Alcohol Abuse Reproduced by Structural Inequalities

A Case Study in rural Mexico

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ABSTRACT

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Title
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Description
The purpose of this case study is to reveal the social structure determining the state of alcoholism in a particular society. The Case Study area is a marginalized rural and indigenous village, highly interconnected with the modern world through non-indigenous presence and because of its geographic location, situated close to a highway.

The research is a result of a perceived local acceptance and naturalness of a highly destructive alcohol intake, which penetrates the whole society.

Theoretical focus
The theoretical focus is drawn from the theories Durable Inequality developed by Charles Tilly and Stigmatization of Outsiders developed by Norbert Elias.

Data and research methods
The study is empirical and presented in a narrative structure introducing the reader to both the particularities of the Case Study area as well as the focal problem. The method used is Participant Observation.

Findings
The crucial finding of the study is that an adaptive structure has evolved around the alcohol abuse, normalizing its existence and hazardous side effects, hindering any form of active resistance, and therefore reproducing or even strengthening the abuse.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was commenced in the spring of 2005 when I first came in contact with the community of San Ildefonso de Tultepec and its inhabitants. Now, two years later I have finally completed a report that offers me a justification for all the time and favours that I have requested from so many.

I want to thank IOGT-NTO for the economic support, through which my residence in the community could be prolonged.

I also want to thank my friends at Jade Grupo Mexicano A.C. for their support and answers to my endless questions and Ann Larsson for her help with proofreading and for her friendship. Thank you.

Finally, I especially want to thank the community for accepting my presence and intimate questions. Your spirits will always be with me and strengthen me in times of hardship.

Sandra Karlsson
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INTRODUCTION

The encounter
My first impression of San Ildefonso de Tultepec was astonishing. The people in traditional Otomi garments; their features were dark, both skin and hair. The landscape was flat with bushes and magueys. The wind had free passage and constantly stirred up the dust and covered everything and everyone. After a few months into the job in the village I noticed more than the shallow visual. One thing in particular that stood out was the presence of alcohol. This observation can be related to my personal experience of alcoholism. During my first visit to San Ildefonso I was there merely to observe and determine if I was interested in an internship with ACCEDDE A.C., the organization accountable for a microcréditos project.

I was very struck by the encounter with the Otomi looking and seeming very different to what I was used to. Another vivid memory of this first meeting was the strong odour of alcohol. I could not say from how many people the odour came from, but I clearly remember that two of the men reeked strongly as I passed them. However, I did not notice it much at this point, more than just registering the feeling.

After about a month, I commenced my work with the project and without me searching for the role of the alcohol in the community, I was constantly reminded of its presence and damage.

The quest
The research was effectively initiated in May of 2004 with the representation of San Ildefonso as the case study area. Despite the short time I had visited the community I recognized that the area was infected by alcohol, and the whole community seemed to be a victim of its damaging effects.

Upon asking participants of the project about this perceived problem their answers were shocking; it became clear to me that alcohol was not officially treated as a problem but instead stated as a fact, even if a lamentable one. I had a hard time to accept this fact as I saw the negative outcome of the abundant drinking in the everyday life of people in the community. The general explanation is that the people always have been drinking; it is socially accepted and has become an integrated part of society. Through this awareness my interest awoke and I explicitly focused more on what I actually saw, heard, smelled and felt, as I was sure that the infectious drinking had vast implications on the society. I made it my quest to reveal the roots of the problem – which was publicly said not to be a problem in the first place.

The method in this first phase of my research was restricted to social facts, only later did I associate a theoretical framework and methods of investigation. Even though the primary collection of data did not conform to any theory or method the questions were not insignificant, but actually still remain the same: What is the meaning of alcohol in this society, and why do they drink as they do?

In the beginning of my investigation I did not set aside any extra time to any specific researching but let the day to day events steer my findings. Through my work with the microcréditos project I regularly visited the village and as I got familiar with the project I initiated my internship investigation, conducting an impact evaluation. First, I remember being lost in this new environment; people looking at me as if I was as exotic, as they were to

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1 The Case Study method is understood through the presentation of Britha Mikkelsen (2005:170ff).
me. In comparison to their traditional garments I wore my red wind-stopper and my trekking boots. This in addition with my blue eyes and blond hair – We were as of two different worlds! However, it didn’t bother me much though, even if I sometimes felt a bit embarrassed having people staring at me and not respecting my western comfort zone. As time went by I got accustomed to the reactions of my presence and didn’t feel awkward when people looked at me – even the shouts and the whistling blended in with the daily life sounds and became less noticeable.

Through the evaluation I got in contact with many people that I would otherwise not have been able to meet. I interviewed women and men participating in the project, even some living remote. The semi-structured interviews left much room for chatting and for elaborating on various subjects. Many times the subject that came up was the alcohol abuse in the neighbourhood or in the family, as the side effect of the abuse was directly linked to their ability to take advantage of their participation in the project. Besides, these occasions were also perfect for observations as we (I always visited the houses accompanied by the secretary who is both a local key person and an interpreter.) sometimes were invited in their houses getting a glimpse of their life, as a daughter could be washing the clothes nearby and the smaller children be playing by our feet.

Small talk with project participants and observations of activities in the centre was a daily activity when visiting the community. The many hours spent chatting and questioning the validity of my observations with the secretary and other participants in the office only inspired me further. As I saw people gathering in a square or behind the church I saw the opportunity to gather more information. When the people got accustomed of seeing me around some had the courage and interest to approach me and question my presence. I responded that my subject of interest was their culture, their joys and worries. We could talk for a while, discussing the event, the people present as well as other subjects of interest. Today I only regret not having brought a 3D version of my world so that they would have been able, if not to fully understand, to grasp the idea of where I come from and how special our interaction was to me.

After one year in Mexico I had to return to Sweden for my studies, however, as soon as I reached my native soil I prepared for my next trip to the homeland of the Otomí. I was very eager to continue and dig deeper into this widespread and damaging issues of alcoholism. During my year in Sweden I continued my research and discovered that the professional label for my method of investigation was Participant Observation, a method used principally in ethnological studies. Upon my return the method proved to be more than an adequate tool for my continued research. As the research took form under this method I became the instrument for its development. During the day I was observing, interviewing and talking to people I encountered in the stores, streets, bars and other social settings. At moments in between, at night, on the bus, over a cup of tea, I wrote down my experiences and facts gathered. I knew little about this culture and even less about the specifics of this particular community. To even begin to understand the role of alcohol I first had to grasp the basics. Through the Participant Observation I touched many aspects of social life and only after having acquired this basic

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overview the true patterns, strategies and peculiarities of the community came clear to me, revealed through the wide scope of my inquiries.\(^3\)

As I learned more I came to understand the social structure and the underlying pattern of alcohol. The alcohol which was orally presented as culturally defining was shown in its true colours as the presentation’s entangling derivation was revealed. As the phenomenon unravelled I was inspired by the work of Charles Tilly and Norbert Elias. In the book *Durable Inequality*\(^4\) Tilly explores consistent inequalities probable to shape the society. *Stigmatization of Outsiders*\(^5\), theorized by Elias, interacts with the former in its definitions of *us* and *them* and the confirming relationship between them.

With the assistance and guidance of methods, theories, individuals and institutions I sought and found answers to my questions, as presented below.

**Alcohol as a structural problem**

When discussing the problem of alcoholism there are many that live by the truth that alcoholism is an individual illness or a problem. Few are those that recognize the greater spectrum of society’s twists and turns. In Mexico the understanding of alcohol and alcohol abuse is very ambiguous. I would be so bold to claim that the focal point of alcoholism is medical, as I through extensive reading and contacts with individuals working in the health department mostly have received information stating the same.\(^6\) The medical focus on alcohol is well documented, and many of these studies categorise alcohol as a disease. Furthermore, in real life so to say, most Mexicans don’t see alcohol as a socially integrated problem. Hence, the alcoholism is regarded as an individual problem rather than a community based issue.

In this specific community I would claim that for the most part alcoholism is a social and a structural, not individual problem; sending drunkards of to institutions doesn’t solve the problem. In most cases the sober alcoholic is sent back home to the same community structure that made him an alcoholic, thus he easily falls back into the same patterns as before. However, if the social structure around him has changed during his institutionalization he has a bigger chance of staying sober. I am not disrespecting the will power of an individual by this statement, but presenting the power of the overarching social structure.

**Disposition**

This thesis has a different structure than the usually presented and academically recognized ones. Due to the area of focus and the participant observation method, I found it to be best presented in this manner inviting the reader into this vivid world. Being different from a traditional thesis there are no chapters of method, theoretical framework or results following that structure the report is instead presented in a narrative framework best suited for the particular flow and personal presentation of the collected material.

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\(^3\) Academically this particular affirmation and reaffirmation of facts is called triangulation as the same facts or data are controlled and verified/falsified through several methods combined, for the specific purpose to validate/falsify them. (Mikkelsen 2005:197)

\(^4\) Tilly, Charles 1998. *Durable Inequality*, University of California Press, USA, California, Berkeley and Los Angeles


\(^6\) Contact was initiated in the summer of 2005 when my initial interest was awakened.
The narrative introduction is several pages long and presents the case study area, in a general sense, giving the reader the opportunity to become acquainted with the local community and its peculiarities. In the introduction the alcohol problem is mentioned and related to various structural phenomenons and practices, leading the reader forward, preparing her/him for the first analytical section: *Inequalities shaping the community*. The section presents theoretical discussions of the inequalities determining the community and its alcohol problem through the theories of *Durable Inequality* by Charles Tilly\(^7\) and *Stigmatization of Outsiders* by Norbert Elias\(^8\).

The second analytical section, *Practices reproducing unequal relations, maintaining a high alcohol intake*, presents the general practices that further reproduce the inequalities discussed in the former section, and more explicitly focus on the practices directly related to the alcohol problem.

The third section, *Incentives for change*, is presented as somewhat of a confirmation that the theoretical framework is adequate and applicable as a tool for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the structural mechanisms that are in play in the case study area: Proving that the existing structure is a case of durable inequalities on different levels, strengthened by the mechanism of stigmatization.

The *Concluding analysis* is describing the theoretical analysis without any extensive empirical facts; this is then is followed by the last section, *Considerations* and thoughts from the author.

**SAN ILDEFONSO DE TULTEPEC – A NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

January of 2004 was the first time I ever visited San Ildefonso de Tultepec, commonly referred to as San Ildefonso. The reason for my visit was work related, I was about to initiate a semester’s internship with ACCEDDE A.C.\(^9\) working in the community. A few months earlier ACCEDDE had commenced cooperation with Jade Grupo Mexicano A.C. (Grupo Jade), another organization working in the area. Grupo Jade already had strong ties with the community, having worked there for some years, putting into operation various community development projects.\(^10\) Since the initial contact had already been made it was a great opportunity for ACCEDDE to implement their *microcréditos* project, providing economical incentives through micro-credit loans.

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\(^7\) Tilly, Charles 1998. *Durable Inequality*, University of California Press, USA, California, Berkeley and Los Angeles

\(^8\) Norbert, Elias 1999 *Etablerade och Outsiders: En sociologisk studie om grannskapsproblem*, A-Z Förlag, Sverige

\(^9\) Acción Ciudadana para la Educación, la Demoracia y el Desarrollo A.C. is a non-governmental organization working for community development in San Ildefonso through a micro-credit project. ACCEDDE principally works in the state of Jalisco. They, through their contacts within El Grupo Jade, initiated, in the autumn of 2004 a project in San Ildefonso.

\(^10\) Jade Grupo Mexicano A.C. is an umbrella organization for various non-governmental organizations working for community development in the community through productive projects such as ceramics, clay products, ashlars extraction and others. It is the only organization of its kind active in the area, apart from ACCEDDE, which works through El Grupo Jade.
Prior to my first visit meetings had already taken place informing people about the benefits of the project. The first meeting I attended, the responsible for ACCEDDE explained the basics of the project and stressed various times that the money handed out in these loans were to be given back, with interest – it was not a gift. To demonstrate the procedure of the loans paper clips representing money was handed out to everyone in the room, and then symbolically each and everyone had to return their paper clips. The paper clips representing money was to be paid back, demonstrated through the returning of the paper clips as it was important that the participants understood the difference between a gift and this loan.

**Patriarchal procedures**
Later I understood that his worrying was connected to the various governmental programmes implemented in the area, where families with low resources were given money with no other promise than them paying regular visits to the health care centre, and nurture their children better. The government has also given material to aid families, as for example providing them with cement and ashlars for upgrading their homes, which often times was made out of wood and metal sheets or clay. There are different opinions about the governmental aid, many referring to it as patriarchal aid, hampering local development, keeping people dependant.

**Remote**
When driving to San Ildefonso, we left the highway heading towards Mexico City, and turned right onto a smaller road leading us into scarcely populated areas. The land was covered with small bushes, but no trees, no vegetation reaching over one, one and a half meter. In January, at this altitude, the warmth so often related to Mexico is far away. In many ways the winter climate can be compared to the Swedish summer presenting warmer days when sunny, but chillier during bad weather and nights. A big difference though is that in Sweden the winds are often stopped by trees and high bushes, compared to the area around San Ildefonso where the wind is not obstructed by anything, bringing with it shovels of dust, leaving everything and everyone with a powdery gray blanket. With the colder wind coming in at winter it chills you to the bones.

The small road twisting further into the almost unpopulated, barely vegetated landscape, presents an astonishing view of great mountains far away. Early in the morning and at sunrise the view is spectacular, changing the natural colours, saluting us with a beautiful spectra resembling that of a paradise, making me forget about civilization – it is sheer beauty.

Coming from the north, about 20 minutes off the highway, the road splits in two; the right turn leading us to Amealco, which is the town closest to San Ildefonso. Amealco has a population of about 7000 inhabitants, including some suburban areas. However, we turn to the left, heading for San Ildefonso. This is the main road to San Ildefonso: it passes right through the village leading us back to the high way, eventually taking us down to Mexico City.

**Arriving to the community**
From where the road splits, it takes about five minutes to reach the centre of San Ildefonso; however, we have already passed some inhabited areas. San Ildefonso has seven suburbs, including the centre, also called San Ildefonso. Driving to the centre we will find various intersections, leading towards the suburbs. Before making the right turn at the split we passed the first suburb, *El Bothe*. Looking down the valley to the left we were able to see *La Nopalera* and *El Saucito*. 
The road to Tenazda, a suburb dominated by non-indigenous people and a residential area, is found right outside the centre, on the right side coming from the split. As we continue straight on the main road we passed homes where locally man-cut ashlarls, clay products, traditional beautifully stitched serviettes and garments. In addition to this, small businesses such as pharmacies, stationers, stores, groceries, a CD record store, and eateries. Entering the centre, on the right hand side is the secondary school, passing it; on the left hand side is the primary school. After the church, situated in the middle of the centre, the street turns to the right leading us to the recently built (was not yet finished in 2004) gas station on the right hand just behind the church. About 500 meters further down, on the left side is the high school, which was funded by Grupo Jade, and then the road continues towards Mexico City, passing the beautiful village of Aculco.

On the left hand side of the road, opposite to the church, is where the office is situated. To reach the office of ACCEDDE you have to enter a small pathway between an ice-cream store and a record store. This is where we are going to meet the future participants of the microcredit project. (Afterwards the office was moved, and is now located in front, facing the street.) Along the same side of the street there are a number of houses, many of them utilized for small businesses.

The people
As we reached the office, people were already waiting – We were late, which is a principal rather than an exception in Mexico. Despite that I had dressed for a cold day I wasn’t wearing enough, however, the excitement of meeting these people made me forget about the cold. Something that struck me as stunning was the bright colours; yellow, green, pink, orange, blue, red, mixed with whites and beautiful and colourful stitching on the women’s clothing, all topped of with white hats, decorated with equally colourful ribbons. There were about fifteen women gathered, their children running around by their feet, playing, or being too small to walk, held by the mother, or hung on the back in the reboso. Few men had come, only about five or six participated this day.

Discreetly observing the women whose garments and looks were much more interesting than the men’s, who did not wear traditional clothing. I felt bad being cold considering all the clothes I was wearing, compared to the women in their clothing. They wore skirts, no pants underneath, and blouses that were designed short in the waist, not protecting them from the chilly wind. Their shoes were sandals, huaraches, and as I found out later, all made of soft plastic, and no socks. Revealed through discussions later on, the sandals proved to be very efficient since they were comfortable enough, and dried rapidly after getting wet, by rain or by crossing a waterway. Furthermore they were economic, as the cost did not exceed 40 pesos for a pair. To cover up themselves a bit they were all using the typical reboso, a shawl, also used for carrying the children as well as belongings. The men wore regular pants, shirts and shoes, and were generally better dressed than the woman for the season, wearing pants, a jacket and better shoes; boots or sneakers. Similar to the women the children’s clothing didn’t seem to be appropriate for the cold weather either, the girls wearing the similar shoes as the women, and many of them only wearing a sweater, and the similar skirt as worn by the women; the boys wore pants and protective shoes, as the men.

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11 A reboso is a typical shawl used by the indigenous women, completing the cultural clothing of the Otomi.
12 40 pesos is about 24 Swedish Crones.
As the meeting proceeded the people talked amongst themselves, with soft and discreet voices; the women putting their heads together, almost whispering, but small giggles escaping at times. Occasionally I could distinguish a word here and there but mostly I did not understand anything. The native language Otomi is ancient and has not developed in many years, forcing the people to include Spanish words in their indigenous vocabulary, which explains the occasional word an outsider may recognize. The Otomi is a soft and beautiful language, characterizing its people. However, in the modern world their language has lost its status and seemingly few young people know it.

**Housing and exploitation**

The office was constructed in the local material, ashlers, covered with cement. It was not a suitable place for an office being only one rectangular room, fully open in the front, the door resembling that of a garage door, a metallic drape rolled up above it when opened. A toilet had been constructed, adding a small rectangular room attached to the right wall, fortunately connected with the sewer system.

The housing in the community varied in size and quality, but the most common housing material is the locally produced man-cut ashlers. The poor households do not have the same living conditions, many not having the resources to build an ashlers house, forced to find other materials, mostly natural in the form of wood and wooden sheets, or metal sheets and plastics. Though, most houses in this community have houses constructed of ashlers, due to governmental aid programmes. It is especially common that the government and political opposition parties come to the rural, marginalized, regions when elections are approaching. They provide the inhabitants with material resources in exchange for votes and good reputation for the giving party. This exchange for votes also includes public servings of food and foodstuff, luring the people to vote for them; a process that creates an unstable pattern, through which the people experience no constant support.

**Infrastructure**

The lack of infrastructure is further reinforcing the perception of being neglected and ignored. Few properties are connected to any sewer system, as they are limited to only the centre and more residential housing areas, as for example Tenazda. In most suburbs the properties are spread out over big areas, being agricultural.\(^\text{13}\) Electricity and access to water are also limited, not reaching the poorest households, affecting negatively both personal hygiene and general wellbeing. Public transportation was for many years limited but has through Grupo Jade begun to grow and reach more and more suburbs, with more frequent stops. However, a ride costs about five to ten pesos which for many people is too much.

I remember a woman we visited in one of the more remote suburbs. She had participated in the *microcréditos* project but had not come to the office for her monthly payment. As we went there to ask her about this she said that she had not been able to come, because she had no money – a result of her husband running off with both loans, his own and hers. He had claimed to want to buy some land to extract ashlers, but was never seen again. The woman was now alone with three children at home, and no money, no job, and no possibility to repay her loan. Though, she and her children had been able to feed themselves on the earnings of her stitching skills. The representative for the project told the woman that she had to come to

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\(^\text{13}\) The traditional culture is based on advanced climatic techniques for cultivating mainly corn, but also kidney beans, nopales, tunas, aguamiel (honey from the Maguey), and they also hunt small animals. The aguamiel is also used in the making of Pulque which is one of the traditional fermented alcoholic beverages. (Nieto 1986:52) The kidney beans used for making chiefly frijoles and the corn used as a base in various foodstuff products, from tortillas to atole.
the office to file a complaint on her husband. The woman complained that it would take her the whole day as she had no money for transportation and would have to walk. The walk would take her two to three hours one way. Furthermore she would have to bring her children along since she had no one to take care of them.

The failing infrastructure is also connected to the wellbeing of the direct environment, as the two garbage containers in the centre are not sufficient, and as it seems, not used extensively by the public but mostly by the businesses and eateries. This cause an unpleasant ambience filled with dirt and trashes everywhere – directly affecting both health and general wellbeing. Furthermore it feels like the dirty chaotic environment negatively affects people’s self image as they tend to identify themselves with their close surrounding.

Non-indigenous presence
The community is accordingly divided into seven suburbs, excluding the centre. At least four of the suburbs as well as the centre have declared to be dominated by indigenous inhabitants, and therefore also said to be the poorest areas. It is evident that the living standard is higher in Tenazda, which is dominated by non-indigenous people. Also, different from the other suburbs, Tenazda is not agricultural, but resembles a residential society. The properties are closely linked one house after another following the road as it curves through the village. These buildings are primarily made out of ashlars and cement, maintaining a higher quality than the houses in the other indigenous suburbs. Due to the residents being non-indigenous the cultural society is also different, including different life patterns, values, identities and basic understanding of oneself in the community.

At the meeting there was only indigenous people and mainly, as the meeting attendance proved, most participants in the microcredit projects was women. However, in the non-indigenous society there are less women participating in the labour market, hence in economic organizations such as this one. Tenazda represents a typical non-indigenous community in which the women are mainly housewives, occupied only by household and children. Many of the non-indigenous women come from other surrounding areas, rural or urban. They marry a man from San Ildefonso or move there with their husband, choosing to live in the community.

Occupation and education
Historically the sedentary people’s agricultural properties were much bigger than the ones seen today. In the Otomi tradition, an old woman said, the land is divided amongst the sons, resulting in a generational shrinking of the accessible land for each family. Through the years the land has shrunk to be too small to sustain a family, which historically was no problem. Thus, she continued, people today are much poorer and have to turn to the economic sector in search of survival.

The educational possibilities are quite low in the community, and even lower in the suburbs: In the centre there is a primary, secondary, and high school. In some of the suburbs there are no schools and the children have to attend school elsewhere. In the suburbs that do have a school it is only up to primary level. The only high school in the area was built in the centre of San Ildefonso by Grupo Jade three years ago. Through the implementation of this school children’s physical educational possibilities have increased. This means that the problem is not so much a physical problem anymore, but the complexity of the problem is focused on the low educational culture and economic priorities – as the historically scarce possibilities has created a natural resistance to the value and necessity of education. Very few adults in the community have higher levels of education, and the women have even less than the men; thus
few persons that have finished primary school and many of the adults are illiterate, especially the indigenous.

Instead, most young people commence their adult life at early ages, taking on adult responsibilities as well as marrying young. Furthermore, related to the early adulthood comes early parenthood, putting an end to any thoughts of further studies. Finishing school, may it be primary school or secondary school, or before graduating from either, the youths are confronted with the necessity of an income, forcing them to find a job, any job, to support the family. Since the education level obtained is very low, the youths are limited to basic labour such as construction work or as temporary handymen. Under these conditions the road to alcoholism is short. For the young couples getting pregnant too early neither prepared for parenthood nor for the marital life, the survival strategy often seem to be connected with oblivion and reality flight – easily found in the alcohol.

**Migration**

Many prefer trying their luck “*en el otro lado*” (“on the other side”) referring to the United States. They travel illegally and gamble with their lives, searching for a better income in order to support their families at home – the causalities are very high, and many men do not return. For the women, the migration option is to travel into the cities, working as live-in maids during younger years, then return when older to start a family. The search for a decent job break up families and make the lives of all family members unstable and insecure, heightening the risks of accumulated alcohol intake.

**Female Advantages - or not**

Most indigenous women have advanced stitching skills, providing them with an extra income as well as clothing for themselves and their children, even if many buy their clothes from the local seamstresses. The commonly stitched product is the serviette with beautiful, colourful patterns. The patterns are specific and different in every community, however resembling one another. Another product is the Otomi doll, designed as a copy of the Otomí woman; with detailed stitching along the edge of the skirt and blouse, the little doll is wearing braids intertwined with colourful ribbons.

Even though the women work very hard for the money earned for these products, it is seldom enough. Making a serviette can take up to four hours or more, depending on the skills of each woman, and the price is never more than 15 to 20 pesos, equalling the price of one kilo of flour. Contemplating the big families, some adding up to about 15 people, one kilo of flour is not sufficient (Not including the costs for other basic products as water, salt, soap and clothing).

**Male hardship – Coping with economical survival**

While the women have their stitching skills the men are more exposed to the formal labour market. Without education and productive skills the men have no other option than to find a unskilled job for their survival. The income of the woman is not enough to support the whole family, making the man the main breadwinner. This puts a lot of pressure on the man to find and maintain a stable income, something very difficult in this marginalized community. Through Grupo Jade more and more men, as well as women, have obtained stable incomes, promoting the individual development as well as a flourishing community - creating a whole new atmosphere with more reachable opportunities.
Despite the developmental projects there is still much left to be done as only a part of the community have been reached, leaving many behind. It is not only the settled men who migrate to support their families. The young men travel more often, however more for the adventure and the perception of the “great life” in the US. Another interesting observation is that there are more non-indigenous that travel “el otro lado” than indigenous. However, the trend is changing and a larger portion of the indigenous is migrating nowadays. One reason for this is the general view that one can earn as much as three times the money in the US compared to work in Mexico – This is an exceptionally big difference, thus generating more and more interest.

For the men that do not have the opportunity to save money for the often very expensive “ticket”, reaching sums above 15 to 20 thousand pesos, have to find the solution at home. The jobs in construction, as handymen and the other professions available for the uneducated men are unstable jobs as they are limited to projects and seasons. The men always have to be out searching for the next opportunity; meantime they can not do anything but wait. Normally the men (except the men fortunate enough to own their own farm or similar) leave their houses in the morning, looking for any job opportunity, but most of the times unable find anything.

**Collapsed dreams and broken families**

Instead these men gather up in small groups, just coexisting and sharing their bad fortunes, taking silent comfort in each other. These groups vary in size and composition, but their misfortune almost always leads them towards the local stores, searching for a relief in a shared drunkenness. At any time of day men are to be found in front of the stores, from as early as eight or nine in the morning to late at night. Some mornings bypasses witness these men sleeping on the ground; they wake up, brush the dust of their clothes and start drinking all over again. The sight of these men is miserable, many are dirty with torn clothes and their odour travelling far, stinging your nose: This smell of misery, alcoholism and indifference.

Having reached adulthood many of these men have struggled for years, maybe their whole lives, but unable to make any change. They have not had any real opportunity to succeed or to create a dignified world for themselves and their families. Those men gathering in front of the stores drinking together offer a temporary relief and an escape to the harsh reality that surrounds them, holding them down. They solemnly state that being there together provides them with a feeling of union and belonging, while the drinking in itself gives them a feeling of peace and quiet; hence not thinking about their hardship, forgetting about their hunger and problems, postponing their problems and thoughts about returning to their so often broken homes.

Many homes are torn apart due to the elevated drinking problem of the husband. Giving in to the hopelessness of recuperating and any kind of dignified life, the situation at home further deteriorates. Many of the drunk men leave their women alone to take care of the household, the crops, the children something that traditionally always have been the chores of a woman and now also a way to sustain her family economically. Her stitching skills are a great help, and by travelling to the cities, selling her handmade textiles she generates a small income needed, barely enough for survival. When travelling, the oldest one is often left at home in charge o the household while the rest of her children help her carrying their belongings, the merchandize and the younger siblings. Having to take such responsibility at a very young age is robbing these children of their childhood. The money will last longer if the property is benefited with some extra land suitable for cultivating.
Women responsible for the monetary income
Taking care of siblings is always the responsibility for the oldest daughter, leaving her in charge of siblings and sometimes also economic resources – the oldest son’s responsibility resembles more that of the fathers’ responsibility of earning money for the family. Unfortunately this also exposes him to the same hardship and probable alcoholism as his father.

When in the city, the mother and her children sell their products on the streets placing their merchandize on a quilt or a piece of textile. If the weather is good they sleep on the same spot overnight, but if not, they usually try to find themselves a place a bit more sheltered – as in the entrance of a church or a roofed pathway. Where there are shelters available they also make their beds, but for the risk of being robbed many prefer keeping to themselves in the streets. In the colder seasons they cover the ground with cardboards and quilts before going to bed, with the smallest children in the middle, covered by more quilts. A family can stay in the city for up to a week, trying to sell all the merchandize they brought, then returning home only to start the whole process all over again.

Some women have said that without the woman the family would fall apart – it is the woman that organizes the family life, implement structures and manages the income. Even when the husband is alcoholised the family will still be a working unit, however in a very insecure and vulnerable environment. If the woman is drinking, as some women are known to do, the family will fall in greater hardship since the regular man lacks the skills to handle the “chores of the woman”. This thought is often completed with the notion that if both are drinking abundantly, there is no salvation for the family, and the children will grow up in a very insecure environment.

Alcohol as a servant to the patriarchal society
The children are exposed to danger even if the woman is not drinking – as well as the woman herself. When a husband drinks abundantly he has been known to abuse both his children and his wife. There are different forms of abuse such as physical and psychological violence, security deprivation, economical deprivation, stealing foodstuff as well as money meant for private use.

One of the worst actions referred to when discussing the hazards of alcoholism is the prostitution of a wife and daughters, where they are sold for sexual activities in exchange for alcohol. This is not widely talked about, but a known phenomenon. Interfamilial rape is another crime connected to the abusive drinking, where the stepfather is a known perpetrator. In present day more and more cases are reported to the authorities and tried in court, but there are still a large number of rapes that are never reported. The prostitution of a wife or daughters is normally not at all reported as rapes. In this patriarchal culture the women are more or less powerless, as they are trapped in an unequal relationship, where the man has superior power.

The lack of opportunities and struggle for a woman to support herself and to create her own life is generated by many things, among them the lack of education, the patriarchal culture, and the persisting social culture. When a young woman marries she automatically falls in the grace of her husband as she moves in on his land – the normal procedure is that the woman moves to where the man is – creating the first bond of dependency. If the woman encounters marital problems, like that of an abusive husband or similar, she is deemed by society to be a bad wife, and is most often rejected in her parents home – she has misbehaved, because otherwise he would not treat her badly (!!!); the punishment falls on the woman.
Legal discrimination of the powerless women

The discrimination of women is extensive, reaching the local government, who reflects the social treatment, blaming the woman for any inconvenient problem. When a woman reports that her husband is abusing her, he, if drunk, is held in the municipal headquarters during the night, but in the morning released, while receiving the sympathy from the fiscals for having such a bad and hysterie wife. As the husband returns to the house the wife has no protection and is exposed to the punishment from her husband. The same thing has been reported to happen to rape reports filed by married women or by “ruined” women – single mothers. The fault is cast on the woman for dressing provocative or leading the man on – the man only acts natural, if even discussed as a guilty perpetrator.

Once, when I talked to a woman about the many festivities in the community, she revealed to me her misfortune. She had earned much money during one of the local festivities celebrated, selling refreshments and botanas: chips, candy, lollipops etc. Later at night a man came in to the store, as she knew him she did not react further, until he threw himself at her, forced her down on the table she had inside her store and violently raped her. She had screamed, she stated frustrated, but no one heard her – outside there were music and people were drunk and talking loudly. Afterwards, when realizing what had happened to her, she put herself together and went to Amealco, filing a report. In Amealco, still very confused, she came to think about the money, suddenly remembering that she earlier had put it in her left pocket of her jacket, demonstratively padding the pocket of the jacket as it was the same one she was wearing this day. However, when searching the pocket for the money it was not there – he had not only raped her but also robbed her!

The public prosecutors, who cooperated with the hospital staff, received the report and the examination papers and claimed that there was no evidence of a rape. She was paralyzed, then frustrated and could not accept their judgement as it was based on the lack of evidence of struggle since she had no bruises. (!) She tried to protest the verdict but gave up when nothing fell in her favour. She claimed that they listened to her less because she was a single mother, and already labelled as a light footed woman, which lowered her credibility. Though, she said, what they did not know is that even her first child was the result of another rape. She was about seventeen years old when her boyfriend drugged and raped her. When she woke up in the morning he had told her that they were to have a baby together, but she could never figure out how this had occurred. However, her belly grew and her son was born. Due to this unfortunate situation she was now deemed by society to be nothing more than a light footed woman, and was not trusted to have been raped. The later rapist who worked in the local municipality had all the favours on his side. Later, his wife came to her, saying that her man only had robbed her because of a debt he had had, and that she was a liar to claim he had raped her. The wife made it very clear that a continuance would be costly. In the end, when no justice had been done, the raped woman finally accepted the bribe money that the rapist offered her for not proceeding with the case.

The alcohol is many times the real perpetrator in these cases, when drunken men loose control and take advantage of the already inferior women. Sexually abusing or forcing women or female relatives to conduct sexual favours with other men in exchange of alcohol. As the legal system is not upheld it offers no legal security for these women, leaving them vulnerable to these kinds of acts.
Violence, accidents and malnutrition – Side effects of alcohol usage

It is not only direct abuse and violence is the result of the alcohol abuse; accidents and malnutrition are also common. There are many ways to accidentally die when drunk, some of the causes are car accidents, drowning and falling.\(^4\) There was a family that had lost three generations of men as a result of alcohol inflicted accidents and illnesses. Beside from the alcoholic him/herself, they themselves pose a threat to their surrounding, driving drunk and neglecting their children. The people are not very talkative about these incidents, but in one case in particular the drunken husband kicked his pregnant wife in the stomach, causing the death of their unborn baby. Other stories told are when small children have been left unsupervised, drowning or falling down, causing their deaths. Mortal abuse of women, mostly a wife, are also claimed to be fairly common. There are enough stories of similar cases, giving me the notion that the violence is more systematic than being an exception.

When it comes to malnutrition, the direct alcohol abuse is a threat to the individual’s nutrition, as he/she no longer feels hunger and prefers buying alcohol instead of buying food. One man said that he started drinking, because “that’s how it is”, and started to drink more and more. He left his house and could be out for days, drinking and sleeping on the ground. He stated that food was never in his interest and spent all the money he could find on alcohol, and even stole foodstuff and money from his wife in order to buy alcohol. Finally she threw him out and he started to get really sick, he was malnourished and his stomach started to swell up and he vomited blood. He had been sent to Anonymous Alcoholics many times but without any success. His condition was now so bad that he decided to make a change – he was not ready to die. He went back to his wife and she accepted his return with the promise that he would not drink again. Today their house is made of ashlars and is well constructed, their garden being clean and orderly; and their clothes clean and their eyes vivid and full of hope when they talk about their future. However, not all find it in themselves the strength to overcome their drinking, but this man stated that his fear of death was what persuaded him.

Not only the alcoholic him/herself suffers from malnutrition, the children are also affected when food is sold and money is spent on alcohol. The Oportunidades program\(^5\) helps some, but is in this society mainly seen as an incentive to the alcoholics, who can drink for days without worrying about anything.

Power to the powerless

A woman who had recently started to work with Grupo Jade in their ceramics factory told me about her hardship dealing with an alcoholised husband. They married and made their home on his land, as many others, and she had nowhere to go and no money. Her situation was miserable and in order to survive she begun to avoid her husband who was always drunk and always found a reason to hit her and force himself on her sexually. He could come home and if the dinner was ready and the house clean he would find another reason for abusing her. She had not spoken to him in eight years and when he entered the house she would leave, and vice versa.

\(^4\) The anthropological study by Karen Lipman Polakoff (2001) reveals some gruesome stories about the accidents following alcohol abuse, as she writes about the consequences of alcohol abuse in San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, Mexico

\(^5\) Oportunidades is a governmental program that is meant to aid poor families, mainly women with children, with an allowance every other month. The requirements are to improve the health of the children and some collaboration at special events. (Source is the local people receiving the allowance).
One time when she had been hospitalized he did not stay by her side. She asked the daughter for the money that she had saved for times in need, but it was all gone. A few days before the woman was hospitalized they had bought a sack of foodstuff, however when the woman returned to her home it was nowhere to be found – the husband had sold it all to sustain his daily alcohol consumption. The husband had been sick many times, vomiting blood, thus in need of hospital treatment due to his drinking. She had always helped him, neglecting the home and the children to be at his side, using the last money on his medicine, but he never returned the favour.

She had had enough a long time ago, but had no other option than to stay in the marriage. However, now with her job at the ceramic factory she earned her own money and was saving up every month so that one day she would be able to buy her own property. She said that a relative had set aside a piece of his property for her to buy as soon as she had enough money to buy it. She would have to work a while longer to save up in order to build her house, but she was hopeful and positive. This was her opportunity, an opportunity within reach now that she earned her own money. Her husband, as many other men, did not approve of her taking a job, but since their relationship had been bad for so many years he had no longer any real power over her. Some women who had taken a job in the factory were soon forced to leave since their husbands did not approve. Through cultural and social structures the men have a difficult time accepting the fact that their women are working outside their homes.

The naturalness of alcohol abuse

One would think that alcohol usage is regarded as taboo and bad since it is causing so much hardship and a negative atmosphere, but no. The women state that the alcohol is causing problems for them and is disturbing the peace in their homes, making it an insecure place for all, especially the wife and the small children. In the same breath they also confirm that the alcohol is a part of their life – something natural that has always been there. One woman in specific discussed her husband’s alcohol abuse. She said it was impossible to convince him to stop drinking despite his severe illness due to alcohol. She had tried to persuade him a number of times but he always replied “we will all die one day”, and continued his drinking. She said that he had stopped drinking at times when he had been really sick, but always continued drinking when feeling better.

Alcohol as a norm instead of a threat to norms

The children grow up in a society where drinking alcohol is the norm, thus they see no wrong in doing it. This cause many young people to start drinking at early ages, falling into the same pattern as their parents. A young school teacher remembered when she was younger and the pressure on drinking alcohol was forceful. She was one of the youth whose parents did not drink, and neither did she. She withdrew from the other young drinkers and joined a group of friends where alcohol was not part of the weekly diversion, but as she remembered, it could be really hard to be one of the kids not wanting to drink. She recalled one boy who refused an offered drink, and when being persistent in his refusal he was badly beaten. The pressure and the fear, she said, are many times overwhelming, leading even those that do not want to drink into drinking.

The same thing happens in the adult life, though not as visible and not as violent, but more sophisticated and unspoken. As mentioned before in the text when not finding work for the day the men joined up in front of the stores drinking. The men, having no job and most often no money due to the obvious lack of job opportunities, are dependant on each other to sustain the daily intake of alcohol.
At the stores one can find a special pattern of socializing around the alcohol consumption. This sub-culture is highly developed in the social structure of the alcoholics. A normal day starts early, around eight or nine in the morning, with a drink; beer or preferably Charanda\textsuperscript{16} that is stronger and therefore gives a faster and cheaper drunkenness; between three up to as many as twelve men have been seen joining these liquid breakfasts. On some occasions the first drinks are followed by some work, carrying sacks of weed or collecting trash, depending on what work they can find. The pay for this can be money, but might as well be a drink. After completing of the work the men normally go back to the store to socialize and to drink some more.

Daily drunkenness

Referring to the woman discussed earlier, the one with the husband with whom she had not talked to in eight years, questioned how her husband was able to get drunk every day, despite seeming to be unemployed and never contributing to the household. Intrigued by her statement and by recalling earlier observations I began to discover specific social patterns of the prevalence of the alcohol usage in the gatherings of these unemployed men. The empirical data for these gatherings are presented as written down in the researcher’s diary:

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The woman questioning her husband’s daily drunkenness inspired me to investigate this further. Through observations and questions to people in the community I found out that the drunkards, los borrachos, use to hang out in front of the stores. About four to five men would gather up and stay there drinking all day. To get in contact with these men I went to one of the stores where I had seen them earlier and begun to chat. I had planned to buy a soda, but at my arrival I was immediately offered a beer. The time was about eleven in the morning and the men had been drinking a few bottles already before my arrival. I accepted the beer after realizing that a refusal was not accepted and we started to chat.

When I almost had emptied my first beer I got another one in my hand and I realized that it would be bad manners not to accept the offer. I was now accepted as a member in the group. As I put away my first empty beer, not having even started my second one, I was immediately given a third. Once more I tried to refuse the offered beer, but without success. As time passed I emptied my second beer but held on to it and there I was with one empty bottle in my right hand, one full in my left and finally not offered another one. However, I was accused of drinking too slow as they did not know that my second bottle was empty.

As I observed this drinking ritual it became clear to me that it was not only my hands holding bottles. All the men, at the time there was five of them, each had bottles in their hands. I realized that it was only one man buying all the alcohol. At the time it did not occur to me, but later I understood that this was the answer to the woman’s question about how her husband could come home drunk, even with no money in his pockets. There was a complex system of mutual trust and a reciprocal gift-economy at the base of this subculture.

\textsuperscript{16} It is said that most of the grown alcoholic men drink beer and Charanda, which is an adulterated spirit with range of 40 to about 60\% of alcohol. Before Charanda came to the area the same men were known for drinking alcohol sold in the pharmacies with up to 90\% of alcohol. Due to the escalated drinking of these strong spirits the mortality rate is high, presenting both accidents and diseases. The most common disease is the Cirrhosis Hepatica which destroys the liver, and therefore presents the vomiting of blood among other symptoms. After many deaths the society realized that the alcohol sold in the pharmacies was culpable and they replaced it for Charanda and beer.
Later on two other already drunken men joined us, probably having spent the morning hours at another store close by. The man paying for our drinks this day handed the men each a beer. Yet another drunken man came along but to my surprise the group ignored him. When he had left I asked why they had ignored him they answered that this lonely man was a drunkard who never had any money. Given that this man was known for not having any money, I believe he was excluded from this pattern of reciprocal gift-economy as he could not live up to the norm where everyone had to offer and receive on an interchangeably basis. Whoever had the money would pay and this man had probably broken the trust by always accepting but not offering anything in return.

The two new friends decided to keep on bar hopping and with them went some of the others. At this stage the men were quite drunk and I planned on leaving. However I decided to stay when another man shoved up. He did not seem to be one of the regulars, which was confirmed as I asked where he was from. He told me he lived in one of the suburbs and was just in town to buy some supplies from the hardware store. He seemed to know how to handle himself in the group and offered the men and me one beer each. I thought this time I would only be offered one beer but again I had to hold on to my empty bottle. When the man left he had bought me two beers, and had I finished them faster he would have bought me more. I left my last two beers barely touched as the amount of alcohol was too much for me in this early hour – it had now been about four hours since I first approached the men.

It seems that the culture of offering alcohol does not stop at the subculture of the men at the stores, but it is part of a more general cultural trait. Nevertheless, I think that it is important to make a distinction between the last man, coming to town for an errand only stopping by for a quick talk and the men spending the whole day drinking. The discussions taking place during our hours of drinking was in part guided by my interest. Generally I did not ask about alcohol in specific but led us into talking about it at some occasions. Some questions I asked were if there weren’t any jobs in the area or why they were drinking? The answer was that, “Of course there are jobs, but we like to drink.” They all smiled and seemed proud of this statement. They lifted their bottles demonstratively joking about being at work as we spoke - they were drinking.

I found out later that one of these men was the husband of the women I had talked to earlier. This particular man was not drinking beer as the rest of us, instead he drank Charanda. He was the last to leave prolonging to going back home. The reason he drank, he said, was that he always felt so good and calm when intoxicated. The other men had earlier said that when they drank together they felt commonness and that they were part of a group; they felt like the men they were and stated that now when I was there, I should consider myself to be one of them.

I feel that the integrated sentiments of this particular grouping are comparable to the integration found in a religious setting. As in religious groups norms and behavioural restrictions are set up, and if breaching the unspoken guidelines a person may be pushed outside the group, as the lonely man that broke the rule of the reciprocal gift-economy. There are no gods involved in the subculture of drinking, but the store is their church. This is where they come together and find strength in each-other, and where they see that they are not alone – finding comfort in their union and mutual support.

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17 There are no official bars in San Ildefonso but most of the stores are selling some kind of alcohol. A young woman stated that she did not sell alcohol because of the danger of it.
Thus, the drinking seems to represent a feeling of being an outsider, to not belong and instead creating a sense of a meaning in life through the partnership of drinking; they feel abandoned and therefore have found a solution in their friendship by the store.

Another servant to alcohol – Catholicism

The religion plays an important part in San Ildefonso. During the colonization many of the natives had two choices: One was to convert to Catholicism or being killed as already had happened to the Aztecs and Mayas. The Otomí who had participated in the genocide of these powerful indigenous groups had seen the colonizers as their saviours as they before the colonization had been suppressed by the latter, but now they realized that they were not to be equals with the invaders. The Iberians instated Catholic churches everywhere and no native was spared as the inquisition spread over the country. In the process of converting, the Otomí brought with them many features from their native religion, which created Catholicism intertwined with ancient customs - it is said that the Virgin of Guadalupe in some portrays is black and that the indigenous Catholics celebrate about 360 different religious festivities per year. (Chasteen, 2006)

The Catholicism practiced by the Otomí represents an important cultural attribute. Not only do they celebrate the more general celebrations, but they also include a vast celebration of saints and they live strictly by the religious “rules”. The Otomí I met cherish family, respect and honesty, and their holistic view on life obliges them to always live at their best with the church. Every eighth day the church must be decorated as a sacrifice and each saint have its specific date when to be celebrated. It is hard for an outsider to understand how these events are planned, but for the Otomí this is something that is part of their life as they grow up. No flyers or posters are waved, because the traditions of the religious celebrations are taught and learned from generation to generation. The families know what to do and when to do it. Few local non-indigenous know exactly what is done and why.

The most important celebrations are the Cargos. During a year about 200 families are involved in the Cargo. Fourteen families are in charge of the celebrations of the saints each year and at the celebration new families are chosen as responsible for next year’s celebration. The application queue can be up to a few years. It is prestigious to be in charge of the festivities, and even though it can mean years of economical debt the applications are many. Besides from decorating the church every eight day the saints are also celebrated with bigger events. The biggest celebration is on the 23rd of January when they celebrate the Saint of San Ildefonso. The Otomí are normally the only ones participating in the celebrations but for this one people come from all the suburbs, including the non-indigenous.

On the days of the Cargo the fourteen families in charge provide food, normally chicken with mole and tortillas on the first day and Atole on the second. As tradition follows the people participating do not only eat but also bring the food back home. For a small family the food from a Cargo can last up to a week and since everyone are welcomed there are many families that make good use of the event. At the festivities the people enter the church with offerings of food and flowers. The celebrations mean much work for everyone in the family, especially

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18 Probably this concentration of the saints has to do with the ancient indigenous traits where they worshipped many goods, every one representing the different natural elements.
19 A clarification: This does not refer to the anthropological term of Cargo/s but is the name the Otomí has labelled their celebration.
20 Atole is a soup, salty or sweet, made of corn.
the women who not only cook but also are in charge of handing out the food. The children also participate, helping their mothers. There are actually very few men participating, when gazing over the crowd one sees mostly women and children. The men present are normally those whose families are in charge or those looking for a drink. As time goes by more men are seen as they gather in groups drinking.

Beer and sodas are most often offered at a Cargo, but it all depends on the family’s economical resources. It is stated that one should offer something to drink, but the most important is to participate with whatever one can afford. If you have the resources, though, you should offer plenty of beer. At the Cargo both men and woman drink, though the men drink more openly and also at the nearby stores outside. When drinking outside the food court area they buy their own beer, Charanda and Pulque21 which have been made especially for the celebration. It seems that the festivities are used as excuses for drinking more and more openly both for men and women. Being a day of celebration many people drink more alcohol than usual but also people who not drink on an everyday basis get drunk.

In the local Catholic society there are no mechanisms restraining the intake of alcohol, instead it seems that the celebration enhance the levels of intake. The Cargo custom presupposes the prevalence of alcohol and especially beer being handed out. The church in itself is most probably not responsible for this development but nonetheless it has grown to be an important ingredient at the celebrations. The alcohol is said to be a necessity for the success of the celebration, which is the same for any private party in the community. I have been told various times but with different words that the alcohol is the “heart of the party” and without the alcohol people will come, but only stay for a short while and not remembering the party as a good one.

Many seem to be using the Cargo and the other religious events as excuses for drinking alcohol. Men gather around the stores and often drink until heavily intoxicated. Their behaviour change and they become loud as they scream and sing, and sometimes they are violent and easily provoked. When their bodies have had enough some fall asleep right then and there. It is rare to see an alcohol drinking or drunken woman and especially one acting out as the men. The difference in the actuation between men and women is a pattern reflected on more areas of their society. A man has the power and the liberty of being accepted even when he is intoxicated, whilst a woman has to act according to the social female norms dictating her behaviour more strongly. Generally a woman has to act with dignity and representatively or she will be seen as weak and repulsive by all, but she will especially be pushed away by the women. An intoxicated and uncontrolled woman is regarded to be a threat to all decent women and their families. When given a chance she would lure any man to betray his family and is therefore dangerous to one’s marriage. A man is not threatened with such a social exclusion.

Traditional Catholicism versus Evangelism: A life restructured

Another religion present in the community is Evangelism. The strict traditional Catholics do not approve of this new religion that, as they say, only bears faith in Jesus and the Cross, excluding the saints and the Virgin Guadalupe. The Virgin Guadalupe is the strongest symbol

21 Pulque is a locally produced fermented alcoholic beverage, made out of the aguamiel, extracted from the Maguey. The drinking of Pulque was in pre-colonial eras highly restricted allowing only elders to drink, except under festivities. It is common to feed Pulque to the children in some areas since it contains proteins and nutritive vitamins. In some communities in Hidalgo it has been confirmed that the Pulque has helped keeping the children well nourished under poor circumstances. (Source: Contact at the health department)
in Mexican Catholicism. In spite of this “sinful” exclusion many people have joined the Evangelism. When discussing the new religion in the community people say that it does not celebrate with organized festivities like the Cargo and that alcohol is presented as being the blood of the devil and is thus banned. Many converters claim to have converted especially because the alcohol is banned in the Evangelism. A woman would convert in order to persuade her alcoholic husband to follow her and as it turns out it has been working for many. Two heavily alcoholised compadres eventually joined their already converted family in their Evangelistic faith and both stopped drinking. They claimed that it had nothing to do with their conversion but at the same time they acknowledged to having tried but failed various times before.

It seems that the Evangelism represents a pretext to stop drinking. For someone who converts to Evangelism it creates a reason and thus a will to stop drinking. The cost of reducing one's drinking patterns is minimized by the otherwise change in social patterns as he/she at the same time is making changes not only in faith but also in life as he/she is included in a different social group. Upon converting one does no longer attend the festivities of the Cargo or the other celebrations in the Catholic Church, and it is not rare to even change friends and other social patterns. The general change therefore seems to enhance the possibility one have to stop drinking.

INEQUALITIES SHAPING THE COMMUNITY

This section concentrates on a theoretical discussion and analysis about those unequal relations existent in and determinant for the community connecting social facts with the theoretical framework of Tilly’s *Durable Inequality*\(^{22}\) and *Stigmatization* within Elias theory regarding *Established and Outsiders*\(^{23}\). The focus lays on those mechanisms and social facts determining the inequalities in regard to national, local and interfamilial levels.

**Indigenosity**

In the whole of Mexico reside about ten million indigenous people, belonging to 56 different ethnicities. In the state of Queretaro reside 1 % of all indigenous. (INEGI indicator: over the age of five and speak an indigenous language, 2005). This one per cent is then concentrated in some specific areas resulting in that the municipal of Amealco where San Ildefonso de Tultepec is situated has as much as 24% indigenous pedigree within its borders. (INEGI indicator: from the municipal population, 2005) The majority of the indigenous people in Amealco are Otomi who reside mainly in the rural communities of the municipal. The municipal is in many ways considered to be characterized and perceived as an indigenous municipal being that as much as 24% of the total population is indigenous.

Specifically in these indigenous, rural areas is where poverty and social neglect is most widespread presented in terms of extreme poverty, high grades of marginalization, illiteracy, discrimination, malnutrition, political and ideological manipulation, migration, insufficient infrastructure, low rates of school attendance, high nativity and mortality, insufficient health care, degraded ecology, low salaries, few work opportunities, low sales prices for produced

\(^{22}\) Charles Tilly 1998. *Durable Inequality*, University of California Press, USA, California, Berkeley and Los Angeles

\(^{23}\) Norbert, Elias 1999 *Etablerade och Outsiders: En sociologisk studie om grannskapsproblem*, A-Z Förlag, Sverige
goods, no access to the market, and low agricultural productivity during cold seasons, to name only a few and most important. (CEdDH: 1999:16ff)

A history that shapes today
Even though some years have passed since the referred numbers was presented there has not been many significant changes in the lives of the Otomí. In 1999, 70% lived in areas considered to be highly marginalized. One out of four children between the age of six to 14 did not attend school and many were absent from school in the agricultural seasons illustrating the household’s necessity of the children’s aid and how this was prioritized. (CEdDH: 1999:17f) The family’s necessities are not the only obstacle but many young people still have far to go to recognize the benefits of education. Many things are decisive for their present concepts regarding schooling and education, one being the low possibilities to find work and another the physical distance to those few possibilities that do exist. The historical marginalization has affected the society negatively as the indigenous for decades have been refused access to school by society and later due to lack of opportunity. They know of no one that earlier attended school and thus find no reason to why this should change.

When listening to the young people today many do not think of education as an option to individual development. Due to lack of schooling, residing in a marginalized area without proper infrastructure, and lacking appropriate information, knowledge and social networks the Otomí are deprived of any real job opportunities. The majority of the Otomí are occupied in the informal sector, working by hour on farms or selling handcrafted goods to by-passers. Many migrate to the cities, neglecting their home, children and animals for the necessity to earn money. The year 1999 about 41% of the indigenous population in the municipal of Amealco did not receive any taxed income. (CEdDH: 1999:18)

National gift-aid strengthens dependence
There is a lot of discrepancy related to the usage of both the monetary and materially aid provided by the government and other organizations. An observation is that the aid actually is deepening the poverty for the families and diminishing their opportunities to self-development. In families where alcohol is a problem the alcoholic often takes whatever money he can find to buy alcohol. It does not matter if it is money provided by an organization; the alcoholic will take it, get drunk and might become abusive. The occurrence of this phenomenon is widely known in the community as there are more drunkards in the streets after payday. In addition to augmenting the alcohol intake the money further deteriorates the already low security level in an impoverished home who counted on that money for survival. The material provided by the government is sometimes used in the same manner as it is sold for alcohol. However, the statistics shows a lowered malnutrition among children, which promotes a continuance of these projects.24

However, the aid does not provide an incentive to the family to try to maintain its own survival without this extra income, but maintain their dependence. I have heard described many times that a man with a drinking problem now can stay drunk for several days only on the aid money. The result therefore is not only that the man prolong his drunkenness, he will not bring any money home either, leaving the family totally dependant on the scarce income

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24 I have not verified the statistics myself as I do not contend their results, I only want to stress that not all money is used in the proposed manner. The comment of proceeding as evidential positive result can be shown comes from my contact at the Health Department.
of the woman.\textsuperscript{25} The physical and psychological security of the family members is also in jeopardy as the drunkenness primarily is a threat to the man’s health and secondly is a threat to the remaining family members who have to live in fear as he might come home drunk and abusive.

**National manipulation**

The political populism and clientelism is widespread and serves for many percentage of the final voting result as the corrupt parties gather up the poor people for manifestations, luring them away under often false pretences. The promoters use clandestine methods for winning the votes of the poor. They promise food, housing material and other resources to the people casting their vote on their party. They bundle them up in busses which takes them to the manifestations or demonstrations where they are promised an adventure and food, and at elections they travel city to city handing out food and drinks to the one’s showing their support. This is what they are doing but their intentions are not as innocent, it is an empty promise. The voting result after having won the votes of the poor has proved to be very promising for the parties but the poor stand as losers. In the end few promises are held and the poor having put their trust in the party’s ability to perform goes home empty handed. In the process they have elevated their expectations and when the trust is broken they return home frustrated and full of mistrust.

Private businesses also find ways to manipulate and earn some easy money from the faith of the poor. As I was told, some years ago a company had initiated a project to draw the appropriate infrastructure for a telephone connection. The company informed that each household who paid a certain fee would be connected to the line: many families invested in this. However, upon collecting the money the fee had increased but nevertheless the people gathered the money, which for them was quite large sums, and saw how the construction commenced. Sadly, after having put up only a few posts the construction stopped and has until this day not commenced again. Neither the company nor the money has accordingly been seen again. Today the people of San Ildefonso have the proper infrastructure for their telephones. When Grupo Jade initiated their project they used the few posts set up by the clandestine company in addition to new ones, creating a telephone net accessible to households situated centrally. The manipulation and misuse of the poor people’s trust and money has the same outcome as the political manipulation as the poor are disrespected in ways generating mistrust, low self-esteem and hopelessness.

**Indigenous or non-indigenous – A comparative**

Through history the indigenous peoples in the world has been discriminated against and still today they have inferior status than the non-indigenous. Due to neglect, racial disputes and centuries of social, economical, political and cultural exclusion, the indigenous people in Mexico are still marginalized in more terms than strictly physical. There is no officially outspoken racism in Mexico today but I strongly feel like if the nation closes its eyes when it comes to its indigenous peoples. The indigenous populations are today amongst the poorest and most marginalized social groups in Mexico. For any one with any knowledge about the socioeconomic reality these people confront every day it is intimidating to hear when some better of Mexicans proclaim that there is no longer any poverty in their country. Even the poor

\textsuperscript{25} Tilly 1998:8 – Tilly states that the roots of categorical inequality are asymmetrical relations across socially accepted boundaries. When the government is aiding the indigenous with economical gifts it re-establishes the unequal relation through a monetary dependence relation, confirming the indigenous lack of “ability” to develop and participate in civilized processes, maintaining the upper hand. The same mechanism as applied in the next chapter regarding political exploitation.
admit to the indigenous being poorer. Its not just economical poverty but it stretches over all societial levels. One of the divisions between classes and rich and poor are marked out by colour which makes it so much easier to conform and to maintain them. The colour of wealth and influence is white and the colours of poverty and powerlessness are dark; the poverty and powerlessness increasing by each darker skin tone.

The non-indigenous inhabitants, poorer or wealthier, talk about their indigenous neighbours with a clear lack of respect and value. They are sure to note that they are proud of their backward, indigenous neighbours, but in the same breath they acknowledge that the indigenous individuals are not fitting in our modern world. There is no racism or overt discrimination behind their words as they merely state the obvious retracted from what they see in their every day life. No one when hearing a comment as such or stating it themselves reacts as it seems to be generally accepted to refer to their indigenous neighbours in this way.

Ethnical inequality serving the non-indigenous
On each side of the road, cutting the centre up in the middle, there are street vendors at almost every property. Mostly, the people sell handmade clay products, barro, that is man made in an all gray, cement workshop. The production of barro is generally a man’s job while the women often take care of the sales. The products are beautifully crafted, rustic, and most only partially painted leaving them with their original orange, brown clay colour as a base for the small patterns painted on after the burning process to complete the finished product. The products are diverse, ranging from bigger bowls, vases and lamps, to small churches, figurines, crosses and decorative suns. Also, at every house the women will be selling the same products, with the same decorations. Since the products are alike it is hard to organize any form of competitive market which results in low prices. On top of that, these economically restricted producers do not have the opportunity to access a competitive market elsewhere. Neither do they have the knowledge of where to find such a market. As a result, they often have to settle for what price they can get.

The indigenous crafts, like the handmade natural products sold by the road in San Ildefonso, or the indigenous looking dolls and embroidered handkerchiefs sold in the streets of San Juan del Rio or Querétaro, are all sold with a lower price when sold by the producer. There is a store opposite the secondary school that makes and sells the clothing so typical for the indigenous women in San Ildefonso. The cultural clothing is an interesting aspect of life as the garments are slightly different in each community; the colours, textures, stitched patterns and numbers of creases on the blouses are determinants that set them apart, distinguishing their origin.

Buying a full outfit here will cost you about 400 Mexican pesos, while in town it would surely cost you about a thousand pesos or more. For the garments to get into town they are usually purchased by a non-indigenous merchant who buys plenty in order to sell in a more competitive market. The merchants access economical resources, transportation and the knowledge needed to reach a competitive market in order to get a good price for their goods; something the indigenous producers cannot.  

26 Tilly 1998 – The mechanism explained in this chapter is by Tilly called Exploitation. Exploitation operates through the powerful, when taking command of resources, they exclude the others, in this case the Otomi, to the full value of their goods. The merchant’s deal is a low input and a high outcome instead of giving the Otomi access to the knowledge and assets.
Local advantage for non-indigenous
During my time in San Ildefonso I talked to many people, but I did not get a clear image of why and how the local inequality was so clearly defined until I talked to this one non-indigenous man. The indigenous are trying harder by the year to fit in by mimicking the modern standards with paid labour, cars, TV’s and big houses. Yet they never seem to be able to reduce the division between them and the non-indigenous. The non-indigenous man is the manager of one of the local hardware stores. His shop is part of the row house constructions built for the sole purpose of commercial activities. These cube-like constructions today count with a cd store, a hardware store, a pharmacy, a grocery store, a shop repairing TV’s and radios, a store selling commercial clothing and a stationer’s.

I think that it has developed a different kind of society in San Ildefonso than in the other rural communities in the area since it is situated close to a connecting road. In addition, it has attracted more non-indigenous settlers probably as a result of this connectedness; the non-indigenous claim to prefer living in the community for the peace and quiet, still aware that the remote housing will require a car or another form of transportation. This results in specific patterns of modern markets and commercialization in the community.

As the non-indigenous settlers settle down in this community they bring with them a different, more modern, lifestyle including different sets of values and attitudes. They also bring with them a division between worlds as the former residents and the newcomers are so different. There is no real unification between the two who now live side by side but not really living together. When the non-indigenous go to work in their stores and shops the indigenous are preoccupied with their daily survival; they don’t have the same opportunities as the non-indigenous that origin from a different set of social boundaries, having grown up with education, values of paid labour and commercialization. As history and current popular politics are measuring the two by different standards a division is created which excludes the indigenous once again from the society that is formed around them; the indigenous are not offered a place in the new society and thus keep lagging behind as their stigma of being the other; the lazy and backward; is reproduced.  

Predefined concepts of stigmas reproduced
Before settling down in the community the non-indigenous already have a predetermined image of the indigenous springing from society at large. Even in the suburbs where non-indigenous have resided for many years, even decades, the indigenous are still conceptualized in the same way; the image reflecting indigenous harvesting their land as traditional farmers; selling cheap man made products in the streets; dragging along their dirty and snotty nosed children; drunken men at every hour of the day; and not seeing any one occupied with the chores of formal labour making a hard day’s work. What they then witness in the community only confirm these thoughts as the indigenous promptly are excluded from their efficient and honest world. The result is that the predetermined image of the indigenous is confirmed and the non-indigenous can go to bed certain that the indigenous brought it on themselves.

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27 Tilly 1998, Elias 1999 – Opportunity hoarding is the mechanism in play, excluding the Otomi from a valuable income network, establishing a monopoly of this type of commercialization. Stigmas are included in order to maintain the monopoly, creating “valid” and “logical” explanations to why the Otomi are excluded – just as Elias proclaims, when discussing how the established bundle up the outsiders to one group, different and inferior to themselves.
This predetermined image, however, goes both ways as the indigenous themselves also have predetermined images not only of the non-indigenous but also of themselves. Their own self image have been moulded during many years of exclusion and manipulation as it today has reached somewhat down to the level of the general society’s image; the roof of their self respect having being pushed down lowering their expectations, their hopes and dreams, and merely situated them in their direct and harsh reality. Education and individual development seems not to be part of the equation. There was this girl, of about 10 years, who said that she was probably not going to school after finishing secondary school as she did not think much of education. What struck me even harder was her logic when pondering about her language skills as she meant that it was more important to learn English and Spanish than her native language Otomí. She did not come to think that the one or the other did not exclude the possibility to actually learn three languages. But living in a society where options are small and life is hard is probably not the most suitable place to be for a little girl having dreams about her future only to have them crushed by harsh reality.

Stigma internalized
The indigenous are affected by the non-indigenous opinions and attitudes as much as they are affected by their own internalized identification. Most of their labels and stigmas have in at different times been introduced to them by the non-indigenous. The indigenous themselves have a good idea of how and who they are. The words coming from their mouths are different and more honest than the description coming from a non-indigenous but the content sums up to the indigenous being unable to maintain a job in the formal sector; not able to conform to the modern timetables where life is restricted by the clock; too ignorant to make something out of his/her life and too fond of alcohol to be an honest man taking care of his family. When the indigenous themselves pronounce these labels in their own words it sound much more poetic as they proclaim to have chosen the pure and peaceful life excluded the modern hectic life. It is hard to judge someone for thriving in their world that apparently is chosen and so peaceful while bearing in mind the opposite position where every day is shed by a light that screams out forgotten and excluded.28

Fitting in to the modern life
As the modern world is making its entrance in the community both indigenous and non-indigenous men follows the flow of US migrants. The family men go to el otro lado for a decent salary and the ability to support their family. And many of the younger men follow as the US symbolizes wealth and prosperity. Many die, are hurt, lost and never heard from again, but that seems to be an accepted risk. As the young men return to their homes they live extravagant and are soon to loose all their earnings. In the equation of American wealth and prosperity the youngsters do not include any sustainable life quality as they only see to the economical gain. So, when back in their village, when back in San Ildefonso, and the money is all gone they are stuck at the same position as before; their opportunities are once again limited, and their wealth did not provide them with any educational experience or gave them the opportunity to find a better job. They are back on square one, only now they have experienced better days and for the first time perceive the frustration and the unjust distribution of opportunities.29

28 Stigmatization and internalization of stigmas, in combination with the adaptation of unequal relations, effectively hides other possible actions and solutions to the coping of the relation, other than the acceptance of and surviving within the structure.
29 The change of scenery and social structure when going to the US is lost upon returning. The money made is not a sufficient incentive to break the unequal bonds strongly attached to the local social structure. Returning home, the individual finds her/himself again trapped in the same structure, unable to make any viable change and thus accommodated again.
Internal structures reproducing gender inequality

The family means much to the Otomí people as they mention it to be important to communicate and to take care of each other. The traditional culture of the Otomí is distinguished by their agricultural heritage where the family is the crucial factor for prosperity. In the Otomí society social bonds and family is really important which makes today’s life today conflictive; most Otomí would not consider moving but as there are no jobs to be found and almost no land to be cultivated. Thus some family members have to leave, if only for a short while. The majority of the old families have their own land in the community and nowadays that is where they feel at home; as one old woman said: “I was born here and my parents lived here, I don’t know anything else”. The Otomí community is therefore static as the same families reside on the same property for ages. Then, when some one has to leave for economical reasons the elderly are not acceptant; being that it is a son or a grandson leaving for the US; or a daughter or a niece leaving for one of the bigger towns to become a live in maid. As far as they are concerned the family is the most important factor in your life and you need to stay close and respect those bonds.

The hierarchical structure in the Otomí society is patriarchal as the men are more powerful than the women; a family’s power structure from the top down starts with the father, then the mother, and children by age.30 But there is also a gender difference to take into account regarding the children and when they are coming of age; the sons in a family are treated with more liberty and they have more power within the home than daughters and even sometimes the mother as they grow up. The local physician noted that even a son of very young age could decide if he wanted to treat a wound while the daughters were obligated, which clearly represents the male superiority even towards the mother. Customarily the children are under the responsibility of the mother. The patriarchal culture even frees the men from any responsibility of their children as a man jokingly can proclaim to not having any children at all while his wife has eight.

The woman has full responsibility for everything concerning the home while the man has the full responsibility for his woman’s responsibilities. The machismo is very evident in the community as in all rural areas where society still is structured by old Iberian patterns. Thus, the Otomí women are responsible for the household, crops, children, animals and other things needed to be done, as well as she produce and sell man made goods as an extra income for the household. The role of the man is to be the breadwinner as he works outside the home with what he can find: extracting sillar, making coal, construction work, or working for pay at other farms. The sons are brought up to match the requirements of a man, being a husband and a breadwinner; the sons therefore start working at a young age alongside their fathers. The daughters are brought up to be good and respectful wives and able to care for a home. The oldest daughter helps her mother with her siblings and it seems that she almost has as much power as the mother when tending to the female chores; she is trusted with money and the full responsibility for her siblings when moving around without the mother. The younger children learn early to obey her, and only when the brothers get older they surpass this obligation as their education teaches them that they are supreme.

30 The hierarchical structure is developed through machismo and marianism brought over by the Iberians. In this structure the man is responsible for his family, the income and all things social. The woman is thus in charge of the domestic chores and the children’s education. (Craske 1999:11ff) Even today this structure lives on in Mexico, and even more so in the countryside and in poor families.
The dynamics within the household creates a barrier between the *obeying woman* and the *supreme man*, initiated at childhood. A woman has to obey a man, and somewhat even a mother has to obey the wishes of her sons when they are becoming of age. When a man comes home from work he is usually said to be tired and expects food on the table. The woman’s obligation is to provide this service; a man or a working son has no official obligation in the home, but they have all the privileges and supremacy, which leaves the woman in a position of dependency.  

**Power structure maintained through dependency**

This power structure seems to be reproduced as most families live on the man’s property; upon marrying the cultural pattern is that the wife moves in to the husband’s house. Through the patriarchal structure the woman is confined to the sphere of the household and children which deprives her of any significant income. The direct lack of economic resources and by living on the husband’s property diminishes the wife’s options. Upon marrying the woman has accepted her role as a wife and thus is culturally negated the right to have any regrets or complaints. If she is not content with her husband or if he is abusive she most probably do not have another choice than to stay with him anyway. Stories about young women falling into the hands of an abusive husband let know that they sometimes are not even accepted back in their parent’s care. In the case of reporting an abusive husband or being open about the abuse she herself is normally regarded to be a bad wife and questioned about why she is disrespecting her husband. She is even ignored and humiliated at the local police department.

The biggest threat for a woman is if her husband would throw her out. She has no resources at all and many times the wife does not even report the incidents as she herself has internalized her duties as a wife and dare not contend her husband.

The same patriarchal power structure is evident when coming to the subject of alcohol. As the husband is supreme and considers himself the official head of the household he does not take orders from his wife. The woman referred to earlier had tried to make her husband stop drinking time upon time but he had never listened to her. She said that she now had grown tired of the discussion as he did not listen to her. When talking about their husbands drinking all the women has a tone of powerlessness in their voices. Their apathy, when asked why they do not leave their husbands or make them stop drinking, is striking.

Besides from being a question of health and social stability the drinking when reaching high levels is affecting the family economy. A man that is a drinker does not always bring his earned money home, but spend it on alcohol. It took me a while to understand how this works but it seems that many men only work for their personal survival. Some of the women I have talked to mean that the husband only gives her some of the money for food, clothing and necessities and keep the rest for his personal use. Other women state that their husbands do

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31 The marital and familial structures concentrate on gender and age inequalities, where gender is the most important. Within these hierarchical structures there are certain features applied to each role, which must be followed. The unequal pair of male/female is very apparent and powerful in this setting, determining the socially accepted behaviour, which gives the man a powerful position in determining what is right or wrong. The society is thus ruled through a collective male structure.

32 Since the society is patriarchal all is ruled by the male collective rules, today defining the man as superior. When entering a marriage the woman accepts her unequal, weak, position towards the man, though not explicitly said so. She is locked into a power structure where the man has all financial power, and by moving to his property she also gives up the option to leave her husband – she has no financial income and no property and will thus be homeless if leaving her husband. The marital structure is today defined by opportunity hoarding where the woman never is absolutely free and independent, and the man monopolises her options.
not give them anything at all but use all their earnings for personal use, but he is still requiring food on the table and a clean home. Either way, the woman has no opportunity to interfere or to oppose.

PRACTICES REPRODUCING UNEQUAL RELATIONS, MAINTAINING A HIGH ALCOHOL INTAKE

Moving from the analysis of unequal relations I will now concentrate on the practices reproducing and strengthening the inequalities resulting in reinforcement of the acceptance of alcohol and a continuance of the alcohol abuse continued of the presence of alcohol. The disposition of the chapter is as in the previous one divided internally in a national, a local and an interfamilial level.

Patriarchal methods – Stagnated efforts
The external actor’s manipulation and misuse of confidence and faith laid in their hands has created a general suspicion which permeates the whole community. In addition it has created something that most strikingly can be described as individual egoism. When I did my research many people asked me what my purpose for being there was and if there were any gains in it for them, individually. I had earlier been told that the governmental programs had formulated a certain culture of expected freebees, regalado, which now was hard to break through. When I communicated with people many was first interested in what I could do for them, if I had any money of material to offer them and who I came with. They were all curious and interested at first, but when revealing the matter of my presence their interest changed. Fortunately for my research I was still often interesting enough for a continued conversation and especially the children seemed never to loose interest in my strange appearance.

When talking to the locals there was one detail in specific that permeated almost every conversation; their tone of voice and the general dissatisfaction ventilated. Their words and postures made known that their life was quiet miserable and most things difficult; they are poor, there are no jobs, and the government is not trustworthy. They claim not having enough money, not enough food, and their houses are faulty. It is not that I do not believe them, but I contend the formulation of their statements as the complaining in itself is an interesting feature of the society. When the government has come with their patriarchal project people have been forced to present their lives as extremely dreadful in order to receive any financial aid. The people have been accustomed to a high level of oral discontent in order to receive offered goods. The whole procedure is questionable as the aid provided as charity actually stems form the factual governmental inability to provide the people with basic human needs on a regular basis.

However, for the rural indigenous in San Ildefonso, it is not a question of receiving the obvious and righteous but through unhappiness and a presentation of their misfortune they might benefit some temporal aid. I like to think of it as when I at the doctor’s office have to complain substantially for him/her to take me seriously. In this same manner it seems the indigenous have developed a certain language for how to refer to their situation. The issue is thus not their factual necessities of these people but the language and behaviour created around the patriarchal power structure. The atmosphere that this extended dependency has created is inducing a negativity to the individuals personal existence making him/her push aside the good features of life and instead focusing on poverty, misfortune and the governments lack of interest and care. In this negative environment it is harder for the people
to actually grasp even the fewest opportunities as it narrows down their conceptualization of themselves of being mistreated and not worthy of a real and sustainable development.  

Some of the drunken men claim that since the government mistreats and does not care about them, then why should they care in the first place? At first, the statement sounds ridiculously childish and illogical but the theoretical interpretation presents that it stems from the external actors and governmental resilient disregard. A comparison could be made to the low self-esteem stemming from negative parents or likewise, incorporating the features of a predestined ‘caregiver’ (the caregiver being the authority figure to which positions are categorized); the Otomí have never gotten the full and constant support of their ‘caregiver’, which colour their self perception as it is internalized. The internalized, negative self perception results in a reduced appreciation of their real capacities, since their capacities are not confirmed by the ‘caregiver’. Thus, development has stagnated, both on personal and societal levels as the disregard is systematically applied to the whole ethnical group.

The stigma of the Otomí being alcoholics and useless in modern life have also been internalized through this same mechanism of self-categorization. The men themselves state that they are working when drinking, and that they actually prefer not to work; these comments are alarming consequences stemming from the internalized perception fed by outer sources, such as a ‘caregiver’ or a powerful, clearly defined oppositional reference. Of course these men are as suitable for work as any other and nor are they alcoholics by genetics or other reasons, but they have never had this confirmed, and thus, creates a self-perception that confines to the surrounding picture.

Durable marginalization

The indigenous peoples have a long history of alcoholism as strong spirits was introduced to them by the colonizers who early on in their colonization used alcohol as a sedative and controlling mechanism of the indigenous ‘slaves’. Later, when history became aware of their indigenous peoples all over the Continent they were also found to be gravely discriminated against. It took the region a long time to even consider them citizens and the recognition of their equal membership and particular ethnicity was widely debated. In Mexico the indigenous was first recognized as a heterogenic state, then a homogenous, and at last in the 1917 (CEdeDH 1999:27) the last bet was to recognize the pluriculturality of its inhabitants.

The indigenous themselves have gone through many struggles, but most importantly they have recognized their inequality towards other Mexicans; their elderly had no education and their children were barely accepted in school; they lived in the outmost rural areas and had not participated in the industrialization nor benefited from its profits; they did not look like other Mexicans nor did they dress like them; and furthermore, they did not even speak the same language as them. Additionally, they had incorporated themselves in a life where alcohol played a big role; during colonialism when forced to drink, then incorporated in their lifestyles and cultural festivities and then being drunk for feeling helplessness. The result, either way, or however someone may want to define it, the indigenous peoples have developed an accepted drinking and dying of alcohol in their life.

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33 The negativity can be explained as a sort of adaptation (Tilly 1998:97ff) to the durable inequality and exploitation they are confronted with. They have learned to complain in order to receive, and the complaining has thus evolved into a structural pattern, not so accurate with their needs. But more importantly the structural complaining is holding them back, restraining them from positive actions for their own development, as the behaviour represents the adaptation mechanism.
With limited education, marginalization, poverty, lack of information, and unemployment, the indigenous were and are very susceptible to alcohol. The indigenous peoples, the Otomi’s, long history of alcohol abuse soon acquired them the today well-known stigma; they ‘are alcoholics almost as by nature’. The institutional manipulation and the general conceptualization of them as ‘alcoholics by nature’ have had the same effect as the prolonged disregard of their inclusion, resulting in the internalization of the stigma. The whole apparatus is then reproduced as the non-indigenous themselves see Mexico’s ethnical heritage being drunk or hanging around doing nothing; they reinstate their predetermined perception and the indigenous hear that they must be ‘alcoholics by nature’.

The apparatus also provides an excellent instrument of self-categorization as the opposing party is that recognizably different; the indigenous drink much alcohol but the non-indigenous do not. The categorization of the indigenous drinking seems today to have reached unrecognizable levels as very few are disputing the factual structural patterns determining the unfortunate faith of the indigenous who must drink. The prevalence of such an acceptance in the local society in relation to the real damages done to the people and families stresses the power manoeuvred by the adaptive apparatus in play.

**Stigmatized alcoholism**

As with the stigma of being backward and ignorant the stigmatic alcoholism has stepped in to fortify and contribute to a generation of a more ample and complex stigma directed at the whole Otomi population. When in interplay these stigmas are strengthened by each other and, thus, reproducing the apparatus of categorization which divides the indigenous and the non-indigenous; a division that is far easier to withhold through visible physical and cultural features.

The alcohol is today an integrated feature of society and, therefore, most of them do not even consider that the alcohol is a threat to them. Since colonization and onward the indigenous have been, and have been referred to as, in close relation to alcohol as a feature of their day to day life and included as well in their occupational culture and in the Catholic religion supportive of moderate drinking. Through the continuance of the old patterned presence of alcohol in almost every societal sphere there has not been much room for reflective thoughts, nor have such a thinking evolved today since there is nothing provoking any form of awakening call or resistance; the society has today not differentiated itself from what it was. The drinking is part of life, imbedded in the culture, and therefore not questioned.  

The stigma laid upon the indigenous for being alcoholics has been stabilized in a similar manner since all the features and concepts remain the same as those created during the colonialism. The non-indigenous in the community clearly distinguishes themselves from their indigenous neighbours but recognize that they are proud to live side by side with Mexico’s ethnic heritage, even though they are alcoholic. The comment not only distinguishes the indigenous but also themselves as they take a stand against being anything that the indigenous are; they are not the same as the indigenous and they do not have the substance abuse problem inherited in their genetics. The differentiation goes both ways as the indigenous also are well rehearsed on the matter; the indigenous themselves pretend to know that they have been drunkards for ages and that that is an inherent part of their lives. The non-indigenous and indigenous concepts are interacting and reconfirming each other in accordance to the expectations of their immediate surrounding; and are thereafter transformed into

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34 The adaptation mechanism has integrated the alcohol abuse within the culture to the extent that there is no longer possible for the people to recognize the alcohol usage as a hazardous practice.
internal constraints, formulating subjective motives and moral justifications for the presence of alcohol.

**Socializing by gender**

There is a gender boundary which separates the men from the women in both familial and social life. It is nothing that is spelled out but when observing the dynamics of the society one can easily see that women and men are scarcely seen together; they are more often seen in groups of women or groups of men. I do not claim to know the reason for this, but a fair guess would be that it is the result from a very divided society where the traditional gender roles separate them through their day to day activities; the women and men apart have specific chores which makes it more plausible that they interact with other women versus men as it creates natural meeting points. This division gives the society very particular dynamics in comparison to the western world where divisions are not as gender bound and it is more common to find both sexes interacting. The gender division is even evident in the Otomí home, between spouses or reflected by the children; as traditional features provides the sons more freedom and higher status than sometimes granted the mother. Due to this stratum males/females get more/less liberty to socialize which as a result offers the men much more social and active positions.

Along with this freedom starts the real difference between the socializing patterns of men and women. The women usually socializing only with other women, tending their cattle together stitching in groups or just meeting at someone’s house for a chat when the time is available. The men meet at work or while looking for one. The women’s day to day activities and thus encounters are somewhat restricted since there are only a number of things for a woman to do outside her house. The men’s situation is much different and much more interactive since few are caught up in day to day working routines; they mostly work on the hour and irregularly. However, even when not working they are out looking for a job or somewhere where they can lend a hand; it is in this social interactive environment that many men drink alcohol.

The days when no job can be found men gather together for a drink at some of the local stores, taking the opportunity to relate and socialize with friends. Actually, I have even seen men drinking before, under and after a job when the pay was alcohol. So, in these situations there are many different types of men to be found; the ones I have recognized are those farmers that only come by for a drink, the unemployed that had bad luck for the day, the drunkard who drinks even when working, and the drunkard that only works enough to be able to drink for days. The occasional farmer or worker seems to be keen to declare that they are not alcoholics but only drinking today and today only; however, even the men identified as real drunkards makes the same declaration. The only difference would be that the drunkards can refer to their drinking as ‘being at work’.

**Gendered alcohol intake**

The society has high rates of alcohol intake and clearly it is the men that in their socially freer positions compared with the women are the ones drinking the most and most often; they are more exposed and vulnerable through their instable situation. The drinking leads to all kinds of different problems affecting personal, interfamilial, social and economical relations. I will not go into a deep discussion about these issues as they are not the purpose of this study. However, it is safe to say is that there are too many negative consequences and side effects of the accepted alcoholism than what would be counted as collateral damage in any society not showing signs of the mechanisms that are in play here.
The women have many stories about drunken, abusive and violent husbands; some finding none or every reason for an excuse to physically or sexually abusing his wife or someone else. The children are also affected, physically and mentally from the insecure home environment. Sexual abuse of children and youth is also a problem related to the alcoholism; I heard, and later got it confirmed that there are cases when a drunken father sells his own daughter’s sexual services to someone for the price of some alcohol. Fortunately it does not seem to be a common occurrence, even though I am hesitant to assume such a fact since I am also sure that this is a subject not widely talked about. Repeatedly and not as gruesome is the thievery of one’s own family’s foodstuffs or money to use as pay for alcohol. Many succumb to the alcohol and dies of disease or alcohol-related accidents as in some families where three up to four generations of men have died due to alcohol and the youngest only a teenager when dying. Families are destroyed, children die, women are killed, accidents are mortal, rapes, and abuse, thievery and social exclusion are only some of the things known as results of the highly accepted alcohol prevalence.

As a defence for the presence of alcohol both women and men have developed evasive language and practices, jokes and mythologies in order to be better handling the problem. The women sit together and joke about their husbands’ drunken behaviour, as how funny he looked when falling down or how he vomited blood on the kitchen floor. It is easy to see the apathy in their almost cold, sad face behind the smile and the giggling, but nevertheless they are smiling and giggling. When a drunken man has come home abusive the guilt is laid upon the woman herself as if it was her doing something wrong to upset her husband; in almost all scenarios the woman feel at fault for her husband’s drunken behaviour. Born from this is a behaviour that do not contend the man’s authority and right to drink, also if the man is abusive there is a great deal of fright involved in accusing the man of being a drunkard. The outcome though, will be that the woman sustains her husband’s drinking who therefore does not see his drinking to be a problem.

The men, as they are often blind to the problem they cause in their homes, set in play other mechanisms that give them the opportunity to avoid recognizing the problem. Once when I asked some men about their drinking and job opportunities, they stated in consent that there are jobs available but they prefer drinking. Right after that they said: -We are working right now! Illustrating this by lifting their bottles to their lips as all the men laughed. The issue of drinking is very hard to talk about seriously in these settings as the men almost always joke when asked about their alcohol usage; even when I talked to men alone they could not take the matter seriously but instead retreated to jokes and stories about funny incidents or episodes while being drunk.

Alcohol as a socially accepted actor
A widespread practice when seeing drunkards in the streets is openly to ignore them and if further wanting to publicly oppose to their behaviour a patronising laugh and a head shake will follow. A young woman said that she was very used to seeing drunken men wobbling down the street outside her store; they sang, screamed and on occasion came accompanied by their wives. The wives, she said, were drunk while with the men but she had not seen women drunk by their own. She said, they sometimes were arguing as they were both drunk and the

35 Evasive practices and jokes, says Tilly, are representative for adaptation and the continuity of existing divisions. The woman may not find it funny when her husband vomits blood, but as she is not in power to change his behaviour she is keen to elaborate routines that “ease day-to-day interaction” (Tilly 1998:97) Through this practice, however she unconsciousness reproduces the existing division between her and her husband, and thus grant his continued drinking habit.
husband could suddenly get angry and start throwing rocks or whatever he could find on his wife. “It is a show, but nothing else” she continued. As I had spent a longer time in the community I recognized that not even I noticed the drunken men lying on the grass, sleeping it off, anymore; as someone shook his/her head I did not take it into account and I definitely shook mine too. The whole occurrence turns into a daily procedure which resembles the procedure appointed by the drunken husband’s wife as she no longer questions his drinking. However, this evasive practice only contributes to sustaining the presence of alcohol, accepting it even in the streets.

A mythology, which maybe started out as a joke, is that men drink alcohol because that is what men do. A woman, could she have been in her 60’s – she herself did not know exactly – narrated her life story which included various periods where drunken men had mastered her life. She was a poor girl when she left for the city in the search for a job. She found one as a live in maid and stayed there until she married. When she talked about the men in her life she continuously came back to their drinking; some had drunk more and some less, but she did not know of any man that did not drink alcohol. Her husband who was from San Ildefonso was a heavy drinker and almost killed her one time as he hung her from a rope; he almost succeeded in strangling her before help came. As she sit there in the sun, sheltered only by her reboso, she complain of severe back pain resulting from her many years of hard work and she shows me her crooked arm that did not heal properly after being broken too many times. For her, being a man is connected with the drinking of alcohol; drinking at work, drinking at home and drinking at whatever hour of the day. Most women in the community share her concept of what a man is and have the right to do.

In the shadow of the drinking patterns and the jokes and evasive practices generated to ease the day to day coping lies a strong notion of apathy and powerlessness. The woman’s impossible situation as she is in no power to affect neither her husband’s nor her son’s drinking; the man’s instable routines and his social vulnerability; and for both men and women, the social constraints, marginalization and the internalization of the stigma and outer pressure laid upon them for being indigenous. Their emotional struggles, marginalization and lack of access to social bases, such as appropriate information and education, inclines them to accept their lot in life; without proper education and appropriate information and the right instruments it is hardly possible for anyone to fight for a change of one’s given lot.

Seemingly there is a gap in the knowledge between what the people have, what they think they have and what they think they are entitled to have which limit any real struggle to gain what would be justified; and to combat the acceptance of alcohol. The Otomí do not have any social power and the continued marginalization keeps them in a state of dependency and away from any real development. The lack of governmental priority, the marginalization and the persistent stigmatization among other variables keeps the community numb and powerless to all matters including the alcohol problem. The alcohol problem which is one of the most damaging features responding to the same powerlessness.\(^\text{36}\)

\(^{36}\) The mechanism in play is opportunity hoarding where the total marginalization and exclusion has excluded the indigenous from their civil rights through generations, and is still withholding important factors needed, through stigmatizing validations concerning race and ethnicity, residing in rural communities, poverty, civilization, effort, culture, ignorance, stupidity, and many other factors, most of them interrelated, being side effects of others, creating a negative circle of inequalities.
INCENTIVES FOR CHANGE

Reachable opportunities

Today there is one NGO (El Grupo Jade, and through it ACCEDDE) working in the community, except another Christian initiative focusing on women. The NGO, El Grupo Jade, run various community development projects, thru which it creates social and work related networks offering the participants an opportunity for work, development and more importantly offering them knowledge about their rights and providing the support needed to create a sense of self-righteousness and respect. But the organisation has far yet to go to reach all individuals and families. However, many of those involved in the work have found an incentive to make an enormous change in their lives; some individuals were on the verge of failing their families and themselves by not working, drinking abundantly, and misbehaving in a general sense. But when finding the support and the access to those basic but crucial social needs, before denied them, they broke the destructive pattern and saw other possibilities not available before.

When the opportunity to progress socially and economically, with a job and a net of support, the people often stopped drinking and misbehaving. One man participating in the work of the organization represents a particularly impressive case; he was on the verge of killing himself through drinking, fighting and not taking care of himself, and even less his family. He could leave them for days as he slept outside on the ground, tirado en las calles, and drank on a daily basis. But as he started to work for the NGO it offered him the incentive needed for making a change in his life and to straighten things out; he is now part of the local directive board in one of the productive community development projects. Individuals like this man are the success stories of this study that through their transformations confirm that the general lack of access to social bases (infrastructure, education, jobs, marginalization, faith, trust, etc.) is the crucial incentive needed in order for any alteration of the dependable structure that holds the community.

This study does not focus on the success stories, but on the people that still have not found access to the social powers needed, thus still restraining them to their unequal and unjust societal positions; which is constantly creating and reproducing a pattern of an accepted, hazardous alcoholism damaging to the whole society. However, both are equally important to the higher understanding of the mechanisms steering the society towards the future, allowing change or not. The work of the NGO has proved to be a powerful incentive for the people that are fortunate enough to be a part of their work and the same proves the presence of Evangelism, which bans alcohol within their circles. Both organizations are steered by organizational purposes, bringing people together for a joint cause, providing change and gain for all participants.

Demanded structural reform

I want to stress the unimportance of the final purpose or goal each organization have, being spiritual, economical or other, but instead focus on the pure structural reform both demand from their participants. Sociologically the activity is not as important as the mechanisms awakened by the reformers, in which they substantially have to make personal changes in their lives in order to earn a membership in a newly associated organization – whatever it may be.

Historically the demands for positive reforms in San Ildefonso have been scarce and the people have settled into ancient, or at least very old, structures neither seeing benefits in change nor in the sustaining of the same. Thus, in lack of a better alternative they have
equally sustained and reproduced the structures adapting and accepting life for what it was. When there is no real incentive promoting change and when the social cost for changing old structures are seemingly high, one sees no reason to why a change would be structurally beneficial. Thus, even the hazardous features of the social structure are reproduced together with the good ones.

The organizations current working within the community came with socially affordable and positive inducements that disturbed the durable bonds of the adaptational structure and thus encouraged the people to take that extra step to modify their lives, to take part of this new societal entity. In these particular cases the benefits are employment, a monetary income and stability, and respectively: spiritual guidance, a net of support and social bonds, among others. The costs implied alteration in the participants’ social life as they now acquired stable jobs with determined working hours and a change in companions; friendships were also torn apart due to spiritual differences and new customs and behaviour not shared by the old friends. The point I try to make is that the incentive was strong enough to destabilize some categorical bonds, while opening up a viable alternative, which altered the basic structure, creating a change with both positive and negative outcomes.

One of the most positive gains for the participants is the break with the strongly attached social alcohol abuse; the underlying reason for the participants’ participation is most often not related to the alcohol abuse, but this effect is rather a side effect than anything else. Needless to say it is a greatly positive outcome not accounted for.

CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

This chapter is a slimmer presentation more concentrated on the theoretical analysis and therefore containing none of the empirical facts intertwined in previous chapters. The main focus is laid on the mechanism of Adaptation presented by Tilly, as the community presents a strong case of this mechanism through its behaviour. I choose to use the “behaviour of the community” rather than the individual residing within, as the problem is more socially determined than individual.

The indigenous peoples were labelled outcast in the world that was created after the coming of the Iberians. They were stigmatized as lowlife and uncivilized; traits that were focused on visible differences, as race and ethnicity. A clear boundary was systematically set between the indigenous and the non-indigenous that still lives strong.

For decades the indigenous have been excluded from society, residing today in the most marginalized areas in Mexico. This marginalization has created patterns of inequalities, where more forceful social actors take advantage of the less powerful. There are at least three unequal categorical hierarchical pairs relevant to this study of inequality: the national/indigenous, the local non-indigenous/local indigenous, and the interfamilial gender pair male/female.

The categories include visible interior categories and outer more systematic installations referring to activities and power structures; whereof alcohol abuse is one. Through the adaptation of the categories they have in turn been transformed into unequal categorical relations embedded into social relations that last for generations as they are transferred from one to the next. They create social dynamics that are institutionalized in the entities of the
hierarchical pair through defining each one on the characteristic laid upon them and at last interlocking them into a dependence on the predictability of this relation; creating a negative circle impossible to break - if not viable opportunities and the access to social bases are increased.

The external manipulation of the indigenous and the governmental patriarchal gift-aid politics are crucial for the reproduction of the hierarchical chain created in the pair. Through continued patriarchal actions the government and other external actors secure their power in their relation to the indigenous, assuring that no resistance will be raised. The exploitation presented by false promises, and the manipulation of the weaker party for personal gains assure their constant lack of power; on the receiving side, the indigenous develop behaviours to ease the disappointment, which in turn awakens the mechanism of adaptation. The awakening of adaptation obstructs any form of resistance, as the side effects of the previously developed behaviours are in fact assertive to the exploitative and demeaning treatment.

Through adaptation and the prolonged marginalization and being ignored by the higher powers the Otomí have fallen into a deep dependence of the categorical identifications laid upon them. The categories have been internalized as they now see themselves with the same parameters as the powerful, hindering any real effort, and promoting a certain relief in acting as predictable as possible.

On the local level, the indigenous are faced with another categorical pair, yet, they are even in this pair the powerless. The non-indigenous/indigenous hierarchical pair is created similarly as the national/indigenous pair, but has more direct impacts. On a daily basis both categories are confronted with the inequalities differentiating them, as they are reproduced and fortified among them. The adaptation is a strong mechanism as both the indigenous and non-indigenous are adapting to the current structure; the non-indigenous reproduce their power through unconscious exploitation and the indigenous accepts it in the name of adaptation. They try to break free of the apparatus with economic incentives by focusing on wealth and economic status but they do this without any real success since the inequality structure does not approve of it; their unequal bonds are too durable to allow a breach of the boundaries through strictly economic gains.

Thus, the alcohol problem. On an every day basis the non-indigenous/indigenous categorical pair is reminded about the boundaries between them; through commercialization, dress codes, in appearance, culture, and in the intake of alcohol, which is the most visible “weakness” among the indigenous. The uplifting and internalization of the categorical characteristic of alcohol abuse among the indigenous grants the non-indigenous their hierarchically higher position and through the internalized stigmatization and adaptation to this feature the indigenous accept their weakness as something natural and needed. Through the continued stigmatic confirmation from the non-indigenous and the drinking of the indigenous both categories maintain their position and can thus define each other after that measurement. The negativity of the stable relationship is, however, that the indigenous are trapped in a negative situation where the social structure is interlocking them in a continued alcohol dependency. This dependency is obstructing them from pursuing other positive activities, and as the physical surrounding is underdeveloped it deepens the impact of the adaptive behaviour.

The interfamilial relations, patriarchal as they are, presents a strong division between male and female is primarily an interior category, but by social mechanisms made outer and fixed on gender inequalities. The divisions between the entities in the categorical pair are made
stronger by the physical marginalization and lack of opportunities that strike differently. The relation as such is found to be contradictory to the current international gender discussion where the focus is laid on female development. My research provides proof that tackling only the female side of the problem is tackling only half of the problem: in this report it has been presented that both categories in the hierarchical pair are equally dependant under the current structure which in this case focused on the alcohol abuse. The structural inequalities distinguishing the female/male relation are widely extended and restrict the less powerful woman’s influence on all matters social and culturally male – where the categorical alcohol abuse is located, but also restrict the man’s probable actions.

As in the more overarching structures presented above, this basic level of interaction is highly affected by the mechanisms within the scope of Durable Inequality. In the prolonged unequal situation, as this is, the woman adapts to current structure in order to ease the daily confrontations, as does the man. Since both are highly perceptive to the stigmatization concerning alcohol and both victims of the high level adaptation, a more basic and close to home adaptation is soon to be applied.

What this means is that it is not only the men that are victims of the adaptation towards a socially accepted alcohol structure but the women are equally affected; the men are exposed and vulnerable to a societal structure where alcohol has come to represent a most basic determinant for their identification and social life; the women confined to their homes accept male drinking and how to manoeuvre around the problems raised. Both categories are steered by structural mechanisms imbedded in their social structure. As a result, not only are the unequal relations reproducing the level of alcohol intake, but the level of alcohol intake is also reproducing the unequal relation, binding the two mechanisms together in a circle of confirmation and reconfirmation.

The woman’s adaptation is responsible for securing the level of alcohol abuse through her resulting actions, as she, when the husband drinks takes over the man’s categorical obligation and responsibility of providing his family with a monetary income. Unconsciously, when applying the survival strategy of taking over the man’s responsibility she reproduces the drinking, or even escalates it. The man who already has adapted to the naturalness of his drinking springing from the two higher categorical pairs is, thus, neither confronted about his drinking on the interfamilial level. As a result, he does not comprehend the drinking as a problem as he is not confronted directly about his drinking, nor is the economic income of the family coming to a halt. Furthermore, when the woman takes over the man’s responsibility it may also affect the man’s categorical security and identification as the sole economic provider.

Thus, the categorical pair has changed one of its basic categorical identifications; no longer obliging the man to bring economic recourses. This phenomenon has been presented by cases where the man works for himself and his own expenses. Since the categories are fluctuant these kinds of changes can occur through time, but as we see in this case, changes do not necessarily balance the hierarchical power balance; through her structurally adapted actions and behaviours the woman has reached an even more disempowered position, now the categorical obligation of providing the family with an income falls on her responsibility. Most importantly, the structural adaptation to these negative behaviours are not resolving the alcohol problem, but maintaining it or even strengthening it.
The structure is thus not only steering the man’s alcoholism but is also determining how the woman handles the every day confrontation with the alcoholism. Therefore there is no possibility to blame one or the other. Perceptiveness of the structure offers the understanding that the lazy, abusive man and the coward and stupid woman are not to blame, not in the big structural picture.

CONSIDERATIONS

Organizational ignorance
This gendered and structural phenomenon is not often the subject for discussion when organizations form their projects in order to empower the poor. Many projects are as discussed earlier focused on empowering poor women but when taking the result of my research in mind these projects are falling short in their conceptualization of the problem they want to address. I claim that a single focus on purely women is letting 50% of the population lagging behind; the visible reality is many times blinding us from the truth that we only through a closer look will reveal what is really going on. In a society where for example men are being drunken bastards we need to look under the surface or we may otherwise contribute to even greater inequalities and further problems.

As an example I want to present the case of one religious organization doing exactly this. The organization claims to work for the poor families, abandoned mothers and children, which indeed they do. But the problem surfaces when the men are brought up; I asked: “What about the men? What can you do for the men?” The answer comes abruptly and shockingly hostile: “The men, bah, they are nothing than trouble: they drink and they fight and they hit their wives and children!” Trying to awaken some kind of inclusion for the men I suggest: “But aren’t the men important in to complete a family?” The woman looked at me as if I did not have a clue: “The men here are no good, we take care of poor abandoned and abused women, we teach them skills so that they can survive on their own.”

I brought one of their folders with me home; it said that the organization is promoting integral and functional families, which for me is a direct contradiction to what I heard. I was told that the men are no good and focus is laid merely on mothers and children, so what happened to the religious concept of a two parent household? The woman representing the organization claimed that there is no salvation for the men, so we are better off ignoring them and creating a society without them. Is she then promoting we create a society of families consisting only of women and children? What is her plan for the men? She meant that dealing with the men is impossible and she did all she could for the women and children. I respect her efforts in regards to the latter work, but I see no real development until women and men both are included in the projects, striving for a holistic development and empowerment. If the men are excluded from initiatives, and especially the impossible indigenous drunkards, does this then not reproduce the durable inequality once again?

Female innocence versus male sinfulness
Men are in this world too often discriminated against, as they are seen as the bad seed, and the producer of all those social and interfamilial problems seen today. I can not stress enough that by blaming the social problems on the man, one is ignoring the fact that there are more structural issues to deal with in order to diminish the problem of abusive drunkards.

Furthermore, as you can read in this report, the women are no innocent bystanders – if you are looking for some one to blame; if using the blaming-focus I would say that men and women
are equally responsible for the socially accepted alcoholism and other structural problems. However, this is not my intention. The two play equally important roles in the structure that reproduces the unequal categories that maintain the categorical hierarchical chain between man and woman. None is guilty as to be the creator of this structure; they are, however, the ones that reproduce the categorical unequal structures as they are trapped and forced into interaction under the rules of Durable Inequality.

My final and most important note is that women and men are adapting their behaviour to the social structure they live within, and as their survival strategy they choose (unconsciously) to live by it, bringing with them both good and bad features through generations and generations. The female/male pair is, however, the last of various pairs that on more overarching levels steer the female/male pair into the structure that the find themselves in. By attacking only the local female/male pair when looking to end the problem of alcoholism or likewise is therefore insufficient.

In this context I see the alcoholism in San Ildefonso as one of the bad features accepted within a greater social structure defined by marginalization, manipulation and invisibility.
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