

## *The Innerburbs in Close-up*

### **San José El Esfuerzo, La Limonada**

San José El Esfuerzo (*zona 5*), one of five neighborhoods that make up '*La Limonada*', is a typical Latin American squatter settlement. Invaded in the late 1950s, this settlement occupies a branch of a large ravine that cuts the city center off from the residential zones to its east. El Esfuerzo was laid out in its present form during the 1950s and almost all of the first constructions were erected (though usually with precarious material) by 1959. The majority of those who invaded were already residents of the zone in which the shantytown is located. For the new residents the first years were tremulous; residents found themselves in a constant struggle with the repressive state apparatuses who would repeatedly attempt to eradicate the settlement by demolishing their shacks. Finally around 1960, given the family ties and intervention of one of the original settlers, then President General José Miguel Ramón Ydígoras Fuentes gave the order to allow the consolidation of the invasion.

*La Limonada* is composed of five different neighborhoods: *San José El esfuerzo*, *Lourdes 1 & 2*, *15 de agosto* and *Limoncito*. While *La Limonada* was not the first squatter settlement in Guatemala City, it certainly has attracted the most attention; *La Limonada* has long been an emblematic symbol of crime and chaos for many in the City. *La Limonada* gets its name from the term "*limones*" which was commonly used as a derogatory term for those who are perceived to be taking advantage of others.

By the late 1960s, though still 'informal' in terms of land titles, rudimentary services such as public latrines, electricity, and public water had been installed. However, by this period the settlement still consisted mainly of wooden shacks with tin roofs and no paved roads. The differences in terms of infrastructure between then and now are dramatic; today the settlement is fully connected to the city's infrastructure (including internet), the houses have been re-constructed with more permanent materials, all the roads and alleyways have been paved, and most recently a road has been opened exiting directly into the city center. Moreover, in 1990 the state created the juridical possibility for the regularization of irregularly settled land. Soon thereafter, motivated by the neighbors' initiatives, the process of formalizing previously informal settlements began with *La Limonada*. Additionally, one can point to two other factors that have changed dramatically during this period: the first is the presence of NGOs in the settlement. From funding the local elementary school to the community center, as well as financing much of the material for the improvements in infrastructure and introducing religious initiatives, the presence of NGOs in the settlement is unmistakable. The second is the increased levels of violence which in many ways structure everyday life in the settlement. Fifty years after its inception, and some forty years after the original study, the settlement is a very different place.