

The influence of globalisation on the identity formation of the urban youth of Matagalpa, Nicaragua



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The influence of globalisation on the identity formation of the urban youth of Matagalpa, Nicaragua

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The picture on the cover page is the logo of the campaign Me Quiero, Me Cuido y Me Respeto (I love myself, I care about myself, I respect myself) organised by ADIC for the youth in Matagalpa.

PREFACE

Here it is, my master thesis. Finally. This thesis is the final product of the research done in the context of the master Human Geography. Within this master, I chose the direction Urban and Cultural Geography. This direction combined with an interest in Latin-America and international development issues that stems from my previous bachelor and master in Cultural Anthropology and International Development Studies, this research on the influence of globalisation on the identity of the urban youth of Matagalpa in Nicaragua came into being. I had been in South-America before, amongst others for my master research of International Development Studies. After spending quite some time in South-America, I got curious to get to know more about Central-America. Via Arij and Christien of the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA) in Amsterdam, I got into contact with Julienne. She introduced me to Nicaragua, the city of Matagalpa and quite some Matagalpinos who became important informants for this research. As such, I also came into contact with the local organisation ADIC. They gave me the opportunity to do an internship at their department Community Development and in that way work with the youth of Matagalpa.

The accomplishment of this thesis, which is at the same time also the accomplishment of the master research and of the master Human Geography, would have never been possible without the help of many. Of course. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

In the first place, I thank all the informants for their contributions to this research. I want to thank you for your open-heartedness, for your interesting, beautiful, and sometimes heart rending stories, and for giving me an insight in your lives. Besides the “research-related” time we spent, I want to thank you all for spending time together in general. It was so much fun hanging around with you all, chatting, laughing, listening to music, playing some sports, and infinitely emphasising our cultural similarities and differences.

I also thank the staff of ADIC. For giving me such a warm welcome in their organisation, for letting me participate in all the activities, but mainly for sharing all their knowledge and experiences with me. Spending those months at ADIC, I did not only collect a lot of data for my research. I also learnt a lot about the work of the organisation, about the challenges to face and the satisfaction to get.

Thanks also go to all the other people I met in Matagalpa and who, unintentionally, gave me great and valuable information for my research. I also thank them for accepting me and making me part of the community. Furthermore, I thank Marieke, who became a good friend. Thanks for discussing my research methods and results with me, and for shedding a different light on my results every once in a while. Besides, it was nice to have someone around to share experiences as a non-Nica in Matagalpa with and to play a tourist with. Then, I thank doña Luisa, Deyanire and Luisa for their hospitality. It is always nice to have a home where you feel at home when you are far from home...

All in all, I want to thank everyone in Matagalpa. I had the best time. I got to love the city, the atmosphere, the food, the mountains, and the people.

Besides everyone in Matagalpa, there are some more people that I am very grateful to. Starting with Lothar. Thanks for all the feedback (especially for bringing the feedback always positively) and for keeping me on the right track. Thanks also to my fellow students, for spending hours (accumulated, of course...) in the lounge of the library and the Cultuur Café chatting, discussing, and drinking litres of coffee. I want to thank my good friend Diego. He is the one who convinced me to do a second master. Especially in the periods I was a bit struggling, I thought back to his words and found the motivation again to persevere. As when I was writing the thesis for the master International Development Studies, the support of my family and friends was crucial now also. However, more importantly, they managed to take my mind of my research now and then. Thanks for that, again!

¡Gracias!

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GLOSSARY

Barrio	=	neighbourhood
Broda	=	friend, acquaintance
Contras	=	adheres of the dictatorial Somoza family, fighting against the Sandinistas during the war (1979-1990) and supported by the US
Cyber / ciber	=	internet café
Matagalpino	=	inhabitant of Matagalpa
Niña	=	girl
Pandilla	=	gang
Patria	=	native country, origin
Sandinista	=	adherer of the Sandinistic revolution and mainly also supporter of the socialistic political party FSLN
Señorita	=	young lady
Taller	=	workshop

INTRODUCTION

“Les hacen promesas de empleo, educación, entre otras oportunidades, entonces los chavalos dicen: 'vamos a cambiar para ser beneficiados' (...) pero al ver que no reciben, entonces vuelven a participar en las pandillas.”¹

Jairo Blanchard (in: Martínez 2010)

This is a quote about the youth of Matagalpa, one of the larger cities of Nicaragua. As this quote makes clear, the youth of Matagalpa lives a pretty hard life. The living circumstances in Nicaragua, thus also in Matagalpa, are for a large part of the population quite low. Many live in houses that do not provide enough protection and that are not connected to running water. The households consist of many persons (the poorer more than seven), often living in small houses. Most youth grows up in complicated family situations, and often have to face intra familiar violence. Four out of every ten adolescents cannot or do not attend secondary school. And many governmental as well as non-governmental organisations do not manage to reach the youth (Martínez 2010; INIDE n.d-a, 13; PNUD 2000, 1-12). As a result, as shown by this newspaper article, the youth of Matagalpa is not able to benefit from all their rights and the possibilities they (should) have. They just hang around on the street, and even end up in youth groups or in gangs. Which also means that this youth is not able to contribute to society (Martínez 2010). This is a huge loss for society the youth plays such an important role in, as Ban Ki-moon (2011) states:

“Young people are gifted with open minds and a keen awareness of emerging trends, and are bringing their energy, ideas and courage to some of the most complex and important challenges facing the human family.

[...]

Failing to invest in our youth is a false economy.

Investments in young people will pay great dividends in a better future for all.”

Unicef (2001, 2-7) stresses that it is important to invest in adolescents and emphasises this by giving several reasons. An important principle of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights is that all forms of discrimination should be eliminated, which means that all groups of society should be included in all aspects of society, thus the youth as well. Investing in youth now will consolidate global gains like increasing the attendance of secondary school and higher education, decreasing the unemployment rates, and diminishing the number of teenage pregnancies and new HIV cases. As a consequence, it can accelerate the fight against poverty, inequity and gender discrimination. Thereby is adolescence the age of intergenerational transmission of poverty, especially because of the relatively high rates of teenage pregnancies among the poorer communities. Although the youth is often referred to as “the next generation” or “the future”, they are an important part of the present: by living, working, contributing to households, communities, societies. Naadiya, an active participant of the International Youth Foundation, even adds that “[...] if we don't develop their [the youth's] skills now, we actually put our own futures at risk” (International Youth Foundation 2012).

¹ They promise to generate opportunities, amongst others to work and to education, so the guys say: ‘let's change to get advantaged’ (...) but when the time comes they do not receive anything, and they thus return to the pandillas.

In its report *Adolescence: an Age of Opportunity*, UNICEF (2011, 45) states that globalisation is one of the most important influences on the deprived situation many youth in developing countries live in. However, globalisation can have a positive influence on human development – it offers great potential to advance human progress, to reduce the insecurity, to relieve the vulnerability, and to erase poverty – and that most young people today are in general in a better position to benefit from the processes of globalisation than any previous generation. Still, the youth that cannot benefit fall behind the youth that can. This increases the gap between rich and poor, which makes it harder and harder for that youth to get in the position to benefit from globalisation (UNICEF 2011, 45; PNUD 2000, 21).

The youth plays an important role in the city. They are large in number and this number will keep on growing the coming years. They are a strategic actor in development processes, because they are flexible and open to change and because they are energetic and innovative. They are the generation that can create themselves and thereby also others a better future. However, when they are not taken seriously, when they get unemployed or idle, they can become a source of social unrest and deviance. They can become a burden on society. The role of the youth should not be underestimated (UNICEF 2011, 20; Krauskopf, n.d.).

Besides their role, should their right on their city not be underestimated either. Every inhabitant of the city, every urban dweller, should be able to participate and to contribute directly to all decisions that produce urban space in their city. Every urban dweller should also be able to produce urban space so that it meets the needs of inhabitants. The right to the city does not just concern the formal citizens of the city, it concerns everyone who lives in the city, who inhabits the city. Thus also the urban youth. The right to the city is not just a right of access to what the property speculators and the state planners define, but it is an active right to make the city different. As David Harvey says, “[...] it is the right to shape the city more in accord with our heart’s desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image” (Harvey 2003, 941). The idea of the right to the city is based on the ideas of both Marx and Park, that we change ourselves by changing our world and vice versa (Purcell 2002, 100-7; Harvey 2003, 939-41).

It is clear that the youth is very important in society. What should be recognised though, is that the youth is in an important phase of their life, which is not the easiest phase in their lives. Adolescence is a dynamic phase: one moment the youth lives a care-free life, the other moment they have the responsibility of making big decisions. It is a phase of changes, of physical changes, mental changes, emotional changes. It is a phase of uncertainties and insecurities, of differentiation, individuation, and the desire of belonging. It is the phase in which a young person becomes conscious of its own identity and thereby starts the process of forming its own identity (Barker 2003, 376-7; UNICEF 2011, 6). How hard is it, to play such an important role in society when being in such a changeable and confusing phase of your life? How does the youth handle the expectations of society without exactly knowing who they are yet? How do they experience the world becoming more open and accessible while living in their own world in Matagalpa? How does this influence the formation of their identity? This research tries to get more insight in these questions.

The objective of this research is to find out how the urban youth of Matagalpa identifies itself and to what extent their lives are influenced by globalisation. This research is of theoretical relevance because of the focus on a relatively small city. Matagalpa is with its 120,000 inhabitants a relatively small city, although it is one of the larger cities of Nicaragua. A lot of research on urban areas focuses on larger cities, and often even on mega cities. However, half of the world’s urban population lives in intermediate or small cities with less than half a million inhabitants, which means that half of the

world's urban population is not taken into account in many studies. Besides the population, is the importance of the smaller cities often overlooked or under-estimated as well. These cities have an important governmental function. Through these central points in the hinterlands and the local governments can the national government implement its policies and in that way have an influence and keep control in the whole country. These cities are of economic importance also, mainly for their function as a market town. It is the place where large agricultural companies trade their products, where farmers' corporations have their trade centres, and where small farmers sell their products on the local market. For the trade of the agricultural products, the smaller cities are the distribution hubs where the products get distributed to and distributed from. Thereby do the cities often count as tourist hubs, from where tourists visit attractions in the country's remote areas. Furthermore, provide the smaller cities for the larger region important education and health care centres (Guzman 2006, 564; Satterthwaite 2006, 1-18). With a focus on a relatively small city, in the case of this research Matagalpa, I hope to contribute to the small set of theory on globalisation and small cities.

Besides the theoretical relevance, is this research also of social relevance. It reveals how the youth lives its life, what is important in their lives, how they see themselves and how they identify themselves. It becomes clear what influence globalisation has on the formation of their identity and on the way they live their lives. This research reveals how the youth experiences the expectations society has of them and if the expectations are justified or should be adjusted. It gives an insight in the expectations we should have of the youth of Matagalpa and about their expected role in the future.

The information necessary to be able to execute this research was gathered by a literature study and a fieldwork period in the city of Matagalpa, Nicaragua. The fieldwork was for a large part enabled by the local Nicaraguan organisation ADIC, the Association for Integral Community Development, that is based in Matagalpa. They aim to improve the living circumstances of the people living in several rural and urban communities of Matagalpa. They develop comprehensive and sustainable processes in the fields of environment, political consciousness, and community development, and execute capacity building projects in the target communities. ADIC gave me the possibility to do an internship at the department community development. In this department, they work with different target groups, amongst others youth. For the youth, they organise *talleres* with themes like leadership, sexual abuse, self-esteem, and abortion. They mobilise the youth to participate in activities that are organised by other organisations, like a parade for International Women's Day or a *feria*² to show compassion to people living with HIV/AIDS. Some of the youth also make use of the *reforzamiento escolar*, the education reinforcement sessions at the office of ADIC. As an intern, I had the possibility to participate in the activities and workshops that were organised for the youth and in that way to meet a lot of (possible) informants and gain information for this research.

All information gained for this research is processed and analysed which finally led to the realisation of this thesis. The thesis is after this first introducing chapter composed of a theoretical and methodological part, an empirical part, and finally a conclusion. The second chapter establishes the theoretical basis of this research by elaborating on the most important themes and concepts. It starts with the discussion of the life stage of adolescence in which the youth finds itself. It is a dynamic phase that is characterised by change, insecurity, opportunities, growth, and especially the phase in life in which the youth starts developing their own identity. The chapter proceeds with the

² A market or a fair

process of urbanisation, the characteristics of the city. This highly affects the life and the lifestyle of the urban dwellers, and thereby the identity of the youth. The last concept discussed is globalisation. This discussion is based on the vision of Arjun Appadurai (1996), focussing on the flows of people, information, and ideologies over the world. Finally, the relation between all mentioned concepts is established at the end of this chapter, which leads to the formulation of the research question and sub questions.

The third chapter of the thesis describes the methodologies applied to gather the data for this research. A literature study has been of great importance, both during the preparing as well as during the executing phase of the research. Besides a literature study, was a fieldwork period of five months conducted to gain empirical data. The fieldwork was mainly base on participant observation, and additional methods like mapping and transect walks. This methodological chapter ends with a discussion on the validity and reliability of this research.

He chapters four to seven describe and discuss the empirical data and results of the research. The data and results are discussed on the basis of the lives of five young *Matagalpinos*. These five adolescents are a good representation of the whole group of informants, based on age, gender, occupation and wealth. Chapter four presents these five informants. Chapter five makes clear in what environment the youth lives and grows up by focussing on the role of the city in their lives. This chapter describes the development of the city of Matagalpa, its main characteristics, and the living circumstances of the youth. Chapter five is about the identity formation of the urban youth of Matagalpa. The main identity markers age, gender, religion, and neighbourhood are described, as well as the social circumstances they live in and their daily activities. Subsequently, the chapter describes how the youth looks at itself and how society looks at them, and how society, culture and history influence their identity, as well as the difficulties the youth faces that comes with this phase of life. Chapter six makes clear to what extent globalisation influences the lives of the urban youth by looking at the use of modern communication technologies, the ideologies that concern them, the effects of family living abroad and their desire for migration. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter, in which all information addressed in the former six chapters is brought together and connected, and finalises with the answer to the research question.

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

This chapter forms the theoretical framework this research is based on, which is set up in pursuance of the research question. The chapter starts with the discussion of adolescence as a dynamic phase of life in which youth starts forming their own identity. One of the factors that influence the identity formation of the youth is the fact that they live in an urban area. Therefore, the process of urbanisation and the context of urban life are described subsequently. Ultimately, the influence of globalisation on the city, on people, and on urban life is described.

2.1 Youth and identity

Adolescence is a very dynamic phase of someone's life. It is the phase in which someone undergoes many changes and starts forming his or her own identity. It is a phase that for some youth brings a lot of good things and new opportunities, other youth gets confused and disorientated. This phase is not just dynamic, but also quite complex, which becomes clear when defining youth and unravelling their identities.

Definition of youth

Youth as a group is hard to define and lacks a clear definition. One of the most obvious features to define youth with is age. Age determines one's physical appearance: at a glance it is possible to see if someone is young or old, if someone is a child, youth, adult or elderly. Based on age, one places itself in one of these age categories, but are also placed in them by other people. The existence of different age categories functions as an important organisational principle within every society. The category you belong to according to your age determines what is possible, desirable and permitted by and in society: to drink, to drive, to vote, to study, to work. However, when someone is seen as a youngster, it is mainly based on his/her social circumstances at that moment, rather than on age. A 25 year old woman who works as a business consultant for large international companies may during the week be regarded as an adult, while during the weekend she is considered youth when she goes crazy in a nightclub. In some situations preadolescent individuals may count as youth, while in other situations people in their 30s or 40s may be considered as youth also. Youth as a group is thus very hybrid and dynamic (Barker 2003, 376-7; Bucholtz 2002, 526; Dieleman 2007, 19-22; Erikson 1968, 128-35).

In general, adolescence is seen as the stage between childhood and adulthood. It is a process in which a person evolves from a child into an adult. Young people are not children anymore. They are making more and more their own decisions, acquiring more responsibilities, starting to live their own life. They try to renunciate the perceived boredom of routinised everyday life and try to concretise their own sense of difference. However, they are regarded as not-yet-finished human beings and still depend on their parents or fosters. Although turning into an adult is a process that takes many years, in many cultures it is age-related, or maybe it is better to say "permission-related". Certain ages are linked to certain permissions that are regulated by law, like the legal permission to drink alcohol, to vote, and to obtain a driving licence. These permissions provide young persons a lot of possibilities, and at the same time important responsibilities. Possibilities and responsibilities that assume an adult lifestyle. However, these permissions also give young persons the freedom to live a typical youth lifestyle in which they leave their parental home, drink and party, and try to discover

their boundaries. In other cultures the switch from youth to adulthood is marked by a rite-de-passage. This can be a single event like an American sweet 16 party, or a longer lasting ritual like an Indian wedding in which the girl-bride becomes a woman, or the warrior period in which Maasai boys become men (Barker 2003, 376-7; Bucholtz 2002, 526-35).

To every age category, a wide range of meanings, ideas, assumptions and understandings is attached, which are very subjective though very pervasive. General ideas that exist about youth include youth being carefree, without great responsibilities, enjoying life and having fun; but also youth as careless, that does not worry about anything or anyone but itself; the youth as difficult, rebelling against everything that has some kind of authority, mainly the parents; and finally the youth as tempestuous, not being able to control itself and that crosses many borders regarding existing norms and regulations. On the one hand are these general ideas created by the youth itself by their behaviour. On the other hand are these general ideas created and maintained by media that acts and publishes according existing stereotypes (Barker 2003, 376-7; Dieleman 2007, 19-22; Erikson 1968, 128-35).

Another feature that characterises youth is change. They are in a process of change, which is expressed in different ways. The youth changes physically - their body evolves from a childish into an adult one - and mentally - their psychic capabilities increase. They used to live in their secure childhood milieu and now are thrown into the big and open society. Their vision on the world changes and they create utopian images of *the* and *their* future. In order to pursue and achieve their utopian images, the youth tries to change *their* and *the* world by altering the existing norms and regulations according to their vision and images. Youth is thus not only in a process of change, they also create change themselves (Barker 2003, 376-7; Dieleman 2007, 19-22; Erikson 1968, 128-35).

With the start of the process of change from child- to adulthood, the youngster starts to form and create its own identity. This creation of an identity does not happen from one day to another. It is a process that lasts the whole lifetime. Identity is not a fixed thing that we possess but it is a process of becoming. Over time, ideas, conceptions, opinions, perceptions and expectations change, the angles that bring them forward change, changes occur in someone's life or in someone's personal environment. Thus, over time, identity changes (Barker 2002, 109-10; Barker 2003, 219-46).

Angles and subject positions

Identity is no single entity, it consists of a whole range of identity markers, like ethnicity, social class, age, nationality, et cetera. Besides the identity markers, a person's identity is made up of ideas, conceptions, opinions, perceptions and expectations which are brought forward from different angles. One angle is the person itself. The conceptions one holds about itself and the emotional identification with these conceptions are one's self-identity. This is the mode of thinking about ourselves: about what we think we are at this moment, and about what we think we would like to be. It is about the questions What to do? How to act? And Who to be? Another angle is society. The identity markers and our own ideas and conceptions only get meaning from the social context they exist in. We live our lives in the context of social relationships with others. Sometimes we live according to the expectations and opinion of others, or intentionally the opposite of what is expected. Thereby do we compare our identities with those of others. Identity exists on the basis of difference: young is not old, woman is not man, dark skin is no light skin, atheist is not religious. Also, identity is brought forward from a cultural angle. Culture determines what ideas and perceptions, but also what vast identity markers like age and gender, mean. In every culture being a woman, being young, being a daughter, means different things. Language plays an important role in this.

Because of language we, as persons, are able to understand the very notions of personhood and identity. Languages differ where culture differs. Besides culture, history also forms an angle. Out of a common history, ancestry and a set of symbolic resources (like a national flag) a common identity is formed (like a “Dutch identity” or a “black identity”). Furthermore is it important how the identities, and the elements they are made of, are represented. They can be expressed in images and symbols, texts and ideologies, in music and films, clothing and hairstyle. This is determinant for the way people create their own image of their and other’s identities (Barker 2002, 35, 109-10; Barker 2003, 219-23, 230-46; Dieleman 2007, 28; Yuval-Davis 2006, 196-9).

A person’s identity also depends on the subject position that person holds at that moment. As a person, everyone is subject *to* social processes and situations that bring them into being as subjects *for* themselves and others. Every person is always positioned in a certain discourse, and subjected to the regulatory power of that discourse. The subject position someone finds itself in at a certain moment determines how he/she thinks and looks at the world at that moment, it determines the person’s place in society, his/her interests, and other people’s expectations. A twenty year old woman, for example, is at home a daughter taken care of by her parents. At university she is a student sociology who is trying to find out who she is and how to develop her personally. At her job at a children’s day care she has the responsibility over ten children and earns some money which gives her the feeling of independency and taking responsibility of her own life. The person’s subject position exists by the definition of that person’s *I, here and now*. It determines that person’s identity at that moment at that place (Barker 2002, 88; Barker 2003, 262-3, 310-13; Bucholtz 2002, 526-8).

Because of all the different subject positions, ideas, conceptions, opinions, perceptions and expectations that are brought forward by all the different angles, no identity is the same. Even if someone feels that he/she shares a common identity, the other people that share this identity are of different ages, have different jobs, live in different places, are of different sexes, etcetera. There is no automatic relation between the elements identities consist of. Every person connects his or her identity-creating elements in a different way and creates an own and unique identity (Barker 2002, 109-10; Barker 2003, 219-46).

Youth crisis

A person’s identity thus starts to develop during youth. That youth is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, has a huge influence on the development of a person’s identity. This is not just because it is a period of uncertainties, individuation, resistance, and differentiation. It has to a large extent to do with the fact that a transition tends to lead to an identity crisis. In this case, it leads to a youth crisis (Bucholtz 2002, 528-32; Erikson 1968, 128-30; Giddens 1991, 148, 184-5).

Erik Erikson (1968, 91-141) developed a life cycle in which he distinguishes nine life stages: from infancy to elderly. Every stage is characterised by some kind of crisis or conflict, but in the stage of adolescence the crisis is relatively heavy. In this stage youth is not just creating a bridge between the stages of childhood and adulthood, they are constantly thrown back and forth between the former and the subsequent stage. This crisis is revealed in the conflict between identity and role confusion. The youth is bothered by the questions Who am I? Who do I want to be? How do I fit in? Where am I going in life?

During this process of identity formation and the transitional crisis, the youth encounters several paradoxes. They are looking for trust in oneself and in others, they look for people and ideas to have faith in. At the same time, however, they fear a foolish, all too trusting commitment and thus will express the need for faith in loud and cynical mistrust. Another paradox is that youth looks for

opportunities to make own, independent and free decisions, but also is afraid to be forced into situations in which they would feel laughable or exposed to self-doubt. Then, it seems easier to act shamelessly in the eyes of the elders which is out of free choice, than to end up in situations that would be shameful in his/her own eyes or, more importantly, in those of peers (Erikson 1968, 128-30).

Youth cultures

The start of identity formation and the youth crisis lead to the desire to belong to a group. The youngsters look for peers with a common interest. This results in the emergence of youth cultures. Youth cultures are characterized as open, as the outcome of incessant processes of social interaction, and as cultures in which it is difficult to distinguish the local from the global. They can be class-based and politically defined, as well as be based on aesthetics, on a particular style, on music, clothing or hairstyle. Youth cultures can also be born out of resistance, based on a rejection of the mainstream culture. The resistance can regard, among others, the dominant class, dominant race, gender, or sexuality. At least the youth cultures are in search for distinctiveness and difference, for a consciousness of otherness (Barker 2003, 378; Bucholtz 2002, 541; Massey 1998, 123).

Mary Bucholtz (2002) considers youth cultures as new ethnicities, based on the ideas of Stuart Hall (1997). New-ethnicities are not founded on static ethnic categories, but are emergent and locally constructed. Also, they are rigidly constructing their own identity (Bucholtz 2002, 538-543). Barker (2003) regards youth cultures as subcultures. The desire to differentiate from the mainstream is expressed in the 'sub' of subcultures. According to Brake (in Barker 2003) do youth cultures, as subcultures, have several functions. They provide solutions to socio-economic structural problems. They offer a form of collective identity different from that of school and work, and provide solutions to the dilemmas of identity young people face. At last, youth cultures win space for alternative experiences and supply sets of meaningful leisure activities in contrast to school and work (Barker 2003, 377-9).

What seems to be one of the most characteristic features of youth cultures however, is hybridity. Youth cultures constantly search for influences and references in other (youth) cultures by which they cross geographical boundaries and scales. Different elements are added and mixed in a continuous process of alteration. The spaces youth cultures exist in, are organised through a vast complexity of interconnections, from the very local to the intercontinental. The interconnections are formed by contacts and influences drawn from a variety of places scattered across the globe. They change constantly which gives them a temporary character. Although hybridity is a character of many cultures, it is a typical feature for youth cultures because especially young people easily cross the barriers that possibly separate cultures, as they carry on with their cultural business (Barker 2003, 172-5; Bucholtz 2002, 538-543; Massey 1998, 123-6).

All the interconnections that construct space are always imbued with power. This means that between cultures a certain hierarchy exists. The power that defines the relations deeply affects the meanings of cultural influences and cultural contact. The lines that connect cultures around the world are expressions that know many directions: the lines can express solidarity with the other culture, or a desire to belong to the other culture. Doreen Massey illustrates this with examples from Latin America and the United States. In Latin America, many young people wear jeans and sweaters of which the texts and prints on the clothes directly refer to the US, which can be seen as an expression of the wish to be one of the US-youth. Young people in the US wear sweaters woven with

colourful fabric from Latin America, which can be seen as an expression of admiration and respect for Latin America and the Latin American culture (Massey 1998, 123-6).

Within the open complexity cultures exist in without being strictly attached to one specific place, both individuals and groups are constantly engaged in efforts to territorialize and to claim spaces, by including and excluding others from particular areas. Fencing off areas may be used to protect and defend particular groups and interests, as well as to express domination, control and power. It can be about territorializing physical space like a neighbourhood or a park, but it can also be about claiming a non-physical space like a political movement or a typical style of clothing (Massey 1998, 126-9).

By placing these characteristics of youth cultures in the perspective of globalisation, three conclusions can be drawn. The first is that besides the endless process of carving up space and claiming it for one's own, cultures do not just exist with the possession of territory. They exist because of the interconnections they have with any space and any other culture on any place on the world. The second is that youth cultures are not so much based on 'roots' as on 'routes'. It are the routes of the connections that cross and connect a whole range of different places across the world, that determine the features of the culture, and not the roots of the culture like ancient customs and habits. The third is that cultures in their existence are very dynamic. The constant supply of new influences – that are the result of the interconnections between places, spaces and cultures all over the world – make that cultures change constantly (Massey 1998, 121-9).

Urban youth

UN statistics turn out that there are more young people in the world today than ever before: almost half of the world's population is younger than 24 years old. Most of the world's youth is living in urban settlements. Living in a city influences the lives, the development, and the future of the urban youth to a certain extent. This influence can be positive, since the city offers a whole lot of facilities, possibilities, opportunities and chances for the urban youth. However, the influences can be quite negative as well, because the city is also full of temptations, immorality, criminality and disorder. The majority of the urban youth lives in the decayed districts of the city and grows up in poor neighbourhoods. This part of the urban youth is fairly marginalised, has less access to the urban facilities and fewer opportunities than the more fortunate part of the city's youth (Hubbard 2006, 60-8; UN-HABITAT 2010, 1-12).

In this context UN-HABITAT (2010) distinguishes three paradoxes which urban youth encounters. Cities have never had such high concentrations of wealth, of abilities and opportunities that were so favourable to human development. However, at the same time, cities concentrate enormous, unacceptable degrees of inequality since the opportunities are just accessible for a small part of the urban population. Moreover, the opportunities that come with the "urban advantage" are especially denied to those that have such obvious and vital roles to play in our collective future, namely the urban youth. What makes it even more paradoxical is that half of humankind is no older than 24 years, which means that a huge part of the urban population has reduced, or no, access to the opportunities cities provide (UN-HABITAT 2010, 60).

A large share of the urban youth thus experiences social exclusion which deprives them of the chance for equal access to resources and which make key political, economic and social processes bypass them. Due to the social exclusion, the youth cannot enjoy the same opportunities as other groups to improve their living standards. UN-HABITAT determines four factors that influence the outcomes of the inequality the urban youth faces. The first factor includes predetermined

circumstances, like sex, race and ethnicity. The combination of these predetermined circumstances can for example determine the access to education (white boy versus indigenous girl) or to healthy nutrition (rural lower class versus urban higher class). The second factor is made up by the place a person grows up in as a child, as well as the access he/she has during childhood to basic services like education, health care, electricity, water and sanitation. A lack of access to these facilities could have adverse effects on the physical and mental growth of a child, which in turn could result in inability to access social, economic and cultural networks in the future. The third factor focuses on intergenerational inequalities, which are principally parents' education, income, wealth, and prosperity. Well-off parents can be better able to provide good opportunities for their children's future than parents that live in a more deprived situation. The fourth factor that influences the outcomes of the inequalities the urban youth faces, is made up by the inequality of opportunities. When all the young urban dwellers have equal opportunities, then factors that are beyond an individual's control (the other three) will not, or will hardly, influence their opportunities. Despite the fact that this is not the situation, this fourth factor does rest on individual and community choices, on the efforts and talents the individual or community addresses, and the opportunities the individual him or herself takes, to achieve the best possible outcomes. This factor contains a form of self-determination (UN-HABITAT 2010, 1-12).

The marginalisation of such a large part of the urban population, means that this part is not able to make any contribution to society which makes a city non-inclusive and unequal in all contexts: social, economic, political and cultural (UN-HABITAT 2010, 1-12). A part of the urban youth cannot contribute to the urban society, because they have an unequal right to the city, as stated by Henri Lefebvre. According to him, the whole urban population should have a right to the city they live in. The right to the city does not just concern the formal citizens of the city, it concerns everyone who lives in the city, who inhabits the city, who uses the city. It concerns all urban dwellers. Every urban dweller should be able to participate and to contribute directly to all decisions that produce urban space in their city. Everyone should also be able to produce urban space so that it meets the needs of the inhabitants. The right to the city should reorient decision-making away from the state and towards inhabitants as the majority and hegemonic voice. The right to the city is not just a right of access to what the property speculators and the state planners define, but it is an active right to make the city different. The idea of the right to the city is based on the ideas of both Marx and Park: we change ourselves by changing our world and vice versa (Purcell 2002, 100-7; Harvey 2003, 939-41). Or as David Harvey says, "[...] it is the right to shape the city more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image" (Harvey 2003, 941).

2.2 Urbanisation

That most of the world's youth is living in urban settlements is mainly due to the ongoing process of urbanisation the world is caught in. This process started a century ago, when less than five per cent of the world's population lived in cities. In the year 2010, the milestone of 50 per cent of the world's population living in urban areas was reached. UN-HABITAT expects that in 2050 this percentage will be increased to almost 70 (UN-HABITAT 2009, 23, 226-8). The urban growth is caused by high rates of natural increase among urban populations, as well as by rural-urban migration. In many cases, urban expansion does not go synchronic with economic and industrial expansion, and with expansion in urban services. Many cities in developing countries experience great stresses in coping with their increasing populations, mainly administratively, socially and economically. The most important

consequences of the rapid urban growth for the inhabitants are the shortages and low standards of housing, and inadequate water supply, sewerage and waste disposal (Prothero 1987, 1284-5).

The extent of urbanisation differs enormously by continent though. Africa and Asia are the least urbanised regions, with respectively 40 per cent and 43 per cent of the population living in cities. After a large gap, Oceania and Europe follow with 71 and 73 per cent. The most urbanised regions in the world are Latin America with a percentage of 79 and North America with a percentage of 82. Although Africa is one of the least urbanised regions, it is urbanising the fastest at the moment. The urban areas in the other regions still grow, though quite slowly (UN-Habitat 2009, 226-8).

Prothero (1987) explains this difference in urbanization by the different colonial histories of the different regions. Latin America was colonised earlier and longer than Asia and Africa. Urban places were established as centres of colonial administration, commerce and religion. The colonisers turned the rural areas into large estates for the production of crops for markets controlled by the colonial powers, and those dispossessed of their land migrated to the urban areas. Although colonial rule in Latin America ended a century and a half ago and despite various land reform measures, large parts of the rural areas remain in hands of just a few landlords. They keep on alienating land from small farmers, who feel forced to move to the city. Colonialism in Africa ended only a few decades ago and the continent is still in a recovering phase. Although the colonists occupied large parts of rural area in some regions of Africa, land shortages and landlessness have been less immediate factors influencing rural-urban migration than it did in Latin America. In Asia, the colonial history has less impact on urbanisation than it has in Latin America and Africa. Asia is generally characterized by rural-urban migration, as well as by urban-urban migration and by circular migration. This makes the urban areas in Asia grow slower than those in Latin America for example (Prothero 1987, 1295-7).

Latin America is thus one of the most urbanized regions in the world, and is the most urbanized region of the developing world. The urban growth mainly occurred in the second half of the twentieth century: in 1990 there were 2.5 times more people living in urban areas than in 1940. The continent is characterized by the gigantic nature of the cities. Four of the world's megacities are situated in Latin America (Mexico-City, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires) in which 14 per cent of the Latin American urban population lives. However, almost 60 per cent lives in the relatively small cities, of less than 1 million inhabitants. These are the cities though, that grow the fastest (UN-Habitat 2009, 25-31).

Three factors can be distinguished that provoked the urban growth of the last century in Latin America: natural growth of the population, industrialisation processes and major governmental investments were centralised in cities, and underinvestment in the rural areas. These last two factors lure people from the countryside to the city. Over the last decades, it has become harder and harder for small farmers in the agricultural sectors to survive in the rural areas. While the people on the countryside have to work harder for less money, they notice that the industrial and service sectors in the cities are growing. Thereby are the facilities for amongst others health care and education much better in the city. These are reasons to migrate from rural to urban areas. However, no city is able to cope with such an urban growth as in Latin America. Sufficient housing and urban space for the well-being of the population cannot be provided, which forces the poorest members of the urban population to build their own houses. By doing so, informal and spontaneous settlements are created on peripheral land around the urban cores. These settlements are characterized by precarious living conditions, without any urban infrastructure or services. Facilities for human development are lacking. This is where the 'dual city' arises, characterised by the dichotomy between the formal and

the informal, the legal and the illegal, the planned and the unplanned, the rich and the poor (Kent 2006, 246-8; Hernández Bonilla 2008, 389-90).

Latin America knows high levels of inequality: the richest 5 per cent of the population receive 25 per cent of the regional income, the poorest 30 per cent receive 7.5 per cent. Sixty per cent of the population of Latin America that is classified as poor, lives in urban areas. This high inequality and high number of poor living in cities, is reflected in the high spatial fragmentation in Latin American cities. Every city knows strong distinctions between areas of wealth where the rich live, and areas of poverty where the poor live (UN-Habitat 2009, 31-38).

The city does not just know the dichotomy between rich and poor. According to Sharon Zukin (1998), 'the urban' is characterised by diversity. Due to immigration, in the city lives a mix of people of different races and ethnicities. Cities attract the extreme poor in search for a better life and cities attract the rich who attempt to expand their capital, which results in a mix of low, middle and high income classes. The mix of such diverse people, leads to a mix of different cultures and habits, with a diversity of language, food, music, clothing, etcetera. This urban diversity seems likely to lead to several paradoxes and polarisation. Nevertheless, it continues to attract a whole range of diverse people to the city. Still, this diversity only functions well when there is a social interdependence and neighbourhood solidarity among the very diverse inhabitants of the city. As a result, the different groups of the urban population, like ethnic minorities or gays and lesbians, become more and more visible and with that also their own urban lifestyle. The great range of different urban lifestyles is the city's most important product. This urban diversity functions as a catalyst: diversity thrives the city. This is what Sharon Zukin calls "the hybrid city" (Zukin 1998, 825-7, 832-6).

2.3 Globalisation

Sharon Zukin (1998, 837) states that the urban diversity, the hybrid city, is incited by globalisation. The immense expansion and extension of global communications and world markets makes that ideas on politics, views on economy, characteristics of culture, habits and customs, information, knowledge, products, commodities and people spread easier and faster over the world than ever before. This spread of people, information, and products, makes that all places of the world are in contact with each other and influenced by each other. However, some state that the urban hybridity and diversity which is created by this globalisation, is the same in all cities throughout the world. In all cities all over the world are Chinese, Italian and fast food restaurants, listen people to the same music (through MTV), wear people the same cloths bought at international store chains like H&M, are people caught in the same social media networks like Facebook, and watch people the same soap operas on television. Globalisation creates one global homogeneous urban culture and one global homogeneous urban lifestyle (Appadurai 1996, 10-8; Zukin 1998, 837; Ching 2001, 293; Escobar 2001, 156-7,166; Hubbard 2006, 44; Pacione 2009, 678).

Nevertheless, the information and products spread over the world by globalisation are used differently at every place on the local level. As Appadurai (1996) states, every similarity hides more than one difference, and similarities and differences conceal one another indefinitely. Different societies appropriate the materials of globalisation differently. Local population uses the global in their own way and to their own advantage. Chinese fast food restaurants adapt the taste of their food to the taste of the local population, MTV broadcasts in Latin America different music than in Europe, and H&M sells cloths according to the local trends and local climate. This is called glocalisation: it is the outcome of the combination of global and local forces (Appadurai 1996, 10-8; Zukin 1998, 837; Ching 2001, 293; Escobar 2001, 156-7,166; Hubbard 2006, 44; Pacione 2009, 678).

Arjun Appadurai (1996) has created a theory that captures both the spread of people, information and products over the world by globalisation, and the use of it on the local level. He sees globalisation as a complex process that cannot be understood just as a centre-periphery model, nor as a push-pull model, as a surplus-deficit model, or as a consumer-producer model. It is far more complex, with inverse relations and disjunctures between economy, culture and politics. Appadurai sees globalisation as a framework, build up of five dimensions: ethnoscaples, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. Every dimension is as a landscape consisting of fluid, irregular shapes, that looks differently from every angle of vision by different actors, inflicted by historical, linguistic, and political contexts. All scapes are made up by flows that move around the world: ethnoscapes by people that migrate; technoscapes by the spread of technology, particularly by multinational corporations; financescapes by the flows of money; mediascapes by information and news that goes around the world; and ideoscapes are made up by political ideologies that move around the world (Appadurai 1996, 27-36).

The flows globalisation is built of once started with the movement of people, first across the region, then across the continent, later across the globe. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2004, 32) even states that globalisation and migration are twin subjects. The number of people migrating between different parts of the world is enormous and growing, despite the increasing political barriers that thwart people to migrate. More persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move. As international capital shifts its needs, as production and technology generate different needs, as nation-states shift their policies on refugee populations, these moving groups can never afford to let their imaginations rest too long, even if they wish to. The geographical distances over which migration takes place, vary enormously. Some people move within their own country, mainly from the rural areas to the city. Others move to neighbouring countries or to countries in the region and some even cross continents and oceans to the other side of the world. By moving around, people constitute the shifting world we live in: they affect the politics of (and between) regions and nations, their economies, and their cultures. The many flows of people and the variation of distances result in the formation of transnational migrant communities. The migrants create networks between their place of origin and their new place of settlement. These networks function as tools along which flows of information, products, as well as other people move around the globe, that influences both the home base and the destination: people send money to family back home, bring along their culture and start vending their traditional cloths or their typical food, start new religious communities, open up new trade routes, and so on (Appadurai 1996, 33-4; Dicken 2007, 447-9).

The huge flow of information and news around the world today is not just a result of the spread of people over the globe, it is also a result of the global communications revolution. The availability of The Internet for the major public and the step from *wired* to *wireless* (mobile telephones) are the main developments of the last decades. This revolution has mainly been made possible by the configuration of technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational. Technology moves at high speeds across various kinds of boundaries, including national borders. The odd distribution of technologies is increasingly driven by increasingly complex relationships among money flows, political possibilities, and the availability of both un- and highly skilled labour. However, multinational corporations play a huge part in this distribution. Many large enterprises operate in many different countries: their employees of different nationalities travel to departments or sister companies in different countries that provide different components of new technological configurations. Most multinationals operate in developed countries as well as in developing

countries. Corporations have several reasons to operate in both developed and developing countries. Once their sales market expands from developed to developing countries, it eventually will be advantageous to set up production facilities there. In the first place, because it reduces the distribution costs. In the second place, because production costs are much lower, mainly due to the lower wages and limited regulations. In the third place, the corporations can easily reach the markets in other neighbouring developing countries. This means that what used to be expensive advanced apparatus, like satellite television, computers and mobile telephones, is now available to a main public all over the world through which they can easily enter the global communications network and have access to the huge flow of information and news around the world (Appadurai 1996, 34; Hubbard 2006, 164-73; Dicken 2007, 115; Castells 2010, 367).

With the spread of people, technology and information, also ideas and ideologies cross the world. They are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it. At different places in the world, ideoscapes are organised around different keywords. Since the colonial periods, developing countries have been submerged by Western ideologies of the US and Europe. It began with Christianity that was brought to the colonies, and which has led to the majority of the population professing the Christian religion in Latin America today. Since the 1940s, the spread of Western ideologies was extended with the urge of the West to spread capitalism in order to prevent communism to expand. Later, the spread of Western ideologies was extended again, with amongst others democracy, freedom, and nation building. In the last decades of the twentieth century, in many Latin American countries, amongst others Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru, the authoritarian regimes were disposed under direct pressure from Western governments. Furthermore, the West has put these countries on the trajectory to freedom, democracy, and also capitalism (Appadurai 1996, 36; Gowan, Panitch and Shaw 2001; Levitsky and Way 2002, 59-60; Saul 2004; Veltmeyer 2005).

2.4 Globalisation, identity and urban youth

As a result of the cases, theories and concepts discussed in the introduction of this thesis and the theoretical chapter discussed so far, can be assumed that a relation might exist between (a) the formation of the identity of the youth living in Matagalpa, (b) the fact that they live in a relatively small city, and (c) globalisation that spreads information, products and people all over the world. This raises the question *What is the influence of globalisation on the formation of the identity of the urban youth of Matagalpa, Nicaragua?* This is the research question on which this research is based. The scheme below illustrates the relation between the main concepts the research and the research question are based on.



The core of the research is the influence of globalisation on the formation of the youth's identity, which is illustrated by the arrow. What makes this research distinctive from other researches on

globalisation, is that it focuses on a smaller city. The fact that the city is relatively small, might affect the influence of globalisation on the city and on its urban dwellers. It also might affect the influence of globalisation on the identity formation of the urban youth. Therefore is the core of the scheme located in a box that represents the urban context the research takes place in.

To be able to formulate an answer on the research question, ample information on the main concepts has to be gathered. In the first place must become clear in what urban environment the youth of Matagalpa lives, how the city developed, what kind of neighbourhoods the city has, which people live in the city, what facilities are available, and so on. In the second place becomes clear what lives the youth lives, what they do, what aspects the youth's identity consists of, what their identity is based on, what they consider important in their lives. The reason that first the urban context the youth lives in will be explored before the identity formation of the youth, is because knowledge on the circumstances the youth lives in provides a better understanding of their identity. In the third place, the influence of globalisation on the city of Matagalpa and on the lives of the urban youth will become clear. The collection of this information will be guided by three sub questions:

1. In what urban context lives the youth of Matagalpa?
2. What are the characteristics of the identity of the urban youth of Matagalpa?
3. How does globalisation affect the lives of the urban youth of Matagalpa?

After the discussion of the methodologies applied to gather information and data, the empirical chapters will give an answer on these three sub questions. In the end, the answers on the sub questions will lead to the answer on the research question.

3

METHODOLOGY

The empirical data for this research was gathered during a fieldwork period of five months, from April to August 2011, in the city of Matagalpa, Nicaragua. This chapter describes the methodology that was applied to gather the data. First, the research location and the research population will be described. Then, the methods applied during the field work are addressed. Finally, the validity and reliability of the methods and data will be discussed.

3.1 Research location and research population

The research was conducted in Matagalpa. Matagalpa is with its 120,000 inhabitants one of the larger cities of Nicaragua and is situated in the northern mountainous part of the country (see map 3.1). The city is surrounded by hills and crossed by the Río Grande (great river). The city is divided into 65 barrios (neighbourhoods). The poorer barrios are mainly located on the fringes of the city, on the slopes of the hills or on the river banks. The richer neighbourhoods are situated more centrally (see map 4.1). The city has quite some facilities, like the largest hospital of the region, schools and universities of different standards, libraries, internet cafés, two bus terminals with regional and national connexions, two markets, and several supermarkets (Alcaldía Municipal de Matagalpa 2004, 85; Alcaldía Municipal de Matagalpa n.d.).



Map 3.1 Matagalpa, Nicaragua (Mapas del Mundo)

The target group of this research is the urban youth of Matagalpa, which makes up the largest group of informants. The informants were mainly found by two ways of sampling: with the help of key informants and through snowball sampling. ADIC has been the most important key informant. Many informants were met during the education reinforcement sessions organised by ADIC in which the same group of youth participates twice a week. Others were met during workshops organised by ADIC and during activities organised by other organisations in which ADIC also participates. After getting acquainted with the youth at ADIC, I hung out with them informally in the streets, in one of the parks, and at the sports fields. They introduced me to friends and family of them who became informants too. Other informants were met just in the park, at the sports field, or at the cultural centre. Generally, I was there to meet informants I already met. Just by hanging around there, I also met other people who became informants.

Besides the youth, many other people provided valuable information. In the first place, the staff of ADIC. Their extensive knowledge and years of experience with the target group is a great source of information. Also some people that were not directly involved still contributed to this research just by telling me their own stories, like the Spanish teachers, members of the family I lived with, neighbours, taxi drivers, and salesmen. Their information helped me getting a broad view of the general context of this research, of Matagalpa and of Nicaragua, generally regarding topics like politics, culture, and economics.

3.2 Research methods

Various research methods were applied. With the different methods, different information was obtained, to gain a broad range of information and a complete overview of the research situation. This chapter describes each method separately.

Literature study

While preparing the research and writing the research proposal, literature on globalisation, urbanisation, identity, youth, Nicaragua and Matagalpa was studied. On the basis of this literature, the research was designed. When arriving in the field, some new relevant literature was offered by ADIC and by some of the first informants. New knowledge and insights gained by this literature led to additions to the topics to be observed and discussed with the informants.

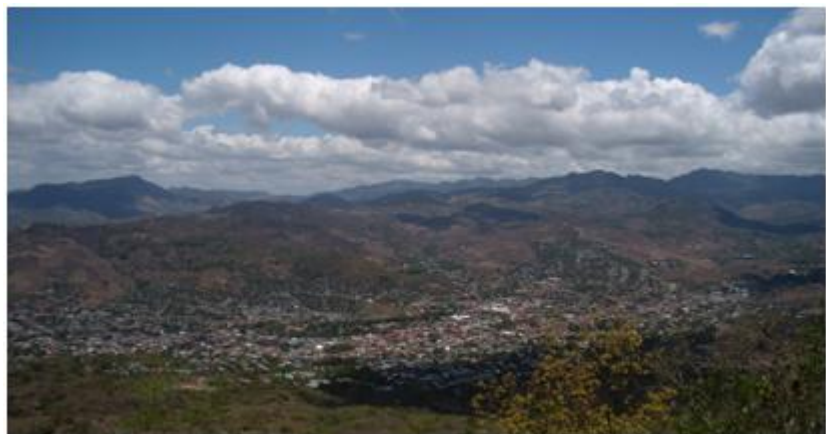
Participant observation

Participant observation was the main method applied during the field period. As much time as possible was spent with the urban youth of Matagalpa. During the education reinforcement sessions at ADIC, I helped the youth with their homework and assignments and I participated with them in the (external) activities. This gave the opportunity to talk to them, to see them acting, and to get to know them very well. Furthermore, I hung out with the youth during their spare time. I generally met them on the sports fields, in the parks, at the cultural centre, and just on the streets. By just being with them, chatting with them and observing them, much information was gained on their behaviour, their attitude, and their way of thinking.

Participant observation is considered the best suitable method to gain the necessary information for several reasons. Information was needed on the daily activities of the youth. The best way to gather this information is by coming along with the youth as much as possible. By getting to know the youth and their urban lives, the best and most valid information about their sense of identity and the influence of globalisation would be collected. An additional reason to apply participant observation is the fact that the researcher and the informants belong to the same age category. This makes it easier for the researcher and informants to become acquainted to each other and to trust each other, which is an important condition to get reliable answers of the informants and to gain valuable information.

Transect walks

Quite some transect walks were made with different informants. In the beginning of the fieldwork period, the walks had an exploratory character. I walked with the youths through different neighbourhoods, where they showed me around: which people live where, which facilities like schools and



Picture 3.1 Overview of Matagalpa

health centres are present, what the places are they hang out. Several times, we climbed up one of

the hills surrounding the city. From the top of the hills, it is possible to overlook the whole city. This provides a good overview and helps to orientate in the city (see picture 3.1). In the later stadium of the fieldwork, the transect walks had a more controlling character. By walking through the neighbourhoods, I could compare the information gathered earlier with the observations I did during these transect walks.

Mapping

To get an idea of the use of the city by the informants, they were asked to draw maps of the city, according to their own visions of and their own experiences in the city. The maps were drawn in small groups, by youth living in the same neighbourhood or close together. They were asked to indicate where their house was, in which parts of the city they come most, and which facilities they use. Afterwards, the map was presented and discussed to gain additional information. The maps were drawn during activities at the office of ADIC.

Activity profiles

Besides the maps, some of the informants were asked to keep up an activity profile, just of any random day. They wrote down every activity they did that day, from the moment they woke up to the moment they went to sleep. These profiles give a more profound insight in their daily routines, because they mentioned activities they normally do not consider worth mentioning while it is valuable information for the research. Some of the informants were just randomly asked to keep up an activity profile, others were asked because I thought that they lived a different life than the mainstream, and some because they were not that talkative but could provide interesting information.

Focus groups

When hanging out with informants in the park or on the sports field, often a group of youths was around. Generally, I was just chatting with one or two informants and observing the larger group. Sometimes, however, more people got involved in the conversation which at times lead to a group discussion. These discussions turned out to be good occasions to get a general picture of what society expects of the youth regarding their everyday life, religion, education, their behaviour, future, etcetera. When asking about these subjects, in first instance they always gave the socially desirable answers which everyone agreed on (because they were in a group, I assume). When the discussion shifted from the general level to the more individual level, differences became clear. These discussions also turned out to be a good occasion to verify earlier acquired observations or information, by proposing it as a hypothetical case to the informants and asking a reaction. The youths generally gave their straight opinions about these hypothetical cases that either confirmed or contradicted the former findings.

In-depth interviews

Towards the end of the field period, in-depth interviews were done with some of the informants. The aim of the in-depth interviews was to acquire additional or clarifying information on specific subjects. Some informants were interviewed because extra information about their personal situation was needed. Other informants were interviewed to provide additional information about more general subjects. The interviews were semi-structured by a topic-list. Since every interview was about different subjects, for every interview a specific topic list was drawn up. Despite the topic lists, had

every interview a conversational character to create a confidential atmosphere in which the informant felt at ease to tell his or her stories.

Informal conversations

The former paragraphs describe the more formal research methods that addressed mainly informants. Besides these formal methods (although generally executed in an informal setting), informal conversations were held with people that were not involved in the research. Just by living the daily life in the city of Matagalpa, I got into contact with random people like taxi drivers, salesmen, owners of internet cafés, teachers of the Spanish School, the family I rented a room of, and neighbours. Just by having small talk with these people, we sometimes got to talk about subjects that were interesting for this research, which led to valuable information. Furthermore, informal conversations with people that were somehow involved in the research sometimes also led to valuable information, like small talk with staff of ADIC, with staff of other organisations, or with parents of the youths that were involved in the research.

Triangulation

All in all, quite some research methods were applied to gather data. The use of different research methods has two purposes. The first is to obtain diverse information. With every method, different information is gathered. All the different information eventually provides a view complete as possible of the research situation. The second purpose is to verify the gathered information. Information obtained with one method is controlled by applying different methods to obtain information on the same subject. Chapter 3.3 will elaborate on this.

3.3 Validity, reliability and reflections on the research methodology

The validity and reliability of the gathered data have been influenced in several ways. In the first place by the way of interpretation. The information gathered by informal research methods is prone to misinterpretation, because the researcher was initially not familiar with the research location and its culture, and because of the cultural differences between the researcher's place of origin and the research location. Therefore, the gathered information was constantly verified in different ways. As described in the former paragraph, different methods were used and many different informants were involved. Stories heard and observations done were therefore discussed in different settings with other youth, the staff of ADIC, the Spanish teachers, and the members of the family I lived with. This created a better understanding and a better insight in the youth.

The sampling method influences the validity of the research. Most informants were found through snowball sampling. One of the most important starts of the snowball sampling was at ADIC. ADIC focuses its work on the poorer neighbourhoods of the city. The youth that participates in the activities organised by ADIC is thus mainly from these poorer neighbourhoods. Because a large part of the informants for this research was found via ADIC, a large part of the group of informants is youth from the poorer neighbourhoods. Richer youth of Matagalpa does participate in the research, but is compared to the poorer youth a bit underrepresented.

Also of influence has been the existing gender relations among the urban youth in Matagalpa. Boys live their lives more outside in the streets, the girls stay rather inside or at least close to their homes. As a consequence, when hanging around in the parks and on the sports fields, I mainly met boys. To meet girls, I had to look for them in their neighbourhoods. Most girls that are involved in the research, I met at the activities organised by ADIC or via these girls. Thereby are the

girls more timid and shy than the boys, which makes it a bit more difficult to approach them and to get them talking. However, once they trusted me, they provided very valuable information. As a result, more boys were involved in this research than girls.

Most boys have quite a macho character. This certainly influenced the way they treated me, as a girl, as a European girl. It took a while before they really trusted me and before they told me more extensive stories that led to more thorough information. In the beginning, they made their stories look beautiful and impressive. Later turned out that most of those stories were a lot more complicated. It does not mean that they did not tell the truth, they just left many aspects out of the story.

The results of this research are very time-bound, which influences the reliability of this thesis. The data was collected in a few months. Especially the data that stems from the information gathered directly from the youth, either by conversations or observations, is based on the spur of the moment the youth was living in at that time. As became clear in the theoretical chapter of this thesis, the youth is in a very dynamic phase in life that is characterised by change - amongst others a change of lifestyle, change of identities, and change of world vision. This means that the information gathered directly from the youth, only represents their opinion, lifestyle, or identity at the moment of collection. If this research was done one year before or one year later, different data and results and would have led to different conclusions.

A last influence was my position as researcher. The application of informal research methods and the fact that the researcher and most informants are of the same age category, highly influenced the relation between the researcher and the informants. Especially towards the end of the field period, the difference between the researcher and friend became very small. On the one hand, this mutual trust led to the acquirement of valuable information. On the other hand, the informants sometimes maybe did not realise they were talking to a researcher instead of a friend.

PORTRAYING THE YOUTH

Before proceeding with the empirical chapters, this “in between chapter” introduces the youth of Matagalpa. The information presented in the empirical chapters is mostly based on the observations of and conversations with the youth. This information is also presented as such, by giving explicit examples and quotes. When reading the empirical chapters with this concrete information, it is good to have a general idea already of the youth of Matagalpa, of their background, of the way they live their lives. To create this general idea, this chapter introduces five informants. These five informants are selected to represent the whole group of informants, because together they form a good representation of the larger group of informants.

The empirical chapters turn out that the influence of globalisation on the identity formation of the youth is quite different per person. The difference in influence depends on various factors. The selection of the five informants is based on the most obvious of these factors. The first is gender. Due to several reasons handle boys globalisation differently than girls. Therefore, both boys and girls are selected. A second factor is age. The younger youth and the older youth reacts differently on globalisation. So, the selected informants cover the whole range of ages: 13 years old, 16, 19, 25 and 27 years old. Besides gender and age, can a difference be made between the richer and the poorer youth. One informant can be classified as rich, two as quite poor, and two somewhere in between rich and poor. Lastly, the informants are selected on the basis of their level of education and occupation. The two youngest informants are in secondary school. One informant is enrolled in university and has a part time job. One informant has a full time job, the last informant is unemployed.

Another reason for selecting these informants to refer to when discussing the empirical data, is because I got a good insight in their lives, because I spent a lot of time with them or because they were relatively open and told me easily a lot about themselves. One by one, the five informants are presented in this chapter by describing basic information and main characteristics. The explicit examples and quotes used in the empirical chapters are all derived from these five young *Matagalpinos*.

Carlos

Carlos is a 13 year old boy. He has two older brothers, with whom he lives with his parents. They live in a neighbourhood on the foot of one of the hills surrounding the city. He often stays with his grandmother though, who lives closer to his school, ADIC, and the soccer field. Also, most of his friends live here. He is in the first grade of secondary school. He takes classes in the morning. In the afternoon, he makes his homework. Twice a week, he comes to the educational reinforcement sessions of ADIC. He is part of the youth group of ADIC and participates in most activities and *talleres* organised for them. He has no standard chore in the household, not for his mother nor for his grandmother. Usually, they ask him to do some grocery shopping, to sweep the floor, or to wash the dishes. But not that often. Mainly because he is not that often home. Most of his spare time he spends outside on the streets, in the park, and on the sports fields. He is part of a futsal soccer team, the team of the neighbourhood where his grandmother lives. Besides playing futsal, he just hangs out the sports field, to chat with friends and to play some sports.

Ana

Ana is a 16 year old girl. She lives in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city, on the slope of a hill. She lives with her mother and younger brother and sister. She is in secondary school. She loves to go to school. She takes classes in the afternoon. In the morning, she helps her mother in the household, mainly with cleaning and grocery shopping. Several days a week, she does the laundry. When she has time left, she makes her homework. Two mornings a week, she comes to the educational reinforcement sessions at ADIC. She also participates in the activities and *talleres* organised for the youth. In the evenings, she usually makes homework. Most weekends, she goes to church. She is also part of a church group. They meet once a week to read the bible and to pray together. What she likes most in her spare time though, is to spend time with friends. They chat, listen to music, and sometimes they have a magazine they read together. She mainly sees her friends when walking to school, and when doing laundry at the communal washing place (she does not have running water at home).

María

María is 19 years old. She is the youngest of twelve. She lives with her mother, three brothers, and two nephews. Almost every night other brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews stay over. Their house is always full of life. She lives in one of the poorer neighbourhoods of the city, on a slope of one of the hills. Most of her brothers and sisters live in Matagalpa. Two sisters live in Guatemala. Her father died when she was three years old. She cannot remember him.

She just finished secondary school. She tried to apply for the public university in the city, but she failed the matriculation exams. She would like to study accountancy. Now, her main occupation is the household. She goes to the market, she cooks, she cleans, and she takes care of her nephews. Sometimes, she sells meals she cooks at the market and the bus terminal. Almost every year, her mother goes to Guatemala to visit her daughters for some weeks. Then, María is responsible for the entire household.

María always stays close to home. She sometimes meets with friend in the streets, but never in other neighbourhoods. Her mother does not allow her to go to other parts of the city alone, without her or one of her brothers. She says that it is not safe for young girls to hang out on the streets, mainly because of all the temptations like unethical music, alcohol, drugs, and boys. A few months after she graduated, she got pregnant. Without being married, without being in a serious relationship. Her mother is very angry at her, and very disappointed in her. María has accepted her destiny and realises that it will be hard to study and work the coming years.

Inéz

Inéz is 25 years old. She has a younger sister. They both live with their parents, in one of the better neighbourhoods of the city. Her family is relatively rich. Her father is a politician and has been active in local as well as regional politics. Her family supports a liberal political party.

Inéz is a teacher and she works for an NGO. She spends a lot of time working. In the evenings she usually prepares classes, in the weekends she often organises activities for the NGO. A part of the money she earns, she contributes to the household mainly by buying food or other things for the family. Most of the money she can keep for herself. She spends her money on books, cloths, and credit for her mobile phone. She does not really have chores in the household. Her family has an

*empleada*³ who works six days a week doing most work in the house. Inéz likes to cook. If she cooks, it is on Sundays. The other days of the week she does not have much time. She also washes her own cloths as much as she can, because she does not really like the idea of someone else doing that.

When she is not working, she loves to hang out with friends. She does not really like to go to cafés. Sometimes, she goes to the cultural centre. But she prefers to meet with friends just at home, to listen music, to watch movies, and to make a lot of fun.

Moisés

Moisés is 27 years old. He is the youngest of thirteen brothers and sisters. Both his parents died. He lives with one of his sisters, in one of the neighbourhoods on the outer fringes of the city. His sister is married and has two children. An older brother and sister also live in the same house, as well as some nephews and nieces. Some of his brothers and sisters live in Matagalpa, others live in Costa Rica and Guatemala.

He is in university, studying economics. He studies a lot, all spare time he has. In the first place because he is really interested in it. He reads a lot, searches for information on the internet, and he talks about his studies all the time. He likes to discuss and to hear the opinions of others, especially on themes he has not formed an own clear opinion on yet. In the second place, he studies a lot because he wants to do it right. He is one of the few of his family who got the opportunity to study. Therefore, he feels that he owes it to his family, to get the maximum out of his studies and graduate with high grades. He is very grateful, to God and to his family, that he got the opportunity to study.

He generally takes evening classes and the classes on Saturdays. During the week, he works as a carpenter. The money he earns, he spends on his studies, to pay for the classes and the exams, and school supplies like books and notebooks. He also contributes to the household, mainly by buying gas, rice and beans. The rest of his money he spends on personal expenses like cloths and the internet café.

Besides studying and working, he spends quite some time in activities for the political party Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). He participates in activities organised by the local department of the party, as well as by the youth department of the party, like meetings and discussion evenings. He also helps campaigning, mainly with painting lamp posts and pasting posters.

³ Maid or charlady

URBAN CONTEXT OF MATAGALPA

The youth that participates in this research lives in urban Matagalpa. The fact that they live in the city, and not on the country side, has a huge influence on their lives. This chapter finds out what that influence is by answering the sub question *In what urban context lives the youth of Matagalpa?*

Matagalpa

Matagalpa is with its 120,000 inhabitants one of the larger cities of Nicaragua, though clearly much smaller than the country's capital Managua with 2.5 million inhabitants. It is the capital of the department Matagalpa, situated in the northern part of the country, the *Región Norte Central*. Where Nicaragua's other larger cities are located relatively close to each other, is Matagalpa more part of the periphery. It is by far the largest city in the region though, and therefore fulfils an important role regarding amongst others regional governance and regional economics. The *Región Norte Central* is a mountainous region with several volcanoes. The lower areas of the region know a humid tropical climate, which tempers by rising to higher altitudes. The combination of the mountains and the climate create perfect circumstances for coffee production around Matagalpa. Matagalpa produces about one third of the total Nicaraguan coffee production, which makes it the most important economic activity in the region (Arrechavala, Espinoza and Lobato 2005, 13-6, 150-66).

The unemployment rate in Matagalpa is high, more than 40 per cent. Most of the people that do not have an official job, make some money informally. In the city of Matagalpa, most people work in the retail trade, in the food sector, in restaurants. Besides, a large share works in the community service sector. Twelve per cent of the urban population of Matagalpa is illiterate. The national institute of information on development, INIDE, indicates that 35.6 per cent of the population of Matagalpa is not poor, that 27.3 per cent is not extremely poor, and that 37.1 per cent of the *Matagalpinos* is extremely poor (INIDE 2005).

Rural-urban migration

When the Spaniards reached the region of Matagalpa, Matagalpa was still a small settlement. In 1862 it was officially assigned as a city. Since the 1950s, the number of inhabitants is increasing enormously. This increase started with the growth of the coffee sector from the 1950s on. More and more coffee was produced in the mountainous region of Matagalpa, and more and more coffee was processed and traded around the city of Matagalpa. The growth of the coffee sector goes synchronically with the growth of the commercial and industrial sector. The growth of these sectors generated a lot of work in the urban region, which lured a lot of people from the country side to the city of Matagalpa. Where from the 1950s till the 1970s the search for an income was the main reason to come to the city, during the civil war of the 1980s people came from the rural areas to Matagalpa looking for security and safety. From the 1990s, people had many more reasons to come to the city. In the first place, many people who fled the region during the war, came back. Instead of going back to the countryside, they started their new lives in the city of Matagalpa. A second reason is a crisis in the coffee sector that affected many families living in the rural areas of Matagalpa that depended on this sector. The prices of coffee declined dramatically in a short time. The small coffee farmers lost

their incomes immediately, but the bigger farmers also went through very hard times. The government of Nicaragua did not prioritise the agricultural sector, and hardly made any investment in the rural areas of the country. When in a short time many Nicaraguan banks went bankrupt, all back-ups were lost. So, for many people working in the coffee sector it became almost impossible to make enough money to support their families. In the search for an alternative income, the small farmers brought their families to the city. A third reason for people to move from the rural to the urban areas is a relatively broad range of facilities available in the city, like schools, health care centres and hospitals, shops, and access to information through newspapers, television and lately also the internet. People hope that the move to the city will improve the quality of their lives and will increase the chances on a better future for their children (Alcaldía Municipal de Matagalpa 2004, 85-88; Flores et al 2002, 57-62).

Coping with population increase

So, in just a few decades, the number of inhabitants of Matagalpa increased dramatically, from 50,000 in 1950 to almost 120,000 in 2012. For the city of Matagalpa, it is a huge challenge to cope with such an inflow of immigrants. The city has never had the adequate instruments to create an orderly and safe city: the city has always lacked economic resources, communal ground has always been limited available and urban knowledge and expertise have always been inadequate. The migrants have no other place to settle than in the outskirts of the city, outside the scope of the government. This has stimulated the subdivision of private land and led to an unorganised anarchical land restructuring. Thereby, it is impossible for the government to provide public services like a sewage system, electricity, and police surveillance in these informal settlements in the outskirts of the city (Alcaldía Municipal de Matagalpa 2004, 85; Alcaldía Municipal de Matagalpa n.d.; INIDE n.d.-b). Almost 20 per cent of the houses in Matagalpa is considered as inadequate and cannot always provide enough protection against climate and weather. About a same percentage of the houses is not connected to running water and almost 5 per cent is not connected to electricity. The garbage is not collected at 16 per cent of the houses. In almost 30 per cent of the houses people sleep with at least four other persons in the same room, and in more than 30 per cent people cook on firewood (INIDE n.d.). Almost 70 per cent of the roads in the city is unpaved. Many roads are in poor condition, the paved as well as the unpaved roads. Most of these bad roads are to be found in the poorer neighbourhoods on the fringes of the city. However, also the three main inter municipal roads that cross the city are in a very poor shape, as well as quite some other roads in the better neighbourhoods of the city. Most of the roads on the slopes of the hills, which are generally not paved, are not accessible by vehicles and thus nor by public transport (Alcaldía Municipal de Matagalpa 2004, 123).

The government is thus not able to provide these basic facilities to all its inhabitants. The new inhabitants are not able to complement the lack of basic facilities themselves, because they lack proper knowledge, proper education, they do not have enough money nor a job to make enough money. Mainly the people that come from the countryside without having family or friends living in the city of Matagalpa, end up building their own houses of found or cheap material in the outskirts or just outside the city. Although they live in the urban area now, it is still quite far from the urban facilities, like employment and commerce. In these neighbourhoods, public transport is generally quite limited because of the conditions of the road, and quite expensive because of the large distances from the neighbourhood to the city centre or one of the markets.

The challenge to cope with the huge inflow of immigrants is amplified by the city's natural barriers that restrict its growth. The city is surrounded by mountains. Living on the slopes of these mountains is impossible. They become waterfalls during the raining season and some slopes are simply too steep to build houses on. Rivers cross the valleys between the mountains, the Río Grande crosses the city from north to south. During the raining season these rivers flood heavily, which makes living close to the rivers impossible. Besides the mountain slopes and rivers, are the clefts and basins also places that are impossible to live on. For some people do these natural barriers not necessarily function as restrictions though. When there is no place anymore to build houses within the natural barriers of the city, people have no other option than finding a place on or outside these barriers. Thus, people do live on the slopes of the mountains and on the riverbanks, despite the risks (Alcaldía Municipal de Matagalpa 2004, 39-40; INETER 1999, 4-5).

The risks became reality when the hurricane Mitch passed the region in 1998. In the ten days the hurricane passed, almost 700mm rain fell around Matagalpa (where 300mm of precipitation is the average for the whole month). All rivers flooded, including the Río Grande that crosses the entire city, and the hurricane caused almost 300 landslides in the region. The storms, rains and landslides damaged more than 3200 houses and destroyed over 4500 houses. Almost 200,000 people in the region of Matagalpa were affected by the hurricane and 123 people died. In the city of Matagalpa, most victims and casualties were living on the slopes of the mountains and close to the rivers. When reconstructing the city, the neighbourhood El Mirador (also called Sabadell, after the Spanish city that has twinning arrangements with Matagalpa and that has contributed enormously in the rebuilding of the neighbourhood) was completely designed for the families that lost their homes. Because there was no space anymore within the natural barriers that surround the city of Matagalpa to construct the new neighbourhood safely, it was built on the other side of one of the northern mountains (Canon et al 2001, 11-13; IDB 1999; Tomlinson 2006, 1).

Dual city

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, one of the consequences of urbanisation is that cities are characterised by diversity. This diversity is often based on duality (the formal and the informal, the legal and the illegal, the planned and the unplanned, the rich and the poor) which can lead to the existence of a 'dual city'. To a certain extent, this is also the case in Matagalpa.

The difference between the rich and the poor in Matagalpa is quite clear and noticeable from the outside in several respects, like the kind of houses people live in, the kind of profession people practise, the kind of clothing people wear, the kind of transportation people use.⁴ It can also be noticed by looking at the different neighbourhoods. The Nicaraguan National Institute for Development Information (INIDE) did this by creating a map that indicates the level of poverty of every neighbourhood of Matagalpa (map 5.1). The map distinguishes four poverty levels: severe poverty (purple), high poverty (red), average poverty (green), and low poverty (yellow). In

⁴ The difference between rich and poor is obvious in Matagalpa. However, when travelling as a tourist through other parts of the country, I got the feeling that the gap between rich and poor is much bigger in some places, like Granada and Managua. I got the feeling that the nicest houses are much nicer and that the slummiest houses are much more slummy than in Matagalpa; that the prosperous neighbourhoods have much more facilities and that the poorest neighbourhoods have even less facilities than the ones in Matagalpa; that the best facilities are even better and that the worst facilities are even worse than in Matagalpa. Thus, the rich-poor duality is definitely present in Matagalpa, although not to that extreme extents as in cities like Granada and Managua.

Matagalpa, of the total 65 barrios, 12 are classified in the level of severe poverty, 14 in the level high poverty, 19 in average, and 20 in the level of low incidence of poverty.



Map 5.1 Poverty map of urban Matagalpa by neighbourhood (INIDE 2008, 39)

The poverty level of every neighbourhood is measured on the basis of five indicators. The first is the population density. In the poorer neighbourhoods of Matagalpa is the population density generally higher, because the houses are build closer together and because more people live together in one house. The second is adequate housing, which refers to the materials the houses are build of. In the neighbourhoods with a low poverty level are the houses build of bricks, in the neighbourhoods with a higher poverty level they are made of wood, plastic, and other collected material. The third indicator is the services the neighbourhood offers its inhabitants, like connection to electricity, running water and sewage systems. The fourth is the level of education of the neighbourhood offers as well as the level of education of its inhabitants. The last indicator that measures the poverty level of the neighbourhood is the extent to which the household depends on the main breadwinner (INIDE 2008, 27-8, 39).

The difference between rich and poor leads to another urban duality: formal versus informal. This duality is most clear on neighbourhood level. The neighbourhoods that know lower levels of poverty can be characterised as formal, legal, and planned. The inhabitants have bought the houses they live in, or they pay rent. The houses are placed orderly along the streets, the streets – which are

generally paved – are arranged in a grid pattern. The local government is present by organising the collection of garbage and the surveillance of the police in the neighbourhood. Conversely, the neighbourhoods in the outskirts of the city are generally informal settlements where people build their houses themselves without buying or renting the plot they live on. People just build their house wherever some suitable place is available. There is no plan to stick to or a planner to listen to. These settlements and neighbourhoods are illegal and people live there illegally. However, the government is not able to take action against the informal settlements because it does not have the adequate resources to provide the necessary solutions. Because the informal settlements are located on a relative far distance from amongst others the shops and markets in the more centrally located districts of the city, an informal economy emerges within these neighbourhoods. People sell products and services from their own houses or on the streets.

The urban diversity discussed so far is quite visible and noticeable, just by walking through the city. However, not all aspects of diversity are immediately visible, but do have a great influence on the lives of the urban dwellers of Matagalpa. The two examples that have most influence are probably religion and politics. Generally, it is not noticeable from the outside which religion someone adheres to, except for some tattoos or necklaces with religious meaning. Most people in Matagalpa are religious. According to the figures of the INIDE is almost 60 per cent of the Nicaraguans (and of the Matagalpinos) catholic, about 20 per cent evangelistic, and about 15 per cent is not religious (INIDE 2005, 26-7). Despite that it is not visible if someone is religious or which religion one adheres to, when getting to know someone a little bit, it becomes clear quite quickly because of small comments people make or an opinion they give. People know exactly from each other which religion they adhere to. Although people show respect to each other in public, at the same time they do despise each other because of their different customs and habits (whether or not in the form of a joke). This dualism that characterises the way Matagalpinos adhere to religion, is also typical for the way people adhere to politics. Two political movements predominate: Sandinistic parties and the liberal parties. As with religion, it is not very obvious from the outside what someone's political preference is, apart from some flags people have at their houses or T-shirts people wear. However, everyone knows exactly what others vote. Also, people show respect to each other in public and at the same time despise each other because of the different opinions.

Use of the city

Although Matagalpa is not a mega city nor a big city, the city is that large that the youth does not come at all parts of the city. They just use a specific part. A clear difference exists between boys and girls in the way they use the city. The boys use a larger part of the city than the girls. The girls stay close to home. They just leave the neighbourhood if necessary, to go to school or to the market for example. Most other activities, they can do just near their houses, like their chores in the household, making homework, and meeting with friends. Another reason why the girls generally stay close to their homes is that the girls are protected by their parents, like María. Her mother thinks that in the streets are too many temptations. "My mother is afraid that I'll get alcohol or drugs offered in the streets, and, worst of all, that I'll meet boys." The boys leave their neighbourhood more often than the girls. In the first place to go to school or work, just like the girls. Besides, they spend a lot of time on the sports fields. It is the place where they meet with friends and where they play or watch sports. Some boys also go to the *cibers* to use the internet. When there is a *ciber* in their neighbourhood, they go there. Otherwise, they use a *ciber* that is in neighbourhood nearby or one on their route from home to school or work.

Some youth feel that they cannot access just every place in the city. They indicate some neighbourhoods as dangerous. They think that it is not safe to go there, especially not alone or at night. They base this feeling on the general image of the neighbourhood and on stories they heard. Some have experienced an unpleasant situation themselves, like a fight or a robbery. Other places in the city they do not enter, because they feel that they do not belong there, are some bars where the richer people come, shops where the products seem too expensive to buy, and churches that preach another religion. There are also some neighbourhoods the youth does not feel comfortable in, because they do not like the people that live there. Ana, for example, is friends with some boys from school, that live in a neighbourhood between her school and home. She used to spend quite some time with these boys in their neighbourhood. Until the girls living there started telling rumours about her. "Now, I'm known as a slut there. When I walk through that neighbourhood, I know people start talking about me. The girls have passed around bad stories about me, in the neighbourhood and at school. So, now I never go there anymore."

Most youth is happy to live in the city instead of the countryside. Many have family living in the rural areas. They know what life is like there, which makes them realise that living in the city has a lot of advantages. The youth that participates in this research sees the possibility to finish secondary school as the most important advantage of living in the city. They see their cousins dropping out of school because they reach the highest level offered at that school, or because they just start working to earn money. Another advantage of living in the city is the possibility to watch television, and especially cable television. "I would get so bored if we hadn't television. Especially in the evenings, when my mother doesn't allow me to be outside. What would you do?" Carlos says. Maritza does not think that her peers living in the country side miss a lot, without television or cable television. "Maybe the news. But they don't really care about the news there. All the other programs are good entertainment, but that's all." What she would miss mostly, if she lived in the country side, is a lot of friends nearby. "The villages are pretty small, so you cannot have a lot of friends there. You are always with the same people, even if you don't like them."

Answering the sub question: In what urban context lives the youth of urban Matagalpa?

Matagalpa is one of the larger cities of Nicaragua, although much smaller than the country's capital. The youth of Matagalpa lives in a city that is increasing in population as well as in surface. The city counts numerous facilities, although not all urban dwellers can make use of the facilities, because they still live too far away, lack knowledge, or lack money. Some facilities, like sewage systems and garbage collection, are simply not available for all inhabitants because the municipality fails to offer them on a larger scale. The natural surroundings of the city with its mountains, rivers, clefts and basins, make quite some places of the city quite dangerous to live in. However, many people have no other choice than living there, which makes them vulnerable to the natural disasters, like heavy rains or hurricanes, that hit the city every now and then. Considering society can Matagalpa be characterised as diverse, but also as a dual city, mainly regarding rich versus poor, formal versus informal, catholic versus evangelist, and liberal versus Sandinistic. The youth just uses a specific part of the city. Most important for them is home, and school or work. Girls are specifically focussed on the neighbourhood they live in. The boys spend more time outside the neighbourhood, mainly on the sports fields.

IDENTITY FORMATION

In Matagalpa, the youth marks the city. The number of young people living in the urban area is huge. About 70 per cent of the population of Matagalpa is younger than 30 years old, about 43 per cent is between the age of 10 and 30 (INIDE 2005, 18). This chapter will find out how these youths live their lives and how their identities are formed. Eventually the second sub question – How can the urban youth of Matagalpa be identified? – will be answered.

Age: from childhood to adulthood

According to the Nicaraguan constitution, someone is considered a child when being younger than 13 years old and youth when being between the age of 13 and 18 (Corte Suprema 1998, 2). However, it has turned out to be quite hard to determine one fixed age category that comprises youth as a target group, since the term youth is pretty changeable. The context determines if someone is regarded as youth, a child, or an adult.

The youngest informant participating in this research is 13 years old. He participates in the activities ADIC organises for the youth. The younger participants of this research do consider themselves as youth at certain moments. Especially when they have to do a job for their parents, when they contribute some money to the income of the household, or when they are assigned the responsibility over younger brothers or sisters. However, most of the time, they consider themselves a child, because often they are the youngest, for example at the activities of ADIC organised for the youth or at their school (since they are in the lowest classes of secondary school). But also because they love to play around, and sometimes can be annoying and disobedient. Carlos explained to me during a workshop about leadership: “Right now, I feel like a young adult because we are dealing with serious themes here that I have to learn. But when I am at home, I often act like a child, because I come home too late, I fight with my brother, and tease my little cousin. Thus my mom often has to get angry at me.”

One of the most heard arguments the informants give as a reason why they feel like an adolescent is because they are in secondary school. When you are in secondary school, it means that you are not in primary school anymore. When you are in primary school, you are a child. Going to secondary school is a first step towards maturity. Ana tells me why: “In secondary school, you learn very important things that you have to remember the rest of your life. Like what we learn about politics and the elections, and what we learn about economics and paying taxes for example. These are very serious subjects. When you are still a child, you would never understand these subjects. Therefore, I don’t feel like a child anymore.” Some of the participants that are considered youth in this research are still in primary school. However, they all take evening classes that are especially designed for the older adolescents and adults.

An argument that many girls mention is the change of their body that makes them feel like an adolescent instead of a child. When their body changes into a woman, they have to act like a woman also. The girls feel that they cannot play around anymore. People then ask them why the young ladies behave like little girls. Whether they want it or not, the girls are adolescents and people expect them to behave like adolescents. In addition, as soon as their body starts changing, men and

boys start whistling at the girls on the streets. This makes them feel like they are becoming a woman as well.

The oldest informant is 27 years old and is a student at the university. He calls himself “*un adolescente mayor*”⁵. He finds himself still an adolescent, because he is a rebel to authority, towards politics and towards the university. He feels grown-up because he is seriously studying and working on his future, and because he works a lot and contributes substantially to the income of the household. He does not feel like a real adult yet, because he is still studying, and because he is not married and does not have his own family.

So, the age of the youth does not only vary considerably, also their own feeling of being young or old varies considerably. They are thrown back and forth between those two extremes, which mixes up their different identities. Every now and then, some of the boys and girls that participate in this research get confused by this, what Erikson (1968) calls a youth crisis. Most of them seem to experience this when they are at home. They all live with their parents or fosters and highly depend on them. The parents take care of their children. However, when they grow older, their parents give them more responsibilities and they become more and more important for the household. Still, their parents control if they did their chores right and the youth has to justify themselves to their parents. Such a situation experiences Ana. Since she is 16 years old, she completely depends on her parents. One of her chores in the household is doing the laundry. She has to make sure that she and her brother and sister wear a clean uniform to school so that the teacher will not have to reprimand them. But because she does not really like to wash the cloths, she is sometimes a bit careless which makes her mother angry.

María experiences a similar situation. Although she is one of the youngest daughters, she is the only daughter still living at home. Therefore, her mother gave her many responsibilities in the household. Most important responsibilities according to María herself are cooking and taking care of her two ten-year-old nephews who also live with them. While her mother requires important responsibilities of her, at the same time she treats María as an irresponsible child. Because she got pregnant. “Ok, I know I have done something wrong. That I have been irresponsible and that I will have to live with the consequences the rest of my life. Yes, it will be hard, but not impossible. But if she thinks that I’m irresponsible, then why does she let me take care of the two boys?” These two extremes of feeling responsible and irresponsible at the same time confuses and frustrates her.

The phase of adolescence they are all caught in now, eventually leads them to adulthood. Although this is a phase that takes quite some years, some one-off occasions mark an abrupt transition to adulthood. One such occasion many informants mark as important is the moment they were or will be able to vote for the first time. Politics is omnipresent in the Nicaraguan society, especially in the months before the presidential elections. From a very young age, the children get in touch with politics: when they hear people talking about it at home, by commercials on the radio or television, and outside on the billboards and by the cars that drive through the streets with huge speakers chanting propaganda of one of the political parties. From the age of 16, Nicaraguans have the right to vote. The youth that already had the opportunity to vote during presidential elections, experienced it as a great responsibility and felt mature. The ones that have never voted yet, are looking forward to do so. As María told me: “It would be great to vote. Then, my voice really counts for something very important.” It should be noted however, that politics was very much alive during the field work, since it took place in the months before the presidential elections of November 2011.

⁵ an older adolescent

Some of the older informants that already had the opportunity to vote, are quite sceptical about the elections though. Some doubt if they would vote for the presidential elections, because they do not really trust anyone of the candidates. They think that they are populists who can never make true the promises they make during the campaigns for the elections. Eventually most of them did vote in November 2011, because they realise that it is a privilege to have the right to vote and that they cannot ignore this privilege.

Another occasion that marks a new phase in their life and which brings the youth a step closer to adulthood, is the fifteenth birthday. This “quinceañera” is particularly for the girls a special occasion. A friend of Moisés explains to me that his mother once told him that it is a ritual that stems from colonial times. With the ceremony, the family announces that their daughter reached the fertile age, that she now is a young woman, a virgin, and ready to get married. Although this meaning of the quinceañera faded away over the ages, the ceremony is still important and celebrated in many families and the girls still experience this “as a switch from a *niña* to a *señorita*” as Ana says. Graduating from secondary school is also an important occasion that brings them towards adulthood. Secondary school is concluded with a graduation ceremony, in which the pupils as well as their family and friends put on their finest cloths and bring all their cameras, and make this one of their most memorable days in their lives. After secondary school, some continue with vocational education or go to university but most will be looking for a job.

When asking the youth what they perceive as being an adult, they mainly answered getting married and having children. Some of the youth that participate in this research do have a child already. None of them feels really grown up though, mainly because they are not married and because they are not able to take care of their child by themselves yet.

Social circumstances of youth of Matagalpa

The youths that participate in this research consider themselves originating from the middle and lower social classes. They mainly base this feeling on the job of their parents and on the neighbourhood they live in. All informants live with their parents or fosters. For most this is the only option and will be the only option for the coming years. When asking the question if they could see themselves living in their own house, most laughed and answered that that is something for the far future. Both boys and girls responded that the moment to leave the parental house is when they will get married and will have children. Some think that even then they might stay with their parents, because they might not have the money to rent or buy their own place, or to take care of their parents when they will grow older. Some of the youth that is enrolled in university are thinking of doing a masters in either Managua or León. When doing so, one of the boys will probably stay a few days a week with family in Managua. The others will commute between Matagalpa and Managua or León, which is about 2 or 3 hours by bus.

A few boys and girls that participated in this research are still in primary school. Most youth is in secondary school, some of the youth is enrolled in university or vocational education. Several informants have a full time job or are looking for work. Except for the youth that has a full time job, all youth involved in this research are financially dependent on their parents, fosters, or family. Several participants have a part time job, in a carpentry, a bakery, in a jeans factory, or doing seasonal work at coffee plantations. Some of the money they earn, they use for personal expenses like cloths. Most of their income, however, they contribute to the household.

The youth that participates in this research mainly lives in the neighbourhoods that are labelled as severely poor and highly poor by INIDE (see map 5.1). These are the neighbourhoods that

lack the main basic facilities like proper housing, running water, garbage collection, public transport, and paved roads. Quite some youths lack running water at their houses. Some use a communal water tap point, others fetch water from the river. Most girls have the task within the household to do the laundry. When they do not have running water at home, they wash the cloths at a communal water point or in the river. They usually do so with friends, because that is more fun: they chat, gossip, and laugh while doing their chore. They also go there together for their own safety, since sometimes men pass by the wash places and harass the girls. Another chore of the girls is cooking. Some households cook on gas from a gas cylinder. Many households cook on firewood or on the shells of coffee beans. Since the houses often do not have a garden or yard, they have to cook inside the house which effects the health of all members of the family (although no one complained about that). The youth does not often use public transport, because their neighbourhood is not connected to public transport and because it is too expensive. Therefore, they mainly walk, despite the distance, time, or weather.

Almost all youth involved in this research is enrolled in school or university. The Nicaraguan school system is organised in such a way that pupils or students only take part time classes: either in the morning, the afternoon, or in the evening. The other part of the day, the youth thus has “spare time”. In the first place, the youth uses this time to make homework or to study. Besides homework, the girls help their parents or fosters in the household, wherever needed: cooking, doing laundry, cleaning, going to the market, taking care of younger brothers and sisters. When they are done with their daily chores, the girls hang out around their house. Inside, they watch some television. Outside, they chat with family or friends. The boys also help in the household, mainly when the father or any other grown up man is absent in the household. Besides, almost all boys like to hang out on the sports field. Some just hang out and chat with friend. Others like to play soccer, basketball or baseball. When they stay inside, they like to watch television and movies.

Youth and change

As made clear before, a feature that characterises youth is change. The changes the youth go through with the development of their body and mind as they grow older and pass classes at school have already been addressed. Besides these clear noticeable changes of the self, is the world around them also changing. There is a clear difference in the way the younger youth and the older youth interpret changing the world. The younger ones generally talk of changing *their* world while the older talk about changing *the* world.

The younger youth seems somewhat resigned when it comes to creating change, mainly when it comes to the bigger society. They do not really see it as their responsibility, yet. At ADIC, a taller was organised to identify the changes the youth would like to see in their neighbourhood, which resulted in a list of several necessities and demands. Most mentioned were connections to running water and the sewage system, reconstructions of the roads with pavements and gutters, street lightning, and the reconstruction of the public sports fields. The youth did not have the intention to try to improve these nor other things themselves. According to them, this is the responsibility of the municipal government.

These younger youths do wish to change the living circumstances of their family though. That is a change they want to realize themselves. They all want to do so by finishing their school and getting a job. Some are convinced that they eventually will be able to change the lives of their family members. Others have some doubts. They say that they will do the best they can, but it will be hard.

The older youth also wants to effect improvements in the living circumstances of their family. However, many older youths are also concerned about the society. Quite some informants do voluntary work at local NGOs (although most of them quite irregularly, since they do not have a lot of time). Some are involved in political parties. Moisés for example, is active for the socialistic Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). He has helped painting propaganda for his party on buildings and public objects (like lampposts), and with capacity building projects. Despite he supports the vision of the party, he does not completely agree with the working method of the party which is according to him at times quite immoral. So, now and then, he takes a bit distance from the party. However, he seriously thinks that this party is improving the country. Therefore, he keeps on supporting the FSLN. Two other students are active in student movements. They try to improve the rights of the students and try to fight against the maladministration of the university. They also bring out a student magazine and broadcast a programme on the local radio.

Self-identity

The process of getting older, of developing themselves, and of going through changes, makes the youth start creating their own identity. They base their identity in the first place on a set of identity markers, which are generally age, gender, religion, neighbourhood, and occupation. Although age is determining what the youngsters do and what their responsibilities are, this still highly depends on the context, something Ana experiences constantly. Like most girls of her age, one of her main tasks in the household is to do the laundry, which she hates. When she complains about it or when she rushes through it, her mother gets angry and sometimes even punishes her. At the same time, her age makes that she has to take care of her younger brother and sister and make sure that they do their homework and their tasks in the household. The context thus determines that because of her age, the one moment she is being controlled and punished and that at another moment she is controlling and punishing others.

Gender mainly determines what chores the youth has in the household and what they do in their spare time. The boys do the tougher chores in the house, like carrying the gas cylinder or repairing the roof. The boys spend a lot of spare time outside the house, in the park or at the sports field. They hang out with friends, and play soccer or baseball. When they have some money, they play videogames in a play hall. Some of the older boys go to a bar at night. The girls help their mothers or older sisters in the household, mainly with washing clothes, cooking, and taking care of younger brothers and sisters. In their spare time, the girls stay closer to their homes than the boys. They hang out in the street or at the communal water point, chatting with friends or families. Some of them sometimes also go to the park or the sports field, but not often. Gender also determines what their parents allow their sons and daughters to do. The boys are much more free than the girls are, which amongst others is shown by the fact that girls stay closer to home than boys.

Religion plays an important role in the lives of most of the youth in Matagalpa. A majority of the youth is catholic, a minority is evangelistic. Most of them practice their religion by praying, reading the bible and going to church. Some do so on a regular basis, others a little less regular. There seem to be two main reasons why religion is important for the youth. The first is that it guides them through difficult periods. It gives them the strength to face the problems, it sometimes provides a reason why things happen, and it gives them hope for the future. The second reason is that religion provides them guidelines how to live their lives, mainly in the form of norms and values. "If you live according to the rules of God, you live a good life", Ana says. Although everyone agrees with her and says that religion is important, not all youths do actually live according to the rules of

their church. Some of the boys get wasted in the weekends while their evangelistic church preaches them not to drink alcohol. A number of boys is sexually active and three girls have a child, while they are not married. Two informants told me that they are not religious. One of them cannot believe that a god exists when people have to bear so many problems and misfortune. "If there was a god, there wouldn't be that much misery among so many people. Take my mom. She lived such a good life, she was very devoted to her church and to God. Then why did she get cancer? Why did she die?" The other informant thinks that "[...] religion causes so many problems, fights, wars, and poverty in the world. No god would allow that." However, both of them asked me not to tell other people about it, since others would probably not understand it and would not accept it.

The neighbourhood the youth lives in turns out to be an identity marker as well. Some of the participants of the research are quite proud of their neighbourhood, mainly when there are some facilities like a sports field or a game hall. Others are not really proud of their neighbourhood and tell me about the shortcomings. A few are embarrassed by their neighbourhood and never told me exactly from which neighbourhood they are. The youth assumes that other people judge them on the basis of the neighbourhood they live in. If they live in a neighbourhood that is known as a poorer neighbourhood, with more humble houses and less facilities, they think that other people see them as poor although that might not be true at all. If they live in a neighbourhood that is known as relatively rich, with paved roads, nice houses, and car parks, other people assume that they are rich, although they might live in a small house and are not able to make use of all the facilities available.

The older youth also identifies itself by their political preference, which is either sandinistic or liberal. Inéz told me: "Sometimes I feel I'm a minority. Especially at work. I'm a liberal, I'm from a liberal family. Sometimes people do not understand how I can do such social work with my liberal ideas. But I feel that I do this work because of my liberal ideas. I think that everyone should have the opportunity to be able to design its own life. And sometimes, someone needs a bit help to create such opportunities. Therefore, I do this work."

The older youth also identifies itself by their view on the world, which they mainly explain by liking or disliking the influence of Europe and the United States on Nicaragua. Moisés mainly approves of the influences on the music and the clothing trends, which he sees as unethical. A friend of Moisés, on the other hand, states that it brings important knowledge. He gives the example of "big thinkers" from Europe like Nietzsche and Noam Chomsky. "The influence of the West also brought us the internet, which is very important to me. Via the internet, I learn and discover so much. Like the big thinkers I just mentioned. I search for information and publications of them on the internet. There is so much to find out." Moisés calls himself conservative, his friend progressive.

The identity markers race and ethnicity do not play any role, despite the fact that Nicaragua represents itself as a multi-ethnic country. Race and ethnicity are important for people's self-identity in the parts of the country where quite a part of the population is of indigenous descent, like at the Caribbean coast. However, in the region of Matagalpa are hardly any indigenous people, which makes race and ethnicity as identity markers meaningless (INIDE 2005, 28-9).

The youth does not only create their identity by looking at themselves but also by looking at someone other's identity. The youth of Matagalpa does so by particularly comparing gender (he is a boy but I am not, I am a girl), religion (he is catholic but I am not, I am evangelistic), politics (he is a sandinista but I am not, I am a liberal), and neighbourhood (he lives in the *barrio* Guanuca but I do not, I live in the *barrio* El Tambor). Moisés says about one of his friends: "He is a *broda*, I like to hang out with him, but I cannot count on him. He is a liberal, you know. Liberals always tend to be a bit egoistic. We Sandinistas, we stick to our promises." María finds herself typical evangelistic. "The

Catholics live a more exuberant life than we do. They have bigger parties, they drink a lot of alcohol, and spend a lot of money. We live a more modest life and have different priorities, and focus more on Jesus Christ.”

External influences

Society has a large influence on the formation of the youth’s identity. Society has expectations of the youth, and places that expectations in the form of an identity on the youth. When they are at ADIC for example, they are considered and expected to be curious and willing to learn new things about how to improve their lives and that of others. So, when they participate in *talleres* of ADIC, they generally behave that way. When they do not behave as expected, they can be dismissed. Another example is that the oldest daughter of the family is often expected to be responsible and caring. This is exactly what Ana experiences. “When the neighbours saw my little sister walking alone through the neighbourhood, they come to me to ask me why I didn’t take care of her. Even if I wasn’t home and thus couldn’t take care of her.” Some of the expectations can tend towards a prejudice. A saleswoman who has a small grocery shop in her house in the same neighbourhood as ADIC thinks that the youth is annoying. “They enter the shop with five or ten at the same time and first have to touch everything before they just choose one thing they want to buy. They also play soccer just in front of my house which scares other customers away and when the ball enters the shop, they don’t even apologise.” The boys say that the saleswoman is always complaining, even if they are not doing anything wrong. “Everything we do, we do wrong. According to her. So, now we aren’t nice to her anymore” Carlos explained me.

Culture influences the way the youth experiences and explains its own identity. During one of the many informal chats I had with some of the staff of ADIC, they illustrated a clear example, that of machismo. When you are a boy in Nicaragua, society expects you to be a tough guy that takes responsibility and that shows to be a leader. Not only men expect that, also the women. In the first place at home. Men are the head of the household which means that they have to make sure that everyone has a safe place to stay and enough to eat. He has to protect everyone. If he somehow fails, his wife will get angry and some will even leave their husband. This identity is not just applied at home, but also taken to their work, to the street. Some men get the feeling that they are superior than women, then they cross the line. They do not listen to women at all, do not respect them. This is the reason why more women get raped here than in Europe. This is also the reason that for society it is so hard to accept homosexual men, and for the homosexual men to accept themselves. “But what can you do? If that is the way they explain to themselves how a man should be, then it is hard to change their minds. Asi es, nuestra cultura Nica, nuestra cultura latina⁶.”

Besides society and culture is history also of influence on the way the youth experiences its own identity. The history of Matagalpa explains why the share of the population that supports the Sandinistic movements is quite large. During the dictatorial regime of the Somoza family between 1936 and 1979, Matagalpa was the fundamental core of the Sandinistic revolt, and during the war (1979-1990) it was one of the principal military staging grounds. At the same time, the city also served as a safe haven for the rural people who fled the war zones (Quesada 1998, 55-6; Arrechavala, Espinoza and Lobato 2005, 129-38). All the youth participating in the research has family that experienced the times of war and suppression, some of the older participants even have some vague memories. They all grew up hearing stories about that time, a lot of them grew up facing the

⁶ That is how it is, our Nicaraguan culture, our Latin culture is.

consequences of that time: some family members fled and left their family, some family members died, some have lost legs or live with other handicaps caused by the war. The older participants explained me that this increases the political consciousness of the youth, and that this is the reason why many are Sandinistas. Moisés is one of them. His father has fought during the war, as a Sandinista against the *contras*. He lost a leg, and therefore couldn't find a proper job after the war. When the mother of Moisés died, he had to take care of thirteen children all by himself. A few years ago, he died as an unhappy and depressed man, whose life was completely ruined by the war. "It feels like my mission to support the Sandinistas and make sure that they win the elections again, to avoid that there would be any father again who's life will be ruined by the anti-Sandinistas."

Subject positions

As made clear before, a person's identity is not static but changes when the context changes, when other people change, and when time passes. A person's identity depends on the subject position a person holds at that moment. A difference can be made between the younger and the older participants of this research though. The different subject positions of the younger participants are far more distinctive from each other than the subject positions of the older participants. The daily lives of Carlos and Inéz illustrate this.

At home, at school, and with his friends, Carlos behaves differently. At school, as well as at ADIC, he is a tranquil boy that works hard and that gets good grades and results. When he arrives at ADIC, he always chats a little with friends and plays around, but he makes sure that he finishes his assignments. When he hangs out with his friends in the street or on the sports field, he is also a bit tranquil but full of energy at the same time. He jokes around and laughs a lot. He is a fanatic sportsman, but also likes to just hang out and watch the others play. At home, he is the youngest son. He has less responsibilities than his brothers, which makes him behave irresponsible also. He does not always listen very well to his mother and grandmother, he annoys his older brothers when they are making their homework, he makes a mess in the house, and he comes home late in the evening. So, one moment Carlos is a serious and tranquil boy, the next moment he is funny and energetic, another moment he is annoying and irresponsible. These different subject positions together form an important part of Carlos' identity.

Inéz also has different subject positions, although they do not differ that much from each other than those of Carlos. What always predominates is her enthusiasm and positive approach. She takes her jobs very seriously. As a teacher, she is serious and strict. However, she uses jokes and funny stories to explain the lessons. When working for the NGO she is more easygoing, because the atmosphere of the organisation and between the colleagues is very relaxed and because the *talleres* she facilitates for the children is compared to the school in a very informal context. When Inéz is at home, and especially when she is with friends, then she is not just enthusiastic but she is just having a lot of fun and even being a bit a clown.

Youth cultures

In Matagalpa, several youth cultures can be distinguished. Some of the informants of this research are part of such a culture. Moisés is active in the youth department of the Sandinistic political party. He participates in gatherings in which they discuss current affairs and themes they think are important and they want to introduce in other departments of the party. In the period before the elections of November 2011, he helped with promotion activities. The main reason for Moisés to be active in this party, is because he agrees with (most of) the ideas and values the party represents and

because he truly believes that this party can improve the country. However, he does not always agree with the way the party operates and expresses itself. They flood the city with posters and paintings on every single wall, billboard, lamppost, and kerbstone, also outside the campaigning period.

When thinking about and discussing certain topics, like the best way to design and execute a democracy or what should be changed in the educational system to give all youth an equal chance to enrol in university, the young Sandinistas look at other countries to get inspired. “Of course we pay attention to neighbouring countries like Honduras and Cuba. However, I think that we should also look at Russia. That country is important not just because of its economic position in the world, but mainly because of the socio-economic organisation of their society.” When exploring other options by looking at other countries, details of the party programme sometimes change, but the main range of ideas remains the same.

Three participants are part of an artistic group of young people, among them Moisés. They act in plays, write poetry, and have discussions about all kinds of topics. Moisés explains that “By hanging around and chatting with these people, my vision on life changes and my vision on the world expands.” Where most of them used to be inspired by Nicaraguans, now they get to know more foreign great thinkers, like Nietzsche, William Blake, and Noam Chomsky. By discussing their ideas, they are eventually able to actually grasp the ideas. Although they all say that anyone can participate in their group, almost all of them are enrolled in or finished university, and they discuss quite difficult or intellectual themes, which makes it quite a secluded group.

Quite some youth participate in church groups. They gather to pray together and to read the bible. Ana says that these meetings are important for her “because here I learn how to read the bible and how to understand my religion.” This group is only for people that adhere to the Catholic religion. “People that are evangelistic cannot really join our group, because they don’t understand us and we don’t understand them. They think very differently about God, Jesus and Mary.” The church groups do not really keep in close touch with each other, nor with groups outside Nicaragua.

The city of Matagalpa knows various sports teams, mainly for soccer and indoor soccer, basketball, volleyball, and baseball. Quite some youth play in one of these teams. Most youths that participate in this research that play sports are members of a soccer team. The soccer teams are usually established on the basis of a neighbourhood (and are therefore often named after that neighbourhood). So, most players of the team are from the same neighbourhood. People from other neighbourhoods are only admitted when they are really good players that will strengthen the team, or when they are family or close friends to a number of the team-mates. Besides the sports teams, many youths just go to one of the sports fields and play some soccer or baseball.

Matagalpa knows a small gay scene. The scene is not obviously present in Matagalpa’s everyday life, and most gay people do not really openly present themselves as such. There are a limited number of places where they gather. One of these places is the cultural centre. The cultural centre organises amongst others musical and theatre performances and shows movies, often about homosexuality to promote the acceptance of it. Homosexual men and women are generally interested in other cultures and other ways of life, which is amongst others shown by the many foreign people they hang out with. Although they are interested and open to other people, the average *Matagalpino* does not seem to feel comfortable with them and does not seem to approach them easily.

Homosexuality is generally not accepted in Nicaragua. Almost all youth that participates in this research thinks that homosexuality is wrong, and some even pull a face of disgust. Some NGOs

try to implement information about homosexuality in their programmes. This is not always easy though. Of course, because for the beneficiaries of the programmes this theme is a taboo. They do not like to talk about it and they are just not interested in it. To some extent, this also counts for the employees of the NGOs though. They often struggle with the dilemma between their support for human rights and their own norms and values. An employee of one of the partner organisations of ADIC puts it as follows: “I know that these people are not bad people. They live good lives without hurting anyone. But in our culture, we believe that God created men and women for a reason. So, I don’t think that men should be with other men.” -> quote van Ana en Inéz?

Some of the urban youth of Matagalpa joins a *pandilla*, a gang. The youth that joins a *pandilla* generally experience problems, like economic deprivation, intrafamiliar violence, and emigration of the parents abroad. Whatever the problem, it often leads to a feeling of loneliness and desolation. In a *pandilla*, they then find the security and the understanding they lacked so far. The *pandilla* becomes their new ‘home’. *Pandillas* often cause problems in the city by committing crimes like theft and robbery, by taking and dealing drugs and alcohol, by threatening and harassing people. The *pandillas* operate on neighbourhood level, the neighbourhood is their territory that they occupy and defend. They do pass by other neighbourhoods or public parks and sports fields, to intimidate and impress others. When they enter the park, other youth moves to the other side or leaves the park.

Since a few years, the number and the influence of the *pandillas* decreased enormously in Matagalpa though, amongst others due to projects organised by the municipality and NGOs. The youth still gathers in groups in the neighbourhoods. However, now they do nothing more than hanging on a street corner and maybe annoying people by playing loud music or calling them when they pass. Where the *pandillas* were cohesive closed gangs, these current groups have volatile and dynamic characteristics. They have no formal members, youth just comes and goes; and they have no official territory they occupy, they just hang on a corner. Although they do face problems at home, they have alternative places to go to: instead of joining a *pandilla* they take the opportunities they are offered by family, school, or organisations.

Representation of identity

The youth of Matagalpa does not obviously express their identities by outward appearances. They do not really express themselves with their cloths or hairstyle. Most youth goes to secondary school during the week, which means that they are wearing their school uniform. The cloths they have besides their uniform, they often get from older brothers and sisters or cousins. When they have some money, they buy some new (second hand) cloths on the market. Some of the youth wears jewellery that refers to their religion, mainly a cross on a necklace or a rosary.

Their political preference is mainly expressed at their houses, by a flag or a poster of the political party the family supports. Sometimes, this causes some commotion in the neighbourhood in which the youth at times is involved also. It does never really get out of hand though.

Some of the participants have a Facebook-account. Most of them post once in while statements or articles with which they expresses something of their identity. Moisés for example, created a public folder in his account in which he collects pictures of Jesus and Mary, and Inéz posts prayers in which she asks God for help. José and Luis post what they call “philosophical life questions” and poems they write which they want to share with the world. Andreas posts videos of American rappers and Puerto Rican reggaetón artists which makes him look like a tough guy, and Ramón posts videos of Christian music to express his religion.

Answering the sub question: What are the characteristics of the identity of the urban youth of Matagalpa?

This chapter turns out that the youth forms its identity on the basis of a quite standardised set of identity markers. One of the most important identity markers is gender. Being a boy or a girl determines their daily occupation, which part of the city they use, what expectations the parents, and society in general, has of them. Thereby plays age a large role. The daily occupation is different: the younger youth is generally in primary or secondary school, the elders are enrolled in technical education or university, or have a job. Also, expectations for the younger youth are different than what is expected of the elders. Besides gender and age, are religion, political preference, and the neighbourhood the youth lives in important identity markers. Furthermore are society, culture and history also of influence on the formation of the youth's identity. Identity is very dynamic though, and changes along the context the persons finds itself in. Some of the youth experiences this as quite confusing though. One moment they feel like a child, the other moment like an adult. This feeling depends on the place where they are, which people they are with, and what kind of activity they are doing. If they are playing on the sports field with friends, they feel like a child; if they are given the responsibility to take care of younger brothers and sisters, they feel older; and if they earn money they can contribute to the household, they feel important.

GLOBALISATION

From the prior chapters, it became clear what it means for the urban youth of Matagalpa to live in a relatively small city in the hinterland of Nicaragua, and what the characteristics of their identities are. This chapter proceeds with a focus on the influence of globalisation on the lives of the urban youth of Matagalpa, by seeking an answer to the sub question *How does globalisation affect the lives of the urban youth of Matagalpa?* To answer this chapter in a comprehensive manner, this chapter discusses the different effects globalisation has on the lives of the youth. This chapter first takes a look at the way the modern communication technologies and multinational corporations influence the lives of the youth. Then, the influence of migration is discussed. This part is not so much about the youth migrating themselves. It is more about the effects of family that has already migrated on the lives of the youth. Finally, the ideas and ideologies that are brought about by globalisation are described. Again, the description of the empirical data is represented by the five selected informants, as described in chapter four.

Modern communication technologies

One of the most obvious effects of globalisation is the flow of information all over the world, and especially the modern communication technologies enabling this spread of information. These technologies have also reached Matagalpa. In the first place by the availability of the internet. Just a few families have internet at their homes, but throughout the city, various internet cafés, *cybers* or *cibers*, can be found. Most cibers are in the central area of the city. The better neighbourhoods also have a few cibers, the poorer neighbourhoods have to do without them. The cibers are located in small rooms, packed with computers (generally about 10). Mainly men make use of the cibers. The main reason for them to use the internet is to check their email. The young men that are enrolled in university also use the internet to search for information when making assignments or studying for exams, the boys sometimes also play games online.

Women seem to make less use of the internet. One reason is that girls are more protected by their parents than boys. Parents often do not know the internet and do not trust it. They think that it might have a negative influence on their daughters. Therefore, the parents do not allow the girls to use the internet. María has never really used the internet, while her brothers can be found in the ciber on a daily basis. "I don't know what I should use the internet for. My mom says that only bad things can be found on the internet. I don't think that it only contains bad things. I hear that people find information on the internet they use for school. But I think that it is true that there are many bad things on it. If you look at the music my brothers bring home, for example. Bad music from the United States. There is a lot of temptation on the internet, I think." Inéz also thinks that more boys than girls can be found in the cibers because boys have more spare time than girls, since the girls have more chores in the household. She thinks that it is a pity that girls hardly use the internet. "Yes, many bad things can be found on the internet. Too many. Like porn. But I think that boys are much more sensitive for these bad things than girls. Girls are stronger and wiser. They would use the internet for their own benefit, *para superarse*⁷."

⁷ To exceed or excel

Moisés is one of the participants that uses internet most. He cannot really remember when he used the internet for the first time. It was probably about five years ago. Since two or three years, he uses the internet intensively. He has no internet at home and in his neighbourhood there are no cibers. He mostly uses cibers in the centre of the city. He also prefers those cibers because their computers and internet connection are fastest. Furthermore they are close to the university and close to his work. He says that he uses the internet for two purposes. The first is to keep up his social network via email and the social network service Facebook. He has quite some friends that live throughout the country and even elsewhere in the world. "The internet is the perfect way to keep in touch with them." The second purpose is to search for information. Some of the information he uses for his studies (although he still prefers to use books from the library to learn for his exams and to write his papers). Most information he uses for his personal development. "I like to surf on the internet and look for people or events to inspire me." He agrees that the internet is not used on a large scale among his peers. He thinks that the main reason is that it is not part of their culture yet. "Internet is available to almost everyone, because the cibers are very cheap. However, people don't know how to use it and don't realise the benefits of it. And they just don't really need it. It is not part of our culture yet."

The communication revolution is also visible in the presence and use of mobile phones. Most households have at least one mobile phone. As with the use of internet, among the youth mainly the older boys and girls use mobile phones. They say that they need a phone to be reachable in case someone needs them. They hardly ever have enough credit on their phone to make a call or to send a text message, and they hardly ever receive a call or text message, since their friends have no credit either. What they do use their phone for though, is to listen to music. They pass on songs to each other via Bluetooth and in that way collect a wide range of music.

María says that she would not want to miss her phone. What she most likes about her phone is to chat via text messages with her friends. "I used to see them everyday in school. But since we graduated, it is hard to meet. Some are studying, some are working. By sending text messages, we keep up to date. However, I don't always have credit. Sometimes my mom gives my money to buy credit, sometimes my brothers give me credit." María uses her phone mostly to listen to music. "I get music from my brothers. They get the music in the ciber or from friends. Sometimes I ask them to look for specific music. I prefer Christian music, but I also like some reggaetón."

Inéz is one of the few who always has credit on her phone. "I use my phone for so many purposes: to call, to send text messages, to listen to music, to search the internet, to check my e-mail and my facebook." She understands that most people cannot afford that, and she understands that credit is not one main priorities to spend money on for many people. She is happy though that she can afford herself credit and she could not live without her phone anymore.

A somewhat different aspect of the communication revolution is the availability of international television channels. Most youth spend quite some hours a week watching television. Most have a TV at home; the ones that do not watch at family or friends that live nearby. Almost all houses with a television are connected to cable television which enables them to watch the Latin American channels that are available throughout the whole continent. These channels do not only broadcast programmes from Latin American countries, but also from the US and sometimes even Europe. This gives them information about other countries and regions. The girls like to watch soap opera shows, especially the ones from Mexico and some from the United States. They prefer the ones from Mexico because they can identify themselves better with their characters. The girls think that the soaps from the United States are a bit unrealistic. Things that happen in the soaps could

never happen in real life, they think. Especially the many criss-crossing love affairs, and the fact that people that die and come back later on.

The boys like to watch sports. The Nicaraguan baseball competition is very popular, as well as the matches of popular teams from Cuba and the United States, amongst others. They boys think of baseball as typically Latin, especially a lot of professional baseball players in the United States are from Latin-American descent. They are proud of the Latin-American players. Although they prefer to play soccer themselves, they prefer to watch baseball on television. One of the reasons is that the Nicaraguan soccer competition is of poor quality. Therefore, the boys love to watch the Spanish soccer competition. In this competition play a lot of Latin-American players as well, which makes the competition interesting for them. Especially the teams from Barcelona and Madrid are popular. When these two teams have to play against each other, people get crazy. Every bar and every restaurant pull out every television they have, people come from all over the place to watch the game, the streets get empty. The day after, the match is the talk of the day.

Both boys and girls watch many Hollywood movies, via the international television channels or on DVD. The boys also like Asian movies. These are not shown that frequently on television, so they buy them on DVD. Most of the youth also likes music channels like MTV and Ritmoson Latino. They like to get to know music from all over the world, especially from other Latin-American countries. "At least that music is in Spanish, so I can understand the lyrics and I can sing along" Ana says. "Some music from the United States and Europe is also nice, but I don't like it when I don't understand it. I do like their music videos though. They seem more professional, and they are just more beautiful. Moisés says that the American music videos may look professional, he does not like them at all. "I think that they are unethical. The videos promote a lifestyle of materialism, greed, and sex. It is typically American. We Nicaraguans don't like that, because we are not like that. We are not that shallow, our lives are much more meaningful than that."

Multinational corporations

Most companies that provide internet, mobile telephony, and cable television are part of international corporations that operate in the whole American continent like Claro, América Móvil, and Movistar. These products and services are also offered in Matagalpa. Some more international corporations operate in Matagalpa, amongst others in the energy and in the tourist sector. The presence of these corporations influence the lives of the youth. In the first place because the youth uses its products and services. When the youth would not be able to watch cable television, to use their telephone, or if their houses would not be connected to the electricity network, their lives would be very different. In the second place create these corporation jobs for the youth.

Many corporations that operate in Matagalpa are involved in the coffee sector, since the region of Matagalpa is one of the largest coffee suppliers of the country. These corporations are directly or indirectly part of the international exportation of coffee. Being one of the largest coffee supplier regions of the country does not just trigger the establishment of big farming companies in the region, but also of coffee cooperations, traders and middlemen, transportation companies, engineering companies, etcetera. Also a number of NGOs work in the coffee sector, which are often funded by international donors and sometimes also assisted by international experts on location. The coffee sector thus creates a lot of employment, also for the youth. They generally go picking coffee beans during the harvesting time, a few weeks a year. A large share of the coffee produced in the region of Matagalpa is exported. Most people that buy coffee in the supermarket buy coffee imported from the United States though.

The youth does not really seem to realise that the presence of international corporations in their city and their influence on their lives is a direct consequence of globalisation, and that these corporations connect them with so many other places on the world. They just notice the international corporations and take it for granted, without realising that the absence of these corporations would change their lives drastically.

Migration

All respondents have some kind of story about migration in their family. Some of the parents moved from the country side to the city of Matagalpa, like the mother of Luis. She came to the city and got the opportunity to study, to get a good job as a lawyer, and to start a family which she could provide a good living and secure them a good future. Most of their family still lives in the country side. Luis has mixed feelings about that. On the one hand, he thinks that life is quite hard for them. Some live without electricity and running water, far away from facilities like schools and medical centres. His cousins would be better off in the city where they could finish their secondary school and go to university. On the other hand, life in the city is not always easy either. They are very dependent on the market and the fluctuating prices, there is no work, and a lot of crime. "But in the end, I am happy that I was raised in the city and that I was given the opportunity to study."

Besides rural-urban migration, have many youths to deal with international migration in their family. A lot of youth has family living in Costa Rica. They moved there to find a better job with a better salary, to give their family a better future. Some of the youth has uncles and aunts living there, others older brothers and sisters. Besides Costa Rica, quite some informants have family living in the US, in Honduras, and in Guatemala. The families keep in touch by calling each other. A few go to an internet café to email them or to call them with Skype. Sometimes, the family members that live abroad come back to Matagalpa to visit them. Usually, they bring some gifts, mostly cloths, CDs or DVDs, and electrical devices like DVD-players or flat screen TVs. When they do not come to visit them, the family sends them parcels by mail. Only a few of the youth that participates in this research says their family receives money from family members living abroad. (According to the statistics of the national institute for information on development, INIDE, receives a little more than ten per cent of the households of urban Matagalpa remittances (INIDE 2005, 16).)

Almost none of the youth that participates in this research has the desire to move out of Matagalpa, not now nor in the future. They love the city, they say. The main reason for loving the city of Matagalpa is because their family and friends live here. They would not want to miss them. What they also like about the city is that everything they need is here: market and shops, schools, a hospital, churches. Furthermore is the climate of the city cool and not as warm and humid as in other cities of the country, they say. When asking them about the opportunities other cities like Managua offer, or other countries like Costa Rica, then they do agree that life can be easier there and that they might have a chance on a better future there. However, they do not need a better life and a better future. Moisés already has some good opportunities to move to Costa Rica and proceed his life there. His sister, who lives there, bought him a plot of land close to her house. When he finishes his studies here in Matagalpa, he could go there, build himself a humble home and look for a good job there. However, he is not sure yet if he will do so. Although he knows that his life in Matagalpa is not perfect and that he might find better job there, he likes living here and he wants to stay loyal to his *patria*, his land and origin.

Spread of ideas and ideologies

Another effect of globalisation that reaches the youth of Matagalpa is the spread of ideas and ideologies over the world. This spread reaches the youth through education. They learn at school about other countries, other people, and other cultures. They also learn about other ideas and ideologies through the communication revolution, via the television, music, and some via the internet. The youth that participates in the activities of ADIC also get some other views on the world taught there. Furthermore, family members that have migrated to other parts of Nicaragua and to other countries, bring stories and products back to Matagalpa.

Most mentioned ideology that influences Matagalpa and their own lives is the Christian religion, which is mentioned quite some times already. Almost all of the youth that participates in this research states to be Christian. For some of the youth is religion very important in their lives. They practice their religion as preached by their church and spend a lot of their time to the religion, by going to church, meeting in church groups, and praying. Others take their religion more lightly and practice their religion in their own way. Two informants are not religious. They are not really open about their vision on religion to other people, because they think that most people would not accept it. These two informants were open to me though, because they know that I am not religious either. Because it is generally not accepted in Matagalpan society that people are not religious, non-religious people would not openly talk about it. Therefore, it might be that more youth that participated in this research is not religious, although they told me they are.

Another often mentioned ideology is socialism. The governing political party in Nicaragua is the socialistic Sandinista national liberation front FSLN, which is also the governing party in the municipality of Matagalpa. A large part of national, regional, and local policy is thus based on socialism. Some of the informants say that the socialistic policies affect their lives positively. Mostly mentioned are the monthly allowances pupils and students get. They also mention the *cabildos municipales*. The inhabitants of Matagalpa can organise themselves in groups, in *cabildos*, that represent their neighbourhood, women, youth, etcetera. Once a year, every *cabildo* gets the opportunity to meet with the mayor of the city and discuss with him the policy of the municipality and indicate what they would like to have changed in the city. ADIC organised such a *cabildo* for the youth. All together, they drew up a list of demands that they presented to the mayor. Some of the informants also mention a project of the municipality in which the people living in poor houses are given a proper roof. Inéz is quite sceptical about the influence of socialism on the lives of the people. She says that only the families that support the FSLN benefit from these programmes. The other families are skipped.

That mainly Christianity and socialism are mostly mentioned as the ideologies that have most influence on their lives as urban youth, might be a reflection of the campaign of the FSLN for the presidential elections of November 2011. The slogan of the FSLN and of its campaign is namely "Nicaragua cristiana, Socialista y Solidaria"⁸. During the fieldwork, which took place from April till August 2011, the FSLN was already campaigning quite aggressively for the elections. They had commercials on television and radio. Everywhere in the city, billboards of the FSLN said this slogan and through the whole city, cars were driving around with huge sound systems shouting the slogan. The other parties started their campaigns at the end of August, at the end of my fieldwork period.

Answering the sub question: How does globalisation affect the lives of the urban youth of Matagalpa?

⁸ Christian, socialistic and united Nicaragua

Globalisation affects the lives of the urban youth in Matagalpa through the communication revolution, the presence of multinational corporations in the city, migration, and ideologies originating from other parts of the world.

The communication revolution makes that internet is available throughout the city, and that some youth indeed makes use of the internet. The extent to which they use the internet varies greatly though. Some just use it just to have some fun and do not really get more out of it. Their use of the internet hardly changes their view on the world, nor on their own lives. Other youth does use the internet more intensively, or at least with a more significant purpose. When looking for information (either for school, their studies, or just out of a general interest), keeping up contact with other people living in different parts of the world, or surfing through the social networks, they more consciously absorb new information which (whether or not consciously) changes their view on the world and on themselves.

The availability of cable television and its many international channels makes watching television interesting for the youth. Without the international channels, they would not watch that much television. By watching television programmes produced abroad, the youth gets an idea of the world outside Matagalpa. However, this view on the world is not really objective and not always that truthful (looking at soap opera shows from the US or Hollywood movies for example).

The arrival of the communication revolution in Matagalpa is to a large extent made possible by multinational corporations. So is the exportation of coffee grown in the region of Matagalpa. The international corporations thus do bring views from other parts of the world to the city, and especially in the case of the coffee sector, also create jobs amongst others for the youth. Globalisation does affect the lives of the youth via migration, mostly by the money and products they get send by family living abroad. When they get DVDs or DVD players, it gives them the opportunity to watch foreign movies, like Hollywood movies. When they get clothes, it gives them the feeling that they are the prettiest boy or girl in the neighbourhood when walking around in cloths that are fashionable and popular in the US. Globalisation does not affect the youth in such a way that they want to migrate themselves, neither to another part of the country nor abroad. Although they realise that in other places in the world they might have more or better future perspectives and that life might be easier there, they want to stay in Matagalpa. They love the city and life is good enough here.

Ideas and ideologies that spread the world also affect the lives of the urban youth of Matagalpa. Christianity affects the lives of all the youth. Mainly because most youth is Christian. It affects their daily occupation (going to church for example), it determines their norms and values, their vision on life. Christianity also affects the lives of the youth that is not religious. They feel that they cannot openly talk about it and do not want everyone to know about it, because they think that it is not really accepted among the *Matagalpinos*. They feel that they are different than the majority of the youth. Socialism has a direct influence on the lives of the youth, because the national as well as the local authorities are governed by the socialist political party FSLN. Policies they design and decisions they make are based on the socialistic ideology. It affects their lives in such a way that (some of) the youth gets allowances to go to school for example.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After having looked at the city of Matagalpa, the youth living in that city, the characteristics of their identity and the influence of globalisation on their lives, it is now time to link them all together and formulate an answer on the research question *What is the influence of globalisation on the formation of the identity of the urban youth of Matagalpa, Nicaragua?* This concluding chapter also leads to the formulation of recommendations for future research on themes relating to globalisation and urban youth, and to recommendations for organisations, institutions, and companies working with urban youth.

The starting point of this thesis is the youth. Often it is assumed that globalisation has a large influence on the youth, especially when they are living in a large city with millions of inhabitants. The influence of globalisation on youth living in smaller cities is underexposed. Therefore, this research focuses on the youth living in smaller cities. Matagalpa can with its 120,000 inhabitants be regarded as a smaller city. It is still one of the larger cities of Nicaragua, but much smaller than the capital with 2.5 million inhabitants. As the largest city in the region, Matagalpa fulfils an important governmental and economic role in the northern region of the country. Most companies that operate in the region have an office in or close to the city of Matagalpa. The regional hospital and other health care facilities like the Red Cross are based in the city, even as the larger universities and secondary schools. The regional function of Matagalpa also leads to a quite well developed infrastructure, amongst others regarding access and connecting roads, electricity, telephone network, and the availability of the internet.

The youth of Matagalpa thus lives in a city that provides quite some facilities. It turns out though that it depends on the youth and on the situation to what extent they make use of these facilities. It depends on their identity. The youth cannot be seen as one homogeneous group. Every person is unique and has its own identity. The process of identity formation starts during the youth. One factor that determines a person's identity is age. It turned out to be impossible to determine a fixed age category. In the research, the youngest informant is 13 years old and the oldest 27. In some situations, the younger youth does not feel like they are youth at all though, but more like a child. In other situations the older youth does not like youth anymore, but more like an adult. Another important factor that determines one's identity is gender. Being a boy or a girl determines a person's daily occupation, a person's responsibilities, it determines what expectations others have of them. Besides age and gender, the youth perceives their religion, political preference, their daily occupation, and the neighbourhood they live in as important identity markers. The expectations of society, the norms and values determined by their culture, and the lessons they learnt from history also play an important role in the formation of the youth's identity.

Youth finds itself in a very dynamic phase in life, that is characterised by change: the change from a child into an adult. Their body changes, their behaviour changes, their mindset changes, their view on the world changes, the world around them changes, the way society looks at them changes. The youth is not just subject to change though, they also want to effect change themselves: they want to improve the living circumstances of their family and improve society in general.

Globalisation is affecting the lives of the youth. Modern communication technologies enable them to watch international television channels and to access the internet, which is in their turn enabled by international corporations. These corporations also enable the coffee trade around

Matagalpa, which provides employment and income. Another effect of globalisation that affects the lives of the youth is migration. Cultures, products, and information are brought to Matagalpa by foreigners and by Matagalpinos living abroad. The youth does not have the desire to migrate to other countries themselves. These effects of globalisation also bring ideas and ideologies from over the world to Matagalpa. Christian religion and socialism that affect the youth most in their daily lives. These effects of globalisation also enable the youth to create a view of the world themselves.

Conclusion

First of all must be concluded that globalisation is definitely present in Matagalpa. For ages, migrants from all over the world have been inhabiting the region, bringing with them their cultures, religions, food, music, etcetera. Of course, one group of migrants has had more influence than the other, but the influence is there: Christian religion, Spanish language, baseball as most popular sport, the consumption of rice, and so on. The Nicaraguans living abroad that send back remittances to Matagalpa or come back themselves every once in a while are contemporary effects of migration. More recent results of globalisation are the availability of international television channels through cable television, the internet, the presence of multinational corporations, and tourists travelling through the region.

Secondly must be concluded that globalisation is not just present, but that it also affects the lives of the youth, as made clear in chapter seven. The extent to which globalisation has an influence on the youth varies though. The use of the internet turns out to depend highly on gender and on the neighbourhood the youth lives in. Much more boys than girls have the opportunity to make use of the internet. The girls do not have that much spare time besides fulfilling their chores in the household, working, or making homework. Thereby are the girls much more protected by their parents or fosters than the boys. They are protected from the bad influences and temptations the internet holds. The neighbourhood the youth lives in also seems to be of influence. In the poorer neighbourhoods are no cibers. The youth thus has to travel to other neighbourhoods to use the internet, which costs time any money. Time and money they should spare as much as possible. The younger youth that lives in the poorer neighbourhoods, both boys and girls, make less use of the internet. The richer the neighbourhood, the more young youth and the more girls make use of the internet. The mobile phone is generally used among the youth. However, the richer youth does use the phone to communicate with other people, the poorer mainly to listen to music. Cable television is widespread over the city which makes the international television channels available for most youth. Almost all youth, no matter which sex, which level of education, which neighbourhood, poor or rich, watches programmes and movies from other countries and continents. The presence of international corporations makes these influences of globalisation on the lives of the youth possible.

When it comes to the ideas and ideologies that come from all over the world to Matagalpa, there is a big difference in the extent to which the younger and the older youth perceive this. The younger youth takes the ideas and ideologies rather for granted. For them, it is completely normal that they are Christian and that not all their friends have the same Christian religion. The older youth does think about it though. They discuss about the differences between the two religions and think for themselves about reason why to stick to their religion. For some youth, it even results in an increasing disbelief and eventually in turning their back on religion at all.

Almost all youth has family living abroad. They get products and money send from them. When their family comes to visit them, they bring more gifts, and entertain them with stories about their new countries. All these influences brought about by globalisation, do not trigger the youth's

desire to move to other parts of the world themselves. They do not see themselves as “world citizens”. In the first place, they are Matagalpino or Matagalpina and in the second place *Nica*⁹. Their view on the world does not very often exceed the Nicaraguan border, except for some older higher educated youth. They do have an interest in other countries, other cultures, other ways of living. However, they hold on to Nicaragua as well. Although their life is not perfect, they would not want to change, and do not think that they would move abroad.

The influences brought about by globalisation are the basis for the view of the youth on the rest of the world. The youth definitely has an idea of how the world outside Nicaragua looks like. However, those ideas are definitely not objective, and mainly based on the soap opera shows and movies they watch on television. The view they have of the rest of the world, also determines the way they look at themselves. They look up to a large part of the rest of the world, and therefore consider themselves as “inferior”, as less developed, as less important. Matagalpinos told me often: “you (as in either myself, or all people from North America and Europe, or the North American and European countries) are so *avanzado*¹⁰” or even more often said “we are so *atrasado*¹¹.” They have a low self esteem compared to the rest of the world. They do not think that they will ever reach “the level of development” of Europe and Northern America. However, they do not pursue that. They are just fine with their position and don’t they really need to change, to improve their lives. They would like to improve their living circumstances, like a better house with a reliable connection to electricity, or having the possibility to finish secondary school without having to work after school hours to be able to buy food for the family. But living a life like the North Americans, as they call them, “with their big houses and fancy cars” is something that other people might like to have, they do not need that. It must be emphasised though, that the youth of Matagalpa does not position themselves as victims of globalisation, nor do they feel as if they are put at a disadvantage. A more adequate comment would be that the youth has a resigned position regarding globalisation. They do notice it, they do recognise it, but they just use it whenever it suits them.

To sum up, globalisation does influence the identity formation of the urban youth of Matagalpa. The influence differs per person though. In general can be stated that the older youth is more affected by globalisation. They make more use of the possibility globalisation brings, and they have a wider view on the world than the younger youth. A difference can also be made based on gender. Boys can make more use of the possibilities globalisation offers. There is no clear difference in the way the boys and girls position themselves in the world. Besides age and gender, is poverty of influence. The richer youth can afford themselves to make more use of globalisation. Besides the different effects among the youth, can be stated that globalisation affects the daily practices of the youth, but mostly unconsciously. The youth does not recognise all effects of globalisation, and is not always aware of the presence of globalisation. They do not constantly realise that they are continuously connected to many other places in the world, wherever they are, whatever they are doing. In the first place, they have their eyes upon Matagalpa, then maybe Nicaragua. They do not automatically and that often look at the world. In the end can be stated that globalisation does penetrate into Matagalpa as a smaller city, but maybe not as deep into the society as in a larger city as Managua. The effects remain a bit at the surface. The effects of globalisation are definitely noticeable, but not in such a way that

⁹ Popular language among the inhabitants of Nicaragua to refer to themselves

¹⁰ Advanced

¹¹ Underdeveloped

Matagalpa positions itself as a city on world scale, but rather on national or even more at regional scale.

Recommendations

The conclusions that result from this research and this thesis lead some recommendations, in the first place to those who plan on conducting research on themes relating to globalisation. Research on globalisation in urban areas often assumes that the influence of globalisation is omnipresent and that every urban dweller wants to benefit from it as much as possible. Especially the youth is supposed to have the desire to change, to innovate, to modernise, and to use globalisation as a tool. This research turns out that this assumption cannot be taken for granted, that urban youth does not always has the desire to improve and reach for the best they can get. Some are just happy with the life they live, although they know things could be different.

In the second place, this research leads to recommendations to governmental as well as non-governmental organisations, institutions and companies that work with youth in Matagalpa. Reading this thesis can provide more insight in the lives and identities of the urban youth of Matagalpa. When aiming to help the youth with their personal development and to create them opportunities, it is important to keep in mind that they are inward looking and focus on Matagalpa. The youth does not have the strong desire to exceed themselves. Nor do they get inspired by the realisation that other people in other parts of the world maybe are richer and living easier lives. When aiming to help the youth with their personal development and to create them opportunities, keep focussed on the same level as the youth and do not go forward in too big steps. Otherwise you will loose them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The youth is an important generation. They play an important role in society, in the present and for the future. Besides the fact that they are large in number, is it the generation that has an open unprejudiced view on the world. With the youth's natural penchant to innovation, it is the generation that can effect important changes, for themselves and for the larger society, in the present and in the future. Globalisation is assumed to have a large influence on the youth, on their lives, on their world view, on their ambitions, especially when the youth is living in a large city. This research turns out that these assumptions cannot automatically be applied on the urban youth of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, based on a literature study and a five month fieldwork period.

Matagalpa is a medium sized city, in the northern mountainous region of Nicaragua. The city has known a fast population increase over the last few decades, too fast for the local government to cope with such an increase. As a consequence, a large share of the urban population lacks basic facilities like proper housing, running water, and access to public transport. Matagalpa can be characterised as a dual city, with the main dualities poor versus rich, formal versus informal, catholic versus evangelistic, and Sandinistic versus liberal.

The city plays an important role in the lives of the urban youth of Matagalpa. The city provides them facilities like schools and health care centres, access to cable television and the internet, places to meet with friends and keep up their social life. Most important places in the city for the youth are their school or work, the places in their neighbourhood like central street corners and communal water points, parks and sports fields.

It turned out to be impossible to determine a fixed age category for the youth. In this research, the youngest participant is 13 years old, the oldest 27. Most youth struggle with their position between a child and an adult. They are thrown back and forth between these two extremes: one day they feel like a child or they are treated as such, they other day they feel like or are treated as an adult. Most youth is in secondary school, but have quite some important chores in the household and contribute the money they earn with their job. Most youth that participates in this research live in the poorer neighbourhoods of the city.

Change is an important aspect in the lives of the youth. They change from a child into an adult. Their body changes. The way society looks at them and treats them changes. They are not just subject to change though, they also want to effect change themselves: improve the living circumstances of their family and improve society in general.

The youth bases its identity on a set of identity markers, generally consisting of age, gender, religion, the neighbourhood they live in, and their occupation. The formation of their identity is not just based on their own identity markers. Society, culture and history also determine a large part of the youth's identity. The youth forms its identity according to the expectations of the society, the norms and values determined by their culture, and the lessons learnt from the history.

The youth's identity enables the youth to be part of several youth cultures. Most common youth cultures in Matagalpa are youth departments of political parties, artistic groups, church groups, and sports teams.

Globalisation does affect the lives of the urban youth of Matagalpa. The communication revolution enables the youth to access the internet and international television channels through cable television, which helps them create a certain view on the world. The communication revolution is not possible without the international corporations. Internal corporations also enable the coffee trade in the region of Matagalpa, and generate a lot of employment. Migration is another effect of globalisation that influences the lives of the youth. Cultures, products and information are brought to Matagalpa by foreigners, and by *Matagalpinos* or family of *Matagalpinos* living abroad. The youth does not have the desire to migrate to other countries themselves. The communication revolution and migration also bring with them ideas and ideologies, like the Christian religion and ideas on socialism.

In the end can be concluded that globalisation is definitely present in Matagalpa, that it affects the lives of the urban youth, and that it affects the identity formation of the youth. They see the rest of the world, mainly Europe and Northern America as *avanzado* (advanced) and Matagalpa (or Nicaragua in general) as *atrasado* (underdeveloped). They look up to a large part of the rest of the world, and therefore consider themselves as "inferior", as less developed, as less important. Because of that low self esteem compared to the rest of the world, they are just fine with their position and don't they really need to change, to improve their lives. It must be mentioned though, that the youth of Matagalpa does not position themselves as victims of globalisation, nor do they feel as if they are put at a disadvantage. A more adequate comment would be that the youth has a resigned position regarding globalisation. They do notice it, they do recognise it, but they just use it whenever it suits them.

This research leads to a couple of recommendations. In the first place to those who plan on conducting research on themes relating to globalisation. Research on globalisation in urban areas often assumes that the influence of globalisation is omnipresent and that every urban dweller wants to benefit from it as much as possible. This research turns out that this assumption cannot automatically be taken for granted. In the second place, this research leads to recommendations to governmental as well as non-governmental organisations, institutions and companies that work with youth in Matagalpa. This thesis provides more insight in the lives and identities of the urban youth of Matagalpa, which can be helpful when designing programmes and policies aimed at the urban youth of Matagalpa.