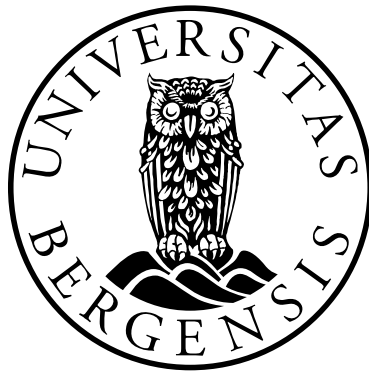# Religious change and political continuity

The evangelical church in Guatemalan politics

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Abstract

This thesis explores the political implications of the rapid growth of Protestantism in Guatemala. Contrasting the considerable changes in the religious landscape, Guatemalan politics has long been characterised by continuity. As a point of departure, this thesis therefore asks: how can the large-scale processes of religious change have left the political status quo seemingly unaffected? Answering this, the thesis presents a detailed analysis of how the sharp increase of converts to Protestantism in the Guatemalan population has been manifested in the country's political arenas. The study aims at contributing with conceptual insights to the research on how religious change affects politics, and to broaden the empirical knowledge of the composition and rationales of the Guatemalan political status quo.

Methodologically, this thesis draws on a qualitative framework, which includes field research in Guatemala. The analysis is built on data accessed from in-depth interviews and observation of religious sermons and activities in Guatemala City. Based on the experiences and empirical insights from the field research in Guatemala the research subject is here conceptualised as 'the evangelical church', and analytical emphasis is placed on the *omnipresence* of evangelical churches in all parts of the country and the various roles they play in people's everyday life. Hence, in addition to analysing the presence of the evangelical church in Guatemala's political arenas, the thesis includes an analysis of the roles of evangelical churches as *service providers*, that operate both in the absence of the state, and in direct cooperation with it. The thesis reveals how this position at the local level, has brought the evangelical church into political positions at the central level in Guatemalan politics.

In all, this is a detailed analysis of the development of the relationship between the Guatemalan state and the evangelical church, finding that evangelical churches have supported the state with practical and material assistance, as well as serving as an alternative religious ally to which political authorities and state officials have turned for uncritical endorsement. The thesis concludes that on the one hand, the sharp growth of Protestantism and the entrance of the evangelical church into Guatemala's

political arenas do constitute a clear *change* in the political organisation: the evangelical church has increasingly taken part in both defining and implementing political solutions, which has affected the state's own operation and services. However, on the other hand, none of these practices appear to have challenged the balance of power in Guatemalan politics. This thesis argues that the political participation of the evangelical church has served to preserve the political status quo.

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Chapter 1

New religion, old politics

> The state and its institutions are no longer capable to confront this problem;
> we believe that the only one that can solve the crisis is God[1]

This thesis investigates the political implications of the rapid growth of Protestantism in contemporary Guatemala. Conversion from Catholicism to various Protestant denominations has increased drastically throughout Latin America, with Guatemala at the top end of the scale. In less than four decades the proportion of Protestants in the Guatemalan population has risen from a mere 2 per cent to more than 40 per cent. The time-period is relevant not only because it indicates that this has been a particularly rapid change, but also because the period coincides with Guatemala's processes of peace and democratisation. The intriguing parallelism of these processes has attracted academic attention to the relationship between religion and politics. Given the traditionally close relationship between the Catholic Church and the Guatemalan state, such a massive flight from Catholicism can be expected to have affected Guatemalan

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[1] Congressman Leonel Soto Arango (UNIONISTA), upon presenting a law proposal to create a national day of prayer for peace, in order to address the crisis of 'the lack of values, disrespect of life, of private property, and of peaceful living' (*La Hora* 2015)

politics in general and the state in particular. In this thesis, I explore if and how the considerable conversion to Protestantism has affected the political *status quo*.[2]

Whilst the increased presence of 'evangelicals'[3] in the Guatemalan public sphere is largely uncontested today, there is deep scholarly disagreement as to what kind of political changes this has brought, if at all. In the first chapters of this thesis I present the various positions and expectations concerning the growth of Protestantism and its relationship to political changes in Guatemala. It seems paradoxical that some scholars analyse the process of conversion to Protestantism as both a cause and effect of political *change*, whereas others characterise Guatemalan politics and power relations by its considerable degree of continuity. As a way to bringing these diverging positions together and taking the analysis a step further, I will here seek to answer the following question: how can the rapid religious change in Guatemala *coincide* with political continuity?

The ambiguities in the literature reveal diverging positions on the more general and long-term debate concerning the relationship between religion and politics: how and to what extent changes in religious adherence of individuals lead to changes at the political level. With this thesis I seek to contribute to this discussion, aiming to provide new insights into how and on which arenas such political changes can be analysed, and how the various levels of analysis interact.

Approaching the role of religion and politics in Guatemala entails entering a highly interdisciplinary field with correspondingly differing conceptions and approaches – particularly concerning how to analyse 'Protestantism' and what is

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[2] With the 'status quo' I will be referring to the existing state of affairs in Guatemalan politics; people, methods, and procedures that constitute central elements of political affairs in contemporary Guatemala (Guatemalan contemporary politics is described in detail below).

[3] In this chapter the words 'evangelical' and 'Protestant' are both used to refer to Guatemala's Protestant population. In chapter 2 I present the various Protestant denominations in Guatemala, noting the challenges related to categorising these particular religious groups (see also below). A central component of the analytical framework of this thesis is the incorporation of how Guatemalans themselves refer to *all* Protestants as 'evangelicals', which is also reflected in the political rhetoric.

considered 'political change'. In developing the analytical framework for this thesis, a first concern has therefore been to establish how the 'growth of Protestantism' can be analysed as a political phenomenon. Contradicting 'conventional wisdom' in the field of Protestantism in Latin America, I argue that 'Protestantism' can in fact be studied as *one* political phenomenon, indeed as a political factor. A second component of my framework involves combining the local and the national levels in the analysis. Whereas research on the field of religious change often concentrates on developments and changes on only one of these levels, I hold that much can be gained from taking into consideration how they interact. More specifically I aim at analysing how the presence and activities of the thousands of evangelical churches at the local level in Guatemala interact with the presence and position of 'the evangelical church' in national politics. The third component of the analytical framework is analysing the political power of the 'evangelical church' by identifying its roles and positions vis-à-vis the Guatemalan state, as a potential source of legitimacy and authority. I thereby include the state as an analytical lens and an arena for analysis.

In this introductory chapter I will first address this particular process of religious change, the so-called 'explosive growth' of Protestantism in the Latin American region. Second, I will introduce Guatemala as a case for analysing the political implications of Protestant growth. I present the highly diverse Protestant population, and the socio-political context, within which I will be tracing the presence and activities of the evangelical church. In the last part of the chapter I present the original contribution of this research and my main argument.

Religious change

During the 20th century scholars of many disciplines sought to determine how adherence to one particular religion leads to the adoption of certain values and behaviour. One of the best known, and by some researchers still considered relevant for the context of contemporary Guatemala, is Max Weber, with his theorising of the

relationship between Protestantism and economic/ political behaviour. Weber argued that the Calvinists and other reformed Protestant groups had a religiously inspired work ethic that encouraged piety and saving, and discouraged excessive spending (Weber 2001 [1930]).[4] With this, Weber argued that the 'Protestant ethic' enabled the development of capitalism in late 16th- and 17th-century Europe. Weber's analyses gave rise to a set of theories based on the 'transformative force of certain religious ideas' (Giddens 2001:xix), providing inspiration to a generation of social scientists as to *how* religious beliefs can be manifested as political and economic behaviour.[5] Indeed, much of the recent literature on the growth of Protestantism in Latin America and worldwide builds on theoretical assumptions of how changes at the individual level – such as lifestyle, behaviour, values – will bring about changes at the societal and political level. With this thesis I aim at challenging such assumptions regarding the mechanisms between individual and political change.

Massive conversion to Protestantism

Since the 1970s there have been considerable shifts in religious affiliation throughout Latin America, most notably, the massive conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism. In 2014, almost 20 per cent of Latin Americans identified as Protestants, compared to 4 per cent only four decades prior (see Figure 1: Religious change in Latin America).

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[4] Weber stressed the Calvinists' this-worldly understanding of their 'call', and argued that they lived by a divine rationale for 'a life of good works', contrasting this to the Catholic cycle of 'sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin' (Weber 2001:71).

[5] Within political science, such ways of analysing culture are attributed the works of Gabriel Almond and his subsequent collaboration with Sydney Verba (1963). These are seen as widely influential in their conceptualisation of political culture in terms of 'orientations toward the political system', and the emphasis on *civic* cultures, found to be prominent in some populations but not in others (Wedeen 2002: 713).

Figure 1: Religious change in Latin America (1910 – 2014)
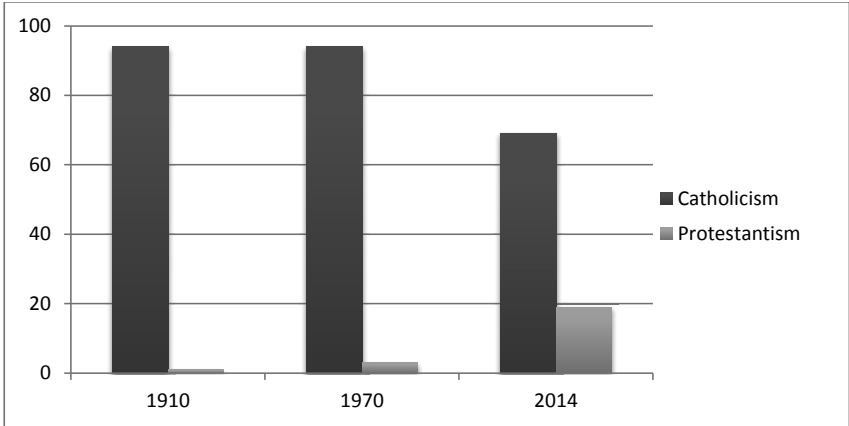
Source: Pew Research Center (2014)

Figure 2: Religions in Latin America (2014)
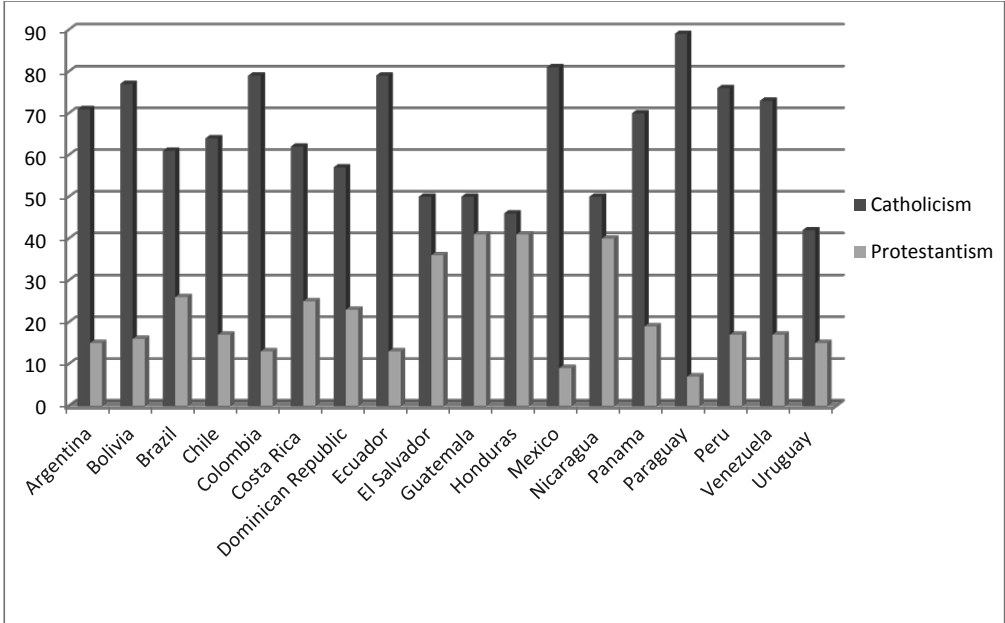
Source: Pew Research Center (2014)

The brief time-period of the rapid growth of Protestantism of roughly 40 years means that most of the movement from Catholicism to Protestantism has occurred within a single generation: most of those who today belong to a Protestant denomination were raised as Catholics (Pew Research Center 2014: 7). Hence, this change of religion is one that has been personally experienced by a large majority of the region's Protestants.

This religious shift has certainly not gone unnoticed; there is a large body of research analysing both the causes and the effects of these changes in the religious adherence of Latin Americans in general, and Guatemalans in particular.[6] Weber's analyses of the triangular relationship between Protestantism, capitalism, and democracy, continue to inspire researchers seeking to explain the impacts of on-going religious change on socio-economic relations. Throughout Latin America, these religious changes took place at a time of wide-ranging political transformations. In the 1970s and early 1980s, most countries in the region were governed by military regimes of various types – all of which had been replaced by democratically elected governments by the early 1990s. And in the literature it is widely held that Protestantism has, in some way, developed in close relation to the type of political regime.[7] Anthony Gill has identified a distinction between those who follow the Weberian framework of expectations concerning how religious values lead to certain political and economic values, and those who somewhat reverse the Weberian thesis and focus on how people convert *because* the values of Protestantism are more congruent with capitalism and neoliberalism (Gill 2004: 3-4). It is also common to distinguish between 'supply-and demand-side' explanations for the religious change and massive conversion.[8] Most often, however, ethnographic studies tend to find that

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[6] Among the many volumes on the 'explosion' of Protestantism in the region, the works of David Stoll (1990) and David Martin (1990) stand as pioneering studies.

[7] As elaborated in greater detail in chapter 2, these assumptions stand in sharp contrast to *political* analyses of the same time-period, close but ignoring religion as a relevant factor.

[8] For introductions to the 'religious economy school', see Levine (2012: 46–50) and Steigenga and Cleary (2007: 14–18).

people decide to convert because of a complex combination of factors at the individual, family and societal level.[9] Since the primary aim of this present study is to analyse the political implications of the growth of Protestantism, I will not dwell on the reasons for individual conversion, but instead engage more directly with the differing scholarly positions concerning the *effects* of such conversion.

… *from* Catholicism

In the Latin American region, the growth of Protestantism has come at the expense of the popularity of the established Catholic Church, which contributes to rising expectations of political change. First, Latin American states have long traditions of close cooperation with the Catholic Church, in the direct governing of the populace and also as legitimating partner of the regime. The various national Catholic hierarchies have been part of the local and national governments' system of social control, both by being the sole moral authority and by endorsing regimes and rulers.[10] Hence, pluralisation of the religious landscape has not only challenged and altered the moral authority of the Catholic Church vis à vis the citizenry, it has also led to changes in how the state relates to the Catholic Church.

Second, internal changes *within* the Catholic Church has led to considerable *changes in* church–state relations, which in the case of Guatemala have come to signify closer relationship between the Guatemalan state and the religious alternative: the Protestant denominations. In the midst of a decade of characterised by the rise of authoritarian governments and military dictatorships, and responding to pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the regional episcopal

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[9] For example, David Smilde has stressed how the individual's networks of friends and family are decisive for a conversion process (Smilde 2007).

[10] To be sure, in the history of Latin America, there have also been instances of confrontations between the Catholic Church and the various states. For a thorough introduction to the roles of the Catholic Church and its relationship with the state in Latin America, see Anthony Gill's *Rendering unto Cesar* (1998).

council in Medellín (1968) announced a form of progressive Catholicism emphasising solidarity and collective commitment. With articulated ideas of how the Catholic Church should prioritise being a 'popular church' and the 'preferential option for the poor', the Catholic Church became seen as siding with the people vis-à-vis the oppressors – which in practice, more often than not, was the state apparatus (Steigenga 2001: 21). The way many Catholic clergy and lay people openly positioned themselves in opposition to the state significantly changed the political stance of the Catholic Church as such in many Latin American countries. Whereas the state could previously rely on the Catholic Church as a partner in its system of control, from the late 1960s, many states came to see the Church as part of the resistance to its rule. In Guatemala, the ruling elites (correctly) interpreted the calls for structural reforms and popular justice as severe challenges to the political *status quo*, and Catholic clergy were explicitly referred to as enemies of the state that needed to be defeated. These changes in the official and practical positions of the Catholic Church serve to illustrate how religious changes have had political implications in the Latin American context. Moreover, these changes are intimately related to the emergence of Protestantism as the new religious alternative, which 'exploded' in the same time-period. The parallelism of these developments is central to understanding why and how the Guatemalan state came to welcome and favour Protestantism.

The case of Guatemala

Although it is a region-wide trend, the growth of Protestantism varies greatly from country to country (see Figure 2). Until very recently, no other Latin American country had seen such rapid conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism as had Guatemala.[11] The changes in Guatemala's religious landscape are immediate and hard

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[11] As seen in Figure 2, in recent years, neighbouring Honduras and El Salvador have shown similar tendencies of rapid growth in the number of converts from Catholicism to Protestantism (see also below).

to ignore; biblical messages are transmitted from hundreds of radio stations and flamboyant TV shows, there is a Protestant church 'on every corner' in rural villages and urban neighbourhoods, and in Guatemala City there are several grandiose edifices with names such as *City of God* and *Megafrater*. Already in the early 1980s it was reported that Guatemalans had converted to Protestantism *en masse*– reaching close to 25 per cent, when the proportion in other Latin American countries barely reached five per cent. Today, Protestants constitute roughly 40 per cent of the population of Guatemala (Azpuru 2014; Latinobarómetro 2014; *Prensa Libre* 2014a). Moreover, as the only Latin American country that has had two Protestant presidents,[12] Guatemala stands out as a country with evident and intriguing links between religious and political authority.

Figure 3: Religious change in Guatemala (1910-2014)
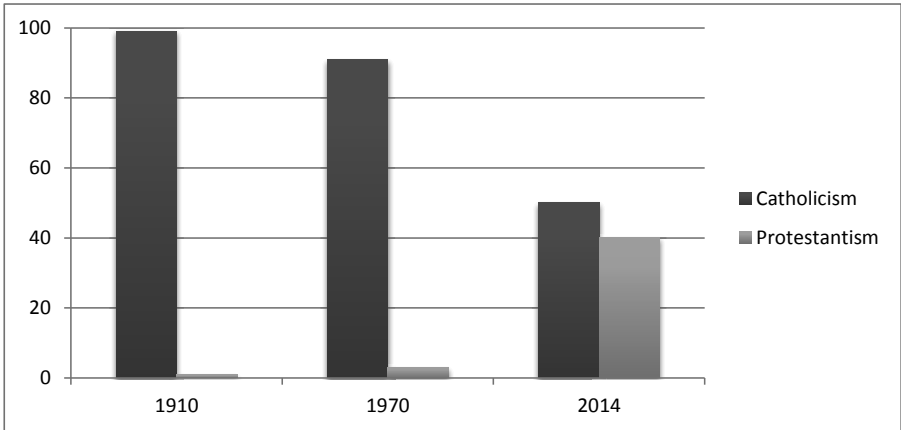
Notes: Catholicism 1910: 99%, 1970: 91%, 2014: 50%. Protestantism 1910: 1%, 1970: 3%, 2014: 40%. Source: Pew Research Center (2014)

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[12] In the second round of the Presidential elections in 2015, Jimmy Morales won by large margins, and will in 2016 be inaugurated as Guatemala's *third* Protestant President.

For this study of the political implications of the growth of Protestantism, the selection of Guatemala as a case is in line with the 'extreme case method' as presented by John Gerring (2007), in which case selection is made on the basis of extreme values on an independent or dependent variable of interest. The selection is then based on thorough knowledge about the variation in the population of cases 'lying in the background of the analysis', which thereby justifies the selection of a *single* case (Gerring 2007: 104). Gerring also notes that case selection of this kind typically reflects how the researcher has a specific question in mind, but no clear hypothesis (Gerring 2007: 101, n.17). In line with George and Bennett, I find that the design as a single-case study allows for more 'detailed consideration of contextual factors', which help to uncover contextual differences in the same concept, and thereby allowing for conceptual *refinement* and high levels of conceptual validity (George and Bennett 2005:19). For example, in this thesis I place great emphasis on the conceptualisation of Protestantism and the importance of identifying how this concept is used in the Guatemalan context ('the evangelical church'). I argue that the great variation in the analytical use of the concept 'Protestantism' has contributed to unclear and even incorrect conclusions as to both the causes and the effects of the phenomenon (see below).[13]

In the general literature on the growth of Protestantism in Latin America, Guatemala has long been considered as the outlier and a hence a favoured case for the study of this variant of religious change and its socio-political consequences. Even though neighbouring Honduras and El Salvador have shown similar tendencies of conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism (see Figure 2), I still consider Guatemala as an *extreme case* of Protestant growth in the region, as this is where the tendency was first observed and where the growth rate has been the steepest by far. The research objectives of this thesis concern 'internal validity', aimed at explaining one particular case – and not at generalising findings directly applicable beyond this case. Nevertheless, my research has also been motivated by how analysing the political implications in Guatemala may provide insights and inspiration for the

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[13] In chapter 2, I present the theoretical and methodological considerations for this conceptualisation

identification of explanatory variables and interactions for further research in countries such as Honduras and El Salvador.

It should be mentioned that the selection of Guatemala as a case for study is also based on how I already had some familiarity with Guatemala and Central America, having worked and stayed in there on several occasions. As advised by George and Bennett, even though such a selection practice can serve to ensure stronger and more focused research designs, it has been important to take into consideration the extent to which my advance knowledge might lead to *ex ante* assumptions concerning the relationship and interaction between variables (George and Bennett 2005:24).[14] A primary concern for the research design was therefore to develop a deeper knowledge of the research subjects – the Protestant population of Guatemala, which could enable a comprehensive analysis of their presence in national politics.

The research subjects: Guatemala's Protestant population

As the number of people converting from Catholicism to various Protestant denominations increases, so does the heterogeneity of the group of converts. Whereas converting to Protestantism used to be typical of the poorer population in Guatemala, Protestants are today found among all segments of society. Elsewhere in Latin America, geographic mobility and level of education are among the few variables that significantly differentiate between Catholics and converts to Protestantism;[15] in Guatemala, however, *no* demographic variables emerge as significant as regards differences between Catholics and converts to Protestantism (Pew Research Center 2014:117–123). The differences lie rather in people's values, and in the level of their religious commitment, operationalised as frequency of church attendance and personal

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[14] Further reflections on these and related methodological challenges are included in chapter 3 in this thesis.

[15] According to regional studies, converts to Protestantism are more likely to have changed their place of residence, rather than always having lived at the same place, and they are less likely than Catholics to have secondary education (Pew Research Center 2014).

prayer. As in other Latin American countries, Protestants in Guatemala tend to be more conservative than Catholics on 'moral/ethical' issues; they are more likely than Catholics to say that abortion should be illegal in all or most circumstances, and they oppose same-sex marriage to a greater degree than do most Catholics. Protestants are also more likely than Catholics to consider alcohol, divorce, and birth control as immoral (Pew Research Center 2014: 69).

In sum, Protestants generally express a stronger religious commitment than their Catholic counterpart – not surprisingly perhaps, considering that a high percentage of them have actively sought conversion to Protestantism as adults. In this thesis I examine the ways in which such a demographically and socio-economic diverse group as Guatemala's Protestants are in fact united in their highly conservative attitudes in 'moral issues', reflecting on how this may have led Guatemalan politics in an even *more* conservative direction – most notably on issues such as sexual and reproductive rights.

Evangelicals and the evangelical church

Hitherto I have referred to the change in the religious landscape of Guatemala as one of conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism. However, 'Protestantism' must be recognised as a large umbrella covering a number of different denominations that generally operate completely independent of each other. Along with these come numerous different scholarly categories and typologies meant to capture denominational and theological differences. Indeed, some of the greatest challenges related to including 'Protestantism' and 'Protestants' in political analyses relate to measurement and categorisation. People who in some analyses are categorised as 'Protestants' are in others referred to as *Pentecostals* or *Evangelicals*. There are naturally also contextual variations, the meaning of Pentecostal or Evangelical can significantly differ from one country to another, and there are also different practices within countries. Such typological variation, which I elaborate further in chapter 2, indicates a highly interdisciplinary field of study, with corresponding differences in

research objectives. This practice contributes to diverging opinions concerning how the religious landscape is changing and the possible consequences. Great caution is therefore needed when analysing statistical material as well as ethnographic studies in order to avoid critical methodological errors. In this thesis I rely on both these kinds of material, as well as data accessed during my own research stay in Guatemala. Moreover, practices of differentiating within the Protestant family often do not correspond to the way Guatemalan Protestants refer to themselves. Notwithstanding considerable denominational and theological differences, the large majority of Guatemalan Protestants simply refer to themselves as Evangelicals (*evangélicos*), and, but to a lesser extent, Christians (*cristianos*), or both: Evangelical Christians (Bjune 2012; O'Neill 2010; Steigenga 2001). Also, in the national media, the terms *evangélicos* and *la iglesia evangélica* is typically used in referring to *all* Protestant denominations. In this thesis, I follow the way Protestants are talked about in the Guatemalan context today: all of Guatemala's Protestants will be referred to as 'evangelicals'. This conceptualisation also reflects how Protestant churches and Protestants are referred to in the Guatemalan polity. Indeed, the way 'the evangelical church' has become a political factor, covering a large and heterogeneous group, is a key component of this thesis' analytical approach.

Contextual Backdrop: Changes and continuity

The analysis of thesis has a time frame of roughly four decades, from the late 1970s through the interrupted presidency of Otto Pérez Molina (2012–2015). When presenting this period in Guatemalan politics as a story of continuity it is essential not to underestimate the considerable changes that *have* taken place during these years, during which the political system has changed from military dictatorships at war, to electoral democracy in peace. However, despite the popular uprisings and repeated calls for breaking with the established order, these systemic changes have not brought about major changes in political and economic power relations in Guatemalan politics. In the following I introduce what I consider to constitute central aspects of the political

'status quo' in Guatemala, and hence the scenario and the relations of power within which the 'evangelical church' has established as a new political factor.

From war to peace: potential changes towards a more inclusive political system

Guatemala's long and brutal civil war (1960–1996) represents a prime but devastating example of a popular attempt to break with the established order. The war emerged as a result of decades of unequal economic growth and extremely uneven distribution of wealth combined with a highly repressive state apparatus that strangled the political voice of the people (CEH 1999; Jonas 1991; ODHAG 1999). A central aim of the 1996 Peace Accords was therefore to target the enormous socio-economic gap dividing the masses from the elites, as well as the traditions of discriminatory policies against the country's many indigenous populations (Jonas 2000). The process leading up to the Peace Accords had been characterised by levels of social mobilisation unprecedented in Guatemalan history, and widely applauded for having included guidelines for a more inclusive, pluricultural and redistributive political system. As a signatory party, the Guatemalan state committed to structural socio-economic changes aimed at achieving the transformation from a homogenous, exclusionary, discriminatory entity, to a pluralist, multicultural state, representative of all its peoples (Jonas 2000). However, the continuing lack of political will has hindered the broad reformation of socio-economic and political structures as set out in the Accords.

Continued political reluctance and confrontation
A clear sign of the resistance to adapt to the changes called for in the Peace Accords was evident already in the outcome of the referendum on constitutional reforms held in 1999. The reforms that were put on a vote in the referendum were necessary in order to go ahead with the judicial and political changes put forward in the Peace Accords.

To the great surprise of national and international observers, the reforms were rejected.[16] Various explanations have been offered; here it is relevant to note that the general lack of official information prior to the referendum is likely to have made it into a highly ideological event, from which the widely broadcast and well resourced 'No' campaign had greater chances for influence (Jonas 2000:195–200).[17] As of 2015, the great majority of the reforms from the Peace Accords have yet to be successfully incorporated in the political system, signalling both political resistance to the agreement reached and a lack of political capacity. For example, efforts aiming explicitly at creating a more pluralist state apparatus, such as creating institutions intended to protect and represent indigenous peoples vis-à-vis the state, and raising the level of indigenous representation at various levels of the state machinery, have been deeply troubled by lack of budgetary support (Brett 2010:46–47). The continuing of racist practices within the state apparatus have been widely documented (Casaús 2002, 2010b; Cojtí Cuxil 2009); and, as argued by Brett, there is an evident lack of genuine commitment to 'adhere to the international normative juridical framework relative to the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly International Labour Organisation Convention 169' (Brett 2010: 47). Further, recent years have seen an increasing number of conflicts for control of land and other natural resources (Brett 2010; Torres-Rivas and Rodas 2008; UNDP 2010; UNPFII 2009).[18] Such conflicts usually involve local, often indigenous, populations calling for self-determination and protection of their land rights, opposing governmental-approved development activities like mining and hydropower projects by international companies.

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[16] The 'No' campaign won, with 55 per cent of the vote. However, 'abstention' has been declared the real winner in this referendum, as 81 per cent of registered voters did not participate. (Jonas 2000:199).

[17] As explained in chapter 4, the main argument against the reforms mostly had to do with defending national sovereignty against international interference, and the fear of a 'balkanisation' of Guatemala (Brett 2009; Jonas 2000).

[18] The sharp upsurge in infrastructure development has also led to destruction of ceremonial and sacred sites of indigenous peoples (UNPFII 2009: 19).

In chapter 4, I analyse the political positioning of the representatives of the evangelical church at different stages of the civil war and the peace process. During the civil war political 'goodwill' allowed local evangelical churches to increase their operations on the ground (in contrast to Catholic Churches that were forcibly shut down), as well as taking part in formal decision-making on the political level. I will also highlight the participation of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala (AEG) and other well-known representatives of the evangelical church in the 'No' campaign of the referendum in 1999; in official statements the organisation warned against the proposal of formal recognition of Mayan spirituality, emphasising the dangers of recognising such 'ungodliness' in the constitution (Jonas 2000: 214, n.7). I argue that the alliances made and the political stance of representatives of the evangelical church taken during these years have had a lasting legacy on the presence and position of the evangelical church in post-war Guatemalan politics.

Democratic institutions, balance of power remained

With the election of a national constitutional assembly in 1984 and the celebration of presidential elections in the following year Guatemala initiated the process of regime change. Today the country holds a multiparty system, and has, with the 2015 presidential elections, celebrated eight consecutive relatively free and relatively fair elections since the restoration of civilian government (ASIES 2007b; Sánchez *forthcoming*). With the exception of President Serrano's failed *autogolpe* in 1993, constitutional order has remained in force (Bjune and Petersen 2010).

In contrast to the skills of political actors to remain in the game, no political party as such has survived as an electoral option in the presidential elections throughout the post-authoritarian period, and no political party has won the presidency in two consecutive rounds (Jones 2011; Sánchez *forthcoming*). It is said that no Latin American country has such a large graveyard of political parties as has Guatemala (Torres Rívas and Cuesta 2007); most parties either disappear, or re-brand and enter new formations from one election to the next. Moreover, there has been a remarkably

high degree of floor crossing (*transfuguismo parlamentari*o) – the tendency of members of Congress to change party adherence during their elected period.[19] As a result, the political parties lack deeper societal roots, and the main political battle lines are typically redrawn by political entrepreneurs from election to election, not reflecting the socio-political conflict lines in the population. Such incoherency in party affiliation has serious implications for democratic accountability, and the low levels of institutionalisation of the Guatemalan party system has also had severe impacts on the policy-making process and the legitimacy of the political system (ASIES 2007b; Jones 2011: 5; Sánchez 2009: 500). A drop in the levels of trust in the newly established democratic institutions was registered already in 1990, and Guatemalans have continued to express little confidence in public institutions, and least of all in political parties (Azpuru 2012; Jonas 2000; NDI 1991). In sum, since the restoration of civilian rule, electoral politics in Guatemala has primarily served to reinforce existing power relations.

It is within this landscape of weak institutions and little trust that the minor efforts of evangelical party politics have taken place. In chapter 5 I elaborate on how the few attempts of creating evangelical parties can be seen in relation to the particularities of the party system, as well as the highly heterogeneous character of 'the evangelical demos'. I consider these factors as part of the explanation of how evangelical political influence has taken other channels than the electoral one – such as advocacy, formal and informal campaigns, and mobilisation for specific causes.

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[19] During the 2008–2012 electoral period, 70 of 158 members of Congress (44 per cent) reportedly changed party adherence from the party under which they were elected. Of these 50 had changed more than once, and two had changed *four* times (*El Periódico* 2011a). In the current Congress (2012–2016), 45 per cent of the deputies had shifted party adherence once or several times by 2014 (*Prensa Libre* 2014b). There is a clear tendency to move to the party with the greatest possibilities for winning the next elections.

Continued insecurity and exclusion

Although Guatemala will soon celebrate the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords, for many Guatemalans everyday reality cannot be characterised as 'peaceful': a large majority is severely affected by the continued high levels of violence and crime. Official figures indicate a drop in the annual homicide rate, from 46 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2009 to 39.9 in 2013 (UNODC 2014).[20] Notwithstanding, in many regions, including in Guatemala City, figures are higher than during the worst years of the civil war (Insight Crime 2013). The difference from the civil war is that the violence is no longer explicitly ideological. New actors – including organised crime, international drug-trafficking networks and youth gangs – have transformed and diversified the violence, but the brutal reality of social and economic conflict has remained. In addition comes the grave level of impunity throughout the Guatemalan judicial system; a mere two per cent of crimes committed result in prosecution (Human Rights Watch 2013, Sánchez *forthcoming*).[21] Beyond the numbers-debate that has characterised much analysis of crime in Guatemala are the very real and constant fears of the Guatemalan populace: of becoming a victim of crime, of being murdered, or losing someone dear (Azpuru 2012, 2014). Both the press and campaigning politicians play upon these fears, portraying particularly young men as the greatest threat to public security, a blame-game that obscures official responsibility for *preventing* crime. Here, local evangelical churches have taken on the role of safe havens and providers of security in insecure neighbourhoods, by offering shelter, activities, job training, and a sense of community belongingness for vulnerable and excluded groups. In a climate of fear and political under-institutionalisation, there

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[20] In comparison, the figures are 21 for Mexico, and 4.7 for the USA (UNODC 2014).

[21] It must be noted that recent years have seen an unprecedented willingness on the part of the Office of the Attorney-General to bring high-ranking officials to trial for wide-scale corruption as well as for war crimes committed during the civil war, including the trial of homicide-accused former president, General Ríos Montt. Most recent examples include the remarkable efforts by the UN–backed 'International commission against impunity', the CICIG, and the Public Prosecutor's Office in the rolling up several massive corruption schemes since April 2015, which has led to the resignation and imprisonment of numerous high–ranking business leaders and public officials, including ex–President Otto Pérez Molina and former Vice President Roxana Baldetti.

is a considerable asymmetry between the levels of trust in state versus non-state institutions. This is perhaps not surprising, but it is nevertheless noteworthy how the churches, the evangelical as well as Catholic repeatedly come out on top in such rankings (Azpuru 2012; *Prensa Libre* 2011b, 2012b), reflecting the roles played by these institutions in people's everyday life.

In sum, whereas political indicators since the restoration of civilian regime (1984–85) tell of a system that could have been expected to erupt into server instability and political crisis, Guatemalan politics has rather been characterised by considerable stability; in the wake of each electoral cycle there has been a renewal of the distribution of central positions of power among the same kind of actors (CICIG 2015:25). With this thesis I highlight the presence of the evangelical church within this scenario, exploring how the established order has affected the roles and positions of the evangelical church, and visa versa, how the presence of the evangelical church has affected the *status quo* in Guatemalan politics.

Main contribution of the study: The relationship between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state

What distinguishes this thesis from much of the literature on the field of the growth of Protestantism is the explicit focus on the Guatemalan state – as an *arena* for tracing changes in personnel and practice, but also as active *participant* in the trajectory of the political presence and position of 'the evangelical church'. In including the Guatemalan state in this regard, it has been particularly relevant to take into consideration its weak social contract with its citizens and its relations to non-state actors and sectors actively involved in the governing of Guatemalan politics. As argued by Joel S. Migdal and many with him, even when one recognises that there are other 'systems of social control' in a given society – apart from the state, it is important not to let the state out of sight in the analysis; rather, the state should be seen as constantly interacting with other systems of control (Migdal 2001: 56). I find that in

Guatemala, the evangelical church has become one of the many 'partners' of the Guatemalan state.

In order to analyse the relationship between the state and the evangelical church, I explore the potential political power of evangelical churches and organisations as *non-state* actors, which operate sometimes in the absence of, but often in direct cooperation with the state. The analytical concepts applied for this purpose are developed from a *governmentality* perspective on power and power relations (see chapter 2). This perspective implies a focus on the processes of governing: that is, how political power is *exercised* and on which *arenas*, which in this case entails investigating why and how the state includes non-state actors in central governmental tasks. From the governmentality perspective then, the evangelical church as non-state actor can be analysed as a participant in governing, and such relationship is expected to have consequences for the authority and legitimacy for both parts (see Sending and Neumann 2006: 657–658).

Throughout this thesis the perceived *absence* of the Guatemalan state is considered a central factor for understanding and explaining the *presence* of the evangelical churches and organisations. The Guatemalan state ranks with remarkable low levels of social spending compared to its GDP, and stands out as the Latin American state with the smallest tax base by far (Briscoe 2009; OECD 2015).[22] Since the mid-1980s, attempts have been made to reform the fiscal sector, however, as of 2015 proposals have not succeeded in passing Congress. This is attributed primarily to opposition from the business community (Briscoe 2009; Jonas 2000; Valdez and Palencia Prado 1998). This continued neglect of social spending has had severe implications for the state of human development.

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[22] The Guatemalan state currently invests less annually in its children than any other country in the region, and scores highest on regional rankings of chronic malnutrition and infant mortality, far worse than countries with similar GDP (INCEFI/ UNICEF 2011).

Evangelical service provision

The high levels of insecurity and poverty experienced by a great majority of the Guatemalan population is undoubtedly relevant for analysing the presence, roles and impact of religion and religious institutions in people's lives. It is recognised that situations of severe insecurity and deprivation are positively correlated with religious beliefs and practices (Norris and Inglehart 2011). However, as this thesis seeks to expand the analysis from a singular focus on the individual and personal beliefs, I focus instead on the *presence* and the *roles* held by evangelical churches and organisations in such situations. Alongside a large number of other private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in Guatemala, evangelical churches and organisations have established as providers of services like education and social security to their local communities by filling in where the state is absent. However, the expansion of evangelical services must also be seen in relation to the at times close cooperation with the Guatemalan state.

To explain the trajectory of the political presence of the evangelical church in Guatemala, I thereby apply an analytical approach that takes into consideration the presence and roles of the various evangelical churches in arenas at the local as well as the central level. By applying this 'two-level approach' I aim to capture how these levels interact: in other words, I analyse the political presence of the evangelical church and its cooperation with the state, in relation to the various roles and positions held by the thousands of evangelical churches at the local level throughout the country.

Main argument

The growth of Protestantism in Guatemala has resulted in the establishing of a new political factor in Guatemalan politics, the evangelical church. I hold that the power and influence of the evangelical church in political arenas at the central level derive from the ways in which tens of thousands of evangelical churches have established a presence in local communities, as a highly trusted provider of spiritual and material

goods. Moreover, my findings indicate that this role as service provider has had considerable impact on the relationship established with the Guatemalan state, which has welcomed and encouraged evangelical participation in public services as well as in central decision–making organs. Further, the evangelical church as political factor has reached a position in Guatemalan politics from which it has taken part in both defining and implementing political solutions, yet none of these roles and practices appears to have challenged the status quo in Guatemalan politics. Finally, with this thesis I argue that the entrance of the evangelical church into Guatemalan political arenas has contributed to the preservation of the political status quo.

Summing up, in this thesis I follow two, interrelated lines of enquiry: Identifying and examining the presence of 'the evangelical church' in Guatemalan politics, by exploring what kind of presence this is, how it has emerged, and how and by whom it is manifested. And second, I examine the question of political *impact*, by focusing on how the growth of Protestantism has been reacted to and acted upon by the Guatemalan state. By highlighting the interaction between the state and the evangelical churches on the local and the central level, I aim at bringing new insights to the understanding of the political implications of the rapid change of religion in modern-day Guatemala. Further, by broadening the analytical lens to include the role and the perspective of the state, and placing the political presence of the evangelical church in relation to the political status quo, I also seek to contribute to the broader study of the balance – and imbalance – of power in Guatemalan politics.

Chapter outline

In Chapter 2 I outline the main theoretical considerations that inform the analytical framework of this thesis. I first elaborate on the central scholarly perspectives and expectations as to the political impact of religious change in general, and the growth of Protestantism in Latin America in particular. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the analytical approach developed for this thesis, and I introduce the

central components that constitute this approach: the 'two-level approach'; the contextual conceptualisation of *Protestantism* as 'the evangelical church'; and finally, analysing the political power of the 'evangelical church' by identifying its roles and positions vis-à-vis the Guatemalan state, which entails including the state as an arena for analysis and active partaker in the trajectory of the political position and influence of the evangelical church.

In Chapter 3 I present the methodological framework that was adapted for this study. I discuss central aspects of the methodology, and specifically how I have approached the topic of religion and religiosity. I elaborate on the challenges and opportunities related to doing research 'in the field', and the relationship between the researcher and the researched. I then present the field research in Guatemala in more detail, to show how these experiences and the kind of data collected have fed into the development of the analytical approach adopted for understanding and analysing the religio-political relationships in Guatemala.

In Chapter 4 I then embark on analysing when and how the evangelical church 'became political.' The Chapter centres around four moments in Guatemala's recent political history that I hold served to trigger *changes* in how and in which arenas the evangelical church related to national politics, and vice-versa: the 1976 earthquake and its aftermath; the government and governing of General Ríos Montt; the political opening and multiparty elections; and the peace process. I will highlighted how the evangelical churches and their representatives have moved from explicitly *a*political positions to actively taking part in various political arenas, including the executive branch of government, and how the kind of relationship developed between evangelical churched and the Guatemalan state resulted in a *normalisation* of the presence of the evangelical church in sectors in Guatemalan politics like education, health, and social security.

Chapter 5 focuses on the *kind of presence* hold by the evangelical church in contemporary Guatemalan politics at the central level. I highlight how, in order to identify and analyse the evangelical presence in Guatemalan politics, it is essential to

take into consideration the particular functioning – and malfunctioning of the Guatemalan political system, where political participation and influence is practiced elsewhere than the formal institutions. I will argue for the need to include evangelical organisations and individuals as agenda-setters in Guatemalan politics, as well as including evangelical *arenas* as sites for political practice and networking. The Chapter also serves as an overview of the various arenas where evangelicals participate for more or less explicit political ends, as well as a map over central evangelical institutions, leaders and representatives in Guatemalan politics today.

In Chapter 6 I turn to the local level and the activities and social programmes by the thousands of evangelical churches 'on the ground.' The Chapter aims at capturing how evangelical 'social work' has been received (or ignored) at the political level – and more specifically, by the state. I analyse evangelical social programmes as *service provision*, distinguishing between three types i) in the absence of the state; ii) cooperating with the state, and iii) alternatives to the state. This systematic analysis will also serve to reveal how there has been a clear diversification in the presence of evangelical churches and organisations as service providers, both in geographic scope, and in terms of which social strata they cater to.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the question of *impact,* and I let the relationship between the Guatemalan state and the evangelical church serve as the main analytical lens. In the Chapter I identify how the increased presence and cooperation with the evangelical church has affected the state's own operations, and I will particularly highlight how neither evangelical political practices and preferences, nor the presence of the representatives of the evangelical church appear to have sparked any changes in the state's own rationales and operations. The Chapter then concludes with the argument that in the evangelical church, the Guatemalan state has found a new religious ally to which it can turn to for seemingly unconditional support.

Finally, in Chapter 8 I outline the main conclusions of the thesis, presenting these in relation to the primary research objectives. I will point to how I with this research I have related to two somewhat distinct scholarly perspectives on the socio-

political development in Guatemala; one with a prime focus on addressing the growth of Protestantism and its effects, and one more 'institutionalist' in character, which more or less ignores the phenomenon of religious change altogether. I present what I find as the main empirical and conceptual contributions of this study, and suggestions as to how these can contribute to more nuanced understandings of Guatemalan politics and power relations, as well as the further development of analytical perspectives on how religion and religious change affect politics and the state.

Chapter 2

Theoretical considerations and the analytical framework

The primary objective of this research project is to investigate the political implications of the rapid growth of Protestantism in Guatemala, and in this chapter I lay out the analytical framework developed to address this objective. The framework has three main, interrelated components: i) applying a two-level approach: tracing the trajectory of the political position of what I refer to as the 'evangelical church' on arenas at the local and the central levels, identifying and analysing the interaction in between them; ii) conceptualising Protestantism as 'the evangelical church'; and iii) analysing the political power of the 'evangelical church' by identifying its roles and positions vis-à-vis the Guatemalan state, as a potential source of legitimacy and authority.

Conversion to Protestantism is for many believers and analysts alike a story of *change:* Change and transformation are highly central elements in the practice and theology of Protestantism in Latin America, and particularly so within Pentecostalism, the variant most practised in Guatemala (Anderson 2010; Levine 2012; Steigenga and Cleary 2007; on *Pentecostalism,* see below). This focus on change is also reflected in much of the literature on the phenomenon of Protestant growth in Latin America and elsewhere, and the various changes experienced by individuals have been thoroughly documented.[1] Scholarly challenges and disputes arise when these narratives of change and transformation are included in analyses of the political *impact* of conversion to Protestantism. As noted by Steigenga (2010b: 79–80), analysts in this field need to be cautious when considering the correlation between an individual's expectations and

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[1] See for example Cleary and Steigenga (eds) 2007; Freeman (ed.) 2012; Freston 2001, 2008; Garrard-Burnett and Stoll (eds) 1993; and Gooren 2007, 2010.

experiences from religious conversion, and the wider societal and political effects of these experiences.

Whereas the scholarship concentrating on the pluralisation of religion in Guatemala is characterised by expectations of political consequences, in the more general analyses of Guatemala's political system, variables and expectations related to religious adherence and religious change are largely absent; the substantial growth in Protestantism is typically *not* included when power relations, political power, or central political actors are to be explained.[2] The wide-ranging processes of religious conversion are thereby expected to have no impact on politics. This may reflect theoretical perspectives where variables like religious adherence and beliefs are considered private matters and not relevant for political analyses at the institutional level; or perhaps religious variables *have* been included, but not found significant for the political phenomena under study. Challenging the perceptions of these more *institutionalist* approaches, the analytical framework developed for this thesis is aimed at identifying what kind of presence the evangelical church has obtained on Guatemala's political scene, highlighting this factor as part of Guatemalan politics.

In the first part of this chapter I elaborate on theoretical perspectives and expectations as to the political impact of religious change in general, and the growth of Protestantism in Latin America in particular. Experiences of change at an individual level are generally uncontested – the scholarly divergence lies in the interpretations of how these are transferred to the societal and political level and their *significance* for political outcomes, such as political behaviour. I distinguish between theoretical expectations of change at the regime level, and those focusing primarily on how religious change affects the individual and civil society. With this review I highlight what appears to be an analytical lacuna in the literature on the political implications of Protestantism; mine is a research agenda that includes both the central and the local level in the analysis, examining how changes experienced at one level affect the other.

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[2] See for example Briscoe (2009); Bull et al. (2014); Casaús (2010a); González (2014); Schirmer (1998); and Valdez and Palencia Prado (1998).

In the second part of the chapter I go into detail on the analytical framework developed for this thesis, first presenting the 'two-level approach'. This approach is aimed at capturing how the presence and position of the evangelical church at the central level relate to the roles of evangelical churches at the local level. I argue that including this *interaction* between the two levels enables a more nuanced analysis of the overall political impact of the growth of Protestantism in Guatemala. I then present how I have applied a contextualised conceptualisation of *Protestantism*, uniting all Guatemala's Protestant churches under the conceptual umbrella of 'the evangelical church'. This reflects how Guatemalan Protestants self-identify, and also how Protestantism is spoken of in Guatemalan national politics. The third component of the framework consists in identifying concrete arenas and mechanisms by which the evangelical church exercises political power, and how it relates to and cooperates with the state. Here I include the roles of evangelical churches and organisations as *non-state actors* that operate as service providers, sometimes in the absence of, but often in direct cooperation with the state. The Guatemalan state is thereby included, both as an arena for analysis and as an active partaker in the trajectory of the political position of the evangelical church.

Theoretical expectations of change

Initially, it was changes within the Catholic Church that spurred the small wave of studies analysing religion as promoter of societal change in contemporary Latin America. The rise of 'liberation theology' across the region and the spreading of writings of liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez had inspired Catholic clergy across the continent, who got involved in peasant leagues, labour organisations and other social movements concerned about the situation of the poor and oppressed (Steigenga 2001:xv, 21, see also Chapter 4). Political scientists such as Scott Mainwaring and Daniel Levine presented findings of how religious beliefs, ideas, and denominations were influential not only at the individual level, but also at the levels of community and society, and that these affected political outcomes (Steigenga 2001:

xv; Levine 1981, 1986; Mainwaring 1986). Indeed, for many scholars of religion, developments Latin America in the second half of the 20th century have served as a series of empirical proofs for falsifying the much-debated secularisation hypothesis.[3] Whether investigating the writings and practices of the liberation theologians who took clear positions against authoritarian regimes, or the intensity with which people embraced and practised variants of Protestantism, it has repeatedly been established that in Latin America, religion has clearly not withdrawn from the public sphere (see for example Levine 2012).[4]

With the rapid growth in the number of converts to Protestantism in the Latin American region, the initial scholarly response focused on understanding *why* this was happening. Why were people converting, *en masse,* from Catholicism to Protestantism? Had it to do with the Catholic Church, or with the specific variants of Protestantism? Was this caused by exogenous factors like Protestant missionaries from abroad, or did the religious changes in religion reflect other socio-economic, demographic, political, or cultural changes in the various countries? The many schools of explanations of the growth in Protestantism have been thoroughly reviewed by numerous scholars in the field,[5] so I will touch on the differences between them only briefly below. However, it is relevant to note that there has been a tendency to fuse explanations of the *causes* of religious change with the explanations of the *effects* of the same processes. For example, several authors have taken arguments about how the non-hierarchical structure of the Protestant churches is part of the explanation for the

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[3] The key element in what was to become known as the 'secularisation hypothesis' concerns how the processes of modernisation (technological innovation, education, societal differentiation) will make religion and religious authorities lose presence and importance in the rational public sphere, and disappear as a factor in the political organisation of societies. For thorough discussions on the 'rise and fall' of the secularisation paradigm, see in particular the writings of Peter Berger (1967, 1999); Steve Bruce (2002), and José Casanova (1994).

[4] The eagerness to denounce the secularisation hypothesis may also be related to how Protestantism itself has been seen as having decreased the impact of religion on its followers; it had liberated itself from traditional religious expressions of the sacred, such as mysteries, miracles and magic, resulting in an overall *decrease* of the impact on its followers (Berger 1967: 111).

[5] See in particular Freston (2008); Levine (2012), and Steigenga (2001, 2010b)

growth of Protestantism, and transferred these into arguments of how the same growth will *cause* the weakening of the hierarchical and authoritarian structures in society as such (Berger 2010; Martin 1990, and Sherman 1997).

More or less democratic? The 'false dilemma' of changes at regime level

The assumptions of how changing religion causes political changes from below are widespread in much of the contemporary literature on religious change in Latin America. Individuals and their beliefs, values, and behaviour are in that sense the main dependent variables, on which variation is found as a result of religious adherence. And when individuals change the way they live their lives or interact with the community, this is expected to lead to political changes. This latter mechanism however, is theoretically less developed, characterised by simplified analyses of the political system in question, and of how this responds to the changes in the religious beliefs and practices of the populace.

For a while, two positions dominated the debates on the socio-political impact of the growth of Protestantism in Latin America: that this religious change has strengthened the authoritarian political traditions in the region; or that it has fostered and strengthened the processes of democratisation. The first perspective is based on how converts to variants of Protestantism were expected to be *less* involved in political and civil society because of the 'otherworldly' and a-political preaching in their churches, in addition to their generally more conservative political values.[6] The second perspective bases the expectations of change on how the religious practice of the Protestant churches enhances civic skills and facilitates individual agency, held to *increase* people's involvement in political and civil society, which again strengthens and shapes citizenship and thereby democracy. Some of these scholars are explicitly

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[6] See in particular Bastian (1986, 1993); Lalive d'Epinay (1969); Diamond (1989), and Huntington and Domínguez (1984)

Weberian in their approach, [7] whereas others frame their studies within the larger debates on social capital (see below). Recently, these debates have been criticised for operating with a 'false dilemma' concerning the impact on political regimes, and Timothy Steigenga and others have argued for the need to expand the debate beyond the democratic or authoritarian discussion (Steigenga 2007: 257).

Along with the higher quantity and level of sophistication of case studies and more refined operationalisations of the concepts of 'religion' and 'Protestantism' as independent variables, it has now been established that Protestants participate in political processes to the same extent as other religious groups. Moreover, it has been documented that, in the Latin American context, religious denomination is in itself not significant as regards the effects on the abovementioned variables, like political behaviour and values (Steigenga 2001, 2007; see also Azpuru 2012). Whereas the previous literature focused on the differences between religious groups (Catholics versus Protestants), assuming that Protestants would differ significantly from Catholics in their political and economic attitudes, it is now recognised that in order to understand if and how religious variables drive political attitudes, one must distinguish between levels of *religiosity*. Steigenga, for example, finds that it is not type of religion, but religious practice and intensity that can significantly predict (conservative) political values and (high) level of respect for authorities. [8] Drawing on survey data from Guatemala and Costa Rica, Steigenga stresses that converts to *pentecostalised* religions [9] are not disinclined to participate in politics *per se*. While they may avoid conflictive activist politics, 'they generally view their political participation as a right and a duty to be expressed primarily at the community level through self-help and volunteerism' (Steigenga 2007: 258).

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[7] See Annis (1987); Berger (2010); Martin (1990, 2002), and Sherman (1987)

[8] See particularly *Politics of the Spirit* (Steigenga 2001). These arguments are developed further in *Conversion of a Continent* (Steigenga and Cleary (eds) 2007).

[9] With 'Pentecostalised religion', Steigenga refers to religious practices and theological beliefs that share an emphasis on spiritual gifts, faith healing and similar (Steigenga 2001; see also section on Pentecostalism below).

In sum, moving beyond the authoritarian–democratic dichotomy, scholars now debate the ways in which religious change interacts with *democratic* development, and the various positions are often rooted in differing conceptions of civil society and its role in young democracies. It is within these debates I seek to place this present research, particularly engaging in the debates on *how* the changes seen and experienced by individuals and communities at the local level result in changes at the central, political level, and *how* these changes are related to the *status quo* of the political regime in question.

Changes in civil society

An increasing body of literature argues that since many people base their social engagement and activism on religious practices and resources, there is a need to include a religious dimension to the study of civil society, particularly for analysing *how* and *where* people practise their citizenship (Rubin et al. 2014:11). In Guatemala, as throughout the whole Latin American region, involvement in Protestant and especially Pentecostal churches has been found to represent a type of interaction and a form of participation that can potentially affect the personal skills and features that individuals bring into political life. In particular, it is stressed how the emphasis on Bible study and the widespread practice of organised reading groups serve to improve literacy skills and encourage believers to pursue education. In addition, members of these churches are encouraged to attend courses in matters such as leadership, self-discipline, financial management, and marriage counselling (Bjune 2012; O'Neill 2010a, 2011; Steigenga 1994: 167–168; *personal observations*). For many, such activities are their first experience of any sort of voluntary association.

These civic experiences have been analysed within or with reference to the broader literature on *social capital*.[10] Social capital is commonly understood as a set of

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[10] See for example Fonseca (2008); Lehman (2007), and Levine (2012)

'moral resources' that derive from social networks and lead to increased cooperation and interpersonal trust (Smidt 2003: 4; Putnam 2000).[11] Social capital as a theoretical perspective is held to originate in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977), further developed by James Coleman (1988, 1990), and popularised by the seminal works of Robert D. Putnam (1993, 2000).[12] This literature argues that the level of social capital has significant political consequences, for the populace and for the government. Everyday practices of participation in associational life generate trust in one's fellow citizens and provide civic training that in turn promotes political participation and engagement (Putnam 2000). Ever since de Tocqueville's classic description of associational participation in the United States, civic engagement has been considered a core foundation of democracy in America (Almond and Verba 1963; de Tocqueville 2003 [1835]). Numerous studies also stress how religious institutions generate *more* social capital than any other institutions, a finding that have been described as so widespread that it has become an 'academic cliché' (Coleman 2003: 33).[13] Several authors have developed the argument further, holding that religious institutions have considerable *democratic* potential, especially as regards the civic skills and interpersonal trust that religious institutions generate (Coleman 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Smidt 2003).[14]

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[11] The literature on social capital thus postulates that the norms of trust and reciprocity arise out of our social networks (Putnam and Campbell 2010: 527).

[12] For a thorough presentation of the trajectory of the literature on social capital, see Putnam's introductory chapter in *Bowling Alone* (Putnam 2000). Here, Putnam (p.19) claims that the term 'social capital' was invented and reinvented at least six times in the course of the 20th century, first appearing in the writings of the practical reformer and state supervisor of rural schools L.J. Hanifan (1916).

[13] See also Putnam (1993, 2000); Putnam and Campbell (2010); Smidt (2003); Verba et al. (1995); and Wuhtnow (2003)

[14] The steadily growing literature on religion and social capital (primarily in the United States) has led to more nuanced analyses, identifying various dimensions along which the generation and trust, cooperation, and 'civicness' will vary: the size of the church or the religious group (Coleman 2003); the structure and nature of the leadership (Putnam 1993); theology and biblical interpretations of the role in society (Wuhtnow 1994); and the type of voluntary work organised by the church, and for whom (Campbell and Yonish 2003).

Most relevant for this thesis is how this framework has been employed to analyse the impact of the social programmes organised by Protestant churches in Latin America – what many refer to as *obra social,* such as literacy campaigns, study groups, and rehabilitation programmes (Fonseca 2008:202–204).[15] These have been found to provide civic training for participants (volunteers from the church and these programmes' targeted populations), foster trust, and facilitate general political participation and engagement. Others have taken a more critical approach, emphasising how the extent to which churches are arenas for creating social capital depends on the types of leadership and the relations of authority within the church (Levine 2012: 152–153). Further, it is also considered important to analyse the character of the social programmes organised by the church, in particular the degree of inclusiveness practised towards non-practitioners of Protestantism.[16] As observed by Putnam, many Evangelical churches may very well increase the social capital of their own members, but without this spilling over the tight boundaries between believers and non-believers (Putnam 2000:77, see also Lehman 2007: 22). The analytical distinction between *bridging* and *bonding* social capital can serve to identify this point. The latter refers to the consequences of homogeneous and exclusive groups that can create strong in-group loyalty as well as out-group antagonism, such as religious brotherhoods. *Bridging,* on the other hand, refers to the effect of more outward-looking groups that encompass people from diverse social and cultural cleavages – such as youth groups, and ecumenical religious organisations (Putnam 2000: 22–23). Putnam emphasises that bridging and bonding should not be treated as an either/or phenomenon: many groups simultaneously promote bonding amongst their members (for example faith or race), and bridge other dimensions (for example class or

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[15] Fonseca finds that that evangelical churches function as expected from the social capital perspective: they foster participation in local associational life, and contribute greatly to the generation of trust among members (Fonseca 2008:203).

[16] In Chapter 7 these assumptions will be discussed further in reflecting on the potential political impact of the widespread 'evangelical social work' in Guatemala.

neighbourhoods) (Putnam 2000: 23).[17] In this thesis, these concepts are not an explicit part of the framework, however the distinction between including versus excluding rhetoric and practices is highly relevant for the discussion of the types of 'evangelical service provision' (see below), their methods, and the conditions set for receiving such services. These dimensions are also relevant for the analysis of the political activities and the political alliances entered into by evangelical representatives in national politics, such as the evangelical organised pro-life and pro-family campaigning.[18]

Diversity versus unity

In the case of Guatemala, one of the cleavages that several authors expect to be 'bridged' as a result of the growth of Protestantism is the one dividing the country's many indigenous groups and the *ladinos*[19] (see for example Cleary and Steigenga 2004; Garrard-Burnett 2004; and Samson 2007). Of the Latin American countries, Guatemala has the second highest proportion of indigenous people: roughly 50–60 per cent of the population are considered to belong to one of Guatemala's 24 indigenous groups (Cleary and Steigenga 2004:5).[20] As noted in the introductory chapter, this ethnic and cultural diversity has never been reflected in the political organisation of the country: the Guatemalan polity has remained characterised by severe inequality and exclusion along ethnic and cultural lines (Brett 2011; Casaús 2010b; Escobar

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[17] Putnam stresses that social capital, like any other capital, can also be directed 'toward malevolent, antisocial purposes', referring to such negative consequences as sectarianism and corruption (Putnam 2000: 22).

[18] See Chapters 5 and 6 for empirical examples, and discussion in Chapter 7

[19] In Guatemala the term *ladino* refers to Spanish-speaking Guatemalans, most often *mestizos* (people of mixed European-indigenous decent), but also applied to 'acculturated indigenous people' (Garrard-Burnett 2004: 127). The term is mostly used to distinguish between indigenous and non-indigenous parts of the population (Samson 2001: 95n13).

[20] These estimates vary greatly, from around 40 to more than 60 per cent, depending on definitions and categories. See the discussion in Brett (2006: 3-4).

2011; UNDP 2010).[21] As many Mayas and members of other indigenous groups have converted to variants of Protestantism, it has been argued that this has in itself had a positive effect on the empowerment of indigenous peoples, as the egalitarian and *ad hoc* structures of Protestant churches has allowed for indigenous leadership within the churches (Samson 2007). The emphasis on teaching reading and writing skills and other education- and health-related services associated with these churches are also held to have benefited many indigenous communities in areas remote from the limited reach of state services (see also Chapter 6). However, in this thesis I place emphasis on how Protestant theology, and particularly the *Pentecostal* variant (see below) and its dualist worldview, has also been used to *protest* against intercultural policies and practices, with arguments that Mayan traditional ceremonies and practices are hedonistic and backward, and something to be discarded – both for the individual, and the nation as a whole (Bjune 2012; Caballeros 2003; Garrard-Burnett 2004). From that perspective, evangelical conversion is explicitly referred to as a change *from* Mayan and Catholic traditions *to* evangelical Christianity.[22] On the issue of inclusion/exclusion, my analysis will focus on this polemic of contrasting the 'Christian' and 'evangelical' with the 'Mayan' and 'traditional', and in Chapters 4 and 5 I provide examples of how evangelical pastors and organisations have employed Biblically-based rhetoric for political purposes, stressing the 'right' and the 'wrong' way of living and of being Guatemalan.

Violence and insecurity

One dimension along which the position and impact of religion and Protestantism in Latin American civil societies has recently been analysed is the churches' position in

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[21] For example, the percentage of indigenous peoples living in conditions of extreme poverty is 26.5, compared to 7.4 for the non-indigenous populations. This imbalance between the indigenous and non-indigenous is reflected in all indicators, including education, literacy, malnutrition and life expectancy (Escobar 2011; UNDP 2010: 247).

[22] For more nuanced presentations on the variety within 'Mayan Protestantism' see in particular Samson (2007), and Garrard-Burnett (2004)

people's struggle with violence, crime, insecurity, and exclusion. Various research projects aim at developing empirical and theoretical understandings of the work of churches, organisations, and individuals concerned about the precarious situations of the communities of which they are a part.[23] At the institutional level, findings indicate that churches and religious organisations play various and important roles, offering spiritual and physical shelter, feelings of hope and belonging for people and communities shattered by violence and crime, as well as providing assistance with rehabilitation, to mention a few points (Brenneman 2012, 2014; Levine 2012; O'Neill 2015; Wolseth 2011).[24] The line of argument used in this thesis will give resonance to such findings and arguments in the sense that I place importance on the role Protestant churches play in precarious situations. However, activities such as rehabilitation programmes and 'exit programmes' for gang members will be analysed not only in terms of what they mean for the users and local communities, but also what their presence signifies for the Guatemalan state.

Despite the considerable increase in scholarly focus, some ambiguities remain as to *how* the massive conversion to Protestantism has affected politics at the central level. This is related to the disciplinary diversity by which Protestantism, Protestants, and the Protestant churches have been approached as a research subject, and a general lack of attention to *how* the state has related to these changes. As pointed out by Steigenga (1994, 2007), the ways in which the Protestant churches impact civil society, and thereby politics, must be analysed in light of the specific political system of which they are a part, and not solely considered as resulting from practices, beliefs, and relationships on the ground. The analytical framework of this thesis has been developed with the aim of capturing this *interaction* between these different levels of analysis, the local and the central. This, I argue, distinguishes my research from the

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[23] Here I refer specifically to the research projects 'Religious responses to violence' organised at the American University (2012-2013), and 'Religion, Social Movements, and Zones of Crisis in the Americas' at Boston University (2010-2013).

[24] See also 'Lived Religion and Lived Citizenship in Latin America's Zones of Crisis', the special issue of *Latin American Research Review* (2014).

above and serves to fill an analytical lacuna in the study of the growth of Protestantism in Guatemala and in the region.

The analytical framework

In line with several of the studies presented above, the primary objective of this thesis is to investigate if and how the sharp growth of Protestantism has had political implications in Guatemala. In developing the analytical framework for this purpose, a central concern has been to enable the analysis of *how* the changes seen at the local level (resulting from the growth of Protestantism) are reflected in politics at the central level.

Combining two levels of analysis

In this thesis I distinguish between 'the central' and 'the local' as two levels of analysis. 'The central' refers to political arenas seen as forming part of Guatemala's central decision-making processes – such as the branches of government, the judiciary and other organs where national politics is practised, including informal and illicit structures. Geographically, these are for the most part situated in Guatemala City. With 'the local' I refer to arenas and practices that are a part of people's everyday lives – such as neighbourhoods, schools, and religious and non-religious organisations and activities. This distinction is primarily a spatial one; I am not making a distinction between political and non-political. On the contrary, I have been concerned with departing from a common held analytical perspective that exclusively focus on political institutions when considering what is political and what is political impact.

The majority of the studies on religion and religious change in Guatemala build on empirical material solely from what I here refer to as the local level, and as indicated above, I find that the ways in which these findings relate to the central level are generally underdeveloped and sometimes ignored. In my view, it is precisely the

interaction between these two levels that is essential for identifying and understanding the political impact of the growth of Protestantism. As will be shown this is particularly salient in the case of Guatemala, where practices, activities and institutions at both the central and the local level are, despite the great diversity, referred to by the same name, *evangelicals.* In order to understand the political presence of the evangelical church, its cooperation with the state, and the overall impact on Guatemalan politics, this must therefore be seen in relation to the various roles and positions held by the thousands of evangelical churches at the local level throughout the county.

To a certain extent, the structure of the thesis reflects the analytical distinction between the central and the local; in Chapter 4, I present the historical trajectory of how the evangelical church has developed, from being present first and foremost at the local level, to establishing a presence in various political arenas at the central level; in Chapter 5, I focus on the presence of evangelical representatives and institutions in political arenas at the central level in contemporary Guatemala, and in Chapter 6, I describe the widespread presence of evangelical churches, organisations, and individuals at the local level. However, the assumption that these two levels interact and must be analysed accordingly characterises the structuring and analyses in all chapters, particularly in the way church relations to the state are included as a dimension throughout the thesis. In Chapter 7 the relationship with the state can thereby be assessed in greater detail, making possible an analysis of the overall political impact of the increased presence of the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics.

Conceptualising Protestantism as 'The evangelical church'

The emphasis on combining the two levels of analysis is closely related to this thesis' conceptualisation of Protestantism, a conceptualisation intended to capture how Protestants and Protestant churches of all variants, at central and local levels, are generally referred to by one name in Guatemala: 'Evangelicals'.

Upon embarking on a study of the role of Protestantism in Latin America, scholars typically bring up a range of theological, historical, and linguistic debates in order to define and conceptualise their research subjects, and considerable emphasis is placed on the remarkable demographic and socio-economic diversity of the group of people who convert from Catholicism to some variant of Protestantism. Some researchers stress the theological differences, distinguishing between for example Pentecostal and historical/ mainland Protestants (Lende 2015; Martin 2002; Schäfer 2011), whereas others argue that a religion and religious adherence in the region is better categorised according to how it is *practised*, finding that religious intensity better distinguishes 'religious' people than does denomination (Cleary 2011; Gill 2004; Steigenga 2001).[25] Some researchers also include spatial dimensions, such as Robert Brenneman's term 'barrio evangelicals' referring to the small, local churches situated on 'every corner' in poor neighbourhoods in Central America (Brenneman 2012). These are only some of the many ways of categorising the myriad of Protestant churches across the Latin American region. However, when it comes to *naming* the research subjects, it is common to settle on the terms 'evangelicals' and 'evangelical churches', and to stress that this is a simplistic conceptualisation, but in line with what the majority of these believers call themselves (Brenneman 2012; Brusco 2010; Freston 2008; Levine 2012; O'Neill 2010a; Stoll 1994).

How religion is spoken of

The task of defining and conceptualising religions is subject to large, ongoing epistemological debates within the discipline of religious studies. There are considerable disagreements and debates concerning what religion *is*, what it *does*, and what it *means* – but these have, according to Michael Bergunder (2014: 247) yet to produce any conclusive results. In this thesis, I examine religion along the lines of the research traditions that analyse religion literally and practically, seeking to understand

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[25] Authors such as Martin Lindhardt and colleagues have opted for a combination of the two, referring to the research subjects as 'Pentecostal charismatic Christians' (Lindhardt (ed.) 2011)

how it is being used and what this use means in a certain context.[26] By placing the analytical focus on the *name* of the religion and how this is employed, rather than focusing on theological and practical variation, this approach resembles a 'discursive definition' of a religion. This kind of conceptualisation opens for analysis of not only the name, but also the *naming*, and identifying the formation of a group of individuals under one particular name (Bergunder 2014: 265–266).[27] Similarly, Robert J. Whutnow (2011) argues for the need to 'take talk seriously' when studying religion and the religious. Seeing the religious as social practice, he holds that identifying 'the talk' of a certain religious group will also shed light on how the religious is spoken of in other forums, such as in national politics, by the religious group themselves, and by others. I relate to this perspective particularly by including the internal rhetoric in the religious communities as an important field of study, in order to better identify and understand how the Protestant churches are spoken of and represented in the public sphere as well as in political arenas.

What is meant by the 'evangelical church?

Taking into account and respecting the ways in which the terms the 'evangelical church' and 'evangelicals' are used in the Guatemalan context today is also a central concern for this research. In this thesis, 'evangelicals' will refer to the entire population of Protestants, notwithstanding the numerous different Protestant denominations found in Guatemala. However, here this is not merely a 'simplistic' solution for want of a better concept: I find great analytical advantages in analysing and employing the terminology that is used in the private and public spheres of Guatemala. First, by using the terms 'evangelicals' and 'evangelical church' I adopt the naming that is most common in the *ordinary language* of most Guatemalans;

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[26] See for example Bergunder (2010 and 2014).

[27] Bergunder argues that this approach is also a means to avoid siding with theologically normative definitions, which he refers to as the 'pitfalls of other normative and analytical definitions' (Bergunder 2010: 53).

believers and non-believers alike use the word 'evangelical' when speaking about any variant of Protestantism (Bjune 2012; Brenneman 2012; Freston 2008; O'Neill 2010a). Throughout the thesis I refer to various national surveys and polls on topics such as institutional trust and perceptions of insecurity, and in these, religious adherence is generally operationalised as Catholic, Evangelical or non-believer.[28] Second, my use of the concept is also meant to reflect how all Protestant churches and Protestants are spoken of in the Guatemalan *polity*. Politicians and state officials talk of 'evangelicals' as if they were *one* homogeneous group, and use 'the evangelical church' in the singular, in the same manner as one refers to 'the Catholic Church'.[29] Such use is also reflected in the national media, which typically employ the terms *evangélicos* and *la iglesia evangélica* in referring to *all* non-Catholic denominations. Headlines such as 'evangelicals pray for peace', and 'political candidates responds to the evangelical community' are used without specifying denomination or theological differences (*Prensa Libre* 2012c, 2015b). As such, this conceptualisation is based on what is *said* about a particular phenomenon, rather than striving to identify an essence of the phenomenon in itself.

The ways in which such diverse groups and such different activities are referred to by the *same name*, in civil and in political society, is hence a central element of this thesis. Even though this insight can be regarded as 'conventional wisdom' in the field of study, here the use of 'the evangelical church' has served analytical purposes of its own. First and foremost, it has provoked and enabled me to take into consideration the ways in which the roles and positions of the entities referred to as 'the evangelical church' at the local level affect the presence and political relevance of 'the evangelical church' as participant in political arenas at the central level. Second, and closely related, this insight has led the analytical lens towards the Evangelical Alliance of

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[28] Of the international polls and reports referred to in this thesis, it is worth mentioning that the Pew Research Center's study on religion in the Americas (2014) categorises religious adherence as Catholics, Protestants, and non-affiliated.

[29] A recent example (September 2015) is the resignation letter of President Otto Pérez Molina in which he expresses gratitude for the prayers by 'la Iglesia Católica' and 'la Iglesia Evangélica' (letter published in *Plaza Pública* 3 September 2015)

Guatemala ('la Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala', AEG), the organisation seen as the main political representative of this 'constructed' group.[30]

Who are 'the evangelicals'?

Jointly, Guatemala's Protestant population counts roughly 40 per cent of the general population (Azpuru 2014: 222; Latinobarómetro 2014; *Prensa Libre* 2014a), who belong to more than 25 000 *different* churches (Morales, interview 2012).[31] A short drive from one part of Guatemala City to another is all it takes to note the spectacular differences between these churches and their member bases. Whereas some churches take the form of garages filled with little else than plastic chairs, others are like stadiums or shopping malls, with grandiose auditoriums and multilevel car parks, even heliports. All of these visibly very different entities are referred to as 'evangelical churches'. Even though the heterogeneity of this group of believers is a central point in this thesis, it is also important to note that there are some characteristics shared by most evangelicals – there exists a certain form of family resemblance within the concept of 'evangelicals'.[32]

Pentecostals

By far the great majority of the churches and individuals referred to as 'evangelicals' are, by theological definition, Pentecostals.[33] *Pentecostalism* has its origins in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. Most researchers consider the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 in Los Angeles to be the cradle of this religious movement,

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[30] Several authors have elaborated on how 'Evangelicals' and 'Pentecostals' should be seen as constructed categories, see for example Elizabeth Brusco's discussion on 'hypothetical families' (2010) and Gina Lende's use of Pentecostals in Guatemala as an 'imagined community' (2015).

[31] According to estimates by the AEG, the total number of evangelical churches (many of which belong to the same 'branches') has reached 40 000 (*Protestante Digital* 2015)

[32] By 'family resemblance' I refer to the expression as used by Wittgenstein and others when conducting 'ordinary language analyses' (see Chapter 3).

[33] According to the Pew Research Center, 11 per cent claim adherence to a non-evangelical Protestant church, and 30 per cent to an 'evangelical or Pentecostal' church (Pew Research Center 2014).

which is today one of the main branches of Christianity (Anderson et al. 2010:1). Globally, roughly 500 million people are believed to adhere to Pentecostalism, or roughly 25 per cent of the world's Christians (Anderson et al. 2010:1; Pew Research Center 2006:3; Schäfer 2009:533).[34] Some Pentecostal churches are large enterprises with branches across the globe, such as the 'Assemblies of God' and the 'Universal Kingdom of God', but in general, a key characteristic of Pentecostal churches is their denominational independence and overall lack of organisational structure (Aasmundsen 2013; Anderson et al. 2010; Garrard-Burnett 2012; Schäfer 2009). Pentecostalism is also well-established as a research topic in its own right, expanding along with its worldwide growth.[35]

As a religious denomination or grouping, *Pentecostalism* is characterised by its focus on the believer's personal relationship with the divine, and with the Holy Spirit in particular.[36] Great emphasis is placed on evangelisation, mission, and the personal conversion, the latter often described as being 'born again.' Being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' is a central element in Pentecostal practice, as manifested through speaking in tongues and ecstatic dancing, crying, and laughing (Anderson 2010: 13–29). Pentecostal pastors typically lead their congregations in a highly charismatic and participatory manner, and many of them practise 'divine healing' (Steigenga 2001:8). However, recent studies have shown that such 'pentecostal practice' is not exclusive to Pentecostal churches; Catholic churches have increasingly adopted certain elements of this practice, which is by some referred to the 'pentecostalisation of faith.' These findings have led scholars to distinguish between charismatic and non-charismatic churches, which may be Protestant or Catholic (Gooren 2010; Martin 1990; Steigenga

[34] In some reports, such as the Pew Research Center's *Global Christianity* (2011) it is emphasised that this figure includes 'Pentecostals' and 'Charismatic Christians'. See details on this distinction below.

[35] See for example Network of Global Pentecostal studies (glopent.net), and the peer-reviewed journals *Pneuma* and *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*

[36] The name 'Pentecostalism' refers to the biblical description of the apostles' receiving of the Holy Spirit during the *pentecost*, enabling them to speak the languages of the world. On Pentecostalism as a research subject, see Allan Anderson's 'Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions' (in Anderson et al. 2010: 13–29), Pew Research Center (2006); and Robbins (2010)

2001; Thorsen 2012).[37] For the case of Guatemala, many observers have, in addition, adopted the term *Neo*pentecostal to distinguish the phenomenon of Pentecostal, mostly urban congregations, attended first and foremost by the upper classes, with strong elements of the 'prosperity gospel' in the sermons (see for example Cantón Delgado 1998; Garrard Burnett 2010, 2012; and Sanchíz Ochóa 1998).[38] Again, for the purpose of this analysis it is important to note that even though the majority of Guatemalan Protestants adhere to what can be defined as Pentecostal churches, the term 'Pentecostalism' is not common in ordinary speech in Guatemala.

Diverse and united

In terms of socio-economic profile, Protestantism used to be heavily represented among the poor and deprived segments of Guatemala's population, but today there are few significant findings to indicate that evangelicals are poorer than Catholics (Pew Research Center 2006, 2014). Rather, like Catholics, 'evangelicals' are found in all segments of society, in all parts of the country; they are as educated as Catholics, and they are found across the entire political spectrum (Azpuru 2012; Pew Research Center 2014).[39] This apparent 'no effect' is one reason why scholars hesitate to operate with 'evangelical' as an identity or variable in analyses of Guatemalan politics. Closer examination, however, reveals clear behavioural and attitudinal factors that distinguish Guatemalan evangelicals from Catholics and non-affiliated. First, evangelicals are more conservative than Catholics; they are more likely than Catholics to say that abortion should be illegal in all or most circumstances, and they oppose same-sex marriage. Evangelicals are also more likely than Catholics to consider alcohol,

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[37] The steadily growing charismatic movement within the Catholic Church is characterised by 'pentecostalised' practices like faith healing, spiritual gifts, and Bible study (Lende 2015: 18; Steigenga 2001:44; Thorsen 2012:38).

[38] Others place emphasis on the *theological* base of the religious groups, distinguishing between *premillennialists* and *postmillennialists*, often aimed at analysing differing attitudes towards seeking political power, and their overall participation in society (See for example Sanchíz Ochoa 1998 and García-Ruiz 1999).

[39] In the Pew Research Center's study (2014), the categorisation of religious adherence is done as follows: Catholics, Protestants, and non-affiliated. For the purpose of this analysis, I use the term 'evangelicals' in referring to '*Protestants',* following the conceptualisation outlined above.

divorce, and birth control as immoral (Pew Research Center 2014: 69). Second, evangelicals are generally found to show a deeper religious commitment than Catholics; they attend religious services on a more frequent basis, and engage more in scripture study groups (Pew Research Center 2014: 48).[40] Jointly then, evangelicals are both characterised by considerable demographic and geographic diversity, and an apparent coherence as regards values and level of religiosity. These latter resemblances may form part of the explanations for why all these different Protestants are referred to by the one term, *evangelicals*.

The Evangelical church as a political factor

In the scholarship on religious change in Latin America in general and in Guatemala in particular, it is widely considered that the heterogeneity of the phenomenon makes it problematic if not impossible to consider this as *one single* factor in politics. However, in this thesis I turn the argumentation around, suggesting that this heterogeneity of the universe of evangelicals and their churches can rather be seen as part of the *explanation* for the political position the 'evangelical church' holds in contemporary Guatemala. In the paragraphs above I have outlined how I consider the 'evangelical church' to be a constructed, rhetorical concept, continuously upheld by the way members of political and civil society make use of it. Moreover, the 'evangelical church' has formal and informal representation in the Guatemalan polity, to which both politicians and the media relate. For Guatemalan politicians, the sheer *numbers* of those referred to as evangelicals indicate a potential electorate from which they can seek support, even without confirmation of their influence and homogeneity in terms of political orientation (García-Ruíz and Michel 2011:421). Further, the 'evangelical church' is repeatedly rated as the most trusted institution in Guatemala, and in this thesis I suggest that this alone makes it advantageous for state officials and politicians

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[40] The way Evangelicals are generally found to show a deeper religious commitment than their Catholic counterparts, likely reflects how a high number of them have actively sought conversion in adult age.

to refer to and engage with representatives of this 'evangelical church' without further denominational specification, as if it were *one* factor. In the subsequent chapters I examine this 'rhetorical' presence in relation to the *actual* presence of representatives of the evangelical church on political arenas. Today, the AEG is by far the most visible one, and I will show how this entity both acts and is treated as if representing the entire group of six million people who adhere to some variant of Protestantism (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Analysing the political presence of 'the evangelical church'

Summing up the previous section, I argue that the rise in the proportion of Protestants in the population has meant an increased presence of 'the evangelical church' in Guatemala's political arenas, both in rhetoric and with formal and informal representation. In order to analyse the potential power embedded in this presence and the overall impact on Guatemalan politics I draw on theory perspectives that allow a focus on *how* power is exercised, *where*, and *through whom*. Specifically, the Foucauldian governmentality perspective on political power as applied by scholars such as Neumann and Sending (2010) and Garland (1997) will enable me to identify the roles and position of the evangelical church vis-à-vis the Guatemalan state, and to analyse the evangelical church as a potential source of legitimacy and authority.

Whereas the state has been ascribed an important role in explaining the *growth* of Protestantism in Guatemala, in much of the current literature concerned with analysing the political effects of the growth of Protestantism, the state as arena of investigation is at best characterised by its absence. In fact, in some studies the *absence* of the state has in itself been included, directly or indirectly, as an explanatory factor for the growth and scope of the activities of evangelical churches in local communities (see for example Brenneman 2012 and O'Neill 2010a, 2015). This thesis is concerned with analysing this perceived absence in more detail, inquiring into the extent to which it is the result of political incapacity, or whether it might also be the result of a deliberate strategy of letting non-state actors fulfil the state's duties towards

the citizenry. This line of research accords to the state a more active role in regard to the political effect of the growth of Protestantism; I include the state both as a lens through which to understand the political position for the evangelical church, and as an arena for investigation.

In order to identify the mechanisms by which the state and the evangelical church relate and interact and the power relations therein, I place particular emphasis on the roles of evangelical churches and organisations as *non-state* actors that operate both in the absence of the state, and in direct cooperation with it.

Power relations in state–non-state cooperation

Debates on how to analyse the political power of non-state actors vis-à-vis the state have been long and are still ongoing. Responding to the observable changes in the structures of authority in political organisation worldwide in the 1990s, the 'governance perspective' was developed and progressively applied to capture the changes in *de facto* political power relations in modern politics. In brief, this perspective entails recognition of the political agency of non-state actors and of the dispersion of political power and decision-making away from the state as a sole actor (Bekkers et al. 2007; Benz and Papadopoulos 2006; Rosenau 1992, Østensen 2013). However, as pointed out by Sending and Neumann (2006: 652), analyses from this perspective have tended to conclude that increase in the power of non-state actors automatically leads to a *decrease* in the power of the state. Criticising this 'zero-sum conception of power', Sending and Neumann argue that such a conception fails to take into consideration the specific *relations* between the state and non-state actors (Sending and Neumann 2006: 652). Hence, when the analytical task involves grasping the 'thinking and practice' involved in such relations and the power implied in them, I have, in line with these authors, found *governmentality* to be a more applicable concept for the purpose.

The concept of governmentality is primarily associated with Michel Foucault, and was developed as a tool for studying the processes of governing, one that places

the analytical focus on processes rather than institutions (Neumann and Sending 2010: 10). The Foucauldian meaning of 'government' is roughly 'the conduct of conducts', and governmentality as an analytical concept aims at grasping the rationalities and mechanisms that allow the exercise of power in modern societies (Foucault [1978] in Burchell et al. 1991).[41] An analytical focus on governmentality thereby involves considering power as exercised through, not upon, active subjects, and emphasis is put on how governing a certain sector can include a multitude of authorities and shifting alliances (Rose and Miller 1992: 174). Understood as such, 'power is not a matter of imposing a sovereign will, but instead a process of enlisting the cooperation of chains of actors who 'translate' power from one locale to another' (Garland 1997:182). In the study of evangelicals and evangelical churches in Guatemala and Latin America, the governmentality perspective has been employed to analyse the power and influence of the evangelical churches by how they govern their members, addressing the mechanisms and strategies that affect the lives of the members of the congregations in question.[42] In this thesis, the governmentality perspective is included as an 'optic for analysis' that serves to identify the ways in which the evangelical church *governs* certain processes and policy areas, and how this role affects the relationship with the state, and the state itself. Emphasis will be placed on identifying how the evangelical presence in certain policy sectors has become 'defined and considered as appropriate and normal' and to analyse the power relations that are implicated in these processes (Neumann and Sending 2010: 10).

In order to analyse how the evangelical church exercises power, this thesis also draws on related Foucault-inspired studies such as Nikolas Rose's *Governing the Soul*

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[41] Foucault's lecture 'Governmentality' given at Collège de France in 1978, is available in English in *The Foucault Effect, Studies in Governmentality* (Burchell et al. (eds) 1991). The governmentality perspective has since Foucault's initial analysis been developed in several directions. Key texts include *The Foucault Effect* by Graham Burchell et al. (1991), *Governing the Soul* by Nikolas Rose (1999), and 'Political Power Beyond the State' by Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller (1992). In *Governing the Global Polity,* Neumann and Sending (2010) provide a good introduction to governmentality as an analytical perspective (chapter 1).

[42] See in particular Garmany 2010 and O'Neill 2010a, 2010b.

(1999). Introducing his approach, Rose argues that *authority* is an essential dimension along which studies of power and 'government' should be conducted. He encourages researchers to investigate the 'constitution of particular personages or attributes of authority' (Rose 1999:xi), and argues that the emergence of certain kinds of *expertise* should be considered a mode of authority, such as medical professionals, social workers, experts on child development, and therapists. Rose also highlights the need to identify and analyse the 'locales' in which such authority is created and exercised.

Arenas, mechanisms, and relationships

Incorporating these perspectives on political power enables the thesis to address how power is being exercised, through which mechanisms, in which arenas ('locales'), and by whom: who and what are the authorities in the particular area under study, and how did they become so? Approaching these research questions, in the first part of the analysis (Chapter 4) I focus on the historical trajectory of the political presence and position of the 'evangelical church', considering this *in relation to* the actions and reactions of the Guatemalan state. I analyse specific historical moments in Guatemalan political *history* as a way of explaining the presence and power of the 'evangelical church' in certain sectors *today*. As stressed by Foucault and others after him, in looking backwards in time when assessing a certain power relation or political position of today, the motivation is not to tell a story of the past or establish the historical essence of a certain concept or subject – rather the concern is to identify what has been instrumental for forming the present.[43] Garland argues that this 'genealogic approach' is a way of problematising the present 'by revealing the power relations upon which it depends and the contingent processes that have brought it into being' (Garland 2014: 372). In the process I will examine if and to what extent the presence of the

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[43] Foucault referred to this strategy of enquiry as 'genealogical analyses', mainly associated with his later writings, in particular the analysis of the prison in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). See also Rose's suggested dimensions for analysing 'the history of the present', in *Governing the Soul* (1999: xi-xii). Here it is also relevant to note that Michael Bergunder's approach to studying religion as a name (see above) includes investigating the connections between its contemporary and its historical use (see Bergunder 2014).

evangelical church has been *normalised* as relevant actor and participant in certain sectors in Guatemalan politics and society.

The above-mentioned research questions and the perspectives of power and power relations they reflect have also been central for the development of the two-level approach. I use Rose's conceptualisation of 'locales' (here: 'arenas') as an analytical key for identifying the evangelical presence in different sectors, distinguishing between arenas at the local and the central levels. In order to explore if and how this presence holds a potential for authority and political power, I address the concept *expertise* as a mode of authority. This opens for analysing the evangelical church as an authority not only in fields traditionally reserved for religious entities, but also in 'secular' fields such as education, health and citizen security, based on their broad experience in providing basic services to local communities.

Providing services

To fully grasp the potential power of the presence and social programmes of evangelical churches and organisations at the local level, the analysis must take into consideration how the state has reacted and related to these, as well as to what extent the state's own services have been affected. For the purpose of this analysis I conceptualise the social programmes of evangelical churches at the local level as 'service provision', developed in line with the research perspectives of Christian Lund and colleagues (2007). In *Twilight Institutions* (2007) these authors have explored situations when government institutions fail to rule and identified how 'other institutions of public authority emerge' (Lund 2007: 2). For contexts such as the Guatemalan it is therefore necessary to take into consideration that public services do not necessarily stem from one single source (the state), but involves a number of 'twilight institutions': actors that are not the state, but that perform public services.[44]

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[44] Lund and colleagues use 'twilight' to refer to the blurred borders between the state and the non-state; 'institutions that are hard to distinguish and discern' (Lund 2007:1n1).

The analytical task should thereby be to 'focus on how particular issues (security, justice, development, taxation, and others) are governed, and to identify which actors are engaged in them (Lund 2007: 10).[45] Resonating with Roses' perspective then, Lund and colleagues argue that the role of providing people with basic goods and services can provide non-state actors with legitimacy as well as authority within the particular policy area in which they operate (Lund (ed.) 2007).

Evangelical service provision

Conceptualising the evangelical social programmes at the local level as service provision makes possible a more comprehensive analysis of how these programmes work, both vis-à-vis the people and vis-à-vis the Guatemalan state. In Chapter 6, I present three categories of service provision delivered by evangelical churches and organisations: i) in the absence of the state; ii) cooperating with the state, and iii) alternatives to the state. In developing this categorisation, I have focused on the relationship with the state and its services, as well as the kind of services delivered, and to which socio-economic strata they cater (see Table 1 in Chapter 6). The assessment of these categories, with empirical examples, constitutes an essential part of the material upon which I base the analysis of the overall *impact* of the evangelical presence in politics in Chapter 7. For example I explore how these services have been received and reacted upon by the state, and the relationship between the expansion of these services and the continued low coverage of public services.

The relationship with the Guatemalan state

In the final part of the thesis, I include the role of the Guatemalan state in a more direct manner, identifying if and how the political presence of the evangelical church has affected and even been advantageous for the state. I particularly examine how Guatemalan state officials have embraced the cooperation – and co-appearance – with

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[45] When 'government institutions fail to rule and other institutions of public authority emerge' (Lund 2007: 2)

cooperated with evangelical churches, organisations and leaders. Working on the broader Latin American context, Anthony Gill (1998) has applied similar perspectives in his analyses of the variation in church–state relations in the region, identifying several mechanisms that serve this part of my thesis well.[46] Gill finds church–state cooperation in Latin America has since long taken the form of a relationship in which 'religious legitimation [is being] exchanged for financial resources and exclusive religious domination' (Gill 1998:61). Gill proposes the following line of arguments: the state is interested in minimising its own costs of ruling and securing a compliant population; ideology is the least expensive methods of coercion and obtaining citizen compliance; and churches specialise in the production of ideological norms and values (Gill 1998:49–54).[47] He then expects legitimacy to be central for the state's incentives for cooperating with the church. In this thesis, I am also concerned with examining the extent to which the Guatemalan state has relied on the evangelical church as a *legitimising factor*, distinguishing between the legitimacy sought obtained by state actors by being associated with the evangelical church (here: 'associative legitimacy') and the attempts at legitimise own policies and decision making processes (here: 'output legitimacy') (discussed in Chapter 7).

For the analysis of the relationship between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state I rely on valuable contributions by authors such as Virginia Garrard-Burnett (1998, 2010), Veronika Melander (1999), and Timothy Steigenga (1994, 2001). Even though primarily concerned with exploring how the relationship with the state may have affected the *growth* of Protestantism in Guatemala, these authors

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[46] Gill's perspective on the position of the church(es) in politics and society is in line with the theory of 'religious economy.' His primary concern is the relationship between the state and the *Catholic Church*, and the variation in how the Catholic Church related to the political regimes of the 1960s–1980. He sees all changes in the religio-political relationship as motivated by the churches' desire to supply the population with their brand of religion. Further, Gill specifies that his analysis is based on the position of the Catholic Church as the dominant religion. The findings presented in this thesis indicate that there are clear similarities in the way the Guatemalan state has related to the evangelical church.

[47] Gill also presents the church's incentives for cooperating with the state, especially to 'maximise parishioners and resources' (Gill 1998: 55).

provide essential analyses of the rationales behind the development of the relationship, as well as the central actors involved. Directly addressing the state's incentives and strategies for cooperating with Protestant churches, Steigenga (1994) adopts Joel Migdal's theoretical framework of 'strong societies and weak states' (Migdal 1988), and frames Protestant churches and organisations as providers of survival strategies for large sectors of the population, particularly during the civil war. Steigenga suggests that the incorporation of Protestant churches should be seen as a strategy to increase the level of *social control* (Steigenga 1994: 158). My analysis of the relationship between the Guatemalan state and the evangelical church will be based on the presumptions described above, that the increase in the presence and the powers of the evangelical church does not imply an *ipso facto* decrease of the powers of the state (Neumann and Sending 2010: 5). Rather, I will present mechanisms of this relationship that I argue have served to provide the Guatemalan state with a new pillar on which to rest its political project. From this perspective I will argue that even though the evangelical church has reached positions from which it has defined, regulated, and implemented policies, these practices do not appear to have altered the *status quo* in the policy sector in question.

Concluding remarks

The rapid growth of Protestantism in Latin America in general, and in Guatemala in particular, has inspired numerous researchers to investigate the reasons and outcomes of the large-scale changes in the religious sphere. In this chapter I have explored some central theoretical perspectives and expectations as to how religious change holds political consequences. I find that most scholars in the field now share the perception that Protestantism is a highly heterogeneous phenomenon, which is experienced and practised very differently from individual to individual, and from context to context, which thus prevents any generalised conclusions as to its 'effect'. Notwithstanding, I find that the literature is also characterised by widespread expectations as to how conversion to Protestantism *does* affect the life of the convert to the extent that it will

also influence their political behaviour. What is less theoretically developed is how these assumed changes are manifested in politics at the central level. I have pointed to how, in the case of Guatemala, understanding these mechanisms is particularly relevant as the high numbers of Protestant converts would suggest considerable changes in the political status quo. However, Guatemalan politics is by most analysts characterised by its lack of changes. The analytical framework developed for this thesis aims at capturing the relationship between these somewhat contrasting presumptions; the *changes* that have derived from the sharp growth of Protestantism, and the considerable degrees of *continuity* in the Guatemalan political system. The overall ambition of the analytical framework presented here is to enable the investigation of how the religious change in the Guatemalan populace has been received, represented, and reacted upon in political arenas, and particularly by the Guatemalan state. The state is thus included as arena of investigation, and as an active partaker in the trajectory of the political position, power, and influence of the evangelical church, and I hold that this perspective distinguishes my research from much of the literature on the field. In the following chapters I will be distinguishing between the presence of evangelical churches as providers of material and 'spiritual' goods at the local level (for example in neighbourhoods and in schools), and as a political participant at the central level (in political arenas, such as the legislative and the executive). This distinction is based on theoretical expectations on how the roles and authority of non-state actors practised at the local level, affect the position and authority of these actors – and their representatives – at the political level. Rather than considering the heterogeneity characterising the evangelical churches and individuals as a hindrance for the analysis, I here expect this same heterogeneity to be the key to understanding the position and type of power of the evangelical church as factor in Guatemalan contemporary politics.

In the next chapter I turn to the methodological framework of my research, seeking to introduce the reader to how the combination of methodological considerations, the types of data available, and my personal experiences *in the field* have directly fed into the development of the analytical framework presented in this chapter.

Chapter 3

Methodology and methods: Researching religion in politics and the politics of religion

The relationship between religious and political authority has a long and complicated history, as does the scholarship devoted to understanding and analysing this relationship. The lengthy and still-ongoing debates on the validity and relevance of the secularisation hypothesis have produced much polemic and scholarship aimed at providing evidence for or against theoretical expectations as to the declining role of religion in modern societies. Critics of the secularisation hypothesis have looked to Latin America for empirical examples of how religion has either re-entered the public sphere, or 'never left' in the first place (Levine 2012). In particular, the sharp increase of Protestantism has attracted scholars from many disciplines, resulting in innovative studies of how to investigate this relationship, on which levels, and with what kind of data. The various methodological approaches have helped to heighten the level of sophistication with regard to *how* to conceptualise and analyse religion and its functions – for example, by focusing on the roles of religious authorities in the public sphere, correlating specific religious beliefs with political values, measuring religious intensity, and analysing religious communities as arenas for civic action, all of which have been influential for this present research.

The two previous chapters have introduced the research field and the analytical framework adopted to address these research objectives. In this chapter I present the choice of methods and ways of accessing primary sources in Guatemala. I begin by discussing central aspects of the methodology, and how I have approached the topic of religion and religiosity; then I elaborate on the challenges and opportunities related to doing research 'in the field', and the relationship between the researcher and the

researched. Here I am particularly concerned with how aspects of the researcher's identity interact with the informants and the data accessed through interviews and observations. For this thesis, questions concerning religious adherence and religious beliefs have naturally emerged as central challenges, as regards how I as a researcher access and interpret the information and data in the field, and more specifically, the relationship between the researched and the researcher when they do not share the same faith or worldview. In the last section I go into detail on the field research in Guatemala, to show how these experiences and the data accessed have fed into the design and the analysis of this thesis. I elaborate on the choice of field site, categories of interviewees, and my practice of observation and 'non'-participation in evangelical sermons and activities.

As this chapter is mainly based on my personal experiences from the field research, I have allowed for a more personal and reflective tone than in the other chapters of this thesis. I identify with research traditions that see the researcher's identity intertwined with her access to interview respondents and other data in the field, and with this chapter I invite the reader to join me in reflecting on the research design of the thesis, and the processes and experiences that have fed into the development of the analytical framework adopted for understanding and analysing the religio-political relationships in Guatemala.

Reflections on methodology

In developing the research design for this PhD project, I have been concerned with identifying an approach and a set of methods that can serve to illuminate what I argue is a political phenomenon largely overlooked in the more institutionalist literature on Latin American politics. My methodological approach can to a certain extent can be described as *interpretive*, in the sense that I am concerned with how certain phenomena and actors are *spoken of* and I include meaning-making and the

mechanisms and effects of such processes as dimensions in the analysis.[1] This approach differs from more classical approaches in political science, which would possibly have included a more variable-centred design and objectives aimed at identifying causal inference. The approach adopted here is then more in line with scholars such as Enrique Desmond Arias and Guillermo O'Donnell, who argue that in the study of Latin America politics, there is a need to apply 'transdisciplinary methods' such as ethnography and other interpretive methods in order to properly understand how the political institutions in the region work – and don't work – as well as central political phenomena like corruption, clientilism, and political violence (O'Donnell 1993, cited in Arias 2006:239). Similarly, these scholars note the importance of not only considering the 'visible outcomes' of political processes but also inquiring into the informal processes by which these outcomes are achieved (see Arias 2006: 243–44). This present research project as a whole cannot be placed within the interpretive tradition *per se*, but as a researcher I do identify largely with the epistemological commitments of this tradition, particularly as to including people's perceptions of actions, actors, and concepts as important elements in explaining and analysing politics. These positions have influenced how I have formulated the research questions, identified the sources of data, and, not least, how I have approached the analysis of religion and religious beliefs as part of politics.

In line with the perspective of scholars of religion such as Michael Bergunder (2014) and Robert J. Wuthnow (2011), I have sought to identify and understand how Protestantism and Protestant churches are spoken of in the Guatemalan context. This means studying religion along the lines of research traditions that analyse religion literally and practically, to show how it is used in a given context, as well as the effects of this use (Bergunder 2010, 2014; see also Chapter 2 in this thesis). I thereby place the analytical focus on the *name* of the religion and how this is employed, rather than

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[1] The 'interpretive approach' emerged as one of the clearest responses and reactions to scholarly traditions aiming at objectivity, generalisation and rationality, which in recent times is generally associated with the seminal *Designing Social Inquiry* by King et al. (1994). For introductions to the interpretive approach see for example Moses and Knutsen (2007); Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006), and Wedeen (2002, 2010)

focusing on theological and practical variation. In the research design, this approach is reflected in how I include the internal rhetoric in religious communities as essential fields of study, helping to make it possible to identify and understand how the Protestant churches are spoken of and represented in political arenas.

Such a perspective stands in contrast to the traditions that seek to grasp the 'inner essence' of a concept, as promoted in the works of Sartori (1984), and referred to by Goertz as 'the necessary and sufficient conditions view of concepts' (Goertz 2006: 29). With the present thesis, lines can rather be drawn to the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1978 [1953]) and the tradition that became known as 'ordinary language analysis.'[2] Wittgenstein stressed that concepts should not be considered to have an inner essence with necessary characteristics and clear boundaries: rather, he argued that, in ordinary language, concepts (or *words*) are categorised according to their *family resemblance* (Wittgenstein 1978 [1953]: paragraph 67, pp. 32^{e}): '…these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, – but [that] they are *related* to one another in many different ways' (Wittgenstein 1968 [1953]: paragraph 65, pp. 31^{e}).[3] As highlighted also by Hanna Pitkin (1993), an important element of Wittgenstein's approach is the emphasis on how scientific definitions emerge and fluctuate: 'what today counts as an observed concomitant of a phenomenon, will tomorrow be used to define it' (Wittgenstein 1968:paragraph.79, cited in Pitkin 1993: 174). As presented in chapter 2, the numerous Protestant congregations and practices across the Latin American region vary greatly in character, as do the scholarly conceptions created and employed to capture these (see also below).

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[2] For scholars who follow this tradition, a central element is the focus on the *meaning* of a word, not its formal definition. The meaning of a word is to be abstracted from and learned from its *use* (Pitkin 1993: 175). As such, meaning and sense of a word is context-dependent: a word's meaning is considered to be 'completed by context' (Pitkin 1993: 85).

[3] The most-cited example of the idea of family resemblance is his presentation of a *game* as one such 'family', in which there is not *one* common characteristic for all the phenomena referred to by the word 'game' (Wittgenstein 1968: paragraphs 66–71, pp 31^{e}–34^{e}).

Researchers and the researched: challenges and opportunities related to identity

Another central difference between the positivist and interpretive tradition is the divergence in views on how the personal traits of the researcher affect the research itself, by shaping the interview situation and influencing the data deriving from it (Kapiszewski et al. 2015: 223; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). Whereas the positivist tradition includes ambitions of designing the research in ways that can yield objective information, the interpretive tradition builds on principles of reflexivity and explicit recognition of how the identity of the researcher impacts on the research experience and thereby on the information and data deriving from it.[4] My research is placed within this latter perspective. On starting this project, I had expected issues of identity, in particular those related to religiosity and gender, to emerge as challenges during my stay in Guatemala, and had, as advised by Ortbals and Rincker amongst many others, sought to equip myself with awareness and practical tools that could serve to make these challenges and possible hindrances into opportunities and advantages (Ortbals and Rincker 2009: 288).

Since the analysis in this thesis has to a considerable extent relied on data and insights from methods such as interviewing and observation as a means of identifying the uses and meanings of religious and political concepts and perspectives, it has been essential to reflect continuously on my role as a researcher, my status as an *outsider*, and the overall power relations surrounding the relationship between the researcher and the research. These reflections have also fed into my research design and the strategies selected for accessing interview respondents and other sources of data in Guatemala. In the following I examine these reflections according to religion (with relevant points on gender, age, ethnicity and class), and nationality.

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[4] See for example Ortbals and Rincker (2009: 288), who argue: 'Identity is incredibly relevant to political science researchers, and especially to comparativists who go abroad and become outsiders in a social context distinct from their own.'

Religion

Throughout the various stages of this research project, I have met specific challenges related to doing research on religious institutions, religious leaders, and people's religiosity. Two aspects emerge as particularly relevant here. The first concerns how the themes of religion and politics in a context like that of Guatemala require considerable sensibility on the part of the researcher. Many Guatemalans have personally experienced how their political and religious identity has been subject to oppression and violent persecution, particularly during the civil war (1960–1996). In parts of the country, merely being Catholic could entail a severe threat, as large segments of the Catholic Church were portrayed as part of the enemy of the Guatemalan state.[5] Similarly, being seen as part of the 'political left' was sufficient reason for persecution at the hands of the military. In practice, the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996 did little to change the high level of socio-political polarisation in Guatemala. Conducting interviews that touch upon these issues thus requires great sensitivity not only to ensure one's own interpretation and understanding of what is said during the interview, but also in order to avoid disrespect or hurt to the interviewee, who may be troubled by her own participation in events during those years – on whichever side of the conflict.

The second challenge concerns if and how the differences in the religiosity of the interviewee and the researcher affect the information shared and the interpretation and analysis of the data material. In addition to general methodological reflections on the specific challenges related to studying other people's religious identities, worldviews and practices that are foreign to one's own, several authors in the field of Protestantism in Latin America have focused on the specific challenges involved in studying this particular version of Christianity, and 'Pentecostal practice' not least. Brodwin (2003) and Sheringham (2011), for instance, stress the methodological limitations related to the scholarly endeavour of interpreting these religious practices and beliefs, and that the researcher should exercise caution in attempting to capture the

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[5] See for example *Guatemala Never Again* (ODHAG 1998).

meaning of individual's religious behaviour, not treating this as a reflection of the religious doctrine as such (Sheringham 2011: 77). Above I have outlined how the methodological framework of this research was designed to address such challenges, focusing on how religion is spoken of and where and how it is practised, and not so much on the meanings and personal experiences of the individual believer (see also Chapter 2). In the following I concentrate on the concrete challenges, and opportunities, I experienced in this regard during my two research stays – more specifically, the challenge of studying religion when one is not personally religious.

The themes and experiences discussed in interviews and preached in evangelical sermons in Guatemala are clearly remote from my own in several ways, and throughout the various stages of this research I have sought to deal with the corresponding methodological and ethical challenges. When I started research for this PhD project I had a relatively well-developed understanding of the key elements of Pentecostal religious doctrine, based on previous research projects (see Bjune 2005) and extensive review of the literature on the field. I also had some experience from personal observations of evangelical practices in Guatemala. Notwithstanding, I have never presumed to fully understand or be able to share the spiritual experiences and religious beliefs of the people who have served as my research subjects. Rather, I have sought to remain aware of how my own personal values might affect the research and particularly the interview situation, and of the risk of projecting *my* values and preconceived ideas on the issues raised in interviews and religious sermons.[6]

As stressed by Kevin O'Neill, researchers working on and in evangelical churches in Latin America will inevitably be faced with direct questions concerning their own faith[7]– and the answer given may affect the relationship between informants

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[6] After all, anticipating that *their* values and beliefs affect their answers, I should also expect that *my own* values and beliefs (albeit secular), affect the questions asked. For further reflections on challenges for non-religious scholars of religion, see Sheringham (2013: 15–17).

[7] Such a question is often posed in the beginning of a conversation, and typically formulated as 'are you a Christian?', which in this context means an *evangelical* Christian, as opposed to Roman Catholic.

and researcher (O'Neill 2010a:xxvi–xxix). Evangelical churches in Guatemala place considerable emphasis on evangelising and missionary activities. Many researchers have experienced that when the evangelical respondents learn that the visiting researcher is not 'one of them', this triggers feelings of both pity and a sort of superiority (over someone who hadn't found God – yet), and concrete attempts at conversion (O'Neill 2010a; Lende 2015, and Sheringham 2013). In this field of study, being an *outsider* does not merely require epistemological reflections: it entails that the researcher is repeatedly confronted with the issue in the field, often very directly. In Guatemala, it is unusual to describe oneself as an atheist, as the expression carries clear negative connotations of a malign and 'sinful' person. Not wanting to be dishonest, but also wanting to avoid confusion as to my personality and intentions, when I was asked the questions of my own religion in an interview setting, I settled for a vague middle way, simply answering that 'Norway is a Protestant country and Protestantism is the state religion', adding that 'the Protestant church has held an important position in our society.' This seemed to be sufficient on most occasions, although it affected the dynamics and the positionality in the conversation in the sense that the interviewee then thought of me as part of 'them', whereas I did not. Also, as experienced by many other researchers, I was on several occasions prayed for during or after the interviews, often with concrete mentions of the wellbeing of my family and the success of my research project. I can only speculate on why these evangelicals chose to participate in my project; however, I assume that 'spreading the word of God' and sharing all the 'greatness God has achieved in Guatemala' with me and my (supposed) audience has been at least part of their motivation. As expressed by a volunteer in a mega-church in Guatemala City, commenting on how he would help me obtain contact with the pastoral couple: 'That is how faith works, right. God knows what you need to do for your work, and that you have faith in your heart. He knows that you need to speak to [the pastoral couple] (…) For Him it is possible what is impossible for us. I will be your instrument …' (Member El Shaddai, interview 2012).

Finally, even though I cannot share the spiritual experiences and feelings of evangelicals in Guatemala ('being filled with the Holy Spirit', speaking in tongues, or participating in ecstatic dancing), I certainly acknowledge and understand that these

are very important elements in people's lives, constituting 'a major interpretative horizon for vast sectors of the population' (Vásquez and Marquardt 2003: 5).

Gender, age, ethnicity, and class

There are of course many accounts of the experience of being a foreign, female researcher doing field-based research in and on Latin America. An overview presented by Ortbals and Rincker notes how white, foreign, female researchers in Latin America have often 'simultaneously felt privileged by their race to obtain access to powerful informants, yet disadvantaged at "building trust"' with women in communities of color' (Ortbals and Rincker 2009: 289, citing Sundberg 2003: 184). All informants in my research proved to be such 'powerful informants'; and as regards achieving access, my personal experiences are indeed close to that description. How I was not always treated as an equal I attribute at least partly to issues related to a combination of my gender and my age. For example, on several occasions I was received and treated as an uninformed 'little girl', even though I had placed considerable emphasis on communicating how I was well informed about the subject matter, and I sought to let the presentation of the research and the interview questions reflect my own qualified assessments. In most such occasions I found it advantageous to 'play the part' and let interviewees position themselves as superior to me, to share their knowledge on their own terms. After all, I was equally interested in the ways in which the information was provided to me, as the actual information. Thus, I do not consider this particular imbalance to have had negative consequences for the quality of the interview, apart perhaps from my own brief feelings of inferiority.

The great majority of my interviewees were male, which might mean a biased material.[8] However, as this was not at all a deliberate strategy on my part, I find this as reflecting the overall tendency of male dominance in the political as well as the religious sphere. Studies of Protestantism and Pentecostalism in Latin America have

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[8] The three female interviewees were all selected by occupational and professional criteria (in academia and the NGO sector).

emphasised that, compared to Roman Catholicism, the new religious denominations have contributed to *empower* women by providing them with greater opportunities and room for manoeuvre in the organisational work of the churches.[9] The evangelical emphasis on the individual's relationship with the divine is also found to be 'liberating' for women, compared to the control practised by the male-dominated Catholic hierarchy (Brusco 2010). Overall, there are more women than men in evangelical congregations; indeed, studies find that women often encourage their husbands to convert, as this is believed to improve the dynamics (and the finances!) in the household (Brusco 2010:89). However, other scholars note the persistence of traditional gender roles in evangelical preaching and practice, in which the woman is associated with the family and the role as a mother and as a wife (Lende 2015; Levine 2012). From this perspective, the room for manoeuvre may have expanded with the new religious practices and activities, but there are still clear restrictions on the role of women in society and in the church. Of course, experiences of liberation or subordination or anything in-between vary from *evangélica* to *evangélica*. In the urban churches visited for this study, I found a strong emphasis on the *nuclear family*, in both sermons and the written and digital material distributed by the church.[10] Further, the largest evangelical churches in Guatemala are typically headed by a 'pastoral couple', a constellation in which the man is the leading figure and the *pastora* holds a secondary position. A notable exception is the mega-church *El Shaddai* which is included in this research, where *pastora* Cecilia de Caballeros took over the role as the leading figure from her husband Harold Caballeros when he decided to run for political office in 2006. Cecilia de Caballeros is therefore an example of how women can be provided with leadership opportunities in evangelical churches; on the other hand, it can be argued that this opportunity depended solely on her role as a wife. In

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[9] On the debates on the paradoxes of Pentecostal gender roles, see Elizabeth Brusco's (2010) review of the scholarship on Pentecostalism and gender.

[10] All of them offered evening courses that would either prepare young couples for their future roles as husband and wife, or assist married couples in maintaining a healthy marriage. This information is accessed via the websites of La Fraternidad Cristiana, El Shaddai, and Casa de Dios, as well as visiting the bookshops of these and others churches.

the media she is typically referred to as the wife of the church's founder (and ex-chancellor) Harold Caballeros. In the other churches and organisations included in this study, the leaders – and therefore the person interviewed – were all men. Combining the interviews of the pastors and evangelical leaders with interviews with the female pastors would undoubtedly have added interesting dimensions to the analysis, as regards interpretations and perspectives, as well as the dynamic between the interviewees and myself as a female researcher. However, for this particular project the main intention has been to talk to those in the *de facto* leading positions who often also operate as public figures, so I have had to settle with reflections on how these interviews, which unintentionally turned out to be with men, mirrors how women in evangelical churches encounter a 'glass ceiling … with positions of influence and authority reserved for men' (Levine 2012: 137).

For the communication and interviews with evangelical seniors I had expected that my private situation as an unmarried female with no children (in 2012), travelling alone to Guatemala, might serve to widen the distance between me and the interviewees, as these characteristics are far from the traditional gender roles preached in evangelical churches. However, for the most part, I did not sense any kind of scepticism or disrespect on this basis. Questions concerning my civil status were typically not raised prior to or during the interviews: such topics tended to come up in the less formal conversation afterwards, if at all. Nevertheless, for the second research stay in Guatemala (in 2014), when I had brought both my boyfriend and our then 1-year-old son, I found that explicitly mentioning them and, in particular talking of my son, always sparked very positive and friendly reactions, and somewhat changed the dynamic in the interview. This slightly different presentation of myself may have helped the informants to place me as a person into more familiar categories, such as mother and wife (I presented my partner as my *husband,* to avoid confusion), instead of perceiving me as a woman in her mid-thirties, travelling far from home *alone,* apparently prioritising professional ambitions over family.

In addition to gender and age, several other aspects of both my own and my informants' identities are relevant for their religiosity, and have affected my

understandings, perhaps particularly as regards ethnicity and class. These dimensions are included in various ways in the chapters of this thesis, but will not be treated systematically in this chapter, where I am primarily concerned with presenting elements that emerged directly from interview situations. The research was conducted in the urban setting of Guatemala City, and my interviewees were primarily *ladino*s from the middle-upper classes, not representative of the Guatemalan population in general. This skewedness in the material and in the perspectives of the people interviewed, which I describe in greater detail below, was a deliberate decision on my part, as the main focus of the analysis is precisely how 'the evangelical church' is manifested in Guatemala's political arenas and perceived by the political and economic elites. This means that in this thesis, the ethnicity dimension is included first and foremost in the analyses of how evangelical political representatives have positioned themselves on issues such as inclusion and tolerance – and not so much on the position of the evangelical churches as regards indigenous communities or identity.[11] In terms of attention to class-related dimensions, this is reflected in how I place emphasis on the particular membership basis of the mega-churches and how financial management and prosperity are central topics in their services (see below for concrete examples).[12] Moreover, issues of poverty and inequality will constitute central elements in the analyses of 'evangelical service provision'.

Nationality

One of the main challenges posed by my identity had to do with nationality. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 6, Guatemala has numerous international NGOs, and during its recent history, foreign aid workers, diplomats, and transnational companies have been visible and active participants in politics and civil society. Being

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[11] For in-depth analyses of these perspectives, see for example Clearly and Steigenga (eds) (2004); Samson (2007); and Stoll (1993).

[12] These issues are treated in further detail in Virginia Garrard-Burnett's study of the use of prosperity theology in neopentecostal churches (Garrard-Burnett 2012), and José Luis Rocha's investigations on the financial model and preaching in Central America's mega-churches (Rocha 2012).

Norwegian, Scandinavian, or Northern European is by many associated with political support of the country's indigenous populations and their political struggles vis à vis the Guatemalan state. Norwegian diplomats and aid workers were part of the team of facilitators of the Peace Process, and Norway hosted the first meetings between the guerrilla and the state (see Jonas 2000; Tønnesen 2007). In the continued highly polarised political debate (and confrontations) concerning the directions of Guatemala's 'development' and the situation of Guatemala's indigenous populations in particular, Norway and Scandinavia have become associated with the side that openly criticises the state and the traditional powerholders. The Norwegian Embassy, alongside the Swedish, has been publically criticised for 'interfering in national affairs'; indeed, the most extreme participants in this polemic frame such support of social movements as support of terrorism.[13] Such accusations have not had any consequences in the realpolitik of either side, but the debate has reached a wide audience through several televised debates and 'documentaries.' As I present in Chapters 4 and 5, representatives of the evangelical church have on several occasions positioned themselves alongside these accusations in such debates.

Hence, I had expected that my identity as a Norwegian might pose various challenges for accessing evangelical leaders and for the level of openness in conversations. Whereas I have no clear examples of my Norwegian identity impeding access to people I sought to interview, I was met with outspoken scepticism as to my agenda as a *Norwegian* researcher in several of the interviews, and an *ex ante* perception that my objectives were biased towards the Guatemalan 'left'. In order to indicate that I was aware of the debate but not directly part of it, I often initiated that discussion myself, saying that I was under the impression that Norwegians and the Norwegian Embassy are actively engaged in the political debate in Guatemala, and then asked if the interviewee could kindly explain the debate to me. In some interviews with evangelicals I myself brought up the fact of my Norwegian identity

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[13] One of the Guatemalan right's most eccentric representatives, Raúl Minondo Ayau, went so far as to state that with the terrorist attacks the 22 July 2011, Norway got what it deserved, considering all the terrorism the country had supported in Guatemala and elsewhere (*El Periódico* 2011c).

and Norway, but then as an example of a Protestant country, as a way of letting the comparison with the historical position of Protestantism in Norway serve as an entry point for talking about the position of Protestant and evangelical churches in Guatemala today.

In the interviews with evangelical pastors and lay people another challenge posed by my identity as a Norwegian concerned how Norway is perceived as a donor country. The best-known position of Norway and Norwegian aid is related to the above-mentioned engagement in indigenous and social movements, but religious organisations in Norway have long traditions of financial and material support to individual churches and church-based organisations (Tønnesen 2007). Some interviewees expressed gratitude for the generous support their church had received from a Norwegian organisation, as well as informing me about concrete projects that would benefit greatly from a little financial support, perhaps from the institution I represented. Even after reminding them that this was an independent research project, and that the University of Bergen is not in a position to enter into such cooperation with any organisation, I was asked for *personal* contributions. Sometimes I was contacted by phone or e-mail after having conducted the interview, with 'kind reminders' of how even a small contribution would mean a lot. I did not contribute financially to any of the churches or organisations visited. Even though I justified this with the ethical and professional guidelines of the research projects, this was met with clear disappointment on several occasions, as if I were breaking some unspoken contract. These examples serve as reminders of the importance of maintaining a level of critical reflexivity on issues of power relations in the interview situation and how this may influence the information deriving from it.

I also want to add that being a white 'northerner' interested in talking about the Protestant religion also led to some initial confusion in my conversations with *non*-evangelical Guatemalans; in a few of the 'expert interviews' it was not until I had assured the interviewees that I was neither a missionary nor even a Protestant, that they started talking freely about their impressions and reflections of the position of the evangelical churches in Guatemalan politics and society.

In all, various aspects of my identity as a Norwegian, female researcher came to play in different parts of the research. My positioning vis-à-vis the respondents should therefore be seen as *negotiated* and adapted throughout the field research in Guatemala (Sheringham 2011: 104). The elements mentioned here may all be seen as part of my *foreignness,* to the field and to the researched. However, in addition to the challenges this has posed for strategies of inquiry, this position as an outsider has also served as an advantage. Respondents seem to have been encouraged to assist me with both practical and with more research-related issues, such as always accompanying me to (and continuing the conversation in) the taxi, providing me with unpublished religious or political material, or detailed drawing detailed timelines and illustrations of Guatemala's recent history and the growing political influence of evangelical churches.

Methods and primary sources in Guatemala: access, 'non-participation', and interviews

My empirical research in Guatemala was conducted over a period of four months, divided into two periods: three months in 2011/2012, and one month in 2014. Some additional archival work and interviews were undertaken by two research assistants in my absence in 2013 and in 2014. Dividing the research in Guatemala into different periods allowed me to analyse the data and information gathered in the first stay, and be more nuanced in my approach and selection of sites and interviews in the second. It also allowed me to include the experiences made by evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike during the government of President Pérez Molina (2012–2015) – who for many Guatemalans personally represents the continuation of the conflicts and division from the brutal the civil war, and who also had appointed the well-known evangelical pastor Harold Caballeros as his foreign minister and generally kept a high level of 'association' with evangelical leaders and organisations.

Four months in total is certainly not a long period of time, however I was able to draw on previous research stays in Guatemala (in 2005 and in 2007), as well as various private visits. I could therefore rely on a broad network of contacts in Guatemalan academia and in the NGO sector.[14] Prior to the field research I had also conducted a preliminary analysis of the body of literature on Protestantism in Latin America in general, and in Guatemala in particular, from which I had identified several key informants, including pastors and other evangelical leaders like Marco Tulio Cajas (ex-campaign manager of Serrano Elías in 1985 and currently professor at the Mariano Gálvez (evangelical) university).[15]

The field site: Guatemala City

My decision to locate the field research in Guatemala City is primarily a reflection of the methodological decision to focus on how the growth in Protestantism is manifested and spoken of in politics on the national level. I therefore gave priority to consulting organisations and individuals actively involved in politics, all of them located in Guatemala City. Further, my contacts and informants in academia and the NGO sector were all based at headquarters in Guatemala City. In addition, the largest evangelical churches are situated in or on the outskirts of the city, and I had planned to attend evangelical services in these mega-churches on a regular basis. I had also been granted a visiting position at FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales) in

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[14] Also, while in Guatemala City I stayed with the director of the 'Institutional coordinator of the promotion of the rights of the child' (Coordinadora Institucional de Promoción de los Derechos de la Niñez, CIPRODENI), invaluable in terms of introducing me to organisations and people, and for checking on my own interpretation of the everyday situation in Guatemalan politics and society, through our daily conversations.

[15] Interestingly, in advance a considerable number of my own contacts in the NGO sector had pointed me in the direction of the evangelical organisation the CIEDEG, as this is the one that works extensively with international NGOs and donors. However, as explained in the coming chapters, compared to the AEG, the CIEDEG holds a negligible presence in Guatemalan politics, which I feel is related to both its ecumenical character, and the ways in which this organisation has been much more critical towards Guatemala's governments (see Chapters 4 and 5)

Guatemala City, which provided me with office space and library access, and proved invaluable for sharing ideas and contacts with new colleagues.

Doing research in Guatemala City is a constant reminder of the lived situation of insecurity, affecting all segments of Guatemalan society, albeit very differently. My personal experiences from this research are more in line with the considerations taken by the middle and upper sectors of Guatemala's society, specifically in terms of restrictions related to travelling and moving around in the city. For me, in addition to the 'normal' security consideration related to personal belongings and security measures for data and documents, this meant taking into consideration which parts of the city I would be in and at which times of the day. Following strict recommendations from friends and colleagues, I mostly avoided public transportation, and for each appointment I made sure to have advance arrangements with a handful of 'trusted taxi drivers' (a familiar phenomenon in Guatemala: *taxistas de confianza*), recommended by friends or colleagues. Further, I was strongly advised not to travel after dark. Such arrangements are time-consuming and left me with far less flexibility than if I could have moved about freely. However, when most of my workdays started and ended in long, scarcely moving queues in the company of a *taxista,* it also provided me with long and interesting conversations, with much less predictable arguments and versions of events than the arranged interviews. Further, these experiences have directly fed into my understanding what it means to live in Guatemala City, and my comprehension of the deeply rooted feelings of mistrust and insecurity, which I argue is quintessential for grasping the appeal of both churches and political leaders promising a transformation of society and a safer, happier, and generally *different* Guatemala. More specifically, I became better equipped for understanding the appeal of the evangelical megachurches, designed to offer the churchgoers safe (guarded) physical spaces: where cars can be parked freely, children can be sent on their one to clubs while parents attend the service, and where there is much explicit focus on the spirit of community and belonging.

Evangelical churches

Whilst in Guatemala I attended a sermon in an evangelical church once or twice a week. I had chosen to attend the largest, urban evangelical churches, such as the 'Megafrater', 'Casa de Dios', and 'El Shaddai'. This choice was based primarily on the objective of familiarising myself with the preaching and status of the currently most prominent evangelical pastors in Guatemala: pastor Jorge H. López (Fraternidad Cristiana), who participates actively in political arenas and in the national media; pastor Cash Luna (Casa de Dios), who heads the (currently) most famous evangelical church and has been rated the second most influential person in Guatemala; and (ex) pastor Harold Caballeros (El Shaddai) who resigned and handed over the role as main pastor to his wife, Cecilia de Caballeros, when he took up party politics with the party VIVA, and entered the government of Pérez Molina in 2012 as foreign minister.[16] As described below, I attended these services as a 'non-participant observer, seeking to improve my insight and understanding of what such services can mean to people, as well as what is being talked about, and how. Second, I took the opportunity to speak with the many volunteers assisting during such services, sometimes 'just' for conversations, but also as one of several approaches to making arrangements with the head pastors. I had not anticipated the bureaucracy and outright hierarchy surrounding the main pastors of these megachurches. Typically, a volunteer who had offered to help would pass me on to another volunteer, who then passed me on to another, more experienced volunteer, who then gave me a phone number to a secretary, who would not necessarily be in direct contact with the pastor in question.[17] In fact, contacting the secretariat of the pastor directly via telephone or e-mail proved a far more effective strategy than going through the hierarchy of volunteers.

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[16] These pastors and their churches are described and analysed in Chapters 4 to 6.

[17] Interestingly, this hierarchy amongst the volunteers and church staff was reflected in their uniforms, which varied in colour and style from position to position.

Evangelical projects and activities

For the most part, I have not personally visited the evangelical projects and activities described in this thesis, and have conducted only a small number of interviews with leaders and volunteers from such organisations. This reflects restrictions related to both time and budget, as well as security concerns related to visiting places such as high-security prisons and detention centres. That, together with how the research stay was concentrated in the urban areas of Guatemala City, placed clear limitations as to the information accessed, and I am aware of how a longer and more varied field research might have enriched the material as well as the analyses in this thesis. However, as I will elaborate below, my decision was also based in the analytical framework of this particular project. The information on the evangelical projects provided in this thesis has been obtained by interviewing evangelical pastors and volunteers, as well as non-evangelical NGO workers in Guatemala City.

Access

Data have been obtained by applying a set of qualitative methods. These methods were elaborated and applied with the aim of understanding the significance of 'religious change', and, specifically, investigating how this is manifested in political arenas and processes. The interviews and the data from these form an essential part of the analytical framework. I have described my approach to accessing data in the field as inspired by the interpretive tradition, distinct from the more 'positivist tradition' within political science where the researcher is to a greater extent seen as entering the field and the interviewees with 'concepts and theories already in place', with less emphasis on how the data *gathered* and the interviewer-–interviewee relationship (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006:119).[18]

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[18] In the interpretivist lingo, gathering data is typically referred to as *accessing* data (see Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006:116)

During my hectic months in Guatemala, I tried to follow the advice of doing as much networking as possible, in different sectors of society, as a way of improving my opportunities of identifying valuable connections.[19] Living with a Guatemalan family provided me with several unplanned intermediaries in the NGO sector, as well as many informal conversations with friends and family, several of whom were either evangelicals themselves, or had strong opinions on the subject of evangelical churches, Guatemalan politics, or both. As mentioned, during my first field research stay I was accepted as a visitor at the FLACSO institute in Guatemala City. Establishing an institutional affiliation and familiarising oneself with scholars and others working with similar topics are considered useful strategies for facilitating access to informants that might be difficult for a sole researcher to reach (Kapisweski et al. 2015: 219). The contacts made at FLACSO proved not only highly inspirational and informative, but also invaluable for access to informants in the Guatemalan Congress.

Accessing evangelical churches and church-goers

Based on my experience from previous research in Guatemala, I expected little problems in gaining access to the relevant people in the evangelical churches. As also experienced by other researchers (see for example Lende 2015) evangelical churches in Guatemala are generally *very* accessible and welcoming to visitors, perhaps to international visitors in particular – but this remains speculation on my part. This kind of openness is somewhat two-fold, as I soon became aware of how the evangelical church-goers and volunteers in the church who, with such kindness and generosity, assisted me in my search for interview appointments and overall information about the churches, were possibly and sometimes openly driven by incentives related to evangelicalism. Although all relationships between interviewees and the interviewer are characterised by asymmetry as to roles, expectations and power relations, this one felt particularly acute, as it created feelings of falseness on my part. Then again, if the incentives for speaking with me *were* purely driven by hopes of converting me, this

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[19] See Kapisweski et al. (2015: 220) on the importance of employing a range of intermediaries and access points and of 'getting off the beaten path' whilst doing field research.

may have given these believers a personal purpose for spending time with me, in addition to 'just' being helpful.

I have found it important to reflect on what *kind* of information I got access to. Sometimes I felt that a narrative or a story had been told by the interviewee many times before. Some of my interviewees frequently appear in the literature on Protestantism in Guatemala (perhaps particularly Harold Caballeros and Marco Tulio Cajas), which on the one hand tell of an accessible and generous person; however, on the other hand, this also indicates that many different researchers may receive the same version of events. With Marco Tulio Cajas for example, his popularity as an informant is partly explained by his professional positions; he served as campaign manager for the first attempt of a political party with clear evangelical identity in Guatemala. His experience is unique as there have been no similar attempts since (see Chapter 4). In order to prevent this *recycling* of informants from having serious implications for the quality and validity of the analysis, I had in advance tried to get an overview of how informants like Tulio Cajas and Caballeros had been used and referred to in other analyses, and I prepared my questions in ways that would allow me to tap into their knowledge and information from *my* perspective, and not simply reproducing stories told many times before. In general, interviewing pastors also gave the impression of being presented with a well-rehearsed story, particularly when they embarked on the historical background of the evangelical church (which they typically would, also without my asking). However, even though the similarities of the narratives can indicate that I did not access the pastors' *personal* interpretations or reflections on the issues raised, I have, as noted above, found such similarities in language and accounts to be analytically very relevant *per se*. Taking careful note of how stories were told in similar ways, the words used and the events emphasised have helped my understanding of the evangelical rhetoric and interpretations of their relationship with Guatemala's political arenas.

Finally, let me note how one of the two research assistants (male, Guatemalan) hired for this project had very different experiences from both myself and the other research assistant (female, Norwegian). The Guatemalan research assistant had

considerable difficulties in accessing people whom we had selected for interviews, both in political and religious arenas. Since the two of us had collaborated closely in the writing of letters, e-mails, and interview manuscripts, his experiences, so diametrically different from my own and from the other assistant, can serve as an illustration of how my status as a foreigner, a westerner, and even an outsider may have facilitated rather than obstructed access to the particular people addressed for this research.

'Non-participant' observations: evangelical services and religious meetings

Attending evangelical services on a regular basis formed a central part of my field research in Guatemala. I argue that incorporating this element in my field research contributed greatly to improving my access to both people and data, as well as the interpretation and analyses of my findings, despite the relatively short period in Guatemala and in these churches. There is great variation in how scholars working on religion and politics in Guatemala place emphasis on engaging with the group in focus of the research. Whereas some, mostly anthropologists, chose to spend considerable amounts of time attending evangelical sermons and meetings, participating in evangelical activities, and living with evangelical families (see for example Brenneman 2012; O'Neill 2010, 2015, and Samson 2007), others observe the phenomenon with greater distance (albeit still 'in the field'), relying on archival material, survey data, and various forms of interviewing (see for example Steigenga 2001). Both practices present the researcher with particular challenges related to data validity, which very broadly can be grouped as related to being either too involved with the research subjects, which can obscure analytical nuance; or too distanced from the phenomenon in question, which can lead the researcher to ignore key mechanisms or individuals essential for the analysis (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006).

In a sense, I settled for a middle ground, relying both on observations from evangelical practices and meetings, and on a critical reading on the secondary material

describing these, as well as interviews of targeted key informants. Here I want to highlight the ways in which I have obtained (oral) data from participating in the evangelical services and engaging with evangelical individuals, which I see as important for the validity of those parts of the analysis that are based on these data. I have decided to call my research method 'non-participant' observation, as suggested by Sheringham (2011: 81), based on my status as a non-religious researcher. This status has affected my access to the field and informants, inasmuch as I cannot pretend to understand what it means or feels to take part in such religious services. However, such these experiences are in any case strictly personal – so even if I had shared the specific evangelical beliefs of the congregations observed, my own experiences of the 'spiritual' would not have been comparable to theirs, and I would also have had to take into consideration my position as an observing researcher and the distance between us.

As I remained conscious of this aspect of my positioning vis-à-vis the people and activities observed, I feel that the fact that I myself am not personally religious has not placed limitations on the research. Indeed, it may have been advantageous as regards the validity of the analysis, in at least two ways. First, as alluded to above, maintaining a distance combined with empathy towards the beliefs and perspectives of the research subjects allowed me to be reflective and analytical of the information provided in sermons and conversations with church-goers, not taking certain mechanisms and accounts for granted. Second, and related, my interest has not so much been in understanding the essence of the evangelical experience and jargons as such: I have aimed at discovering how these are repeated, referred to, and *normalised* in other spheres of Guatemalan politics and society. For example, although aware of the concept of tithing (*diezmos*) in evangelical churches, I was not familiar with how this was practised and justified in the larger churches, nor of the considerable emphasis placed on topics related to the management of personal finances. I was therefore curious to note how topics related to tithing and finances in general were emphasised in the different churches, both in the preaches and by the frequency of the passing of collection boxes, envelopes, and forms in which one was expected to specify bank account details, full name, and amount given. On several occasions, much of the preaching concerned the divine benefits of both saving and offering, and

the various *kinds* of offerings evangelicals are expected to provide.[20] I also found this emphasis on financial management reflected in the evangelical bookshops, with best-selling books on biblical economy, and the 80–10–10 system (referring to the advice of spending only 80 per cent of one's salary, saving 10, and offering the final 10 per cent to the church), written by famous pastors like Jorge H. López (of 'La Fraternidad Cristiana'). Had this practice seemed *normal* to me, I might not have been so curious to note this particular rhetoric, also practised by evangelicals in political arenas, and might not have identified this aspect of financial management as part of the holistic worldview and lifestyle provided by these churches to their members. And finally, maintaining a critical distance to this rhetoric also served to point up the sharp distinction between the practice and preaching of the megachurches and the everyday life and challenges of most Guatemalans.

Interviews

In all, I have conducted 40 interviews (see appendix 1).[21] I had prepared a list of informants prior to the trip to Guatemala; this was both adjusted and expanded during the field research, on the basis of experiences and contacts made in the field.

Although I settled for a form of interviewing that was conversational, the interviews were all prepared as semi-structured. In advance I had identified a set of themes I wanted to raise with the interviewee and formulated a set of questions aimed at addressing each theme. This interview guide was individualised for each interview,

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[20] On several occasions there were given lengthy presentation of the importance of giving, and how one will 'reap what one sows,' referring specifically to financial contributions to the church. In of the churches visited the congregation was handed out a pamphlet where it was described the '4 ways of giving' in which the tithing was only the first step (an obligation), and the following three were described as larger sacrifices, that would bring larger 'harvests.' It was also specified to what – and whom – the different contributions would benefit (the church, the pastor, the poor, and to one's *soul*)

[21] Seven of the interviews were conducted by a research assistant in my absence. These were mostly follow-up interviews that had been set up in cooperation with me. I took part in communication with the interviewees, and the research assistant followed a semi-structured interview guide we had developed in close collaboration. All these interviews were recorded.

based on the interviewee's role and position, and adjusted throughout the field research according to experiences from other interviews.[22] The approach can hence be described as flexible and responsive to the experiences from each interview situation. For example, in my first interviews with evangelical politicians and leaders I focused more on the individual beliefs and political positions of the interviewees, this was soon adjusted to include questions aimed at leading the conversation over to concrete policy proposals and initiatives. This, I found, served to improve my understanding of specific events and the actors involved, as well as how these were *spoken of* by the different interviewees.

My interview strategy was inspired partly by what Schaffer and others with him have called 'ordinary language interviewing', described as 'a tool for uncovering the meaning of words in everyday talk' (Schaffer 2006: 151). Schaffer specifies that this a valuable tool for political scientists, as the analysis of the terms people use increases one's understanding of social and political phenomena (Shaffer 2006: 153).[23] However, in general, my interviews were aimed at serving a wider purpose than the analysis of certain words (in my case: 'the evangelical church'), and some, particularly those with academics and NGO workers, included questions more aimed at providing information about certain political individuals or events, or organisational characteristics and locations. Nevertheless, Schaffer's design has served as inspiration.

Almost all interviews were recorded, after I had cleared this with each interviewee. I sensed no scepticism towards being recorded, which may be related to how most of my interviewees had been selected on the basis of their occupational or professional status, and had been informed that I was not concerned with their

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[22] Prior to my departure for Guatemala, the interview guide was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), following the ethical guidelines for conducting field research of the University of Bergen.

[23] The purpose of this kind of interviewing is for the researcher to discover 'language in use – to engage the interviewee in a conversation, and within that conversation, to provide the person with occasions to use particular words of interest in ways that reveal their various meanings' (Schaffer 2006: 154)

opinions related to personal opinions. The interviewees themselves would indeed often touch on personal issues and opinions – but only on their own initiative. Also, several of the interviewees had long experience of talking to either researchers or the press, as well as addressing broader audiences, for political or religious purposes. As stressed by Kapiszewski and colleagues (Kapiszewski et al. 2015: 228), in order to capture the content of the interview, notes and recorded material from interviews should be typed up as soon as possible after the interview situation. In Guatemala, I would listen to the recordings of each interview alongside my field diary, typing out my observations and reflections. This practice enabled me to learn continuously from what had been talked about in previous conversations and how, and it also allowed me to adopt and 'test' phrases and references in the subsequent interviewees, to ensure that I had understood them correctly. I also took care to check on my interpretation and understanding during the interview, with phrases like 'If I understand you correctly, you say that …'. Such a practice served to assure my interviewees that I understood what had just been said, that I was taking them seriously, and that we could continue the conversation on the same level (see Schaffer 2006: 154). Checking the recordings of the interviews during the stay in Guatemala also improved my readings and analyses of secondary sources and archival material while in the field. Upon returning to Norway, I re-played the interviews, taking detailed notes about the themes discussed, the interviewee's behaviour and the overall atmosphere in the interview situation, the location of the interview, and other reflections. I also consulted the notebook where I had written down reflections and observations during and immediately after each interview. Most interviews were then transcribed, and these transcriptions proved very useful in the writing process, allowing me to review certain passages and quotes.

Language

All interviews, informal conversations, and written communication with informants and contacts were conducted in Spanish. As that is not my native language, this might pose limitations to the communication and the type of information received. However, I have actively sought to minimise these limitations by explicitly acting upon this

aspect of my foreignness instead of trying to hide it. For example when, in the course of an interview, I searched for the right expression or mispronounced a name or a word, which could have served to increase the distance between the interviewee and me, I instead took the opportunity to ask the interviewee questions such as 'is this the right term here in Guatemala?' or 'does this mean that *[…]* institution is in charge of *[…]* responsibilities?', carefully presenting this in a way that did not come across as lack of professionalism on my part but as curiosity. This way, I let my own identity as a foreigner serve to control the information accessed, which served to strengthen the validity of the information, as interviewees were encouraged to explain the subject matter in a more detailed manner. As also experienced by Sheringham (2011: 104), the fact that people felt that they could assist me with a pronunciation, or we could together laugh at a misinterpreted word, seemed to make them more relaxed, perceiving me as a 'normal person' in whom they could place more trust.

Categories of interviewees

The selection of informants and interviewees reflects my overall research aim of identifying and analysing the larger political consequences of the change of religion in Guatemala. The main criteria for selection of informants have been their direct or indirect experiences from central political positions and roles and/ or larger evangelical churches or organisations. Thus, the selection of informants includes people with direct experience from leading positions within national politics, from the largest evangelical churches, and people with experience from various channels of political influence – like political parties, advocacy groups, and the organisational sector, evangelical and non-evangelical. The sample also includes informants selected because of their overall knowledge of the political situation in Guatemala, such as academics and journalists. In sum, in selecting informants I have sought to be able to access information that would contribute to my understanding of concrete political events and interpersonal and intersectional connections, as well as insights into how these things are spoken of, by evangelical authorities in particular.

Evangelicals and evangelical leaders

Whereas I in a previous study (Bjune 2005) had opted for conversing and interviewing *ordinary* evangelicals in more or less random evangelical congregations, for this research I narrowed the focus to Guatemala's largest evangelical churches in Guatemala, and their leaders and pastors. These were identified on the basis of how frequently the churches and the pastors appear in the national press and alongside politicians, ministers, and even the President. Including access to political corridors and the channels of the media, the pastors of the most popular churches also rely on massive audiences in their own congregations (counting up to 15 000 per sermon) to whom they speak and preach each weak. The weekly sermons are typically broadcast through the churches' private media channels and are accessible on the web and via social media channels. For example, pastor Jorge H. López of 'La Fraternidad Cristiana' ('The Christian Fraternity) writes opinion pieces in newspapers such as *El Periodico* and is frequently cited in the press on issues that concerns moral and values, and the topics that affect the country's evangelical population. Pastor López also hosts the evangelical inauguration ceremony for the incoming government, the Te Deum Evangélico (see Chapters 5 and 7).

My specific objective in approaching these *leaders* was twofold: first, considering their large audience, I was interested in hearing their personal perspectives: How would they describe their own and their church's social and political position in Guatemala; secondly, I was interested in hearing their version of central political events, as well as what they saw as the challenges confronting Guatemala today. As mentioned above, in approaching pastors it was very interesting to experience the 'bureaucracy' surrounding them, with secretaries, first secretaries, heads of staff, head of volunteers, private guards, chauffeurs etc.[24] However, in the end, I managed to talk only with Pastor López as a representative of this category. My

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[24] For detailed accounts on the different roles and positions within the megachurches in Guatemala City, see Holland (2011) and Rocha (2012).

interviews with Pastors Harold and Cecilia de Caballeros (of 'El Shaddai') and Pastor Cash Luna ('Casa de Dios') were postponed innumerable times. The reasons given had to do with their very busy schedules, particularly since this was only a month after Caballeros had been appointed foreign minister, and Pastor Cash Luna travelled the region with his *Noches de Gloria* shows.[25] To what extent this also reflects scepticism to taking part in research in general, or merely fatigue at having to talk to journalists and researchers coming to Guatemala to investigate these new 'celebrities', must remain speculations. Due to my own limited time in Guatemala, I finally had to settle for the interviews, conversations, and experiences achieved in the process, with pastors and other church leaders in the same churches. In addition I could rely on the numerous interviews available with the mentioned pastors, as well as the other head pastors of the largest churches (like 'La Iglesia de Jesucristo La Familia de Dios', 'Ministerios Ebenezer', and 'Principe de Paz'), in their own published material, as well as in Guatemalan media and in the literature on the field. These interviews with evangelical leaders have also served to improve the analysis by providing me with information about connections between evangelical and political leaders and the networks between them (as analysed in Chapter 5), as well as the specific arenas where they co-appear and cooperate (Chapters 6 and 7).

Whereas my original strategy for interviewing evangelical leaders (and originally, evangelical politicians, see below) followed a line of inquiry aimed at identifying the relationship between personal beliefs and political values and attitudes towards certain political issues, I soon developed interview questions and a format that enabled me to focus on how these interviewees used certain concepts, and how they framed central political debates by using an evangelical rhetoric. I made these adjustments as a part of a perhaps obvious recognition of the diversity within the category evangelicals: there are as many ways of being 'evangelical' in Guatemala as

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[25] In these televised 'miracle shows' Pastor Cash Luna is portrayed as capable of transferring God's miracles by 'healing' people from the audience, apparently treating them for a great variety of illnesses in front of thousands of people. The shows are broadcast throughout the American continent.

there are evangelicals, and the objectives of this research have not included seeking to grasp the *essence* of each individual's personal faith.

The Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala (AEG)

Before the research trip to Guatemala I was aware of the AEG and its role as a representative organ for evangelical churches. However, it was not until initiating the interviews with the abovementioned pastors and a more focused investigation of secondary sources in Guatemala City that I started to comprehend the AEG's political position, and how this is clearly distinct from other evangelical organisations. I was introduced to the AEG via one of the pastors in El Shaddai who also served in the board of directors (*junta directiva)* of the AEG. The AEG leadership proved to be accessible and very friendly, so much of the information about the structures, activities, and strategies of the organisations derive from my interviews with current and previous members of the leadership in AEG. The objective of these interviews was similar to that with the other evangelical leaders presented above: to engage them in conversations on their perceptions of the AEG's position in Guatemalan politics and society, and on how this has developed and/ or changed over time, pointing out concrete events that they consider relevant for such development. I was particularly interested in which broader political themes and conflicts were brought up by the interviewees and how these were spoken of. I also took note of the examples of direct political participation and advocacy, specific mentions of partnership with local and central government, and what kinds of activities were mentioned as examples of evangelical 'social work' (*obra social*). In all interviews with AEG representatives, the theme concerning the activities of evangelical churches as service providers (my terminology) was presented as a quintessential role for the position that the evangelical church holds in Guatemalan society, and thereby in politics. Also, interviewees were keen to share with me specific examples of the direct contact they enjoy with Guatemalan politicians, including the executive branch.

The AEG interviews ran parallel to the interviews with the evangelical pastors, so I could 'check' the information from the pastors about their churches' position and activities against the accounts of the AEG. Also, I became aware of the connection

between some of the individuals in leading positions: many of them served on the same boards, and had attended the same universities and/ or churches before starting their own. Simultaneously, the diversity and the *ad hoc-ness* within the evangelical population became striking; although claiming to represent as many as 25 000 evangelical churches, the AEG admits that there is considerable variation and even confusion related to these figures and the terminology of the churches, and that there are many differences among the various denominations.

Politicians

A central methodological element in my initial plan for the first research stay in Guatemala was to interview politicians and particularly members of Congress who openly confessed to a variant of the Protestant faith. According to previous polls in the national media, the number of evangelicals in Congress has basically reflected the percentage in the general population (34 per cent in 2009, *Prensa Libre* 2009). The aim of this approach was to identify voting patterns on policies along the lines of the pluricultural reforms embedded in the Peace Accords, and to engage interviewees in conversations that would reveal how they talked about such policies, how they portrayed their political allies and opponents, and how they used direct religious references, if at all. My key contact in Congress, a political advisor working for a large political party group, readily identified some fifteen evangelical deputies and provided me with contact information. I had planned to start off by interviewing a few deputies and then letting them assist me in identifying others – as a strategy to identify to what extent evangelical congress members knew of each other across party lines. From the literature and my archival research, I already knew that there had been organised events in Congress for evangelical members of Congress, such as prayer reunions (see Chapter 5 for more examples). However, from my experiences with the first interviews and my ongoing revisiting of secondary sources, I realised the need to readjust the line of inquiry. First, the Peace Accords *per se* are not on the agenda in Guatemalan politics today.[26] Second, and as noted by Israel Ortiz (2004:92), the

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[26] The development and the stalling of the Peace Accords are discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

evangelical members of Congress do not seem to diverge from the documented trend characterising most members of the Guatemalan Congress, which is the extraordinary low degree of party discipline in terms of expressed ideology and voting patterns. This could have served to affirm my hypothesis that the evangelical religion trumps other political identities. However, these same members of Congress did not express much coherence in terms of a religion-based identity either. In fact, these interviews rather served to illustrate the diversity of the category 'evangelical' as identity, also amongst the political elites, as well as providing examples of how 'evangelicals' and 'the evangelical church' are spoken of and referred to more generally in political arenas.

Non-governmental organisations (evangelical and non-evangelical)

Interviewing professionals working in the NGO sector provided various (remarkably uniform) presentations of what distinguishes evangelical organisations from non-evangelical organisations working 'on the ground', providing services to the citizenry alongside other NGOs and private foundations.[27] Again, since these interviews ran parallel to the interviews with the evangelical pastors and my readings of material on the *obra social* of evangelical churches and individuals, I took the opportunity to check on my interpretation of both actual episodes, like the 1976 earthquake, and of the alliances (and non-alliances) made amongst organisations in recent history. From these interviews, I also developed a more nuanced understanding of the concept of *ecumenism*,[28] and how some Protestant organisations frequently ally with other faith-based organisations as well as non-religious organisations (such as the 'Conference of evangelical churches in Guatemala', CIEDEG), whereas others (like most of the churches affiliated with the AEG) take a clear stance against such inter-religious recognition and collaboration. Further, in the literature and in reports produced by and for the NGO sector, the CIEDEG comes across as a key actor in the NGO sector in Guatemala, with a large and international set of partners and donors. However, from

[27] Contacts within Guatemala's large NGO community contacts were made via previous work experiences and colleagues, primarily via Save the Children, Norwegian Church Aid, and the Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala City. ─

[28] This concept is elaborated in more detail in Chapter 5

the interviews I learned that their ecumenical perspectives and work methods are not representative of the great majority of independent evangelical organisations and individuals working in the local communities, which are typically not concerned about placing themselves and their work in larger political debates (see Chapter 6 for analyses of the different ways of working with service provision). Information provided by interviewees from the NGO sector was further backed up by conversations with academics working on these topics, including anthropologist Kevin O'Neill, who generously shared of his long experience from the field, and particularly from his work on evangelical rehabilitation centres in Guatemala City.

From the interviews with church members and volunteers, and members of the NGO sector, there emerged a contrasting picture of the evangelical churches and their *obra social*; on the one hand, that this is widespread, covers many sectors, and is conducted in numerous ways. On the other hand, evangelical organisations are *perceived* as operating in very similar ways, presented as clearly distinct from the operations of the non-evangelical organisations. Jointly, the insights deriving from these interviews fed directly into the development of this research's 'two-level approach' – by providing empirical examples of the kind of work evangelical churches do (and do not do) at the local and the central level; how this is well-known and related to by other actors in the field, as well as by ordinary members of the public, and also by affirming that the evangelical organisations, notwithstanding their heterogeneous character, are spoken of as if were they *one type* of organisation.

As mentioned above, for this study I personally have not done ethnographic research in evangelical organisations, and I have only conducted a small number of interviews with leaders and volunteers from such organisations. Even though this reflects time and budgetary restrictions, it must be underlined that the priority *not* to include this dimension in the field research was also grounded in this project's analytical framework. Recognising the great diversity in how such organisations operate, in terms of how and where they work, their sheer size, their relation to external donors and/or churches, I knew that neither making a selection, nor trying to cover them all would serve the analytical purposes set for this research. Instead, I have

focused on the diversity in itself, and attempted to identify the sectors where most of them operate, as well as the *types* of services they provide. A deeper personal (experience-based) knowledge of more types of organisations, how they operate and, particularly, how they are received and perceived in the public would certainly have strengthened this part of the analysis. However, I have been able to draw on excellent ethnographic analyses from scholars like Robert Brenneman (2012, 2015), Virginia Garrard Burnett (1998, 2010); Deborah Levenson (2002, 2011), and Kevin O'Neill (2010a, 2012, 2015), whose material and reflections have contributed considerably to my own understanding and analyses. In addition, the social work and 'missions' of the larger evangelical churches in the Guatemalan country side are thoroughly documented on their websites and in interviews where pastors and volunteers share their reflections on the work they do, why they engage in this kind of work, and who the target groups are.

In addition to representatives from these main categories, I also interviewed various academics and journalists, engaging them in conversations about the current political situation, on the balance of power in the Guatemalan polity and its central stakeholders, as well as their reflections on the position of the evangelical church vis-à-vis the state. In a way these interviews resemble 'expert interviews' where the interviewee is selected with the aim of generating concrete, professional or occupational knowledge. However, I was equally interested in learning how these well-informed professionals *portrayed* the Protestant religion and its manifestations in national politics.

Summing up, the 'oral data' accessed in Guatemala (the observations and the interviews), have served to improve and develop my own understanding of the context in which I situated my research, as well as enabling me to identify the use and meaning of concepts central to the analysis. In particular, the interviews became the main source for understanding of the meaning of religious terminology in the Guatemalan political context, which has fed directly into this thesis' conceptualisation of 'the evangelical church' as *one* factor in Guatemalan politics. Another example of how the interviews have served the analysis is how the evangelical leaders describe the

presence of evangelical churches and organisations in 'all spheres of society', and how this *omnipresence* makes the evangelical church relevant for 'all policy areas' (Morales 2012 interview). These interpretations of the relevance of the evangelical church inspired me to examine more closely the types of presence on the ground and which services they provide the population, as well as how these are perceived and used by local and central political authorities. As a result I incorporated the analytical distinction between these two levels, the local and the central, in the analytical framework, with the objective of analysing the interaction between them (see Chapter 2). Lastly, and as mentioned above, since the field research was conducted in two time periods I learned from the changes in the interviewees' experiences from the direct presence of evangelical leaders and the AEG in national politics. Several of them expressed disappointment and disillusionment on how the increased presence of evangelical politicians and interests groups in Guatemalan politics during the administration of President Pérez Molina (2012– 2015) had not been accompanied by an overall improvement in people's lives, or by more ethical behaviour on the part of the country's top officials.

Written texts

I have described and stressed the importance of the *oral* data accessed primarily through interviews, conversations, evangelical sermons, and other activities in Guatemala. During my research stays I also collected numerous written texts that have complemented my understanding of the religious and the political context in today's Guatemala – and the interactions between them. These texts fall into two categories: church material and other evangelical texts, and official and semi-official political documents and reports.

Documents and text material from evangelical churches and institutions

Regular visits to the evangelical churches provided me with a wide array of material aimed at the church-goers, including monthly bulletins, reports from church social work, advertisements for their school and nursery services, and information on courses organised by the church, on topics such as finance management and preparation for marriage. I have also collected less conventional text samples from these churches, like the different kinds of envelopes distributed during sermons in which the churchgoers are to place their *diezmos*. Jointly, these have provided essential insights into the wide array of activities and programmes offered by the different churches, as well as the language and religious references used in describing them.

Most of the largest evangelical churches are equipped with bookshops which, in addition to the books written by the churches' own pastors, contain a selection of national and international evangelical literature, CD recordings of popular sermons, and various kinds of religious decorations, toys and gifts. In addition to noting the particular kinds of items sold in these shops, I also took the opportunity to engage in conversation with the shop keepers for advice and information about the most popular items, and to purchase written and oral material that would have been difficult to access elsewhere.[29] The churches and their bookshops also distribute evangelical newspapers and magazines that have proven very useful sources of information for their portrayal of current events in Guatemalan politics and society, interviews with evangelical leaders and organisations, and wide coverage of activities of evangelical churches and pastoral networks. Additionally, I was granted access to the archives in one of these newspapers, *La Palabra* ('The Word')*,* which I found valuable as an alternative source of information on central recent political events in Guatemala, such as coverage of the 2011 election campaign, and the popular uprising in Totonicapán in 2012. This kind of information has particularly served my analysis of the evangelical presence and position in Guatemalan political arenas, as presented in Chapters 5 and 7.

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[29] Such titles included *El Matrimonio Sano* ('The healthy marriage'), *Discipulando las naciones* ('turning nations into *disciples'*), and *Mensajes de Transformación* ('messages of transformation'). For a detailed account of the evangelical bookshops in Guatemala City, see Rocha (2012).

In addition, from these evangelical magazines I learned which pastors were active participants in evangelical events and discussions also outside their own churches, as well as getting information about the various pastoral networks that operate in Guatemala. This assisted me in identifying interviewees, and also left me better prepared for the interviews with evangelical pastors, as I could ask more directly about certain networks, leaders, and events, and be better equipped for interpreting and taking part in the evangelical rhetoric.

'Interactive texts': Internet and social media channels

The large evangelical churches in Guatemala are highly innovative in their use of media technologies, which have come to include the Internet and social media fora such as Twitter, Facebook, and personal blogs. In this they follow in the footsteps of evangelical churches in the USA, which have practised tele-evangelisation for decades.[30] On the one hand, these practices are highly advantageous for the researcher, facilitating the gathering of information while diversifying the sources of information. Following the accounts of evangelical churches, pastors, TV channels, and organisations has enabled me to monitor the public messages of these individual and institutions, also from Norway. In particular, it has been of interest to follow which events have been commented upon, and which have *not*. Furthermore, the Facebook pages of churches and pastors are not used solely for distributing information, sermons, and practical messages: they have become arenas for interaction among evangelicals. For me, being able to follow the discussions and feedback has been highly valuable for keeping updated on discussed topics and the terminology used by believers in referring to themselves, their churches, and national politics.[31] As written sources, such texts require special caution as to the validity of the data accessed. Great uncertainty surrounds the audience and the overall reach of these messages, as numbers of 'followers' and 'likes' can be manipulated. Also, most evangelical

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[30] For a general overview of evangelical churches' use of the media, see for example Smith (2009), and Smith and Campos (2005, 2012).

[31] See also Lende's reflections on Pentecostal churches' use of the internet and how this can be applied for analytical purposes (Lende 2015: 26–27)

churches in Guatemala lack access to the advanced communication channels used by the better-funded churches 'Casa de Dios' and 'La Fraternidad Cristinana', and rely on more traditional channels like the radio. The data deriving from these interactive sources must therefore be recognised as representing only a certain segment of the evangelical messages distributed in Guatemala. However, for this project, the ways in which the megachurches use these advanced communication strategies is in itself a relevant aspect, exemplifying how they target only certain segments of the population.

In general I would argue that researchers can benefit greatly from the evangelical churches' strong emphasis on disseminating their message as widely as possible, and their innovative approach to spreading the spoken and written word. Evangelical messages can be found in places on bus windows, on taxi business cards, in the fast-food chains, and in job advertisements. The challenge is how to interpret and analyse such messages and their distributors. For my research such sources have particularly served to confirm my 'assumptions' about how the evangelical message is 'everywhere' in the Guatemalan public sphere: in very different forms and with very different senders, but all clearly recognisable and distinct from Catholic messages.

Official political documents and media archives

In addition to the documents provided by my evangelical informants, I also received various useful documents from other respondents, including annual and thematic reports from NGOs and think-tanks, political pamphlets, manifestoes and party programmes, and academic articles and theses. I spent numerous hours at the national newspaper archives, the *Hemeroteca,* in Guatemala City, consulting national newspapers for coverage of key events in recent Guatemalan political history, always with a keen eye for entries by and of evangelical representatives.[32] These searches

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[32] Most of Guatemala's national newspapers have functional and accessible websites, which I have followed throughout this research project. Recent years have also seen an upsurge in independent, internet-based media, and consulting these online publications such as *Plaza Pública* and *Nómada* has been valuable for innovative and independent analysis of current political affairs.

proved particularly useful the analysis of the election campaign of Serrano Elías in 1990 and the referendum on the constitutional reforms in 1999, both presented in Chapter 4. These are events that have been widely covered in the general literature on Guatemalan politics, but with less attention to the presence and participation of evangelical organisations or campaigns. I learned much about the religious dimensions of these events from reading the paid advertisements from organisations such as the AEG and other religious networks, and opinion pieces by evangelicals and non-evangelicals commenting on each other's biases. In addition to the coverage and opinion pieces on these events as they occurred, this review of media coverage proved valuable for analysing the differences – and similarities – in the naming of Protestant, Pentecostal and evangelical churches in recent decades. These data were later applied in triangulating the extensive secondary literature in the field of Guatemala's recent political history.

Controversies

On a final note, let me address some challenges concerning the written sources describing the 17 months with Ríos Montt as head of state. The largest proportion of reports, scholarly articles, and witness accounts tell of an intensification of atrocities carried out by the armed forces, directly targeting the indigenous Mayan populations through scorched-earth tactics, massacres and disappearances.[33] At the time of this writing this (Autumn 2015), the now 89-year-old evangelical general is again awaiting trial, accused of engineering genocide against his own people.[34] However, for this thesis, I have also consulted a very different literature, written by the General's companions from the military and from his church, 'Verbo'. Needless to say, this literature gives a very different account of events – blaming much (all) of the conflict on the guerrillas, focusing on Ríos Montt's intentions of changing the hearts and minds of all Guatemalans, purging the country of corruption, achieving law and order,

[33] These accounts are covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

[34] As of November 2015, the trial is scheduled for January 2016, but to be held behind closed doors, and without the personal presence of Ríos Montt, who has been found mentally incapable of participating in his own trial.

and saving the indigenous population from the godless Marxists.[35] I have consulted these sources primarily in order to identify people and organisations involved in the Ríos Montt government and operations, as well as to familiarise myself with the terminology and alternative accounts of events. Moreover, the deeply polarised positions regarding the accounts of the civil war re-emerged on Guatemala's public scene during the long processes leading up to the first trial in 2013.[36] This polemic was therefore central during the time I conducted this research, clearly evident in the national media and in political discussions. In some interviews with evangelical churchgoers and politicians, I was presented with similar favourable portrayals of Ríos Montt's persona and regime.

Concluding remarks

The methodological approach and the analytical framework adapted for this research are both directly inspired by my experiences and reflections from the research stays in Guatemala, which for that reasons has been given considerable attention here. In this chapter I have elaborated on how I identify with research traditions that see the researcher's identity intertwined with her access to interview respondents and other data in the field. With this detailed account of how I have conducted the research for this thesis, where, with whom, and why, I have aimed at setting the scene for the following chapters in a way that will assist the reader to follow my analyses and the drawing of conclusions as regard the relationship between religion and politics in Guatemala today.

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[35] See in particular *Efraín Ríos Montt. Servant or Dictator?* (Anfuso and Sczepanski 1984)

[36] In this period, the old ruling coalition (military and business) publicly positioned themselves as opponents of the genocide accusation, accusing the 'other side' (left-wing 'terrorist' (the new name for the ex-guerrillas), intellectuals, international NGOs and embassies, and radical Catholic bishops and priests) of splitting the country and preventing peace and progress. See in particular the publications of the *Fundación contra el terrorismo* available at http://fundacioncontraelterrorismo2013.blogspot.com

Chapter 4

Becoming political: Critical periods in the trajectory of the political position of the 'evangelical church'

In the period under study here (1976–2015), the evangelical church and its representatives have moved from an explicitly *a*political position to actively taking part in various political arenas, including the executive branch of government. Here, I analyse this as a process of 'becoming political', arguing that, in order to understand the position held by the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics today it is important to identify and analyse concrete moments and periods in the recent past, which have been critical for how and on which arenas the evangelical church has been involved in politics. In developing this approach I have drawn inspiration from the critical juncture framework as well as the 'genealogic approach.' The former led me to focus on the relationship between the state and the evangelical church as an 'institutional setting' that has emerged through decision-making under 'conditions of uncertainty' (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007:354). Further, that the conditions for the 'options available during critical junctures, as well as the choices made by actors, are typically rooted in prior events and processes' (Mahoney 2001:7). In the genealogic approach I found further epistemological guidance for examining how contemporary practices and institutions have emerged out of specific conflicts, alliances, and exercises of power in the past, and this approach's specific focus *power relations*. As described by Garland (2014: 372): 'its intent is to problematize the present by revealing the power relations upon which it depends and the contingent processes that have brought it into being.'

In the present analysis I focus on periods in Guatemala's recent political history that, in my view, have triggered a *change* in how and in which arenas the evangelical church relates to national politics, and vice-versa. Each period identified is meant to

represent a brief period of time when the probability of a change in the relationship between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state was 'substantially heightened' (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 348).[1] I have identified the following periods as 'critical': 1) the 1976 earthquake and its aftermath; 2) the government and governing of General Ríos Montt; 3) political opening and multiparty elections; and 4) the peace process. These represent critical periods in recent Guatemalan history in which many social and political relations changed, or might have changed. I see tracing the trajectory of the evangelical church and main evangelical actors during these periods as central to understanding the political presence and position of the evangelical church as political factor today.

As presented in Chapter 2, a central component of the analytical framework of this thesis is based on Nikolas Rose's concept of 'locales', which I let serve as an analytical key to identify and analyse evangelical presence in different sectors of civil and political society (Rose 1999; see also Chapter 2). Rose's concept 'locales' is in this thesis referred to as 'arenas', and I distinguish between arenas at the local and the central level. In this chapter, I highlight how at each 'critical period' evangelical churches and individuals have entered and established a presence on *new* arenas.

Hence, this chapter seeks to explain how the growth of Protestantism has been accompanied by a political presence of 'the evangelical church'; further, if and how the development of the relationship between 'the evangelical church' and the Guatemalan state has resulted in a *normalisation* of the presence of the evangelical church in certain sectors in Guatemalan politics. This analysis will also serve to illustrate how one particular segment of the evangelical church became part of a particular political project: the Evangelical Alliance (AEG) and its positioning alongside the traditional elites in Guatemalan politics. All in all, the processes analysed in this chapter will serve to illustrate how what was initially referred to as ad

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[1] This framing of the 'critical periods' draws on Collier and Collier's definition of 'critical junctures' as 'a period of significant change' in the history of a given country or political unit which is 'hypothesised to produce distinct legacies' (Collier and Collier 1991:29). However, I do not follow a 'critical juncture framework' as such.

hoc religious representatives (whether called Pentecostals, Protestants, Evangelicals or fanatics) became established as *one* factor, with *one* name: 'the evangelical church.'

My presentation of each 'critical period' has three central components: First, I briefly present the political and religious context and an empirical description of the specific historical event. Second, I identify the arenas into which the evangelical church entered during the period in question. And third, I present what I see as the *lasting legacies* from the particular period, focusing on the established political presence of the evangelical church and its representatives.

The 1976 earthquake

Functioning as a catalyst for already-existing tensions, natural disasters such as earthquakes can trigger changes in a country's social and political organisation (Garrard-Burnett 2009b; Gawronski and Olson 2013). As noted by Buchenau and Johnson (2009: 5), in addition to the physical destruction of homes, infrastructure, government and commerce, in the recovery from an earthquake 'long-settled arrangements among families, classes, and institutions are tested and challenged in profound ways'.

This is in many ways what happened in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that hit Guatemala in 1976 (Berryman 1984: 24). Ever since 1960, the country had been in a state of *de facto* civil war. Guerrilla factions were fighting the state-led counterinsurgency campaign, increasingly leading to massive repression of the civilian population, mostly at the hands of the armed forces (CEH 1999; ODHAG 1999). Guatemala had had various military governments since 1954, and was in 1976 led by General Kjell Laugerud García, who had come to power through a highly fraudulent election in which most political parties had been banned from participating (Jonas 1991). Several authors hold that the earthquake hit at a time when the guerrillas had already started to reorganise among sectors not previously incorporated in the armed struggle, most importantly the indigenous population. In the aftermath of the

earthquake, social movements inspired by Liberation Theology were to expand in numbers and visibility, and Catholic priests and lay-people increasingly took part in the outspoken opposition and resistance to the regime (see Berryman 1984, 1995; Falla 2001; Garrard-Burnett 2009b; and Levenson 2002).

In the accounts of Protestantism and the evangelical church in Guatemala, the 1976 earthquake is seen primarily as a catalyst for numerical growth, in the number of converts and in churches. Scholars place varying emphasis on whether this was the result of deliberate strategies by foreign missionaries, or of people searching for hope and shelter in the growing number of neighbourhood churches (Annis 1987:79; Garrard-Burnett 1998; Gooren: 2001: 184–185; Martin 1990: 92; Steigenga 1994:156; Stoll 1990:14). The main focus here is not so much on the growth, but on how the greater number of churches and the presence of evangelical missions across the country affected the role and the image of the evangelical church in political and civil society. Whereas Protestant missionaries had operated in Guatemala since the late 1800s, most of these had been established in remote highland villages, where they organised literacy or health programmes as part of their missionary activities (Garrard-Burnett 1998). Since the mid-1960s there had been a notable increase in the number of converts to Protestantism, which has been seen in relation to an intensification of missionary efforts and several 'evangelisation campaigns', as well as the worsening social and economic situation for most of the population during the civil war (Garrard-Burnett 1998; Steigenga 2001; Stoll 1993; Wilson 1997). The post-earthquake 'massive evangelical growth' should therefore be recognised as a process already underway – but what was about to change was the visibility of the evangelical churches as providers of social services and shelter across the country, or what I here call 'service provision' at the local level, soon to be reflected at the central, political level.

'An act of God'[2]

The devastating earthquake that hit Guatemala on 4 February 1976 literally left the
Guatemalan ground(s) open for new civil and political actors to enter. The earthquake
measured 7.5 on the Richter scale, with its epicentre in Chimaltenango, 54 km west of
Guatemala City. The earthquake hit at 3 o'clock in the morning, causing enormous
damage to people, housing and infrastructure. By official counts, 22 545 people were
killed, three times as many were injured, and more than one million were left homeless
(Gawronski and Olson 2013; Garrard Burnett 2009b: 157; Levenson 2002:60).[3] In the
ensuing weeks, a wide array of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs)
responded to the needs of the Guatemalan people, shipping emergency materials and
personnel, and establishing emergency relief programmes across the country.[4] A
considerable number of these were Protestant organisations and church-based aid
agencies, mostly from North America (Garrard-Burnett 2009b: 165; Levenson 2002:
62; Wilson 1997: 140).[5]

The political response

The government of Kjell Laugerud García welcomed international aid, but
immediately sought to control the coordination of the international operations. It

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[2] Attributing the earthquake to a divine plan, and even God's punishment for the unrest in the country,
was common among both evangelicals and Catholics. On the evening of 4 September, the Archbishop
of Guatemala, Mario Casariego, made an announcement where he stated that God had placed his
finger on Guatemala, and the earthquake was a punishment for all the social protests (Garrard-Burnett
2009b: 181,n37; Levenson 2002: 64)

[3] As is often the case in such catastrophes, the earthquake hit Guatemala's already impoverished
population disproportionately, leading Susan Jonas to call it a 'class quake' (1991: 124).

[4] Many of these INGOs remain in the country today.

[5] The earthquake led to an upsurge in the formation of grassroots movements and initiatives from civil
society including labour unions and peasants' organisations, which are considered to have been highly
influential in the last years of the civil war and the transition to civilian government (See Berryman
(1984: 24–34); Garrard–Burnett (2009b); Gawronski and Olson (2013); Jonas (1991: 126–127);
Levenson (2002, 2013) for detailed accounts of the many civil society organisations in the aftermath
of the earthquake).

seems likely, as various analysts have held, that the government's prompt response was at least partly driven by the desire to preclude the mobilisation of progressive social and political movements (see for example Garrard-Burnett 2009b; Gawronski and Olson 2013; Levenson 2002). One governmental strategy was to establish the National Reconstruction Committee ('La Comité para Reconstrucción Nacional', CRN), an emergency and development programme through which all aid was to be carefully controlled in cooperation with the military. The CRN retained its role as coordinator of relief efforts for several years after the earthquake (Garrard-Burnett 1998:120–121; Levenson 2002:62–63; Melander 1999:75). Deborah Levenson argues that in the aftermath of the earthquake the CRN became and remained 'one of the most important national institutions' and that officials within the CRN saw it as a ministry of development (Levenson 2002: 63). Further, she states that even though it is dubious whether the military's strategy of channelling all aid had resulted in any 'real friends in the villages and towns (…) it was the case that the military strengthened its reach into the countryside and barrios of the city where previously it had little connection' (Levenson 2002:63). As also argued by Garrard-Burnett, this way of placing the military in charge of civilian life can be seen as a harbinger of what to come during the insurgency campaigns of the late 1970s and early 1980s (Garrard-Burnett 2009b: 165; Levenson 2002: 62).

The Protestant Response[6]

Within few weeks following the earthquake a dozen large foreign Protestant relief agencies, most of them affiliated with mainline US denominations, had arrived in Guatemala (Garrard-Burnett 1998:121).[7] Many of these organisations clearly had a

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[6] As explained in Chapter 2, in the literature it is common to refer to the Protestant population in Guatemala by the term 'evangelicals'. In the following I use 'Protestant' when referring to international churches and missions, and use 'evangelical' as a collective term for all Guatemalan non-Catholic Christians.

[7] Among these was a delegation from 'Gospel Outreach', a US denomination that had already established missions in Guatemala. In the aftermath of the earthquake 'Verbo' was established as a

twofold strategy for their programmes, aimed at assisting in the physical but also the spiritual rebuilding of Guatemala: 'Though their primary object at this point was to provide physical relief to the stricken, their long-term objective was to "saturate with Scripture," winning converts by word and example' (Garrard-Burnett 1998:121). International Protestant organisations and churches took on the role of assisting local evangelical churches in their rebuilding of members' homes and church buildings, while also establishing new missions and projects in the affected areas. There was great diversity as to both theological base and emergency relief strategies among these organisations.[8] Here it is of greatest relevance to note that many of the arriving organisations belonged to churches and organisations that can be categorised as charismatic or *neo*pentecostal. Whereas most of the Protestant churches established in Guatemala prior to the earthquake were 'historical' or 'Presbyterian' in orientation, the years following the earthquake saw the emergence of Protestant churches that were clearly more conservative and even fundamentalist in character, following the theological base of their North American sister churches (Alonso 1998: 203) (see Chapter 2 for an overview of the variants of Protestantism in Guatemala). As will be elaborated below, these churches proved more attractive to Guatemala's upper classes than had the historical Protestant denominations.

The response of the local evangelical churches to the tragedy was prompt, but somewhat limited (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 120). The focus was mostly on rebuilding members' houses and churches, and much of their work was done in partnership with the larger Protestant aid agencies and mission groups, which provided funding, material, and personnel for local operations. Within days of the earthquake the AEG tried to establish an interdenominational emergency relief committee in order to coordinate local emergency relief efforts; however, this failed due to inter-church

Guatemalan sister organisation of Gospel Outreach. 'Verbo' soon became one of the most (in)famous evangelical churches, first and foremost for being the church of the future dictator, General Ríos Montt (see below).

[8] See Melander (1999: 75) for reflections on the different intentions between US church-based missions, versus independent *parachurch* agencies

rivalry and different positions towards ecumenicalism as the principle for inter-religious cooperation (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 121). In the following, the AEG's outspoken negative position towards ecumenically based cooperation will be presented as a key characteristic of this organisation compared to other evangelical organisations (see below). Much of the post-earthquake relief work by international and national Protestant churches and organisations was instead coordinated by a newly established Protestant umbrella organisation, the Christian Council of Development Agencies ('Consejo Cristiano de Agencias de Dessarrollo', CONCAD). It is worth noting that some smaller, church-based groups of conservative and fundamentalist US denominations chose to not take part in this cooperation, because they regarded some of the partner organisations in CONCAD as being too liberal (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 121).

The sudden destruction and emergent needs following the earthquake has been presented as the 'awakening' of the social concern in Guatemala's evangelical churches, bringing in 'a new vision for service came into the church' (evangelical theologian David Suazo 1999:103, cited in Ortíz 2007: 57). However, the evangelical emergency programmes were also criticised for taking advantage of the situation, often formulated as *lámina por ánima* ('a soul for a tin roof') (Levenson 2002:64; Garrard-Burnett 1998: 121). This expression refers to the way evangelical churches and Protestant aid agencies distributed the housing material that was most in demand in post-earthquake reconstruction mostly to its own members and supporters, indicating that the evangelicals were combining their role as saving lives with 'saving souls.' The expression 'the invasion of the sects' also emerged from this period, alluding to how Protestant missionary activities were seen as a part of a US strategy for countering the influence the Catholic popular churches and the spread of liberation theology (Steigenga 2001:1, see also Chapter 1 in this thesis).[9]

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[9] Later studies have found that many of the new churches registered as having started in this period were splits from existing (Guatemalan) ones, and hence not the direct result of the efforts of North American missions (Melander 1999:73–74)).

Arenas

In general, the devastations of the earthquake can be said to have created many *more* arenas for evangelical churches and their representatives to enter and establish a presence. First and foremost this is related to the increase in the number of evangelical churches and foreign and national Protestant organisations, responding to the acute needs of the affected population. Here it is argued that this presence at the local level then served to open up for an increased presence in political arenas at the central level, based on the roles and experiences from the local communities. In the following I concentrate on the *new* arenas – arenas where evangelical churches had not previously had any noteworthy presence.

Guatemala City

In addition to the overall increase in number of Protestant missionaries, pastors and lay-people in Guatemala, the earthquake brought evangelical churches and organisations to areas where they had no prior operations (Melander 1999:74). In particular, the earthquake triggered a massive flux of migrants from rural areas to the capital city. In the weeks and months following the earthquake, 50 000 people migrated to Guatemala City, settling in slums on the outskirts (Jonas 1991:124). Migrants in search of shelter, food, and jobs – all in short supply – found support from evangelical mission stations and in the small ad-hoc evangelical churches that popped up in the *barrios* of the capital city. Where the Catholic Church generally failed to respond, due to both a total lack of presence and its hierarchical structure, the new evangelical churches took on the role as provider of basic services (O'Neill 2010a: 22–23). Garrard-Burnett (1998: 122) argues that these evangelical churches came to represented 'one of the few forms of urban voluntary associations accessible to low-income families'. Evangelical-run organisations such as Alcoholic Anonymous, youth groups, and women's groups often operated in church premises (which could be a garage, a tent, or in a private house), and provided the newcomers with supportive

relationships and networks in an otherwise vulnerable situation (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 122–123).

Affluent neighbourhoods

Along with the many missionaries and church-based volunteers travelling to Guatemala to assist in the reconstruction work came also the new 'brand' of evangelical churches, the *neo*pentecostal churches. These were typically established in the better-off areas of Guatemala City, in large and comfortable buildings, providing well-organised services to their members, such as childcare facilities and primary and secondary education. The theological profile of these churches has been referred to as 'prosperity theology' (Garrard-Burnett 2012). These churches became popular first and foremost among Guatemala's upper class, which meant that the evangelical church had thereby increased its scope not only geographically but also in socio-economic terms (Freston 2001: 266; Stoll 1994: 101).

One of the clearest examples of the demographic expansion of the evangelical churches is the path taken by the 'Iglesia Cristiana Verbo', or 'Church of the Word', born in the aftermath of the earthquake. A mission from the US-based evangelical denomination the Gospel Outreach arrived Guatemala within weeks of the earthquake, bringing material and financial assistance to the victims. The missionaries worked primarily with reconstruction, but, as is evident from Verbo's own accounts, the missionaries did not neglect the opportunity 'to share the love of God' (Verbo 2015). Unlike other missions that mostly collaborated with local churches, the Gospel Outreach established its own 'home churches' in affected low-income neighbourhoods around Guatemala City, often headed by local Guatemalans (Verbo 2015; Stoll 1990: 184). The leader of the mission, Carlos Ramírez,[10] had soon established a network of local churches named *Verbo* as a formalisation of the evangelisation efforts of the

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[10] Ramírez was born in Colombia, but lived in the USA, where he experienced his 'awakening' (Melander 1999:114).

Gospel Outreach missionaries (Melander 1999: 114). The 'Casa Verbo'[11] was constructed in the affluent zone 16 in Guatemala City, becoming the first of the urban, neopentecostal churches. The theological emphasis on morality, the 'tangible rewards of right living', and being filled with the Holy Spirit preached by the US-trained missionaries' provided meaning for the urban, affluent part of the Guatemalan population a time when 'their way of life looked increasingly uncertain' (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 56; see also Stoll 1990: 184–185).[12] In present-day Guatemala, evangelical churches have maintained their presence in the urban landscapes. In the megachurches of Guatemala City, practices and preaching are still considered to be in line with the neopentecostal theological doctrine, for a membership drawn primarily from the higher social strata of Guatemalan society. Evangelical churches have thereby maintained their presence in the arenas entered in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Legacy: Evangelical–political partnership in service provision

The devastations of the earthquake had led to both an increase in the number of evangelical churches and organisations, and an expansion as to where they operated, which services they provided, and for whom. The perhaps most evident legacy of this critical period is how substantially more people than before the earthquake had become aware of the work and the preaching of protestant missionaries and evangelical pastors. By providing people with both material and psychological assistance, evangelical churches and organisations gained overall popularity and trust, also in political circles.

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[11] 'Casa Verbo' was established as the 'mother church' of all the smaller home-churches (Melander 1999: 115)

[12] Melander describes in detail how the targeting of the upper classes was a well-planned strategy on the part of the elders in 'Verbo'. 'Saved' well-known (and well-off) individuals were more likely to bring others with them in faith. For further description of Verbo's strategies and membership base see Garrard-Burnett (2010:56–57), Melander (1999: 114–115), and Stoll (1990: 182–185).

Tracing the changes in the relationship between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state in this period, it is essential to consider how the earthquake led to changes in the political position of the Catholic Church. The military governments of the 1970s had grown increasingly suspicious of the social engagement of the segments of the Catholic Church that took great inspiration from the writings and teachings of liberation theologians such as Gutierrez (Berryman 1994; Levenson 2002; Garrard-Burnet 2009b). In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, liberationalist clergy saw the earthquake as a 'call to action on behalf of social justice' (Garrard-Burnett 2009b:170–171) and many engaged directly in activities aimed at promoting the rights of the poor, such as land invasion movements. This demonstrated a clear separation between the popular church at the grassroots level and the Catholic Church as an institution.[13] The institutional Catholic Church had not responded to the immediate needs on the ground, due to lack of presence in the affected areas, its hierarchical structure, as well as a leadership unwilling to engage in projects beyond the traditional sorts of Catholic charity (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 123).[14] This stood in sharp contrast to the operations of the evangelical churches and agencies, which were steadily initiating programmes and activities across the country, without engaging in any form of political activism.

In the emergency situation in the aftermath of the earthquake, the Guatemalan government recognised and welcomed the financial and organisational strength of the Protestant relief agencies and the local evangelical churches. In order to continue their missions, these had accepted the rules and restrictions set by the government and cooperated with the military in distributing food and shelter to the population. The CRN had entrusted evangelical churches with the task of reconstruction and shelter, for example by authorising special priority for construction materials to evangelical

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[13] For a presentation of the response(s) of the Catholic Church to the earthquake see Berryman (1984: 24–33; and Garrard-Burnett (2009b).

[14] Garrard-Burnett attributes this position mainly to the Archbishop of Guatemala, Mario Casariego, who explicitly objected to humanitarian work beyond the traditional Catholic charities (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 123).

churches. The CRN thereby acknowledged the evangelical rationale of how reconstruction of evangelical churches and church-related relief correlated with community reconstruction (Garrard-Burnett 1998:120–121).

This kind of formal and informal cooperation between evangelical churches and the state was to be further strengthened during the government of Ríos Montt (1982–83), when evangelical missionaries and lay-people (foreign and nationals) were directly involved in providing goods and services to people in military-controlled areas. Such cooperation then could draw on experiences from the reconstruction work following the earthquake. The increased presence and activities of evangelical churches on the local level and the direct cooperation with central government in the aftermath of the earthquake thus contributed to the *normalisation* of evangelical churches and representatives as providers of basic services. In a way, the 'Verbo' church can also be considered a legacy in itself. Not present before the earthquake, it had soon established various branches, reaching both the very poor and the very rich with messages and assistance. And most notably, *Verbo* was the spiritual home of the General and soon-to-be dictator Efraín Ríos Montt.

The government of Efraín Ríos Montt (1982–83)

The Ríos Montt regime is associated with horrific massacres and great human suffering, and a long-lasting legacy of sociocultural and political confrontation and polarisation.[15] In this section I concentrate on how Ríos Montt's entry into the presidential palace in 1982 constitutes a critical period in the trajectory of the

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[15] Of the extensive scholarship on the topic, see for example the *Never Again* report from the truth commission led by the human rights office of the Catholic church (ODAHC 1998); the UN-supported Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH 1999); *Eternal Spring: Eternal Tyranny* (Simon 1988); *The Battle for Guatemala* (Jonas 1993); and *Massacre in the Jungle* (Falla 1994)

relationship between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state.[16] General Ríos Montt was the first evangelical to become head of state in Guatemala, and indeed in Latin America. Exactly how his religious affiliation affected his personal decision-making is beyond the scope of this analysis. However, during his term in office, several variants of formal and direct cooperation between the state and the evangelical church were initiated, many of which continued also after Ríos Montt had left the presidential palace.

It is believed that, by the early 1980s, roughly 25 per cent of the Guatemalan population adhered to some variant of Protestantism, a massive rise from 2 per cent in 1976 (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 56; Pew Research Center 2014). The growth in this period is mostly explained by the extreme hardships experienced by the great majority of Guatemalans towards the end of the 1970s.

The late 1970s and early 1980s were by far the most violent years of Guatemala's civil war. The military government led by General Romero Lucas García (head of state, 1978–1982) had intensified the counterinsurgency campaigns and employed paramilitary groups and death squads to control and suppress the population. As mentioned, in the wake of the 1976 earthquake there had been an increase in popular participation in civil organisations and political protest, and General Lucas and the armed forces responded with torture, assassinations, disappearances, and massacres, targeting first and foremost the civilian population (Garrard-Burnett 2010:45).[17] In addition, the military had interfered considerably in Guatemala's financial institutions, leading to a sharp decline in local and international investment and severely affecting key national industries. Such were the atrocities and

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[16] The religious dimension to Ríos Montt's governance has been most thoroughly analysed by historian Virginia Garrard-Burnett (*Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* 2010). Garrard-Burnett's analysis of Ríos Montt's speeches serves as an important source of information in this chapter; however, where possible, alternative sources have been consulted, including my own interviews.

[17] Jenifer Schirmer calls this development a shift from *selective* to *massive* killings (1998:41). It must be noted that the two military governments prior to Lucas' (Arana and Laugerud García) were also highly repressive and violent regimes (see in particular Jonas 1991 for detailed accounts of the counterinsurgency strategies of the military regimes since the 1970s).

chaos that even elements within the armed forces realised that the situation would have to change, if only in order to 'please' allies and business partners at home and abroad (Jonas 1991; Schirmer 1998). It is within this context one must understand the role of the next head of state, the born-again General Ríos Montt, who was to introduce a new rationale for the governing of the Guatemalan state.

The evangelical president: 'I know that God placed me here'[18]

On 23 March 1982, a group of young officers deposed General Romero Lucas García and announced the annulment of the recent rigged elections (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 138; Stoll 1990:187). A military junta presented itself as head of government, led by General Efraín Ríos Montt. His scant 17 months in office were to become the most violent period in Guatemala's civil war.[19] According to the narrative told by his supporters Ríos Montt himself had no prior knowledge of the plans for the coup, he was teaching at the primary school in his church when the officers called him to the presidential palace (Anfuso and Sczepanski 1984).[20] Ríos Montt was at the time a newly converted evangelical Christian, belonging to the 'Verbo' church in Guatemala City. According to his fellow officers, he had been chosen to lead the junta because of his military record and personal uprightness; they had not considered his religious affiliation as relevant for his new role as leader (Garrard-Burnett 2010:54–57, 1998: 138; Stoll 1990: 185–189). However, Ríos Montt certainly did. His first words to the nation on the eve of the coup were laden with religious and distinctively evangelical rhetoric, hitherto unfamiliar in Guatemalan political discourse: 'I am trusting my Lord

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[18] '*Sé que Dios me puso aquí',* Ríos Montt quoted in Garrard-Burnett (2010: 69), citing *Prensa Libre* (10 January 1983).

[19] During his first 100 days in office, detailed reports tell of at least 69 massacres of the civilian population (RHEMI 1998).

[20] Several researchers have cast doubts on this information (see Garrard-Burnett 1998: 139). However this account still bears relevance in the way it served to establish the narrative of Ríos Montt as being *called upon* to govern the country (Anfuso and Scepanski 1984)

and King to enlighten me (...) for He is the only One who gives or takes away my authority' (quoted in Anfuso and Sczepanski 1984:117). Within days, Ríos Montt introduced a weekly televised speech to the nation, where he stressed the need for moral reawakening and of every individual's personal responsibility for living in peace – with God, with the family, and then, with compatriots (see below for details).

As with most military-led coup governments, reintroducing a state of order and security was central for Ríos Montt's legitimacy as head of state (Garrard-Burnett 2010:60). Compared to its predecessors, the new regime soon proved to be clearer about its declared enemies, and state persecution became somewhat more predictable than during the Lucas García regime (Garrard-Burnett 2010:60). The most (in)famous military operation during Ríos Montt's presidency was the plan referred to as *Victoria 82*: 'a systematic and aggressive plan for the pacification of the highlands' (Garrard-Burnett 1998:147), aimed at completely eliminating the guerrillas as well as their support base. In line with the strategy of 'rifles and beans' ('*fusiles y frijoles*'), the population in the highlands was given the 'choice' between supporting the guerrillas (being killed), or collaborating with the army (being fed). From then on, the military interfered massively in what were termed 'zones of conflict' in the highlands, organising forced neighbour patrols, large-scale resettlement of whole villages, and the distribution of food, medical supplies and other basic necessities to villagers who had decided to collaborate (Garrard-Burnett 1998:147; Jonas 1991; Stoll 1993). The main partner in the development programme was the 'Foundation for aid to the Indigenous population', ('Fundación de Ayuda al Pueblo Indígena', FUNDAPI), a private, government-sanctioned organisation composed of several evangelical churches and agencies (see below).

Ríos Montt also initiated campaigns of a more moral character, seemingly targeting the widespread corruption in the state bureaucracy. One of the plans was internally referred to as 'Project David' after the Biblical King David (Anfuso and Sczepanski 1984: 151; Garrard-Burnett 1998:142). All state employees (like police officers, judges, and members of Congress) were obliged to officially denounce all sorts of corruption, stealing, and misconduct. The public were encouraged to denounce

public officials who broke these promises; posters with the text 'I don't steal, I don't rob, I don't abuse' were distributed across the country.[21] Such moral commands were a frequent topic in Ríos Montt's Sunday speeches, where he denounced corruption also in sectors previously left alone, such as private business, the military and politicians (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 143).

Arenas

During the Ríos Montt regime, the evangelical church expanded in both numbers and scope, which to a certain extent can be attributed the General's own evangelical affiliation and his network of fellow 'brothers', serving to open political doors and new arenas for certain evangelical churches, organisations, and individuals.

The Halls of Power

With Ríos Montt, the evangelical church entered the halls of power at the highest level, as the General invited several fellow evangelical 'seniors' to central positions in the state apparatus.[22] Shortly after the coup, Ríos Montt declared himself head of state, deposed his two fellow members of the military junta, and rearranged the structure and the composition of the military government (Garrard-Burnett 2010:58). Two seniors from his own church were appointed to specially created positions close to the president: Francisco Bianchi as 'secretary to the private affairs of the president' and Álvaro Contreras as the 'secretary of the president of the republic' (Anfuso and

[21] The image of a white hand holding up three fingers on a blue background, accompanied with the slogan *No robo, No miento, No abuso* was to become the logo of Ríos Montt's future political party, Guatemala's Republican Front (*Frente Republicano Guatemalteco,* FRG).

[22] Smith and Grenfell (1999:6) argue that the evangelicals invited to the halls of power were mostly from Ríos Montt's own church, so the state was not 'opened' to evangelicals in general. However, from interviews with former AEG leaders, Garrard-Burnett finds that Ríos Montt frequently invited evangelical pastors to 'presidential breakfasts' in the national palace, which indicates that at least to a certain degree he nurtured contacts with a range of evangelical authorities (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 140).

Sczepanski 1984: 103; Garrard-Burnett 2010: 57). According to Verbo's own accounts the church had decided to release the two elders from their duties at church after 'hours of prayerful discussion, stretching over a period of several days (…) Their primary work [would be] to walk in covenant with Ríos Montt, to speak openly and honestly with him in a spirit of love, and always to keep before him the principles of the Scripture' (Anfuso and Sczepanski 1984: 158). Ríos Montt also arranged weekly meetings with several seniors from Verbo (Anfuso and Sczepanski 1984: 158; Berryman 1994:120). After having dissolved Congress, he also appointed fellow-evangelical Jorge Serrano Elías as head of the newly formed Council of State (Garrard-Burnett 2010:57). Serrano Elías was then a leader in the neo-pentecostal Elim church, but in the history of Guatemalan politics, he is most known as President, 1991–1993 (see below). For the operations and 'development projects' in the Guatemalan highlands, Ríos Montt's government relied on the assistance of both national and international Protestant churches and missionaries. Fellow evangelical Alfred Kaltschmitt led FUNDAPI, and US citizen Harris Whitbeck was appointed as civilian advisor and personal representative in relief work (Guzaro and McComb 2010:160; Stoll 1990: 191).[23] In addition, many evangelical pastors were entrusted with positions of authority in the army-controlled areas in the highlands (Garrard-Burnett 2010:140).

Hence, Ríos Montt's entry into the executive led directly to the entry of several evangelical 'seniors' in political arenas, centrally and locally, merely by virtue of their being trusted, fellow evangelicals. This practice would come to affect the relationship between the evangelical church and the state.[24] On the one hand, several of these individuals stayed on in national politics. The most relevant for this analysis are Francisco Bianchi, who ran as presidential candidate in 1985, 1990, and 1999, and served as presidential advisor in several governments, and Jorge Serrano Elías,

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[23] Whitbeck was later to serve as Ríos Montt's running mate in the 1990 presidential elections (Freston 2001: 274).

[24] Chapters 5 and 7 examine how churches can be considered new arenas for network building and friendship, which can create new channels and opportunities for political participation and influence.

presidential candidate in 1985 and later President of the Republic (1991–93).[25] On the other hand, the close relationship has affected the room of manoeuvre for evangelical engagement in politics. In the aftermath of the Ríos Montt regime, many evangelicals spoke of being fed up with being blamed for his politics, and Verbo struggled for years to rid itself of its associations with the regime (Stoll 1990: 207).

Service provision in the highlands

Ríos Montt's entry to power came to signify a formalisation of the various forms of cooperation between the Guatemalan state and evangelical churches and organisations.

A central element of the *Victoria 82* plan for fighting the guerrillas and creating a 'New Guatemala' (Garrard-Burnett 2010) was combining counterinsurgency operations with development aid in the same territories, most of which were situated in the Ixil area in the Guatemalan highlands. The latter part of the plan was co-ordinated by the National Reconstruction Committee (CRN) established after the earthquake, still overseeing all public and private relief. Most of these 'development projects' were carried out by FUNDAPI,[26] the state-sanctioned relief organisation operated and staffed by evangelical churches and missionaries, largely funded by donations from religious charities and church groups in the USA.[27] The most prominent partners in FUNDAPI were Ríos Montt's church Verbo and their emergency aid group International Love Lift, the missionary organisation the Wycliffe Bible

[25] Ríos Montt himself also stayed on in national politics; although constitutionally banned from running for office, he remained an active, controversial and popular politician as leader of the FRG party, serving as member of Congress from 1990–2004, and then again from 2008-2012. During most of these years, Ríos Montt was also under investigation for his role in the massacres and disappearances during his presidency.

[26] Stoll lets an evangelical pastor and community leader in the Ixil region explain: 'When the aldeas [villages] began to surrender, the only aid committee was the one advised by FUNDAPI, which was supported by Ríos Montt. They sent sugar, beans and clothes' (quoted in Stoll 1993:175.

[27] The then director of FUNDAPI, Alfred Kaltschmitt, has described the organisation as a development project, funding its operations by support from international Protestant organisations, evangelical Guatemalans and business people 'interested in helping,' as well as some support from the government (transcript of witness statement from 16.04.2013, republished in *Plaza Pública* 2013a).

Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics, and the Carrol Berhorst Development Foundation. The latter two were US-registered Protestant charities (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 136–137; Melander 1999:172, 225; Stoll 1990:191–193). Anthropologist David Stoll has written extensively on the organisations and individuals involved in evangelical development aid in the Ixil region in the early 1980s. On the organisation of FUNDAPI he writes:

> Behorst personnel and the Summer Institute translators would serve as field agents, while the Word church [Verbo] would provide staff in the capital and raise funds in the United States (…) Providing food, medicine, clothing, shelter, and tools, the Word elders anticipated, would meet the needs of refugees, win their support for the new government, and create openings for evangelicalism (Stoll 1990:191–192).

The partnership between the Guatemalan state and these evangelical aid workers was thus based on their missionary activities in the region (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 136–139; Melander 1999: 225–226; Stoll 1990: 191–192); however, as partners in FUNDAPI these organisations came to be closely connected to the *Victoria 82* plan. Witness accounts from the newly established army-controlled model villages *(polos de desarrollo)* tell of how FUNDAPI trucks arriving with foodstuffs and other emergency assistance were often accompanied by foreign (US) missionaries (Guzaro and McComb 2010:181). Even though FUNDAPI only technically reported to the CRN and worked *de jure* autonomously from the Guatemalan government, the practical – and personal – links with the Ríos Montt regime were direct and essential. As noted by Garrard-Burnett (2010: 137), 'FUNDAPI workers travelled free on military transportation and received army escorts into controlled areas and enjoyed access to stricken populations that the same army typically denied to Catholic relief workers, who could not receive free-passage assurance to work in afflicted regions.'

Concerning the presence and role of FUNDAPI and other evangelical relief agencies in this period, it is important to note the continued absence of the Catholic Church in the same areas (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 138–139; Melander 1999:225). Even though Ríos Montt later opened up for CARITAS and other non-evangelical Christian organisations to operate within the conflict zones, evangelical organisations, also those without ties to FUNDAPI, enjoyed considerably more freedom to work than did non-

evangelical organisations. Catholic and non-religious relief agencies reported that they did not receive any guarantees of free passage into areas controlled by the army, whereas evangelical missionaries by own accounts could travel freely (Garrard-Burnett 1998:150). Melander points out that many evangelical organisations working in the conflict areas during the Ríos Montt years may have been unaware of how they to some extent formed part of the counterinsurgency strategy of the government; however, communiqués and strategic documents of FUNDAPI show that at least this foundation was clearly aware of its political role (Melander 1999: 229).[28] Among other relief agencies and NGOs, FUNDAPI's links to the government were controversial, and some partners in its operations expressed criticism of the atrocities committed by the army. Missionaries have later explained how they nevertheless chose to collaborate in order to be able distribute emergency relief (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 137–138). For most evangelical missionaries, cooperating with the government was a pragmatic decision, accepting the regime 'and its promises of reform as a lesser evil than a revolution' (Stoll 1990:19; Garrard-Burnett 2010: 138).[29]

Legacies

Before Ríos Montt and associates came to power, the evangelical religion had not explicitly been used for political means at the central level, except by those who had lobbied for securing the liberties of the evangelical church itself. After 1983, however,

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[28] For a thorough documentation of FUNDAPI's own strategies of collaboration with the government, see Melander's review of FUNDAPI's correspondence with donors in the USA (1999: 226–232). For example, the organisation reports: 'The mayors and even the army have asked FUNDAPI to help in extending the infrastructure of roads and airstrips in the Ixil area because they do not have the resources. The Lord provided a D-7 caterpillar through a generous donation from a church in the States. This machine is on its way down now. The Guatemalan National Forest Service has given us the use of a Case 850 tractor with which we are building the airstrips in Chajul and Cotzal. All we need to do is provide the diesel and oil' (see Melander 1999: 227).

[29] There has been much scholarly (and non-scholarly) polemic on the role of US missionaries in the counterinsurgency campaigns of the Ríos Montt regime. At the time, considerable emphasis was given Ríos Montt's personal and church-based links to well-known US 'Christian right' leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, in addition to President Reagan's positive attitudes regarding Ríos Montt's religiosity (see Stoll (1990) and Garrard-Burnett (2010)

the evangelical church was for many directly associated with the ousted dictator and his form of governing the country. Ríos Montt in the executive hence led to a clear change in the room for manoeuvre for evangelicals with political intentions. I will also argue that with Ríos Montt, 'evangelical' was established as a political identity.

'Evangelical' as political identity

Again, in order to assess the 'evangelical' as political identity, it is important to consider how this emerged as an alternative to 'the Catholic'. The distinction between the Catholic and the evangelical as political identities can be attributed at least partly to the counterinsurgency strategies of the military regime. These strategies included rhetorical and structural methods aiming at dividing the population into 'enemies and friends' of the state and of each other. And in their control of the civilian population, the military increasingly included religious adherence as a distinguishing factor (Melander 1999; Stoll 1990). Many Catholic clergy and lay-people had taken a critical stance to the Guatemalan state and the brutalities of the armed forces.[30] The military governments of the late 1970s and early 1980s then included Catholic priests in their depiction of the enemy, and 'Catholic' as identity came to be equalled with political radicalism.[31] In several parts of the country residents were required to carry ID cards in which religious affiliation was specified. Witnesses' accounts tell of bus controls, where passengers who could prove their evangelical adherence were left in peace, whilst Catholics were taken out of the bus (Melander 1999:134).

To be sure, the Catholic–Evangelical divide was nothing new to the Ríos Montt regime. Evangelical churches had, through the intensification of the civil war, been accused of passive and apolitical attitudes in a time of politicised conflict, and of thereby accepting and supporting the regime and the political status quo. However,

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[30] See Chapter 1 for more details on the 'church of the poor', and the activism and political role of many Catholic priests and bishops in the aftermath of the Medellín conference in 1968.

[31] For introductions to the political positions of the Catholic during the civil war, see Berryman (1984, 1994); Garrard-Burnett (1998); Levine (1986), and Steigenga (2001).

with Ríos Montt the evangelical identity became linked to the political regime in a more direct manner. Amongst the people there was a general perception that belonging to an evangelical church was much safer than belonging to a Catholic church – although, as stressed by Garrard-Burnett (2010: 141), in many areas evangelicals were also killed and tortured by the armed forces whenever there was suspicion of opposition towards the regime. Nevertheless, the tendency was clear: evangelicals and evangelical authority were not attacked in the same way as Catholics were (Stoll 1993:177). Many Catholic churches were turned into army barracks, whereas most evangelical pastors were allowed to continue their religious services. A great many Catholic priests and lay-people disappeared or were killed; and in the Quiché region, Catholic Bishop Juan Gerardi took the unprecedented decision of withdrawing all church personnel from a diocese (Berryman 1984: 54; Stoll 1993: 169). In contrast, many evangelical pastors were known to actively offer their assistance to the government forces; examples include churches that allowed the army to use both their premises and their 'evangelical infrastructure' to coordinate supplies, to communicate with people in the conflict areas and to take censuses (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 150). In the villages and refugee camps, numerous evangelical pastors collaborated with the military leadership and were given local positions of authority, including in the local civil patrols (Garrard-Burnett 2010: 140; Guzaro and McComb 2010).

Evangelical rhetoric in political arenas

Finally, Ríos Montt's religion-laden speeches and moral campaigns represent the introduction of evangelical rhetoric in Guatemalan national politics and security. In Guatemala, the evangelical rhetoric is clearly distinguishable, particularly the sharp focus on personal responsibility and the transformation of the individual, as well as the frequent references to the Bible and Jesus Christ.[32] As noted, only days after the coup Ríos Montt created a new platform from which he spread his personal and deeply

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[32] For analyses of the 'evangelical discourse' in the Guatemalan context, see Cantón Delgado (1998), Sanchíz Ochoa (1998), and Steigenga (2010a).

religious interpretations of the country's social and political challenges. His televised Sunday speeches to the nation monopolised the airways of both radio and television networks and were soon referred to as the 'Sunday sermons' for their clear evangelical rhetoric. These Sunday speeches were published as verbatim transcripts, and they also appeared in synopsis form in the leading newspapers. Having examined the recordings of all these speeches, Garrard-Burnett finds that Ríos Montt used this as an opportunity to present his conceptual framework for understanding Guatemala's many problems, as well as the moral and Christian solutions to creating 'The New Guatemala' (Garrard-Burnett 2010:58–69).[33] 'The General, dressed in civilian clothes with a Bible near at hand, addressed his audience on a variety of political, economic, and social topics, but always with a religious or moral subtext that was solidly embedded in an evangelical context' (Garrard-Burnett 1998:141). Ríos Montt's message to the Guatemalan people was that Guatemala's many problems were rooted in the lack of moral and Christian values;[34] he told husbands to be faithful to their wives, sons to obey their fathers, and all to stop drinking alcohol (Garrard-Burnett 2010):

> The peace of Guatemala depends on you, *señor*, on you, *señora*, on you, *niño*, on you, *niña*, yes the peace of Guatemala is in your heart. As soon as you have peace in your heart, there will be peace in your house, and when there is peace in your house, there will be peace in society. Your tranquillity and your peace, the peace of Guatemala does not depend on arms (…). You need order in the house, then there will be order in society; there will be order in the State

> Ríos Montt Sunday speech 11 April 1982[35]

Whenever given the opportunity, Ríos Montt linked his regime's economic and political direction and legitimacy to a divine order, backing up his arguments with biblical passages (Garrard-Burnett 2010). His technique of combining personal moral

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[33] See in particular *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* for a thorough analysis of Ríos Montt's evangelical discourse, based on his speeches to the nation, as well as interviews with journalists and government communiqués (Garrard-Burnett 2010).

[34] 'The subversion starts in one's own family' (Ríos Montt, quoted in Garrard-Burnett 2010:66)

[35] Cited by Garrard-Burnett (2010:65)

and national security politics was a first and arguably lasting experience of how the evangelical rhetoric could be applied to the chaotic and war-torn context of Guatemala.

The moment the born-again, evangelical General Ríos Montt took the Guatemalan political stage on the eve of the coup of 23 March 1982 certainly initiated a critical period from many perspectives. Manoeuvring among the many accounts of the rule of the infamous General, I have here sought to focus on what has had a lasting legacy on the evangelical presence and position in Guatemalan politics. In light of all the horrendous crimes that took place whilst Ríos Montt was head of state, his supposed strong religious beliefs may appear irrelevant for understanding his regime. However, independent of the 'real' intentions behind his evangelical identity, or whether it was all just a part of strategic warfare, Ríos Montt brought with him both a group of people and a way of speaking that originated from a well-known evangelical church. Furthermore, evangelical agencies were directly involved in the formation of his plans for the transformation of Guatemala (Garrard-Burnett 2010:136). With Ríos Montt in the presidential palace, the evangelical church had established a presence on the political scene, with personnel, rhetoric, and collaborative projects with the state. This presence was soon to be further strengthened through another evangelical presidential candidate, and indeed one who had spiritual, political, and personal links to the Ríos Montt regime.

Democratic elections

In this section I present how the evangelical church entered the electoral arena, represented by presidential candidate Jorge Serrano Elías. This critical period is situated in the midst of Guatemala's dual transition processes – from war to peace, and from military to civilian government (see Chapter 1). The multiparty elections of 1985 were the first democratically held elections since 1950; and, notably for this analysis, they also mark the first time that religious differentiation emerged as an element in a

political campaign. The experiences made during the 1985 campaign were to be thoroughly analysed within evangelical circles, arguably affecting the strategic choices regarding participation in the subsequent democratic elections in 1990. Here I will present the 1990 elections and Serrano's second campaign as part of the 'legacy' of the 1985 elections. This is done to highlight the lasting legacies from first entry of 'the evangelical church' in Guatemalan electoral politics: namely *normalisation* of the presence of 'the evangelical church' and evangelical rhetoric in electoral politics – and the formation of an alliance between conservative evangelicals and the country's traditional elites, for electoral purposes.

The ousting of Ríos Montt in 1983 marked the start of a slow, top-led process of liberalisation of the political regime.[36] Ríos Montt himself had agreed to hold democratic elections, but soon declared that the 'chaotic situation' required that he should continue as head of state for an undetermined period. The new military government of General Oscar Mejilla called for elections for a National Constitutional Assembly in 1984 (Azpuru 1999: 102). The Assembly was composed of members of traditional and new, but moderate, political parties, which in the process consulted various sectors of Guatemalan society, including representatives of evangelical churches and other religious groups (Shaw, interview 2012). A new civilian constitution was adopted in 1985, and within the new constitutional framework, the military regime prepared for general elections to be held later that same year.

The grandiose marking of the centenary of religious pluralisation in 1982 is held to have served to boost the electoral confidence of evangelical leaders.[37] In close collaboration with the Ríos Montt regime, evangelical leaders had organised a national rally that ended in a 'prayer festival' in *Campo Marte*, the army parade grounds in Guatemala City. Attended by Ríos Montt and members of his cabinet, as well as by

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[36] Opinion differs as to whether this should be seen as part of a democratic transition, or merely a well-orchestered political liberalisation from above (see discussions in Jonas 1991, 2000; and Schirmer 1999).

[37] Dated back to when President Barrios invited Protestant missionaries to Guatemala in 1882

famous international evangelical pastors, the event is said to have gathered several hundred thousands of evangelicals (Berryman 1994:122; Morales, interview 2012; Tulio Cajas, interview 2014).[38] According to Marco Tulio Cajas, coordinator of Serrano Elías' presidential campaign, this event signalled to evangelical leaders how many devoted evangelicals there were in Guatemala – and the thought of mobilising this group as voters was born (Tulio Cajas, interview 2014).[39]

Several prominent Evangelical leaders had, since the experiences with Ríos Montt, officially taken a stance against the political participation of evangelical churches, exemplified by the declarations from the newly created evangelical organ 'Coordinating Commission of the Evangelical Church' (COCIEG) that explicitly stated that the evangelical church was non-political (Stoll 1990:209).[40] Evangelicals were to varying extents encouraged to fulfil their civic duties, but as individuals: the churches were strongly encouraged to stay out of politics (Melander 1999: 201; Stoll 1990:209). David Stoll has also found that the COCIEG leaders had discouraged any presidential ambitions of evangelicals, stating that 'the churches were not ready for another evangelical candidate' (Stoll 1990:210). Jorge Serrano Elías, however, did not take their advice. In campaigning for the presidency (in 1985 and again in 1990), he balanced between arguing for the importance of evangelical values and virtues in politics, and convincing both evangelical and Catholic voters that he would not 'abuse' the evangelical church for political purposes, nor lead the country into theocracy, as he was accused of by his political opponents (*Prensa Libre* 1990).

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[38] Figures on the number of participants differ greatly: Berryman reports roughly 200 000 (Berryman 1994:122), Garrard-Burnett cites local newspapers estimating 500 000 (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 199, n58), and both the AEG and Tulio Cajas tell of an audience of more than 750 000 evangelicals (AEG, interview 2012; Tulio Cajas, interview 2014).

[39] The massive rallying for the celebration of the centennial is generally referred to as one of the turning points in the history of Protestantism in Guatemala (AEG, interview 2012; Tulio Cajas, interview 2014).

[40] The COCIEG was composed of numerous organisations and pastoral networks, including the AEG as well as la Asociacion de Comunicadores Evangelicos de Guatemala, la Asociacion de Ministros Evangelicos de Guatemala (AMEG), la Confraternidad Ministerial de Occidente, Consejo de Misiones de Guatemala (Melander 1999:201, n51, citing Tulio Cajas 1992:18)

The 1985 elections

In 1985, political parties from across the spectrum were allowed to run for office at all levels (mayors, deputies, and president), and the new constitution had reformed the existing electoral law, which has been described as 'manipulated to suit frauds perpetrated by the military government', referring to the mechanisms that excluded oppositional parties from the left (Azpuru 1999:101–102). International observers generally assessed the elections as free and non-fraudulent, and with a relatively high turnout rate (Azpuru 1999:102). However, there were some severe restrictions to the electoral setting, first and foremost related to the ongoing counterinsurgency campaigns, with violations and massacres of the civilian population and a climate of fear, violence, and mistrust. The elections were in effect being held in a context of civil war – effectively limiting basic rights like freedom of expression and freedom of assembly (Jonas 2000: 18). One clear cleavage in the 1985 elections was directly linked to the fighting between the guerrillas and the armed forces, dividing the parties that supported a negotiated solution to the war, and those who opposed it. As is common in Guatemalan politics, many parties created loose electoral alliances under one presidential candidate. Serrano Elías headed the bid for the party 'Democratic Party for National Cooperation *(Partido Democratico Cooperación Nacional,* PDCN), which at the last minute entered into a coalition with the 'Revolutionary Party' *(Partido Revolutionario,* PR). Here it should be noted that, despite the name, the PR was far from a *revolutionary* party: it was a traditional pro-military party that had shared power in the Lucas García government (Melander 1999:132; Tulio Cajas 1985).[41] The PDCN-PR coalition ended up in third place, with 13.8 per cent of the vote, whereas Vinicio Cerezo and the Christian Democratic party won by sizable margin (68.4 per cent) (Bendel and Krennerich 2005: 340–341).

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[41] With hindsight, this alliance was also included as an explanation for Serrano's failure as the evangelical candidate (Tulio Cajas 1985).

Arena: Electoral politics

Serrano Elías' entry into the electoral arena as the 'evangelical candidate' represents the first attempt to use 'evangelical' as a political identity for electoral purposes. Contrasting the apolitical position expressed by the COCIEG, some evangelical leaders saw the liberalisation of political spaces as an opportunity to increase the evangelical influence at the national level, and this time via the ballot box. Some of these joined forces with Serrano Elías, actively supporting his bid for the presidency. One of the most prominent of these was Marco Tulio Cajas, who took on the task of leading the Serrano campaign in 1985.[42] For that purpose, Tulio Cajas created 'The Christian Civic Organisation of Guatemala' *(Organizacion Civica Cristiana de Guatemala,* OCC) to serve as an evangelical platform of support for Serrano's candidacy, meant to be independent of the party he was campaigning for. This way, the organisation hoped to attract evangelicals who were interested in politics, but did not want to be directly associated with a specific party (Tulio Cajas 1985:30). According to Tulio Cajas himself, his main task was to convince the evangelical community that they should fulfil their civic duty to vote – and that their votes should go to Serrano Elías, because he was a fellow evangelical (Tulio Cajas, interview 2014; Melander 1999:206).[43]

Reaching out to an evangelical constituency

As explained in Tulio Cajas' own reflections of the campaign, the intense focus on the evangelical vote overshadowed most other political perspectives; the campaign and the

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[42] Marco Tulio Cajas was then a member of 'Centro Biblico el Camino', described as 'an independent fundamentalist church' (Melander 1999:125). Tulio Cajas is an often-cited source of information in the study of the political role of the evangelical church in Guatemala, and in Chapter 3 I comment on possible challenges to data validity when 'everyone' refers to the same source.

[43] See Melander (1999) for an analysis of the political strategies of Tulio Cajas from a theologian's perspective (Melander 1999: 203–206).

attempts at creating a political party were largely non-ideological (Tulio Cajas 1985, interview 2014). Tulio Cajas hence describes an attempt to reach out to a potential constituency solely on the basis of an evangelical identity, presenting a presidential candidate with divine legitimacy to the executive; 'we didn't have an ideology, apart from the idea that God would come to bless Guatemala if an evangelical president was elected' (Tulio Cajas, interview 2014). This was the first time the evangelical community was referred to in the singular in an electoral setting, as if were it *one* constituency. It would soon be apparent that this was not so. Even though surveys indicated that evangelicals to a certain extent preferred Serrano, in the end religious adherence did not have any significant effect on voting patterns in the 1985 elections (Freston 2001: 274). Reflecting on why this campaign strategy failed, Tulio Cajas concludes that the alliance with the PR was a mistake; that the campaign suffered from lack of financial resources; that they had no prior party structure of candidatures and competence; that Serrano's connections to Ríos Montt and Ríos Montt's way of combining religion and politics had more negative than positive effects on the electorate; and, finally, that the 'evangelical vote' did not exist (Tulio Cajas 1985: 41–45). It is also important to consider that the campaign was developed and led by evangelical pastors who were keen on communicating the candidate's evangelical beliefs, but had little prior knowledge of advocacy work or political campaigns, struggling to come across as relevant for a wider share of the population – indeed, to come across at all. Tulio Cajas was also asked to lead Serrano's campaign in Serrano's second attempt in 1990, but Tulio Cajas then refused because he had lost faith in Serrano as an evangelical candidate (Melander 1999: 267). Interestingly enough, in the 1990 election Serrano succeeded.

Legacy: Established presence in electoral politics

Even though the 1985 elections had pointed up the challenges involved in bringing 'the evangelical' into Guatemala's political arenas, I hold that these elections initiated the process of *normalising* the presence of the 'evangelical church' in Guatemalan

electoral politics. Here, I illustrate this process with examples from the 1990/91 elections, when the electoral strategy of the same candidate, Serrano Elías, had changed dramatically. Serrano's 1990 campaign clearly drew on his evangelical adherence; however, the strategies and alliances made indicate learning from the past experience.

The elections in 1990/91[44] represent a symbolically important event in the democratisation process in Guatemala, as political power was peacefully transferred from one political party to another, by means of general elections (Rosada-Granados 1990:283). Jorge Serrano Elías won the second round with 68 per cent, defeating Jorge Carpio Nicolle from more the more traditional right-wing National Centre Union *(Unión del Centro Nacional,* UCN) (Bendel and Krennerich 2005:341). In total 19 parties took part in the elections, with few clear ideological differences among them (Rosada-Granados 1990:274, 298). It is also important to consider the candidacy of Ríos Montt, who at the last minute withdrew from the race. The former general had headed the highly conservative coalition *No Venta* ('Not for Sale' and/or 'ninety' *[noventa]*),[45] however at the last minute a court ruling barred his candidacy due to his prior unconstitutional behaviour. This would not be the last time Ríos Montt sought the presidency via electoral means, and not the last time his candidacy would be barred. It is not certain how much Serrano's bid gained from the withdrawal of Ríos Montt. Surveys indicate that Serrano channelled more of the Ríos votes than the other candidates, but it is uncertain if this had to do with the two candidates' shared evangelical affiliation, or simply how the public associated Serrano with Ríos Montt as persona. Ríos Montt never formally endorsed Serrano's bid: on the contrary, he recommended his followers to cast blank ballots; and the parties of his coalition did

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[44] The first round of the 1990 elections was held on 11 November, and the second round took place on 6 January 1991.I will here refer to these elections as the '1990 elections', unless specifically referring to the second round.

[45] The electoral coalition was composed of Ríos Montt´s own newly created 'Guatemalan Republican Front' (*Frente Republicano Guatemalteco*, FRG) in coalition with the PID and the FUN (NDI 1990: 28).

not officially back Serrano's candidacy until the second round (Freston 2001: 275, see also discussions in Melander 1999; NDI 1990; and Rosada-Granados 1990).

Garrard-Burnett (1998: 167) has argued that in the 1990 elections religion had become a 'defining element in national politics' and that 'Serrano's election is eloquent of proof of the enduring resonance of religious identity in Guatemalan society'. In the days leading up to the second round, there *was* a certain degree of confrontation based on religious beliefs between the two candidates. Particularly the Nicole Carpio campaign stressed Serrano's evangelical identity, accusing him, via paid advertisements in the national press, of opening up for an international Protestant campaign aimed at destroying and dividing Guatemala (*Prensa Libre* 1990). However, subsequent electoral campaigns have not seen a similar focus on the confrontations and disagreements between Catholics and Evangelicals. The legacy from the first attempts at 'evangelical politics' should be seen as the establishment of 'the evangelical' as a *normal* element in the Guatemalan electoral arena, which has since been sought utilised with considerable variation.

'The evangelical' as necessary, but not sufficient, component in electoral politics

Serrano certainly managed to come across as a very different candidate in the 1990 elections than he had in 1985. For those who recognised it, his rhetoric was clearly evangelical, but his political message was not. He had created a political party, the 'Solidarity Action Movement' Party (*Movimiento de Acción Solidaria,* MAS) (see Chapter 5), with which he had linked with international conservative circles such as the International Democratic Union in the USA. Serrano was also a member of the Council of National Reconciliation as representative of the political opposition, with which he took part in the dialogue with the guerrillas (ASIES 2004b:73, see also below*). Serrano's 1990 campaign was more pragmatic and less outspokenly 'evangelical', and his promises to the business community as well as to factions of the military made him come across as a viable option for the country's powerful elites. At the same time, Serrano spoke with easily recognisable evangelical rhetoric, and he

nurtured the networks of pastors from large evangelical churches.[46] Prior to the elections, Serrano had published a book on why and how a good (evangelical) Christian should participate in public and political life (*La Participación del cristiano en la vida publica*, Serrano Elías 1990). This follows up the strategies and suggestions of the project of the OCC-led campaign of 1985, with Biblical references to why Christians should engage in this-worldly tasks such as voting and running for office. Serrano frequently quotes works by more or less well-known pastors in the USA, and the main message is that God wants Christians to run the country according to His will (Serrano Elías 1990). It is not known how widely this little book was distributed prior to the elections or its direct impact on how Serrano was received by the public. However, this does tell of a presidential candidate who sees his religious identity as relevant for his political project, and seeking to convince that part of the electorate assumed likely to abstain from voting. Also worth noting are Serrano's membership in the evangelical megachurch El Shaddai[47] and his friendship with the church's head Pastor and founder Harold Caballeros (see Cantón Delgado 1998; Freston 2001:274). Parallel to Serrano's election campaign, Pastor Caballeros organised a national campaign of 'spiritual warfare' called 'Jesus is the Lord of Guatemala' aimed at declaring the national territory for Jesus Christ, in which he openly endorsed Serrano's candidacy (Cantón Delgado 1998: 247–248; Ortíz 2007:334).[48]

Conservative profile and conservative allies

Scholars not primarily concerned with the religious dimensions of these elections have tended to attribute Serrano's victory to his adjusting to the preferences of the business elite; to his pragmatic stance with regard to negotiating with the guerrillas; and that he

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[46] Serrano's running mate Gustavo Espina was also a businessman, as well as a member of the evangelical church *La Fraternidad Cristiana* (Freston 2001:276).

[47] Serrano had left his previous church, Elim, for El Shaddai during the election campaign (Steigenga 2001:96 n2).

[48] The various religious and political roles of Harold Caballeros is analysed in more detail in chapter 5

came across as the righteous 'newcomer' in a system that already had grown tired of corruption scandals involving elected officials (Casaús 2010a; McCleary 1999; NDI 1990).[49] Serrano's political message was one of breaking with the old and corrupt ways of doing politics, of promoting honesty and modesty – all of which could also be linked his evangelical identity. In the 1990 elections, people are believed to have opted for a candidate that came across as non-corrupt and with 'good values', whilst the business community saw a pro-market candidate with a weak party base, meaning he would have to trade a lot of favours when in power (McCleary 1999; Melander 1999:278). Hence, Serrano as an evangelical candidate could succeed only when he managed to balance his evangelical identity with an electoral platform along the preferences of the conservative power-holders in Guatemalan politics. As suggested by Bastian (1999), Serrano's victory in 1991 can be seen to reflect both the incorporation of 'the evangelical' and evangelical circles in national politics, and the capacity of the political and economic elites to incorporate 'the evangelical' as part of their *own* political project, 'to secure legitimacy based in an religious adherence' (Bastian 1999: 159).[50] This alliance between the evangelical as an element in electoral politics and Guatemala's conservative elites can thus be seen as a legacy from these first democratic elections, setting a pattern for the evangelical representatives that *have* enjoyed a certain level of success in Guatemalan electoral politics.

In sum, the experiences and strategic choices made during these first elections in post-war Guatemalan have had a lasting legacy for the role and position of 'the evangelical church' on the electoral arena: In 1985 the Guatemalan polity was made aware of the high percentages of evangelical voters, and that 'the evangelical' could be communicated for political purposes in an electoral setting. However, it was also

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[49] Sociologist Torres Rivas (1996: 55–56) stresses the weakly institutionalised party system, in which the elites float between parties and alliances, positioning themselves wherever their interests are best represented.

[50] My translation

apparent that being evangelical was not a sufficient component for engaging this large percentage of the population.

The Peace Process

This last section focuses on how 'the evangelical church' participated in Guatemala's peace process. Here, this process is presented as a critical period first and foremost because it represents a threshold for political participation for numerous civil society actors, including evangelical organisations. During the peace process the AEG disassociated itself from ecumenical cooperation with other religious actors engaged in the peace process. And by the end of the process, the AEG had strengthened its position alongside the established order in Guatemalan politics, a position this organisation arguably has held since.

The period analysed in this section was a time of remarkable transition, although perhaps not the *transformation* as envisioned by the observers in the mid-1990s (see for example Sieder and Wilson (eds.) 1997). From the early 1980s to the mid-1990s Guatemala was undergoing parallel process from war to peace, and from authoritarianism to democracy. The Peace Agreement ('the agreement of a firm and lasting peace'), signed by representatives of the guerrillas and the government in December 1996, formally ended the 36-year-long civil war. The accords were the result of more than a decade of often-troubled negotiations; and after initial optimism regarding the 'comprehensiveness' of the agreement, it is now often referred to as a *pact* in which elite interests were largely ensured (Jonas 2000). Notwithstanding, the process leading up to the formulating and signing of the Peace Accords was characterised by a level of social mobilisation unprecedented in Guatemalan history. A large number of civil society organisations and movements joined together in organs such as the National Dialogue and the Assembly of Civil Society *(Asamblea de Sociedad Civil,* ASC), articulating popular demands vis-à-vis the state apparatus and formulating proposals to the negotiating table. This is held to have contributed greatly

to the inclusion of comprehensive guidelines for a more inclusive political (and economic) system in the final drafts of the Accords.[51]

Peace negotiations

The Guatemalan peace process has been thoroughly documented and skilfully analysed from various perspectives.[52] For this section, I draw especially on the literature that analyses the arenas where civil society and their representatives met with leaders of both sides of the conflict.[53] Bruce J. Calder argues that the Guatemalan peace process was 'significantly influenced' by religious participation (Calder 2001:778) – particularly as the religious actors represented institutions that enjoyed high levels of trust in the general population, which facilitated the task of bringing the parts together in the early phases of the negotiation (see also Berryman 1994; and Jonas 2000:61 n2).[54] In addition, national religious representatives successfully involved international religious networks that functioned as both funders and facilitators for several rounds of the negotiations. In particular, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is held to have been an important external actor, playing an active backstage role at various stages of the negotiation, consulting with both parties to the conflict, as well as foreign governments and faith-based partners (Sieder and Wilson

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[51] Susanne Jonas points out that these experiences of mobilisation now constitute an important element in Guatemala's collective memory (Jonas 2000).

[52] See in particular *Of Centaurs and Doves* (Jonas 2000); *Who governs* (Sieder et al. 2002); 'Peace and Democratisation in Guatemala. Two Parallel Processes' (Azpuru 1999), and *The Guatemalan Military Project* (Schirmer 1998)

[53] Focusing on the religious dimension: *Stubborn Hope* (Berryman 1994), and 'The role of the Catholic Church and Other Religious Institutions in the Guatemalan Peace Process, 1980–1996' (Calder 2001)

[54] For reflections on the more problematic role of the Catholic Church, see Sieder and Wilson (eds.): 'though influential in establishing an agenda for comprehensive talks and bringing the parties into dialogue, the [Catholic] church was perceived as possessing neither the impartiality nor the political leverage to broker agreements on the more sensitive issues and was relieved of its mediatory role in 1993' (1997:93)

1997: 95; Tønnesen 2009: 179, interview, Skauen 2014; interview, Stålseth 2015). Calder argues that the LWF was instrumental in the process of persuading the Minister of Defence, General Héctor Gramajo, to allow direct talks with the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity *(Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca,* URNG), effectively ending the deadlock in the peace talks (Calder 2001:776). Since 1989, the LWF had facilitated (and funded) several meetings between representatives of the two sides, including the meetings in Oslo in 1990, which led to the 'The Basic Agreement on the Search for Peace by Political Means', a breakthrough on the road to a negotiated solution to the crisis (Calder 2001: 776). However, it is notable that analysts who do not focus primarily on the religious dimension tend to attribute these same breakthroughs in the negotiations to how even hardliners in the Guatemalan conservative military and business elite realised that the country was in economic and diplomatic crisis that was harmful to their interests and that could only be solved by political means (see for example Azpuru 1999:104–105).

Arena: civil society

Also in the general literature it is clear that religious institutions and individuals were *present* and involved in the formal processes leading up to the signing of the Peace Accords. Most prominent was the Catholic Church, represented by Bishop Rudolfo Quesada Toruño, who headed the National Committee of Reconciliation (*Comisión Nacional de Reconciliación*, CNR). The CNR consisted of four members, representing the government, the political opposition, a 'prominent citizen', and the Catholic Church (ASIES 2004b:73; Sieder and Wilson 1997:92). The CNR soon established the 'National Dialogue', intended as an arena for encounters and dialogue between different sectors of civil society, involving some 60 participating organisations. These included representatives from six religious bodies, two of which were evangelical: the AEG, and the Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (*La Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala*, CIEDEG). These two organisations represent two distinct types of evangelical churches: the latter is characterised by its ecumenical

perspective, whilst the former is generally described as conservative, non-ecumenical, even 'fundamentalist' (Alonso 1997:198, see also discussion in Chapter 5).

The meeting of the religious sector in Quito

Based on the agreements reached in Oslo in 1990, a series of five meetings was initiated between the conflicting parties and various sectors of civil society. The meeting that included the religious sector was held in Quito, 24– 26 September 1990 (Calder 2001:777).[55] This meeting facilitated a direct dialogue between leaders in the URNG and delegates from seven religious organisations. At the meeting, the evangelical church was represented by the AEG and CIEDEG, as well as by the Episcopal Church of Guatemala.[56] The meeting resulted in the 'Quito Declaration', a brief and rather vague statement in which the religious sector endorsed the need to negotiate a political solution to the crisis, emphasised the importance of ensuring the participation of 'all sectors' of society in the search for peace, and finally urging direct communication between the URNG and the government (Declaración de Quito 1990). According to the few sources covering the dynamics of the dialogue in the meeting, the vague character of the declaration is explained by the correspondingly vague position of the representatives from the AEG. Having teamed up with representatives of the Jewish community prior to the meeting, the AEG had presented a separate programme from that of the more progressive positions of the Catholic organisations and of CIEDEG (Calder 2001:782; Samson 2007:152n33, Tulio Cajas, interview 2014). As noted by Calder, both the AEG and the Jewish community were known for their conservative and generally government-friendly positions, so the mere fact of their participation in forums like the Quito meeting has been seen as an achievement of the negotiations in itself (Calder 2001:781–782). However, I find it more relevant to

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[55] Calder argues that these rounds of meetings were particularly successful in managing to reach general agreements concerning social, economic, and political issues that were to be resolved in the final peace settlement (Calder 2001:777).

[56] Other religious organisations represented the Catholic Church and the Jewish community (see Calder 2001:781 for details).

take note of the hesitance demonstrated by the AEG, as well as the fact that at the end of the meeting they chose to *not* sign the declaration.[57] Whether or not a strategic gesture, this hesitance and the disassociation from the ecumenical efforts of the religious organisations are in line with the AEG's later activism *against* the incorporation of central elements of the final Peace Accords (see below).

In the subsequent phases of the peace negotiations that led up to the final Accords in 1996, the AEG is best characterised by its *absence*. Other evangelical organisations, like CIEDEG, continued the ecumenical collaboration throughout the negotiation process,[58] but there is remarkably little record of the AEG. According to David Stoll, AEG representatives found that instead of taking part in examining the past, the role of evangelical churches was to conduct 'a silent form of social work which was transforming Guatemala from the ground up' (Stoll 1993: 31, see also Lende 2015: 228). Most observers and analysts then have presumably concluded that the AEG did not play a role of any importance in this process. However, in this thesis, the AEG's lack of engagement in the peace process and the ecumenical initiatives in civil society constitute important elements for the understanding of the position of the AEG in contemporary Guatemalan politics.

Legacy: The alliance between the AEG and the elites

At the various stages of the Guatemalan peace process, members of civil and political society were presented with new opportunities for participation and cooperation, and the choices made by organisations and individuals served to either strengthen or alter their already established positions. From the perspective of this thesis, the main legacy from this period is how the AEG, as representative organ of the evangelical churches

[57] A few weeks later, the declaration was nevertheless ratified by the AEG.

[58] See in particular Samson (2007 and 2008) for details on the ecumenical engagement of CIEDEG, and *Historia Contemporánea del Ecumenismo en Guatemala* (Consejo Ecumenico Cristiano de Guatemala 2008)

of Guatemala, chose to position itself regarding other religious and civil organisations, and Guatemala's political and economic elites. During this 'critical period, the leadership of the AEG took strategic decisions that arguably strengthened their conservative and reactionary position. In contrast to their relatively passive position in the process leading up to the signing of the Peace Accords, in the aftermath, the AEG and other prominent evangelical leaders emerged as more active political actors, openly opposing the constitutional reforms in 1999 that were meant to secure the implementation of the Peace Accords. In the following I let this opposition serve to illustrate the *kind* of presence the AEG and 'the evangelical church' were establishing in Guatemalan politics.

The 1999 referendum: 'If you vote Yes, you must be Catholic'[59]

The Peace Accords signed in 1996 were not legally binding on points that contradicted the Guatemalan Constitution of 1985. Hence, in order to proceed with the judicial and political changes needed to fully implement the Accords, a first step involved reforming the Constitution. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a set of constitutional reforms was put out to referendum in 1999, where the electorate was to vote for or against four sets of reforms, 52 in total.[60] With their implementation, the reforms could 'unblock, assure, and consolidate change in the most crucial areas of the peace accords' (Jonas 2000: 189). For example, the multicultural nature of the Guatemalan state had been formally recognised by the 1985 Constitution; however, without the reforms, there would be no legal basis for the full realisation of indigenous cultural, economic and

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[59] This and slogans such as 'if you vote yes, you're a guerrilla fighter', or 'if you want peace, vote No' were used by the advocates of the No-campaign ahead of the referendum in 1999, among them, evangelical pastors and leaders (Pico 1999, see also Carey 2004:84).

[60] When the reforms were placed forward to the electorate in May 1999, this was after long discussion and much delay. The package of 50 reforms was presented in four categories to which they either voted 'Yes' of 'No'; indigenous rights, legislative branch reform, executive branch reform (including the role of the army, and judicial branch reform. It is considered that the actual presentation of the reforms to the electorate was so complicated that many were not able to vote according to their preferences (Jonas 2000: 189–216, MINUGUA).

juridical rights. To the great surprise of national and international observers, the reforms were rejected; the 'No' alternative gained 55 per cent of the vote.[61] In the months leading up to the referendum there had emerged a massive campaign against the reforms led by the organised business sector and the military. The official argument against the reforms mostly had to do with defending national sovereignty against international interference, and the fear of a 'balkanisation' of Guatemala (Brett 2009, Carey 2004; Cojtí Cuxil 2002: 107; Jonas 2000; Zepeda 1999).[62]

The AEG and several evangelical leaders and pastors were active participants in this campaign for the No-vote. From official communiqués and paid advertisements in national newspapers, the AEG urged its members to vote No in the referendum, stating 'severe concerns' regarding the proposal of recognising Mayan spirituality, and emphasising the dangers and ungodliness of recognising the 'indigenousness' of Guatemala. It was argued that the reforms would permit Mayan religions to dominate over Christianity: thus the call for evangelical Christians to vote No was framed as a familiar dichotomy – the choice between God ('No') and the Devil ('Yes') (Carey 2004: 83; Jonas 2000: 214 n7; Samson 2008:70). For example, Francisco Bianchi, former elder in the 'Verbo' church[63] and close associate of Ríos Montt, was in the midst of a presidential campaign, and in opinion pieces and paid advertisements in newspapers he openly opposed the referendum and encouraged people to vote 'No' (Carey 2004:73; *Prensa Libre* 1999; Samson 2008, see also Chapter 5 in this thesis).[64] The 'evangelical No' was also preached at the local level. Many evangelical preachers warned against the return to Mayan religious practices, and tensions between Catholics and evangelicals in Kaqchikel communities resurfaced during the referendum

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[61] This has been explained from various perspectives, se for example Carey (2004); Jonas (2000); Pico (1999), and Zepeda (1999). See also chapter 1 in this thesis.

[62] This referred to the 'interference' in Guatemalan internal politics by the UN and other international organisations (Jonas 2000:197).

[63] In 1999 Bianchi was a member of El Shaddai

[64] Bianchi also served as vice-president of the AEG at this time (Samson 2008: 94 n6).

processes (Carey 2004:74; Cojti Cuxil 1999:21–22).[65] In an analysis released soon after the referendum, Hernando Pico reflects on the role of religious differences in the divisions of votes, finding that 'more than a few' evangelical churches actively encouraged their members to vote No (Pico 1999). Also the University of San Carlos (USAC) has stressed evangelical churches' participation in the No-campaign, finding that evangelical pastors preached against the reforms on the Sunday of the referendum, using arguments that were in line with official AEG statements on how opening up for the Mayan religions would be equivalent to allowing the entry of 'paganism' and 'witchcraft' and even 'satanism.' The No-campaign also made strategic use of the evangelical churches as part of their communication strategy for No-arguments (Zepeda 1999:12).

In sum, even though many evangelicals supported the constitutional reforms,[66] as did CIEDEG, whose alliance with other ecumenically oriented religious bodies was active in the Yes-campaign (Zepeda 1999:13), in analyses of the processes leading up to the referendum, most emphasis is given the evangelical *opposition* to the constitutional reforms, and this opposition is, to varying degrees, assumed to have had some influence on the victory of the No-vote.

As pointed out by Philpot-Munson (2009), the evangelical 'peace resistance' should not be understood as resistance to peace as such, but rather as resistance to elements of the peace as defined in the Peace Accords. For the purpose of this analysis, the campaigning and mobilisation prior to the referendum on the constitutional reforms serve to clarify the differing positions of the two evangelical representative organs: CIEDEG was part of the side that promoted structural change along multicultural lines, whilst the AEG crystallised its position alongside the elites, explicitly engaging in the rhetoric of conserving national (Christian) values and an

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[65] For thorough analyses of the Mayan perspectives on the referendum see Carey (2004) and Cojti Cuxil (1999)

[66] One of the most prominent of these was Vitalino Similox, who in 1999 was running as vice-president for the left-wing ANN coalition (in which the URNG was a partner). In the political sphere, ANN was the most active defender of the Yes-vote (Carey 2004:73, see also Chapter 5 in this thesis).

overall defence of the socio-economic status quo. With hindsight, it is clear that of the two, the AEG has been by far more successful in terms of entering political arenas at the central level, and even establishing a position in politics as the main representative of all evangelical churches in Guatemala. As discussed in Chapter 5, CIEDEG has since remained in a marginal position vis-à-vis the Guatemalan state. I argue that the alliances entered and strategic choices taken by the AEG and other prominent evangelical leaders and pastors at this critical period in Guatemalan political history left a lasting legacy as regards the room for manoeuvre of the evangelical church as a political factor.

Concluding remarks: Establishing political presence

This chapter has traced the trajectory of 'the evangelical church' as participant in Guatemalan politics, aiming at identifying how and under which conditions 'the evangelical church' has established its presence as a *normal* participant in Guatemalan politics. Tracing the positions of evangelical churches and representatives during critical periods in recent Guatemalan political history has enabled me to identify new *arenas* where evangelical churches have established a presence, as well as how the positioning in Guatemalan politics during those periods has left *legacies* as to what kind of presence the evangelical church holds today.

Arenas and legacies

One of the clearest tendencies in the period analysed for this thesis is how the evangelical church has expanded its presence and scope, from primarily rural mission-related operations at the local level to include a clearly notable presence and participation among the country's economic and political elites at the central level. More concretely, I have identified four *new* arenas where evangelical churches, organisations, and individuals have established as *normal* participants: urban areas; 'the halls of power'; electoral politics; and organised civil society.

First, the 'urbanisation' of the evangelical church in the aftermath of the 1976 earthquake also included an entrance into the affluent neighbourhoods and zones of Guatemala City, and the types of evangelical churches established in these areas reflected the material and spiritual needs of Guatemala's upper classes. In the following chapters I will examine how evangelical churches and organisations operating in these parts of Guatemala City in themselves have become arenas for networking and friendship among political and economic elites. In the aftermath of the earthquake the overall population and politicians alike were also exposed to the evangelical church as *service provider*. By entering into formal and lasting collaboration with evangelical churches and aid agencies, the government expressed recognition of the methods, and/or financial strength of the evangelical church as a partner in providing basic services, which I consider left a lasting legacy on the evangelical-political partnership (this is explored in more detail in chapter 6).

Second, with Ríos Montt as head of state the evangelical church entered '*the halls of power'* in Guatemalan politics for the first time – with personnel, rhetoric, and collaborative projects with the (illegitimate) state. Moreover, 'evangelical' was established as a distinct political identify from 'Catholic', a legacy that was to trouble evangelical political aspirants in the years to come, when various attempts were to be made to attract evangelicals for electoral purposes.

Third, the experiences and strategic choices done by Serrano Elías' and his fellow evangelical political aspirants during the first elections in post-war Guatemala represent the entrance of the evangelical church into the electoral arenas. Whereas it was established that 'the evangelical' could be communicated for political purposes in an electoral setting, it also became evident that simply being evangelical was not a sufficient component for engaging this large percentage of the population. The lessons learned from the first evangelical attempts in the electoral arena are also illustrative of the overall challenges facing all political parties in the Guatemalan party system, which suffers from severely low levels of institutionalisation. Since these first elections, the evangelical church has maintained a presence on the evangelical arena, and there have been numerous evangelical politicians and presidential candidates;

however, in election campaigns they have generally mobilised on a ticket of 'values' and 'moral', rather than portraying themselves solely as 'the evangelical candidate.' These issues are discussed further in the following chapter (Chapter 5).

Lastly, during the Peace Process evangelical organisations and representatives took part in Guatemala's organised civil society, which came to highlight the very different political positions held by different evangelical organisations, particularly seen in their relations to the Guatemalan state. From the perspective of this thesis, the principle legacy from this period is how the AEG chose to position itself alongside Guatemala's political and economic elites, often in sharp contrast to other evangelical organisations. These strategic decisions arguably strengthened the conservative and reactionary position of the AEG, which by and large concurs with the political position held by this organisation today.

Overall, the intent in this chapter has been to identify how the development of the relationship between 'the evangelical church' and the Guatemalan state has resulted in a *normalisation* of the presence of the evangelical church in certain sectors in Guatemalan politics. In the following chapter I turn to how this political presence is manifested in Guatemala today; in which arenas (local and central, political and religious); with which partners, and finally what kind of impact this presence holds on contemporary Guatemalan politics.

Chapter 5

The evangelical church in Guatemala's political arenas

Arguing that the growth of Protestantism in Guatemala has been accompanied by an increase in the presence of evangelical individuals and organisations in political arenas may be uncontroversial; however, there has been little systematic analysis of what kind of presence this is. This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the various arenas where evangelicals participate for more or less explicit political ends, which will also serve to map central evangelical institutions, leaders, and representatives in Guatemalan politics today.

I begin with the electoral arena. Recent studies indicate that there are two electoral cleavages related to religion in Latin America: believer–non-believer, and the Catholic–Evangelical cleavage (Boas and Smith 2015).[1] For the case of Guatemala, a democratic system in which 40 per cent of the population self-identify as evangelicals, one might well expect considerable evangelical presence in electoral politics, manifested both as parties and as legislative blocs. This can be seen in countries with growing numbers of evangelicals in the population, like Brazil (Fonseca 2008; Freston 1993; Reich and dos Santos 2013). In Guatemala however, neither of these seems a viable option for evangelicals seeking political influence – as evangelicals. Here, I describe some attempts at creating electoral platforms based on evangelical values and evangelical identity, urging 'brother to vote for brother.'[2] These attempts have generally failed. As to why Guatemala is so different from a country like Brazil in this

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[1] These findings depend upon the conditions present in a particular election or a country's party system, which needs to be at least somewhat polarised with parties that appeal to voters on programmatic terms (see Boas and Smith 2015).

[2] See Freston (1993).

regard, I will relate this to both Guatemala's severely weakly institutional party system, and the heterogeneity of the large evangelical population.

I then turn to political arenas, focusing on the political presence of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala (AEG), which is currently the by far largest and most visible representative organ for evangelical churches, and has achieved a position from which it claims to promote political issues on behalf of the evangelical church as such. I also explore the different kinds of evangelical political activism, and identify three fields (pro-family, peace/ end-violence, and Israel) where evangelical organisations have set the political agenda and affected the *framing* of the debates, in domestic politics and in Guatemala's international relations.

In the last part of this chapter the empirical focus is on evangelical churches and organisations as arenas for networking with and within Guatemalan political and economic elites. I explore the extent to which this has led to political presence and positions, showing how networks and friendships have brought evangelical representatives and evangelical values to the inner circles of decision-making in Guatemalan politics. Finally, I present how there has been an increase in how political and evangelical authorities interact in public events, both on evangelical and political arenas.

Evangelicals and electoral politics

As show in Chapter 4, the restoration of the civilian regime in 1985 also saw the first direct participation of evangelicals in electoral politics, seeking to attract the votes of the country's growing evangelical population. This reflects a regional tendency. The sharp increase of evangelicals in the Latin American populations from the mid-1980s coincided with the democratisation processes in the region. On the one hand, this inspired theorists and observers to propose a *causal* relationship between these two processes of religious pluralisation and democratic opening (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, the mere correlation of the two phenomena has led some analysts and

politicians to expect that the evangelical communities will at some point become evangelical *constituencies* in the young democracies.[3]

Indeed, the increasing spread of Protestantism in the Global South has to a certain extent been reflected in the party systems. In a global survey of Protestant parties, Paul Freston (2004) found great diversity within this party family, both because of the highly diverging contexts in which these parties operate, and because of the blurry conceptual frames of the term 'Protestant party'. He stresses that the Latin American Protestant parties are 'united' in terms of emerging in the same period and facing similar challenges from the state-enforced monopoly of the Catholic Church. They also had to distinguish themselves from the growing numbers of 'Christian democratic parties', all of which were Catholic (Freston 2004: 103). Notwithstanding, Latin America's *evangelical* parties (the contextually more correct term than 'Protestant') are better explained by their differences than by what unites them. In the mid-1990s there were attempts at creating a regional alliance of evangelical parties; however, as explained by one of the organisers of the first (and hitherto only) regional summit, it soon became apparent that these parties had little else in common than the religious adherence of their members.[4] According to Marco Tulio Cajas, campaign manager for Serrano Elías in 1985 (see Chapter 4), most parties were *ad hoc* creations, characterised by a total absence of ideology. Regional cooperation and attempts at finding common principles soon lost momentum (Bastian 1999:161; Tulio Cajas, interview 2014).

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[3] Most research on this topic has focused on political opinion and the voting behaviour of evangelicals, with a few notable regional studies of evangelical parties and the electoral ambitions of some evangelical communities. See for example Bastian (1999); Boas and Smith (2015); Freston (1993, 2004), and Reich and dos Santos (2013).

[4] Tulio Cajas illustrates some of the difficulties experienced at creating confessional, evangelical parties with the account of how two presidential candidates representing two different evangelical parties, from the *same* country, had based each their candidacy on the vision of how God had called upon that particular candidate to rule the country (Tulio Cajas, interview 2014).

Evangelicals in Guatemala's electoral arena

Of the few attempts at creating clear confessional, evangelical political parties in Guatemala, none has survived one electoral circle, and only one has participated in national elections with a presidential candidate. At the same time, there is a clear increase in the trend for political candidates (evangelical and non-evangelical) to take part in evangelical-led events during electoral campaigns, explicitly reaching out for 'the evangelicals' as if were they one constituency. Herein lies the puzzle: with roughly 40 per cent of the Guatemalan demos, 'the evangelicals' can clearly be considered an important pool of votes, but the poor experience of the evangelical parties indicates that simply being evangelical or evangelical-friendly is not sufficient to win this vote. Particularly the trajectory of the pastor-turned-politician Harold Caballeros, as his (frustrated) manoeuvring between religious and political arenas will here serve to illustrate the complexity of the political presence of the evangelical church in the electoral arena in Guatemala.

Absence of evangelical parties

In searching for evangelical parties in Guatemala, my defining criteria were political parties that had either a confessional clause or a political platform with clear evangelical references, and whose leaders and spokespersons were clear about their and their party's evangelical identity. By these criteria Guatemala has only had *one* instance of an evangelical party taking part in a national election.[5] The 'Party of Democratic Renewal Action' *(Partido Acción Renovadora Democrática,* ARDE) was founded prior to the 1999 elections by Francisco Bianchi, first known in the Guatemalan polity as the elder from the 'Verbo' church who served as the 'secretary to the private affairs' of head of state, General Ríos Montt (1982–83) (see Chapter 4). The ARDE presented itself as a party of Biblical principles, and Bianchi, who had also

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[5] This finding is in line with the categorisations of Freston's (2004) global survey of Protestant parties (see above). See also ASIES (2004a, 2007b), and Bastián (1999).

served as AEG vice-president, was well-positioned to represent the large percentage of evangelical voters in Guatemala (Samson 2008: 75). Ahead of the 1999 elections ARDE received relatively broad national media coverage, particularly because of Bianchi´s sharp opposition to the referendum on constitutional reforms held in May that same year (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, ARDE and Bianchi finished in sixth place in the first round, receiving only 2.1 per cent of the vote, and thus losing their registration (Bendel and Krennerich 2005:343).[6] A few years later, Bianchi registered another evangelical party, the 'Movement for Principles and Values' *(Movimiento de Principios y Valores,* MPV); however, due to disagreements amongst coalition parties prior to the 2003 elections the party did not field any presidential candidate for the race, and then disappeared (ASIES 2004a). A first reflection is how these evangelical parties in effect mirrors the nature of *all* Guatemalan political parties, emerging and vanishing with the electoral tide, inseparable from the person who founded them.[7] Considering the evangelical presence on the Guatemala electoral arena, the analysis must therefore include a focus on individual candidates, who tend to be considerably more 'constant' and influential than the *ad hoc* parties they claim to represent.

Increased presence of evangelical politicians

The absence of evangelical parties in Guatemalan politics does not signify an absence of evangelical politicians. Indeed, the presence of evangelical politicians on the electoral arena has steadily become more visible since the late 1990s. This indicates either that aspiring politicians have become more open about their evangelical identity (whether for personal or for political reasons), or that evangelicals are more politically active than before. As the focus in this chapter is on evangelicals who are active in politics at the central level, I concentrate on candidates running for the presidency.

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[6] The threshold for allowing a party to run again in a Guatemalan presidential election is 4 per cent

[7] Parties in Guatemala generally do not serve as vehicles for ideology: they function to bring individuals to power, and if this does not work, the party fades away. Omar Sánchez has thereby placed Guatemalan political parties in the category 'taxi parties' (Sánchez *forthcoming*, see also Chapter 1 in this thesis).

Many of these evangelical politicians have come from leading position within their evangelical community and sought to transform their religious authority to the political arena, but as yet only Serrano Elías has been successful in his bid for the presidency.[8]

After the electoral defeat of the PDCN in 1985, Jorge Serrano Elías founded his own political party in 1987, the Movement of Solidary Action *(Movimiento Acción Solidaria,* MAS), on which ticket he ran for the presidency in 1990. This was not an evangelical party, although some saw it as such. Serrano himself was known to be evangelical, a member of the 'El Shaddai' church in Guatemala City,[9] and a considerable number of the list candidates were evangelical pastors (Freston 2001: 279). Serrano's political message was one of breaking with the old, corrupt ways of doing politics, of honesty and modesty. Studies of the political speeches he held in evangelical events show that he deliberately drew parallels between his role as a presidential candidate and the role of a prophet (Cantón-Delgado 1998). However, Serrano's victory in 1990/91 is generally attributed his close ties to the business sector and his promises of neoliberal policies, as well as his position in the peace negotiations (Bjune and Petersen 2010; McCleary 1999, see also Chapter 4). As argued by Bastian (1999:160), Serrano and the MAS Party exemplify how some evangelical politicians leading non-confessional parties have managed to secure the electoral advantage of their personal evangelical faith, without limiting their image and appeal to one specific denomination. Bastian contrasts this success to the poor performance of the explicitly evangelical parties, and compares Serrano and the MAS success in 1990/1 to Peru's Alberto Fujimori and the 'Cambio 90' Party (Bastian 1999).[10]

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[8] In October 2015, Guatemala elected its third evangelical President, Jimmy Morales, running for the coalition FCN-Nacion (see 'final remarks' in Chapter 8).

[9] As explained, Serrano changed from the evangelical church *Elim* to Harold Caballeros' church *El Shaddai* during the 1990 election campaign (Cantón Delgado 1998).

[10] Fujimori himself was not evangelical, but it is believed that the 'Cambio 90' to a greater extent than the competing parties sought and gained evangelical voters (see also López 2008). This is an interesting comparison, considering how Serrano may have taken inspiration from Fujimori also when engineering his *autogolpe* in 1993 (Bjune and Petersen 2010).

Another well-known evangelical candidate is of course Ríos Montt, who attempted to register as a presidential candidate on several occasions and served as a member of Congress for the *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco* (FRG) from 1990 to 2004 and again from 2008 to 2012. The FRG cooperated with evangelical pastors in distributing Bibles and discussing how Biblical values should be applied in national politics; and according to Ríos Montt, the FRG did not have a political programme as such, because they had the Bible in which all their political principles were to be found (ASIES 2007b: 41; Hallum 1996: 108–110).

As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7, most evangelical politicians can be placed on the right of the political spectrum. A notable exception has been Pastor Vitalino Similox, the hitherto only left-leaning evangelical participant in a presidential race, who ran for the vice presidency in 1999 for the 'The Alliance for a New Nation' *(Alianza Nueva Nación*, ANN). This was an electoral coalition that included the 'Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity' (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*, URGN), the newly created party of the dismantling revolutionary guerrilla movement (Samson 2008: 76). This coalition finished third in the 1999 elections, receiving 12.4 per cent of the vote (Bendel and Krennerich 2005:343). Like Bianchi, Similox then continued as a religio-political authority, but in other arenas.[11]

Among evangelical pastors and leaders who have sought political office, evangelical pastor-turned-politician Harold Caballeros deserves special mention, not only because he is currently the best-known example of an evangelical politician, but also because his very lack of electoral success illustrates some of the challenges faced by evangelical representatives, as well as how these candidates are seen by other political contestants.[12] When practising as pastor, Harold Caballeros organised various

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[11] Similox now serves as leader of the Christian Ecumenical Council of Guatemala (see below). Bianchi led another attempt at a political party before becoming presidential advisor to two consecutive administrations (Freston 2004: 133–134; Ortíz 2004).

[12] As discussed in Chapter 3, Harold Caballeros and his published material constitute the case most studied by researchers in the field of religion and politics in Guatemala, most notably in *Cities of God* by Kevin O´Neill (2010a), continuing the perspectives developed by Smith (2009), and Stoll (1994).

'spiritual campaigns' from his church El Shaddai, with the declared ambition of 'saving the country for Jesus', and 'changing people's values' (Caballeros 1999, 2003; see also Cantón Delgado 1998). His initiatives gradually became more politically oriented, and from 1991 to 1993 he served as spiritual advisor to President Serrano Elías. In 2006 Caballeros and his followers started the 'social movement for good people' (*Movimiento Social de Gente Buena*), and began drafting the plans for a political party (ASIES 2011:172). In remarkably short time, Caballeros managed to complete (almost) all organisational requirements for registering 'Vision with Values' *(Vision con Valores,* VIVA)[13] as a political party, demonstrating a considerable organisational network, as well as financial strength (ASIES 2011:172–173). VIVA was in the end not allowed to run in the 2007 elections due to late registration of candidates. Caballeros and VIVA spent the next years preparing for the 2011 presidential elections, entering three different electoral alliances along the way. VIVA has not self-identified as an evangelical party: in communication with the media it has been stressed that this is a party of 'values', with members drawn from all faiths (VIVA/CEIDAL 2011). Caballeros himself placed considerable rhetorical emphasis on not portraying himself as *the evangelical* candidate, nevertheless, his candidacy was clearly associated with his previous role as pastor in El Shaddai, and the campaign strategies reveal a clear call to Guatemala's evangelicals. Caballeros chose to launch his candidacy in Almolonga, a town in the Quetzaltenango region unknown to many Guatemalans, but with iconic status in many evangelical circles. There, Almolonga is presented as an exceptional place; productivity is much higher than the rest of the Guatemala, unemployment and crime rates are remarkably lower, and the percentage of evangelicals is exceptionally high, with estimates varying from 75 to 90 per cent (Garrard-Burnett 2009a; O'Neill 2010a, Morales, interview 2014). In the evangelical narrative, it is the high percentage of evangelicals that has directly caused Almolonga to prosper. As pastor, Caballeros had on various occasions presented this place as evidence of how Jesus and evangelical values transform people and society, and

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[13] VIVA also means 'alive' in Spanish.

thereby as an example of what Guatemala can become (Caballeros 1999; Garrard-Burnett 2009a; Lende 2015:168–169). This, then, is where Caballeros launched his bid for the highest office and his visions for how he and the VIVA would transform the country.

Most of the founding members and listed candidates of VIVA have been evangelicals.[14] During the 2011 campaign, party members actively used their own and Caballeros' networks of evangelical pastors and leaders in the thousands of evangelical congregations across the country, directly targeting evangelical communities in mobilising support for Caballeros' candidacy (VIVA member, interview 2012; Skauen interview 2014). According to members of El Shaddai, there was an explicit expectation that they would vote for their pastor-turned-politician (VIVA member, interviews 2012), and surveys conducted in El Shaddai indicate that as many as 99 per cent of the congregation planned to vote for VIVA and Caballeros (Villagran Estrada 2011:70).

With roughly six per cent of the vote, Caballeros and VIVA-EG ended up in fifth place in the first round (ASIES 2012). However, this did not puncture Caballeros' political ambitions. For the second round, he and VIVA broke the alliance with the centre-left party 'Encounter for Guatemala' *(Encuentro por Guatemala*, EG), and supported the (successful) candidacy of Otto Pérez Molina and the right-wing 'Patriotic Party' *(Partido Patriota*, PP) instead (*El Periodico* 2011d). Switching alliances during an electoral campaign is not unusual in Guatemala; moreover, the alliance with the PP was more coherent with VIVA's political programme than the alliance with the EG had been. Pérez Molina responded by appointing Caballeros as his Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Caballeros' running mate Efraín Medida as Minister of Agriculture. The appointments were seen as a highly surprising move, as neither man had political experience within the field. Pérez Molina justified Caballeros' appointment by pointing to his experiences of leadership and his

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[14] As of 2015, this list includes Zury Ríos, daughter of Efraín Ríos Montt, who ran as VIVA's presidential candidate for the 2015 election.

international network (*Prensa Libre* 2011d); however, analysts and observers saw the appointment as a clear strategic gesture towards all evangelicals, aimed far beyond the small electoral base of VIVA (*Prensa Libre* 2011d; Skauen, interview 2014).

In all, the 2011 elections saw the hitherto highest number of candidates for the presidency openly referring to their beliefs as 'evangelical' (Bjune 2012). However, they also came to show how being 'the evangelical candidate' is not sufficient on election day. In addition to Caballeros, prominent evangelical candidates included Manuel Baldizón of the LÍDER party (*Libertad Democrática Renovada*); and Patricia de Arzú running for UNIONISTA, the party of her husband, former president and current mayor of Guatemala City, Alvaro Arzú. Patricia de Arzú made the most explicit references to her evangelical beliefs and her opinions on the role of God and Jesus in Guatemalan politics.[15] She was also the one with poorest score on election day, with barely 2 per cent of the vote (ASIES 2012). Manuel Baldizón is known to be an evangelical Christian, as was clear in his electoral rhetoric, particularly noticeable in how he argued his opposition to Palestinian statehood, and his endorsement of re-activating the death penalty in the Guatemalan penal code (Bjune 2012; *Prensa Libre* 2011c). During the electoral campaign, Baldizón frequently appeared holding the Bible in one hand and the Constitution in the other, presenting these as his two principal political 'tools' (LÍDER 2011). However, Baldizón is also known for his extraordinary populist political strategy, so the evangelical rhetoric might have had little to do with his own beliefs, and everything to do with what he perceived to be the

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[15] In addition to de Arzú's Biblical references in political debates and interviews, the UNIONISTA party also distributed the Ten Commandments at party meetings, explaining that merely following the Commandments would bring great changes for the individual as well as for Guatemalan society (*El Periodico* 2011b)

beliefs of his potential voters.[16] All the same, Baldizón lost to Otto Pérez Molina in the second round.[17]

No legislative bloc

By contrast, Brazilian evangelical politicians have had considerable success in electoral politics. There, the tendency has been for evangelicals to enter the electoral arena primarily as representatives of evangelical constituencies, and not as representatives of evangelical parties. Once elected, evangelical politicians have established legislative blocs as a way of securing 'evangelical interests' (Freston 1993; Reich and dos Santos 2013). In Guatemala, the proportion of evangelicals in the Guatemalan Congress has in the most recent congressional periods reflected the percentage of the evangelical population as a whole: some 35 per cent of the deputies have identified as evangelicals (Rodríguez 2011). Nevertheless, there have not been any successful attempts at creating legislative blocs. I see this related to the overall lack of discipline among members of the Guatemalan Congress. In the current Congress (2012–2016), 45 per cent of the deputies had shifted party adherence once or several times by 2014 (*Prensa Libre* 2014b);[18] and as stressed by Ortíz, evangelical politicians have demonstrated little or no tendency to 'better behaviour' than other politicians (Ortíz 2004: 92).[19]

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[16] Baldizón himself describes his style as populist, saying that he intends to give people exactly what they want. Campaigning for the presidency in 2011, he made extraordinary electoral promises, for example promising to bring Guatemala to the World Cup if he were elected president (*Prensa Libre* 2011a)

[17] In the 2015 election, Baldizón did unexpectedly not make it to the second round, however, this is best explained by the extraordinary conditions surrounding the elections that year resulting from the large-scale corruption cases brought up by the CICIG in collaboration with the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Attorney General.

[18] Two members of Congress have changed party five times in the course of two years (*Prensa Libre* 2014b)

[19] Writing from the perspective of an evangelical theologian, Israel Ortíz urges evangelical politicians to distinguish themselves from other politicians by serving the nation and not themselves, and to

I also find that this lack of evangelical alliances in the Guatemalan Congress reflects the fact that there is currently no urgent need to join forces in order to protect evangelical issues in the legislature. As elaborated below, such evangelical issues typically include pro-family policies, like opposition to abortion and opposition to the recognition of same-sex marriage, which are all on the political agenda of the evangelical caucus in the Brazilian Congress. However, in the Guatemalan Congress, these are not contested issues, and parties and candidates would not stand out by fronting them (*Contrpoder* 2013).[20] When such issues *are* debated, this is often on the initiative of evangelical *and* Catholic pro-family activists, as a reminder to *preserve* legislation as it is, and not as press for change (see below).

Whereas there are no examples of policy alliances among evangelicals, evangelical deputies have organised various informal social initiatives, such as evangelical breakfasts and receptions for international guests. Such cases represent what I will refer to as arenas that facilitate networking, created by the shared evangelical faith (see below).

Present, but not (directly) participating

In sum, the numerical growth of evangelicals in Guatemala has not been translated into a homogenous evangelical vote. For Guatemalan politicians however, the sheer size of the population that identify as evangelicals appears to signify a potential for partners and votes they cannot afford to ignore, even though there is no evidence as to their influence or homogeneity (García-Ruíz and Michel 2011:421). This is exemplified by the rising tendency of campaigning politicians to attend evangelical services and events during, seeking their support and their legitimacy for electoral purposes. Thus the evangelical church is clearly *present* as a factor in Guatemalan

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contribute to push for the laws and socio-political changes from an evangelical perspective (Ortíz 2004: 92).

[20] In Chapter 7 I return to this conservativeness that characterises the Guatemalan polity, exploring how it relate to the increase of evangelicals in political and civil society.

politics, also in the electoral arena, despite the continuing poor performance of evangelical parties and candidates.

Lastly, another notable aspect is the apparent lack of engagement in electoral politics on the part of Guatemala's many evangelical *churches*. In Brazil, the presence of evangelicals is often seen in relation to the political ambitions of some of the largest evangelical churches. Many successful evangelical candidates in Brazil have been backed by mega-churches, such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD). With unique access to funding, the media, and elite networks, the IURD and others have served as efficient 'electoral vehicles' in Brazilian politics (Fonseca 2008; Reich and dos Santos 2013). Given the low levels of institutionalisation of the Guatemalan party system, one might expect the large and well-financed evangelical churches to play a more direct role in determining electoral outcomes. However, since the restoration of civilian rule, no church of considerable size has publically endorsed a political candidate running for national office, even though, as indicated above, the links between Harold Caballeros and El Shaddai were evident to most observers. This lack of direct engagement may be related to the experiences of Verbo's direct involvement in the military dictatorship of Ríos Montt; however it may also have to do with the electoral system in itself. If the ambition is political influence, the evangelical churches and their pastors may have found that the electoral arena is not the most efficient channel.

Evangelical interest groups and political activism

Expanding the focus beyond traditional political institutions the evangelical church emerges as a visible participant in Guatemalan politics, with well-known representatives and a relatively predictable political agenda. In chapter 4 I presented how the AEG has become the main representative organ of the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics, in the following I examine in more detail what *kind* of presence this organisation has established in political arenas.

Representing the evangelical church vis à vis the state: the AEG [21]

The AEG was originally named the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Guatemala and dates back to 1937, when leaders of various Protestant churches agreed on an organisational structure that would facilitate interdenominational cooperation (Holland 2007). The cooperation was intensified in the 1960s, and the re-named Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala formed part of Guatemala's first interdenominational evangelisation campaign, 'Evangelicalism-in-depth' (1961–62).[22] Of particular relevance here is how this national campaign is seen to have paved the way for greater acceptance of evangelicals in the public sphere. In 1962 President Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes hosted an AEG-sponsored leadership seminar for evangelical pastors and missionaries – the first time that a Guatemalan president participated in a non-Catholic religious event (Holland 2007; Zapata 1982:112).

According to AEG president Jorge Morales (2010-2013), the political role and aims of the AEG have undergone clear changes since its foundation.[23] From being more like a small-scale umbrella organisation with the main objective of protecting its member churches vis-à-vis the state, the AEG is today a large, complex representative organ.[24] Its leadership is frequently consulted by politicians and the national media on

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[21] Parts of this section have previously been published in 'Te Deum Cristiano Evangélico: The evangelical in Guatemalan politics' (Bjune 2012).

[22] The campaign *(Instituto Internacional de Evangelización a Fondo,* IINDEF) was designed and headed by the US-based Latin American Mission (LAM), stressing the need to put aside inter-denominational schisms and join forces in a 'national crusade' to convert Guatemalans to Evangelical Christianity. See Garrard-Burnett (1998:109–110).

[23] The details of the structure and methods of the AEG derive mainly from interviews with its previous president, Jorge Morales and other members in the board of directors (2012; 2013).

[24] AEG members can be divided into three broad categories: 'umbrella churches' (churches with several branches, such as the Asamblea de Dios and El Shaddai); independent churches; and evangelical institutions, such as schools, pastoral organisations, and theological seminaries (Lende 2015:200; Morales interview 2012). AEG's financial resources come largely from its members, and the pastors of each church are then granted representation at the annual AEG General Assembly, where the leadership is elected and strategies and objectives for core areas of interest and influence are decided. Internationally, the AEG is affiliated with the World Evangelical Alliance, which seeks to strengthen local churches through national and international alliances.

social as well as political and economic issues, often side by side with the Catholic hierarchy. There do exist a few other evangelical interests groups and representative organs, but the AEG is by far the largest, currently representing around 18,000 different evangelical churches in Guatemala, several of which have numerous branches (Morales, interview 2012).[25]

Expanding activities and political presence

Hosting seminars and campaigns aimed at spreading the evangelical message have traditionally been the most important part of the AEG's strategy; however, the alliance has increasingly expanded its repertoire of methods as well as its target groups. The AEG is currently structured around a directive leadership of nine persons, who ideally represent different Protestant denominations or church groups. Each of these leaders heads a commission representing the various focus areas of the alliance, such as theology and prayer; children and youth; women; social development; communication and media; and civic and political issues. The commissions are formed by members of the alliance with specific interests and skills relevant to the area in question – for example, the commission on civic and political issues is composed of lawyers and members with experience from and interest in politics.

> Working with the state apparatus, we have the 'civic committee' and the lawyers on this committee are well known and highly respected in political circles and in civil society. This committee has opened doors for us to political spaces as well as to the business sector. Then there is another commission, the commission on development, which also is 'alert' and ready to attend needs and necessities, nationwide and especially needs in the countryside.[26]

> Jorge Morales, interview 2012

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[25] According to estimates by AEG, the total number of evangelical churches has reached 40,000. Many of these belong to the same 'branches' (*Protestante Digital* 2015)

[26] My translation from Spanish

The commissions are expected to provide the member churches with inspiration and training in their respective areas. The organisational model of the AEG thereby serves to provide its leaders and members with concrete arenas for distributing information and for networking. Such an organisational structure also speaks of an organisation with wide-ranging aims as regards competence-building and political relevance.

> Last week the CEO of the cement company ['Cementos Progresos'] also came to us, inviting us to come and visit the new cement plant, so that we could see the site and give some recommendations. And this is the business sector. The CACIF, the organisation that unites the industrial sector, all commerce, the bankers, the landowners and all of those, they also know us, and they have provided us with their work plans and their strategies. So this means that we in practice are present in all spheres of society. [27]

<div align="right">Jorge Morales, interview 2012</div>

In recent years the AEG leadership itself has openly entered political arenas, to 'offer spiritual guidance and moral support to Guatemala's political leadership' (Morales interview 2012).

Whereas some evangelical leaders are still sceptical to associating with politics and politicians, worried that the evangelical church as such will become politicised, the majority now agree that 'everything is political' and that evangelicals should seek to 'occupy all possible spaces' so as to be able to shape the country according to their faith-based values (Camargo, interview 2011; Díaz, interview 2012; López, interview 2012). Former AEG leader Darío Pérez Ramos has noted how the sheer numerical growth in evangelicals naturally increases the likelihood of evangelical churchgoers as well as pastors being politically active in some way or another (*Noticia Cristiana* 2008). As formulated by Morales: 'A philosophy of the evangelical church as such is that we are neither ecumenical nor political [partisan]. But yes, we participate in politics, but not with one particular party and no particular tendency' (Morales, interview 2012).[28]

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[27] My translation from Spanish

[28] My translation from Spanish

Political relevance: Omnipresence and expertise

In terms of political relevance, the AEG leadership considers that the alliance is now in a position where governmental officials and other political and economic authorities approach them, not only the other way round. Indeed, to an increasing extent, the leadership of the AEG is invited to take part in political arenas such as governmental initiatives, the Congress, the judiciary and the educational sector, particularly when the topic is seen as associated with moral and 'values' – or the lack of such. For example, the AEG holds 'value-oriented' activities for inmates in prisons, and is invited to lecture on morals and values at police and military academies (see also Chapters 6 and 7). During electoral processes they have also been invited by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to witness the presidential candidates sign pledges for non-violent campaigns (Morales, interview 2012).

For the AEG leaders their strength and political relevance lie first and foremost in their *omnipresence.* The organisation has member churches in all parts of the country, and can thus rely on local expertise and easily mobilise pastors and churchgoers when needed.

> This has been taken notice of [by the government], we are working within health, education, social work. For example, NGOs have contacted us to say that they are aware that we have a programme of vaccination in certain regions in the country, and they say they want to give a million doses directly to evangelical churches, because we are *capable*: we have church buildings near the local schools, and the pastors and churchgoers can assist in distributing the medicine to the children. (...). We have also contributed with our health centres. And we have lent out some of our church buildings to literacy programmes (...) and indeed some churches have started schools on their own premises, as a way of contributing to popular education.[29]
>
> Jorge Morales, interview 2012

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[29] My translation from Spanish

The AEG's political positioning is also reflected in their entering the *grupo garante*, the G4, a group of special advisors to the president on matters such as citizen security, justice and health care. The group, previously the G3, was set up by President Alvaro Colóm in 2006, composed of the leaders of three central institutions in Guatemala: the Catholic Church, the University of San Carlos, and the Ombudsman for Human Rights. In 2007 the President invited the AEG to join; and, as a member of this group, the leader of the AEG frequently appears in the national media commenting on political issues and proposing solutions – on behalf of the G4, but also representing the evangelical community as such (Morales interview, 2012).

In sum, both by strategy and by invitation, the AEG has moved from being a marginal interest organisation with a narrow agenda and little influence, to a large representative organ with a natural presence in political arenas and in the public debate. They are consulted and listened to on a range of issues, far beyond what would be defined as 'related to religion', and the AEG leadership has established direct contact and professional cooperation with all branches of government.

Ecumenical alternatives to the AEG

There are a few other cross-denominational evangelical interest groups working to influence national politics, although none of them can compare with the AEG in size and political position. Best known is the Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala *(La Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala*, CIEDEG), which, as presented in Chapter 4, played an active part during the peace process, but has since more or less vanished from the political scene. CIEDEG was established in 1987, as an ecumenical alternative to the AEG (Lende 2015: 205; Consejo Ecumenico Cristiano de Guatemala 2008). 'Ecumenical' refers to inter-religious recognition and cooperation with other forms of faiths and beliefs, and the main difference between the two organisations lies in their diverging positions to ecumenical work. The AEG is explicitly opposed to ecumenism as approach (Morales, interview 2012), whereas the CIEDEG has ecumenism as its leading principle and its member churches are actively

involved in projects with other religious denominations.[30] These differences, with their political implications, have arguably led to the markedly diminishing role of CIEDEG in the post-conflict years. While CIEDEG has on several occasions cooperated with other religious and non-religious organisations and forming part of civil society-based opposition vis-à-vis the state, the AEG has either not been involved or has sided with the government. The different positions of the two organisations during the peace process (described in Chapter 4) are illustrative in this regard. A split within CIEDEG led its former leader, Pastor Vitalino Similox, to create a new ecumenical body, the 'Christian Ecumenical Council of Guatemala'. Even though Similox himself is a relatively well-known figure on the political arena, apart from publishing reports and arranging small-scale seminars, his organisation is comparatively small and cannot be said to have any significant presence in Guatemalan political arenas today (Lende 2015). When politicians and the media want to know the position of 'the evangelical church' as such, the AEG is first in line, followed by individual pastors or looser pastoral networks (see below).

Informal Activism: Marching and praying

There is a myriad of evangelical organisations and activities throughout Guatemala, but most of these do not explicitly aim for political influence: the focus is on fulfilling one's individual duties as an evangelical Christian. Typical evangelical activities originate in an evangelical church, headed by church leaders. Such activities include prayer groups, youth gatherings, courses and training in matters like matrimonial and financial management, as well as more charity-related activities like collecting and distributing foodstuffs and clothes to rural villages.[31] This might be characterised as

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[30] Even though AEG formally cooperates with other religious bodies that does not make the organisation itself 'ecumenical' (Stålseth, interview 2014; see also discussion in Lende 2015).

[31] Anthropologist Kevin O'Neill, who has written extensively on evangelical churches and church groups in Guatemala City, sees this as a particularly *Christian* way of practising citizenship, a *Christian citizenship* (O'Neill 2010a). O'Neill emphasises how the activities conducted by

activism, but opinion varies as to whether it is *political* behaviour. [32] Notwithstanding these main tendencies, recent years have also seen a certain amount of evangelical mobilisation and activism directed towards decision-making organs. Such policy-directed evangelical activism generally focuses on one of three main topics: *pro-family, pro- peace/ end-violence,* and *pro-Israel*. I include this kind of mobilisation as a form of presence in political arenas because the public manifestations and activities, like marches and organised (mass)prayer, have often been combined with advocacy in more closed circles, by leaders within the AEG or more narrow evangelical networks like the Apostolic Council (see below). Further, I argue that this activism has also affected the framing of the debates on central policies.

Pro-family

In the evangelical discourse the *family* – understood as husband, wife, and children – is the core of society. The stability and survival of the nuclear family is thus important not only for the security and happiness of its members, but also as a determinant of the strength of the society and the nation as a whole. Adultery, pre-matrimonial relations, feminism and, in particular, homosexuality are seen as great threats to this stability (Bjune 2005, 2012; Lende 2015; Sanchíz Ochoa 1998: 116). In evangelical (pentecostal) theology, the authority of the family is God-given and thus ranks above the authority of the state (Sanchíz Ochoa 1998: 137). Such reasoning is used as justification for private (and evangelical) welfare institutions such as schools and health care (Sanchíz Ochoa 1998: 122). [33] To be sure, the focus on the family is not unique to evangelical activism; as evident from the examples below, in pro-family

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evangelicals are indeed aimed at changing (transforming), although not via traditional channels of political influence.

[32] See Chapter 6 for a detailed analysis of how and with which partners evangelicals and evangelical churches participate in civil society

[33] Private schools with Christian curricula are considered particularly important: either the parents or the church should be in charge of the schooling the children, not the state. See Chapter 6 on the role of evangelical churches in the educational sector.

issues the evangelicals have often joined forces with the Catholic Church and other religious bodies.

Reacting to The Children and Youth Code

The importance of parental authority within the household came to constitute the main argument when the evangelical church mobilised to protest against the implementation of 'The Children and Youth Code' of 1996. In order to follow up on the signing of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the Guatemalan Congress had unanimously adopted the Children and Youth Code in 1996. It was to have entered into force in 1997 (Samson 2008: 77); however it provoked broadly based opposition and implementation was postponed several times (ODHAG 2001: 14). The AEG joined the 'Episcopal Conference of Guatemala' and several other religious bodies in a particularly vocal opposition; most central in their polemic was the debate over parental authority (*patria potestad*) versus the role of the state, and how this Code would lead to 'social polarisation' (ODHAG 2001: 28; Samson 2007: 77). The AEG delivered to the Guatemalan Congress a petition with over 50 000 signatures opposed to the Code (Samson 2008:78) – the first time the AEG had directly presented the Guatemalan legislative with the opinion of the 'evangelical community' as such. In conversation with anthropologist C. Mathews Samson, the then vice-president of the AEG, Francisco Bianchi, described the Code as 'a typical case of the government taking on the attributes of God . . . It all sounds very nice – the rights of the children – and we are defending them. But it hasn't worked. It has created a tremendous rebellion in a lot of children … those who are responsible for the children are the parents, not the government' (cited in Samson 2007: 78). In 2000, implementation of the Code was postponed indefinitely by a decree of the newly installed Portillo administration, stating that 'the Congress of the Republic must listen to the diverse opinions that are expressed in the context of society regarding the theme of children and youth (…) adopting measures for attaining the integral strengthening of the family' (cited in Samson 2008: 79). The Children and Youth Code was in 2003 rewritten into the 'Law on the Integral Protection of Childhood and Adolescence' *(Ley de Protección Integral de Niñez y Adolescencia),* in which concrete suggestions drafted by various religious communities in Guatemala had been taken into account (*Diario de Centro América*

2003).[34] Working together with the Catholic Church, the AEG and other representatives of the evangelical church had succeeded in framing the debate as one of protecting of the *family,* not protection of children as individuals. In addition, the polemics and activism originating in the opposition to the Code provided the AEG with the opportunity to speak out on behalf of the evangelical church as such.

Opposing same-sex marriage and abortion

The most typical and indeed most effective means of the evangelical pro-family agenda is the framing of *threats* to the family, seen primarily in terms of as homosexual relations and planned parenthood. Evangelicals have been involved in placing same-sex marriage and abortion on the political agenda, at times and occasions when these have not been issues up for debate in Guatemalan politics – as when evangelicals reacted *en masse* to legislation in Spain in 2005 *(La Prensa Libre* 2005). Within a week after the Spanish Parliament had voted in favour of a bill permitting same-sex marriage, representatives of the evangelical community in Guatemala presented their own Congress with a policy initiative aimed at *preventing* similar legislation in Guatemala. The proposal involved a constitutional amendment, as the article referring to marriage in the Guatemalan Constitution does not specify that marriage involves two persons of opposite sex.[35] Working together with two Catholic bishops, several evangelical organisations gathered over 30 000 signatures which were ceremoniously handed over to the Congress *(El Periódico* 2005). The actual delivery was led by FRG Congressman Carlos Velásquez and Pastor Jorge H. López of the evangelical church 'la Fraternidad Cristiana' (Pastor López is introduced in more detail below). The AEG openly supported the initiative. Legalisation of gay marriage had not been on the political agenda in Guatemala when this proposal was brought forward, and no politician or political party had indicated otherwise.[36] Thus the rapid

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[34] Samson (2008: 78) argues that, with this, the 'locus of responsibility for children had shifted from the state back to the family' .

[35] The proposal was named 'proposal for law on the integral protection of marriage and of the family' *(Iniciativa de Ley de Protección Integral del Matrimonio y la Familia)*

[36] The national newspaper *Prensa Libre* argued that, considering the great number of social, economic,

and outspoken reaction to the decisions in Spain seemed strictly unnecessary, in terms of policy. However, from the perspective of promoters of the pro-family agenda, the Spanish legalisation provided them with an opportunity to make clear their position as protectors of the Guatemalan family, and indeed, of the nation as a whole. Gay activists experienced increased threats and harassment during the weeks of the evangelical mobilisation and public debates, including the extrajudicial killing of a central member of the OASIS, an organisation working for gay rights and sexual diversity (OASIS TV 2012). The law proposal did not lead to an amendment of the Constitution, as it was found that the protection of traditional heterosexual marriage was already ensured in the Civil Code. But as a result of this mobilisation, the issue of same-sex marriage entered the national public debate, and evangelical representatives had great impact on the terms and conditions for this debate.

In the run-up to the 2007 elections, the AEG and evangelical pastors from the Apostolic Council (see below) invited all presidential candidates to a 'Presidential Forum' where the focus was solely on 'values', primarily concerning same-sex marriage and abortion.[37] All the invited candidates expressed support for the evangelical position. However, since opposing this view had been framed as being against the family, against life, and against God, it seems reasonable to argue that the terms for the debate had been set in a way that the only viable option was the participants to express support. Moreover, the moderator of the event introduced the debate saying that their answers would greatly influence the vote of Guatemala's evangelical Christians; similarly, the then-president of the AEG, Dario Pérez, stated that 'after having listened to the perspectives of the candidates, the evangelical community now have elements to guide our voting. We are four million voters that now are in a better position to choose whom to vote for' (cited in *Prensa Libre* 2007). Similar forums were also arranged prior to the elections in 2011 and 2015.

and juridical problems facing the Guatemalan people, the issue of gay marriage was a far cry from topping the list of the country's real priorities *(Prensa Libre* 2005).

[37] The title of the event was 'Gobernemos Guatemala con el temor de Dios'

Pro-family activists and organisations have since shown capacity in mobilising whenever the issue can be portrayed as a threat to the Guatemalan family. And, for the government, such evangelical influence on political decisions is not something that is sought concealed from the public: on the contrary, government consultations with the Catholic and the evangelical churches has typically been spoken of openly, and church opinions are presented as being authoritative. One example was when President Otto Pérez Molina conferred with religious leaders prior to the regular June 2013 session of the Organization of American States (OAS) to be held in Antigua, Guatemala. In the weeks leading up to the meeting, numerous religious organisations and denominations had mobilised, seeking to influence the Guatemalan government's position on the OAS conventions concerning racism and discrimination ('Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Forms of Intolerance' and the 'Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination'). These activities were well coordinated; and their message was that signing these conventions would open the way for same-sex marriage in Guatemala as well as legalising abortion. Responding to this mobilisation, President Pérez Molina made an announcement the day before the planned signing of the declarations, in which he stated that his administration would continue to protect the Guatemalan family and *not* sign the conventions proposed by the OAS (*Emisoras Unidas* 2013; *Plaza Publica* 2013):

> I have talked this over with the president of the Episcopal Conference, the Apostolic Nuncio, and the president of the Evangelical Alliance. The issue is that we as Guatemalans must decide our position concerning the right to life, and our position is *not* in favour of abortion (…) You must take into account that our society is a conservative society … the situation is different in countries like Argentina where other things have already been approved. But here in Guatemala, we do not follow these lines, and so we must be very cautious, and we [the government] will make our position very clear in these issues.[38]

Otto Pérez Molina 2013[39]

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[38] My translation

[39] President Pérez Molina in a televised statement to the press, 3 June 2013 (*Diario de Centro America* 2013)

In the weeks following the OAS meeting, the issue of same-sex marriage continued to feature in the public debate. The government was criticised by human rights organisations, and from gay rights organisations in particular, for having allowed the religious communities to frame a declaration of tolerance and anti-discrimination as a pro-family issue. As stated by Jorge López, leader of the OASIS organisation for gay rights and sexual diversity, the convention was not primarily about marriage or abortion, it was about recognising sexual diversity and protecting all minorities from discrimination and securing equal rights (*Canal Antigua* 2013). However, once this had been framed as a declaration in favour of abortion and same-sex marriage, the public did not see the presidential decision against signing as controversial.

There are numerous examples of evangelical participation in pro-family initiatives, typically in the form of 'marches' in urban areas. Such initiatives often cover all the issues mentioned above: at the same time rallying against gay marriage, against abortion, and for parental authority in the household. As exemplified by the 'National march for life and the family' *(Marcha nacional por la vida y la familia)* in Guatemala City in May 2014, such initiatives are claimed to be independent of any specific ideology or religion; the uniting concepts are *values, family,* and (the right to) *life*. [40] However, the great majority of the organisations backing such initiatives invariably refer to these issues with explicit Biblical references and interpretations. Both the Episcopal Conference and the AEG frequently participate in such initiatives, addressing the audiences on behalf of their respective churches *(Plaza Pública* 2014; *Prensa Libre* 2014c). Such broad-range participation in these pro-family mobilisation in a way breaks with many evangelicals' negative position as regards inter-religious collaboration. In these initiatives, official representatives of the Catholic Church and the evangelical church stand side by side, echoing each other's traditional family values. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, evangelicals are generally even more

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[40] This march was organised by the umbrella organisation *La Familia Importa*, which unites organisations such as *Si a la vida*, *generacion por la vida, Fundación Teletón* and *Jovenes por Guatemala* (see www.lafamiliaimporta.org for details).

conservative than Catholics on these issues – but at the top level, the two religious communities stand united in 'defence' of the Guatemalan family.

Praying and marching for Peace[41]

Evangelical mobilisations for 'peace' are frequent in Guatemala; evangelical congregations join forces and take to the streets in marches or outdoor ceremonies with the declared objective of praying for peace and an end to violence. As in evangelical circles in the USA and elsewhere, on such occasions it is very common to join together and pray as a group, for peace, for the nation, and for its leaders. When organised in collaboration with larger organisations like the AEG, such events in Guatemala have often been joined by politicians, police directors, and representatives of the judicial sector. It is important to note that these evangelical pro-peace manifestations and their messages of an end to violence are not formulated in ways that hold anyone accountable: it is not a question of blaming any specific political institution or policy for the situation. Rather, representatives of the authorities are invited in order to pray for them and together with them, so that they can discharge their tasks as leaders of the nation, following God's guidelines. The nationwide 'Claiming my nation' *(Tomando mi nación)*[42] is one of the largest mobilisations of this kind in recent years: a three-day long 'prayer circle' in evangelical churches, organised each year since 2011.[43] Various events are organised in parallel across the country, and in addition to marches and outdoor ceremonies the organisers rent helicopters and small planes from which evangelical pastors pray for the national territory of Guatemala, and 'claiming Guatemala for God' *(Siglo 21*, 2012b). The first year, over

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[41] It must be noted that in this context, the calling (praying) for 'peace' does not refer to the end of war, but the end of violence and insecurity. Also in the media, such mobilisations are referred to as 'evangelicals march for peace', the evangelical church pray for peace' (*El Periódico* 2012; *Prensa Libre* 2012c, 2013).

[42] *Tomando mi nación'*is also the name of the evangelical foundation in charge of the event.

[43] The events are also attended by some Catholic charismatic congregations

3000 evangelicals gathered in front of the national palace in Guatemala City for the closing event, which was led by pastors of 25 evangelical churches, each presenting their prayers for Guatemala. Some pastors referred directly to the upcoming elections, praying for the candidates, that they would be wise and take good decisions. Others prayed for the victims of violence. A representative from the 'value office' in the National Police *(la Oficina de Valor y Servicio),* prayed for an end to corruption in the police force *(The Christian Post* 2011).[44] Also local evangelical churches arrange peace marches and invite the local authorities to participate in prayers for peace.

In these activities and marches, the problems of violence, crime and corruption are referred to solely in moral terms, with the disintegration of the traditional family structure and the lack of values portrayed as the main causes of Guatemala's problems (Lende 2015: 240–241; Caballeros 2003; Díaz, interview 2014). Pastors and evangelical leaders call for the *transformation* of the individual, as only this will lead to the transformation of the nation. Societal problems are framed in moral terms, so the solutions to social, economic or crime-related challenges are presented as spiritual and value-oriented, very rarely seen as political or structural (Bjune 2012: 126; Díaz, interview 2014; *The Christian Post* 2011). The individual and the family are portrayed as unquestionably the most important arenas for transforming Guatemalan society, not the state. Moreover, organising meetings with the declared aim of 'praying for peace' has also spread to the Guatemalan political arena, exemplified by the newly established National Day of Prayer for Peace (2013), to be described below.

Israel

A third topic that has served to gather evangelicals in public mobilisation is Israel. Guatemalan evangelicals are found to be more likely to express strong support for Israel than non-evangelicals (Pew Research Center 2006: 71). As in many evangelical churches worldwide, Israel is referred to as God's land, and the chosen nation.

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[44] The *Valor y Servicio* office in the national police force is presented in Chapter 7

Emphasis is also placed on how Guatemala's vote in the UN was decisive for the creation of the state of Israel in 1984, and many evangelicals thus speak of a special relationship and a special responsibility. This rhetoric of a special relationship is also found on the formal political level, in national as well as international settings (Caballeros 2003, Lende 2015: 230–232).

Mobilisation and activism related to Israel typically emerges as a reaction to signals from the government concerning Palestine, and more specifically, to Palestinian statehood. When the issue of Palestinian representation in the UN was put to a vote in the General Assembly in 2012, Guatemala was one of the 41 countries that abstained from voting (138 voted in favour, 9 against: UNGA 2012). Guatemala's tardiness in recognising Palestine, compared to other Latin American states, might perhaps be related to the persona of the Foreign Minister at the time, Harold Caballeros, who, while serving as evangelical pastor in 'El Shaddai' had both published and preached on the divine position of Israel. Shortly after Caballeros left office, Guatemala finally recognised Palestine in the UN, as one of the last Latin American countries to do so. Evangelical churches and organisations responded immediately with protest marches in Guatemala City (Lende 2015: 231). The message was that by not supporting Israel, Guatemala was provoking the wrath of God. The AEG published communiqués directed to the government, criticising the decision in an unusually harsh manner:

> As the ultimate representative entity for the Evangelical church in Guatemala since 1937, and with a membership of over 6 million Guatemalans, in regard to the recognition of a Palestinian state
>
> We manifest:
>
> - That we care for the Palestinian and Israeli people and we recognise their desires and rights, which must be discussed exclusively between the two, in search of a common peace.
>
> - That the topic of Israel has very important biblical, historical, and political connotations.
>
> - That the majority of the Guatemalan people believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and urge us to pray for peace in Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6–9).

- That Guatemala is and has been a friend of Israel since its foundation, and Israel in return has shown solidarity and been a great collaborator with our nation.

- That we regret that our governmental authorities make decisions without considering the full picture, exposing the whole nation to new judgements from God Almighty.

We exhort:

- That our authorities reconsider the recognition and that they refrain from taking positions that do not express the feelings of the majority of the Guatemalans.

- That the position from the UN in 1948 is kept, by which Guatemala has been protected and greatly blessed by God.

- That in the search for a firm and lasting peace between the two peoples, if required, Guatemala participates in conciliation and mediation only.

God said to Israel: 'I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you' (Genesis 12: 3a)

<div align="right">AEG communiqué, April 2013</div>

The government did not alter its decision. As such, one of the most specific and political messages of the AEG in recent times had no apparent political effect. However, the communiqué and the ensuing mobilisation did spark a certain level of polemic in the national press, where commentators reminded the AEG of the secular nature of the Guatemalan state, and criticising the evangelical church as such for seeking direct influence in decision-making processes. In other words, interference in international affairs was perceived as inappropriate – whereas involvement in 'softer' political areas related to family and health has not sparked similar reactions.

The examples of evangelical activism presented here are meant to show how evangelical representatives and leaders have strengthened the presence of the evangelical church in political arenas, and on several occasions have had direct influence on policy-making processes by setting the agenda for legislative processes. It is notable that such presence and influence have been obtained when the issue has been, or has been successfully framed as, a question of 'values' and the importance of the family. In Chapter 7, I explore the extent to which the evangelical church has achieved a position of *expertise* as regards the loose concept of 'values', and how this

has provided a certain amount of influence, also in non-religious issues, such as crime reduction and drug rehabilitation.

Networking and evangelical arenas

The growth of Protestantism and evangelical churches has also opened up opportunities for friendship and networking with and within Guatemala's elites, here I examine how this can have resulted in a greater presence of evangelical pastors and organisations in political arenas.

For study of the political presence and influence of religious institutions and individuals, the specific arenas in which the religion is practised are important units of analysis. Here, that means placing focus on the evangelical churches, and particularly those that attract members of the political and economic elite. Sharing the same faith and attending the same services and meetings can open up new possibilities for networking and friendship. The networks and the family structures of the Guatemalan elites have been analysed from several perspectives.[45] Marta Elena Casaús has noted how some members of the elite have joined evangelical churches of the *neopentecostal* variant, and that new alliances have been made with the objective of legitimising the conservative governments (Casaús 2010a: 169 n96) – but the evangelical church as such has not been analysed as relevant to elite structures. In my view, evangelical churches and the shared evangelical faith need to be included as a dimension in analysing Guatemala's elite structures.

Research on evangelical influence in US politics has stressed the importance and particularities of evangelical elite networks (Lindsay 2007). Evangelical leaders

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[45] See in particular *Lineaje y Racismo* (Casaús Arzú [1992] 2010); *The Guatemalan Military Project* (Schirmer 1998); 'El capitalismo de hoy y los emprendedores' (Valdez 2015); and *Business Groups and Transnational Capitalism in Central America: Economic and Political Strategies* (Bull, Castellacci, and Kasahara 2014).

describe a scenario of friendship, trust and professional cooperation across sectors, due to shared religious beliefs and a shared church. It has been found that, within the structures of elite power, religious identity bears the potential to provide vital, cross-domain cohesion, and the bonds between *evangelical* leaders emerge as uniquely strong compared to findings on elite cohesion in general (Lindsay 2007). Although these findings are from studies in the USA, they are relevant for the Guatemalan political context, where pastors of the largest evangelical churches have, by becoming large (and very rich) entrepreneurs, entered the elite structures in the country. And as stressed in this thesis, friendship on grounds of shared religious beliefs has opened political doors for evangelical individuals and organisations.

In Guatemala, being evangelical opens for several new arenas for the believers to practice their faith and to socialise with other evangelicals. In addition to the weekly sermons, most churches typically organise meetings and group sessions several times a week (O'Neill 2010a). There are also *Christian* networks that gather members of various evangelical churches, focusing on topics such as family, women, and business skills. The largest and perhaps best-known is the Guatemalan branch of the 'Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International' (FIHNEC in its Spanish acronym).[46] This fellowship is explicit about not belonging to a particular religious institution or denomination, and both Catholics and evangelicals are welcomed as long as they are 'charismatic.' The fellowship organises regular meetings in hotels and restaurants in Guatemala City and has local branches across the country. Anthropologist Manuel Cantón Delgado, who followed this group in the early 1990s, reported a membership of persons from the highest level in their sector, among them CEOs of large banks, high-ranking members of the military, and then-President Jorge Serrano Elías and his Vice-President Gustavo Espina (Cantón Delgado 1998). Today FIHNEC has about a hundred cells in Guatemala City alone, and perhaps a hundred more throughout the country. In line with previous studies, I find that the form and the language of its

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[46] Part of this information was collected from observation of a FIHNEC meeting in Guatemala City in January 2012. I also spoke with members, who preferred to remain anonymous.

meetings closely resemble evangelical sermons, in content and in form (Bjune 2012:117).[47] The model for organising the meetings is presented in the magazine *La Visión* where there are also testimonies from newly converted members, to be read out loud in the meetings. FIHNEC has cross-sector networking and 'competence-building' among its main objectives. In addition, the participants at these gatherings share deep personal experiences and testimonies, which are received with applause and hugs. These emotional practices can be expected to create an atmosphere of trust and friendship, with interpersonal relations that last beyond the actual meeting.

Pastoral networks

Even though evangelical pastors are not formally part of a larger clergy, there exist several more or less formal networks and joint platforms constituted by evangelical pastors of different denominations. Many of these come across as unstable configurations, however, the ones who gather the pastors of the larger churches have established as more stable and functional networks, with varying degrees of political ambitions and involvement. At present, those that occasionally figure in the national media are the National Commission of Evangelical Pastors (*la Comisión Nacional Cívico Pastoral*), the Association of Evangelical Ministries (*Asociación de Ministros Evangélicos de Guatemala,* AMEG), and the Apostolic Council of Guatemala (*Consejo Apostólico de Guatemala*), initiated by Harold Caballeros in 2000. Of these entities, the latter is the most visible, as it includes the most influential pastors in Guatemala City (Lende 2015: 203; Ortíz 2007:103).[48] There are currently 16

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[47] Particularly referring to the practices of clapping and cheering, crying, hugging, presenting personal testimonies, and the use of emotional music. See Chapter 2 on the terminological challenges related to the evangelical religion. See also Steigenga's reflections on charismatic practice in *Politics of the Spirit* (2001).

[48] 'The New Apostolic Movement' originated in the USA and has been criticised for its hierarchical (and patriarchal) structures, according semi-divine authority to the pastor/apostle. For a detailed presentation of the apostolic movement in Guatemala, see Smith (2009); Lende (2015:203–204); and Ortiz (2007:103). The Apostolic Council of Guatemala is currently headed by Pastor Cash Luna (*Actitud* 2014:48).

Guatemalan evangelical pastors who are (internally) ordained 'apostles', meeting monthly to 'plan, organise, and share the word of God,' As pastors of large (neopentecostal) churches, they all reach a wide audience, in their own churches and via their own media channels (Lende 2015:203).[49] In addition to being an arena where pastors meet and get to know each other and share experiences and ideas, this network has on several occasions served political purposes, like co-hosting political debates with the AEG and organised prayer rallies (see above).

Many of the large evangelical churches also form part of international networks of churches and pastors. This involves wide sharing of theological material, learning from each other's methods and strategies, and of course financial support. The widespread use of electronic media is a central component: churches based in Guatemala City are streaming their services so that they can be followed by farmers in the highlands, or by Guatemalan migrants in the USA. And there is wide circulation of published material from the most famous pastors and evangelical leaders – often from the USA, but also from Latin American pastors. The most famous Guatemalan pastors travel the region, and Guatemalan evangelical churches frequently host international guests, most often from the USA but also from Latin America, as well as South Korea. The most famous pastors have been welcomed to Guatemala at the political level, most notable has been the reception given to Argentinian pastor Luis Palau.[50] Palau has visited Guatemalan on numerous occasions, and was the most prominent guest when Ríos Montt invited to the celebration of the centennial of Protestantism in Guatemala (see Chapter 3). Palau's visit to Guatemala in 2009 is also illustrative of how the evangelical religion creates new arenas for networking in Guatemalan politics. In the course of a ten-day 'evangelisation festival' for the various sectors of Guatemalan society, Palau was granted personal meetings with President Álvaro

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[49] Current and former members include many figures mentioned in this thesis: pastors Francisco Bianchi, Jorge H. López, Harold Caballeros, and Cash Luna (see www.consejoapostolicodeguatemala.org)

[50] For an analysis of the role and position of Luis Palau in Latin American evangelicalism, see Aasmundsen (2013) and Stoll (1990)

Colom, a meeting with the Cabinet, dinners with 'Christians in Congress', meetings with Guatemala's business sector, with lawyers' associations, and many others (*The Christian Telegraph* 2009).[51]

Regardless what may come of such meetings in terms of political output, these evangelical initiatives create arenas explicitly aimed at facilitating networking and friendship among and between the leaders of the various sectors in Guatemala (see also Chapter 7).

The megachurches

The pastors of the largest evangelical churches have become well-known public figures in Guatemala, with great influence beyond their church premises.[52] As explained, their churches are also far more than places of worship; the average megachurch has its own school, nursery, health services, bookshop, and media lab. Moreover, the size and the complexity of these 'temples' have made them into national landmarks, to which both politicians and press have to relate and act upon. The inauguration of the hitherto largest evangelical site in Central America, the *Ciudad the Dios* (City of God) in 2013 illustrates the way the mega-churches serve as arenas where religious and political authorities appear side by side, acknowledging and possibly affecting each other's position.

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[51] In interviews, Palau has said that he was positively surprised by the level of governmental cooperation during his visit: '… what distinguished this campaign from any other was the level of impact – the depth of penetration – to all levels of society. Never have we seen such access to government leaders, business professionals, and military personnel. It's a testament to the power of the Gospel' (Palau, cited in *The Christian Telegraph* 2009).

[52] Much literature on the growth of evangelical churches includes their non-hierarchical structure as one of the explanatory factors, comparing this to the strictness of the Catholic hierarchy. However, the sheer size of some of the urban evangelical churches in Guatemala has turned their main pastors (and their wives) into businesspeople and entrepreneurs with considerable influence on the local and national authorities.

Pastor Cash Luna and the City of God

Pastor Cash Luna of the evangelical church 'The House of God' *(Casa de Dios)* is currently the county's best-known evangelical pastor, voted the next-most influential person in Guatemala in 2013, second only to President Pérez Molina (*Contrapoder* 2013b). Pastor Cash's real name is Carlos, but as a child he was supposedly nicknamed Cash as an imitation of how he mispronounced his name. Indeed, no one could have thought of a better name for the man he is today. Cash founded and heads one of the largest churches in the country, he runs a large broadcasting company, and is well known beyond the borders of Guatemala for his role as tele-evangelist.[53] Pastor Cash travels the region (including the United States) with his 'miracle shows' (*Noches de Gloria*) in which he 'heals' people from the audience, apparently treating them for a great variety of illnesses in front of thousands of people. Among the most spectacular events in Guatemala in 2013 was the inauguration of Pastor Cash's new church building, 'La Ciudad de Dios' (The City of God), a grandiose construction on the outskirts of Guatemala City, with capacity for 10 000 people in the main auditorium, as well as a school, a health centre, a multimedia centre, and the largest car park in Central America. The concept 'megachurch' has already become part of Guatemalan daily language; Guatemala City already houses five of these, but 'La Ciudad de Dios' is by far the largest, in areal and in membership. The construction process, followed closely by national media, has had a marked impact on local infrastructure, which has had to adjust to the arrival of tens of thousands of people, several times on any given Sunday. The inauguration ceremony attracted broad media attention, as well as (perhaps because of) remarkable participation by Guatemala's political, financial, juridical, and cultural elites, including President Otto Pérez Molina; the mayor of Guatemala City, Alvaro Arzú; and Olympic champion Eric Barrondo (Lende 2015; *Prensa Libre* 2013a). In his speech to Pastor Cash Luna and his wife Sonia, President Pérez Molina described the creation of the megachurch as an example of all good things Guatemala can *become*:

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[53] See Lende (2015) and Smith and Campos (2005, 2012) for thorough presentations of evangelical pastors' use of the electronic media.

> This is the best example of how things can be done provided by Pastor Luna and all his leaders, telling us that in Guatemala, we should not resign to violence or poverty, or to hunger. We can build a good Guatemala, a better Guatemala, if we obey God, if we have Christ in our hearts and if we have the faith that we can *change*. Thank you pastor, thank you Sonia, thank you for giving us this example. God bless you.[54]

> President Otto Pérez Molina, Ciudad de Dios 2013

Such speeches are of course meant to be festive and laudatory, but the fact that the president and several ministers and members of Congress chose to be present at this ceremony tell of mutual approval and that these two authorities, the political and the evangelical, are not worried about being associated with one another.

Pastor Jorge H. López and La Megafrater

One of the clearest examples of how an evangelical church has become a political arena is the establishment of the tradition of celebrating an evangelical inauguration ceremony for the newly elected president. These ceremonies are referred to as 'Te Deum Cristiano Evangélico'[55] and are held in the *Megafrater* on the outskirts of Guatemala City. The ceremony is hosted by pastor Jorge H. López, founder and leading pastor of 'La Fraternidad Cristiana' of which the Megafrater is a part. As in other Latin American countries, Te Deum ceremonies in Guatemala were originally organised by the Catholic Church, to mark the inauguration of a new government. Guatemala is now among few countries to organise *two* such ceremonies, one Catholic and one evangelical.[56] Pastor López has hosted all the evangelical Te Deum

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[54] My translation, from recording of the inauguration ceremony, published on Pastor Cash Luna's website https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HTUCLs0yZ4

[55] 'Te Deum' is Latin (For/To You, God), and in this context refers to masses celebrated by the Catholic Church to mark grand, national events. In many Latin American countries they have been used for marking independence day, whereas in Guatemala, Te Deum ceremonies have been organised exclusively to mark the entry of a new government.

[56] As elaborated in Chapter 7, the main differences between the Catholic and the evangelical Te Deum ceremony lie in the content of the prayer to the incoming president. The Catholic bishop of Guatemala City typically remind the incoming president of the socio-economic challenges faced by the populace and urging the government to stay faithful to its promises and do what is best for the Guatemalan people (Ortíz 2004: 95). In evangelical Te Deum ceremonies, the focus is to a much larger extent

ceremonies, and, since 2008, the ceremony for the inauguration of the new president has been held in the Megafrater, one of the largest church buildings in Central America, with a seating capacity of 12 000. In these ceremonies Pastor López addresses the newly elected president and the incoming government on behalf of the entire evangelical community. Also in attendance are all members of the incoming cabinet, international guests, the AEG, and many other well-known pastors of the mega-churches in Guatemala City (for more on the political importance of these ceremonies, see chapter 7).

Jorge H. López has for many years been one of the best-known evangelical pastors in Guatemala. He writes opinion pieces in national newspapers on a regular basis and is often consulted alongside the AEG as a representative of the evangelical church as such. Like Pastor Luna, Pastor López has been ranked among the most influential persons in Guatemala (Contrapoder 2013b). López personally initiated the evangelical 'Te Deum' ceremonies, and the ways in which Guatemala's leading politicians have embraced this initiative indicate recognition of the role and position of López as an evangelical pastor, and of the significance of this evangelical church as an arena. López himself stresses his close connections to decision-makers at the local and the central level, emphasising how he has often been called upon by candidates during election campaigns as well as by various presidents to talk about how they can cooperate: 'for them I provide them with the opportunity to side with a representative of 40 per cent of the population' (López, interview 2012).

Political authorities and evangelical events

To an increasing extent, evangelical pastors or organisations organise various events, large and small, explicitly aimed at bringing together the various sectors of the country's political and economic elite, evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike. Here I

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placed on *blessing* the newly inaugurated political leadership, directing a message of companionship and alliance on behalf of the evangelical community.

present one of the most prominent new initiatives, 'the National Prayer Breakfast', to illustrate how evangelical initiatives create opportunities for evangelical leaders to stand side-by-side with the country's elected officials, as well as members of branches of power such as the judiciary.

National Prayer Breakfast and Guatemala Próspera

The National Prayer Breakfast is modelled after the event with the same name organised each year in the USA, where the explicit objective is to create opportunities for socialising and networking, in bringing together members of Congress, diplomats, religious, business and military leaders, as well as the national President. In Guatemala, the event has been arranged by 'Guatemala Prospers' (*Guatemala Próspera*), an organisation working for the 'transformation of Guatemala [through] integral development of the individual, the family, the corporation, and society' (Espina, leader, interview 2014). The National Prayer Breakfast has been organised since 2013, and been very well attended by political authorities and widely covered by the national media. The invitees are persons in leading positions in Guatemalan politics and society, and the aim is to demonstrate how the country's leaders are 'united by the principles of Jesus', and to pray for peace (Espina interview 2014). Representatives of the various sectors have included the President; the President of the Guatemalan Congress and other members of the legislature; the head of the Constitutional Court, the Attorney General, and other judges and lawyers in leading positions; business leaders; academics; and diplomats and international guests (*El Periódico* 2014; *Prensa Libre* 2013b; Congreso de Guatemala 2013, 2014). The most prominent guests are invited to offer a prayer before the audience. President Pérez Molina attended the events in 2013 and 2014, speaking about his faith and how God gives him strength to fulfil his presidential duties. Pérez Molina is himself a Catholic, but it has been noted how his manner of speaking about his faith resembles the evangelical (Lende 2013: 193). Opening the event in 2013, the President employed familiar evangelical rhetoric, declaring Jesus as the Lord of Guatemala: 'Today we declare Jesus Christ as Lord of Guatemala! And in his name we declare that each of

our generations will be generations that can live in a Guatemala that is prosperous, and all of us present here are called upon to follow this path' (Pérez Molina cited in *Prensa Libre* 2013b).[57] President of the Guatemalan Congress, Pedro Muadi, followed along the same lines, stating that Guatemalans should 'expel the evil spirits, among these corruption, racism and violence'[58] (Muadi cited in *Prensa Libre* 2013b).

Lende (2015: 193) argues that the National Prayer Breakfast exemplifies how the once distinctively evangelical rhetoric now occupies a 'natural place in public life' in Guatemala. It is notable how the rhetoric and the methods of *Guatemala Próspera* strongly resemble the messages of the evangelical churches.[59] According to the leader Manuel Espina, *Guatemala Próspera* works closely with John Maxwell, an evangelical leader in the USA (Espina interview, 2014). Maxwell's books on evangelical values and ways of living, and the 'transformation of nations', are bestsellers in this category throughout the continent. According to Espina, *Guatemala Próspera'*s main activity is organising courses and trainings to public and private institutions, 'The transformation is in me' *(La transformacion está en mi)*. This is a programme developed by John Maxwell, aimed at 'transforming the nation through a culture of values.' The organisation claims an impressive list of attendees to their 'transformation training', having organised courses for the Congress, the Executive, several ministries, the municipality of Guatemala City, the police academy, and large private companies.[60] In 2014 John Maxwell organised a 'crusade for transformation' from Atlanta, Georgia, in the USA; upon arriving in Guatemala, he was welcomed by

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[57] My translation from Spanish

[58] My translation from Spanish

[59] For example, the organisation addresses seven spheres of influence with which they want to work and assist in their 'transformation'. These are the government, the media, academia, culture, sports, the churches, and the family. These are identical to the seven spheres of influence preached by well-known pastors such as Cash Luna and Harold Caballeros. References are often made to 'seven streams of influence' as defined by US evangelical pastors Cunningham and Bright. (See Lende 2015: 206–208 for a comparative analysis of the rhetoric of Guatemalan pastors and their US counterparts).

[60] The list of course participants is also found at *Guatemala Próspera*'s website http://guatemalaprospera.org/empresas-e-instituciones-participantes/

President Otto Pérez Molina. The point here is not to label *Guatemala Próspera* as evangelical, nor speculate on the reasons for the success of this particular organisation. The examples presented here illustrate how the rhetoric that for most Guatemalans is associated with the evangelical church has travelled from evangelical arenas (the churches) to political arenas and state institutions.

Recent years show that organisations such as *Guatemala Próspera* and initiatives like the National Prayer Breakfast, and 'Claiming my Nation' are typically fluctuating constellations, whose sustainability hinges on the decisions and contacts of their leaders. All the same, the continued presence of such initiatives, and their close collaboration with local and national authorities, indicate that Guatemalan political arenas are open for this kind of evangelical presence. Further, I hold that such evangelical initiatives and increased socialisation amongst the country's evangelical and political leaders have contributed to the 'normalisation' of the evangelical church and organisations previously referred to as 'sects' and 'fundamentalists'.

Concluding remarks: Normalised political presence

In this chapter I have presented how the evangelical church's presence in Guatemalan political arenas takes many forms, which jointly have contributed to the normalisation of the evangelical church as a political factor. Even though there have not been any successful examples of evangelical political parties, this does not mean that the evangelical church has not been part of Guatemalan electoral politics. On the contrary, I find that aspiring politicians to an increasing extent have sought out evangelical arenas and individuals during electoral campaigns, indicating expectations as to how such co-appearance with representatives of the evangelical church will positively affect their candidacy. Furthermore, organisations like the AEG has also established as a *natural* participant in electoral campaigns, seen in how it is consulted on political matters in times of elections, and most notably in how its 'presidential forums' have been well attended by presidential candidates and reported on by national media. In

addition, when invited to witness official ceremonies such as when presidential candidates sign pledges for non-violent campaigns, the AEG has also played the part as 'moral guardian' of the rules of the game. In all, this tracing of evangelical presence in electoral arenas has served to highlight the political positioning of the AEG and how this is at least partly the result of deliberate strategies on their part. In chapter 7 I go into detail on how the presence of the AEG has also been welcomed by the state.

This chapter has also illustrated how the evangelical presence and influence in Guatemalan politics is also found beyond traditional political institutions such as parties and the legislative. I have highlighted the need to include how evangelical organisations and individuals have set the political agenda and been influential in determining the terms of political debates. This type of presence and influence mostly concern policies and decision-making processes that relate to traditional (Christian) family values, and alliances have been sought with the Catholic Church in pursuing such issues. Jointly, these two religious authorities have succeeded on various occasions to *prevent* changes that could have led to a softening of Guatemala's conservative family policies. Lastly, I have identified a tendency of evangelicals entering political arenas by virtue of their position in an evangelical church. Activities and meetings in evangelical churches and events have presented members of the elites (evangelical and non-evangelical alike) with opportunities to meet and form close social, professional, and/or political ties. With this I find that evangelical churches as arenas and networks are worth bringing in as a dimension in the analyses of Guatemalan elite structures.

In order to proceed with the analysis of how the Guatemalan state has welcomed and related to this presence of the evangelical church in political arenas at the central level, it is essential to take into consideration the positions held by evangelical churches and organisations at the local level. In the next chapter, focus is therefore directed to the local level and the *omnipresence* of evangelical churches and services across Guatemala.

Chapter 6

Evangelical service provision

Turning from the central level and the presence of evangelical representatives and leaders in Guatemala's political arenas, in this chapter I examine the activities and services provided by evangelical churches at the *local* level. Distinguishing between these two levels enables the analysis of how the role of the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics is related to the *omnipresence* of evangelical churches and organisations 'on the ground'.

In the scholarship on the growth of Protestantism and its potential societal and political impact there is considerable empirical evidence of the diversity within the population of evangelicals and evangelical churches. Most scholars nevertheless agree that evangelical churches generally serve to promote *change* in the societies of which they are a part. In particular, the social work done by evangelical churches and organisations in local communities (like schooling, vocational training, and health care) is considered to promote considerable change – and improvements in people's lives, which in turn is expected to lead to overall political changes. A relevant representative of this position is Robert Brenneman (2012, 2014), whose substantial work on the role of religion, and evangelical religion in particular, in urban youth gangs in Central America has shown how conversion to evangelicalism and participation in evangelical programmes have improved the lives of many individuals and their families. Brenneman draws the conclusion that evangelical religion 'creates and cultivates communities of embodied selves (…)', which he expects to contribute significantly to the incorporation of marginal youth in society (Brenneman 2014: 126). Brenneman, and many with him, therefore argue for the importance of looking beyond the political institutions in assessing 'political impact' of the growth of Protestantism, and rather assess the roles and activities of churches and organisations at the

community level, and how these can enhance people's capacities to act on their situation (Brenneman 2014:125).[1]

In many ways my approach follows this perspective of needing to expand what is considered as political in this regard; however my conclusions will differ from those of Brenneman and others as regards the role of evangelical churches in promoting change. I agree that it is essential to consider the roles that evangelical churches and organisations play in people's everyday lives, and that the work done by these religious actors is often driven by explicit intentions of changing and improving people's lives as well as the larger community. Hence, when assessing the political role of the evangelical church as such, careful attention should be paid to evangelical activities on the ground. However, I find that most of the literature does not make it clear *how* the changes at the local level interact with the political level. In order to avoid the sometimes erroneous assumption that changes and improvements experienced by the individual inevitably lead to similar transformative changes at the political level, I therefore argue for the need to analyse how such evangelical presence on the ground is received (or ignored) in political arenas at the central level – and more specifically, by the state.

In this thesis I am concerned with identifying the *interaction* between the two levels (local and central), and here I will present and analyse the activities and programmes of evangelical churches as 'non-state service provision'. This enables a more comprehensive analysis of the roles and positions of the evangelical church as such, both in relation to the populace and to the Guatemalan state. In the first part of the chapter I present a categorisation of evangelical service provision that distinguishes between three categories of evangelical services, based on how they operate and relate to the state. The second part of the chapter then examines how the different evangelical services relate to the state and to which social strata they cater. This investigation of the types of service provision will then constitute the material on

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[1] See also Freston (2008), Levine (1997); and Samson (2007, 2012) for similar positions.

which I base the analysis of the overall *impact* of the presence of the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics (in Chapter 7). I begin by presenting the empirical and theoretical grounds on which I conceptualise evangelical churches and organisations as non-state service providers.

Non-state service provision

For most Guatemalans their security and basic needs are not covered by the Guatemalan state. Events analysed in this thesis, such as the earthquake in 1976 with its massive damage and high death toll, served to highlight the state's low capacity for providing emergency assistance and basic services to the general population. Further, since the restoration of the civilian regime and the establishing of democratic institutions, Guatemala has been among the countries in the region with the lowest level of social spending, as well the smallest tax base (Briscoe 2009; OECD 2015). Hence, it is perhaps unsurprising that the sectors examined in this chapter (education, health, and citizen security) are characterised by exceptionally low levels of public financing, and high levels of participation by non-state actors providing services to the populace. [2]

Conceptualising the social programmes of evangelical churches as such 'non-state service provision' I take inspiration in the research perspectives presented by Lund and colleagues (Lund, ed., 2007; see also Chapter 2 in this thesis). In *Twilight Institutions* (2007) these authors explore situations when government institutions fail to work, and identify the emergence of other institutions of public authority. In contexts like that of Guatemala it is useful to take into consideration how public services do not stem from one single source (the state), but involve a range of 'twilight institutions': actors that are not the state, but that provide public services.[3] The

[2] More concretely, the Guatemalan state has the lowest public expenditure on both education and health in Latin America, and invests less in its children per year than any other country in the region (UNDP 2010:185-186). As a result, Guatemala performs significantly worse than other countries in Latin America in the areas of education, but especially in health and nutrition (World Bank 2013: 9).

[3] Lund and colleagues use the term 'twilight' to refer to the blurred borders between the state and the non-state; 'institutions that are hard to distinguish and discern' (Lund 2007:1, n1).

analytical task should be to 'focus on how particular issues (security, justice, development, taxation, and others) are governed', and to identify which actors are engaged in them (Lund 2007: 10).

Evangelical service provision – a categorisation

Identifying the services provided by Guatemala's evangelical churches and organisations and the arenas in which they operate is a central aspect of the analytical framework of this thesis. I enquire into whether this role of delivering basic goods and services has provided the evangelical churches with certain roles and positions of authority in the various fields in which they operate at the local level (see Lund 2007; Rose 1999), and how the evangelical church as such may have become considered as an 'appropriate and normal' participant in policy areas such as education and rehabilitation at the central level (see also Neumann and Sending 2010).

There are several significant studies of evangelical services and social work in Guatemala and in the region, covering demographic and geographic diverse areas. I draw on several of these in my analysis – in particular, the extensive historical material of Garrard-Burnett (1998, 2010) and Levenson (2013), the investigation of evangelical education by Rose and Schultze (1993), and the ethnographic studies of evangelical outreach programmes targeting different marginal groups, mainly the works of Brenneman (2012,2014) and O'Neill (2010b, 2011, 2015). My own contribution to this field lies primarily in systematising the information on the evangelical organisations and services from these studies according to their type of relations with the Guatemalan state. For that purpose, I have developed the following relational categories: 1) *in the absence of the state* – evangelical services that exist in what Lund and colleagues (2007) call an 'institutional vacuum', operating in more or less independent of the central government; 2) *cooperating with the state* – referring to the rather common practice of formal and informal cooperation between the state and evangelical organisations and individuals in providing the citizenry with public goods,

and 3) *alternatives to the state* – covering evangelical services that operate as alternatives to the state and to other private services. This categorisation also serves to highlight the considerable diversity of the evangelical services, demographically as well as geographically. The empirical examples by and large represent three policy areas – education, health, and security (See Table 1).

Table 1: Evangelical service provision in Guatemala

RELATION TO THE STATE	SERVICES	CLIENTS*
'In the absence of' 'Filling gaps' – Providing services to citizens uncovered by public services	*Education*: Mission schools *Health:* Health centres, hospitals *Security*: Gang ministry and exit-programmes	Poor; rural and urban
'Cooperation with' Providing the state with – Knowledge and resources – Methods, content, 'rationale'	*Education*: Literacy campaigns, teacher training *Health:* Shelter and rehabilitation *Security*: Prison ministries	'Targeted' areas and populations; urban and rural
'Alternatives to' Private (pay) services	*Education:* Evangelical private schools and universities *Comprehensive welfare services* Services offered in and by megachurches	Elites, upper-middle classes; mostly urban

* 'Clients' in this context refers to both participants in the evangelical programmes and the 'users' of the services

The three categories should not be read as mutually exclusive. For instance, from the examples provided in the two categories 1) *In the absence of*, and 2) *cooperation with*,

it will be seen how the development of formal cooperation between the state and evangelicals in providing public services has often emerged as a result of how the state has sought assistance from evangelicals already operating as service providers in the field. Further, the examples provided here are not meant as a comprehensive list of all variants of evangelical activities and services, which are as diverse as the evangelical churches and their members. Rather, the activities and programmes selected here represent *types* of services that can be categorised as within the responsibility of the state, and/ or that have had impact on the state's own services, or lack thereof. In some cases, like schooling and literacy campaigning, the cooperation between evangelicals and the Guatemalan state can be traced back to the 19th century, whereas other services have emerged by demand caused by more recent societal phenomena, such as youth gangs.

In the absence of the state

The type of service provision that is here referred to as 'in the absence of' is certainly not a uniquely evangelical phenomenon. Evangelical churches and organisations form part of a wide range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provide the citizenry with goods and services that are technically the responsibility of the state, such as basic education and health care, and public security. With the examples presented here I identify that there are certain particularities of the evangelical programmes, primarily related to their religious content, highlighting how these services should not be considered to be merely 'filling the gaps' left by the absent state, but also seen as contributors to the definitions of what the gaps are.[4] The empirical examples also indicate how churches and organisations are present in rural and urban areas where the state cannot, or has chosen not to, enter.

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[4] I thank Gina Lende for interesting and inspiring discussions on evangelical churches and the ways in which they 'fill the gaps' (see also Lende 2015).

Mission schools: Reading and writing the word of God

Ever since the establishment of the first Protestant missions in Guatemala in the late 19th century, Protestant missionaries have had a special focus on education as an instrument of their work. Raising the level of literacy was seen as an important instrument of the evangelisation processes that would enable the converts to practise and preach among themselves, also after the missionaries had moved on.[5] In addition to small-scale literacy programmes, international missionaries established educational centres with the explicit objective of training pastors and lay people in indigenous languages so that they could preach in these languages, and also translate the Bible from Spanish (Garrard-Burnett 1998). By the mid-1900s several faith-based language academies had been established, notably the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), founded by William Cameron Townsend, a US citizen who moved to Guatemala in 1917 order do 'cross-cultural work with the Mayan Cakchiquel people of Guatemala'.[6] As noted by Garrard-Burnett (1998: 70), the liberal assimilarist agenda of that time prohibited public (state) schools from teaching in any language other than Spanish, leaving the mission schools and training centres as the only educational services with instruction in indigenous languages.[7] In today's Guatemala, such mission schools are to a much lesser extent the *only* education services available to the population.

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[5] This is of course not unique to Guatemala. In the words of Garrard-Burnett 'the ability to read the Word of God is a basic tenet of Protestant faith' (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 35) and Protestant missionaries worldwide have literacy programmes as a central instrument in their mission. She provides an interesting overview of how different denominations have varied according to whether education was considered as primarily a vehicle for theological instruction, and concludes that 'for even the most liberal Protestants, mission schools were first and foremost a means of religious instruction' (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 34)

[6] This information is from SIL's own presentation of their history. SIL is today a large foundation operating in more than 50 countries around the world. On the homepage SIL presents itself as 'a faith-based organization that studies, documents, and assists in developing the world's lesser-known languages' (www.sil.org).

[7] Such mission schools and language academies have also been criticised for serving to weaken indigenous cultures, and for operating as proxies for US imperialism (for introduction to the polemic, see for example Stoll 1990)

However, even though the coverage of public services has improved drastically in recent decades, for the poorest segments of school-age children, the availability of public education is still restricted by cost- and language-related challenges. In some areas and communities, foreign and national missionaries still operate as the *de facto* sole providers of basic education.

Health, hygiene, and 'discipline'

As noted by Garrard-Burnett (1998) and O'Neill (2011:180–181), in addition to education, promoting and providing health and hygiene were essential parts of the missionary tasks of 'saving' and 'developing' the peoples of Guatemala. The country's first modern medical facility, the 'Hospital Americano', was opened by the Presbyterian mission in 1910; according to Garrard-Burnett (1998:33) the mission had soon 'established permanent medical clinics from mission out-stations scattered throughout the highlands'. In some parts of the country, international missions still serve as providers of basic health services in the absence of public health centres and personnel.

Providing variants of health services to the neighbourhoods and communities of which they are a part is also a common practice in the 'outreach' programmes of *local* evangelical churches in Guatemala today. Alongside other NGOs, evangelical churches and organisations operate ambulant clinics, establish local health centres, provide medicine and vaccines, and assist in relief work in the aftermath of natural disasters (Morales interviews 2012, 2013). Some of these activities are coordinated by the AEG, but they are usually *ad hoc* initiatives, sometimes in cooperation with international evangelical individuals and NGOS. Such initiatives vary greatly in form and practice, making it difficult to identify any general tendencies. O'Neill (2011) attempts to draw the lines from the missionary activities in the 19th and 20th centuries with the more recent phenomenon of the mission-like operations in the Guatemalan highlands organised by the urban evangelical mega-churches. He specifically investigates the 'Hands of Love' programme (*Manos de Amor*) of the evangelical

church El Shaddai, and finds a particular emphasis on assisting poor recipients with improving personal hygiene. This he links to the evangelical discourse of self-control, discipline and civility, and notes how church volunteers distribute small 'personal hygiene bags' – containing soap, dental floss, toothbrush, and toothpaste (O'Neill 2011:181–182; see also 2010a). These remain isolated examples, but they exemplify how the *content* of evangelical services is often closely related to the overarching mission of evangelisation.

Rescuing and saving criminals and gang members

In line with the programmes and activities of many NGOs operating with and within local communities and neighbourhoods in Guatemala, much of the social work done by evangelical churches involves dealing with the feelings of insecurity and crime-troubled everyday lives of their congregants and neighbours. Evangelical activities and programmes that relate to these issues target people who are affected, as well as the ones who cause violence and insecurity.

During the civil war many people sought physical shelter from violence and persecution in the evangelical churches, as these were seen as offering more 'neutral' ground than the Catholic churches, which were accused of and attacked for having actively chosen sides in the conflict, against the state (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 4). Also today, evangelical churches are considered safe havens, if in a less concrete manner: many Guatemalans seek the local evangelical church and the evangelical way of life because they are searching for protection from the dangers of life in a gang, or a life of addiction and *la vida loca* ('the crazy life') (Brenneman 2012). There has been increased scholarly interest for the role of religion in the lives and operations of gang members. As initially pointed out in Dennis Rodgers' analysis on gang membership in Nicaragua (2006: 273), gang members have little (if anything) in common apart from

not being evangelicals,[8] and other researchers such as Robert Brenneman (2012) stress the need to acknowledge the part played by the '*barrio evangélicos*'.[9] Recent years have seen the emergence of numerous evangelical 'exit programmes' for gang members in Guatemala and other Central American countries, with evangelical pastors working with members of youth gangs, presenting them with 'salvation' as a way out of the gang.[10] Brenneman and others have found that in many neighbourhoods where gang membership is high, evangelical religion represents a well-known 'refuge' from the gang (Brenneman 2012, 2014, see also Vásquez and Marquardt 2003; Wolseth 2008). Brenneman attributes this to spatial, spiritual, and rational dimensions. First, evangelical churches and gangs share much of the same social spaces – spaces that are characterised by the absence of state. Second, even though in many ways in complete contrast to the gang membership, the evangelical faith as preached and practised in the *barrios* presents young men with codes of conduct and identity markers that can replace the identity previously provided by gang membership. And lastly, even though most born-again ex-gang members speak of their conversion as stemming from Divine intervention, Brenneman and others point out that this is often a rational choice, a deliberate strategy to leave the life of a gang member and the associated dangers (Brenneman 2012). My intention is not to explore the 'real' causes of why members of gangs and other criminals turn to evangelical churches, but it is important to consider that such narratives of evangelical *transformation* have become well-known in Guatemala, shared and distributed by the churches and organisations themselves, but also by the national media, with reports of how people have managed to turn their lives around and leave their criminal past as a result of converting to evangelicalism (see for example *El Periodico* 2010).

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[8] Concerning gang membership in Nicaragua, Rodgers note how 'the only element that systematically affected membership was religious, insofar as there were no evangelical Protestant youths in the *pandilla*' (Rodgers 2006: 273–274)

[9] With 'barrio evangelicals' Brenneman refers to the small, local evangelical churches to be found 'on every corner' in poor neighbourhoods (Brenneman 2012).

[10] Gang members themselves describe how the 'morgue rule' of the gang (the only way out of a gang is the morgue) has only one exception: evangelical conversion (Brenneman 2012).

The long-term effects of these evangelical 'exit programmes' are relatively under-studied, and opinion differs as to the overall *impact* of such evangelical activities and programmes.[11] Whereas Brenneman stresses how such evangelical programmes present salvation and rescue as an opportunity for *all,* 'no matter how lost they are in sin', and that this is a key feature of evangelical theology (Brenneman 2014: 118), it is also reported how these evangelical programmes share a distinctively individualistic framework, based on the evangelical 'conceptualisation' of rescue and transformation. In rhetoric and in practice, the primary focus is placed on rescuing the *individual*, by evangelical conversion and offers of a new life with a new sense of belonging.[12] Researchers and non-evangelical NGO workers alike have described evangelical programmes and activities in this field as 'exit-oriented', in contrast to other non-governmental programmes that are oriented more towards *preventing* people from entering gangs, including the whole community in their approaches to target the challenges of insecurity and violence (Brenneman 2012; Wolseth 2008; Anleu, interview 2014; Jiménez, interview 2014; *El Periódico* 2010). As argued by the director of a regional NGO working with youth and violence: 'they don't see the community as such, they see *their* community. Sometimes their programmes have larger impact, but in general … if they are constructing a school, it is one of *their* schools, not for the community as such. They don't have this vision of development in more general terms' (Jiménez, interview 2014). Moreover, as noted by another non-evangelical NGO worker, evangelical programmes have proven especially fragile, as the sustainability and legitimacy of their activities are closely related to the continued good behaviour of the converts (Mansilla, interview 2014).

Summing up this section, throughout Guatemala evangelical churches and organisations have long traditions of providing basic services, catering to areas and

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[11] Brenneman himself has revisited some of the participants of his study, finding that some of them were still evangelical and had continued with their 'new lives' and new jobs; some had re-entered the gangs and prisons, and some had died in connection with gang-related violence (Brenneman 2014).

[12] This is a framework in sharp contrast to the liberation theologians' preaching of socio-political transformation (Brenneman 2012).

populations that have remained outside the scope of the scarce public services. In assessing the political effects of this presence (see Chapter 7) I will emphasise how the content of such services – particularly aspects related to *evangelisation* – affects their operation, compared to other non-evangelical operations; and I enquire into whether and how the focus on individual conversion and individual responsibility has been transferred to rhetoric and practices in political arenas.

In cooperation with the state

The development of formal cooperation between the state and evangelicals in providing public services has often been the result of the state seeking assistance from evangelicals who are already operative as service providers in the field in question. In addition, and as seen with the devastating earthquake in 1976, cooperation between evangelical churches and the state has also emerged as a logical consequence of the *omnipresence* of evangelical churches in Guatemala. In whichever part of the country that has been hit by a natural catastrophe, there have been evangelical churches already present, with resources, personnel, and locations available for conducting emergency assistance. Such emergency assistance has often been initiated and coordinated by the AEG (Díaz interview 2012; Morales, interview 2012), and represents a variant of *ad hoc* cooperation between the state and the evangelical church.

In the following I explore some examples of cooperation that have to a certain extent been formalised, to illustrate various ways in which the Guatemalan state has made good use of the experience, knowledge and resources of international Protestant missionaries and local evangelical churches and organisations. The state's incentives for cooperating with evangelicals can of course be interpreted in various ways: as a strategy on the part of a benevolent state seeking temporary assistance in fulfilling its duties towards its citizens, or as a strategy for spending as little resources as possible on welfare-related policies. I argue that, for a state with an extremely small tax base

and one that has had few ideological incentives for providing public services to the citizenry, cooperating with evangelical churches and organisations has proven opportune, primarily due to the way the individualistic frameworks of the evangelical services have cohered ideologically with the political position of the Guatemalan state. I return to a more thorough discussion of *how* cooperation with the evangelical church has been advantageous for the Guatemalan state in Chapter 7.

Providing teachers, techniques and pedagogical material

The first direct cooperation between Protestants and the Guatemalan state emerged from the implementation of President Justo Rufino Barrios' liberal reforms (initiated in 1873), particularly the reform directed at secularising the school system. Up till 1873 the Catholic Church had run virtually all schools in Guatemala and had closely monitored the curriculum (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 11). President Barrios had clear economic incentives in challenging the monopoly of the Catholic hierarchy, and education was among the spheres where he sought control. Paradoxically then, it was the introduction of secular, public education that opened the way for Protestantism in this sector. First and foremost this cooperation was related to practical considerations: the exit of the Catholic clergy from the schools left behind a vacuum in terms of personnel and resources, one which Protestant missionaries were well equipped to fill (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 13). Moreover, the liberals in government found that the foreign missionaries could teach subjects that were close to their own political project of modernisation, particularly the English language. Despite their declared atheism, President Barrios and several of his cabinet ministers sent their children to the first Protestant school that opened in Guatemala City in 1882 (Garrard-Burnett 1998:15).[13]

The cooperation between Protestants and the state as regards education continued and intensified through various governments in the 20th century.

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[13] The school and the church it was a part of were opened by Protestant Pastor John Clark Hill, who came to Guatemala on personal invitation from President Barrios (Garrard-Burnett 1998:14-15).

International and national Protestant missions were considered instrumental for widening the scope of public education, specifically by organising literacy campaigns. Also the reformist government of President Juan José Arévalo (1945–1950), which had universal education as a core objective and means of reforming Guatemalan society, used the 'arsenal of experienced teachers, schools, and established pedagogy' of the missionaries and evangelical churches, particularly in isolated areas in the Guatemalan highlands (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 82). At that time, missionaries were among the very few who had bilingual expertise and could teach in Mayan languages. The Evangelical Synod (the predecessor of the AEG) was appointed to head a literacy campaign running in tandem and in close cooperation with the governmental campaigns. From the findings of Garrard-Burnett it is clear that the cooperation with the evangelicals went beyond inviting the Synod and other evangelical actors to conduct their own *separate* literacy campaigns; teaching materials that had been developed for missionaries were soon adopted for use in the government's own programmes. In addition, there was also a certain 'overlap' of personnel; the teachers trained by Protestant missionary organisations were active not only in Synod-led schools, but also in the government's literacy projects and in public schools (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 82–83; Steigenga 2001:97, n.12).[14] Missionaries and local churches also contributed by establishing a large number of new schools in order to fill the void beyond the reach of governmental programmes (Garrard-Burnett 1998:82). As noted by Steigenga (2001), Rose and Schultze (1993) and others, for the government this direct cooperation with missionaries and evangelical churches in fulfilling educational obligations and ambitions can be seen as advantageous, both practically and financially. And for the missionaries and churches, this was a way of achieving their objective of reaching out to as many Guatemalans as possible.

Illustrative of how the cooperation between the Guatemalan state and evangelical churches has to a certain extent been ideologically conditioned is how the

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[14] According to Garrard-Burnett (1998: 83,) substantial numbers of converts to Protestantism 'served as teachers in rural government schools, where they were frequently the only personnel trained to both read and write in local languages.'.

relationship between Protestants and the government changed drastically with the revolutionary government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman (1951–1954). The most common explanation is the Protestant missionaries' critical position towards what they saw as a Communist regime. However, according to Garrard-Burnett (1998), the decline in the cooperation came only after the Arbenz government placed force behind its nationalistic political project, in which foreign and particularly US presence was referred to as interference in national affairs. The new laws required that all teachers had to hold 'a national title of credentials or a certificate of aptitude' (Garrard-Burnett: 1998: 89), and strict restrictions were introduced for entry and residence visas for foreigners. In this period the Protestant missionaries lost the direct ties to the state (Garrard-Burnett 1998: 91). However, as with most of the reforms introduced under the Arbenz government, restrictions towards missionaries were lifted after the President was forcefully removed in the coup of 1954, and cooperation was re-established. Several foreign protestant missionaries and local evangelical churches cooperated directly with the state for educational purposes throughout the military dictatorships of the 1970s and early 80s. For instance, the Summer Institute of Linguistics was involved in the literacy campaigns of the Lucas García administration (1978–1982), as a way of 'serving God by serving the government' (Stoll 1990:191).

Evangelical services of shelter and rehabilitation

The devastating earthquake in 1976 intensified and highlighted the presence and activities of international Protestant missionaries and local evangelical organisations and churches. The overall population and politicians alike were exposed to the evangelical church as service providers in a hitherto unprecedented way. By the late 1980s observers had also started noticing how evangelical organisations had become established as central actors in the task of providing shelter and 'rescue' to people in vulnerable situations in Guatemala City. In 'On their own: A preliminary study of youth gangs in Guatemala City' published by the Guatemalan research centre AVANCSO *(Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales)* in 1988, the authors

point out that the government had opened up for religious authorities in domains that belonged to the state: '… by allowing the Evangelicals to handle what it does not have to tools to deal with as civilian power, the state opens its door to transforming state institutions into religious, rather than secular ones' (AVANCSO 1988: 50).[15] The AVANCSO report refers specifically to the services available to the increasing numbers of children and young adults living on and off the streets of the capital city, many with severe drug addiction. Deborah Levenson (2013) addresses similar questions.[16] She finds that in the late 1980s the structural adjustment policies and the substantial cutbacks in funding of state welfare services had severe implications for the already scarce services for street children and youth. Levenson argues that in the late 1980s, *de facto* responsibility for the care of the 'needy and troubled youth' was turned over to evangelical churches and individuals (Levenson 2013: 107). Evangelical churches organised volunteer visits to the few state-run centres, providing them with educational programmes aimed at orienting youth away from vices like drugs and alcohol. Such programmes were also provided as teaching assistance to the public schools. This period also saw the establishment of several independent centres for shelter and rehabilitation run by evangelicals, housing hundreds of young people. Several of these based their treatment fully on strict mental discipline and physical punishment (Levenson 2013: 107–108).

Both the AVANCSO report and Levenson's accounts indicate the emergence of direct cooperation between the evangelical shelters and rehabilitation centres and the criminal justice system in Guatemala. For example, children who had been picked up from the streets by the National Police and young people sentenced to rehabilitation by the courts were frequently handed over to an evangelical centre for children and youth, *Casa Mi Hogar*, for shelter and rehabilitation, and Levenson writes that 'the state remunerated Casa Mi Hogar for services' (2013: 108). Structural arrangements were

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[15] Somewhat anticipating the more recent studies on youth gangs and religion, the AVANCSO report also notes that for young people on the street, the evangelical church is one of two 'organisations' of any importance, the other one being youth gangs.

[16] Levenson is also one of the authors of the AVANCSO report (1988)

also initiated between evangelical centres and the juvenile courts; the courts started sending detained children and youth to custody in certain evangelical shelters instead of prevention centres. The shelters then reported back to the courts on the consigned minors. One youth court judge is quoted as saying, 'there is little choice; given the scarcity of state programmes, the evangelicals are useful' (AVANCSO 1988:44–45).

This cooperation was further institutionalised during the presidency of Jorge Serrano Elías (1991–1993), Guatemala's second evangelical president. By direct invitation of the president, the Spanish evangelical organisation REMAR (*Rehabilitación de Marginados)* was invited to Guatemala, specifically to run the Gaviotas youth detention centre in Guatemala City (Levenson 2013:111; Serrano 2012:116). The President expressed great faith in handing over the task to an evangelical organisation: 'If we cannot make this with the help of the Lord, then nothing can help us solve this problem' (Serrano 2012: 116, my translation). According to Serrano's own accounts, the REMAR did 'remarkable things' at the Gaviotas, improving conditions dramatically within a few weeks (Serrano 2012: 116). However, REMAR's running of the Gaviotas and several other state and non-state institutions to which they lent their services has been widely criticised for brutal methods of 'disciplining' the young residents. A report published by Human Rights Watch (1997) tells of frequent use of physical punishment and punitive isolation as disciplinary tools. By the mid-1990s, REMAR was in charge of all of three state detention centres for young boys, as well several private centres for children, to which Guatemalan juvenile courts were sending more than a thousand children each year (HRW 1997). Despite criticisms, the organisation continued its operations in Guatemala, running orphanages, rehabilitation centres, schools, and homes for the elderly (Levenson 2013; REMAR 2015; *Plaza Pública* 2013; *La Hora* 2014). According to their accounts, REMAR aims at assisting the disadvantaged, to 'guide them along the path of Jesus' (Cristina de Masilla, REMAR staff, cited in *La Hora* 2014). In Chapter 7, I discuss the state's motivations for cooperating with evangelical organisations in such matters. Suffice it here to suggest that the reasons for the state's continued cooperation with REMAR despite broad criticism may partly indicate

necessity – the Guatemalan state welcomed all the funding and personnel it could get; and partly rely on REMAR's legitimacy as an international evangelical organisation.

Privatisation of state institutions and responsibilities in the early 1990s was not unique to the sector of youth detention and rehabilitation. Starting with the Serrano administration, subcontracting and outsourcing became more the rule than the exception in this period of Guatemalan politics (Dosal 1995; Bull 2005, 2014). The above-mentioned developments must therefore be seen in light of the overall reorganisation of state resources, in response to the severe lack of funds and the requirements imposed by structural adjustment programmes. Also many non-evangelical organisations were operating as 'social workers' in Guatemala at the time. However, the evangelical organisations stand out, first of all because there were so many of them, and because they increasingly entered into direct cooperation with state institutions. It is worth taking into consideration the information provided as to *how* the evangelical centres work, what kind of services they provide, and perhaps equally important, what they do not. Returning to the examples of evangelical rehabilitation centres, studies indicate that drug rehabilitation has remained almost the sole domain of private evangelical actors; as of 2015 there were no state-run residential rehabilitation centres for the treatment of drug addiction or alcoholism (O'Neill 2015, interview 2014). The scant information available refers to more than 200 private evangelical-led rehabilitation centres in Guatemala City alone.[17] These figures indicate that the field of treating drug and alcohol addiction has remained in private, mostly evangelical, hands and that the state has seen no need or possibility of taking over this work.

Many of the evangelical rehabilitation centres are run by former drug addicts who have converted to evangelical Christianity as part of their own recovery. Researcher, journalists, and clients report on harsh conditions and strict codes of

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[17] O'Neill (2015) argues that the 'mushrooming' of such evangelical centres has come in response to the demand posed by the sharp increase of drug abuse accompanying the increase of drug trafficking and production in Guatemala.

conduct in many of these centres, with explicit reference to 'biblical discipline' and 'good moral behaviour' (see for example O'Neill 2015; *Plaza Pública* 2013c; Pressly 2014). According to O'Neill, there is widespread use of forced isolation as part of the rehabilitation strategy, combined with strict discipline, physical punishment, and Bible readings. The solution to addiction is hence presented as conversion and personal discipline: there is no clinical treatment (O'Neill 2015, interview 2014). The National Police and the courts still use the evangelical rehabilitation centres to keep detained minors. Moreover, as was the case in the 1980s, Guatemala's prisons and detention centres are still heavily overcrowded, and criminals with drug problems are often sent to evangelical rehabilitation centres simply because state resources are inadequate. As argued by O'Neill (interview 2014), for the Guatemalan state, the evangelical rehabilitation centres represent a cost-effective solution for the detention of individuals at risk; and for evangelical churches and individuals, the centres may represent opportunities to fulfil their mission as Christians, as well as being a welcome source of revenue.

Prison ministries

In addition to working with criminals in their local communities, many evangelical churches and missions in Guatemala offer their services to inmates in prisons and prevention centres.[18] According to governmental sources, inmates are provided with various forms of rehabilitation and educational activities.[19] However, this information stands in sharp contrast to the accounts of non-governmental reports and academic observations. The Guatemalan penitentiary system generally reflects the broader

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[18] These activities do not represent a direct cooperation with the state, as the evangelical pastors and volunteers have generally not entered into formal arrangements with state officials. However, I categorise prison ministries as 'cooperation' as the activities take place in state facilities to which the evangelicals have to be granted permission.

[19] Information from 'Dirección General del Sistema Penitenciario' achieved at www.dgsp.gob.gt (28 March 2015).

regional situation: notoriously overcrowded, understaffed and often not governed by the authorities assigned with the task (O'Neill 2010b; International Centre for Prison Studies 2015; Ungar 2003).[20] 'Prison ministry', or chaplain ministry, refers to the organised prison visits of evangelical volunteers and pastors. It has become common for the larger evangelical churches in Guatemala to organise such activities as part of their outreach strategies (Aguierre interview 2013; López interview 2012). Most, if not all, prisons and detention centres in Guatemala are frequently visited by local or international prison ministries.[21] Such visits may take the form of one-to one conversations between a pastor and an inmate, Bible study sessions, and group sermons. Often the visitors bring along small gifts or food to the inmates. Staff at a juvenile prevention centre in Guatemala City tell of how volunteers from various evangelical churches organise activities six out of seven days a week – otherwise, no other activities or meetings are arranged for the young inmates, not by other volunteers or by the staff. The meetings are typically open to all, not only those who are already evangelical. As described by one of the volunteers at the detention centre for girls in Guatemala City, it is not the case that all participants are believers or claim to have converted to evangelicalism: some of them attend because of the food and clothing distributed at such meetings (Volunteer, interview 2013). And as also found by Johnson (2011), in addition to providing something to do, someone to talk to, and something to believe in, the visiting pastors can serve as contacts with the outside, for example by passing on messages and money between family members.[22]

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[20] As of 2015, the prison population counts approximately 20 000 inmates, half of them held in detention centres. The official capacity of the prison system is reported to be 6 492 – indicating an overpopulation of roughly 245 per cent (International Centre for Prison Studies 2015; *Prensa Libre* 2015a).

[21] For example, in 2013, the *Granja* prevention centre in Guatemala City registered frequent visits from seven different evangelical churches, and the prevention centre in zone 18 had two (NGO worker interview 2013).

[22] For the case of Brazil, Johnson finds that the relationship established whilst in prison can continue on the outside, providing the evangelical pastor with an important role and a high status due the services he has assisted with (Johnson 2011).

The pastors and the volunteers who visit prisons generally do so independently of each other, and even though they offer similar services to the inmates, there are differences in spiritual focus and form. However, in the eyes of inmates, guards and the government, they are there as *evangelicals*, distinguishable from Catholics or other volunteers. Several international Protestant missions that operate in Guatemala are involved in such activities in prisons, whether by setting up their own prison ministry, or by accompanying and sponsoring local initiatives.

> On Wednesday we all went in for a service at the Centro Correctivo Santa Teresa prison, in Antigua. Because two inmates had been killed in a riot there two weeks ago, we were only supposed to be allowed to speak to the inmates through the bars and have no direct contact with them. However, after talking with the administration, they opened up the entire facility to us and we had a full service in the patio with about 40 inmates present. It was as though an Angel of the Lord had opened the prison doors for us. I thought about the Apostle Peter who was in prison and an Angel opened the door and he walked out. We walked in. We distributed 40 Bibles, not enough, including to many of the guards

Chaplain Rob Brown reporting from prison visit in Guatemala[23]

Some of these ministries also target the prison officials and other state officials of the penitentiary system, as does the Crossroad Bible Institute, Guatemala.[24] Again, there is nothing extraordinary about religious groups or services inside prison facilities. Inmates worldwide are presented with religious conversion as a remedy and 'salvation' from the harsh conditions in which they find themselves. However, the extremely poor conditions of Guatemalan penal facilities combined with the low levels of control and authority held by the guards and state officials arguably give more importance and indeed authority to other non-state actors who can provide alternative systems of control and discipline. Gang leaders constitute one such alternative – evangelicals another.[25] Often representing the *only* activities and visits that are

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[23] Newsletter, Chaplains for Christ International (2004).

[24] Information of this prison ministry is achieved at http://cbi.fm/team-view/cbi-guatemala/

[25] As O'Neill (2010: 74) notes, whereas controlling and monitoring have been considered the central functions of 'modern' prisons, in the overcrowded, poorly-managed prisons of Guatemala, there is little such monitoring; the state is not 'watching' and the prisoners know that they are left alone.

organised for the inmates, evangelical activities are well-attended, and the evangelical preaching on how to solve one's problems and choose the 'right way' by turning to Jesus reach wide audiences inside the prison walls. This contributes to the *normalisation* of the evangelical rhetoric of what is good and what is evil, of the criminal as a sinner, and repentance and conversion as the way to recovery (Bjune 2012; O'Neill 2010b).

In all, the examples presented here show how the cooperation between the state and evangelical churches and individuals can be seen as what Steigenga (2001: 66) has called a system of *quid pro quo.* The state is assisted with resources like personnel, materials and content; and evangelicals are granted access to areas and populations, facilitating their mission of evangelisation, and also, improving their finances.

Evangelical services as *private* alternatives

The third category of evangelical service provision concerns the evangelical activities and services that operate as alternatives to existing public services, as well as to other private services. As the socio-economic base of the evangelical churches has widened considerably since the mid-1970s, the activities and services organised by the churches have diversified correspondingly. To some extent, the examples presented below can be seen as private businesses that have emerged as a response to the diversified demand in a specific segment of the evangelical population. However, here I consider these services within the framework of service provision, in order to focus on the relationship with the state.

Previous chapters have shown how Guatemala's evangelical megachurches have the capacity to function as sole providers of welfare services to their members. For those ones who can afford it, these churches offer professional and specialised services within education and healthcare, as well as various courses and small-scale

vocational programmes. Indeed, some researchers have described them as as enterprises operating as full alternatives to the Guatemalan state.[26] These churches are also equipped with large media labs that distribute not only the religious services and messages from the churches, but also news productions and entertainment programmes. This means that the megachurches can provide alternative channels of information to their own members and to the general public (Smith 2009; Smith and Campos 2012).

The examples of 'alternative services' provided here are all private *educational* services. There also exist numerous private, evangelical health clinics; however, evangelical education services are far more widespread, and the evangelical schools, colleges and universities stand out as clear alternatives to the public and the private services as regards both method and content. Moreover, the expansion of evangelical education services has served to bring evangelical leaders, as directors and headmasters of institutions of higher education, into Guatemala's political arenas and central decision-making organs.

Evangelical schools, colleges, and universities[27]

In line with the heterogeneous character of the foreign Protestant missions to Guatemala and the local evangelical churches, there has been and still is great variation in how the evangelical schools are run and the kind of education they offer. There is little exact data on the total number of evangelical schools and colleges, nor how this is or is not controlled by the Ministry of Education. For the purpose of this

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[26] See for example Holland (2011); Lende (2015); Rocha (2012); and Smith (2009).

[27] The focus here is on education services that operate as alternatives to public/state services and to other forms of private education, and that at least to some extent follow official guidelines as to curriculum. The most used phrases for private schools that are explicitly led by evangelical, biblical principles are *colegio cristiano* and *educaccion cristana.* In addition to the schools and colleges, most evangelical churches offer Sunday school services to their congregations (see Rose and Schultze 1993).

analysis, it is sufficient to note that of the many private schools and colleges in Guatemala, a considerable number are evangelical, and that these are monitored by the Ministry of Education only to a limited extent.[28]

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Rose and Schultze (1993) identified two main tendencies of the evangelical education services in Guatemala. One concerns the small evangelical schools located across the country, attended by poor children and young people who might otherwise be out of the reach of public services. The second tendency concerns the evangelical schools, colleges and universities in urban areas, with bilingual tutoring and high tuition fees, catering primarily to Guatemala's middle and upper-middle classes (Rose and Schultze 1993:428–429). From interviewing the headmasters of the largest evangelical schools in Guatemala City and other large cities, Rose and Schultze (1993:427) found that many presented their educational services as a necessary alternative to 'arm their children against the corrupting ideas of secular humanism' of the public schools. Further, the curricula offered by the largest evangelical schools were clearly inspired by Christian 'education packages' developed in the USA, distributed to Guatemala via missionary networks (see Rose and Schultze 1993:423–429).[29] Other studies have also emphasised this close contact with evangelical schools and universities in the USA; Sanchíz Ochoa (1998: 169) suggests that many Guatemalan evangelical schools deliberately present their services as a way of preparing children and young adults for further study at Christian universities in the USA.

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[28] In communication with the Ministry of Education it was confirmed that there are many private evangelical schools and colleges, however I have not managed to obtain exact figures. It remains uncertain if this is related to poor monitoring by the Ministry or poor efforts and methods by the researcher, however the Ministry *has* been criticised for lack of control over the flourishing market of private education in Guatemala. For more general analyses of the relationship between public and private education in Guatemala, see for example Lavarreda et al. (2005) and Ruano (2003).

[29] See Rose and Schultze (1993:420-433) for a thorough presentation of the curricula, and interviews with school leaders. See also Rose (1993) for an analysis of the role of 'Christian fundamentalists' in the education system in the USA.

To be sure, much has changed in Guatemala since the early 1990s, and the coverage of public schools has increased considerably, at least at the primary level (UNESCO 2014). However, I find that to a great extent the tendencies identified by Rose and Schultze still apply. The evangelical schools in rural areas, typically run by smaller evangelical churches, mainly teach reading and writing skills. In this, they follow the tendency of Protestant schools and campaigns in the 20th century, providing education in areas with scarce public services. However, many evangelical schools and colleges in today's Guatemala are of a very different kind. Situated in urban areas, they appeal to the higher social strata, with very different demands beyond basic literacy.[30] Meeting the demands and expectations of the upper classes of Guatemala's population, evangelical churches and educational engineers focus on supplying their 'clients' with attractive education programmes such as bilingual teaching materials and computer science instruction, as well as university degrees and exchange programmes with colleges and universities in the USA. An explicit emphasis on evangelical education as a necessary alternative to the secular, public education system is still an important element in the ways these schools portray themselves.

As with the evangelical churches, many of the evangelical schools are relatively short-lived; and, like other enterprises, they respond at least partly to demands in the population. The most stable evangelical education services are those that are formally connected to a well-established evangelical church, like the megachurches Fraternidad Christiana, Elim, El Shaddai, and Verbo.[31] Of these, Verbo has the longest history in the education sector. The educational institution Colegio Verbo is one of the largest of

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[30] Despite improvements since the 1990s, Guatemala's public schools and colleges are still characterised by a severe lack of resources and personnel, and many school-days are lost each year to strikes and other conflicts. Hence, for many who can afford it, private education is the preferred option.

[31] Much of this information derives from conversations during field research in Guatemala 2012/2014), and is also available from the churches' websites (www.liceofrater.edu.gt; www.colegioelim.edu.gt; www.uspg.edu.gt; www.colegioverbo.edu.gt, last accessed October 2015)

its kind in Guatemala, currently counting 11 centres: pre-schools, elementary, middle and high schools,[32] half of them situated in the capital city.

The great plurality that characterises evangelical schools and colleges complicates the generalisation concerning what *kind* of education they offer, and indeed, there has not been much research on the subject. However from Rose and Schultze's investigation in the early 1990s and from my own interviews and review of the best-known evangelical schools and universities in Guatemala, I would hold that what distinguishes these educational services from the public services, is – unsurprisingly – the emphasis in how the education that they provide is based on biblical principles and Christian values. For instance, the *Colegio Elim* of the Elim Church states in its statues: 'students are to develop as good citizens in the image of Jesus, developing skills to fulfil God's work on earth'.[33] As in the preaching in evangelical megachurches, considerable emphasis is placed on developing good leadership *(liderazgo)*, discipline, and entrepreneurship. Also noteworthy is the focus on the English language. For example, the 'Liceo Frater', under the Fraternidad Cristiana of Pastor Jorge H. López,[34] describes its services as follows: 'Liceo Fráter is a bilingual [Spanish–English] educational institution created with the purpose of offering a high standard, integral education based on Biblical principles', and further, that they will shape 'leaders that will impact society providing them with a bilingual education for successful earthy life, and concentration to the Heavenly purpose.'[35] It is interesting to note that in the universe of urban evangelical schools and colleges, the concept of bilingualism is consequently referred to as teaching in Spanish and in

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[32] The *Colegio Verbo* presents itself as a Christian education institution that evangelises, prepares and improves members of the coming generation so that they will be 'capable of governing themselves and of acting with justice and knowledge in all aspects of life, with academic excellence based on biblical principles' (my translation, see www.colegioverbo.edu.gt)

[33] My translation (www.colegioelim.edu.gt)

[34] See Chapters 4 and 5 for more information about the Fraternidad Cristiana, and the political role of Pastor Jorge H. López

[35] My translation (www.liceofrater.edu.gt)

English – and not referring to Guatemala's indigenous languages.[36] This is a marked difference from the mission schools in rural areas that were established in the early 20th century, where teaching Mayan languages was among the primary objectives.

Several of today's megachurches also have colleges and universities, which means that members of the congregation have the possibility of following the education services offered by their own church from nursery throughout university. For instance, in 2006 the aforementioned Harold Caballeros opened the University San Pablo as a part of the education services run by El Shaddai.[37] Caballeros, now resigned as head pastor in El Shaddai, still serves as the director of San Pablo University. Here I find it worth noting that this 'specialisation' of the evangelical education services to include higher education has served to open the doors for the leaders of the larger colleges and universities into new political arenas, as educational authorities and entrepreneurs. This is most notable for the directors of the evangelical universities and the deans of the law faculties, who by the virtue of their role in the evangelical institution have reached important positions in the election processes of central members of the Guatemalan judiciary. The Guatemalan Constitution assigns the universities, public and private, with seats on the commission that prepares the list of candidates for the highest judicial positions in the country: Magistrates and Justices for the Supreme Court of Justice, the Courts of Appeal, the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Attorney General, and Chief of the Public Ministry – a list from which the Congress then choses and decides (Andrade 2014; González 2014: *Plaza Pública* 2014c). In this committee, university directors are jointly represented by one member, whereas the deans of each law faculty hold one seat each. When the Constitution was written in 1985, there were four universities in Guatemala; as of 2015 there are 14: one

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[36] These findings are in line with analyses of Guatemala's private education sector, in which 'bilingual' education is found to refer consistently to the teaching of Spanish and another European language, usually English. Ruano notes: 'not a single private school which caters to the middle and higher income segments of the population in Guatemala City defines bilingualism as the inclusion of Maya languages in its curriculum alongside Spanish' (Ruano 2003: 3).

[37] The school, college and university are not technically the property of El Shaddai Church; however, the institutions are run more like one large enterprise with various subsidiaries

public (the University of San Carlos), and 13 private, of which four are evangelical. All universities have a faculty of law, and are thereby represented in the committee by their dean. National and international observers have characterised the most recent nomination processes as both scandalous and speculative, with claims that the ways in which the private, highly conservative universities dominate in these committees have affected the outcome by selecting candidates who are seen as loyal to the status quo of Guatemalan politics (*Plaza Pública* 2014). The nomination system, originally intended to enhance the separation of powers and prevent political interests from interfering in judicial processes, is now described as a central arena for exercising political power. Indeed, many believe that private universities have been created with the sole purpose of accessing the above-mentioned committee (Andrade 2014; *Plaza Pública* 2014c).

Thus, the role of evangelical schools and education centres as providers of services has developed considerably, from that of filling 'the educational vacuum' (Rose and Schultze 1993: 421), to that of representing an alternative to public education – an alternative available and attractive to those who can afford it, and who prefer the quality and/ or the particular evangelical character of these services to the services offered by the state. Further, whereas relations with the state in this sector were based on providing assistance in terms of personnel, knowledge and materials, now the diversification of evangelical educational services has contributed to making this relationship more diversified, and arguably more directly political.

Concluding remarks: Omnipresence, diversification, and specialisation

Religious organisations and individuals have always formed an important and natural part of Guatemalans' every day lives, not only as 'saviours of souls' but also by assisting with more worldly necessities like food, shelter and clothing. In this chapter I have examined how evangelical churches and organisations have entered such roles, often alongside other organisations, but sometimes representing the sole alternative

within their field. Concerned with identifying how the evangelical church has related to the state and vice-versa, I have analysed activities and programmes of evangelical churches within a framework of 'non-state service provision'. This approach has allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the types of roles and positions held by evangelical churches and organisations at the local level. Emerging from this analysis are two central aspects that I develop further in the next chapter: First, the analysis of this chapter illustrates a clear diversification in the presence of evangelical churches and organisations as service providers, both in geographic scope, and in terms of which social strata they cater to. From operating mainly in the countryside and providing assistance to the poor, evangelical services now cater to urban as well as rural populations, to the very rich as well as to the very poor. This geographical and demographical diversity is what I in this thesis refer to as the *omnipresence* of the evangelical church. Second, the Guatemalan state has come to rely on the collaboration with the evangelical services. In itself this kind of state–non-state cooperation is not unique, however as I will elaborate in the next chapter, cooperating with evangelicals and their particular type of services has proved to be particularly advantageous for the state. Finally, the position as service provider has led evangelical representatives to take part in both the formation and the implementation of secular policies in collaboration with local and central governments, a tendency that has arguably increased along with the increased specialisation of the types of services provided by evangelicals. In the next chapter I let this dual role as provider of both spiritual and material 'goods', constitute a key for the analysis of the relationship between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state.

Chapter 7

Changes that preserve continuity: the impact of the political presence of the evangelical church

'How can there still be so much violence and crime in Guatemala where the percentage of evangelicals is more than 40 per cent, and the AEG is working closely with the government?' The question was posed by one interviewee, who felt disappointed and frustrated at the low impact of the increased evangelical presence in Guatemalan politics.[1] Albeit naïve, this question captures some of the complexities to be discussed in this chapter: the political presence of the evangelical church represents a clear change in Guatemalan politics, but politics as such seemingly remains unchanged. As articulated by Briscoe (2009: 6–10), the status quo in Guatemalan politics is still characterised by a 'weak and porous state', upheld by powerful elite groupings with 'extraordinary rights to veto'.

In this final chapter I return to the question posed in the introduction to this thesis: how can the considerable changes in religion and the correspondingly greater presence of the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics have *coincided* with such political continuity? In answering this I concentrate on the partnership between the Guatemalan state and the evangelical church, distinguishing between the practical and the more spiritual dimensions. After explaining how, acting as service provider, the evangelical church has become a partner that has assisted the state, I examine how the evangelical church has also come to serve as a new and alternative religious ally of the state. Next, I turn to how the partnership with the evangelical church, as provider of both spiritual and material goods, has affected the operations of the Guatemalan state.

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[1] Previous member of the leadership of AEG (interview 2014)

And lastly, finding that official representatives of the evangelical church have served as supportive partners to whom state officials have reached out to for unconditional support, I conclude that the evangelical church has provided the Guatemalan state with a new *pillar* for the political status quo.

Practical and spiritual partnership

The Guatemalan state has a long tradition of working together with non-state actors. What then is special about the partnership with evangelical churches and organisations? I hold that the answer lies in the way the evangelical church can offer both practical and spiritual services, seemingly with no reservations or strings attached.

Practical assistance

In contemporary Guatemala social indicators tell of a country where the state still lags far behind in providing basic social services, which is related to a combination of scarcity of state revenue and a lack of political will. Despite regime change and the considerable attention placed on issues such as increased public spending and tax reforms linked to the 1996 Peace Accords, the tax-to-GDP ratio is still amongst the lowest in Latin America (González 2014: 402; World Bank 2013: 7). For providing basic services to the population, the Guatemalan state relies on cooperation with non-state actors – and evangelical organisations have demonstrated their willingness to enter into various kinds of such cooperation. In Chapter 6 I showed how numerous evangelical social programmes across Guatemala – in schools, neighbourhoods and prisons – provide the state with much-needed resources, such as materiel and personnel, conducting tasks the state cannot or chooses not to do itself. At the central level, actors like the AEG have been eager to respond to concrete requests and necessities of the state, like technical support and practical knowledge. For the

evangelical churches this kind of cooperation has provided increased access to areas and populations, in turn facilitating their mission of evangelisation. For the state, cooperating with the evangelical church has proven a particularly low-cost mode of governing.

Evangelical expertise: Values and moral

Somewhat in line with Nikolas Rose's analyses of how expertise is to be considered a form of authority, the AEG holds that the combination of practical and moral *expertise* constitutes the principal political strength and relevance of the evangelical church (Rose 1999; see also Chapter 2). According to the AEG, the main reason for the increased cooperation is that the Guatemalan state has acknowledged that the evangelical church is 'everywhere' and does 'everything', and holds valuable expertise in a wide array of policy areas, from emergency relief to pedagogy and drug rehabilitation (Díaz interview 2014; Morales interview 2012). The AEG thereby portrays the evangelical church's role in governing as that of an *expert* that provides the government with authoritative knowledge and information. And indeed, from the experiences and roles at the local level, the evangelical church does represent a certain source of knowledge from experience in various secular policy fields. However, such experience is not unique to the evangelical church: many other non-state actors that operate alongside the evangelical organisations could also qualify as experts in the same manner as the evangelicals (for example the Red Cross, USAID, and Catholic organisations like Caritas). Hence, the state's choice or acceptance of one or the other as partner cannot be explained solely by perceived expertise in the policy areas in which they operate.

However, a closer look at the evangelical services provided in direct cooperation with the state within the different sectors does reveal a certain kind of evangelical expertise that has proven attractive for the Guatemalan state and politicians: its expertise as regards *values*. In the political rhetoric in Guatemala, the term 'values' commonly refers to traditional family values. A distinction is not

necessarily made between 'values' and *Christian* or *biblical* values: they all are used to mean 'good values'. An expression like being a person of 'values' then refers to being a 'good person.'[2] *Values* as area of expertise may come across as vague and soft, with little potential for authority or relevance in Realpolitik. Notwithstanding, in the political rhetoric in Guatemala, 'values' – and more specifically, 'improving one's values' – is frequently presented as the solution to specific political challenges, such as reducing crime and corruption. In the Guatemalan political rhetoric, the evangelical church has established itself as a central representative of the field of 'values', and entities such as the AEG are included as highly relevant participants when the task involves 'changing', 'improving' or 'teaching values' in a given sector or institution. Here it is worth noting that the evangelical emphasis on values invariably refers to values in the *individual*, and the individual's responsibility for changing or improving his or her values (see discussion below).

From this perspective, then, when state officials invite the AEG and evangelical churches to lecture at police and military academies, or allow them to organise activities in prisons and detention centres, the authority and (political) relevance of the evangelicals is based on their expertise in values, and not in security policies (Jiménez, interview 2014). In sum, I hold that for the Guatemalan state, the appeal of the evangelical church as partner for providing services to the populace is primarily related to the particular evangelical – and individualistic – rationale upon which these services are based.

A (new) religious ally

According to Anthony Gill, church–state cooperation in Latin America has taken the form of a relationship in which 'religious legitimation [is being] exchanged for

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[2] For example, the political party created by Harold Caballeros 'Vision with Values' (*Visión con valores,* VIVA) employs this rhetoric, referring to its members and voters as 'people with values' (VIVA 2015, see also Chapter 5 in this thesis).

financial resources and exclusive religious domination' (Gill 1998: 61, see also Chapter 2 in this thesis). Hence, for a state wishing to legitimise its own rule and operations, to secure a compliant population, and at the same time minimise its own costs of ruling, allying with highly trusted actors like churches can be expected to be an attractive strategy. The Guatemalan state has long traditions of allying with the Catholic Church for practical assistance in governing as well as for spiritual legitimacy. However, as this thesis has shown, in contemporary Guatemala, the Catholic Church has not served as the monolithic support it once was, and has to a considerable extent criticised and challenged the state and its operations. By comparison, the evangelical church has emerged as a much more collaborative partner.

Co-appearance with the evangelical church

In recent years Guatemalan state officials have increasingly taken part in events and initiatives organised by the evangelical church. This must be seen in relation to how the evangelical church is regarded as one of Guatemala's most trusted institutions, and how it is *not* the Catholic Church.

A clear example of how the Guatemalan state has practised such co-appearance with the evangelical church is found in the evangelical *Te Deum ceremonies*, celebrated as an evangelical inauguration of a new government (see also Chapter 5). The Te Deum ceremonies were originally organised by the Catholic Church, but today Guatemala is among the few countries to organise *two* such ceremonies, one Catholic and one Evangelical. Pastor Jorge H. López and his church *La Fraternidad Cristiana* have hosted all the three evangelical Te Deum ceremonies; and since 2008, the ceremony has been held in the Megafrater, one of the largest church buildings in Central America. Present at the evangelical Te Deum ceremonies are typically all members of the incoming cabinet, international guests, and many other well-known pastors of the mega-churches in Guatemala City. At the inauguration of President Otto Pérez Molina in 2012, Pastor Jorge López, accompanied by the head of the AEG, addressed the new president and the incoming government on behalf of the entire

evangelical community (La Megafrater 2012, personal observations).[3] Local media commented on how Pérez Molina seemed moved by the speeches of the evangelical leaders, and in his response he referred to Guatemalan evangelicals as *one* group of people (*Prensa Libre* 2012a):

> We count on you, we count on God's blessing and this will enable us to move forward and develop together with all the people of Guatemala. (...) I feel confident that in all of the 25,000 evangelical churches and in all of the hearts of six million Guatemalan evangelicals – you will include us in your prayers and this will help us and the country of Guatemala to move forward. [4]

> Otto Pérez Molina, La Megafrater, 2012

Similar rhetoric was employed by the then incoming president Alvaro Colom in 2008, when he described how he and his family had managed to come strengthened out of the long and dirty electoral campaign because he and his wife had begun each morning with prayer. President Colóm thanked all the evangelical pastors who had visited them during the campaign and who had provided them with Bibles. Colóm also thanked Pastor López who had, early in the electoral campaign, given him the book *A Government as God Commands,*[5] 'which we now keep there, on our bedside table so that we never forget. Because to create a government that God commands is to create a good government' (President Álvaro Colom, La Megafrater 2008).[6] With this, Colóm indicated a close relationship with evangelical pastors, including Pastor López, one of

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[3] The presence of the most central evangelical leaders signalled to the incoming government a joint 'we', portraying all Guatemala's evangelicals as a single group; throughout the ceremony the guests were reminded of this group's moral authority and a numerical strength (La Megafrater 2012, personal observations).

[4] My translation from Spanish

[5] Translated from Spanish, *Un Gobierno como Dios Manda*. The book is published by the Guatemalan Bible Society, an evangelical association that organises courses for Bible reading and in evangelical leadership, and translates and distributes Bibles and materials to churches, schools, and other institutions throughout Guatemala. In relation to each presidential election, the association also organises campaigns aimed at communicating the biblical principles for governing and political participation (see www.ungobiernocomodiosmanda.org).

[6] A recording of Colom's speech is available at www.tedeumcristianoevangelico.org

the best-known representatives of the evangelical church in Guatemala, as well as expressing his own personal experience of evangelical practices and rhetoric.

Adapting to the evangelical rhetoric

The evangelical rhetoric in Guatemala is well known and readily distinguishable from that of the Catholic Church. This is often explained by the evangelical extensive use of both traditional and electronic media in spreading their message, the coherence in the religious message communicated, as well as the omnipresence of evangelical churches and organisations (see for example Lende 2015; Smith 2009; Smith and Campos 2005). Rationales and expressions belonging to this rhetoric, like 'transformation of the individual', are easily identified when they appear in political discussions on matters like crime reduction. President Otto Pérez Molina (2012–2015) appeared on various occasions together with evangelical leaders and employed a clearly recognisable evangelical rhetoric by referring to the need to *transform* Guatemalan society, and the importance of *choosing* the right *values*. For example, Pérez Molina's speech when welcoming John Maxwell, an evangelical leader from the USA (see Chapter 5), echoed the evangelical rhetoric of transformation and the change in the individual:

> And when John tells us that 'the transformation is in me' this is precisely the message that we as Guatemalans need to hear and to understand; when each one of us is ready to accept that if I change, Guatemala will change, we will be ready to take the first step, and I am certain that this is the step we are taking at this moment. Thanks to you we will make the change, and then Guatemala too will change.[7]

Otto Pérez Molina, Guatemala City 2013

These examples are relatively recent. However, as is evident from the presentation of the trajectory of the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics, the phenomenon of

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[7] Speech published at the government website (guatemala.gob.gt, 2013, see also *La Hora* 2013). For other examples, see Chapter 5, where I describe Pérez Molina´s participation in the opening the mega-church edifices of *Ciudad de Dios* in 2013. In this speech he declared that 'we should not resign to violence or poverty, or to hunger. We can build a good Guatemala, a better Guatemala, if we obey God, if we have Christ in our hearts and if we have the faith that we can change' (Guatemala City 2013, see also descriptions of the event in Lende 2015).

non-evangelical politicians seeking the company and public blessing of evangelical leaders is by no means new (see Chapter 4 in particular). For example, members of the cabinet of General Lucas García (1978 – 1982) widely publicised their evangelical conversion, and Lucas García himself opened many public functions and events with prayers given by a Protestant minister (Steigenga 1994: 159, citing Garrard-Burnett 1987: 216).

Such practises of reaching out for the evangelical church as an alternative source of legitimacy is not unique to Guatemala. One of the clearest examples is Chile, and General Augusto Pinochet's need of a new religious 'alibi' when being harshly criticised by the Catholic hierarchy (Bastian 2007; Catoggio 2011; Gill 1998). When, in 1975, the Chilean Episcopal Conference decided to not receive Pinochet for the traditional Catholic Te Deum ceremony, 32 evangelical leaders issued a statement in the national newspapers expressing support for the Pinochet regime and thanking God for freeing them from Marxism (Catoggio 2011: 32). The regime then turned to the evangelical church for support, and from then on, Pinochet, accompanied by members of his cabinet, participated in the *evangelical* Te Deum ceremonies, which granted evangelical churches in Chile unprecedented official recognition.[8]

In the case of Guatemala, the co-appearance of evangelicals with state officials must also be seen in relation to how many people consider evangelical churches and organisations as the most 'appropriate and normal' actors to which they turn for assistance in their daily lives[9] – for example, for problems related to crime and violence in their neighbourhoods. Such perceptions among the populace can serve to explain why the National Police has accepted invitations to be 'prayed for' in public events organised by evangelical churches, as well as why state officials have approached representatives of the evangelical church to appear together with them

[8] The evangelical Te Deum ceremony is still celebrated annually in the Methodist Pentecostal Church in Santiago, attended by current and previous presidents and cabinet members (Oficina Nacional de Asuntos Religiosos 2014; Pew Research Center 2006)

[9] Throughout this thesis I use the term 'appropriate and normal' as employed by Neumann and Sending (2010: 10). See discussion on the governmentality approach in Chapter 2.

when they present strategies of violence reduction (Morales, interview 2012; see also Chapter 5). From this perspective, it is not necessary for state officials such as the National Police to regard evangelical actors as security experts, or to agree with their solutions to crime-related problems; they simply act on the fact that members of the public trust the evangelical church as a legitimate partner.

Legitimacy by association?

According to Brown (2008: 83) legitimacy can be dispersed by associating with legitimate actors or practices widely recognised as legitimate within a given field (see also Østensen 2013: 61). Brown argues that such seeking of 'legitimacy by association' includes the adoption of well-known rhetoric, entering direct cooperation with widely recognised organisations or corporations, and/or recruiting individuals with credibility and legitimacy 'as eminent persons' (Brown 2008: 83).[10] Central Guatemalan political institutions have long been characterised by low levels of public support and of perceived trustworthiness (Azpuru 2012, 2014), and Guatemala's average scores on political legitimacy ranking have long been among the lowest in Latin America (Booth and Seligson 2009; Azpuru 2014).[11] By contrast, the churches – the evangelical as well as the Catholic Church – tend to top these rankings (Azpuru 2012, 2014; Latinobarómetro 2011; *Prensa Libre* 2011b, 2012b).[12] Here, my intent has not been to examine whether the co-appearances with representatives of the evangelical church actually *has* brought about to a dispersion of legitimacy. (Suffice it

[10] Brown presents these as strategies of *non*-state actors such as NGOs, seeking legitimacy by associating with other non-state actors, but I find the phenomenon useful for explaining the growing tendency of Guatemala's state officials to appear side by side with representatives of the evangelical church (see Brown 2008; Østensen 2013).

[11] Political parties and the Congress have long constituted the least-trusted of all public institutions in Guatemala, and the institutions constituting the criminal justice sector have traditionally also been accorded remarkably little trust and credibility by the population – the exception being the armed forces, which continuously receive high scores (Azpuru 2014). However, trust in the institutions of justice is expected to rise considerably as a result of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Attorney General's successful collaboration with the CICIG in the unprecedented processes of corruption charges that got underway in April 2015.

[12] Depending on the poll (and the definition of the term 'evangelical'), the churches are credited with scores of around 65–70 points (of 100) (Azpuru 2012; Latinobarómetro 2011; *Prensa Libre* 2011b, 2012b).

to note that all the governments and institutions referred to above have to varying extent *remained* illegitimate or troubled by considerably low levels of trust). However, I find that the 'legitimacy by association' perspective can help to explain *why* state officials have increasingly sought out the evangelical church for co-appearance in public events. It seems reasonable to assume that the political leadership in today's Guatemala dare not risk losing the support of those who can be considered to represent both a highly respected and trusted institution, and claim to represent roughly 40 per cent of the population. On the other hand, this increased socialising might also be seen as a reflection of the generally close relations among the country's political and economic elites, considering that several prominent evangelical pastors have also become large-scale businessmen and entrepreneurs.

Even if the *effect* may not have been greater legitimacy as such, I would hold that these practices nevertheless send out signals of close companionship between evangelical and political leaders, and of how the evangelical church is to be considered as an ally of the state.

Implications of the partnership

I hold that the evangelical church has established a partnership with the Guatemalan state based on how it provides both spiritual and material goods. Now I turn to the assessment of how this kind of partnership has affected the policies and operations of the Guatemalan state.

The evangelical church and popular mobilisation

Anthony Gill (1998: 54) argues that in Latin America, state actors turn to churches as sources of mobilisation 'to rally support for their political causes.' As a premise for this argumentation, Gill notes the inherent trustworthiness of religious leaders as such, and that they are considered to be able to convince their parishioners about why a

certain policy or alliance is better than another (Gill 1998:52).[13] In my view, such mechanisms rarely apply as regards the relationship between the Guatemalan state and the evangelical church. Compared to the Catholic Church, the structure of the evangelical church is relatively loose, characterised by multiple leaderships of individual pastors, each controlling their separate congregations. In previous chapters, I have indicated various examples of the state's co-appearance and cooperation with the AEG; however, even though the AEG is officially a representative body of 25 000 churches, there is no evidence as to whether its opinions as an institution affects the opinions of its members. In fact, representatives of the state have reported that, in its interaction with the state, the AEG does not pretend to speak on behalf of such a large 'constituency' (Jiménez, interview 2014). Furthermore, political mobilisation in Guatemala is to a considerable extent organised around *individuals*, not ideology or a particular cause, reflecting the country's under-institutionalised party system (Sánchez 2009, *forthcoming*). When churches are sought out for political mobilisation, this is likely to be for the support of a certain *person*, not an ideology. In every electoral campaign, political candidates have turned to the evangelical church, whether as part of a personal position or an electoral strategy, or both. Local and national media frequently report of political candidates who visit their local pastors and take part in evangelical activities and ceremonies during election campaigns. Notwithstanding, there is no evidence of an 'evangelical vote' as such, and signs of coherence related to policy preferences are evident only when the policies in question are related to traditional family values, on issues like anti-abortion and anti-gay marriage – and these views are, to a considerable extent, shared by Catholic voters as well (Azpuru 2014; Pew Research Center 2014, see also Chapter 5).[14] I therefore hold that the evangelical church *per se* has not served as a source of support for specific policies of the Guatemalan state – due to the relatively un-hierarchical structure of the evangelical

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[13] As noted in Chapter 2, Gill's analyses by and large concern the *Catholic* Church and its role as a majority religion.

[14] Ex-President Pérez Molina's explicit involvement of the AEG and the Catholic hierarchy prior to his decision against signing the OAS conventions on tolerance and anti-discrimination in 2013 can serve as an example of such seeking of *output legitimacy* via religious representatives (see Chapter 5).

church, and the person-oriented, non-ideological character of Guatemalan politics. The political support of the evangelical church can instead be found in *how* evangelical organisations and individuals work together with the state.

Evangelisation of public services

Even back in the late 1980s it was noted how the Guatemalan state allowed evangelicals to take charge of what the state did 'not have to tools to deal with as civilian power' and that this could contribute to transforming 'state institutions into religious, rather than secular ones' (AVANCSO 1988: 50). Since, the practice of inviting evangelical pastors and organisations as personnel and authorities in public institutions such as schools and detention centres to teach extra-curricular subjects like violence reduction programmes has continued. This would indicate that, at the very least, the state does not disapprove of the evangelical messages and methods applied. The state's acceptance of how the numerous evangelical rehabilitation centres are run is also illustrative of such approval: not only are they allowed to operate according to their own methods and rationale, various state bodies (like the police and the courts) also make use of these services as an alternative to the state's penitentiary institutions (see O'Neill 2015, and chapter 6 in this thesis).

The way the state has allowed evangelical actors to take charge of public services is found to break with the constitutional principles of secularism and equity, as well as the freedom of worship (*Plaza Pública* 2015a). In itself this practice is not new in Guatemalan politics – but has there been an *increase* in such practices corresponding to the growth of evangelical churches and organisations? Given the fluctuating character of the evangelical churches and their social programmes and the often informal kind of cooperation entered with state institutions like courts and local schools, it is difficult to identify clear tendencies in the state's use of evangelical services. In this thesis I have instead focused on how there *has* been an increase in the scope and presence of evangelical churches and organisations as service providers, and that this has led to a *normalisation* of their operations – to the extent that evangelical

churches have not only become accepted as participants in governing, but are also perceived to be politically *relevant* for tackling challenges such as crime reduction.[15] Praying and Bible study have to an increasing extent been presented as *political* solutions, also in political arenas. Recent examples include the persistent attempts – by members of Congress – at getting a law passed that would make Bible reading mandatory in schools, as a means of improve young people's values and morals, thereby reducing the high levels of violence and crime (el Congreso de la República 2015; *Prensa Libre* 2015b),[16] and several attempts, also from members of Congress, to create an official day of prayer as a means to solve the 'crisis of lack of values and respect for life' (*La Hora* 2015)

I also hold that the ways in which Guatemalan state officials have made use of evangelical rhetoric and practices in their public operations and appearances can be seen as a form of evangelisation of public services. In addition to the examples of the evangelical presidents and politicians (see Chapter 5), a well-known and highly controversial example is Edwin Sperisen, the previous director of the National Police force, who regularly referred to biblical principles and evangelical morals in public appearances. For three years (as police director), he personally led a weekly TV programme on the evangelical TV channel *Canal 27* called 'Values and Service (*Valor y Servicio*) in which he replied to questions from concerned members of the public live on camera, often citing the Bible. He called this 'police preaching',[17] and used this platform to preach of the evils that lead to violence and crime, and how following Christian values would change this. However, Sperisen is also remembered for heading the police force in a period that saw a sharp increase in extrajudicial killings.[18]

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[15] In Chapter 4 I explained how the evangelical General Ríos Montt was the first to draw openly on evangelical rhetoric and worldview in political speeches.

[16] This proposal was initiated in January 2015 by Congressman Marvin Osorio (LIDER), who also presented it as a law proposal to the Congress on 15 July 2015, in the midst of the on-going political crisis (Congreso de la República 2015).

[17] In Sperisen's own words:*'una especie de prédica policial'* (cited in *El Periodico* 2007a)

[18] Sperisen is particularly remembered for personally heading the police operation in the *Pavón* prison in 2007, when several inmates were killed, among them all four waiting to be tried for the murders of

Stirring up evangelicals and non-evangelical alike, he publicly admitted that evangelical police officers had taken part in operations of 'social cleansing' as a strategy of eliminating gang members and cleaning the streets of 'evil elements', doing 'what was just' (Brenneman 2012: 215; see also *El Periódico* 2007a; *New York Times* 2007; Smith 2007). The 'Secretariat of Values and Service' (*Secretaría de Valor y Servicio*) still exists within the national police force, albeit with much lower visibility than during the Sperisen years. Among other activities, representatives take part in evangelical events such as prayers for peace and anti- violence campaigns (Municipalidad de Villa Nueva 2013, see also Chapter 5). These incidents alone have not led to any 'evangelisation' of a public institution like the police force, and the participation of the AEG and other evangelical representatives in the formal training work of the police and the military may still reflect the state's lack of resources or capacity. However I would hold that the *outcome* of such presence is that students, inmates and police recruits of public institutions are being taught to distinguish right from wrong and good from bad by evangelical pastors and leaders, exposing them to a certain kind of evangelical worldview.

Reducing the pressure on the state

Several scholars have argued that the evangelical participation in providing services have served to reduce the pressure on the state as regards complying with its constitutional obligations to provide universal education, healthcare and public security (AVANSCO 1988; Levenson 2013; Rose and Schultze 1992; see also Chapter 6). However, singling out such cost–benefit effects of evangelical service provision is problematic, as there are many other non-state actors operating in similar fields. That being said, I do find that the content of the evangelical services and the methods they follow may have served to lowering the pressure on the Guatemalan state in a less

the Salvadorian members of the Central American Parliament two weeks earlier (Alston 2007, *New York Times* 2007).

material manner: by reducing the pressure on the state to take responsibility for improving its own performance. For example, in evangelical programmes directed at tackling crime and insecurity, the emphasis is typically on rescuing the 'lost ones', individual by individual, helping them to change their own values (see examples in Chapter 6). This way of tackling issues like violence and crime through the framework of individual sin and corruption is to a large extent reflected in the preaching in evangelical churches throughout the country. S*olutions* to these challenges are presented as equally spiritual and value-oriented – very rarely as political or structural (Bjune 2012: 126; O'Neill 2015). The evangelical focus on the *individual*, and the individual's responsibility for changing or improving his or her life stands in contrast to other NGOs that operate with more community-oriented strategies, of which some also directly target decision-making processes and socio-economic structures. By comparison, the individualistic framework of evangelical services and message entails few, if any, demands on the state to change *its* policies.

Here I can only speculate about if and how such programmes affect the kind of political participation of the individuals involved in them, and how this affects their positions towards the state.[19] However, what *is* notable is how evangelical churches and organisations have demonstrated a clearly collaborative, non-confrontational position towards the state, and that the evangelicals have been allowed, even invited, to operate and provide services also within the state's own domain. As a result, more and more 'clients' have been treated by such individual-centred approaches. It is therefore my argument that evangelical churches and organisations have been advantageous for the state as regards its own (scant) service provision, by lessening the expenses of the state, reducing popular pressure for improving and expanding state services, and more directly, by providing methods and personnel.

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[19] See for example Brenneman (2014) for a brief review of the contrastnig scholarly perspectives of how the evangelical focus on 'reformation of the self' serves to impede or pomote critiques of broader social structures.

A *pillar* of the political status quo

This thesis has been manoeuvring in a landscape of change as well as continuity. The previous sections have indicated tendencies as to how the Guatemalan state has responded to the increased presence of the evangelical churches, organisations, and leaders. I now turn to the puzzle of how the political status quo at first glance appears to have remained unaffected by all these changes. A first concern is then to point out how 'impact' does not necessarily imply *change*: the impact of one phenomenon on the other can also be *the absence* of change.

Expectations as to how the Guatemalan state and Guatemalan politics would change in response to the growth of Protestantism have been many and diverging. In addition to expectations specifically related to the evangelical church as a religious actor and the potential political values and practices inherent in the Protestant faith (see Chapter 2), other theory-based expectations relevant for this discussion include perspectives on how the powers of the state change vis-à-vis the powers of non-state actors. When a state relies heavily on the expertise, personnel, and financial resources of a wide array of non-state actors and organisations, as is the case in Guatemala, this has been expected to entail greater *dispersion* of state decision-making, and an overall reduction of its powers (Benz and Papadopoulos 2006: 277; Hall and Biersteker 2002: 4, see also Chapter 2 in this thesis). However, here I find resonance in a different perspective on power and power relations: one which regards such dispersion of political tasks as not necessarily implying a transfer of power *away* from the state, but rather as a form of governing and a *type* of power (see Neumann and Sending 2010). From this governmentality-inspired perspective, an increase in the presence and the powers of a non-state actor like the evangelical church does not imply an *ipso facto* decline or even change in the powers of the Guatemalan state. I have established that the evangelical church has attained positions of power from which it has defined, authorised, regulated, and implemented policies – but these practices do not appear to have altered the status quo of the policy sector in question. Quite the converse: by providing the state with much-needed resources, the evangelical church appears to have assisted the state in continuing 'business as usual'. In this last section I am

putting forward aspects of the evangelical political presence, which may also have served to have contributed to the *strengthening* of the political status quo: unconditional support of the political leadership and ideological concurrence.

Unconditional support

The increased socialising between evangelicals and state officials in open, public events has provided platforms from which representatives of the evangelical church can deliver their messages to audiences beyond evangelical congregations. The AEG has also achieved a position equivalent of the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church, and is frequently contacted by the national media on religious as well as political affairs. In all, the evangelical church has access to a range of arenas from which it *could* voice criticism or opposition regarding Guatemalan politics, for example based on first-hand knowledge of conditions at the local level. However, hitherto neither the AEG nor the most famous pastors have directly criticised any sitting government, the sole exception being the criticism of Guatemala's recognition of Palestinian representation in the UN in 2013 (see Chapter 5).

The examples of the evangelical Te Deum ceremonies and how they differ from the Catholic ceremonies illustrate this point. The primary difference between the Catholic and the evangelical Te Deum ceremony lies in the content of the prayer to the incoming government. The Catholic bishop of Guatemala City typically directs the message to the incoming president, reminding him of the socio-economic challenges faced by the population and urging the new government to remain faithful to its promises and do what is best for the Guatemalan people (Ortíz 2004: 95; *Siglo 21* 2012a). The Catholic tradition is thus in line with practice in other Latin American countries: combining praise of God and giving thanks (*dar gracia*) with a reminder of the president's obligations to the people. By contrast, in the evangelical Te Deum ceremonies, the focus much more on *blessing* the newly inaugurated political leadership, directing messages of companionship and alliance on behalf of the evangelical community. When addressing the incoming president Pérez Molina in

2012, Pastor Jorge H. López noted that Guatemala was challenged by corruption and lies, and called upon the new government to comply with the rules of justice, in particular to ensure the prompt fulfilment of juridical verdicts. However, commenting on the ceremony in his church bulletin, Pastor López stressed that his aim had never been to enter into political discourse,: when he raised issues such as corruption and the rule of law, this was done with reference to the imperative of heeding the call from God, and not as criticism (López 2012).[20] Pastor López ended the speech to Pérez Molina by ensuring him that the new president was not in this alone, he could count on the entire evangelical community for spiritual advice, friendship and prayers (Megafrater, personal observations 2012).[21] Although the various evangelical churches and pastors may hold different and even contrasting positions on how to relate to the government, speaking directly to the incoming president, as a self-proclaimed representative of the entire evangelical population, Pastor Pérez has great influence on how the political position of the evangelical church is perceived in the public, and not least by the Guatemalan government.

Praying for the government

In recent decades there have been many occasions of civil protest against the state. The issues have included large-scale corruption scandals, the high levels of violence and crime, and the increase in the use of state violence in disputes over land rights, and the Guatemalan state has been harshly criticised by representatives of national and international civil society, including the Catholic Church. A common theme is the call for large-scale structural *change*. On such occasions the general response of the evangelical church has been non-confrontational in the sense of not explicitly holding any instance or institution of the state accountable for the state of affairs. Rather, in

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[20] López stressed that the message to the new president was aimed at communicating the double compromise entailed in being a citizen (complying with the rule of law) and a Christian (praying and complying with what is mandated by the Bible) (López 2012, my translation from Spanish).

[21] The speach it also avaliable at http://frater.org/recursos/2012/01/18/tercer-tedeum-cristiano-evangelico/

line with the individualistic evangelical framework discussed above, the focus is on achieving changes from *within*. When the evangelical church, represented by the AEG, *has* reacted publically, this has mostly been in the form of organised prayer: praying for the end of violence, the end of corruption, for the importance of the family. On several occasions such events have featured central state officials, invited so that those present could pray for them and their offices, as a means to improve the situation. Any calls for change have referred to the individual politician or state official to change, not the state as such. In my view, this practice of praying for the state, even if it involves praying for the state to end corruption, signals a kind of endorsement of the state and its policies on behalf of the evangelical church. For politicians and other representatives of the state, participation in such evangelical events has no strings attached; even though the events as such may be related to matters for which these state officials are technically responsible, they are not confronted with any conditions or requirements other than joining in the evangelical rhetoric. By 'merely' proposing prayers as solutions for how Guatemala and the Guatemalan state should improve, the evangelical church seemingly accepts the state as it is.

In a way, this practice of not criticising the operations and policies of the Guatemalan state has served to prolong the perceptions of the political position of the evangelical church during the civil war: self-proclaimed *a*political, not involved in the opposition and uprising against the regime, but directly cooperating with the state. Even though the civil war must be considered an exceptional period, the type of presence that the evangelical church has established in Guatemalan politics is rooted in decisions taken during that 'critical period' in history. Certainly, now as then, in the population of Guatemalan evangelicals, there are individuals who do express concern and criticism regarding political affairs. However, main representatives and leaders at the central level consistently opt for blessing, praying, and speaking of values when communicating with the political leadership. As evangelical leaders have certainly not *encouraged* fellow-evangelicals to take the streets and demand system changes, this practice may have rather served to reduce Guatemalan evangelicals' interest in choosing such forms of political expression.

Ideological concurrence

The positioning of the evangelical church as a partner of the state can also be seen as a more explicitly ideological alliance. On the one hand, the preaching and practices of individualisation of risk and responsibility referred to above are fully in line with the neoliberal rationale shared by all post-war Guatemalan governments. On the other hand, and more concretely, the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics is clearly conservative. This is evident from the policy proposals put forward by representatives of the evangelical church (mainly by the AEG) and the types of political issues that have triggered responses from evangelical organisations. These have served as fervent promoters of the conservation of traditional (Christian) family values, and opponents of political proposals designed to alter the established political order. The examples of the opposition expressed to the Children and Youth Code and the constitutional reforms (both in 1999) show how evangelical rhetoric has been used for explicit political purposes: strengthening the role of the state as guarantor of the rights of the child was portrayed as a hazardous violation of the authority of the family (and God); and the recognition of Mayan spirituality was presented as a threat to Guatemala as a Christian nation (see Chapters 4 and 5). These positions concurred with the positions of the traditional conservative elites in Guatemalan politics.

The evangelical rationale for taking part in the opposition to the constitutional reforms also serves to highlight another dimension of the ideological concurrence between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan political status quo: its *monocultural* character. Here I am referring to policies and practices that are based on homogeneous conceptions of Guatemala as a nation, of what it means to be Guatemalan, and of what it means to be a Guatemalan family. Of relevance here is the markedly dualistic worldview of the evangelical rhetoric as it appears in Guatemala's political arenas, stressing the distinction between the right versus the wrong way of living, and between good (God) and evil.[22] The Guatemalan *nation* is accorded

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[22] The evangelical rhetoric presented here is the type 'practised' in Guatemalan politics. It clearly reflects Pentecostal theology, and is *not* representative of all evangelical churches in Guatemala or

considerable emphasis in this worldview, often linking to how only faith can save the individual, then only faith can save the nation of Guatemala (Miller 1994; O'Neill 2010a, 2011). Whereas promoters of pluricultural policies and structures stress how Guatemala is a diverse country of many nations, referring to the many indigenous groups (Cojti 2009), for the evangelical church Guatemala is *one* clearly defined nation, and the core of this nation is the nuclear family. Threats to the stability of the family, commonly presented as homosexuality and abortion, are thereby also presented as major threats to the nation. Such positions are frequently expressed by the main representatives of evangelical churches, for example in the political debates organised by the AEG and pastoral networks like AMEG during electoral campaigns. At such events, the invited candidates have been questioned about their positions on issues related to Christian family values such as abortion and gay rights, framed in terms of being for or against the security and overall wellbeing of Guatemala as a nation (*Prensa Libre* 2015c; see also Chapter 5). In this sense, in Guatemala's political arenas the main representatives of the evangelical church have positioned themselves as defenders and promoters of policies that are in line with the established *monocultural* order.

The continuation of monocultural, often exclusionary and intolerant, policies and practices has generally been considered a central characteristic of the political status quo in Guatemala (Casaús 2002, 2010b; Brett 2010; see also Chapter 1). In line with the rhetoric from the civil war, the traditional power-holders in Guatemalan politics have continued to present the calls for self-determination for indigenous groups and any kind of structural changes as threats to national stability and 'development'. As seen in the example of the opposition to the constitutional reforms, the policy preferences of the Guatemalan elites have fit in with the monocultural rhetoric of the evangelical church, even though the objectives of the political positioning can have been very different. Again, there is great variety within the

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elsewhere. For in-depth analysis of the evangelical (and Pentecostal) rhetoric in Guatemalan politics, see Cantón Delgado (1998) and Sanchíz Ochoa (1998). See also O'Neill (2010) for analyses of evangelical understandings and use of 'the nation' in the Guatemalan context.

thousands of evangelical churches on such issues, and an organisation like CIEDEG has taken a clear stand alongside organisations in civil society that work for the promotion of pluricultural policies and the recognition of Guatemala's cultural diversity. However, as argued in previous chapters, as other explicit ecumenical organs, CIEDEG has remained a small organisation with very limited access to political arenas – presumably precisely because of such political positioning. By contrast, the AEG, which has been relatively consistent in its conservative and monocultural political preferences and initiatives, has enjoyed political access on the same level as the Catholic hierarchy. Therefore, I argue that at the central level there has been considerable ideological concurrence between the preferences of the evangelical church and the political status quo.

In sum, then: I find that the evangelical presence in Guatemalan politics has been characterised by a particularly non-challenging endorsement of the institutions of the state as such, and by conservative political preferences of main representatives of the evangelical church have concurred with those of the Guatemalan elites. Taking into consideration how the evangelical church is a relatively new participant in Guatemala's political arenas, and how it has increased presence and visibility I conclude that as *factor* in Guatemalan politics, the evangelical church can be seen to have provided the political status quo with an *additional* pillar for its 'basis of existence', without which the political status quo is more likely to have been shaken, if not altered.

Concluding remarks: allowing for the *continuation* of the status quo

In this chapter I have examined how the growth of Protestantism and the establishment of the evangelical church as a new factor in Guatemalan politics appear to have left the political status quo unaffected. Using the relationship between the Guatemalan state and the evangelical church as my main analytical lens, I have shown how the increased

presence and cooperation with the evangelical church has affected the state's own operations. On the one hand, this partnership has indeed brought about changes: the evangelical church has become a *new* partner for the state, a partner to which it has turned for practical and material assistance, as well as for more spiritual endorsement. As a partner of the state, the evangelical church has participated in Guatemalan politics – by setting the agenda, defining societal problems as well as their solutions, and contributing to policy implementation. In my view these practices have led to a certain degree of *evangelisation* of public services, not least within education. Indeed, the Catholic Church has long filled roles similar to those the evangelical church has taken on in Guatemalan politics and society. However, the fact that there now are *two,* large religious entities may have contributed to making Guatemalan politics *more marked by religion* than before, when there was only one religious partner. Furthermore, the evangelical church can be seen as an additional guardian of Guatemala's highly conservative social policies. The Catholic hierarchy has generally shared the evangelical church's conservative position on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage – but in the population, evangelicals are reportedly significantly more conservative than Catholics. As evident in election campaigns, politicians of all parties appear to consider it (electorally) advantageous to be associated with such values.

On the other hand, my analysis of these evangelical political practices and preferences indicates clear concurrence with the unchanging 'order of things' in Guatemalan politics. The evangelical church has achieved a political position with direct and close connection to central decision-making organs, but this has not been used to question or challenge the relations of power in Guatemalan politics. Evangelical cooperation with state institutions has been un-confrontational as regards the state and its representatives, and ideologically in line with the defenders of the status quo.

Seen jointly, these mechanisms explain why the evangelical church has been invited and accepted as partner of the state: in the evangelical church, the Guatemalan state has found a religious ally that enjoys high trust in the population, and also an ally

with which it can work together and associate without committing to any requirements of change. And therefore I conclude that the political participation of the evangelical church has made possible a continuation of the conservative policies and exclusionary practices that characterise the political status quo in Guatemala.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The primary objective of this thesis has been to identify and analyse the political implications of the growth of Protestantism in Guatemala – including, how the Guatemalan state has reacted and related to the changes in the religious landscape. Guatemala has long been a favoured case for the analysis of the growth of Protestantism: why then, embark on yet another study of this well-documented case of rapid religious change? I have been especially intrigued at the *lack of* changes in Guatemala – how Guatemalan politics and power relations do *not* appear to have changed in line with the processes of religious change. How can the rapid religious change in Guatemala have coincided with political continuity? By answering this, I hope to have provided new insights into the mechanisms by which religious change affects politics, and to have helped to broaden empirical knowledge of the composition and rationales of the Guatemalan political status quo.

'The evangelical church is in practice present in all spheres of society' (Morales, interview 2012). With this statement, describing how evangelical churches across Guatemala are engaged in social work of all kinds, and how representatives of the evangelical churches participate in central arenas for political and economic decision-making, the then-president of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala (AEG) unknowingly provided an analytical key for examining the political position of the evangelical church in Guatemala. His presentation of how evangelical churches are 'everywhere' and does 'everything' is in line with how the evangelical church in general is *perceived* – by evangelicals themselves, by the general public, and by state officials. Indeed, in less than four decades, there has been an overwhelming change in the image of evangelical churches in Guatemala– from being seen as fundamentalist and sectarian anomalies, to becoming a *normal* part of everyday life. Concurring with

the focus of much research in this field, I have stressed the heterogeneous character of evangelical churches, activities and individuals. However, whereas this diversity has often been referred to as a hindrance for analysing the political impact of the evangelical church, I see this characteristic as a major explanatory factor for the kind of presence and influence established by the evangelical church in national politics in Guatemala.

In this final chapter I revisit some of the main findings of the thesis, bringing together the central arguments seen in relation to the primary objective and ambitions of the thesis, and placing the empirical and conceptual contributions in relation to the literature on the field. Lastly I indicate some possible implications of these contributions, and pathways for further research.

Summary of key findings

In this research I have followed two, interrelated, lines of enquiry: First, I have sought to identify and examine the presence of 'the evangelical church' in Guatemalan politics, by exploring what kind of presence this is, how it has emerged, and how and by whom it is manifested. Second, I have examined the question of political *impact*, by focusing on how the growth of Protestantism has been reacted to and acted upon by the Guatemalan state.

The presence of the evangelical church in Guatemalan politics
Despite the increased scholarly focus on evangelical churches, evangelical activities and the overall rapid religious change in Guatemala, considerably less attention has been paid to *how* the massive conversion to Protestantism has affected politics at the central level. This has led to corresponding diverging conclusions as to the overall impact of this religious phenomenon. In the first chapters of this thesis (1-3) I explored theoretical and methodological challenges entailed in identifying the political consequences of the growth of Protestantism, specifically noting the debates on how changes as experienced by individuals transfer into changes in politics. And indeed,

conversion to Protestantism *has* led to changes in the lives of many individuals, and an increasing number of Protestant churches *have* become important parts of peoples' lives. However, my ambition in this thesis has been to analyse to how these individuals and institutions are received, represented and reacted to in political arenas, and by the Guatemalan state in particular. I have therefore presented the state as central in the analytical framework, as an arena for analysis and as actively involved in the trajectory of the political position and influence of the evangelical church.

My research has analysed the political position of the evangelical church as a *process* of 'becoming political', finding that the relationship with the state has been central for the scope and direction of this process. In Chapter 4 I presented four periods in Guatemala's recent political history in which the relationship between the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state was 'substantially heightened', serving to trigger changes in how and in which arenas the evangelical church related to national politics, and vice-versa. These four periods were the 1976 earthquake and its aftermath; the government and governance of General Ríos Montt; the political opening and multiparty elections; and the peace process. During the periods analysed, the evangelical churches and their representatives moved from explicitly *a*political positions to active participation in various political arenas, and I concluded that the kind of relationship developed between 'the evangelical church' and the state contributed to a *normalisation* of the presence of the evangelical church in sectors in Guatemalan politics and policies like education, health, and social security. I also highlighted how the AEG established a position alongside the traditional power-holders in politics and society. In all, the conclusions drawn from that chapter provided a foundation for better understanding *the kind of* political presence and influence enjoyed by the evangelical church in Guatemala today.

In Chapter 5 I turned to the manifestations of the evangelical church in contemporary Guatemalan politics which, from a more conventional political science perspective than the one applied here, would hardly be visible: there have been few examples of evangelical political parties, and none with electoral success; there is no evangelical caucus in Congress; and when included in predictions, 'evangelical' is not

significant factor for political behaviour or party preference. Furthermore, Guatemala's evangelical churches have not been actively engaged in electoral politics, as has been the case in Brazil (see Reich and dos Santos 2013). However, I have stressed the importance of taking into consideration the particular functioning/ malfunctioning of the Guatemalan political system, where political participation and influence is practised elsewhere than in the formal institutions. From this perspective, my findings reveal that the evangelical church indeed holds a presence in political arenas. It is spoken of as *one,* identifiable and homogeneous entity with clearly defined representatives; evangelical organisations and individuals have served as agenda-setters in political debates and policy-making; and evangelical *arenas* are used for political practice and networking.

Analysing power and impact: the evangelical church and the Guatemalan state

Having established that the increased growth of Protestantism has indeed led to a presence of 'the evangelical church' in Guatemalan political arenas, I then examined the kind of *power* exercised by 'the evangelical church'. Chapter 6 revealed the political relevance of the presence and activities of evangelical churches and organisations at the local level. Whereas other studies of evangelical social work have focused mainly on one *type* of services or have been in-depth case studies of one particular church or neighbourhood (see for example Brenneman 2012 and O'Neill 2010a, 2011), I sought to systematise evangelical activities and social programmes as 'non-state service provision', in order to capture how these services *function*: in the lives of their clients and participants, and how they have been received (or ignored) by the state. Compared to other non-state services, many *evangelical services* share a distinctively 'individualistic framework', with a focus on the individual and his or her own ability and responsibility to improve the life-situation. My analysis further revealed that the Guatemalan state has come to rely on collaboration with the evangelical services. Moreover, I found that there has been a clear diversification in the presence of evangelical churches and organisations as service providers –in

geographic scope, and in terms of which social strata they cater to. From operating mainly in the countryside and providing assistance to the poor, Guatemala's evangelical services now cater to urban as well as rural populations; to the very rich as well as to the very poor. Jointly, these findings indicate that the political relevance of the evangelical church has increased considerably in policy areas as well as in clientele.

From the empirical findings and analyses in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I could then conclude that the evangelical church has achieved positions from which it has defined, authorised, and implemented policies, often on behalf of the state. Thus I hold that the evangelical church has established itself as a participant in *governing* in Guatemala, and developed a relationship with the state with a potential for affecting the authority and legitimacy of both (see also Sending and Neumann 2006: 657–658). Chapter 7 focused on examining the impact of this relationship. I found that the evangelical church has not (yet) employed its political position, with direct and close connection to central decision-making organs, to question or challenge the power relations in Guatemalan politics. Rather, my analysis showed how the evangelical cooperation with state institutions has been distinctively supportive of the state and its operations. Moreover, as regards policy preferences as expressed by evangelical representatives at the central level, these have been clearly conservative in character, and in line with those of the Guatemalan elites. On the basis of these findings I concluded as follows: by participating in the forming and implementation of policies and services, the evangelical church has provided the state with much needed resources and rationales, which has allowed for a continuation of the conservative policies and exclusionary practices which characterise the Guatemalan political status quo.

Contributions and insights for further research

With this research I have related to two distinct scholarly perspectives on the socio-political development in Guatemala: one with a prime focus on the growth of

Protestantism and its effects, and one more 'institutionalist' in character, basically ignoring the phenomenon of religious change altogether. By drawing on both these literatures, I have provided empirical and conceptual insights that can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Guatemalan politics and power relations, as well as of the mechanism by which religion and religions change can affect politics in general and the state in particular.

For the study of Guatemalan politics

In the more general analyses of Guatemalan politics I find an overall lack of attention to the massive changes in religious adherence among the population. Unsurprisingly then, one of my recommendations for further research is to include religion as a dimension, if not a variable, in analyses of the Guatemalan political system and the relations of power. In recent years, greater methodological sophistication has contributed to better understanding of how religion can be included in political analyses in the Latin American context. For example, Steigenga (2001, 2007) has found that the *type* of religion (Catholic or Protestant) is rarely significant as regards the effects on variables like political behaviour and values: the distinction lies in how religion is *practised* and the level of *intensity*. My thesis offers a detailed account of how and where the evangelical church has established a political presence. This focus has enabled me to identify roles and arenas hitherto not included in political analyses, for example evangelical churches and organisations have served as arenas for networking and friendship, which the has served to create opportunities for political positioning. I have highlighted that when taking part in evangelical activities and arenas, decision-makers and other state officials adapt to the evangelical rhetoric and rationales. I hope that these findings can serve to persuade researchers to take the evangelical church and its representatives into account when studying Guatemalan politics, as I believe this perspective can contribute to more nuanced analyses of the relations of power in Guatemalan politics, and the operations and alliances within the Guatemalan elite. Furthermore, my analyses have highlighted the roles of evangelical churches and organisations as *service providers,* and revealing the at times close

relationship with the Guatemalan state. In my view, these findings can offer important insights for research on how the Guatemalan state *governs*, the various types of cooperation with non-state actors and institutions, and the implications for the positions of authority and legitimacy of both parts. Whereas much research has been done on the illicit partners and practices of the Guatemalan state (see for example Briscoe et al. 2014, and CICIG 2015), my study serves to provide insights regarding the more *normal* and accepted kind of partnerships, which (perhaps for that reason) are often overlooked. In particular, I have highlighted some possible implications deriving from how religious institutions conduct their provision of *public* services, for example when the practices and principles of the evangelical organisation counter constitutional principles of egalitarianism, secularism and freedom of worship. Here I hope that my analyses of the various types of *evangelical* service provision can serve to inspire further research on the Guatemalan state's continued practice of 'outsourcing' its responsibilities and duties vis-à-vis its citizens, and the implications this holds for the 'clients'.

In sum, I hope that my findings concerning how and in which arenas the evangelical church participates in politics can bring insights into why and on which terms Guatemalan politics has managed to remain so conservative – in terms of the preservation of policies in line with traditional, Christian 'family values', but also more generally, in terms of its ability to resist pressure to change the socioeconomic and political status quo.

For the study of Protestant growth and the relations to the state

With this study I have also aimed at contributing to more concept-oriented debates as to how to analyse the political potential of Protestant individuals and institutions and the overall political effect of Protestant growth. First, the findings and conclusions of this thesis indicate the need to examine how religion and religious change is manifested in politics beyond individual believers and their behaviour – for example, by including religious leaders and representative organs, as well as local religious

organisations and their 'social programmes'. Much of the literature aimed at identifying political effects of Protestant growth in Guatemala and elsewhere in the region operates with unclear conceptions of how effects as seen at the local level (individuals, families, neighbourhoods) are related to the those seen (or not seen) at the central level (political parties and regimes). Seeking to help to fill this 'analytical lacuna' in the literature, my thesis proposes a framework for capturing the dynamics and *interaction* between the two levels of analysis, the local and the central. This two-level approach is meant to capture how the presence and influence in politics at the central level relate to roles and positions held at the local level. Such a perspective entails recognising how changes in religion entail the emergence of new practices, institutions, and leaders at the local level, yet that the *impact* of such changes cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration how they are reacted to and acted upon at the central level. Conversely, understanding the kind of political presence of religious representatives and institutions at the central level should be read in relation to the roles and positions held in local communities, where religious institutions and individuals can hold numerous and sometimes unexpected roles, spiritual as well as 'secular.' In my research, a key to analysing such interaction has been to incorporate how evangelical churches and organisations serve as providers of basic services to the Guatemalan populace. In the literature, the various types of religious social work in Latin America have often been analysed with the broader ambition of identifying how they serve to improve the lives of the participants, and further, how the religious institutions as 'agents of change' can strengthen democratic practices, values, and procedures. I have found analytical benefits from analysing such programmes in a more systematised manner – aiming specifically at identifying how they interact with local and central governments, within which policy areas they cooperate, and how the positions and authority achieved from providing services at the local level have affected the positions held by their representatives in political arenas at the central level. In the case of Guatemala, identifying evangelicals as service providers has also shed light on how sectors like health and education are governed at the local level, and by which methods and rationales.

Second, I hold that analyses of political impact of the growth of Protestantism or other types of religious change should specifically examine the role of the state, both as a site of investigation and as an active participant in the formation of the kind of presence and position the religious entity in question holds at the central level. Protestants and Protestant churches indeed represent a highly diverse phenomenon that can technically not be considered as *one* political factor. However, identifying how this is spoken of (as 'the evangelical church') in political arenas at the central level, and that a defined set of actors are treated and acted upon as *de facto* representatives, have yielded valuable insights for understanding the political impact of the growth of Protestantism in Guatemala.

Furthermore, I hold that identifying the state's practice of cooperating with certain religious institutions and organisations (and not others), and within which sectors they cooperate with each other, can provide important insights into policy-making (or the lack of such) in the sectors in question. I hope that my findings from the case of Guatemala can inspire other researchers to include the state as arena and participant in the analysis, even though the state at first sight may appear to be *absent* and 'irrelevant' compared to other veto powers in a given society.

For comparative regional analyses of the political roles of the evangelical church

The conceptualisations and approaches applied in this thesis have been highly context-driven, and not directly aimed at generalising findings applicable beyond the case of Guatemala. However, the steady growth of Protestantism in neighbouring El Salvador and Honduras certainly indicates the need for a closer look at the political-religious relationship in those settings. In my analysis I have learned from Brenneman's (2012) regional studies of evangelical social programmes, which indicate similarities across the 'Northern Triangle' between the types of programmes and the rationales upon which they are based. The three countries share similar (low) levels of socio-economic indicators and critically high levels of corruption and violence, which in turn indicate that the roles of the Honduran and the Salvadorian state as regards the citizenry may

resemble the situation in Guatemalan. Hence, empirical insights from Guatemala concerning the roles of evangelical churches and organisations as service providers may serve as inspiration for designing comparative research projects on the political implications in these three countries. My findings from Guatemala indicate that, compared to other non-state actors, 'evangelical services' are distinctively similar in terms of their focus on 'saving' and 'transforming' the individual. Furthermore, many evangelical churches and organisations are connected to each other, for example by representing branches of the same church, sometimes operating across international borders. In my view, in a region troubled by extraordinary levels of violence, insecurity, and migration, non-state actors that operate *transnationally* and provide people with services they otherwise would be deprived of – as do evangelical churches, deserve increased attention by academics and policy makers alike, in order to develop the understandings of their political roles and influence, as well as how these practices affects the (scant) services and operations of the states in this region.

I would also like to suggest a comparison of a more thematic character, somewhat returning to the discussions on how changes in religion holds democratic potential. Even though the scholarship on the growth of Protestantism in the region has indeed moved beyond the discussions on whether or not this is *good* for democracy (the 'false dilemma', as identified by Steigenga 2001: 257), I hold that there is more to be said about the democratic potential of the evangelical churches. Specifically, I find that there is a lack of attention to how there are different and sometimes conflicting *kinds* of democratic models and practices in contemporary Latin America. Very broadly, Andean countries like Bolivia and Ecuador, both with high percentages of indigenous peoples in the population, have to a certain extent let their form of governing be inspired by principles of pluriculturalism and plurinationalism (Escobar 2010; Walsh 2008), whereas Central American countries have upheld a system of governing along the lines of monoculturalism. For the case of Guatemala, I have pointed to how culturally excluding political practices have been preserved in spite of the incorporation of some of the multicultural reforms of the Peace Accords (Brett 2011). I have also pointed to how the main representatives of the evangelical church have positioned themselves as defenders of the traditional Christian family and of the

Guatemalan nation (in the singular), and actively supported policies that are in line with the established *monocultural* order. I propose more scholarly attention to how the evangelical church, as participant in national politics, affects the debates and policymaking concerning diversity versus homogeneity, and the alliances formed in this regard. Such focus can then shed light on how the increased political participation of the evangelical church relates to the development of certain *kinds* of democratic governance. In my opinion, this research perspective can also contribute to the more conceptual debates on how religious practices and activities can be including and/or excluding. Again, as a research agenda, this would entail a recognition of how the evangelical church can hold a very different position at the central political level compared to the roles played at the local level, where Protestantism and evangelical churches have been found to form important part of indigenous peoples' life and cultural practices (Garrard-Burnett 2004; Samson 2007).

Final remarks: 2015 – Change or continuity?

As I write these final paragraphs, Guatemala has elected its third evangelical President, Jimmy Morales. Seen from the perspective of this thesis, Morales' victory can serve to illustrate the paradoxical relationship between change and continuity in Guatemalan politics. The preceding months had certainly been extraordinary in Guatemala – the calls for change (*¡Cambio Ya!*) have arguably never been as loud and as unison as they were from April 2015 onwards, responding to the investigations, corruption charges and continuing arrests of high-ranking officials. Both the cross-sectorial and peaceful mobilisation, and the successful collaboration between the Public Prosecutor's Office's and the CICIG constitute clear changes in the 'order of things' in Guatemalan political affairs. Was Guatemala finally about to break with the political status quo? Would the state have to change its operations as a consequence of the massive revelations of criminal behaviour and practices in its own domains?

As of November 2015, it is of course much too early to predict on the outcome of these events, and mine are mere reflections based on observations of events that

may or may not have served to spark changes in Guatemala's political status quo. After months of popular mobilisation for large-scale structural changes (including the electoral laws), the 2015 elections went ahead as planned, if only with a surprising result. As a well-known comedian with scant political experience, Jimmy Morales had campaigned as the 'candidate for change', which is seen as the main explanation for his remarkably successful campaign and eventual victory in the second round. However, this is not the first time a candidate has presented himself as outsider and a newcomer, making a point of his lack of political experience. Comparisons have already been made with the campaign and victory of fellow-evangelical Jorge Serrano Elías in 1990, who also entered government with a considerable opposition in Congress and minimal options for alliances. And as Serrano, Morales is openly backed by sectors within the traditional power-holders in Guatemalan politics, including central elements of the business and military elites.

From the perspective of my research I have taken note of how the evangelical church and its representatives have responded to the corruption scandals and the popular mobilisation, curious to note if those I have analysed as a 'religious ally' would abandon their position alongside the state and the government. My observations have been limited to the formal reactions and statements of the AEG and the 'megapastors', of rather, noting the lack of such. Certainly the AEG has formed part of an evangelical initiative of organised prayer that have been organised in connection to the protests at the Central Plaza. However, in these, the calls for change have been formulated in familiar terms: as prayers for peace and for the end of corruption, without references to specific political authorities. During the election campaign Jimmy Morales continuously expressed his conservative, religiously based position regarding issues such as gay marriage and abortion, but so did most other candidates as well. As of yet it is uncertain if or how Morales will include evangelical 'elements' in his government and governance. However, in my opinion, the incoming president's evangelical beliefs and possible allies within the evangelical church serve to lower the expectations for the coming government's will and skill to comply with the *structural* changes called for by the masses at the Central Plaza.

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Appendix 1: List of Interviews

Name/ Pseudonym	Date / Place	Position/ Occupation
Aguirre, Helmut*	15 March 2013, Guatemala City	Coordinator, ministry of social work, La Fraternidad Cristiana
Anleu, Eduardo Zeissig	4 July 2014 Guatemala City	Coordinator youth programme, Guatemalan Red Cross
Arango, Ronald	20 January 2012, Guatemala City	Congressman (TODOS)
Argueta, Otto (2 interviews)	24 January 2012, 8 July 2014 Guatemala City	Analyst, Interpeace (Guatemala office)
Barquín, Manuel	12 December 2011, Guatemala City	Congressman (GANA in 2012, LÍDER since 2013)
Barrios, Cesar*	18 March 2013, Guatemala City	Editorial board member *La Palabra*, President 'Camara de Empresarios Cristianos de Guatemala'
Camargo, Sergio	27 January 2012, Guatemala City	Pastor El Shaddai
Cajas, Marco Tulio	14 July 2014, Guatemala City	Director, Escuela de Gestion Publica, Universidad Mariano Gálvez
Cifuentes, Héctor	2 February 2012, Guatemala City	Advisor to Mayor of Guatemala City, Alvaro Arzú (UNIONISTA)
Díaz, Marco Antonio (3 interviews)	8 February 2012 19 March 2013 28 July 2014, Guatemala City	Pastor 'Igelsia Reino de Dios' and in AEG leadership AMEG member
El Shaddai members (2)	11 December 2011 Guatemala City	Members of the evangelical church El Shaddai

Font, Juan Luis	24 January 2012 Guatemala City	Political editor *El Periiódico*
Espina, Manuel	18 July 2014 Guatemala City	President, 'Guatemala Próspera'
Godoy, Victor H.*	24 October 2013 Guatemala City	UNDP Guatemala
Guinea, Gerardo*	24 October 2013 Guatemala City	Editor, journalist (independent)
Gutierrez, Leonel	26 January 2012 Guatemala City	Journalist, *La Palabra*
Lassen, Jan Gerhard	18 July 2014 Guatemala City	Ambassador, Norwegian Embassy, Guatemala
Leal, Fernando Estévez*	5 July 2013 Guatemala City	Board member, AEG
López, Jorge H.	7 February 2012 Guatemala City	Pastor and founder, 'La Fraternidad Cristiana'
Jiménez, Francisco	17 July 2014 Guatemala City	Country director, Interpeace (Guatemala Office)
Helen Mack	14 July 2014 Guatemala City	Director Myrna Mack Foundation Previous Commissioner of the National Police Reform
Mansilla, Wendy	22 July 2014 Guatemala City	Project leader, youth and violence programme USAID
Marroquín, Edgar*	27 June 2013 Guatemala City	Theologian, analyst 'Analystas independientes de Guatemala'
Morales, Jorge (2 interviews)	31 January 2012 26 March 2013* Guatemala City	President, AEG
Muralles, Tito*	18 March 2013 Guatemala City	Director, *La Palabra*
Navarro, Otto*	17 June 2013	Human Rights Ombudsman (office), representative in G4

NGO-worker*	12 November 2013 Guatemala City	Coordinator, youth gangs programmes
O'Neill, Kevin	10 July 2014 Guatemala City	Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
Ponciano, Karen	29 July 2014 Guatemala City	Director, Instituto de Estudios Religiosos, Universidad Rafael Landívar
Rayo, Mariano	23 January 2012 Guatemala City	Board member UNIONISTA party, campaign leader for Patricia de Arzú
Rodríguez, Marco Antonio (2 interviews)	1 February 2012 16 July 2014 Guatemala City/ San Lucas	Pastor Iglesia Evangélica Galilea Previous President AEG and leader of *Radio Alianza*
Shaw, Richard	25 January 2012 Guatemala City	Editor for journal *C4* Member of constitutional assembly (1984-85)
Skauen, Petter	14 March 2014 Oslo, Norway	Special advisor, Norwegian Church Aid and Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Stålsett, Sturla	10 April 2015 Oslo, Norway	Professor, Norwegian School of Theology, University of Oslo
Trujillo, Pedro	7 July 2014 Guatemala City	Director, 'Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales' La Universidad de Francisco Marroquín
VIVA member (2 interviews)	20 January 2012 27 January 2012 Guatemala City	Board member of political party, Vision con Valores (VIVA)
Volunteer, detention centre*	20 March 2013 Guatemala City	Participating in organised visits to youth detention centre
Zeissig, Otto	4 July 2014 Guatemala City	Political advisor, TODOS

* Interviews conducted by research assistant (2013)