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COMMENTARY

Moving On and Moving Back: Rethinking Inequality and Migration in the Latin American City

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Abstract. This paper focuses on the similarities and differences between contemporary urban organisation and that of the 1960s in Guatemala City and other Latin American cities, mainly using data taken from a re-study of low-income neighbourhoods in Guatemala City. It looks at the impact of sharper patterns of residential segregation, changes in migration patterns, rising levels of crime and violence, and the increase in the relationships of the urban poor with external actors, such as governments and NGOs. Severe inequality persists, but is mediated by an improvement in living standards, by the range of consumer goods accessible to the poor, and by community- and family-based adaptation.

Keywords: residential segregation, crime and violence, migration, inequality, poverty, community organisation

Introduction

A little over 40 years ago, I studied two low-income urban neighbourhoods in Guatemala City with the aim of exploring the social and political changes accompanying rapid urban growth and substantial rural–urban migration.[1] Guatemala City was then a relatively small city by Latin American standards, and the country one of the poorest and most rural in the region. The subsequent years have seen momentous changes in the general economic and political environment of Latin American cities, including that of Guatemala City, as a result of democratisation and the switch from the predominant model of import substitution industrialisation (ISI) to one based on free market policies. From 2002 to 2005, I participated in a research project on the impact of these economic and political changes on poverty, inequality

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[1] Bryan R. Roberts, *Organizing Strangers: Poor Families in Guatemala City* (Austin TX, 1973).

and urban community organisation in eight of the larger cities in Latin America.[2] This research project did not include Guatemala City, so to build upon my first urban research in Latin America I decided to take advantage of Peter Ward's current project on the evolution of low-income housing in Latin America by re-studying the two Guatemala City neighbourhoods.[3] I did so because I wanted to use my earlier data to explore longitudinally the meaning of urban change through the lives and perceptions of several generations of inhabitants, as has been done in other re-studies of poor urban neighbourhoods in Latin America.[4] I was also attracted to the re-study of Guatemala City as an opportunity to use the city and its poor neighbourhoods to explore and develop further the issues for contemporary urban research that my colleagues and I had identified in our studies of the eight Latin American cities. My aim was to 'move back' in order to 'move on'.

There is no typical Latin American city, but Guatemala City was and remains, on various counts, an outlier among Latin American cities. In the 1960s, Guatemala was one of the least urbanised of Latin American countries and Guatemala City one of the least industrialised. Both comparisons remain true today. Guatemala City is also an outlier because of the high degree of social, political and economic problems that it faces: the persistence over time of high levels of income inequality, the relative absence of industrialisation, lack of urban planning, high levels of informal employment, high levels of crime and violence, weak state institutions and the absence of state-provided welfare. At the same time, Guatemala City, like other Latin American cities, is shaped by the global economic and communications system, by free market policies and by democratisation. My aim is, thus, to use the similarities and differences between present-day urban organisation in Guatemala City and in other Latin American cities to help identify what is particular and what is general in the way that the contemporary urban poor in Latin America manage their environments. In this Commentary, I will focus on what has changed in migration and in the ways in which people experience poverty and inequality.

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[2] These studies explored Latin American urbanisation and urban residential segregation through collaboration with researchers in Buenos Aires, Campinas, Mexico City, Lima, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Santiago de Chile. Alejandro Portes, Bryan R. Roberts and Alejandro Grimson (eds.), *Ciudades latinoamericanas: un análisis comparativo en el umbral del nuevo siglo* (Buenos Aires, 2005); Bryan R. Roberts and Robert Wilson (eds.), *Urban Segregation and Governance in the Americas* (New York, 2009).

[3] This a collaborative research project of third-generation housing and its policy implications in ten Latin American cities, of which Guatemala City is one, coordinated by Peter Ward of the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the Department of Sociology of the University of Texas at Austin (www.lahn.utexas.org).

[4] Janice Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro* (Berkeley CA, 1976); Janice Perlman, 'The Metamorphosis of Marginality in Rio De Janeiro', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2004), pp. 189–92; Caroline O. N. Moser, *Ordinary Families, Extraordinary Lives: Assets and Poverty Reduction in Guayaquil, 1978–2004* (Washington DC, 2009).

The re-study of the two neighbourhoods consists of surveys and in-depth interviews with neighbourhood leaders, business people and long-time residents.[5] The original surveys in 1968 were done randomly, using housing maps to identify representative samples. New surveys have been carried out in both neighbourhoods that include socio-economic data on households, housing improvements and residents' perceptions of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the neighbourhood. The new surveys aimed, as far as was feasible, to use the addresses and data in the 1968 questionnaires as the basis for the new samples. It proved impossible to match the addresses in one of the neighbourhoods, Planificada, but we used current maps to obtain a representative sample of similar size to the original. We also revisited families and informants that had been present when I did my original study in 1966 and 1968. We are now in the process of interviewing a subsample of the original inhabitants and their children to compile extended family histories of social and spatial mobility in the intervening 40 years.

Caution will be needed since the two neighbourhoods, one originally a centrally located squatter settlement and the other a peripheral but legally settled subdivision, are only a small part of a city that has grown enormously in both population and area. The two neighbourhoods are not representative of all poor neighbourhoods in Guatemala, either in their socio-economic composition or in their location. Consequently, we are using micro-data from the 2002 Guatemalan Census to place our neighbourhood data in the broader urban context. One other important limitation to this re-study is the current climate of insecurity in Guatemala City. When I conducted my original fieldwork in 1966 and 1968, I could walk freely, day and night, in either neighbourhood. That is no longer possible. In one of the neighbourhoods, San Lorenzo, my colleagues and I now need to be accompanied by a neighbourhood leader when we visit to interview or attend meetings. In neither neighbourhood is it advisable to work at night.

I will first move back, placing the Guatemalan urbanisation of the 1960s and 1970s in the Latin American context. I will then review what I and other researchers, working in different cities and countries, learnt about migration and inequality in the 1960s and 1970s. My discussion of the contemporary

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[5] The fieldwork for the re-study is mainly being carried out by the poverty research team of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Guatemala, headed by Marcel Arevalo, Vicente Quino and Federico Estrada, and by two sociology graduate students, Sergio Cabrera of the University of Texas at Austin and Julio Osorio of the University of Houston. I have drawn heavily on their insights and data for this paper. Their energy and commitment have been invaluable under field conditions that are much more difficult than I encountered in 1966 and 1968.

Table 1. *Urban and Economic Indicators: Selected Latin American Countries*

Country	% urban 1950	% urban in major city	% growth of major city 1950–60	GDP growth rate, 1960s	% value added industry, 1965
Argentina	65.3	45.0	2.6	4	48
Mexico	42.7	24.4	5.5	6.8	27
Guatemala	29.5	36.4	5.1	5.5	17

Source: United Nations Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2001 Revision* (United Nations Common Database, 2002).

period first looks at the contemporary context of urbanisation in Guatemala. I then examine the significance of changes in urban migration patterns as Guatemala City, like other Latin American cities, expels rather than takes in population. My discussion of contemporary inequality concentrates on the impact of new patterns of spatial organisation and segregation that are possibly more malignant in Guatemala than elsewhere. Finally, I consider the ways in which the urban poor organise to adapt to the challenges of the new urban environment, including their relationships with external actors, whether governments or national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Urbanisation, Migration and Inequality in the 1960s and 1970s

In the mid-twentieth century, Guatemala had low levels of urbanisation compared with Argentina, one of the most urban countries of the time in Latin America, and Mexico, which had intermediate levels of urbanisation (see Table 1). Manufacturing industry growth was weaker in Guatemala than in many other countries during the ISI period in Latin America from the 1950s to the 1980s, based on tariff protection for domestic industry, but it shared with those countries other characteristic results of such policies, particularly economic concentration in the largest city.[6] The 1950s and 1960s saw high rates of urbanisation in Guatemala characterised by the increasing concentration of the urban population in Guatemala City. In 1950, Guatemala City was over four times larger than the combined populations of the next four cities; by 1981 it was over seven times larger.[7] Velásquez provides a detailed analysis of economic trends in these years, showing that economic and employment growth in Guatemala was primarily located in the city.[8] Primary sector exports prospered but the benefits from these were concentrated in large, often foreign-owned, agricultural enterprises and in the city-based financial and marketing firms that serviced them, and were diminished internally by unfavourable terms of trade. The share of GNP provided by small-scale subsistence-oriented farming declined sharply up to 1980, whereas the number of subsistence farmers increased as the rural population grew apace. Industrial growth, stimulated by the General Treaty for Central American Integration of 1960, concentrated in Guatemala City, as did investments in construction.

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[6] Orlandina de Oliveira and Bryan R. Roberts, 'Urban Growth and Urban Social Structure in Latin America, 1930–1990', in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Cambridge History of Latin America*, vol. 6, part 1 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 253–324; Werner Baer, 'Import Substitution and Industrialization in Latin America', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1972), pp. 95–122; Alan Gilbert, *The Latin American City* (London, 1998), pp. 23–38.

[7] Eduardo Antonio Velásquez, *Desarrollo capitalista, crecimiento urbano y urbanización en Guatemala, 1940–1984* (Guatemala City, 1989).

Economic concentration brought large-scale migration from rural areas and small towns to Guatemala City, as it did to the major cities of other Latin American countries. The implications of this migration and of 'explosive' urban growth became a major research focus for social scientists interested in development issues.[9] The question that preoccupied many researchers of the time, including myself, was whether rural people with low or no education, accustomed to the ways of life in very small places, could get by in large, heterogeneous cities. These issues of 'peasants in cities' were approached from diverse theoretical perspectives.[10] For some theorists, rural–urban migration was viewed as potentially positive when accompanied by urban planning for low-cost housing, not only in terms of providing the labour needed for industrialisation, but also in terms of instilling the values and skills required for economic development through education and the experience of 'modern' work.[11] Other theorists pointed to the anomie that could result from migrants' experience of the impersonality of the city, and its possible negative political implications. This was a preoccupation even in the Argentina of the 1950s, where urbanisation was well advanced, as in Gino Germani's comments on the role of internal migrations in the creation of a society of masses in Buenos Aires.[12] Whatever the perspective, rural–urban migration was seen as essentially a centripetal process in which over time rural and small-town inhabitants made permanent homes in the city.

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[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 139, 232–59.

[9] *The Exploding Cities* was the title of a conference and a book edited by Peter Wilsher and Rosemary Righter (London, 1975) which focused on cities in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

[10] Bryan R. Roberts, *Cities of Peasants* (London, 1978), pp. 159–75.

[11] Lauchlin Currie, *Accelerating Development: The Necessity and the Means* (New York, 1966); John F. C. Turner, 'Housing Priorities, Settlement Patterns, and Urban Development in Modernizing Countries', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, vol. 34, no. 6 (1968), pp. 354–63.

[12] Gino Germani, *Estructura social de la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1955), pp. 76–7.

My research in Guatemala City concentrated on two low-income neighbourhoods: a squatter settlement, San Lorenzo, and a low-income legally established neighbourhood, Planificada.[13] In both neighbourhoods, the majority of heads of family were migrants, but some 27 per cent in each neighbourhood were city-born; education and occupations among the latter were of a somewhat higher level than those of the migrants.[14] The focus of the research was, however, less on migrants than on showing how the poor, whether migrants or natives, were active agents in managing the challenges of living in Guatemala City. It was influenced by earlier anthropological research carried out in Central African towns, which showed how rural- or small-town-origin migrants could adapt to large towns and cities through social networks and urban identities based on the cultures of places of origin, kinship and religion, as well as urban work and residence.[15] The organising capacity of migrants in the cities and their capacity to adapt economically to urban life had also been shown in the Latin American cities of the 1960s, in such case studies as Mangin in Lima, Leeds in Rio de Janeiro, and Balán, Browning and Jelin in Monterrey, Mexico.[16]

In the 1960s, there was relatively little migration to Guatemala City from the indigenous rural areas to the west. Indigenous identity was therefore not a significant organising factor in urban life, unlike in the case of La Paz in the same time period and, to a lesser extent, Mexico City.[17] In the 1980s, Bastos and Camus found a more substantial indigenous migration to Guatemala City, partly as a result of the violence against indigenous areas during the military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s.[18] Except in one of their neighbourhood cases, however, they report little evidence of indigenous families from the same place of origin settling in the same urban neighbourhoods and find relatively low levels of ethnic segregation.

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[13] Roberts, *Organizing Strangers*, pp. 34–41.

[14] The statistics on the two neighbourhoods are taken from the original questionnaires, which have now been coded and the data entered electronically; this was not feasible in the late 1960s.

[15] Arnold L. Epstein, *Politics in an Urban African Community* (Manchester, 1958); J. Clyde Mitchell (ed.), *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns* (Manchester, 1969).

[16] William P. Mangin, 'The Role of Regional Associations in the Adaptation of Rural Migrants to Cities in Peru', in Richard Adams and Dwight Heath (eds.), *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America* (New York, 1965), pp. 311–23; Anthony Leeds, 'The Concept of the "Culture of Poverty": Conceptual, Logical, and Empirical problems, with Perspectives from Brazil and Peru', in Eleanor Leacock (ed.), *The Culture of Poverty: A Critique* (New York, 1971), pp. 226–84; Jorge Balán, Harley Browning and Elisabeth Jelin, *Men in a Developing Society* (Austin TX, 1973), pp. 317–23.

[17] Xavier Albó, 'La Paz/Cukiyawu: The Two Faces of a City', in Teófilo Altamirano and Lane Hirabayashi (eds.), *Migrants, Regional Identities and Latin America Cities* (Arlington VA, 1995), pp. 113–50; Lane Hirabayashi, *Cultural Capital: Mountain Zapotec Migrant Associations in Mexico City* (Tucson AZ, 1993); Lourdes Arizpe, *Campesinado y migración* (Mexico City, 1985); Lourdes Arizpe, *Indígenas en la ciudad de México: el caso de las Marías* (Mexico City, 1975).

[18] Santiago Bastos and Manuela Camus, *Los mayas de la capital* (Guatemala City, 1995).

In Guatemala, the relative weakness of rural–urban property and commercial ties meant that place of origin did not determine urban residence and relationships as much in Guatemala City as it did in Lima and Huancayo in Peru.[19] Kinship, however, was an important part of coping with urban life in Guatemala City, as elsewhere in Latin America.[20] Also, my research and that of Lauren Bossen has shown that religion was an important source of material as well as emotional support for women in San Lorenzo, who were often the main breadwinners of the family due to the desertion or lack of contribution of the male head.[21]

The Making of the City

The focus on adapting to urban life highlighted two key elements of the nature of poverty and inequality in the ISI period. Poverty was a general condition that in terms of low income and poor facilities constrained the lives of most of the urban population, but it did not prevent them actively seeking to improve their situation. Despite Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty thesis, I and others found no evidence that the urban poor were mired in fatalism.[22] Likewise, inequality, while clearly apparent in housing and lifestyles, was not perceived by my poor informants as a structure excluding them or their children from the possibility of obtaining education, employment and shelter. For rural migrants, the city offered opportunities for work, improved housing and education for their children. Among the first generation of migrants, poverty did not provoke violence or radical politics.[23]

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[19] Bryan R. Roberts, 'The Interrelationships of City and Provinces in Peru and Guatemala', in Wayne Cornelius and Felicity Trueblood (eds.), *Latin American Urban Research*, vol. 4 (Beverly Hills CA, 1974), pp. 207–35; Norman Long and Bryan R. Roberts, *Miners, Peasants and Entrepreneurs: Regional Development in Central Peru* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 161–4.

[20] Larissa Lomnitz, *Networks and Marginality: Life in a Mexican Shantytown* (Orlando FL, 1977); Mercedes González de la Rocha, *The Resources of Poverty: Women and Survival in a Mexican City* (Oxford, 1994).

[21] Bryan R. Roberts, 'Protestant Groups and Coping with Urban Life', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 73, no. 6 (1968), pp. 753–67; Laurel Bossen, *The Redivision of Labour: Women and Economic Choice in Four Guatemalan Communities* (Albany NY, 1984), pp. 188–245.

[22] Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty* (New York, 1968), pp. xlii–lii; Roberts, *Organizing Strangers*, pp. 5–6; Leeds, 'The Concept of the "Culture of Poverty"', pp. 226–84; Larissa Lomnitz, 'The Social and Economic Organization of a Mexican Shantytown', in Cornelius and Trueblood (eds.), *Latin American Urban Research*, vol. 4, pp. 135–56; Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, pp. 146–9; Moser, *Ordinary Families, Extraordinary Lives*, pp. 10–11.

[23] Joan Nelson, 'The Urban Poor: Disruption or Political Integration in Third World Cities?', *World Politics*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1970), pp. 393–414.

A key to understanding why even the poor saw opportunities in their environment is the informality of many of the rapidly growing cities of Latin America. Poor migrants and city-born people could see themselves as 'making' the city because that is what they did, in terms of both work and housing. An important part of adapting to the city in this early period was the informal pattern of settlement. The Latin American city in the mid-twentieth century showed a chaotic pattern of urban development. Neither markets nor government planning ordered the city's ecology into clearly defined zones of commerce and industry, or of working-, middle- and upper-class residential areas. Land invasions, ambiguous or contested land titles, and the ease of subdividing land into building plots without providing infrastructure generated a heterogeneous pattern of residential and business settlement. Lúcio Kowarick labelled the process 'the logic of disorder', referring to the speculative, ad-hoc ways in which areas of the city were urbanised through the combined efforts of politicians, developers and people seeking cheap accommodation.[24] The low incomes of the majority of the Latin American urban populations meant that there was little incentive for the private sector to build extensive middle-class suburbs on the US model, nor to provide housing for the working class.

Government-constructed housing for the working class was relatively uncommon until recently; the housing that was built tended to go to the middle class. Consequently, self-construction was the rule rather than the exception. Squatter settlements and other types of informal habitation occupied both peripheral and central locations. Low-income housing appeared even in zones mainly occupied by the wealthy. At times, this was facilitated by topography, as in the hillsides of Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City or the ravines of Guatemala City, but even in relatively flat cities, squatter settlements or semi-legal low-income housing found their way into the interstices of high-income neighbourhoods, such as the squatter settlement Villa La Cava, in the middle of the wealthy neighbourhood of San Isidro in Buenos Aires.

There was no one path of settlement in the city. The influential argument of John Turner posited a model of first seeking cheap rental accommodation in the central city, which made it easier to seek work, and then eventually moving to an irregular settlement on the urban periphery in order to self-construct housing to meet the needs of a growing family.[25] Migrants also settled directly in more peripheral locations, however, as argued by Perlman for Rio de Janeiro and in Ward's analysis of patterns in Mexico City in the

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[24] Lúcio Kowarick, 'The Logic of Disorder: Capitalist Expansion in the Metropolitan Area of Greater Sao Paulo', Discussion Paper, Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, 1977.

[25] Turner, 'Housing Priorities', pp. 354–63.

1970s.[26] Renting remained an important means of access to the city and to locating close to jobs.[27] Most studies reported, though, that after some initial residential mobility, migrants became long-term residents of neighbourhoods, whether in legal or illegal settlements. Thus, even in neighbourhoods where tenure was precarious, most residents had lived there over the long term. In a 1993 survey of 61 precarious settlements of Guatemala City, Morán found that most households had lived in their settlement for ten years or more, and with longer residence, their housing was more likely to be built with solid materials.[28] Obtaining housing, upgrading it with time and working with neighbours to improve neighbourhood amenities became in the 1970s and 1980s a major way in which even the poor could experience some improvement in their situation.

There was a clear synergy between informal settlement and finding jobs in the informal or non-state-regulated economy of self-employment and small businesses.[29] In many cities, informal settlements were close to city centres or to the residences of the wealthy, facilitating service employment and street vending. Self-construction was itself a source of informal employment, as owners hired labourers and craftsmen to build their houses. Also, the flexibility of construction in informal settlements meant that housing could accommodate workshops, shops and other domestic industries.[30] Even in formally settled neighbourhoods, zoning regulations restricting industry from locating inside residential locations were rarely enforced even when they existed. Lax government regulation stimulated many types of informal activity. The most successful entrepreneur in San Lorenzo in 1968 made his money by smuggling goods from Mexico to sell in the city, taking advantage of the tariffs that put a high price on legally imported goods.

In the Latin American ISI city, poverty and inequality were facts of life but not inflexible barriers to social mobility. Most researchers of the period did not view poverty as a social condition that required a government welfare policy. From the marginality perspective, the problem of the poor was their lack of integration into society and was to be remedied by education and community action aimed at promoting local organisation.[31] In cities such as Buenos Aires, where industrialisation had proceeded apace and formal work dominated, it was labour conditions rather than poverty that dominated the agenda. Gino Germani's classic *Estructura social de la Argentina* reviewed a host of social and political issues, such as social mobility, but had no section on poverty.[32]

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[26] Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, pp. 75–8; Peter M. Ward, *Mexico City: The Production and Reproduction of an Urban Environment* (Boston MA, 1990), pp. 52–3.

[27] Alan Gilbert and Peter M. Ward, *Housing, the State and the Poor: Policy and Practice in Three Latin American Cities* (Cambridge, 1985).

[28] Amanda Morán, *Condiciones de vida y tenencia de la tierra en asentamientos precarios de la ciudad de Guatemala* (Guatemala City, 2000), Table 16.

[29] Bryan R. Roberts, 'The Provincial Urban System and the Process of Dependency', in Alejandro Portes and Harley L. Browning, *Current Perspectives in Latin American Urban Research* (Austin TX, 1976), pp. 112–20.

[30] Bryan R. Roberts and John F. C. Turner, 'The Self-Help Society', in Wilsher and Righter (eds.), *The Exploding Cities*, pp. 126–37.

Levels of occupational mobility were high in the cities of Latin America in the 1970s as educational levels increased and economies moved structurally away from unskilled manual work and toward skilled and white-collar employment.[33] Even in Guatemala City there were high levels of structural mobility as white-collar service employment grew. Part of that growth was provided by state employment. Even in weakly developed states such as Guatemala, public employment was estimated in 1989 as comprising almost 17 per cent of the city's labour force and 27.5 per cent of the formal sector labour force.[34] These figures are comparable to countries that had extensive bureaucracies, such as Argentina, where the public sector accounted for 52 per cent of non-manual workers, or Mexico, where the public sector comprised 17 per cent of total employment in 1980.[35] In the 1970s the Guatemalan state provided some 4,000 houses mainly for its mid-level employees, offering them finished homes with utilities and neighbourhood parks and facilities.[36]

Change and Guatemala City 40 Years On

At first sight, the ending of ISI and the increasing integration of Latin America into the global economy mark a radical break for the cities of the region. Neoliberal economic policies opened markets (including land markets), privatised state-run enterprises, de-regulated labour markets and led to increased foreign direct investment (FDI). In the cities, the private sector had a greater freedom than in the past to provide housing, transport and communications infrastructure, and to develop large-scale commercial enterprises such as megastores and shopping malls. Alejandro Portes and I characterised the new urban environment in Latin America as 'The Free

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[31] Roger Vekemans and Jorge Giusti, 'Marginality and Ideology in Latin American Development', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 5, no. 11 (1969), pp. 221–34.

[32] Germani, *Estructura social de la Argentina.*

[33] Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), *Transformación ocupacional y crisis social en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile, 1989).

[34] Juan Pablo Pérez Sáinz, Manuela Camus and Santiago Bastos, *Todito, todito es trabajo: indígenas y empleo en Ciudad de Guatemala* (Guatemala City, 1992), Table 1.6.

[35] De Oliveira and Roberts, 'Urban Growth and Urban Social Structure', pp. 284–5.

[36] Manuela Camus, *La colonia Primero de Julio y la 'clase media emergente'* (Guatemala City, 2005).

Table 2. *Selected Indicators of Development in Guatemala, Argentina and Mexico*

Region and country	% urban in 2000	Rate of population growth, 1990–2000	Value added % GDP, 2000		GDP per capita, 2000	FDI net at current US$ in 2000, millions
			Agriculture	Industry		
Argentina	90.1	1.3	5	28	7703	9,517
Mexico	74.3	1.7	4	28	5935	17,977
Guatemala	45.1	2.3	23	20	1718	230

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators (WDI) database, http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators, accessed 8 Sep. 2009.

Market City', basing our interpretation on studies by colleagues in Buenos Aires, Lima, Mexico City, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro and Santiago.[37] We identified a set of social problems that accompanied the economic changes in the six cities: high levels of income inequality; job instability and informal employment, particularly marked in cities such as Buenos Aires and Montevideo, which previously had low levels of informality; a residential segregation marked by an increase in small-scale segregation through the proliferation of gated communities throughout the city; and increasing rates of crime and violence.[38]

The case of Guatemala City fits this profile, but in an exaggerated form as a result of the slow and unbalanced development of its economy and its tenuous insertion into the global economy. Up until 2000, the value added by agriculture in Guatemala to the country's GDP was greater than that added by industry. This is in sharp contrast to Argentina and Mexico, whose agricultural sectors contributed relatively small amounts to its GDP (see Table 2). Table 2 shows that in 2000, Guatemala was still primarily a rural country and had a rate of population increase that was higher than that of either Argentina or Mexico; it also shows that the GDP per capita was substantially lower than that of Argentina or Mexico.

Guatemala is less tied to global investments than most other Latin American countries, receiving between 40 and 80 times less FDI than either of the other two countries (see Table 2). FDI has grown rapidly in recent years in Latin America, increasingly concentrating in 'urban' investments such as communications, financial services (including real estate) and commerce. Only a minority of FDI is now placed in the traditional areas of agriculture and the manufacturing industry. In the first years of the new millennium, Guatemala has succeeded in increasing its value added through industry and also its FDI flow, which totalled US$ 658 million in 2007. Much of this has been due to investment in textile plants exporting to the US market; largely Korean-owned, these plants are located mainly to the south of Guatemala City and employ some 113,000 workers.[39]

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[37] Alejandro Portes and Bryan R. Roberts, 'The Free Market City: Latin American Urbanization in the Years of the Neoliberal Experiment', *Studies in Comparative National Development*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2005), pp. 43–82.

[38] Portes, Roberts and Grimson (eds.), *Ciudades latinoamericanas*.

Guatemala has high income inequality, with the urban Gini coefficient barely changing between 1989 (.558) and 2002 (.524). The percentage of the city's labour force working in the informal sector was approximately 57 per cent in 1964 and 49 per cent in 2004.[40] Other estimations put the contemporary percentage of informal sector workers as much higher.[41] Neoliberal reforms in Guatemala may actually have energised the heterogeneous collection of activities that comprise the informal sector through the import of cheap goods and reduced government control of markets.

People that we interviewed in both neighbourhoods were positive about their economic situation, seeing crime rather than economic opportunities as limiting their possibilities. Self-employed workers abound in San Lorenzo today just as they did in 1968, with occupations such as tailoring, street sales, car repair and painting, and television repair work. The current most successful entrepreneur in San Lorenzo makes his money through distributing contraband goods as did his predecessor in 1968, through a chain of street sellers, renting space in his house to some of these. The contemporary contraband business is no longer based on avoiding tariffs. It is a product of neoliberal reforms that create incentives for the political and military elites to siphon off a proportion of private sector imports to be sold without sales taxes through intermediaries in the numerous markets that crowd the streets at the centre of Guatemala City. Apart from the vibrancy of the informal economy, an important factor that makes people in both neighbourhoods relatively positive about their economic situation is the fact that they have no golden age of the past to regret; this is in sharp contrast with the worsening situation of Buenos Aires, where the percentage of informal sector workers went from 12.9 per cent to 44.1 per cent and the Gini index went from .411 to .540 between 1980 and 2002.[42]

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[39] See Vestex Guatemala website (www.vestex.com.gt/vx/), accessed 8 Sep. 2009.

[40] Deanne Lanoix Termini, 'Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Population of Guatemala City', unpubl. MA thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1968, Table XVIII; José Florentín Martínez, *El proceso de urbanización en Guatemala* (Guatemala City, 2006), Table 3.28. The informal sector is measured by the non-professional self-employed, unpaid workers, domestic servants, non-professional workers and owners of enterprises of five or less workers. In Termini's statistics it is measured by lack of social security coverage, which is likely to result in a higher estimate of informality.

[41] Federico Estrada, 'Migración, inserción laboral y redes: nuevas formas de inserción socio-económica en la Ciudad de Guatemala', in Jesús García-Ruiz (ed.), *Identidades fluidas, identificaciones móviles* (Guatemala City, 2006).

Rethinking Migration

Migration patterns in Guatemala show a greater break with the predominantly rural–urban migrations of the past and more similarities with other Latin American countries than might be expected from Guatemala's low level of urbanisation. Important explanatory factors are the ethnic divide in Guatemala and its troubled recent history. The earthquake of 1976 had severe negative impacts on the economies of the rural poor, as did the brutal civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Guatemala's population, mainly in the indigenous rural areas to the west of the country.

The resultant instability led to a rise in migration from the affected areas; the metropolitan area of Guatemala did not show any unusual rise in population during these years, however, with other, less urban regions showing more rapid growth in each of the intercensal years of 1964–73, 1973–81, 1981–94 and 1994–2002.[43] The dense indigenous populations to the west of the country had not migrated substantially to the city in the 1960s, and despite an increase in the 1980s, their share of the city's population remains very low. They, like many other Guatemalans, have sought refuge elsewhere, mainly in the United States, but also in Mexico.

As was the case in the 1960s, Guatemala City is predominantly made up of owner-occupiers, with some 70 per cent of households owning the places where they live; these buildings range from the modest concrete-block houses of the poor to the mansions of the rich. The major zones of renting are Planificada, at the north-western edge of the city, where renters are just over half the population, and the more centrally located Zone 8, where 47 per cent of households are renting. In Zone 5, where San Lorenzo is located, 30 per cent of households are renters.[44] In the heavily populated metropolitan municipalities, owner-occupiers are also the majority, as a consequence of the waves of squatter settlement and irregular subdivisions offering cheap housing to those living in overcrowded conditions in the central city. In 1964, some 61 per cent of the population of the municipality of Guatemala was born in the city, compared to 77 per cent in 2002.[45] This latter proportion is similar to the 70.4 per cent reported for the central city of Buenos Aires in 1999, and the 77 per cent reported for the Federal District of Mexico in 1999.[46] In contrast, the outlying metropolitan municipalities of Guatemala City show 52.6 per cent of their population born in those municipalities in 2002, but an additional 24.7 per cent of their population born in the central city. The central city is now predominantly a city of people who were born there. Of those that leave, over 80 per cent now live in the outlying metropolitan municipalities.

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[42] Portes and Roberts, 'The Free Market City', Table 2.

[43] Martínez, *El proceso de urbanización*, Table 2.14.

[44] These data are taken from the microdata of the 2002 *XI Censo de Población* of Guatemala (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2004).

[45] Termini, 'Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics', p. 15; Martínez, *El proceso de urbanización*, Fig. 49.

This pattern occurs elsewhere in Latin America, where many of the cores of the large cities began to report net losses of their populations in the early years of the twenty-first century, as in the case of Mexico City in 2000. As the metropolitan areas of cities grow, a considerable part of total residential moves are within metropolitan areas, particularly moves from the old cores of the cities, such as the Federal District of Mexico and the City of Buenos Aires, to their outer metropolitan rings. Emilio Duhau has analysed the population exchange between core and periphery in Mexico City, in which the poor are pushed out of the core through redevelopment and lack of space and the wealthy return to the core to occupy new condominium developments or gentrified central areas.[47]

Demographic changes contribute to this population dynamic. Fertility has declined everywhere in Latin America, so that rates of population growth are converging below 2 per cent. Average family sizes are now smaller than they were in the mid-twentieth century. Family structure is also changing, with extended families comprising a smaller percentage of households than in the past and with higher percentages of households made up by a single person, a single parent or couples without children. These changes in structure increase the number of households as couples break up and because the decline in extended family households means that children leave their parental household upon marriage or to live alone. These trends combine with previous high levels of fertility to drive intra-urban mobility.

The restudy of the two Guatemalan settlements first studied in 1968 illustrates these migration and demographic dynamics. There is considerable continuity in residence in both settlements, with the surveys showing that the average length of residence in San Lorenzo is 37 years; Planificada owners likewise have an average length of residence of 37 years. Renters in Planificada have been living for an average of 18 years in the neighbourhood and an average of eight years in the same rental. Although Planificada's large rental market could potentially attract recent migrants from outside the city, 60 per cent of renter household heads in Planificada have either lived all their lives in Planificada or come from another zone of the city. A further 31 per cent come from the outlying municipalities of Guatemala City's metropolitan area. The relative absence of rural migrants is highlighted by the fact that just 9 percent of renter heads of household came to Planificada from outside the metropolitan region of Guatemala City.

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[46] Bryan R. Roberts, 'Citizenship, Social Policy and Population Change', in Christopher Abel and Colin Lewis (eds.), *Exclusion and Engagement* (London, 2002), pp. 111–30.

[47] Emilio Duhau, 'División social del espacio metropolitano y movilidad residencial', *Papeles de Población*, vol. 36 (2003), pp. 161–210.

Despite the continuity in family residence revealed by the restudy, there has been considerable residential mobility among the families of the original informants. When the study was done 40 years previously, there was an average of three children per household in San Lorenzo. In the succeeding years, these children grew up, married and had children themselves. Space is at a premium in San Lorenzo. Although two-thirds of current respondents have added a second floor to their original house, there is not enough space to accommodate the increase in population. In Planificada, the lots were originally much larger and could have lent themselves to the type of remodelling to accommodate extended families that has been noted elsewhere in Latin America. However, renting space has proved a more attractive alternative to most lot owners, who stress in interviews how renting has become one of the most reliable sources of income in the city.

In both settlements, the families of the original residents have dispersed. In San Lorenzo, 19 per cent of the children or grandchildren of the original residents are still living in the same house, but 30 per cent have moved elsewhere in the same neighbourhood, 36 per cent have moved elsewhere in the city, 4 per cent have moved elsewhere in Guatemala and 11 per cent have moved to the United States. In Planificada, 22 per cent of the children or grandchildren of the original residents are living in the same house, 31 per cent are living in the same neighbourhood, 35 per cent are living elsewhere in the city, 1 per cent are living elsewhere in Guatemala and 12 per cent are living in the United States. Compared to 1968, international migration has become a much more evident feature of both neighbourhoods. Indeed, 32 per cent of household heads in Planificada and 59 per cent of household heads in San Lorenzo reported having siblings who are now living in the United States.

The family histories that we have collected suggest that these patterns result from the outcome of calculations that balance the need for space, the value of established community relations and the desire for new economic opportunities. Demographic pressures mean that a high proportion of people have to move out of overcrowded San Lorenzo, but they have the option of buying houses left vacant by those who have left the neighbourhood. One of the original informants that we re-interviewed was Lupe, the widow of Felix, a community leader and construction worker of indigenous background.[48] She identified nearly 60 descendants, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This family has remained tightly ensconced in San Lorenzo; its members help each other and see the neighbourhood as a supportive community. The children and grandchildren buy housing when it becomes vacant in San Lorenzo, so that they now own eight houses in the neighbourhood. Only one of the children has moved to a peripheral municipality. He is the only one of the children with a middle-class job, and his sons were the first in the family to complete college. He returns to visit every week despite now living far to the south in the city.

In two other cases, there has been more dispersion. The wife of one of my original informants, Don Luis, left him and moved to California, where two of his daughters also live.[49] He has two other children living in the south of the city, where they moved because of the job opportunities created by the textile *maquiladoras* and the availability of cheap land for building. One of these two is a return migrant from the United States. A third son lives in the north of the city, and another, Luisito, has migrated twice to the United States but has returned each time to San Lorenzo because, as he puts it, he feels more comfortable there than anywhere else. Another case is Beto, who was born in San Lorenzo and was a child when I was there in 1968. Only one of his siblings remains in Guatemala, living in the north of the city. Beto's two adult sons have stayed in Guatemala, one living with him and the other in a neighbourhood in the same zone as San Lorenzo. His mother left for the United States in the 1980s with another of Beto's brothers to join his two eldest sisters in Los Angeles. His eldest sister was the pioneer migrant of the family in the early 1970s; her move to the United States was, according to Beto, probably occasioned by her conversion to evangelicalism and her church contacts there.

Leaving the city and a poor neighbourhood is viewed as both a survival and a social mobility strategy. Even Luisito admits in an interview that he would go again to the United States despite his liking for San Lorenzo and Guatemala. Remittances from the US are used to improve or buy housing. Two new formally constructed houses in San Lorenzo, one of three floors and the other of four, have been built with remittances. The three-storey house belongs to a return migrant who proudly told me that he had built it with 11 years' work in Los Angeles. The bottom floor is used as a garage where he rents spaces for neighbours to keep their cars; this is a business that he established speculatively on his return even though at that time there were no roads into San Lorenzo and hardly any cars. Those of our informants in Planificada who had lived in the neighbourhood from the beginning commented extensively on how the neighbourhood had become mainly a

[48] Roberts, *Organizing Strangers*, pp. 55–6.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 133–4.

commercial and rental one. They cited examples of their neighbours who had gone to the United States and left their houses in charge of a relative, who had carried on a business there and rented out accommodation.

Inequality and the Consolidation of the City

In the contemporary period, marginality inadequately characterises the situation of the urban poor, who are now integrated into the city in terms of the provision of basic services, infrastructure and democracy, although their rising levels of education have not improved their job opportunities significantly. The term 'exclusion' better characterises contemporary inequality in the Latin American city, because it draws attention to the underlying processes that perpetuate disadvantage.[50] Exclusion also draws attention to actions that keep the poor in poverty, particularly those of the wealthy and the markets. In this section I use the data from Guatemala to look at exclusion as a phenomenon of urban spatial organisation, including the physical barriers that contribute to a growing gap between the quality of public and private provision of education and other services, that stigmatise the poor and that concentrate crime and violence in low-income neighbourhoods.

Research in Latin America, as elsewhere, shows that the characteristics of neighbourhoods have an effect on the employment and educational opportunities of residents over and above the effects of the residents' individual and family characteristics. In homogeneously poor neighbourhoods, the poor are more likely to be unemployed or to fail in school than are the poor in more socially heterogeneous neighbourhoods.[51] Despite the concentration of poverty on the periphery, Latin American cities remain relatively less residentially segregated than their US counterparts.[52] In the contemporary city, however, residential segregation is acquiring a new significance in contributing to inequality.

The contemporary patterns of segregation are more malignant and exclusive than in the past because of three cumulative changes. Firstly, there are the consequences of the physical and population expansion of cities. This expansion results in larger areas of homogeneously poor neighbourhoods, and in substantially increased distances between peripheries and centres, which Iracheta and Smolka see as exceeding an economically tolerable level in terms of travel costs.[53] Also, there is likely to be a worsening spatial mismatch between jobs and residence, as in the case of Mexico City, where the poor populations live at some distance from the major sources of employment as measured by the economic censuses.[54] Secondly, the middle classes and elites are able to escape the poor quality of public facilities through private education, private healthcare and gated neighbourhoods. Thirdly, whereas in the ISI period even becoming literate brought rewards in an expanding labour market where non-manual jobs were an ever-increasing proportion of the total, it is not literacy that makes the difference in the contemporary labour market but acquiring professional and high-level technical skills. Studies in Monterrey, Mexico, show that compared to the 1960s, education makes relatively little difference to income except at the very top of the occupational structure.[55]

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[50] Pierre Rosanvallon, *The New Social Question: Rethinking the Welfare State* (Princeton NJ, 2000), pp. 98–100.

[51] Ruben Kaztman, Fernando Filgueira and Fernando Errandonea, 'Respuesta de los sectores populares urbanos a las transformaciones del mercado y del territorio en Montevideo', in Portes, Roberts and Grimson (eds.), *Ciudades latinoamericanas*, pp. 441–508; Ruben Kaztman and Alejandro Retamoso, 'Residential Segregation in Montevideo: Challenges to Educational Segregation', in Roberts and Wilson (eds.), *Urban Segregation*, pp. 97–120.

[52] Roberts and Wilson (eds.), *Urban Segregation*, pp. 1–18; Francisco Sabatini, Gonzalo Cáceres and Jorge Cerda, 'Segregación residencial en las principales ciudades chilenas: tendencias de las tres últimas décadas y posibles cursos de acción', *Revista EURE*, vol. 27, no. 82 (2001), pp. 21–42.

These changes are evident in Guatemala City, but in a more exaggerated form as a result of a highly unbalanced pattern of economic growth and low levels of infrastructure development. In some major cities, such as Santiago de Chile and Buenos Aires, the pattern of residential segregation has been changed by the provision of superhighways that circle the city and give rapid access to the peripheries. Their impact on segregation is to increase small-scale segregation by breaking up the large-scale segregation associated with the homogeneously poor peripheral areas of the cities through the creation of gated communities in peripheral areas.[56] Guatemala City also now possesses a superhighway that circles the city and around which gated communities cluster. It is not complete, however, and access to the densely populated municipalities of the west and south of the city is limited by poor road links. The transport system in Guatemala has long been plagued with problems of old, overcrowded, unreliable buses. In 2007 a Transmetro system similar to that in Bogotá was introduced, but with only limited initial coverage.

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[53] Alfonso Iracheta and Martim O. Smolka, 'Access to Serviced Land for the Urban Poor: The Regularization Paradox in Mexico', *Economía, Sociedad y Territorio*, vol. 2, no. 8 (2000), pp. 757–89.

[54] Andrés Villarreal and Erin Hamilton, 'Residential Segregation in the Mexico City Metropolitan Area, 1990–2000', in Roberts and Wilson (eds.), *Urban Segregation*, pp. 101–18.

[55] Patricio Solis-Gutierrez, 'Structural Change and Work Lives: Transformations in Social Stratification and Occupational Mobility in Monterrey, Mexico', unpubl. PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2002.

[56] Sabatini, Cáceres and Cerda, 'Segregación residencial'.

Guatemala City's expansion has been a horizontal one, mainly extending some 20 miles towards the south and to the west, with little high-rise housing for low-, middle- or even high-income families in either the centre or the periphery. The city and its surrounding municipalities are more socially heterogeneous in terms of housing types and population than are most Latin American cities. Guatemala lacks the large-scale government housing projects and private investments that have built large homogenous tracts of middle- or low-income housing in cities such as Santiago.[57] Villa Nueva and Pinula, the southern municipalities that have been popular destinations for people leaving San Lorenzo because of the offer of large, cheap lots, contain large areas of older low- and middle-income housing, the largest squatter settlement in Guatemala (with a population of around 55,000), and several gated communities. One of the latter that we visited is adjacent to the squatter settlement and has two sets of walls and entrances to protect its residents.

The heterogeneity of most municipalities in the metropolitan area and of the city's 22 zones means a proliferation of relatively small gated communities throughout the metropolitan area, some purpose-built and some where walls and gates have been built around existing neighbourhoods at the residents' initiative.[58] Wherever you go in Guatemala City, there is physical evidence of a socially divided environment. One striking example is the recent enclosure by fences and gates of older low- to middle-income neighbourhoods across a major highway from Planificada. Planificada's boundary streets have also been blocked at some access points.

In various parts of the city, walls, guard posts and entrance roads have been built to monitor what are perceived as crime-infested neighbourhoods. Neighbours in El Gallito, a once socially heterogeneous neighbourhood in Zone 3 of the city, complained on the municipality website's 'Barrio Querido' section of the police closing 12 streets and leaving only three entrances and exits. The neighbours posted commentaries saying that this made life more difficult for residents and reinforced in the eyes of outsiders the neighbourhood's reputation as the home of criminals and drug traffickers.[59] In a similar vein, the new through road in San Lorenzo has created controversy within the neighbourhood between those seeing it as a police attempt to control illegal activities within the neighbourhood and those favouring it for that reason. In 1968, a through road would, I suspect, have been seen by almost all neighbours as a major sign of progress. Gating in Guatemala, then, serves the dual purpose of protecting the inside from the outside and the outside from the inside.

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[57] Manuel Tironi, *Nueva pobreza urbana: vivienda y capital social en Santiago de Chile, 1985–2001* (Santiago de Chile, 2003).

[58] Mario Alfonso Bravo Soto, *Proceso de Urbanizacion, segregación social, violencia urbana y 'barrios cerrados' en Guatemala 1944–2002* (Guatemala, 2007).

[59] See the 'Barrio Querido' section of the Municipality of Guatemala's website, at www.muniguate.com.

A city of walls is also likely to intensify educational segregation in the city.[60] At the primary level, public schools enrol some 54 per cent of Guatemala City's children, with the remainder attending private schools. The public schools serve small, relatively homogeneous areas such as San Lorenzo, whose primary school draws on the neighbourhood but loses children to what neighbours with more resources see as better private schools in the neighbourhoods above the ravine. At the secondary school level, segregation occurs mainly through families' varying ability to pay private school fees of at least US$ 40 a month. In Guatemala City, of the 40 per cent of children who attend secondary school, public schools educate 22 per cent and private schools educate 78 per cent.[61] Private secondary schools are concentrated in the centre of the city or close to the more middle-class zones of the city, entailing transport costs for those living in peripheral zones. One of our middle-class informants from Planificada arranges for her children to go to a city-centre private school, a journey that could take up to an hour.

These patterns of segregation are associated with high levels of crime and violence that make Guatemala City one of the most dangerous cities in Latin America. Insecurity is a general feature of urban life in Guatemala; it is a constant theme in all our current interviews in San Lorenzo and Planificada, and one that was almost absent in the 1960s. Various factors explain the high levels of crime and violence present in the city. Persistent poverty, unemployment and lack of good job opportunities, particularly for the young, are important explanations. There are at least 14,000 gang members in the city, predominantly aged between eight and 24.[62] They are concentrated in certain peripheral zones of the city and in outlying municipalities. These are a 'second generation' that experience the city as a place that frustrates rather than helps them realise their aspirations, unlike their migrant parents or grandparents, who found jobs and acquired housing and basic amenities.[63] The insecurity and availability of firearms associated with Guatemala's long civil war and the expulsion of Guatemalan gang members from the United

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[60] Teresa P. R. Caldeira, 'Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation', *Public Culture*, vol. 8 (1996), pp. 303–28.

[61] *Anuario estadístico de educación, 2007* (Guatemala City, 2008), accessed through www.mineduc.gob.gt/estadistica/2008/main.html.

[62] United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment, Annex 2: Guatemala Profile* (Washington DC, 2006).

[63] Roberto Briceño-León and Verónica Zubillaga, 'Violence and Globalization in Latin America', *Current Sociology*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2002), pp. 19–37.

States in the 1990s are other factors in the formation of armed gangs (*maras*) throughout the city and metropolitan area. These gangs survive by robbery (including bus robberies), kidnapping and drug dealing. The victims are predominantly low-income populations who cannot afford the private security that protects middle- and high-income areas and businesses. Even gated communities cannot escape insecurity, however. The leader of the gang accused of the murder of the Guatemalan attorney Rodrigo Rosenberg lives in a gated community in the south of the city, with other gang members living close by.[64] He is an ex-policeman, as is one of his associates; two members of the gang are current members of the police force, and another is an ex-soldier.

As has been reported for Rio de Janeiro, communities like San Lorenzo learn to live with drug dealing.[65] In interviews, San Lorenzo residents recognised the presence of drug dealing and the violence occasionally associated with it but stressed that they still felt safer in the neighbourhood, where neighbours know each other, than on the outside, where they were prey to random crime and violence. Luisito, despite being robbed at gunpoint on a city bus shortly before one of our meetings, insisted that he felt safer in San Lorenzo than anywhere else because he was familiar with his neighbours and they with him.

Planificada informants worry about insecurity in the neighbourhood, which they see as having worsened over the years and whose visual sign is the prevalence of iron gratings covering shop fronts in most street businesses. Neighbourhood businesses pay protection money to gangs on a regular basis. The informants comment, however, that insecurity is bad throughout the city and that little is to be gained by leaving. This kind of calculation is also made by renters. One informant renting in Planificada has two daughters and one son, and the family is middle-class. The parents have been looking for housing with one of the daughters, who is engaged to a government employee. They want to buy a house, but say that the neighbourhoods where prices are affordable are too insecure and remote ('*bien adentro*'); consequently, they have chosen to continue renting in Planificada until a suitable low-cost property comes on the market in the neighbourhood.

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[64] *Prensa Libre*, 12 Sep. 2009, www.prensalibre.com.

[65] Alba Zaluar, 'Perverse Integration: Drug Trafficking and Youth in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2000), pp. 653–71; Licia Valladares, Edmond Préteceille, Bianca Freire-Medeiros and Filippina Chinelli, 'Río de Janeiro en el viraje hacia el nuevo siglo', in Portes, Roberts and Grimson (eds.), *Ciudades latinoamericanas*, pp. 123–80.

Changes in Civil Society

In our case studies, we have shown that the organisation and goals of urban popular movements vary dramatically between the six cities.[66] There is, however, a common underlying matrix that is the changing class and spatial structure of Latin American societies during the neoliberal period; to explain the variation, we emphasise prior experiences of mobilisation and, importantly, differences between cities in the kinds of relationships that have developed between states, NGOs and citizens as a result of administrative and social policy reform. These new social policies decentralise administration, target low-income populations and directly and indirectly promote community and NGO participation. We argue that, depending on the capacity of the state, the reforms result in more pervasive relationships between governments and citizens, which encourage but also fragment grassroots responses to the challenges of the Free Market City.

The experiences of the two neighbourhoods (and particularly San Lorenzo) over 40 years provide an opportunity to explore these hypotheses with longitudinal data. The caveat here is even stronger than in the case of rethinking migration and inequality. Guatemala is, in many respects, a worst-case scenario of a failed state plagued by violence whose citizens have increasingly chosen the exit option in Hirschman's trilogy of exit, voice and loyalty.[67]

The consolidation of democracy in the face of military rule has been fragile. The Christian Democrat party and its affiliated movements had begun to establish a strong grassroots presence in the city when I was there in the late 1960s.[68] The party failed to establish a strong political base that made it independent of the military and economic elites, however, and it disintegrated at the beginning of the new millennium. Urban and national politics are today dominated by a number of parties of recent formation that are closely identified with particular leaders. None of them has a strong or consistent electoral base. A telling indicator of the continuing weakness of governing institutions is the prevalence of private security forces guarding gated communities and neighbourhood businesses. These outnumber the national police force, with approximately 80,000 private security guards compared to 18,500 police officers.[69]

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[66] Bryan R. Roberts and Alejandro Portes, 'Coping with the Free Market City: Urban Collective Action in Latin America at the End of the Century', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2006), pp. 57–83.

[67] Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States* (Cambridge MA, 1970).

[68] Roberts, *Organizing Strangers*, pp. 320–7.

[69] USAID, *Gang Assessment*, *Annex 2*.

In other respects, Guatemala City shows the trends in state–civil society relations that are occurring elsewhere in Latin America. There are some 300 NGOs located in Guatemala City, both national and international, many of which provide social and economic services to the urban low-income population. In 1968 the NGO presence in the city was very limited, apart from religious organisations, both Protestant and Catholic. These latter organisations have also grown in number, and several of them have missions in San Lorenzo, where students from North America are sent to distribute food and provide literacy or other training programs for neighbourhood inhabitants. San Lorenzo has a kindergarten and primary school set up by an Indian-origin educational movement for peace and harmony. Recently a computer training facility has been established with NGO funds in the communal centre of the neighbourhood, with over 20 computers. In general, projects to improve irregular settlements in the city are mainly financed with help from NGOs, international agencies or foreign governments, with Guatemalan government or municipal agencies providing technical assistance.

Guatemalan government has modernised considerably in recent years, providing internet access to its ministries and following international standards in applying surveys and censuses. It has also collaborated with the World Bank and a number of other international organisations (the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Soros Foundation and the International Labour Organization) to develop a state-of-the-art national poverty plan, the Guatemala Poverty Assessment Program (GUAPA).[70] The *Secretaría de Planificación y Programación* (Ministry of Planning, SEGEPLAN) promotes the new social policies of targeting, decentralisation, multiculturalism and participation that have become standard in Latin America.[71]

Although Guatemala City lacks an effective metropolitan authority, the municipality has an active policy of community development and outreach. Its website promotes local community identity through the 'Barrio Querido' section, which features the histories of low-income urban neighbourhoods including Planificada and a neighbourhood adjoining San Lorenzo, records the memories and opinions of residents, and reports on current activities and organisation. The municipal government has organised the municipality into 14 districts, 54 delegations and 700 neighbourhood committees, and these have generated a further 300 security committees responsible for patrolling the streets. Whereas in 1968 there was little formal municipal presence in

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[70] World Bank, *Poverty in Guatemala* (Washington DC, 2003).

[71] See the ministry's website, at www.segeplan.gob.gt.

San Lorenzo, there is now an official neighbourhood committee of nine members and a municipal representative, all of whom are active in promoting the neighbourhood's welfare.

Our interviews with neighbours and leaders in San Lorenzo are still under way, and provide only preliminary insights into the changes in community organisation. Projects of neighbourhood improvement continued after those described in 1968, and San Lorenzo has had a relatively continuous history of neighbourhood committees and participation in neighbourhood projects, of which the most important are a neighbourhood primary school, a municipal clinic, provision of piped water to houses, providing concrete surfaces for the roads and alleys of the neighbourhood, and building a through road that links San Lorenzo to the centre of the city. Women have been as active as men in leadership positions, as Bossen makes clear.[72] One example is María, a long-term resident of San Lorenzo; a somewhat volatile member of community organisations in 1968, she later became president of the Betterment Committee and an effective community leader who helped obtain the school.[73] She, like other former leaders, retains clear memories in our current interviews of the value of collective organisation in the neighbourhood, detailing the various projects and giving dates for the arrival of water, electricity, drainage, schools and clinic.

These leaders are also aware of the growing formality of a neighbourhood administration that began with ad-hoc committees to promote projects; these became officially recognised Betterment Committees, which then turned into the current *Comités Unicos de Barrio* (Neighbourhood Committees), with municipal officials organising the elections and distributing leaflets calling for meetings. Residents finally received official titles for their houses in 1998, and are an integral part of the city's administration and utility services; water and electricity meter readers now walk the alleys, a possibility that would have been unthinkable in 1968. Our neighbourhood interviewees calculate that they now spend some US$ 35 a month on utility payments, costs that were not present in 1968. They talk about the growth in drug-related violence, but emphasise the considerable improvements that have been made in the neighbourhood.

Contemporary leaders stress the value of collective action as much as they or their counterparts did in 1968, though they note that neighbours rarely join together in projects and the relationship with the municipality or NGOs is an individual one. Also, they claim that participation is not as extensive as it has been in the past – the mandated yearly meeting of the *Asamblea de Barrio* (Neighbourhood Assembly) rarely attracts more than 50 attendees.

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[72] Bossen, *The Redivision of Labour*, pp. 188–245.

[73] Roberts, *Organizing Strangers*, p. 327.

Collective action today, as in 1968, is not dominated by political parties. Leaders made clear in our interviews that the neighbourhood should seek to obtain what it needs by approaching every political party with candidates in a municipal or national election and seeing what they are prepared to offer. Luis had been active in neighbourhood committees in 1968, and though he worked for various political parties, he had been mainly sympathetic to those on the Left.[74] In 2009 he had retained his political sympathies, but was as clear as he was in 1968 that he is primarily a neighbourhood activist, ready to approach any political party for help.

Don Beto holds a municipal position that gives him responsibility for advancing infrastructure and social development in San Lorenzo. He has been active in promoting various projects, such as the through road and the computer centre. He even created a sophisticated PowerPoint presentation for meetings with potential donors in which he juxtaposed images of San Lorenzo from 1976 with pictures taken from the same position in 2008 to show the improvements in the neighbourhood. Beto's 28-year-old son, who lives with Beto, helped put together the presentation. He has finished secondary school and works as a gas meter reader. From the time that he was in secondary school, he has been active in city-wide projects sponsored by the Kansas-based organisation Children International. He likes San Lorenzo and sees it as having community spirit, dismissing its insecurity – '*hay mas peligro afuera que adentro*'. He is not interested in migrating to the US, where other members of his family live, and sees a future for himself in community organising.

Levels of awareness of political and international issues are much greater now than in the 1960s. Our informants talk knowledgeably about city, national and international events. Mobile phone and internet use is common in both San Lorenzo and Planificada, as is access to television. In other respects, however, the contrast with 1968 is far less sharp. Beto is a better informed, more self-assured and organised leader than his counterparts in 1968, but sees himself as working very much in their tradition, constantly invoking the achievements of the previous Betterment Committees. Current local leaders in San Lorenzo need to be adept at working with the city administration and national and international NGOs, but that was also the case in 1968 when municipal de-centralisation had begun. What is less evident now is involvement in city-wide coalitions to improve conditions in poor neighbourhoods. These had been present in the late 1960s and 1970s, in the form of city-wide organisations such as the *Movimiento Nacional de Pobladores* (National Movement of Settlers, MONAP) and the *Instituto para el Desarrollo Económico y Social de América Central* (Institute for Socio-economic

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[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 257.

Development in Central America, IDESAC), and the network of Women's Clubs.[75] These and other organisations that promoted city-wide movements of community development began to withdraw from San Lorenzo in the 1980s as political tensions and government repression grew. The last of those that I had known in 1968, IDESAC, withdrew in the late 1990s to concentrate on rural issues.

Conclusion

Re-studying migration and inequality through the lens of Guatemala reminds us that change is often more incremental than we might assume, and that making sharp contrasts between economic periods can be misleading. The way in which poor people adapt to urban conditions in 2009 is basically similar to the way in which they adapted in 1966 and 1968. Their reliance on mutual aid among family and neighbours is similar, as is the way in which they actively and eclectically seek the help of outside government agencies or national and international NGOs. Nowadays the poor in Guatemala are faced with a larger and more complex city, more insecurity and more difficult housing choices than they did in the 1960s. Unlike other cities in the region, however, Guatemala City has never been an industrial city with high levels of labour organisation and social protection for the working population. Our interviewees regret the passing of neighbourhoods secure from crime and violence, but they also value local community organisation, the gradual improvements in housing and the new economic opportunities made possible by international migration and a flourishing neoliberal informal economy. They have been badly let down and exploited by political and economic elites, but they never expected much of them in any event, other than individual favours and patronage. They continue to exemplify the concept of popular rational adaptation in which the poor seek means to cope instrumentally with the specific social and political context of their city in order to ensure survival, physical security and neighbourhood improvements.[76]

Despite the particularity of Guatemala City, the research issues seem clear. Migration is no longer the end point of the rural–urban transformation that results in finding, after a few trials, a permanent urban location. Instead, it has become part of the constant re-ordering of settlement in the large cities, particularly the metropolitan areas, as people, individually rather than collectively, seek accommodation that best meets their budgets and family stage and structure. It is also a starting point for city dwellers seeking to capture resources elsewhere in their country or abroad. The extent and consequences of these movements, including return to place of origin and the ties that are created, require more research than they have yet received.

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[75] *Ibid.*, p. 325; Bossen, *The Redivision of Labour*, p. 220.

[76] Alejandro Portes and John Walton, *Urban Latin America: The Political Condition from Above and Below* (Austin TX, 1976); Alejandro Portes, 'Rationality in the Slum: An Essay in Interpretative Sociology', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1972), pp. 268–86.

If we link urban inequality to social exclusion, we need to examine empirically the mechanisms by which this occurs. To what extent are there diminishing opportunities for social mobility, and how central have high levels of education become for obtaining the relatively few good jobs available in a city? To what extent are the poor excluded because they are locked into neighbourhoods where there are few local job opportunities and where schools are of low quality? Where once welfare was closely tied to work and the formal economy, it is now increasingly based on an individual household relation to the market and to the state. In cities like Guatemala, informality may spread wealth to the population through illegal as well as legal means more effectively than does the formal sector. Corporate, employer-based provision of welfare, negotiated by trade unions, slowly disappears. Inequality in this situation does not mean lack of opportunities for the poor, but lack of the means to assure a sustained improvement in their and their children's social and economic situation; neither education nor the labour markets provide that assurance. Only the highest levels of education guarantee a stable, well-paid job. The labour market does not easily lend itself to building a career in one firm or field of expertise because of the volatility of an increasingly globalised economy in which foreign investment comes and goes with changes in international trading agreements, as has happened in the Guatemalan textile industry. Spatial mobility becomes a means of securing opportunities, but equally, as we have seen, immobility is seen as a less risky strategy by many.

Rethinking inequality in this context entails separating the formal analysis of inequality from its substantive meaning. Formally, the urban social structure has become increasingly rigid as social mobility is reduced by an increasingly physical pattern of spatial segregation, deep divides in the quality of private and public provision in health and education, and the scarcity of managerial and professional positions. Substantively, inequality is obscured in Guatemala as in other Latin American cities by an improvement in living standards and the range of consumer goods accessible to the poor, by an insecurity that is shared by rich and poor alike, and by a likely decline in encounters between poor and rich, whether in the workplace, in public spaces or in markets or malls. The final aspects of contemporary inequality that need research are the ways in which inequality and poverty may be acquiring both new form and new meaning as they become the objects of social welfare policies that create new direct relationships between governments, NGOs and their client populations. As Simmel argued, when poverty is a relationship between a state and part of its population, then it becomes a relationship of second-class citizenship.[77] The poor are targets of state policy, and their receipt of aid comes in return for conforming to certain patterns of behaviour.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Este artículo se centra en las similitudes y las diferencias entre la organización urbana contemporánea y la existente en los años 60 en la ciudad de Guatemala y otras ciudades latinoamericanas, mayoritariamente utilizando la información tomada de un nuevo trabajo sobre barrios de bajos ingresos en la Ciudad de Guatemala que habían sido estudiados previamente por el autor. Se examina el impacto de patrones más agudos de segregación residencial, los cambios en las formas de migración, los elevados niveles de crimen y violencia y el incremento en las relaciones entre los pobres urbanos con actores externos, como gobiernos y ONGs. La desigualdad severa persiste, aunque está mediada por un mejoramiento en los estándares de vida, por la variedad de bienes de consumo accesibles a los pobres y por la adaptación basada en la comunidad y la familia.

Spanish keywords: segregación residencial, crimen y violencia, migración, desigualdad, organización comunitaria

Portuguese abstract. Baseando-se principalmente em dados obtidos em um estudo revisado acerca dos bairros de renda baixa na Cidade da Guatemala, este artigo concentra-se nas semelhanças e diferenças entre a organização urbana contemporânea e a da década de 1960 na Cidade da Guatemala e outras cidades latino-americanas. O impacto dos padrões de segregação habitacional mais desiguais, as mudanças nos padrões de migração, os níveis crescentes de criminalidade e violência e o aumento nas relações entre pobres urbanos e agentes externos, como governos e ONGs, são analisados. A desigualdade severa persiste, mas está sendo mediada por uma melhora em padrões de habitação, pela ampla gama de bens de consumo acessíveis aos pobres e por adaptações realizadas por comunidades e famílias.

Portuguese keywords: Segregação habitacional, crime e violência, migração, desigualdade, pobreza, organização comunitária

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[77] Georg Simmel, 'The Poor', in Donald Levine (ed.), *Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago IL, 1971[1908]).