Social Change of an Indigenous Community

A case study of the community-based cooperative "Millennial Women" in Oaxaca, Mexico

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Abstract

Mexico has a large share of indigenous people that are living in disproportionally high poverty levels. As a result, rural communities are facing deprivation of indigenous peoples in search of work in urban areas. The community-based cooperative "Millennial Women" was formed about 2-3 years ago with the intentions to maintain community resilience while promoting economic development in the rural community of El Azamal in the state of Oaxaca. By introducing the ancient production of the beverage "pulque" to the local market, the cooperative is changing previous subsistence mode of production. This thesis is analysing the organisation of the cooperative and its social effects through the social relations of the members to shed light on the literature of community-based organisation. Data was gathered through 21 semi-structured interviews of members during eight weeks and complemented with participant observation. Identity theory was used to identify how the pulque production, the cooperative and the indigenous identity relate to the interpersonal relations of the members. This study shows how the cooperative managed to integrate profit orientation with community resilience as a common goal that strengthened indigenous identity. It also contributed to internal socio-economic competition and domestic violence due to conflicting work responsibilities and changing gender roles. Despite the social conflicts, the local governance system of solidarity and reciprocity combined with indigenous identity, and economic benefits maintain the cooperative in the form of a solidarity economy.

Keywords: Community-based cooperative, indigenous identity, subsistence, social relations, solidarity economy, pulque production, Mexico

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1.Introduction

Like many other indigenous populations worldwide, the indigenous people in Mexico continue to be disproportionately marginalised even if the poverty gap is slowly decreasing (OECD, 2018). There are around 25,7 million officially recognised indigenous peoples that speak 56 different indigenous languages in the country, which constitute 21,5 % of the total population (INEGI, 2016). As a result of the high poverty levels, many indigenous have out-migrated to urban areas or across the national border to the United States in search of work. There were around 26,6 million people of Mexican origin living in the United States in 2008, which make up the world's largest diaspora (Castles, 2008, p.264). Furthermore, 11,7 % of the population that speaks an indigenous language classified as an absolute migrant[1] in 2015 (INEGI, 2016). Consequently, Mexico suffers from, for instance, brain drain[2], the dismantling of products intended for the domestic market and socio-economic instability due to the increased dependence on remittances[3] over the last decades (Covarrubias & Wise, 2008, p.128). Mexico received a total of $36 billion in 2018, which is the highest amount of remittances of all countries in Latin America (World Bank, 2019b).

In response to these broader development patterns, the cooperative "Millennial Women" of El Azamal has been formed to maintain community resilience and economic self-sufficiency. The cooperative produces the beverage "pulque" and receives tourists that are interested in the production of the pulque and the community life of El Azamal. Similar to many other indigenous communities, El Azamal is characterised by food insecurity, low employment rate, and outmigration[4]. As the members facilitate Millennial Women themselves, the cooperative situates local needs and aspirations. Thus, it is a grassroots initiative with more prospects as previous findings, and several development intuitions have acknowledged the effectiveness of community-based organisations (Giovannini, 2016).

It is, however, a cooperative that focuses on economic growth by introducing pulque to the local market and by commercialising indigenous culture. The beverage derives from the plant Mageuy, which has been naturally growing in the community for generations but has

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[1] Absolute migrant refers to persons who live in a federative entity different from the one of their birth (INEGI, 2016).

[2] Brain drain refers to the displacement of qualified labour (Portes, 2008, p.26)

[3] Remittances refer to the economic transaction from one person to another usually abroad (Covarrubias & Wise, 2008, p.128).

[4] These findings are based on observations and interviews

only been extracted for self-consumption or produced to a smaller scale for sporadic gift exchanges or sales. By commercialising the natural resource and community life of El Azamal, the cooperative has introduced a market-based solution to the poverty experienced by the members. Enabling farmers to profit from agriculture and overcome the high rate of rural poverty has been, however, a challenge for policy-makers worldwide (IFAD, 2011). A further global challenge has been to alleviate poverty through an economic growth model without undermining indigenous economic and social relations that constitute indigenous culture (Kuokkanen, 2015). It begs the question of whether Millennial Women can serve as an example of a successful cooperative that increases indigenous capacity to secure their livelihood and achieve rural development while addressing community-based needs simultaneously. In order words, if the cooperative manage to promote the indigenous way of life and the collective identity of inhabitants of El Azamal through a market-based solution.

Also, since there are only around 37[5] households in the community of which 11 are involved in Millennial Women, the cooperative impact larger socio-economic structures of El Azamal through its economic changes on the subsistence mode of production. Millennial Women is, therefore, not only a case of a community-based cooperative attempting to achieve community resilience and economic self-sufficiency through a market-based solution but also a case of socio-economic transformation at the community level.

1.1. Specific aim and research question

Due to the interest in the potential role of community-based cooperatives to lift indigenous peoples out of poverty in a sustainable way, this study analyses the cooperative "Millennial Women". In the field of community organisations, previous studies have been focusing on identifying the primary needs of local groups and how community organisations can contribute to attaining those needs (Giovannini, 2015; Orozco-Quintero & Davidson-Hunt, 2010; King, Adler, & Grieves, 2013). This study intends to shed light on the literature of community organisations by including an analysis of the characteristics of Millennial Women and its effects on social relations of members. Since the primary means of the cooperative is the production of pulque, indigenous identity that constitutes the cultural life of inhabitants of El Azamal is principal to its operation.

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[5] In the absence of reliable statistics this number is based on observations and informal discussions

In order to understand the processes behind the cooperative and its effects on social relations, this thesis will draw on identity theory. This theoretical framework provides analytical tools to understand the complex relationship between the production of pulque and indigenous identity. It is of critical importance to assess how the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of the members relate to the new social positions that the members occupy as producers and as part of a cooperative. Researching this case in-depth is also of instrumental value for development policy-makers considering the attention they have directed at community-based initiatives to meet the needs of indigenous peoples to overcome rural poverty. The research has thus been guided by the following question:

How are the social relations of women in Millennial Women changing as a result of their engagement in the cooperative?

1.2. Delimitations

This study focuses mainly on how Millennial Women impacts women since they are the official members of the cooperative. Husband and older children are, however, participating in the cultivation of pulque as well since the boundaries of the cooperative are blurry[6]. Therefore, they carry valuable insights into how the cooperative is shaped and how this translates into the experiences of participants in terms of social relations and gender roles. Based on members shared identities as indigenous, pulque producers and members of Millennial Women, the thesis is focusing on social aspects. Therefore, it will not address the psychological aspects of identity theory that Burke and Stets highlights (2009).

1.3. Disposition

In order to understand the specific social features of Millennial Women, this thesis provides a general historical overview of the current situation for indigenous peoples in Mexico. A brief insight into the socio-economic and political context of indigenous communities follows this section. The part of existing research is presenting the discussion on how and why indigenous economies are changing, and correspondingly how these changes impact gender relations. These arguments are later on used to contrast the findings of the empirical data to broader

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[6] This finding is based on interviews and participant observation

experiences of indigenous peoples in Mexico. The theory of identity, according to Burke and Stets (2009), is subsequently presented as a separate section followed by the methodology. Identity theory and existing research are later on used to guide the empirical findings.

2. Background

2.1. A brief historical overview of the current situation for indigenous in Mexico

The socio-economic disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Mexico remain high (INEGI, 2016). One contributing factor is The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)[7] that the countries signed in 1994. Following the trade agreement, production costs, and prices lowered in the United States due to heavy subsidies and a more advanced technology that many Mexican farmers could not compete against. Consequently, this surged the importation of goods and the exportation of cheap labour (Covarrubias & Wise, 2008, p.117). It is estimated that more than 10,000,000 small-scale indigenous and peasant producers have been affected ever since, which has contributed to high rates of migration and exploration of alternative economic strategies (López, 2012). Export-oriented policies such as NAFTA have been gradually promoted in Mexico over the last decades (Covarrubias & Wise, 2008, p.117). The country is increasingly relying on remittances and labour-led exportations for economic growth. For example, 1.6 million households in total received remittances in 2008, which represents 8 % of the population. 47 % of these households were basing their income solely on remittances (Covarrubias & Wise, 2008, p.128). The volumes have steadily increased to make Mexico the third largest receiver of remittances today (World Bank, 2019b).

Following this model of socio-economic development, the gap between rich large-scale retailers and poor small-scale producers has over the decades increased (López, 2012). To exemplify, the wealthiest 20 % of the population earns ten times as much as the poorest 20 % (ibid). It is, however, a broader economic trend that is slowly reversing according to an economic outlook conducted by OECD (2018). In 2011, 79 % of Mexico's 123 million people were living in urban areas, which had an annual growth rate of 1.63 % (Garcia-Moreno & Anthony Patrinos, 2011). Despite the high number, two-thirds of the rural

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[7] The agreement created a trade bloc between the United States, Canada and Mexico (Covarrubias & Wise, 2008, p.117).

population is living in extreme poverty, and 61 % of these people are indigenous (IFAD, 2017). In other words, a large share of the total 25,7 million indigenous peoples in Mexico is living in rural poverty (INEGI, 2016). To exemplify, in the state of Oaxaca, where El Azamal is located, the maternal mortality rate is 80.6 per 100,000 (United Nations, 2015). To contrast, the maternal mortality rate in the country is 38 per 100, 000 (World Bank, 2016). Furthermore, the probability of death due to preventable diseases is 181 % higher in rural areas than the probability in the urban areas of the same state (United Nations, 2015). Also, existing inequalities make indigenous women especially marginalised (López, 2012).

2.2. The socio-economic and political context of indigenous communities in Mexico

According to the Mexican constitution, ethnicity is based on cultural variables such as language, traditions, and beliefs. Indigenous groups are thus formed based on shared cultural practices, a common history, and a common language that creates a sense of belonging and a collective identity (INEGI, 2016). The state of Oaxaca, where the empirical data has been gathered, has one of Mexico's most significant shares of indigenous peoples as 32,2 % of the state's population speaks an indigenous language (INEGI, 2016). The community under study is further located in the region of la Mixteca, which is a cultural, economic, and political region and refers to the home of the Mixtec people (ibid). Several multicultural reforms that acknowledge indigenous practices by law have also been enacted in the state of Oaxaca. The communal governance system *"usos y costumbres"* or "uses and costumes" that characterises many indigenous communities is one example. These regimes with municipal elections have officially been legislated in almost three-fourths of Oaxacan municipalities (Worthen, 2015). More specifically, 412 out of 570 municipalities within Oaxaca have formally adopted this system (Benton, 2012). Similar to many other indigenous communities in Mexico, El Azamal is also characterised by *"usos y costumbres"*. "Cargo" and "tequio" are two distinct features of this type of socio-political organisation[8]. Cargo is a position held by a democratically elected individual or a couple that is responsible for public affairs concerning the entire community (King, Adler, & Grieves, 2013). Tequio, on the other hand, is the community work that every household of the community participates in for some collective benefit, which the cargo or the community council is in charge of organising. It is an integral and ancient custom that is governed by the principles of reciprocity and solidarity (Worthen, 2015).

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[8] This finding is based on interviews and participant observation

Another common feature of indigenous communities is the collective form of landholding, and the land is known as an *ejido*. The notion of *ejido* was conceived in the 1917 Constitution to recognise communal landownership of families and communities (Torres-Mazuera 2016). In 1992, the Mexican government passed an agricultural reform to make it legal to sell *ejido* land. Before this reform, around half of the Mexican territory was *ejidos* distributed among 3,5 million landowners that circumvented private property law. The reform was an attempt by the Mexican government to increase productivity and economic growth (Herrera-Rodriquez, 2012). In 2015, *ejidos* still occupied over 51 % of Mexico's national territory (Torres-Mazuera 2016).

The concept "indigenous knowledge" is also significant to indigenous communities. It is unique in the way that it originates in the cultural traditions of a particular place. Therefore, various indigenous groups carry distinct knowledge embedded in their culture. It is passed on from generation to generation through shared cultural practices, which means that it is continuously reinforced in everyday interactions that carry cultural value. This indigenous knowledge, thus, depends on the maintenance of cultural traditions (Senanayake, 2006).

3. Existing research

3.1. Indigenous economies and cultural significance

Since indigenous peoples are disproportionately marginalised many indigenous communities have moved into profit-driven economic activities to sustain a living. A subsistence mode of production is usually characterising indigenous communities in Mexico. Activities that are adding to or replacing the subsistence livelihood range from cash crops, other forms of production to seasonal migration (Kuokkanen, 2015). Koukkanen (2015) stresses how this is damaging to indigenous self-governance and economic self-sufficiency since indigenous economies are embedded in their cultures. In this sense, the notion of subsistence stretches beyond economic definitions, which Kuokkanen (2015) refers to as the "social economy". Thus, social economies are integrating cultural values and identity, indigenous knowledge, and system of governance (ibid). Furthermore, Stewart-Withers, Banks, Mcgregor and Meo-Sewabu (2014, p.74) points out how the notion of reciprocity is, in general, integral to indigenous communities carrying communal and collective values. It is "…the glue that

builds and binds the social capital of communities" according to Stewart-Withers et al. (2014, p.74)

Most indigenous peoples are still engaged in small-scale production and agricultural makes up 45 % of the indigenous economically active population, which refers to the people under employment or actively seeking employment (Pérez Velasco Pavón, 2014). With a background in economics, Pérez Velasco Pavón (2014) found that indigenous peoples prefer working in small family businesses or being self-employed instead of larger organisational corporations due to so-called "cultural factors". Small-scale work and self-employment are viewed as expressions of indigenous culture and in particular norms of reciprocity and solidarity. Also, Pérez Velasco Pavón (2014) stresses how communities with a high degree of these so-called cultural factors have less trade and lower economic growth. It does not imply that indigenous communities are not successful to meet its objectives. Indigenous concepts such as participatory democracy and distributional equity and solidarity enabled local cooperatives as alternative livelihood strategies in rural Mexico to meet local needs and goals, according to King et al (2013). The case of "Casa de la Mujer Indígena" is another example of a successful community-based enterprise that contributed in delivering satisfactory health services for indigenous women that in other contexts experience disparities in care. This further empowered women to report abuse and referrals for obstetric emergencies. (Pelcastre-Villafuerte et al, 2014). Based on these findings, Pelcastre-Villafuerte et al (2014) raise the importance of local ownership and the community-based project to be flexible and situated in diverse indigenous contexts.

Embedded in indigenous economies is also the notion of communal landholding that carries cultural significance. Torres-Mazuera (2016) found that the 1992 land reform gave rise to "normative dissonance" regarding the social legitimacy of *ejido* land. In other words, the privatisation and the sale of ejidal land undermined indigenous customs and social regulations. Although privatisation of land might be more conducive in economic terms, Herrera Rodriguez (2012) argues that this form of social organisation has enabled farmers to mobilise resources based on their shared community identity. To exemplify, a study made by Orozco-Quintero & Davidson-Hunt (2010) found that core cultural values and commons unite people in community enterprises. Commons represent a cultural and natural resource that is accessible to all members of the society, which contrast the notion of private property. Furthermore, community enterprises retrain legitimacy both externally and internally when they are, amongst others, rooted in customary institutions, norms and values (Orozco-Quintero & Davidson-Hunt, 2010).

This finding shows how community organisation is one method to achieve community development because it situates local needs, values, decision-making, and accountability (Dizon, 2012). Dizon (2012, p.4) stresses that community organisation is "a process by which a community identifies its problem and finds solutions through the collective mobilization of community people and resources". The core assumption is that people can overcome the powerlessness they experience individually by collectively striving towards common goals and developing a sense of power amongst them (ibid). Furthermore, the World Bank (2019a) defines community-based strategies as operating on the principles of "transparency, participation, accountability and enhanced local capacity". The institution views these strategies as positive for poverty alleviation by effectively delivering essential services and building small-scale infrastructure (ibid).

In the absence of *ejido* and social economies, communal integration will depend more on each community's socio-economic structure (Herrera Rodriguez, 2012). Koukkanen (2015) also argue that the modern versus traditional dichotomy further pose a threat to the survival of indigenous communities because of its conceptualisation of development as linear with industrial capitalism on the frontier. Promoting indigenous economies or communal land holding is, therefore, crucial for preserving the indigenous way of life and the identity of these communities, according to Kuokkanen (2015).

3.2. Gender relations in indigenous communities

Gender roles in indigenous communities are also changing due to development trends such as migration and alternative economic strategies. Women are usually in charge of the domestic and productive work in the home but are becoming more integrated into the market as wage labourers as well (Howell, 1999). Men still represent the vast majority that migrates (Nobles & McKelvey, 2015). Nobles & McKelvey (2015) stresses how the notions of masculinity and adulthood favour male migration as it is viewed as a male responsibility to support the family. As a result of male migration, more households are headed by women in both rural and urban areas, which corresponded to a total of about 40% in 2005 (Olivera & Furio, 2006). Worthen (2015) pointed out that emigration promotes women's political participation in the case study of Oaxacan female migrants. They were more engaged in the political decision concerning community life upon return to their hometowns. Worthen (2015) argues that the absence of men combined with the growing importance of women's role in improving the economic situation is the contributing factors. The number of increasing led-female households does not

imply that traditional gender roles are reversed due to persisting traditional gender models that perpetuate women as dependent on men, according to Olivera & Furio (2006). For example, only 0.7 % of communal landowners and 3.4 % of *ejido* were women in 2005 (Herrera Rodriguez, 2012).

Howell (1999) found that formal education and employment gradually changed gender roles to acknowledge women's productive roles without diminishing the importance of their reproductive roles as wives and mothers. Women's economic self-determination was most readily accepted as long as they are fulfilling traditional roles to provide for the family as mothers and wives (Howell, 1999). However, Olivera & Furio (2006) argue that gender and class status are still differentiated because larger social structures favouring men are not altered. Consequently, women are overburden with responsibilities and are in many cases more vulnerable to domestic violence due to men's self-image of *Macho*[9]. The culture of machismo maintains the man's status quo as superior and changing gender roles threatens this status that increases domestic violence (Olivera & Furio, 2006). Marital abuse is also more concurrent when men remain in the community and do not migrate for work, according to López (2012). It results in a higher incidence of alcohol, which further intensifies the domestic violence (ibid). Kuokkanen (2015) even suggests that entering the labour market downgrades women's autonomy, as subsistence activities are usually the domain of women.

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. Introduction

This section presents the theoretical theory that guides the analysis of the empirical data. Since the economic, political, and social systems in indigenous contexts are influenced by cultural principles such as reciprocity and solidarity, the concept of identity is central to indigenous relations. Therefore, identity theory will be used to explore whether the economic changes following the cooperative Millennial Women undermines or facilitates the development of the community of El Azamal based on how it relates to their shared collective identity as indigenous, producers and members of the cooperative. It also provides the theoretical lens to understand how gender roles are changing due to the new economic

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[9] Macho is a concept used to explain when men are displaying strong masculine characteristics that are associated with a man's responsibility to provide for and protect his family (Olivera & Furio, 2006).

positions women are occupying following Millennial Women. The theory emerged after an initial coding of the empirical data (Bryman, 2012, p.569). Thus, an inductive approach to the study was employed, which is common when conducting qualitative research (Bryman, 2012, p.27)

4.2. Identity theory

The interplay between the self and society shapes identities. It is a broad field of study within and across academic disciplines. In *"Identity theory"*, Burke and Stets (2009) are, however, attempting to overcome these distinctions by bringing together central roles of both meaning and resources in human interaction into a single framework. Drawing on the perspective of structural symbolic interaction[10], the authors define identity, as "…the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person" (ibid, 2009, p.3). Hence, people have multiple identities depending on the occupation, group association, and personal characteristics. Individuals are shaped by their context as well as producing the social structures that influence them through their actions. Agency is a key notion that views individuals as actors engaging with social structures (ibid, 2009, p.12-13). The concept of "identity standards" is a combination of meanings attached to particular identities. These meanings serve as the reference for people that guide their behaviour in social contexts (ibid, 2009, p.15-16).

4.2.1 Bases for identities

According to Burke and Stets (2009, p.112), there are three bases for identities that still operate in the same way: role identity, social identity, and person identity (see appendix 1 for a full overview). The emphasis on roles follows a more traditional sociological view of identities as being shaped by the set of expectations associated with a particular social position such as parent or student. Social identities are, on the other hand, formed by individual membership in certain groups such as political parties. Person identities are the characteristics that individuals have attached to the self as separate of other individuals. As

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[10] Structural symbolic interaction is a perspective within sociology and psychology that stresses the role of symbols and language and the meaning attached to them in framing social structures (Burke and Stets, 2009, p.16)

pointed out by Burke and Stets (2009, p.129), all individuals act to verify their self-perceived meanings by behaving in ways that are consistent with the meanings and expectations associated with the identity-standards. When identities are verified, positive feelings of authenticity, self-efficiency, and self-worth are the outcomes, which further activates the identities. Identity non-verification, on the other hand, occurs when the meanings of identity standards are not consistent with the perceived meanings of self, leading to negative consequences such as withdrawing from interaction (ibid, 2009, p.163-165). Thus, individuals are perceptually regulating their self-meanings of the role, social, and person identities to match the feedback they receive in the situation (ibid, 2009, p.127-129).

4.2.2 Identity change

In addition to exploring the formation of identities, Burke and Stets (2009) also examine how identities change. As identities are created based on the meanings held in the identity standards, identities are changing when the meanings are changing as well. Thus, identity standards are flexible and can change slowly over time. Identity changes occur when there is a lack of identity-verification or when there are external changes in larger social structures. It occurs when the meaning of the perceived self cannot be controlled to match the meanings in the identity standards or when there are conflicting meanings of identities activated together (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 186-188). Identity standards can also change, for instance, when someone with more resources redefines the meanings and expectations associated with a particular role or group membership, or when groups expand or contract (ibid, 2009, p.218-220). The creation of identities is another source of identity change based on three principles: social learning, direct socialisation, and reflected appraisals. We learn what behaviour is associated with positions and expectations, and we are socialised to conform to these identity standards. Reflected appraisals refer to what we think others think of ourselves to maintain and verify the set of meanings that are portrayed by others (ibid, 2009, p.193-195). These thoughts on identity change provide an analytical lens at the organisational level of intergroup and intragroup relations to understand under what conditions participants embrace specific identities. It also provides an analytical lens at the interpersonal level to answer for the motivational processes of participants such as self-worth or self-efficacy (ibid, 2009, p.128).

5. Methodology

5.1 Research design and sampling

This thesis follows a qualitative case study design that was conducted over eight weeks in El Azamal, Mexico. Relevant to the research questions are the experiences of the participants of Millennial Women. Drawing on their narratives is an effective method when analysing how people perceive, construct, define, and attribute meaning to their realities (Bryman, 2016, p.61). A qualitative case design captures these perspectives, which is instrumental in understanding how the identities as an indigenous, producer and member of Millennial Women relate to the experiences of the participants. Since the case of Millennial Women and the community of El Azamal lack previous research, a qualitative case design also allows for a detailed and holistic account of this specific context (Bryman, 2016, p.402).

The sample emerged through the process of purposive sampling according to the objective of the study and based on the essential characteristic as member of Millennial Women. Therefore, the sampling process has embraced a sequential approach that enables the sample with relevance to the research question to evolve throughout the research (Bryman, 2016, p.410). Although women are the only official members, husbands and older children participate in the activities of the cooperative as well. They are, therefore, included in the sample. The sample consists of a diverse range in age and gender that enables a more in-depth assessment of the case as experiences might differ due to gender roles in the community or hierarchical age structures. As the cooperative is limited in its number of participants, the sampling process ceased when there were no possible additional interviews, which is when the research attained data saturation (Bryman, 2016, p.425-426).

5.2. Data collection

The thesis is drawing on 21 individual semi-structured interviews with community members of El Azamal that are actively playing a role in the cooperative. Eleven interviewees are the official members of the cooperative, which means that they have their names signed on a paper to request for funding. A few of the husbands were not available due to seasonal work outside of the community. Hence, four interviewees are the husbands of the women participating in the cooperative. The remaining five interviews are children of legal age, the

initiator and her partner and one woman who left the cooperative (see appendix 2 for a detail list of interviewees). All of these interviews were recorded, except for one, with the permission of the interviewees. Furthermore, the interviews were semi-structured, and the questions were open-ended to capture the interviewee's point of view (Bryman, 2016, p.468). To have a flexible approach and to situate the study from the perspective of the interviewees is of particular importance since indigenous peoples are the sample of the study. Stewart-Withers et al. (2014, p.72) stress the notion of indigenous worldview to be recognised in the process of gathering data when indigenous peoples are involved. As the research intends to cover specific topics with relevance to the cooperative, the interviews departed from an interview guide (see appendix 3, interview guide).

Furthermore, participant observation of the daily life of community members in El Azamal was also carried out in a natural open-ended way while in the field. For example, one such occasion included a tequio[11] to clean the water facilitation that provides water to El Azamal and nearby communities. Thus, participant observation provided further inquiry into the social realities of community members. The method was instrumental in capturing the overall context of El Azamal (Bryman, 2016, p.423). By living in El Azamal during the field period, several undocumented interviews were additionally carried out. These informal discussions were documented in the form of field notes afterwards and provided a more profound understanding of the community life of El Azamal in a variety of locations and at different times (Bryman, 2016, p.440).

5.3. Data analysis

The process of transcribing and analysing the gathered data commenced already while in the field to capture variables of this particular case. It is a common strategy within a qualitative case design that enabled the data to be organised based on common themes in the interviews (Stewart-Withers et al, 2014, p.76). Therefore, the thesis employed a thematic analysis throughout the various stages of analysing the data (Bryman, 2012, p.584). After finalising and transcribing the interviews, a word frequency query was carried out through the program NVivo to identify concurrent themes further (see appendix 4). Since the interviews were semi-structured, the word frequency query combined with an initial thematic coding allowed for the theory of identity (Burke & Stets, 2009) to emerge in accordance with the

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[11] For definition see section 2.2

interviewee's experiences and perceptions. The theory of identity enabled the second round of coding by using NVivo for a more detailed analysis of the interviewee's responses. Three central identities emerged: community member, producer, and member of Millennial Women. Responses were later on categorised based on how the interviewees experience these different identities with subthemes answering for the underlying causes according to the interviewees (see appendix 5 for a synoptic coding scheme).

5.4. Ethical considerations

As the sample of the data is indigenous peoples, there are a few ethical issues and potential biases in need of consideration. Due to the marginalised position of the interviewees, extra care was given to minimise the possible side effects of fieldwork. Scheyvens, Scheyvens & Murray (2014, p.196-197) has noted how the positionality[12] of the interviewer in relation to the interviewees has further diversified power inequalities and academic paradigms in indigenous research. Therefore, the interview guide with open-ended questions was carefully developed with regards to contextual sensitivity, to minimise ethnocentric understanding and to "give voice" to the interviewees (ibid, 2014, p.196-197) Although it is challenging to avoid ontological and epistemological biases, participant observation and informal discussions aimed to immerse into the cultural setting and to provide a critical perspective of the thesis (Bryman, 2016, p.393). The methods of inquiry also served to facilitate reciprocal relationships. Furthermore, all of the interviewees were briefed about the purpose of the study and the ethical dimensions to ensure informed consent and reciprocity (Scheyvens et al, 2014, p. 184). The data given through the interviews were later on treated with confidentiality and stored securely (ibid, 2014, p. 189).

Another ethical consideration is the role of the research assistant (RA) that assisted in translating during the interviews and in the process of transcribing. By using a research assistant, there is a risk of losing knowledge due to language barriers. The RA was, however, selected based on the criteria sex, skills, and nationality with concerns of her positionality (Mclennan, Storey & Leslie, 2014, p. 153). Furthermore, the RA played a crucial role in facilitating communication and interaction throughout the fieldwork and helped to avoid using labels of people in living in poverty in the local language that might internalise the way they are spoken about (Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall, 2008). In consideration of indigenous

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[12] Positionality is a concept to underline how individuals are influenced by their social and political context that affects the way they perceive and understand the world (Scheyvens et al, 2014, p.196-197)

customs and traditions, gifts were carefully prepared to show gratitude and respect before leaving the field. Gift exchange is an integral part of most indigenous cultures (Stewart-Withers et al, 2014, p. 74) Throughout the field period I sought to be transparent with my intentions and my social position as a bachelor student to avoid giving expectations of any sort.

6. Analysis

6.1. Setting the scene

There are about 37 households in the community with around 130 inhabitants[13]. Generations of families live under the same roof and share daily household tasks. Subsistence farming is the primary livelihood, which means that consumption and production are mainly at the household level. Crops such as wheat and corn are dominating, and most households own and maintain livestock as well[14]. As mentioned in the introduction, the plant Mageuy is naturally growing in the community and has been cultivated and extracted to produce pulque for generations. Therefore, the natural resource was already significant to community members and central to El Azamal before the cooperative of Millennial Women initiated 2-3 years ago. It was, however, only maintained for self-consumption and a few interview subjects used pulque to exchange for other crops or to receive some money from people in nearby communities. Only two to three participants reported that they sold pulque at the local market before joining the cooperative. Interviewee 13 (2019-03-06) highlights the previous lack of market engagement:

"A lot of people did not know, they did not sell their products, we were the ones who started selling there in Nochixtlan, and we saw that we sold pulque, and there was a bit of money, and with that we went ahead, because nobody here has a fixed job, they simply work in the field."

Following on this account, one interview subject (Interviewee 20, 2019-03-09) explained how they used to suffer even if they produced pulque because of the food insecurity, lack of financial means and lack of transportation, as indicated in the quote below:

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[13] In the absence of reliable statistics the numbers are based on participant observation and informal discussions

[14] The findings are jointly based on participant observation, informal discussions and interviews

"Before we suffered a lot because we were pulqueros for a long time, then we were going to offer to several communities, and we had to walk for kilometres, there are people who bought from us, there are people who did not, sometimes they paid us, sometimes not, or sometimes we exchanged with corn, beans. That's how it was before, and now little by little with this organization we can move forward."

This statement also suggests how the cooperative of Millennial Women has changed the living conditions of the members. The organisation has enabled the production of pulque to increase and to become a market product for the general population of El Azamal. The reason is that they have received technical training about Mageuy by a woman and her husband, who are from nearby communities. Both of them have attained a university degree in environmental engineering. The woman is referred to as "the engineer" and was the one who initiated the cooperative for the inhabitants of El Azamal to become recognised for their pulque and to rescue the Mageuy (Interviewee 21, 2019-03-10). The name of Millennial Women that was introduced by the engineer is even originating in the idea to strengthen indigenous knowledge concerning the cultivation of Mageuy and to recognise the work of women as indicated in the quote below:

 "It's an organization called women, but it is made up of men and women. I also wanted to the work of the women behind the production of pulque to be known. Before you asked the men who were the ones who worked with the pulque and they always said that they did all the work and did not say that a woman was going to clean the maguey or to collect honey water and it was to highlight and strengthen the work they do." (Interviewee 21, 2019-03-10)

Aside of empowering women and indigenous knowledge as highlighted in the quote, the engineer also intends for the production of pulque to be commercialised and known beyond the community in regional and national markets (Interviewee 21, 2019-03-10). It is the reason why the engineer and her partner are providing technical assistance that involves learning about how to clean and cultivate Mageuy more efficiently. Furthermore, they use a machine collectively in the form of a routine schedule that is also providing guidelines about how often the participants are working on each other lands. This work is sometimes referred to as "tequio" and sometimes as "activity".

In terms of resource management, the cooperative resolve how to manage the income from the pulque and tourism in the form of an "assembly" through direct democracy. The president of the cooperative or the Mageuy committee is the very same person that holds the cargo[15] position of El Azamal. The position is based on trust and prestige and does not entail an economic reward. The assembly of the community occurs when there is a need to change authority. In regards to Millennial Women, the assemblies depend on when they have to decide on how to distribute the money they have collectively gained. Sometimes they agree to spend the money on resources such as the machinery that they are using for planting maguey, and sometimes they distribute the money equally amongst themselves. It usually occurs after tourists have visited them, which happens two to three times each year[16].

6.2. Pulque producer and indigenous identity

As previously mentioned, the objectives of Millennial Women go beyond securing an income for involved members. It is also a way for the people of El Azamal to maintain community resilience and to rise in economic terms. When asked about the goals of being involved in the cooperative, several interviewees answered in collective terms. The quote below highlights this:

"Our goals are for the community to be known more, for the pulque to be known and for us to be known as producers, and we are pleased when they come" (Interviewee 2, 2019-02-06)

This statement is also representative of the shared positive attitudes towards the cooperative. Contrary to previous findings of Koukkanen (2015), it seems that the people of Millennial Women have managed to frame the objectives and needs of the community members in line with market-based principles. The people of Millennial Women have transformed the production of pulque into a profit-driven economic activity that still integrates cultural values, relations of reciprocity, and indigenous knowledge. Therefore, the "social economy" as highlighted by Koukkanen (2015) overlaps with a market-based mode of production. It can be explained by how pulque production has become embedded in the notion of collectively belonging to El Azamal. Since the cooperative is integrated by cultural principles such as assemblies and tequios, the identity of being a producer overlap with the indigenous identity

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[15] For definition see 2.2.

[16] The findings are jointly based on participant observation, informal discussions and interviews

or the community identity. This community identity is based upon their shared access to the resource of Mageuy and the region on which their culture depends. As previously highlighted by Torres-Mazuera (2016) and Herrera Rodrigues (2012), natural resources carry cultural significance for many indigenous peoples. Thus, the production is closely linked to the cultural practices that form the basis of the collective identity as indigenous, which is also evident in the quote below:

"Yes; for example, how we have to take care of the maguey, the pulque, and we have to consume more pulque because it is more natural, that we shouldn't lose our traditions, we have to carry on with them" (Interviewee 9, 2019-02-08)

The subsequent sentence further develops this statement:

"I feel happy because before maybe the grandparents didn't take care of it as they should, but now they teach me more about it" (Interviewee 9, 2019-02-08)

As suggested by the quotes above, to maintain the production imply to pass on cultural practice. Although indigenous knowledge[17] about Mageuy existed beforehand amongst the participants of Millennial Women, the engineer and her partner reproduced it due to the technical training they received. Therefore, the technical assistance did not only make the production of pulque more efficient in economic terms. It also strengthened the already existing indigenous knowledge of Mageuy and thus the collective identity itself. Before getting involved in the cooperative, several interview subjects reported that they felt ashamed and shy and did not know that people were interested in buying pulque, which the sentences below underline:

"Before people were really shy, they couldn't explain, or they couldn't tell who they are; more than anything, things related to pulque, many people don't know about pulque" (Interviewee 2, 2019-02-06).

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[17] See section 2.2 for the definition of indigenous knowledge

Since there was not a cooperative beforehand of similar orientation[18], this quote shows how integration with the market appears to strengthen indigenous identity. Words such as proud and beautiful are used frequently in association with the production. Since there were no established ideas in regards to what it means to be a market-based pulque producer of a cooperative in El Azamal, this allowed for the engineer to guide normative behaviour and frame identity standards due to her superior social position. Participants confirmed to these identity standards because of the commitment and the feeling of competence in association with the role of pulque producer. This commitment also reflects the desires the participants have for their children to maintain the pulque production. For instance, interview subject 5 (2019-02-07) stated that:

"I'm leaving them for my grandsons, my granddaughter and my kids, so they can benefit from them as we do with the sale of pulque, for them to continue the sale of pulque".

As highlighted above, community resilience is based on the pulque production due to the socio-economic possibilities it creates for individual households as well as for the community as a whole. This objective shows how economic behaviour, social relations, and cultural principles integrate, which has previously been emphasised by scholars such as Koukkanen (2015) and Pérez Velasco Pavón (2014). The difference is that participants of Millennial Women managed to frame community resilience, economic growth, and cultural practices as a common objective simultaneously. Similar to many other findings of community-based initiatives, the case of Millennial Women is, thus, successful in its intentions to meet local needs across several goals. It is due to the integrative ties pulque production has to the identity as indigenous that enabled participants to mobilise resources in the first place. Family and community integration are, therefore, significant principles of the economic activity of Millennial Women. Since the people of Millennial Women intend for the children to continue working with Mageuy and the field, it implies that these experiences are positive. In the quote below, interviewee 1 (2019-02-03) support this finding further:

"What inspires me is that the kids that are just growing up, well, for them to keep strengthening this beginning that we are supporting; that the tourism keeps growing always and the community rises a little more."

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[18] This finding is based on interviews and informal discussions

Thus, the production of pulque combined with tourism, creates the opportunity to maintain their customs and traditions, as highlighted above. A further explanation is that the economic changes of El Azamal due to the cooperative did not undermine shared community identity. The productivity of the cultivation of Mageuy increased without having to privatise the land, which follows the findings of Herrera Rodriguez (2012), who argued that communal landholding enables farmers to mobilise resources. Furthermore, the salience of the identity as pulque producers as well as the identity as indigenous was reinforced by interactions with buyers at the market, with tourists and amongst each other. It implies that the members socialised into conforming to the behaviour associated with the position and the following expectations as pulque producers.

The quote mentioned above also shows how the interviewee views the cooperative as an opportunity to not out-migrate to sustain a living, which is a view shared by many other interviewees. This interview subject had alike many other interviewees previously been working outside of the community to generate money for the family. However, several interviewees associate the experience as mostly negative in comparison to working in the field with Mageuy in El Azamal. Although the reason for settling down in El Azamal differs between the interviewees, the cooperative of Millennial Women provides the possibility to improve the livelihoods of inhabitants without having to migrate. The two quotes below exemplify this view further:

"Being in the city, if you work you eat, if you don't then you don't eat, and having a child makes it more difficult. That's why we came here" (interviewee 4, 2019-02-07).

"For me, I feel proud, it's not like in the city. In the city there is a lot of diseases. Here there is open air and everything" (Interviewee 11, 2019-03-06)

These sentences imply that another reason for working with the field is to have better living conditions in terms of food security. Working with pulque production appears to provide a more secure livelihood for the interviewees than to work in urban areas. Food security is thus another reason for remaining in El Azamal. This finding sheds light on why indigenous peoples in Mexico would prefer working in a small family business or being self-employed as previously emphasised by Pérez Velasco Pavón (2014). A few interviewees stated, however,

that a further goal of being involved in Millennial Women is to pay for costs that keep the children in school. The quote below highlights this:

" My goal for my kids, what I have been thinking, is for them to study, to have a career in the future, so they not to work only in the field like me, or my girls, for them to be something besides just housewives, like me also. I want them to become someone in the future. To support them in what we can with their studies" (Interviewee 4, 2019-02-07)

Maintaining the production of pulque over generations is, therefore, not a goal shared by everyone. The identity as a community member of El Azamal that sustains the cooperative is non-verified in this statement. It is also more common that the older children are working outside of the community to have an income, which concerns several interviewees. In the long term, the cooperative faces the risk to disperse since children are less attached to the community and pulque production through schooling and alternative work, which the quote below highlights:

"We are losing the customs here in the village, the kids leave the homes, grab and leave, and do not return sometimes" (Interviewee 11, 2019-03-06)

These quotes also suggest how the indigenous identity that came to revolve around the production of pulque is dependent on sustaining the tradition over generations. It implies that out-migrations undermine the indigenous culture of El Azamal.

6.3. Millennial Women and social conflict

Although the view of pulque production is positive due to the economic benefits, the strengthening of indigenous identity and the opportunities to maintain community resilience, the majority of the interviewees were conflicted in their views on how the organisation of the cooperative. Three primary reasons for this social conflict emerged from the thematic analysis of the empirical data: the diffuse concept of work and responsibilities, socio-economic conflict, and gender roles. These reasons are under discussion in their separate sections.

6.3.1. The diffuse concept of work and responsibilities

Unity[19] is a word that is frequently used by the interviewees in association with how they experience the work. Since salary structures with hierarchical relations of employees and employers do not govern the working conditions, maintaining the cohesion of the cooperative will depend more on social relations. The quote below indicates this finding:

"I see that we work well, the more united we are, the better the work, so it always goes well, because when one is here, and another one does not show up, but when we are united the work goes better. Some people work alone, and some people do it later, and as a team, it is done." (Interviewee, 16, 2019-03-07)

The principles of unity and trust are, therefore, central to the efficiency of the work, as highlighted above. It also suggests how the cultural principles of reciprocity and solidarity guide the work, which forms the general system of local governance and the identity of indigenous peoples. Thus, the cooperative of Millennial Women has integrated already existing indigenous notions in management and arrangements as well. From this perspective, the cooperative operates as a solidarity economy. The quote below further support this finding:

"Through an engineer who tells us what day we have to meet to carry out the work, a tequio, and so we have to go to such places to continue with the work" (Interviewee 20, 2019-03-09)

As highlighted in the quote, the work itself has diffuse meanings. In this statement, the interviewee is referring to it as "tequio"[20] while other interviewees refer to the work as an activity. Some interviewees do not even recognise the activities of Millennial Women or the cultivation of Mageuy itself as work. For them, work denotes formal employment, which this quote by interviewee 11(2019-03-06) exemplifies:

"Therefore, there is no work, there is no work here in the town, only the field, kids study, they see the money, they go to the city and they earn something and they do not return, and we maintain it, even if it is little, but we keep the community here."

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[19] This word itself has 17 references
[20] For definition see section 2.2

There is a lack of consistency in regards to the concept of work, as indicated by the quotes combined. As previously discussed, this is partly due to the integration of cultural notions such as tequio and assemblies but also due to the lack of social structures defining work in this context. All of these indigenous concepts[21] bring forth clear identity standards to guide social and cultural behaviour between the inhabitants. Integrating these concepts in the cooperative makes the meaning of them, however, less clear. The implications of such ambiguity are diffuse responsibilities in terms of how much work is required and what this work entails. Consequently, there seems to be a lack of standardised activities and consistent work expectations that give rise to unclear working responsibilities, which the quote below highlights:

"As I understand about how it is organized, how each thing is done because everyone has an opinion of how it is done, how it is going to improve, there are many ways of being a group" (Interviewee 17, 2019-03-08)

As suggested by the quote above, the diffuse concept of work and the following diffuse working responsibilities is thus a consequence of conflicting ideas of what it means to be a group member. Also, existing norms of equilibrium that is central to the community life of El Azamal such as assemblies seem to be the reason for why it is more challenging to establish working structures agreed by everyone, which the quote below underlines:

"The group fights for politics, but do not fight for their friendship" (Interviewee 14, 2019-03-07)

According to this interview subject, social conflicts only extend to political matters in regards to working expectations. Their social relations and shared collective identity can explain why the cooperative is still operating despite their different opinions.

6.3.2 Socio-economic conflict

As previously discussed, the diffuse concept of work and working responsibilities allows for several interviewees to experience frustration towards one another. Similar to the findings of

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[21] Indigenous concepts denotes principles of equilibrium such as tequio and assemblies

Torres-Mazuera (2016), Millennial Women seem not to have been able to establish complete social legitimacy due to the "normative dissonance" in terms of work. Several interviewees argued that people of the cooperative need to work harder and take the work more seriously. The engineer and her partner stressed in their interviews that is the lack of awareness that is the cause for not showing interest in the work of the cooperative, which the quote below indicates:

"We give talks to improve the production process because if we do not give it, people will forget it, sometimes it is not of interest for them and since there is no one pushing, they forget everything and there is no follow-up, they do not continue working, they forget, that is why sometimes we improve their production techniques so that they can move forward" (Interviewee 18, 2019-03-09)

This quote highlights the importance of trust and encouragement in sustaining the cooperative, which enabled the cooperative to mobilise resources and take form in the first place as further indicated in the quote below:

"The superstitious they had when we started the project is that they didn´t trust in the activities we were doing. Although the project has been working since 2016 there are people who still do not believe in the knowledge that one has or in wanting to change things" (Interviewee 21, 2019-03-10).

The quote suggests that social conflicts seem to arise from diffuse working responsibilities as well as a lack of incentives. One explanation is that Millennial Women created a new form of socio-economic competition, which is stressed by Interviewee 1 (2019-02-03):

"It's like they don't care; I don't like it because when we must work, they are not there, but when the money is divided they are there. Most people work hard, and they support, and they think it is annoying when we need them and they're not there, and when the money is divided they appear, and that's when they start to say "why do you have so much?" "

This quote shows how this member experiences socio-economic competition within the cooperative, as they appear to be envious of each other's materialistic standards. "Envy" is a word that is frequently used across the interviews when they are discussing the organisation

of the cooperative. The partner of the initiator reports that the envy originates in the idea of them earning more than the other producers since they are better off in economic terms, which this quote provided by the engineer stresses (Interviewee 21, 2019-03-10):

"Win or do not win, they say you win a lot for the projects and we really have to look for financing alternatives and people believe that because we support them, we earn a lot, when it is really a social service that we are giving them without making money."

As indicated in the quote above, the engineer and her partner who provides technical assistance view their work as a social service as they do not earn a wage. It suggests how the envy experienced towards one another seem to be a result of the perceived various socio-economic statuses member occupy due to their income gained from selling pulque. Therefore, Millennial Women created a market-based identity that clashes with norms of equilibrium that has previously been guiding the life of inhabitants of El Azamal, which consequently gave rise to socio-economic competition.

Social hierarchy itself is, however, not a new phenomenon in El Azamal as the inhabitants have over generations elected a person, a cargo, to represent the interest of the inhabitants in public affairs. As previously mentioned, the cargo position does not entail an economic reward but only prestige and trust. Due to the economic benefits of Millennial Women, the social hierarchy of this cooperative involves social divisions according to material statuses. Interviewees are, however, overall positive to what the engineer is providing and doing for the cooperative. Her leadership position is, thus, not questioned, but only the rewards that come with the new social hierarchy. The finding sheds light on Koukkanen (2015) who emphasised that changes in economic structures ultimately impact the social relations of indigenous peoples since the local system of governance and subsistence is the foundation for communal integration. Another interview subject argued, however, that the competition is not due to the cooperative since the members equally divide the money amongst them, but exist in El Azamal itself, which the following quote exemplifies:

"I see that we work well, the more united we are, the better the work, so it always goes well, because when one is here, and another one does not show up, but when we are united the work goes better. Some people work alone, and some people do it later, and as a team, it is done." (Interviewee 16, 2019-03-07)

This interview subject is, however, not an official participant of Millennial Women and assist the engineer in marketing the cooperative, which can explain the different attitude. Also, it seems that the social hierarchy has retained internal and external social legitimacy since many of the interviewees referred to the persons in leadership positions when asked about potential changes for the cooperative. Several interviewees answered that it depends on the work of other people in the cooperative or on what they say. For instance, the president of Millennial Women (interviewee 13, 2019-03-06) explained that:

"My main role, I'm the one that drives all of them because if I'm not there, they do not stand out, because I'm the one who makes the most of it, it encourages them more than anything, and they named me as president of the maguey committee."

As indicated in the quote, the maintenance of the cooperative relies on the accountability of leaders. It also important that leadership features are rooted in indigenous institutions, which has been highlighted by scholars such as Orozco-Quintero & Davidson-Hunt (2010), Pelcastre-Villafuerte et al. (2014) and King et al. (2013). Working together on the land is also more efficient than individual labour, and it is a preferred choice according to many interview subjects. Thus, the attitude towards the cooperative itself is mainly positive despite their conflicting political opinions due to diffuse working responsibilities and internal socio-economic competition. It is only one of the interview subjects who have left the cooperative because of these reasons highlighted in her statement:

"I din´t like it, because it has plenty of requirements, and suddenly I spoke to them so I can participate but I really don't have the time to, or they do not arrive on time and they begin to complain those that arrive first. They are very envious. "(Interviewee 12, 2019-03-06)

The very same interview subject reported that there is another woman who has left for similar reasons. As previously discussed, the cooperative is, however, maintained as a social group due to the positive opportunities it provides for the members. The socio-economic competition and the diffuse working responsibilities experienced by the members are not severe enough to cause withdrawal for all of the members. The collective ties to El Azamal and the common strive towards community resilience, and economic self-sufficiency maintains integration. The identity as indigenous is integral to social relations, as highlighted in the quote below:

"I usually get along with one or two women, but the others are really rude and talk with pure vulgarities, and since I understand Mixtec now I defend myself sometimes but not every time. I don't talk back to avoid fighting with them, before I didn't understand them and I used to cry, but now that I can, I talk back and sometimes they endure, but not always. I tell them that I don't like when they talk to me like that, they are really rude. "(Interviewee 8, 2019-02-08)

The quote indicates that she is experiencing social conflict due to her lack of attachment to the indigenous identity as Mixteco. This interview subject is from another state and moved to El Azamal because of her husband. It appears that the strengthening of indigenous identity through pulque production is limiting the scope of the cooperative to include more members that do not meet the social requirements. Thus, the cooperative is producing a social identity that brings people together with similar and specific characteristics.

Furthermore, the social conflicts create also an identity-ambiguity on the part of the roles that members are expected to carry out due to the diffuse working responsibilities. The identity standards that are supposed to serve as reference and guide behaviour in certain situations are, thus, unclear. It makes the identity as a group member less salient and more fragile as compared to the identity as pulque producer. If the market-based solution strengthens individual identities to the extent that it undermines the collective identity that integrates indigenous peoples, the cooperative would assumingly disperse. As previously emphasised by scholars such as Koukkanen (2015), the social relations of indigenous peoples have weakened when indigenous norms, values, and institutions are no longer guiding community practices.

6.3.3 Gender roles

Another cause for social conflict aside from diffuse working responsibilities and socio-economic competition is current gender roles and the expectations that they imply. Some male interviewees have recognised the new social position of women as pulque producer of Millennial Women, which the quote below indicates:

"Working, organizing through the group and I support them as a man, because as a team of pure women as a man we have to support them, and since the job is to cultivate the maguey, we have to collect the honey water, and the woman sell it" (Interviewee 20, 2019-03-09)

This quote suggests how there has been a growing acceptance of women as income-takers as well. One explanation for the perceived approval of women as income-takers and producers of Millennial Women is that it does not challenge traditional gender roles and the men's status as breadwinners of the households. Women are still carrying out their reproductive roles as wives and mothers[22], which go in line with the findings of Howell (1999). Several of the male interviewees report to still seasonally migrate to provide for their families. From their perspective, the work of women is generating additional income for the families. Similar to the case of Olivera & Furio (2006), larger gendered structures are, thus, not altered in El Azamal despite the newly acquired productive role of women in Millennial Women. Furthermore, the support of men is integral to the work of women, as highlighted in the following quote:

"Yes, everyone have their husbands, they also help, we work as couples; that's why we get ahead a little, or with the youngsters when they have the time they help us. We are getting ahead a little" (Interviewee 9, 2019-02-08)

The quote indicates that what also sustains the cooperative of women is the participation of husbands and older children. Thus, the diffuse work responsibilities do not only extend to members but also exists within households. Several interviewees reported that women are the only ones to participate in the work and the assemblies of Millennial Women, as suggested in the quotes below:

"As I told you before the husbands do not let the women go to the meetings, to the "tequios" or the maguey work, and when we ask the husbands and the young boys they never appear, the truth is that the women are the only ones that are always working, that participate, for example" (Interviewee 18, 2019-03-09)

"Here without women's help, the men can't do anything. They can't take a machete to clean the magueys, it is weird to see a man who works and clean the magueys, most of them like to drink, they go and drink and return to their houses to sleep, and they leave us alone working" (Interviewee 8, 2019-02-08)

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[22] This finding is supported by participant observation, informal discussions and interviews

These quotes suggest that Millennial Women does not provide incentives for the men to participate as well. Since the name of the cooperative only addresses women, it appears that men are more reluctant to identify as pulque producer and embrace the diffuse responsibilities that are subsequently required.

Furthermore, the responsibilities following the roles as mother and wife and as a pulque producer are not, however, corresponding in all cases. Several interviewees reported how domestic violence is prevalent in El Azamal. Participating in Millennial Women appears to further increase domestic violence, as the quotes highlights:

"Because our husbands are very jealous and drunk, then we arrive, and they leave us with a black eye" (Interviewee 12, 2019-03-06)

"Yes, then they hit us in the eye, and we cannot go to sell pulque because they leave us without teethes. Look, I do not have a tooth anymore." (Interviewee 12, 2019-03-06)

These quotes suggest how this woman is more vulnerable to domestic violence when her participation in Millennial Women challenged her husband's self-identity as the breadwinner of the family. Also, participating in Millennial Women clashed with her responsibilities as a housewife, which was the reason for leaving the cooperative in combination with the social conflicts within the cooperative. It appears that the reluctance is due to conflicting expectations as a housewife and as an additional provider for the family. The partner of the engineer (interviewee 18, 2019-03-09) argues how the lack of interest to participate in the activities of Millennial Women originates in predetermined gender roles as highlighted in his two statements below:

"They have little interest because they are people who sometimes have family problems mainly, live in domestic violence and the husband is the one who does not let the women participate, that is what we have seen"

"But when they are not there, the women make it possible to come to the meetings and work a little with us, they talk to us about what they are interested in, but because of the machismo that exists, they are not able to participate. Although sometimes we invite the gentlemen and

they come over drunk and talk more than what they should and we cannot talk to them properly"

These statements suggest how a culture of machismo is manifested in El Azamal and how it contributes to undermining the efficiency of the cooperative. Women are consequently overburdened with responsibilities, as highlighted in the quote below:

"Because the men drink, and they're not responsible, that's why women are the ones working with the pulque, the men just work on the corn and the ones who go to work with the maguey are the women, the men just drink" (Interviewee 1, 2019-02-03)

Alcoholism appears to be more common amongst men according to this interview subject. In addition to gender roles, alcohol consumption is another disincentive of men from participating. Following López (2012) findings of the general association between alcoholism and exacerbated domestic violence, there is a risk that the women of Millennial Women are more vulnerable to domestic violence due to the higher incidence of alcohol it enables. Due to their indigenous identity and lack of socio-economic security, women are experiencing more marginalisation. It makes it more difficult to adverse domestic violence when women are dependent on men, as highlighted in the quote below:

" 'Being a woman costs a lot, but being an indigenous woman costs more' "(Interviewee 20, 2019-03-09)

The quote summarises the reason for why the engineer wanted to form a cooperative of only women formally to target the situation of women in specific.

7. Limitations

One main limitation of this study is the incapacity to generalise the findings beyond the people of Millennial Women to ensure external validity (Bryman, 2016, p. 390). Since it is a case study assessing the interpersonal relations of the interviewees, this is, however, not the aim of the thesis. By illustrating this case, the findings operate as broader instances on the effects of indigenous mobilisation to overcome rural poverty. Furthermore, this study is limited to portray a full picture of the community life in El Azamal since the data derives

from semi-structured interviews and participant observation. It is instead an account of the conveyed experiences of the interviewees. However, the responses might be affected, both consciously and subconsciously, to romanticise the cooperative and the production of pulque considering the prevalence of tourism that generates income. Based on my positionality[23], it is possible that the interviewees view me as another foreign tourist. I sought to be transparent about my role as a student and the intention behind the study to reduce this bias. Also, all of the interviews, except for one, were carried out in their separate homes to minimise the influence of other people in their responses.

Furthermore, the eight weeks of gathering data limit the study to estimate the impacts of the cooperative on the social relations of its members in the long run as their experiences might differ over time. It is also limited to make causal inferences, as there might be other contributing variables that influenced the effects of Millennial Women on the lives of its members. By analysing the accounts of the interviewees, this thesis provides a more complex and sensitive analysis of the patterns within this specific context, which is a significant strength of case studies. The contextual factor enables an in-depth assessment of the relationships between the interviewees. A few husbands of the members of the cooperative were, however, not interviewed, as they were not accessible due to work. It limits the study to account for the conveyed experiences of all participants.

8. Concluding discussion

By commercialising pulque production and indigenous culture while adapting to new technology, the community of El Azamal is fundamentally changing. The case of Millennial Women illustrates both the challenges and the possibilities following these changes. The main challenge is to avoid social conflict as economic benefits and diffuse working responsibilities creates socio-economic competition. On a positive note, members of Millennial Women view the cooperative as a possibility for the community to rise in economic as well as in cultural terms aside from the personal gains. It is, thus, a case of a community that mobilised resources based on its traditions and relations to the cultivation of Maguey that appears to be conducive to progress. From this perspective, development is a synonym to producing pulque, which situates indigenous principles. It contrasts classical sociological thinkers such as Weber

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[23] For definition see 5.4.

(cf. Granato, Inglehart & Leblang, 1996, p. 241-244) that viewed the progression of society as naturally unfolding through industrialisation and urbanisation. From this perspective, traditions are primitive and a hinder for economic development and social welfare, which is also a core tenant of modernisation theory that Rostow manifests in his classical work on the stages of economic growth (Rostow, 1990, p.174-180). Contrary to Rostow's (1990, p.174-180) view, development for participants of Millennial Women is not a progressive linear model of industrialism and capitalism as the end goal. It is to remain in the community and to maintain the tradition of cultivating Maguey. Indigenous knowledge combined with technical assistance enabled the cooperative to frame economic and community needs simultaneously.

Another distinct feature is the integration of reciprocity and solidarity that governs the cooperative. According to Granato, Inglehart & Leblang (1996, p. 241-244), culture maintains social solidarity but discourage economic accumulation as social mobility is repressed. The case of Millennial Women shows, however, how an indigenous community can mobilise resources through their collective identity. By remaining integral to indigenous principles, the cooperative is dependent on the mechanism of solidarity between the members instead of a division of labour, which assumes that the members are hierarchically tasked specialised. This mechanism is maintaining the indigenous social order even if the cooperative contributed to internal socio-economic competition by introducing profit in this context, which resembles Durkheim's concept of "mechanical solidarity" (cf. Merton, 1934). In his classical work, Durkheim proposed that the culture shared by a community enabled people to work together through the sense of social connection that he called "solidarity" (ibid).

Millennial Women is a case of complex social effects following economic changes at the micro level. The increased productivity of Mageuy strengthened social relations to promote collective indigenous identity. Social conflict and domestic violence through changing gender roles were also the outcomes of the cooperative. Future research is encouraged to further explore the effects in the long run and whether market principles will replace indigenous notions to yield economic growth but at the cost of community integration. The thesis also encourages researchers to explore the possibilities of community-based cooperatives with similar characteristics as Millennial Women to provide effective tools to lift indigenous peoples out of poverty while promoting their culture.

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10. Appendices

10.1. Appendix 1, Three bases of identities

Table 6.1. Defining Features of Person, Role, and Social Identities

Features	Person Identity	Role Identity	Social Identity
Bases	Individual Self-Concept	Expectations Tied to Social Positions	Social Group
Definition	Meanings that Define Person as a Unique Individual	Meanings Tied to a Role	Meanings Tied to a Social Group
Cognitive Representation of Identity	Identity standard	Identity Standard	Prototype
Activation of Identity	Salience	Salience	Accessibility and Fit
Behavior	Independent of Others	Complementary to Others	Similar to Others
Self-Reference	Me	Me as Role	We
Verification Outcome	Authenticity	Self-Efficacy	Self-Worth

Source: Burke and Stets (2009, p.129)

10.2. Appendix 2, List of interviewees

Interviewee number	Date	Social position of Millennial Women	Sex
1	2019-02-03	Participant/ vice-cargo	Woman
2	2019-02-06	Participant	Woman
3	2019-02-06	Participant	Woman
4	2019-02-07	Participant	Woman
5	2019-02-07	Participant	Woman
6	2019-02-07	Participant	Woman
7	2019-02-08	Participant	Woman
8	2019-02-08	Participant	Woman
9	2019-02-08	Participant	Woman
10	2019-02-10	Participant	Woman
11	2019-03-06	Husband of 8	Man
12	2019-03-06	Left the cooperative	Woman
13	2019-03-06	President/Treasurer	Woman
14	2019-03-07	Husband of 9	Man
15	2019-03-07	Husband of 2	Man
16	2019-03-07	Son of 6	Man
17	2019-03-08	Husband of 5	Man

18	2019-03-09	Husband of the initiator	Man
19	2019-03-09	Daughter of 2	Woman
20	2019-03-09	Husband of 7	Man
21	2019-03-10	The initiator, the "engineer"	Woman

10.3. Appendix 3, Interview guide

Theme 1: Background
- What is your name?
- Please tell me about your background.
- Please tell me your relation to El Azamal.
- Could you describe the most important factors in your life?

Theme 2: Coordination/function
- What is your position in the group?
- What are your main tasks?
- How do you divide the work and the resources?
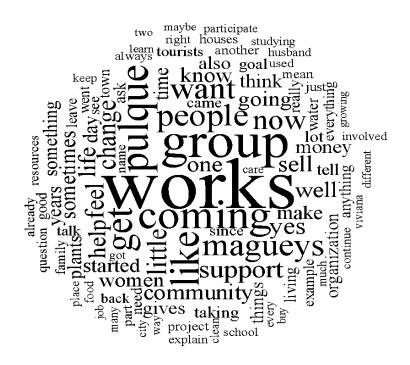- Can you describe a day when you work with the group

Theme 3: Benefits
- Why did you join the group?
- What was your life like prior to involvement in the group?
- How is your life now afterwards?
- What are your goals of being a part of the group?
- Have you realized any of these goals/ambitions?

Theme 4: Feelings/attitudes
- Is this group typical of other you have worked with?
- How do you feel about the group?
- How do you feel about how it is managed?
- Is there something you would like to change?

10.4. Appendix 4, Word frequency query

10.5. Appendix 5, Coding scheme

Identities	Responses	Reasons	Sample quotes (examples)
Producer	Verification	Economic benefits, community resilience, indigenous knowledge	" Our goals are for the community to be known more, for the pulque to be known and for us to be known as producers, and we are pleased when they come" (2) "I'm leaving them for my grandsons, my granddaughter and my kids, so they can benefit from them as we do with the sale of pulque, for them to continue the sale of pulque". (5) " Before people were really shy, they couldn't explain, or they couldn't tell who they are; more than anything, things related to pulque, many people don't know about pulque" (2)
	Ambiguity	School opportunities for the children	" My goal for my kids, what I have been thinking, is for them to study, to have a career in the future, so they not to work only in the field like me, or my girls, for them to be something besides just housewives, like me also. I want them to

			become someone in the future. To support them in what we can with their studies" (4)
Group member	Verification	Social and economic support, accepted gender roles	"I see that we work well, the more united we are, the better the work, so it always goes well, because when one is here, and another one does not show up, but when we are united the work goes better. Some people work alone, and some people do it later, and as a team, it is done." (16)
			"Yes, everyone have their husbands, they also help, we work as couples; that's why we get ahead a little, or with the youngsters when they have the time they help us. We are getting ahead a little" (9)
	Ambiguity	Social conflict (diffuse work responsibilities, gender roles, socio-economic competition)	"Well, I feel that it is okay, because, there are people who need it, because here in the community there are envious people, and they wonder why some people have more and so, in the group it is fine, because the money it is divided between the women half and half (16)
			"The group fights for politics, but do not fight for their friendship" (14)
			"As I understand about how it is organized, how each thing is done because everyone has an opinion of how it is done, how it is going to improve, there are many ways of being a group" (17)
			" As I told you before the husbands do not let the women go to the meetings, to the "tequios" or the maguey work, and when we ask the husbands and the young boys they never appear, the truth is that the women are the only ones that are always working, that participate, for example" (18)
			"It's like they don't care; I don't like it because when we must work, they are not there, but when the money is divided they are there. Most people work hard, and they support, and they think it is annoying when we need them and they're not there, and when the money is divided they appear, and that's when they start to say "why do you have so much?" (1)
			"Being a woman costs a lot, but being an indigenous woman costs more" (21)

	Withdrawal	Gender roles (domestic violence and alcoholism), socio-economic competition	"I didn't like it, because it has plenty of requirements, and suddenly I spoke to them so I can participate, but I really don't have the time to, or they do not arrive on time, and they begin to complain those that arrive first. They are very envious. "(12) "Because our husbands are very jealous and drunk, then we arrive, and they leave us with a black eye" (12)
Community member/ indigenous identity	Verification Ambiguity	Cultural value, secure livelihoods, Losing traditions due to outmigration or schooling of the younger generation	"For me, I feel proud, it's not like in the city. In the city there is a lot of diseases. Here there is open air and everything" (11) "We are losing the customs here in the village, the kids leave the homes, grab and leave, and do not return sometimes"(11)