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BEYOND POVERTY
LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF WOMEN COFFEE
PRODUCERS IN WESTERN MEXICO

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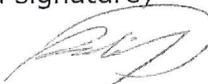
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DEDICATION

I dedicate my research to the people of Oxeloco, for sharing with me a life changing experience and for always being the place where I get to find the strongest and most passionate side of my heart.

I also dedicate this research to the memories of my father Raúl Ancona and Manolo Bates, to my mother Mercedes Bates and Rosita López, and to my siblings Alejandra and Jorge Ancona: I had the luck to have the best people at home.

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this research is rural poverty in Mexico, exploring how people climb out of poverty by implementing different livelihood strategies. The research uses the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and it investigates both individual and collective efforts to get out of poverty, and assesses whether these efforts lead to positive or negative outcomes. The study group is a cooperative of fifteen members in the indigenous community of Cuzalapa, Mexico. The vulnerability context, in which the members of the cooperative unfold their strategies, reduced their space to maneuver due to the marginalization of women in rural areas, the low involvement in social and political institutions and their exclusion in national development, due to the adoption of neoliberal thinking. However, the impact of the latter is reduced due to the protection of the regional development thinking constructed by mainly the DRBSM, CUCSUR and IMECBIO committed to sustainable rural development and seeking the participation of local people to adopt conservation of the area, which exists due to the privileged geographical area where the cooperative is located. Yet they did not submit to these circumstances and found strategies to alleviate their poverty. The individual livelihood strategies of the women have been identified. An important strategy is the use of conditional cash transfers to invest in the education of their children, the use of animals as a form of savings and self-production to increase food security. The only outcome that has not yet been achieved is a political voice for increased well-being. Furthermore, the research focus is this collective strategy and identifies the trajectory that the cooperative has been following as a vehicle to alleviate the poverty of its members. It elaborates on the sustainability of the livelihood strategies and analyses the development thinking to alleviate poverty.

The social capital of the cooperative has been central to compensate for the lack of services and infrastructure in the area. They have used their network to obtain knowledge, skills and services. In addition, human capital has a significant representative of a positive leader who gives much of her time and keeps the working spirit alive, and who is complemented by government support for obtaining physical capital. The combination of these three strategies results in an optimal combination to achieve their livelihood outcomes. The livelihood strategies of the cooperative are based on a diversification of activities, such as market orientation, rural non-farm and self-employment. This allows them to reduce their vulnerability to external forces. The livelihood outcomes that have not yet been achieved and may threaten the existence of the organization are the internal relations of trust and pests in coffee trees. Currently the cooperative is expanding their markets. The latter creates a solid institution in the area, providing a link between customers and producers and creating employment opportunities for coffee producers who have an incentive to maintain the coffee trees in its plantations. The collective livelihood strategies are positively impacting development in the lives of its members and in the community.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of poverty inspires considerable debate on the extent of relief required. In the global consciousness, poverty is a concern that needs urgent action. This concern is fuelled by statistics such as “almost half of the world lives on less than \$2.50 dollars a day” (World Bank 2008); about 21 children die each minute, every day, due to poverty; one in three children don’t have adequate shelter; one in five children don’t have access to safe water; one every seven children do not have access to health services (UNICEF 2005). Privileged individuals – those who able to read and get access to information about the inequalities of this world – are in a unique position to assist in reversing this frightening situation on behalf of the most vulnerable. Moved by this thought, many people worldwide have endeavoured with their time and resources to stop ignoring the facts and to begin making a positive difference with respect to these issues.

Actions are taking place to reduce poverty. Forces at the macro level, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organization (WTO), United Nations (UN) agencies and development ministries discuss directionality for poverty alleviation, mainly supported by policies, agreements and budget planning. At the same time, actions must be implemented at the micro-level where poverty is felt. There is a duality of influences between one another; both have to be considered for an analysis on poverty alleviation. The recommendations and guidelines set at the macro level shape the way actions take place at the micro-level. But, what are the developed local strategies to alleviate poverty and what are the purposes of social interventions? Are they aligned with the peoples' priorities?

In this section, I will present the theme of my thesis project; starting with the research problem and the goals I have set, followed by the research questions. Furthermore, I introduce the topic of poverty and continue with the introduction of the study group, the Women Coffee Producers Association (hereinafter referred to as WoCoPA), and the characteristics of the surrounding areas. Then I explain the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, which I used as a lens to observe the information used in my research and to structure the thesis. The last part consists of the methodology, showing the process of how the research was designed and how the data collection was planned and implemented during the fieldwork. This is done to guide future research in the area of the methodology followed in this thesis. I describe this in as much detail as possible in order to guide the lector on a systematic path to reach my objectives. Though I am aware that any replication will not provide identical results, it can shed light on the discussion of the strengths and constraints of rural initiatives to achieve sustainable livelihoods and thus poverty alleviation.

Background

Moved by the alarming situation on poverty, I was taught in life and in school that the world should not continue ignoring its existence. Convinced by the urgency of intervention on poverty, twelve years ago I became an interventionist myself. I decided to volunteer for a year in an indigenous community in my country. I went because I was told the population was in deep poverty and needed help to 'progress'. To my surprise, I arrived at a place full of richness – richness of natural resources, richness of culture, richness of cuisine, and richness of collaboration – and that was the first moment when I started to reflect that 'progress' is much more complex than wealth in our pockets. It was there, in the poorest areas of my country where I felt richer having no budget. I observed that while they did indeed lack financial and physical capital, they had strengths in their natural, social and human capital, with the possibility to convert these things into positive outcomes.

That experience was my first with a society in a marginalized village, but it had a profound effect on my life. While I doubt that my efforts at the time provided meaningful change for those people, I was able to learn from the experience and discovered a new motivation for my personal, professional and future academic life. Poverty cannot be analysed in a short term. My perception of how 'progress' in marginalized areas should appear was inadequate. It has taken me a long time to understand the dynamics of poverty, and yet I feel that I have just begun.

Research problem

Every year in Mexico, a vast amount of resources are directed at financing social programs in rural areas where, in many cases, there is no intention of repayment. Regardless of this fact, there is often no evidence of conditions improving afterwards (Armendáriz, Rai and Sjöström 2002). This is not only a waste of resources, but also a cause of frustration for the beneficiaries, and a missed opportunity to make positive changes to poverty alleviation, which is the intended goal of these projects.

Reports state that 46.2 % of the Mexican population lives in poverty, meaning that 55,342,000 people in this single country have insufficient income to purchase the goods and services required to meet their needs while also being deficient in at least one of the following areas: education, access to health services, access to social security, quality and basic service in housing, and access to food (CONEVAL, 2014). Different causes are attributed to the persistence of poverty. Arriagada (2005) points out that the interpretation of the precise nature of poverty depends on cultural factors, such as race, gender and ethnicity, as well as the economic, historical and social context. In Mexico, the sector that has historically faced increased marginalization is the women of indigenous communities, who are usually located in rural areas (Villareal 1994). It is in this intersection of attributes where the group of study belongs.

The cooperative that is the focus of this study is located in Cuzalapa, a marginalized indigenous rural area, and it is comprised primarily of women. These individuals are placed in a vulnerable context where the consequences that have followed neoliberal policies are not positive (Holzner 2007). In Cuzalapa, poor people remain unequal to others, with limited access to productive resources and low involvement in social and political institutions, yet they do not submit to these circumstances and are finding strategies to alleviate poverty.

Goals of the research

I have set two complementary goals for this research; the first is scientific, while my own personal and professional interests constitute the second. I believe the latter is necessary to give motivation during the research process – to find the passion that makes it enjoyable and easy to fully apply oneself to the task. Ideally, these goals should go together. This research was not designed by any organization or group of study, but it was born with the same motivation that made me study this International Master in Rural Development (IMRD), to go deeper into the matter of livelihood strategies of indigenous communities and a way to understand better the dynamics for poverty alleviation in Mexico.

The scientific goal is to investigate both individual and collective efforts to get out of poverty, and to assess whether these efforts lead to positive or negative outcomes. I do so by analysing their efforts through the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, highlighting the importance of both the socio-political and economic contexts, and the dynamism of the processes of constructing livelihood strategies. This goal will complement my personal interest of providing a contribution to the debate of poverty alleviation in indigenous communities.

Through this Master, I got to know the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) as a framework “to provide the basis for action” (DFID 1999). I am convinced that SLF is a very helpful tool to understand and to act against poverty. The sustainable livelihood approach has been the core of the framework and methods used in the past decade by contemporary agencies and institutions in development policy and thinking. It brings new perspectives and aspects into the development process. Scoones (2009) in his paper “Livelihood perspectives and rural development” points out the utility of this framework to explain the complexity and diversity of ways that was not revealed before, but the ideology from its creation, such as the dynamism in the processes around livelihoods and the power and politics, has been lost or rarely achieved. The author narrates a historical review of the tensions, ambiguities and challenges of this approach and makes an urgent call to re-energize this framework by including questions on different aspects, such as the directionality and ideas of ‘progress’ in development. A diachronic perspective on the socio-political and economic context contributes to the debate about the kind of development the livelihood strategies are heading towards. In Scoones own words: “for those convinced that livelihoods perspectives must remain central to development, this is a wake-up call”.

Research questions

- (I) What is the context within which the livelihoods of the members of the WoCoPA have unfolded?
- (II) What are the individual livelihood strategies of women who are members of the WoCoPA to alleviate poverty?
- (III) What is the trajectory that has been followed by the WoCoPA as a vehicle to alleviate the poverty of its members?

1. INSIGHTS ON POVERTY

Poverty as the centre of attention to development intervention strategies in rural areas is a constant and a global concern. It was expressed in the millennium development goals to halve extreme poverty and increase wellbeing worldwide, objective that was accomplished (UN 2015), but still there is much more to do. However, who should take on these commitments and engage in the compliance of these objectives that are proposed at the international level? The United Nations (2001) emphasize that the commitment should be assumed by the public sector to implement strategies and multi-sector programs to attend to places of high vulnerability and poverty. There is a high worldwide pressure to oblige national governments to put poverty as a priority on their agendas.

The concept of poverty is widely used, but its definition is highly contested. There is a trend to explore poor people's definition of poverty, but there are development institutions whose definitions are commonly used. According to the United Nations, poverty is inability lack of choices and opportunities, and a violation of human dignity. The World Bank defines it as a pronounced deprivation in wellbeing, embracing many dimensions. Respecting measurement there are several aspects. For instance, Birchall and Simmons (2008) gives a very quantitative perspective as an increase of income, consequently it can be said that a person succeeds in the way out of poverty if their income increases. Another way to measure poverty is from the theoretical understanding of the inter-generational cycle of poverty, as being able to achieve social mobility. Last but not least, it is related to non-income poverty, a framework derived from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), where poverty is linked to a gain or to a lack on different types of capitals. In this research I focus mainly on the latter, but I include to the concept of poverty the perspective of the rural poor in Mexico.

The public organization in charge of establishing the guidelines for the definition, identification and measurements of poverty in Mexico, is the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) and is based on the General Law of Social Development at the federal level. In its last report, it measured 45.5 % of the population in Mexico living in poverty. In Mexico, poverty considers the living conditions of the population from three areas: economic, social rights and territorial context. The first includes the needs associated with the goods and services that you can purchase through income. The second is

integrated based on the needs of the population to achieve social development. And the third incorporates aspects that transcend the individual level (which may relate to geographic, social and cultural characteristics, etc.); in particular, those associated with social cohesion and others considered relevant for social development (DOF 2010).

Engerman and Sokoloff (2000) trace back the origins of poverty in Mexico to the Spanish conquest, when the abundance of natural resources, labour force and power structure built a system that had perpetuated along the years, consolidating the power on a minority, and leaving the rest on high levels of poverty generating inequalities. Other authors (Rocha-Reza 2007; Morton 2010), blame as the cause of poverty macro-economic vulnerability, the neoliberalism model that Mexico had adopted decades ago, imposing global trends that trigger market-oriented development. According to (Holzner 2007) there is no space for the marginalized areas of the country to cope with this system, yet it creates difficulties and discouragements for political mobilizations that affect the poor more drastically than other groups.

1.1. Inter-generational cycle of poverty

The concept of the inter-generational cycle of poverty or development gap has been defined as the sequence of factors or events that triggers poverty and perpetuates it until an intervention takes place, an actor inside the cycle of poverty is not able to go out by itself (Sautu, Dalle and Elbert 2005; Calderón 2012). In simple words, this means that if the first generation lived in a precarious context, such as poor housing, health or education the second generation will grow up in this context and lack of opportunities perpetuate the same conditions, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to break this circle of poverty inherited by the third generation. However, any change in the context could generate 'social mobility' vertically, across generations, meaning one generation is able to improve its living conditions compared to the other previous generation. Also, social mobility can exist vertically, when throughout a person's life an opportunity allows them to break the cycle of poverty, such as access to education, and therefore appears to a better paying job, or on the other hand, a crisis that leads to impoverishment, such as the alcoholism of a husband and mistreatment in the house.

1.2. Poverty traps

The conditions of poverty may be very challenging to abandon, or in other words, it is difficult to obtain the necessary amount of assets that help people escape from poverty, that often makes them remain in a vicious circle, also called poverty trap (Smith and Kwak 2011). The poverty trap has a self-perpetuating nature, which means poverty becomes its own nature, suggesting that if the initial conditions of an economy were better, then the long run performance of the economy would be better itself (Kiminori 2005). According to Villatoro (2005), many intervention programs in Latin America work under the assumption that the poverty cycle is repeated due to the lack of investment in health, nutrition and education.

The more universally known poverty traps are described by the United Nations agencies, they explain them as five, so the problems are easier to picture for the purpose of this research, since here are only used to exemplify how rural people are coping to break out of them, but the core of the analysis is the livelihood strategies. For further analysis' reasons, this essay focuses on five main traps that underpin chronic poverty and are described by UNICEF in 2011.

One – Insecurity: the chronically poor usually are surrounded by environments of insecurity and possess few assets or entitlements to survive undesired events that bring shocks and stresses.

Two – Limited citizenship: this relates to the lack of effective political representation and the absence of meaningful political voice.

Three – Spatial disadvantage: chronically poor people are immersed in an intra-country spatial poverty trap, due to remoteness, political exclusion, some lack of a natural resource base and fragile economic integration.

Four – Social discrimination: this reflects the exploitative relationships that can be found among chronically poor people and trap them due to the social relations of power, patronage and competition. These also can deny them access to public and private goods and services and are based on class and caste systems, gender, religious and ethnic identity, and age among other factors.

Five – Poor work opportunities: this is caused by inadequate or unequally distributed economic growth, limiting not only work opportunities but also exploiting people. As a consequence, people have to work for daily survival, do not have the opportunity to accumulate assets or capital for children's education.

2. GROUP OF STUDY – THE WOCOPA

I carried out my research in Western Mexico, in the indigenous community of Cuzalapa. I wanted to select a local initiative with a positive trajectory. I easily found the cooperative “Colour of the Soil” through some research on the web. It looked like the optimal initiative for the case study. However, I had doubts about the disposition of the cooperative to cope with more research that concerned their work. Contrary to my suppositions, they didn't have reservations in accepting the request and so they integrated me not just in their daily activities at work but also in some extra activities of their life. Showing me with pride what they had built in those twenty years of existence.

The cooperative “Colour of the Soil”, the WoCoPA, was initiated by 15 members, all from the indigenous community of Cuzalapa, located in the Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve in the state of Jalisco, in Western Mexico. The cooperative was consolidated in 2000, but members have been working together since 1996, when collective action began through embroidery activities that had mainly social and

human purposes. However, when the demand for products of the cooperative increased, economic opportunities were taken into consideration as well. The group began to diversify their activities to incorporate the sale of other products, such as coffee, which was traditionally grown in the area, but had drastically diminished its production due to a drop in the prices that made buyers in the area stopped buying from growers. However the WoCoPA members brought back coffee production in the area. With time, the coffee gained importance and became central to their cooperative. They set objectives to create a patrimony for their families and to contribute to regional economic growth, as well as to provide job opportunities for local economic development, and to preserve and regain village resources (Color de la tierra 2006).

3. SIERRA DE MANANTLÁN BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve (from now on RBSM; its acronym in Spanish) is considered one of the most important Natural Protected Areas in Western Mexico due to its natural richness, territorial coverage and the provided environmental services, as well as the biological biodiversity. The ecosystem provides the water supply to more than 430,000 inhabitants in the region (CONANP 2012). The RBSM is a mountain range of about 140,000 hectares. It holds vast biological diversity; as a result, it contains three core zones, covering 30% of its territory, where strict protection measures are in place, and a buffer zone for the other 70%, where tenure regulations are imposed in the area by the reserve. In terms of land possession, 32 agrarian communities, including Cuzalapa occupy 60% of the land, while 40% is under private ownership. The inhabitants mainly practice subsistence agriculture and livestock breeding (Gerritsen 2002).

In 1979, researchers of the University of Guadalajara (UDG) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison found a variety of maize with potential for genetic improvements. This finding brought national and international attention to protect the conservation of its natural resources and the same year it was declared a biosphere reserve. In 1984, the UDG established a scientific station called Las Joyas, known today as the Manantlán Institute of Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation (IMECBIO according to its Spanish abbreviation). This began the start of research processes and social inclusion that resulted in the creation of the RBSM in 1987 as part of the international network of biosphere reserves of the United Nations program MAB-UNESCO (CONANP 2012).

The existence of a reserve of such environmental magnitude represents a source of benefits for the communities encompassed in the area, as well as a special vigilance that restricts certain activities. However, a major relevance to its existence is the indirect impacts to the villagers, since it brings intellectual actors that may shape its path of development, and at the same time it represents a new element for technology transfer and creation of knowledge through the constant implementation of research projects.

4. CUZALAPA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The hamlet of Cuzalapa is inside the indigenous community of Cuzalapa, located in the southern section of the buffer zone of the RBSN, in the municipality of Cuautitlán de García de Barragán, belonging to the Costa Sur Region of the state of Jalisco in Western Mexico. To help with the visualization of Cuzalapa in its context, a wider picture is provided in the figure 1, where the geographical location is presented, highlighting the main places involved in the process of influencing and accessing the resources used for the livelihood strategies.

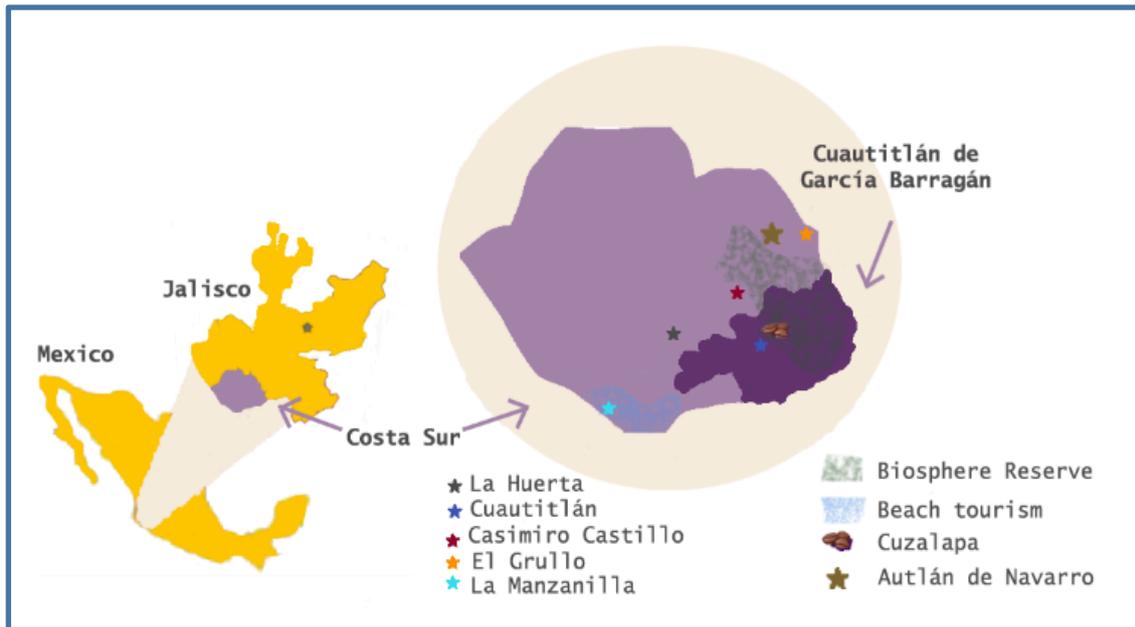


Figure 1. Spatial location of the main places involved in the process of the WoCoPA members to develop their livelihood strategies.

The Costa Sur Region covers 9.11% of the state of Jalisco. Its importance is attributed to the fact that the RBSM is in this area, which is highly valued for its biologic diversity and its environmental services. Another reason it is important is that the southern beaches (image 1), which host both domestic tourists and international tourists, mainly from the United States of America (USA) and Canada, who usually spend the winter season in those areas. Along the cost, which is about 100 km away from the locality of Cuzalapa (from now on only called Cuzalapa), restaurants, hotels and stores can be found (Ramirez 2015). The principal municipality of the region is Autlán de Navarro (image 2), an important city in the area due to its productivity; health services, provision of quality education, and also for its services offered by the governmental offices. Other important cities in the region are Casimiro Castillo and La Huerta. Both are the connecting points to get to the principal municipality when travelling from Cuzalapa. The distance to both places is 44 and 54 km respectively, Casimiro-Autlan 40 km, La Huerta-Autlan 64 km and Autlan-Guadalajara (the capital of the state) 193 km.



Image 1. Southern beaches of Jalisco.

Cuzalapa (image 3) is the biggest village of the indigenous community that carries its name. The community has more than twenty hamlets, such as Canoítas and El Vigía, where some of the WoCoPA members live. All together they comprise the biggest indigenous community in the Manantlán Biosphere Reserve with an extension of around 24,000 ha (almost 5.5% of the total extension) and a population of 1,500 inhabitants and 220 *comuneros* (land-holding peasant of agrarian communities or co-proprietors). 71% of the community's land is embraced in the buffer zone, while 19% is placed inside the three core zones. The remaining 10% is located outside the reserve (Gerritsen 2002).



Image 2. Municipality of Autlán de Navarro.



Image 3. Hamlet of Cuzalapa.

Cuzalapa, for the year 2010, registered 870 inhabitants, of which 448 are women and 422 are men, and it has 226 dwellings. The degree of social marginalization here is high, while social inequality is low (SEDESOL 2013). The latter indicator has shown an improvement as compared to the prior survey from five years ago, as displayed on table 1. The indicators to calculate the social marginalization index are the same, with the exception of the percentage of population of 6 to 14 year

olds not attending school, the percentage of the population without rights of health service and the percentage of private dwellings without drainage and washing machines.

Table 1. Social marginalization and S. gap index (SEDESOL 2013, Own translation).

CUZALAPA	2005	2010
Total population	777	870
* % of population of 15 years or more illiterate	17.37	15.44
% of population of 6 to 14 years not attending school	11.18	3.98
* % of population of 15 years and more with uncompleted primary school	68.02	67.79
% of population without rights of health services	45.05	19.54
* % of private dwellings with earthen floor	37.7	7.52
* % of private dwellings without toilet	29.51	11.5
* % of private dwelling without water pipe system	28.96	5.75
% of private dwelling without drainage	25.68	8.41
* % of private dwelling without electric power	3.83	7.96
% of private dwelling without washing machine	67.76	49.56
* % of private dwelling without refrigerator	40.98	26.11
Social gap index	-0.521	-0.718
Degree of social gap	low	low

The basic services in Cuzalapa cover the majority of the population, as shown in table 1. However, there is still a large minority with no access to basic services. In addition, daily bus service, conventional shops, butchery, cemetery, churches, internet cafes, and a football field are also found. However, the conditions of the services have many deficiencies. Within the indigenous community of Cuzalapa, the further the hamlet is located from the main village, Cuzalapa, the worse the service conditions are. El Vigía and Canoitas don't have running water, and the latter also lacks electrical power. Higher education, the medical center, transportation and bigger shops are only found in Cuzalapa. Most of the people from other hamlets don't have private transportation, such as cars or motorcycles (which are more commonly seen in Cuzalapa), so people have to walk about two hours to access necessary services.

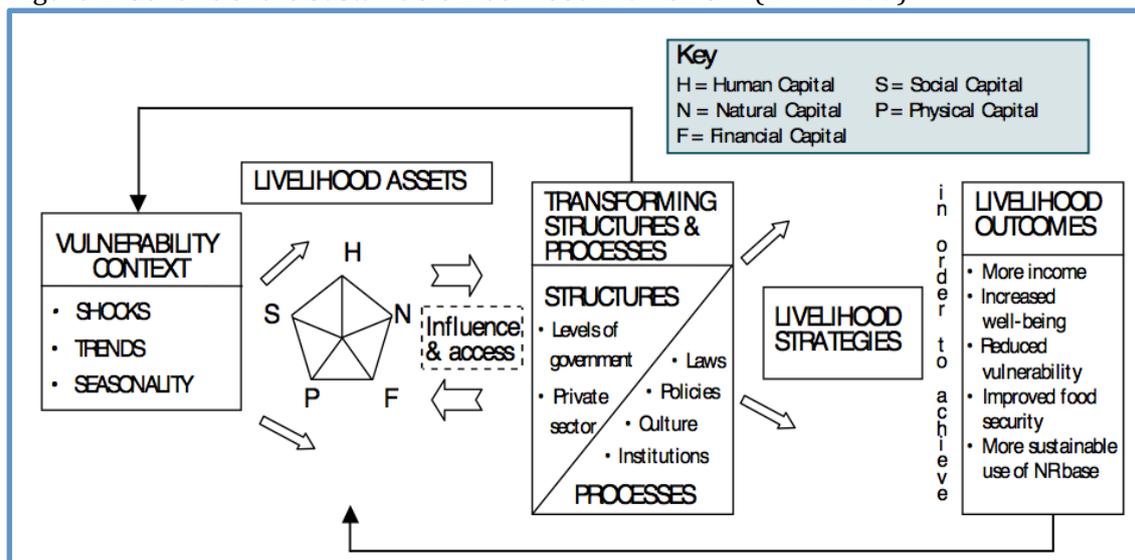
Rural areas in Mexico are characterized by a lack of services and poor conditions of roads and infrastructure. The remoteness obstructs the connectivity necessary to introduce public services and restricts market access and the promotion of a variety of activities and services (Rojas 2001). However, even though Cuzalapa does not have a variety of options for transportation (since there is only one bus per day) and travel is time consuming, it is possible to connect to other areas. The existence of roads helps transit in the area and it is feasible to get transportation, "now you just get to the highway, wait until a car stops by and then you ask for a ride, people are friendly and they usually take you" (Apolonia).

The combination of an increment flow of people and the geographical location of Cuzalapa has brought different benefits to the WoCoPA. For instance, beach tourism represents an important demand for the provided services of agro tourism, as well as for the allocation of its products. In addition, the feasibility to access bigger localities allows them to get services and inputs for its cooperative, for instance the construction materials were acquired in Cuautitlán, few machines from el Grullo, and the packaging of some products in Autlán. Another important fact to remark is the social marginalization index that categorizes Cuzalapa as highly marginalized. This index is the cause of many intervention programs for the poor, as well as marginalized ethnicities, benefiting indigenous communities. Last but not least, the environmental condition of its location allows them to grow coffee and to benefit from the landscape through agro tourism, in addition to the cultural traditions involved in the processes. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework, was chosen for this research for better dimension all the factors and dynamics mentioned above, involved in the vulnerability context of the WoCoPA members to develop their livelihood strategies to alleviate poverty.

5. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK

The livelihood framework is a tool to understand livelihoods, especially of the poor. The framework is centred on people and it has different components. The first component examines livelihood outcomes. In figure 2, a generic framework developed by the Department for International Development (DFID) can be observed. They place five categories – more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and a more sustainable use of the natural resource base – that should be managed according to people’s priorities. Therefore they are highly connected with the livelihood strategies people develop.

Figure 2. Generic of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (DFIF 1999).



Another component is livelihood assets, which is shown in the pentagon constituted by the human, natural, financial, social and physical capital. People choose their livelihood strategies based on the existence or lack of these types of capital, which at the same time are influenced by the transforming structures and processes affected by the vulnerability context. The sustainability portion seeks to understand the reasons behind people's choice of livelihood strategies in order to strengthen positive actors and pay attention to negative influences to mitigate them (DFID 1999).

Several aspects should be considered when analysing livelihoods; Bebbington (1999) identifies reasons of failure to improve them. The author says it has to take the following aspects into consideration: i) What are the assets and the value that rural people use in constructing livelihoods and how do they prioritize them; ii) how do the participants defend their assets and which are the ways to access them; iii) if participants identify opportunities to turn assets into livelihoods, how do they transform the assets into income, dignity, power and sustainability; iv) how do they protect existing ways of turning assets into livelihoods (trying to keep a place in the market) and; v) how they build relationships with other participants and make alliances; this can help to see how different actors are perceived by the people belonging to the state, market or civil society.

This framework was chosen for several reasons. First of all, because it is centred on people, the framework aims to achieve outcomes defined by the people's priorities. This helps to break with any previous misconception or assumption on poverty. Furthermore, because it analyses livelihood strategies built upon the management of different capital assets, it is useful in debate for intervention entry points; and last and related to the uniqueness of this framework, is because it takes into account the vulnerability context, structures and processes as part of the forces that influence and give access to the livelihood strategies of the people. Hence that uniqueness helps to analyse their sustainability. All the methods and techniques to gather data from the field were designed according to the fulfilment of this framework.

6. METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

In the social sciences, it is widely known that realities are socially constructed. The basis lies in the duality of structure (Giddens 1984), explained on the coexistence of agency and structure, implying that these two themes cannot be analysed separately. Structures impact the way people develops their livelihood strategies, but at the same time, people with their discourses and behaviour influence the knowledge collected by development agencies on which they build up their agendas and policies.

Taking into account this duality, the methodology consists of two parts. First, the review of the secondary data, mainly related to the socio-political and economic context of the primary data, but also used to complement or confirm empirical

research; and second, the process to collect primary data with qualitative methods to determine livelihood strategies at the local level.

Qualitative techniques are observed in the studies of poverty that analyse processes, causes of situations of poverty and dynamics of populations in poverty. On the other hand, quantitative methods are abundant in that researchers of poverty often pay more attention to the measurements of the situations of impoverishment, in terms of terms expenditure, income or some other quantitatively defined indicator (Grootaert, Kanbur and Oh 1997). For this research, qualitative methods are more appropriate and aligned to achievement of the objectives, since the aim is too see poverty through the eyes of the poor. In addition, several aspects of rural and indigenous realities are very valuable, but difficult to measure and quantify, as in the case of social and cultural phenomena. According to Pérez (2002), to study poverty from a sociological point of view, you cannot neglect the qualitative perspective, since people perceive, explain and live poverty in a very personal and unique way.

The techniques employed for data collection included a case study to delimit the sample and to make a more in-depth analysis; semi-structured interviews and life histories to obtain intended information, narrated by local people; and participant observation and a focus group to corroborate and complement the information of the preliminary results. The setup of the field plan and budget are presented in appendix 1.

6.1. Review of secondary information

Secondary information was mainly used to gather data which could help to assess the debate of poverty and the optimum methodologies used to study it, as well as to gain insights on the studies previously done in the research area. After the field research, secondary data were also gathered to complement the context of the WoCoPA.

The WoCoPA has been centre of analysis on different occasions. The research subjects have been: the cooperative in the matter of multi-functionality and sustainable rural tourism (Gerritsen and Morales 2007), as a successful example of sustainable rural development (Larco-Lauren 2010), and as a form of collective action, gender dynamics and constraints for scaling up women's initiatives (Contreras-Arias, Pernet, and Rist 2013). This literature was made available at the UDG. Relevant information about the WoCoPA was provided by the members, such as the regulations, diplomas, the monthly assembly journal, the book of finances, the archive of projects and receipts of payments.

The research done in Cuzalapa is much more extensive, but it is important to mention that after some conversations with local people, they decided it was important that I read some material in their possession, such as the case of the thesis work of Figueroa (1996).

6.2. Case study

The research interest of the case study, according to Tesch (1990), is the comprehension of the meaning of actions through interpretation. I applied an intensive approach to focus on just one cooperative, 'Colour of the Soil', in order to study it in depth and provide details of their processes to build up their livelihood strategies in its own specific context. Another benefit of the case study is to track the phenomena around the trajectory of the cooperative over time, making it possible to explain changes during the period of its existence.

6.3. Participant observation

Participant observation as its name suggests, involves two actions 1) participating in a situation, while at the same time 2) observing to gather data. As Iacono, Brown and Holtham (2009) points out, this technique is constrained by the accessibility and approving of its own role within the social setting, but also offers the chance to collect valuable insights into the organization, allowing researchers to take advantage on their unique circumstances to provide information that is interesting, contemporaneous, accessible and significant to practitioners alike.

Every day, I went to the store to become familiar with the members and with the activities. I had informal conversations while helping with the tasks they were performing. We shared informal talks usually written down in a diary immediately following the conversation. Each day of the week, I got to know two members who were in charge of the store. During the second week, I accepted invitations to spend time outside of the store where I harvested tomatoes, visited some fields, made an excursion to the river, accompanied a member of the medical centre, went to purchase the items for the party of a child of a WoCoPA member, attended meetings about intervention programs and also participated in the festivities of the holy week and of the "four virgins days", the biggest festivity in Cuzalapa. As part of the WoCoPA activities, I helped in the daily duties of the value chain process of their products and accompanied them to sell at a fair in Cuautitlán and another one at the UDG. Each of the activities helped to corroborate the conditions of the services, infrastructure, and job opportunities that they talked about when indirectly explaining their livelihood strategies.

The most relevant information collected through participant observation was written down in the diaries, and events were photographed and sometimes recorded on video camera.

6.4. Semi-structured interviews

I individually interviewed each of the WoCoPA members; in total fifteen were semi-structured. The interviews were designed according to the livelihood framework, to gather information to provide to the understanding of the context, structures and processes which constrain or facilitate access to their development of livelihood strategies, as well as for the definition of their livelihood assets. The interviews focused on three parts. The first was conducted to get insights on their personal objectives, motivations, perceptions about poverty and development, and their participation in intervention programs. The second part was intended to find moments of struggle and opportunities for learning. Its emphasis was on subjects of employment, the role in the family, housing, health, education, land and property. The third part was about their life linked to the WoCoPA, and was intended for use to begin gaining an understanding of the events that led them to the establishment and also some moments of crises.

Key actors who were mentioned by the WoCoPA members as important roles on the trajectory of the group were also interviewed in a semi-structure formality. In total were six: 1) the State Coordinator of the (Special Program for Food Security) PESA program, who knows the trajectory of the program in the State, having awarded funding to the cooperative in two different periods and for two different concepts; 2) the current facilitator of the local Agency of Rural Development (ARD) under the PESA program, who is training many of the members on improving the growth of vegetables and poultry production in the backyard to make awareness on nutrition and the use of food. She is at the same time guiding on the process to obtain physical assets as a collective group; 3) The facilitators of the previous ARD hired by the PESA program who assisted with the procedures to grant them a solar drier, and who, even when their contract was finished, committed to the WoCoPA to help them obtain additional machinery requested from governmental programs; 4) A professor from the UDG who has been accompanying the process of the cooperative since its inception. When in moments of crises, the members usually call him for guidance; and 5) One of the first customers on the surrounding tourist area, who was a key element in the training process for quality improvement of the product offered.

Important actors within the village were also interviewed, such as ex-members of the cooperative, in order to know the reasons why they withdrew, and customers and coffee producers as part of the institutions that influence the actions and development of the WoCoPA.

In total there were fifteen semi-structured interviews with the WoCoPA members, five semi-structured interviews with external key actors and several informal interviews with local actors who are linked to the WoCoPA. The names of the interviewed people under the semi-structure format are listed in the appendix 2. Those interviews were voice recorded and written down in a notebook, and I did the translations of all the quotations of interviews in this thesis from Spanish to English.

6.5. Focus group

The focus group was attained through a group interview, conducted at the halfway point of the period of the fieldwork, and was meant to corroborate the information about the trajectory of the WoCoPA and the preliminary results. It lasted two hours, and it was performed after the monthly meeting of the WoCoPA to assure full assistance. I was the moderator, and the agenda consisted of a group dynamic to energize the group and to get insights into the frequency of the diagnosed moments of crisis during the trajectory of the WoCoPA. Furthermore the members were divided into four groups, each comprised of three to four constituents. They had thirty minutes to discuss two questions: 1) what have been the important moments within the WoCoPA that lead to the establishment; and, 2) what were the moments of struggle they had to face across the years. At the end of this time they had to select a spokesperson that shared the answers to the queries with the group. All notes were written on a blackboard to be seen for everyone, in case of disagreement or willingness to add information, participants were encouraged to speak up. When all the groups had spoken, the moderator made a summary to verify all points were considered and consented to.

The dynamic to energize consisted as follows: all members had to sit in a chair making a circle, one person stood in the middle and gave a statement (i.e. I made tortillas in the morning), all the persons who identified themselves equal to the statement (i.e. I also made tortillas in the morning) would stand up and change places including the spoken person. One person will be left out without a chair; she would share with the group a story related to the statement and introduce the next question to the group. The initial rounds were intended just to energize the group and to share fun moments, but after some time, the statements were just formulated according to the information I needed to obtain, for instance, "I had problems with my husband for joining the WoCoPA". One story was officially shared in each round, but on some occasions some additional members wanted to share their stories too. This dynamic was voice recorded, but also filmed in order to see how many members were standing up for each statement.

6.6. Life histories

Three generations of women are involved in the WoCoPA. I chose to do three life histories of a family involving the daughter, mother and grandmother. The aim was to get insights into the process of impoverishment and the intergenerational cycle of poverty, while at the same time providing a diachronic perspective on the impact of the changing ideology of development through the intervention programs and how it has shaped its own goals.

6.7 Fieldwork

I arrived to the WoCoPA with my co-promoter and his group of students from the Southern Coast of Jalisco University Centre (CUCSUR). I had my first contact as a customer of one of the services provided in the cooperative. We were all taken on a hiking tour, guided by one of the WoCoPA members, and finished the tour with a meal made with local products. After, the professor who was well known and respected by the members of the group, presented me to the leader and asked her to guide me to the community centre, my future home. Coincidentally, the day after my arrival, when the WoCoPA had its monthly meeting, I received a bullet point on the agenda under the title “other aspects: a master thesis student”. I was introduced to all the members and I explained the purposes of the research and asked if I could assist with any task or activity. They consented to my research and asked me to make a design and to print new menus for the beverage sale at its store. I took advantage of the situation to obtain the free, prior informed consent (FPIC). I asked permission to take pictures of them and their activities, as well as to write about their cooperative. They consented to this.

I stayed eight weeks (see appendix 3 for description of the work plan for data collection) living in Cuzalapa in the community centre of the CUCSUR, which was also the home of the leader of the WoCoPA and her family. For that matter, the experience was deeper since I spent a lot of time with a key informant, accessing a lot of information through informal conversations. But despite the richness of the personal experience to live together with a very friendly family, I had to be aware of the danger of bias. To manage this possible constraint, I used the information provided there just as a starting point to dig in and complement it with other members and with documents from the cooperative when possible.

7. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In the first chapter, I presented the subject of the thesis, the research problem, the goals and the research questions. Furthermore, I make the introduction to poverty, followed by the introduction to the research group and the characteristics of the research area and its surroundings. At the end, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework is presented and justified its use on this research, along with the methodology designed for the elaboration of the thesis.

In the second chapter, I present the literature review divided in two parts. The first related to the vulnerability context, within which socio-political and economic actors have intervened in the rural context, and the second part is about the transforming structures and processes, where I point out the key elements that have influenced the dynamics in the availability of capitals asset of the women and the WoCoPA itself.

The third chapter contains the individual livelihood strategies of women who are members of the WoCoPA to alleviate poverty. It starts by explaining the poverty

challenges of the WoCoPA members in the last century through the life histories of three generations of the same family. I continue by identifying the livelihood outcomes and the livelihood assets of the WoCoPA members, closing the chapter with the livelihood strategies.

In the fourth chapter, I present the trajectory that has been followed by the WoCoPA as a vehicle to alleviate the poverty of its members. I provide the example of the WoCoPA as a common strategy to achieve collective goals. First, I present the collective outcomes. Furthermore, I show the trajectory of the WoCoPA pointing out the events of success that led to establishment, as well as the difficulties and how they stepped forward as a group with collective action. The chapter finishes with the identification of the collective livelihood strategies.

In the fifth chapter I sum up the main arguments and conclude.

CHAPTER 2. VULNERABILITY CONTEXT AND TRANSFORMING STRUCTURES & PROCESSES

In this chapter I provide the literature review focusing on the vulnerability context and in the transforming structures and processes. The first provides an insight on development to explore how is conceived, as well as to expose the forces behind the development thinking. I end with a zoom up on the socio-political rural context in Mexico, pointing out the need of characterization of the reality to be intervened, including trends like population and migration. Besides I expose the powerful forces in development from the international and national level to the local level, where cultural phenomenons take place, as is the case of the *gender dynamics* and the *caciquismo* (chieftainship). The transforming structures and processes, helps understanding of the structure on which the WoCoPA takes part and the 'rules of the game', as well as to identify the intervening institutions at different levels, including markets. I point out the key elements, such as policies and institutions involved in the context of the actors who are in the centre of this analysis. The aim is to comprehend the factors influencing the access or constraints to acquire capital assets on which they unfold their livelihood strategies.

VULNERABILITY CONTEXT

The aim of the vulnerability context is to identify the factors that are of specific importance to livelihoods. According to DFID (1999) the context is critical because lies outside the control of the persons and have a direct impact upon the existence of their assets and the possible options to develop the strategies to achieve their objectives. Different types of situations can push a sector deeper into poverty, if unaddressed may further marginalise groups that are already poor. However, the effects of the context do not have to be always negative or can be detected to make a change, for instance Levy (1991) pointed out the negative impacts of the high birth rates of the population in rural Mexico, therefore actions took place to inform about how the well-being could be improved by reducing the number of children. The vulnerability context draws attention to the complexity of trends, shocks and seasonality that directly or indirectly impacts on the livelihood of the rural poor.

1. Context of development

The classic aim of development, as Pieterse (2010) points out, was for several years comparable to modernization, implying that development was a result of different steps that move a nation from one setting (the south, developing country) to another (the north, developed country) more advanced and desirable situation. The conventional agent of development has been the state; it had the role to

prioritize the needs of the population and trace a strategy to conduct the nation towards the goals. However, a big shift in development thinking was the entry of neoliberalism releasing the historical role of the state, replacing it with market forces and international institutions. Later on, that kind of development was in question; different problems have arisen arguing that it leaves out different important aspects, for example culture and environment. Currently, more concerns are shaping development, such as gender, diversity, globalization and sustainability. The latter has been of rising importance since the popularization of the term contained in the Brundtland report in 1987. The question today is what type of development is emerging and if so, what are the causes and forces that are shaping it and towards what? Development is and has been changing its meaning over time.

Across history there are long-term theories on development. Pieterse (2010) classifies the meanings of development over time, suggesting that the theories depend on political and intellectual processes. Starting with classical political economy dating back from the post-war era, when the meaning of development was attributed to 'catching up' with the advanced industrialized countries. Earlier, during the 1850s and 1870s he classifies latecomers and colonial economics (see figure 3). During that time in Europe there was established an early stage of commerce followed by plantations and mining derived from its colonies. Thus development was highly associated with colonial resource management, exporting raw materials to be industrialized in the metropolitan countries. During the early nineteen hundred's there started modern development thinking, relating to the development of economic growth. Later on it broadened to include modernization through, for example, entrepreneurship.

Period	Perspectives	Meanings of development
1800s	Classical political economy	Remedy for progress; catching up
1870 >	Latecomers	Industrialization, catching-up
1850 >	Colonial economics	Resource management, trusteeship
1940 >	Development economics	Economic growth – industrialization
1950 >	Modernization theory	Growth, political and social modernization
1960 >	Dependency theory	Accumulation – national, autocentric
1970 >	Alternative development	Human flourishing
1980 >	Human development	Capacitation, enlargement of people's choices
1980 >	Neoliberalism	Economic growth – structural reform, deregulation, liberalization, privatization
1990 >	Post-development	Authoritarian engineering, disaster
2000	Millennium Development Goals	Structural reforms

Figure 3. Meanings of development ever time (Pieterse 2010).

In the 1970s alternative development thinking initiated the incorporation of social and community development, leading to the human development theory in the 1980s shifting development to capacitation. At the same time came the theory of neoliberalism, ruled by markets and having the aim of economic growth but

through deregulation, liberalization and privatization. This theory is still influential in development, but post-development theory emerges to accuse state authorities, and economic growth is repudiated due to the failures and disasters in human populations, as Holzner (2007) for the case of Mexico argues that creates obstacles and disincentives for political mobilization that affect the poor more drastically than other groups. This triggers a higher intervention of international institutions that recommended structural reforms along with the Millennium Development Goals in 2005.

Reflections on the meaning of development matter. To look at the trends in development thinking across the years, is like looking at a collective mirror, based on the statement that development is a mirror of the times, and taking into account that there are many angles to take and arguments to fit the occasion (Pieterse 2010). To make an analysis on a rural development theory, it is necessary to explain different elements that influence its origin. First, development needs to be contextualized; second, the identification of characteristics of the reality to be intervened; and third, to map out the different stakeholders and institutions in development, the power forces. I deal with each in turn.

1.1. Contextualization of development in Mexico

Mexico was part of the colonial economies where development implied resource management. Colonial economies dominated rural areas and poor people were victims of the exploitation of their lands, a situation that changed with the victory of the revolution. After the revolution, the government was obliged to return to the natives the land that was taken away by the landlords; it was achieved with the reform of article 27¹ of the Mexican constitution in 1917. Over an extensive period, peasants obtained more than 100 million hectares of land, on which they established thirty thousand *ejidos* (agrarian community) and communities, including more than three million heads of household (Warman 2003). This historical change, and the world crisis of 1929 that bankrupted the *haciendas* (large agricultural state), ends with the aspiration of Mexico becoming an agro exporter.

In 1938 the oil companies were nationalized and Mexico was heading towards industrial development. The rural areas were assigned to provide sufficient food and at lower prices to the urban areas. The government controlled the market and the meaning of development in that sector was aligned with achievement to integrate the *ejidos* into the markets and in food self-sufficiency. Interventionism ruled in the rural areas. From 1940 to 1970, the export of cotton was the most dynamic and profitable sector of agriculture, but foreign companies mainly controlled it. However, the self-consuming production contributed not just to food

¹ Ownership of the lands and waters within the boundaries of the national territory is vested originally in the Nation, which has had, and has, the right to transmit title thereof to private persons, thereby constituting private property (Constitution of Mexico 1917, obtained from http://www.oas.org/juridico/mla/en/mex/en_mex-int-text-const.pdf accessed 30/07/15).

security, but also perpetuated the traditional existence in rural areas. Besides, the income obtained mainly with labour force was high in proportion to the spending on acquisition of food. The aim of agrarian reform seemed to be achieved. After this, suitable land for agriculture diminished, efficiency was lower and the budget of peasants was not enough because they had to include fertilizers and pesticides to compensate the loss of productivity. In addition to the expenditure in transportation, medicine and other goods and services needed to be paid for that were not in the market before (Warman 2003).

Rural areas were undercapitalized and inequality was evident. The Mexican government designed paternalistic programs to help the poor; the initial way of operating was providing cash grants directly in poor areas. At the same time, the Mexican government subsidized lending to the poor, because due to their characteristics they could not obtain it from public or private institutions, hence rural banks run by the government lent to the poor, or also indirectly provided financial resources to microcredit organizations, which offered small loans to small farmers across Mexico (Armendáriz, Rai and Sjöström 2002), its purpose was to provide capital and encouraging the creation of groups to deal with economies of scales to commercialize their products and to obtain inputs at a competitive price. Dachary and Argentino (1987) pointed out the constraints of these actions because groups had no participation in the decision-making process; the state and credit institutions supervising the small holders' production took all decisions about production. Hence lack of autonomy of small holders for planning, production either commercializing resulted in failures of the programs. Develtere (1994) reports that members of the communities felt a lack of autonomy in their own projects to control them, instead they sensed them as quasi-governmental agencies, which are good in providing some services they need, rather than an instrument to gain surpluses belonging to them.

Modernization started to take force during the 1990s, entrepreneurship was the key to achieve it; development in rural areas was not seen any more as increasing the output of basic grains to feed the population, but to explore different markets, a development thinking that led to neoliberalism. The latter started to build up during the presidential term of Carlos Salinas (1988-1994). Different events led to the entering of a new era of development. First, the modifications in the agrarian reform, *ejidos* were able to rent or sell their common lands, favouring the land market; second, privatization of the bank took place; and third, it started trade openness with NAFTA². In order to counteract the disconformities of the left in the country due to the adoption of the new ideology of development, the biggest social program 'PROCAMPO' was formed in 1994, it consisted of direct programs to producers of basic grains who were disadvantaged, and for the first time, peasants that were not able to sell in the market because they consumed their own production, got support.

² NAFTA is the North American Free Trade Agreement that came into effect in 1994, making the world's largest free trade zones among Canada, USA and Mexico. This was founded on economic growth and rising prosperity of their countries (NAFTA Web page <http://www.naftanow.org/> accessed 30/07/15).

The aim of PROCAMPO was developing different areas classified in four broad areas: food support, production, infrastructure, and social services programs. Under the food programs began the implementation of selling fixed amounts of two items, tortillas and milk, at subsidized prices (Tortibonos and Liconsa programs, respectively). Also the targeted coverage through the system of rural stores operated by the government's food marketing and distribution agency, a National Company of Popular Subsistence (CONASUPO, for its Spanish initials), which are currently present in many rural areas. For the production services, the program incorporates incentives such as conditional cash transfers, helping people to earn additional income. For the infrastructure services, the ideology was to invest resources in creating institutional environments where the profits with their assets could be enhanced; also the chances to acquire human and financial capital were improved. In 1991 was the creation of PASSPA for the social services, a program funded by the government and with a loan from the World Bank intended to support health in poor areas of the country, with it, started the idea to provide simultaneous provision of a basic package of food-health-education to reach the complementarities concerning these needs. The initiative of integrated support was tangible until 1997 when the program PROGRESA (later Oportunidades and currently PROSPERA) was created, which has been leading the interventions in rural areas since then, but changing the name according to the political party in turn. It works under conditional cash transfers (Levy 1991).

Post-development thinking is emerging and there are several forces opposing current neoliberalism. With post-development thinking comes a higher pressure to incorporate the poor into the decision-making process; international development institutions and the intellectual forces in the field also have explored the benefits of the participatory approaches, such as the actor-oriented approach of the Wageningen University and the Sustainable Livelihood Framework of DFID, centered on people who best know the needs to be assisted.

1.2. Characteristics of the reality to be intervened

Intervention into poverty alleviation makes a differentiation between the poor to address the necessities, the urgency and the priority of interventions, according to the level of poverty. Some interventions need to aim to help the poor immediately, while others should be complemented with other interventions that create future conditions to grow out of poverty. The poverty traps (chapter 1, section 1.2) give insights on the possible problems that might keep poor in undesirable circumstances, pointing out the entry points for intervention.

In Mexico, quantifying information collected through surveys traditionally has done the characterization of poverty. The collected information usually reflects the conditions of health, education, housing, nutrition and the provision of services such as transportation, electricity or water supply; these make the distinctions indicating the rank of social marginalization and social gap of the communities (for an example see table 1 in chapter 1), being an indicator of where to target the

intervention programs. In Mexico the distinctions are categorized in the General Law of Social Development. However, there are other major characteristics that need to be taken into consideration, for instance the work of Levy (1991) is an example of the potential benefits of targeting the appropriate needs of a specific group of poor. First he distinguishes the differences between the extreme-poor and the poor, and for the latter, he recognizes that its characteristics allowed them to have more active participation in the labour market, to migrate and to benefit from educational opportunities. However, for the extreme-poor, he points out other characteristics such as high fertility rates and under-nutrition, therefore policies should specifically target these concerns. Taking the value of this research and aligned with the SLF, for further analysis of this thesis, special trends in the area of study, such as the population trend and migration would be added.

1.2.1. Population trend

The last population census, made in 2010, shows that Cuzalapa has 870 inhabitants. This is an increase of 12% with respect of the previous census in 2005 (SEDESOL 2013). The changes in the population density in Cuzalapa were highly influenced during the twentieth century by the emergence of commercial forest exploitation activities in the RBSM. In the 1940s, a connection was made between forest activities in the area and an increase in population, and when commercialization ended in the 1960s, the population numbers seemed to have followed suit as well. Another important fact was the amount of out-migration of Cuzalapa inhabitants (Gerritsen 2002). There was no information found in the literature about the average number of children per family, however, based on the observation in the field it seems that the rate is decreasing. Within the WoCoPA, the elder generations have up to nine children and the new generations (from early twenties to mid thirties) want to have an average of three.

1.2.2. Migration

The state of Jalisco has a longstanding tradition of migration to the United States, going back to the end of the nineteenth century. According to the index of migratory intensity calculated by the National Population Council (CONAPO its acronym in Spanish), Jalisco has a high degree of migratory intensity, and has the thirteenth place among the thirty-one states of the country. The municipality of Cuautitlán, where Cuzalapa is located, received remittances in 9.34 percent of households in the municipality in 2010 (IIEG 2014).

The lack of employment opportunities in the area and the low wages results in high migration rates to urban areas and to USA. Poor people consider this alternative as the fastest way to gain savings and sometimes the only feasible option to do it. Men migrate to surrounding villages to be employed as bricklayers or other jobs where labor force is needed, and women usually find jobs as housekeepers or selling at shops (for more information see chapter 3 section 2.5.3). According to the WoCoPA members, people migrate to the USA with two different periods of stay. Firstly, as temporary workers to make fast savings for

specific reasons (i.e. to buy construction materials for housing, or for the costs of a special celebrations like a wedding), and secondly, a more permanent stay to send remittances to their families. However, according to the results of a survey conducted by Gerritsen in 1998, remittances are generally small amounts and are sent irregularly, therefore not contributing much to the household economy. This study also presents as reasons to migrate the land scarcity and of work and other income-generating possibilities in the community, to obtain money to buy cattle, and to get married. More recently was added to look for adventure and to obtain a certain kind of education (Gerritsen 2002).

1.3. Powerful forces in development

Traditionally, intellectual power collected information from the developing countries to make recommendations created in the developed countries. The main international forces of development are the IMF, the World Bank and the UN agencies. These international institutions are located mainly in northern societies, but more often aim decentralization and set up offices in the South. International development cooperation has changed from projects to programmes and from bilateral to multilateral cooperation (Pieterse 2010). The international development forces are complemented with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the governmental ministries of the developing countries, which have specific internal power relations in each country.

Different stages in the history of Mexico have shaped the powerful forces affecting the rural poor. During the industrial development era, a network was built that directed, financed, distributed and marketed production in rural areas. Irrigation infrastructure companies, finance companies, rural insurance companies, government trade monopolies, public enterprises of fertilizers, machinery and seeds, and a multitude of service units constituted the network (Warman 2003). The interest of enabling rural people to integrate them into the market to achieve development was highly linked to their interests, and interventionism was the most powerful force of the rural economy.

To understand the political power relations in Mexico it is necessary to introduce the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), characterized by its modern policies of neoliberalism and privatization. The PRI ruled the country for 71 years, having the dictatorship of governance until 2000, when for the first time a candidate of the opposition won the presidential elections. The elected president, Vicente Fox, represented the National Action Party (PAN), and after two terms of this political party governing the country, the PRI managed to regain the presidency in 2012.

In Mexico, economic and political institutions are linked with common interests and have a powerful network to influence the process of decision-making. I'll bring in some of the historical context. In 1936 the state organized the peasants of the reformed sector in a unique and majoritarian center, the National Peasant Confederation (CNC). This was, at the same time the agrarian entity of the PRI. The

militant cadres of the CNC had positions of municipal presidents, local and federal legislators and governors of the states of the federation; they had much influence in the selection of the president's successor. Leading cadres of the CNC, which were not always of peasant origin, established relations of obligation and strengthened a bond of dependence patronage. In these relationships, concessions or privileges camouflaged rights. During the same time, the *ejidos* also acquired dimensions of political instance; they demanded public services, and became a formal social group with the capacity to organize the rural development of the community. At the beginning they had the function of land distribution, but it was rooted as a solid institution in the Mexican rural organization (Warman 2003).

Neoliberal ideologies contextualize the further events. The work of Morton (2010) provides insights into the forces behind the scenes, those on whom the government depends. The process started during a period of time when the Mexican government promoted anti-private sector rhetoric and the alliance that had existed among state and national capital deteriorated. The private sector manifested their opposition by founding Business Co-ordinating Council in 1975; with this event the forces became divided. The financial crisis triggered by the drop of world oil prices in 1981, led to the nationalization of the banks. At that time, institutional career paths of the elite began to be linked with the ministries positions, since banking and financial planning provided the curriculum to further achieve paths to upper strata of government. In addition, the Ministry of Programming and Budget (SPP) gained predominance as an essential group within the organization of the state. In 1976 the SPP became in charge of the economic policy making. By 1983, 60% within the government cabinets started their professions in these sectors and over 80% previously worked within them. The SPP subordinated other ministries and prioritised policies related to transnational economic theories. Therefore, the influence of neoliberal trend in Mexico is moved by the existence of a capitalistic class that connects analysts, private investors and bank officials, as well as government leaders around the PRI.

As Pieterse (2010) points out, the development thinking also performs a role of representation, of articulating and privileging particular political and class welfares and cultural inclinations. The Mexican government has a very powerful influence over rural areas, yet international institutions also impact the course of development in the country, for instance with the effects of the emerging post-neoliberalism era and the recommendation of decentralization of power, leaving space for community, local economic, and micro regional development, empowering local stakeholders and institutions in the process of development. However, there are also strong forces at the community level in rural areas, such as the gender dynamics and *caciquismo*. I deal with each in turn.

1.3.1. Gender dynamics in rural areas

Traditionally, the families in rural areas are under patriarchal authority. Women are subordinated to the decisions of men, which is enforced by economic power, since men are supposed to cover the expenses of the house with the profits of their jobs (Molineux 2006). There are idealized assumptions about the social positions

occupied by the sexes. In Cuзалapa, the role played by every member in the family is very well defined. The women are not allowed to work outside the house because provision of money is a man's duty and men think if people see their wife working, they would think their work is not enough to provide to their families. Some of the WoCoPA members said that traditionally, men used to think that money provided by women was obtained only in one way, through their bodies; and because women need their time to do the duties in the house and they are on charge of feeding the family members. Traditionally, women in the houses have to bring the food to the males wherever need it, to the school or to the plots, and this can take as long as three hours walking. In this sense, if job opportunities exist for women that require a long time outside the home, women have to ask permission to their husbands so they can figure out a way to fulfill their duties and to do the job.

Nonetheless, the specter of national attention to act against this problem of marginalization is having consequences at the local level and the conception of the roles began to evolve. Policies increasingly are giving more attention to women. Some decades ago all the social programs were targeting men, but nowadays it has been proven (Molineux 2006) that women invest in their families and the improvement in quality of life is better when the mother takes the leadership in managing the finances. Policy makers are giving more opportunities to women.

“Like 30 years ago I remember people came to make surveys about the intervention programs. I complained that all the programs like PROCAMPO were for men and they used the money for drinking and lovers instead on their families. The subsidies were for men but women are who make the spending, children needed to be fed and attend to school. I said all that to the lady, she took note of everything and time after, the programs arrived for women too” (Doña Chole).

The mechanisms to empower women are being adopted. The work of Villareal (1996) analyses the forms on which power is built with a gendered perspective, she uses the largest program (until PROSPERA) targeting rural women to show how their legal status as UAIM³ provided some formal social space from which demand recognition and make their voices heard. Another important program that made a shift to empower the role of women is PROGRESA (now PROSPERA). This provides conditional cash transfers to women. It also favored the education of women by providing higher incentives for them. According to the members of the WoCoPA there have been other recent changes in the gender dynamics, for instance there are some families who divided the land equally among all the children, or at least some possessions are given to women too. Women who have been outcast want to change the situation for their children and they have more support from their husbands through a change of mentality.

³ The UAIMs were created in 1971 through reforms of the Agrarian Law, stipulating that all agrarian groups must give a plot of prime land, adjacent to the city centre, to sow and for industry of the rural women.

The WoCoPA challenges the local gender roles in the area. Contreras-Arias, Pernet, and Rist (2013) identified the development activities of this cooperative as an extension of the women's proper role, despite travelling and some activities of marketing, such as talking to strangers and especially to men. Even though it was not the women's priority, it is one of the most impactful side effects of the cooperative, acting as an emancipation motor within the community.

1.3.2. *Caciquismo*

The term *caciquismo* (strongmanship) is used in rural Mexico to refer to a dominant relation of leaders who become informal representatives thanks to their ability to mobilize communities and mediate with the state. In many ways, the *caciques* in indigenous rural communities resulted from the cultural and social disparities that existed in a country whose political center was unable to act without bicultural operators that served as translators. They were often self-taught at the beginning, with a cultural and economic capital barely higher than the other villagers, but they learned to manage relationships with officials and leaders of a higher political and economic hierarchy. They knew how to move their patronage and corruption relations. In addition to its personal ability, there is recognition and support (symbolic and material) from the state, which makes them more than just opinion leaders within the communities; they gain also the power to manipulate (Recondo 2007).

In Cuzalapa there is a strong *caciquismo*, the families on which the general assembly is centered are the *caciques*, and they have used that control to their own benefit, distributing communal land to allies and putting constraints to their opposition. The group is made up mostly of livestock owners, but they also have forestry interests that have triggered conflicts with other groups over commercial forest exploitations, which ended with the creation of the RBSM. However, encounters over land and natural resources have continued, partly due to the restrictions on access and the location of some land on the reserve's core zone. For those reasons the *caciques* strongly opposes the reserve (Gerritsen 2002).

Different research (Figueroa 1996; Ortiz 2001; Gerritsen 2002) make evident the inequalities in Cuzalapa due to the high influence of *caciquismo* in the region. Facts that have been united by governmental intervention programs, and prioritization of the support of activities such as cattle raising, impacts the community and results in the favoritism of a certain group of people, reproducing poverty and wealth.

To conclude, we have seen the context in which the members of the WoCoPA unfold their strategies, reduced their space for maneuver due to the marginalization of women in rural areas, their exclusion of the process of decision making at the local level by the *caciques* and their exclusion of the national development, due to the adoption of neoliberalism thinking, which imposed trade liberalization and privatization in the interests of an elite class and marginalizing the rural poor. However, the decreasing birth rates in the population seems to

positively impact the achievement of well-being as well as the immediate benefits of migration. In addition, the post-development thinking brought international development institutions and the intellectual forces to put a higher pressure to incorporate the poor into the decision-making process and to recommend the national governments to promote the local development, the Mexican government has increased programs that generates women empowerment. This context has a direct feedback from the transforming structures and processes, since for instance the policies implemented and established through structures affect trends, or for example well functioning market increments the income of peasants by trading their products with fair prices and thus reduced migration.

TRANSFORMING STRUCTURES & PROCESSES

This part relates to the institutions, policies, organizations, policies and legislation that shape the livelihoods of the WoCoPA members. They effectively determine the access to different type of capitals, to livelihood strategies and to decision-making instances, besides the terms of exchange among capitals and the returns to any given livelihood strategy, such as economic return. The structures are the public and private organizations on charge to implement policies and legislations, purchase, trade, deliver services among some of the functions that affect livelihoods. On the other hand processes are crucial and complex, they encompass policies, legislations, institutions, culture and power relations, for instance policies provide a framework for the actions of the public sector implementing its strategies and institutions are informal practices that make the behavior of organizations predictable (DFID 1999).

In this part of the chapter I start explaining the market dynamics of the area, then I continue with the two organizations that have drastically impacted the livelihoods of the WoCoPA members, those are the CUCSUR and the DRBSM. Furthermore the agrarian reform will be explained along with its results of land distribution in Cuzalapa and the ruling politics in the area. At the end, I will provide a description of the governmental organizations and its programs that have provided access to assets of the WoCoPA members.

2. MARKET IN THE AREA

The practices related to the market in Cuzalapa could be traced back to the beginning of the XX century, during the existence of the *hacienda*, where sugar cane was produced on a larger scale. Muleteers' of beasts carried the merchandise. The *hacendado* had twenty animals for the stock transfer, and he not only had under his power the possession of land and production, but he also dominated most of the trade. He mostly sold sugar, maize, alcohol and beans. Inocente Villa, a local trader, commercialized the rest; he had a small store outside the *hacienda*. His provisions were matches, cigarettes, coffee, and bread, among other items. The merchants used the *hacienda* animals to carry his products since the animals were load free after leaving the sugar cane to the bigger villages (Figueroa 1996).

In the 70's there was just one convenience store in Cuzalapa, they sold salt, sugar, soap and cookies. "People didn't really have in mind to spend money because we didn't know what could we buy" (Doña Lupe). Currently there are more stores with essential goods. Cuzalapa also has a pharmacy with few products and one CONASUPO, which sells products at subsidized prices to low-income consumers.

Missing markets in rural areas seem to be a particular constraint, but many initiatives are emerging at the regional level. An increasing number of fairs and events at the regional level are also organized to promote local and organic products and to build networks among producers; they are organized by different institutions, such as the Cooperative Society of Common Sales & Purchase and Commercialization, El grullo, S.C.L. The University of Guadalajara in Autlán organizes another more frequent initiative; it hosts a weekly informal market where local producers gather to sell and exchanges goods. The common feature is to base the production on organic principles; the WoCoPA is an assiduous seller at this fare.

Today, many farmers are partially integrated to markets. Peasants find different alternatives to sell their surpluses, either directly to the local stores, door to door to the neighbors (image 4), or to traders who come by car to the towns searching for specific products to buy, but the prices are usually very low. The local production is mainly for self-subsistence:



Image 4. A neighbor selling chickens.

however, according to Gerritsen (2002), the monetary income in Cuzalapa reflects sales of maize, beans and tomatoes, non-timber forest products, grazing, cattle, hogs and chickens, and family production, such as fruit juices, cheese and other lactic products. Few peasants offer products with added value, but a successful case is the cheese made in a surrounding village, as they supply to all the stores in the area.

The WoCoPA itself is an emerging local market with potential positive impacts in the community. They do not only offer a variety of products to the local people but they also attract many foreign buyers to their store. This opens a market for the peasants, since many times seasonal products such as watermelon or black-seed squash are allowed to be sold in the store. Besides this, agricultural farmers have a place to sell their coffee production with no additional transaction costs, since they are established within the community.

3. THE DIRECTORSHIP OF THE RBSM

The Directorship of the RBSM (DRBSM) was created in 1993 through the intervention of the National Institute of Ecology (INE), it was meant to be the governmental body responsible for the administration of the reserve. The DRBSM takes the leadership in the program's implementation to manage the protected area, the inter-institutional agreements, and the effective protection of the area as well as the implementation of the policy on conservation; while the IMECBIO takes the lead on research, education, diffusion and technical assistance; establishing a close collaborative relation among them. Since 1995, IMECBIO is part of the CUCSUR implying a larger participation on educational activities. The Directorship of the RBSM belongs to the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), a decentralized body of the Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) (CONANP 2012).

IMECBIO has an important role in the conservation and sustainable development of the reserve, as they stimulate participation of local people to embrace the conservation activities dictated by the policies. For instance, some people in Cuзалapa work as fireguards and also contribute to prevention activities like to digging anti-fire trenches. Also, locals who have a specialization in a related field have a higher probability to find employment on the institute. The DRBSM, as well plays a significant role with the people. For example, technical training can be provided to guide good agricultural practices. As Gerritsen (2002:10) says, "in other words, it has been operating as an active change agent in the region".

The DRBSM has impacted the livelihood strategies of the WoCoPA members due to the employment opportunities that some of their relatives have acquired within and beyond the institution. Also the WoCoPA itself has directly benefited from its existence through the management of the procedures to obtain funding. They together determine what the most urgent need is and the DRBSM decides which type of funding they should apply for. So far they have obtained three different projects, the first to invest in the extension of their infrastructure; the second to get training in managerial skills; and the last to get training for controlling pests.

4. UNIVERSITY OF GUADALAJARA AND ITS CUCSUR

The UDG is a bicentennial public institution. The CUCSUR is part of its network, located in Autlán de Navarro in the state of Jalisco; it is the largest high centre of education in that area. Its objective is to train professionals in different relevant areas, to contribute to the sustainable development in the South Coast region of Jalisco and Mexico. The services embrace dozens of municipalities from the state of Jalisco and nearby states. Currently they have 3,100 students among technicians, bachelor's, master's and doctors' degrees (UDG 2015).

Since 1995, the CUCSUR harbours the prestigious IMECBIO; it implies a larger participation of the centre on educational activities. The university has 74 professors engaged in research, ten of them belonging to the National System of

Researchers (SNI). The academic divisions of CUCSUR are the social studies and economics and regional development. There are 8 departments: ecologic and natural resources, tourism studies, farming production, administrative sciences, public accounting, engineers, education for sustainable development in costal areas and legal studies. UDG also gives the opportunity to have virtual education in high school, bachelor's and master's degree programs; it also organizes particular events of extension and cultural dissemination (UDG 2015).

The character of most of the studies offered by CUCSUR spreads the researchers and students in the surrounding areas to make field research applicable to sustainable development. The university has a special link with Cuzalapa, as they have a community centre hosting academics in their field visits and it currently employs a person who gives maintenance to the centre and helps in the development of the cooperative "Colour of the soil", organization who in 2014 won the award of the university-society link given by the UDG.

The children of some members of the WoCoPA have either graduated or are currently studying in the CUCSUR, and two members are about to graduate from university. The youngest member of the cooperative, who is in her last year of university in Natural Resources Engineering and is planning to do her thesis in Cuzalapa, which is related to the plague that is affecting the coffee plantations. The other member is the leader of the group, who is in the process to obtain her degree in cultural management. She has studied in the UDG virtual, a mayor achievement considering the poor Internet conditions in Cuzalapa. In addition, while I was in the field the WoCoPA received two visits of students of the CUCSUR interested in doing its social service in the cooperative. Their backgrounds are in nutrition and tourism. Recurrently the WoCoPA hosts' visitors of the CUCSUR interested in doing research and an exchange of knowledge is constantly happening. The cooperative has been an entry point for intervention in the matter of rural development.

5. AGRARIAN REFORM

The historical event of the Mexican revolution started in 1910. The reason was the inequality in the rural areas. The *hacendados* (owners of haciendas) dominated the agrarian sector with semi feudal relations, the use of the land was for extensive agriculture; native people were semi-slave employees of *hacendados* with cheap labor, living in conditions of deep poverty and repression.

In 1910 the *hacendados* represented 1% of the agrarian sector and had control of roughly 85% of the land. At the beginning of the Mexican Revolution the majority of the land in Cuzalapa was on the hands of the *hacienda* La Loma. Land grabbing was the result of colonial exploitation practices depriving native indigenous people from its land, even though they were in possession of the titleholder of Cuzalapa's foundation on 1531. Ignoring this fact, the *hacienda* covered ten thousand hectares just in Cuzalapa (Figueroa 1996).

In 1917 the Mexican revolution throw light to the idea of 'land of the landless' with the main purpose of giving it back to the indigenous people. The constitution recognized the state as the owner of the land for its administration and it had the power to transfer the land to private individuals. The state encourages native people to register as rural communities and gave them the right to work a piece of land, they could inherit the usufruct rights, but selling the land was prohibited. People could work the land collectively or individually but the latter was mostly done (Bastiaans and de Groot 1988).

The first main strategy of the government to generate development in the agro sector was brought with the revolution; the *ejido* was the main instrument. This consisted of an area of communal land used for agriculture, on which community members individually possess and farm a specific parcel. However the importance of that strategy was much discussed, since *ejidos* were considered to isolate smallholders, without any support, driving them towards failure. Despite the success to make the *ejido* an official instrument, changes were not clearly observed; in two decades only 4% of the territory was transferred, giving benefits to only 5% of the peasants (Praeger 1954). The lands were distributed as a complementary wage to provide for the basic necessities of peasants, and to increase the income earned on the *haciendas* and agro-export properties, which were the most dynamic sector of the Mexican economy. The distribution of land was then understood as an act of justice that raised the welfare of farmers; but this fact was not contemplated for national economic development (Walter 2003). The *hacienda* in Cuzalapa ended in 1928 and the land was communally used for subsistence agricultural practices. Before that, peasants were able to work collectively and to sow anywhere they chose (Figueroa 1996).

The second main strategy was brought with the period of the president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). He materialized the willingness of the revolutionaries to make the *ejido* more labor intensive and modern with the proposed way to achieve this being through cooperatives. The president expropriated large portions of lands that were inefficiently used and gave them to the *ejidos*. Together with the land he also provided them education, credits and technical assistance. The collective production was promoted and highly incentivized with the possibility to get credits with protective interests. The change was radical, from 13% of the land in possession of the *ejidos* in 1930 to 48% in 1940 (Dachary and Argentino 1987). The National Official Journey published in 1950 that peasants in Cuzalapa were given restitution of land in the form of communal property. In 1934, the locals requested to the state government the restitution of property due to the lack of land sufficiency to cover their economic needs (Figueroa 1996).

The course of the development of the reformed sector was conducted for many years by the state. The aim was not just to achieve food self-sufficiency, but also to promote the participation of the *ejidos* in the markets. A set of public and state-owned companies was established and they directed, financed, distributed and marketed production of the reformed sector. Government intervention became the most powerful force in the Mexican rural economy's prevailing paternalistic

interventions. The segment of private property owners that speculated in the rural sector with, for instance livestock, obtained a great amount of profits through the support of public subsidies, but they did not invest in fixed capital. The aging of farmers worsened the situation because there was no system of social security and pensions for workers in the field and so they turned the land into a unique heritage to address the needs of aging. The reform failed to translate into increased well-being and caused extreme poverty to the targeted peasant farmers. Deterioration of the rural sector intensified. Stability, governance and development in Mexico were based on the reform and permitted to transform the country into a predominantly urban, industrial area, and endowed it with an important service sector. But land reform failed to sustain welfare. Rural and agricultural developments were unable to respond effectively and equitably to the demographic and structural transformation of the country (Warman 2003).

In 1992, the concept of rural development shifted with the reform of the article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, and the land and forest law that were enacted. Land ownership was granted to the *ejidos*, which stopped being subordinate to the government authorities. Autonomy was given to the *ejido's* general assembly. The value of land as capital was transferred to the *ejidos* for its preferential use, including selling it. Hence the link between the state and the peasants was broken, and farmers had possession of a territorial capital. The reform was a part of the radical neoliberal actions of the national president. It also promoted the social aims of the reform to provide equal opportunities in the rural sector, thus social programs were created, such as PROCAMPO. With those intervention programs the government claimed to free the peasants to manage their own development.

5.1. Rural land property and its distribution in Cuzalapa

In Mexico, there are three forms of rural land property: small rural property, *ejidos* and the indigenous community. The first is a private property. You have the right to use, lease or rent the land. The Mexican constitution sets conditions to the amount of land allowed to be considered as follow: a small irrigation property if the surface area do not exceeds 100 ha, a small forest property if does not exceed 800 ha, and a small livestock property is limited by the necessary amount where 500 head cattle can graze (DOF 1992). The *ejido* is an agrarian community; the land was given to the members of the *ejidos* for use, but remains under the property of the nation. The *ejidos* operate with internal regulations. *Ejido's* property rights are limited. With the 1992 reform, the *ejido's* general assembly acquired the possibility to decide by majority vote on changing the tenure of the land. The indigenous communities are agrarian communities with collective owners of the lands under a regime of common property. The Spanish Crown gave the entitlements during the colonial period. Some communities have remained intact through the centuries but most of them lost their land. The agrarian reform aimed to return these lands (Portner 2005; Larco-Laurent 2010).

The Program for the Certification of *Ejido* Land Rights and the Titling of Urban House Plots (PROCEDE) was created as a part of the 1992 reform. The aim was to register and title land-rights in *ejidos* to: i) secure land tenure, ii) create the land markets and iii) facilitate the achievement of privatization. PROCEDE was designed to operate only on request of *ejidos* and indigenous communities. However, as Larco-Laurent (2010) points out, the reality is that there are very recurrent external and, less regular, internal pressures that seek to compel *ejidatarios* and *comuneros* to enter the program. Gerritsen (1995) reports that 8% of the co-proprietors are owners of 67% of the communal land in Cuzalapa. He identifies cattle breeding, credits of FIRA and the support of PROCAMPO as important factors that have influenced the land distribution in Cuzalapa. Another very important reason is the influence and power of regional elite groups to prioritize their interests. For example, in 2005 the agriculture department tried to parcel more than 6000 ha of common land in Cuzalapa, relying on certain corrupt group of leaders and finding opposition in most of the community, who brought the case to trial. That caused the program to stop in Cuzalapa, but the threats and economic interests for land are still present.

Communal land was given in Cuzalapa, divided in 200 entitlements, but a board was never created to impartially delimit the land to each co-proprietor. The land was not evenly divided, and some received very distant land or land with poor soil conditions. Some land remained as communal, such as orchard fruit, whose products would benefit all the villagers (Figueroa 1996). Around 240-250 co-proprietors integrate into the general assembly in Cuzalapa. The distribution of land triggered inequalities in the community, allocating the majority to just a small group of farmers. The scarcity of land is becoming evident, with almost all of it already being given, and the difficulties to apply for a new piece have led until 1990s an approximate of 110 landless farmers, mainly the sons of the co-proprietors (Gerritsen 1995; Gerritsen 2002).

As a consequence of the agrarian reform and the land market, the WoCoPA was able to buy a piece of land from the *comunero* Domingo Rodríguez Hernández, who transferred his right entitlements to the cooperative. This transaction had to be carried by the commissioner of communal land. One of the oldest coffee plantations in Cuzalapa is located on communal land, and they have allowed the cooperative to make use of the property by owning some coffee trees in order to bring tourism to the area. However that territory is now in conflict, and may be used for different purposes, impacting the WoCoPA who have built the eco tourism roads and threatening the existence of the coffee plantation, a main point of interest on its tours.

5.2. Authorities in the *ejidos*

The general assembly, the *ejidal* commissary and the supervisory committee convened the body of the *ejido*. The supreme element is the general assembly and it is made up of all the *ejidatarios and comuneros*. Meetings most take place at least every six months, and among the tasks assigned to them are the definition,

allocation and destination of land for common use and distribution of income resulting from the activities of the *ejido*. The *ejidal* commissary is responsible to make the announcements for convocation, is responsible for the implementation of the agreements of the general assembly and has the administrative representation and management of the *ejido*. The agreements are taken by a majority of votes, and in case of a tie the *ejidal* commissary has a casting vote. A president and two secretaries, and their respective alternates make up the supervisory board. They are responsible for monitoring the actions of the commissioner, and the accounts and operations before they are disclosed to the assembly. They convoke a meeting when the commissioner cannot (DOF 1992).

The control of the general assembly by some 30 percent of the farmers to distribute the land in Cuзалapa is an example of the power dynamics within the community. Gerritsen (2002) points out that the board is centered around four original families who historically have been influencing the decision-making, as are affiliated with the PRI. The general assembly is a social space where interests are confronted, alliances and negotiations are made, and relationships of imposition and subordination are cemented.

6. Politics in the area

The national president, who is chief of state and government chief in a multiparty system, rules the country. The most important political parties in the country are the PRI, the current president is a member of it, the PAN and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Corruption in Mexico is closely linked to politics, since it has been deeply instilled in the Mexican system. Whether drug dealers, large international companies, military or political actors of small or large importance, all of them seem swayed by money, or show force to those who are subordinate to its authority (Larco-Laurent 2010). This situation becomes more evident to those who are below the national hierarchy, among them, the rural poor. However, in rural areas the patron of corruption is also present.

6.1. City council of Cuautitlán de García de Barragán

The Electoral Law of the State of Jalisco devotes a chapter to the rules that must be observed in the selection and integration of the city councils. In its article 37 indicates: a municipal President, and a variable number of councilor, as per relative population, unites the city councils of each municipality. There are different Institutions that can support initiatives backed up by the municipalities, for instance via the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL, its acronym in Spanish), but the projects are often conditioned to be conducted through the city councils. For instance, the first machines given to the WoCoPA had to be processed through the municipality; this bureaucratic procedure many times retards and obstructs the process instead of facilitating it. City councils also provide complementary services to the population, for instance transportation or gasoline vouchers (in case you find your own vehicle) to join cultural events or to participate in fairs to promote your local products.

6.2. Politics in Cuzalapa

The same laws in the rest of the country (federal, state and municipal) govern Cuzalapa. The difference is that its condition of being an indigenous community adds the communal laws conducted by the authorities in the *ejidos* (the general assembly, the *ejidal* commissary and the supervisory committee). In Cuzalapa there exists three local political groups, the *caciques* (local bosses) who are affiliated with the PRI and who have a high level of influence in decision-making in the community, the *jacqueteros*, who function as swing voters, and the democratic group, affiliated with the PRD. In the 1990s, the three political groups were almost the same size, but currently there is no strong countervailing power to the *caciques* (Figuro 1996; Gerritsen 2002).

The major authority representing the government in small villages in rural Mexico are the councilmen or councilwomen; they are in charge of promoting the development of the municipality in various areas, such as education, culture, health, transport, economy, finance, parks and gardens, public works, and urban planning, among others. To become a candidate, the WoCoPA members told me that you need to invest in your campaign at least 3000 euros. The elections are every 3 years. A couple of months before the elections, the streetlight posts become full of advertisements, vans are full with people supporting and cheering for their candidate, money is spent in events to hear the speeches full of promises and followed by bands playing music and tons of food for everyone. People expect this kind of campaign. Often candidates are seen losing their belongings after losing the elections, for the winners are rewarded since he/she not only obtains a stable wage but also has the opportunity to get political and economic privileges by taking advantage of their position.

The normal procedure in Cuzalapa to make a request is first to communicate your intentions to the council in the village, and be convincing about its importance. If you get back up by the villagers, the social pressure could speed up the process. "27 years ago arrived the light in Cuzalapa thanks to a peasant who fought for it, people supported him until the right person heard the concerns" (Gonza). The councilmen fulfill the requirement to process at the municipal level; they usually provide the budget to make investments. Examples of projects are electricity, roads, sports fields, potable water systems, schools, or an internet cafe. Some facilities should be mandatory and given to the community as a right, however in many cases they have to process and pressure the authorities in order to get them.

7. GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS AND ITS PROGRAMS IN CUZALAPA

Mexico has a vast amount of organizations committed to rural development through education, health, women empowerment, micro finance and technical support. However, in this list I'll mention the main objectives of the main institutions involved in the livelihood strategies of the WoCoPA members and the main programs that have been seized. All the information provided was taken from the websites of the institutions.

7.1. Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA). It is a federal unit of the Mexican government, which seeks to support producers to improve their production practices to integrate their economic activities from rural areas into larger productive chains. The objectives are linked to the National Development Plan under the agricultural sector. Among its objectives are increasing human development and patrimony in rural areas, creating domestic markets, and increasing producer's income. SAGARPA has a large range of support from its different activities: rural development, productivity and competitiveness, commercialization and market development, productivity of fisheries and aquaculture, sanitation and food safety, education and technological development, livestock and agriculture. SAGARPA has programs in coordination of other international organizations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with the PESA. It also has for instance, the widespread Direct Field Support Programme (PROCAMPO productive). In addition, this federal unit also holds the sustainable Rural Development National Network (RENDRUS) (SAGARPA 2014).

PESA was created by FAO in 1994 to support low income and food deficient countries to increase small farmers' productivity by introducing relatively simple, affordable and sustainable technological changes. In 2002, PESA was also adopted and adapted by the Mexican government to the reality of the country. One of PESA's principles is to centre on people's actions. The strategy of PESA is based on four areas: agriculture-livestock backyard, grains basic-cornfield, prevailing production systems and local markets. Addressing the areas of intervention begins according to the current conditions. There are three stages of intervention: production bases, production and markets, and sustainability. The program operates through the Rural Development Agencies (ADR), which are professional service firms or civil society organizations that have a multidisciplinary team of professionals. They are hired to work at participatory planning with families as well as to identify, design, implement and provide technical assistance and monitor the actions and projects together with the communities (PESA 2015). In Jalisco, the program had presence in two periods from 2008 to 2010 and from 2013 until today. In the first period, the WoCoPA was a beneficiary of the program, obtaining a solar dryer for the coffee beans. During the second period, many members were beneficiaries in order to get support in the production of vegetables, chickens and pigs, along with technical training and a variety of courses, for example to learn to make compost or organic soap. Currently, the program adds additional support to peasants that have proven to be self-sufficient and to have surpluses. To them there is support to obtain physical capital to make micro-business. One member is part of a group that received an egg incubator, and the WoCoPA is in the process of obtaining new machinery.

PROCAMPO productive aims to complement the peasants income, whether subsistence or commercial, to contribute to their individual economic growth and the country as a whole; and to encourage the production of legal crops, by granting monetary support according to the amount of surface area inscribed in the program (SAGARPA 2014). In 2013 this programs makes a change, not giving payments support just for land ownership, but for planted area. If peasants do not fulfill the planting requirement, will be removed from land registration in the PROCAMPO directory. This program is impacting the livelihood of the members through their husbands, the actual beneficiaries. However, the minority belongs to PROCAMPO and the potential benefits depend on the use by the husbands, which is unknown, as they think is used to buy fertilizers or invested in other items for agriculture.

RENDRUS is a national network that exchanges successful experiences, which allows the generation and transmission of knowledge from farmer to farmer. This initiative has been continuously promoted for 18 years in coordination with the graduate college, the state governments and other institutions in the sector. The aim includes promoting communication and technological innovation among rural producers, encouraging knowledge sharing to make their projects replicable in other areas outside their community (SAGARPA 2014). The WoCoPA has participated in several district meetings.

7.2 Secretariat of Public Education (SEP). Public education services in Mexico are offered and regulated by SEP. The legal framework of education in the country is under the articles 3 and 31 of the Constitution, it sets out the right to education and the circumstances in which this service should be granted. Everyone has the right to education and the state should provide preschool, primary and secondary education. The three levels of basic education have services that cater to the linguistic and cultural needs of indigenous groups in the country, of the scattered rural population. SEP has different projects devoted mainly to education with complementary artistic activities, for example “Cultural Missions” (SEP 2010). SEP also values the empowerment of indigenous culture as an agent of change in their own communities by making calls to reward local initiatives, such as is the case of the national youth indigenous award, for instance given in 2007 to the WoCoPA. With the budget acquired through this award, they were able to diversify their activities. They built the pathways for hiking, as well as purchased complementary equipment for eco-tourism activities.

Cultural Missions are itinerant schools, formed of multidisciplinary teams, committed to teaching job training (arts and crafts), literacy and basic education for youth and adults, promoting economic, cultural and social improvement in the rural communities with the purpose of promoting and encouraging the individual and collective development. Some members of the WoCoPA have participated in different workshops provided by this project, for instance to get carpentry skills or knowledge on how to make handcrafts. Their abilities were improved and their newfound creativity was used to create new products to sell in the store, such as earrings and key chains made with local products.

7.3. Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL). The secretariat aims to guarantee the fulfilment of Mexican's social rights by promoting capacity building, environmental care and a decent income, as well as participation and social protection, giving special attention to the most vulnerable social sectors. Among its objectives is to address poverty. It has 16 different programs addressing Mexicans from infancy to old age, to help them to improve their living conditions and welfare. The most recognized program is PROSPERA, but in Cuzalapa the Food Support Program (PAL), pensions for elders, milk provision and productive options (SEDESOL 2015) are also present.

PROSPERA aims for social inclusion through the provision of conditional cash transfers subjected to mandatory actions related to nutrition, health, and education. The nutrition component is achieved by delivering direct monetary support to beneficiary families, to help improve the quantity, quality and diversity of food; the health component, through the actions of health campaigns for diseases prevention and the promotion of access to quality health services; and the education component, providing greater education coverage, with scholarships as an incentive to the permanence and school progress. The amount of the cash transfers depends on the number of children and their level of education. However, there is a maximum amount that a family can get per month, which is 107 euros if the children are in primary and secondary school and 173 euros if children are in high school; the amount is fixed for food, but the scholarships increase conditionally on the grade the children study and from secondary upwards the amount is bigger for women than for men. The total maximum budget is also comprised of a certain amount given to acquire school supplies (SEDESOL 2015). Almost all the members of the WoCoPA reported this program, with exception of a couple of members who either have PAL or who were not selected due to not fulfilling the eligibility criteria "they think we are rich, and yes some people need it more than us" (Delia and Liz); this program is highly impactful on the availability of financial capital to be transformed for children's education. The condition of attending meetings was not mentioned to be useful for the medical services, but instead it has impacts on the environment, since the beneficiaries are formed in groups, which are regularly called to make improvements in the community, such as cleaning the streets or the river.

PAL has some similarities with *PROSPERA* since they give conditional cash transfers, but this subsidy only remains until primary school, after you can apply for *PROSPERA*, but they are exclusive of one another. It comprises monetary support to contribute to better food and nutrition of children, adolescents and pregnant women; gives support for families with children of zero to nine years old to strengthen its development; provides nutritional supplements for children over six months and under two years, as well as for pregnant or lactating women; and gives fortified milk for children between two and five years old. Families who join the *PAL* are benefiting from the performance of its obligations, including getting the National Health Card for each of the family members, who will go for at least once every six months to the closest health unit to receive health supervision (SEDESOL 2015). A couple of the *WoCoPA* members are beneficiaries of this program. It has the same benefits than *PROSPERA*, however they mentioned the advantage of not having to assist to recurrent meetings, *PAL* being more convenient only if the children are kids.

Productive options aim to improve the income of people in poverty by supporting and developing sustainable productive projects. It is a program that provides financial resources capitalized for the acquisition of assets, concepts of working capital and non-capital support for the provision of technical assistance and productive technical training. Additionally, it delivers support to expand production capacity of the applicants. The range of financial support given to projects is from 2,940 to 18,800 euros. (SEDESOL 2015). The *WoCoPA* made use of this financial support to be provided with their first new equipment, a coffee roaster and a coffee grinder, the total amount was 8,870 euros and it was acquired through the municipality of Cuautitlán de García de Barragán.

7.4. National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) uses the protected areas as an instrument of environmental policy to conserve biodiversity. The condition requires stewardship of virgin portions of land or water, which produce environmental benefits. The performed activities are set in accordance with the General Act of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection, and it defines categories for those areas to have special protection, restoration, conservation and development (CONANP 2012). It acts through the directions of the different protected areas, for example through the Directorship of Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve as an intermediary with the local initiatives that need support. It has different programs to enforce the sustainable development of the areas such as the Conservation Program for Sustainable Development (PROCOCODES).

PROCODES is an instrument of public policy that aims to promote the conservation of ecosystems and its biodiversity in priority regions through sustainable use with equal opportunities for women and men, and an emphasis on indigenous population. PROCODES supports the establishment of communitarian squads mainly for forest fire prevention. It also carries out project activities of conservation and restoration. The three projects obtained through the DRBSM belong to this program. The first support for the extension of the infrastructure, the project “Processing of natural resources” was financed with 9,400 euros. The second project “Training for the development and integration of productive chains” was funding with 2,350 euros in order to attend a workshop related to the exchange of experiences in managerial, productive and transformative capabilities and to have an external consultancy. And the last project “Habitat restoration” was financed with 5,900 euros to get training in pest control, prevention and protection.

7.5. National Support Fund for Social Enterprises (FONAES) is a decentralized body of the Ministry of Economy whose purpose is to support the organized efforts of indigenous producers, peasants and popular-urban groups, to promote productive projects and social enterprises that generate jobs and income for the population. FONAES provides financial support up to 60% of the total inversion, not exceeding 58,800 euros. It also provides support by organizing fairs to promote the enterprises products (FONAES 2015). The WoCoPA has participated in several expos organized by them.

I have shown the transforming structures and processes in which the members of the WoCoPA are involved; markets are scarce in the community, except for some small stores. However, farmers are partially integrated to markets through different strategies. Besides, more attention is given to fairs and events to promote local products. The WoCoPA is becoming an important market in the area. Many institutions aim to contribute to rural development and to improve the conditions of rural poor. The DRBM and the CUCSUR are key elements in the development of the area, besides four different secretariats that also sponsor programs in Cuzalapa: public education, social development, economy and agriculture, livestock, rural development, fisheries and food, in addition to the national commission of natural protected areas. Each of them has a variety of interventions in the community, which at the same time shape development. Also strong groups are found within the community, the result of the agrarian reform and the formation of *ejidos*, give an extra layer of structure in the indigenous communities. Political parties, especially the PRI have strong influence in Cuzalapa transmitted through the *caciques*. Important attention needs to be paid to land scarcity and the relation with the general assembly, since now it is being threatened to lose the use of the communal land were the coffee plantation is located. Wills and strategic intentions are crucial in these power relations, but very difficult to elucidate.

Understanding the processes and structures will help the analysis of livelihood strategies, as well as to explore the sustainability of them by tracking the dynamics of the factors and institutions whom are involved in the access or constraints of their livelihood assets.

Having explain the vulnerable context and the transforming structures and processes in which the WoCoPA members are placed, in the next chapter I will describe the livelihood outcomes, assets and strategies at the individual level.

CHAPTER 3. BREAKING POVERTY: INDIVIDUAL LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

Introduction

The current composition of the livelihood assets of the members of the WoCoPA varies in relation to the poverty challenges they face. If a group of people remains caught in a certain poverty trap then the related livelihood assets related to that trap would be unable to increase. But, if mechanisms boost specific assets, then people can diversify their strategies to convert one asset into another and escape from the poverty trap. For example, if the financial capital of a household is very low, people cannot invest in education, therefore human capital remains low, which has long-term implications that in the future the person will not be able to find job opportunities with higher salaries and thus financial capital will remain low. But if a mechanism of cash transfer is available, or if they engage in new job opportunities, then the person increases financial capital and with it the possibility to widen livelihood strategies, since the poverty trap is broken.

This chapter is divided in two parts. I first explain the poverty challenges of the WoCoPA members in the last century through the life histories of three generations of the same family. Even though the experiences of the members can drastically vary with relation to the other members, the intention is not to make generalities but to give dimension to and exemplify the concepts of poverty traps and the inter-generational cycle of poverty. The analysis is used to make visible how the third generation still exists poverty within the current context in Cuzalapa. The life histories throw light to: i) the impact of increments in their livelihood assets for breaking the poverty traps and ii) the poverty challenges and the strengths of the individuals and their personal goals help to define livelihood outcomes.

The second part of this chapter identifies the livelihood assets of the WoCoPA members. The information includes all the different forms of capitals reported by the members through semi-structured interviews, complemented with participant observation and similarities found in secondary data, and verified through the focus group. At the end, the livelihood strategies will be reported and this will open the floor to present the common strategy that can influence an increase in their livelihood assets and to achieve their outcomes, which is the existence of a micro-business with collective action, the WoCoPA.

1. LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES

Livelihood outcomes are the accomplishment or outputs of the livelihood strategies. Focusing on the priorities that people set for themselves, it helps to not assume that people are entirely dedicated to maximizing their income (DFID 1999). The consideration of poverty challenges will contribute to the

understanding of the prior necessities of the WoCoPA members, based on the elements that contribute to people's struggles and the aims in which people point their strategies. The first part of this section provides insights into the livelihood strategies of three generations to observe how the intergenerational cycle of poverty can be broken. The second part explicitly mentions the changing poverty challenges across generations, hence the changes in the livelihood outcomes to be achieved.

1.1. Life histories

First comes the life history of the grandmother, followed by the mother and the daughter (Image 5). The stories take place in the period of time begging in 1945, the year when the first generation was born. Currently, the last two generations are part of the WoCoPA; the first generation left the cooperative to give her rights to the granddaughter. They are the only case where three generations have been part of the cooperative.

1.1.1. Apolonia

Apolonia is a 70 year old lady with ten children, of which two died at a young age. She has six daughters and two sons. She has lived all her life in Cuzalapa. During the time when Apolonia lived with her father, she never experienced poverty because they always had maize and fat pigs. They never starved; there was food and animal fat. She helped her parents by working in the land, she had to plow the land and to sow with mules, and she compares how today they do it with beasts and how the parcels now have irrigation and how the brush growing on the land is burned.

When she was married the situation changed. "We had nothing, we were really poor". She mentions the struggles she had to suffer due to lack of natural and financial capital. For instance, she used it to acquire cloth for her family she had to look in the garbage for pieces of clothing to mend the damage clothing of herself and her children. When they were in school she had to wash their clothes right after returning so there was enough time to dry them to wear clean the day after. At her husband's house it was difficult. Her father in law used to sell the maize to buy alcohol, as he was a drunkard. They didn't have the father in law's support; hence the husband had to start from zero.



Image 5. The three generations of the life histories.

She mentions how the financial situation changed in her life due to the acquisition of natural capital. Her husband's father bequeathed them land and animals and with it they were able to inherit their heritage. "We had to take a step forward, sometimes we sacrificed food to buy another animal, but that was an investment".

They had to learn in the process of finding new livelihood strategies, for instance the acquisition of human capital; as a very important skill was baking. When the couple was young, the husband sold a chicken so he could buy one kilo of flour. The first attempt was a failure, but he had to keep trying, and with the help of a baker from another town he accessed the missing ingredients and finally he succeeded. "Now he just bakes bread for consumption because there are too many bakers, but before it was a good way to get income".

With the years, the husband was able to create savings to obtain physical capital. He purchased irrigation so he increased the amount of maize production, and sold the surplus and bought a heifer. Then he got a young bull, and then two and slowly they increased in numbers. Then he got pigs, they multiplied and with that he got goats. He sold them and finally he was able to buy cows. "Now we are ok, the maize is always present in the house and when we are sick we know we can sell a young bull and get treatment, cows give us security".

She remembers how the house of her grandparents was made with wood sticks and her parent's house with tiles of mud. Now her house is made partly with cement. She tells how there was no transportation before. The options were either to go by foot or in case of having an animal, to ride a horse or a mule. She compares how now is easier, having roads that allow cars to travel, then the walking distances are shortened to the edge of the road where you can easily get a ride. Before there were no cars and no roads or bridges, you had to cross the river, which sometimes was risky.

When someone had health problems, everything was easier because they all had knowledge about the local medicinal plants. There were no pills.

"Thirty years ago I remember we started to hear about pills that were sold to make you feel better. I was curious and when I got sick I asked my husband some money to buy them, and so I did and they worked, but now they are useless, perhaps our bodies are very much in drugs now. Plants are healthier and are free".

She didn't receive public education; she didn't go to school because she lived in the mountains and there was no access, besides she had to help in the land. She is illiterate. Her children did go to study but some didn't like it so they stopped it.

Apolonia tells how before they didn't have support of any governmental program. She comments on the inexistence of PROSPERA and the benefits of belonging to one of these programs, since now she belongs to a program for elders. Every other month she gets around 118 euros. "That money is very helpful, I expect to get it

because I count on it". She says how before there were no programs, but no need for them because there was not much to buy. The market was people from other towns who used to bring the basic necessities carried by mules. The products were mainly lime (needed for the nixtamal), soap and sugar. Other products were brought from Cuautitlán de García de Barragán to the local store in Cuzalapa. However, the store was usually out of stock so you had to make a trip to the capital to buy the products, which was mainly salt. Now Apolonia comments that it is much easier because people have money to spend and markets to buy things from. Before there was no job so no way of income, now people are in *El Norte* (USA) and they send you money.

Finally, Apolonia comments that she was part of the WoCoPA in its origins. With her work she was able to obtain income, but she had to leave it because she had to fulfill her duties at home. "My husband told me I could not work in the WoCoPA while doing the duties of the house, he was right and so I quit".

1.1.2. *María Guadalupe*

María Guadalupe (commonly known as Doña Lupe) is 45 years old and is from Cuzalapa. Her mother is Apolonia. She has five daughters, one son and three grandchildren.

When Doña Lupe was a child, she worked helping her father who was a baker. She had to go to other towns to sell the bread, and the income was used to buy basic things for the house. They produced their own food. They harvested maize, beans and tomatoes, and when they wanted meat they used one of its chickens or pigs. She comments how during that time people took good care of their clothes; at her house she remembers everyone trying not to get dirty, they changed clothes every seven days. In order to prolong the use of the cloth, they were always taking precautions, for instance, women wore aprons while cooking.

Education was difficult when she was young. "I wanted to study and my parents didn't think it was important so they didn't support me". She studied until 3rd year of primary school; she learned the basics: to read, to write and to do calculations. She had some novels from her aunt, and by reading them she got better. Her father didn't want her to continue studying because for him it was a 'waste of time', and also it was hard to get to the school since a river divides Cuzalapa. In times of flood, she commented that people who lived in the opposite side of the school were not able to make it across; people could cross only by car or by horses.

"Since my father thought women didn't need to go to school, he never made time to help me crossing the river with his horse, I had to wait a decrease in the river's level, but it could take a couple of months. I felt really sad when I was a child and I swore under a tree that if I was conceded to grow older I was not going to treat any of my children like I was treated".

Later on, in the 1990s, she was a single mother with one child. She worked the land, she was hired to harvest tomato, which was the most common work for women, but she also took other job opportunities, like harvesting beans.

When she got married she had a happy life. The only child was with her mother and she moved to an isolated area with a piece of land owned by her husband. He spent the whole day working and she had to cook and wash the clothes for both of them. She also had a lot of free time, something unknown for her. She believes necessity makes you learn:

“My mom tried to teach me how to embroider but I never learnt, when I married I needed cloth napkins for the tortillas and I needed embroidery pictures on it, so I borrow some designs and I copy them. Now I do them also for selling, I improved and I also do embroidery for clothing, for instance I get 6 euros for one shirt I sell”

When she became pregnant again, she and her husband had to return to the town to live with the husband’s family; there she had new tasks to fulfill, like taking care of the animals. She learned to milk the cows and to make cheese. Along her life, she has acquired different skills, so that when she moved to her own land, they needed to build a house and she asked a man who sells tiles how to make them. She learned and so she helped make them. She has taken workshops from different programs and learned to do, for instance, clay-cooking pots. She also developed some managerial skills as a school representative of her children; as an agent of PAL program, where she had a wage and had to go to other towns to get training and train others later in Cuzalapa; and she has been deputy of a kitchen in the biggest celebration of the town, where she had to be on charge of the organization of people to cook during three consecutive days to feed all the guests.

Doña Lupe doesn’t like to go to the doctor. She learned how to cure ailments with plants, and every time she feels sick she gets information about the right plants and she heals with teas. So far that has work perfectly for her. She learned from her grandmother to do healing massages, and she uses it as a way of income when someone asks for her services. Every session she charges around 1.2 euros.

The biggest challenge she faces is to provide the necessities to her children. Her economic priority is to invest in her children’s education. Her second oldest daughter is currently in her last year of university. The daughter has a scholarship but she has to help her to pay the rent and to cover some expenses like transportation and food. “It is difficult when every week you have to give a budget to your children and specially when you don’t have a job that makes weekly payments, then you have to figure out how to get it”. She sometimes asks people to lend money to her and she pays them back when she obtains the support of PROSPERA or the wage from the WoCoPA.

She is a beneficiary of PROSPERA; she mainly uses the support to cover the rent of her daughter. She estimates a spending of 3,500 euros and she hardly believes it

when she says it, as she thinks if such amount was spent in her house, they will not live as they do now. She wants the other children to study as well, so they can find a job and earn money, because if they stay at home like her, they will have to depend on a husband.

She is also with the PESA program, and the last year she was a beneficiary of material to build her henhouse, and this year she applied for a pigsty. Every month she gets supervision at her place, she also needs to attend the weekly meetings where an agent of PESA gives educational talks or workshops to learn new things, like making soap, natural insecticides or compost, among many others.

Doña Lupe tells how to be a member of the WoCoPA not only provides her a monthly income but also increases her job opportunities, “I can sell whatever I want, before it was very difficult because there was no market, but nowadays many people come and we can sell our products”. To be a member gives her security, and her dream is to retire and to move to her ranch to an isolated place. But feeling tranquility means to give her rights to another daughter as a form of heritage, and at the same time still selling products at the store to keep doing something productive while receiving benefits.

1.1.3. Irma

Irma is 23 years old. Her mother is Doña Lupe and her grandmother Apolonia. She is from Cuzalapa but is currently living in Autlán due to her studies. She is not yet married, nor a mother and she is not planning to do so until she finishes her studies and gets started in an economic activity that provides her a stable way of income.

She lived with the mother of her father until she was a teenager. She remembers when she was younger and there existed a subsidy for outstanding students. She considered that was not fair because every child wanted the same support, and kids were upset. At the time she was studying and working as the nanny of a wheelchair bound man, and she said this was her only job because her grandmother spoiled her and gave her everything she wanted. However, she thinks today that there are more job opportunities.

“The work in Cuzalapa has changed along the years, before they had traditional agriculture, but now people are using tractors and machinery. The crops have also changed, before it was mainly maize and beans so people guaranty food for the year, but later there was an important shift to sugar cane due to the high prices of this product for selling. Unfortunately the prices dropped and now people even give it for free. The cattle has also gain a lot of space in the community, you see the land cover by pasture. In Cuzalapa, you can work as agriculture or cattle breeder; also the municipality can employ you as a temporary public worker. People also migrate to a bigger city or even to another country”

During high school her other grandmother died and she returned to her parent's house. She remembers those days as the most difficult time of her life. She had to learn to share and to live in a big family. In Irma's family there were only females, and when the last child was born there was a lot of tension because it was the only male. The sisters were afraid of losing the necessary assets to build patrimony, the land. This thought was triggered by the traditions in Cuzalapa, for instance the grandfather was a male focused and would leave the land and assets only to the male of the family. Irma tells how jealousy escalated in her house by thinking he was going to be the heir. However, the parents felt the tension and spoke with all of them to announce that in that house everyone will get equal treatment and an equal share of the goods they had.

She usually buys items from the stores, for instance soap to wash clothes, tortillas, if there was no time to make them, or other necessary products for cooking and for her daily duties. She thinks the markets were not so important in the old times because there was autonomy, for instance with food. People grew their own vegetables; they had cows, therefore milk and cheese; they had chickens and consequently eggs and meat.

“Now we don't have always animals and then we have to depend in the inputs of outside. If the weather is not good and the bridge gets flooded we get incommunicado and there is a lack of food or other goods”.

Irma comments how she has to visit the doctors when she is sick, but also gets treatment at home with teas. She compares it to how before you only went to the doctor if there was an emergency, because people trusted the knowledge of the grandmothers and preferred to get cure with plants.

When she went to the university she moved to a bigger city, there she worked in a convenience store, but in order to attend her classes she had to take the night shift, from 10 pm to 6 am and from there to university. She said it was very hard so she quit and instead she learned to economize. Her family gives her around thirty euros per week and she has to distribute the budget for all her expenses, such as for transportation, food and materials or printing. She travels almost every week to Autlán, and sometimes she gets a ride with other students who also live in Cuzalapa and possess a car, as they go together and divide the expenses. If not, she has to take the public transportation, catching the only departure of the day and making at least one more connection to get to her home.

Irma is currently in her last year of university to become an engineer in natural resources. She explains how education is useful in her life, especially now that she is learning very practical things that can be implemented in her house, such as organic agriculture, conservation, seed improvement and forest management. She is aware of the improvement in access to education due to the government's support to pay for the expenses, “before it was hard to get even a pencil or a notebook”. She tells about the advantages of access to information, for instance she

helps her brother to understand concepts taught in classes by showing him informative videos on her computer.

“Going to university changed my life, I had a lot of doubts in the beginning about continue studying, but now I am convinced it was the best decision. To study raised my perception about the value of my town, now I am aware of the positive impact I can make through my learning”.

She sometimes accompanies her father (a co-proprietor of the *ejido*) to the general assembly meetings, where important decisions take place. She comments how she doesn't have the right to speak in the meetings because she doesn't own a piece of land. She thinks the elders don't take younger people into consideration because are afraid they will take their lands.

“They don't realize they make things worst, sometimes they receive environmental payments from the government and instead of investing strategically, for instance in reforestation or cleaning the river, they divide the payments for its own personal goods, for example they buy cars”.

Seven years ago Irma affiliated with the WoCoPA, where she is currently working on her thesis, which will be about the impact of a current plague affecting the coffee trees in Cuzalapa, and in this way she wants to contribute to a problem that is affecting the cooperative. Now she is planning to build a house in Cuzalapa to move back to live there and make investments in the town. She wants to work in ecotourism, make roads to hike, construct huts and to put in a zip-line, while at the same time she wants to improve the environmental condition of Cuzalapa through reforestation. She dreams of making an Environmental Management Unit (UMA) for wildlife conservation, specifically for deer, so she can also profit from them. She plans to do it with the support of SEMARNAT. “In this way I will achieve my dreams but also I will reward my parents for all the support for this opportunity”.

1.2. Poverty challenges across generations

The poverty challenges that the three generations had to face are very different, but there are some poverty traps that are clearly seen in the first generation, and through the implementation of some strategies the trap is broken and is not repeated in the next generations.

In the first generation, the member points out the feeling of poverty related to food insecurity, lack of shelter and items, such as clothes. She mentions the scarcity of roads and transportation, as well as the lack of equipment and machines to makes the work faster, on top of the lack of electricity. There is gender discrimination related to the role of sexes, but she doesn't express it as a problem. Due to her work strictly relating to house duties, she had no personal income, therefore her purchasing power is lower and she doesn't find the lack of market as a major constraint. Besides, she could recall no need of acquisitions, except a few assets.

She associates them with a problem of provision of the local store and the poor road conditions to access other hamlets. Internal transportation was limited to foot and animals, like mule or horse. Due to isolation, she didn't have access to school, but she doesn't consider it a prior necessity to job opportunities. Her strengths were related to traditional knowledge and to a sustainable way of living, so once her family acquired their first assets they relied on agricultural activities. Their health do not seem to be a constraint since the knowledge of healing with plants has been transmitted across generations and they haven't faced major health problems.

The second generation also mentions food insecurity and poor shelter as major priorities; in addition to the lack of roads and especially bridges that constrain the access to markets in her early days, as well as her access to education, which was an important goal that she did not achieve. She suffers from gender discrimination. On the other hand, her



Image 6. Hand made tortilla.

strengths rely on the inclusion of different groups, and she started to get involved in decision-making processes; different new activities or programs open spaces for her to experience managerial skills, also cultural instances gave her the opportunity to be part of a board. She acquired more abilities through assistance in workshops organized by the government. In addition, she received a job opportunity in the WoCoPA. There are also technological improvements that make her home duties easier, such as the electricity and the mill in Cuzalapa impacting the duty of making tortillas (maize pancake) (image 6), a daily activity. Another fact is the reduction on the number of children, decreasing from ten to six. Her goal is to provide for her children and to have a peaceful old age.

For the third generation, shelter, roads, food security and access to markets and education are not mentioned as a challenge. However, she points out the necessity to improve transportation, and for her the biggest challenge is fighting against discrimination. This is reflected when she wants to participate in the general assembly where decisions about the direction of rural development take place, but she is not allowed by the power of the *caciques*. Her strengths rely on the accumulation of capital assets from previous generations, who were able to pass these down to her. She focuses on her education, supported by her parents and by governmental programs. A major strength is also her access to information. Her

life goals are beyond her personal necessities and expand to the development of her community, making investments to increase job opportunities while taking care of the environment.

1.3. Goals of the WoCoPA members

The livelihood outcomes have changed across generations; first the strategies were centered to improved food security and to reduced vulnerability. Later on, increases in income and increases in well-being were more tangible since the necessity to improve infrastructure was mentioned as a constraint to get access to different services like education and benefit from markets. Besides, the goal to improve the self-esteem through equal treatment, a patron repeated in the last generation, in addition to the more sustainable use of natural resource base, which was not mention before and it increased its importance perhaps due to the access of the third generation to information to be aware of the benefits of conservation.

The WoCoPA members shared their dreams and life goals through the semi-structured interviews; they vary, usually depending on ages and economic status. I group all of the individual goals under the livelihood outcomes of the generic livelihood framework; they are presented in table 2. The previous description of the goals of the three generations is also contained. I deal with the collective goals associated with the WoCoPA in chapter 5.

Table 2. Individual livelihood outcomes of the WoCoPA members.

More income	The aim to obtain financial capital is meant to achieve other objectives. A stable job with fair wages.
Increased well-being	Good health. Free time to spend together with the family Spaces to de-stress Equal treatment for men and women, freedom to choose one's activities, and to not depend on the patriarch of the family. Peaceful and good old age. Inclusion of political voice.
Reduced vulnerability	Assure the education of the children. Shelter made with good materials, durable and with enough rooms to accommodate the children.
Improved food security	Own land on which to work. Self-produced food so as not to depend on the market and to save on food spending. Animals to provide proteins.
More sustainable use of natural resource base	Good care of the environment.

2. LIVELIHOOD ASSETS

This part focuses on the asset pentagon of the livelihood framework, where the five capital assets are described. It is important to consider that the endowments are constantly changing and transforming from one capital into another. The aim is to use the pentagon to gain a precise and realistic understanding of the WoCoPA member's strengths.

2.1. Financial Capital

Financial capital represents the financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives. It is probably the most versatile of the assets, since it can be converted into other capitals; it can be used directly to achieve a livelihood outcome or can be transformed into political influence. It is usually the asset that tends to be scarcer among poor people (DFID 1999).

2.1.1. Regular inflows of income

Some members of the WoCoPA do temporary work for seasonal products. Savings are not that easy or feasible to obtain in rural areas, as the poor job opportunities or the low income generated makes it very hard, for instance a day working as a tomato harvester is pay 0.70 euros/kilo, if you are good and collect six kilos a day, then you can make around four euros a day.

The income obtained from the WoCoPA is a constant for all the members; however, the amount varies according to the individual products that they place in the store.

2.1.2. Remittances

Migration is an alternative solution for making savings; some of the members have indirectly benefitted from this option, either through their brothers, sisters, husbands or sons. Weddings or other festivities, health, investment to improve labor or houses and education are the main reasons that require extra capital.

“When my husband and I were planning to get married we wanted to make a celebration, buy a dress, but there was no money, the salaries were too low and even if your work harder it was not enough to make a big spending. At his house they sell maize and fatten pigs but his mom had cancer and the expenses were too many. The only choice was to migrate to USA to raise money on time, with the job opportunities here and the low wages there was no chance, and so he left” (Doña Rosa).

Migration is the most common way to find a job with higher wages. Some migrate to surrounding villages where they usually are employed as bricklayers. Others migrate to the USA, also known as *El Norte*. What lies behind such a decision is the expectation of a better future, to be able to make savings to invest in your return.

Also the feeling of stability, having a salary to buy good food, hot water to shower and if staying term perhaps you save enough to buy a car for transport, on top of the savings or remittances sent to your family in Mexico.

“The money have more value there, an the wages are fare. When my father left my mother, the two older brothers migrated to *El Norte* so they could lead us out of the situation, with the money they sent, my mother could afford many things” (Lupita).

Despite all the benefits, you are away from home and the risk can be very high if you migrate illegally, which often happens since the chances of obtaining a USA visa as a poor Mexican are very low.

“I went to the *El Norte* some years ago, first I had to save for my travel expenses. I took a bus to the capital of the state, \$20 euros, then I had to flew to Tijuana, which is located at the border of the country, \$90 euros more, and from there we began the travel with the “Coyotes”. I had to pay them \$2000 dollars to cross the mountain, others go across the bridge, is faster but the payment is \$5000 dollars. The travel lasted 3 days and 2 nights, some get lost in the way, snakes bite others. We were 30 and just myself and other one were on our first time. They gave a bottle of water each pair, the amount was finishing when luckily we got to a river, time after we got to the highway were two bans picked us up, we were 15 people piled laying down in the trunk and cover with a tarp. When we were crossing, the border patrol told me that my foot was visible, so I covered it and calmed down because I realized everything was arranged with the police too. We finally got to L.A., California, we had to wait until someone picked us up, give the money to the women and go to work, but with the fear that the migration officer caught you. I worked as a gardener in people’s houses, at my return with my savings I was able to build a house of my own” (Villager of Cuзалapa).

2.1.3. Cash transfers

The Mexican government has reached rural areas through programs of conditional transfers. The majority of the members are beneficiaries of either PROSPERA or PAL (for the details of the programs see chapter 3, section 5.3.2), since they are exclusive of one another.

2.2. Physical Capital

Physical capital is the basic infrastructure and the producer goods required to the sustain livelihoods. It is meant to help people to obtain their basic needs and to improve their productivity, whether with tools or equipment. The essential components usually needed in livelihoods are transportation, housing, water supply, energy and access to information (DFID 1999).

2.2.1. Roads and transportation

Cuzalapa has public transport with a daily departure to the closest bigger city where people can obtain connection to other buses. One big problem of isolation is the linkage with transportation and the quality or existence of the roads. Availability of transport is usually not very common and the conditions of the roads make the trip longer than expected. When natural disasters occur, the roads get obstructed and vehicles can't continue along the way, and it is even more difficult if the vehicle is a horse or even worse when there is no way of transportation but walking.

The WoCoPA members live in different towns, and some take from 5 to 15 minutes walking, others around 30 minutes and the furthest an hour. There are not always roads between villages and often rivers have to be crossed. (image 7). When it is



Image 7. WoCoPA members in their way to harvest tomatoes.

raining or when the sun is too hot, they don't want to go out. "If someone gives me a ride then I gladly go to work, then you don't feel the inconvenience" (Doña Chole). Six members of the WoCoPA have the availability of a car in their houses, two belonging to the husbands, two to their children and two brothers share the same car One of the brothers is a member of the WoCoPA and the other is the husband of a member.

The resilience of infrastructure in rural areas is very low when damaged, mainly because of natural disasters. In times of flood, strong rains or hurricanes in Cuzalapa, the water channels get blocked with branches or mud, and this is very recurrent and is only fixed until someone voluntarily goes to clean them. It gets more difficult when the piped water systems break and the population stops getting the supply until an expert goes to repair them. It is the same situation with the electricity towers.

2.2.2. Housing

Almost all of the members expressed housing as one of the main concerns. First to acquire the land to build upon it and second the materials to construct it, but the labor is not a big constraint since many people know brickwork and are able to help working in kind or at viable prices or flexible terms of payment.

A problem is faced when couples move together or get married, and the most common situation is that the new couple lives with the family of the male until they are able to construct a home. Usually when this happens they are very young (between 16-20) so they don't have savings yet. It can be that either both or just the male migrates to make savings or that the family provides them land and help for the first room.

“When I got married at 16 years old I moved with my mother in law, my partner and I had no house. Later on, my father in law gave us a piece of land to work, we moved there and we made a house just with nylon, we stayed in that condition for two years, then I made bricks and all the profit saved was for buying materials, we even had to ask for a loan, but now we have a place to call home” (Sele).

Construction of the houses normally starts with the main room, the latrine and the roof for an outside kitchen. People save, so with the time they can add to their houses, and they keep adding rooms and improving the materials, as they can start with cardboard, then sheet metal, wood, tiles and bricks (Image 8).

“I had a cardboard house that got destroyed with the earthquake, I had to make an effort to get better materials, and it was made with a lot of sacrifice, we also had to sell a small piece of land to complete the budget, but now my house is much resistant” (Marina).



Image 8. The house of a WoCoPA member.

There are some governmental programs that help donate materials, mainly for latrines, roofs or ecological stoves. Some WoCoPA members built their houses with the capital obtained through their husband's migration. Also many claimed to have helped in the making of bricks, lowering the costs of the materials.

2.2.3. Water supply and energy

All of the members who live in Cuzalapa have piped in water supply and electricity in their houses. The five members who live in El Vigía do have electricity but no water supply and the only member who lives further away in the hamlet of Canoas, lacks both of the services, but she is able to get energy only sporadically with a motor fuel, and it is rather expensive.

2.2.4. Information

In Cuzalapa there is education from kindergarten to bachelor school, however El Vigía and Canoitas do not have the same facilities. “I live in El Vigía, there is no high school, my children have to walk a lot of time to get to the closest school and their shoes don’t last longer, it makes the situation very difficult” (Sele). The only WoCoPA member from Canoitas mentioned how education was when she was a child. She said the school days were not very often, they knew when the teacher was coming because every day they’ll go in the afternoon to the river to take a shower and were able to see if the teacher was on her way, and that meant there would be classes tomorrow.

WoCoPA members are from different villages even though a majority is in Cuzalapa. Whenever there is a spontaneous meeting, it is more difficult to communicate with the further hamlet, where there are no telephones. To deliver the information, the messengers call a WoCoPA member who lives in El Vigía and he delivers the message to the children of the member when they pass by from his way from work. All the members besides the one in Canoitas have access to a telephone, whether they have a telephone line in their houses or they borrow it from a family member or a neighbor.

In rural areas they usually do not have the option of Fiber Optic Internet Service, which is the fastest. Also the internet service on mobile phones is not possible, since for instance in Cuzalapa there is no phone signal. However, the community has two cyber cafes, one, which is for free provided by the municipality, and other private cyber, which has a faster connection, but still very slow.

In the family of a WocoPA member live in the house of the University, where there is an internet dial-up connection (via telephone). The mother had to upload a document she had to sign in order to complete the procedure to graduate. She spent three hours at night sitting in front of the computer, trying to get connection to open the website. She did not succeed, the day after she woke up early and spent two hours more with the same result. Since the deadline to upload the document already passed, at night the son had to drive to the closest town with phone signal to get internet. All the youth took advantage of connections too; we got into the car with cell-phones, i-pads, computers (many of them obtained when the son went during the summer to work in the USA). It took us thirty minutes to get to Cuautitlán, we went from the restaurant to shops to try to gain their signal, and we even tried the medical center. One succeeded and so we were inside the car for

more than a couple hours immersed in the outside world. In normal conditions a paper is required to be signed and sent is an easy task, where a lapse of two days is more than enough to complete it. In Cuзалapa it took some days to get the information via e-mail since it was not possible to check it every day, A couple days of patience and times to trying without success, money for gasoline and a car, all for that paper to be uploaded.

2.2.5. Producer goods: tools and equipment

Agricultural inputs are needed to improve their productivity, but due to isolation and the high transaction costs, it is very difficult to obtain them. WoCoPA members are taking advantage of the PESA program, which in the period of 2012-2015 has provided infrastructure to increase the production to be self-sufficient; they mainly support the production of vegetables, chickens and pigs.

“PESA is helping me to build the henhouse instead of having them ranging freely. They give me the material like wire-mesh, ribs or bricks and I just need to have or to buy the animals that go inside” (Doña Chole).

Some WoCoPA members, who are benefiting from it, have considerably increased their efficiency either for hens or horticulture.

“I always grow vegetables but with the wires, irrigation and the possibility to get a variety of seeds now I have more production and don't have to buy so much, I have tomatoes, green beans, lettuce, cabbage, sweet potato, pineapple, banana, strawberry and prickly pear” (Marina).

For the case of pigsties, the benefits are less clear since it takes longer to measure the differences and people is complaining about the negative impacts of having to employ water to wash them.

“What I don't like about the pigsties is that people is planning to build them near the river so is easy for them to wash it, but they will drain in the river contaminating the water of the village” (Lupita).

Clay ovens and an egg incubator are two special items found among the WoCoPA members that provide diversification in their income. The first was made after a workshop of Farmer's school. Sele asked how she could have a clay oven at her house, and they said she needed around 180 euros and gave her the list of materials she needed to buy. She thought it was a lot of money but it could be a good investment. After a few months she got everything she needed and called a professor of the University. He came and with the help of the teachers of the Farmer's school they built the clay oven. Now she bakes bread and cookies to sell at the WoCoPA. She is the only one in her village with an oven. The case of the egg incubator is very recent; it comes from the PESA program. Doña Rosa got it in society with other two women, they needed to have enough egg production and

then they requested to obtain it. They are getting the training to use it to increase the production of chickens to sell them in the village.

The WoCoPA members narrated their daily activities from when they were kids; there are several differences according to ages. For instances, the older ones relayed activities like waking up early to help their mothers with the process of making tortillas or fetching water from the river. Both were very demanding activities that ended with the arrival of technology: mills and a pipe system. For some people, technology not only signified a reduction of energy and time in daily activities but an improvement in production through increasing agriculture production with the use of machines or getting a quality product like with coffee.

2.3. Natural Capital

The term refers to the natural resource stocks that have a wide variation in the resources that make up this capital from intangible public goods such as biodiversity, to divisible properties used straight for production. This capital is very important to those who derived most of their livelihoods from the primary sector (DFIF 1999).

2.3.1. Land

Most of the families of the WoCoPA have possession of a piece of land, except one whose husband does not work in agriculture, and three more who work the land, but in two cases are loaned by relatives, and the other works half-and-half, providing half of the production to the owner.

Land inheritance traditionally is given to the men of the family due to the mentality that women's usufruct is from the land of their husbands when they get married, even though all their youth worked in their land's family, they have no right once they move to another house. However, as shown in the section 1.2.4 this trend is changing within some of the WoCoPA members.

2.3.2. Animals

The members usually make savings in kind. Instead of having money in the bank they usually have animals and when a shock occurs, it is very common to hear that people sell a cow, a pig or a chicken according to the quantity of money they need.

“My mother inherit cattle, her husband help her to increase the number and when he died she had a large livestock. She didn't know of caring cattle so she used each of them to raise her children. She sold them every time she needed something, to buy maize, food, soap, and clothing or also when someone was sick. At the end, she just had one left. A friend of her helped her to build capital again, because the most valuable thing were the animals” (Doña Paula).

2.3.3. Wild resources

Cuzalapa has non-timber forest products, fresh water shrimp, and wild animals, such as boar, porcupine, deer and armadillo. Jardel (1992), reported that eight fruits from wild plants are collected to sale, three wild herbs complement people's diets, and more than fifty plants are use for medicinal purposes. All of the WoCoPA members reported to use medicinal plants and most of them grow vegetables.

For more information about the environment on which the WoCoPA is places, see Chapter 2, under Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve.

2.4. Social Capital

There is a wide debate about what social capital implies. The livelihood framework (DFID 1999), considers it as the social resources upon which individuals draw in search of their livelihood objectives, developed through networks and connectedness, membership to groups and relationships of trust.

2.4.1. Networks and connectedness

Philanthropy, social work and interest in rural areas bring experts to the field. In a very short period (eight weeks) I was able to meet prestigious professors who were doing field research in Cuzalapa. These were experts on coffee production, a veterinarian, a bestselling American writer, a musician and an artist who spends her vacations every year teaching art in her free school for kids two hours away from Cuzalapa. People who take the opportunity and expand their social network can take a lot of advantage from these relations. The same goes for the temporary workshops that the government, NGOs, the university or other institutions provide. The trajectory of the WoCoPA (chapter 5) is a clear example of how the network they have built has brought them a variety of benefits.

When your network is wider through family members who migrate, teachers, voluntary workers or researchers you can find other types of jobs such as working for the universities, institutes, specific stores or in governmental programs. "When I was 16 years old, I went to work in a shrimp packing company in the *el Norte* of Mexico, I had a sister there so she took me" (Doña Paula).

2.4.2. Membership to groups

Many of the WoCoPA members have been part of different groups. To start, the governmental programs open applications to be part of a group, and all the beneficiaries of the PROSPERA program, belong to a group, which is in charge of developing certain social duties to obtain their cash transfers. The beneficiaries of the PESA program also recurrently gather to get training through workshops. The second stage of the program focuses on peasants who have surpluses and encourage them to form groups to support their enterprises, and some members

are part of these groups too. In addition, some have taken positions on committee boards in their children schools and also in committees of cultural events in Cuzalapa.

Belonging to the WoCoPA has not just broadened their networks, but has also made them members of some groups. They are involved in RENDUS and are members of the organic fair organized in the CUCSUR. Within the WoCoPA, they have also developed relationship of trust, among the members and with external actors linked to the project (see chapter 5).

2.5. Human Capital

This capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to produce labor and good health. Altogether, this enables people to obtain a variety of livelihood strategies. An important characteristic of human capital is that its accumulation can also mean an end in itself, talking about the achievement of the final outcomes.

2.5.1. Skills and knowledge

Traditional education has always existed in rural areas. Grandparents carry the knowledge and pass it from generation to generation. Many of the WoCoPA members claimed to learn many skills from their elders, such as medicinal plant' knowledge, sowing strategies, bakery, and skills for selling, organic fertilizers and compost, among others.

Secretariats of the Government, such as those for public education or for culture, sponsor temporary courses in rural areas. The WoCoPA members mentioned the utility of the learning outcomes through these initiatives, which are taught for one year. For Cuzalapa, they very recently had courses of food industrialization and dance, while in El Vigía had carpentry, handicraft and craftwork. As a result of the latter, some members improved the quality of the products sold to the cooperative, like earrings or key chains made of natural local elements; and for carpentry a member said it was not easy to sell her work due to the lack of market but that she has made some chairs, a table and a bed for herself.

Within the WoCoPA they have developed different skills, not just in the process of the coffee value chain, but also managerial, marketing and other skills through the workshops that are offered. The experience itself has been a learning process.

2.5.2. Education

Cuzalapa has formed a kindergarten to high school institution, but it took a large amount of effort to construct the buildings and to get them active. Two members of the WoCoPA are illiterate and more than the half were not able to finish primary school. Even though there was the intention from most of them, they gave reasons like parents not being able to afford it or not allowing them due to male

dominance. However, all the stories belong to the older women of the group. “My father told me: why you should go to the school if at the end you will get pregnant?” (Doña Lupe), “I was able to go to school only if the teacher was a female, if it was a he, then my father didn’t allow me and my sisters to go” (Doña Chole).

Nowadays schools have been increasing in numbers and importance. Parents are more conscious about how education can positively impact the future of the children. Many hopes of a better future are placed on education.

“I would like my children to have no need of working under the sun, I do inculcate them to work the land but I don’t have enough land to distribute among them and we have no money to rent it, what would they do then? If they look for a job to get a salary now any kind of work asks for school papers” (Sele).

Many children of the WoCoPA members are benefiting from PROSPERA, They said that the important change in this program is to switch the cash transfer from men to women.

“Before the men spent the money on alcohol, but women are better administrators, my mother used the money for the education of myself and my other 8 brothers/sisters, she bought us shoes, the school supplies, uniforms and books and even she managed with the cash transfer to gave us lunches, bean tacos every day but we had something to eat” (Amparo).

Environmental education depends on the awareness of locals on taking care of natural resources. The WoCoPA members are influencing these actions. For instance, one of the reasons of the WoCoPA’s existence relies on the believe that coffee trees are good for the reservoir of water, and by taking care of the trees the water will still flow and future generations will still benefit from it.

2.5.3. Ability to labor

The most popular work for women and children is in agricultural plots, employed usually during harvesting season and particularly with tomatoes (image 9). One member of the WoCoPA also mentioned their work as a child in applying fertilizers in plantations and also sowing Jamaica. If the family has a shop, usually women or children attend to the clients, but there is no wage since it is a family business.



Image 9. Harvesting tomatoes.

Job opportunities for women in the surrounding areas are as housekeepers or they employed in stores or restaurants. Some of the WoCoPA members worked in the houses of people with more monetary assets in bigger villages, doing jobs as nannies, cleaning, cooking, taking care of sick people and doing the housekeeping duties in general. These kinds of jobs were more likely before marriage and many of the WoCoPA members reported that the money earned through them was given to their mothers or spent in buying provisions for their family, although some mention buying personal items too.

“After my summer work I thought what I was going to do with so much money? (around 176 euros) Happily I went to the store, it was very big compared to my village, and I bought a huge bag of soaps, cookies, and lots of things for my mom” (Lupita).

The Government also provides job opportunities; it can be either as a politician or as a worker on the projects. The most well paid position is as councilmen or councilwoman, for periods of three years. There are possibilities to be hired for cleaning roads, electricity maintenance, driver, etc. The son of a WoCoPA member is currently running to be a councilman. His brother is a lawyer and works in the city council as the director of the civil registry. The husband of another member sporadically works as a driver when the political party has events.

The DRSM and the CUCSUR provide job opportunities too, especially the first. Many husbands have been hired to monitor the hills for fire control. They have a walky-talky and a radio to inform the central base. In case of a fire they have to dig anti-fire trenches and carry out other activities related to prevention. There is the special case of the employee of the University, the husband of a WoCoPA member, the leader and pioneer of the group who works as the guard of the university house in Cuzalapa, where researchers stay. Recently among his duties was added helping the WoCoPA when they needed it, mostly working with the machines. There is another case, where the son of another member, works in El Grullo with the University.

To acquire a special skill gives you the possibility to be an independent worker with an income, such as carpenter, blacksmith, baker, electrician or plumber, among others. In Cuzalapa there are not many specialized people, and sometimes they have to go to another village to get the needed services. However, there is one case in the WoCoPA, where a member's husband became an electrician and a plumber. Nowadays people hire him when they need installation for new houses or to make repairs. His sons have learned these skills also and now they are helping him, providing them an income alternative to working in the village.

Landowners can provide jobs to other members of the community who don't have land. It is commonly seen the '*cultivo a medias*' (sharecropping) where the owner gives the land and finds someone to work on it. One gives the asset, the other the labor. At the end both divide harvest. Other people rent the land for pasture or sell it after they harvest. They have a variation of income. Some types of crops, for

instance tomato, use the *cultivo a medias* during harvesting. It is usually seen that neighbors, family members or friends are asked to harvest, they help and at the end they get rewarded with a bag of tomatoes or the commodity they harvest. One member of the WoCoPA works its land in this way, but others have the same system for other jobs such as milking cows.

Selling agricultural products is another common way of income, and the range varies on the type of market and on the added value. Among the WoCoPA members I saw different strategies. There are cases where they produce enough for self-consumption and they sell the surplus, which is the same situation when doing *cultivo a medias*; also collecting seasonal fruit from the trees to sell; others prefer to add value to their products, for instance selling corn instead of maize, and others produce jams, cookies or ointments. People also sell their animals: chickens, rabbits, goats, pigs, and cattle among others. Mules, beasts or horses also provide an income, since people rent them, you can get payments in cash or in kind. Usually people give you a part of what they were carrying like wood, maize, sugar cane or other products. Some of the WoCoPA members mentioned a “lending with interests’ strategy” implemented in their houses. They would lend beans, powder brown sugar or maize and get the double amount when returned.

Social programs give temporary jobs too; different institutions bring all kinds of different workshops, from teaching music instruments and dance to teaching about carpentry. At the end of the project period, people are motivated and are willing to sell the learned outcome, but usually due to lack of inputs or absence of market they stop and just some people keep doing it just for consumption or satisfaction. However, there are other projects, which offer payments during their existence in the village. In both cases the provision of job is due to the budget and agenda of the institution in charge of the project. The homemade clay for pottery is an example of the first scenario, as it was an initiative of the University of Guadalajara and women were very motivated. But at the end of the project the learning outcomes were more art-craft instead of the cooking pots they wanted to make. In addition, the village didn’t have the conditions for large-scale production of clay since they had scarcity of mud.

A current example of social program in broadening job opportunities is seen through the folkloric dance group “Tlaneci” (image 10). It was formed due to the initiative of “Misión Cultural” sponsored by the Secretariat of Public Education. They provided a teacher, which resulted in Tlaneci, a dancing group of five women who dance traditional dances and wear typical dresses. They advertise the group to perform in special events to disseminate their culture and to gain a profit from it. To improve their venture, they asked for support from the government for buying the costumes, they provided half of the cost and the group is holding raffles to collect the other half. One last example is related to the projects that offer payments. A member of the WoCoPA mentioned a sewing course that took place some years ago where the payment was around 350 euros for two months. They received the training but the clothes they made had to stay with the teacher.



Image 10. Folkloric dance group “Tlaneci”.

Temporary work in the agriculture sector is usually available but at low wages. For some, that is the only opportunity for employment. It includes participating in any tasks from weeding and clearing the plots to sowing and harvesting. There are owners of large plantations who go to small villages to find labor. They transport them and give them food and shelter for the working period, lasting from one day to weeks.

2.5.4. Good health

As rural people, they have the right to belong to the *Seguro Popular*⁴, where they need to provide the necessary documents and every two months they have to renew them. In Cuzalapa they have a health center, which provides medical services when needed. However, there is a lack of quality since the doctors are usually under qualified. There is a high rotation since many of them are medical students doing social service, which is mandatory for students before they graduate. People also complain that even if they receive a good diagnosis, the given treatments must be completed with medicine. They believe that this should be provided for free, but in many cases, and usually when they are expensive, the health service doesn't cover the expenses and they have to purchase it on their own. In the case that the medicine is provided, despite aspirin, paracetamol or

⁴ Seguro Popular provides health service coverage, through voluntary, public insurance for persons that are not affiliated to any social security institution. It is operated by the National Ministry of Health, and is independent of State (for more information look at <http://www.smahealthinfo.com/seguro-popular.html> accessed 7/08/15).

antidote for scorpion stings, others are most of the time not available in the local medical centers. You usually have to travel to a bigger town in order to get them. “In Cuzalapa you do find a medical center, but most of the time what you do not find is medicine, nether doctors ” (Liz). Complaints are also related to the travel distances to the nearest medical center with more capacity and equipment. “Sometimes is not easy to get to the hospital and if you have an emergency, specially for children and elders is even more complicated to make the trip” (Tabo).

IMSS provides a higher level of medical protection than Seguro Popular, but still many deficiencies are found. It is possible to get IMSS if you are a formal worker of an institution or a company, however the isolation of places and poor work opportunities make it difficult to be linked to this medical service. For the WoCoPA members, the only families covered by IMSS are because the husband works with the university and it provides them with affiliation.

The private sector is usually the best option, and even if you can find good doctors in the public sector, the waiting list and bureaucracy make it inefficient. In cases of urgency and financial availability, rural people prefer going to a private facility. Within the WoCoPA this happens for dentist, gynecologist or particular cases like a daughter who had heart murmur.

CONEVAL (2012) reported a good impact of PROSPERA in education, but there is no evidence of improvements in health. Some of the WoCoPA members mentioned the uselessness of the cash transfer in relation to health.

“They obliged you to go to the doctor’s appointments, they just weight you, and take your measures, nothing useful, they also obliged you to go to information meetings but every year are the same things, and if you can’t attend, even if it is justify they penalize you, every absence they discount you 400 pesos (23.5 euros)” (Amparo).

The programs of the government give different supports to improve health. PAL is only for babies or sick children. DIF is also present; they provide food supplies and milk, ten boxes every two months when there are children under 4 years old, and also for pregnant women.

3. LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

Different livelihood strategies can be distinguished in the way the WoCoPA members achieve or try to achieve their individual livelihood outcomes. In the table 3 each of the strategies link to their goals can be observed.

Table 3. Individual livelihood strategies of the WoCoPA members.

Livelihood outcome	Individual livelihood strategies
More income	Wage of husband or children, remittances and migration (urban and USA), cash transfers (mostly PROSPERA and PAL), seasonal agricultural work, the WoCoPA, selling surpluses: fresh harvest, added value and animals (the most common way of savings), incorporation of micro-business and making dance performances.
Increased well-being 1. Good health 2. Free time 3. De-stress 4. Equal treatment 5. Good old age 6. Political voice	1. Due to poor conditions of social services they usually use their savings (FC) to achieve it or traditional knowledge (HC) through the use of plants. 2. Reduced the time used on the house duties through the use of electricity, water supply and washing machine (PC) 3. Relaxing in the field or swimming in the river (NC), going to the football field and to the WoCoPA (SC&PC). 4. Educating their children to not repeat the same behavior (HC) and by joining the WoCoPA (SC). 5. Investing in their children's education so they get more job opportunities (HC) to help them in the future. Also to pass down the WoCoPA rights to their children to keep the privilege to sell in the store (FC). 6. Is not yet achieved at the individual level.
Reduced vulnerability 1. Education of children 2. Good shelter	1. Using the cash transfers, with their husband's income and with the profit made in the WoCoPA (FC). 2. First by using the help of the parents to host the new couple (SC) and many times inheriting a piece of land (NC), buying construction materials with savings usually from migration (FC) and using local or their own labor to construct (HC&SC).
Improved food security 1. Land property 2. Self-food production 3. Animal consumption	1. Inheriting from their parents (SC), buying it (FC) or borrowing it (SC). 2. <i>Cultivo a medias</i> (SC), increasing productivity through irrigation (some given by PESA), machinery (PC) and incorporation of new techniques (HC), growing in backyards, collecting fruits from the communal land (NC) and purchasing food (FC) directly from the market. 3. Hunting or fishing (NC), producing their animals, increasing production by making henhouses and pigsties (PC) with PESA support, and also buying them (FC).
More sustainable use of natural resource base	1. Cleaning roads and rivers through the conditional duties of PROSPERA (SC), and the good practices adopted in agriculture and treatment of waste (HC), along with the principles of coffee production of the WoCoPA.

4. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

The livelihood strategies that make use of external support for asset accumulation are the use of direct cash transfers from PROSPERA and PAL and the producer goods given by PESA. However, the latter is helping to reduce vulnerability with direct support to asset accumulation and PROSPERA and PAL reduce it since the cash transfers are used primarily in the education of the children, with the hope of a better future for them where they can take care of their parents. Both are impacting the outcome of more income and PESA also influence to improved food security by providing physical and human assets to the members, since materials are given to increase productivity as well as training.

Indirect support through transforming structures and processes are perceived not just in the previous mentioned programs but also in the sporadic workshops and trainings that were reported, such as Cultural Missions and the CUCSUR, the skills acquired sometimes became a new form of income through the development of a product or a service.

The assets in which the members are investing for the future are tangible such as animals, as well as intangible like the case of the education of their children to secure a good old age and more income. This with the idea to reduce the vulnerability. The only livelihood outcome that was not achieved with current strategies was the political voice for higher well-being.

The outcome of more sustainable use of natural resources base, is only been pursued indirectly through the conditional duties of PROSPERA and the indirect impacts of the WoCoPA. However, they are using the natural capital to develop strategies in order to get increased well-being with the use of the rivers to swim and for animal consumption by hunting and fishing. This is a threat and actions need to take place. Another natural resource is the land, which is used to achieved good shelter and improved food security. This is a main concern since the caciques are in charge of the distribution of the common land prioritizing themselves, and the current data shows that there is scarcity and no more to share. However, the more recent changes on the agrarian reform make possible the acquisition by purchasing, but there are few strategies that allow to raise considerable amounts of income. Achievable by migration, if the husband has a job outside his agricultural plot or if the person has possession of big animals to sell.

The analysis of the impact of the institutions goes beyond this research, however, it is important to mention that besides the indirect impact of cash transfers in education, the only program that is seeking the assets accumulation is PESA. This provides not just income or material, but empowers individuals to acquire skills and adopt simple, affordable and sustainable change, it is not surprising that it is the only government program (although in coordination with FAO), which is focused on people and promoting participatory planning, confirming what Develtore (1994) noted that for a successful intervention needs to be adopted by

the people. However, the only strategy that could have a negative impact is the creation of pigsties, since people are polluting the rivers with the draining water directly on them. If the program continues to support this initiative and if there is no awareness during the technology transfer, harmful effects can impact their natural resources.

In this chapter, I have provided insights into the evolution of the poverty challenges based in the life histories of three generations of the same family, making visible how the constraints they face have been changing and how the third generation exits poverty. The consideration of the poverty challenges contributed to the understanding of the prior necessities of the WoCoPA members. Then I identified the livelihood outcomes of the members of the WoCoPA and their livelihood assets, on which they trace their strategies to accomplish their dreams and goals. The common strategy that all the members are implementing is membership within the WoCoPA and this has clearly improved their way out of poverty. This strategy is contributing to all their personal outcomes, except for improving food security. However, it actually indirectly helps to this goal too, since it is a direct way to obtain income and thus it can transform into food security through improved purchasing power.

In the next section, I will go in depth to the collective strategy, the WoCoPA, since it was shown that a strategy like this would provide a vast amount of different benefits, positively impacting the lives of the members. The trajectory will be explained, to identify the events that lead to its establishment, as well as the constraints that the members had to face.

CHAPTER 4. THE LIFE OF THE WOCOPA: A COLLECTIVE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY

Introduction

Individuals are able to gain capital assets with different livelihood strategies, such as collective action, a very powerful instrument especially in rural areas. The precarious situation at the beginning is contrasted with the improved current situation, but there is a lack of information about the struggles in the middle and the emerged strategies that leads initiatives to rise up from the starting point.

In this chapter I provide the example of the Women Coffee Producer Organization (WoCoPA) as the common strategy of a group of women that drastically helped in the achievement of their individual goals. However, there are collective outcomes, which would be point out in the first part of this chapter. Furthermore, I show the trajectory of the WoCoPA to finish with the identification of their livelihood strategies. The cooperative has almost twenty years of existence and I provide insights to a number of questions, including: How they have managed to sustain life for twenty years in this changing environment full of constraints? How have they acquired the infrastructure, found a market and administrated the profits among the members who have been changing their behaviour too? Who influences the decision-making process?

Back in 1996 an initiative was about to come alive in Cuzalapa. The distinctive feature was the self-determination of the members to unite and a history of well-taken support from different institutions. The first event that leads to the formation of the group was the arrival of Rosa to Cuzalapa after her husband was hired to take care of the maintenance of the community centre of the CUCSUR and she came with him. She incorporated the activity of embroidery to her routine, created a network with it and got the attention of different actors who believed in the value of their products to provide a source of income. The initial intention of Rosa was to teach something she liked to do; she never imagined what was to follow.

“I’ve always liked to embroider. When I arrived to Cuzalapa I sat outside the house to do so, I didn’t know anyone and to embroider helped me to meet other ladies because they stop by to ask me how to do it. I was happy to show them. They start sending their children to me and suddenly there was the first group of people with intentions of doing something together”.

As this group was being formed, Saskia Kreutzer, a sociologist of the CUCSUR who was working in the area, helped by assessing them and their current situation. As a result, they began to think about selling the products at the university and did so. The success was such that the increasing demand got the mothers involved and

they ended up taking over the products' elaboration. That was the moment when the group started to consider specific economic incentives for their work.

The unification of the group continued and got a more solid form. They constituted in 2000 as "Group of coffee, embroidery, production of preserved wild fruits", name that got changed into Colours of the Soil, and from then on they started on a path together.

The cooperative has 15 members (image 11), mostly indigenous women ranging in age from 23 to 64 years old. Traditionally, the group has been, and is meant to be, comprised only of women. However, a recent exception was made to allow a man to participate because he inherited



Image 11. Cooperative Color de la Tierra, the WoCoPA.

his mother's membership when she passed away. The WoCoPA currently has one male employee who is mainly in charge of the roasting, grinding and deliveries, but this worker is paid by the CUCSUR. To become part of the group, it is stated in the regulations that you have to be a woman who resides in Cuzalapa or in the neighbourhood areas and you have to fulfil the next requirements: a) be of legal age, b) pay the fee established by the assembly, c) not to mix personal problems with work, and d) make a written request addressed to the president. All requests are approved during extraordinary meetings by majority vote, along with the payment terms.

The members have the right to receive a proportionate share of the profits generated by the project. The revenue is generated from the fee of the tours, and from the sales mainly of the cooperative products such as coffee and mojote (for a detailed list of the products and their description see appendix 4), but also of the small grocery store and the sales of drinks to customers. All of their products are made with local raw materials, thus providing an alternative way of income for the villagers. In addition, the members have the possibility to get an extra income by producing other types of products, which are sold by the cooperative too.

All the members are equal, and have the same rights and responsibilities. There is no hierarchy, just positions of responsibility fulfilled by turn. The president, the secretary, the treasurer and the supervisory committee form the board. The latter are two persons in charge of supervising the accountability and the quality of the products. The members on the committee board should last three years, giving the

opportunity to each of the members to experience the different tasks. There are two other positions of responsibility that change every month: the person in charge of the sales of the products of the cooperative and grocery store and a second person in charge of the individual products. They both have to go at the end of the day to complete the inventory and cash closing, and during the monthly meeting they have to report the income and the expenditures to pass the job on. For the case of the cooperative products, the employee makes the inventory.

The sales of individual products have a special record of attendance formed only by the members who bring products to the store. The process for those sales consists of making your products - such as embroidery, handcraft, cookies, toasts, medicinal plants and liquors among many other items - bringing them to the store, and having them registered in a notebook. Once they are sold, you can collect your money, but usually the respective profits are placed in personal envelopes and are distributed at the monthly meeting. The current method allows the members who want or who need to work more to do so, either because not everybody is skilled or likes to make other products, or because not everybody has time for extra work. It also leaves room for creativity, as there is a place in the shop for whatever you produce or make (Larco-Laurent 2010).

The WoCoPA has an installation open every day from 10:00 to 18:00. Each day of the week is assigned to two members (except on Fridays when there are three), who welcome the clients, make the sales, and in the case of a low flow of customers, they occupy the time doing tasks of the value chain of the products, such as cleaning the coffee beans, placing the final coffee in packs or roasting the coffee. The latter is a task that should be done under the supervision of the person in charge of production. There is also a role list to attend the events outside the village; the next pair on the list will go to sell the products, they get an estimated amount of budget to cover the expenses of the travel.

The WoCoPA is much more than what has been described; it has an interesting story of ups and downs that turned out to be a successful project from the perspective of different actors and also of the members itself. They have been developing different strategies to achieve their proposed goals.

1. LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES OF THE COLLECTIVE ACTION

The goals that the cooperative have set are based in the objectives of the group described through the regulations written in 2006 and in specific aspirations that have recently appeared, both are observed in table 4, where are grouped in the categories of the generic livelihood framework, It is important to remark that non of their collective goals are directly related with the improvement of food security. They have two main priorities divided into economic and social aspects. The former consists of selling their products to obtain profit for the group, to create a patrimony to the members' families, to help the economy of their families, and to contribute to the regional economic growth. The social objectives are to provide

job opportunities, to contribute to the regional economic development, to ensure the family members' inclusion during suitable tasks, to avoid people migration for seeking jobs, and to preserve and regain the village resources (Color de la tierra 2006).

The WoCoPA members have set additional to the goals mentioned in the regulations, other objectives that have rising in importance across the years; those were share through the individual semi-structured interviews and confirmed in the focus group. Those are to improve the infrastructure, since part of the roof is falling, to wider the market network so the sells increase, to acquire machinery for a specific part of the process that is been bottleneck, to suppress chronic coffee pests, and to formally constitute the group. The reasons behind the latter are linked with the personal wishes' of some members to get reunited with their family members in the United States, since the legal act of possession of the WoCoPA would raise their chances to obtain an American Visa.

Table 4. Collective livelihood outcomes of the WoCoPA.

More income	Creation of a job for the members. Expand their markets.
Increased well-being	Equal treatment among the members. Build internal relationships of trust. Inclusion of their family members. Avoid migration of the villagers. Reduce labor-intensive procedures.
Reduced vulnerability	Creation of a patrimony, including a durable infrastructure made with good materials.
More sustainable use of natural resource base	Preserve and regain the village resources. Suppress chronic coffee pests.

2. TRAJECTORY OF THE WOCOPA

This success story helps to illustrate how an intervened group got out of poverty by using external support and by developing collective livelihood strategies to reach their outcomes. On the figure 4 the different events of the WoCoPAs' life are structured on a chronological order to help the reader to follow up the trajectory. It is a summary of the eleven points of passage to lift up the cooperative from the actors' perspective.

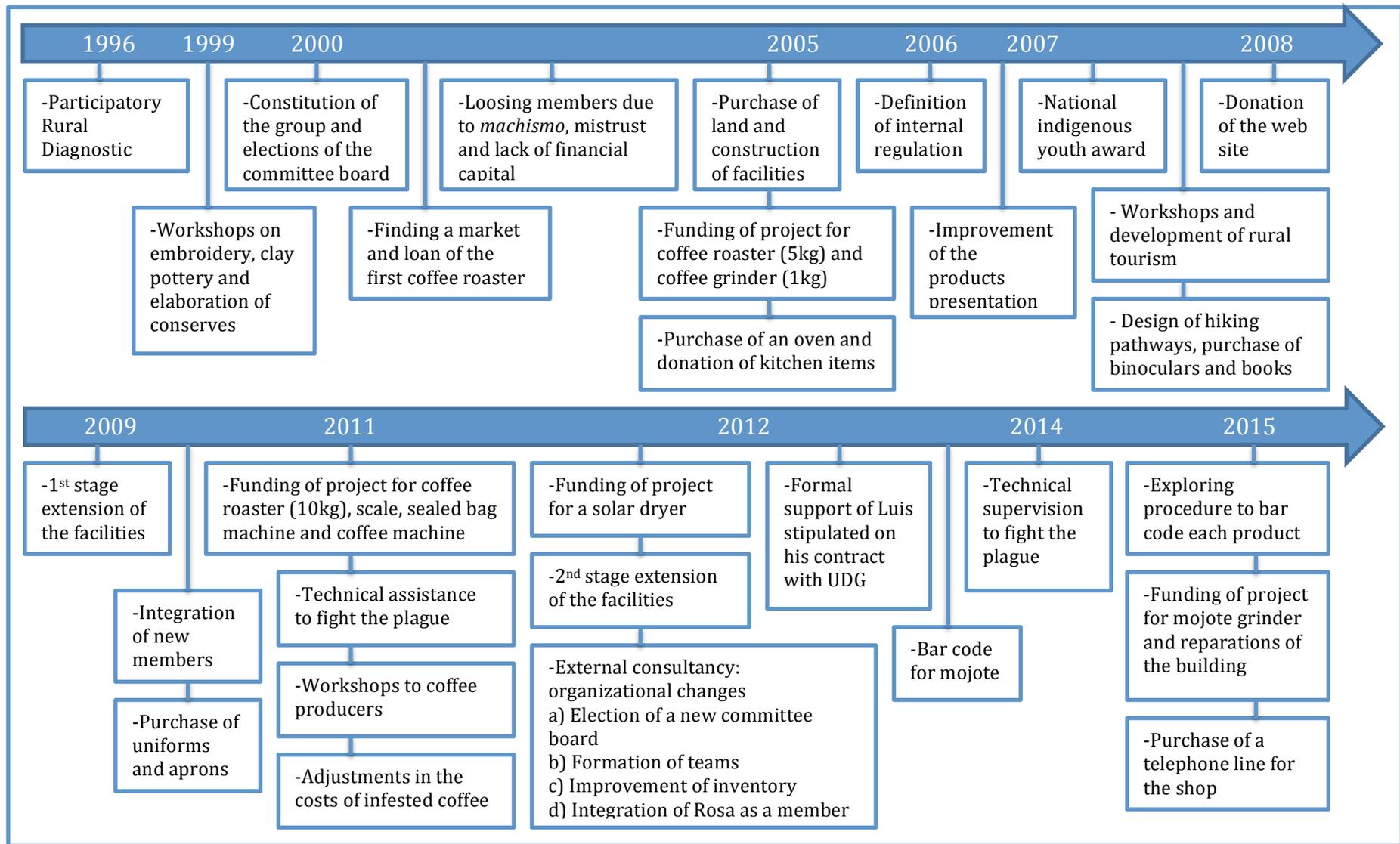


Figure 4. Timeline of the trajectory of the WoCoPA.

2.1. Volunteer promoter: leadership

Every single member at different levels has contributed with their passion and work to establish the WoCoPA where it currently stands, but it is important to highlight that during the individual interviews of the members, the majority recognized the special effort of two key actors, Rosa and her husband Luis. Rosa (image 12) and her willingness to teach what she loves, led to the formation of the first group gathering to make products to profit from. She acquired the name of volunteer promoter and due to the results of her leadership, other towns started to call her for guidance and the university even hired her for six months as a formal promoter. Inside the WoCoPA, she has been carrying out a big part of the function of publisher, innovator and acquirer of the funds, but most importantly, she keeps the working spirit alive.



Image 12. Rosa.

“I would like to keep doing this, forming groups and encouraging them to move forward with their own resources to preserve and make the most of it. I believe people can be happy in their villages; they don't have to divide the families with migration. They do so because they think there are no job opportunities, but they don't consider that depends on you to create, to build and to strengthen the initiatives to make them happen”.

The WoCoPA has not a centralized control because it is a cooperative where decisions are taken as a group, but the opinion of Rosa highly influences the decisions. She was not included in the cooperative until 2012, before she did not get economic benefits from the common shares, but the effort she invested was equal or even more than many of the others. Some members told me it was not fair when she was not included because she has been the solid pillar of the group. “When we had the external consultancy they suggested including Rosa. There was opposition by a few members, but many of us stand up for Rosa and as a majority we won” (Gaby).

Since the beginning, Rosa has led all the monthly and extraordinary meetings. She is not only the voice of the group as a mediator between the members and external actors, but she is also a conciliator among the group members during moments of discomfort or disagreements on organizational decisions, having the important role of maintaining the balance. For instance, she intercedes and mediates if someone needs a substitution or a loan from the group. In addition she brings new ideas to improve the work. She and the ex-president of the group, who presided for more than ten years, were the most popular faces of the group and gave plenty of interviews, which resulted in published articles and television reports.

Another key actor is Luis, who formally began to work with the WoCoPA in 2012, but was an important actor for the group since long before. Primarily responsible for production, he gained the respect of group members and over time, and his voice began to be heard. The link of the group with the university began with Luis' job. At the beginning he was only in charge of the maintenance of the community centre of the university at Cuзалapa, a place where the researchers stay during fieldwork. Through the years, his responsibilities have been increasing, and today, supporting the WoCoPA is officially included as a task on his contract with the CUCSUR. He is in charge of the technical parts (functioning of the machines) and the processing, since he is the only one who knows how to get the precise roasting of coffee beans. He also makes most of the deliveries, taking advantage of owning a car, and he supervises the profits and production of the common products in coordination with the treasurer. He has also indirectly encouraged the work of Rosa, because he has a stable job providing for the basic needs of the family.

2.2. Gaining human capital

Over the years the group has received training by different programs and institutions in a variety of subjects; they would take any available option of learning. At the beginning, they had workshops to gain skills in elaboration of products to explore new alternatives of profit such as elaboration of conserves, clay pottery and embroidery, which were imparted by the CUCSUR. Later they got useful courses, also by the university, to improve their managerial skills. They especially remember one related to learning how to set prices by calculating the costs; “that helped us to defend our prices, acknowledging the value of our products” (Rosa). The secretariat of public education, through the program “cultural mission,” provided some courses which helped the group to broaden the individual products they sold at the store, for instance, by adding handcrafts. Other workshops also helped this cause, improving their skills on making cookies, prickly pear toasts and ointments, among other products. The most recent training was related to methods to control the current plague that is affecting the coffee trees. The group does not keep the newfound knowledge to themselves, but most of the time they share it with other people in the village.

The WoCoPA has participated in several events organized by FONAES, RENDRUS, the CUCSUR, and CONANP, among others. The members are not able to remember all the occasions, but they have kept all the diplomas that are sometimes given after the event. They have fourteen certificates of participation on expo-ferias, one of taking a workshop on “Challenges of women to export regional products”, two attendances to symposiums, three diplomas of attendance to events as expositors, and four recognitions: the honorific mention in the contest of regional handcraft by the CUCSUR in 1997; the national award of indigenous youth given by the SEP in 2007; the recognition of prominent farmer in the rural sector by SAGARPA in 2010; and the award of the link university-society by the UDG in 2014. The members said that from each experience they have taken very much; they have learnt new ways of thinking and working, and they have also observed different

products, which encouraged them to be creative.

New equipment also brought the necessity to acquire new skills to make it work properly. For instance, in 2005 when the funding of the first coffee roaster and coffee grinder was approved, the cost of training was included in the policies of the project sponsor by the general direction of the state employment service of Jalisco. However this instruction never took place, perhaps due to diversion of funds. Nevertheless, they learnt. They remember “No one came to teach us, we experienced burning the coffee beans until we learnt”. For the case of the second acquisition of machinery in 2011, they got the training; in this case, the project was from the SEDESOL and was intermediated by the operators of the ARD of PESA. The most challenging was the manoeuvre of the coffee machine, since it was something completely new. They had to learn because it was a daily service not only asked by the clients but also by the members who enjoy having their cappuccinos (image 13) every morning. Some members mastered the use of the machine after the training, but others had to keep practicing.



Image 13. Cappuccino made by a WoCoPA member.

“I was terrified to use it because I thought I could break it, but I said to myself <the machine can’t beat you>, so I disassembled it, saw how it worked from the inside and I got determine to try out and overcome my fear until I succeed” (Delia).

The skills acquired by each member were increasing, as well as the work they had to do. In 2009 they were unable to cope with the work. They faced the need to hire two additional persons to help them clean the coffee beans and chose two women (a sister and a daughter in law of the WoCoPA members) who used to occasionally help out for free, but would now contribute daily work, so a payment was promised. After the arrangements were made, they had worked for three months but no payment was made, so the cooperative made them an offer. Instead of paying them in cash for their services, the group invited them to join the WoCoPA, and the ladies agreed. The entry fee is 1,500 pesos (88 euros) but they were condoned to pay because it was equivalent to the payment for their previous work.

The different workshops shaped the project itself. With new skills they were able to widen the alternatives of getting income and also improved their productivity. They are making internal adjustments to respond to the increasing demand. To put it into perspective, the WoCoPA bought 238 kg of coffee beans in 2012, 357 kg in 2013, and 688 kg in 2014 (estimated data based on the purchases of the cooperative registered on their accountability books) representing a yearly increase of 50% and 92% respectively, implying an important increase on human

capital to cope with the work, not just on quantity but also on training and on internal organization to improve their performance. They have also provided more job opportunities to the local producers who sell the raw materials.

2.3. The first battle to be fought: *machismo*

During the first workshops, the participants were up to thirty, but by 2000 when they constituted, the number decreased to fourteen. Multiple factors lead to this decline, but the predominant cause was the opposition of the husbands based on three main reasons. The first concerned the use of the women's time, as many husbands preferred that their wives instead focus on fulfilling the tasks of the house, such as providing food, doing laundry and cleaning the house; secondly, the husbands were possessive of their wives, not liking the fact that they would serve other males; and thirdly, the men were distressed by the potential message that would be sent, as it was common in their society to believe that if a woman works, it is because the husband doesn't provide enough for their families.

The current members are not only aware of the trouble with the *machismo* (male chauvinism), in fact, the majority have had to face this obstacle personally. A couple of these experiences are relayed below:

"The fact that I was working didn't please my husband, especially when I had to stay until late, he thought I was just talking and wasting my time. One day I took some coffee beans to clean them at home, and they were infested with the plague that made it even more difficult to clean. I asked him to do it while I was cooking, after a while he complains of being tired to have his head tilted down and his shoulders sagged. After that he understood how time consuming and difficult it was, now whenever I am working late, he even brings me something to eat or when I arrive home, he asks the children to cook because he knows I am very tired. He never complained again" (Lupe).

"My husband didn't allow me to come, I had to secretly do it, but he left to the *El Norte* for some months and I began to come daily, then we start the construction of the building and my children came to help. When my husband returned he wanted me to quit, but I told him <if you want me to quit then you'll have to pay me back all the money I invested>. He still doesn't like it, but with that argument he never complained again" (Rosa Canoitas).

"I was not able to attend the WoCoPA because I had too much work to do at my house and bringing the lunch every day to my husband's plot took me a lot of time. One day I decided to revolt. I told him <you go to your work and I go to mine, I can't be following you all the time>, he complained to our children because I didn't want to bring him the lunch. He thought they will force me, but instead they bought him a bicycle. <In this bicycle

you go to work and come back to have lunch and then you go working again>, the problem was solved” (Paula).

Having to confront their husbands made them stronger and they keep finding strategies to make arrangements at home. “We remain, the warriors, the most committed and hard-workers” (Paula). Some members confronted their husbands giving them convincing arguments showing the benefits of their work, others forced them to experience the work so they could understand better, they helped each other interceding when need it, others hid the fact they were working, but the husbands’ attitude didn’t stop them from continuing to work - they ignored them and at the end they conceded. They fought against a trend that was holding them back from experiencing the benefits of paid employment and they are an example of how it is possible to change even the most deeply rooted practice; that same determination is impacting the success of the WoCoPA.

2.4. Finding a market

The origin of the marketing strategies can be traced back to the year 2000, when the group was supported by the CUCSUR, who provided information about events where they could promote their products (mainly embroidery) and also offered transportation. With this support, they participated in many expos at local and regional level. During the same year, a member of the group came up with the idea of selling coffee; she was encouraged by the increasing amount of visitors, mostly university students at the community centre. They adopted the idea and began looking for coffee beans because there were not too many producers left, even though Cuzalapa was traditionally a place of coffee plantations. They offered customers cups of coffee, and as they sold well, the group began to plant their own coffee trees.

At first, the quality and presentation of the coffee left much to be desired. It was produced with artisanal methods that most of the time burnt the coffee beans and was packaged only in small plastic bags, nevertheless they sold. The consumers at the community centre were willing to buy the product because they valued local initiatives. Without being aware, the WoCoPA was selling not the product, but the meaning behind its production, the image of tradition to people who gave importance to local knowledge and wanted to experience it. On the other hand, another group of potential buyers were the people in the village, but for them the concept of local knowledge was not significant enough to make the purchase. According to Larco-Laurent (2010), people in the surroundings were accustomed to buying coffee in the stores (i.e. Nescafe) because the prices were attractive and also because of the popular belief that foreign products or products advertised on television had better quality than the local or regional.

The WoCoPA decided to expand and to look for new potential buyers, an arduous task. They got the help of CUCSUR and DRBSM who were interested in the project, and supported with training, logistics and transportation. The product began to be

advertised at touristy places on the coast 90 km away; it was only possible because Rosa and Saskia accompanied women who dared to go. It was a challenge not only because they were women who had never left their village, least of all to talk to strangers - especially if they are men - but even more so because they had to convince people to buy their product. They walked the beaches door to door facing scepticism, indifference or even rejection by the potential buyers. But they also found people willing to help and to give them an opportunity, like in the case of Martin, the owner of a restaurant on La Manzanilla beach (Larco-Lauren 2010).

“A woman with her children arrived to my restaurant to offer me coffee, I told them I was not interested because I was buying it in Guadalajara with a very good quality, also because I saw the stale coffee in a simple plastic bag. I said no and so she left. Some minutes after, Rosa arrived and told me I should reconsider buying the coffee because by purchasing it, I was helping a fair cause, to rescue the coffee trees because people in Cuzalapa were cutting them down due to the lack of profitability and incentives. She was very empathic, she seemed to say the truth and she was convinced that she was going to make me buy, and so I did”.

Once again, the selling marketing strategy was not about the product per se, but the philosophy behind its production. Martin remembers he was very impressed when he found out all the effort required for selling the product. Families from the surrounding areas travelled to the beach together, some went selling while others fished to have free food at their return to lower the expenditures. Someone lent them a place to cook and to sleep and every weekend so they could go sell. With the recurrent visits, they started what would be a friendship that lasts until today.

Martin showed the WoCoPA the products' flaws from a consumer perspective and helped them to improve their quality. He made them realize the problem of roasting the coffee with artisanal methods, sometimes being burnt, green or, in fact, not standardized. In addition, they had the problem of the grinding; they did not have the necessary size to be used in a coffee machine. He gave them a suggestion; they should focus on achieving better quality that makes



Image 14. Products of the WoCoPA.

the product sell itself instead of wasting their energy on selling a coffee that is not good. He was buying to the WoCoPA' coffee to help them, but he was using it on his pots as a fertilizer for the plants. Later, the women increased the quality, so he began to use it as a drink to sell. For a long period he started to obtain the WoCoPAs products like coffee, beans or tomatoes as exchange for the food he was preparing for them so they did not have to join the fishing group anymore. Now he complains with humour that he is not able to have the good coffee of the WoCoPA. If he wants it, he has to travel to Cuzalapa to get it from their shop.

The WoCoPA gained marketing assets and a place to sell, their facilities became a market in Cuzalapa. The first building where they worked and sold was the community centre of the University. In 2005, they moved to their own building and in 2012, they extended it. The presentation was much better, it began to look like a store to welcome the visitors, it also had space for a dining room in case customers wanted to sit and eat. Many people came to Cuzalapa with research purposes, and because they usually stayed at the community centre where Rosa's family also lived, many friendships were made and a willingness to contribute to the project in any kind grew. The WoCoPA got marketing assets such as a logo, presentation cards, design of the products' covers, banners, and more recently, a website. The members identified the presentation of the products (image 14) as one of their strengths since they have made considerable progress, and this has impacted sales.

“I was not feeling comfortable to offer my product during the first sale, we didn't have a nice bag nor a label. You don't feel good to offer a product that you know is way less qualified than others but that was our only option. We knew it was good because it didn't have agrochemicals but how do you demonstrate this to someone you don't know?” (Rosa).

The product is advertised in every possible fair, event and expo in the area, and as a result, different clients are looking now for the WoCoPA' products. Clients would often talk to the ex-president or to Rosa to make a request, since they had the telephone number from the promotional cards. Luis (Rosa's husband) has a car and helps them make the deliveries. Many foreigners, mostly Americans and Canadians, come to the store looking for the products, but they are seasonal customers since they stay in the beaches (80-130 km away) usually only during winter. Another group of seasonal customers are the migrants, who arrive during vacations and spend a lot before going back to USA to take local products with them. A customer mentioned he feels very proud of being able to find products of good quality in the area and that the products meet the requirements to cross customs. Many people from the surrounding areas are also assiduous clients, such as some restaurants and a naturist medical centre of a very high prestige.

“I live in Cuautitlan (11 km away). My daughter gave me a cup of coffee that was delicious, I asked her where she bought it and she gave me the indications to get here. Now I recurrently come to buy it, I like the fact that it is organic and from the region. I was very surprised the first time to see the variety of products they have” (WoCoPA' client).

The new goal is to place their brand in different stores, but special requirements are needed, such as consistency on their quality or to have a bar code. The path to achieve this has already started with the support of external volunteers, for instance, the local honey was sent for inspection to a laboratory and they found out one farmer was not being organic, so they stopped buying from him. The same case with the mojote, a researcher from Mexico City did the necessary studies to provide the nutritional information to put on the back label, as this was one of the requirements to get the bar code. Until now, mojote is the only product with a bar code, but the DRBSM is exploring the possibilities to obtain them for the rest of the products.

2.5. Acquisition of first assets: improving quality

With a little information about the quality of the coffee they had, once they got feedback from a client, they realized the urgency to change the way of production and the importance to acquire physical assets. A professor of the UDG knew there was an abandoned coffee roaster in a nearby town. He took the women in a car to ask permission to borrow the machine; it was from an extinct cooperative. They succeeded with the mission and came back with their new roaster. The change in quality was substantial, but the machinery was old and very demanding in time and energy, so they decided to ask for financial support from the SEDESOL.

Acquisition of new equipment was one of the most urgent requirements. The first time they applied for support was in 2005. A professor in the neighbourhood suggested that they request assistance for a project that they had already commenced and on which they needed support. He provided guidance in their application to obtain a new 5 kg coffee roaster and a 1 kg coffee grinder. The procedure to get funding from the government can be very complex for rural areas, as the transaction costs are high, and to obtain information and complete the requirements on time is very difficult. Changes in deadlines are especially problematic for rural groups. Paula, the first president of the WoCoPA told me how it happened.

“I was very surprised when I got the call to inform me that we got the machines and we had to go tomorrow to the capital to pick them up. They told me to come with all the members at a certain day and a certain time in the capital and if we didn’t show up they would give the machines to another group. I told them they could not do that to us and begged them to give us one more day to be there. I explained the situation - that we didn’t have money or a car, and how far and difficult it was to get to the capital because we only had a daily departure in the morning, there was no way we could have been there. If I would have been someone else I would have pretended to be deaf, hang up and do nothing. But instead I ran to find out what to do. I could not find the teacher who helped us anywhere. People suggested that I ask for help in the city council; the brother of a member worked in the local office and with his help we got the support. They told

us to not worry, they would send a car to pick us up at 5 in the morning and they would call to the capital to tell them to wait for us. We gathered in one place because we are from different villages and after many inconveniences we got in the car. It was late, I asked Rosa to call to tell them we were going to be late. Finally we got there and we got our first new machine to work with the coffee”.

The project was elaborated between the teacher and Rosa, but the WoCoPA members had to go to the capital to sign the papers. They didn't have to pay anything; the only condition was to use the machines. In a period of one year they had inspection a couple of times to find out they were using it. In one occasion the national audit officer arrived to ask them about the received training to use the machines. They said to be very surprised to hear that question because they never got anyone to train, they had just learned on their own.

During 2005, they were also purchasing the land for their facilities with their own money; this increased the commitment and empowerment of the initiative, it changed the mentality to acknowledge the feasibility of their financial power. This fact, make them believe they were able to buy whatever needed if they decided so. Around that time, they were offered a course to make pizzas; they proposed to chip in to buy their own oven to continue with the project, which did not last long because the cost of the items resulted in high prices for the pizzas and besides, there was no demand. Throughout the year items are donated by different actors; from the refrigerator, plates, glasses, cutlery, pot, pans and other kitchen items to machines used in the production process. However, when they identify the necessity of new items, they communicate the fact during the monthly meetings and vote to proceed to make the purchase with their own savings. For example, they bought uniforms and aprons and recently they bought the glasses for cappuccinos and are adjusting the budget to get a phone line in their shop.

2.6. The moment of investments and losing members

The initiative was working and they saw the necessity to have their own building. They agreed to have a fee; each had to pay 30 euros to complete the purchase price for buying a piece of land. A treasurer would collect the money, but some strange actions led to a growth of mistrust.

“One day the treasurer had a bad-temper, she yells at us and said we needed to complete the payment to speed up the process of moving to the new local. Then we found out she used the money for personal purposes, she paid it later, but I got really mad, we discussed because there were other problems on top of that and so that day I quit the cooperative, it was not just me, other members have also withdrawn, either because they were sick of some behaviours or because the fee was expensive for them” (Cuca).

In 2005 they moved to their own building constructed with their own resources. Many of the members remember this event as the most touching. Commitment grew in the group because it was constructed with collective effort; they had to sweat to build it. Each member had to find someone to help as a construction worker, a son, a cousin, a nephew or someone they knew. The women were very proud of the result, but the place was small, as the kitchen and machines were sharing the same area.

In 2009 the director of the DRBSM helped them to win a grant project from PROCODES to extend the building, and in 2012 they received support again for the second stage of construction. Today they have a warehouse, a kitchen with a dining area, space for the store, the area of production, and a complete bathroom. They are pleased with the extension, however the roof is not in good condition and they need to make repairs to it.

2.7. Internal regulations

In 2000 all the members gathered at the community centre for a meeting. The purpose was to have a formal document where they were identified as members of the WoCoPA; this was important because they would be recognized as a group and they could ask permission to use the common property, such as the land where the coffee trees were planted. The representative of communal goods signed it. They elected a president, a secretary and a treasurer.

The president position has remained the same person for more than ten years. She pointed out that it was a lot of responsibility for one single person; she had to decide the work every day gave instructions to the members. She also had to take notes of all the production and the profits. The requests were made mostly to her telephone so she felt the responsibility to lead the production to fulfil the demand. She remembers those days when deliveries of coffee beans were made late at night and they had to stay there to dry it. She complained, and one of the changes was to delimit the working hours to 6 pm, after that time no deliveries were accepted.

In 2006 they wrote internal regulations. They structured it into eight parts: 1) Description of the group goals, economics as well as social; 2) Specifications of the production process, the characteristics of the coffee products and the delimitations of the market; 3) Membership requirements; 4) Rights and duties of the members; 5) Delineation of the committee board and description of the responsibilities of the president, secretary and treasurer; 6) Carrying out of assemblies; 7) Stipulations of the common fund; and 8) Penalizations and fines.

At the beginning, selling the products implied travel to other villages, and usually the same 3-4 volunteers had to do it because the others always had an excuse. The problem was fixed by making a roll list to attend to the events; the next pair on the list will go to sell the products of the cooperative and the individual products. For the latter, the profits are not equal depending on the quantity of your individual

products' sales. The pair who goes to sell takes a box with the individual products, but some members altered the organization of the box, putting in more of their personal merchandise so they had advantage to sell more. This caused a lot of discomfort among members, breeding feelings of mistrust.

A current case that represents a danger in breaking the harmony of the group is related to the feelings that some people are prioritizing their own interest over the communal benefits. I will give an example to illustrate this. Every day there are two members at the store in charge of selling and tending to the costumers and also to do tasks related to production, but in case they need to use the machines, it is supposed to be under the supervision of Luis. Abnormalities started to be recurrent the same day of the week (i.e. all Thursdays), suggesting that the duo in charge of that day were using the machines without informing anyone. It was eventually discovered that some members roasted the coffee beans and packed them for sale at lower prices. Members are allowed to produce for their own consumption or for their families; this has been the argument on which these members have backed up their unlawful actions, saying that they did not register because they brought their own coffee beans to roast and grind them. Those responsible did not see the flaw in their actions, ignoring the fact that a customer returned the product because the quality was not good, due to the fact that she roasted the coffee beans without the supervision of Luis who is the expert. She ended up discrediting the brand and is making competition for her own cooperative.

The problem of selling individual products is that it creates jealousy and rivalry among some members. I heard complaints about "copyright", complaining that some members copy the products that are selling well and later they start to make it exactly the same way or sometimes even better, capturing the majority of the individual sales. There are some ideas about how to organize it in the sense that everyone has the same opportunities, like taking turns and waiting until the product is not sold to supply it again, but formal actions have not been taken yet.

The organization for the small grocery store has been making some adaptations. First, they had preferential prices for the members, but friends and relatives were asking them to buy for them in order to obtain the discounts. The profits were very low so they decided to give the same prices to everyone, even for members.

Economic and spatial differences among members give flexibility to the tasks they have to accomplish. Is not the same to live in Cuzalapa than to live 3 or 5 km away, and is not the same if your husband has a car to give you a ride or if you have to walk. It's commonly seen that members who live far away get replaced by a family member, or they pay for someone who is willing to work extra. During my stay in Cuzalapa a member who was really busy working on a political campaign was in charge of the two stores, and she hired her niece to replace her.

Savings to do investments also have evolved with the years. At the beginning all the profits from the cooperative's products were equally divided among the

members during the monthly meeting and very little was left to make investments. To shops new inputs were a problem because there was never enough budget for them. In 2012 Luis began to take charge of the inventory of the cooperative products, and he suggested giving an estimated wage to all the members and keep the rest in the bank. There was scepticism, but at the end they agreed and it was implemented. Every month each member receives at least \$500 pesos (30 euros), but it can increase if the sales are higher, and with that method they have been able to raise in two years around 10,500 euros, planning to invest in new equipment and structural repairs in the building. “Now we have our own budget to make investments where we need” (Luis).

The monthly meetings have been very beneficial to the group. The members said they use those moments to talk about problems and necessities and to try to find the solutions. It helps to improve communication and to inform the members. It represents also the day on which they will get payments and make agreements, adding value to the importance of their assistance.

2.8. Diversification of activities: Ecotourism

In 2007, the WoCoPA got the national indigenous youth award named after Peter Gerritsen, a professor of the UDG and Marisa Gutiérrez. His student, led the procedures. They both were working together in researching multifunctionality and sustainable rural tourism alternatives. The results of a diagnostic developed under thesis work to value the potential rural tourism in the area suggested a high rate of attraction to Cuzalapa based on the natural resources, cultural activities, folklore and traditional farming activities. They concluded that the potential was considered sufficient to begin a path to sustainable development through rural tourism, but first needing to improve the infrastructure of the area to make it viable (Gerritsen and Gutierrez, 2008). For the latter, they invested the prize of the national award to fund the required infrastructure and equipment needed to start the activities. Two pathways for hiking were constructed, bilingual signs were placed along the paths, and posters were designed and printed. The members also attended a training course to guide hiking tours and bird watching; this is complemented by the acquisition of binoculars and bird guides.

The adoption of rural tourism brought not just a new alternative of income, but also changes in the organization and new perspectives towards the environmental surroundings. Since the beginning, the members were accustomed to interacting with students and people from abroad due to the activities of the University in the area. Also, some of their clients in the tourist places at the beach started to recommend the place. Tourists looking for alternative experiences began to travel to Cuzalapa to look around. Foreigners mostly from Canada and USA were visiting the WoCoPA with their huge cameras and interpreters of English and French to be able to understand them. The members consented to being photographed and became used to foreigners.

Today they offer organized tours with fixed prizes, and all you have to do is call them in advance and they will prepare to show you the natural and cultural wealth around their village, a presentation about the production process of the WoCoPA and they will prepare a menu of delicious local cuisine to satisfy all the food lovers.

2.9. Projects investments and acquisition of new physical assets

The required equipment to improve productivity and quality had a high price. However, they used the assistance of some external actors who helped in the process because they could not access the information about the available programs and their requirements. At this time, in 2011, the WoCoPA acquired important equipment to increase their productivity through SEDEDOL, with the people from PESA as intermediaries. They obtained a new roaster of bigger capacity (10 kg), a sealed bag machine, a coffee machine and a scale. All the equipment was brought to their shop and they just had to sign for it, there was no need to travel anywhere else. Some time after PESA provided a solar dryer to speed up the process of dehydrating the coffee beans, because before they dried it on the roof and it was exposed to rain and dust, but now the coffee is protected. For the latter project they had to contribute a small percent of the budget, but they took it from the savings in the bank.

For the less expensive, but equally necessary items, they had to developed different strategies to obtain them, since most of them are not available in the village, such as the case of the printed labels or products' bags. The children of the members are usually the intermediaries to bring those items to the cooperative, for instance the coffee, pipian and mojote bags and the honey bottles are all bought from the capital. The son of a member who lives in El Grullo, a place in between the capital and Cuzalapa, makes the order and receives the package, and he makes the delivery when he goes to the village. This is the same situation for the printed labels, but those are available in El Grullo. There are other special cases like the hair caps to maintain the hygiene standard, provided by those responsible at the medical centre.

Unanticipated technical problems arose, as they do not have the proper machine to ground mojote and haven't identified any store which sells it. They are using a grinder with special adapted pieces that work for the size and properties of mojote, since it is thicker and bigger than the coffee beans, but it often breaks down. Currently the PESA program is helping investigating where they can find the grinder with the specifications they have discovered they need. PESA will most likely finance the purchase of the machine. The facilitators of the program asked for the lacking equipment to be more efficient in the production of coffee. The suggestions were the mojote grinder, a new roaster, a new bag sealer or a computer system for the shop. The members voted and the mojote grinder won. Before they acquire it, they need to receive training, and everyone should know how to use it, as they will follow up for at least five years.

2.10. Plague in the coffee plantations

In 2011 the coffee beans sold to the women by the farmers were damaged with the coffee berry borer plague. The presence of the outbreak of the beetles caused plenty of damage, and farmers said they lost productivity. For instance from one sack of coffee beans they could use only a third and get paid only for that. For the women it represents a loss in the quality of coffee, and therefore a potential risk to lose clients. They had to be very careful when cleaning the coffee beans because if plenty of the infested beans get into the machines then the final outcome would have a bad taste. Therefore the task of cleaning coffee became much more demanding.

The economic consequences of the plague had a deeper problem, as the WoCoPA decided to pay half the price for sacks of coffee beans with the plague. They are negotiating a new deal to make the farmers responsible to clean their own coffee before selling and the WoCoPA will pay the normal price, but they will assure the coffee is mostly clean and will save energy and time on not cleaning it themselves.

Technical assistance was taken. Some of the WoCoPA members travelled to another state to take a workshop about how to control the pest. They first applied the learned practices on their coffee plantations and it worked, so they replied to the workshops to share the knowledge to the farmers in the village so they could stop spreading it. The plague remains in the coffee plantations, but after the remedy it diminished considerably. They are currently having periodic visits from the DRBSM to monitor the correct use of the techniques to fight the plague.

The sharing of knowledge and the provision of work to the local farmers helped WoCoPA to slowly adopt a positive initiative in the area. The WoCoPA has gain respect, to speak and to be heard. I was myself in a meeting with coffee producers; they would not begin the meeting until the WoCoPA representatives were present and constantly consulted their opinions.

“They work very well and they are very organized, every day they come to work. They have managed to do things right. They got support from the university to sell their products, but before there was no one to buy coffee here, now there are clients so we can bring our coffee beans to the WoCoPA and they sell it. Also thanks to them now we got some attention, we can get support to get coffee trees, economical support, technological packages or infrastructure via SAGARPA to begin to produce it again. Is very nice to have them in Cuzalapa, also because when they ground coffee it smells amazing” (Coffee producer).

Ending the plague required a collective effort. Some members mention that it is one of the biggest threats to the cooperative because it considerably lowers productivity and if the commitment to eradicate the pest is not seriously adopted by all the producers then their individual efforts are worth nothing.

2.11. External consultancy: organizational adjustments

Actors from the UDG and the RBSM are able to influence the decision-making processes that affect the structure of the internal organization. As Law and Callon (1992) pointed out, the vast amount of actors included to express their points of view sometimes make it difficult to arrive at a decision.

Before 2012 the group was structured as was established in the regulations, but with the help of external consultancy they made some changes to improve their organization. The current situation was analysed, the causes of the problems were identified and the main outcomes were that the person whose turn it is should register all the sales to fully account to the person in charge, the creation of inventories; election of a new president with a sitting period of three years, since the foundation of the group the same person held the mandate; formation of teams to attend large visits, to prepare their meals and to guide the tours.

To make inventories was very demanding work at the beginning, but they kept doing it because they knew it was something necessary to bring benefits, so they looked for a better way to do it. The members remember how time consuming it was, because every day they had to count all the items in the store and it was a lot of work. Later they decided to do it in teams. Now there are three responsible every month. The first is Luis, who does the inventory for the cooperative items (coffee, mojote, pipian, jamaica, honey and pumpkin seeds). The second person checks the individual items that members bring to sell (this role does not include all the members, only those who put products in the store). The role for the third inventory concerns everybody and is for the small grocery store, and this person receives a payment of \$200 pesos (12 euros) at the end of the month. The three responsible have to go every afternoon to do the cash closing to check if the sales were ok from the duo in charge. In addition, at the end of the month they have to do a complete inventory, make a report to announce the profits in the monthly meeting and pass the charge to the next person. In this way, they gain more control of their transactions and it seems that profits are rising.

The formations of two teams to attend the visitors have had a very good response. Before, the guiding and cooking for the visitors was in charge of whoever wanted to do it, but sometimes no one volunteered and that was a problem. With the division they know when to go, and when resting they feel relaxed because of the security that the other team is taking good care of the group.

The eleven points described to lift up the cooperative from the actors' perspective show the livelihood strategies of the WoCoPA members, which relied on external support consisting of acquisition of machines, complementary infrastructure, and managerial, marketing and technical skills. The complementary pathways that they have developed with their own and with the external support mentioned before consist of diversifying products and services, reaching the market, improving infrastructure and improving their organization. However, there are two main threats that haven't been solved yet, the pest infesting the coffee plantations in the area and the relationships of trust inside the group.

3. Changes in the livelihood assets

The different capitals of the group decreased or increased based on the collective strategies. During the first years they relied mainly in the relations among villagers to form a group, the social capital (SC). They needed just the skills of one person to teach, the human capital (HC), and a little income, the financial capital (FC), to purchase few assets, the physical capital (PC).

The key element mainly in the beginning, but also throughout the years, has been the support of the local promoter in terms of time, knowledge and motivation. Furthermore, the group was inspired to implement their skills and abilities (HC) through different workshops supported mainly by CUCSUR and the DRBM. With time they improved their SC through the expansion of their market and the external support that arrived from different institutions. An important event was to purchase the land, the natural capital (NC), to have a place to build their building; they made it possible with their own FC and HC through their children's labour. Later came the support of the DRBM to extend their infrastructure, along with the acquisition of machines (PC) to improve productivity, which was also sponsored by governmental programs. The success of the initiative in terms of more income brought internal problems, decreasing the SC. In addition, they had a decrease of NC due the pests' problems. The SC, HC and PC keep improving with the group's savings and the diverse external support that they are receiving. Hence the FC is increasing too.

4. Collective livelihood strategies

In the table 5, I point out the implemented actions that the WoCoPA members have collectively developed to reach their outcomes. It is important to mention that even though gender equity was not mentioned to be a collective outcome, it is considered an important individual goal that was difficult to be achieved, but through the collective action it has been indirectly being reached. The same situation is noticeable in the inclusion of political voice, since the WoCoPA is acquiring power in the rural sector through the coffee producers, who are valuing their efforts and taking their opinion in consideration for the decision-making process.

Table 5. Collective livelihood strategies of the WoCoPA.

Livelihood outcome	Collective livelihood strategies
<p>More income</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of job for the members 2. Expand their markets 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversification of activities: market oriented, rural non-farm (eco-tourism) and self-employment; and elaboration of new products through workshops to gain new skills. 2. Acquiring their own installation to sell their products, improving the quality of the products, obtaining support to sponsor their costs of transportation to join different events, and implementing marketing strategies: i) using cultural and social aspects to advertise them, ii) obtaining information of places and fares to participate, iii) improving the presentation of the products' packages.
<p>Increased well-being</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equal treatment 2. Internal relationships of trust 3. Inclusion of family 4. Avoid migration 5. Reduce labor intensive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having a positive leader, providing same rights and responsibilities to all members mandated in the regulations, rotating the positions of responsibility, and making a roll list for attendance of events. 2. Implementing the use of inventories, informing the profits and production to all members (transparency), making a supervisory committee and using the machines with the supervision of the technician. 3. Increasing production, giving them the opportunity to bring products to sell, getting help in: i) construction labor, ii) work duties (cleaning coffee) ii) obtaining information (internet), acquiring inputs (for those who live in bigger villages). 4. Providing job opportunities and being a broker to obtain governmental support for investments in coffee plantations. 5. Acquiring infrastructure and adopting new skills.
<p>Reduced vulnerability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of patrimony 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having a positive leader with availability of time, borrowing installations of CUCSUR while acquiring financial capital, involving some children in the labor of the first construction, making savings to de investments, getting support of different institutions to improve infrastructure and to obtain producer goods.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preserve and regain resources 2. Suppress pests 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of local resources in all their products, sustainable way of production in the coffee plantations and giving a tangible value to the maintenance of the coffee trees (not to cut them). 2. Getting training to learn techniques to fight the pest, obtaining support to cover the costs and giving workshops to train the coffee producers.

5. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COLLECTIVE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

The vulnerable context in which the members of the cooperative unfold their strategies, reduced their space for maneuver due to the marginalization of women in rural areas and the low involvement in social and political institutions. However, to reduce vulnerability members are creating patrimony. Initiative that has been mainly promoted by the CUCSUR, the DRBSM and IMECBIO as well as by its own members. A positive aspect is that the objectives of these both organizations are aligned with the objectives of the cooperative, and those are respectively to contribute to the sustainable development in the South Coast region and the effective protection of the area, as well as the participation of local people for embrace the conservation. Even though the national forces are aiming development through the neoliberalism, the WoCoPA is protected by the regional development thinking of the powerful forces in the area, which exists due to the privileged geographical area where the WoCoPA is located.

The barrier of the lack of market was broken through the continuous support of the CUCSUR and Rosa, since the lack of transportation was cover by the first and the time and motivation of the leader was crucial for its continuation. Two of the ministries that are present in the area through their programs, aim to create domestic markets (SAGARPA) and organizations of fairs (FONAES). However, no actions taken by the first and the second organizes exhibitions, but has not brought potential customers. Some members complain after returning from the fair, saying that no previous promotions for encourage people to go to visit the events, resulting in an investment with little benefit.

Two objectives were achieved at the collective level, even though its members did not mention them. First is the political voice as the group is taken into account more frequently for decision-making processes at the local coffee production, and the second gender dynamics, as noted by Arias (2013) that is not the objective of the cooperative but has been one of the main benefits of their members who have suffered from male chauvinism. However, she points out that the actions of the members of the cooperative are an extension of women proper role but the political voice goes beyond of its traditional role.

I do not go in seasonal prices of coffee and the inclusion of seasonal shocks in the context of vulnerability, either I include laws relating to the export of the products or, for example, the cost of organic certification. For future researches this may be included.

In this chapter, I presented the collective livelihood outcomes and I tracked the trajectory of the WoCoPA, pointing out the events of success that led to establishment, but also difficulties and how they stepped forward as a group to achieve their goals with collective action. Throughout with the chapter I provided examples of the events of the conflict that caused danger to the existence of the

cooperative, to help the reader to find similarities of the causes that make projects fail in their own realities. In this case there are the internal organizations, the relationships among members and the plague that is currently impacting coffee productivity. I also made an analysis of how the livelihood assets have been impacted with developed strategies. At the end I identified the collective livelihood strategies.

In the next chapter, I will sum up the arguments made along the thesis to conclude in both the individual and collective efforts to climb out of poverty, and to assess whether these efforts lead to positive or negative outcomes. I will conclude with respect to the context within which the livelihoods of the members of the WoCoPA are unfolded, to the current individual livelihood strategies that the women who are members of the WoCoPA are implementing to alleviate poverty, and the trajectory that the WoCoPA has been following as a vehicle to alleviate the poverty of its members.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

The research explored how people in Cuzalapa get out of poverty traps by implementing different livelihood strategies. This adds to the debate of poverty alleviation in indigenous communities. Individual and collective efforts to climb out of poverty were revealed, and the efforts assessed lead to positive outcomes for its members and for the community. The three research questions were answered, the context within which the livelihoods of the members of the WoCoPA unfold, the current individual livelihood strategies that the women who are members of the WoCoPA are implementing to alleviate poverty, and the trajectory that the WoCoPA has been following as a vehicle to alleviate the poverty of its members. Besides, I have gone beyond the questions to elaborate on the sustainability of the livelihood strategies.

I argue that the sustainable livelihood framework should remain central to development since it is very effective to explain the complexity of the different strategies implemented by the rural poor. In addition, it helps to include the dynamism in the processes around livelihoods. This research provides to the revitalization of the framework by injecting a more thoroughgoing political analysis, dynamics and the power and politics. However, the livelihood framework did not explicitly allow me to see the indirect goals reached by the cooperative such as the impacts on gender and inclusion of political voice. The furthest analysis of the sustainability of the livelihood outcomes made me realize the effects of the developed strategies into the context. Therefore, the context is crucial to the livelihood framework and should not be left aside.

Development is and has been changing its meaning over time, the latest big shift in development thinking was with the entry of neoliberalism releasing the role of the state, replacing it with market forces and international institutions. The rural poor haven't benefitted from this kind of development. Hence, post-development thinking is emerging, including new aspects such as empowerment, gender and environmental concerns. There are powerful forces influencing the direction of development. Intellectuals are mainly in international institutions of development, such as the IMF, the World Bank and the UN agencies; but governmental ministries of developing countries, and NGOs usually direct actions in the countries. In Mexico, there is a high influence of the PRI in development concerns, being the main leaders of neoliberalism. The reason lies behind a tide relation among the political party and a capitalistic class, who has benefitted from this relation and has been gaining control over institutions that are included in the decision-making processes prioritising policies related to transnational economic theories.

In Mexican rural areas strong groups are found within the community, the result of the agrarian reform and the formation of *ejidos*, which give an extra layer of structure to the indigenous communities. Political parties, especially the PRI have

strong influence in Cuzalapa transmitted through the *caciques*. Important attention needs to be paid to land scarcity and the relation with the general assembly, since now the cooperative is under threat to lose the use of the communal land where the coffee plantation is located. In addition to the rural areas in Mexico, the sector that has historically faced increased marginalization is the women of indigenous communities, who are usually located in rural areas. It is in this intersection of attributes where the group of study belongs.

The context in which the members of the WoCoPA unfold their strategies, reduced their space for maneuvering due to the marginalization of women in rural areas, their exclusion of the process of decision making at the local level by the *caciques* and their exclusion in national development, due to the adoption of neoliberal thinking. However, the decreasing birth rates in the population seem to positively impact the achievement of well-being as well as the immediate benefits of migration. In addition, the post-development thinking brought international development institutions and the intellectual forces to put more pressure to incorporate the poor into the decision-making process and to recommend to national governments to promote local development. I did not go into seasonal prices of coffee and the inclusion of seasonal shocks in the context of vulnerability; either I include laws relating to the export of the products or, for example, the cost of organic certification. For future investigations this may be included.

The geographical location of Cuzalapa has brought benefits to the WoCoPA since beach tourism represents an important demand for their services and allocation of their products. In addition, being within a Biosphere Reserve provides the benefits of natural resources, which allows them to diversify their activities, but also provides constant monitoring and supervision since sustainable rural development is aligned with the objectives of the allied institutions. This means that even though the national forces are aiming development through the neoliberalism, the WoCoPA is protected by the regional development thinking of the powerful forces in the area, which exists due to the privileged geographical area where the WoCoPA is located.

The basic services of the community still need more improvement, but at least they have available roads, transportation, electricity and a telephone line, which allow the members to develop marketing strategies and to maintain a flow of clients.

The transforming structures and processes in which the members of the WoCoPA are involved show the scarcity of markets in the community, except for some small stores. However, farmers are partially integrated into markets through different strategies. Besides, more attention is given to fairs and events to promote local products. Two of the ministries that are present in the area through their programs aim to create domestic markets and the organization of fairs. But no actions taken by the first and the second are done to organize exhibitions, but it has not brought potential customers to the cooperative. However, the analysis of the impact of the present institutions in the area is beyond this research. Impact in

the market has been the WoCoPA itself becoming an important place to trade in the area.

Many institutions aim to contribute to rural development and to improve the conditions of rural poor. The DRBM, the IMECBIO and the CUCSUR are key elements in the development of the area, besides four different secretariats that also sponsor programs in Cuzalapa: public education, social development, economy and agriculture, livestock, rural development, fisheries and food, in addition to the national commission of natural protected areas. Each of them has a variety of interventions in the community, mainly providing cash transfers or physical support to collective actions for the case of the governmental programs. The factors and institutions mainly influenced the access of the livelihood assets of the WoCoPA members.

The individual livelihood outcomes have changed across generations; first the strategies were centered mainly to improved food security and to reduced vulnerability. Later on, increases in income and increases in well-being were more tangible since the necessity to improve infrastructure was a constraint to get access to different services like education and benefit from markets. In addition, there is the goal of improving self-esteem through equal treatment. The latter is still a current outcome, together with the more sustainable use of the natural resource base, which is a concern of the new generations; it has increased in importance due to the access of information promoting the benefits of conservation.

The individual livelihood strategies of the WoCoPA members are developed according to the livelihood outcome that is proposed. To increase their income, very few count the support of either a husband or a children's stable wage, often those are linked with the CUCSUR and the DRBSM. However, some husbands provide the wage of seasonal work in agriculture or temporary work related to the government. Independent workers, such as baker, plumber or electrician represent an important space for job opportunities. Other members have relied on remittances and migration of their husbands, but usually for a short period until they make enough savings for a specific cause. Within their families, some profit from their surpluses of agriculture, selling it as fresh harvest or with added value. The majority of the members profit from their animals, and this is the most common way of making savings, they use the sale of smaller animals to buy bigger ones, and the bigger the animal the bigger the nest egg. Other more rare but innovative jobs are, for instance, a dance group or entrepreneurship.

To increase their well being, almost all of them have reduced the time used for house duties due to an increase in their physical capital, using the electricity and the pipe systems to facilitate their daily duties. In times of stress, the members use their natural capital, such as fields and river, and if they do not possess an adequate location some use their social capital to take advantage of the assets of friends or relatives. Going to work is also used as a social space to talk and to forget about problems. Equal treatment is not yet fulfilled, but there are some strategies

implemented such as educating their own children in a way that they don't repeat the same treatment to their wives; a common strategy that has been positively and slowly working has been the membership to WoCoPA. To be able to have a peaceful and good age they are working to provide a good education to their children so they can obtain a better future and take care of them when they are old. They also need a source of income in case of an emergency, for instance bequeath the WoCoPA rights to their children so they can still sell products at the store.

The social services need to be improved, the health center and its services do not meet the needs of people and often the savings must be invested in the search for other options outside the community. At the same time, the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants that historically has cured people in the community has been reported as a valuable capital asset, thus health institutions, specially PROSPERA due to its national importance need to include this strength of the indigenous communities as the basis of its activities.

To reduce their vulnerability through better education of their children most of them are getting the support of PROSPERA and PAL, while other use their husbands' income and also the profits made through WoCoPA. For the case of good shelter, the majority of the members used the help of the parents to host them until they are able to make enough savings to acquire the materials; this is a common reason to migrate. Usually the land is inherited, but the materials are bought. The labor for construction is acquired at lower costs because many use the help of people who do brickwork, and many members claimed to have helped in the construction of bricks, a skill taught by people who know and are willing to share the knowledge.

To achieve an improvement in food security, most of the members rely in land. In some cases they inherit from their parents, but if not is the case, they try to buy it or they do *cultivo a medias* with a person who is willing to share the benefits of its possession. Once they have this asset, some of the husband's members focus their work on self-food production agriculture. Also the majority of the members grow vegetables in their backyards to contribute to the food production while making savings in the economy of the house, a couple increased their production through the PESA program through physical assets, but also with training in good practices. Members also benefit from the common land where they have some trees to collect fruits. The members who don't sow and have animals purchase them.

The outcome of a more sustainable use of natural resource base has only been pursued indirectly through the conditional duties of PROSPERA and the indirect impacts of the WoCoPA. In addition, workshops conducted by different institutions share knowledge about good practices in agriculture, animal production and waste treatment, such as compost. However, they are using the natural capital to develop strategies in order to increase their well-being with the use of the rivers to swim and for animal consumption by hunting and fishing. This is a threat and actions need to take place. Another natural resource is the land, which is used to achieved

good shelter and improved food security. This is a main concern since the *caciques* are in charge of the distribution of the common land prioritizing them, and the current data shows that there is scarcity and no more to share. However, the more recent changes to agrarian reform make possible its acquisition by purchasing, but there are few strategies that allow raising considerable amounts of income. This is achievable by migration, if the husband has a job outside his agricultural plot or if the person has possession of big animals to sell.

The cooperative as a collective strategy to alleviate poverty is impacting positively on all individual outcomes except food security. However this is the only outcome. The collective livelihood strategy is a vehicle to alleviate the poverty of its members.

The trajectory of the WoCoPA shows how they have improved the cooperative with the support of different institutions and with their own efforts. The key element, mainly in the beginning but also throughout the years, has been the support of the local promoter in terms of time, knowledge and motivation. Furthermore, the group was inspired to implement their skills and abilities through different workshops supported mainly by CUCSUR and the DRBM. Later on they expanded their market and the external support that arrived from different institutions. An important event was to purchase the land to build their building. Later came the support of the DRBM to extend their infrastructure, along with the acquisition of machines to improve productivity, which was also sponsored by governmental programs. The cooperative is successful. However there are three livelihood outcomes that yet are not completely achieved, strategies have taken place to avoid migration, to suppress pests and for the internal relationships of trust. These may threaten the sustainability of the cooperative. However, support and actions are taking place from the CUCSUR in the case of internal relationships and the DRBSM in the case of the pests.

The livelihood strategies of the WoCoPA are based on a diversification of activities, such as market orientation, rural non-farm and self-employment. This allows them to be more resilient in case external forces effects one of them. Direct support to asset accumulation is being sought by themselves by making savings to invest in the necessities. This is besides the fact that they are seeking any kind of support to acquire physical capital. They are taking advantage of the purpose of the state to achieve development through enterprises, thus there exists support from different programs for capacity building (SEDESOL) and to improve their production practices (SAGARPA) among others. At the same time they are accumulating human capitals since they are seeking every single opportunity to gain new skills to improve their work, either in the productivity or in managerial abilities.

To increase well-being, they provided the same rights and responsibilities to all members mandated in the regulations, rotating the positions of responsibility, and making a roll list for attendance of events, implementing the use of inventories, informing the profits and production to all members (transparency), making a supervisory committee and using the machines with the supervision of the

technician. To incorporate their family members they are increasing production, giving them the opportunity to bring products to sell, getting help from them in construction labor, including them in work duties, such as cleaning coffee, asking them for obtaining information by using internet, and acquiring inputs for those who live in bigger villages; the WoCoPA is also providing job opportunities and being a broker to obtain governmental support for investments in coffee plantations and acquiring infrastructure and adopting new skills.

The social capital of WoCoPA has been central to compensate for the lack of services and infrastructure in the area. They have used their network to obtain the knowledge, skills and services. In addition, human capital has a significant representation of a positive leader who spends much of her time and motivation for members, which is complemented by government support for obtaining physical capital. The combination of these three strategies results in an optimal combination to achieve their livelihood outcomes. Collective livelihood strategies are favored by their geographical location, meeting local organizations committed to sustainable rural development and seeking the participation of local people to adopt conservation area.

The members incorporate in their livelihood outcomes avoiding migration, suppressing and regaining the natural resources and expanding their markets. The latter creates a solid institution in the area, providing a link between customers and producers and creating employment opportunities for coffee producers who have an incentive to maintain the coffee trees in their plantations, maintaining environmental conditions. When looking for economic growth of the community, migration can be avoided. The collective livelihood strategies are positively impacting development in the lives of its members and in the community.

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GLOSSARY

ARD	Agency of Rural Development
Caciques	Local bosses
Caciquismo	Chieftainship
Comuneros	Land-holding peasant of agrarian communities or Co-proprietors
CONANP	National Commission of Natural Protected Areas
CONASUPO	National Company of Popular Subsistence
CONEVAL	National Council of Social Development Policy
CUCSUR	Southern Coast of Jalisco University Centre
Cultivo a medias	Sharecropping
DFID	Department for International Development
DRBSM	Directorship of the Manantlán Biosphere Reserve
Ejidatarios	A member of an ejido
Ejido	Agrarian community
El Norte	United States of America
FONAES	National Support Fund for Social Enterprises
Hacendados	Landowners, owner of hacienda
Hacienda	Large agricultural estate
IMECBIO	Manantlán Institute of Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation
Machismo	Male chauvinism
PAL	Food Support Program
PESA	Special Program for Food Security
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PROCODES	Conservation Program for Sustainable Development
RBSM	Manantlán Biosphere Reserve
RENRUS	Rural Development National Network
SAGARPA	Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food
SEDESOL	Secretariat of Social Development
SEMARNAT	Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
SEP	Secretariat of Public Education
Tortilla	Maize pancake
UDG	University of Guadalajara
WoCoPA	Women Coffee Producers Association

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APPENDIX 1

PLANNING OF THE FIELD AND BUDGET

Knowing only that I wanted to research poverty alleviation in Mexico, I had a talk with the head of the Rural Sociology Department (Han Wiskerke) at Wageningen University, and he suggested to me some professors who could be interested in the subject and gave me a contact of an external researcher (Peter Gerritsen) linked to the University, based in Mexico, who would later be my co-supervisor. That narrowed down the research area to Western Mexico, where his institute was located. I was still searching for a supervisor who could guide me at Wageningen University. After some meetings with several potential supervisors, I chose a professor (Gerard Verschoor) who had knowledge of agricultural interventions and small-scale enterprises and at the same time was familiar with the Mexican context. With the team completed I started the design of the thesis proposal under their supervision. In the table 6 the chronological order of the timetable can be observed.

Table 6. Timetable of the thesis work, year 2015.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Define topic and promoter								
Literature review								
Thesis proposal								
Data collection								
Writing of the thesis								
Defense								

The budget for the field research was a total of \$1,200 euros, and was covered by the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Category A, through financial support granted each semester for installation and travel costs. The expenditure consisted 60% of the international travel expenses, 15% for food, 10% for intra-urban-rural transportation in Mexico, 8% for material used in the field, and 7% for other expenses. There was no cost for accommodation since the University of Guadalajara host me in its community centre at Cuзалapa.

APPENDIX 2

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED UNDER THE SEMI-STRUCTURE FORMAT

- Members of the WoCoPA

Irma, interviewed on 22/03/15.
Doña Chole, interviewed on 22/03/15.
Delia, interviewed on 23/03/15.
Elida, interviewed on 23/03/15.
Doña Lupe, interviewed on 24/03/15.
Doña Eva, interviewed on 25/04/15.
Lupita, interviewed on 25/03/15.
Gaby, interviewed on 25/03/15.
Sele, interviewed on 02/04/15.
Tabo, interviewed on 03/04/15.
Marina, interviewed on 04/04/15.
Rosa Canoitas, interviewed on 05/04/15.
Amparo, interviewed on 07/04/15.
Doña Paula, interviewed on 08/04/15.
Rosa, interviewed on 11/04/15.

- Grandmother of the life histories

Apolonia, interviewed on 25/03/15.

- Key actors in the trajectory of the WoCoPA

Susana Erika Salmerón Hermosillo. State Coordinator of PESA in Jalisco, interviewed on 30/03/15.

Iliana Licona Flores. Coordinator of the ARD “Alternatura” of PESA in the period 2008-2010, interviewed on 18/04/15.

Martín Velarde Madero. Owner of a restaurant in La Manzanilla beach, interviewed on 23/04/15.

Pedro Figueroa Bautista. Professor of the CUCSUR, interviewed on 27/04/15.

APPENDIX 3

WORK PLAN FOR DATA COLLECTION IN MEXICO

	DATE	ACTIVITY
Week 1	11/03/15	Meeting with Co-promoter Peter Gerritsen in Autlán.
	12/03/15	Revision of written thesis in Cuzalapa
	13/03/15	Arrival to Cuzalapa & Tour from "Color de la Tierra"
	14/03/15	Monthly meeting of WoCoPA: observation
	15/03/15	Meeting with coffee producers: observation
Week 2	16/03/15	Store ⁵ : semi-structure interviews related to the livelihood individual strategies of the WoCoPA members to alleviate poverty
	17/03/15	
	18/03/15	Store: live history & PESA meeting ⁶ : observation
	19/03/15	Store: semi-structure interviews related to the livelihood individual strategies of the WoCoPA members to alleviate poverty
	20/03/15	
	21/03/15	Store: Lives history
22/03/15	Store: semi-structure interviews related to the livelihood individual strategies of the WoCoPA members to alleviate poverty	
Week 3	23/03/15	Store: semi-structure interviews related to the livelihood individual strategies of the WoCoPA members to alleviate poverty
	24/03/15	Visit: Lives history, interview to her mom and daughter
	25/03/15	Store: verification & deadline of Lives history
	26/03/15	Meeting with Supervisor Peter Gerritsen
	27/03/15	
	28/03/15	Days off: design and print menus & promotional of WoCoPA
Week 4	29/03/15	
	30/03/15	Meeting in Guadalajara with the coordinator of PESA at the state level: Biol. Susana Erika Salmerón Hermosillo
	31/03/15	
	01/04/15	Store: semi-structure interviews related to the trajectory of WoCoPA in terms of difficult moments and strategically choices
	02/04/15	
	03/04/15	
	04/04/15	
05/04/15		

⁵ Store is the center where the WoCoPA is placed, daily are two members taking care of the duties in the store like sealing and cleaning the coffee. I'll help with the required activities meanwhile making the semi-structure interview.

⁶ Every Wednesday the facilitator of PESA comes to give follow up of the projects.

Week 5	06/04/15	Preparation of Workshop and questionnaires
	07/04/15	Verification of trajectory of WoCoPA: workshop. Details and relevant facts of WoCoPA members: questionnaires
	08/04/15	Store & PESA meeting: observation
	09/04/15	Include external facts linked to the trajectory of the WoCoPA: interview to key actors ⁷
	10/04/15	Sale in Autlán: observation. Meeting with Supervisor in Autlán. Meeting with PESA "Casa Comunidad" in Cuautitlán ⁸
	11/04/15	Include external facts linked to the trajectory of the WoCoPA: interview to key actors
	12/04/15	Meeting with Coffee Producers and deadline to identify the trajectory of WoCoPA
Week 6	13/04/15	Store: pictures and filming
	14/04/15	Deadline for identification of livelihood strategies of the members of the WoCoPA to reduce poverty and their reasons to unite
	15/04/15	Monthly meeting of WoCoPA: observation and collect ideas for the board game
	16/04/15	Store: collect ideas for the board game
	17/04/15	Meeting with co-supervisor and sale in Autlán.
	18/04/15	Interview: Iliana Licon (ADR)
	19/04/15	
Week 7	20/04/15	Look over the monthly assembly journal and verification of the preliminary results
	21/04/15	
	22/04/15	
	23/04/15	Interview: Martin Velarde (restaurant owner)
	24/04/15	Festivity of the four virgins, collaboration in the kitchen
	25/04/15	
	26/04/15	
Week 8	27/04/15	Meeting with Peter Gerritsen and Interview: Pedro Figueroa.
	28/04/15	Try out of Role Playing Games
	29/04/15	
	30/04/15	

⁷ There are many actors who have been very close to the project; the idea is to include their point of views to the trajectory of WoCoPA. Among them are the ex-members of the group; teachers who have help them, the first client, the teacher who lent them the first machine.

⁸ This period of PESA is almost finished, but for the second year it has been operated by the Agency of Rural Development called "Casa Comunidad", they are based in Cuautitlán.

APPENDIX 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE WOCOPA PRODUCTS



Arabica coffee. Bags of ground roasted coffee of 200g and 500g. They also sell roasted coffee beans by ¼kg, ½kg and 1kg and in bulk quantities up to 10kg. Coffee beans are the variety *Coffea arabica* grown under organic methods on shaded plantation in the surrounding areas, are sun-dried, toasted and grounded.

Mojote coffee. Bags of ground roasted mojote of 200g and 500g. The Mojote seeds are obtained from the tree *Brosimum alicastrum*, they are sun-dried, toasted and grounded. The mojote is known in the region by its calming and relaxing properties, as well as its important source of nutrition.



Mojote flour. Bags of 200g. The mojote seeds are sun-dried, toasted, but at fewer time than the toast for coffee, and grounded. It is mixed with wheat flour and it can be used for making bread, cookies or other pastries (Larco-Lauren 2010).

Natural honey. Jars of 100% pure honey bee locally produced in the indigenous community of Cuzalapa.



Jamaica. Bags of dried Jamaica's flower petals of 80g. The Jamaica flower is obtained from the plant *Hibiscus sabdariffa*. It is usually used to make a refreshing drink. They also prepare the drink at the store to sell to the costumers.

Pumpkin seeds. Small bags of dried pumpkin seeds to be eaten as snacks.



Pipian. Bags of ground pumpkin seeds of 200g. It is made from the seeds of *Cucurbita sp.* It is used as base for sauces on typical Mexican dishes.