

Securing the City

An Introduction

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Neoliberalism, a term commonly used to describe the set of economic reforms that impels structural adjustment, is a practice. It is a kind of tool kit, a set of institutions, logics, and rationalities that are used by people—sometimes sitting in government offices, sometimes vending crafts in crowded streets—to understand inequalities and to respond to them. In the spirit of Sherry Ortner (1984) and Eric Wolf (1980), who wrote of a different phase of global capitalism, the essays collected here ask what neoliberalism looks like on the ground and how it is practiced. How have Guatemalans come to inhabit lives and spaces that are in large measure engineered according to neoliberal logics? What do ordinary people make of these changing times, and what lessons are to be learned from their experiences? More specifically, what does neoliberalism look like in Guatemala?

Guatemala's neoliberal moment is strikingly evident in practices and politics of security. Even after the close of Central America's longest and bloodiest civil war, which reached genocidal proportions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Guatemala remains a violent country, though the political and cultural coordinates of this violence have changed significantly (Nelson 2009). Guatemala has one of the highest homicide rates in all of the Americas averaging about 17 murders per day, with much of the violent crime concentrated in the capital city. The country also has one of the lowest rates of incarceration at 28 prisoners per 100,000 people (Canadian Red Cross 2006; Ungar 2003). The average criminal trial lasts more than four years with less than 2 percent of crimes resulting in a conviction (Wilson 2009). "It's sad to say, but Guatemala is a good place to commit murder," one international observer remarked, "be-

cause you will almost certainly get away with it” (Painter 2007). More than ten years after the Peace Accords of 1996, postwar peace seems little more than a bloodied banner.

Postwar violence has coincided with a formal reconciliation process, an uneven transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic institutions, a shift from state-centered to free market economic policies, and a booming drug trade. About 90 percent of the cocaine shipped from the Andes to the United States flows through Central America, with 200 tons of the drug moving from Colombia through Guatemala into Mexico and finally to the United States each year (Seelke 2008). Guatemala City is now one of the most dangerous cities on the planet. Interestingly, the spike in violence in the postwar period has prompted not public debates about the structural conditions that permit violence to thrive in the first place, but rather a new set of practices and strategies that privatize what would otherwise be the state’s responsibility to secure the city. These new efforts at security, evident as much in everyday lives as in social policies, constitute the practice of neoliberalism in Guatemala.

The question of security in Guatemala calls attention to three interrelated themes, which this volume investigates. First, there is the devolution of law enforcement to communities and private enterprises. Law enforcement measures now include the employment of private security forces, the formation of community associations, and, in the most extreme cases, vigilantism (including lynchings). Accompanying these strategies is a new common sense that involves blaming gangs and other unsavory segments of the population for danger and insecurity. While transnational criminal networks, such as Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18, bloat postwar Guatemala’s tragic statistics, residents tend to embed the problem of violence with a moral vocabulary—with the language of *delincuencia*, or delinquency, as well as choice, character, and self-discipline. Each essay in the volume explores ethnographically how people experience the country’s new violence and what they do to make the city or their communities safer, meaning less corrupt and crime ridden. For example, some Guatemalans employ private security services (Dickins, this volume), others give to charity and become deeply involved in organized religion (O’Neill, this volume), and still others invest in urban renewal projects (Véliz and O’Neill, this volume). What makes these practices neoliberal is not a simple logic of class interests, as David Harvey (2005) might have it, but rather the broad-scale transference of state functions to private citizens.

Second, our focus on security refers to the sense that life is much more dangerous in the postwar context than it has been in the past. This sense is

evident in the mass media as well as in everyday conversations across Guatemala, where danger is most often experienced and represented as an urban phenomenon. With this dimension of security in mind, the essays explore the processes by which Guatemalans come to internalize and, in turn, respond to insecurity as a lived reality. Feelings of distress emerge from failed promises (Levenson, this volume; Camus, this volume), but they also reflect new entrepreneurial efforts in an uncertain economy (Offit, this volume; Thomas, this volume) and a more general discourse of terror in the postwar context (Benson, Thomas, and Fischer, this volume). This line of analysis treads carefully toward the phenomenological, suggesting that there is an experiential component to the practice of neoliberal security in postwar Guatemala.

Third, our concern with security draws on the fields of critical human geography and the anthropology of space, building on the observation that neoliberal responses to security alter how cities function. A collective sense of insecurity, for example, leads to the criminalization of poverty, a narrow focus on delinquency as the root cause of urban violence, and entrenched segregation (Low 2003). The essays collected here demonstrate, however, that it is not entirely accurate to understand Guatemala City as a “city of walls” (Caldeira 2001). In many mid-sized Latin American cities, such as Guatemala City, Managua, and San Salvador—which each have fewer than three million people and a relatively small number of wealthy residents—the strategies by which the very wealthy “disembed” (Rodgers 2004) themselves from society differ significantly from strategies observed in larger cities. While São Paulo’s demographic contours, for example, allow the wealthy to all but retreat from public life, the practice of security in a mid-sized city, such as Guatemala City, leads to more porous relationships between those who can afford walls laced with glass shards and those who cannot. Segregation is more of an ideology than a lived reality in Guatemala City. At the same time, the essays collected here demonstrate that Guatemala City is inseparable from the rest of the country. A key strength of this volume is that each essay examines how discourses that locate danger in the capital city, together with neoliberal responses to danger, shape rural-urban dynamics. Urban crime and violence drive security guards to migrate from their rural homes to the capital (Dickins, this volume), rural entrepreneurs look to urban markets as sources of opportunity but also sites of danger (Thomas, this volume; Offit, this volume), and urban residents view the countryside as more innocent territory (O’Neill, this volume; Camus, this volume).

This volume, the first comparative ethnographic analysis of Guatemala

City, calls for greater attention to the ways that city and country are constituted in relation to one another in Guatemala. Though anthropologists have been writing about Guatemala for more than a century, very little is known ethnographically about the capital city. Most scholarship has focused on the rural Maya, drawing needed attention to a group that has faced broad-scale oppression and making lasting contributions to the social sciences. Research in the historically *ladino/a* (nonindigenous) capital city has often been viewed as uninteresting and even irrelevant, prompting many foreign researchers, like tourists, to leave Guatemala City only moments after their flights touch down. But social and structural dynamics evident in Guatemala City—the disparities in wealth, the intensity of crime, and the militaristic nature of much social response—are deeply entwined with changes happening throughout the country.

Guatemala City in Historical Perspective

Guatemala City was born from disaster. Multiple earthquakes led to the abandonment of earlier capitals (what are now Ciudad Vieja and Antigua), and the current site was chosen in 1773. The Plaza Mayor was the first public space available to the inhabitants of the new capital, and was home to the first street vendors, who have occupied the plaza continuously for more than 230 years (Gellert 1995). The liberal-period reforms by Justo Rufino Barrios—president of Guatemala from 1873 to 1885, whose landmark construction of the national railroad linked Guatemala City to the Pacific coast—transformed the sleepy capital into a major hub in the global coffee trade (Smith 1990). At the start of the twentieth century, the city expanded in size and population, booming from 55,000 inhabitants in 1880 to double that figure by the conclusion of the First World War. Jorge Ubico's regime, which tightly controlled internal migration to the capital in the 1930s through a series of forced residency and labor laws, helped establish the capital as a base of operations for the United Fruit Company, a United States–based corporation that soon became Guatemala's largest landholder (Schlesinger and Kinzer 1999).

When Ubico's regime was toppled in 1944 by a democratic and Left-leaning revolutionary movement, rural Guatemalans began migrating in huge numbers to the capital to work. By 1950, the population of the capital city had grown to nearly 300,000 people, and while Zone 1 remained the undisputed city center, the population sprawled out into the central valley. The “Ten Years of Spring” ended in 1954 as CIA-funded planes dropped leaflets onto the Plaza

Mayor, signaling to the crowds that a new regime was on its way to power. Framed by Cold War fears of communism, President Jacobo Árbenz's land redistribution policy was seen to threaten the interests of global capitalism, and in particular, the interests of the United Fruit Company.¹ Following the United States-backed coup that unseated Árbenz, Guatemala's government became increasingly militarized, while guerrilla forces began to mobilize in the capital city and the mostly ladino eastern region. In the 1960s, amidst active efforts by Maya people to demand cultural rights and recognition and to reclaim land, leftist ladino groups recruited highland communities through a narrative that emphasized a collective fight for freedom of organization, land rights, and democracy. The government's response to these groups was brutal, especially between 1978 and 1982. Large-scale massacres, scorched earth tactics, and widespread disappearances and displacements aimed at annihilating Guatemala's Maya population alongside leftist insurgents would later be understood as acts of genocide.² In the early years of the conflict, Guatemala City was a sometime battleground between revolutionaries and state-sponsored death squads. In later years, it became a refuge for those displaced from the western highlands by the military's genocidal campaigns.

Global awareness of the systematic human rights violations being carried out had forced the Guatemalan government by the mid-1980s to adjust its tactics in order to continue receiving international aid. Nonetheless, atrocities continued and went unpunished. The peace process began in 1986 with a series of talks that ultimately led to a United Nations-mediated peace agreement. The final accords were signed on December 29, 1996. According to the UN-sponsored truth commission report released in 1999, more than 200,000 people died or disappeared as a result of the armed conflict, of which more than 80 percent were Maya. The report also establishes that 93 percent of these human rights violations can be connected to the state (CEH 1999).

It was in the context of nascent civil war and the massive rural-to-urban migration set off by the conflict that anthropologists began to take notice of the capital. The first major anthropological work to deal with Guatemala City was Richard Adams's landmark *Crucifixion by Power* (1970).³ The volume focuses on how the constitution and growth of the national elite, centered in Guatemala City, shaped power relations on a national scale and directly influenced life in the altiplano. As power became an important analytic for anthropologists, ethnographers of the Maya began to look to centers of political, economic, and social power for a greater understanding of the highland region. Adams's book includes a chapter by Bryan Roberts, who later produced a

series of works (1968, 1970, 1973), most notably *Organizing Strangers*, which examined tenuous class relations in the capital and documented the lives of the urban poor. Roberts, whose more recent work has explored the political economy of urbanization in Latin America (Roberts 2005; Roberts and de Oliveira 1996; Roberts and Portes 2005) and the urban informal sector (Roberts 1991, 1994),⁴ has had a tremendous influence on scholarship in Guatemala and the anthropology and sociology of Latin America.

Between 1973 and 1987, a period that includes the most intense years of the armed conflict, the population of Guatemala City nearly doubled from 890,000 to just over 1.6 million (CITGUA 1991). This dramatic growth reflects a steady stream of rural-to-urban migration linked to the conflict and the inequitable distribution of arable land. For many, life in villages and small towns became either too dangerous or economically untenable, and the imagined opportunities of the city beckoned. Another major factor in the city's growth during this period was the devastating 1976 earthquake. The catastrophic quake, measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale, left 23,000 dead and over 1.2 million people homeless. Guatemala City was hit hard. The earthquake wounded 16,549 and killed 3,370 urban inhabitants, and destroyed 99,712 homes, rendering nearly a half million residents homeless (Johnston and Low 1995; Thomas 2007). Water services shut down. Thousands were buried alive. People slept in the open air, considering it safer to be in the city streets than in their homes (Montenegro 1976).

Despite the level of destruction, many people migrated from outlying rural areas to the capital immediately after the quake, looking for work and refuge (Gellert and Pinto Soria 1990). When they found little of either, the newcomers began constructing shelters from whatever materials they could scavenge in whatever spaces were available. Squatting meant that Guatemala City would mushroom in a disorganized way—without infrastructure, without planning, without permits. Even today, approximately one-fourth of the nearly 2.5 million people residing in the metropolitan area live in what Guatemalan authorities define as “precarious settlements” (INE 2004; Morán Mérida 1997: 8),⁵ a reference to “neighborhoods built with fragile materials such as cardboard, tin, or, in the best of cases, cement blocks” (Murphy 2004: 64). These settlements tend to exist beyond the reach of property rights regulation or the most basic of social services, such as water and electricity.

Migration patterns have dramatically shifted urban demographics in Guatemala. The indigenous population, once almost exclusively comprising rural agriculturalists, accounted for only 6 or 7 percent of the total urban

population from 1880 to 1973 (Gellert 1995: 96). In recent decades, the Maya nearly tripled their representation in the metropolitan region to around 20 percent (CITGUA 1991). As a result, there has been more ethnographic work in the capital city and on the Mayas living there. Santiago Bastos and Manuela Camus produced a series of joint studies of Maya migrants to the capital (1995, 1997, 1998; see also Camus 2002) that document the complex intermingling of indigenous and urban identities. Other anthropologists have challenged and reshaped our understandings of Maya identity and ethnic relations in Guatemala through their work with the politicized class of urban indigenous leaders who form part of the pan-Maya movement that gained momentum during the peace process (see Fischer and Brown 1996; Nelson 1999; and Warren 1998).

Research on urban ladinos has increased as well. Notably, studies by Deborah Levenson (2005) and Camus (2005) build on the earlier work of scholars such as Laurel Bossen (1984) and Roberts to examine how working-class ladinos contend with rising levels of unemployment, diminishing opportunities for collective organization and fading senses of group affiliation, and the failures of state modernization programs. Investigations of crime and violence in Guatemala City by AVANCSO (1996), Ailsa Winton (2007), and Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine (2004) add to the larger sociological and anthropological literatures on violence in urban Latin America. The essays in this volume contribute to the study of violence, including political and popular responses to security concerns, as well as urban indigeneity and shifting class relations, all central themes in current scholarship on Guatemala City.⁶ The capital has become an especially productive site for ethnographic research, yet the theorization of the city remains woefully incomplete.

Neoliberal Guatemala

David Harvey defines neoliberalism as a set of economic policies guided by the ideological perspective that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” (Harvey 2005: 2). This definition affords a general sense of the ideological underpinnings and cultural assumptions of structural adjustment programs, first tested by United States economists in Chile in the 1970s. It says less, however, about the specific ways that neoliberal policies and ideologies come to be practiced and experienced in a place such as Guatemala, how they intersect with national

predicaments and politics, and the frictions produced as neoliberal rationalities stream together with the various cultural logics of everyday life. Neoliberal economic and political reforms implemented in Guatemala beginning in the 1980s included the standard adjustments mandated in many countries via World Bank and International Monetary Fund loan programs—market liberalization, privatization of industry and state services, reductions in public expenditure, and opening to foreign trade. Right-wing dictators and, later, democratically elected leaders aligned with interests of the United States expanded these reforms, a process that recently resulted in the signing of the Central America Free Trade Agreement. Along the way, everyday life for many Guatemalans has changed in fundamental ways. Neoliberalism serves as a backdrop, if not a central analytic, for each of the essays in this volume. In addition to shaping state and popular responses to security concerns, the structural and social changes that neoliberal policies have effected in Guatemala underlie the widespread economic, political, and physical insecurities that many urban and rural residents face.

In Guatemala, neoliberal economics meet the historical and cultural contingencies of a nation shaped by a strong indigenous presence and a *de facto* unfinished peace process. As William Robinson (2003) explains, the system of subsistence agriculture that sustained highland communities for centuries and ensured a measure of economic and even political autonomy became increasingly untenable over the course of the twentieth century. Subsistence farming was initially restructured with the rise of coffee and fruit plantations in the nineteenth century. The agricultural export sector, which experienced a boom in the 1960s and 1970s, and the genocide that targeted highland communities in the late 1970s and 1980s further undermined the subsistence system. Neoliberal measures accelerated this trend by both flooding the domestic market with cheap imported food and encouraging the capitalization of landholdings. While a small percentage of Maya farmers have successfully entered the export market, the vast majority of rural Guatemalans have been greatly disadvantaged by these changes. They have undermined not only an economic system, but also an important set of cultural practices tied to cultivation (Fischer and Benson 2006; and Green 2003).

These changes in the rural highlands led to waves of migration to the capital city and surrounding towns, where the neoliberal strategy of export-led development brought some low-wage work in *maquiladoras* (factories where garments and other goods are assembled for export). Many urban migrants as well as rural residents, however, resort to informal economic activities such

as petty trading to make ends meet, their life chances further diminished by the reduction in state services that is mandated as part of neoliberal reforms. On the whole, neoliberal policies have exacerbated longer-term historical processes including the proletarianization of rural populations, the semiurbanization of and increased class differentiation in rural peripheries, increased internal as well as transnational migration, and the concentration of impoverished Guatemalans in the capital city's metropolitan region (Robinson 2000; Smith 1990).

All of this looks quite different from the sweeping social, economic, and political promises made in the Peace Accords. Neither do these lived realities mesh with the promises of progress found in the master narratives that travel alongside structural adjustment policies. The peace negotiations were said to usher in a new era of democratic process and economic growth at once, since disparate groups were invited to the table to voice their concerns and contribute to a new vision of Guatemalan nationhood while also realizing new opportunities for employment, education, and entrepreneurship. The accords included important endorsements of human rights in general and indigenous cultural and political rights in particular, education reforms to enhance rural achievement, and participatory mechanisms to thicken civil society and diminish the political and economic "distortions" of race and culture, including requirements that women participate in rural and urban development planning (Jonas 2000). But neoconservative technocrats and international financial institutions were also actively involved in shaping the peace process, and their interests generally won out over demands for truly substantial democratic and social justice reforms (Robinson 2003: 113). As social scientists have repeatedly pointed out, the decade since the signing of the accords has seen increasing disparities—in education, health, housing, socioeconomic status, and access to capital—that actually diminish possibilities for the full democratic participation of all citizens (Chase-Dunn 2000; Jonas 2000; Robinson 2000).

One particularly bright spot in the postconflict period has been the vigorous indigenous rights movement that emerged in the early stages of the democratic transition and gained strength during the peace negotiations. The movement has sought full political membership and participation for indigenous Guatemalans, using the Peace Accords as a means to frame questions of political inclusion in the language of cultural citizenship.⁷ Led by a determined cohort of Maya leaders involved in various grassroots organizations, the pan-Maya movement challenged the hegemonic denigration of

Mayan languages, dress, and culture by promoting the legitimacy of traditional practices, emphasizing the economic contributions of indigenous populations, and seeking political and legal reforms to protect civil liberties, punish discrimination, guarantee indigenous representation in government, and secure public support for bilingual education (the Peace Accords officially recognized twenty-one Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala) (Fischer and Brown 1996; Warren 1998). The movement has been a tremendous source of cultural resurgence for indigenous Guatemalans and a focal point of international NGO and human rights activism. Yet neoliberal policies and accompanying ideologies have often limited the efficacy and scope of these goals (Benson 2004; Nelson 1999). Charles Hale (2002, 2005) has developed the concept of “neoliberal multiculturalism” to describe how neoliberalism, as much a political moment as an economic one, embraces cultural rights claims made by disadvantaged groups, but only insofar as they do not cross over into “radical” demands for “control over resources necessary for those rights to be realized” (2005: 13). In the Guatemalan case, the state celebrates cultural difference and acknowledges the cultural rights that activists within the pan-Maya movement have worked to secure. The state has done little, however, to address the structural conditions that make the majority of indigenous (and nonindigenous) Guatemalans vulnerable to poverty and insecurity (Hale 2006). More than 80 percent of Maya men and women live in extreme poverty. Three-quarters of indigenous people do not own land. Diane Nelson’s (1999) work on the semiotics of nationalist public culture complements Hale’s focus on structural disparities: the language of multiculturalism permits the state (and corporations) to acknowledge the cultural value of the country’s Maya majority while continuing to tacitly legitimize ethnic superiority through economic reforms that fail to attend to the disproportionate structural marginalization of indigenous populations.

This volume draws on the insights of previous studies of neoliberalism in Guatemala that address how these policies have further entrenched uneven structures of political, social, and economic power, while focusing on the ways neoliberalism is now practiced and experienced by ordinary Guatemalans. The authors are especially concerned with the role of urban space—its concrete materialization and its meaning in mass media and popular discourse—in configuring relations of power in the postwar moment. How does space inform competing social meanings of poverty and violence among rural and urban Guatemalans? How is space a key resource in official or informal projects that seek to clarify material and symbolic boundaries between dif-

ferently positioned or valued groups of citizens? As the promises of postwar peace and stability fail to keep up with realities of deepening social inequality and new forms of violence, what spatial logics and practices are used to make sense of daily life?

Security and Insecurity

Guatemala's internal armed conflict may have ended more than a decade ago, but everyday life for many Guatemalans continues to be fraught with violence. Survival teeters on meager earnings in informal economic activities, and the state remains ill equipped to deal with social and health problems common across the developing world (McIlwaine and Moser 2001; Pérez 2004). Crime rates in Guatemala have soared in recent years. The number of homicides jumped 40 percent from 2001 to 2004 and continues to rise (USAID 2006). In 2005, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reported that Guatemala had the highest murder rate in Latin America.⁸ Guatemala City's homicide rate—one of the highest in urban Latin America—is 109 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, nearly eleven times the rate labeled a “crisis” by the World Health Organization. A few comparisons help to put these numbers in perspective. The number of violent deaths in Guatemala over the past five years equals the death toll of the massive 1976 earthquake that leveled parts of the capital and nearby towns. Perhaps even more shocking is the fact that Guatemala's current homicide rate far exceeds the average number of Guatemalans killed each year as a result of political violence during the armed conflict (Canadian Red Cross 2006; Painter 2007).

The gendered dimensions of the violence are painfully apparent. More than 2,200 women were violently murdered in Guatemala between 2001 and 2006, often in ways that are themselves gendered, involving rape, sexual assault, and sexual mutilation. Amnesty International has reported that this number wildly outpaces the rate in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, where activists and NGOs have long fought for international awareness of femicide. Of more than six hundred cases of women reported murdered in 2005, only two convictions had been handed down a year later (Amnesty International 2006; cf. ASIES 2003). Even so, the numbers given above are likely lower than the country's actual crime rates. Informal conversations with police and rescue officials reveal that only certain violent deaths, such as those of laborers, and not others, such as those of gang members, tend to be included in official tallies. This is not to mention the climbing rates of assault, theft, robbery, and other vio-

lent and nonviolent crimes in the capital city, where mass transit and urban marketplaces are daily targets of criminal activity.⁹

Striking levels of crime and violence in Guatemala City represent a shift in the spatial coordinates of danger in Guatemala. The Peace Accords ended an armed conflict that had begun in Guatemala City and eastern departments but quickly moved to rural regions in the western highlands (Carmack 1988; Stoll 1993). Today, violence is concentrated in Guatemala City, though “talk of crime” (Caldeira 2001) is certainly not confined to the urban center. Gangs are an increasing problem in the capital but also in small towns and semiurban municipalities (Rodríguez and de León 2000; Winton 2005). Estimates put the number of gang members nationwide at anywhere from 14,000 to 165,000 (USAID 2006). Despite the lack of data this discrepancy reflects, gangs are commonly blamed for the nation’s security problems and social ills by the mass media, in community-level responses to crime, and in everyday conversation. Lack of police protection and government programs to curb crime and violence, widespread distrust of authorities, and pronounced differences between state and local cultural understandings of justice and rights all explain the growing numbers of neighborhood watch groups as well as lynchings—of which there were more than four hundred cases in Guatemala between 1996 and 2002 (MINUGUA 2002; Sieder 2003).

Angelina Godoy’s (2006) investigation of lynchings in the highland region gives a useful account of how the destruction of community institutions and social ties during the conflict continues as collectively experienced trauma today. Militarized and violent forms of authority instituted during the conflict “remain embedded in local practices,” and “community life itself . . . ha[s] been deeply infused with violence,” she argues (Godoy 2006: 84; Sanford 2004). She points to a fundamental rupture of social life during the conflict—the disappearance of thousands of people, the fragmentation of communities, and the often blurred lines between perpetrators and victims—as a phenomenological foundation on which distrust and fear have been established among those who experienced *la violencia*, either directly or indirectly (see also Green 1999). The legacies of the armed conflict are an important dimension of the social insecurities Guatemalans experience today, and ethnographic research is indispensable for gauging the social and psychological weight of the violence in terms of collective memories, testimonials, and social critique.

If the spatial organization of violence has shifted in the postconflict era, however, so has its sociopolitical context. Dennis Rodgers (2006) suggests

that Latin America as a whole has experienced a shift in the political economy of violence in the post–Cold War, postconflict era. Noting that “crime is not a new phenomenon, and political violence is by no means extinct,” he argues that violence has become “democratized.” The state now controls neither the means nor the direction of violence; rather, it increasingly appears “as an option for a multitude of actors,” for a multitude of reasons (268). Edward F. Fischer and Peter Benson (2006) refer to this shift as the neoliberalization of violence, meaning the outsourcing and privatization of violent acts, the personalization of victimhood, the rationalization of violence in terms of anticitizens (e.g., gangs), and the empowerment of dangerous forms of community response. The informalization and privatization of security is a significant trend in Guatemala (Kincaid 2001: 52; Paley 2001). Approximately 7 percent of Guatemalan households currently pay for their own personal security. The number of private security guards working in homes and businesses is estimated at 80,000, compared to 18,500 police officers nationwide (USAID 2006). Avery Dickins’s essay takes an ethnographic look at the private security industry, illustrating how realities and rumors of urban violence, taken together with patterns of rural dislocation brought on by structural adjustment policies, promote rural-to-urban migration among young men who see private security as desirable work. The guards she depicts have come to see urban violence as a potential vehicle for upward mobility in the face of declining rural economies, while their patrons see the private rather than public consumption of security as a preferable response to crime.

This volume builds on the work of Godoy, Rodgers, and others by situating these changing forms of postconflict violence within a broader context of fear and insecurity and attending to how neoliberal policies have exacerbated these conditions and shape responses to them. The essay by Benson, Thomas, and Fischer on “resocializing suffering,” for example, makes a strong case for understanding the origins and outcomes of Guatemala’s “new violence” in terms of structural and societal conditions related to rural and urban economic restructuring. In the absence of state services, a pervasive condition of structural violence puts already disadvantaged groups in Guatemala at greater risk of violent behavior and victimization. Official narratives about violence that neglect this fact encourage citizens to understand the new violence as the result of informal economic activities, not a part of the formal system, and as the problem of marginalized social types, including gang members. This approach, which places promises of security and realities of insecurity, promises of formalized economic growth and realities of informal subsistence and

entrepreneurship, within a single conceptual framework, calls attention to the failures of societal responses to address root causes of violence. In Guatemala, these underlying structural conditions are dire. Neoliberal reforms have contributed to a situation in which nearly 60 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and one in five people live in extreme poverty (World Bank 2007). Guatemala, along with Brazil and South Africa, has the most unequal income distribution in the world (UNDAF 2000 quoted in Preti 2002: 110; UNDP 2000). The education system has left the country with the highest illiteracy rate in the Americas after Haiti (Preti 2002); 65 percent of indigenous women are illiterate. The efforts of international aid organizations and the innumerable NGOs that began working in Guatemala following the Peace Accords—another example of the privatization of what might otherwise be seen as the state's responsibilities—only go so far. Guatemalans experience pervasive food insecurity (Shriar 2002), unemployment, political instability linked to lack of participatory mechanisms and widespread corruption, and ubiquitous fear of police and military forces (Pérez 2004), all together with the widespread availability of arms in a postwar setting (Winton 2005).¹⁰ Insecurities and personal hazards “conspire to create a condition of relentless vulnerability for poor urban residents” of the capital city in particular (Beall and Fox 2006: 6). Reliance on an unstable, monetized informal economy, lack of sufficient housing, limited access to water and sanitation services, vulnerability to environmental hazards (Beall and Fox 2006), and discrimination against indigenous people and women (Preti 2002: 110): all of these factors contribute to a social setting characterized by structural violence.

An important feature of the postconflict era is the popular call for *mano dura* (firm hand) solutions to violence, including military interventions, social cleansing campaigns, and lynchings (Godoy 2006; Sanford 2008; Thomas and Benson 2008). Many of this volume's essays highlight state-level and community-level responses to crime and violence, examining how a common view of criminals and other unsavory social types as the source of violence reflects the influence of cultural assumptions about individualism built into neoliberal theories about economic systems. Each essay in the volume contributes to the theorization of how “talk of crime” shapes the lives of Guatemalans who often imagine their relationship to the state and capital city through the lenses of urban violence and danger. Yet the specter of danger itself is something that has been preconfigured in terms of dominant representations of the delinquent, the youth, the criminal, the gang member, and the pirate—the anticitizens of a neoliberal social order.

City and Country

Arjun Appadurai has referred to contemporary cities in the Global South as “cracked and refracted” images of global processes (2000: 627). Uneven development, rampant inequality, and rising crime rates contribute to an overall sense of disjuncture and distortion. In this section, we take a closer look at the ways that neoliberalism, security, and related transnational processes shape the spatial and social configuration of Guatemala City and the dynamic relationship between city and countryside in Guatemala. One feature of many contemporary cities is the fortified enclave, a spatial configuration that contributes to the sense of disjuncture and fracture that Appadurai describes. Gated communities use private security guards, surveillance technology, and imposing walls to protect wealthy residents from actual and perceived threats. These enclaves can be found throughout Latin America (Low 2003) as well as in Africa (Ferguson 2006), Asia (Falzon 2004), and the United States (Cattellino 2004; Chesluk 2004). The most enduring critique of gated communities comes from the Brazilian context. Teresa Caldeira (2001) argues that fortified enclaves have transformed public space in São Paulo. Their proliferation has contributed to the association of poverty with crime while also emptying the public sphere of those who can afford private security. Fortified enclaves have left São Paulo broken and fractured; they have made the city feel more dangerous than it already is.

The spike in violence and insecurity in Guatemala over the last decade has similarly altered spatial organization in Guatemala City. As mentioned above, the retreat of state services has included limited spending on the country’s police force and a spike in the amount of private security demanded by urban elites. Clusters of private condominiums cocooned by guns, dogs, and mercenaries now speckle Guatemala’s highways, particularly between the capital and Antigua, one of Guatemala’s storied tourist destinations. Fortified enclaves also segregate Guatemala City’s more exclusive zones from the more popular ones. Zone 1, for example, is Guatemala City’s oldest and most historic zone; it is the home of the national cathedral, high courts, and national palace. As Véliz and O’Neill recount in their essay, Zone 1 has become particularly dangerous in recent years, with a disproportionately high rate of violent murders taking place within its parameters. Once Guatemala’s seat of power and wealth, Zone 1 has now been abandoned by Guatemala’s urban elite for peripheral zones largely built up over the past two decades, complete with fortified homes, upscale shopping malls, and private security forces.¹¹

Despite similarities with the Brazilian case, Guatemala City is not a megacity. The capital's urban elite do not match in number or buying power those in São Paulo, Mexico City, or Mumbai. As Rodgers (2004: 120) argues, fortified enclaves in mid-sized cities such as Managua and Guatemala City are not so much self-sufficient islands of refuge and privilege as they are secure nodes in a network of protected spaces through which the urban elite travel in their daily routines. Véliz and O'Neill recount in their essay how wealthy Guatemalans are trying to reclaim Zone 1 of Guatemala City as one such secure, privatized node. Plans include ridding the historical city center of less desirable elements, including street vendors and the clients who depend on their cheap goods (Véliz 2006). Urban renewal programs such as that proposed for Zone 1 create retail and recreational spaces that are not only heavily secured but also characterized by forms of conspicuous consumption well beyond the reach of Guatemala City's poor and even middle-class residents.

Outside the sanctuaries lie urban spaces with limited security, limited resources, and mounting problems. Much of the city has simply fallen off the grid. Again, this reality is not particular to Guatemala City. The rate of worldwide urbanization and the desperate conditions in which many urban residents survive is striking. According to recent estimates, one billion of the three billion urban residents in the world today live in slums, "vulnerable to disease, violence, and social, political, and economic exclusion" (Beall and Fox 2006: 5). Conditions of structural violence and neoliberal market rationalities in places such as Guatemala City fuel the deterioration of living conditions for the urban poor and motivate against effective state responses (*ibid.*: 10).

Life in Guatemala City slums has been examined in the work of several scholars, whose contributions include analyses of youth involvement in gangs, family life and social organization, and perceptions of violence (Espinosa and Hidalgo 1994; Morán Mérida 1997; Moser and McIlwaine 2004; Roberts 1973; Winton 2003). This volume focuses on the everyday lives of those who have, by and large, managed to avoid the worst living conditions and are part of the city's working and middle classes. The essays provide an in-depth look at class stratifications in the capital city and changing senses of distinction and difference among groups whose social status has been thrown into flux in the neoliberal era. Manuela Camus's essay looks at citizens of *Primero de Julio*, a once decidedly middle-class neighborhood where people increasingly feel disenfranchised as well as disconnected from the visions of modernity and progress they previously held for the city. Thomas Offit supplies a more hopeful portrait of urban opportunity. His essay follows an indigenous entre-

preneur who has achieved relative success in the informal sector by drawing upon rural ties, including kinship networks, to establish retail empires in the city streets. As noted above, Véliz and O'Neill show another side of the street vendor story, as wealthy interests threaten the city center's curbside markets.

Beyond a portrait of contemporary urban life in Guatemala, the essays in this volume highlight the circulations of people, goods, media, social and political movements, and crime across rural and urban space. Anthropologists have clearly demonstrated that urban space is often experienced as something completely other than the countryside. At the same time, urban studies that neglect the relational dynamics between city and country sidestep the historical and experiential processes through which urban and rural spaces are produced in physical terms and in the social imaginary. This volume confronts the tension between these two contradictory perspectives by advancing the argument that spaces are not inherently connected or disconnected. Rather, scholars as well as residents of Guatemala come to perceive space one way as opposed to another. Critical inquiry into how perceptions of space have been shaped over time and the social and political effects of these modes of perception is especially urgent in a country where the distinction between rural and urban space is historically charged with powerful meanings: the city associated with ladinos and modernity, the countryside associated with indigenous people and tradition. Essays by Avery Dickins de Girón and Kedron Thomas delve into how urban space is imagined from the countryside, including how urban violence and insecurity figure into representations of the city and into economic decisions made among merchants and migrants with ties to the capital city and its markets. Kevin Lewis O'Neill investigates the urban perspective on rural life. His essay explores the specific figures and fables that circulate about the rural poor within one of Guatemala City's booming neo-Pentecostal megachurches. This volume makes a strong case for understanding Guatemala City and country as inextricably linked and mutually constitutive. This is an especially effective approach, we argue, to understanding mid-sized cities around the world. Viewed as fluid and dispersed locations (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) and hubs of translocal political, economic, and social processes, it is untenable to define mid-sized cities as bounded entities (Frisby and Featherstone 1997; Graham and Marvin 2001; Soja 2000) set apart from surrounding rural and semiurban zones. This volume takes discourses of security, experiences of insecurity, and transnational processes linked to neoliberal agendas as fruitful grounds for exploring the ways city and country are presently bound together.

The Book

Securing the City is divided into two parts. The first part, "Urban History and Social Experience," provides a historical and ethnographic analysis of Guatemala City's rise as an urban center. The essays focus on processes that have transformed how urban space is organized and experienced in Guatemala as well as continuing struggles of group affiliation and exclusion that impact who has a right to the city. The volume's second part addresses how the country's urban and rural spaces interrelate, with particular attention to the work of the imagination (Appadurai 1996) in shaping not only perceptions of space and security, but also everyday practice in the realms of politics, religion, and work.

The first part opens with Deborah Levenson's essay entitled "Living Guatemala City: 1930s–2000s." Her subject of analysis could be framed with a seemingly uncomplicated question: How do people get by and make sense of their world in a place as precarious and dangerous as Guatemala City? Moving through the life histories of three generations of youth in one working-class urban family, she shows how youth have conceived of their selfhoods and made their ways through the specific modernities of which they were a constituent part. The essay conveys a powerful history of the political, economic, and cultural changes experienced in Guatemala City in the last century, leading to new perspectives on the rise of neoliberalism and how security is practiced by young people in the capital today.

The next essay, "Primero de Julio: Urban Experiences of Class Decline and Violence," authored by Manuela Camus, also places Guatemala City in historical context, looking at changes over four decades in one urban neighborhood. Camus, one of the foremost anthropologists of Guatemala City, couples her ethnographic findings on contemporary forms of class insecurity, social suffering, and violence in the capital city with a genealogical analysis of patterns of discrimination that inform how people respond to situations they find threatening. Residents of Primero de Julio interpret the loss of middle-class social standing they are experiencing in terms of the inability of indigenous migrants to successfully adapt to the urban environment, which they believe results in the delinquency and crime encroaching on their neighborhood. The essays by Camus and Levenson raise important questions that later essays continue to unravel: How do deeply rooted ideologies of race, class, and gender inform contemporary responses to rising inequalities? How is urban space

materially and symbolically reconfigured alongside meanings of poverty and crime as institutions and ordinary citizens practice neoliberal rationalities?

The next two essays take up these questions in addressing the lived experiences of urban street vendors, participants in an informal economic sector that has proliferated in the wake of neoliberal reforms. Thomas Offit's essay, "Cacique for a Neoliberal Age: A Maya Retail Empire on the Streets of Guatemala City," looks at the ways that neoliberal ideologies of individual autonomy, economic rationality, and entrepreneurship seem convergent with the social and economic practices that have turned some indigenous street vendors into retail kings. "Privatization of Public Space: The Displacement of Street Vendors in Guatemala City," authored by Rodrigo J. Véliz and Kevin Lewis O'Neill, addresses the divergent meanings that urban space holds for vendors who make their living on the streets of Guatemala City's historic Zone 1 and the developers who promote "urban renewal" as a way to save the city's historic center from what they view as degradation, crime, and blight. These first four essays provide the reader with a historical backdrop against which the neoliberal period takes shape as a distinct political, economic, and social field, along with in-depth analyses of how economic changes, rising security concerns, and explosive urban growth are transforming the city's human and social geography.

The volume's second part begins with an essay by Avery Dickins de Girón entitled "The Security Guard Industry in Guatemala: Rural Communities and Urban Violence." Dickins addresses the multifarious effects that neoliberal reforms and rising crime rates have had in the department of Alta Verapaz, a rural region north of the capital city. Patterns of rural dislocation together with real and perceived conditions of violence in the capital, she argues, fuel the migration of indigenous men to Guatemala City, where the private security guard industry promises economic opportunity and encounters with urban modernity as it is imagined from the countryside.

The two essays that follow feature ethnographic glimpses from Tecpán, a large town located about an hour's drive west of Guatemala City. "Guatemala's New Violence as Structural Violence: Notes from the Highlands," by Peter Benson, Kedron Thomas, and Edward F. Fischer, takes up many of the themes addressed in Dickins's essay to examine how new forms of violence and social suffering in Guatemala reshape relations between the capital city and the highlands. The authors are especially concerned with liberal political and moral models that narrowly interpret violence in terms of individual

suffering and culpability, models that converge with *mano dura* politics and privatized security. Enduring legacies of state violence and the social and economic insecurities brought about by neoliberal policies shape life in both Guatemala City and the countryside, even if the problem of violence is often portrayed as a distinctly urban one. Kedron Thomas's essay, "Spaces of Structural Adjustment in Guatemala's Apparel Industry," examines the economic life of Maya entrepreneurs from Tecpán who supply informal markets in the highlands and in Guatemala City with clothing, usually featuring pirated logos of popular brands. Thomas highlights how a social imaginary that links urban space, danger, and criminality affects their market decisions, at the same time as international trademark laws have turned these indigenous men and women into criminals themselves. Neoliberal reforms have made it increasingly difficult for apparel producers to earn a living, blaming them, as "pirates," for the nation's social and economic ills.

The volume's final essay returns to Guatemala City to consider how rural spaces are imagined by urban residents concerned about not only the safety but also the souls of Guatemala's indigenous population. In "Hands of Love: Christian Outreach and the Spatialization of Ethnicity," Kevin Lewis O'Neill focuses on Christian outreach programs instituted by some of the most prominent neo-Pentecostal megachurches in Guatemala City. In an ethnically diverse city where over a third of the population lives in extreme poverty, O'Neill's essay considers why urban residents need to leave the city to do charitable work. He examines the program participants' decisions to help people in the countryside rather than the city streets, tracing the church's moral construction of indigeneity and poverty alongside its conceptualization of urban versus rural space. The four essays of the volume's second part contribute to the theorization of how perceptions of urban and rural space—whether premised on notions of urban violence, urban opportunities, rural decline, or rural innocence and deservedness—shape institutional and individual practices in a neoliberal era.

Notes

1. See Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer 1999.
2. The conclusion that periods of Guatemala's armed conflict are best understood as genocidal is not an uncontested argument. Diane Nelson (2001), for example, suggests that questions of intent complicate the charge of genocide, given that genocide's legal construction pivots on the intent of the powerful to eradicate the powerless.

3. While Adams's work was the first major *anthropological* work to deal with Guatemala City, this does not mean that there was no earlier academic research that addressed the capital with a social-science perspective. Theodora Caplow's (1949) pioneering work on the social ecology of Guatemala City and Michael Micklin's (1966, 1969) work on the psychological effect of urbanization on a sample of men in Guatemala City are notable. In addition, numerous historical studies have been published in Spanish on various aspects of the city's growth and development (see Gellert 1995; Gellert and Pinto Soria 1990; and Velásquez Carrera 2006 for recent exemplars).

4. The urban informal sector has drawn repeated interest from scholars of Guatemala City, including Juan Pablo Pérez Sáinz (1990, 1997); Pérez Sáinz and Menjivar Larin (1991); Gustavo Porras Castejón (1995); and Thomas Offit (2008; this volume).

5. Guatemala is considered a unique case in the region because the percentage of its population living in urban areas is relatively low (47 percent in 2006, compared to an average of 70 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean; World Bank 2006). As Carol Smith (1984) has pointed out, this statistic is offset by the fact that most of the nation's urban population resides in one overdeveloped metropolis, Guatemala City. Guatemala City is eight to ten times larger than the second most populous city of the nation, Quetzaltenango, a city in the western highlands that has itself recently attracted interest; see, e.g., the excellent historical studies by Greg Grandin (2000) and Irma Velásquez Nimatuj (2002).

6. See also recent work on Guatemala City by Kevin Lewis O'Neill (2010a) and Thomas Offit (2008).

7. See Fischer 2001; Fischer and Brown 1996; Hale 2002; and Warren 1998.

8. Inés Benítez, "Guatemala City: New Commission to Investigate Prisons, Police," Inter Press Service, August 2, 2007.

9. In 1996, 67 percent of urban Guatemalans surveyed said they or someone in their family had been the victim of a common crime (e.g., assault) that year (Pérez 2004). See also INE 2006.

10. See also Lara, Julio, Olga López, Leonardo Creser, and Coralia Orantes, "Sociedad armada, población violenta." *Prensa Libre*, August 19, 2007.

11. Zones 9, 10, 13, and 14 are considered the wealthiest and safest zones in Guatemala City today.