

Introduction to the Guatemala City Case Study (Fieldwork: Phase 1 [La Florida], June-July 2009; Phase 2[El Esfuerzo], TBA)

The Guatemala City case study was designed as a re-study of Bryan Robert's (1973) study of two poor neighborhoods in Guatemala City. The objective of the original study was to explore the social and political changes accompanying the rapid urbanization that was occurring in Guatemala, and how the urban poor experienced and coped with those changes. That study analyzed a heterogeneous population's hardships as they were being inserted into social relations very different from those in their communities of origin. Many of the informants were recent migrants to the city in their early phases of their integration into city life, while others had arrived in the settlements from other sectors of the city. This re-study returns to those same neighborhoods with the objective of exploring what has changed -and what has stayed the same- after 40 years.

Specifically, the aim of this re-study is to explore the life trajectories and spatial mobility of families living in the settlements today, many of whom are the same families that were living there during the original fieldwork. The selection of the two settlements was made so as to select two low-income settlements with contrasting legal origins. Each type of settlement presented a unique solution to the problem of scarce low-income housing in the urban core. Consequently each settlement also presented unique conditions affecting the way in which the poor coped with city life. The first of the settlements, La Florida (*zona* 19, about 7 miles west of the city centre), was established in the mid 1950s on formally subdivided (then) peripheral farmland. La Florida falls neatly within Guatemala City's innerburbs. The second settlement, San José El Esfuerzo (*zona* 5), is a typical case of a Latin American shantytown / 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. Our sense is that these two settlements continue, in their own ways, to affect the way in which people cope with city life. Elsewhere we have included more detailed descriptions of the two settlement histories.

Lot Selection Procedure

Hypothetically, our re-study would have re-interviewed the same lots that were randomly selected for the original 1973 study. This, however, proved impractical for several reasons. For one, while the contemporary *fraccionamiento* (block) numbers on our maps corresponded with the *fraccionamiento* numbers on the 1968 questionnaire, given changes in the street naming and numbering system we were unable to locate the exact lots selected in the original study. Also, in the case of La Florida the pervasiveness and manner of lot subdivisions would have meant excluding many home owners and/or renters from our sample¹ simply because those lots did not exist in 1968. For these reasons we chose to generate a new random sample.

We obtained plat maps from FLACSO-Guatemala. FLACSO had obtained and used these for the preliminary surveys in both settlements during the summer of 2008. La Florida comprises 90 blocks. Slightly less than half (42) of the blocks were selected using a random number generator. The lots within each selected block were then counted and numbered 1 – *n* (usually between 40 and 50), according to the number of lots on each block. Using a random number

¹ For example, in 1968 the four corner lots on any block would have translated into four separate homes, each with an entrance facing the main streets running east - west. Given the nature of the subdivisions, today those four lots may very well have been subdivided into 6 or 7 lots, many of these newer lots having entrances facing the smaller avenues running north – south. Using the 1968 sample would have automatically excluded these newer lots from our sample.

generator, for each selected block we chose three random numbers between 1 and that block's n ; these numbers represented the lots in our sample. This yielded a sample of 123 lots. Once this had been completed we walked the settlement identifying an address for each of the selected lots. In cases where the selected lots were clearly not being used for residential purposes (ex., open public parking spaces), those lots were automatically substituted.

Survey Design Procedure

FLACSO-Guatemala's preliminary survey helped to identify some of the key issues and trends in the settlements, as well as helped to familiarize us with the particularities of the Guatemalan case. Also, the preliminary survey facilitated establishing contact with respondents in La Florida with whom we conducted a second set of semi-structured preliminary surveys. Based on the information gathered we then tailored the Monterrey (2009) survey in accordance with our objectives. The modifications to the Monterrey survey naturally included those changes accounting for idiosyncrasies in language and historical processes, though we also modified the instrument to place greater emphasis on family trajectories and individual socioeconomic data. Both the owners and the renters' surveys (for Monterrey and Guatemala) are included elsewhere.

Fieldwork Protocol

Most of the interviewing in La Florida was conducted by hired Guatemalan interviewers contacted through FLACSO-Guatemala. Also, a member of the faculty in the *Area de Pobreza* of FLACSO-Guatemala was at all times present during fieldwork. Training in the presentation of the questionnaires, fieldwork protocols, and interviewing had been carried out during a meeting between the Austin researchers and Guatemalan interviewers a week prior to commencing fieldwork. In addition to the aforementioned, this meeting also emphasized clarification in the appropriate anchor points to remember during data collection, as well as definitions for certain key concepts used in the surveys (for example, how 'household(s)' and 'single family' are conceptualized, etc.). Interviewers were asked to continue practicing the questionnaires during the time before commencing fieldwork. All interviewers were provided with the necessary materials: letters of presentation; name tags and identification; and clipboards with household lists and maps, both broken down by sub-areas. The mentioned lists included spaces for interviewers to record dates, times, number of visits, whether a substitution was made, the reason(s) for substitutions, and whether the case had been completed. Provided that we substituted vacant lots prior to beginning the interviews, substitutions were only allowed if after the 3rd visit the interviewer was not able to locate a person living on the lot who could and was willing to answer the questionnaire, or if participation was refused. In this case that a substitution was necessary the original lot would be substituted with the 3rd house to the right facing the first selected lot. This rule was applied strictly whenever it was necessary to make a substitution. During the initial interviews interviewing was done in pairs and individually latterly as interviewers familiarized themselves with the instruments. Due to the level of insecurity in La Florida interviewing was always done before 5pm and preferably in pairs; if pairs were not possibly then interviewing was done at least in sight of another interviewer on the same street.

Actual interviewing took between 20-30 minutes for owners, and between 10-20 minutes for renters. However, a considerable amount of time had to be dedicated the initial presentation of the survey and convincing people to participate. Given widespread feelings of vulnerability and insecurity in La Florida this more often than not proved an arduous task. Completing 2-3 interviews in a day per interviewer was a good yield.

Post Survey Coding and Analysis

Given that the survey instrument was a modified version of the Monterrey survey, the coding guide was also a modified version of the Monterrey guide. This was prepared once we returned to Austin. Coding is scheduled to take place over the following month (September, 2009) and will be undertaken mainly by a hired coder familiar with Guatemala. Familiarity with Guatemala will allow for greater efficiency and consistency in inputting accurate responses. Though most codes were pre-categorized, string variables were used for some responses. These will be coded so as to allow us to later recode the responses thus obtaining more nuanced range of responses. The Coding is done directly into an SPSS (v.16) datasheet. We estimate that half of the respondents are renters.

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