HARVESTING CONSCIOUSNESS:
The Impact of Seasonal Labour on the Transnational Political Identity of
Guatemalan Migrants to Canada

By
GISELLE VALAREZO

A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
January 2012

Copyright © Giselle Valarezo, 2012
Abstract

The Temporary Agricultural Worker to Canada (TAWC) project was introduced in 2003 with the purpose of recruiting Guatemalan migrants to fill seasonal labour voids in Canada. Workers contracted through TAWC directives have received minimal scholarly attention, given the infancy of the program and the substantial focus on Mexican migrants recruited through the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. This dissertation illuminates the transnational political realities of Guatemalans by examining the impact that circular migration has on the subaltern migrant body.

Fieldwork was conducted in two sites, the first St. Rémi in Québec, the second Santiago Sacatepéquez in Guatemala. Research findings underscore the transnational nature of the flow of hegemonic (discipline, insecurity, oppression, exploitation) and counter hegemonic (empowerment, liberation, collectiveness, security) political ideas and activities between the spaces traversed by migrants. The study engages a multi-faceted ethnographic design in order to explore the spatiality of political consciousness, assessing Guatemalan migrant responses to a range of ideas and activities imparted by agencies of power. These include both the Canadian and Guatemalan governments, the International Organization for Migration, and le Fondation des entreprises pour le recrutement de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère (FERME) along with a range of transnational supporting allies. Nevertheless, the decision to (dis)engage in certain politicized conduct is largely dependent on the human agency of Guatemalan migrants, as they find the means to cope with the mounting pressures of seasonal migration.
A political economy perspective allows me to engage three debates that theoretically frame the transnational political identity of Guatemalan migrants. These are: (1) processes of political transnationalism; (2) neoliberal agenda and mindsets; and (3) migrant political consciousness, with a particular emphasis on Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and Gramscian notions of hegemony and consciousness. By engaging the (re)shaping of transnational political identity as a phenomenon influenced by agencies of power, and more importantly, the human agency of subaltern migrants, my dissertation emphasizes migrant (un)willingness to embrace and/or suppress certain resources that restructure political consciousness and political action. The versatility and fluidity of transmigrant political identity reveal that the distinct realities of individuals are constructed by travelling back and forth, as seasonal labourers, between Guatemala and Canada.
Acknowledgements

I begin by thanking two remarkable advisors, George Lovell and Beverley Mullings, without whom I would not have survived the long arduous days of research and laborious hours of writing. Their wisdom and guidance have motivated me to strive to be a strong scholar and even more passionate advocate. Throughout my many years at Queen’s University the close-knit faculty and staff of the Geography department have been a great support system providing me with wise words and invaluable assistance.

I am eternally indebted to the number of Guatemalan and Mexican farmworkers that I have met over the years. Without their invaluable contributions to my study, I would never have collected such enriching data and inspirational stories that prompted me to focus my dissertation on the stirring lives of migrants. Much of my fieldwork would not have been possible without the assistance of the United Food and Commercial Workers, the Agriculture Workers Alliance, and the Global Workers Justice Alliance. Their dedication to a worthy cause has taught me the value of advocacy work.

Thank you to the many peers that have stood by me through the tears and laughter, you are truly wonderful friends and confidantes. A huge thank you to Donny Allan, Kirsten Greer, Heather Hall, Austin Hracs, Steve Kim, Nathaniel Lewis, Nicolas-Guillaume Martineau, Yolande Pottie-Sherman, Brendan Sweeney, Natalie Waldbrook, Trista Wood, Kay-Ann Williams, and of course Katrina Fenicky.

Finally, a huge thanks to my family for their patience and encouragement during my academic endeavours. A thank you to the Stinson family; your affection and warmth are truly contagious. To my sisters and best friends Cynthia and Maria Christina who
have proved that first generation immigrant children can do anything with a little
determination and a lot of ingenuity. I owe you both my gratitude. Ben, you have
brought a great deal of laughter, love, thrill, and much appreciated craziness to my life - I
cannot wait for what is next. Most importantly, I am infinitely grateful to my parents
whose own migration story has inspired me to work hard and dream big. Roque and
Maria you are strong role models and dedicated parents.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... iv
List of Figures ................................................................................................................ x
List of Tables .................................................................................................................. xii
Acronyms ...................................................................................................................... xiii

Preamble ........................................................................................................................... xv
  Antonio’s Story: Fighting for Dignity ........................................................................ xv
  Anita’s Story: A Life with Few Opportunities ......................................................... xvi
  Daniel’s Story: Pressed to the Limits ........................................................................ xvii

Chapter 1 - Introduction ............................................................................................... 1
  Why Study the Transnational Political Identity of Guatemalan Migrants? .......... 6
  The Study of Migration by Geographers ................................................................. 11
  Overview of Dissertation ......................................................................................... 14

Chapter 2 - Transmigration, Politics, and Identity: A Theoretical Framework ........ 20
  Introduction ............................................................................................................... 20
  Defining Transnationalism ....................................................................................... 21
    *The Circular Flow of Temporary Migrants* .......................................................... 24
    *Formation of a Transnational Identity* ................................................................. 25
  Political Transnationalism ....................................................................................... 29
    *State Involvement in Political Transnationalism* ............................................... 31
    *The Role of the Receiving State and the Flexibilization of Disposable Foreign Labour* .......................................................... 32
    *The Role of the Sending State and Governing from a Distance* .......................... 34
  Political Practices and Transnational Migration ..................................................... 40
    *Shaping Migrant Political Consciousness* ............................................................ 42
Ties between Foucault and Gramsci ................................................................. 46

Human Agency and the Transnational Political Identity of Migrant Workers ........ 48

Conceptualizing the Transnational Political Identity of Migrant Workers ............ 53

Chapter 3 - Contextualizing Violence and Migration in Guatemala and the Temporary Agricultural Workers to Canada (TAWC) Project ................................................................. 57

Introduction .......................................................................................................... 57

Violence and Political Instability in Guatemala .................................................... 58

Agricultural Foreign Worker Programs in Canada ............................................... 73

The Temporary Agricultural Worker to Canada Project ..................................... 86

Chapter 4 - Challenges in the Field: Methodological Approach to Transnational Research .............................................................................................................. 90

Introduction .......................................................................................................... 90

Research Design .................................................................................................... 92

Methods of Data Collection .................................................................................. 103

Advocacy Research ............................................................................................... 109

Positionality ............................................................................................................ 112

Chapter 5 - Neoliberalism, Conformity, Market Demands, and Authority Figures .... 115

Introduction .......................................................................................................... 115

Migration and Governmentality ........................................................................... 117

The Government of Guatemala and a Favoured Temporary Migration Scheme .... 121

Offloading of State Responsibilities .................................................................... 127

The Disciplinary Tactics of the Guatemalan Consulate ...................................... 131

An Unstable Political Climate .............................................................................. 136

The Canadian Government and Temporary Foreign Workers ........................ 138

Limited Role of the Canadian Government ....................................................... 145

The Prominent Role of the Non-State Actor ....................................................... 150

The Role of the International Organization for Migration ............................... 152

The Authority of FERME ..................................................................................... 166
# Table of Contents

## Chapter 6 - Empowering Political Consciousness: Migrant Agency and its Allies

- Introduction .................................................................................................................. 174
- The Key Struggles of Guatemalan Migrants ................................................................. 176
- Comparison between the Transnational Experience of Mexicans and Guatemalans ... 180
- Forging a Transnational Political Identity .................................................................... 186
- Tracing the Transnational Politicized Journey ............................................................. 190
  - *A Life of Political instability and Mistrust* ............................................................... 191
  - *A Country of Hope* ............................................................................................... 196
  - *Back at Home* ....................................................................................................... 211
- Expression of Political Consciousness .......................................................................... 215
- Concluding Remarks ..................................................................................................... 221

## Chapter 7 - “Pushed to the Edge”: The Organization of AGUND

- Introduction .................................................................................................................. 223
- Political Organization amongst Migrants ....................................................................... 226
- The Formation and Mobilization of AGUND ............................................................... 230
- Concluding Remarks ..................................................................................................... 238

## Chapter 8 - Conclusion

- Limitations and Future Research .................................................................................. 240

Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 256

List of Interviews ............................................................................................................. 273

Appendix A – In Search of Policy Alternatives ............................................................. 276

Appendix B - Fieldwork Questions ................................................................................. 281
  1 - State Leaders, Policy Makers, Administrators of Foreign Worker Program ........ 281
  2 – Non-State Actors (Support Groups) ........................................................................ 282
3 – Migrant workers (Mexican and Guatemalan) .................................................................282

Appendix C - Letter of Information (Government officials and Administrators of the
Foreign Worker Program and Members of Support Groups) ............................................284

Appendix D - Letter of Consent (Government officials and Administrators of the Foreign
Worker Program and Members of Support Groups) ..........................................................286

Appendix E - Letter of Information (Agricultural Workers) .............................................287

Appendix F - Letter of Consent (Agricultural Workers) ....................................................289
List of Figures

Figure 1 - Mapping of the Guatemalan Temporary Agricultural Worker to Canada (TAWC) Project (Source: National Resources Canada 2002) ......................................................... 7

Figure 2 - Formation of the Transnational Political Identity Conceptual Framework (Source: Author) .......................................................... 56

Figure 3 - Documentation of the Massacres during the Guatemalan Civil War (Source: Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification 1999) .......................................................... 60

Figure 4 - Number of Homicides per 100,000 people in Guatemala (1995-2009) (Source: PNUD 2010) ........................................................................ 64

Figure 5 - A group of Mayan women on the streets of Santiago Sacatepéquez, heading to a church gathering (Source: Author 2010) .......................................................... 69

Figure 6 - St. Rémi, Québec is the provincial hub of seasonal agricultural workers (Source: National Resources Canada 2002) .......................................................... 95

Figure 7 – A Spanish wire transfer poster in the community of St. Rémi, Québec (Source: Author 2006) ........................................................................ 96

Figure 8 - The small town of Santiago Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, the focus community of this transnational study (Source: United Nations 2004) .......................................................... 99

Figure 9 – The community of Santiago Sacatepéquez, predominantly made up of a population of small-scale farmers (Source: Author 2011) .................................................. 100

Figure 10 - Mapping the Transnational Flow of Political Ideas and Practices (Source: Author) ........................................................................ 190

Figure 11 – A poster for the UFCW Canada Guatemalan Political Campaign launched in 2010 (Source: UFCW Canada 2010) ........................................................................ 203

Figure 12 – The logo for Agriculture Workers Alliance, a migrant organization that lobbies for improvements at foreign agricultural workers’ workplace (Source: UFCW Canada 2011) ........................................................................ 204

Figure 13 – Outside the Fiesta des Cultures in St. Rémi, Québec (Source: Author 2010) ........................................................................ 211

Figure 14 – In Guatemala City during the September 2010 march to the steps of the Canadian Embassy (Source: UFCW Canada 2010) ........................................................................ 231
Figure 15 – In Guatemala City, blacklisted migrant workers “demand the reinstatement of workers expelled from the TAWC project in Canada” as they march to the steps of the Canadian Embassy (Source: UFCW Canada 2010)
List of Tables

Table 1 – Comparative Chart of SAWP and TAWC Project ........................................75

Table 2 – Number of Guatemalan and Mexican temporary agricultural workers in Québec from 2002 to 2010 ........................................................................................................87

Table 3 – Facts and Figures 2009: Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s (CIC) overview of the composition of Temporary Residents .................................................................140

Table 4 – Facts and Figures 2009: Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s (CIC) overview of the composition of Permanent Residents .................................................................140

Table 5 – The National Origin of Agricultural Foreign Workers in Québec 2002 to 2010 .................................................................................................................................167
Acronyms

AGUND – Asociación de Guatemaltecos Unidos por Nuestros Derechos or Association of United Guatemalans for our Rights

AWA - Agriculture Workers Alliance

CAQ – Certificat d’acceptation du Québec

CBSA - Canada Border Services Agency

CEADEL – Centro de Estudios y Apoyo al Desarrollo Local or Centre for Studies and Support for Local Development

CIC - Citizenship and Immigration Canada

CITA – Centro Independiente de Trabajadores Agrícolas or Independent Farmworkers Center

CONAMIGUA – Consejo Nacional de Atención al Migrante de Guatemala or National Council of Attention to Migrants in Guatemala

FLACSO – Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales or Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences

FARMS - Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Service

FERME – Fondation des entreprises pour le recrutement de la main-d’oeuvre étrangère

GATS - General Agreement Trade in Services

HRSDC - Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

INCEDES – Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Sociales y Desarrollo or Central American Institute of Social Studies and Development

IOM – International Organization for Migration

LMO - Labour Market Opinion

LOU- Letter of Understanding

MENAMIG – Mesa Nacional para los migraciones en Guatemala or National Bureau for Migration in Guatemala
MFN - Most Favoured Nation exemption
MICC - Ministère Immigration et Communautés culturelles
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
NOC - National Occupational Classification (system)
PDH - Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos
SAWP - Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program
TAWC - Temporary Agricultural Workers to Canada (Project)
TFWP - Temporary Foreign Worker Program
UFCW - United Food and Commercial Workers Canada
WALI - Western Agriculture Labour Initiative
WTO - World Trade Organization
Preamble

Antonio’s Story: Fighting for Dignity

When I first entered into the celebrated Guatemalan–Canadian migration program, I was promised a two-year contract on a farm out in British Columbia. Immediately after we arrived, the boss was quick to notify us that we were here to work long hours, up to 15 hours some days. That was fine with me because I had come to earn a decent wage to send back home to my family of ten children. The only thing that worried me was that the boss expected us to pay for prepared meals at a cost of $210 a week. This meant that a large cut of our wages would be going to food that we quickly learned was barely edible. I was never in agreement with this stipulation, but I put up with it for over eight months. Everyone working on the farm soon realized that those who complained about the strenuous work or the strict demands of the boss would be sent home.

The mood on the farm changed the day a Guatemalan co-worker was injured while riding his bike to the fields. After the accident our boss denied knowing the worker to the press, and brushed off his existence. After this man died of untreatable injuries, I knew something needed to be done, so I made a call to a local support centre for farmworkers to seek advice on how his family could receive the compensation owed to them. Before I had the chance to take action, the worker’s widow was quickly flown up from Guatemala and manipulated into signing papers stating that the boss was not at fault for the accident. Afraid of causing trouble, the meek widow, unaware of the proper legal channels in Canada, accepted the conditions and went home empty handed.

When I tried to reason with my employer to pay the widow compensation owed to the dead worker’s family, he irately turned me away. He went on to find out that I had been in communication with the local support centre, which further enraged him. The death of the worker had caused great tension on the farm, so an official of the program was flown up from Guatemala to speak with us. We were instructed that we were all barred from speaking about the death of the worker and those who spoke would be fired. Before the official left, a large group of us were given notice that we would be returning home. In fact, we were being blacklisted from the program. I was not even allowed to finish up the two-year contract promised to me.

Once back in Guatemala I presented myself to the administrative office, where they felt that I did not deserve a suitable explanation as to why I was sent home. They quickly threw me out and told me never to return. Had I been lazy or irresponsible they would have reason to fire me, but to lose my job because I fought for the rights of a deceased man’s family is unjustifiable. The message ingrained in Guatemalan migrants is that if you want to keep working in Canada, you must remain quiet and not speak out against any wrongdoings - a message repeatedly embedded into all of us.
Anita’s Story: A Life with Few Opportunities

Unlike the rest of my family, I had been given the chance to finish high school, an achievement I thought would earn me a well-paying job. I desperately wanted an escape from having to toil in the fields with the rest of my family. Sadly, even with this degree my Mayan traditional clothing, looked upon as primitive and backwards, encumbered me from being hired by Ladino employers who took pride in flaunting their own European roots. Every business office I entered hastily turned me away as soon as they laid their eyes on my traditional clothing. Frustrated and jobless, I was determined to find honest work to help support my family.

A job opportunity arose after hearing of community members who had been traveling to Canada to work on farms. While this had been the type of job I had been hopelessly trying to break away from my whole life, I realized that this would be my only chance to safely travel to Canada without having to make the treacherous journey north as an undocumented migrant. I was well aware that securing a spot in the migration program would finally allow me to send remittances home. Applying as a Mayan woman made it easier to enter into a program that was largely sending poor campesinos. Thankfully and gracias a Dios, I was an offered seasonal work in Québec, on a farm mostly hiring women. If only I had known what I was getting myself into.

I knew from day one that newly arrived Guatemalan women were treated differently from more veteran workers who had grown a thick skin after years of labouring on this farm. Off the bat, the manager warned us of not leaving the property without proper permission and if we wanted to keep our jobs we would have to prove ourselves to be strong and dedicated workers. Her ill-tempered nature made me realize that I could not trust this overbearing manager, as she placed the interests of the Francophone owners above all else. In carrying out the owners’ orders, the manager gave all of the fresh recruits the most arduous and gruesome jobs. Our passports were taken away, we were barred from leaving the property grounds without consent from the owner, and to top it all off we were relentlessly pushed to produce at a faster pace and harvest an abundant yield. We were warned that if we did not submit to these demands they would not hesitate to send us home, as there many other desperate Guatemalans waiting to fill our position. I spent the next few months yielding to their dehumanizing rules.

When it came time to return home, we were each given an envelope with instructions concerning our future employment status to be handed over to the proper officials upon our arrival in Guatemala. Once back home, I was told that the employer had not requested me for the following season. They would not even give me a proper explanation as to why I would not be returning. I resigned myself to that farm only to be dismissed without proper justification. Now I must dedicate myself to finding another job in the hope that another door will not shut in my face for wearing my traditional clothing and holding on to my traditional beliefs.

xvi
Daniel’s Story: Pressed to the Limits

During the middle of the harvesting season the boss had assigned a group of us to a new project that had us installing a new irrigation system, a job we had never been trained on but that we were expected to competently carry out. On this farm I peacefully worked alongside both Guatemalan and Mexican workers up until the day a group of us, which included three Guatemalan workers and a Mexican foreman, were ordered to install a complex irrigation system. Unfortunately, the boss was enraged that the Mexican worker had done a shoddy job, and violently tore out the pump after reviewing our work. Absolutely livid, our boss grabbed a metal tube on the worksite and thrashed him with it. Shocked and injured, the Mexican worker spoke out in rage, quarrelling with the boss over what had just transpired. Eventually, things subsided, and the boss walked away only to call us over a few hours later. He warned us to forget what had happened earlier that day, laying blame on us for this quarrel. He insisted that we were forgiven since it was just a mistake.

Furious with the boss, the Mexican foreman decided to bring forward a complaint to the migrant support centre and pleaded with the three of us to act as witnesses. We hesitantly signed papers to declare that we witnessed the abusive treatment. The harvesting season came to an end without trouble, and we went home to Guatemala with hopes of returning the following year. Before the start of the new season we were called into the administrative office, where we were pressed by officials as to why we had signed papers accusing our boss of wrongdoings. We felt it was not only our right but our duty to bring to light the physical and verbal abuse that had been inflicted on our co-worker. Infuriated by our actions and behaviour, the IOM officials notified us that we would not be returning to Canada ever again, as we had been blacklisted from the program. We pleaded with them to give us our jobs back, but were blamed for bringing the troubles on ourselves.

The three of us decided not give up the fight to get our jobs back and approached lawyers and different government officials, but to no avail. They washed their hands of us. At one point I attempted to approach a local newspaper to bring forth our story through the press, but the reporter was threatened by administrative officials to keep out of the organizations’ affairs.

Fed up and tired of fighting without reaping any results my two companions gave up on our fight, but I refused to surrender to this injustice. I repeatedly called the migrant support centre back in Canada imploring that they help to get us reenlisted. Eventually, the director of the support centre garnered the assistance of a human rights lawyer in the United States, who accepted the task of ensuring that administrators and the Guatemalan government finally take heed of how poorly we were treated. Through the lawyer’s valiant efforts I was reintegrated into the program. Now I must patiently await a phone call telling me to pack my bags and head back to Canada. I am not sure if and when this call will come. I can only hope they keep their word. Until then I take pride in knowing that I never gave up and refused to tolerate the humiliating treatment.
Chapter 1

Introduction

*The migrant people, scuttling for work, scrambling to live, looked always for pleasure, dug for pleasure, manufactured pleasure, and they were hungry for amusement.*


The preceding vignettes offer insights into the transnational experience of seasonally migrating between spaces of oppression and empowerment. Not all Guatemalan migrants have endured the same forms of discriminatory treatment comparable to these three individuals, given that the constant flow of the migrant body between multiple spaces facilitates variable and versatile transnational encounters. Each of the interviewed Guatemalan migrants sought to share their stories with a larger audience by disclosing their transnational experiences, in hopes of generating awareness of the power and influence held over them by agencies of power that mandate their conduct in the various spaces they traversed.

Migration to “El Norte” (North America) has become a common tale among countless families in Latin America, as a growing number of individuals opt to make the dangerous trek north, yearning to find work to support family members left behind. Undocumented migrants are willing to place their lives at risk, to journey across dangerous borders replete with gang violence, drug trafficking, terrorizing human smugglers, and “la migra” (border patrol agents), all for the chance to start a new and more prosperous life. For economically marginalized Guatemalans, the harsh reality of illegally migrating to North America, but most predominantly the United States, has not
deterred them from the northward voyage. In fact, the mounting economic and political tribulations plaguing Guatemala have motivated many disenfranchised citizens to leave their home country out of dire necessity.

Media headlines publicizing the number of missing migrants headed north are on the rise, as more reports emerge concerning the disappearance of family members and the discovery of mass graves full of the bodies of undocumented migrants. With organized crime on the rise, a National Human Rights Commission from Mexico report estimates that more than 11,000 migrants were abducted over a six-month period last year, while trying to travel through Mexico. Migrants are ambushed by armed groups, extorted for money or terrorized into trafficking drugs across the borders into the United States (BBC News 2011). Managed migration, therefore, brings real hope and optimism to the lives of migrants and their families, especially since documented movement across borders signifies a sought-after form of security and stability.

The accelerated movement towards orderly managed migration, for many countries, has become the solution to undocumented foreign labour. Depicted as an instrument for legal migration and safe return that has been devised to benefit actors both in the home and host countries, the darker side of migration schemes is often overlooked in lieu of economic gains garnered from the regulated movement of foreign workers. Reed (2008) defines managed migration as a practice that directly offers (1) the necessary legal documentation to permit the controlled cross-border movement of migrant workers between countries, and (2) a set of rules and guidelines that steer temporary foreign worker programs and policy implementation. Indirectly, the practice of managed migration permits political and economic cooperation between labour-sending and
labour-receiving governments. While managed migration schemes have been hailed as successful models for the authorized movement of foreign workers, Hennebry and Preibisch (2010) maintain that controlled migration models also bolster a restrictive dark side. Canada has made significant strides to expand temporary migration; however, the federal government’s approach to such schemes fails to recognize the human travails of the movement of foreign workers. The goal of this dissertation is not to draw attention to the problems of managed migration or invalidate the worth and impact of temporary migration; instead, my focus is on the transnational migrant body as the primary scale of analysis, assessing how movement between transnational politicized spaces (re)shapes political consciousness and political activities, and thereby, the transnational political identity of Guatemalan agricultural workers.

I utilize the migrant body as an instrument of research to gain insight into the politics of embodiment and spatiality, designating Guatemalan workers as the focal point of analysis. In doing so, I explore the ways different transnational experiences/realities influence the expressions of migrant political consciousness and actions in the various transnational spaces that migrant bodies traverse. More precisely, this approach draws on the notion that “bodies produce space and knowledge, and space and knowledge produce bodies” (Longhurst, Elise, et al. 2008, 208). In Michel Foucault’s (1979) early work on power relations he focuses on the subjectification, transformation, and improvement of
the body and comes to define it as the object of power.¹ The political economic approach assumed in this geographic study; however, leads me to turn towards the work of David Harvey (1998) when conceptualizing my corporeal approach to the migrant body, as his own work conceptualizes the body as an active moral agent that attempts to change the conditions under which they labour. The body in this case is construed as a political site both superimposed and self-produced, borrowing from Harvey’s argument that “the human body is a battleground within which and around which conflicting socio-ecological forces of valuation and representation are perpetually at play” (1998, 116). For Harvey (1998), the body is envisioned as an accumulation strategy that permits the exploitation of labour, but can also generate the locus for political resistance to contest the agencies of power that mould the body.

In determining how bodies are produced, and thereby how the transnational political identity of migrants is shaped, Foucault’s notion of governmentality and Antonio Gramsci’s conceptualization of hegemonic forces and consciousness (debates that will be discussed at more length in Chapter Two) have much to contribute to my discussion of migrants’ conduct. Conceptualization of the superimposed and self-produced transnational political identity of Guatemalan migrants necessitates examination of the containment and discipline of the migrant body and, in turn, resistance against prevailing political-economic rule. The works of Foucault and Gramsci, in particular, shed light on disciplinary practices and hegemonic control over consciousness and actions of

¹ While I borrow heavily from Foucault’s work on governmentality in this transnational study, unlike Harvey or Gramsci he does not clarify why or how certain subjects should engage in forms of resistance. The value laden approach to resistance lacks normative explanations as to why subjects should resist certain forms of power (Pickett 1996).
populations, but more importantly how oppressed bodies struggle with certain power relations.

The corporeal approach of this dissertation acknowledges the importance of embodied subjectivities and rescinds any notion that studying relationships between places can be objectively scrutinized. I would argue that studies ought to do away with broad-sweeping generalities of the spatialization of power, and instead embrace micro-level politics (Longhurst 2001). Assessment of the migrant body draws on the subjective realities of individual Guatemalan migrants whose distinct reactions to the political ideas and tools they are exposed to reveals the process by which their transnational political identity is (re)shaped. For Harvey (1998) the body is construed as a site for political action, guided by political ideas that stimulate certain behaviour and actions. Closer scrutiny of the migrant body discloses Guatemalan workers respond to disciplinary tactics and hegemonic forces by either conforming to the demands of authority figures\(^2\) or overcoming oppressive circumstances through an awakening of political consciousness. While the migrant body is delineated as the primary scale of analysis, readers should not be transfixed by the corporeal approach, but rather turn their attention towards the reaction of Guatemalan migrants to newly acquired political tools and ideas and the reshaping of political consciousness and action in the multiple spaces they traverse.

\(^2\) The term authority figure makes reference to different agents (both state and non-state actors) with the power to impose certain ideology that shapes the behaviour and actions of docile subjects.
Why Study the Transnational Political Identity of Guatemalan Migrants?

Since its launch in 2003, the Guatemalan Temporary Agricultural Worker to Canada (TAWC) Project has been portrayed as a remedy to the economic woes of impoverished Guatemalans through the orderly management of seasonal migration (see Figure 1). The promise of a secure alternative to undocumented migration has inspired Guatemalans to seek entrance into a program that guarantees their return each year, rather than being illegally trapped in “El Norte” without the security of an authorized work visa. The number of documented Guatemalan migrant workers recruited to labour in Canada is still low in relative terms, an estimated 5000 in 2010; however, many others still aspire to gain entrance into a program with the potential to rescue them from economic hardship.

The majority of Canadians are unaware of the presence among them of Guatemalan agricultural workers, and indeed many continue to confuse them with Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) counterparts. Celeste MacKenzie (2004) was amongst the first to report on the existence of Guatemalans in the fields of Québec and how their arrival transformed the panorama of foreign agricultural labour in Canada. Her investigative reporting carefully examined the introduction of Guatemalan migrants to the province of Québec and reasoned that this group kept afloat by accepting precarious seasonal work abroad.
Aside from a select few reports and articles, there is still little to no information made available pertaining to the seasonal migration of Guatemalans to Canada, much less studies examining migrants that cope with both the repressive and empowering political components of managed seasonal migration. The lack of observation and information concerning Guatemalan migrant agricultural workers, I would argue, has allowed for the
escalation of oppressive barriers, for instance the blacklisting of foreign workers and market-oriented changes in the TAWC project, without the implementation of proper safeguards. There is no denying, however, that migration is both a building block and hazardous gamble for individuals left with little alternative but to undertake the risk of fleeing their home country in search of better opportunities.

The idea behind my doctoral research was initially formulated during my Master’s fieldwork, when I first observed Guatemalan migrants being differentiated from SAWP counterparts (Valarezo 2007). Guatemalans confront a reality of exploitation and discrimination based on perceived notions of their inferiority, constructed and maintained by figures of authority that control the mobility of this group of migrants. When Guatemalans first began to arrive in Canada, they would seclude themselves into small groups as a coping mechanism to deal with the pressures of yielding to the demands of employers and government and administrative officials.

My own curiosity concerning the transnational political identity of Guatemalans stemmed from their obvious apprehension and reluctance to participate in my Master’s research, or engage in any form of politicized activity, for instance contacting the Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA) support centre or questioning the employers’ authority. While Mexican migrants are more stridently disposed and open to adopting behaviour or actions that jeopardized their jobs, Guatemalans were unwilling to undertake activity that might create friction with employers. What is more, the general perception held by employers regarding Guatemalans sustained unwarranted impressions of subordination and meekness, leading me to question why these newly arrived migrants are categorized into a constraining status. In my efforts to fully grasp the turbulent lives
of Guatemalans, I came to realize that there is more to the transnational journey of migrant workers than is currently being studied in the geographical field of migration.

From this curiosity sprang a desire to investigate not only the transnational political experiences of seasonal labourers and the shaping of the migrant body but also the oppressive and empowering experiences incited by flowing through multiple spaces. Thus, I would argue, the variability of this transnational process generates fluid and versatile transnational political identities. In discussing the politics behind transnational migration, my study draws on the political inferences of the process of circular movement, moving beyond a concentrated focus on economic implications of migration. Ultimately, the cyclical component of the migratory process makes this phenomenon increasingly dynamic, as the continual flow between conflicting transnational spaces highlights the volatility of managed seasonal migration. By drawing on the constant movement of the migrant body, I investigate how migrants cope with the political ideas and tools superimposed and imparted upon them, in the various spaces through which they flow.

Early on in my research, I acknowledged that in order to grasp the transnational nature of seasonal migration, I would have to conduct fieldwork in both Canada and Guatemala and interview a range of key actors who contributed to formation and reformation of the transnational political identity of migrant workers. My doctoral study first brought me back to St. Rémi, Québec, in the summer of 2009, with the aim of forging strong contacts with Guatemalan migrants labouring in and around the small farming community. The links built with migrant farmworkers in Québec took me, in the winter of 2010, to the small town of Santiago Sacatepéquez in Guatemala, a community
where a large portion of seasonal workers had originated. I returned to Guatemala the following year to investigate changes that had transpired as a result of the emergent support from transnational allies who sought to empower Guatemalan migrant workers. Conducting fieldwork in Guatemala proved to be a challenging, heart-wrenching task and revealed some extraordinary circumstances that produced what Michael Steinberg (2006) calls a “tragic modern landscape.” Steinberg contends that “nowhere else in Latin America do repressive colonial economic and social conditions/traditions continue to persist on the same level as they do in Guatemala. Nowhere else in Latin America has a state’s military and intelligence apparatus been directed at unarmed civilians to the extent that took place in Guatemala” (2006, 13). An overview of Guatemala’s tragic history provides insight into the lived experiences of marginalized ethnic groups forced to deal with a life of political oppression. Thus, by assuming a transnational approach to the research project, I was able to examine the transformative nature of seasonal migration and migrants’ coping mechanisms to the demands and expectations of authority figures.

For the purpose of this study, five intertwining questions were designed to explore the various facets that influence the political expressions of Guatemalan migrants. My inquiries address the different actors and spaces that contribute to the (re)shaping of Guatemalan migrants’ transnational political identity. The five key research questions I ask may be articulated as follows:

1. How does the political context of different spaces (i.e., political experiences of oppression/exploitation and/or empowerment/information) impact migrants’ transnational experience?

2. How do figures of authority and support networks suppress and/or empower migrant political consciousness?
3. What small-scale and large-scale processes are involved in suppressing or stimulating political consciousness and political action among Guatemalan migrants?

4. How does the movement across international borders and between spaces impact the transfer of political ideas and migrant political consciousness? Moreover, how does this process impact migrants’ (un)willingness to embrace and engage in certain political ideas and activities?

5. How does the migrant body respond to different transnational realities in diverging spaces?

The line of inquiry breaks down and illuminates the various facets that feed into shaping the transnational political identity of Guatemalan migrants. More importantly, the above set of questions is linked to broader geographical inquiries of migration, which only until recently have begun to question the structures and processes of global circular migration. The evolution of the study of migration within the discipline of geography has led to a movement towards scrutinizing the restructuring of migrant labour markets by authority figures and assessing the agency of disenfranchised migrant bodies.

**The Study of Migration by Geographers**

By assuming an interdisciplinary political-economic approach, I can draw on a range of connections between agency and socio-spatial structure to analyze how the process of transnational migration shapes the migrant body (Sheppard 2011). Conceptually, the study borrows from theorists who advance the notion that uneven geographical development contributes to an unstable system of global migration (Sheppard 2011). By utilizing a political-economic approach and moving away from
more conventional schools of thought, I seek to do away with any constraints that oversimplify the complexity of transnational migration.

Within the discipline of geography, the study of migration has received greater attention than many other facets of population studies; however, the historical transition of the study of migration by geographers has been hindered by research on homogenized migration patterns and processes (see Zelinksy 1971). Earlier geographical studies on migration tended to statistically analyze local labour markets and impacts on labour-receiving countries, placing greater value on collected quantitative data than on ethnographic studies. The limited geographical research endorsed unwarranted generalizations of migration patterns and homogenized the migratory experience without taking into account aspects of space and scale (see Zelinksy 1971). Everett Lee’s (1966) research on migration assumed a neoclassical economic perspective when describing the ways migrants were pushed out of areas with low wages, high population density, and economic fluctuations and pulled into regions with higher wages and better job prospects.

Not until the late 1970s and the 1980s did research begin to move towards more comprehensive studies of migration, a movement that can be attributed to the rise in comparative research designs and consequently, the development of hypotheses that could be tested cross-nationally. Geographers were finally organizing their studies on a case-by-case basis, examining the distinct national experiences of migrants and recognizing the importance of local in relation to global patterns. Cross-national comparisons became the basis for theoretical conceptualizations and debates on migration amongst geographical scholars (Chapman 1978, Kuhn 1978, Krane 1979, Wong 1984, Massey 1988).
More recent geographic literature on migration criticizes neoliberal restructuring of global labour markets and finds solutions to the unjust treatment of migrants with minimal access to basic human rights in the labour-receiving country. There is a movement amongst scholars that stresses the need for a reformation of migration programs, taking on a more development-friendly approach to governments’ admission processes. For example, many scholars (Mattila 2000, Ball and Piper 2002, Hugo 2003, Chavez, Wampler, and Burkhart 2006, Ruhs 2006) advocate the development of solutions that grant migrants access to more rights and privileges, bearing in mind ethical questions of exploitative treatment. Money assessed the political geography of immigration control, suggesting that “if global and domestic equity are appropriate goals, political entrepreneurs have the ability to craft a set of policies to maintain a level of relative openness to immigrants that avoids the stop and go nature of immigration policy to date” (1999, 222). Ultimately, Money’s (1999) geopolitical analysis of migrant labour pushes for more global openness and social and geographical inclusion of foreign workers.

Recent studies now assume a neo-Marxist lens, critically analyzing the current structure of global migration and opposing the growing inequalities that persist as a result of neoliberal restructuring of labour markets. Neo-Marxist research views global migration as a phenomenon that is compounding instead of narrowing, with the development of a gap between industrialized countries and poorer labour-sending areas of the world, therein deepening relations of dependency (Miles and Schwartz 1990, Martin 2002, Bauder 2006, Hugo 2006, Sharma 2006). The growing body of literature that focuses on migrant contributions to the larger capitalist system, as cheap and exploitable labour, bridges a gap between the individual migrant and wider political and economic
structures (Johnston, Gregory, et al. 2006). I employ conceptual reflection over the structural inequalities of global migration as a scaffold for my own research on Guatemalan migrant agricultural workers, guiding my geographical analysis of the migrant body. The advancement of migration research, concentrating on connections between the migrant body and larger structures, has inspired me to examine individual migrant workers’ responses to oppressive and empowering transnational political realities.

**Overview of Dissertation**

The subsequent chapters are designed with the intention of charting the transnational political experience of Guatemalan migrants and outlining the multiple actors and spaces involved in (re)shaping their transnational political identity. More importantly, the study was developed with the purpose of identifying not only struggles but also acknowledging successes that awaken the transnational political identity of migrants. By examining the contours of the migrant transnational experience, I construct a narrative that focuses on the migrant body and the politics behind seasonal migration. As such, the goal of my doctoral study is twofold: (1) to advance the notion that the transnational political migrant body is shaped and reshaped both by authority figures and, more importantly, by the self-agency of Guatemalans who consciously submit to, accommodate, and/or counter political ideas and actions they are exposed to while seasonally migrating; and (2) to stress that managed seasonal migration both suppresses and empowers migrant political consciousness.
The dissertation is subdivided into two parts. Contextually and conceptually, the first opens the study and the second presents more empirical findings. Chapter Two critiques the discussion of political transnationalism in relevant literature, which I then utilize as a platform to develop a conceptual framework. The chapter reviews established theories concerning transnational migration and the political components that influence the process of migration. An assessment of scholarly discussion on migrant political activities and political identity, taking into account the circular movement of this group, solidifies what is already known in migration literature. This theoretical platform becomes a starting point in developing my own conceptual framework on the moulding and restructuring of political consciousness and political activities, and therein migrants’ transnational political identity.

The first part then moves on to contextualize two key issues in Chapter Three, setting the scene for the remaining discussion on Guatemalan migrants. The chapter outlines the political situation of Guatemala, discussing the political instability and violence that has plagued the country for decades and moves into a summary of the formation and operation of the TAWC project.

The methodological approach that fashioned my transnational study on migration is rationalized in Chapter Four. By emphasizing the utility of the multi-sited ethnographic design used to carry out my research, I accentuate the transnational nature of the study and the extensive fieldwork I conducted to reinforce dissertation findings. The chapter discusses the different methods of data collection I employed to extract data from a range of sites and sources. What is more, I take into account my positionality in this study and how this, in turn, moulded my interaction with research participants.
In the empirical section of my dissertation, I begin by dissecting the role of authoritative forces and their control over Guatemalan migrants’ political consciousness and political actions. Chapter Five assesses how the labour-receiving and labour-sending governments and administrative officials of the TAWC project have sanctioned managed migration as a tool to hold sway over the demeanour and performance of migrants, in a drive to align them with a neoliberal agenda of economic advancement through self-regulation. Social control over the mobility of migrants is also validated through a form of neoliberal governmentality that disciplines the general population to succumb to technologies of self-regulation. Foucault’s concept of governmentality contributes to the discussion of the disciplining of migrant conduct in order to create submissive workers who succumb to the needs and demands of figures of authority. In addition, I critically analyze the exploitative nature of the TAWC project and the unwavering control the Canadian and Guatemalan government and non-state administrators of the program have garnered over the mobility of Guatemalan migrants. The chapter engages in a debate over agencies of power, also referred to as authority figures, and the abuse afflicted on migrants coerced into becoming more disposable and flexible to market demands.

In Chapter Six, I continue to study the shaping of the migrant body by examining the self-agency of Guatemalan migrant workers in forging their own identity. The chapter probes migrants’ submission to, accommodation, and/or countering of political

---

3 The term “agencies of power” is utilized to stress how certain agents retain power through processes of force, creation of consensus, and authority. The uneven distribution of control over resources and the means of productions grant certain agencies greater authority and control over society. Unequal power sanctions and legitimizes the role of certain agents that retain greater authority and control over the society’s organization of production, distribution and exchange (Johnston, Gregory, et al. 2000).
discourse superimposed upon them by various agencies of power. In doing so, this chapter undertakes to explore Guatemalan migrants’ (un)willingness to embrace certain political ideas and activities afforded to them in the multiple spaces through which they flow. Inquiry into empowering political ideas and activities requires investigation of the role of supporting groups as an agency of power that challenges the role of the state. Gramscian notions of hegemony and consciousness shed light on how individual migrants will choose either to conform to certain conduct or resist expectations and demands placed on them by dominating forces.

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the human agency\(^4\) of migrant workers and engage with Gramscian concepts to study why Guatemalan migrants suppress and/or embrace the introduction of newly acquired political ideas and tools that awaken political consciousness. In this section of the dissertation, I argue that migrant workers’ transnational political identity is neither rigid nor inflexible but rather continually restructured as the migrant body flows through the various transnational spaces and is introduced to both oppressive and empowering political ideas and tools.

The final empirical chapter is a case study of a group mobilized Guatemalan migrants compelled to participate in large-scale political activities to contest the social injustices of the TAWC project. Chapter Seven delves into the formation and history of the Association of United Guatemalans for our Rights or la Asociación de Guatemaltecos Unidos por Nuestros Derechos (AGUND), and the supporting allies that assisted in the

\(^4\) In utilizing the term “human agency” I intend to analyze the capabilities and manifestations of human beings, while also taking into account the various structures and agencies that influence migrants’ decisions and choices.
migrant association’s recent successes. The goal of this chapter is to examine in more depth how Guatemalan migrants are induced into more overt political activities when “pushed to the edge”\(^5\) and left with no other alternative but to take action.

The doctoral study concludes by reviewing the contributions and the limitations of the study, while also providing suggestions for future research endeavours. More importantly, the conclusion scrutinizes the role that transnationalism has played in the inhibition and/or political awakening of the migrant body, lending value to the agency of subaltern migrants.

Seasonal movement under a regulated migration program constricts and creates empowering opportunities for Guatemalan migrant workers. The transnational process through which the politicized migrant body is (re)transformed reveals the complexity of acquiring new political ideas and tools in multiple politicized spaces. As such, the overarching argument of my dissertation claims that the (re)shaping of the transnational political migrant body, the primary scale of analysis, is a process both superimposed and, more importantly, self-constructed. This process exposes the migrant body to both oppressive and empowering political ideas and tools in the multiple transnational spaces they traverse, variably impacting migrant political consciousness and political action. In the case of Guatemalan migrant workers, authority figures discipline them to succumb to a neoliberal agenda of economic advancement through self-regulation, pushing migrants to submit to, accommodate, and/or counter oppressive political ideas that dictate how they

\(^5\) I use the term “pushed to the edge” throughout this dissertation to stress how migrant workers will choose to engage in more overt political activities only when left with no other alternative. Moreover, I conceptualize political activities as a coping mechanism and survival strategy to overcome oppression forced upon them by authority figures.
are to act and behave. Transnational supporting allies also impart empowering political ideas, influencing migrants’ (un)willingness to embrace and/or suppress political resources that restructure political consciousness and political actions. In the end, the decision to engage in certain politicized conduct reflects the ways Guatemalan migrants cope with mounting pressures. The versatility and fluidity of the transnational political identity of Guatemalan migrants reveal that the distinct realities of individual migrants are constructed by the politicized process of traversing transnational spaces.
Chapter 2

Transmigration, Politics, and Identity: A Theoretical Framework

The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary.  
– Gabriel García Márquez (1982)

Introduction

Political-economic approaches to transnational migration and critical theorists’ analysis of agencies of power and the self-agency of disenfranchised group enhance my own theoretical framework concerning the transnational political identity of migrant workers. By reviewing established theories pertaining to transnational migration and the political facets that influence this process, I move beyond what is known in migration literature and formulate a conceptual framework that assesses the (re)shaping of migrants’ political consciousness and political activities, and thereby their transnational political identity. This chapter introduces the concepts and debates that I plan to engage, utilizing the critique as a platform for broader inquiries into the transnational political identity of migrants.

The literature review begins by evaluating the genesis and conceptualization of transnationalism and the links to circular migration, politicization, and political identity, while also acknowledging the interconnectedness that migration produces for populations traversing multiple spaces. The chapter then moves on to dissect theoretical debates concerning the authoritative roles of both labour-receiving and labour-sending states,
probing the influence and control retained by agencies of power. Debates that dissect the role of authority figures contribute to the formulation of a theoretical framework that confronts a disciplinary process that obligates migrants to conform to the social constructs of dominant forces. Finally, an overview of migrants’ transnational political activities conceptualizes migrant political conduct and also provides a platform for rationalizing their decisions to engage in certain political acts.

In developing a theoretical framework, I employ debates in relation to the process of political transnationalism, the impact of states’ neoliberal agenda to direct the flow of migrants, and migrant political consciousness. Foucauldian and Gramscian debates regarding relations of power provide an interpretive apparatus for assessing the relationship between authority figures and the migrant agent. In the end, I formulate my own conceptual framework to assess how the transnational process of flowing through multiple politicized spaces impacts the migrant body.

**Defining Transnationalism**

Geographical analyses draw out how transnationalism as a global process is locally embedded, varying from place to place, and impacting spaces and places differently. According to Dunn (2010), geographers call for a more grounded study of transnationalism, urging for the advancement of an embodied approach and further analysis of the everyday circumstances of transnationalism. The term “transnational”

---

6 Johnston, Gregory, et al. claim that the overarching assertion of neoliberalism is that “free markets maximize human welfare: economically, markets efficiently distribute knowledge and resources; socially, liberal individualism will maximize moral worth; and politically, liberalism maximizes political freedom since it rests on the most efficient distribution of resources and wealth” (2006. 547).
alludes to human activities and social institutions, but more importantly, to a process that extends beyond the borders of nation-states. Baubock maintains that the borders of nation-states are “crossed by flows of people, money or information and are spanned by social networks, organizations or fields” (2003, 702), highlighting the heightened interconnectivity between people and places. In my own research, I employ transnational debates to illustrate how seasonal migration permits the flow of ideas and activities, stressing the influence that circular movement has on the migrant body.

Contemporary transnational migrants are distinct from migrants of the past given the changing global political-economic conditions. Kim explains that the evolving political-economic conditions prompt “new circuits of capital that make and maintain transnational connections; improved technologies of communication and transportation; the advent of global cities; and the weakening of the nation-state” (2009, 682). The current condition of the global political economy has impelled or coerced people to migrate to countries deemed pivotal centres of global capitalism. Global restructuring, increased political and economic insecurity of newcomers in host countries, and political loyalty projects to both home and host country have created a present-day form of transnational movement that permits migrants to forge and maintain simultaneous, multi-stranded social relations in more than one society (Schiller, Basch, et al. 1995).

Transnationalism has rapidly become a key focus in migration literature given the versatility of this approach towards cross-border activities, while also recognizing the rootedness of migrants in multiple sites. As pioneers of debates on transnationalism, Schiller, Basch, et al. (1992) reinvigorate traditional conceptualizations of the “experiences and consciousness” of migrants by defining them as populations that
“develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and then in turn develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (1992, 1). As such, the transnational process grants migrants the ability to establish multi-webbed social networks that connect them to both their home and host country (Schiller, Basch, et al. 1992, Smith and Guarnizo 1998).

By accepting the humanistic component of cross-border activities, the literature on transnationalism also embraces the liberating potential of migration.

Debates around transnationalism have advanced migration literature by shifting it away from the notion that migrants are fixed in one space or place towards recognition of the fluidity of migrants who maintain multiple contacts and relations in multiple spaces (Schiller, Basch, et al. 1992, Smith and Guarnizo 1998, Heisler 2001, Vertovec 2004, Satzewich and Wong 2006). Recent work on transnationalism moves beyond focusing on more permanent forms of settlement that ruptures links and pushes for assimilation, and instead, looks towards identifying economic, political, social, and cultural connections that migrants maintain in multiple spaces. Ties between the home and host society are not severed once migrants leave their country of origin, as migrants have the ability to maintain simultaneous connections (Mitchell 1997, Nolin 2001, Kearney and Beserra 2004).

According to Bradatan, Popan, et al. (2010), as transnationals, migrants participate in multiple national communities, which often results in changes to homeland connections. Most circulatory migrants are not equally linked to two places. Rather, they define themselves through their home country and regard the host country as a way to
improve their economic status, a transnational experience quite distinct from that of more permanent settled migrants (Bradatan, Popan, et al. 2010). Thus, it is critical to acknowledge that analysis of migrant behaviour and responses provides insight into their transnational practices and avoids essentializing transnational migrant movement.

**The Circular Flow of Temporary Migrants**

A pivotal objective of my research is to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the circular transnational flow of temporary migrants, bearing in mind the various relations of power that influence their transnational experiences and decisions. Temporary migrants can be bound to multiple spaces, while simultaneously transcending different scales and bringing with them a multiplicity of identities and experiences, which can be acquired both at home and abroad. This transnational process that links migrants to multiple spaces is critical to my own analysis of the migrant body. Mitchell notes that “the destabilization of linear and/or essentializing narratives has been an important first step toward opening up alternate ways of theorizing subjectivity and the social” (1997, 108). Rejection of essentialized identities advances the notion that possession of multiple subject positions influences migrants to acquire politicized knowledge and practices and to exercise agency in situations and places they were incapable of prior to migrating.

The recent growth of state-regulated programs reinforces the need for more research and work to be done on the transnational circular mobility of temporary migrant workers. While the continual cyclical flow of migrant workers keeps them from being fixed in one location for very long, they still maintain social, economic, political, and
cultural roots in multiple spaces. Even international policy circles recognize the significance of transnational practices of contemporary migrants, as circular migration fosters the growth of transnational networks. Policy-makers from national and international institutions promote the facilitated and managed movement of migrants, since circular migration is regarded as a solution to a range of challenges confronting international migration (Vertovec 2009).

As temporary foreign workers, however, migrants must struggle with being non-citizens in their host society. Migrants with temporary or seasonal status, Piper points out, are forced to deal with “non- or under-payment of wages (not migrant specific), work contracts tied to (often inadequate and over-priced) accommodation and work permits tied to a specific employer or sector (including live-in arrangements for domestic workers)” (2010, 113). Piper (2010) goes on to argue that such conditions leave migrants vulnerable and insecure and as a result hesitant to speak out against such violations. The issue of freedom of association has also been a continuing barrier for migrant workers, given their non-permanency and volatile status.

**Formation of a Transnational Identity**

Aside from examining the process of transnational migration, this study also analyzes the migrant body’s constant movement between spaces, thereby accentuating the versatility and fluidity of the transnational identity of migrants. Thus, it is critical to probe the various debates concerning the formation of the migrant identity and the different facets that contribute to the transnational process. Since the primary concern in the field
of migration is the movement of people across space, Dunn (2010) urges researchers to offer insight into the desires, needs, and experiences of migrants, highlighting the emotive elements of movement. Transnationalism reinforces the notion that migrants can possess multiple identities within and between the multiple spaces in which they reside and work, but more importantly, in which they are rooted. Silvey and Lawson (1999) make note of how migration studies of the past assumed coherence of migrant groups in particular spaces. The expanding research on temporary migrant workers reveals the difficulty of amalgamating migrant populations into one homogenous category, emphasizing the multi-faceted nature of migrant identities.

The underlying assumption that migrants share an essentialized transnational identity disregards the complexity of place and its intersections with multiple power relations. The identities assumed by migrants in one space can be transferred to another, given the fluidity and continual circular movement of migrant bodies. Nevertheless, transnational identities are very much grounded in particular places at particular times, fortifying the notion that identities are constantly reworked through simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society (Yeoh, Willis, et al. 2003). According to Kearney and Beserra (2004), the discursive, socially constructed spaces through which transnational migrants move and in which they find themselves situated contribute to the variability of migrant identity formation. The social structures of the different spaces are largely influenced by the entangled intersection between gender relations, racial hierarchies, and economic inequalities (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Each space allows for different forms of structured interactions that can both advance and place constraints on the acceptance and transfer of knowledge and action (Landolt 2008).
In their study of transnational actors, Smith and Guarnizo (1998) argue that identity formation in transnational space is continuous and rooted in the process of becoming. Transnational identity formation is a complex process in which various ‘social spaces’ like trans-local migrant networks, transnational working arrangements, and globalizing neo-liberal ideology, can be viewed as affecting the formation of character, identity, and acting subjects at the same time that identity can be seen as fluctuating and contingent, as the contexts through which people move in time-space change and are appropriated and/or resisted by acting subjects. (Smith and Guarnizo 1998, 21)

While the creation and preservation of multiple fluid identities link migrants to different spaces simultaneously, this process also allows them to resist oppressive state regulations or adjust to working and living conditions that expose them to exploitation and insecurity (Schiller, Basch, et al. 1992). This concept does not imply that identity construction is purely voluntaristic and a process of individual self-formation. Rather, migrant identity formation is a process both freely formed and socially determined (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). In other words, migrant transnational identities can be plural and continually evolving.

At the international scale, movement across space requires migrants to cross borders, which for privileged bodies is easier to negotiate than disadvantaged bodies, given the inequitable structure of transnational mobility. For Dunn (2010), the uneven process of crossing borders highlights the value that researchers should place on embodied approaches. The embodied differences of migrants (which includes, race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, and so on) not only shape and discipline people’s movement, but are also closely linked to migrants’ inequitable access to mobility (Pessar and Mahler 2003). The formation of the transnational political identity is an inherently
unbalanced process that is limited by a societal stratification based on differences, constraining migrants’ ability to self-determine how they traverse multiple spaces.

In their study on the regulation of identities, Kearney and Bessera (2004) maintain that regimes of authority and power want to ensure that the reproduction and delineation of migrant identities is “unevenly produced, distributed, and consumed,” which, in turn, secures the proper ordering of individuals within a socially constructed, stratified society. These regimes of power and authority are heavily involved in the formation of the transnational identities of migrants, given the political and economic interest that the state has vested in cross-border migration (Kearney and Beserra 2004). As such, the transnational movement of migrants advances the stratification of their own identities, a process based on the interaction among differentiations such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class and the various spaces and scales that they flow through (Satzewich and Wong 2006).

The regulation of identities assures the reproduction and demarcation of migrants in a system discriminately formed, distributed, and utilized (Kearney and Beserra 2004). The state contributes to the formation of migrant identities by “enacting laws of membership, determining who is included, who is excluded, and determining what are their respective rights and duties” (Vertovec 2009, 88). Migrants are willing to accept and conform to social stratification to gain access to the economic opportunities made available to them in the rich labour-receiving countries. Kearney and Bessera (2004) maintain that as migrants seek to reposition themselves both nationally and transnationally, in hopes of improving their livelihoods and that of their family, they will depart from and enter into various social and political spaces to attain and create new
identities that move away from previous, less desirable identities. The drive for upward mobility compels them to conform to, accommodate, and resist hegemonic constructions and simultaneously contributes to the construction of their identity (Kerr 1996, Kearny and Beserra 2004, Vertovec 2004, Landolt 2008). The movement away from essentializing migrant identities ascertains connections between identity formation and the cyclical flow of migrant bodies through multiple spaces, but more importantly, affirms the construction of versatile and fluid politicized identities. Moreover, the literature on migrant identities compels me to take into account the embodied differences of individual migrants and the constraints that these distinctions place on their political mobility.

**Political Transnationalism**

Conceptualization of the power the state and the human agent requires review of the literature on political transnationalism that focuses on the transfer and movement of material, people, and ideas. Discussions regarding political transnationalism disclose the neoliberal strategies employed by both labour-receiving and labour-sending states to effectively restrain political consciousness and political activities among migrants. For Goldring (2002), the study of state-transmigrant relations draws attention to the heightened politicization of transnational social spaces, therein highlighting the expanding clout of bodies crossing borders. The process of migration is shaped by politics and policies of both the sending and receiving states, beginning with migrants’ reasons for emigrating all the way through to regulations of admission and policies of labour protection. Migration has generated numerous political challenges
transnationally, which, in turn, confronts the nature of politics (Piper 2006). In more general terms, political transnationalism is utilized to explain a myriad of activities that ranges from small-scale activity, such as migrants being members of associations in two separate countries, to large-scale activity, that includes political parties running campaigns across borders. Political transnationalism draws on the activities of government officials, state functionaries, or community leaders who aim to achieve political influence in the sending and receiving country (Martiniello and Lafleur 2008).

Nevertheless, political transnationalism is not merely about the activities of the state and organized interests. It is also about a political community that spans borders (Baubock 2003). The mass movement of people no longer rooted in one single place also incites migrants to “revitalize, reconstruct, or reinvent” their political claims (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995, 52). Discussion of the political identity of migrants tends to focus on electoral activities and political attachments to the home country, ignoring the political participation of migrants in host countries (Guarnizo, Portes, Haller 2003, Theodore and Martin 2007). The literature on political transnationalism must broaden its perspective on politicized conduct and acknowledge that transnational migrant political participation also refers to the direct and indirect political involvement of migrants across borders and “how migration changes the institutions of the polity and its conception of membership,” impacting both the sending and receiving state (Baubock 2003, 701). In his study, Baubock (2003) insists that political transnationalism regards boundaries of polities as contested sites for constructing and reclaiming political identities.

Transnational and national political relations allow for the formation of overlapping memberships between territorially separated and independent polities. Essentially,
political transnationalism is not only about cross-border activities - it also impacts collective political identities and notions of citizenship and belonging.

The intertwined connections between the actions of migrants and the actions of state are integral components in grasping the concept of political transnationalism. While state policies influence political possibilities and activism, migrants can also exert pressure to change state policies (Martiniello and Lafleur 2008). I would argue that the focal point of political transnationalism should not be the state but the populace that knowingly or unknowingly wields political influence over the state.

*State Involvement in Political Transnationalism*

A focus on the state is essential to developing a stronger conceptualization of the formation of political identities, given the influence that sending and receiving states strive to retain over temporary migrants. The regulation of temporary migrant labour, I maintain, ensures the controlled transnational circular movement of state-disciplined foreign workers in alignment with the state-led neoliberal project. Ball and Piper (2002) contend that the state has not lost influence and power over the market but rather has shifted its role, given that the state continues to regulate the movement of migrant labour and influence the formation of the migrant identity. Actively involved in labour markets, states receive migrant workers or send them to work abroad and alter regulatory immigration policies and practices to align with market demands (Ball and Piper 2002). As a result, migration management policies and practices of the state deepen and widen market relations, transforming the governance structure of the sending and receiving state. Government disciplining of migrant workers, based on market-oriented rules,
reinforces the contradiction that exists between the neoliberalized regulation of migrants and democratic governance (Pellerin 1999, Overbeek 2002). Pellerin maintains that “states embracing neoliberalism and regional integration are not necessarily more liberal in their immigration or emigration policies. Important domestic interests prevent states from adopting measure that would facilitate the free circulation of migrants” (1999, 469).

The stratification and ordering of migrants leaves them vulnerable to state control and disciplining of political consciousness and actions. The conduct of migrants is swayed by the policies and practices of both the sending state and the receiving state, which are strategically implemented to maximize gains and profits and minimize loss. The state’s regulation of migrants, therefore, fortifies the power it retains over the transnational identities of migrant workers crossing borders (Kearney and Beserra 2004). States have a strategic role to play in mediating the identity of migrants, given the vested interest that these institutions have in determining the status of migrants in the various transnational spaces where they reside and work. Baubock (2003) observes that sending countries typically have less command over migration patterns because wealthier labour-receiving countries possess stronger global political economic will. The entry of labour across borders is far more regulated than the exit of labour, which gives host states greater power and authority over the movement of migrant workers.

The Role of the Receiving state and the Flexibilization of Disposable Foreign Labour

According to Ball and Piper (2002) and Bauder (2006), the labour of unskilled and low-skilled migrants is required in wealthier receiving countries to meet the labour demands and gaps that local nationals are unwilling to fill. Global neoliberal
restructuring has prompted receiving states to take a more strategic approach to migration, so as to profit from the cheap disposable labour of temporary migrants. While receiving states accept the free flow of capital and trade across borders, governments take a more regulatory stance when it comes to the flow of migrants (Dreher 2007). To control the spatial and social mobility of migrants, states regulate access to national territories and form policies and practices, which, in turn, protects the national interests of the receiving country (Dreher 2007, Kearney and Bessera 2004).

Policies on citizenship and migrant permanency allow host states to hold authority over the distribution of certain rights and legitimate claims to membership. What is more, notions of citizenship and belonging and construction of national identities permit receiving states to regulate who gains access to certain rights and privileges, thereby making the state unaccountable for the protection of the social welfare of non-citizens (Stasiulus and Bakan 2005, Kofman 2002). Sharma (2006) maintains that the differentiation of rights and entitlements in receiving countries legalizes the indentureship of people categorized as migrant workers. In the end, by presenting concepts of boundaries and borders as common sense, the state justifies a neoliberal agenda of the free flow of trade and capital, but not of people (Dreher 2007).

By monitoring access to local labour markets, receiving states can also regulate the type of worker granted entry and can individualize employment conditions. Remery (2002) contends that government policies target migrant workers who succumb to the will and demands of the host state and employers. Over time migrants engaging in a flexible labour market are no longer making free choices, and instead, must comply with fluctuating conditions and demands, losing many rights along the way (Remery 2002).
The implementation of regulations that favour the flexibilization of labour is part of the state’s neoliberal agenda to naturalize contingent employment with minimal rights attached (Chin 2008). Flexibilization and disposability as modes of social organization and processes of self-constitution oblige migrant workers to align themselves with the just-in-time⁷ production mode of the global political economy (Fraser 2003). The naturalization of flexible labour is part of the state strategy to pursue cost-cutting approaches that improve its global competitiveness. The state has transformed the flexible labour market as the dominant mode of social organization through the intensification of labour market segmentation, social exclusion, and wage inequality. In advancing more flexibilized accumulation strategies, the labour-receiving state and employers take advantage of the growing pool of unemployed and the weakened working class, leaving disadvantaged workers to accept flexible labour as the natural path to take in order to survive the lack of economic prospects (Theodore 2003). Theodore (2003) argues that labour markets that push for a contingent economy render workers disadvantaged and deprived, given the precarious nature of the labour.

The Role of the Sending State and Governing from a Distance

In recognizing their inability to control the flight of nationals, poorer sending states are now reconfiguring policies to maintain some form of influence over the populations living and working abroad (Gibson, Law, and McKay 2001; Baubock 2003).

⁷ “Just-In-Time” is a business strategy that organizes production in a way that eliminates waste, increases productivity, and improves efficiency so as to augment returns on investment. The production strategy also advances the need for more flexibilized labour (Linge 1991 and Herod 2000).
By illustrating the power and control that sending states hold over nationals abroad, Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003a) reinforces that sending states are reorganizing their approach to outward migration as a strategy for economic development. In her work, Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003a) asserts that research on transnational migration tends to focus on the impact that transnational political practices have on receiving countries without really taking into consideration the role that sending countries play in influencing the political practices and identity of migrants in both the home and host societies. In addition, Ostergaard-Nielson (2003a) maintains that academics must not disregard the role of the sending country, given the state’s determination to develop practices and policies that utilize emigrants as part of their national development agenda. Many sending states have come to strategically modify approaches to migration in response to changes in migrants’ orientations, a rising but not universal trend (Ostergaard-Nielson 2003a, Baubock 2003). Baubock (2003) lists human capital upgrading, remittances, and the political lobbying of receiving countries as three instrumental reasons why sending states attempt to maintain command and stay connected with citizens abroad.

What is more, political borders have not deterred sending states from devising ways of governing migrants from a distance, influencing and shaping the political practices and identity of temporary migrants even from afar. In their separate studies Larner (2004) and Rudnyckyj (2004) both argue that power and regulation are not necessarily territorially bound. This notion is particularly important as sending states have found more ways to maintain disciplinary influence and social control from a distance.
Neoliberal restructuring in poorer countries and a lack of labour opportunities afforded to local nationals have impelled sending governments to assume a more accepting attitude towards outward migration. By encouraging migrants to revive and sustain ties with their country of origin, sending governments are able, to some extent, retain some influence over the political practices of migrants (Landolt 2008). In the post-Fordist era, modes of regulation allow sending states to govern from a distance through flexible, fluctuating networks that surpass structured institutional sites. Fraser insists that social ordering operates through the authority of spatially dispersed agencies that include “states, supranational organizations, transnational firms, NGOs, professional associations, and individuals” (2003, 168), and afford the state the ability to govern citizens from a distance.

The Foucauldian concept of governmentality reveals that emigrating citizens can be transformed into actively responsible agents in the receiving country. Governmentality moves away from conventional notions of governance, which entails the direct exercise of authority and rule over subjects within a given territory. This form of dispositional governance is still comprised of certain elements of sovereignty and domination in complex ways, as governmentality is more concerned with ordering people and things and “the imbrication of men and things” (Foucault 1991, 93). As such, members of the population are regarded as resources to be fostered, utilized, and

---

8 Identified with a period that began in the mid-1970s and was followed by the Fordist era, the Post-Fordist era is best described as a period that advances production methods that are more flexible than those of the Fordist era. This process includes the vertical disintegration of large corporations, subcontracting, advancement of versatile machinery, and flexibilization of labour in terms of quantity and task performed (Johnston et al 2006).
optimized. The government’s intention is to produce a population that complies to set standards, by disciplining them to accept certain policies and practices. Ultimately, Foucault’s interest lay in the productive nature of power and how it produced a system of power relations.

This study, however, is more interested in assessing how migrants are disciplined to be self-regulated individuals, thereby recognizing that this analysis requires a thorough examination of the contributions of the historical mode of neoliberal governmentality. The Foucauldian concept of neoliberal governmentality stresses the point that processes of self-regulation render a migrant “a subject of market (choice) and a consumer of services, this individual is obligated to enhance her quality of life through her own decisions. In this new care of self everyone is an expert on herself, responsible for managing her own human capital to a maximal effect” (Fraser 2003, 168). This form of self-regulation is in alignment with the sending-state strategic agenda to advance its position in the global political economy. Much like the receiving state, the sending state also aims to shape the migrant body to be more fluid and provisional to the demands of the host state and employer (Fraser 2003, Larner 2004).

Through technologies of power and technologies of self, migrants are trained and

---

9 Foucault draws a connection between the individual’s ability for self-control and the forms of political rule and economic exploitation. The stability between technologies of self (forms of auto-regulation) and technologies of power (forms of domination and control) allows for a fine balance between coercion and the construction and modification of the self (Lemke 2002). Technologies of power are not a threatening type of power that is violently forced upon people. Instead, this type of power is more about the regulation of the body and the foundation for a relationship of power. Best defined as biopower, it makes reference to the techniques employed by the government in order to have control over the body (Dean 1999). In this regard, power is about guidance and governing through forms of self-government, which structures and shapes the actions of a subject (Lemke 2002).
modified to acquire certain attitudes and skills, rendering them self-regulating individuals in the labour-receiving country. The process of regulation, discipline, and subject-making is not only infused through state-sanctioned policies but is visible in mundane everyday technologies that rationalize performance, profitability, and security, creating competent migrant subjects. Through this process the state seeks to produce migrants who exhibit certain skills and attitudes and personify traits of efficient bodies. According to Rudnyckyj (2004), it is most effective to work with weaker subjects easily influenced by techniques such as audits, evaluations, timetables, forms of verbal address, and bodily discipline in order to facilitate the production of ideal subjects - also referred to as technologies of servitude. Docile subjects are easier to shape into migrants who embody the skills and attitudes sought after by labour-receiving states (Rudnyckyj 2004, Larner 2004).

Looking beyond their national borders to cultivate productive strategies to bolster their economies, labour-sending states of poorer countries of the Global South are now embracing outward migration. The benefits of implementing techniques of self-regulation have proven to be quite valuable to the social and economic development of poorer, labour-sending nation-states. Binford (2005) suggests that the continued maintenance of a neoliberal model in sending countries depends on the expulsion of unemployable (or subemployable) sectors of the labour force. State promoted neoliberal truths and knowledge that advance self-regulation are employed to train and guide migrants to evolve into efficient workers while working abroad. Through various disciplinary institutions and mechanisms, the state has crafted ways to produce ideal migrant workers who embody marketable traits. Labour-receiving states and employers
covet docile, hardworking employees, and through techniques of self-regulation the sending state is afforded the means to model migrants into ideal amenable workers, in accordance with the neoliberal model.

Aside from offloading the responsibility of providing its national population with access to labour and capital, the sending state also benefits from the capital, skills and knowledge acquired by migrant workers. Considered a development strategy, remittances have the potential to enhance the well-being of migrants’ families through multiplier effects, while also promoting income growth and facilitating the process of poverty reduction at the community and national level. More importantly, remittances, through financial intermediation, assist in productive investments (Gammage 2006, Ostergaard-Nielson 2003a, Baubock 2003).

In 2008, it was calculated that remittances account for two percent of GDP for all developing countries and six percent for low-income countries (World Bank 2011). Additionally, the World Bank (2011) estimates that global remittances reached $325 billion dollars in 2010 and flows are projected to rise to $374 billion by 2012. These statistics only capture balance of payments data, often ignoring remittances sent through informal channels. As the second largest source of external finance for developing countries, behind foreign direct investment, remittances have significant impact on poverty, inequality, growth, education, infant mortality, and entrepreneurship (Aggarwal 2010).

Balance of payments is a statistical statement used by the International Monetary Fund that summarizes the economic transactions of one country with the rest of the world. In terms of remittances, the balance of payments data largely records capital sent through formal channels (banks and wire transfer agencies) (Aggarwal et al. 2011).
et al. 2011). Economic necessity and unstable development increase global mobility and migrants’ reliance on external labour, forcing many to flock to more stable countries.

The unchecked and under-regulated flow of migrant workers and lack of accessible options make it difficult for many to resist being differentiated. Jaynes (2007) claims that this process renders migrants commodities to the state and employers and, in turn, permits the mistreatment and exploitation of foreign workers who remain under constant scrutiny. In other words, to gain access to economic opportunities in receiving countries, migrants must often submit to the docile, submissive role imposed upon them by the state. Transnational social fields, however, provide migrants with the opportunity “to improve their social position and perhaps their power, make claims about their changing status and have it appropriately valorized” (Smith and Guarnizo 1998, 167).

While regimes of stratification are readjusted by means of submission and acceptance, alternative power hierarchies can also be developed through the advancement of political participation and various forms of resistance. Since identities play a significant role in positioning individual migrants in their everyday lives, both within and across spaces, transnational identities can also form the basis for home and host country-focused political engagement (Vertovec 2001).

**Political Practices and Transnational Migration**

Only recently have academics begun taking a stronger interest in the influence that the transnational migration process retains over political participation. Political transnationalism offers a public space for political engagement, allowing politicized
action to extend across borders. This does not signify that transnational political participation is independent of state-based systems of citizenship/membership that endow rights and privileges to certain individuals. Nonetheless, it is critical to look beyond a limiting state-centred approach by taking into consideration transnational political activities from below (Baubock 2003). Migrant political transnationalism emphasizes the notion that the political engagement and activities of migrants are carried out in both their country of origin and host country and are not limited to institutional political structures (Durmont 2008). The fluidity of transnational movement pushes migrant political participation beyond formal activities such as electoral participation, given the constant circular movement of migrant workers (Collyer 2008).

Studies often overlook the political practices and ideas that migrants acquire in the host society, which can be transferred across borders. According to Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003b), host societies shape the collective organization of migrations by endowing them with certain political resources and models not only employed in the labour-receiving country but also channelled back to political system of their home country. The human rights discourse acquired in the host society provides migrants with language for negotiation at various scales (transnational political networks, the state, and their employer). The transfer of political practices and ideas, through grass-roots transnationalism and bottom-up participation, has the potential to ameliorate democratic processes at home. Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003b) reasons that transnational civil society could inevitably advance communicative power to question and criticize political authority at home, while simultaneously strengthening democratic control. According to Williams (2006), migrants not only transfer remittances to their home community, they
also engage in a transmission of knowledge developed through social interaction within their host community. While comprehension of the process by which knowledge is transferred across borders is limited, this process grants migrants the opportunity to bring back to their home community new tools and ideas.

Aside from the conditions of entry and mode of incorporation of migrants, the transmission and use of the political tools and knowledge is also contingent upon the composition of migrant populations. Guarnizo (2001) maintains that transnational political actions vary across national groups, based on the history of the country of origin and the dominant political culture that influences the political practices of migrants in their home communities. Nonetheless, the transfer of political tools and knowledge serves as a catalyst for larger political change by empowering migrants to utilize these resources both at home or abroad (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003b).

**Shaping Migrant Political Consciousness**

A critical component of understanding migrants’ willingness to undertake certain political actions is grasping how consciousness is shaped, but more importantly, how they prevail over the weakening of their political identity through reappropriation of political consciousness. Engagement of Gramscian notions concerning hegemony\(^\text{11}\) and consciousness of the masses offers a strong conceptual framework for my discussion of the human agency of migrant workers. In his work on consciousness of the masses,

\(^{11}\) Hegemony is a Gramscian concept that refers to the process of ideological domination. The underlying assumption is that dominant groups control the material forces of production and the means of symbolic production (Scott 1985).
Gramsci (1971) declares that hegemonic forces of society (the ruling group) attain predominance over the masses (subaltern group) through a form of consent that asserts the domination of hegemonic ideology.\textsuperscript{12}

Consent is garnered through a process of internalizing dominant values and definitions, which entails accepting the status quo and succumbing to the belief that ruling groups validly possess a superior position in society (Femia 1975). Therefore, consent of the masses is obtained through a passive process in which individuals are denied access to certain conceptual tools in order to normalize the ideology of the ruling forces. More importantly, the process ensures that individuals will not act upon disgruntlement that may manifest as a result of conforming to ideologies, placing them in oppressive spheres of political life.

Gramscian notions of hegemony scrutinize the state use of apparatuses of coercion, under a framework of legality, to impose the disciplining of groups and assert consent, therein legitimating the popularization of certain ideas as the norm. Conformity to hegemonic ideologies is not only exacted by influencing and coercing individuals to believe in certain ruling ideas but, according to Kiros (1981), is also achieved through the structure of productive forces, which demands that individuals adopt a work ethic that advances the economic interests of the society as a whole. Kiros (1981) draws on the historical example of Ford’s rationalization of labour as a paradigm enforced by the state to ensure that the masses conform to the demands of the productive forces without

\textsuperscript{12} Hegemony is attained not through a process of dominant visible force but rather through a willing acceptance of certain cultural, social, and political practices and institutions that creates a group of citizens with subordinate status (Gramsci 1971).
questioning the hegemonic rationale. Thus, productive forces become critical to commanding rule over the masses and preventing populations from exercising political actions that counter hegemonic ideology. Dominant ideologies become common sense through a process of false infliction, which entails influencing or coercing subjectified individuals to accept the status quo and fortify the rule of capital without questioning the power of dominant groups. The creation of false consciousness is based on the assumption that subordinate classes willing accept dominant visions of social order, symbolically aligning dominant and subordinate class values (Scott 1985). Hegemonic forces ensure that subaltern groups accept dominating ideologies and the uneven structure of relations of power through the imposition of a submissive role (Patnaik 1988).

Subject to dominant rule, subaltern populations become products of a process entirely shaped by the ideologies of the dominant faction (Rosen 1996). Appropriation of ideologies and values superimposed by hegemonic rule results in a loss of identity and signifies a cognitive failure of individuals to freely express themselves in an environment controlled through normative coercion. According to Rosen (1996), loss of the ability to convey self-conscious emotions, as a form of release, reveals the suppression inflicted on the cognitive and emotional values of the population by dominant forces that seek to curb political revolt. Nevertheless, subaltern groups reappropriate their identities by questioning and challenging the ruling ideology and curtailing the clout held over them by hegemonic forces.

While it is the responsibility of governments, as the ruling institution, to act as an ethical socializing agent, the state instead opts to strategically develop, popularize, and disseminate certain ideas, beliefs, and attitudes to advance a neoliberal political and
economic agenda. The authority and legitimacy of the ruling and socializing agent comes into question during a period that Gramsci (1971) labels as the “crisis in authority.” The masses begin to critically examine the philosophy and leadership of the state by taking political action, a process that involves gaining access to ideas and beliefs that enable individuals to participate in the decision-making process of rationalization.

The first step towards countering dominant rule entails becoming conscious of the influence hegemonic forces hold over individuals, working towards building a progressive self-consciousness where ideas and practice finally correspond. More importantly, critical self-consciousness comes about through the existence of intellectual leaders who ethically inform the masses how to empower themselves with the appropriate political ideas and tools and take action that challenges the dominant rule. The existence of a group of intellectuals facilitates the development of individuals’ critical self-consciousness and encourages the organization of the masses to take political action. Intellectuals can be subdivided into two categories, traditional and organic.

In his writings, Gramsci (1971) explained that all humans carry some form of intellectual activity; however, not every individual has the social function of an intellectual. The distinction between the two types of intellectuals is based on connection to certain social groups (or class) and how each can exercise intellectual function. Traditional intellectuals garner power from hegemonic forces and are part of a class separate from the rest of society. Organic intellectual, in turn, refers to the thinking group that is organically formed out of a specific class. Gramsci (1971) noted that in order to overcome hegemonic forces, a counter-hegemonic movement must develop. Essential to this rising movement is the development of organic intellectuals, especially given that
organization does not exist without intellectuals (organizers and leaders). Gramsci recognizes that particular classes are more prone to becoming intellectuals and that different categories within these classes are drawn to certain specialization.

By gaining access to political ideas that empower their consciousness, individuals begin to question the legitimacy of dominant forces and take action to reverse the impact of submitting to the rule of authoritative figures under the directive of intellectuals. Gramscian notions provide a conceptual platform to assess the relations of power that oppress and empower Guatemalan migrants, but also build upon Foucauldian ideas of governmentality. The conceptualization of an “organic” transition towards an awakening of political consciousness and an acceptance of resistance, facilitated by intellectuals, deviates from Foucault’s governmentality, which does not assume a normative approach to resistance and counter-hegemony.

_Ties between Foucault and Gramsci_

In contextualizing how power relations between the state and civil society, specifically migrant workers, impact the political practices of individuals, I draw upon Foucault’s concept of governmentality and Gramsci’s notions of hegemony and consciousness as frameworks for grasping the fabrication of societal stratification and the institutionality of power. Olssen remarks that it has become “commonplace today for authors to cite Foucault on one page and Gramsci on the next,” (1999, 89) as both critical theorists engage in discussion of the production of power through social relations. Both
also mull over inequitable power relations that hinder people’s ability to equally exercise power, while exploring the relationship between agency and structure (Pringle 2005).

A pertinent distinction between the two theorists is that Gramsci extends this debate by asserting that subordinate groups overcome domination through resistance, while Foucault’s value laden approach does not provide a strong conceptualization of why or how certain subjects should engage in forms of resistance (Pickett 1996). Ettlinger (2011) is adamant that Foucault visualizes resistance as a matter of challenging norms, discourses, and mentalities, not entities or persons in certain standing in a hierarchy. While Foucault and Gramsci have different accounts of the origins and structures of power, the point at this juncture is not to merely draw on the dissimilarities but highlight the connections, to justify why Gramscian and Foucauldian concepts are fruitful frameworks that contribute to my analysis of the power relations between the state and migrant workers.

Both Gramsci and Foucault insist that power is maintained through the subjectification of a population, shaping individuals/bodies to conform to the will and demands of dominant forces. According to Ekers and Loftus (2008), the two theorists establish the context for the arena in which politics transpires and both assert that political practices are shaped through (1) the dominance of one social group, (2) the maintenance of social relations, and (3) individual conduct. One of the principles points of connection is their mutual awareness of how ideas and types of knowledge are congenitally incorporated within the materiality of practices and apparatuses, providing a sound understanding of how certain ideas are internalized (Ekers and Loftus 2008). Ultimately, the common appreciation of how the state assumes control over the political behaviour
and actions of individuals through the institutionality of power and the regulation of the body is what draws me to both theorists in assessing the strategic role of hegemonic powers.

**Human Agency and the Transnational Political Identity of Migrant Workers**

Although it is imperative to acknowledge the role of authoritative figures in the formation of transnational migrant body, migrants are active beings who navigate the course of their transnational experience. More importantly, as human agents, migrants contribute to the formation of their own identities. The term “agent” is in reference to an identity that arises from a transforming relation referred to as agency, and it is within this transforming relation that migrants formulate individual choices and make decisions that contribute to the construction of society (Ortiz 2005).

As previously noted, an embodied approach to migration studies not only assesses the relationship between agency and structure, also referred to as the in-between place of migration; it also hinders the essentialization of the migrant identity (Dunn 2010). Examination of the body as a scale of analysis moves away from the economic neoclassical approach that views migrants as disembodied actors and embraces the notion that the body, attached with inscriptions and meanings, is a powerful starting point in studying migration (Silvey 2004). Human agency continuously reacts to shifting circumstances, which can often be unpredictable or risky and creates new prospects or access to new information or resources (Conway and Potter 2007). Conway (2007) clarifies that in order to grasp how the powerless find ways to empower themselves, we need only look at the clout and creativity of the human agency.
While authoritative forces retain a significant role in the formation of the political identities of migrants through the social ordering of humans within a constructed stratification, migrants are also able to resist these forms of domination. In other words, political action taken by migrants, both individually and collectively, to resist these social constructions demonstrates the constant struggle they confront in reclaiming power over steering their course of action, therein moulding their own identity (Ortiz 2005). Living transnationally and engaging in transnational activities in a globally interconnected world facilitates the advancement of transnational activism (Levitt, Dewind, et al. 2003).

Transnational social fields are multiple intertwining social relationships that are unevenly structured, given the unequal exchange, organization, and transformation of ideas, practices, and resources (Landolt 2008). As a result, it is ultimately up to migrants, as human agents, to reclaim their transnational experience and counter the unequal structure of transnational social fields. For Smith and Guarnizo (1998), the power to resist hegemonic constructions is present at all levels of the global system. Counter-hegemony helps to “reduce power asymmetries based on gender and race, and even promote solidarity based on these dimensions, such asymmetries often tend to persist not only as a steady source of struggle, but also of identity” (1998, 23). Both hybrid\(^{13}\) and liminal\(^{14}\) spaces have come to be utilized not only for capital accumulation to advance the economic mobility of migrants but are now being employed to resist against hegemonic narratives, which according to Mitchell (1997) undercuts prior notions of fixed and

\(^{13}\) In reference to space of flows and connections not limited by boundaries and divided territories.

\(^{14}\) An in-between space and threshold that allows for the mixture and interaction of cultures along with the intercession of hegemonic narratives of race and nation.
essentialized identities. Migrants engage a process of “endless becoming” by challenging authoritative influence over identity construction in transnational spaces and yearning for self-formation of their political identity. According to Smith and Winchester (1998), this “endless becoming” stresses the temporal and spatial variability of identity and the continual struggle to negotiate the individual embodied identity.

Nevertheless, not all forms of political participation and resistance have to be conducted in a larger political arena. According to Scott, “where institutionalized politics is formal, overt, concerned with systematic, de jure change, everyday resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains” (1985, 33). Everyday forms of resistance require little to no coordination or planning, and instead, represent a form of individual self-help that avoids direct confrontation with authority or hegemonic norms. More often than not, small-scale resistance involves passive non-compliance, subtle sabotage, evasion, and deception. What everyday forms of resistance ultimately share with larger-scale forms of political resistance and defiance is an attempt to mitigate or deny claims made by dominant classes or to promote claims of these subordinate groups (Scott 1985). At the everyday scale, migrants struggle to counteract superimposed constructions by means of negotiation and opting to undertake acts often not considered resistance at the larger scale.

When prompted, migrants may also choose to participate in large-scale political resistance against hegemonic constructions. Since the state’s neoliberal agenda creates the terrain to overtly counter dominant rule that oppresses the migrant body, large-scale political action often entails opposition to inequitable neoliberal policies and programs (Mitchell 1996). Migrants band together with organized advocates to lobby, strategize,
and place pressure on the receiving government to enact change for improvements to the legislation that binds migrants to oppressive working conditions. According to Stasiulis and Bakan, through effective migrant mobilization with the assistance of local advocates and supporters, “creative models are being constructed and lobbied for that address the specific needs and conditions” (1997, 53) that migrants are obliged to confront as subjectified populations.

In deviating from nation-state oriented forms of resistance, Piper (2005) shifts focus to the transnational scale by examining the role of NGOs and the involvement of migrants in widening the scope of resistance and advocacy. The engagement of non-state actors involved in processes of political incorporation and contentious policies reshapes the policies and practices of the state and, in turn, restructures superimposed hegemonic constructions that allow for oppressive treatment of migrant workers (Theodore and Martin 2007). Moreover, supporting allies quash disciplining narratives that confine migrant workers into submissive roles.

Ness (2006) makes note of how status as outsiders, collective isolation, and migrants’ concentration in specific labour sectors based on ethnicity often incites the development of strong ties and deepened class solidarity. Migrants are not more militant or less passive but rather it is the real workplace conditions of migrant workers that produce greater resistance on the job. According to Ness (2006), the simple fact that local national workers have an exit strategy while migrant workers do not urges foreign workers to be more open to the prospect of undertaking action that improves their working conditions. Unable to turn to the state, migrants tend to develop other means of coping with and/or resisting structures of oppression. By engaging in acts of resistance,
migrants seek to transcend spaces of oppression and disrupt the patterns of capitalist productivity.

My research focuses not merely on migrant resistance to a state-led neoliberal project but rather on how migrants conform to, accommodate, and/or oppose hegemonic constructions that shape their transnational political identities. While both state and non-state actors play pivotal roles influencing and modifying the demeanour of migrant workers, this point should not deter from the focus of my research, which concentrates on how migrants process and cope with transnational political ideas and actions presented to them while traversing multiple spaces. According to Silvey, a more subjective perspective of identity formation shifts migration studies “towards an understanding of the migrant self as constituted through a range of intersecting, sometimes competing, forces and processes, and as playing agentic roles in these processes” (2004, 499). I would argue that it is critical to take into account the experiences and narratives of migrants, but more importantly, the agency and political views of workers.

Through this amassed theoretical literature, I intend to focus on the transferable political resources and ideas acquired and forced upon temporary migrants in the multiple sites in which they reside and work and how this, in turn, underpins the notion that transnational identities are fluid and versatile. There is much to learn from this array of literature on migration, and I make use of it as a guide in defining the transnational politics of seasonally migrating from Guatemala to Canada.
Conceptualizing the Transnational Political Identity of Migrant Workers

An analytical framework was developed to examine the role of authoritative powers and the human agency of migrants, so as to effectively assess the process that (re)shapes the transnational political identity of Guatemalan agricultural workers (see Figure 1.1). As previously established, the migrant body as the primary instrument of research and scale of analysis draws out the versatility and fluidity of the formation of the transnational identity, which is a process that is inherently unbalanced and restricted by societal stratification based on embodied differences. In grasping how the transnational political identity is formed one must first turn to the different transnational political realities that migrants encounter while flowing through multiple spaces. The transnational experience of seasonally migrating between Guatemala and Canada and the diverging transnational political realities have significant bearing on migrants’ political consciousness and political actions. Examination of the oppressive and empowering transnational political experiences/realities provide insight on how the migrant body responds to different political tools and ideas and how this in turn influences migrant political consciousness and actions.

By working and residing in multiple spaces Guatemalan migrants have developed a transnational experience based on constant cyclical flow. The fluidity of their movement allows them to maintain and develop a relationship with multiple interconnected transnational spaces, a process that plays a powerful role in shaping and reshaping the migrant body. Temporary migrants often continue to tackle some of the same oppressive political realities (discipline, insecurity, oppression, exploitation) encountered in their home country while labouring the receiving country; however, they
are also exposed to new and diverse political resources and ideas (empowerment, liberation, collectiveness, security) by supporting allies who seek to empower this marginalized group and create positive political realities.

Transnational migration allows for the transfer of political resources and ideas both freely acquired and forcefully imposed upon Guatemalan migrants in the various spaces they traverse. While the experience of seasonally migrating to Canada grants migrant workers the opportunity to learn of new political practices and ideas, not all of them are necessarily receptive to transferring these newly acquired political tools. Nevertheless, migrant workers’ political consciousness and political practices are continually reshaped by varying transnational political realities. As both an imposed and self-constructed transnational political identity, Guatemalan migrants have developed different means of reacting to divergent transnational political realities that expose them to both oppressive and empowering political ideas.

Migrant workers have expressed varying responses when presented with empowering ideas and tools by supporting allies. The three most prominent responses to newly acquired political resources have been (1) acknowledgement of new political ideas but an unwillingness to engage in political practices that endanger their jobs; (2) acknowledgement of new political ideas and a willingness to engage in political practices without requiring much persuasion; and (3) being pushed to the edge and left with no other alternative but to engage in political practices. Each level of political engagement contributes to the shaping and reshaping of Guatemalans’ political identity in one form or another. While hegemonic forces manipulate and coerce migrants to submit to a neoliberal agenda of self-regulation, the human agency of migrant workers also allows
them to conform to, accommodate, and/or oppose hegemonic constructions of their political identity, authority figures (which include employers, administrators of the program, and government officials). In delineating the transnational process as both superimposed, and more importantly, self-constructed, I recognize the wavering nature of the migrant transnational political identity, which is attributed to the continual flow of ideas and resources. Acceptance and/or rejection of certain political ideas and activities by the migrant body highlight the agency of certain subjects and the ability of migrant workers to act as agents of power who find ways to cope with the mounting pressure of seasonal migration. Figure 2 below charts the various political facets involved in forming the migrants’ transnational political identities, taking into account how traversing multiple spaces influences migrants’ response to opposing and accepting certain political ideas and tools.
Figure 2 - Formation of the Transnational Political Identity Conceptual Framework
(Source: Author).
Chapter 3

Contextualizing Violence and Migration in Guatemala and the Temporary Agricultural Workers to Canada (TAWC) Project

The generals wipe out many Indian communities wholesale and expel even more from their lands. Multitudes of hungry Indians, stripped of everything, wander the mountains. They come from horror, but they are not going to horror. They walk slowly, guided by the ancient certainty that some day greed and arrogance will be punished. That’s what the old people of corn assure the children of corn in the stories they tell them when night falls.

- Eduardo Galeano, Century of the Wind (1985)

Introduction

By examining the political context of Guatemala and exploring the political reality of insecurity that has impinged upon Guatemalans lives, while also analyzing the inner working of the Canadian-Guatemalan managed migration program, this chapter presents a comprehensive platform for the chapters that follow. Insight into the violence and political instability that rocked conflict-ridden Guatemala from the 1960s to the late 1990s sheds light on how the suppression of empowering political ideas and tools has further marginalized ethnic minorities and impoverished populations of this country. More importantly, an overview of the volatile political and economic landscape of Guatemala provides details on why the trend of outward migration has become a key strategy of survival for impoverished Guatemalans. A summary on the creation and operation of the Guatemalan Temporary Agricultural Workers to Canada (TAWC) project reinforces the notion that this managed migration program advances economic growth through control of the flexibilized and disposable migrant body.
Violence and Political Instability in Guatemala

The cloud of fear and insecurity overshadowing Guatemalans is rooted in a long history of internal conflict that came to a head during a brutal civil war (1961-1996) and in the aftermath of violence that continues to affect daily life in the country. Guatemalans, especially those residing in rural areas, have been traumatized by years of bloodshed and brutality, still resonating today through remnants of state oppression aimed at striking political purpose (Brett and Brett 2008). Today, Guatemalans are compelled to cope with violent crime triggered by the rise of gang-related activity and drug trafficking (Benson, Fischer, et al. 2008). Examination of the political and economic history of Guatemala, I would argue, reveals how endless violence and insecurity requires marginalized Guatemalans to not only suppress political activities of empowerment but also leads a distrust of political manifestations and political authority figures. For disenfranchised Guatemalans, oppressive political experiences have meant a fracturing of a confidence, and ultimately, conviction in voicing political discontent or taking action.

The Mayan population of Guatemala has been forced to deal with centuries of oppression and violence at the hands of Spanish colonizers. The political events of the latter half of the 20th century have sustained the marginalization of the majority of the population, whether Indigenous, Mayan, or mixed blood Ladino (Little 2009). During the presidency of Juan José Arévalo from 1945 to 1951, a series of political reforms was enacted. The most prominent transformation was the implementation of progressive labour laws that enfranchised a large portion of the population, especially in urban areas. Jacobo Arbenz Guzman followed suit by introducing unparalleled agrarian reforms in 1952, thereby placing more government controls on foreign investment in the
countryside. Economic and political restructuring and reforms, misconstrued as radically socialistic when in fact they were moderately capitalistic, drew the wrath of Guatemalan elite, foreign business owners (particularly the United Fruit Company), and the U.S. government. The perceived threat resulted in a CIA sponsored military coup d’état in 1954 to thwart the political influence of Arbenz’s administration in the country, ousting the president and inevitably ending Guatemala’s social experiment. The suppression of alleged communistic threats by bringing in military juntas and generals to govern for the next 30 years sent a strong message across the country that defiant political actions would not be tolerated and democratic rule was obsolete (Little 2009).

Between 1966 and 1982, a series of military or military-dominated administrations governed Guatemala (Flynn 2002). The brutal period of military rule that sought to maintain unquestioned control engendered repressive economic, political, and social policies directly aimed at the Indigenous people along with poor rural and urban populations. Devastated by thirty-six years of civil war that ensued, Guatemala was transformed into a country plagued by political violence. A guerrilla insurgency responded to the repressive rule of the military and the dictatorship’s lack of respect for human and civil rights. The acts of state terror during the 1970s and 1980s, which sprang from confrontation between the guerrilla insurgency and the national armed forces resulted in the massacre (see Figure 3) and disappearance of an estimated 250,000 people and the internal and external displacement of a million more (Flynn 2002, Lovell 2000).
Figure 3 - Documentation of the Massacres during the Guatemalan Civil War
(Source: Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification 1999).

While large numbers of Guatemalans fled to other countries or joined the guerrillas, the majority of poor and working-class campesinos who stayed behind were confined in “model villages,” tortured and re-educated, or coerced into serving the military. The Indigenous highlands were hit hard by the counterinsurgency campaign, as entire villages were targeted with the burning of houses, raping of women and girls, mass murders, and wiping out of entire villages (Brett and Brett 2008). The Guatemalan

15 “Model Villages” confine Indigenous people of different languages and backgrounds to enclosed and regimented areas under constant surveillance (Brett and Brett 2008).
government pursued a scorched-earth policy\textsuperscript{16} that destroyed the countryside and resulted in the disappearance of over 400 villages (Brands 2010). According to Brands (2010), the remorseless violence traumatized and shattered Guatemala and left an incomparable legacy of mistrust in politics, extreme by Latin American standards.

Political organization under military governments and regimes during the 1970s and 1980s was unachievable, given the genocidal counterinsurgency and the systematically violent response to mobilization by unsanctioned politicized groups. Although Guatemala had a fast growing cooperative movement during the early part of the conflict, with nearly 510 cooperatives\textsuperscript{17} in existence, the chaos incited by the 1976 earthquake allowed the government to quash the social awakening that was taking place in the Guatemalan countryside (Davis and Hodson 1982). During the conflict, activists, union members, university professors, and political members branded enemies of the military government and deemed to be in direct defiance were quickly eradicated. Political repression became a way to systemically exclude insubordination from formal political structures (Brett 2008).

The brief presidency of Rios Montt (1982-1983) marked the most violent period of the internal conflict, augmenting summary executions, forced disappearances, and the torture of non-combatants. According to Morrison and May (1994), the government strategically approached this conflict as one of generalized terror, leaving few people

\textsuperscript{16} The scorched earth policy is a military strategy that entails destroying anything that is considered of use to the enemy, including shelter, transportation, communication, and industrial resources (Brands 2010).

\textsuperscript{17} 57\% of the cooperatives were located in the Western and Central highlands and had a significant impact on Indigenous communities’ political attitudes, marketing strategies, and agricultural techniques (Davis and Hodson 1982).
impervious to the risk of violence. Democracy was impossible during this period of blatant disrespect for the rule of law and international human rights standards. The “Vigilante Democratic Elections” model implemented and enforced by the military permitted only the presence of government sanctioned political parties and granted the military greater clout and authority over the electoral process (PNUD 2010). As a result, fraudulent elections fortified the notion that individual votes carry no weight.

After national presidential and legislative elections and a Constituent Assembly created a new constitution, civilian rule was restored in January 1986. The international armed conflict, however, had already left behind a maimed nation traumatized by years of violent conflict and coerced into fearing the iron fist of the state. It was not until 1996 that the Guatemalan government and guerrilla armed forces signed a “firm and lasting” peace agreement. The signing of the symbolic peace accord signalled an end to overt hostilities but did nothing to impede government corruption, political violence, severe social inequalities, and economic hardships.

Inquiries conducted in the wake of the peace accord determined that more than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared and approximately 1.4 million Guatemalans were internally and externally displaced (Nolin 2001). For millions of displaced Guatemalans, returning to their home communities was not an easy transition. Lovell notes that “those who were repatriated often found themselves in a difficult situation, stigmatized by the army and even government officials as guerrilla sympathizers and consequently treated with suspicion or outright hostility by residents of the communities to which they returned or in which they were resettled” (2000, 94). Numerous displaced returnees came back to land disputes, having had their land taken over (Morrison and
May 1994). The violent conflict left an enduring rift in the country, leading to a new violence marked by organized crime, operation of gangs without impunity, and increased drug trafficking. Political tensions still resonating in the country sustain and ferment the silence and political fears that afflict ethnically marginalized and impoverished populations, as well as intensify a distrust of political manifestations.

Since the signing of the 1996 accord, severe levels of violence continue to plague Guatemalans both in rural and urban areas (Benson, Fischer, et al. 2008). The rise in violence can be defined as a postwar anxiety that has given rise to murder, assault, armed robbery and kidnapping. Criminal organizations and other gangs rob people in transit, traffic drugs, attack and kill people with impunity and they are not limiting their activities to a specific geographical region in Guatemala (Little 2009). The activity of urban gangs is well documented, while the crime creeping into rural regions, an area that was formerly free of this type of violent crime, continues to be disregarded by the national government (Burrell 2009). The origins of gang problems can be linked to the civil war, when displaced and uneducated young people were forced to turn to crime as a way cope with economic challenges brought about by the internal armed conflict. In addition, the U.S. government sent back nearly 3,600 criminal deportees who arrived in the U.S. as political refugees but later turned to gang activities (Brands 2010). These deportations during the mid-1990s rapidly swelled the gang population in Guatemala and inundated law enforcement agencies. Brands argues that “for a country that never fully recovered from the civil war, the effects of this criminal activity have been devastating” (2010, 57). Criminality and violence have become engrained in Guatemala since the armed conflict.
The annual homicide rate (see Figure 4) in Guatemala has doubled since the civil war; between 2006 and 2009 there were over 45 homicides for every 100,000 inhabitants (PNUD 2010). In 2008 alone, 6,200 murders were reported, ranking Guatemala as one of the most dangerous countries in Latin America, above Mexico and Colombia. On average, 250 people are murdered each month in the capital with the murder rate there reaching 108 per 100,000 inhabitants (Benson, Fischer, et al. 2008; Brands 2010). Even President Alvaro Colom acknowledges how levels of crime and violence have intensified since the end of the internal armed conflict. In recent years, the number of homicides annually has exceeded the annual death rates during civil war, as corrupt governments have been unable to contain the spreading violence.

Figure 4 - Number of Homicides per 100,000 people in Guatemala (1995-2009) (Source: PNUD 2010).

Regions all across Guatemala are now under the control of drug traffickers, youth gangs, and other criminal groups (Brands 2010). Armed robberies in broad daylight and
rising gang violence are now the norm in Guatemala, feeding into the continual unrest in the country (Benson, Fischer, et al. 2008). An estimated 180 to 400 metric tons of cocaine are trafficked through Guatemala each year, a trade valued at approximately $10 billion annually (Brands 2010). According to U.S. Embassy officials in Guatemala, 75 percent of drugs that enter into the U.S. pass through Guatemala (PNUD 2010). Benson, Fischer, et al. (2008) argue that the notion of a “postwar” era is a way to deflect attention away from subtler forms of violence and the linkages of crime and violence to political instability and the state. With violence and corruption on the rise, even after the signing of the peace accord, mistrust and estrangement from the state have grown amongst the most marginalized of the country.

Present-day state aversion to determining the root cause of the rise in crime and violence in Guatemala has allowed the state to take an “iron fist” approach, reinforcing corruption by the government and elite and powerlessness and fear amongst the poor and working class (Benson, Fischer, et al. 2008). Rather than addressing the root causes of the violence in Guatemala, which have included endemic poverty, inequalities in land ownership, instabilities caused by rapid structural adjustment, and poor law enforcement, the state’s tactics are creating a climate of insecurity, militarizing the streets to restrict the growing problem of violence (Benson, Fischer, et al. 2008). Brands links the rise in violent crime to a government “starved of resources and riddled with corruption” (2010, 18).

Guatemalan governments have often been criticized for taking an authoritarian approach to internal political and economic conflict. An even harder line seems certain in the wake of former general Otto Pérez Molina winning the presidential election of November 6, 2011 (Benson, Fischer, et al. 2008).
2), incapable of restraining criminal operatives assassinating government officials and members of the political class deemed a disturbance.

Criminal elements have infiltrated corrupt security personnel, judicial institutions, and many other offices or agencies responsible for upholding law and order (Brands 2010). Massive corruption in the police force has throttled attempts to address gang problems through legal, police, and prison reforms (Burrell 2009). In addition, the military is believed to be closely associated to drug traffickers (Benson and Fischer 2009). Disorderly crime has devastated faith in democracy and made Guatemalans sceptical that the current system can secure the protection of basic human security (Brands 2010).

Civilian political organization is incessantly targeted, while the state, in turn, continues to turn a blind eye to blatant human rights violations (Little 2009). Plaintiff witnesses, lawyers, and judges involved in court cases dealing with past atrocities during the armed conflict have gone into exile after assassination attempts. Many representatives of the human rights organization and others connected to these cases, such as labour organizers and journalists, have had their archives stolen, received death threats, or been murdered. According to Little (2009), forces of the past continue to maintain stronghold over Guatemala, benefitting from immunity and privilege given to them by the state. The general message conveyed through these acts of atrocity warn the Guatemalan population of the dangers engaging in politicized activity and leave many believing that social injustices will continue to exist.

The key difference between violence of the armed conflict in the 1980s and the more contemporary forms of violence is that the latter impacts Guatemalans’ everyday
lives in a more personal way (Little 2009). For many Guatemalans disenchanted by repressive government institutions, violence and bloodshed have become a way of life (Brands 2010). Benson and Fischer have characterized the current state of violence in Guatemala as one “marked by a most pressing danger, the tendency of violence to compound and fester under the duress of images of insecurity, instability, and mayhem and circulating discourses that personalize blame, targeting select groups rather than structural conditions or social relations” (2009, 163). Violence in Guatemala will continue to persist so long as the government inadequately deals with inequalities linked to land and labour and ignores holding to account the perpetrators of politicized violent crimes (Lovell 2000). The production and preservation of fear instilled in disenfranchised Guatemalans by an eroding government unable to control the rampant spread of violence, have traumatized a country with little hope for the future. It is evident that the Guatemalan government contributes to the sustainment of systemic barriers that leave disenfranchised populations, like Guatemalan migrants, to fend for themselves and tend to their own social welfare.

The traumas of the 1970s and 1980s left Guatemala vulnerable to the resurgence of internal disorder, and inevitably have led to the recent intensification of violence and unrest in the country. With the debt crisis of the 1980s, the ensuing aggressive program of liberal economic reform nurtured the new violence in the country. Benson and Fischer (2009) highlighted the connection between the rise of violent crime and the
decentralization of markets and politics as a systemic process of neoliberalization of violence.¹⁹

Neoliberal restructuring implemented by the military regimes during the 1970s and 1980s had a negative impact on the previously well-managed Guatemalan economy, propelling poverty into a rampant issue ineffectively managed by the national government. The 1980s were defined as a period of deficient macroeconomic management that experienced a debt crisis and caused a reduction in GDP and investment (PNUD 2010). From 1980 to 2007, GDP increased at an average annual rate of 2.7 percent, with the population growing at an annual rate of 2.6 percent, signifying a slow but steady improvement of the national economy (PNUD 2008). Although the overall economy of Guatemala has steadily improved, inequality between urban and rural inhabitants, and between indigenous and non-indigenous people, has been dramatically widened by hegemonic imperatives.

¹⁹ Neoliberalization of violence theorizes that violence and crime are accompanied by economic privatization and the erosion of the state (Benson and Fischer 2009).
Even though Guatemala is historically defined as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and plural cultural nation, Indigenous people (see Figure 5) have continually confronted the most extreme forms of inequality. The political and economic life of Guatemala has been built upon the subordination of marginalized Indigenous, as the elite have benefited from a restrictive societal gap. With a total population of some 14 million inhabitants, 45 percent of the population lives in rural areas and 40 percent of the population self-identify as Mayan, Xincas, and Garifunas (PNUD 2010).

The contrasting levels of poverty between urban and rural areas attest to the underlining issue of the societal divide. Extreme poverty levels in urban areas are at 5 percent, but five times higher in rural areas at 25 percent (PNUD 2010). Levels of total poverty are even higher, with urban areas at approximately 30 percent and rural areas at
approximately 70 percent (PNUD 2010). In addition, the levels of total poverty of Indigenous ethnic groups, for instance Kaqchikel (at 64 percent), Kiche (at 68 percent), Mam (at 76 percent), and Qeqchi (at 85 percent), far surpass the non-Indigenous population (at 36 percent) (PNUD 2010). With 70 percent of the non-Indigenous population making above minimum wage, while only 42 percent of the Indigenous earn above minimum wage, the prevailing disparity has solidified the institutionalized exploitation of Indigenous populations living in rural regions (PNUD 2010). The bulk of migrants entering the Canada-Guatemala migration program originate from ethnically marginalized Guatemalan communities that self-identify as Mayan, illustrating the economic desperation of Indigenous populations. Forced to leave their home communities in search of labour, disenfranchised migrants are willing to undertake risks to support their families back home and overcome oppressive systemic barriers.

The civil war triggered the first mass exodus of Guatemalans, with over 400,000 people crossing national borders to seek refuge abroad during the 1980s (Nolin 2001). While the significant majority fled to Mexico or United States, Canada also admitted a number of refugees, increasing its migrant population to approximately 14,000 (Nolin 2001). Many political refugees have since returned to Guatemala, but the number of economic migrants has dramatically risen over the years, as the civil war left the country in economic disarray. With the underemployment rate at approximately 40 percent surpassing the official unemployment rate at approximately 4.9 percent, a great number have chosen to migrate outwards in search of employment and stronger financial stability (Smith 2006). The majority of migrants working abroad have been males hailing from rural areas, who must leave their families behind to seek out the finances to support them.
This gendered trend is quickly changing with a growing number of women and minors migrating alongside men in the pursuit of the means to climb out of economic desperation (Smith 2006).

The number of economic migrants leaving Guatemala has rapidly surpassed the number of refugees who fled to escape political persecution. The majority of economic migrants leaving Guatemala are undocumented, travelling through Mexico and into the United States. In 2006, there were an estimated 320,000 undocumented Guatemalan immigrants in the United States, with 6,000 to 12,000 new Guatemalan migrants arriving each year and a total of 1.4 million documented and undocumented Guatemalans (96 percent of all Guatemalans living abroad) living in U.S. in 2007 (Smith 2006). Between 1990 and 2001, the number of Guatemalans registered in the U.S. increased by 125 percent (Smith 2006). In Mexico, there are approximately 250,000 undocumented Guatemalan migrants (Smith 2006). Hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans leave the country legally, but the vast majority fleeing the country are undocumented migrants compelled to embark on the long dangerous trek through Mexico and into United States in search of new economic prospects (IOM 2008b). Economic desperation has left them with no other alternative but to flee their country in hopes of finding empowering prospects.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the volume of remittances sent back to Guatemala by migrants is estimated at USD $4.5 billion for 2008 (IOM 2008b). The remittances have become a key driving force for the national economy and a vital survival strategy for a large portion of the population. One of the most devastating hardships is the debt that individuals acquire in finding the means to
migrate to the Global North, estimated at between GTQ1 thousand and GTQ45 thousand, at times, including an additional one-time payment at their final destinations. Migrants often accumulate huge debts in order to collect the funds needed to leave their home country, using land and real estate properties as a form of assurance (IOM 2008b).

The phenomenon of large numbers of Guatemalans migrating out of their communities is incited by the upsurge in neoliberal policies and the resulting economic and social divisions. These factors have been exacerbated by the rise in social instability and the increasing mistrust of the government and state figures, along with the escalation in crime and violence. For many, migration has become one of the few remaining realistic strategies of survival in view of the societal erosion overtaking the lives of Guatemalans, even though seasonal migration to Canada has brought about a political experience fraught with discrimination and oppression.

The country’s unstable history has locked disenfranchised Guatemalans into a life filled with insecurity and violence, suppressing political consciousness even before they are recruited into the Guatemala-Canada migration program (Guatemalans’ first-hand accounts of their experiences with a corrupt government and rise in crime are discussed at more length in chapter six). While outward migration provides Guatemalans an escape from a life of economic hardships, managed migration schemes pressure foreign workers to succumb to the economic needs and demands of the labouring-receiving state and employers. I argue that these schemes stifle the political expressions of migrants who are required to assume a submissive role while labouring in Canada, forcing many to reluctantly accept the dire working and living conditions as seasonal foreign workers.
Agricultural Foreign Worker Programs in Canada

The global revitalization of labour migration schemes have been carried into Canada as the federal government sought to fill voids in the unskilled and low-skill labour pools (Menz 2009). The creation of the Guatemalan Temporary Agricultural Workers to Canada (TAWC) project is a prime example of how the Guatemalan and Canadian governments and Canadian employers have profited from the controlled movement of foreign workers shaped into flexible and disposable forms of labour. Prior to the implementation of the TAWC project, migrant agricultural workers were solely recruited through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) from Mexico and the Caribbean. As the more long-standing program, the SAWP is now considered the more transparent program as a result of fortifying regulations that endow SAWP workers with more solidified rights and privileges. The following table illustrates some key differences between the two foreign agricultural worker programs, explaining the appeal of the TAWC over the SAWP for Canadian employers (see Table 1).

Prior to the arrival of foreign agricultural workers in Canada farming was predominantly a family business. Since the 1940s, farms have been consolidating and families have become significantly smaller, which has resulted in a demand for seasonal wage labour (Basok 2002). Soon after World War II local farmers began lobbying to the government to respond to labour shortages in rural Canada. Introduced in 1966 as a short-term solution to the mounting pressure to fill labour demands in the agricultural sector, the SAWP has now become a permanent fixture that brings in over 25,000 foreign workers for up to eight months each season to toil in fields all across Canada (UFCW Canada 2011). Basok (2002) insists that Canadian farmers have become accustomed and
dependent on foreign farm labour, and as a result, offshore programs are now a ‘structural necessity’ for agricultural operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Chart of SAWP and TAWC Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations provision and cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight Provision and Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Source: Author 2011

Jamaica was the first country to participate in SAWP, followed by Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago in 1967, Mexico in 1974, and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (Grenada, Antigua, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Montserrat) in 1976 (Basok 2002, Basok 2007). The large majority of migrants contracted through the SAWP are found in the province of Ontario with an estimated 18,000 Mexican and Caribbean workers labouring in agricultural sectors that include tobacco, vegetables, fruit, greenhouses, and tree farming (Hennebry 2008). According to Bauder (2005), farmers overlook the high costs of hiring foreign labour because they receive obedient workers who are willing to comply with employers’ rules and standards and tolerate the workplace conditions.

While Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) is the federal authority accountable for the operation of SAWP, in 1987, administrative responsibilities were handed down to the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Service (FARMS) in Ontario, and the francophone counterpart Fondation des entreprises pour le recrutement de la main-d’oeuvre étrangère (FERME) in Québec, and then to the Western Agriculture

---

20 Recruitment to the province of Québec is now facilitated by FERME.
Labour Initiative (WALI) in British Columbia in 2004, for a short period of time. The private agricultural producer associations in Canada are non-profit organizations made up of board of directors who represents the business interests of Canadian farmers contracting foreign workers. More importantly, these associations facilitate and coordinate the processing of requests for temporary foreign workers. The SAWP functions under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the participating countries at the intergovernmental level, outlining the objectives of the program, the steps involved, and the role of all participants (see Table 1).

For many years the Canadian government was unable to expand participation in the SAWP beyond Mexico and Caribbean countries because, according to an HRSDC official, the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) exemption, a principle of non-discrimination amongst World Trade Organization (WTO) members, restricted trading partners from establishing new agreements with other member countries. Preferential treatment with regards to trade in goods or services was not permitted by WTO members after the one-time exemption. Canada secured the long-standing MOUs with Mexico and Caribbean countries by listing participating SAWP countries as an MFN exemption under the General Agreement Trade in Services (GATS). Only after the implementation of the MFN exemption was the SAWP defined as a seasonal labour migration program restricted primarily to agricultural labour.

The trade restrictions placed on Canada by the WTO impeded the Guatemalan government from bargaining entry of Guatemalan agricultural workers through the SAWP. Attempts by the Guatemalan government to negotiate entrance into the SAWP were thwarted by the MFN exemption, since SAWP participating members have already
established bilateral agreements prior to the introduction of the WTO restriction. The Office of the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala maintains that “if we were to have a bilateral agreement with Guatemala other countries would want the same and Canada would have to open its doors to foreign workers from these other countries. Technically, it is difficult to have that type of recruitment because we would then have to open the door too widely” (Canadian Embassy Official 2010). Not until the Canadian federal government revised the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)\textsuperscript{21} to include low-skilled foreign workers was the Guatemalan government able to initiate negotiations with the government agencies and businesses to push for the entry of Guatemalan seasonal migrant workers. The initiative to launch an agreement between the two countries was instigated by the Guatemalan government in its search to find a more secure channel that permitted the documented migration of the country’s population.

After directly approaching FERME, the Guatemalan government began negotiations for a two year pilot project deal in 2003, permitting the recruitment of Guatemalans into Québec’s agricultural sector. The pilot project was a program that openly conflicted with the comparable SAWP. For the Guatemalan government, the SAWP had long been perceived as the main obstruction for the entry of Guatemalan migrants into Canada, especially since the Canadian government refused to establish a MOU with non-SAWP participating member countries. The inception of the pilot low-

\textsuperscript{21} The Guatemalan TAWC project is a distinct migration program from the Canadian TFWP; however, the Guatemala-Canadian migration program operates under the regulations of the low-skilled stream of the TFWP. The creation of a low-skilled stream granted the Guatemalan government to opportunity to launch a program with Québec agricultural employers.
skilled TFWP in 2002 provided FERME and the Guatemalan government with a mechanism to bypass the requirement of an intergovernmental agreement.

Upon solidifying an agreement with FERME, the Guatemalan government handed over administrative responsibilities of the TAWC project to the International Organization for Migration (IOM),\textsuperscript{22} recognizing the need for international knowledge and expertise to manage the project. For the Guatemalan government, offloading administrative responsibilities to the IOM was a way to evade the need for private recruiters and ensure the security of migrant workers. According to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, transferring responsibility to IOM “eases the execution of the process. It is an international organization and it is quite knowledgeable on this material. They have all the resources, information, and capacity to manage this type of migration project” (Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Relations Official 2010). By handing over administrative responsibilities, the government of Guatemala sought to garner knowledge and expertise from the IOM, building up the government’s capacity to independently manage the TAWC project down the road.

Without government intervention and input, FERME and the IOM jointly developed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) and the abiding regulations, in compliance with relevant Canadian and Guatemalan migration and labour legislation, for the recruitment of Guatemalan migrants to labour in the agricultural sector of Québec. The two non-governmental agencies established an agreement unique to the province, opening

\textsuperscript{22}The International Organization for Migration is one of the more prominent intergovernmental organizations in the field of migration and has worked with various governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental partners.
the doors to the seasonal flow of Guatemalans onto farm fields all across Canada. According to the IOM, this migration project between Guatemala and Canada “has contributed to improving the bilateral relationship between both countries and has become an international cooperation model proving that regulated, dignified and effective migration is possible” (IOM 2008a, 4).

The Guatemalan government required the technical assistance of the IOM to solidify the successful execution of the migration project. In the past, the government of Guatemala frequently turned to the IOM to coordinate and execute projects pertaining to education, health, and infrastructure across the country. By delegating the bulk of the administrative responsibilities to the internationally renowned organization, the Guatemalan government believes the best decisions are being made for the success of the migration project and all participating migrant workers. Lack of government involvement permits non-state actors like the IOM to retain steadfast control over the regulated movement of migrant workers, signalling a progression towards privatization through the transfer of state responsibilities to non-state agencies.

The IOM is responsible for the coordination, recruitment, and pre-selection of candidates with agricultural labour experience, in cooperation with the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Social Provision. The IOM then assists potential workers to obtain their health and criminal records and work permits and also carries out pre-departure orientation sessions. Essentially, the IOM performs all the logistical activities pertaining to the coordination of temporary migrant workers, including the safe and orderly transport of Guatemalans to Canada.
FERME covers the transportation costs between the two countries and supplies the IOM with details on the required agricultural workforce to fill the labour void. The IOM then uses the provided information to match agricultural workers with specific employers. Upon their arrival in Québec, FERME assumes all responsibility for the coordination of temporary migrant workers. In other words, “FERME handles the transfers,” explains the IOM coordinator of the migration project, and “We (IOM) handle the activity on the ground, here in Guatemala” (IOM Official 1 2010). HRSDC, in turn, responds to employers’ requests and evaluates the Labour Market Opinion (LMO) application of employers hiring Guatemalans through the low-skilled TFWP. An HRSDC official claims that “HRSDC and FERME are communicating on an ongoing basis throughout the year to facilitate the administration of the program” (HRSDC Official 2010). As an employer, demand-driven program, the larger TFWP provides Canadian businesses with the means to address what the HRSDC calls “immediate skills and labour needs on a temporary basis” (HRSDC Official 2010).

In 2002, the pilot low-skilled TFWP, formally referred to as the Pilot Project for Occupations Requiring a Lower Level of Formal Training, was initially introduced by HRSDC to fill demand for workers in Canada’s meat, construction and tourism industries, but it has now come to include various other sectors such as agriculture, oil refineries, and food services, amongst others. The implementation of the TFWP altered the federal government’s approach to migration management, shifting the focus away from more humanitarian and permanent forms of migration and towards temporary foreign labour as

---

23 The Labour Market Opinion analyzes the effect foreign workers could have on Canada’s labour market and/or how the offer of employment could potentially impact Canadian jobs.
a permanent fixture. The modification sanctioned a substantial increase in temporary foreign labour, but more importantly, now grants work permits to low-skilled foreign workers. Prior to 2002, the only foreign workers eligible to apply for a temporary work permit were highly skilled workers, who worked on short-term trade projects or were brought in as academics at universities. According to an HRSDC official, “the Pilot Project arose from the fact that despite increased advertising and recruitment efforts, employers have been unsuccessful in hiring local labour, particularly in agriculture, and have demonstrated an ongoing and increasing need for foreign agricultural labour” (HRSDC Official 2010). By creating a low-skilled stream for foreign workers, the Canadian government is not only moving away from more permanent and humanitarian migration schemes, it is intensifying the disposability and flexibilization of a vulnerable group of migrant workers denied access to permanent residency (Assessment of the Canadian government’s approach to migration is expanded upon in chapter five).

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) are the federal departments responsible for the joint administration of the TFWP. The roles and responsibilities of each federal government agency concerning the entry of temporary foreign workers to Canada are prescribed by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations. While HRSDC oversees the distribution of LMOs assigned to employers, review of foreign workers’ entry and stay in Canada is conducted by CIC. CBSA, in turn, authorizes foreign workers’ admission into Canada at airports and border crossing points.

Under the larger TFWP, workers are streamed on the basis of duties they are expected to perform using the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system, with
skilled workers grouped into level O, A, and B and low-skilled and unskilled workers categorized into level C and D. The federal government segregates highly skilled workers from low-skilled workers with the aim of drawing in highly skilled migrants to become permanent residents, given the desirable skills and traits they bring to the country. Streaming of foreign workers based on their education, training, and skills has created very distinct realities for highly skilled and low-skilled migrants, a separation that has intensified the latter’s vulnerability to exploitative treatment. As such, foreign workers entering Canada through the high-skilled stream are granted the opportunity to apply for permanent residency, while low-skilled foreign workers are deprived of access to the same channels. In this way, the Canadian government engrains foreign workers with the impression that the normative segregation and societal stratification is sanctioned in their host community.

A new stream of low-skilled workers was introduced on January 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2011, separating agricultural workers from the regular stream. HRSDC claims that the new agricultural stream facilitates more transparency than the regular stream, providing foreign agricultural workers with more safeguards from excessive exploitation. The most progressive developments under the agricultural stream that have increased the protection of foreign agricultural workers have been limiting the stream to on-farm primary agriculture and aligning wage rates to the SAWP, which follows a wage rate commodity based system.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{24}The wage rate has been aligned with the national list of commodities for the SAWP and breaks down the listing of wages based on the produce grown on-farm.
When hiring workers under the low-skilled program, employers must first submit an application to HRSDC and meet the assessment criteria for the LMO, a necessary mechanism that protects the domestic workforce from foreign competition. The application ensures that (1) the employer has undertaken reasonable efforts to hire and/or train Canadians for the job, and (2) the employer is experiencing a genuine labour shortage. In order to recruit foreign workers to fill NOC C and D occupations, employers are required to advertise employment offers for fourteen days during the three months prior to applying for a LMO, demonstrating reasonable efforts to recruit local nationals (Fudge and MacPahil, 2009). In Québec, employers must also apply to Ministère Immigration et Communautés Culturelles (MICC) for a Certificat d’acceptation du Québec (CAQ), as consent from the provincial government is required to hire temporary foreign workers. The provincial government of Québec and the federal government are jointly responsible for determining if an employer is permitted to hire foreign temporary workers. Byl (2010) maintains that two factors contributed to the recent increase in temporary foreign workers: (1) changes to the TFWP that permitted low-skilled foreign workers to be recruited through the program; and (2) the TFWP becoming the ideal program for employers in dealing with shortages for skilled and low-skilled labour.

Overhaul of the TFWP through introduction of low-skilled foreign workers brought about a series of measures to monitor employers and ensure safety and fair treatment of temporary foreign workers, which were not present when only skilled foreign workers were granted entry to Canada. According to Byl (2010), protective mechanisms were not implemented in the past since foreign workers were accorded protection through their contracts of employment. Currently, if an employer is found to
not have complied with terms of a previous offer, HRSDC can then assign a negative LMO until the employer proves they have undertaken the correct measures. HRSDC also has the power to revoke LMOs where employers deliberately misrepresent their applications. Reported abuse of low-skilled foreign workers also generated mounting criticism about the ineffectiveness of monitoring measures, pressuring HRSDC to implement additional mechanisms for monitoring the treatment of foreign workers. Ultimately, the amendments were introduced in response to growing flaws in HRSDC’s divested management approach to the TFWP.

In acknowledging of the vulnerability of low-skilled foreign workers, HRSDC was compelled to assume a proactive approach for employers hiring foreign workers who fall under NOC C and D. HRSDC now requires employers to provide (1) a signed employee-employer contract; (2) a job description matching the actual job duties; (3) coverage of transportation; (4) coverage of health care; (5) assistance in finding acceptable and reasonable accommodations for workers; and (6) verification that employers did not recover cost from foreign workers. In the words of one HRSDC official involved in the administration of the TFWP, “the pilot project is viewed as a successful because the program requirements offer certain protections for the workers who are recognized as a more vulnerable group of workers” (HRSDC Official 2010).

In the end, HRSDC is solely responsible for administering the employment program, while provincial authorities handle the enforcement of health and safety standards. Disconnect amongst government agencies has created mounting health and

---

25 For example, if an employer does not pay the required wage or cover the necessary transportation costs, HRSDC has the authority to issue a negative LMO.
safety problems on Canadian farms and left migrants with improper safeguards and protections (McLaughlin 2009). An HRSDC official maintains this Canadian government agency “is working with a number of provinces to strengthen protection mechanisms for temporary foreign workers through the development of information sharing agreements that will enable better communication between levels of government and also improve the integrity of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program” (HRSDC Official 2010). HRSDC has proposed changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations to introduce a “more systematic and rigorous approach in assessing the genuineness of an employer’s offer of employment; decrease instances of foreign nationals working for unscrupulous employers; and prevent employers who do not pay the wages, or provide the employment or working conditions originally offered to a foreign national, from hiring temporary foreign workers for two years” (HRSDC Official 2010). For employers and workers, however, the TFWP is the faster and more favoured way to meet long-term labour shortages and gain access to a dependable migrant workforce.

While the pilot low-skilled TFWP opened the doors to permit the Guatemalan government to initiate a migration program with FERME in Quebec, the TAWC project functions as a distinct program with the sole objective of recruiting Guatemalan seasonal agricultural workers. For all figures of authority involved in the administration of the TAWC project, the migration scheme has become a mechanism to restrain the behaviour and actions of migrants willing to succumb to their demands. Both IOM Guatemala and FERME, as non-state actors, possess considerable and unwavering power and authority over the administration of the TAWC project (a dynamic that will be further analyzed in a
latter chapter). Why is it that the neither the Guatemalan nor Canadian government are managing the TAWC project? More importantly, what roles do these authority figures play in the suppression of certain political ideas and actions? These questions amongst others will be further explored in chapter five as I begin to dissect the power and social control held by authority figures.

The Temporary Agricultural Worker to Canada Project

The TAWC project was first designed as a two-year pilot plan by the IOM, with the intention of hiring 25 workers in the inaugural year. This number quickly rose to 215 by the end of 2003 and has exponentially grown since then. Considered pioneers and ambassadors by their communities, the first group of 31 migrant workers, 7 women and 24 men, left Guatemala on July 16, 2003. Discussions with members of this group of migrants revealed that most left feeling the need to represent Guatemala in a positive light. While the group travelling to Québec was apprehensive about the whole experience, they were still eager to reap all the benefits of seasonally labouring in Canada. Since then, the number of Guatemalan migrant workers had grown to approximately 4,200 in Québec and 4,500 in all of Canada in 2010 (see Table 2). Overall, more than 14,000 Guatemalans have been sent to Canada through the TAWC project, and in the coming years the Guatemalan government plans to send thousands more. After the initial success of the TAWC Project, the IOM began sending Guatemalans to work on farms outside of the province of Québec. Agreements were established with other private agricultural grower associations across Canada and individual employers in the province of Alberta, Ontario, and British Columbia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mexican (QC/N.B.)</th>
<th>Guatemalan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2637</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2649</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2835</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3002</td>
<td>1208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3033</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3037</td>
<td>2934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3536</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4200 (approx)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2** – Source: FERME 2011

According to a community member of Santiago Sacatepéquez, who was hired by the IOM to assist in the recruitment of migrant workers in his town, in the first year that the government of Guatemala and the IOM began searching for potential candidates, it was difficult to recruit people to participate in the pilot project. Many were wary of the validity of the program and were distressed with the dangers of travelling to Canada, comparing it to the realities of illegally migrating through Mexico and into the United States. With the return of the first group of migrants at the end of the growing season in 2003, Guatemalans in rural communities across the country quickly began to become more receptive to the economic benefits that could be reaped from migrating to Canada. Interest rose with more and more Guatemalans desiring entry into the program.

For eight years, IOM and FERME worked hand in hand to manage and oversee all administrative tasks of the TAWC project. In Guatemala, IOM assumes responsibility
over (1) selecting temporary agricultural workers while taking into account the needs and demands of Canadian employers; (2) assisting recruited candidates with preparation of paperwork and records required by Canadian immigration; and (3) organizing pre-departure sessions and accompany hired workers to airport at departure. FERME, in turn, took on the administrative duties of (1) coordinating employer requests for foreign workers; (2) helping employers put in order all papers that need to be submitted to HRSDC and CIC; and (3) preparing all travel arrangements. During the eight year joint migration program, Günther Müssig, the former head of IOM Guatemala, was ousted and replaced by Delbert Field in late 2008. Müssig was Chief of Mission of IOM Guatemala when the TAWC project was first launched, but with the entrance of a new Chief of Mission, numerous changes have since been implemented in an attempt to regain integrity and revitalize the migration program between the two countries.

In late 2010, FERME decided to terminate the LOU with the IOM and appropriate complete command and authority over the recruitment and coordination of Guatemalan migrants. Since then, FERME has opened an office in Guatemala and cut all ties with the IOM, opting to run the program privately. By reneging on their agreement with the international organization and the Guatemalan government, FERME attained unwavering command over the mobility of migrant workers, escalating the employer association’s control over the selection and recruitment process26 (The termination of the LOU is discussed at more length in Chapter Five, where I explore in more depth the roles of IOM and FERME). In the end, the primary commitment of this growers’ association is to

26 The agreement between IOM and FERME was up for renewal at the end of 2010; however, FERME sought permission from IOM to end the LOU before the end of the contract.
Québec employers, which creates a real dilemma when Guatemala migrants place their trust in an organization mainly seeking to advance the economic interests of businesses in the agricultural sector. The advanced privatization of the Guatemala-Québec program eludes state responsibility over the mobility of this group of workers and merely adds on to the pre-existing problems and challenges faced by vulnerable migrants.

Guatemalan migrants’ dependence upon the TAWC project has granted government and administrative officials even greater control over the conduct of seasonal agricultural workers. Nonetheless, the exploitative nature of the temporary migration program has driven many migrants to find the means to counter the oppressive and discriminatory treatment imposed upon them, as a way to reappropriate their transnational political experience and ensure their survival in the program.
Chapter 4

Challenges in the Field: Methodological Approach to Transnational Research

*The way to do fieldwork is never to come up for air until it is all over.*
– Margaret Mead, *Letters from the Field* (1977)

**Introduction**

The incorporation of a spectrum of viewpoints on how migrants’ political expressiveness is stifled and empowered by various transnational and political facets broadens the depth of this transnational study. Additionally, the inclusion of both the labour-sending and labour-receiving field sites strips away restrictive “national blinders” that limit a researcher’s methodological approach, allowing me to embrace a multi-sited and multi-faceted perspective. In his work on transnational migration, David Fitzgerald advocates for more “intensive research in several connected sites selected for their potential theoretical yield . . . to understand the influences of different kinds of boundary crossings and ecologies on their experiences in multiple domains” (2006, 20). By employing a multi-sited methodology where the boundaries of conceptual spaces are constantly renegotiated and reconstructed, I intend to endorse the utility of a cross-border study in migration research.

This doctoral study was inspired by research I conducted for my Master’s thesis, which examined the support and assistance afforded to both Mexican and Guatemalan migrant agricultural workers in St. Rémi, Québec. During my Master’s research, the recruitment of willing Guatemalan participants was complicated by the hesitancy and
apprehension of these newly arrived migrants. Intrigued by the trepidation of Guatemalan migrants, I began reflect on why this group of labourers was branded as timid and humble by activists, government officials, and Mexican migrant workers alike. Driven by my curiosity and concern over the transnational political realities of Guatemalan migrants, I decided that my doctoral study would explore the oppressive and empowering nature of transnational migration.

This chapter discusses the multi-sited ethnographic design I set up in planning and executing my research project, while also justifying the application of a multi-methodological approach to garner extensive qualitative and quantitative information and shift away from more traditional schemes of assessing relations of power and human agency. After spending over two years immersing myself in this research project, it was inevitable that some kind of advocacy work became an integral component of my study. My research, I believe, needs to serve another purpose aside from contributing to academic knowledge. As a result, this study also became a forum to advocate for much needed improvements to the TAWC project that could supply migrants with essential support and assistance. The realization of this study was dependent on reflexively assessing my positionality as a first-generation Canadian/Latina doctoral student; without this reflection, I would not have grasped the relationship built between the research participants and myself. More importantly, by carefully exploring my own positionality, I was better able to embrace the commonalities I possessed with Guatemalan migrants while also recognizing the privileges inherent in my methodological approach.
Research Design

When I originally set in motion my transnational research project, it was first designed as a general case study on Guatemalan migrant agricultural workers that would allow me to examine an abstract problem of this particular group. After spending several months with a group of migrant workers from Santiago Sacatepéquez, however, a huge component of my research was quickly redesigned to integrate a more extensive ethnographic study on the political engagement of Guatemalans. Rather than focusing my research on more abstract units of study such as industries or nations, I was instead motivated to explore the ways that Guatemalans “view, interpret and respond to their world” (Mullings 1999, 337). My interest lies in the activities and relationships of Guatemalan migrants, most effectively studied through the application of ethnographic data-gathering techniques.

By shifting towards a more multi-sited ethnographic approach of both observation and participation, one that crossed borders and different scales of assessment, I was able to shift away “from the single sites and local situation of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities” (Marcus 1995, 96). Marcus (1995) argues that in conducting multi-sited ethnographic study researchers often find themselves becoming “circumstantial activist(s)” through close intimate ties developed with the community or group they study. In my own research, advocacy work became an integral component of investigating the politically oppressed and empowered migrant body, predicated upon the idea of developing personal and intimate relationships with a specific group or community. According to Marcus (1995), unlike more limited single-site studies, multiple sites of observation and
participation traverse dichotomies of local and global, moving away from more conventional studies.

Shifting between different sites and levels of society allowed me to engage in a more personal form of multi-sited research that encouraged interaction with Guatemalan migrants. In the end, the multi-sited approach helped me to effectively scrutinize the transnational influences and connections that shape the Guatemalan migrant body, tracing not only the movement of people but also the transfer and transformation of political ideas and activities across different spaces. This approach afforded me the opportunity to grasp a variety of perspectives involved in the flow of migrants and political resources and the different power structures that impact this process. Thus, I was better able to grapple with the transformation of Guatemalan migrants’ political identity and the various transnational facets that contribute to shaping and reshaping migrant political consciousness and political action. Before I set my research into motion, it was first critical to identify the over-arching questions that shaped my study, so as to determine the most appropriate ways of investigating my line of inquiry (Valentine 2001). The definitive questions of my transnational research project addressed five substantive issues:

1. How does the political context of different spaces (i.e., political experiences of oppression/exploitation and/or empowerment/information) impact migrants’ transnational experience?

2. How do authoritative figures and support networks influence migrant political consciousness and their submission to, accommodation, and/or countering of political ideas and activities?
3. What small-scale and large-scale processes are involved in suppressing or stimulating political consciousness and political action among Guatemalan migrants?

4. How does the constant flow between spaces impact the transfer of political ideas and migrant political consciousness? Moreover, how does this process impact migrants’ (un)willingness to embrace certain political ideas and engage in particular political activities?

5. How does the migrant body respond to different transnational realities in diverging spaces?

In examining these questions, I sought to find answers to how the transnational migrant body is moulded and remolded by the politicized process of seasonally migrating.

My multi-sited fieldwork first began the summer of 2009, in the province of Québec, with participant observation and preliminary informal discussions in the community of St. Rémi. The small town can be reached by crossing the Mercier Bridge south of Montréal, then driving through the Mohawk territory of Kahnawake and along a stretch of farm land in the Montérégie region (see Figure 6). With a population of over 7,000, St. Rémi has a long rooted history in agriculture, which is predominantly controlled by Francophone farmers with strong, deep-seated ancestral ties in the province (City of St. Rémi 2011). From the beginning of April until the end of October each year, the landscape of St. Rémi is transformed by the arrival of hundreds of migrant workers onto surrounding farms. The presence of foreign agricultural workers has brought an abundance of economic and social benefits to the small farming community, revitalized by the consumer demands and cultural diversity of agricultural workers (City of St. Rémi 2011).
Figure 6 - St. Rémi, Québec is the provincial hub of seasonal agricultural workers
(Source: National Resources Canada 2002).
Every Thursday, St. Rémi becomes a throbbing hub of activity, brought about by migrant agricultural workers bussed in from neighboring farms to cash their cheques, buy groceries, wire money home, and/or purchase goods to be brought back home to their families. Local stores and businesses geared towards Spanish-speaking migrants can be found all across the small community, supplying wire transfer services and selling cultural food products (corn tortillas, chili peppers, black beans and the like), long-distance calling cards, and electronics and toys for family members back home. The signs posted in Spanish targeted towards foreign workers reveal the community’s growing reliance and acceptance of the rapid influx Mexicans and Guatemalans, given the economic benefits reaped from their presence (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 – A Spanish wire transfer poster in the community of St. Rémi, Québec (Source: Author 2006).
In the same community, one can also find a migrant support centre staffed by 3-4 support workers and occasional volunteers located in a small office above a money wiring office. Migrant workers come from all across southern Québec to seek support and assistance from the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada funded Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA) migrant support centre. Workers call into and arrive at the office on a daily basis, seeking advice on issues pertaining to labour rights, health and safety concerns, migrant status, tax returns, and paternity benefits. For migrants, the AWA support has become a safe haven away from the pressures of work, offering them a relaxing and secure space in which they can unwind and escape from the hardships of seasonal agricultural labour.

Already having established rapport with various UFCW and AWA workers during my Master’s fieldwork, I was able to return to the AWA migrant support centre with an established network in Québec. The support centre acted as a gateway towards gaining the trust of vulnerable participants and guiding me through my research in Québec. Prior to commencing the fieldwork stage of my research, I already knew that Guatemalan workers would be hesitant to participate in recorded interviews while in close proximity to their employers. More importantly, I realized my fieldwork required a more strategic approach, so as not to alarm potential participants. By initiating preliminary informal discussions I gained a better understanding of Guatemalans’ deep-seated fear of speaking out; however, they were still reluctant to agree to formal interviews while still in Canada. What is more, I knew that by interviewing Guatemalans in Canada, I was contributing to their intensified vulnerability, given the lack of job security and apprehensions towards my line of questioning. Instead, I opted to wait until I was in Guatemala to interview
migrant workers in a space away from Canadian employers, where they felt comfortable answering questions that dealt with sensitive issues, concerning politicized ideas and activities.

Nevertheless, I continued visiting the support centre throughout the summer of 2009 and into the fall, fortifying relationships with migrant workers, while also volunteering my assistance at the centre. I helped fill out paternity benefit claims, photocopied and filed cases, answered calls, and passed out information sheets on labour rights and health and safety. This opportunity became an enriching process for me, one that would inevitably transform my outlook on how I would approach this study. While volunteering my time and support to the centre was not necessarily part of my research design, by assisting migrant workers I believed I was giving back to my focus community and contributing to a worthy movement.

In the winter of 2010, having already established rapport with a number of migrant workers from Santiago Sacatepéquez, I travelled to Guatemala to commence interviewing participants in my targeted community (see Figure 8). The small community of Santiago is situated in the highlands of Guatemala west of the capital, Guatemala City, and can reached by passing through “La Entrada de Santiago” (the entrance to Santiago) from San Lucas Sacatepéquez and driving along a small and winding road that climbs up to the community of approximately 25,000 inhabitants.
Figure 8 - The small town of Santiago Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, the focus community of this transnational study (Source: United Nations 2004).

Santiago Sacatepéquez (see Figure 9) was originally selected by the IOM as a site for recruiting potential candidates because many of the residents were experienced in small-scale farming and the highland climate was similar to that of many Canadian
agricultural regions. In this predominantly Indigenous Cakchiquel-speaking community, most inhabitants are either practicing Catholics or Protestant Evangelists. Thanks in large part to the assistance and guidance of a female migrant worker whom I employed as a research assistant, I quickly gained entrance into this small, riddled community, which I soon found out was plagued by violence and gang-related activity.\textsuperscript{27} The research assistant, a woman greatly respected in her community, helped to find willing participants through word of mouth and by knocking on neighbours’ doors. Her persistence and dedication paid off, and I established innumerable contacts with migrants in this small community.

![Image of Santiago Sacatepéquez]

\textbf{Figure 9 – The community of Santiago Sacatepéquez, predominantly made up of a population of small-scale farmers} (Source: Author 2011).

By my conducting interviews in Santiago Sacatepéquez, migrant participants were not placed in the same vulnerable position of losing their job as they were back in their host communities. Nonetheless, I continued to encounter several Guatemalans reluctant

\textsuperscript{27} It is also important to note that with the rise in crime in Guatemala City and the close proximity to Santiago, the community was forced to bring in national military forces to deal with the rapid influx of gang violence and drug trafficking.
to participate in my study for fear of reprisal by authority figures. Aside from in-depth interviews with migrant workers, I also conducted extensive meetings and formal interviews with various governmental officials, IOM officials, and NGO representatives in Guatemala. The politically corrupt environment of Guatemala manifested itself in the interviews with government and institutional officials, causing me to lose trust in many state figures and question the transparency of government agencies. In addition, I carried out extensive data collection by sorting through government policies and documents, media reports, archival pieces, institutional reports, and local academic studies.

After completing the extensive research in Guatemala and coming back to Canada, I attempted to contact various Canadian government officials and Canadian experts in the field of migrant labour, while also continuing to collect relevant documents and reports on temporary agricultural foreign workers. A critical component of my research was to analyze Canadian immigration and labour policy on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, examining the evolution of the program over the past decade. Unfortunately, garnering vital information from Canadian officials and FERME, the growers’ association in Québec, proved to be a rather fruitless process. Whether it was the nature of my study or the unwillingness of certain informants to be interviewed, the only government official willing to participate was an HRSDC representative. Upon returning to the migrant support centre in the summer of 2010, I interviewed the director of AWA Québec and a number of Mexican migrant workers, comparing their experience to that of Guatemalans, while also continuing to assist foreign workers at the centre.

In the winter of 2011, I revisited Guatemala with the purpose of exploring recent political manifestations of the migrant community of Santiago Sacatepéquez. With the
formation of la Asociación de Guatemaltecos Unidos por Nuestros Derechos (AGUND) during the summer of 2010, this migrant association, which contested the mistreatment of workers in the TAWC project, became my primary focus of study while back in Guatemala. I frequently visited the office of AGUND to better understand the mission of this mobilized migration organization. I also investigated the advocacy work of Global Workers Defenders Network, the key supporters of AGUND by interviewing representatives and attending critical meetings. What is more, I continued to interview government officials and IOM representatives and collect relevant documents and policy data. After wrapping up my two year multi-sited ethnographic research project in the spring of 2011, I came to the realization that this study allowed me to learn a great deal about this disenfranchised group of migrants. I was inspired by their humility, yet also by their determination to survive in such a political unstable environment.

Reflection on the limitations of assuming a multi-sited approach when working with vulnerable participants provides insight into the shortcomings of inquiring into the nomadic life of migrants. First and foremost, I was not willing to take advantage of the vulnerable position of Guatemalan migrants for the sake of my research. This conviction prompted me to only interview migrant participants in their home communities to ensure that they would be more open to a sensitive line of questioning; especially since the power structures of seasonal migration deny temporary workers the same freedoms and privileges as other local Canadian workers. While migrants’ hesitancy may have hindered my study, I was still able capture the transnational nature of transferring political ideas and tools and the transformative influence of seasonal migration. Migrant participants were probed about progressive political participation and their thoughts and
connections to the Guatemalan civil war (see interview questions in Appendix B); however, most were reluctant to engage in discussion regarding political imperatives and the dark historical period that plagued the highlands. Even though this setback placed significant constraints on the results, I refused to press migrants on such issues because for many the line of questioning made them feel uncomfortable.

Secondly, there was not enough time to truly get acquainted with one site in-depth, and I realized that I could have devoted more time to further explore migrant political consciousness and political action. During my time in Santiago Sacatepéquez, however, I built strong connections with a select few migrant participants, who gave me a real understanding of their transnational lives. What is more, my research and advocacy work with AGUND broadened my own ideas regarding the transfer of political resources. The limitations of the multi-sited research may have weakened my overall study, but the approach was still critical to conceptualizing the transnational nature of transforming the Guatemalan migrant body.

**Methods of Data Collection**

While I would have preferred not to be confined by epistemologically labeling the direction of my research, there is no overlooking the fact that epistemology informs methodological strategies. After much internal reflection I realized that my own work is shaped by the ideas that (1) knowledge is socially constructed (a feminist standpoint) and (2) authoritative views require proper deconstruction (a post-modernist approach) (McKendrick 1999). These two epistemological points of view not only informed my methodological approach but also encouraged me to engage in unobtrusive yet intimate
methods that helped me to conceptualize the transnational political identity of migrants. What is more, this critical perspective allowed me to employ a methodological approach that contests dominant ways of thinking and the contradictions that sustain social inequalities and patterns of marginalization (Kobayashi 2001).

To effectively address the central questions structuring my doctoral research I tactically employed a multi-method approach to conceptualize the opposing factors that (re)shape the transnational political identity of migrant workers. Mixed methods research, also commonly referred to as triangulation, assists with the collection of information from different sources as a mean of maximizing our comprehension of the research question (Valentine 2001). The various transnational actors that influence the process forming and reforming the Guatemalan migrant body required examination through the use of a wide assortment of research strategies. There are a range of advantages to deploying multi-method or triangulation research over more conventional modes of methodological approaches; these advantages include (1) avoiding modification to the study by using alternative approaches; (2) providing the research with a more extensive breadth of understanding; and (3) strategically gaining the confidence of the audience (McHendrick 1999). By engaging in both qualitative and quantitative methods of research, I was afforded different opportunities to conceptualize the complexities of the migrant body. Moreover, I embraced the need for less rigid notions of “appropriate” methods, which allowed me to be flexible in the face of the trials and tribulations of fieldwork (England 1994).

Quantitative data was critical to developing a sound basis for my multi-sited ethnographic study, especially since the analysis of states’ migration management
approach is integral to discerning the formation of the migration identity. Government statistics and policy reports from both Canada and Guatemala offered concrete and substantiating data on the state’s tactical approach to managing migration. According to Pain (2003), policy research can be utilized as an effective strategy in much needed action research, pushing for a deeper engagement with social problems. Since 2002, there have been numerous alterations to the Canadian TFWP in attempt to sustain rising employer demands and public criticisms. By charting changes in Canadian migration policies, I identified shifts in the government’s strategy that favour economic growth through flexibilization of the labour market. Government reports that openly criticize (for example, the Auditor General’s Report 2009) and support (for example, CIC and HRSDC reports) the TFWP helped to identify the federal government’s stance on economic migrant labour. There is limited data available on Guatemalan policies governing the TAWC project, since the IOM is the official administrator of the program in Guatemala. All the same, I scrutinized the state’s stance on outward migration and assessed the Guatemalan consulate’s policy on nationals abroad. Assessment of the administrative policies of IOM and FERME confirmed the state’s offloading of governance responsibilities to the non-state sector.

Nevertheless, qualitative data is the primary focus of my doctoral research, prompting me to gather a range of in-depth information. Collection of data on current and past events through the mass media (news articles, blogs, etc.) helped me to stay up-to-date and well-informed on issues pertaining to migrant agricultural labour. In Guatemala, I visited the National Library to carry out archival work on Prensa Libre (the most widely circulated newspapers in Guatemala), recovering articles written about
Guatemalans’ seasonal migration to Canada through the TAWC project. While undocumented migration is a widely reported issue in Guatemala, there is very little written on documented temporary workers, given the small number of migrants who head “North” legally. In Canada over the past decade, the topic of temporary agricultural workers has been increasingly reported on by the mass media; however, with the introduction of the TFWP in 2002, there have been mounting debates on the successes and downfalls of the migration program. The advocacy work of UFCW Canada and other local activists helped to boost media reports on migrant agricultural workers, bringing to light the faults of the SAWP. In spite of this, the Canadian mass media has yet to report in-depth with the same intensity on the Guatemalan migrant workers.

Using participant observation methods afforded me with the opportunity to better integrate myself into a migrant community dependent upon a successful livelihood in the TAWC project. What distinguishes this group of migrants from many other foreign workers is their ability to seasonally migrate, therein facilitating the contested process of constant border crossing and flowing through multiple politicized spaces. I would argue that there is much to learn from observing migrant interactions in the multiple spaces in which they work and reside. Participant observation allowed me to spend extended periods of time in a specific community to better grasp Guatemalans’ experiences in the context of their everyday lives. By making note of events, activities, behavior, and relationships through observation of the multiple experiences of transnational migrants, I gained valuable insight into the ever-shifting lives of Guatemalan participants (Valentine 2001).
During the course of several visits to the AWA migrant support centre in St. Rémi, I was afforded the chance to observe and scrutinize migrant interactions with community members, SAWP counterparts, activists, and government officials by attending different events in the community, for example the local cultural festival and migrant Catholic masses. In Santiago Sacatepéquez, I attended Evangelical services and family gatherings to better integrate myself into the community, but more importantly, to observe daily interactions within households and across the whole community. At the IOM Guatemala office headquarters I also observed pre-departure orientation and the processing of migrant workers. During my first trip to Guatemala, when blacklisted migrants first began to mobilize, I participated in several of their meetings, and upon returning the following winter I spent a great deal of time in the office of AGUND as a spectator of the inner workings of this organization. In the end, observation of migrant interaction in politicized spaces helped me to explore the different structures and processes that shape and reshape the migrant body.

According to Valentine, in-depth interviews are a critical component of qualitative research, permitting “participants to provide an account of their experiences, of how they view their own world and the meanings they ascribe to it” (2001, 44). Thus, both conversational style and formal interviews became an essential component in investigating the role of both authoritative figures and the human agency of migrants. While I originally intended to conduct multi-sited interviews with Guatemalan migrants, I quickly shifted my methodological approach to instead interview migrants in their home community, a space where they would be more open and willing to discuss political imperatives.
Away from the pressures of their employers and with the help of my research assistant, I found over thirty willing migrant participants in Santiago Sacatepéquez. The group was made up of sixteen men and fourteen women, the majority of whom worked in the province in Québec with the exception of two workers who had worked in B.C. and Alberta. In order to protect the confidentiality of the migrant participants, I assigned pseudonyms to create anonymity, thereby protecting the identities of migrant participants, while also personalizing their responses. In doing so, I attempted to pacify any apprehensions vulnerable participants had with this study. My questions attempted to investigate a spectrum of intertwining social, cultural, and political issues to effectively conceptualize the human agency of Guatemalan migrants. The members of AGUND also became an integral facet of my study during my second trip to Guatemala, during which time I conducted a larger group interview and separate extensive interviews with executive members of the association. Follow-up interviews were also carried out with three key participants of my study, whose stories epitomized the struggles and drive of Guatemalan migrants. Their stories were written into vignettes (found in the preamble of my dissertation) that revealed the downfalls of seasonally migrating to Canada. During my second summer in St. Rémi, I interviewed seven Mexican migrant workers, who were also given pseudonyms, comparing their experience to that of Guatemalans.

In the course of my two trips to Guatemala I set up meetings and interviews with various government officials from the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Ministry of Labour and Social Provision, the Guatemalan migration government agency Consejo Nacion de Atencion al Migrante de Guatemala (CONAMIGUA), the Canadian Embassy and the municipal government of Santiago Sacatepéquez. Two separate interviews were arranged
with the IOM Guatemala director and officials and I also conducted interviews with local NGOs officials like Global Workers Defenders Network to allow for an all encompassing range of perspectives. In Canada I took the same approach by including the perspectives of an HRSDC official, the director of the AWA in Québec, and academics interested in the issue of seasonal migration (interview questions are found in Appendix B).

**Advocacy Research**

Too often, academic studies become consumed with the production of knowledge and are devoid of action research that aims to produce viable social changes. Overwhelmed by theory, academics often disregard empirical work and the lived experiences to advance their career, ignoring any attempts to what Pickerel (2008) defines as “good work.” Action research affords academics with the opportunity to “decentralize the production of knowledge, remove the monopoly of universities, governments, and scientific research establishments and give a ‘voice’ to practitioners and to community members” (Winter 1998, 54), but more importantly, it teaches them to speak out against social injustices plaguing vulnerable groups. While the concept is rather idealistic, there is still a need to build a bridge between advocacy research and the academic field, paying particular attention to the methodology utilized to incite social changes (Routledge 1996, Winter 1998, Pain 2003, Pickerel 2008). By taking heed of the methods of practice that steer the process of inquiry, action research can be employed as a professional practice that justifies and validates the merger between activism and the academy (Winter 1998). The first step towards bridging this gap is writing in more accessible language and
ensuring that research is not entrenched in theory. Academics should be more critical of their role and open to the possibilities of “good work” (Pickerel 2008).

While advocacy research tends to be a time consuming and difficult process to coordinate, empirical studies tender more valuable results for the benefit of others (Pickerel 2008). In his work on academic research, Routledge calls for more critical and reflexive forms of engagement that embrace a third space28 “where we may negotiate the locations of academia and activism” (1996, 400). The negotiation of spaces ensures that neither role undermines the other, but more importantly, bridges the gap by creating something outside of both academia and activism. The fluidity of these spaces entails a simultaneous coming and going between distinct modes of action. Routledge (1996) also promotes a form of critical engagement that adopts diverse strategies and a radically oppositional standpoint through a fluid movement between academic and activism. The most effective strategy for building a bridge is bringing down established hierarchies of knowledge and creating a space where this knowledge can be shared (Sundberg 2003).

By interweaving these two spaces in this study, I am attempting to not lose myself in academic theory, and instead, take heed of the power and influence of empirical work in my own research.

My advocacy work with Guatemalan migrants moved well beyond volunteering at the AWA migrant support centre. After having spent time gathering transnational political stories of blacklisted migrant workers, I immediately began lending my assistance to this group in an effort to advance their collective goal to garner the attention

28 Third space is a movement away from dividing the world into binary oppositions. Routledge (1996) uses the term to topple the opposition between academic theorizing and political activism.
of government officials and administrators of the TAWC project. By working closely with Guatemalan migrants and offering them my support, I quickly gained the trust of individuals in the community of Santiago Sacatepéquez and members of AGUND. For these migrant workers, having their stories told was of great value, as I was not only a venue for venting, but also a means to share their lived experiences with a wider audience. The rapport and trust I built with this community advanced my research and also spurred me to support the mobilization of blacklisted migrant workers. For me as an academic, one of the most effective means of giving back to this marginalized community was to aid Guatemalan migrants in relaying their messages, providing a forum to empower the powerless. By using my research findings for “good work,” I endeavored to challenge the social inequalities deeply embedded in the state’s strategic management approach to migration.

Aside from using my time out in the field to assist Guatemalan migrants, I also developed my doctoral thesis into a platform to advocate for much-needed progress in encouraging and institutionalizing migrant political participation. More importantly, my thesis makes the case for a complete overhaul of the Guatemalan and Canadian governments’ approach to migration management and the fruition of proper safeguards and resource for migrant workers. In essence, the third space (Routledge 1996) is employed as a tool to probe the liberating potential of merging my role as both an academic and activist. Feminist geographers speak of a diffusion of the relations of power between the researcher and the researched by including the latter’s voice and writing the text together. While I may have not necessarily engaged in participatory action research, the voice of migrants guided how my study would be fostered and
prompted me to find a balance between theory and political matters regarding Guatemalan migrants. Nagar (2002 and 2003) is in favour of more accessible research that does not merely focus on theoretical concerns but also takes into account what research communities deem as politically imperative. The goal of my study was to bear in mind the fear and unease voiced by migrant workers and ensure that they played a prominent role in guiding the direction of my research.

By diffusing the production of knowledge and giving a voice to the marginalized, I am able to take into account the opinions and thoughts of migrant workers that steered my research in a direction that not only criticizes social injustices, but also calls for viable alternatives. Through research, I intended to critically challenge the power dynamics of academic convention, by converting this study into a medium for consciousness-raising (Gottfried 1996). While critical engagement is a rather romanticized narrative, in the real world it produces genuine social changes in solidarity with Guatemalan migrants, as I overcome my own internal struggle to negotiate between my roles as an academic and activist.

Positionality

A decisive component of third space engagement is reflexive self-critical analysis as an academic and activist, therein recognizing how my positionality shapes the development of my doctoral study (Routledge 1996). For any research project, reflexivity entails a process of self-reflection that critically explores the politics and power relations of the study, while also being accountable for the collection of data and production of the final text (England 1994, Katz 1994, Subedi 2006, Sultana 2007). By engaging in active
and critical reflection, I am able to challenge oppressive power relations in a more constructive manner rather than reinforcing the hierarchical nature of the production of knowledge in academic research (Maxey 1999, Sultana 2007). As an academic conducting international research, I have to be particularly attentive to hierarchical differences created by the North-South divide. According to Sultana, researchers should be continually conscious of “histories of colonialism, development, globalization and local realities,” (2007, 375) so as to move away from exploitative studies that foster relations and structures of domination and control and move towards the decolonization of the production of knowledge. In the context of my own work, denying that positionality exists and refusing to acknowledge certain privileges (Mohanty 2003) would only promote the growth of discourses that hinder migrants’ social relations and opportunities made available to them.

Academic research is inherently structured in hierarchies of power that subjectify human research participants, and as an academic I am required to acknowledge that while I may seek to construct a reciprocal study, I am ultimately narrating the final text (Gottfried 1996). By embracing the culturally constructed nature of the society, rather than dismissing it, I am reflexively acknowledging the challenges that may arise out in the field as an academic with a more privileged position than that of my subjects (England 1994). Acknowledgement of my positionality not only as an academic but also a first generation Canadian female with cultural roots in Latin America confronts the privileges I possess along with the commonalities that connect me to the migrant participants. According to Katz (1994), the dual role situates me in a position of being in a space of betweenness. My cultural commonalities allow me to gain legitimacy and
access to an insider’s view of cultural practices (Kobayashi 1994), an opportunity not afforded to many other researchers.

In my own study I sought to establish more consensual research by (1) recognizing commonalities with Guatemalan migrants in order to negotiate for more a meaningful relationship with research participants, and (2) being more open and accountable in how I produce knowledge, by constantly questioning the uneven power dynamics and the agency of marginalized research participants (Subedi 1996, Sultana 2007). More importantly, I am conceding the fact that I am reliant on the involvement of Guatemalan migrants in my research, accepting that the knowledge of my study’s participants far exceeds my own knowledge and expertise in relation to the subject matter (England 1994). By respecting and treating migrants as autonomous agents, I aimed to construct a research project that bolstered the voice and agency of Guatemalans as the defining factors in how knowledge was disseminated in my study.
Chapter 5

Neoliberalism, Conformity, Market Demands, and Authority Figures

*Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing.*
– George Orwell, *1984* (1949)

Introduction

Both labour-sending and labour-receiving states play decisive and strategic roles in advancing labour migration programs through the institutionalization of the disposability and flexibility of foreign workers with the aim of producing a more efficient labour force. Although the current political economic context upholds free-market driven approaches through neoliberal forms of governance, the state still aims to direct the mobility of humans, which runs counter to the notion that the free flow of factors is beneficial to economic development and efficient growth and gains (Dreher 2007). Why is the free flow of people not permitted in a world that favours a free market? More importantly, how is the state able to continue to regulate labour migration while also promoting the need for free-market driven approaches?

Dreher (2007) maintains that traditional notions of liberalism nourish the assertion that markets, rather than states, rule over the distribution of the factors of production, giving way for global markets of free labour. The state eludes the contradiction of controlling the mobility of migrants through a form of neoliberal governmentality that justifies the disciplining of the general population through technologies of self-regulation, therein creating economically responsible individuals. Accordingly, closer scrutiny of the
transnational political identity of Guatemalan migrants discloses the strategic role assumed by authoritative figures (government officials and administrators of program) in ensuring the formation of economically productive temporary foreign workers.

I argue that authority figures have constructed spaces of social control and dominance by normalizing an agenda of economic advancement through the self-regulation of the migrant body. The following chapter begins by reassessing Foucauldian notions of neoliberal governmentality, utilized as a platform for scrutinizing the role that figures of authority play in the transnational process of regulated seasonal migration. I then discuss the role of the Guatemalan government in depth, critiquing the state’s limitation of migrant political consciousness through a process of societal stratification, while also probing how the Guatemalan state governs from abroad. This is followed by an examination of the regulatory approach of the Canadian government in managing migration programs, which seeks to largely recruit foreign workers converted into flexible and disposable forms of labour.

The chapter includes an examination of non-state actors as key authority figures, given the prominent position held by such organizations in managing the TAWC project and shaping the migrant body to conform to and accommodate a neoliberal agenda. The evolutionary role of IOM Guatemala, created much controversy during the early years of the TAWC project; however, the organization has sought to redeem the integrity of IOM by amending the controversial management approach to migration programs. Finally, in reviewing the operation of FERME, the private growers’ association, it is clear that this non-state actor has attained unwavering social control over the program in a way that
blocks government intervention and grants them significant authority and power over the migrant body.

**Migration and Governmentality**

To accurately grasp the regulatory power of government officials and administrators of the TAWC project, there first is a need to examine how discipline and control over Guatemalan migrant workers is authorized through a neoliberal discourse and agenda of creating flexible and disposable labour in demand. As discussed in Chapter Two, governmentality provides a strong theoretical framework to conceptualize how the conduct of a population is governed not only by the state but also through a range disciplinary institutions and agencies (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Aside from concern over a relationship of power defined by discipline and control, governmentality also advances a regulatory dimension of productivity (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Most importantly, governmentality focuses on the body as the sight of regulation and as the object and target of power, drawing on how the body can be subjected to institutional regulation (Foucault 1979). Therefore, I argue that the Canadian and Guatemalan government and administrative agencies both endorse a common goal of yielding subjects who conduct themselves in a manner that promotes a neoliberal agenda of economic advancement through self-regulation.

While the term governmentality applies to a various historical periods, this mode of neoliberal governmentality, in particular, depicts a political-economic reality that mass-produces self-regulated individuals through more indirect government apparatuses and techniques, with the goal of generating responsible and economic–rational subjects.
For the purpose of this analysis and the political economic approach assumed in the study, I borrow from the Foucauldian conceptualization of neoliberal governmentality, which many scholars like Lemke (2001) have drawn from in their own work. Neoliberalism as both a theory and practice draws out the contradictions of a discourse that aims to denote the most effective mode of political economic governance based on an extension of market relationships (Larner 2000). In theory, neoliberalism seeks to transfer responsibility of economic activity from the state to the private sector in promotion of individual liberty and freedom. In practice, there may be call for the roll-back of state involvement and the advancement of privatization and deregulation; however, the state continues to maintain a role in ensuring the promotion of neoliberal policies. The contradiction between theory and practice asserts that neoliberalism cannot deliver the promised liberty, given the imposition of neoliberal policies that intensify inequalities. Governmentality, in turn, has established that governance is not a matter of less government and loss of power but of a new modality of government that denotes a shift in governance (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, Larner 2000, Lemke 2001). The state constructs mechanisms of discipline and control (state apparatuses and techniques) through various realms, institutions, and technologies, including, but not limited to, the workplace, educational institutions and welfare agencies, manipulating individuals to conform to the norms of the market (Kunz 2008, Larner 2000, Mitchell 2006).

The form of neoliberal governmentality may signify less direct government involvement; however, new mechanisms and techniques of internal self-regulation facilitate government-favoured results by empowering individuals to discipline themselves. Individuals are fashioned into productive subjects who embody a disposition
that promotes economic and entrepreneurial responsibility (Kiersey 2009). In essence, neoliberal governmentality is not a roll-back of state involvement, but a shift in governance techniques “for leading and controlling individuals without at the same time being responsible for them” (Lemke 2001, 201). Reduction of government responsibility normalizes the increased call for self-care and personal responsibility.

Closer examination of self-regulation techniques that propagate more “autonomous” individuals reveals a form of governance that diminishes responsibility of the (welfare) state and advances indirect economic exploitation (Lemke 2001). By rendering the population independent subjects, the state shifts responsibility concerning social welfare issues (such as health, employment, etc.) to self-regulated individuals, justifying the self-care strategy of the state (Lemke 2001). Such rhetoric sanctions the offloading of the state’s responsibility over consequences of neoliberal policies (privatization, cuts in social spending, etc.) to citizens, tactically branded as individuals responsible for their own autonomy (Kunz 2008). The neoliberal agenda of government roll back and reduction facilitates the process of creating responsible and economically rational individuals while in turn endowing the market with greater command over labour forces. According to Leander and Munster, “neoliberal governmentality situates human activity within an economic calculus” (2007, 204) which implies that activities are transferred from the public sphere to the market through means such as the creation of the conditions for competitive success, direct privatization, public-private partnerships, and outsourcing. Thus, the decentralization of power sanctions the promotion of practices that produce self-regulating individuals and creates new subjectivities more amenable to market demands.
By persuading the general population to identify themselves as “individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being,” the state rationalizes techniques of discipline, endorsing the need for more flexible bodies (Larner 2000, 11). Disciplinary normalization allows free market logic to penetrate every facet of life (Mullings 2011), but more importantly, sanctions firms to hire efficient bodies that accept flexibilized labour and adjust to market pressures to increase profit rates (Dreher 2007). For Foucault (1979), techniques of discipline not only enhance the forces of the body, in terms of economic utility, but also weaken undesirable forces of the body, in terms of political obedience. The objective of state discipline “is no longer simply an art of distributing bodies, of extracting time from them and accumulating it, but of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine” (Foucault 1979, 164). Ultimately, control over the performance of the general population, in promotion of economic advancement, validates the state’s agenda to institutionalize the flexibilization and disposability of migrant workers, warranting the need for and growth of self-regulated migrant labour.

This artificially constructed rationale of governance through self-regulating technologies has permitted the Guatemalan and Canadian government to reap the economic benefits of institutionalizing the disposability and flexibilization of migrant labour programs regulated by non-state actors. The following chapter assesses the Guatemalan and Canadian governments’ role in (re)shaping the transnational political identity of migrants to align with a political economic agenda that presses for an efficient and confirming labour force that adjusts to market pressures and increases economic gains. Both governments and non-state administrators advance the significance and utility of the TAWC project on humanitarian grounds, emphasizing the need for labour
market alternatives in the Global South. While the TAWC project provides migrants with economic options and alternatives, examination of techniques of disciplines reveals that authoritative figures profit from shaping migrants into disposable and flexible labour. Assessment of non-state actors also discloses how over time the state has sanctioned the intensified privatization of the TAWC project, in a political-economic environment that favours market control over the factors of production and, in essence, the mobility of Guatemalan migrant workers.

The Government of Guatemala and a Favoured Temporary Migration Scheme

Years prior to the implementation of the TAWC project, the Guatemalan government struggled to reach an agreement with the Canadian government and employers, similar to the MOU established with the SAWP participating countries. Regulated migration programs supply the Guatemalan government with a mechanism to govern from a distance, while also offloading responsibility of supporting the well-being of their citizens. More importantly, migration programs, such the TAWC project, alleviate underemployment in a country where the rural Indigenous population has failed to acquire a decent standard of living in the agricultural sector. Left with minimal options to thrive, Guatemalan migrants struggle to stay afloat in country plagued by constant political and economic instability. Lack of transparency and accountability has created a climate of distrust of the government. According to Marcos, a Guatemalan migrant new to the migration program who has had to assume various jobs in his home community just to makes ends meet, “politicians are too powerful and we [Guatemalans] do not even
know what they [politicians] are doing because they keep us blind by not telling us anything about what is happening to the economy” (Guatemalan migrant worker 4 2010)

Larger agri-businesses favoured by the Guatemalan government and the rise in food prices have made it difficult for small scale farmers, like many of these migrant workers, to expand their small family-owned businesses or even provide their households a proper standard of living (Gauster and Isakson 2007). Without suitable government support to help their businesses flourish, many rural Guatemalans are positioned to fail in a country that favours the economic interests of large business owners over those of marginalized campesinos. Andrés, a veteran migrant worker who subsidizes his income during the winter by working as tailor, complains of how “larger businesses get what we produce and then sell it for a higher price than us,” leaving small-scale farmers with no other alternative but to conform to conditions of inequality (Guatemalan migrant worker 5 2010). After eight years of seasonally migrating to Canada, Juan has garnered a real understanding of the functioning of the program, and sums it up by stating that

Guatemala is in a really bad state and it is because of the lack of work available. Not a lot of people have a strong education and others do not have the means to find work. We are unable to study because we dedicate ourselves to cultivating in the campo [rural areas]. We are forced to battle with the environment, which causes a great deal of problems. The majority of people [in Guatemala] have dedicated themselves to agriculture which faces the worst economic problems. (Guatemalan migrant worker 28 2010)

The Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Relations claims that the creation of a migration program with Canada permits the government to provide for citizens by generating employment prospects outside of the country. Many Guatemalans, however, blame the corrupt and politically unstable government for the economic volatility disrupting the countryside. “Because of corruption in our government and past
governments, poverty has intensified in our country,” explains Anita. As one of the more outspoken women in the program and one of the few who attained her high school diploma, Anita goes on to declare that “the government has not been able to properly administer the finances of Guatemala” (Guatemalan migrant worker 1 2010). In a country that failed to generate labour options internally, a growing group of underemployed rural Indigenous people are deemed prime candidates for the TAWC project by the state and administrators of the program, given their long-rooted history in cultivating agricultural lands and undeniable economic necessity. With the promise of avoiding the dangers of undocumented migration and private recruitment, Guatemalans are exceedingly attracted to a regulated program that assures a successful migratory experience. Even though it is not explicitly implied in the IOM requirement procedures and orientation package, the structure of the program makes it so that Guatemalans are only guaranteed a spot in the program, so long as they submit to a docile and submissive role as flexible foreign labour. This process secures the IOM ideal, submissive candidates. Impoverished migrants are willing to accept this role as a means to deal with the economic hardships they confront on a daily basis.

By utilizing the TAWC project as a development tool to advance the economic interests of the nation as a whole and as a mechanism to deal with the recent economic crisis, the state validates Canadian employers’ requests for flexible labour. Moreover, by securing the circular movement of seasonal worker, the state ensures the annual return of economic gains, reinvested into Guatemala. According to the director of Consejo Nacion...
IOM Guatemala, in turn, advertises the program’s strength to be the result of its “inclusive approach” that oversees every detail of the recruitment, travel arrangements, and medical examinations, while also ensuring dedicated assistance in migratory procedures (IOM 2008a). The TAWC project, while rather small in scale, is idealized as a seamless migration program employed as a tool for economic development for the “transfer of technology, knowledge, and money,” as affirmed by a Guatemalan consular official in Montréal, Québe (Consular Official 2009).

By promoting the program as a viable channel for migration, the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Ministry of Labour and Social Provisions strive to uphold the success of the program while also avoiding response to the lack of employment opportunities in Guatemala. By evading responsibility to the social welfare of citizens and offering migration alternatives as a viable solution, the Guatemalan government functions as a neoliberal regime that urges the population to be accountable for their own social risks of poverty and underemployment, thereby stimulating them to be economically responsible individuals (Mullings 2011). What is more, by portraying recruited Guatemalan migrants as economic heroes who assist in bolstering the economic

---

29 The National Council of Attention to Migrants in Guatemala is a government branch of the Ministry of Foreign Relations that monitors government activities related to migration issues and provides support and assistance to migrants and their families. CONAMIGUA’s primary focus is on migration to the United States and Mexico; it has no involvement in the TAWC project.
and social well-being of their country, the Guatemalan government prompts the creation of new subjectivities that align with state neoliberal interests (Kunz 2008).

In assessing migration as a tool for development, Phillips (2009) warns of the strong dependence on providing a continual supply of cheap, low-skilled or unskilled workers to boost national economic gains, as this process of accumulation deepens inequalities both within the sending country and at a more transnational scale. By relying on migration to resolve internal economic inequalities, the Guatemalan government does nothing but sustain and potentially intensify processes of uneven and unequal development. The mayor of Santiago Sacatepéquez regards the TAWC project as a mechanism of control fashioned to fit the interest of greedy politicians over local workers and has called for national government programs to take a stronger focus on the local population (Mayor of Santiago Sacatepéquez 2010). By supplying the Canadian businesses with a large pool of submissive and flexible workers, the Guatemalan state is able to govern from a distance whilst ensuring the annual return of economic gains.

Out of economic desperation, Guatemalans are willing to submit to precarious forms of labour that afford them little to no job security and haul them thousands of miles away from their families. For many migrants, participation in the TAWC project is deemed an immense privilege and honour, given the small number of Guatemalans recruited in comparison to the thousands who struggle to attain a “prestigious” posting in the program. Guatemalans speak of paying large sums of money, in an attempt to be recruited into the TAWC project, to deceptive and false recruiters and to migrants enlisted in the program who claim that they can secure people a guaranteed spot in the coveted program. More often than not, these false promises result in the swindling of thousands
of quetzales from households desperate to send family members to Canada. Migrants are willing to pay large sums of money for a place in what is promoted as a once-in-a-life-time opportunity, too enticing to let pass.

The IOM, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Ministry of Labour and Social Provisions, strategically selects regions where ideal candidates can be recruited into a program that tracks down submissive bodies. Aside from providing technical agricultural expertise, candidates recruited into the TAWC project are also expected to come from rural areas of the country where poverty and underemployment are growing issues. These rural regions are largely inhabited by Indigenous populations with strong ties to the land, often characterized as timid and humble people with access to the minimum bare necessities. “That is the way we are,” confirms Roque, a soft-spoken migrant who owns a small farm in Guatemala. Roque went on to explain that “As Indigenous people we do not have an education and are too timid to talk or converse with others, especially in a language we do not know. We only dedicate ourselves to working and as a result we are characterized as humble people” (Guatemalan migrant worker 17 2010). The tactical selection of Guatemalan migrants embodying such traits makes them more marketable abroad to employers who seek a dependable and malleable workforce. This selection process is advantageous for the Guatemalan government’s promotion of Guatemalan migrants as ideal foreign agricultural workers.

The strategy of selecting amenable migrant bodies is part of a largely veiled state agenda that facilitates a process of producing citizens who promote neoliberal policies of economic advancements through self-regulation and flexibilization. By rendering migrants to become agents for development, the state generates self-regulating and
responsible contributors of the economic development of Guatemala. The production of a neoliberal discourse that seeks to benefit from the flexibilization of migrant workers obligated to accept temporary non-permanent forms of labour, enhances the power of the Guatemalan government, even from abroad. Unlike migrant diaspora groups courted by the labour-sending government to act like subject agents of development, temporary migrant workers’ non-permanent status involuntarily renders them agents co-responsible for development of their home country (Kunz 2008). The approach of governing from abroad is also employed to appease the Canadian government and secure longevity of a program that yields conforming and submissive migrant labour pools. The relative power of the Guatemalan government over migrant workers, both in their home communities and abroad, grants the state social control over the disciplining of migrant bodies willing to succumb to such tactics to be given an opportunity to work in Canada.

**Offloading of State Responsibilities**

For years the Guatemalan government has heavily relied on the technical expertise of the IOM to lead major development projects within the country in hopes of bolstering economic viability. As a prominent international organization, the IOM is committed to a mission that advances humane and orderly migration for the benefit of migrants and society as a whole (IOM 2011a). In Guatemala, the IOM has been delegated to manage a range of projects not limited to the administration of migration programs. One of the more well-known initiatives led by IOM Guatemala has been the safe and secure repatriation of refugees from surrounding countries, resettling Guatemalans who have been out of the country for decades. Administrative responsibilities over the TAWC
project were originally offloaded onto the IOM Guatemala office, anticipating that the organization would afford seasonal migrants the same safety and security as millions of other refugees and migrants regulated by IOM. The Ministry of Foreign Relations justifies the government scheme:

In the theme of migration the Guatemalan government has several projects with the IOM. The government provides IOM with the funds to administer these programs, because it eases the execution of the process. IOM is an international organization and is quite knowledgeable on this type of material, plus they have all the resources, information, and capacity to manage this type of migration project. This initiative exists as a viable alternative and given the experience of the IOM we see it as a good thing. We consider it the best option for the execution of the program. (Ministry of Foreign Relations Official 2010)

Whether responsibility over the TAWC project was delegated to the IOM on account of its expertise in this field or because the government wished to offload accountability, there is no question that state action or inaction exposed the incompetence and disorganization of a government incapable of managing state programs. Research institutions like MENAMIG30 and INCEDES31 argue that IOM Guatemala should not be granted such extensive command over the TAWC project. An INCEDES official argues that “the function of IOM should be to help the state of Guatemala and provide technical support. Instead, IOM Guatemala designs, executes, administers, and evaluates the program” (INCEDES official 2010). The regulatory power and disciplinary techniques of IOM are discussed at more length in the latter part of this chapter, exploring the means by

30 The National Bureau for Migration in Guatemala (Mesa Nacional para las Migraciones en Guatemala) is an umbrella group that coordinates the efforts and activities of institutions, member organizations, and individuals interested in the migratory phenomenon and the human rights of migrants and their families.
31 The Central American Institute of Social Studies and Development (Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Sociales y Desarrollo) is an not-for-profit organization, made up of professionals, that seeks to facilitate various research projects on migration with the aim of strengthening democratic states.
which the IOM implements technologies of self-regulation to assert its influence and social control over the conduct of migrants.

The government justifies indirect involvement in the program by validating the role of officials from both the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Ministry of Labour and Social Provisions, which, according to officials from the Ministry of Foreign Relations, are heavily involved in the recruitment process. Since the inception of the program, however, the IOM has acted as the leading entity in the design, execution, administration, and evaluation of the TAWC project. Neither the Ministry of Foreign Relation nor the Ministry of Work and Social Provision have established any written contracts with recruited Guatemalans, allowing the government to be unaccountable to their citizens living and working abroad. According the Guatemalan Labour Code Article 34, Chapter 1, the Ministry of Labour and Social Provision is the primary government agency conferring direct authorization for the recruitment of Guatemalan workers (Ministry of Labour and Social Provision 1995). At no point has the Ministry of Labour and Social Provisions made any effort to include itself in any contractual process; instead, it has relied on the IOM to regulate the signing of all labour contracts between workers and employers. Additionally, the same Labour Code article maintains that all recruitment and transportation fees must be paid by the employer or recruiting agent. While airfare is covered by employers, workers are still expected to pay for certain processing fees and up until recently were required to leave a deposit before travelling to Canada. Officials of MENAMIG have long urged that a contract be written up with the Ministry of Labour and Social Provision, in order to hold the government more accountable in sanctioning foreign employers to temporarily “borrow” workers without any form of job security.
The lack of government involvement allows non-state actors like IOM to garner clout over this program with minimal accountability to the state or the workers.

When the Guatemalan government originally launched the two-year TAWC pilot project, the state assured that responsibility for the program would be retracted from IOM Guatemala. Now in its ninth year, the migration “project” has established itself as a leading program to be modelled by other countries in Central America. Even though FERME has now assumed all administration duties in facilitating recruitment between the province of Québec and Guatemala, the government has done little to countermand responsibility from this non-state actor.

The Guatemalan government has been slow to implement transparent mechanisms of accountability and put into practice strong measures that protect the rights of temporary migrants, and instead, has largely depended on the IOM administrators to uphold the integrity of the program. Although CONAMIGUA is the formalized government entity instituted to monitor the actions and activities of state bodies that assist and support Guatemala migrants, the government branch has no role in the administration of the TAWC project. In fact, officials of CONAMIGUA deem the Canada-Guatemala migration program to be “a valuable program” and an exceptional example of regulated migration, and as a result, have done very little to probe the activity of the IOM. The only government branch that plays a significant role in monitoring the movement of migrants is the Guatemalan consulate in Canada; however, even then, many Guatemalan migrants complain of the ineffectiveness and bias of consular officials.
The Disciplinary Tactics of the Guatemalan Consulate

The role of the Ministry of Foreign Relations in the TAWC project is validated by the Guatemalan consular presence in the province of Québec, entrusted with operating as a supporting governing entity for Guatemalan citizens working and residing in Canada. The fully staffed Consulate General was first opened by the Guatemalan government in Montréal, in 2005, in response to the growing number of migrant workers hired on by Canadian employers. With a smaller consular presence in British Columbia, the Guatemalan government has been ineffective in coping with the rising number of recruited nationals. Migrant farm workers posted in rural Alberta have complained during interviews of the lack of assistance afforded to them by consular officials, leaving them isolated and with no support on remote farms. When Guatemalan workers telephone a consular office located outside the province of Alberta they are advised that officials are unable to visit them. Instead, the consulate instructs isolated Guatemalan workers over the phone to cope with work-related issues alone, while also re-embedding the idea that migrants are not to disrupt and jeopardize their relationship with the employer. Messages of self-regulation relayed to migrants re-instil a form a programming that presses them to personify desirable characteristics.

In an interview, the Ministry of Foreign Relations official representative for the TAWC project explains that when workers arrive in Québec they are greeted by consular officials at the airport and offered immediate support. The Ministry of Foreign Relations official goes on to claim that

The consulate provides migrant workers with immediate support. We help them to get acclimatized to the area and fill out their applications and forms. We also give them two phone numbers so that for whatever emergency or for whatever reason
they can communicate with the consulate. Additionally, there are visits to the farms to see the conditions, to see if the workers are in need of anything. When very special cases exist the consulate also makes itself available to provide immediate support in cases of emergency. (Ministry of Foreign Relations 2010)

While the Guatemalan Consulate is committed to assisting national residents and visitors in Canada with the intention of protecting their rights and interests, the role of consular officials has come under fire from both temporary workers and non-governmental organizations.

Aside from their supporting role, consular officials also assume the duty of disciplining migrant agricultural workers labouring and residing abroad, so as to guarantee the success of the program. The consulate upholds a form of governance from a distance under the premise of assisting and supporting nationals in Canada. Consular officials urge migrants to self-regulate their behaviour and actions to keep in line with employer demands and expectations, warning them of the dangers of repatriation. Migrants are also reminded by the consulate that, as representatives of Guatemala, all workers must grow into responsible agents and a positive symbol of their home country. As ambassadors, migrants are expected to prove to Canadians the dutiful and hard-working nature of Guatemalans, while also confirming their loyalty to their government. By conducting themselves in a manner befitting of the expectations of Canadian employers, Guatemalans demonstrate their worth as submissive employees.

When questioned about the support and assistance afforded to them by the consulate, Guatemalans acknowledge the service provided upon arrival to the Montréal airport. As a worker driven to migrate out of Guatemala because he was unable to compete with larger agribusinesses, David confirms that “when we arrive at the airport
the consulate receives us and gives us information on our rights. The information is
difficult to understand and as a result we do not want to act upon these rights. We do not
demand our rights but instead decide to remain silent” (Guatemalan migrant worker 6
2010). After they leave the airport, state assistance ceases for many Guatemalan
migrants. Inaccessibility and ineffective dissemination of information on their rights
leaves them lost, confused and incapable of acting upon available rights. Roberto, a
migrant who spends all of his free time out on his farm when back in Guatemala, offers
insight into the support afforded to Guatemalans by the consulate, giving details on how
“when we call them (the consulate) they tell us they are too far away, but at the same time
they also tell us to make sure that we behave” (Guatemalan migrant worker 10 2010).

Often overworked and overextended, consular officials in Montréal are denied the
proper resources and support by the Canadian government to adequately deal with work-
related issues and concerns that arise on local farms. When interviewed, two former
consular officials allege that even though a large number of claims of abuse and
mistreatment were brought to the attention of the Canadian government, federal and
provincial officials did little to adequately address the grievances of temporary foreign
workers (Consular Officials 2010). Frustrated and left without support, these two
consular officials eventually resigned, disgruntled by the lack of response by both the
Canadian and Guatemalan government. The same consular officials also support
migrants’ claims that agricultural workers are instructed by the consulate and IOM
officials that association with any political groups or unions hinders their opportunity to
return the following year (Consular Officials 2010). Year after year, migrants are
ingrained with the notion that their sole duty is to appease employer requests and disassociate from conduct deemed inappropriate by authoritative figures.

The director of the Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA) in Québec, Andrea Gálvez, holds the Guatemalan consulate responsible for the improper dissemination of information to migrant workers. Since the consulate ineffectively responds to pleas of assistance from agricultural workers, the AWA accordingly organized with the intention of alleviating the vulnerability of migrants. The two former Guatemalan consular officials admit that little has been done to fully arm and equip migrant workers with the appropriate information and support to defend their rights. As one of the primary distributors of information on basic labour and human rights, the Guatemalan consulate has been criticized for mismanaging the limited information made available to its citizens abroad.

Guatemala’s Ministry of Foreign Relations, in partnership with the consulate, has been quite open about the government’s desire to secure the successful facilitation of the program. I would argue that one of the primary objectives of the consulate is to comply with the demands and expectations of Canadian employers, so as to guarantee the continual seasonal migration of Guatemalans. Since most recruitment is carried out in regions where the candidate pool largely consists of Indigenous people with minimal education, low incomes, experience in farm work, and a household to support, administrators and consular officials retain clout over the conduct of migrants willing to personify an ideal worker to safeguard their placement in the TAWC project. When discussing Guatemalan migrants’ characterization as humble and timid people, Maria, a more reserved worker who has been travelling to Canada for three years, hesitantly states
that “they [IOM and Guatemalan government] only want to hire the most poor and take advantage of these people because they cannot even defend their own rights” (Guatemalan migrant worker 14 2010). Migrants are aware of the appeal of their docility and humbleness, and as a result, resign themselves to the compliant role superimposed by authority figures.

The more Canadian employers are drawn to the submissiveness and docility of Guatemalans to fill labour demands, the more the Guatemalan government seeks to satisfy their economic needs. The disciplinary tactics of the consulate sustain an environment of subjugation and self-regulation by enforcing the notion that an unsatisfactory worker is easily replaced by a pool of Guatemalans eager to embrace the unsympathetic realities of seasonal migration. Jorge, a more outspoken worker who owns a small plot of agricultural land in Guatemala, acknowledges the lack of job security that leaves migrants with no other option but to tolerate the oppressive nature of seasonal migration:

Guatemalans know very little about their rights and there are a lot of obstacles out there. I am too scared to claim these rights because travelling to Canada is one of the only opportunities we have to obtain better economic gains. This is the reason why Guatemalans do not say anything. Guatemalans are not ignorant, but I personally do not want to speak out and will do my job the way they tell me to do it. (Guatemalan migrant worker 27 2010)

Consular and IOM officials ingrain migrants with the belief that seasonal migration is an incomparable privilege and opportunity offered to select few, and as a result, Guatemalans detach from politicized behaviour and acts that could jeopardize their jobs and livelihood.
The mere presence of the consulate as a disciplinary institution is enough to sustain the authority and social control of the Guatemalan government over the conduct of migrant workers, so as to govern from abroad. Barraged with disciplinary tactics and technologies of self-regulation, migrants align themselves with the state neoliberal agenda and allow their performance to be guided by market demands. Thus, the diffusion of authority not only secures the subjectification of migrant workers but also compels them to conform to the will of the Canadian government and employers.

An Unstable Political Climate

Apart from the disciplinary tactics employed by the state to reinforce the submissive role of migrants, the corrupt political climate from which Guatemalans originate also feeds into the suppression of political consciousness and political activities, even prior to their recruitment into the program. In a country rife with crime, violence, and political corruption, Guatemalans are implanted with the impression that claiming rights or speaking out is risky in a society rampant with impunity (Brands 2011). The current rise in violence and political oppression has created civic disillusion and eroded the authority and legitimacy of the state. In response to questions regarding the political climate of Guatemala, Anita, one of the only migrant women with experience working for an NGO, believes that “corruption begins with the police all the way up to the government” (Guatemalan migrant worker 1 2010). The lack of trust in the government and distaste for political figures has deepened the state of fear amongst Guatemalan migrants forced to comply with the demands of agencies of power, therein restraining their mobility. The director of INCEDES spoke of social degradation in a country where
“there are no means for justice because the whole system has problems and is completely flawed” (INCEDES official 2010). With the government ineffectively responding to the rise in crime and violence, Guatemalans must deal with living in a constant state of wariness and trepidation. Desperate to find mechanisms to cope with the political and economic instability, many turn to outward migration as an alternative to overcome the volatility of their home country.

The promise of peace and political stability with the signing of the peace accord after the 30-year civil war did nothing to diminish or impede the rise of corruption and violence. In fact, after the monumental year of 1996, the level of crime in Guatemalan escalated out of control, leaving many Guatemalans feeling helpless. The majority of Guatemalan migrants who participated in this study see no end to this corruption and violence, and the general response from most workers has been one of despair. Cristina is a mother of two children and has numerous family members who also travel to work on Canadian farms. With only two years of seasonally migrating under her belt, she feels that “the violence and corruption will not end because of politicians are the ones carrying out the wrong things” (Guatemalan migrant worker 2 2010). Misgivings about the political climate in Guatemala have not only fostered the suppression of migrant consciousness and action, but have left them with a disdain for political matters. Incessant pressure from the Guatemalan government cultivates oppressive transnational political realities, intensifying the wounds generated by an unstable political environment. Rather than alleviating this damage, the state instead opts to augment the oppression of political consciousness, forcing migrants to disengage from inappropriate conduct. In shifting the focus to the Canadian government in the next section, I intend to reveal the
means by which the labour-receiving state sustains an oppressive transnational political experience by reinforcing the flexibility and disposability of the migrant body.

**The Canadian Government and Temporary Foreign Workers**

Historically, the Canadian government has been dependent on foreign labour from poorer labour-sending countries and attracted to the flexibility and disposability of temporary migrants to fill cumbersome labour shortages in unskilled and low-skilled sectors. While the recruitment of foreign labour for economic optimization is not a novel phenomenon, the recent intensified reliance on temporary foreign labour over other more permanent migration streams highlights the Canadian government’s interest in moving away from social welfare concern towards more economic points of interest. An HRSDC official justifies the expansion of the TFWP on the basis that it “facilitates the entry of temporary foreign workers to Canada to meet the short-term labour and skills needs of employers who are unable to find suitable Canadians or permanent residents to fill a job” (HRSDC Official 2010). Normalization of the state’s reliance on this process permits the Canadian government and employers to profit from the institutionalized disposability of hyper-exploitable foreign labour. Heightened forms of disadvantage and deprivation generated by the expansion of a flexibilized pool of workers leave migrants with no other alternative but to accept this institutionalized disposability.

I would argue that migration in Canada is increasingly shifting from humanitarian assistance and family unification into a matter of expanding the pool of temporary flexibilized labour to minimize the state’s welfare responsibility over migrants and, in
turn, maximize capital gains. According to Siemiatycki (2010), the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been especially adamant in aligning immigration policies with market and employer interests. Since being elected into office in 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his cabinet ministers have “been explicit in promoting a ‘quicker fix’ regime of immigration admission to meet immediate employer needs” (Siemiatycki 2010, 61). Siemiatycki’s article on foreign labour goes on to discuss how the national economic plan titled Advantage Canada: Building a Strong Economy for Canadians (Department of Finance Canada 2007) secures greater global competitive advantage by generating a more flexible workforce. For the Conservative Government, temporary foreign workers have become an integral component in the federal government’s design to acquire a more flexible labour pool while also advancing Canada’s economic interests (Flecker 2010).

Since its inception, the low-skilled stream of the TFWP has been presented to the Canadian public as a required and necessary mechanism for the economic development and survival of the local labour market. In the Temporary Foreign Worker Guidebook for Canadian employers, CIC describes foreign labour as “an essential part of a company’s business strategy” that “fill labour shortages in Canada and bring new skills and knowledge to help the country’s economy grow” (CIC 2008a). By framing the recruitment of foreign labour as an economic necessity, the state can then disregard upgrading the employment standards of unskilled and low-skilled labour or expanding the pool of permanent residents to fill this void, and instead, opt to build up the temporary foreign worker regime. As a result, the recruitment of temporary foreign workers has
rapidly increased since the introduction of the low-skilled stream of foreign workers, as
demonstrated in the following graphs (see Table 3 and Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Workers</td>
<td>106,002</td>
<td>181,987</td>
<td>179,984</td>
<td>300,399</td>
<td>404,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Students</td>
<td>71,441</td>
<td>204,198</td>
<td>209,467</td>
<td>233,765</td>
<td>253,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian population</td>
<td>26,813</td>
<td>148,915</td>
<td>155,820</td>
<td>119,872</td>
<td>136,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>116,736</td>
<td>134,882</td>
<td>137,705</td>
<td>146,502</td>
<td>142,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>320,992</td>
<td>669,746</td>
<td>682,976</td>
<td>800,538</td>
<td>937,284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3** – Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Class</td>
<td>39,211</td>
<td>59,993</td>
<td>62,287</td>
<td>66,241</td>
<td>65,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Immigrants</td>
<td>26,058</td>
<td>128,350</td>
<td>137,863</td>
<td>131,244</td>
<td>153,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>16,741</td>
<td>24,307</td>
<td>25,116</td>
<td>27,955</td>
<td>22,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>3,780</td>
<td>11,312</td>
<td>10,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84,345</td>
<td>216,038</td>
<td>229,049</td>
<td>236,754</td>
<td>252,179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4** – Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010a

For the Canadian government and employers, work permits issued to low-skilled
streamed foreign workers such as Guatemalan migrants have been a favourable
mechanism of control that ties and designates workers to one employer and denies them
the option of changing employers without permission from the proper authorities. In
theory, a foreign worker can transfer to another workplace by finding an employer with
an approved LMO and funnelling through the proper channels to apply for a change of status and work permit (CIC 2008a). However, Guatemalan agricultural workers have indicated during interviews that such a process is unattainable as most employers are unwilling to provide them the option to transfer farms. A work contract ties them to one employer during their stay in Canada, granting agricultural producers control over migrant workers’ mobility and political participation. This hindrance leaves Guatemalan migrants with minimal employment protection and no proper recourse to dispute repatriation, as most are unaware of the correct channels to contest mistreatment.

Sweetman and Warman (2010) raise concerns over having temporary foreign workers tied to a specific employer by a binding work permit and lack of rights that weaken their legitimacy in the host community, especially those streamed into low-skilled occupations.

In 2007, the federal government committed $50.5 million over two years to improve the processing resources of the TFWP, emphasizing a commitment to the successful execution of a program deemed a viable mechanism (CIC 2008b). The same year, “improvements” were made to the TFWP, stressing the federal government’s dedication to a strategic economic agenda that would inevitably lead to the intensified institutionalized disposability of foreign labour. In the drive for a more flexibilized program, HRSDC and CIC now allow temporary migrants to stay up to twenty-four months without having to request an extension; in the past, employers were only permitted to bring workers for up to twelve months and then obliged to reapply to the program after four months. Part of the amendments included a simultaneous processing of work permit applications through CIC and LMOs of employees through HRSDC; however, after mounting pressure from interest groups, this procedure was quickly
abolished. Employers must now have a positive approved LMO issued by HRSDC before applying for a work permit through CIC. If a negative LMO is delivered by HRSDC, employers are then required to reapply and prove that they are eligible for a positive LMO. The just-in-time approach to the TFWP led to the introduction of new national advertising requirements by HRSDC to simplify the steps an employer undertakes before applying to hire a temporary foreign worker. What is more, an online LMO application system was created to lessen the processing time, while also generating stronger communication among participating federal partners.

At the same time, it is critical to acknowledge the federal government’s strategic endorsement of the TFWP as a tool to facilitate development in poorer sending countries, especially since the government is “optimistic about the potential for remittances and technology transfer to lead to economic development in the source countries” (HRSDC 2009). HRSDC upholds the conviction that “temporary workers need to be well planned and facilitated in order to yield results,” therein advancing the neoliberal claim that free markets maximize an individual’s potential and welfare (HRSDC 2009). By portraying itself as a provider of foreign aid, alleviating poverty and conferring opportunities for investment through remittances sent back home, the Canadian government imparts a positive image of the program to the Canadian public. The Canadian government seeks to promote the notion that the state is “helping employers hire disadvantaged groups,” converting this concern from being an economic issue into one of international assistance (HRSDC 2009). By advancing the TFWP as a pro-development strategy, incoming foreign workers are shaped into a labour regime obligated to appreciate the prospect of earning higher wages. During an interview, Dr. Kerry Preibisch insists that the success of
this strategy is reflected in migrants’ acceptance of the drive to improve their job performance and acceptance of substandard working and living conditions (Preibisch 2010a).

According to an HRSDC official, “we (HRSDC) believe that the workers benefit tremendously from participating in a systematic, safe, and dignified migration movement. Because this movement is legal and closely monitored by the governments involved, workers are offered an excellent opportunity to work abroad and earn a legitimate salary” (HRSDC Official 2010). In using a discourse of foreign aid to legitimize the TFWP, the federal government exploits the economic limitations of foreign workers from poorer countries like Guatemala. Mateo, a migrant who has been travelling to Canada for four years, rationalizes the desperation of Guatemalan migrants by affirming that “we do not have access to very secure jobs. All we want to do is work and gain wages. Maybe that is why Canadian employers seek out migrants because we are in real need of jobs and the economic opportunities that they provide us” (Guatemalan migrant worker 23 2010).

While the HRSDC website is accurate in stating that “temporary foreign workers benefit from the opportunity to live and work in Canada” and “many workers earn much more in Canada than would be possible in their countries of origin,” the Government of Canada continues to disregard the precarious nature of the programs that render foreign workers into disposable labour (HRSDC 2009). Tailored to meet the needs and demands of Canadian employers, the economic gains of the program garnered by the federal government and employers far outweigh those of temporary workers and their sending country. The demand-drive program grants considerable power and authority to Canadian employers, forcing many workers to comply with orders of authority figures
and discouraging them from speaking out against conflict at work. For Carlos, a migrant with brothers also travelling to Canada, Guatemalans complacency is a result of the dire need for work, “we try to do our best, so that employers see us in a good light” (Guatemalan migrant worker 16 2010). In the end, the government’s positive portrayal of the program contributes to the state’s strategic approach of normalizing the rapid entry of foreign workers into Canada, without instituting the proper channels to safely protect the rights of this vulnerable group.

In April 2011, CIC implemented regulatory changes to the TFWP in response to the Auditor General’s report and mounting public pressure, both of which highly criticized the federal government’s migration management approach. Most of the proposed amendments sought to protect low-skilled workers in the program, as a result of the backlash incited by the lack of oversight on the part of the federal government. The report linked government deficiencies to the continual abuse of foreign workers at the hands of employers. The report also maintained that low-skilled temporary foreign workers are most at risk because of language barriers, the economic conditions from which they come, and the lack of understanding and awareness of their rights in Canada (Auditor General of Canada 2009). The amendments include (1) a two year ban on any employer found to be violating the terms of agreement of an employee; (2) permitting temporary foreign workers to work in Canada for only up to four years, after which they must then wait four years until they are permitted re-entry, therein reinforcing the temporary nature of the program; and (3) the promise of a more “rigorous” assessment of employers’ genuineness in their work offer. Minister Kenney insists that “the government is taking action to protect temporary foreign workers from potential abuse
and exploitation” and that for the federal government the recent amendments are a step towards restructuring the TFWP into a more fair and equitable program (CIC 2010b).

While modifications to the TFWP were introduced as measures to protect workers from mistreatment, the four year limit does nothing but reinforce the disposability of workers. In addition, neither CIC nor CBSA have tendered any form of guidance on how the processing of work permits has been influenced by the amendments. This system, “creates opportunities for miscommunication and confusion” (Nakache and Kinoshita 2010, 10) splitting up administrative responsibilities amongst the three federal branches. The allocation of duties creates many grey areas, which can lead to consequential results detrimental to foreign workers. HRSDC has been the only branch to provide specific details on their assessment of the genuineness of a job offer, pushing for a more systemic and standardized evaluation in determining the genuineness of employer bids. Nonetheless, there is no denying that the recruitment process promotes a just-in-time approach to immigration by endorsing the growth of an “inventory of application, improving services, and reducing wait times,” while also divesting from social welfare responsibilities (CIC 2008b). Closer scrutiny of the Canadian government’s direct participation in the TAWC project, however, exposes its lack of involvement in administering a program that recruits through the Pilot Project for Occupations Requiring Lower Levels of Formal Training (NOC C and D).

Limited Role of the Canadian Government

As official administrators of the Canadian TFWP, HRSDC and CIC utilize foreign labour to advance economic growth within the country and much like the Guatemalan
government, HRSDC and CIC have assumed limited roles in monitoring the TAWC project and affording support to foreign agricultural workers who silently accept their disposable status. The only contact that occurs between the Guatemalan and Canadian government is during the tripartite annual evaluation meeting where all program representatives and administrators convene to assess the success of the program and determine if future amendments are required. The Canadian Embassy sends officials to this meeting to represent the country’s interests; however, without an agreement the Canadian government is unaccountable to the Guatemalan authorities. Even the state official from the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Relations recognizes the value of a bilateral agreement, as “it is important to fortify the program through an agreement with Canadian authorities” (Ministry of Foreign Relations official 2010). Preibisch (2010b) points out numerous examples of various member-countries of the WTO recently designing migration programs based on bilateral agreements, even with the presence of MFN exemptions, questioning the Canadian government’s rationalization of the movement away from bilateral models. Ultimately, the underlying motivation for the Canadian government is a commitment to push labour markets to align with competitive pressures, thereby evading social protections (Preibisch 2010b).

Since Canada is not a signatory to the agreement between IOM and FERME and not a party to the employment contract, even though the LMO and work permits are issued by Canadian authorities, the state continues to exonerate itself from responsibility for the general health and welfare of low-skilled migrants in the agricultural sector.

32 Canada Border Services Agency is not included in this analysis, given the minimal role of this Canadian government agency in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
HRSDC claims to have no authority to intervene in the employer-employee relationship and enforce the terms and conditions of employment. For the government of Canada, employers and workers are responsible for acquainting themselves with labour and health standards to oversee and monitor their own interests. The rhetoric of self-regulation fortifies a form of neoliberal governmentality that sanctions the federal government’s divestment of social responsibilities, making it unaccountable to citizens and documented migrants.

An HRSDC official justifies the lack of federal government involvement by insisting that “regulation and enforcement (over employment and health standards) is the responsibility of the provinces after the hiring process occurs” (HRSDC official 2010). Since the regulation of employment and health standards is managed at the provincial level, these diverging policies allow for inconsistency amongst different Canadian employers. Lack of government involvement permitted Québec agricultural employers to overcharge Guatemalan migrants for accommodations since their arrival in 2003. Only after lobbying by UFCW Canada was action finally taken by the Québec Labour Standards Board, which concluded that the $45 a week deduction for housing was in direct violation of the $30 a week maximum allowable under provincial labour standards. The decision to charge $45 for accommodation was originally negotiated between FERME and Guatemalan authorities and sanctioned by the Canadian federal government (UFCW Canada 2011). Even though three separate government branches are involved in the overall administration of the TFWP, by not taking full responsibility for the protection and well-being of temporary workers, the Canadian government merely reinforces the precarious nature of seasonal migration.
Temporary foreign workers may have the same rights as local workers on paper; however, Guatemalan migrants maintain that little is being done to uphold their employment rights while working and residing in Canada. Rather than resolving mounting conflicts, the Canadian government instead opts to rapidly increase the number of recruited low-skilled foreign workers from economically devastated countries. If low-skilled foreign workers are to be endowed with the same rights and privileges as Canadian workers, it is essential that they be granted equal access to permanent residency. Under the current structure of the TFWP, only more educated and highly skilled foreign workers are conferred with the option of permanent residency, excluding low-skilled workers from this scheme. Denial of citizenship rights, in essence, sustains the low costs of social provisions, while also expanding the pool of readily available flexible labour (Hennebry and Preibisch 2010). Government oversight and lack of accountability constricts migrants’ mobility and access to fundamental human rights. Preibisch (2010b) makes note of the federal government’s slow development of policies that take measures to protect and monitor the rights of migrant workers, while on the other hand it has been quick to react to market demands and employer needs by implementing numerous strategies to ease the process of hiring foreign workers.

By structuring the TFWP to be a demand-driven program the Canadian government forces incoming foreign workers to accept their superimposed flexible and disposable status. More importantly, by aligning the TFWP with market demands, the Canadian government justifies the institutionalized disposability of temporary foreign labour, upheld through the construction of flexibilized migrant bodies. The neoliberal initiative to appease economic interests is further intensified by permitting FERME to
acquire complete control over the TAWC project without Canadian authorities thoroughly monitoring the administrative duties of the non-state actor. By divesting from the TAWC project, the state grants FERME complete power and influence over the management of “regulated” migration programs, thereby sanctioning the privatized facilitation of foreign workers.

The production of knowledge concerning the viability of Canadian TFWPs legitimizes the federal government’s migration management approach that renders foreign workers subject to market demands. By disseminating a discourse that promotes the economic advancement of Canadian citizens through the subjectification of foreign workers, the state makes use of neoliberal ideas to sanction the disposability and flexibilization of migrants. The Canadian government’s neoliberal discourse regarding migration schemes has afforded both citizens and non-citizens a way to conceptualize and conform to the norms of the market. What is more, neoliberal strategies of rule have encouraged migrant workers to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well-being, thereby usurping the role of the welfare state (Larner 2000). Foreign workers are trained to act as active agents even prior to their arrival to Canada and expected to exercise autonomous choices that render them more amenable to the neoliberal goals of the labour-sending and labour-receiving countries.

The regressive role of the Canadian government does not imply that it is disconnected from the mistreatment and control of migrant workers. Instead, the state finds other means of governance to regulate the conduct of migrants by offloading responsibility to non-state organizations. Thus, the government is indirectly implicated in the volatile and objectionable management of migrant workers labouring in Canada.
**The Prominent Role of the Non-State Actor**

The authoritative position of non-state actors in the management of migration schemes has become increasingly powerful, as states continue to grant increased authority to employer associations and non-governmental agencies. Non-state actors hold considerable clout over migration policies and the implementation of new labour recruitment schemes. The lobbying efforts of Canadian employer associations have pushed the federal government to amend immigration policies to permit the entry of migrant labour in a manner that favours employer interests. Menz explains the increased sway that private interests hold over government strategies, by stating that: “labour migration policies are influenced by labour market interest association seeking to imprint their preferences on regulatory policies” (2009, 125). Businesses lobby for efficient amendments that intensively privatize selection and admission procedures, sanctioning the ability of employers to act as agents of the public interest and allowing them to oversee and monitor the documented migration of foreign workers (de Lange 2011).

Migration programs are more and more being structured to suit the interest of employers or agencies, endowing non-state actors with increased authority over managing the mobility of documented foreign workers. By according employers and agencies with this type of unquestioned authority, the state in essence privatizes the protection of migrant workers’ well-being in the interest of economic gains. According to de Lange (2011), with this shift of responsibility over to private interests more concerned with financial incentives, migrant rights will not be properly safeguarded or given due recourse. The government neoliberal strategy of privatizing recruitment procedures
jeopardizes the social welfare of migrants and calls into question the integrity of migration programs.

While the IOM has no economic interest in administering the program, the stronghold of the organization over the TAWC project needs to be carefully scrutinized, especially given recent changes in staff at the office of IOM Guatemala. Although the IOM is regarded as an international humanitarian agency for aiding the movement of migrants and refugees, unlike many other NGOs the organization has the finances, resources, and political clout in Guatemala to influence government decisions regarding issues of migration. FERME, in turn, has a vested economic interest in holding sway over the entrance of foreign workers into the province of Québec. As an employer association with a firm grip on the agricultural industry in Québec, FERME has been able to strengthen command over the TAWC project by lobbying the federal government to meet employment demands of growers in the province.

In shifting away from the SAWP bilateral framework and towards a more employee-employer contract structure, the Canadian government has abdicated all recruitment responsibilities to employers and agencies (Preibisch 2010b). Thus, the TAWC project is a daunting example of the perils of offloading administrative responsibilities to non-state actors that place economic interests above all else. Non-state actors are prime example of disciplinary institutions that utilize technologies of self-regulation to shape the conduct of Guatemalan migrants to conform to and accommodate the neoliberal agenda of the state. The restricted role of the government and the predominance of market mechanisms have allowed non-state actors to acquire greater power and social control over the behaviour and actions of migrants disciplined and
trained to succumb to an agenda that instructs them to become responsible self-regulating individuals.

The Role of the International Organization for Migration

As the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, the IOM has attained a prominent reputation for the management of projects geared towards facilitating and regulating economic migration and addressing forced migration. The IOM strives to uphold a mandate “dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants” (IOM 2011b, 1). In Guatemala, an IOM office was opened to tender professional services relating to migration activities and efficient and transparent recruitment facilitating services. Globally, the IOM has over 420 field locations in 125 countries and aims to expand employers’ recruitment schemes through a business-like model that advertises services to employers and migrants alike.

According to the IOM, circular migration through temporary labour movements spurs the return and circulation of skills and other assets beneficial to the development initiatives of Guatemala. By assuming administrative duties of the TAWC project, a scheme originally created by the Guatemalan government, IOM officials also accepted responsibility of overseeing the protection and safeguarding of temporary migrants. In offloading these duties, the Guatemalan government awarded the IOM with a certificate of no accusations and no penalties, giving the IOM impunity from any wrongdoings and allowing the organization to be unaccountable to the state.
IOM Guatemala touts the TAWC project as a program that (1) ensures that Guatemalan workers return to their home communities; (2) plays a role in meeting the labour needs required by the Canadian agriculture sector; and (3) provides support for an improved quality of life for participating Guatemalans (IOM 2008a). For Delbert Field, the current Chief of Mission of IOM Guatemala, the TAWC project is “more than a commercial operation since we are working under our constitution and we are adding the value of the presence of the administration of an international organization, which means things are going to be transparent and consistent” (Field 2010). In the recruitment package, IOM Guatemala also endorses the TAWC project as a “one-stop-shop” service, managing all administrative duties from candidate selection up until pre-departure, in addition to post-arrival and re-integration services (IOM 2009). This inclusive recruitment approach has endowed IOM officials with unquestioned authority over the TAWC project, an operation accused of corruption and wrongdoings in the past. Before discussing the shifts in the IOM Guatemala administration, there is first a need to assess the duties and facilitating role of an organization that for years managed the TAWC project without state scrutiny.

Although the recruitment and selection of potential candidates is convoluted by a step-by-step process, it still requires critical analysis to comprehend authority figures’ management approach to the TAWC project. The IOM, in correspondence with the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Relations and Ministry of Labour and Social Provision, generated a standardized process of recruiting and assembling all the necessary documents to send seasonal agricultural workers to Canada. According to Delbert Field, “we would be overwhelmed if our recruiting was not low profile. If we put up a sign it
would be crazy to do so. We recruit in the field. We do not recruit here, in our office” (Field 2010). Rather than posting advertisements for employment opportunities to the general public to fill the limited requests in Canada the recruitment of candidates generally occurs in communities and municipalities of different Guatemalan departments.

The Ministry of Foreign Relations explains that, as recruiters,

We provide advanced notice where we are going with the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Ministry of Labour and Social Provisions, and IOM. We situate ourselves out in the rural areas and we talk to the people who are interested. They start filling out the papers and are given a short interview. We also make sure if they know how to read, write and do basic mathematics and basically evaluate them to determine if they are good candidates. We also hold a presentation for the people who are interested in travelling, and their spouses are permitted to attend. During these talks we tell them how long they are going for and we also explain to them that they need the support of their wives. Because of a lot of the time they are in Canada and their wives are not patient and want them to return. We need to make sure that the wives are also agreement that they are going to be travelling. (Ministry of Foreign Relations Official 2010)

In 2003, the first year the pilot project was launched, four municipalities were selected by the IOM: Santiago Sacatepéquez, Sumpango Sacatepéquez, San Juan Sacatepéquez, and Tecpan Chimaltenango. When IOM officials first began to arrive in these small highland communities, residents were wary of the validity of the program. They were concerned that officials coming from the capital were part of a scam to extort money from them, which, according to IOM officials is a common occurrence in many small rural communities across the country. Imposters would arrive into villages and towns dressed in blue vests, like those worn by IOM officials, with the promise of sending Guatemalans abroad. In addition to these schemes, the level of political corruption and criminality has left many Guatemalans with a mistrust of political and authoritative figures, given the long years of suffering experienced by marginalized
Indigenous communities of highland Guatemala. Only after the IOM established strong rapport with the first group of migrants travelling to Canada were other Guatemalans more open and eager to the prospect of being included in the TAWC project.

The IOM, accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Ministry of Labour and Social Provision, head out into the field several times each year in search of potential candidates. According to an IOM coordinator, the selection of the community or region is based on “a map where agricultural areas are identified” and an area mirroring the climate of Canada, similar to the milder highlands of Guatemala (IOM Official 2010). IOM Guatemala officials assert that the initiative of recruiting Guatemalans from highland coffee regions has been quite successful, since migrants from these communities have proven to adapt quite well to fast-paced workplace environments. In addition, potential candidates are expected to be financially supporting a family, which guarantees their return at the end of the seasonal contract. Field sheds light on the process by explaining how the organization seeks out individuals ready to dedicate six months of their lives to hard and repetitive labour. More importantly, officials look for certain types of personalities, for

Someone who is not committed to immigrating, but for someone who is willing to sacrifice a certain amount of their time to improve their family’s situation. We are looking for people who demonstrate, at the beginning of the interview, a seriousness to hunker down and do a job that is not just oriented to their own self-betterment. I think that is why employers appreciate Guatemalans. And we hear that the Guatemalans are very popular not only because of their stature in the industry, but because they also have the right attitude towards work to stay for six months. (Field 2010)

By targeting these traits and characteristics in potential candidates, IOM officials supply employers with “ideal” foreign workers who contribute to the economic success of the
Canadian agricultural sector. More importantly, the IOM recruits bodies more amenable to complying with submissive and self-regulating roles.

Applicants are interviewed and carefully assessed to determine if they conform to the selection requirements of the project. The collected data is registered in the Recruitment Form and entered in a database of temporary agricultural workers. By assigning individual candidates codes based on their qualifications, the IOM can then match up employer requests sent by FERME. Additionally, potential candidates must make a payment to cover expenses amassed from gathering all the required documents, which includes $130 US for the Canadian visa, costs for the medical test, costs for local medical insurance for family members (Medical Service Plan), and the departure tax.33

The Medical Service Plan was set up by IOM to supply public health services to families of migrants remaining in Guatemala; however, many interviewed participants complained that they are often required to travel into larger cities to access a service only offered in select medical centres. Migrants are denied the choice of opting out of the Medical Service Plan and must concede to this stipulation if they wish to participate in the TAWC project. Yet according to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, “the purpose of this medical insurance is to diminish the return of migrants because of medical problems. As well as to create a culture of going to the doctor through the use of insurance” (Ministry of Foreign Relations Official 2010). Another questionable charge prior to 2010 was the $480 USD bond that workers were obligated to pay to travel to Canada, placing even more economic burdens on migrants and their families to amass this large sum of

33 As previously noted, article 34 of the Guatemalan labour code indicates that all costs accumulated must be covered by the employer or government.
money. The rationale behind the bond was to secure the return of migrant workers at the end of the harvesting season. Change in IOM administration put an end to the obligatory bond; upon entering the position of Chief of Mission of IOM, Delbert Field recognized the futility of the bond and the pressure it imposed on migrant families to collect the necessary funds. This large sum of money was inaccessible to families who struggle to pay for the bare economic necessities. The organization is currently working towards giving back deposits to all Guatemalan migrants.

The documents required for admission to the project include a valid passport and photocopy of first page; nine passport-size color photos; a certificate of criminal record; a original and photocopy of agricultural recommendation letter; two photocopies of education certificates; two photocopies of marriage or common-law marriage certificates; a photocopy of the Guatemalan identity card; and a receipt for water or electricity services that indicates the address of the applicant. Once all the necessary documents are collected, candidates then fill out a visa request form, initiating the process of opening individual worker files. The IOM sends the visa application to the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala City, along with all the required documents. According to the Canadian Embassy office in Guatemala, approximately 18,000 files are processed each year for the seven countries in Central America, 16,000 of which are for temporary residence. The Canadian Embassy then makes the Medical Test Form available so that IOM personnel can take candidates to a physician, who then sends the results to the IOM office in Trinidad and Tobago to assess workers’ physical suitability for temporary agricultural work in Canada. If the returned medical tests reveal that the applicant is suitable as an
agricultural worker, he/she can be assigned to an employer request or kept on the reserve list for urgent requests.

Workers approved to labour temporarily in Canada are summoned to IOM Guatemalan headquarters to be briefed in an orientation session on the trip and rules of behaviour they are obliged to observe throughout the duration of their contract. An IOM official insists that the orientation sessions are a required service, making available details on “how to prepare a suitcase, what to take to Canada, what their rights are, what happens if they become ill, and what happens if they need some assistance. They also know prior to departure what their wages are, how much they have to pay for housing, and how much they are paying for medical insurance in Canada. So it is very complete service” (IOM Official 2010). The orientation package distributed to migrant workers not only prepares them for the trip but also urges the adoption of a demeanour that conforms to and accommodates the expectations and demands of future employers. Additionally, the orientation session and package both ingrain migrants with the notion that they travel to Canada as representatives of the national interests of Guatemala. As such, migrants are expected to act as responsible and hard-working Guatemalan ambassadors to secure their spot the following year and uphold the success and integrity of the TAWC project, thereby opening the door for other Guatemalans yearning for entrance into the prestigious program.

The disciplinary language employed during the orientation session and in the packages presses recruited Guatemalans to become self-regulating workers, while also making them accountable for conduct deemed “inappropriate” by administrators, government officials, and employers. In the orientation package, Guatemalans are
explicitly instructed on how to look after their hygiene (being told to bathe daily), how to behave while living in the residence provided by their employers, and how to respect the rules of the workplace. In one of the past IOM orientation packages, migrants were told to “only do activities you are assigned to and not distract yourself with any group or association,” to “not consume alcoholic beverages or drugs during [your] days of work” and to “take care of your hygiene and bathe yourself and use deodorant every day, to brush your teeth, to shave, to cut your nails, to keep your hair short in order to avoid lice.” Upon review of the package, the new Chief of Mission revised much of the language and omitted instructions pertaining to hygiene, given the derogatory nature of the instructions.

On the day of their trip, workers present themselves at the airport with a prepared file containing all the required documents for employers and customs officials. IOM personnel accompany workers to the airport, allocating all the necessary documents and instructions, reiterating the importance of representing Guatemala in a positive light by complying with employer demands.

As previously mentioned, prior to the recruitment and arrival of Guatemalan migrants in Canada, agricultural employers interested in hiring temporary agricultural workers must first advise FERME on the number of workers needed, while also obtaining the required LMO from HRSDC and other necessary documents. FERME is responsible for assessing and approving the requests, then sending them to the IOM Guatemala office, along with copies to the Guatemalan Embassy in Canada. Requests detail the number of workers needed, the starting date, the duration of the work contract, and the type of crop cultivated on the farm. Migrant candidates are then assigned to request groups and once a group has a complete number of work permit applications, they are then sent to HRSDC.
Once back in Guatemala at the end of their contract, workers fill out a return notice form and present the employer’s letter of recommendation, indicating whether or not they have been requested for the following season. If a worker is not named by their employer the IOM may attempt to match up the worker with another employer, place them on a waiting list, or potentially remove them from the program. Delbert Field rationalizes this method, explaining that “the priority is first to the workers that are named. If there are possibilities for other employers we send them to other employers. The evaluation in recent years indicates that a lot of employers are very satisfied with their workers. A lot of the time employers ask that they not be sent a new worker because they trust older workers. That is something that has increased in recent years” (Field 2010).

There is no denying that IOM Guatemala has been quite professional in following the proper channels and procedures when recruiting and processing workers before their departure to Canada. Nevertheless, the IOM has been criticized for profiting from the international migration of humans by operating under a business-like model. As a humanitarian organization, the IOM validates all decisions and activities under the premise that the international entity acts on behalf of the well-being of migrants. The use of human rights terminology such as “protection,” “opportunity,” “assistance,” and “partnership” and the promise of safeguarding the interest of migrants mask how the international organization serves the calculated neoliberal agenda of “managed migration,” and reinforces institutionalized control over the flow of migrants (Ashutosh and Mountz 2011). The use of a business-like model to operate the TAWC project led to
the implementation of questionable actions and policies by the previous IOM administration, under the leadership of Günther Müssig.

When the TAWC project was originally launched, Müssig was the IOM Guatemala Chief of Mission and operated the migration program with unconditional authority. Many Guatemalan migrants, especially those blacklisted from the program, were frustrated by the lack of transparency and accountability of the administration working under Günther Müssig. Several grievances of humiliating and discriminatory treatment and corruption in the office of IOM Guatemala were lodged by migrants who found IOM officials to be disrespectful and offensive. Many were treated with contempt and disrepute upon arriving at the IOM office in Guatemala City, scolded by staff who dismissed the inquiries and concerns of migrants. Antonio, a Guatemalan blacklisted from the program and with ten children to support, explains that “at the IOM office we are told that if we want to keep on working we need to stay out of the office and not speak out” (Guatemalan migrant worker 24 2010). Additionally, Antonio claims that IOM officials warned migrants of the dangers of politically organizing while working in Canada: “They [IOM] said that over there [in Canada] we cannot form an organization because you can be removed from the program” (Guatemalan migrant worker 24 2010). Distressed and alarmed by the thought of losing the opportunity to work in Canada, migrants submit to the disciplinary tactics of figures of authority and remain silent even while working abroad and away from the watchful eye of administrators.

An article published by the national Prensa Libre (2009) newspaper in Guatemala claimed that money funnelled into the IOM by the national government was improperly handled. Additionally, the article criticized the Guatemalan government for giving large
sums of funds to the IOM for the development of various projects unrelated to migration issues. The Guatemalan government continually subcontracted the IOM to execute a range of development projects not limited to the management of human migration. The cost of the projects totalled 786 million quetzales ($98 million US) between 2004 and 2008, of which the IOM made a total commission of 51 million quetzales ($6 million US) at a rate of 4 percent. The article questioned why projects like the construction of schools and installation of basic services such as water and electricity were not directly handled by the government, but instead offloaded to an organization whose sole purpose is to protect human migrants. Additionally, *Prensa Libre* (2009) accused IOM Guatemala, under the administration of Günther Müssig, of a long history of corrupt dealings that included the disappearance of money from projects subcontracted to the organization. The director of INCEDES confirms these allegations, claiming that “IOM manages funds that have nothing to do with the organization, like constructing roads and parks. There has been corruption within the organization and I can only hope that with the new IOM administration things will finally change” (INCEDES official 2010).

According to Ashutosh and Mountz, “the ‘good work’ done by the IOM serves to obscure some of its ‘shady’ operations” (2011, 28) surfacing all across the globe. Ashutosh and Mountz (2011) raise concerns over the IOM’s involvement in managing an offshore refugee detention centre in Naura as part of Australia’s “Pacific Solution,” a policy designed to intercept and detain individuals at sea before they can reach Australia and make asylum claims. Although the detention centres in remote locations created unease over the protection of human rights, the IOM, contracted by the Australian government, successfully operated these centres through the use of international human
rights terminology and reliance on the organization’s reputation as internationally renowned facilitator of human migration. What is more, the establishment of a contractual relationship with states not only conceals abuses but also creates ambiguity as to who is responsible for human rights violations carried out by the IOM on behalf of partnering states (Ashutosh and Mountz 2011). 

Decentralization of power over the mobility of migrants grants IOM Guatemala, a non-state actor, with unwavering authority over the movement of Guatemalans seasonally labouring in Canada. The offloading of responsibilities to IOM reflects the ways neoliberalism reconfigures the governance of migration to avoid privileging of the state as the executive body of power. Leander and Munster (2007) argue the neoliberal governmentality decentralizes the responsibility of the government and traces it to other social agents and disciplinary institutions that promote a neoliberal discourse of self-regulation. As a disciplinary institute, IOM Guatemalan gained unquestioned regulatory control over the mobility of migrants and the functioning of the TAWC project. I would argue that IOM initiatives reflect a shift away from social welfare program towards the promotion of more market-oriented projects that instruct migrants to become responsible self-regulated individuals who manage their own social needs. The techniques exercised by IOM create neoliberal subjectivities who become active and marketable citizens, burdened with upholding the success of the migration program. Administrative changes in IOM Guatemala, however, have transformed the organization’s management approach and also relocated power to another non-state actor with even greater vested economic interests in shaping Guatemalan migrants to become flexible and self-regulating agents.
In 2009, Delbert Field was ushered in as the new Chief of Mission of IOM Guatemala and began to rebuild the integrity of the local office, a process that entailed an overhaul of the TAWC project. With the old Chief of Mission gone, the Canadian-Guatemalan migration program underwent many changes to better meet the needs of migrants and erect safeguards. Field was committed to making certain that migrants travelling to Canada were treated with the respect and dignity owed to them since the inception of the program. Upon their return from Canada, migrants now fill out an anonymous feedback sheet, imparting comments on how the program can improve. The collected information is for internal use only, employed to adequately respond to the complaints and suggestions of foreign workers. The anonymous questionnaire allows for frank feedback, often too difficult to attain from migrants afraid of speaking out for fear of losing their jobs. According to Field, frank feedback is needed “in order to improve the program and keep the program honest” (Field 2011).

As previously noted, the 4000 quetzales bond was also eliminated after HRSDC and CIC officials made it clear to the new Chief of Mission that the Canadian government was not comfortable with this charge. The decision to drop the bond coincided with the Guatemala political campaign organized by AWA and UFCW Canada, supporting allies who valued this amendment as a positive step forward in dismantling the systemic barriers of the program. After mounting pressure from AGUND, Global Workers Justice Alliance, and UFCW Canada, Field agreed to meet with workers blacklisted from the program during the period when Müssig managed IOM Guatemala. By agreeing to meet with blacklisted workers, Field opened the door to a group of Guatemalans long ignored by the previous administration. During the course of amendments to IOM Guatemala,
there was also major overhaul of the IOM staff overseeing the TAWC project, weeding out bias and unprofessional officials.

At the end of 2010, FERME notified Field that the Québec growers’ association wished to terminate its partnership with the IOM and henceforth no longer required the organization’s service. Even though the contract with IOM was not up for renewal until the following year, FERME was granted permission to sever the LOU with IOM and independently operate the recruitment of migrants in the province of Québec. Field explained that FERME decided to terminate the agreement for financial reasons, as the Québec growers’ association deemed the organization’s charge of approximately $120 per worker to cover administrative fees far too high for employers. The IOM Chief of Mission makes it clear that “they (FERME) did not accept my proposal that I have some kind of minimum coordination with them for the benefit of the workers” (Field 2010). Instead, FERME resolved to assume all administrative responsibilities for the recruitment of Guatemalan migrants both in Québec and the country of origin. After severing all ties with IOM Guatemala, FERME opened up an office in Guatemala City, allowing them to acquire direct and complete command over the program.

While IOM still continues to work with various agricultural employers in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, the number of workers this organization sends to Canada has significantly dropped, given that the large majority of Guatemalans migrants travel to the province of Québec. With absolute control over the mobility of Guatemalan foreign workers travelling to work on farms in Québec, FERME has completely privatized the migration program, assuming the authority to manage foreign workers as it sees fit. Prior to terminating their LOU with the IOM, the growers’ association also solidified an
agreement with the Honduran government, in 2010, with the intention of expanding the pool of readily available foreign agricultural workers. The neoliberal agenda of economic advancement through the creation of self-regulated individuals is coming to fruition, as FERME continues to garner even more clout over managed migration schemes.

The Authority of FERME

FERME, a growers’ association administered by a board of agricultural producers, was first founded in 1989 to assist Québec employers in facilitating the recruitment of foreign workers. FERME’s mission is to ease employers’ labour demands, acting as the intermediary between employers and governments, organizations and agencies. In addition to organizing and administrating the process of recruiting migrants, FERME created a travel agency in 2005 to diminish the hurdles of bringing foreign workers to Québec.

In an article written for FOCALPoint, René Mantha, the director of FERME, maintains that the growing demand for foreign labour in the Québec agricultural sector is the result of (1) a drop in local birth rates; (2) a change in the local labour force as a result of improved economic and employment opportunities; and (3) a drop in the number of farms but also a rise in land suitable for cultivation for large scale farms still in operation. According to Mantha (2011), local producers are left with no other option than to turn to foreign workers to cover the growing demands for agricultural labour in the province.

Québec agricultural employers first began to recruit Mexican and Caribbean foreign workers through the SAWP in 1974. After the federal pilot project for low-skilled foreign workers came into effect in 2002, Québec farmers became the first
Canadian employers to recruit Guatemalan foreign workers. With the growing demand for foreign labour, it became necessary for FERME to acquire other governments interested in sending nationals to work abroad, but more importantly, to diversify the source-countries of foreign labour arriving into the province. In 2010, FERME signed a recruitment agreement with the Honduran government, quite distinct from the LOU affirmed with IOM Guatemala. Essentially, the new agreement gives FERME authority over the recruitment process and minimizes the role of the Honduran government.

During the 2011 harvesting season, FERME intended to recruit approximately 300 Honduran workers onto Québec farms, with the intention of steadily increasing this number over the coming years (Mantha 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mexican (QC/N.B.)</th>
<th>Guatemalan</th>
<th>Caribbean (Jamaica)</th>
<th>Honduras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2637</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2649</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2835</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3002</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3033</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3037</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3536</td>
<td>2934</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4200 (approx.)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>300 (approx. in 2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 – Source: FERME 2011 and Mantha 2011
Since the inception of FERME, there have been rapid changes in the demographic composition of foreign workers in the province of Québec, especially with the introduction of the pilot low-skilled scheme. Employer preference is a labour strategy employed by FERME to advance farmers’ economic interest. As the first group of agricultural foreign workers granted to entry into Canada in 1966, Jamaicans secured a dominant standing when the SAWP was first launched. The entrance of Mexico into the program in 1974 brought about a quick rise in the number of Mexican migrants, while the number of Jamaican workers stagnated. Employer preference in Québec quickly changed once Guatemalan foreign workers were introduced into the agricultural landscape. In under a decade, the number of Guatemalans working recruited into Québec rapidly matched those coming from Mexico. FERME further expanded the pool of readily available foreign workers by granting employers the option of hiring migrants from Honduras. By broadening the national/ethnic selection of migrants, employers are afforded the option to switch employees if and when they are dissatisfied with workers from a specific country (see Table 5). This system of disposability creates competition amongst workers and compels them to succumb to the will of employers.

According to Preibisch and Binford (2007, 16), racial/national shifts in labour force compositions in the agricultural industry are driven by employers’ “quest for a more docile, exploitable labour force.” “Country surfing” (Preibisch and Binford 2007) is a process whereby employers pit foreign workers against each other in an endeavour to find the most flexible and reliable labour source. The practice is in complete opposition of Article 16 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedom, which forbids discriminatory practices when hiring, employing, or firing a person (Québec Commission
of Human Rights and Youth Rights 2011). Since discrimination is defined as the
distinction, exclusion, or preference of certain individuals on the basis of race, colour,
sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, religion, political convictions, language,
ethnic or national origin, social conditions, or a handicap under Article 10 in the Québec
charter, employers and FERME are blatantly ignoring safeguards that should be protected
by the provincial government (Québec Commission of Human Rights and Youth Rights
2011).

The growth of a disposable pool of foreign labour and creation of a competitive
work environment grants FERME and Québec employers an authoritative mechanism to
discipline the migrant body. The practice of changing labour-sending countries, or
threatening to do so, has created tension amongst migrant groups returning for a
subsequent season (Preibisch and Bindford 2007). The competition between different
national/ethnic groups works to the advantage of FERME and agricultural employers, as
migrants try to outperform one another in the fields. When Guatemalan agricultural
workers were first brought into Québec, Mexicans were intimidated by the presence and
rapid growth in the number of newly arrived migrants seen as in direct competition with
them. Mexican migrants working in and around the community of St. Rémi, Québec
constantily spoke of the threat of being replaced by Guatemalans if their work
performance was not in accordance with employers’ expectations. Andrea Gálvez, the
former director of AWA Québec says the fears of Mexicans are justified: “Mexicans are
scared of losing their jobs, and I think it is a fear that is quite founded. We [AWA]
continue to work with them to say that it is not the fault of Guatemalan workers that they
are losing their jobs, it is the employers who are unjustly firing you” (Gálvez 2010).
When Guatemalans first began to arrive on farms across Québec, Mexicans were hesitant to welcome them with open arms, given the threat that newly arrived workers posed to the security of their jobs. Estefan, a Guatemalan migrant who has been travelling to Canada for more than five years, gives an account of the strained relationship between the two groups.

In the beginning and for the first five years the relationship was not very good because in the past there were mostly Mexicans. When Guatemalans began to arrive, Mexicans felt as though we were stealing something from them. The relationship was not very good. But little by little and with time things improved. They started to realize that Guatemalans were working very hard. Now we get along and have stronger friendships with Mexicans. (Guatemalan migrant worker 7 2010)

Nonetheless, more Mexicans discern the tension created between foreign workers sharing cultural and social similarities, with the aim of enhancing production and furthering the economic interests of Canadian employers. When asked to speak of his relationship with Guatemalans, Elian, a Mexican worker claims it is good: “I get along with them quite well. We cannot be racist because we are both made of flesh and bones. Guatemalans push themselves to work quite hard and sometimes in excess. The expectation is then to make us work just as hard” (Mexican migrant worker 1 2010).

Increasingly, Canadian employers are attracted to the prospect of hiring Guatemalans. According to Dr. Kerry Preibisch, employers’ perception of Guatemalans as being “a more malleable and exploitable workforce than Mexicans” reinforces a competitive working environment where migrants must outperform one another to safeguard their jobs (Preibisch 2010a). Selective recruitment of Guatemalans is strategy employed by FERME and Québec agricultural employers to also respond to the rise in political organization amongst foreign workers. Unionization of agricultural workers is
regarded as damaging to the agricultural industry, and as a result, the mobilization of Mexican workers, supported by UFCW, poses an imminent threat to employers. When interviewed for my study, Dr. Preibisch attributes the rise of migrant militancy to employers’ strategy to switch from one group of workers to another.

If you look at the history of the agricultural labour force in Ontario and Québec you see changing social compositions of the temporary visa worker population every time a group seems to get more rights. You can even see that with domestic migrant workers. Jamaicans workers were becoming more empowered. Certainly there is labour replacement that takes place. (Preibisch 2010a)

The historical pattern of ethnic/national worker preference raises serious questions about the Canadian federal government sanctioning of FERME’s procurement of administrative tasks over the recruitment of Guatemalan and Honduran migrants. Now that FERME has broadened its options by opening offices in Guatemala and Honduras, there is a real need to question the future strategies of an organization that places the interest of agricultural employers above all else.

The reinforcement of neoliberal governmentality by FERME as a disciplinary institution reflects the preference given to market mechanisms over bureaucratic apparatuses as a way to control the conduct of migrants. While IOM Guatemala may have promoted similar techniques of social control, FERME has greater vested economic interests in ensuring the success of a program that supplies flexibilized labour. By acquiring command over the actions and behaviours of migrants, through the expansion of the organization’s administrative scope (firing the IOM and handling administration itself), FERME capitalizes on the self-regulating migrant body. Techniques of social control are further institutionalized as FERME continues to acquire social control over the growing pool of foreign labour from the Global South. With the Guatemalan and
Canadian government unwilling to question or challenge the growing monopoly FERME holds over foreign agricultural workers, this private firm will continue to retain command of the migrant body.

Concluding Remarks

Through a form of regulated subordination authority figures are not only able to legitimize social control of workers’ mobility these forces also stifle migrants’ ability to awaken their consciousness through ideas of empowerment, liberation, or equality. The use of technologies of self-regulation to influence migrant workers’ conduct across multiple spaces normalizes the neoliberal migration management approach of the Canadian and Guatemalan governments and non-state actors, thereby reinforcing disenfranchised workers’ conformity to and accommodation of economic market demands. This mode of neoliberal governmentality advances the normalization of a political-economic project that restructures power relations and turns migrants into autonomous workers. Although workers may not be brutally coerced into a subordinate status, the process of submission urges them to willingly surrender to dominant ideology embedded in their cognitive behaviour.

The effectiveness of the aforementioned disciplinary tactics illustrates the clout possessed by authoritative actors in aligning Guatemalans with a neoliberal agenda that produces profitable gains for both the state and administrators of the TAWC project. A commitment to this neoliberal scheme has led both governments to adopt a business model in privatizing and subcontracting the TAWC project, while still touting governing
techniques that encourage migrants to become self-regulating individuals who take responsibility for their own social welfare. The authority and power held by IOM Guatemala and FERME have sanctioned the curtailment of the flow of empowering political ideas and tools, by selecting Guatemalans whose identity can be easily manipulated to maximize disciplinary institutions regulatory power. This form of social control transcends borders and produces political spaces that solidify migrant conformity.

As discussed in Chapter Two, rule over migrant political consciousness is obtained by means of passive consent that emerges through a process of denying and barring access to conceptual political tools (Gramsci 1971). Thus, the disciplinary tactic of passive consent stifles discontent amongst Guatemalan workers, therein suppressing their transnational political identity. Gramscian concepts of hegemonic rule and resistance carry on where Foucault left off in his discussion of governmentality, advancing the notion that hegemonic rule over the political activities of subjectified Guatemalans often incites a form of resistance through political consciousness. The following chapter dissects the reshaping of migrant political consciousness and political action by examining Guatemalan farmworkers’ submission to the superimposed role of disposability and flexibility. More importantly, I explore the ways migrants conspire to fight back against the exploitation inherent in the system that hires them by acquiring tools of empowerment.
Chapter 6

Empowering Political Consciousness: Migrant Agency and its Allies

_Necessity is blind until it becomes conscious. Freedom is the consciousness of necessity_
– Karl Marx (year unknown)

Introduction

Born into a country plagued with political corruption and economic instability, then propelled into a government-sponsored migration program that institutionalizes their disposability, Guatemalan migrants are obliged to succumb to a lifetime of uncertainty and exploitation, unable to contest mistreatment or oppression for fear of reprisal by authoritative figures. The previous chapter discussed the authority of state and administrators over the production of “ideal” marketable migrant workers who embody traits that appeal to Canadian agricultural employers. In assessing the human agency of the Guatemalan migrant body, however, it becomes clear that the transnational process of moving seasonally between multiple spaces is not a homogenous experience. Instead, the politicized spaces through which migrants flow, and in which they find themselves situated contribute to the variability of transnational identities.

This chapter moves away from employing neoliberal governmentality as a conceptual framework towards an engagement of Gramscian notions concerning hegemony and consciousness. A Gramscian conceptual framework bears in mind the means by which class relations and the dominance of the state and certain institutions fortify and normalize the ideology of the ruling hegemonic forces. The shift from
Foucauldian to Gramscian concepts is also attributed to notions of counter hegemony and politically conscious opposition to hegemonic rule by gaining access to empowering political tools and ideas. Empowerment of the consciousness is critical to countering exploitative and discriminatory conditions that render Guatemalan migrants vulnerable to the demands of authority figures. What is more, an assessment of the human agency of Guatemalan migrants sheds light on how the transnational process of seasonal migration affords this group of workers the opportunity to cultivate consciousness by acquiring new tools and ideas, thereby enhancing their political expressions to challenge the authority of various agencies of power.

The purpose of the following chapter is to examine the human agency of Guatemalan migrant workers in (re)shaping their transnational political identity, by analyzing how the transnational process of seasonally migrating impacts political consciousness and political (in)activity. In doing so, the key problems and conflicts that Guatemalans confront as transnational migrants should be first outlined, with a particular focus on how their relationship with Mexicans shapes their quotidian realities. I opt for a framework that traces the (re)formation of migrants’ transnational political identity by conceptually delineating the cyclical experience of migrating and following Guatemalans’ transnational journey of flowing through multiple spaces. The chapter ends with a discussion of the evolving nature of migrant consciousness, empowered by supporting allies that endow them with the political resources to overcome the oppressive nature of seasonal migration.
The Key Struggles of Guatemalan Migrants

As established in the previous chapter, to gain access to labour opportunities in Canada, Guatemalan migrants are first obliged to accept and conform to employers’ demands, inevitably submitting to the conditions of being disposable labour. Exposed to systemic forms of exploitation engrained in the TAWC project, Guatemalans yield to mistreatment at the hands of employers, administrators, and government officials in Canada and Guatemala, as a result of their dependence on the financial gains obtained from seasonal migration. The key struggles and difficulties they tackle as migrant workers influence them to engage in and/or shy away from varying levels of political action, as a way to cope with the mounting pressures.

In summarizing the key issues of mistreatment and exploitation disrupting the lives of migrant workers, three separate groupings are delineated to identify the encroaching obstacles generated by the employer-driven program. The three intertwining struggles are broken down into (1) lack of support and assistance; (2) dependence on the TAWC project; and (3) diverging rights from SAWP counterparts. Although the weight and severity of each problem and issue impact individual Guatemalan migrants differently, as a collective they share a mutual fear of speaking out against wrongdoings and oppressive treatment. The fear of denouncing mistreatment and abuse at the hands of authority figures intensifies the vulnerability of migrants, coercing them to silently succumb to the burdens forced upon them as submissive workers.

Migrant workers’ lack of knowledge regarding access to certain rights largely stems from the absence of support and assistance from figures of authority. While assistance from supporting groups comes with the promise of healthier working and
living conditions, with little to no aid migrant workers are left alone to contend with a series of mounting difficulties. Guatemalan migrants have voiced concern over their volatile relationship with employers and consulate officials, unable to grasp the lack of interest on the part of authority figures. Cristina, for instance, feels uninformed and unsupported as a migrant worker: “We are only given a sheet of paper and on this paper all of our rights are explained to us. We have little contact with the consulate because they are too far away to be reached” (Guatemalan migrant worker 2 2010). Incapable of contending with the escalating problems, Guatemalans continue to confront a series of issues, including inaccessibility to much-needed documents (such as Social Insurance Number cards), restriction to the farm with minimal social interaction, language barriers, powerlessness to contest mistreatment, and the threat of being barred from the program.

Left without channels of support migrants often turn to supporting allies; however, even that proves to be a huge risk to vulnerable workers. Migrant workers who approach UFCW/AWA for advice on labour-related issues often compromise the security of their jobs, given that authority figures deem contact with unions grounds for termination. Antonio left a large family and his crop fields behind in hopes of finding better opportunities working seasonally in Canada. Disenchanted by the TAWC project, he explains that as a seasonal farmworker he is forced to deal with “restrictions set by the employer against talking to other people. They do not allow us to talk to the consulate and they prohibit us from talking to people from the support centres (AWA)” (Guatemalan migrant worker 24 2010). Lack of assistance by employers and administrators of the program and an inability to maintain contact with supporting groups
consigns Guatemalan migrants with a double disadvantage, left alone to cope with a damaging and unstable workplace environment.

Although Guatemalan workers never alluded to their dependence on the TAWC project during interviews, their involvement in the migration scheme produced a strong reliance on seasonally migrating to Canada each year. In order to assure their recruitment into the TAWC project, workers often go into debt, taking out huge loans and struggling to keep afloat with employers denying them wages and hours promised in their contract. The economic restraints burdening families back home also create a vicious cycle of dependence on seasonal migration, inducing many workers to return to Canada year after year despite their desire to remain with family. Estefan works as a taxi driver in Guatemala because he does not have land to cultivate like many others in his community. He describes his dependency on labour in Canada, which allows him to obtain the “basic necessities”:

In Guatemala one cannot do much to get ahead in life. One needs an education or degree to do something better. The first time I went over there [Canada] I realized that working a season or a few months helped you to do a lot of things here [Guatemala]. The first year I travelled I realized that I was earning more than what I made in my own home country. I then realized that I had to keep on travelling. One looks for work and it may be a good job, but one cannot pay for the basic necessities. Even if you have a small family, you still try to give them the best life. As a result we are motivated to go [to Canada] in order to give our children the best life. (Guatemalan migrant worker 7 2010)

For Guatemalan migrants, the sense of being locked into the program influences many to accept that no other viable alternatives are available, unable to shake the feeling of being trapped into a form of indentureship.

Without the protection of a bilateral agreement, the rights of migrant workers under the TAWC project are quite distinct from those under the more long-standing
SAWP. Guatemalan workers have not come to grasp why SAWP counterparts have fewer restrictions placed on their mobility and freedom, while labouring and residing in Canada. For Claudia, who is a housekeeper back in Guatemala, “Mexicans do not have the same worries because if they do not do a good job and they are not called back then they can pick another farm to go to. They have other opportunities” (Guatemalan migrant worker 8 2010). Confused and left in the dark, Guatemalans resign themselves to the fact that SAWP counterparts possess more solidified protections covering issues of health coverage, housing, and employer transfers.

Guatemalans speak of being set apart from other farm workers and the creation of a competitive working environment where migrants are pitted against one another in the name of competitive advantage. Andrés works on a farm in St. Rémi, Québec and he affirms that “employers had told me that Mexicans are pushier about their rights. There are things that Mexicans do not want to do and things that they think they are too dignified to do. A Guatemalan will do jobs that a Mexican is not willing to do. For example, cleaning a washroom without gloves” (Guatemalan migrant worker 5 2010). The unfair characterization of Guatemalans as docile and submissive workers, and the employers’ creation of a competitive relationship with Mexicans compels Guatemalans agricultural workers to succumb to the will and expectations imposed upon them by authoritative figures. In the end, the mounting concerns and struggles incited by regulated seasonal migration lock migrants into a life of oppression, coercing them to accept their superimposed flexible and disposable status.
Comparison between the Transnational Experience of Mexicans and Guatemalans

Discussion of the competition and tensions generated between Mexican and Guatemalan workers offers insight into the different political contours that Guatemalans migrants confront while traversing multiple politicized spaces. The division created between the two groups is utilized by authority figures as a mechanism to control and discipline the performance of Guatemalan migrants. Expansion of the readily available pool of foreign workers has intensified the competition between workers, while also advancing the economic interests of figures of authority seeking to profit from the intensified flexibilization of labour. This social distinction not only exacerbates the antagonism wedged between Mexicans and Guatemalans, but also increases the pressures placed on both groups to yield to a disposable and flexible role sought after by employers.

When Guatemalans first began to arrive in 2003, Mexican migrants were hesitant to welcome them with open arms, as the more long-standing workers quickly recognized the threat the newly arrived workers posed on the security of their jobs. For Mexicans, the docility and submissiveness of Guatemalans jeopardize their work contracts, given that employers are more attracted to the flexibility of foreign workers who do not question their authority with the same intensity as Mexican migrants. According to Andrea Gálvez, however, the perception that Guatemalans are docile workers is misconstrued:

The idea that Guatemalans allow themselves to be mistreated because they are poorer is a strategy of the employer in order to pit the two groups against each other and silence unsettled Mexicans. The unsettlement of Mexicans coincided with the arrival of support centres in Québec. I think that they [FERME] brought Guatemalans because the federal program allowed them to bring workers at a cheaper cost. (Gálvez 2010)
For agricultural employers, the submissiveness of Guatemalans promises the production of labour pools less critical of the demands imposed upon them.

With growing support from UFCW and AWA, Mexicans have become more aware of their rights as foreign workers and consequently are now more involved in the drive to unionize agricultural workers all across Canada. In the past, Mexicans were afforded limited support by the state, and only when AWA support centres began to appear all across Canada were Mexicans granted the political resources that stimulated their political consciousness. Jesús, a Mexican worker who spent over ten years seasonally labouring in Canada, explains that quite a bit has changed for him and many other SAWP workers: “Since 2000, more people started to tell us about our rights. I am pleased that Canadians are worried about us, and because of them we have information on our rights. The information that I have on my rights is not made available to me by the consulate or by my boss. Now I am more conscious of my rights thanks to the support centre” (Mexican migrant worker 5 2010).

With a longer, rooted presence in Canada, Mexican workers have proven to be more politically conscious of their labour, acting upon political discontent at a larger scale than Guatemalan migrants. In the province of Québec, Mexican workers are highly involved in the unionization drive, assuming leadership roles in the workplace, in an effort to challenge the current working conditions afforded to them by the Canadian

34 Prohibited by provincial legislation to collectively bargain in Ontario and Alberta, agricultural workers have relied on the UFCW to improve workplace regulations. Even though all other provinces provide agricultural workers the same collective bargaining rights as other employees, the Supreme Court of Canada determined that UFCW’s case to revoke the ban would hinder agricultural businesses, particularly family farms that would be great affected by work stoppage during volatile harvesting seasons (Makin 2011).
government and local employers. As previously mentioned, the arrival of Guatemalans gave Canadian employers the means to respond to the rise in political organization amongst foreign workers and the perceived risks that Mexicans posed to the agricultural industry in Canada. Expansion of the pool of accessible foreign workers provided Canadian employers with alternative means to repress politicized sentiment amongst agricultural workers.

Nevertheless, numerous collective bargaining agreements have been established in British Columbia and Québec in response to mounting pressure from agricultural workers, with the legal support of UFCW/AWA. Migrant workers receiving support and assistance from UFCW/AWA often risk compromising their jobs for associating with a politically charged organization; they are ingrained with the notion that contact with any union is grounds for termination. In early 2011, the UFCW accused the Mexican government of blacklisting Mexican union sympathizers, preventing their return to farms in B.C. through the SAWP. The group of Mexicans worked on farms that succeeded in voting for the establishment of a collective agreement, and as a result, they were barred from returning to the farm and excluded from the program (Brar 2011).

The introduction of a new group of workers lacking the political will to engage in conduct that jeopardizes their employment opportunities appeals to Canadian employers who find the unionization of workers to be a detriment to the agricultural industry. Troubled by the unease of Mexican workers, employers contract Guatemalans to increase their social control over expanding pool of foreign labour. Kerry Preibisch sums it up best when she stated during an interview that
There is a perception in Québec that Guatemalans are a more malleable or exploitable workforce than Mexicans. I do not think that this has to do with any intrinsic qualities Guatemalans have opposed to Mexicans. I just think that they are a new group in agriculture. There has been a lot of organizing of Mexican workers through UFCW. Certainly, Mexicans have been politicized within Québec in a way that Guatemalans have not yet been, but I think that it is going to change. (Preibisch 2010a)

Mexicans do not display the same level of hesitancy as their Guatemalan co-workers in discussing political matters of their home country or the exploitative nature of migration programs. With more years labouring in Canada under their belt and armed with the political resources to express defiance, Mexicans’ political identities have proven to be quite distinct from Guatemalans. AWA support workers have drawn attention to the fact that Mexicans are more open to bringing forward grievances to their employers and approaching the Mexican consulate and AWA/UFCW with complaints. This confidence and stronger awareness of rights are what sets Mexicans apart from Guatemalans not as forthright with political matters.

An assessment of the interviews conducted with both groups of migrants reveals the openness of Mexicans towards vocalizing political disgruntlement, while Guatemalans tend to be more apprehensive towards political dialogue. For example, Mexican migrants like Benito have no qualms in conveying their distaste of political and economic conflicts that have devastated their home country. Benito blames the Mexican government for allowing “commercial producers to be in charge of all of the country’s products and as a result consumers are suffering. The consumer always has to pay for the producer’s mistakes, while campesinos and agricultural workers in Mexico are the lowest class” (Mexican migrant worker 3 2010). When comparing the political situation between Mexico and Canada, Paulo, another Mexican worker with a large family to
support back home, argues that it is better in Canada where “the political will is a lot stronger, while in Mexico certain things are promised but nothing is accomplished. Here in Canada people talk and things get done. I do not see poverty like in Mexico. I think that in terms of politics, Canada is far more advanced” (Mexican migrant worker 6 2010).

Rather than acknowledging the active political consciousness of Mexicans in a positive light, many Guatemalan migrants view their SAWP counterparts’ political expressions to be abrasive and confrontational. Some Guatemalan migrant workers stated that they preferred to distance themselves from Mexican co-workers because they could not relate to their directness, forthright manner, and willingness to loudly convey discontent. Guatemalan migrant women, in particular, are unable to grasp Mexican migrant women’s openness and assertiveness, which they perceive as aggressive and forceful behaviour. This clouded perception was most apparent during interviews with Guatemalan women working on a farm that predominantly employed female workers. By largely hiring women, instead of men, who are often associated with more politicized activity, this particular employer utilized a strategy of social control to limit inappropriate conduct (experiences on this particular farm will be expanded upon in the latter portion of the chapter). Anita, one of the many women working on this farm, characterizes Mexican women as “a bit violent and rough. We do talk to them, but we Guatemalans stick together. Not all Mexicans have that personality, but most of them do” (Guatemalan migrant worker 1 2010). Employers contribute to Guatemalans’ perception of Mexicans, by instilling that politicized expressions of defiance endanger workers’ jobs. The employers’ use of Mexicans as an example of the traits that workers should not emulate
influences Guatemalans to deem SAWP counterparts as foreign workers inciting conflict at the workplace.

After years of tension and growing hostility, the relationship between the two groups has slowly improved, now that Guatemalans are accepted by SAWP counterparts as foreign workers with the same financial needs and social standing. This relationship has transformed into a class-based camaraderie rooted in economic necessity and mutual respect. For Aurelio, a more veteran Mexican migrant, “Guatemalans are good people and I believe that I do not have any reason to talk badly about them. They are also struggling for a better life in their country just like us” (Mexican migrant worker 4 2010). However, tensions still exist between the two groups, as Guatemalans continue to isolate themselves to avoid conflict with authority figures.

Mexican migrants greater willingness to openly express their displeasure does not imply that Guatemalans are fully complacent with mistreatment at the hands of their employers. Andrea Gálvez gives details of how “Guatemalans will ask questions and lodge complaints, but not as loud as Mexicans. This does not mean that Guatemalans are not as politically charged as Mexicans. It simply may mean that Guatemalans are not as overt when it comes to resisting certain things that make them discontent” (Gálvez 2010). By deconstructing migrants’ choice to politically express displeasure, it becomes evident that Guatemalans have distinct ways of responding to the expectations and demands of authority figures and articulating their political consciousness.

The intention of this comparison is not to argue that consciousness amongst Mexican and Guatemalan is based on inherent attributes; instead, it reveals the ways support and transfer of political tools awakens migrant political consciousness. Many
Mexicans have been driven to the point where they are no longer willing to accept the exploitative nature of the SAWP, and instead, choose to undertake political activities that improve future prospects. The same support afforded to Mexican workers is now granted to the newly arrived group of workers, and while Guatemalans may not be as loud and abrupt as other co-workers, they still find their own ways to cope with mounting pressures. The differences between the Mexican and Guatemalan migrant experiences are symptomatic of FERME and the Canadian government’s hegemonic project that commonly constructs newly arrived groups as more accommodating and therefore favoured and pitted against other migrant groups who assert their rights as seasonal labourers.

**Forging a Transnational Political Identity**

Chapter Two introduced Gramscian notions regarding hegemonic forces and the social control attained through ideological domination, while also reinforcing the idea that individuals counter dominant rule through a process of building progressive self-consciousness. In analyzing the cultivation of migrant political consciousness, there is a need to examine how this group strives to overcome expectations of compliance and conformity by challenging hegemonic clout over ideological sectors of society and questioning their own subordination. External agencies, such as supporting allies, are a critical component of empowering this powerless group, endowing them with the conceptual apparatuses and critical consciousness to counter hegemonic rule and the dominant ideology of authority figures in Guatemala and Canada. The political tools and
resources afforded to migrants by supporting agencies fracture hegemonic rule and stimulate their political consciousness to engage in different forms of resistance and defiance (Scott 1985). While resistance is not a universal reaction amongst Guatemalan migrant workers, analysis of the relationship between thought and action provides insight into the formation of the transnational political identity. The relationship between political thought and political action is dependent on the human agency of migrants and the distinct and forever changing reactions of individual Guatemalans.

Engagement with Gramscian notions of consciousness equips me with a conceptual platform to formulate my own theoretical framework pertaining to the formation of migrant political consciousness and action. Conceptually, the (re)shaping of the transnational political identity is a process marked by both the imposition of authority figures, and more importantly, self-constructed migrant agency. Movement through multiple transnational spaces grants migrants the opportunity to garner new and empowering political ideas and tools that contribute to the reformation of their political consciousness. What makes Guatemalan migrants’ transnational experience unique is their constant circular movement between multiple politicized spaces in which distinct political ideas and tools are afforded to them. Migrants receptiveness to oppressive and empowering different political resources superimposed on and instilled in them are critical components in comprehending the shaping of migrant political consciousness by the transnational process of seasonal migration. Migrant receptiveness to the political ideas and tools presented to them in the different spaces they traverse is not an essentialized or universalized process but instead, can be defined as an internalized and individually based response to demands and pressures. More importantly, Guatemalan
migrants (un)acceptance of certain political resources is employed as a coping mechanism to deal with the oppressive nature of seasonal migration.

The cyclical experience is a process that entails exposure to similar and diverging political resources accessible to Guatemalan migrants in their home country, signifying comparable and parallel transnational political realities. Mapping out responses to the ideas and tools acquired in multiple spaces ascertains how migrants express themselves politically. An assessment of the evolution of migrants’ political expressions first begins in Guatemala, with an analysis of their response to hegemonic imposition of oppressive political notions and the flow of similar disparaging political ideas to Canada. Once in Canada, Guatemalans are introduced to new political ideas that are internalized quite differently by each migrant. Reactions to newly introduced political resources also influence the transfer and use of political ideas and political activities back in their home communities.

Thus, through the process of mapping out political expressions and the transfer of political ideas and tools, I analyze not only migrants’ conformity to, accommodation, and/or opposition to hegemonic constructions of their transnational political identity, but also their response to new political resources made available by the supporting allies that dismantle systemic barriers through means of empowerment. Supporting groups like unions, NGOs, and human rights activists play a critical role in introducing political ideas and tools that challenge hegemonic ideologies and objectives. As agencies of power that influence migrant consciousness, transnational allies do not tactfully impose political ideas. Instead, these groups work in cooperation with migrants, exposing them to political resources freely accepted and utilized.
In his work on resistance, Scott (1985) discusses the variability of political expression among subordinate groups and the varying ways that individuals choose to express dissatisfaction with hegemonic rule. While resistance and political action is often associated with large-scale and violent activity, Scott (1985) argues that more common practices of political activity are everyday forms of noncompliance, subtle sabotage, evasion, and deception. Small-scale political activity can be equally effective as larger and more defiant altercations. Ultimately, both forms of resistance intend to mitigate hegemonic rule and, in the case of Guatemalan migrants, challenge the social control held by authority figures. Migrant agents’ response to political activity is neither uniform nor consistent, as the decision to engage or disengage from certain acts and behaviour is employed as a coping mechanism and survival strategy to deal with the demand and pressure imposed upon them by figures of authority.

For Guatemalans agricultural workers, seasonal migration becomes a transnational journey across multiple spaces, with different agencies of power imposing and imparting political ideas and tools that migrants choose to conform to, accommodate, and/or oppose. Guatemalan migrants assume varying political identities dependent on the political climate of the space in which they are situated, choosing to politically express themselves in variable ways. In the end, the cyclical nature of their transnational experience stimulates the flow of ideas and tools between spaces, which either hinder or benefit migrants originating from a country where political expression proves to be difficult (see Figure 10).
Figure 10 - Mapping the Transnational Flow of Political Ideas and Practices (Source: Author)

Tracing the Transnational Politicized Journey

A charting of the transnational cyclical journey of Guatemalan agricultural workers entails tracing migrants’ perspective on the political climate of the multiple spaces through which they traverse along with tracing the flow of political ideas and tools between the same spaces. Assessment of migrants’ perceptions regarding the political climate of the different spaces reveals how migration not only reinforces some of the same political experiences of oppression and exploitation encountered in their home country but also introduces new political experiences of education and empowerment. This form of cognitive mapping takes into account larger processes, so that people can
become aware of their own position in the world, which according to Jameson (1991) gives individuals the resources to resist and make their own history. The (re)shaping of migrant consciousness is a process defined by discipline and oppression as well as empowerment. Since the migrant body is the primary scale of analysis, this study seeks to stress that the transnational process of seasonally migration is not a homogenous experience, thereby fortifying the notion that the transnational political identity is both fluid and versatile.

*A Life of Political instability and Mistrust*

Indigenous campesinos were hardest hit by the military and government’s systematic response to the leftist guerrilla movement and the social awakening of cooperatives in rural areas (Davis and Hodson 1982). While cooperatives in the Guatemalan highlands made significant strides in advancing progressive political participation, the campaign of violence against the population sought to put an end to political strides in the countryside. The rise in crime and violence in the country has left migrant agricultural workers with a sceptical outlook on political matters, given the state’s inadequacies in managing the lack of employment opportunities and political instability afflicting their country. Guatemalan migrants discern no imminent escape from the criminality and corruption plaguing a country where political defiance has been repressed and persecuted (Davis and Hodson 1982).

A mistrust of the local government leaves marginalized Guatemalans with little to no hope of relying on politicized agencies, resulting in distaste for political issues. This aversion was exemplified during discussions with Guatemalan migrants on their political
affiliations. Although questions concerning progressive political participation and the Guatemalan civil war were raised during interviews, most migrant participants were unwilling to engage such inquiries. Instead, many preferred to discuss religious alliances, given the negative connotations attached to politics in Guatemala. Religious institutions have been able to build stronger ties than a government that provides false and empty promises.

It is imprudent to claim that progressive political participation in Santiago Sacatepequez, and especially in the highland Indigenous communities of Guatemala, was not prevalent during the civil war and even today. Most migrant participants, however, were reluctant to engage in discussions pertaining to political participation or even the armed conflict. Tastelessness for politics can be linked to Guatemalan migrants misgivings towards the state and politicized institutions. Mateo’s words reflect those of many other disenfranchised Guatemalans, affirming that “one has to fight to succeed in life. You cannot depend on the government or institutions and you have to determine how you are going to succeed and advance in life” (Guatemalan migrant worker 23 2010). Mateo makes reference to the anxiety and resentment afflicting the general population concerning the Guatemalan government’s faltering abilities and lack of accountability.

Even though the civil war that devastated Guatemala has come to an end, the rise in crime and violence continues to destroy any sense of safety and security amongst marginal communities. Ethnically marginalized communities, promised an end to decades of violence, must contend with daily insecurity, as the government continues to lose control over the rise of criminal activity. Miguel, a Guatemalan agricultural worker
whose wife also travels to Canada, reminisces over the changes in his country: “In the past the guerrilla and military oppressed small villages and the inhabitants of these areas were the ones most affected. Things have changed and all Guatemalans are now affected by the rise in organized crime and gangs. No one can go outside without feeling insecure because of the violence. The government has no control over anything in Guatemala” (Guatemalan migrant worker 11 2010). Anita also draws attention to the distrust of Guatemalan politics, explaining how “during the civil war there was not as much violence as there is now, even though we are supposed to be a democratic country. The civil war was isolated to the mountains and small villages. In Guatemala, the police that are supposed to be taking care of us are corrupt. They threaten us and make extortions” (Guatemalan migrant worker 1 2010). The sentiments of these two workers strongly reflect the stance of the large majority of Guatemalan agricultural workers who see no end to the cycle of violence and political instability.

In Santiago Sacatepéquez, a community largely dependent on small-scale farming, the growth of crime and violence has ravaged and overwhelmed the lives of local people. Santiago Sacatepéquez was not as deeply disrupted by the thirty year civil war as other communities in the highlands, so the rise in gang activity sent a real shockwave through the small community incapable of coping with the sudden rise in crime. The town’s close proximity to the capital, where much of the gang activity originates, left Santiago Sacatepéquez vulnerable to incoming drug trafficking, extortions, robberies, and murders. Vicente, a migrant who stopped travelling to Canada after only two years, speaks of how he was directly affected by the presence of gangs in Santiago Sacatepéquez. “When I was twenty-one years old, a gang shot me because they wanted me to join and I did not want
to” (Guatemalan migrant worker 15 2010). Gang members flock into Santiago Sacatepéquez from the capital to escape incarceration. While hiding in the small tight-knit community they try to recruit future members and sell drugs.

Things came to a head in Santiago Sacatepéquez after infuriated community members lynched a gang member found robbing a local house. After this incident, the mayor of the town was forced to call in the national military to restore peace and order. He gives details on how “the local police were unable to control crime in the area, so I had to solicit support from the military. This helped to decrease crime in Santiago” (Mayor of Santiago Sacatepéquez 2010). Although the level of criminality has steadily decreased in this small town, years of violence have scarred community members and left many with a sense of insecurity, inducing them into a state of constant vigilance.

As a small town largely composed of Indigenous people, the marginalized community of Santiago Sacatepéquez has limited incoming support from the national government. Historically, the Indigenous people of Guatemala have been targeted by the state and others agencies of power, discriminated and made to feel inferior by the Ladinos35 whose self-entitlement has socially constructed ethnicity and class into key markers for access to political and economic prosperity. For self-identifying Indigenous migrants, the civil war is a leading example of the government’s lack of accountability, as explained by Jorge: “In terms of social development of the Mayan community, we have never had the support of the government. Villages have survived these struggles through

35 Ladino is a socio-ethnic category that dates back to the colonial era. The term is used in Guatemala to refer to groups of people who do not self-identify as Indigenous. The status is an ongoing issue of contention in Guatemala, as many Ladinos enjoy a greater take in the country’s wealth (Reeves 2006).
their own work and without support from the government” (Guatemalan migrant worker 27 2010). Discrimination against the Indigenous people is deeply embedded in Guatemalan society and Anita draws on her own personal example, giving details of how she had “gone to interviews with different companies and they saw my traditional clothing and they would say, ‘If only you did not wear your traditional clothing, you could have worked with us’” (Guatemalan migrant worker 1 2010). These two examples illuminate the deeply embedded structures of oppression in Guatemalan society. Many migrant participants in this study assume blame for the discrimination they tackle on a daily basis, owing to their lack of education and to the humility they personify in the workplace.

Without the proper education, migrants see no end to the continual cycle of discrimination in a country that highly values economic standing. Juan, a worker who dedicates his time in Guatemala to producing corn, rationalizes “Indigenous people’s lack of educational advances” by stating that “we only dedicate ourselves to work, and nothing else, and as a result we are characterized as humble people” (Guatemalan migrant worker 28 2010). Without the proper tools and ideas to empower themselves, Indigenous migrants succumb to their inferior status, unable to challenge their imposed subordinate social standing. Government officials and administrators of the TAWC project use the false characterization of marginalized Guatemalans to suppress migrant political consciousness and advance a neoliberal agenda of self-regulation. Orlando, who has been seasonally working in Canada for over six years, believes that

Here in Guatemala we are accustomed to the little we have. Those who live far away from the city are people who are very humble, living with the bare minimum and not taking other people’s things. We are timid people out of fear and because
we have never left the country. Most migrants come from rural areas and these people are in real need. At the same time they do not have an education and the means to develop. (Guatemalan migrant worker 29 2010)

Many of the Guatemalan research participants surrender and conform to the super-imposed restrictions of their Indigenous identity as an undeniable reality of their lives, reinforcing the hegemonic paradigm of social control over the masses. Compliance to Ladino superiority and Indigenous inferiority has allowed structural divides to prevail in a country where systemic barriers have locked marginalized ethnic communities into lives of poverty and violence. Moral subordination and suppression of disenfranchised migrants has granted the state and Ladinos command over the rule of capital, a notion that is carried over by the migrant body to other spaces. The flow of oppressive ideas not only sustains migrants’ submission but also fortifies the clout of labour-sending states, not bound by political borders.

A Country of Hope

Once in Canada, Guatemalans continue to encounter similar political experiences of oppression and discrimination as Canadian government officials, employers, and Guatemalan consular officials endeavour to retain control over migrants’ performance. Barraged by disrespectful treatment, they are unable to overcome preconceived notions of inferiority in the space provided to them by authority figures. Nonetheless, discussions with Guatemalan agricultural workers reveal that incidence of mistreatment at the hands of employers and local Canadians varies amongst migrants. Not all workers encounter inhibiting conditions while working in Canada; many find Canada to be far more
liberating than Guatemala. Thus, migrants’ willingness to express political consciousness is dependent on the treatment they encounter in the workplace and host community, which for many Guatemalan migrant women has been an experience defined by exploitation and subjectification.

Mistreated Guatemala women must contend with what Cristina, a worker who dedicates much of her time in Guatemala to domestic service, describes as “a complete disrespect of our rights. Because as Indigenous people they think they can do whatever they want with us” (Guatemalan migrant worker 2 2010). The majority of Guatemalan women participating in this study worked on one particular farm that forced them to comply with restrictive demands. This produce farm mostly hires women from Mexico and Guatemala and has been found by AWA officials to violate the rights of migrant workers. Guatemalan women employed on this farm complain of being interned in a constant state of fear and unease, having the employer confiscate their passports, limit their visitor privileges, and demand that they seek permission before leaving the farm. With three years on the same farm, Claudia is made to feel “like a prisoner because the employer does not allow the workers to talk to other people outside the farm. The foreman is very strict and does not allow workers to talk to anybody” (Guatemalan migrant worker 8 2010).

Incapable of claiming the rights they are entitled to, many of these women are denied the same liberty and freedom that other local workers have. Isolated and without support, these women must contend with the demanding expectations of employers coercing them to conform to a certain standard to secure their return the following year. Out of economic necessity, workers will yield to this type of treatment. Forced to
accommodate the pressures placed on them by employers, most Guatemalan migrants, like David, feel that “employers act superior to us and intimidate us. We put up with the way they treat us in Canada out of necessity” (Guatemalan migrant worker 6 2010). David works as a tailor during the months away from Canada, awaiting the day he can return to Canada and make more money to help out his large family.

Although Guatemalan migrant workers struggle with difficult working conditions, they also encounter new political experiences of security, liberty, empowerment and knowledge transfer in this new space. The shift in political climate and increased assistance from supporting allies enhances their ability to acquire political tools and resources that transform their submissive conduct. Even though Guatemalan women must endure repressive experiences that stifle any form of political expression, all interviewed migrant agricultural workers were in agreement that working and residing in Canada afforded them an escape from the insecurity and violence that plagues most citizens in their home country. Guatemalan migrants view Canada as a safe and secure political space where people can walk on the streets freely without the same fear of being robbed or assaulted. They have come to appreciate Canada, unlike Guatemala, as a peaceful and calm space where anxieties over insecurity dissipate and they are able to flee the constant state of terror for at least a few months.

While not necessarily a driving force for outward seasonal migration, the liberty and security experienced in Canada instil migrants with the impression that political resources can be employed to escape and move past the violence that afflicts Guatemala. According to Gonzalo, who has seasonally laboured in Canada since the inception of the TAWC project, “working in Canada you feel freer and you can go outside on the streets
without being afraid of getting assaulted. It is not like here in Guatemala where people are too scared to go out to the bank. Over there you feel calmer and are not scared that something will happen to you” (Guatemalan migrant worker 20 2010). Juan too speaks of being more at ease while in Canada: “A lot of things happen here in Guatemala, but once I leave, I feel better in Canada because of the sense of security and because the economy is better. One feels more security in Canada because the government provides more protection and gives priority to its people” (Guatemalan migrant worker 28 2010).

Even though she is new to the program, Cecilia also feels quite secure while in Canada, which for her is tied to the respect and value placed on human life in her host community. Cecilia goes on to explain that “over in Canada there is more respect given to you. While here in Guatemalan we do not respect one another and we do not function as well as they do over in Canada” (Guatemalan migrant worker 18 2010). Migrants are struck by courteous acts like “people saying hello to you in Canada” (Guatemalan migrant worker 23 2010), “being able to calmly walk down the street” (Guatemalan migrant worker 22 2010), or the fact that “even a vehicle has more respect for people” (Guatemalan migrant worker 17 2010). Ultimately, the experience of security helps migrants discern that a better of standard of living is linked to a more equitable government that provides for its population and properly administers to the welfare of the country.

Exposure to more accountable and transparent forms of governance allows Guatemalans to observe that alternatives are obtainable, awakening their consciousness to empowering realities. For Miguel, “a country like Canada is more developed and they have a better type of life and a more transparent government than in Guatemala”
The blatant differences between Canada and Guatemala leave many migrants, like Lucas, yearning for a better life: “Canada is very different in comparison to Guatemala. It is different in every aspect, including education, style of living, housing, the roads, and all of that” (Guatemalan migrant worker 25 2010). By working and residing in a country where the government responds to the needs of the population, Guatemalan migrants feel as though they should be afforded the same opportunities, thereby instilling them with principles of equality and emancipation.

More importantly, the transmission of rights-based knowledge by supporting allies, give migrants a tool for empowering their consciousness. Since many Guatemalans have little to no access to information concerning work-related issues, illuminating political resources liberate them from a sense of isolation and social exclusion. Naama Sabar (2002) maintains that social networks help (im)migrants adjust to their new social environment by granting them access to contacts and information that support their endeavours in the new community. Social networks are a critical component of the support systems of newly arrived migrants who have minimal if any knowledge of their new host communities. Unlike many other immigrants who settle in larger urban areas, migrant farmworkers are sent to rural areas where there are few immigrants of the same ethnic background in the community. Without the proper network-based support, many are left isolated, uncertain as to whom to turn for support and guidance (Basok 2004).

Based on my own field observations, support systems play a pivotal role in the lives of migrants with minimal knowledge of their new environment and the inability to properly navigate the Canadian legal system. Organizations, constituencies, and other
political bodies that offer outreach through advocacy, education, and assistance have become an integral support system for temporary migrant farm workers in Canada. These allies battle to guarantee guidance to migrants in maintaining a respectable quality of life as seasonal workers. However, even though migrants require the assistance of support systems to gain access to certain rights and benefits, providing such systems has proven to be a difficult undertaking for support allies both in Canada and Guatemala.

Support groups fill a gap left by government officials and administrators of the TAWC project by addressing migrant workers’ needs and complaints (Fairey, Hanson, et al. 2008). Even without financial assistance from government entities or other stakeholders, various support groups have taken up essential work to protect the rights of a vulnerable group of migrants. What leads these support groups to take up the cause is the “lax enforcement environment” in labour-receiving countries (Fairey, Hanson, et al. 2008) engendered by various authority figures that reinforce the vulnerability of migrant workers. In an environment where Guatemalans are denied the ability to claim rights, support groups are an essential agency in protecting vulnerable workers under a human rights framework (Basok and Carasco 2010). While Guatemalan migrants may deem the political climate of Canada more advanced than that of Guatemala, support groups bring to light the irregular conditions that migrants confront, playing an integral role in demanding their protection on the basis of legislation instituted by the state. Interaction with support networks adds to migrants’ knowledge about their rights, providing them with the tools to defend against discrimination and exploitation (Griffith 2009).

The Canadian UFCW/AWA labour movement and the transnational Global Workers Justice Alliance human rights organization are the most prominent supporting
allies for Guatemala migrant workers along with many other migrant groups. Both allies undertake advocacy work under a human rights framework, in an effort to bring to fruition tangible social changes. Guatemalans’ receptiveness to such aid has been mixed and muddled, as they are obliged to contend with the reality and dangers of repatriation. Instructed by authority figures that political association outside the workplace is deemed dissatisfactory conduct, many migrants withdraw from activity connected to supporting groups. While most migrant participants respond optimistically to support from allies, the fear instilled in this group prevents many from approaching such politicized organizations. What is more, given their unease over political matters, Guatemalans are unable to shake off a distrust of supporting allies’ politicized approach in mobilizing workers.

For over two decades UFCW has been the leading advocates for foreign agricultural workers in Canada, endowing Guatemalans with the political resources to inform and empower themselves in Canada and back home. In 2002, the first agriculture workers support centre in Canada was opened in Leamington, Ontario, and since then another nine other support centres have been opened in: Abbotsford, BC; Kelowna, BC; Surrey, BC; Portage la Prairie, MB; Bradford, ON; Simcoe, ON; Virgil, ON; St. Rémi, QC; and Saint-Eustache, QC. The establishment of support centres has allowed UFCW to maintain close contact with agricultural workers, even when they cannot legally bargain on workers’ behalf. For Bradley Walchuk, UFCW’s outreach to migrant agricultural workers provides a fundamental lesson for all other supporting allies: “a union organizing drive should not be abandoned if the union cannot get enough cards signed to prompt a vote, nor should it necessarily be abandoned following an
unsuccessful vote” (2009, 159). In addition, the support centres supply a positive, friendly environment educating workers on their basic rights, while also building migrants’ confidence by valuing their sacrifices and dedication.

When UFCW Canada first opened up a support centre in Québec in 2003, many Guatemalans were hesitant to interact with support workers. Whether it was the fact that Guatemalans were fairly new to Canada or their concern over the restrictions placed on them by IOM and government officials, the newly introduced group isolated and distanced themselves from the host community, let alone politicized groups. Over time, the relationship changed as more Guatemalan migrants began to accept the support centre as a vital support line (see figure 11).

Figure 11 – A poster for the UFCW Canada Guatemalan Political Campaign launched in 2010\(^{36}\) (Source: UFCW Canada 2010)

---

\(^{36}\) The political campaign for Guatemalan seasonal farmworkers, called No More Injustice and Oppression against Migrants, was launched in the summer of 2010 to draw attention to the systemic abuse of migrants recruited through the TAWC project. The campaign called for an end to the $400 deposit and a review of the blacklisting of Guatemalan migrants.
In 2008, the UFCW enhanced its efforts in Canada through the establishment of the Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA), a national advocacy and support network for both domestic and foreign workers recruited through the SAWP and TFWP (see Figure 12). According to UFCW Canada, both UFCW and AWA “stand as Canada’s most comprehensive resource of support and outreach to seasonal and temporary agriculture workers” (2009, 7). The centres are made available to agricultural workers to offer advocacy services at no charge. Staff and volunteers respond to a number of issues, including assistance with filing health insurance and prescription claims; cases of repatriation, claims for parental benefits; filing of income tax statements; worker’s compensation claims and entitlements for vacation pay; assessing deductions for Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance; and other problems that workers may encounter while employed on Canadian farms.

Figure 12 – The logo for Agriculture Workers Alliance, a migrant organization that lobbies for improvements at foreign agricultural workers’ workplace (Source: UFCW Canada 2011)
Staff and volunteers also visit various isolated farms to disclose rights-based knowledge and contact information so migrants can lodge grievances. Roberto observes that “the only people that visit us on the farm are the union [AWA officials]. They have arrived year after year to help us.” He also complains of the way “the union speaks the truth about what is happening and the consulate does not” (Guatemalan migrant worker 10 2010). AWA support centres also strive towards educating workers through workshops in work-related issues, including ESL/FSL language classes, health and safety, basic labour rights, workers compensation, parental benefits, and bicycle safety.

Workshops also inform workers on employment standards acts, the Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance, and how to claim parental benefits. Since migrant workers arrive in Canada with limited knowledge of provincial employment and health and safety standards, the dissemination of human-rights related information by AWA support centres is a much-needed initiative. According to UFCW Canada (2011), workers are entitled to be informed of their rights to (1) health and safety hazards and their employee rights; (2) participate in any association and in keeping their workplace safe healthy; and (3) refuse to do unsafe work. In addition to empowering migrants with a sense of self-confidence, the dissemination of political resources also endows them with the conviction that they will continue to be supported by these advocacy groups. Ultimately, the shared information inspires migrants to be well-informed about employment standards and rights, empowering them with the knowledge required to claim their rights.

Aside from dealing with complaints and inquiries, support centres establish a space of comfort and relief for the workers after long days of strenuous work. One staff member at the St. Rémi support centre remarks, “It is a space for them to sit and chat and
chill and to talk about what happened on their farm. It is an articulating centre and it is important for migrants to have that type of space” (AWA official 2006). For Guatemalans, the support centre not only assists them with grievances, but also offers them a space to vent about daily work-related problems and discrimination encountered in the host community.

According to Andrea Gálvez, the former director of AWA Québec, the advocacy work is not merely about informing migrants of their rights but also about facilitating access and exercise to these rights. For Galvez, the long arduous process of empowering foreign agricultural workers is worth the time and effort:

It is a way to give workers the tools so they can interpret and understand injustices and recognize that they are being mistreated. That way they are acknowledging the injustice and they are recognizing abuses. With this ability they can articulate their demands. They have the ability to challenge this injustice publicly and know the steps to take. Once they know about the injustice, they then ask what we can do. (Gálvez 2010)

An enrichment of political consciousness yields the means to stimulate migrant action that counters the demands imposed upon them by figures of authority. The unionization of agricultural workers has been one of the primary initiatives of UFCW and AWA, in an effort to develop solidarity with unsupported and uninformed migrants. The UFCW’s endeavours to collectively mobilize workers has forced this labour organization into provincial courts in hopes of reconstructing labour rights into human rights, relying on national and international human rights charters to protect and promote the civil liberties of agricultural workers. According to Walchuk, UFCW has “moved beyond a sole reliance on the provincial legislature to foster progressive social and economic change” (2009, 152). The UFCW sees itself as a leading voice for seasonal agricultural workers in
Canada, advocating not only to improve the lives of workers but also to uphold the integrity of the agricultural industry.

AWA officials recently sought the legal assistance of Global Workers Justice Alliance, under the directorship of Cathleen Caron, to advocate for the rights of Guatemalan migrants contracted through the TAWC project and to tackle individual cases of migrants blacklisted from the program. This American organization, in partnership with a cross-border network of worker advocates, has a long rooted history in advocating for the rights of foreign workers through a form of “portable justice” for transnational migrants. The term refers to “the rights and ability of transnational migrant workers to access justice in the countries of employment even after they have departed for their home countries” (Global Workers Justice Alliance 2011). According to Global Workers Justice Alliance, “portable justice” is critical to migrants’ political understandings of how rights are transferable, but more importantly, of how they can be utilized to contest discriminatory treatment and removal from the TAWC project.

Through collaborative efforts with various Guatemalan advocacy groups and NGOs, Global Workers Justice Alliance has defended the rights of migrants blacklisted from the TAWC project by petitioning the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Relations, CONAMIGUA, IOM Guatemalan, and the Canadian Embassy and seeking immediate redress. Guatemalan officials who are part of the Global Workers Network have been urging local NGOs to form a coalition in support of migrant agricultural labour and draw awareness to the exploitation of documented migrants. The Global Workers Network anticipated that the formation of the coalition would garner more institutional support for
AGUND, an association formed by Guatemalan migrants blacklisted from the TAWC project. As the mobilizing force behind the organization and fortification of AGUND, Global Workers Justice Alliance has given migrants the necessary political resources to advance their movement (this progress is discussed at more length in the following chapter). According to the director of AGUND, the formation of the migrant association would not have been possible without supporting allies: “Thanks to the support of Cathleen Caron and the union (UFCW) our cause has advanced quite well” (Director of AGUND 2010).

Non-state actors like UFCW/AWA and Global Workers Justice Alliance play a vital role by facilitating access to social rights and, more importantly, empowering migrants with the political tools and knowledge to take matters in their own hands (Gabriel and Macdonald 2011). Migrant allies have generated transnational support that advocates in favour of “portable justice” for Guatemalans who have been hindered by a state-sponsored discourse that confines access to rights within national borders. By defending the need for transnational migrants to access justice in the countries of employment, even after they have returned to their home countries, supporting allies like Global Worker Justice Alliance and UFCW Canada rouse consciousness among Guatemalans left in the dark in order to challenge hegemonic constructions that constrain their rights.

Without support from UFCW/AWA and Global Workers Justice Alliance, Guatemalans would not be equipped with the tools and knowledge nor the confidence to push for real social changes. While assistance from support groups is a more overt example of the means by which Guatemalans acquire new political ideas and tools
through the transnational experience, there are also less prominent occurrences and events that offer them the opportunity to enrich their transferable knowledge and skills.

Aside from being afforded access to a space of liberation and equality from advocacy groups, Guatemalan migrants also find empowering political resources in the host community and workplace, which engender secure and emancipatory transnational political realities. In this new space Guatemalans often listen in on, and/or hesitantly participate in discussions of a political nature without fear of reprisal from authority figures. A select group of Guatemalan migrant workers are often found in the local AWA support centre in St. Rémi attentively listening in on discussions concerning political matters. This social interaction often prompts them to be more open and honest in a space where they can openly criticize employers, the TAWC project, government officials, and the IOM. The experience allows them to engage in frank discussions, but more importantly, stimulates their political consciousness. The building up of relationships with more outspoken Mexican migrants at the workplace are especially empowering for Guatemalans, now that Mexicans feel stronger camaraderie with Guatemalans. Through this bond Guatemalans become open to honest political expression among other foreign workers facing the same kind of treatment and discrimination. The budding class-based and racialized unity amongst migrant workers has helped Guatemalans to gain the confidence to speak out against injustices at the workplace.

Although a significant number of migrants encounter discriminatory and exploitative treatment at the hands of their employers, some of these authority figures have also proven to be valuable assets, contributing to an awakening of Guatemalans’
political consciousness. In certain cases Canadian employers strive to demonstrate to their employees a commitment to upholding labour rights. The sense of impartiality among employers is often not encountered in Guatemala where the divide between Indigenous and Ladinos is deeply embedded in societal structures. In the case of Andrés, his employer has been helping him to apply for landed residency in Canada: “I am filling out the papers because my employer wants me to go live over there in Canada. My employer brought me to an immigration lawyer and she is filling out all the papers so that my family and I can go live over there” (Guatemalan migrant worker 5 2010). Such support from Canadian employers proves to Guatemalans that their status as migrant workers does not necessarily condemn them to a vulnerable position, and instead, brings to light alternative realities to the oppressive societal structure of Guatemala.

Within the local host communities, appreciation and recognition for foreign agricultural workers has grown rapidly, as migrants prove themselves to be essential to the Canadian farming industry (Bauder 2006). Communities such as St. Rémi have begun to extend a welcoming hand to migrant workers contributing to the economic landscape of small towns dependent on agricultural production. For example, in St. Rémi, the Fiesta des Cultures (see Figure 13), an annual cultural festival first launched in 2008, was initiated in response to the growing number of Mexican and Guatemalan migrants laboring in Southern Ontario. The event is organized to bring together local community members and foreign agricultural workers in celebration of Mexican and Guatemalan culture, with the intention of promoting the integration of migrants by recognizing and honoring their presence. By being made to feel welcome, Guatemalan migrants open up to community members and build strong connections with this space.
Canada, as a labour-receiving country, has afforded many Guatemalan migrants an uplifting politicized space that stimulates their political consciousness by enriching their confidence and self-assurance. Nonetheless, the oppressive facets of this space cannot be disregarded, especially with authority figures cultivating transnational political experiences of inequality based on societal divide.

**Back at Home**

The transnational journey is ongoing, as most recruited workers will continue to seasonally migrate between Guatemala and Canada. By extending the experience of acquiring new political resources, migrant workers are often inspired to transfer empowering knowledge and skills back to their home communities. Deemed an
economic tool for development by governments of the Global South, outward migration has the potential to benefit impoverished populations. Even though migrants must strive to tackle systemic barriers while seasonally migrating, they are also granted the opportunity to escape a life of poverty, which equates to liberation from a life of oppression and exploitation by figures of authority with control over the resources and capital of Guatemala. Denied re-entry into the migration program after three years of toiling in Canada, Miguel feels as though “there is more security in Canada than here in Guatemala where there is no security.” He blames the insecurity on the “lack of transparency in Guatemala and a mismanagement of funds and political affairs” (Guatemalan migrant worker 11). Miguel is no longer willing to tolerate the inequitable societal structure of Guatemala, which has prompted him to take action against his removal from the TAWC project. The desire to improve their standard of living motivates migrants, like Miguel, to find ways to secure an advantageous future for their families by continuing to seasonally migrate.

Guatemalan migrants in Santiago Sacatepéquez employ the income generated by their seasonal employment in Canada to start up small businesses for example construction, transportation, and textiles and to build up their small-scale farming operations. These initiatives help them to compete against larger companies, a possibility that was not viable prior to outward migration. Migrant household providers also utilize the acquired funds to renovate their homes and send their children to better schools. For Guatemalan migrants, the education of their children is a critical component to escaping the cycle of poverty and empowering the next generation.
Guatemalan women, in particular, have much to gain from a transnational experience that converts them into stronger economic contributors in a patriarchal household\textsuperscript{37} that often undervalues the work and contributions of women. While migration challenges traditional gender roles, male providers still continue to retain control over the behaviour and decisions of women in the household. Before migrant women can be interviewed in their homes they would first have to seek permission from their husbands. Nonetheless, Anita gave details of the remittances sent for the construction of a new house for her family. By the time she returned to Santiago Sacatepéquez, the house had been built and she and her family were able move in. As economic contributors, women are slowly being inspired to make empowering decisions and acquire more respect in male-dominated households. Claudia originally decided to participate in the TAWC project to help financially support her family, even though her husband did not approve. For Claudia, seasonally migrating to Canada has “allowed me to help my husband” while also “making enough to help provide better opportunities for my children” (Guatemalan migrant worker 8 2010). Guatemalan women’s participation in international migration is eroding traditional gender roles that limit women to the domestic realm, as the exposure to new political ideas and non-traditional conduct proves to be an enriching process for migrant women (Nolin 2006 and Taylor, Moran-Taylor, et al. 2006). Thus, outward migration helps women to achieve gender equity in their home

\textsuperscript{37} Social life in Guatemala, like other Latin American countries, is structured by traditional patriarchal norms. Women’s role is often limited to the domestic realm; however, as more women attain higher levels of education, traditional gender roles gradually erode (Taylor et al. 2006).
community, but more importantly, slowly dissipates traditional notions of household division.

Traditional gender roles are also disrupted as more male Guatemalans are obliged to assume duties typically assigned to women in their household. Taylor, Moran-Taylor, et al. (2006) discuss they way attitudes and demeanor of male returnees change after they are forced to fend for themselves by taking a more active role in household duties in host communities. Without the assistance of women, men must learn to clean their own clothes, shop for groceries, and cook meals. Not only do they come to appreciate the role of women in their household, but traditional gendered notions of the role of women are disrupted as more men come to value their wives as equal contributors.

As previously noted, the political views and opinions of migrant workers are also altered by the sense of security and liberty experienced in Canada. Some migrants express a desire to live in Canada because of the promising changes afforded in this space, reflecting the impact that emancipatory political realities have on their decisions. Exposure to a new political climate leaves migrants wanting stability and liberation: “I could live with my family in a country where there is security and not as much crime as in Guatemala” (Guatemalan migrant worker 7 2010). In striving to improve the lives of their families, migrants are also desire to bring the same tranquility back to their home communities.

Nonetheless, there are also tangible dangers attached to seasonally migrating. Migrant workers in Santiago Sacatepéquez spoke of threats and extortions posed on their families, as people in the community target members of household that have someone migrating to Canada. Notes will often be left on doorsteps, terrorizing the families of
migrants and pressuring them to pay large sums of money. Even though Mateo toils in
crop fields even when back Guatemala, he explains that “If someone sees someone else in
the community succeeding, gangs will come and they will extort you” (Guatemalan
migrant worker 23 2010). However, the insecurities of leaving their families behind have
not deterred migrants from continuing to travel in an effort to move ahead. In the end, the
tactics of intimidation do not prevent migrants of striving to better the lives of their
families. Seasonal migration is a journey defined by turbulence and unpredictability as
Guatemalans contend with political oppression and turmoil while also acquiring political
tools and ideas that endow them with hope and confidence to overcome their
marginalized status.

In many cases, migrants state that (in their in words) they have been “pushed to
the edge” and compelled to put up with exploitative treatment at the hands of government
officials, administrators of the program, and employers. Armed with the political tools
and ideas imparted to them by support groups, a select few have gained enough
confidence to contest mistreatment and inadequate working conditions. By harnessing
the conviction to politically express their views, groups of mobilized Guatemalans and
individual agricultural workers have found ways to challenge the status quo imposed on
them by authority figures.

Expression of Political Consciousness

Guatemalan migrant workers’ expressions of political consciousness vary from
individual to individual. Although many are exposed to new political principles, while
working and residing in multiple transnational spaces, they have differing responses on
how to employ their newly acquired skills and knowledge. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the three observed general responses to obtaining new political ideas and resources have been (1) acknowledgement of new political ideas, but an unwillingness to engage in political practices that jeopardize their jobs; (2) acknowledgement of new political ideas and a willingness to engage in political practices without requiring much persuasion; and (3) a sense of being pushed to the edge and left with no other alternative but to engage in new political practices. The varying modes of migrants’ appreciation of newly acquired knowledge and skills and their reaction to hegemonic constraints illustrates the means by which these strategies are employed as coping mechanisms to survive the pressures and expectations of personifying a submissive migrant body.

When Guatemalan migrants first began to arrive to Canada, in 2003, the majority secluded themselves in isolated groups, choosing not to associate with other agricultural workers and community members. When decisions were made by Guatemalan migrants at the workplace, they would band together as a way to cope with the new surroundings and pressures. The demands and expectations placed on them by employers, government officials, and administrators of the program left many far too fearful to act or behave in any way that jeopardized their return. As a result, their general wariness of associating with outside organizations or groups left them refusing to undertake conduct that agencies of power might deem inappropriate and undesirable.

Rather than embracing principles of liberation and empowerment, one of the most prominent reactions amongst Guatemalans has been to disassociate from political activities to address the submissive role imposed upon them by authority figures. Jorge has not had to face many problems during four years working in Alberta; however, he is
afraid of being expelled from the program because “the IOM is in charge of overseeing our rights and they have said that ‘over there [in Canada] you cannot form any type of organization or else you will be removed from the program.’ There is always a need to make sure and question if you are able to do certain things because it can result in problems” (Guatemalan migrant worker 27 2010). The fear of speaking out has rendered Guatemalans insecure of engaging in or even discussing unacceptable political acts or behaviour. When asked during interviews about the potential for migrant worker mobilization the general response amongst most Guatemalans was a hesitancy to answer such questions. Like many other research participants, Claudia responds to the idea of mobilizing by stating, “No, I do not know what to say. Over there [Canada] they have their rules and here it is different. No, I do not know what to say” (Guatemalan migrant worker 8 2010). Ingrained with the notion that political activity endangers their jobs, migrants will instead choose to conform to and accommodate the rules of figures of authority. The lack of self-assurance fostered by authority figures has resulted in workers’ decision to disengage from behaviour and activity deemed undesirable and ensure that they personify the ideal migrant worker as required.

Guatemalan migrant workers with many years of employment under their belt, however, have built the confidence to challenge and contest such mistreatment and intolerable working and living conditions. With support from organizations like UFCW and AWA and the relationships they have built with co-workers and local community members in Canada, more tenured agricultural workers are now open to political prospects of countering the hegemonic rule of authority figures. Inspired by newly acquired political tools and ideas, they often resolve to engage in what Scott (1985)
describes as more public forms of defiant political confrontation or resistance (large scale) and/or more covert forms of everyday resistance political activity (small scale). By engaging in conduct that counters hegemonic ideology, Guatemalans are able to reshape and empower their transnational political identity.

Not all political acts on the part of Guatemalan migrants have to be grand gestures or blatant politicized activity. Instead, Guatemalans can choose to politically express themselves in a covert manner. According to Scott (1985), more open forms of insubordination will often provoke a more severe response than less overt actions and behaviour that do not necessarily challenge formal definitions of hierarchy and power. For migrants with limited prospect of improving their subordinate status, small-scale resistance and political activity offer the means to tackle hegemonic forces.

In choosing not to be complacent, migrants will engage in everyday forms of political actions that include (1) inquiring about their rights through support groups both in Canada and Guatemala; (2) visiting the support centre to attend various workshops; (3) lodging individual complaints with the consulate, IOM, and/or support groups; (4) ignoring instructions and regulations imposed on them at the workplace; and (5) asking the employer to address problems at the workplace. Roberto gives details of how, after mounting problems with their housing workers, his co-workers decided to approach the employer: “We had a problem with the apartment where twenty-four people were living. We told the boss and he said he would fix it. After couple of weeks he did not do anything, so we left things like they were and just kept on living like that” (Guatemalan migrant worker 10 2010). While these workers never carried forward their complaint,
since open defiance would upset their employer, these small acts are steps forward in garnering the confidence to confront daily injustices.

Preibisch maintains that small-scale political acts become a survival strategy for Guatemalan migrants challenging the authority and social control held over them:

In terms of small-scale acts of resistance, they can range from making a phone call when they are not allowed to use the phone or things like the employer saying they have to stay in accommodation provided by employer and then staying somewhere else. The small scale acts of resistance are more common. There have been more overt acts and there have been workers who have been willing to risk their jobs and their permanence in this program by engaging in more formal acts of resistance. But I think that they face so many constraints to that type of action. (Preibisch 2010a)

Covert activities help Guatemalans to determine the available options and allow them test the limits on what type of performance incites a response from authority figures. More importantly, more covert forms of political expression produce positive social change in the lives of migrants. Andrea Gálvez affirms that “complaints lodged by migrant workers push the government to react” and through this experience “they learn how to lodge a complaint and they know that there are others living in the same situation as them” (Gálvez 2010). In the end, the weight and influence of more covert political activities should be taken into account, since these acts permit Guatemalans to overcome their vulnerability and potentially gain the confidence to engage in more large-scale and overt forms of political activity.

While overt political acts on the part of Guatemalan migrants are few and far between, the initiative to undertake conduct that jeopardizes the security of their jobs is prompted and encouraged by support groups and co-workers hoping to challenge the oppressive nature of seasonal migration. Guatemalans’ tendency to band together has
often worked in their favour, as migrants often work in assembly to seek redress for wrongdoings on the part of the employer. More covert political activities by mobilized groups include (1) work stoppage, (2) collective association, and (3) openly contesting wrongdoings on the part of employers. While such occurrences are intermittent, mobilization can either result in positive social changes at the workplace or the dismissal and repatriation of workers. According to Aurelio, the decision to collectively challenge conditions is not that straightforward and easy:

Last year we had a problem with the pay, and the employer was demanding a lot of work from us. Then the moment came when co-workers decided not to work anymore. The employer was not giving us enough for hourly pay. The day that the group decided to unite made a huge difference for all of us. But if one person instead of a group decides to organize, it can be very difficult because then you might not be called back the following year and be stuck in Guatemala.

(Guatemalan migrant worker 4 2010)

When individuals attempt to claim certain rights without support from other co-workers, they face the possibility of repatriation and removal from the program, given the lack of recourse. When Antonio challenged an employer’s authority, his open defiance resulted in termination of the seasonal labour contract: “Had I been lazy or irresponsible for my work I should have been found guilty, but I was sent home for fighting for my rights. They did not want me around because I asked the employer to pay for the money that was entitled to me” (Guatemalan migrant worker 24 2010). The continual narrative of repatriation has left many Guatemalans with resentment of authority figures who place economic interests before concerns of migrants’ welfare.

For Guatemalans blacklisted from the TAWC project and “pushed to the edge,” there is no other alternative but to contest their dismissal with the objective of regaining their position in the migration program. Left with the feeling of being wrongfully
dismissed, blacklisted Guatemalans are now mobilizing in an attempt to urge the
government and IOM officials to reintegrate them into the program and address
reoccurring problems within the TAWC project. The mobilization of a group of
blacklisted workers would not have been possible without the assistance of and political
resources supplied by support groups like UFCW/AWA and Global Worker Justice
Alliance once again underlining the importance of transnational allies for the transfer of
political tools and ideas (the political mobilization of blacklisted migrants will be
discussed at more length in the following chapter, which traces the activities and mission
of AGUND and illustrates the empowering results of transnational migration).

**Concluding Remarks**

While the willingness to conform to, accommodate, and/or counter hegemonic
forces and politically express disgruntlement around working and living conditions varies
amongst migrant workers, there is no overlooking the fact that the transnational
experience of seasonally migrating to Canada has a transformative impact on the migrant
body. In following the seasonal flow of the migrant body between various politicized
spaces, it is evident that the transfer of political tools and resources (which include rights-
based knowledge, principles of security, liberty and equality, notions that sever traditional
gender roles, amongst others) inevitability empowers migrant consciousness in the
multiple spaces they traverse. The transnational process of acquiring new political
resources in different spaces transcends boundaries, illustrating the enriching nature of
seasonal migration. Nonetheless, the opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the
hegemonic rule and dominant ideology that sustain their subordinate status is not
embraced by all Guatemalan migrants. The perilous nature of the migration program constrains many from engaging in politicized behaviour or action that might jeopardize their access to economic opportunities unavailable in their home country. The reluctance of ill-equipped Guatemalan migrants to undertake forms of resistance or political activity that disrupt the social control of authority figures stresses the notion that human agency plays a significant role in how migrants cope with the pressures and demands superimposed upon them.

With the assistance of transnational supporting allies, however, migrants are gaining the confidence to reappropriate their political conscious and engage in large-scale forms of resistance and political action and/or more covert everyday forms of defiant behaviour. Gramscian debates regarding hegemony and consciousness acknowledge the need for influential external agencies that contribute to the transformation of political consciousness among subordinate groups by empowering them with the political tools and resources to challenge oppressive dominant forces. By transcending borders, AWA/UFCW Canada and Global Workers Justice Alliance are able to teach migrants that social justice can be brought to any space. By prevailing over the hegemonic rule of authority figures, migrant workers not only gain access to uplifting prospects but also take control of the trajectory of their transnational migratory experience, reinforcing the agency of subaltern groups.
Chapter 7

“Pushed to the Edge”: The Organization of AGUND

The feeling of revolt will grow stronger every day among the peoples subjected to various degrees of exploitation, and they will take up arms to gain by force the rights which reason alone has not won them.
- Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara (1964)

Introduction

Social mobilization in Guatemala has a long history of the exclusion and suppression of Indigenous populations from the traditional political system. With the signing of the peace accord Indigenous people once again began to take part in electoral processes and collective action. The agreement on the identity and rights of Indigenous peoples and the inception of the government-funded Indigenous Women’s Ombudsman in 1999 became the foundation for Indigenous groups’ role in Guatemala’s political system. The democratic transition period also permitted the mobilization of Indigenous groups that concentrated their focus on cultural rights, recognition, and entitlements. Nonetheless, Carment et al (2007) argue that the political scope and agenda of modern Indigenous movements has been constrained by the fear of violence and has resulted in the fragmentation of the mobilization of Indigenous groups.

Nevertheless, the non-violent Pan-Mayan Movement, which included organization such as the Committee for Campesino Unity (CUC), National Coordinator for Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA), Mutual Support Group (GAM), Council of Ethnic Communities Runujel Junam (CERJ), Highland Campesino Committee (CCDA), and the
National Council of Guatemala’s Displaced (CONDEG), has had an influential role in national politics. These organizations had strong input in the negotiations for the peace accord and are now being recognized as the institutional voice for the Indigenous people of Guatemala. This progressive Indigenous movement draws attention to the presence of a strong political consciousness and a determination to regain autonomy in Guatemala (Warren 1998).

The political organization of migrant agricultural workers in North America has a long and contentious history marked by the persecution of the most vocal activists challenging the rule of hegemonic forces (Jenkins and Perrow 1977, Mitchell 1996, Rivera-Salgado 1999, Piper 2006). For repatriated Guatemalan migrants, the struggle to redress the blacklisting of workers from the TAWC project has proved to be a discouraging and arduous process in the face of a power structure that represses workers’ political will. The collective mobilization of the Association of Guatemalan United for Our Rights, in Spanish la Asociación de Guatemaltecos Unidos por Nuestros Derechos (AGUND), however, has fostered the confidence of migrants seeking reintegration while simultaneously challenging the repression of the migrant body.

While the previous chapter probed subordinate groups’ participation in everyday forms of resistance throughout the different politicized spaces through which they flowed, this chapter narrows in on a growing trend that results in Guatemalan migrants being
“pushed to the edge”38 (see previous Chapter Six) and left with no other alternative but to partake in large-scale forms of political activity. Confined into conditions that render them powerless, blacklisted migrants are now engaging in open forms of political action with the hope of achieving real social change. Even though open forms of resistance often spark heated responses by dominant forces, this collective group of Guatemalan migrants has not been dissuaded from tackling massive and bold forms of confrontation, opposing the clout of figures of authority.

The transfer of empowering political tools and resources would not have been possible without the resilience of transnational allies determined to dismantle the unjust structures that trap vulnerable migrants into a life of indentured servitude. Supporting allies like AWA/UFCW Canada and Global Workers Justice Alliance demand that migrants gain access to justice in Canada even after returning to Guatemala, thereby helping to temper the discriminatory nature of seasonal migration. In doing so, supporting allies reinforce the conviction that human rights are not territorially bound but rather accessible to all migrants and the different spaces they traverse. With the support of transnational allies, politically conscious and politically charged migrants are more disposed to undertake acts aimed at opposing repressive hegemonic norms.

This chapter illustrates how political knowledge and resources afforded to migrant workers by supporting groups, in combination with a political reaction of being pushed to

38 During my second visit to the community of Santiago Sacatepéquez in Guatemala, migrants collectively articulated frustration and a sentiment of indignation towards being mistreated and mishandled while seasonally migrating to Canada. “Pushed to the Edge” is a metaphor that encapsulates remarks of migrants such as, “I am fed up,” “I am frustrated,” “and “I am tired.” Many of them had reached the limits of their patience and are no longer willing to tolerate such conditions, prompting them to take action.
the edge, incites migrant workers to respond with large-scale acts of resistance and organization. Not all Guatemalan migrants share a willingness to mobilize, since it is the outcome of persecution and oppression at the hands of agencies of power inhibiting their conduct. While repatriation has long been employed as a mechanism of control to fortify migrants’ conformity, this tool is now resulting in discontent and resistance amongst blacklisted workers. An overview of AGUND’s formation and political activities reveals the value and merit of supporting groups and collective mobilization that produce viable social changes in the lives of migrant workers.

**Political Organization amongst Migrants**

Migrants’ willingness to organize politically, in an attempt to counter the submissive role imposed upon them, has long been a delicate issue for Guatemalans fearful of jeopardizing their position with the TAWC project. Out of desperation migrants now take measures to draw awareness towards the exploitation they endure. Yet, devoid of self-assurance, migrant workers cannot single-handedly challenge agencies of power. The confidence needed to confront authority figures is bolstered when a group of migrants bands together (Ness 2006). The workplace conditions that encumber migrants engender militancy and prompt them to mobilize in order to cope with the burdens inflicted upon them. Left to fend for themselves in spaces that repress unacceptable behaviour and actions, the collective sense of social isolation binds migrant workers provoked to organize, deepening solidarity amongst them. Migrants with limited options and no exit strategy are more prone to engage in political action to generate some progress in the host community (Ness 2006).
While large-scale political activity has proven to be a problematic and complex undertaking for migrants, given their constricting legal status and lack of knowledge regarding their rights, the support of transnational allies gives them the confidence to unite and to oppose the state, administrators, and employers (Gabriel and Macdonald 2011). The advocacy work of supporting groups not only creates awareness regarding migrants’ mistreatment, but also inspires many of them to mobilize as activists for their own cause (Griffith 2009). The transfer of political knowledge and tools is a necessary step in stimulating consciousness among migrants who have long been instructed to repress any insolent conduct.

For AGUND, transnational coalitions and activism provide spaces for disputing and negotiating with hegemonic rule. According to Routledge (2003), actors across particular terrains of resistance will coalesce in transnational social movement to contest and negotiate certain interests, goals, and/or strategies. Resistance is imperative to subordinate and weak populations lacking the resources and tools to challenge dominant rule on their own. Tarrow (2005) argues that increased global integration and interconnectedness generate both new threats and new possibilities for activism. The formation of interconnected networks permits political activity to transcend borders, which is particularly beneficial for mobile populations. Transnational activist networks have played a critical role in advancing the political claims of the weak. Even though states may not recognize the validity of transnational claims, this barrier has not impeded transnational networks from intervening on behalf of migrants (Tarrow 2005). One of the most significant contributions of transnational social movements has been the bridges
constructed to permit the flow of political tools and resources between multiple spaces to empower disenfranchised groups (Nicholls 2007).

The theoretical framework conceptualizing political organization is not pertinent to all migrants, especially since many deviate from insubordinate behaviour and activity. Instead, many interviewed Guatemalans are incapable of overlooking the perils of collectively mobilizing, as Anita points out:

Banding together would be a very important opportunity for us, but many Guatemalans are afraid of organizing. They believe that the following year we will not be contracted. So they are far too scared to organize or be part of an association. During the few times that the consulate has visited, they have told us not to speak out, and so many of us remain silent, but I feel that not all people are willing to think that way (Guatemalan migrant worker 1 2010)

There is no overlooking the fact that that Guatemalan are ingrained with notions of conformity, made to fear the dangers and perils associated with participating in political action in spaces controlled by prevailing agencies of power. The strategic use of fear and intimidation leaves migrants reluctant to embrace political organization. Even though they recognize that tangible changes can be triggered by political organization, many are too apprehensive to openly espouse politicized behaviour and acts. Yet, Andrés acknowledges that “organizing would be a good thing because many people are too timid and scared. If something happens to them they are too quiet to speak out and I think if we unite things might be a lot better” (Guatemalan migrant worker 5).

The tentative receptiveness to collective mobilization is warranted by the fact that Guatemalan migrants who engage in conduct proscribed by authority figures are often repatriated and blacklisted from the TAWC project. Andrea Gálvez argues that employers “always have the last word”: 
It is very scary for a migrant worker if they do not receive an invitation card. We have filed many complaints about the repatriation of migrants and we have been able to reintegrate some people. Tactics of intimidation, of repression, of repatriation on the farms are horrible. What angers us is that they [authority figures] tell employees that people were fired for unionizing and they are not ashamed about saying it as a threat. They are saying it knowing it is illegal to fire someone on those grounds. (Gálvez 2010)

The uncertainty over returning the following year has sustained the structure of intimidation. A CONAMIGUA official admits that fear and uncertainty among migrant workers triggers a series of mounting problems for Guatemalans:

The problem is that these people are in Canada for 6-11 months without knowing if they will be returning the following year. FERME and other businesses in Alberta or B.C. instruct IOM and government officials which workers they want to return. While employers have the right to judge which workers are efficient and which workers are strong producers, the problem that I see is that they do not tell migrants if they will be returning. The workers are then left with the illusion that they will be returning at the end of their work contract. (CONAMIGUA official 2010)

Government and administrative officials lack of concern and response to workers’ struggles has allowed workers’ insecurity to persist without recourse. For a Canadian embassy official in Guatemala, repatriation is not an issue of consequence: “I have never heard about anyone being excluded from the program. It would be interesting to get the other side of the story and talk to the employer. The majority of work permits that we are issuing are to workers returning annually. I understand if one of the workers is not doing satisfactory work, then the employer will say that “I do not want that employee to return the following year”’’ (Canadian Embassy Official). By disregarding the complications of seasonal migration and shifting the blame to migrant conduct, authority figures continue to hold sway over the migrant body.

Interviewed migrants often found fault with the treatment they encountered when visiting the IOM office in Guatemala City and of officials who spoke to them in a
demeaning manner. Migrants complained of “not being treated well at the IOM office” and being discriminated against and treated in a demeaning manner because of their social and ethnic standing as Indigenous campesinos (Guatemala migrant worker 6 2010). Blacklisted migrants, in particular, had many problems in the past with IOM officials barring them entry into the office and banning them from returning. The entry of the new Chief of Mission of IOM Guatemala, however, instigated a complete overhaul of the IOM staff, a decision that pleased members of AGUND. Amendments within the IOM Guatemala office and with the TAWC project (discussed in Chapter Five) have been a motivating factor for AGUND, as the association seeks to dispute the treatment of migrants and challenge relations of power that create stratified spaces of inequality.

The formation of AGUND is a prime example of the way Guatemalans can take measures to overcome their vulnerable status. For members of the migrant association, repatriation and removal from the TAWC project has been the strongest motivating factor behind the collective mobilization of a group of individual workers incapable of confronting government and administrative officials alone. Confined to a space where there is little to no support from allies back in Guatemala taking heed of their grievances and incapable of pressuring authority figures to be accountable for decisions, blacklisted migrants decided to join forces in the hope of prompting viable changes in their lives.

The Formation and Mobilization of AGUND

While the formation of AGUND was onset by the lack of support afforded to blacklisted Guatemalans in their home country, the same feelings of desperation and
panic also triggered the need to mobilize. Members of AGUND acknowledge their collective struggle to overcome subjectification:

In Guatemala, authorities harass us and they work against us. People and organizations in our country do not focus on what is happening here. Guatemalans always want things to remain silent so they do not become worse. But we have been advancing this [AGUND] project quite well in the past year. An individual by themselves is scared, but as an association we do not have that same fear. We realize that we are entitled to claim certain rights. We have the intention and goal to overcome the barriers imposed on us. (AGUND member 1 2011)

Figure 14 – In Guatemala City during the September 2010 march to the steps of the Canadian Embassy (Source: UFCW Canada 2010)

After Global Workers Justice Alliance began to defend the individual claims of migrant workers wrongfully terminated from the TAWC project, some of the blacklisted workers in Santiago Sacatepéquez took the initiative to organize meetings to find other Guatemalans wishing to reintegrate back into the program. AGUND was born in 2010 with the aim of challenging the grip of authority figures over the migrant body. Instead
of fighting cases of abuse individually, the initial group of 25 blacklisted migrants banded together to form an institutionalized group, seeking to gain recognition from government and administrative officials (see Figure 13). As the first formal organization in Guatemala to embark on advocacy work for migrant rights, AGUND has undertaken to redress a series of problems that have long been disregarded. The association was instituted out of a collective feeling of being pushed to the limit and left with no other alternative but to contest the unjust structure of the TAWC project, directly.

Members of the association see AGUND as an opportunity to join forces and openly defy government and administrative officials who have long ignored their complaints and pleas for assistance. According to the director of AGUND, collective mobilization “formalized our association in our fight to claim rights entitled to us as both human beings and workers” (Director of AGUND 2011). Through word of mouth and networking, the organization has now grown to over 60 blacklisted workers and approximately 100 more overlooked for recruitment into the TAWC project. The mission of AGUND is threefold: (1) to defend the rights of workers blacklisted from the program; (2) to lobby for much-needed amendments to the TAWC project; and (3) to seek agreements and contracts to send Guatemalans outside of the country for seasonal work.

Now headed up by a president and board of directors, AGUND aspires to be independent of institutional support from external allies, and in essence, to achieve as sense of autonomy.

Nonetheless, AGUND continues to welcome the support and assistance from various national and transnational allies that lobby for legislative amendments. In Guatemala, the Global Defenders Network, in conjunction with the Global Workers
Justice Alliance, has sought to form a strong coalition with prominent NGOs and human rights organizations to demand immediate recourse from the national government. NGOs like el Centro de Estudios y Apoyo al Desarrollo Local (CEADEL), la Mesa Nacional para los migraciones en Guatemala (MENAMIG), el Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Sociales y Desarrollo (INCEDES), la Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) and the Archbishop Human Rights Office have joined forces with the Global Defenders Network, taking up the cause of AGUND in an effort to pressure the government to amend the state approach to the TAWC project. National support roused by the transnational activism of the Global Workers Justice Alliance has reinforced a form of “portable justice” that aims to deterritorialize access to justice and formalize transnational workers’ rights.

As an early supporter of AGUND, Global Workers Justice Alliance continues to be a vital ally, lending legal expertise along with logistical and financial support to advance the migrant association’s claims. Transnational support from UFCW Canada and AWA also supplies members of AGUND with advice on paternal benefits applications, tax returns, and other social services, but more importantly, this labour movement also campaigns to improve the rights of these blacklisted workers back in Canada. In a short period of time, AGUND has built an assemblage of allies that pressure IOM Guatemala, different Guatemalan government agencies, the Canadian Embassy, and Guatemala’s human rights body, Procuraduria de Derechos Humanos (PDH), demanding recognition and recourse for the migrant association’s claims. For the director of AGUND, the collaborative alliance has not only achieved recognition of the political
struggles of this migrant association but has also validated workers’ concerns over a migrant scheme devoid of the proper safeguards.

On September 1, 2010, AGUND organized a large-scale protest in Guatemala City with the support of Global Workers Justice Alliance, UFCW Canada, and AWA, during which time the director and board members broadcast their mission to the wider public in a press release. Hundreds of Guatemalans migrants and supporters took to the streets and marched to the Canadian Embassy, manifesting their discontent towards the regulated migration program (see Figure 14). For the director of AGUND and all other members, the goal of the march was to raise the profile of blacklisted and mistreated migrants as a whole. “The march made AGUND known to the public,” the director said,
“and explained why we are doing what we are doing. This has been possible thanks to the help of many people. We [AGUND] have advanced quite well, thanks to our demonstration” (Director of AGUND 2011).

The awareness achieved through the demonstration put pressure on government and administrative officials to open their doors and to listen to the claims of AGUND members. After the march to the steps of the Canadian Embassy, officials agreed to meet with a delegation consisting of AGUND members and supporting allies. The delegation found the meeting to be quite successful after the officials agreed to focus more on temporary workers’ issues. What is more, the meeting secured a promise that embassy officials would review the cases of blacklisted workers and make a commitment to attend to concerns around the TAWC project. The same day the delegation also met with CONAMIGUA and, according to the director of AGUND, “CONAMIGUA has become quite accessible. The previous director was not in agreement with our activities and the way we carried out the demonstration. The new director is more accessible and wants to help us. Thanks to CONAMIGUA, we have been able to arrange meetings with the Ministry of Labour and Social Provisions” (Director of AGUND 2011).

Shifts in IOM administration permitted the delegation to secure a commitment from the Chief of Mission of IOM Guatemala, Delbert Field, to work with the group to resolve a series of concerns raised by AGUND members and a promise to reintegrate blacklisted workers. The reinstatement has been slow, especially since FERME terminated the contract between the two administrators, thereby drastically reducing the number of workers that the IOM can send to Canada, from a little under 5000 migrants in 2010 to 1000 workers in 2011 (Field 2010). Without sufficient numbers of requests, IOM
is incapable of adequately resolving the claims of blacklisted workers. IOM’s Chief of Mission felt “that it was a good gesture to re-interview the people on AGUND’s list. We are going to do what we can. Since we are not longer working with FERME, we do not have the same means of placement that we did before” (Field 2011).

Nonetheless, the strengthened relationship with IOM gives real hope to the collective group of migrants, inspiring them to put their faith and trust in politically charged movements. “They said they were going to investigate each of our cases,” the AGUND director disclosed, adding that “IOM originally rejected our case because the current staff had nothing to do with the decisions of the previous administration, but we kept on pushing director of IOM to resolve these problems. With the pressure that we put on IOM, they are now more accessible and the doors at the IOM office are now open to AGUND. This has been a huge step forward” (Director of AGUND 2011). AGUND members are slowly regaining trust in an international organization that in the past stripped them of their rights and discouraged defiant political conduct.

Apart from advocating the reinstatement of blacklisted workers, AGUND has introduced empowering initiatives in hope of ascertaining long-lasting positive changes in the lives of marginalized Guatemalans. In the near future, AGUND plans to develop a training project with the aims of (1) raising awareness among migrants prior to their departure to Canada, informing them of their rights, privileges, and responsibilities as foreign workers; and (2) better preparing workers on how to responsibly handle the influx of income and remittances. The objective of the project is to empower Guatemalans quickly thrown in a migration program with the proper tools and resources. Members of the association maintain that migration “is not just about making money. There is a need
to educate people” (AGUND member 2 2011). The training program would ultimately give migrants the necessary knowledge and tools to protect themselves from exploitative treatment and motivate them and their families to embrace more productive investments for remittances.

While the need to mobilize was originally sparked by sentiments of injustice and rage over the repatriation and blacklisting of workers, members of AGUND also uphold the conviction that all disenfranchised Guatemalans are entitled to the opportunity to migrate out of their country in search of employment and wages to send back to their families. According to AGUND officials, the gap between “those who travel and those who do not” creates a division between “people who have money and people who do not” (AGUND member 3 2011). To mitigate this conflict the association has developed a labour migration scheme run by migrant workers themselves. The director of AGUND acknowledges that “5000 [recruited into the TAWC project] is not a lot of people for Guatemala. But by offering help to others, we are establishing a project to capacitate people so they assume responsibility over their own lives.” He goes on to explain how the migrant association is “worried about people who were blacklisted from the program, but we are also interested in helping those people who have not yet had the opportunity to travel to Canada or the United States” (Director of AGUND 2011).

The director of Global Workers Justice Alliance inspired AGUND to embark on the labour migration project of sending documented Guatemalan migrants to seasonally labour in the state of Arizona. In partnership with the Centro Independiente de
Trabajadores Agrícolas or Independent Farmworkers Center (CITA), AGUND is working towards solidifying a recruitment initiative that promotes a safe and secure alternative to illegal migration and recruitment by private agencies, which have a history of overcharging foreign workers. AGUND plans to formalize an agreement to develop an AGUND-CITA alliance that would sanction the recruitment of Guatemalans to Arizona through the H-2A program.

A member of AGUND endorsed the need for collective mobilization by stating that “the formation of this association really gave us the desire and energy to fight for our rights. If we do not say anything then we just become victims” (AGUND member 3 2011). Without collective unity and the moral support of transnational allies Guatemalan migrants would not have garnered the political ideas and tools to awaken their political consciousness and to defiantly react against years of subordination and oppressive treatment. For many in this marginalized group, AGUND has rekindled hope in political thought and political action, with aspirations of generating positive social change in the lives of migrant workers and their families.

Concluding Remarks

As a collective with the support of transnational allies, AGUND is a convincing example of how when, pushed to the edge and left with no alternatives, migrants are disposed to find the means to counter the repressive structure of seasonal migration. The

39 A New York State based non-profit organization that recruits foreign workers from Mexico to the U.S. through the H-2A program, a U.S. initiative that grants work visas to foreign nationals for entry into the temporary agricultural labour.
more that authority figures coerce Guatemalans to conform to economic demands and the expectations of the market, the more oppressed migrants open up to challenging the power and legitimacy of administrative and state officials. In the end, assistance from transnational supporting networks provides AGUND members with a space to rouse their political consciousness and unite to fight for much-needed amendments to a migration program that thrives on subjectifying the migrant body.

By rising above the submissive role superimposed upon them, politically conscious blacklisted workers are telling authority figures that they are not amenable to an agenda that sustains Guatemalan migrants’ inferior status. Through a process of reappropriation members of AGUND have been able to mould a transnational political identity based on defiance and empowerment. The goals and initiatives of AGUND illuminate the fortitude of a group of migrants determined to engender their own path, not one socially constructed by hegemonic rule. In the end, the coalesced identity of AGUND has empowered Guatemalan migrants with confidence and persistence to resist a dominate ideology that promotes the suppression of political thought and action and create viable initiatives to prevail over their subjectification. This subaltern group rallies together in the hope of generating tangible social changes in the inequitable structure of controlled seasonal migration.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future, and the future is ours. - César Chávez (1984)

The fluctuating transnational realities of migrants are not simply cautionary tales of the nature of regulated seasonal migration, which often erect oppressive and exploitative barriers that inhibit mobility. Instead, closer scrutiny of the shaping and reshaping of the Guatemalan migrant body accredits value to human agency and the power disenfranchised subjects possess in reclaiming authority over their own transnational political identities. The lives of Guatemalan migrants seeking to escape a bleak existence, tarnished by economic and political instability, are perpetually altered by continually flowing through conflicting political spaces and seasonally labouring in the Canadian agricultural sector that lacks committed national labourers. While Guatemalan workers risk surrendering to the will of authority figures, transnational migration also generates emancipatory prospects that liberate them from oppressive political thought and action. Migrants are presented with the opportunity to awaken their political consciousness by traversing multiple political spaces that propagate empowering political ideas and tools, thereby advancing a political transnational process of liberation and equality. Transmigration, in short, can engender transformation.
Envisioned as ideal recruits, Guatemalans enlisted in the TAWC project originate from a society marked by insecurity and political instability. The remnants of the thirty-year conflict have sent shockwaves through Guatemala and left marginalized communities with little hope in political parties and processes. As prisoners of their own fears, Guatemalans are confined into situations that undermine social cohesion and equality, which have triggered unwavering effects of violence and crime. The perpetuation of an environment of terror and fear impedes citizens’ ability to accept and reproduce democratic and liberating values and also permits figures of authority to retain social control over disenfranchised Indigenous subjects (Clouser 2009). I argue that under the TAWC project, authority figures such as the Guatemalan and Canadian government, IOM, and FERME profit from the subjectification of disciplined Guatemalan workers by sustaining a structure of self-regulation that produces flexibilized and disposable migrant bodies.

Nonetheless, entrance into a regulated migration program also affords Guatemalans with the opportunity to experience empowering realities that rouse their political consciousness and incite them to participate in political action. In doing so, migrants validate the agency and effect of subaltern subjects. Frameworks of politics must move beyond focussing on the state as the only political platform and not cast doubt on the agency of subaltern figures. In order to accentuate the prominence of the human agency of the migrant body, I engaged with three underlying debates, including processes of political transnationalism, the impact of states’ neoliberal agenda and mindset in controlling the flow of migrants, and migrant political consciousness.
Discussions (reviewed at length in Chapter Two) pertaining to political transnationalism offer theoretical insight into the politicized nature of circular migration and its impacts on the behaviour and actions of Guatemalan migrants who maintain links to multiple spaces. In mapping out the political spaces through which they flow, individual subjects are endowed with a new heightened sense of place in the global system. The strength of the human agency of disenfranchised migrants and the contributions that these individual subjects make in shaping their consciousness is effectively deciphered through a form of cognitive mapping that spatializes the ideas and tools embraced and/or rejected by Guatemalans workers. An awareness of migrants’ agency underscores the inconsistencies and fluctuations of expressing transnational political identities, therein rejecting notions that essentialize the migrant body.

The deviating transnational political realities draw out both the progressive and regressive moments of political consciousness and migrants’ willingness to embrace and/or counter certain political tools and ideas as a way to cope with the pressures of seasonal migration. The cognitive mapping of migrant consciousness and the (in)acceptance of certain political resources reveal that they respond in accordance with the political climate of the space in which they are situated. This response is based on a purposeful submission to, accommodation, and/or countering of political ideas and tools in an effort to survive the perils and risks of controlled migration. The dynamic fluctuations of migrant political consciousness reinforce the connections between thought/mind, (in)action, and space, emphasizing the notion that space mediates ideology (Goonewardena 2004).
The power and influence secured by agencies of power like the state, administrators of the program, and transnational supporting allies allow these forces to impart hegemonic or counter-hegemonic discourses with the intention of altering transnational migrant bodies. Through a form of neoliberal governmentality, authority figures have played an integral role in disciplining self-regulated, amenable Guatemalan migrants in an effort to advance a neoliberal agenda that prioritizes economic interests over disposable workers’ social welfare. More importantly, proliferation of managed migration schemes has consequentially resulted in an offloading of the Guatemalan and Canadian governments’ responsibilities to non-state actors, the IOM and FERME, in an effort to enhance the economic profitability of recruiting documented foreign workers.

Aside from the suppressive technologies of power that coerce migrants to conform to and accommodate market needs and demands, supporting allies also contribute to an empowering transformation of migrant political consciousness and action through a form of counter hegemony. The transfer of rights-based knowledge and principles of equality, liberation, and collectiveness (sense of belonging) incite marginalized workers to come to realization that not all agencies of power exert force and social control. Discernment of the different structures, processes, and forces involved in shaping Guatemalans’ transnational political identity allows me to scrutinize the social control agencies of power retain over migrants’ thoughts, behaviour, and actions. Nevertheless, by distinguishing between the role of agencies of power and the migrant agent, my study reinforces the power disenfranchised migrant groups possess in postulating decisive choices.
Although the regulatory structure of managed migration programs grants authority figures (hegemonic forces) with steadfast command over the mobility of migrants through means of disciplining and self-regulation, the agency of Guatemalan migrants (subaltern subjects) has more to contribute to discussions pertaining to the spatiality of political consciousness. According to Gramsci (1971), for change to occur migrant farmworkers would need to assume the social function of intellectualism in order to generate counter hegemonic discourses, values, and viewpoints. What is more, Gramscian notions of consciousness enhance debates concerning migrants’ willingness to embrace and/or counter certain political ideas and tools required to prevail over hegemonic discourse.

Nevertheless, notions of hegemony tend to overvalue the social control of agencies of power (hegemonic forces and traditional intellectuals) and overlook less overt political acts that can be misconstrued as submissive and conforming behaviour. The fact that migrants find their own ways of coping with mounting pressures seasonal migration, underscores their ability to exercise political function and take command of their own destiny. For instance, when Guatemalan migrants decisively choose to band together in secluded groups, workers do so in order to survive the demands of the workplace and collectively make decisions that may impact one or more individuals.

Critical theorists tend to dwell on transnational migration as a cautionary tale, honing in on the regressive nature of regulated management of the subjectified migrant body. While the oppressive structures, processes, and discourses of transnational migration must not be disregarded, the fluctuations of seasonally flowing between politicized spaces also afford migrants with new realities of illumination, emancipation, and empowerment. By merely concentrating on the oppressive facets of international
migration, primacy is allocated to structures and agencies of power that control the flow of humans, thereby discounting the agency of the migrant body. My analysis of the connections between mind/thought and (in)action in politicized spaces imparts value to the power and self-assurance of migrants in assuming control over their transnational experience.

Why engage in discussions concerning the spatiality of politically conscious migrants? More importantly, why examine the connections between thought, action, and space, and how the resulting realities (re)shape the migrant body? Analysis of political consciousness and political (in)action among migrant workers draws attention to the fortitude of the subalter body, underestimated by critical theorists that focus on the weaknesses of dispossessed subaltern agents. The crisis of authority is a radical turning point that rouses political consciousness and liberates subaltern agents from hegemonic rule; however, critical theorists like Fontana (2010) and Bourdieu (1985) undervalue the resiliency and determination of subaltern groups, who they deem to be incapable of shaping their own political consciousness without the assistance of external forces. It is not enough to draw out the fluctuating stages of development of political consciousness or the sense of place that inclines subjects to accept the social world (Pessar 2001), since such conceptualizations place emphasis on the formation of consciousness from the outside. By discounting and diminishing the validity and power of human agency, the transnational political realities of migrants are conceptually converted into a superimposed process that weakens the migrant body. Neglecting to give authority to subaltern groups over their own decisions and actions, furthermore, implies a loss of control over the production of their own identities.
Gramsci (1971) embraces the existence of organic intellectuals (everyday men) that carry some form of intellectual activity. Nonetheless, Gramsci also maintains that certain classes are more given to becoming intellectuals, as these select groups possess the means and ideological apparatuses to lead the masses. The relevance bestowed upon traditional intellectuals diminishes the power of certain individuals and groups that lack the knowledge and political skills. While Gramsci values the conception of organic intellectualism, the distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals neglects the less overt political actions that are often equated with subaltern groups. The less overt political behaviour and acts of subaltern groups tend to be disregarded as progressive participation. I am not implying that Gramsci does not recognize the agency of subaltern bodies; however, far too much relevance is given to dominant forces and traditional intellectuals. Especially in the case of migrant agents contracted through labour migration schemes.

Traditional Marxist debates regarding the spatiality of politics tend to critique the idiocy and drudgery of rural life, approving of more advanced modern and urban spaces that are disposed to heightened political consciousness and mobilization (Goonewardena 2004). This discourse favours spaces where hegemonic powers (authority figures) and traditional intellectuals (transnational allies) are located over spaces where the subaltern and organic intellectuals are situated. By asserting that political consciousness and political identity can only be fostered in spaces where intellectuals disperse political resources (Goonewardena 2004), debates on the spatiality of politics insinuate that subaltern migrant groups lack the astuteness and intelligence to develop their own politicized ideas. Characterization of the subaltern body as ignorant and unable to
cooperate in a revolutionary class discounts migrants’ ability to make decisions pertaining to their own lives and nurture their own identity while traversing multiple spaces.

By focussing on Guatemalan migrants’ politicized responses (like their willingness to deny and/or embrace certain ideas) and interpretations of political figures and manifestations, my study negates conceptual misinterpretations of the role of Guatemalan migrants and bolsters the agency of the subaltern migrant body and their capacity to make resolute decisions. Moreover, the power migrants hold over the formation of their own identity is substantiated by Guatemalan migrants’ willingness to accept and/or reject certain political ideas or tools, a strategy utilized as a coping mechanism to deal with the pressures and demands of seasonal migration. As discussed in Chapter Six, the general response by Guatemalan migrants has been (1) acknowledgement of new political ideas, but an unwillingness to engage in political practices that jeopardize their jobs; (2) recognition of new political ideas and a willingness to engage in political practices without requiring much persuasion; and (3) a sense of being pushed to the edge and left with no other alternative but to engage in new political practices. I argue that these responses reflect upon their agency and resolve to make the best decisions based on the resources made available to them in the different spaces they are situated.

Even though discussion concerning consciousness is limited in the field of geography, there is still much to learn from studies examining the spatiality of ideas. Political consciousness among transnational migrants constantly on the move is defined by the political ideas they embrace and/or reject as well as the way the transnational body chooses to utilize newly acquired political ideas and tools in the varying politicized
spaces. Critical theorists’ contributions to debates regarding the social standing of workers supplement my own conceptualization of the spatiality of political consciousness, since migrants, as subaltern agents, are constrained by hierarchical structures that control their mobility. Thus, circular movement affords Guatemalan migrants the opportunity to awaken their political consciousness through political ideas and tools, including a sense of security and belonging/collectiveness, rights-based knowledge, and principles of liberation and equality. These reserves of empowerment stir migrant political consciousness and open them to new possibilities and opportunities that have the potential to transform their lives and that of their families.

Guatemalan migrants’ exposure to disciplinary and liberating discourse creates both repressive and empowering transnational political realities, as they continue to seasonally migrate between Canada and their home country. For example, migrants recruited into the TAWC project are disciplined and instructed how to behave and act but entrance into the program also affords them opportunities to learn about liberating possibilities from supporting allies and the host community, ideas and tools that can then be transferred to their home community.

Thus, the overarching argument of my dissertation claims that the political (re)shaping of the transnational political migrant body, the primary scale of analysis, is a process superimposed by agencies of power, but more importantly, self-constructed by the migrant agent. Exposure to oppressive and empowering tools in diverging spaces variably impacts the migrant body and creates fluctuations in political consciousness and political (in)action. Authority figures involved in the regulation and administration of the TAWC project discipline Guatemalan migrants to succumb to a neoliberal agenda of
economic advancement through self-regulation, inciting them to submit to, accommodate, and/or counter ideas that control their conduct. More empowering political resources are also imparted upon migrants by supporting transnational allies, in hopes of awakening subaltern migrant political consciousness. Decisions to engage in certain small-scale or large-scale political acts reflect their ability to cope with the mounting pressures of seasonal migration. Guatemalan migrants’ (un)willingness to embrace and/or suppress political resources that restructure political consciousness and political actions contributes to the versatility and fluidity of their transnational political identities.

While transnational supporting allies bestow migrants with encouraging political ideas and tools, exposure to new political realities of security, equality, and collectiveness (sense of belonging) also endow Guatemalan workers with new empowering political resources. By living and working in a space that some Guatemalans come to deem as safe and secure, migrants are exposed to new ideas and political realities that help them realize that tangible social change can be sparked by small-scale and large-scale political acts. This interpretation by Guatemalan migrants lends to my argument that there is a need for the institutionalization of political spaces that foster the political transnational identity of migrants - a point that is expanded upon below.

Aside from asserting arguments that draw out the theoretical and pragmatic facets of the transnational political identity of migrant workers, this research also contributes to wider geographical research on migration from the Global South. In the end, my study advanced two critical points. First, my dissertation conceptualizes connections between mind/thought, (in)action, and political spaces, so as to grasp the impact controlled circular movement has on political consciousness and political action among Guatemalan
migrants exploited as flexible, disposable labour. The transnationality of this process generates fluctuations in Guatemalan workers’ political expressions, as the migrant body continually shifts between spaces that yield diverging political climates. By moving back and forth between spaces of oppression and insecurity to spaces of liberation and empowerment and back, Guatemalan migrants are afforded new political opportunities. Within these shifting spaces migrants decide how to internalize these newly acquired resources and how to survive and thrive in a politically-charged circular experience. Thus, the transnational spatiality of political consciousness supplements a body of research that often relegates importance to macro-processes and structures influenced by agencies of power.

Second, since geographical research tends to focus its energy on critiquing the disrepute and exploitative nature of temporary migration without taking into account the empowering and liberating opportunities of circular migration (Conway 1998; Massey and Liang 1989; McDowell 2008; Mitchell 1996), my study highlights the potential for seasonal migration to contribute to meaningful social change in the Global South. Even though I criticize the disciplinary role of figures of authority, there is still much to learn from the political encounters that incite migrants to transfer valuable tools and resources back to their home community in order to challenge the daily grind of life in Guatemala, as in the case of AGUND members who mobilized after they felt they were pushed to the edge. After collectively organizing, this migrant association was able to place pressure on government agencies and the IOM to pay attention to their claims of mistreatment and discrimination. By scrutinizing the state promotion of regulated migration schemes and examining the circular component of transnational migration, I counter notions that
migrants’ precarious status disconnects them from the spaces and, in turn, defend the agency of foreign workers and their ability to create links in their host society while also bringing these connections back to their home community.

Limitations and Future Research

The evolving nature of transnational migration signifies ever-shifting patterns and conceptualizations of the migrant body. Therefore, I will conclude my dissertation by offering observations about the conceptual limitations encountered while carrying out my study and the means by which restrictions can be surmounted through future research opportunities. The most taxing research problem I encountered was deciphering what ideas and activities should be classified as political in order to grasp how migrant workers internalize consciousness. Political ideology is often associated with the state, abandoning concepts constructed by disempowered individuals. The political imperatives of subaltern migrant agents are just as or even more relevant than political discourse socially constructed by agencies of power, especially since the inclusion of principles such as security, liberation, and counter hegemony help illuminate migrants’ internalization of newly acquired political resources.

While an awakening of political consciousness is critical to understanding the transformative nature of seasonal migration, in order to grapple with the newly acquired ideas that influence the migrant body one must pour over the expressions and actions of Guatemalan workers in the multiple spaces through which they flow. Political actions are incessantly limited to large-scale acts of defiance and confrontation given the transparent
nature of activities such as demonstrations and strikes. Nonetheless, less visible political action are just as relevant, since migrants strategically utilize small-scale acts as a way to curb the risks associated with larger acts of resistance. By carefully assessing migrants’ responses to political matters and also bearing in mind observations out in the field, I was able to ascertain what migrant workers deemed to be assertive acts that countered hegemonic pressures. Acts performed in opposition to power relations in an effort to advance migrants’ social standing are not confined by a set definition but, rather, are dependent on migrants’ attempts to express themselves politically and cope with the pressures of seasonal migration.

Future research must seek to move away from merely critiquing the exploitative structures that control and oppress the behaviour and actions of migrant workers, and instead, ascertain ways to improve their situation. By either assisting and supporting migrants or determining ways that workers can garner a sense of belonging and security, researchers can distance themselves from sustaining power relations that promote the marginalization of migrants. Such contributions enhance the migratory experience, and more importantly, advance the need for fostering political consciousness and political activities. Migrant studies, I believe, should look beyond acts of resistance and defiance and promote undertakings that advocate for more democratic initiatives.

In determining ways to enhance political consciousness among disenfranchised migrants and support the transfer of empowering and liberating political ideas and tools into conflicted and unstable spaces, academics and researchers give back to a migrant community with the agency to incite long-lasting social change. The transnational institutionalization of migrant agents’ political participation extends principles of
freedom, equality, and liberty that are often restricted by national borders and political discourse that favours the role of the state. By conceptualizing a framework of thought and action that cultivates democratic initiatives, subaltern groups can effectively gain the tools and resources to improve their working and living conditions and escape the vicious cycle of poverty and oppression (Flacks 1996). This form of democratization at the grass-roots level should be considered a cross-border strategy that disrupts hegemonic structures and provides migrants with the means to participate politically in the processes that regulate their transnational mobility.

Advocacy for forms of democratization does not solely refer to a course of action that permits political participation through an electoral process but, rather, inclusion in a process of political self-determination not limited to the state. For migrant workers, this inclusion denotes an involvement in the decision-making process that regulates labour contracts and the labour standards and policies that dictate their mobility. Too often, migrant workers are excluded from the structural decisions that shape labour migration schemes, negated involvement in choices that directly impact their transnational migratory experience. The recklessness of the Guatemalan and Canadian government is illuminated by the control FERME has acquired over the recruitment of agricultural migrant workers in the province of Québec. The fact that neither government has responded to the privatization of this migration scheme reinforces the need for Guatemalan migrant workers’ involvement in negotiating the terms of their labour contract (other policy alternatives are suggested in Appendix A).

Inclusion of migrants in workplace decision-making processes and contract negotiations not only holds the state and administrators accountable to recruited foreign
workers, but also encourages the transfer of political resources to home communities and legitimizes action against labour violations. The growth of transnationalism and cross-border strategies grants migrants the opportunity to challenge traditional notions of citizenship and equality and to participate in a political arena not merely defined by national terms. This form of “portable justice” forces states and administrators to acknowledge that access to rights and privileges should not be bound by borders. Instead, global migration has to be used as a tool to promulgate the transfer of progressive political ideas and tools that liberate subaltern agents from the reigns of oppressive and conflicting agencies of power. The initiatives of AGUND exemplify the impact that the inclusion of politically-charged migrants can have in challenging hegemonic discourse and generating a political forum that allows migrants to gain access to principles of equality, security, liberty, and most importantly, collectiveness (sense of belonging).

Even with shifting global dynamics and variable contours of political transnationalism, the emancipatory nature of seasonal migration can be enhanced and supported by states and transnational allies in an effort to empower politically and economically disenfranchised communities. There is much to gain from studying the political (in)action of Guatemalans, given their drive and motivation to thrive in a migration scheme that benefits from their disposability of flexibility. The resilience and fortitude of Guatemalan migrants, those of the members of AGUND foremost of all, shed light on the political will of marginalized communities and their ability to challenge hegemonic discourse that suppresses their transnational political identity. This determination was captured during a touching interview with Tobias, a member of AGUND:
Sometimes I do not feel comfortable talking about political issues during these types of situations out of fear. I am scared that the wrong people will hear me speaking out against wrongdoings. Maybe it is our [Guatemalan migrants] lack of education or because we have not been given the opportunity to talk in these type of situations. But I am here to fight and try to improve the desperate circumstances of my family because I do not want my children to work out in the fields and end up in the same situation I am in right now. (AGUND member 4 2011)

Like many other migrants who struggle with the fear of speaking out and engaging in defiant acts, Tobias feels that his only escape from this form of contracted servitude is advocating for the basic principles of liberty, equality, and empowerment at the grassroots level, in an effort to gain a strong, emancipatory political voice.
Bibliography


List of Interviews


Director of Asociación de Guatemaltecos Unidos por Nuestros Derechos. 2010. AGUND. Santiago Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. Personal Interview.


Human Resources and Skills Development Canada Official. 2010. HRSDC. Ottawa, Canada. Email Correspondence.


Appendix A – In Search of Policy Alternatives

Engagement with advocacy work at the grassroots level has prompted me to postulate key policy recommendations that draw links between theoretical claims and political imperatives of Guatemalan migrant participants. These alternatives, in my opinion, would improve the administration of the TAWC project and grant migrants the opportunity to develop political consciousness and institutionalize their political participation. These suggestions would sanction the inclusion of migrants into a political arena often controlled by agencies of power.

First and foremost, all low-skilled foreign workers could have access to a pathway to permanent status, a point that has been repeatedly raised by researchers and activists alike (Basok 2005, Sharma 2006, Hennebry and Preibisch 2010). For UFCW Canada (2011), the systemic denial of a pathway to permanent residency goes against the foundational basis of a country fortified by the arrival of immigrants. Temporary foreign workers confined to the low-skilled sector are often tied to one employer, a government regulation that intensifies the precarity of migrants’ status. The Live-In-Caregiver Program is a successful example of advancing the rights of workers, since it allows foreign workers to gain a more permanent status after completing 24 months of authorized full time employment.
Expansion of the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)\footnote{The PNP allows the province to select economic immigrants who will be nominated for landed immigrant status.} would provide migrant workers who have filled voids in the labour market with a channel to secure landed immigrant status. Touted as a mechanism that promotes equality and fairness, the PNP provides temporary foreign workers with a channel to secure landed immigrant status. For example, low-skilled foreign workers employed at Maple Leaf hog slaughter and processing facilities in Brandon and Winnipeg, Manitoba, qualified for the PNP after being nominated by the province. UFCW Canada (2011) argues that the federal government needs to ensure that provinces make the PNP available to all foreign workers, so that temporary labour can contribute to landing points.

In order to move forward, the Canadian government might take into consideration the social and economic contributions of temporary foreign workers who return seasonally to toil in undesirable sectors local Canadians are unwilling to fill. The federal government has a history of exploiting the precarious labour of migrants without affording them the opportunity to apply for a more permanent status on the basis that they lack the preferred skills and characteristics. If accorded the option to permanently immigrate, temporary foreign workers would not be constrained by the insecurity of their status and inaccessibility to certain social rights.

Second, a state-to-state agreement needs to be established\footnote{The PNP allows the province to select economic immigrants who will be nominated for landed immigrant status.} to solidify regulations that protect the movement of Guatemalan migrant workers across borders. While Canada hides behind the MFN limitations, the privatization of the Guatemalan-Canadian migration program permits non-state actors to acquire authority over a labour scheme that
should be under the regulation of government agencies. The lack of protections and recourse reinforce the indentured treatment of migrant workers’ and inhibit their conduct. The development of a bilateral agreement would free migrants from the constraints of an employer-employee contract and force the Canadian and Guatemalan government to be accountable for the mistreatment of foreign workers. What is more, a state-to-state agreement would not tie Guatemalan migrants to one employer during the duration of their work permit, and instead, grant them the opportunity to transfer to another farm. Under the SAWP foreign workers are granted a provision to transfer to another farm, since they are not tied to one employer but rather regulated by a bilateral agreement. Guatemalan migrants would not be so constrained by the fear of losing their jobs, if given the same opportunity of being protected under a bilateral agreement. Growers’ associations like FERME, and Canadian employers’ social control over Guatemalans’ mobility and political participation, would be challenged once migrants are granted a venue for recourse.

Third, *stronger policy connections between various government agencies* would generate much-needed government accountability and devise a sound overarching mechanism to monitor the TFWP. The lack of connection between various government agencies both at the federal and provincial level have resulted in inconsistent employment standards and overlapping policies that create miscommunication and confusion. The development of national employment and occupational health and safety standards would obligate the provincial governments to guarantee full coverage for all foreign workers. Movement away from provincial standards would also ease the process of monitoring the safety of foreign workers who would then be treated like all other local workers. The
offloading of responsibility to provincial governments by HRSDC and CIC intensifies the ambiguity of temporary foreign worker programs and weakens the enforcement of certain established rights. By creating stronger connections between various government agencies, migrants would no longer have to contend with the confusing government channels and be provided better measures of protections.

Tied to the previous suggestion is need for a *transparent and impartial process of appeal*, so that migrant workers are afforded a mechanism to contest being fired and repatriated. The Canadian government is not formally involved in monitoring the repatriation of migrants, and more importantly, employers are not required to seek permission from any government agency to terminate a workers’ contract. Unable to challenge their repatriation, Guatemalan migrants are dissuaded from contesting intolerable working conditions.

Fourth, *FERME cannot be the sole organization administering the migration of Guatemalans to the province of Québec*. When FERME signed an agreement with the Honduran government to recruit migrants to the province of Québec, it stated in the contract that “Canada has no power to intervene or ensure the contract is enforced” when a worker is dismissed (UFCW Canada 2011). Now that FERME has complete control of the recruitment and handling of Guatemalan migrants, the Canadian federal government needs to be aware of how the growers’ association administers a labour scheme that has limited state involvement. Without government intervention FERME has achieved, in effect, a monopoly over the contracting of foreign workers in the province of Québec and has minimized their accountability to state regulations. Privatization of migration schemes is decidedly problematical, as it can lead to minimal oversight, indeed abuse of
migrant rights. Thus, the Canadian government would do well to monitor FERME’s administration of recruitment and labour contracts.

Lastly, migrant workers should be involved in the development of agreements/contracts, as this role of self-determination would allow them to have input in a properly regulated program. Migrants are entitled to a place at the bargaining table, especially if governments wish to overcome criticisms regarding the management of migrant labour schemes. The full participation of Guatemalan migrants in making decisions on wages and employment stipulations would diminish the number of workplace violations and discontent amongst the workers, but more importantly, minimize their vulnerability as disposable labour. The Canadian and Guatemalan governments might consider offering disenfranchised workers the option to be involved in the creation of an agreement/contract, especially if the state does not want to widen inequalities in poorer labour-sending countries and propagate a dependent relationship.

The future of Guatemalan migrants is reliant on progressive changes to a migration program that currently advances economic interests through the control of workers’ behaviour and actions. By assuming an alternative approach to the management of migration, both the Canadian and Guatemalan governments would harvest brighter opportunities and instil in Guatemalan migrants the confidence needed to express political consciousness. More importantly, these alternatives would strengthen the agency of Guatemalans migrants to flourish and sanction their political participation while traversing multiple spaces.
Appendix B - Fieldwork Questions

1 - State Leaders, Policy Makers, Administrators of Foreign Worker Program

- What role does your institution play in the recruitment/management of seasonal migrant workers? (Assess the level of involvement of the governing/managing body in shaping the political identity of migrants)
- What are the qualities that you look for when you are selecting workers to participate in the seasonal program in Canada?
- What policies have been implemented to better develop and manage the migration of seasonal farmworkers? (Questioning the disciplinary tools implemented by the governing/managing body)
- Have any policies been implemented by the Guatemalan to accommodate to the needs and demands of the Canadian government and businesses?
- What type of policies have been implemented to speed up the process of recruiting Guatemalan migrant workers onto Canadian farms?
- Has your governing/managing body changed any of its policies and procedures regarding migration in order to accommodate to the current national and global economic crisis?
- Is the government of Guatemala offloading responsibilities of providing labour and access to capital to the Canadian government and businesses?
- Why do the Guatemalan and Canadian governments prefer that Guatemalan workers return to their home country?
- How do your government’s policies restrict or limit the flow of migrants?
- Why does the government allow the free flow of trade and capital, but not the free flow of people?
- Why are migrants not provided with access to the same rights and privileges and citizens?
- Has the Guatemalan government tried to find ways to provide work for their citizens in their home country, so that they do not have to travel outside of their country to find work?
- How important are the transfer of remittances and knowledge back to Guatemala?
- How has seasonal migration transformed the lives of migrants and their families?
- Are the political activities that migrants engage in both in Guatemala and Canada supported by your government or administrative body? Why or why not?
- What is your opinion on the unionization of seasonal agricultural workers?
- How has the political instability in Guatemala impacted migrant workers?
- Is seasonal migration more beneficial than permanent migration for the worker/community, and government? More importantly, how does migration contribute to political economic development in both Canada and Guatemala?
- What have been some of the unforeseen downfalls of the seasonal flow of foreign workers?
2 – Non-State Actors (Support Groups)

- What type of support do you provide to migrant workers?
- How would you describe the current working conditions of migrant workers? What are some issues of concern?
- In Canada, what type of political activities are Guatemalan migrants engaging in?
- Do you feel that the political instability in Guatemala has impacted the migrant experience of Guatemalans in Canada?
- What are some important tools and knowledge that Guatemalan migrants need to be provided with?
- How has the local community and other seasonal migrant workers reacted to the presence of Guatemalan workers?

3 – Migrant workers (Mexican and Guatemalan)

- What type of work did you do before coming to Canada?
- How many people do you support in your household in your home country?
- What motivated you to choose to temporarily migrate instead of finding other forms of work?
- How many years have you been migrating to Canada? How long will you be in Canada for?
- How would you describe your relationship with other workers Mexican/Guatemalan migrant workers? What are some positive or negative things of working and living with other farmworkers?
- How would you describe your relationship with local Quebec community members?
- What rights do you have or know of as a temporary foreign worker in Canada?
- How would you compare the rights you have in Canada to the rights you have in your home country?
- Do you feel you have greater liberty and security as a citizen of your home country or temporary migrant worker in Canada?
- Where do you get information on your rights and responsibilities here in Canada?
- Where do you get your information on political events in Guatemala and Canada? Where is it easier to get political information?
- Do you face discrimination in your home country as a result of your ethnicity? Do you face discrimination in Canada as a result of your nationality?
- How difficult or easy is it to migrate from your home country to Canada or any other country? Why is it difficult or easy?
- If given the opportunity would you join a union? Do unions help to improve the rights and privileges of workers?
- What is your opinion of President Barrack Obama and his relationship to all of Latin America? How would you compare him to past U.S. presidents?
• What do you remember of the civil war and how has this impacted your family?
• How has the civil war and political instability impacted your opportunity to find work in your home country?
• How has the civil war changed (shaped) your political views in Guatemala?
• Are you involved in any political activities in your home country? Please explain why or why not?
• How do you feel about the unionization drive for agricultural workers?
• What do you think of engaging in political activities to improve the rights of migrant agricultural workers such as you?
• How would you compare the political situation here in Canada to that of your home country?
Appendix C - Letter of Information (Government officials and Administrators of the Foreign Worker Program and Members of Support Groups)

1. This research is being conducted by Giselle Valarezo, doctoral candidate at the Geography Department, Queen’s university, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.
2. The topic that is being researched is titled “Seasonal Migration of Guatemalan Farmworkers to Canada and the Transfer of Political Practices.” The main purpose of the study is to examine: (1) how seasonal migration between Guatemala and Canada impacts the political consciousness of migrant agricultural workers and (2) how Guatemalan migrant workers use the newly acquired political knowledge and tools in their host and home community. Interviews conducted with government officials and administrators of the foreign worker program and support groups will provide insight into how each of these individuals and groups shape the political consciousness of seasonal agricultural workers recruited from Guatemala. As a part of the research, interviews will be conducted in which the participant will be asked to state their opinion on questions related to the topic under study.
3. Participants will be interviewed alone. Interviews are expected to last no more than one hour. Participants may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview, only if necessary.
4. There are no known physical, psychological, economic or social risks involved with the participation in the research.
5. Participation in the research project is completely voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any point of time during the research for any reason they may deem fit. If a participant chooses to withdraw the information they provide will not be used for this study. At any point during this study they can get in contact with me to let me know that they have withdrawn from the study and wish to retract all the information that they provided me. At which point I will then dispose of all the information that they provided me.
6. There is no compulsion for participants to answer a question/questions that they are not comfortable with.
7. A tape-recorder shall be used to record the interview.
8. If the participant does not provide explicit consent to use their full name to be quoted the confidentiality of the participants shall be protected by means of concealing the names and identities of the participants. The information in the form of raw data shall be kept safe in a laptop, which can only be accessed with a password, locked in a cabinet in an office at Queen’s University. I will be the only individual with access to this information and it will not be released to any other individual or group.
9. This research shall be part of the PhD thesis that will be submitted to Queen’s University. The academic community and any other person interested in it shall have access to it through Queen’s University. It may also be published in the form of a book at a later stage and can be thus available to the general public or as a secondary source for other researchers.
10. Any complaints or queries regarding the nature or manner of research can be forwarded to the following persons/bodies:
➢ Researcher
➢ Giselle Valarezo
   Email: 4gv@queensu.ca
   Telephone: 613 533 6000 ext. 75721
   Geography Department,
   Queen’s University,
   Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6.
➢ Supervisor
➢ Professor W. George Lovell
   Email: lovellg@queensu.ca
   Telephone: 613 533 6041
   Geography Department,
   Queen’s University,
   Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6
➢ Supervisor
➢ Professor Beverley Mullings
   Email: mullings@queensu.ca
   Telephone: 613 533 6000 ext. 78829
   Geography Department,
   Queen’s University,
   Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6
➢ General Research Ethics Board
➢ Chair: Dr. Joan Stevenson
   Email: chair.GREB@queensu.ca
   Telephone: (613)533-6081
   Queen’s University,
   Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6
Appendix D - Letter of Consent (Government officials and Administrators of the Foreign Worker Program and Members of Support Groups)

1. Project Title: “Seasonal Migration of Guatemalan Farmworkers to Canada and the Transfer of Political Practices.”

2. Name of Participant: ____________________________________________

3. I have read the Letter of Information and have had all questions regarding it answered to my satisfaction.

4. I am aware of the aims of this research project titled “Seasonal Migration of Guatemalan Farmworkers to Canada and the Transfer of Political Practices.” and the nature and extent of my involvement in the same and have consented to the use of a tape-recorder to record my interview.

5. I am aware that I can contact the researcher at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, Giselle Valarezo, tel. 613 766 9937 ext. 75721, email: 4gv@queensu.ca or the supervisors at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, Professor W. George Lovell tel 613 533 6041, email: lovellg@queensu.ca and Professor Beverley Mullings tel. 613 533 6000 ext. 78829, email: mullings@queensu.ca or the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, Dr. Joan Stevenson, tel. 613-533-6081, email: chair.GREB@queensu.ca, regarding any complaints or queries with respect to the research.

6. I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any point of time.

7. I am assured that if requested the researcher shall protect the confidentiality of my identity, by not using my name or any other identifying information in the research and keeping the raw data safely in a laptop, accessed with a password, stored in a locked cabinet.

Initial the following points that you give consent:

_________ I hereby give explicit consent to the researcher to use my full name in this research.

_________ I hereby give explicit consent to the researcher to tape record the interview.

Name:
Date:
Signature:
Appendix E - Letter of Information (Agricultural Workers)

1. I would like you to participate in this research being conducted by Giselle Valarezo, doctoral candidate at the Geography Department, Queen’s university, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

2. The topic that is being researched is titled “Seasonal Migration of Guatemalan Farm workers to Canada and the Transfer of Political Practices.” The main purpose of the study is to examine: (1) how seasonal migration between Guatemala and Canada impacts the political consciousness of migrant agricultural workers and (2) how Guatemalan migrant workers use the newly acquired political knowledge and tools in their host and home community. As a part of the research, I wish to conduct interviews with you in which I will ask you to state your opinion on questions related to the topic under study.

3. As a migrant farm worker, I would like to interview you alone in a private and secure area. Interviews are expected to last no more than one hour. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview, only if necessary.

4. You may be uncomfortable with the line of questioning that deals with the political conflict in Guatemala and may create some social discomfort. I will provide you with the contact information for a professional counsellor before commencing the interview in case you are distressed in any way by the line of questioning. Interviews will be held in a public location where you feel most comfortable and that is away from vicinity of your workplace in order to protect you from risk of possibly upsetting your employer for participating in this study. If you feel that your job is at risk by participating in this study you are welcome to withdraw at any point and the information you have provided will not be used in my research. Other than that, there are no known physical, psychological, economic or social risks involved with your participation in this research.

5. Participation in the research project is completely voluntary and for any reason you may deem fit. If you choose to withdraw, all information you have provided will not be used for this study. At any point during this study you can let me know that you want to withdraw and I will dispose of all the information that you have provided.

6. There is no compulsion for you to answer a question/questions that you are not comfortable with.

7. A tape-recorder shall be used to record the interviews.

8. If you do not provide explicit consent to use your name to be quoted your confidentiality shall be protected by means of concealing your name and identity. The information in the form of raw data shall be kept safe in a laptop, which can only be accessed with a password, locked in a cabinet in an office at Queen’s University. I will be the only individual with access to this information and it will not be released to any other individual or group.

9. This research shall be part of the PhD thesis that will be submitted to Queen’s University. The academic community and any other person interested in it shall have access to it through Queen’s University. It may also be published in the form of a
book or articles at a later stage and can be thus available to the general public or as a secondary source for other researchers.

10. Any complaints or queries regarding the nature or manner of research can be forwarded to the following persons/bodies:

**Researcher**
- **Giselle Valarezo**
  - Email: 4gv@queensu.ca
  - Telephone: 613 533 6000 ext. 75721
  - Geography Department, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6.
- **Supervisor**
  - **Professor W. George Lovell**
    - Email: lovellg@queensu.ca
    - Telephone: 613 533 6041
    - Geography Department, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

- **Supervisor**
- **Professor Beverley Mullings**
  - Email: mullings@queensu.ca
  - Telephone: 613 533 6000 ext. 78829
  - Geography Department, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

- **General Research Ethics Board**
- **Chair: Dr. Joan Stevenson**
  - Email: chair.GREB@queensu.ca
  - tel. (613)533-6081
  - Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6
Appendix F - Letter of Consent (Agricultural Workers)

1. Project Title: “Seasonal Migration of Guatemalan Farmworkers to Canada and the Transfer of Political Practices.”

2. Name of Participant: ______________________________________

3. I have read the Letter of Information and have had all questions regarding it answered to my satisfaction.

4. I am aware of the aims of this research project titled “Seasonal Migration of Guatemalan Farmworkers to Canada and the Transfer of Political Practices” and the nature and extent of my involvement in the same and have consented to the use of a tape-recorder to record my interview.

5. I am aware that I can contact the researcher at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, Giselle Valarezo, tel. 613 533 6000 ext. 75721, email: 4gv@queensu.ca or the supervisors at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, Professor W. George Lovell tel 613 533 6041, email: lovellg@queensu.ca and Professor Beverley Mullings tel. 613 533 6000 ext. 78829, email: mullings@queensu.ca or the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, Dr. Joan Stevenson, tel. 613-533-6081, email: chair.GREB@queensu.ca, regarding any complaints or queries with respect to the research.

6. I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any point of time.

7. I am assured that if requested the researcher shall protect the confidentiality of my identity, by not using my name or any other identifying information in the research and keeping the raw data safely in a laptop, accessed with a password, stored in a locked cabinet.

Initial the following points that you give consent:

________ I hereby give explicit consent to the researcher to use my first name in this research.

________ I hereby give explicit consent to the researcher to tape record the interview.

Name:

Date:

Signature: