

Shaping Reproductive Freedom – Family Planning and Human Rights in Cold War Guatemala, 1960s-1970s

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Abstract

In Guatemala, family planning has been accompanied by hostile voices since its origins in the 1960s. In periods of US-American support of repressive counter-insurgency programs, Guatemalan key figures often saw Guatemalan's "reproductive rights" jeopardized by supposedly interventionist and coercive birth control methods. These accusations were linked to international debates on worldwide population growth and the establishment of family planning programs to confront the envisioned dangers of "overpopulation". In this context, reproductive choice was declared a "universal" human right at the International Conference on Human Rights in Teheran in 1968. This act was celebrated by transnational population experts since they considered the 1968 Declaration an important step in ensuring public support for family planning worldwide. However, by linking "overpopulation" to discourses on development and modernization, they often gave priority to society's engineering over individual freedom. This paper tackles the multifaceted character of "universal" reproductive rights by analyzing the manner in which different actors invoked human rights in the field of family planning in Cold War Guatemala. By doing so, it reveals how freedom and its meanings were understood and shaped through discourses on population and rights.

Keywords: Reproductive Freedom, Cold War, Guatemala, Human Rights

1. Introduction

In the 1970s, the Guatemalan family planning organization Aprofam based their activities on the following principle:

Family planning is the 'right and the duty spouses have to only conceive the children they want, according to their beliefs, moral values and responsibilities for themselves and the society to which they belong'. (Aprofam, *Planificación* 5)

The interpretation of family planning as a "fundamental human right" is remarkable for several reasons: Regulating fertility by means of "modern" contraceptives, such as "the pill" and intrauterine devices, was just turning into a common habit in 1970s Guatemala. The right to limit births also broke with former human rights traditions, which had stated the opposite: the right to start a family and procreate. The quote also makes clear that individuals were

not completely "free" to decide as they were perceived to be influenced by and responsible for society. Thus, Guatemalan family planning pioneers interpreted reproductive choice not only as a right, but also as a duty to society as high fertility among Guatemalan families became a major concern for local and international experts who, embedded in a transnational "population establishment" [1], problematized population growth in relation to economic performance, natural resources and political stability. In order to address the global "population problem", public and private family planning programs were established worldwide.

In this paper, I study the links, thematic affinities and potential contradictions between family planning and human rights in Guatemala during the 1960s and 1970s. Guatemala is interesting for two reasons: First, family planning advocates confronted strong resistance by different groups in Guatemala what, according to these pioneers, "impeded the spread of family planning" in the country (Santiso and

Bertrand 153). The joint effort of Aprofam, the Guatemalan Ministry of Health and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to establish a national family planning program in 1967 quickly ended in chaos, and the private Aprofam became the main organization in this field in the 1970s. Second, Guatemala experienced four decades of Civil War (1960-1996). During this period, human rights violations and political repression were common, reaching a sad peak in the 1980s, when Mayan groups became victims of genocidal violence. In this context, "reproductive freedom" was discussed controversially by family planning advocates and opponents in Guatemala. Taking up on the debates on family planning as "reproductive right"[2], the paper reveals how different actors in Guatemala - medical experts, religious leaders, feminist activists - invoked, understood and shaped the human rights discourse in the field of population politics.

This paper follows a chronological-thematic structure: First, I analyse how regulating reproduction entered the human discourse in a broader context of development and modernization in the 1960s as both family planning and human rights were part of a "[...] larger history of competing ideologies of human betterment" (Moyn, The Last Utopia 86). Second, I will focus on the use of human rights in Guatemalan debates on family planning, disclosing how class, gender and ethnicity shaped the spaces of "reproductive freedom". Third, the paper shows how human rights and legal aspects gained importance in the 1970s when, paradoxically, the voluntary principle of family planning was questioned by international population experts, and how this shift was accompanied, if not encompassed by transnational experts. Fourth, I will carve out how Guatemalan women related the idea of family planning as human right to feminist discussions on women's position in Guatemalan society.

This paper covers different, if entwined levels of analysis which arose from the perspective on "reproductive freedom": First, the study can illustrate the (contested) validity of human rights in the Guatemalan context. In this regard, it is important to understand that human rights are historical and that their meanings and moral

power changed significantly during the 20th Century (Hoffmann 13-25). Second, this paper refers to the discursive shaping of "reproductive freedom", and is therefore connected to Nikolas Rose's work which discloses how spaces of freedom were shaped through different, often non-coercive practices (Rose 61-98). Tracing the "powers of reproductive freedom" in Guatemala, consequently, does not mean disclosing coercive family planning practices since the historical sources suggests that rather "voluntarism" and "self-government" than compulsion and coercion functioned as guiding principles for population politics in Guatemala (Bashford 330; Rose 63) [3]. Third, I follow the personnel and institutional connections between the "population establishment" and the emerging human rights movement on an international and local level since separate studies have shown that international organizations and transnational experts played an important role for the spreading and popularization of new ideas for the fields of family planning and human rights (Rinke; Moyn, The Last Utopia 176-212).

In this way, the paper aspires to disclose the complex and multifaceted entanglement of these two historical phenomena which have so far barely been studied. It is true that historians have recognized the potential conflict between the private right to choose and the individual's responsibility to reproduce in accordance to collective needs. In doing so, they evaluated rather negatively the close alliance between human rights and family planning, stressing that individual's freedom collided with the primary goal to reduce the world's population growth in the 1960s and 1970s (Connelly 8; Dowbiggin 13). As a consequence, the conceptual approach to a history of "reproductive freedom" is restricted to the 1980s and 1990s - a period when global population politics started to emphasize women's right to contraception and reproductive health (Connelly 327-370; Rao). As the historian Alison Bashford has argued, the "[...] idea of reproductive rights within the general history of human rights is not understood as well as it might be" (345), although there is a growing literature on family planning and demography (i.a. Bashford; Connelly; Robertson; Necochea) as well as on human rights (i.a. Iriye; Frei; Eckel; Moyn; Hoffmann). Taking up on Bashford's stimulating ideas on the relation between a human rights narrative and debates over fertility regulation, this paper will analyse the connections between family planning and human rights (329).

The paper is related to my study on the transnational history of family planning in Cold War Guatemala for which I gathered sources from different Guatemalan and US-American archives. For this article, papers, official statements and pamphlets, which either circulated among population experts or were published as books or as articles in Guatemalan newspaper, were used to analyze discussions on family planning. Furthermore, the archival material of the USAID Mission to Guatemala, located at the National Archive and Records Administrations at College Park in Maryland, USA, provides insight for tracing said connections and, especially for revealing women's contestation of reproductive freedom in Guatemala.

2. Family Planning in 1960s Guatemala – The Individual's Duty?

In 1962, a small group of doctors, nurses and social workers established Guatemala's first family planning organization, the Asociación de Pro-Bienestar de la Familia de Guatemala. As clinicians and field workers, they were primarily concerned with the high abortion rates in Guatemala which endangered, from their point of view, the wellbeing of both the individual family and the Guatemalan nation. To stop the feared "disintegration" of the Guatemalan family, Aprofam started to provide information on and access to contraceptives by the mid-1960s. This Guatemalan organization was embedded in a transnational network of research institutes, philanthropic foundations and international development agencies whose actors were increasingly concerned about the "population bomb" and its negative effects on the socioeconomic progress of "Third World" countries. Problematizing the birth rate in relation to the availability of schools, health services, housing, work opportunities and natural resources, demographers and economists, mostly affiliated with "Western" academic communities, argued that a high fertility rate would hinder the economic performance in "underdeveloped countries" (Unger 61). Latin America's population growth came increasingly into focus after the Cuban Revolution in 1959: Population experts, such as the US-American demographers Irene Taeuber and J. Mayone Stycos, feared that a growing population in Latin America would threaten the goals of the Alliance for Progress, the region's development program initiated in 1961 by John F. Kennedy to alleviate social and economic conditions and prevent communist upheavals (Huhle 79).

Guatemala fitted into this picture: After the US supported coup in 1954, US officials and Guatemalan military leaders tried to transform Guatemala into a textbook example for capitalist development to avoid another "Árbenz or Cuban style" revolution. In this context, Guatemala's "overcrowded" families turned into a major obstacle to development and a potential security threat. By linking Guatemala's population dynamics to modernization theory, International Population and Urban Research Center at University of Berkeley argued that Guatemala, whose population had increased by 3,3 % to 4,284,473 in 1964, had gotten "stuck halfway" on the road to modernity and thus suffered "with the consequences of social unrest" (International Population and Urban Research Center 78). Addressing the "population problem" ranked high in the development agenda in the 1960s: In 1965, USAID declared assistance in population programs a priority, increasing the budget for this purpose from \$2.1 million in 1965 to \$34.7 million in 1968 (Ravenholt 561). USAID, together with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), provided funds to Aprofam that played a significant role in establishing and promoting a national family planning program. In 1967, an agreement between Aprofam, the Guatemalan Ministry of Health and USAID was signed to provide information on and access to new contraceptives. Despite the fact that political authorities had given its approval, governmental support for family planning was rather lukewarm. In the 1960s and 1970s, Guatemalan policy makers never fully committed to family planning, nor supported the idea of a Guatemalan population problem.

As a result, the private Aprofam was the leading organization in promoting and negotiating the principles of family planning in the country.

For this group, the idea of freedom was essential. Aprofam's medical professionals based their activities on the principle of "voluntarism" as Guatemalans were supposed to decide freely on the number and spacing of their children (Dimif; Aprofam, Planificación). In this context, family planning activists like Aprofam's leading doctor Roberto Santiso Gálvez considered high abortion rates an indicator for women's desperate wishes to control their fertility, regardless their traditions, living conditions or ethnic and social belonging (Santiso, "Contraception"). Hence, Aprofam leaders interpreted "reproductive freedom" in relation to the availability of and the access to "modern" contraceptives. As Guatemalan family planners argued that only Guatemala's white elite had the necessary economic resources to get access to contraceptives through their private doctors, they considered Guatemala's middle and lower classes to be "not free" in their "reproductive choices" (Santiso "Contraception" 2; Aprofam, Planificación 5; Forno Consequently, the principle of equality was one of the major arguments for the distribution of contraceptives in the country. Imagining family planning both as a right in itself and a precondition to ensure the "spiritual" and socioeconomic stability of Guatemalan families, family planning advocates popularized the use of contraceptives as a "liberating" instrument to overcome class differences in Guatemala, as becomes clear in the following USAID statement:

[...] opportunity of choice is not available to the average Guatemalan, especially those in the rural areas where information on family planning is almost non-existent. Should not these people be given the same opportunity for choice as their more privileged countrymen? (USAID 6)

The claims for equal "reproductive choices" in Guatemala have to be seen in a broader context of human rights discussions and development thinking in the 1960s, when "fundamental freedoms" were expanded beyond civil and political rights to social, economic and cultural

rights. As a response to the acts of barbarism during the Nazi regime, world leaders were eager to secure individual political and civil rights against a restrictive, authoritarian state in the 1950s. In the 1960s, instead, the welfare state, its promises and ideas about social justice gained new significance as did social, economic and cultural rights. In this decade, there also emerged competing right claims known as "solidarity rights", which included the right to development and freedom from colonialism (Maul 308). In this sense, leading population experts conceptualized family planning as a precondition to other social freedoms, especially to the "freedom from hunger" - a popular claim within development politics (Bashford 345). The links between population growth, development and human rights were emphasized at the first International Human Rights Conference in Teheran in 1968 where world leaders primarily focussed on the right to family planning as a fundamental condition for human rights: "The present rapid rate of population growth [...] reduces the possibilities of rapidly achieving adequate standards of living, [...] thereby impairing the full realization of human rights" (UN 15).

The Teheran Declaration codified for the first time "that couples have a basic human right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and a right to adequate education and information in this respect" (UN 15). This broke with the Human Rights Declaration of 1948 which had stressed the right to start a family and procreate. For family planning advocates worldwide this was an important step in universalizing and "officially" legitimizing family planning as they perceived human rights as an apolitical, non-religious, universal sphere of global governance. Hence, the Teheran Declaration was considered an important instrument to stipulate the state's involvement in family planning and silence the criticism by religious, nationalist and leftist groups which were identified by population experts as the main opponents of family planning in Latin America (Mendoza 1; Stycos; Santiso and Bertrand 137-154). In Guatemala, however, Aprofam leaders initially rather turned to the 1948 Declaration to legitimize family

planning activities among medical professionals and policy makers. Although the "couple's right and duty to plan their families" became a popular slogan in promoting family planning among Guatemalan families, the family's rights to protection by society and state - article 16 of the 1948 Declaration - was prominently printed next to the association's logo in the Aprofam's Bulletin, therefore appealing to the duty of medical professionals and policy makers (Aprofam, *Boletín Pro-Bienestar* 1). In this way, family planning was portrayed as a protective measure, while avoiding the sensitive matter of contraceptive use in Guatemala where sexuality and birth control remained a taboo.

As the state remained responsible for the family's wellbeing, so was the individual family considered key for the nation's progress. In this sense, reproduction was imagined individually and socially, and addressing individual families in order to fight a global "population problem" was key in international population politics. The same holds true for a human rights narrative in which collective wellbeing and individual freedom were two sides of the same coin. Hence, discourses on human rights and family planning also constructed a new form of social citizenship by pointing at the individual's responsibility on a local as well as on a global scale. While facing a supposedly ticking population bomb which endangered the wellbeing of the world society, leading population experts often prioritized social responsibility over personal freedom. For instance, at the 8th Conference of the IPPF in Chile in 1967, the representatives declared that "planned parenthood" was first a "duty", and then a "right" (IPPF). The idea of a responsible, rationally planned reproduction was at the core of the Guatemalan family planning program: Family planners informed Guatemalan families on the dangerous effects of a promiscuous sex life for both the individual family and the nation's wellbeing (Aprofam, Asociación), hoping that "self-governing" Guatemalan citizens would plan their families voluntarily and responsibly.

While Guatemalan family planning pioneers stressed the right of *every* Guatemalan couple to have access to "modern" contraceptives, not *all* Guatemalans had the same duty to limit their families. Embracing eugenic views on "desirable"

and "undesirable" children, the first Aprofam director Enrique Castillo Arenales argued that spouses who could "guarantee subsistence, adequate alimentation and education" should have a big family (Castillo 31). Accordingly, even though the Guatemalan middle and lower classes should be "free" in their access to contraceptives, they were supposed to plan their families according to their socioeconomic capacities. As Guatemala's lower classes were identified as the main target group of family planning, ideas of "quality" clearly shaped population politics in Guatemala. The relationships were equally important: Family planners promoted the ideal of a happy, stabilized marriage in which Guatemalan couples were supposed to decide jointly over the size of their family. In this sense, they prioritized spouses over individuals as right-holders, thus shaping the image of the nuclear, heterosexual family - a point that was also stressed in the 1968 Teheran Declaration (UN 15). Family planning consequently was not understood as a means for women's empowerment - a point which had been stressed by "Western" female activists in the 1920s, but whose voices were marginalized during the 1960s.

3. Everyone's Freedom? – Discussing Family Planning in Guatemala in the early 1970s

Discussions on civic responsibility reproductive behavior seemed to be everyone's lips in the 1960s - officially designated the Decade of Development by the United Nations. While the principles of social justice and "a life worth living" crossed political, religious and ideological borders, the question of whether family planning represented a legitimate means to achieve the promises of an equal and harmonious society was subject to a fierce and controversial debate in Guatemala. Criticism culminated in 1974, when, in the course of the World Population Conference in Bucharest, Guatemalan Congress discussed the establishment of a new Planned Parenthood Institute in November 1974 [4]. In the public press, very different social groups took a stand against family planning - from the professional organization Colegio de Médicos, the public San

Carlos University to Catholic women and female leftist activists. Among the most fervent critics were Clemente Marroquín Rojas, founder of the newspaper *La Hora* and former vice president, Julio Penados del Barrio, a Catholic physician and director of the Department for Mother and Child Health of the Social Security Institute, as well as the Guatemalan archbishop Mario Casariego y Acevedo.

While opponents often framed their critique in a rights narrative, referring to "free will" and "personal choice", human rights were not a binding moral order, but were rather used to discredit family planning in the country. Thus, the new human rights catalogue of the 1960s, including the Teheran Declaration, was mostly ignored. Instead, opponents stressed the right to procreate, therefore basing their argument on the Human Rights Declaration of 1948. Not surprisingly, this argument was especially articulated when voluntarism appeared to be at stake: When a rumor about compulsory sterilization of Guatemalan Maya women circulated in 1972, the professional organization Colegio de Médicos stated that the right to procreate was a "natural law", which " [...] could not be repressed by any type of law or order that contravenes or limits the liberty of the choice of the couple" (Colegio de Médicos) [5]. By pointing to a "natural law", the Colegio de Médicos based their position on a Christian moral order which embraced the idea that laws derived from God and were thus objective, suggesting that the existence of moral rules was determined by nature - and not by humans (Moyn, The Last Utopia 21-22). In this regard, the use of hormonal and intrauterine contraceptives, declared as artificial by the Vatican in 1968, were also against the "divine laws" and "the nature of marriage and responsible parenthood" as the Guatemalan archbishop state in 1974 (Cardenal 4). Consequently, family planning opponents questioned the moral authority of a new human rights catalogue of the 1960s, while relying on a Christian set of moral values lying beyond the international rights narratives.

In general, human rights were barely accepted as a political and moral instrument in Guatemala in the early 1970s. According to Hoffmann, although human rights declarations

were introduced in the semantics of international and national politics in the 1960s, they had no implications for national affairs. Latin American dictatorships turned to violence, torture, and terror exactly when these practices were officially forbidden in the indicated decade (Hoffmann 19; Dyckmann 50). Ironically, Guatemala, which pressed for democracy and the protection of human rights in 1965, entered the darkest chapter of its history in the following decades (Quiroga Medina 97-99) [6]. From 1966 to 1970, during the presidency of Julio Méndez Montenegro, the military's power in politics increased and counter-insurgency campaigns were initiated against Guatemala Guerrilla groups and political dissidents. Thus, human rights violations in the early 1970s increased significantly: During the presidency of the military general Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio more than 13,000 people "disappeared" (Way 123).

US-American institutions were deeply involved in designing and financing the military-led counter-insurgency campaigns in Guatemala. US-American presence became also highly visible in everyday life, including family planning, higher education or community development projects (Streeter 75-68). As political and civil rights were threatened and the promises of a better future for all Guatemalan citizens through development programs remained unfulfilled, US influence in Guatemala was harshly criticized by both Guatemalan nationalists and leftwing groups. This points to one of the major conflicts in global history after 1945: The tension between an increasing international system of global governance with its own moral order and instruments, and the idea of national sovereignty and self-determination of nations. Hence, "Third World" nations often did not adopt the human rights discourse in order to canonize individual rights, but to guarantee the collective liberation from empires and to achieve economic prosperity (Moyn, The Last Utopia 86-89).

This tension between self-determination and global governance was also the key topic in the debate on family planning in Guatemala. For nationalists and left-wing groups, family planning was an imperialist project, conducted by USAID and its "extended arm", the Guatemalan Aprofam (e.g. Marroquín Rojas; Universidad de



San Carlos). In this context, opponents turned to the "right to privacy" to stop foreign interference in Guatemalan bedrooms:

[...] fertility regulation was a personal problem in whose internal authority do not belong – and the Guatemalans should not permit – bastards interests that do not have anything in common with our nationality, with our problems, with our interests, beliefs and traditions. (Colegio de Médicos)

In this sense, Guatemalan physicians argued for the right to privacy, but individuals had only a "free" choice as long as their wants were in line with the nation's interests. Clemente Marroquín Rojas extended this anti-imperialist, nationalist point of view so far that he repeatedly accused the US-American government of conducting a genocidal campaign against the Guatemalan population ("La esterilización"; "El Ministro"). In this context, the lines between coercion, manipulation, influence and free decisions blurred. Well aware of globally circulating stories on coercive sterilizations, Julio Penados del Barrio, who got involved in a heated debate with Aprofam's director Roberto Santiso Gálvez in the newspaper La Hora in January 1975, argued that Guatemalan families had been "forced" to use contraceptive pills and intrauterine devices. Although he admitted that physical force was not applied in Guatemala, Penados del Barrios stressed that manipulative message could easily be interpreted as "coercion" as it clearly limited the free choice of Guatemalan families (Penados del Barrio, "El doctor"). In this sense, family planning opponents interpreted the influence of foreign interests in this "private" sphere as pressure, meanwhile family planning advocates equally criticized nationalist, left-wing and religious voices for exercising "political and religious pressure" on Guatemalans (Santiso, "Aprofam").

The debate on "coercion" and "pressure" reveals an underlying patronizing, elitist view which opponents like Penados del Barrio or Marroquín Rojas shared with family planning advocates. Despite their different political and religious beliefs, Guatemala's urban

white elite assumed poor people were easy to manipulate, easily falling for the promises of foreign development messages or Catholic arguments, and, consequently, that they could not decide themselves what was best for them. Mayan families often stood in the center of controversial debates on family planning as they were victimized by family planning opponents. This was the case when representatives of different social groups and political fractions, including Aprofam and women's groups, spoke up to protect indigenous groups and stop the planned establishment of the national Planned Parenthood Institute (e.g. "No aprobar"; Vargas de Ortiz). For instance, Marroquín Rojas openly condemned the " [...] dirty work of the gringos to 'sterilize' our poor indigenous people and to terminate [...] with our suffering 'raza de bronce." While he glorified "lo indígena" as the essential element of the Guatemalan nation, he did not take into account the attitudes of Mayan women towards birth control. On the contrary, Mayan women were rather used as an argument against family planning. Consequently, behind these discussions lurked the question of who was fit enough to decide over their own reproduction and sexual behavior, thus clearly revealing patterns of cultural racism and social delineation.

In this regard, family planning advocates and opponents had more in common than one would think as they connected Guatemalans' sex lives to the wellbeing of the nation. Hence, debates about national development and foreign influences (rhetorically) limited the scope of the individual's freedom and private sphere in Guatemala. Opponents also understood the heterosexual family as the fundamental nucleus of the Guatemalan society: they commonly referred to the inseparable unit of husband and wife and the couple's choice (e.g. Penados del Barrio, "Planificación"; Vargas de Ortiz). Consequently, the "private bedroom" - in Guatemala neither private nor, in case of poorer classes, a bedroom in itself - was envisioned, controlled, and often problematized by Guatemalan professionals, politicians, intellectuals and religious leaders who, each in their own way, defined the limits of reproductive freedom in Guatemala.

4. A Turn in Population Politics? – Bringing Human Rights Discussions into Family Planning

In the 1960s, population experts considered human rights important for the promotion of family planning worldwide. However, human rights and legal topics were barely subjects of great attention for the "population establishment" in that decade. This changed significantly in the 1970s when population experts became more aware of the legal implications of population programs and legal experts entered the field of international population politics. While the growing interest in human rights within the "population establishment" reflects the rise of human rights as a key concept in international politics (Gassert 149-164; Moyn, "Die Rückkehr" 7-22), this was also related to a shift in birth control practices from the use of hormonal and intrauterine contraceptives to the support of sterilization and abortion.

Strikingly, population experts turned to human rights when the voluntarism principle of family planning was at stake. As more data on world population growth became available and made the problem more alarming by the end of the 1960s, some international population experts questioned the usefulness of family planning programs and thought about coercive measures such as reversals of tax benefits, prioritizing the greater good over freedom of choice and voluntarism (Connelly 238-239, 245; 248). At the same time, contraceptives and intrauterine devices were no longer praised as major breakthroughs as information on the side effects of the pill and injuries caused by IUDs spread around the globe (Dowbiggin 139). As a result, by the end of the 1960s, sterilizations became widely acceptable among population experts to confront a global population problem (Dowbiggin 157). In this context, some countries, like India and China, took drastic measures to address their high birth rates. India, for example, introduced a sterilization quota and made sterilisation a condition for medical care, promotions or electricity (Connelly 322).

As discussions about abortion and sterilization made legal implications more important, legal scholars entered the international population field. One of the "new rising stars" in the "population establishment" was Luke T. Lee: The Chinese-US-American professor of international law and diplomacy initiated a new program studying the legal grounds of human rights and population programs at the renowned Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Massachusetts. The program produced a series of studies concerning domestic, but also international legal texts on reproduction which were published from 1970 onwards. Lee also played an important role in a series of UN sponsored seminars and projects in the 1970s which reflected the growing interest in the relation between human rights and populations politics on the part of the United Nations: In 1971, the United Nation Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA) created the "Law and Population" project in order to provide research grants for studies on legal practices concerning abortion, marriage or "social legislation" and their relation to established population politics (Salas 203). Furthermore, a series of meetings on Population and Human Rights were held from 1974 onwards, e.g. in Tunis and Amsterdam 1974, and 1975 in Paris, organized and sponsored by UNESCO (UNESCO).

During these UN sponsored seminars the most pressing topic was, in fact, the compatibility of coercive measures with human rights: According to Lee, who compiled the results of the expert meeting in Paris, many participants argued that coercive measures would violate individual's human rights, like the right to life or freedom of conscience. Others argued that it would be difficult to "take a categorical position on this matter" (UNESCO 27). At the core of the discussions stood the dilemma between the individual's rights and collective well-being which already had been articulated in the idea of family planning as a right and a duty in the 1960s. Embracing an alarmist perspective on the population problem, Lee used the dialectic tension within the human rights discourse to legitimize coercive measures. Even though he stated that coercive measures should not result in discriminatory practice, he considered coercive measures in no way incompatible with human rights as they benefitted both the family and the global society: "What at first appears

to be a coercive measure infringing upon an individual's human right will in the end improve the well-being of all - including the individual" (UNESCO 77). In this sense, Lee exploited the idea of family planning as a precondition for other human rights to legitimize the use of coercive measures in international population politics, giving priority to the greater good over individual freedoms.

In Guatemala, however, coercive measures were unacceptable for many family planners. Even though the nation's wellbeing was a major argument to legitimize sterilization practices in Guatemala, voluntarism and consent were core concepts when Aprofam established a sterilization program for both men and women in 1973 ("Legal Exam"). Thus, the historical sources give no indications of forced sterilizations or coercive measures. Proposals to make sterilization compulsory for poor Guatemalans were rare exceptions, and immediately caused public outrage [7]. In general, sterilizations as well as family planning remained a sensitive matter in Guatemala throughout the 1970s. In light of the ongoing fierce debate on family planning, Aprofam refrained from publicly promoting sterilization and female sterilizations were subject of strict medical control in the public hospitals in Guatemala City in the early 1970s. Attempts to bind Guatemalan legal experts to population politics also remained unsuccessful as the following illustrates: In 1978, Luke T. Lee, now director for refugee affairs at the US State Department, travelled to Guatemala where he established contact with different lawyers affiliated to the public San Carlos University and its rector Saul Osorio Paz. The US-American legal expert used the ongoing human rights narrative as a vehicle to awaken interest for population topics - without success (Lee). That this initiative fell on deaf ears among these Guatemalan lawyers is hardly surprising given the political climate and violence the country was experiencing by the end of the 1970s: Understandably enough, in light of the political violence against university members, the public university considered the protection of political and civil rights more urgent than changing the laws concerning marriage, contraceptives and abortions. In addition, Saul Osorio Paz had been a fierce opponent of family planning since late 1960s. In this regard, Lee's initiative presumably confirmed Paz's opinion about international population politics. Instead of male university affiliates, other social groups took up on family planning by the end of the 1970s, rehashing an older topic which had been silenced during the 1960s: women's right to family planning as a means to control their own body.

5. Reproductive Freedom – Women's Rights in Guatemala in the 1970s

During the 1960s, women's right to birth control had not been present in the discussions on economic development, society's wellbeing, and collective needs although contraceptive practices mainly focussed on women's bodies. Furthermore, family planners emphasized the couple's choice over reproduction, not the individual's. This fortified, on the one hand, the ideal of the modern - small - heterosexual family, and, on the other hand, excluded alternative ways of living "outside the box" like Guatemalan single mothers.

The absence of female topics in the population discussions can be attributed to the fact that women rarely occupied leading positions in the "population establishment" in the 1950s and 1960s. The same holds true in Guatemala: Even though female nurses and social workers played a crucial role by promoting family planning in the field, male physicians initially occupied lead positions within Aprofam or the Ministry of Health. In general, the women's movement was not very strong in Guatemala in the 1960s and 1970s: As researchers have pointed out, female students and intellectuals in Guatemala often joined radical left discussions on the (armed) struggle for social transformation, while "postponing" genuine women's claims due to their belief that a change in politics and society would eventually have positive effects on women's lives. It appears that genuine women's affairs were rarely brought on the discussion table, and that these topics lost their importance within the radicalized political context of the Guatemalan Civil War (Aguilar 97). [8] As has been highlighted for other Latin American countries, Latin American women,

who were embedded in left-wing groups, initially opposed family planning programs, criticizing the imperialist character rather than supporting contraceptives in terms of a political liberal feminist tradition to liberate women (Schultz 188-189). In Guatemala, too, female activists initially shared the view of their male colleagues, criticizing the US-American influence in family planning in Guatemala (Alfaro de Carpio; Vargas de Ortíz).

A new impetus for a change in the perception of family planning in regard to women's rights was the first International Women's Conference in Mexico City and the declaration of the first International Women's Year (IWY) in 1975 which stimulated debates on the women's role in society and their relation to fertility control in the Guatemalan context (Carrillo 176; Carrillo et. al. 140). The conference was organized by the United Nations in reaction to an anti-imperialist women's health movement that criticized authoritarian, masculine and coercive population politics (Black 132-155; Nelson). In accordance with the IWY 1975, the "Acción Solidaria de [9] (ASDEM) organized several Mujeres" roundtables in May 1975 for which exclusively highly educated, academic Guatemalan women were brought together to discuss women's rights and position in the Guatemalan society ("Mesas redondas"). While many talks focussed on the role Guatemalan women played in the union movement or in political and civic life, one panelist addressed abortion and reproduction. The paper was presented by Hilda Morales Chúa who was one of the few women in leading positions within the Guatemalan family planning organization, directing Aprofam's division for "marginalized areas". Her talk expressed the concerns presented by an emerging global women's health movement: Criticizing the Neo-Malthusians debates on the "population bomb", she argued that, in the 1960s, women often were objects of "[...] politicians, scientists, and technocrats [...]", being manipulated by "[...] mechanisms to motivate the women to reduce her fertility [...]" and, in case of non-acceptance, forced by "[...] complete and total coercion" (Morales Chúa).

Distancing herself from the population politics of the 1960s, she argued for a transformation of

"ordinary women" from objects into subjects of "reproductive freedom". From her point of view, family planning was an important instrument to free Guatemalan women from the imposed task of motherhood. Interestingly, she used the regulation of women's fertility to push for a profound change of Guatemalan society: According to Morales Chúa, in "compensation" for the "lost motherhood" - taken away by family planning - Guatemala should be made "suitable" for emancipated women, for instance, by conducting a "review [of] every literature [...] that subordinates the women to the care of the house and the offspring [...]" (Morales Chúa). In this sense, family planning was once again depicted as a precondition to other rights. However, she attributed for the first time the right to decide freely and responsible over the number and spacing of children explicitly to the women - and not to the couple. Her feminist interpretation of the right to family planning was supported by the other participants who argued that "it should be our right to first decide if we want to be mothers and then the number and spaces of our children" (Méndez de la Vega). With this absolute support of family planning as an instrument for women's empowerment and female liberation, ASDEM took a different stand to other "leftist" and "Western" women's movements which rejected family planning as an imperialist, masculine, discriminating practice (Schultz 119). More importantly, ASDEM broke with earlier narratives on family planning in Guatemala in which the needs of the nation and the family had been prioritized over women's decisions.

One way to achieve equity of men and women and to make the Guatemalan society "suitable" for emancipated women was to change the legal situation of Guatemalan women. The focus on legal topics was directly linked to new legal experts in the population field which points to the significance of transnational experts and networks. While Luke T. Lee was unsuccessful in attracting the interest of male lawyers, he closely cooperated with the female lawyer Carmen Yolanda Chavarría de Ponce in the regional project "Laws discriminating women in Latin America" (Lee). In 1975, Chavarría de Ponce published a book on the Guatemalan situation, stressing the

macho character of the Guatemalan legislation. While she mainly focussed on infanticide and abortion, she also referred to family planning in the country. Declaring that family planning was an "individual choice of women", she criticized the lack of family planning service in the country and advocated sterilization. Similar to a women's health movement she criticized the patronizing, macho medical practices as Guatemalan women needed the permission of her husband or spouses to have the procedure. According to Chavarría de Ponce, in the end it was the doctor, not the women who were "[...] to decide on whether the women should or should not have children" (Chavarría de Ponce 113). Consequently, while in 1972 stories on sterilizing "unfit" indigenous women had triggered disgust and connotations of genocide in Guatemala, in 1975, "fit" Guatemalan women claimed sterilization as an alternative to DIU and the pill. This shows not only that sterilization turned from a eugenic procedure to an acceptable contraceptive method, but also that women and experienced "reproductive freedom" in accordance with their ethnicity, class status and economic possibilities, what Rebecca Kluchin has also carved out in the US-American context (Kluchin 55).

Strikingly, women's efforts to achieve better opportunities in Guatemala were barely taken into account by Guatemalan male family planners. It was only in 1976 that Aprofam's director Santiso Gálvez cooperated with Hilda Morales Chúa in publishing a short report titled "Family Planning and Responsible Parenthood: The Guatemalan Economic Development." Women and contrast to Chúa's feminist attitude in the 1974 roundtables, the study does not portray family planning as a means to liberate women or to strengthen women's position in the Guatemalan society, despite the fact that, ironically, a great part of the report on the situation in Guatemala was copied from Chúa's talk on abortion. The study rather used the feminist approach to family planning to reach single, working, rural and indigenous women who were seen as specific target groups (Santiso, Aldana and Chúa). The new emphasis on marginalized women coincided with Aprofam's reorientation to rural and indigenous groups when the Guatemalan Ministry of Health bowed out of the field in 1975. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Aprofam's projects resulted in new, genuine female spaces in which women contested and negotiated contraception - even though it was a side-effect of family planning activities rather than the primary goal.

6. Conclusion

Historiography of family planning, contraception, and population politics has mostly neglected the connections of family planning and human rights. In order to shed light on this topic, I have therefore located family planning in Guatemala in a broader context of human rights discourse in the Americas. In this regard, this case study has shown that the perspective on "reproductive freedom" in Guatemala enriches the understanding of historical patterns of thinking within international politics in several ways.

First, the power of human rights as a morally binding instrument had been limited in Guatemala for a long time. It was rather a political instrument which was used to legitimize or discredit family planning in the country. Furthermore, there existed a competing set of moral norms, based on Christian traditions, which competed with a human rights catalogue of the 1960s. At the same time, population experts prioritized development politics over human rights throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The 1968 Teheran Declaration itself expressed the significance of modernization and development as a guiding principle for international politics as it pointed to social responsibility in a global society: It was considered a precondition to other social and economic rights and reflected the hope that changing the individual's reproductive behaviour would benefit both families and nations. Even though human rights became more important as development politics lost their appeal in the 1970s, the portrayal of family planning as a precondition for other rights was a dominant way of thinking, even in feminist discourses in Guatemala.

Second, this study has disclosed the discursive spaces of freedom in Guatemala. The most striking fact is that, counterintuitively,

"freedom" must be understood as an instrument of power. Thus, family planning programs drew on "voluntarism" and "choice" as these ideas embraced underlying ideas on selfimprovement and civil responsibility. In fact, individual's reproductive "freedom" was first restricted by their own aspiration to achieve a better life and, second, by the sense of responsibility to the society. It was indeed the "powers of freedom", shaped by discussions on responsibility, coercion, the educated, conscious citizen, economic development and the modern family, which influenced reproductive choice in Guatemala. Not only Guatemalan family planning advocates but also their opponents promoted the private right to choose "freely" from any kind of "pressure". However, "reproductive choice" was neither a private nor an individual matter as Guatemalan actors prioritized the nation and the couple over the individual. In this context, the debates on family planning, coercion and manipulation further shaped ideas on who was considered to be a responsible citizen, fit to decide freely. Guatemalan elitists groups (rhetorically) denied poorer, indigenous individuals the right to "reproductive choice". That "reproductive freedom" was often determined by class, gender, and race becomes equally clear in the context of women's rights in Guatemala in the 1970s.

Third, the significant – and overlooked – role that transnational experts played in bringing together legal and human rights aspects and family planning has to be highlighted. Thus, the new popularity of human rights in the international arena in the 1970s was accompanied and encompassed by new expert groups, the international lawyers who were eager to strengthen the connections between the two fields using the institutional system of the United Nations. Whereas they still depicted family planning as a precondition to other rights, placing collective welfare over individual freedom, these new personal and institutional connections inspired a broad range of activities in the field of women's rights. It is worthwhile to note that precisely this field - the personal and institutional links between law, "population establishment", and women's groups in the 1970s - needs further consideration. In

Guatemala, these connections triggered new – genuinely feminist – interpretations of family planning. Guatemalan female professionals who championed the women's right to reproductive choice in the 1970s were also leading actors in women's human rights groups which emerged in Guatemala in response to political violence, disappearance and genocidal campaigns against Maya women in the 1980s.

Endnotes

All quotes from Guatemalan sources were translated from Spanish to English by the author of this paper. The author thanks Raúl Necochea López for his helpful comments and suggestions, and Thelma Porres, director of the archives of the Centro de Investigaciones regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA), for providing important information on the women's roundtables in 1975.

- [1] Population experts of the 1960s and 1970s considered themselves to be part of a global "population movement". The term "population establishment" was first introduced by those who criticized the practices and ideas of this global network, thus pointing to its elitists and relatively inflexible character (Schultz 81-82).
- [2] The term "reproductive rights" became popular in the 1970s and was often used by female activists to claim reproductive (women's) health. Today, reproductive rights are still based on the right to family planning, but also include other rights, e.g. the right to reproductive health. Contemporaries used the terms liberty, freedom and rights without further explanation or definition. For this reason, the terms were used synonymously in this article.
- [3] Bashford and Rose connect their work to the idea of "self-government" which goes back to Michel Foucault who identified different technologies of the self, for example, self-control or guidance for family and children.
- [4] Interestingly, the establishment of a Guatemalan Planned Parenthood Institute was proposed by members of the Congress who presumably did not have any contact to USAID or Aprofam. The latter even supported the initiative to stop the creation of this Institute as they feared a duplication of effort.
- [5] The accusation was made by a delegate who did not want to declare his name nor his nationality. Apparently, priests informed the delegate that Mayan women confessed to them that they had been

sterilized by injections in public health centers. This information was then first published in a Nicaraguan newspaper (Denuncian). It remains unclear how family planning was carried out in Guatemalan villages. However, there is no indication to coercive practices in the letters between Aprofam and USAID.

- [6] According to Quiroga Medina, the Second Inter-American Special Conference on Human Rights in Rio de Janeiro in 1965 was convened on a request sent by the Guatemalan government in 1964.
- [7] In the course of the debate over the national Planned Parenthood Institute, the activist Violeta de Carpio accused the representative Grace Hernández Siqui de Zirión of proposing compulsory birth control measures for poor women that should prevent them from "asking for better living conditions and thinking about a revolution" (Violeta de Carpio). Unfortunately, the original proposal and Hernández Siqui de Zirión's announcement could not be found.
- [8] Hardly any research has been done on women's movements in Guatemala in the 1960s and 1970s. Susan Berger, for instance, dates the emerging of a women's movement in Guatemala in the late 1970s and early 1980s, dedicating only two pages on the "antecedents" of the movement (Berger 20-21).
- [9] In addition to the *Alianza*, Ana Lorena Carrillo Padilla mentions the *Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas*, founded in 1975. In the historical sources, I found references to further women's groups: *Consejo Nacional de la Mujer de Guatemala, Comité Nacional de la Comisión Interamericana de Mujeres, la Alianza Cívica de Asociaciones femeninas*. It would be worthwhile following the traces of these groups and their global embeddedness.

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