

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Latin America's "Innerburbs": Towards a New Generation of Housing Policies for Low-Income Consolidated Self-help Settlements**

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#### **OLD SUBURBIA IN THE USA AND LATIN AMERICA COMPARED**

This research project addresses a “blind spot” in contemporary housing and policy analysis, namely the failure to recognize and better understand the characteristics, dynamics and policies directed towards the first wave of suburban development throughout the Americas. While this volume will focus upon nine Latin American countries that form part of the Latin American Housing Network (LAHN [www.lahn.utexas.org](http://www.lahn.utexas.org)), it is worth mentioning that one observes a parallel quickening of research and policy interest in what are called the “first suburbs” of the USA (Katz, Lang and Berube, 2006; Puentes and Warren, 2007). Scholars in the USA and the LAHN group are becoming increasingly interested in the dynamics of urban change and neighborhood and housing revitalization in the older consolidated former suburbs.

The 1950s through the early 1980s saw the first wave of US suburban development, much of it working-class and middle-class bungalow development. Research into the first suburbs of the USA shows characteristics frequently associated with urban decline in traditional city centers namely: elderly vestige populations trapped in their original homes; high proportions of recently arrived as well as established ethnic minorities; high levels of relative and absolute poverty; widespread housing dilapidation; anachronistic infrastructure; land-use changes from residential to mixed uses; struggling businesses and fiscal stress; weak and poorly performing real estate markets; and underutilized and fragmented commercial land. Today however, notwithstanding ongoing suburbanization, many of these inner suburbs are experiencing partial gentrification, upgrading and home remodeling, lot clearances and rebuilds, switching from low density to high density townhouses, and the construction of lower-end (cost) rental apartment complexes. All of these processes not only lead to significant physical changes in the nature of the neighborhood, but also make for major social changes and displacement. Communities become more mixed and heterogeneous and there is widespread population turnover or “churn” as it is often called. For

those whose lifestyles privilege urban rather than suburban living, and for those that can afford these buy-outs, one sees a “back to the city” movement that quickens as communities embrace the prime location, rehabilitated public spaces, pedestrian and cycle access routes, public transport, and a greater commitment to principles of urban and environmental sustainability (Lang, 2009; Lang and Lefurgy, 2007).

Latin America metropolitan areas have also experienced dramatic suburbanization albeit a decade or two later than their US counterparts, and while middle-class populations were also part of this process there was a major difference in so far as much of this expansion comprised very poor settlements in which un-serviced land was acquired informally by invasion and illegal land sales, with homes being self-built largely by poor migrants who had streamed into the cities some years previously (Gilbert and Ward, 1985). For them, low incomes and a lack of formal financing institutions to support home acquisition, meant increasing recourse to low-cost and informal methods of housing production, usually achieved through various methods of “spontaneous” and “irregular” land and housing development. Instead of moving to ready-made housing suburbs with services and infrastructure provided from the outset, as was the norm in the USA, these Latin American neighborhoods underwent gradual integration and physical upgrading over two or three decades. Communities in these incipient neighborhoods collectively organized themselves to open up access streets (albeit unpaved), and to hustle local authorities for services, legal recognition and secure property titles. Simultaneously individual households took responsibility for home building and improvement, albeit with considerable social costs of raising a family in such difficult living conditions. But it was a housing process that “works” (Turner, 1968), eventually evolving into working class neighborhoods that we observe today. Although these neighborhoods remain low-income, their visible levels of “consolidation” and permanence belie their illegal and shantytown origins.

In the USA successive rings of suburbanization and even expansion into the hinterlands (“exurbia”) continued apace (Berube et al. 2006; International Encyclopedia of Housing and the Home, 2012a). In Latin America almost all of the growth was suburban, primarily at the periphery, which expanded outwards through the formation of new irregular settlements. Thus many Latin American cities show first, second, and even third “rings” of suburban growth, even though the actual “ring” shape is sometimes distorted by local geography and topography. Since

2000 “exurban” settlements have also begun to feature in some metropolitan regions of Latin America, as private developers and construction companies, supported by national and local governments, have created massive housing estates for lower-income and lower-middle-income populations. In an age in which research and policymaking has begun to embrace ideas of urban sustainability, lower energy use, reduced carbon footprints, public and collective transit systems and smaller community-scale residential neighborhoods, such housing developments are clearly unsustainable and run counter to the ideas of densification and the more rational use of existing urban spaces. Janus-like, these developments present a face that looks in the opposite direction of the policy imperatives that we will outline in this study, namely, a face that looks backward and inward to policies of rehab and revitalization in the older suburbs.

One of the most significant differences when comparing Latin American and US first suburbs is the level of turnover and mobility. In the USA residential mobility is the norm, tied to upsizing and downsizing during the life course, job mobility, educational catchments, accessing valued amenities and so on, all of which are facilitated by a functioning housing market based primarily upon ability to pay. In Latin America, however, for worker populations, incomes are lower and relatively “flat” over the life span of employment, and family building takes place in situ through physical self-built home extensions and internal lot or dwelling subdivisions. As we shall observe in this volume, there is remarkably little mobility among these early pioneer homesteaders of the 1960s and 1970s, most of whom are now entering late middle age with little prospect of moving out: for them “a home is forever” (Gilbert, 1999; Ward, 2012).

In Latin America there is minimal turnover and one observes in-situ household expansion, the subdivision of dwellings and lots, the intensive use of rooms and living space, densification and overcrowding, and the rise of rental tenements and other economic uses of the home such that these neighborhoods are experiencing considerable stress and physical deterioration, not least since the dwelling unit itself may not have seen much, if any, retrofitting of pipes, appliances, wiring, and more energy efficient upgrades since these were first installed two or more decades ago.

Despite these extant problems, policymaking and research have in large part ignored these first suburbs, and instead their focus continues to be newer un-serviced irregular settlements at the

urban periphery, the proliferation of gated communities, and the future implications and needs of the massive social housing developments in exurbia. In short, the Latin American Housing Network is the first study to highlight some of the comparative research and initial policymaking approaches that identify the first suburbs as a unit of spatial and housing policy analysis ([www.lahn.utexas.org](http://www.lahn.utexas.org)).

## **LATIN AMERICAN IRREGULAR SETTLEMENT: THE PRODUCTION OF THE FIRST SUBURBS OR “INNERBURBS”<sup>1</sup>**

The story of 1950-80 suburban development in Latin America was in part a product of industrialization and province-to-city immigration (Gilbert and Ward, 1985; Roberts, 1994). Much of this suburban development was low-income informal settlement that was almost entirely unregulated and was the inverse sequencing of Planning – Servicing – Building – Occupancy (PSBO) that Baross (1990) described, in which occupation takes place first as self-builders acquire land illegally (by squatter invasion or illegal sales of land devoid of services and infrastructure). Lots are occupied immediately and homes are constructed through family self-build as households gradually extend and upgrade from initial flimsy shacks to brick-built and often two or three storey dwellings - a process that commonly takes 15-25 years to achieve widespread home and settlement consolidation.

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<sup>1</sup> In English terms often refer to suburbs and to “exurbia,” the latter referring to urban settlement in the hinterlands often at a considerable distance from the city limits. We have coined the term “innerburbs” in order to emphasize their spatial location which is invariably the old periphery – now the intermediate ring or first ring of the city. In the English text we will use the terms first suburbs and innerburbs interchangeably.

# Proceso constructivo

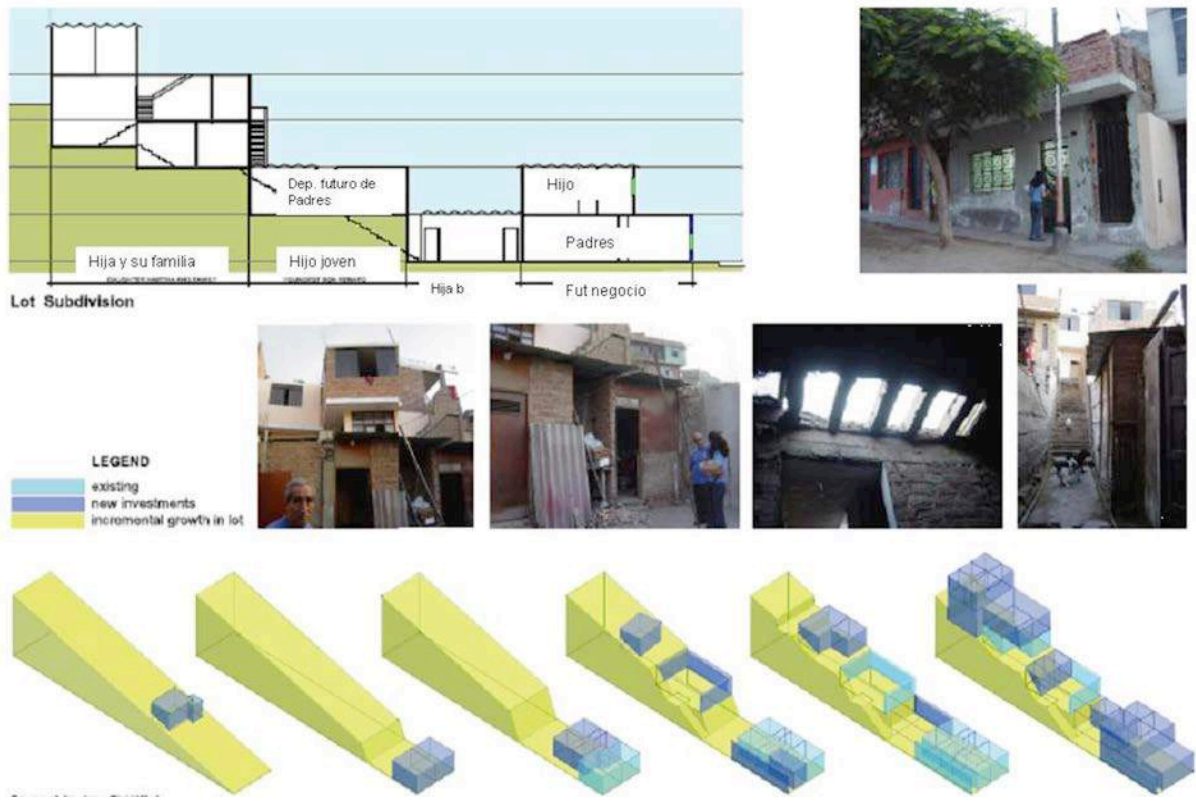


Figure 1.1. Gradual build out of home, Lima.

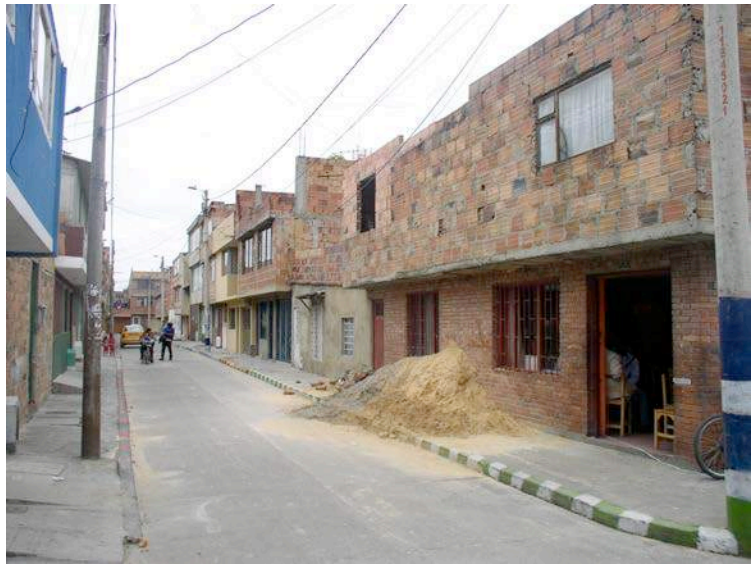
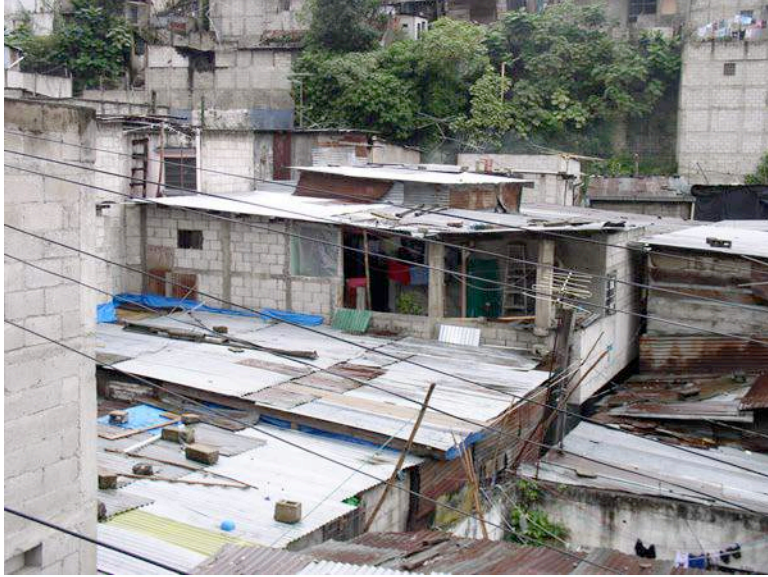


Photo 1.1. Consolidated street with ongoing self-help, Bogotá.



*Photo 1.2. Dilapidation and intensive use, El Esfuerzo, Guatemala City.*

Figure 1.1 depicts how this gradual dwelling expansion takes place on a lot over time, starting with a single room shack and progressing to a multiple room, two storey residence that ultimately may provide a residence for two or more households – those of the original parents and their second generation family of one or more of their now adult children. Alongside these self-help and community mutual-aid efforts, city governments gradually install basic infrastructure, provide legal titles to the land, pave streets, and retroactively bring these unregulated settlements into the planning and land registries (Gilbert and Ward, 1985). The end result is consolidated working class neighborhoods with mixed and heterogeneous levels of dwelling improvement, which few outsiders would recognize as having begun illegally as shanty developments at the (then) periphery (Photo 1.1.)

Meanwhile ongoing rapid urbanization and informal settlement development since 1980 have continued to push the periphery ever outwards. Today these first suburbs are embedded in the intermediate ring or zones of the city – relatively close to the city center and historic core – and constitute what we will refer to interchangeably as “first suburbs” or “innerburbs” (see footnote 1), and post-1980s growth has often created additional “rings” beyond. As mentioned previously, the majority of these settlements began informally, without legal title, and were largely (or completely) un-serviced. Over the years these working-class and low-income families

have built their own homes, adding rooms as their resources allowed, and as the family grew. Local authorities have undertaken the “regularization” of the neighborhoods, gradually providing basic services, often giving the original families full property titles, building schools and markets and extending social services, etc. Such is the physical consolidation of dwellings (Photo 1.1) and the complete provision of services, that most middle-class city residents are largely unfamiliar with the lowly and illegal origins of many of these poorer neighborhoods.

Moreover, in terms of physical structure, land use and land market behavior, social and demographic characteristics and dynamics, community organization, and dwelling problems these first suburbs are very different today than in yesteryear. After 30 or more years of intensive use, many of the dwelling structures and homes are heavily dilapidated (see images in Figure 1.1). Some homes have construction defects such as cracks and leaking roofs. Once improvised pit latrines dug in the early stages of occupancy retain their original locations, and while they are now connected to mains drainage, these toilets are invariably dark, damp and poorly ventilated. The same applies for bathroom and shower facilities. The original wiring and water pipes are inadequate or broken (as are some of the original secondary network services of drainage and water pipes under the street that were laid down in anticipation of a smaller neighborhood population). Unlike the churn observed in many US first suburbs, there has been minimal family turnover; indeed in a Bogotá and Mexico City study, 80 percent or more of the original families who arrived as self-builder de facto owners 25-35 years ago are still living on their lots – as almost all of the cases in this volume will attest. In the words of one author: “A Home is Forever” (Gilbert, 1999; see also Ward, 2012).

As we propose to show in this volume, notwithstanding their self-built and lowly origins, properties today have substantial value in these consolidated settlements, yet because the market is dysfunctional few are able to sell even if they wish to do so. Moreover, in many countries while property titles have been “regularized” and clean title has been provided to the de facto owner(s), the failure to transfer the title to the (relatively few) new owners who have bought in, or to sons and daughters who inherit, is leading to complications of new title informality and insecurity that is almost certain to further inhibit housing market sales and housing improvements.

Population densities are quite high, a result of family growth and subdivision and/or sharing the lot/dwelling with second-generation (now) adult sons and daughters and their families. In addition some lots have been turned over to low-income renting (where, as one would expect, there is considerable mobility or churn). Where lots and dwellings are shared with other members of the family, the physical organization of space, lack of privacy, poor air quality, and lack of planned design of the house, all are features that demonstrate that the contemporary configuration is often out of synch with the household's current needs, and urgently needs to be reconfigured. While few people had or aspired to have a private vehicle thirty years ago, today a significant minority owns a car or truck, but neither the self-built homes nor the streets are configured for appropriate parking or garaging. Finally, some of these neighborhoods have high crime rates and other severe social problems associated with drug use, gangs, crime, and urban poverty in general.

### **THE “INNERBURBS”: A NEW UNIT OF HOUSING ANALYSIS IN THE AMERICAS**

In the majority of cities each decade or two decades of suburbanization leads to the creation of a new “ring” or sector(s) of urban expansion. Invariably the innermost areas comprise the oldest suburbs, with the newest suburbs out on the periphery, and occasionally even further out – into exurbia. The idea of rings of growth associated with successive periods of suburbanization brings us to our principal spatial focus in this study: namely that of the “first suburbs” and “innerburbs.”

In order to begin to investigate these processes in greater detail and in comparative perspective for several Latin American cities, one of our first tasks is to develop a detailed typology and methodology that will permit us to describe and define the innerburbs.<sup>2</sup> This methodology and the resulting depictions are described for each chapter, but the Guadalajara team has done the most complete and insightful analysis and development of the GIS methods that were used (see Chapter 3). Here I only wish to outline some of our preliminary efforts and steps to analyze the first suburbs of US cities using the example cases of Austin, Texas, which we compared with Monterrey, Mexico as part of a 2008-9 class project at the University of Texas at Austin (LBJ, 2009; International Encyclopedia of Housing and the Home, 2012a).

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<sup>2</sup> Our first attempt included both one US and one Mexico city (Austin, Texas and Monterrey, Mexico) – see International Encyclopedia of Housing and the Home, 2012a.



First, for both cities (Austin and Monterrey), we started with historical records, maps, aerial photographs, planning legislation and records (where these existed) to determine what constitutes the central core of the city – usually a reticular grid from the nineteenth and early twentieth century with standard block and lot sizes, and sometimes associated with older commercial and industrial uses. Traditional residential areas often also form part of this central core although the nature of the blocks, lot sizes, and street patterns may differ. Second, using the same range of records, we delimited the built-up areas that developed beyond the core up until 1950, which we call the Inner Urban Areas (*Inurbas*).<sup>3</sup> Third, we used more recent records and aerial photography to define the most recent – post-1980s – suburban development. This allowed us to take the fourth step, which was to depict the innerburbs as those areas that fall *between the outer limits of the Inurbas and the boundary of the post 1980s development*. Detailed maps of the innerburbs that were constructed in this way are provided in Chapters 3 and 4 (Guadalajara and Mexico City/Monterrey respectively), and are not repeated here.

When we began to draw the boundaries for the innerburbs of Latin American cities we realized that a 1960 start date for suburbanization was more appropriate, since significant suburbanization (much of it spontaneous settlement) usually began a decade or two later than in the USA where the 1950-80 definition was appropriate and worked quite well. Thus it is sometimes helpful and necessary to distinguish between the earliest phase suburbs that formed in the late 1950s through the 1960s, with those that developed between 1970-80, and all three Mexican case study cities are broken out in this way. Once defined, we were then able to generate map displays for a number of variables such as income, education, and marginality, while connecting the settlements to different types of land appropriation such as the settlements that formed almost exclusively on *ejidal* land in the case of Guadalajara. While much of this development is low-income informal settlement, mapping spatial growth tied to GIS plotting of census data and other information also revealed variations and “hotspots” within the innerburbs that often include

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<sup>3</sup> In US cities areas that developed in the 1940s are also sometimes included in what the Brookings Institution researcher refer to as “first suburbs.”

higher-income neighborhoods, middle-income and gentrifying neighborhoods, as well as public housing projects.<sup>4</sup>

**THE RESEARCH PROJECT: “THE REHABILITATION OF CONSOLIDATED IRREGULAR SETTLEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICAN CITIES: TOWARDS A NEW GENERATION OF PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT”**

The research project that we report on in this volume is one of the first to systematically examine the contemporary social and household dynamics and public policy needs of low-income settlements that formed illegally in Latin America thirty to forty years ago. In the 1970s the primary goal was to investigate the nature and dynamics of households and communities in irregular (squatter-type) settlements in Latin American and other Third World cities, and to arrive at more accurate assessments about the nature of those settlements (Portes, 1972; Perlman, 1976; Ward, 1976; Lloyd, 1979). In policy terms this earlier work ultimately led to a major shift in approach, away from housing projects towards aided self-help for low-income irregular settlements (Turner, 1976; Ward, 1982; 2012).

That “paradigm shift” has been described in detail elsewhere (Ward, 2005), but briefly it comprised a change in the way in which irregular settlements were viewed and treated from the late 1970s onwards, when “slums” began to be seen as rational and viable responses by the poor given the incapacity of governments to undertake low-income housing production on a scale adequate to cope with rising urbanization. By that time irregular settlements in many Latin American and other developing countries often made up between 25-50 percent of the built-up area. Over a 15-20 year period, these settlements were physically upgraded and improved through the mutual aid activities of community residents, and through family organized self-help dwelling construction or “consolidation” as it came to be known. Starting with a rudimentary shack, incremental house construction allowed nuclear households to add rooms as needed and as their resources allowed: it was a flexible and pragmatic “architecture that works” (Turner, 1968; 1976; see also Figure 1:1 above).

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<sup>4</sup> In the US cases one also observes neighborhoods that contain high concentrations of ethnic and racial minorities: African American, Hispanics, and Asians.

Two earlier “generations” of aided self-help housing policy, which sought to improve these incipient settlements, can be identified from the 1970s onwards (Ward, 2005). The first was an “urban projects” approach whereby national housing policies became more supportive of these informally entrained processes, and the conventional policy wisdom changed to one of upgrading and installing services to such areas (rather than eradicating them, as had often occurred before [Perlman, 1976; 2008]).

Later, from the late 1980s, a second generation of policies emerged which provided less direct intervention in urban projects, and instead involved indirect policies that sought to strengthen operations of the land market, raise local institutional and governmental capacity, and improve housing actions in ways that were sustainable and less reliant upon direct state-led intervention (Gilbert and Ward, 1985). These involved more effective management systems, reduction or removal of subsidies, and greater expectations of cost recovery for services and improvements (Jones and Ward, 1994). Within that context of institutional strengthening and decentralization of policy-making to sub-national and local governments, the principal policy approaches towards irregular settlements continued to be those of upgrading and “regularization” often supported by major external funding agencies such as the IDB. These policies were framed within an institutional and administrative context that emphasized greater managerial autonomy, fiscal sustainability, public-private partnerships, legal titling, adherence to urban planning norms, etc. Indeed this policy direction continues today, especially targeting new irregular settlements forming at the urban periphery of cities (Ward, 2005).

However, since the 1980s and 1990s economic restructuring and neoliberal macro-economic policies have dramatically changed labor market structures and employment prospects for workers (Portes and Hoffman, 2003). A “new” poverty and new vulnerabilities have emerged among recent migrants, the elderly, female-headed households and the unprotected youth (Roberts, 2010). Moreover, democratic change has led to government decentralization and downsizing, and the privatization of social policy and devolution to local government (Wilson et al. 2008; Spink et al. 2012), such that there is an urgent need for a new phase of research and normative policy development – what we will describe as a “new generation” of housing policy – that is also embedded within a paradigm of sustainable and local government implementation.

But in this case it will address the challenges experienced by the first generation of self-builders, most of whom continue to live in the innerburbs some thirty or more years later.

### *Research Interest in the Innerburbs and Project Goals*

The research reported upon in this volume seeks to develop policy thinking beyond existing “regularization” and “upgrading” policies and addresses the largely unstudied issue of **housing rehabilitation** and **community revitalization**. We do so by focusing upon the older irregular settlements that were established some thirty or more years ago, and which despite their apparent full spatial and physical integration into the city fabric are invariably in urgent need of attention and policy support for revitalization. If these areas were not “slums” of the past (as many authors such as John F. C. Turner and others sought to argue), they could readily become the slums of today and of the future – if they aren’t already in some cases.

Part of the problem is that these dwellings were built gradually over time as families grew in size, and as resources allowed. Being self-built and low-cost, they relied upon little or no formal building skills, were rarely conceived according to a complete dwelling plan, and did not comply with safety norms and codes. That worked fine at the time, but 20-30 years later it has led to severe deterioration of the built environment (see Photo 1.2) Sometimes, as in Caracas or Mexico City in recent years, floods or earthquakes can lead to tragedy when such poorly built or severely dilapidated structures collapse, in part because of inadequate maintenance or because of a lack of more recent intervention to reconfigure and strengthen the physical structures of existing dwellings.

Equally important is the fact that the social composition of these settlements and households has changed markedly. As noted earlier, innerburb population densities have increased significantly, land uses are more mixed, and there is widespread renting and sharing of dwelling units (Varley and Blasco, 2003; Bouillon, 2012). And while the large majority of lots continue to be occupied by the original owners and their families, the household structure and size is now out of synch with the dwelling structure that evolved many years earlier. In this way, the dwelling layout, room access and usage are often not only distressed but also anachronistic to the household’s contemporary needs and space requirements.

Recently we have become more aware of a cross-generational dynamic, especially after some scholars have developed longitudinal assessments of the irregular settlements in which they first worked in the late 1960s and 1970s, and published restudies or cross-sectional analyses of households and settlements over a period of 20-30 years (Gilbert, 1999; Perlman, 2010; Moser, 2009; Roberts, 2011; Ward, 2012). At the time that these authors' began to study these settlements they were fledgling communities at the city periphery, whereas today they invariably form part of the innerburbs. These studies have not only allowed us to evaluate the process of matching household dynamics to the spatial and physical trajectories of dwelling consolidation over time, but now offer insights about how those housing assets will be passed on to the next generation household members.

Our expectation is that the research reported upon here and by others in the Latin American Housing Network (LAHN described below) will make a substantial contribution to sociological and urban theory in Latin America, as well as to more informed and sensitive public policy approaches for the future. Our findings intersect with theoretical and empirical debates on household organization and dynamics among first, second and third generations living in working class consolidated communities, and their residential trajectories through the life course. We offer insights about how residential space aids or constrains the survival strategies of those living in "new poverty" (González de la Rocha, 2001; 2004), and we identify second and third generation stakeholder interests in dwelling renovation and retrofitting. In short, our research speaks to key contemporary issues about urban ecological changes that are underway in inner and first-ring suburbs in Latin America.

Concretely, too, a central goal of our research is to contribute to **housing policy analysis** and to directly inform new normative approaches that will facilitate in-situ housing rehabilitation in older consolidated low-income settlements. To date, however, most urban renovation policies have focused upon inner-city redevelopment and cultural heritage restoration in the historic core. Our research conceives housing policy on a much wider-scale by targeting the older now deteriorated consolidated irregular settlements, and by describing new strategies of financing and credit that are more culturally sensitive and workable than those proposed by Hernando de Soto (2000) and his followers. We wish to elaborate policies of technical support about how to achieve in-situ remodeling and retrofitting in low-income communities, taking account of the

greater awareness and opportunities that exist today for the creation of more sustainable community and dwelling redevelopment. Another important goal is to evaluate and outline legal and financial instruments to facilitate stakeholder engagement, especially as it relates to succession and inheritance of the housing asset as these are passed to the second generation. At a broader level we hope to provide policy guidance about how best to improve housing and land market behavior, and to improve the access of second and third generations who currently have little prospect of sharing in home ownership.

In short, there has been too little public recognition and appreciation of the housing, land use and social development challenges that exist in Latin America's older suburbs. The general public, as well as most policy makers, assume that regularization and interventions that provided infrastructure in these former irregular settlements have largely resolved the problems that were faced, and that principal policy challenges and priorities continue to be located in the large areas of un-serviced and untitled land at the current periphery. While the latter remain valid and urgent concerns, our research seeks to redirect public policy towards the very real challenges that exist in the older (now) consolidated settlements located in the largely neglected innerburbs.

This volume presents many of the survey and research results and reflections by colleagues working in a collaborative research project in eleven cities across nine Latin American countries. Our goal is to shed light on the public policy imperatives for what are already extensive built-up areas of the city, as well as to add theoretically to a comparative understanding of the innerburbs within contemporary urban studies.

### *Specific Dimensions of Analysis and Broad Propositions*

Within the context of consolidated irregular settlements, most of which are located in the innerburbs, our project collectively sought to research and analyze a number of themes and issues. First the urban structure and dynamics of first suburb development and how, methodologically, these could be best analyzed and depicted. These first suburban rings form an increasingly important part of the housing stock, and relatively little was known about how the market functioned. We observed in the USA that because of their locational advantage close to the city center and existing infrastructure and investment, these areas were beginning to figure large in urban planning, sustainability, and community redevelopment strategies. Although we

anticipated that Latin American innerburbs would be very different, we also hypothesized that the inner ring would be key to future urban development and housing strategy – often for the same reasons as in the USA. Second, we wanted to examine the physical structure of consolidated settlements in the innerburbs, looking at what ultimately became three levels: those of the community, the street-house interface, and the actual state and organization of the dwelling environment. Here we were interested in the trajectory of the home construction over time, and the extent to which the current dwelling(s) served contemporary household and family structures. Specifically, what were principal challenges facing owners in recasting and rehabilitating the physical fabric of their dwellings after what was in many cases over a quarter of a century of intensive use. It was here that we were also interested in assessing the extent to which these challenges and settlements were on the policy agenda of national and local policy makers: we suspected that they were not, and one of our principal goals was to begin to contribute to the development of that new policy agenda.

A third dimension of analysis and proposition testing was the importance of gaining a better and more nuanced understanding of the socio-demographics of low-income owner households. The preliminary work that we and others had undertaken made us suspect that once owners established themselves and began to consolidate their homes through self build, there would be minimal turnover of those owners who would now be entering their later stages of the life course. Associated with owner aging, the lot and dwelling environment would become host to other households as close kin, and especially adult children, became long term and often permanent stakeholders in the family home. As second and third generations were raised in the *barrio*, what were their expectations and aspirations for residential space in which to raise their own families? And now that these properties represented a substantial asset, both in terms of use and exchange values, how would these assets be transferred between generations?

## **THE LAHN METHODOLOGY IN DETAIL**

The Latin American Research Network is a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary program of research being conducted by a number of independent, but closely coordinated groups of researchers, who form part of a collaborative effort anchored at the University of Texas at Austin coordinated by the author at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. The lead authors of the current

volume (Drs. Peter Ward, Edith Jiménez and Mercedes Di Virgilio) were the three founding members of the Network which first convened in Austin in August 2006 along with several other research directors from three other countries (Chile, Guatemala and Peru). Subsequently, additional research groups were added until by 2010 nine countries were participating in the research endeavor, comprising eleven cities.<sup>5</sup>

In the period 2006-2012 we held a total of twelve regional meetings of the LAHN research group either as full group meetings with all of the principals present, or in sub-regional meetings such as that of the Southern Cone in November 2010 and in Bogotá in 2011. The LAHN website, maintained at the University of Texas, became the primary repository for research materials, databases, meeting agenda, and publications, and is the medium whereby data were shared between the respective research teams, all of which had open access. While some of the pages on the website were password protected, these have gradually been made publicly available with open access to the (redacted) databases that will allow for independent verification of our results, as well as provide opportunities for other researchers and students to work with the data that we have collected (<http://www.lahn.utexas.org/data.html>).

The first meeting in Austin in 2006 began the collaborative process to create a comparative methodology and research design that would be the basis of the three principal phases of the research program over the following six years, while also recognizing that these instruments would require further refinement and negotiation as we moved forward, and as additional research clusters joined the network. Three broad phases of the program and data collection were proposed. First, we agreed that it was necessary to be more precise about the universe of study – the first suburbs – so we began to consider how these older consolidated settlements might be defined and measured using a common frame of reference, and then how they might best be

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<sup>5</sup> Buenos Aires (Argentina), Dr. Mercedes Di Virgilio (Universidad de Buenos Aires); Bogotá (Colombia), Dra. Angélica Carmargo (Universidad Piloto de Colombia); Guatemala City (Guatemala), Dr. Bryan Roberts (UT-Austin); Lima (Peru), Arq. Martha Lazarte & Themis Castellanos (Alternativa NGO), and Danielle Rojas (UT-Austin); Mexico City (Mexico), Dr. Peter Ward (UT-Austin); Guadalajara (Mexico), Dr. Edith Jiménez (Universidad de Guadalajara); Monterrey (Mexico) Dr. Peter Ward (UT-Austin), Roberto Garcíá (COLEF), and Mtra. Sandrine Molinard (ITESM); Recife (Brazil) Dr. Flavio de Souza and Dr. Circe Monteiro (University of Pernambuco); Santiago (Chile), Dr. Fco. Sabatini & Dra. Carolina Flores (Catholic University); Montevideo (Uruguay), Dr. Santiago Cardozo (Catholic University); and Santo Domingo (República Dominicana), Erika Grajeda, (UT-Austin).



characterized and analyzed using census and other GIS data and materials. This phase was to occupy us for much of the first two to three years and involved a number of regional meetings and presentations in Lima, Buenos Aires, and Austin as well the comparative application by graduate students mentioned earlier (LBJ, 2009).

Second, in each city we proposed to select two or more case study settlements that were 25-30 years old (sometimes even older), which the local research group considered to be fairly typical of consolidated informal settlements in that city. The common parameters used to select those settlements were: 1) broadly similar lot size; 2) intermediate ring location in the city; 3) full infrastructure; 4) title regularization (where this was the city norm); and 5) a similar overall level of consolidation, even though we recognized that dwellings in such settlements were likely to be heterogeneous in terms of size and level of completion.<sup>6</sup> Once case study settlements were selected, we conducted random household surveys in each settlement. The basic survey was identical in all cities, and contained only minor local changes in nomenclature. However, several of the research teams also had additional research agendas to which they were already committed, such as geographical mobility patterns (Buenos Aires), educational trajectories (Santiago), segregation indices and residential trajectories (Montevideo), and in the case of Bogotá a much wider study of low-income settlements, not just the innerburbs. In these case study cities additional sections were added to the instruments, and these amended protocols are included on the website under the “case study cities.” However in constructing the master datasets we only included the variables common to the project survey across all countries.

Although we were aware that first suburbs contain very mixed populations, comprising both owners and renters in different sorts of accommodations, we chose to focus primarily upon owners since our overarching research questions and hypotheses related to issues of home improvement, consolidation and housing rehab, all of which were not likely to be central concerns for renters who generally have a low stake in the property ownership market. Thus we

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<sup>6</sup> In fact this ultimately proved difficult since in some cities consolidated self-help settlements can have two principal forms with major differences between them. These are best exemplified in Brazil where two forms of housing subsystem exist: the widely known *favelas*, and the less well researched but more widespread *loteamientos*. Similarly Buenos Aires has its *villas* and *loteos populares*. Ultimately, therefore, we found it necessary to differentiate between these two housing forms in order to effectively disaggregate the very different physical policy challenges (and possibilities) that these cities need to confront. These differences are taken up in the Buenos Aires, and Guatemala City chapters.

drew our sample by selecting households randomly across lots in each settlement, most of which we expected to be occupied by property owners. Occasionally we found a lot occupied by renters – usually a house that was rented out – and in these cases we applied a modified survey tailored to renters.<sup>7</sup> Still, there is no doubt that our lot-based sample framework led to a significant undercount of renters, and that the data gathered for renters is weighted to homes (*casas*) rather than rooms in rooming houses, small apartments, or dwellings where renters lived in the home of an owner in a petty landlord tenant relationship.

In five of the countries (Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay) the settlement surveys were undertaken during the course of 2009, while Colombia, Peru and the Dominican Republic were surveyed at the end of 2010, and in Brazil in 2011. Full details of the actual sampling frames and settlement findings may be found under each city on the LAHN website, along with the datasets in SPSS and EXCEL (with household identifiers removed).

Also, as part of this second stage of fieldwork we conducted interviews with key informants such as local leaders, public officials at a variety of decision-making levels, and local NGO personnel. Interviews with public officials proved less fruitful than some of us had experienced in previous research projects (Gilbert and Ward, 1985), not because they were not trying to be helpful, but more because the issue of the housing conditions and housing rehab was not on their radar screens. This was one of our propositions of course, and many officials expressed surprise that we were not focusing upon the more conventionally understood housing needs of un-serviced settlements at the periphery. The one exception was among public security officials who often did have a nuanced knowledge of gang organization and “hot spots” (*focos rojos* as they are called) in innerburb communities, but they and other agency officials were poorly informed about the physical housing and social dynamics that were at work in these settlements. Also we occasionally held focus groups with different constituencies of residents, NGO staff, and local leaders.

A third level of fieldwork and data collection sought to provide much more detailed insights from what we anticipated would comprise a small number (usually 4-10) of “interesting cases” in

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<sup>7</sup> Copies of the survey instruments and interview protocols are available on the LAHN website: [www.lahn.utexas.org](http://www.lahn.utexas.org)

each city, which broke out of the earlier questionnaire survey. The aim was to use these cases to allow us to delve much more deeply into the intersections between household dynamics, life histories, and the evolution of the dwelling structure. This third phase was not carried out in each city since not all teams had the resources or ethnographic fieldwork experience to conduct such intensive and multidisciplinary analysis. We gathered a total of over 35 selected case studies in five cities (Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Guadalajara, Mexico City, and Monterrey), all of which ultimately provided a rich layer of understanding about household “churn,” cross generational ownership aspirations, and housing conditions and build-outs over time.

The intensive case study approach required a new methodology that would allow us to gather data that would provide a nuanced and detailed understanding of specific aspects of household dynamics and housing conditions in consolidated self-help settlements. It went into much more detail than was possible in the (second phase) survey. It explored features and processes intrinsic to that particular city, or even to an individual colonia/*barrio*, or section therein. For example, selection criteria included cases of: petty-landlord tenant relationship; disputed or problematic inheritance issues; shared lots with two or three homes and kin-related households; dwellings subject to major construction challenges or problems (flooding, etc); dwellings that had multiple uses (residence and workplace); cases of extreme poverty; and cases of later *traspasos* (buy-outs) and successful housing rehab, etc. It was highly qualitative in nature, comprising a mini-ethnographic study of each household and included extended interviews of the family heads and some members, construction of household life histories of family members; the family genealogy of the original pioneer household head, household members exit and (re)entry strategies and mobility patterns during the life course, inheritance and succession understandings and conflicts, the elaboration of detailed house plans and how the dwelling had expanded over time, as well as a documentation of specific housing construction and other problems that the household(s) experienced. Between four and six members of the research team participated simultaneously in the intensive cases studies and contributed to the integration of the final household archive. A full description of the methodology may be found in the LAHN website.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lahn.utexas.org/Methodology/Interesting%20Case%20Template/InterestingCase.html>

Thus the research strategy adopted is that of a mixed methods approach in which we expected to build theory using two principal theoretical approaches. First, our methodology was embedded within a positivist endeavor that fostered contextual data collection, GIS analysis, and household surveys and analysis. However, both our selection of city sites as well as case study settlements was purposive, even though actual selection of survey households was random. Our goal using these methods was to begin to test some of our hypotheses, which, we knew, would be **indicative** rather than **representative** of socio-physical processes in the older consolidated settlements of Latin American metropolitan areas. Thus while data driven, ours was never intended to be a random control experimental design that would allow us to extrapolate more widely to similar poor neighborhoods. We simply did not have the resources or the luxury of doing such a study, and even if we had, we would have chosen a more qualitative approach that would allow us to gather insights rather than generalizable findings.

Our second theoretical approach is that of creating “grounded theory” which we hoped would evolve from our on-the-ground embedded interviewing, observations, focus groups, key informant conversations and especially the intensive case studies described above, and would allow us to develop theory propositions from the ground up (Cresswell, 2013). As with most qualitative approaches it is much more inductive and phenomenological than the deductive a priori thinking that informed much of our broader effort. We believe that by mixing and matching in this way our quest was better served than had we adopted a singular, albeit more orthodox approach.

## **VOLUME ORGANIZATION AND OVERVIEW**

Just as we adopted a common framework to conduct the research, each of the following city chapters has been constructed to a common template and structure, but in a way that we hope will also allow the “voice” of each city’s innerburbs to be heard and understood. In order to move swiftly to the research and policy focus about the nature of consolidated housing in the innerburbs, each chapter offers only a brief summary description of the city’s growth and broader housing policy development. After offering an analysis of the conditions that apply in the case study settlements and the key challenges that these communities face, each author has been asked to identify and prioritize the housing rehab policy issues that most apply in that

particular city. While most cities will share several common challenges across a spectrum of policy approaches, the primary aim of each chapter in this volume is to highlight those that are most important in each individual city.

In the penultimate chapter Jiménez and de Camargo – authors of the Guadalajara and Bogotá chapters respectively – analyze the data that we have gathered about renter households from those that fell into our random lot sample in each city. As mentioned above, our overarching focus was on owners, but we are the first to recognize that renting is widespread in the innerburbs, and that it takes various forms, which are outlined in the chapters. Moreover, even if a focus on the innerburbs has not yet gained traction with policy makers and international agencies, renters, and policies towards renting is fast becoming a priority area (UNHABITAT, 2003; BID, 2013). There is irony here, since the neighborhoods in which low-income renters most predominate are precisely the consolidated innerburbs, and yet policymakers are focusing upon the trees (of renting) without seeing the context of the wider forest.

Our concluding chapter continues this theme: the need to take a wider policy view when tackling many of the challenges that we have identified. If, as we expect, back-to-the-city policymaking gains traction and looks for ways to increase densities and remodel infrastructure to take advantage of the locational advantages that innerburbs now offer, there is the ever-present danger that these neighborhoods, or sections thereof, will be slated for removal – on economic efficiency grounds, as well in order to leverage investment from the private sector. We have already observed one such case in Bogotá’s Chapinero district in which developers bought-out residents in a consolidated *barrio* adjacent to one of our case study settlements. There is clear neoliberal logic here and, if it is allowed to gain momentum, then previous and widely described experiences of gentrification will pale by comparison. It will be more akin to selective urban regeneration that will bear little resemblance to the main thrust of what we are advocating in this book, namely the rehab and improvement of the existing housing stock. Some selective buy-outs of adjacent lots in order to build rental and condominium residences is to be expected and may well be positive, insofar as it leads to more socio-economic mixing, new land uses, and rising property values. But whole-scale redevelopment, in our view, would be undesirable, inequitable, and perverse given that these former peripheral neighborhoods have been self-built largely by

homeowners and that the locational advantages that they enjoy have followed them; not the other way around.

As our findings began to come on line we saw the need to bring these to the attention of policy makers, and we began a series of regional policy roll-out meetings targeting public officials and scholars. Our first meeting was in Guadalajara (2011), followed by Buenos Aires and Bogotá (2012). These were only partially successful, and we have begun to focus our attention upon multilateral organizations themselves with meetings in Nairobi (UNHABITAT) and in Washington D.C. (IDB, World Bank, Habitat for Humanity International, etc.) with a view toward trying to ensure that the issue of rehab in the innerburbs is on the agenda of the forthcoming UNHABITAT meeting scheduled for 2016. Starting in 1976, these twenty-year UNHABITAT meetings have proven to be hugely influential in shaping awareness and global housing policies (1976 Vancouver, 1996 Istanbul), and we believe that the upcoming 2016 meeting will be another important moment in bringing the key issues of housing and community rehab of existing “slums” and human settlements onto the world agenda.

Because each chapter will prioritize selective policies for consideration in each city, Chapter 2 offers a stand-alone overview of housing policy approaches for rehab and community revitalization. It draws upon past practices (“best” or not), that have sought to address two levels of housing rehab and redevelopment in three regions of the world: Europe, the USA & Canada, and Latin America, and identifies four principal policy arenas: 1) physical policies for housing rehab and community regeneration and redevelopment; 2) the legislative and regulatory environment that will facilitate such programs; 3) the social capital needs for effective engagement and organization in local housing redevelopment; and 4) the fiscal and financial instruments to make the whole thing work.

We have concentrated these policies and approaches within a single chapter with the idea that readers will be able to more fully appreciate and contextualize the policy priorities that are identified by individual authors for each city. The stand alone city chapters are organized north-to-south starting with Guadalajara and are intended to be read individually, but the hope is that the reader can toggle back and forth from individual cases to these first and second chapters,

both of which are designed to minimize the need for each author to engage in repetition of our collaborative research methodology, definitions, and many of the specific policy details.

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