

From *The Mayan in the Mall* by J.T. Way

Introduction

Seemingly endless paradox and contrast are assimilated in the spatial unfolding of Guatemala's distorted development. Grand Tikal Futura, harbinger of first-world consumerism though it is, sits at the epicenter of a country in which roughly three-quarters of the economically active population works in the informal economy, slightly more live in poverty, and well over half are illiterate.¹ The mall's neighbors include multistoried transnational corporate offices at intersections where rag-clad urchins spit fire for a tip. The Kama Sutra love motel and the Pentecostal temple are nearby. Mayan vendors hawk tortillas next to Goodyear Tire shops and cinderblock shacks where cockfight spurs and guns are sold.

All these installations are denizens of a highway known as the Calzada Roosevelt, named after FDR. The Roosevelt is really part of the Pan-American Highway—the part that runs through the city where gated enclaves of the wealthy rub elbows with shantytowns on open sewers. It connects that city with the corn-terraced villages straight out of National Geographic. A U.S.-built road network that links the Americas, the Pan-American (called the Carretera Interamericana in Central America) is a highway whose construction was the largest infrastructure and development project in contemporary Latin America. One of the great, globalizing development schemes that this book explores, the Pan-American was the stuff of imperialism and dreams. The section of the highway that lies in Guatemala City, the Roosevelt, epitomizes Guatemala's contemporary dichotomies. The Roosevelt is the broken heart of the road network that ties the nation together, a miracle mile on acid, an asphalt ribbon through a manmade ruin.

That the ruin was manmade is an overarching premise of this book. From the arrival of the Spanish, Guatemala has been marked by oligarchic control, huge landholdings, coerced labor, and profound racial division. Today, the nation is still not even remotely healed from the genocide that its military committed against the Maya in the early 1980s or from decades of generalized state terror. Its civil war, in which the United States was intimately involved, began in the 1960s and did not end until 1996. A great deal has been written about racism, imperialism, and genocide in this small nation, but very little about the fabric of development that binds them together.²

¹Statistics on Guatemala are unreliable and are rounded off throughout this book. Of the 80 percent of the population that is impoverished, two in three live in extreme poverty, earning under two dollars a day, and with chronic malnutrition. Infrastructure, health care, and education are sorely lacking. Figures can be found on the U.S. Department of State and World Bank websites: <http://devdata.worldbank.org> (see `genderstats` and `hnpstats`) and www.state.gov.

²Development is an organizing and central theme in Guatemalan culture, politics, and public discourse. The word itself, *desarrollo*, means so many things to different people that it has been emptied of its real-world meaning. I make a key distinction: infrastructure building

[...]

Nothing in Guatemala's primal nature, Indian soul, or location in Latin America caused these problems to be inevitable. The problems were developed, quite literally. Perpetuating the myth that Guatemala is underdeveloped perpetuates the myth that development can solve the very problems it has created and continues to create.

Grand Tikal Futura is aptly named. It stands, paradigmatically, for all that development has achieved and for the shining future its promoters dream of creating. Whether or not the Maya themselves or their mestizo cousins ever get to enter the postmodern, global retail emporium as shoppers is immaterial. Either way, they lose. Development has put the Mayan in the mall.

Ch. 1: "Like Sturdy Little Animals"

Making the Modern Anti-Modern. 1920s—1944

Race, just as much as Guatemala's adherence to its status as agroexporter, conditioned the nation's modernism and affected its culture of development. Race serves as the thread that connects the national imaginary that emerged from the 1920s and the new labor movement, born in the same decade, that has had cultural and political impact ever since. Notions of race affected the nation's marketing of itself abroad, its relationship with other countries and international movements, and even its perceived position in a burgeoning hemispheric system dominated by the United States. Finally, racial ideas, labor patterns, and demographics were integral to Guatemala's institution-building and infrastructure-building projects and help in part to illuminate the underlying continuity behind the shocking swings in the style of modernism from the 1920s to the end of the Second World War.³

"La Patria Nueva": Romantic Modernism, Mysticism, and Marketing the Maya

During the same era, the international marketing invention of Guatemala as *Mundo Maya* was underway. Peasant Mayan themes were a hit as early as 1917, when Wanamaker's department store in New York City exhibited Mayan

vs. development. The first is just what the word implies: a sewer, a school, a highway. Development, however, is a cultural phenomenon: a sewer so we won't be a backward nation, a school so children learn middle-class values, a Pan-American Highway so we bring democracy and prosperity to all. Development, besides referring to what has become a contemporary industry in its own right, is a word that evokes a diverse set of values, goals, and belief systems—a word located where culture and infrastructure meet.

³Quijano, "Colonialism of Power, Eurocentricism, and Latin America," explores race as "a mental category of modernity" originating in the Americas. For further exploration of these ideas, see Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings*.

pyramids of yore and primitive huts of today together with purses and parasols for sale.⁴ In Guatemala, meanwhile, both ancient Mayans and *indígenas*, or Indians barely associated with this glorious past, were the subject of much elite discussion. In the 1920s elite media, touting the Patria Nueva, or New Nation, often portrayed the Mayan woman as the harbinger of a modern era. She appeared in newspapers and magazines as a flapper, her traditional Mayan skirt and blouse, or traje, redrawn with Jazz Age flare.

Esoteric spirituality was all the rage among the elite in the 1920s, but the highbrow romantic modernists still looked toward Europe, not to their own indigenous backyard.

Even as intellectual elites looking abroad espoused a biological Pan-Hispanic Americanism that included the indigenous in ways mostly imaginary, the United States, itself no stranger to racism, was promoting a different Pan-Americanism. There was one of a business culture, made operational through the Pan-American Union (PAU) and promoted at the grass roots by organizations like Rotary International and the Lions Clubs. Early in the 1920s, the PAU initiated the Pan-American Highway project, promoted in propaganda as a vehicle for tourism, a road to international harmony, and a route to development. By 1927 Rotary had founded a tourist club in Guatemala City that advocated for highway construction and offered discounts on hotels and restaurants. Within a few years the club was making arrangements for Thomas Cook and American Express travelers' checks to be accepted. In 1930 the PAU was proudly reporting that Central American service workers could say "hotel," "baggage," and "I'm your man."⁵

The fact that all of this activity was simply a cover for highly racialized economic and cultural imperialism was not lost on Guatemalans. Just as in Europe, critics in Guatemala decried Americanization, and they wrote news magazines, formed clubs, and even founded a chapter of the Anti-Imperialist League.⁶ It was in their crusade against the *Yanquis* that the elites found common ground with workers, who were busily organizing in the 1920s. La Patria Nueva emerged in the 1920s as a vibrant imaginary—its heroes arrayed against the imperialists to the north, its blood imbued with the cosmic spirit of pyramid builders, Egyptian and Mesoamerican alike. This cultural global modernism accompanied the growth of soft industry, the congealing of an urban working class, the spread of civic organizations, and the growth of urban neighborhoods. Together in their expanding city, workers, elites, and middle sectors envisioned a Patria Nueva of justice, progress, and growth, but somehow the Patria's mascot, the new indígena, failed to win a place at the table.⁷

⁴Leach, *Land of Desire*, 103.

⁵*Bulletin of the Pan-American Union* [hereafter BPAU], (May 1928), 497-504, and (March 1930), 226 (citation); *Chronology of the Pan-American Highway Project* (Washington: Pan-American Union, Technical Unit on Tourism, Department of Economic Affairs, 1963), 1-2; *El Imparcial*, 19 March 1927 and 1 January 1930, 3.

⁶*El Imparcial*, 14 October 1922, 9-11, 29 August 1925, 3 and 3 February 1928.

⁷This does not imply that there was not rural organizing; there was. See Grandin, *The*

Workers in the 1920s: Internationalism and Insularity

In the 1920s urban workers played an enormous role in defining the texture of Guatemalan modernism. They were protagonists in setting the political agenda and in resisting domination from abroad. Additionally, they looked internationally to draw on discourses of class justice, thereby contributing to the shape of the Guatemalan resistance for decades to come. Their nascent movement failed to incorporate the Maya, as would the later worker revolution of 1944–54. It did, however, begin to set the stage for the popular front of the 1970s and 1980s and establish the discourse that would lead many Maya to describe their race in terms of class: *de la clase indígena*—from the indigenous class.

As 1926 began, textile and soap factory workers, transport workers, and bakers went on strike—a wave of activism that led to the splitting of one of the nation’s main confederations into two groups, one communist and the other more reformist, or economist, in the words of its critics.⁸ The union movement was growing, and it was growing in a variety of directions.⁹ By decade’s end, communist and anarchist groups were spreading. They vied both against each other and against the procapital, reformist unions. Internally, they broke into squabbling factions. Sectarianism weakened the labor movement even as its grass-roots base was expanding and its leaders were forging ties of solidarity around North, Central, and South America.¹⁰ As we will see, labor suffered crushing blows in the 1930s, but by the beginning of the decade workers had created lasting cultural and political discourses that remained an integral part of society and the culture of development.

“One of the Most Important Branches of Society”: Laboring of Culture in the 1920s

The two groups weren’t always a perfect fit, especially as the union movement radicalized and became more internationalist. By 1925 Wyld Ospina, while maintaining that the government should support unions, was claiming in the pages of *El Imparcial* that “the idea of socialism” was “a European import.” The Guatemalan reality, he held, was one of “hundreds of thousands of illiterate agricultural peons and a few thousand semi-literate artisans.” The artisans were not a class but a “subgroup” manipulated by political leaders. Wyld Ospina, well intentioned and as dedicated to championing the Mayan campesino as he may have been, did not stop to note that he himself was borrowing freely from

Last Colonial Massacre, 27-30.

⁸This is a greatly simplified gloss of complex labor politics covered at great length in the sources cited here, especially *Más de cien años del movimiento urbano*. *El Imparcial*, 3 February 1926, 29 March 1926; *Más de cien años*, 1:116, 206–16, 235, 335–39.

⁹Very dubious statistics indicate that as much as 12 percent of the nonagricultural, urban workforce may have organized by 1927. *Más de cien años*, 1:238–39.

¹⁰*Más de cien años*, 1:144, 211, 217–18, 246, 260.

European thought. When he paraphrased Gustave Le Bon—“the masses are guided by feeling, not by reason”—he was engaging in a discourse prevalent in the Europe of the 1890s that combined a revision of Marxism and revolt against positivism with the ugly currents of social Darwinism and upper-class racism rooted in the thought of Arthur de Gobineau. In promoting a racialized, folk-Guatemalan approach to worker organizing, he sent intellectual taproots into the pool of European thought that nourished national socialism.¹¹ He also furthered the binary language of race that, while it had a basis in demographic realities and was intended to be pro-Indian, painted Mayans as an ethno-anthropological other, separate from the social needs of a working class, special and apart. Had the “semi-literate artisans” been allowed to keep organizing through the 1930s, they may well have forged urban-rural and Ladino-Maya solidarity, as their inheritors (both Ladino and Maya) attempted to do during the Revolution of 1944–54. During the 1920s they certainly kept organizing and opened not only a school for proletarian children in 1926, but also a Centro Obrero de Estudios Sociales a year later—the kind of grass-roots institution designed specifically to grapple with social realities at once global, national, and local.¹²

Beyond intersecting with the elite, the projects and public language of the unions spread through the lower class faster and more widely than did the organized unions themselves. In 1922 an unaffiliated group of about sixty workers in Guatemala City wrote to the government requesting a grant of suburban farmland. They were, they said, “notoriously poor workers who ought to receive their land for free. . . proletarian workers and sons of labor, who win sustenance through the sweat of their brows.” Rents were rising, the population was growing, and thus their request was surely just. These are difficult times, they noted, and “the majority of countries find themselves in political convulsions.” This veiled threat they followed up with one not so veiled: “Lest we find ourselves in a situation like GERMANY’s.” Street riots and chaos might be avoided by following the lead of postrevolutionary Mexico, where, the workers maintained, labor legislation was the order of the day. They also wrote internationalist, anti-Semitic doggerel in capital letters, charging that “THE PROPERTY OWNERS EXTORT US MERCILESSLY. . . THESE FOREIGN JEWS AND GUATEMALANS.” The sons of labor even used the language of Pan-Americanism: “Farmland should

¹¹On Le Bon, the generation of the 1890s, philosophy, and fascism, see Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, 33–42 and 63–104 passim; Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820–1940*, 170–71; and, most importantly, Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, 35–37 and passim. From the beginning, one of the goals of the Popular University was to educate campesinos as well as urban workers. In 1923 administrators sent thousands of leaflets for basic literacy and arithmetic to fincas. *El Imparcial*, 8 June 1923. Wyld Ospina quotation is from “Obrerismo y el problema obrero en Guatemala,” *El Imparcial*, 19 September 1925, 6.

¹²*Más de cien años*, 1:240. The union movement spread throughout all of urbanized Guatemala during the 1920s, though its most important node remained Guatemala City, followed by Quetzaltenango. The UFCO and IRCA workers brought unionism to the ports, docks, and plantations as well. The state and local strongmen actively discouraged rural organizing, but, as we have seen, there were strikes on the fincas by the turn of the decade. It is reasonable to suppose that the rural workers might have forged solidarity with the urban, not vice versa—a process that during the Revolution of 1944–54 remains understudied.

belong to the State,” they held, “as was established by the Laws of the Incas of Peru. . . . Their system has been the wisest ever registered in the history of the PUEBLOS AMERICANOS.” The workers, who never identified either their occupations or any established mutual aid society or association to which they belonged, coupled their internationalism and Pan-Americanism with legal acumen. They attached a law that they themselves had drafted, a law to regulate the expropriation of latifundia by the state and its partition among the working class. Such was the amplitude of consciousness and the depth of the search for a new identity among the class that Wyld Ospina called semi-literate hordes.¹³

“Our Guatemalan Hearts in Unison Beat”: From Incomplete Proletarian Unity to Incomplete Organic Unity

The spiritualist, vitalist intellectuals who had influenced the modernism of the 1920s gave way to a new group concerned with purity of blood, eugenics, and racial superiority. These thinkers, say the historians Marta Causús Arzú and Teresa García Geráldez, contributed to a new, hegemonic discourse of racial domination and helped to create “a State without a nation.”¹⁴ Even as its racial perspective changed, romantic modernism among the elite ceded its leadership position to a practical, corporate capitalist discourse closely in line with U.S. Pan-Americanism. In short, the Rotary Club picked up where the Theosophists left off. Ubico cooperated fully with U.S. businesses and the U.S. military. He embraced their notion of progress, even as his policies cemented coercive (many use the word *feudal*) land and labor relations on a landscape that had only just begun to change.

Thus the 1930s underscore the spatially articulated contradictions with which modern capital built and rebuilt itself: New Deal, on the one hand, *tata/fiera sanguinaria*, on the other. Tying them together, well before the globalization watershed of Bretton Woods, would be an emerging banking system designed to benefit the great estates, a Pan-American Union apparatus on hand with development money and propaganda, a slowly emerging highway network that was really a web of ox-cart trails—carved through the mountains by the imprisoned poor, and an agricultural labor regime that likewise approximated slavery thanks to its use of anachronistic vagrancy laws in the Mayan highlands.¹⁵

Guatemalan hearts were not, however, beating in unison. First of all, many were beating in prison or in exile. More to the point, though, is the paradoxical reality that as the Ubico regime attempted to replace a nascent proletarian unity with an organic, nationalist unity, it strengthened already sharply drawn

¹³AGCA B/22231 (Fomento: Lotificaciones [Lot.]), 1923, Expediente [hereafter abbreviated Exp.] 3373. The government responded that the workers should frame their request according to the Expropriation Law of 1899.

¹⁴Causús Arzú and García Geráldez, *Las redes intelectuales*, 289.

¹⁵On the banking system and currency (the quetzal replaced the peso in 1924), see *El Imparcial*, 19 September 1925, 7; *Más de cien años*, 1:33–34. A detailed description of the Central Bank and National Mortgage Bank can be found in BPAU (July 1937), 555–63.

class and ethnic distinctions. The planter class would soon be pitted against new industrialists and the middle classes, who billed the Revolution of 1944 as antifeudal. As we will see, those same classes would find themselves swept up by the demands of the lower classes, the vast majority of the population. Far from being organically unified, however, the lower classes were themselves ever more divided. As a proletariat became historically recognizable as a class through the complex processes that make pueblos into mass societies, it also demonstrated evolved differentiation that resulted in innumerable conflicts. Some of these divisions were ideological and political. The biggest, however, was racial. To this day, the Guatemalan indígena resides in a different category from the Guatemalan *obrero*, or worker. Greg Grandin has demonstrated a key dynamic of modernization in Guatemala, namely, that “ethnic identity deepen[s] while state power increase[s].”¹⁶ This process occurred, as Grandin demonstrates, concurrently with the marketing of the Maya, a discursive phenomenon at the heart of the Guatemalan modern anti-modern and an economic phenomenon driving both the tourist industry and the elite national imaginary today.

“Indians That I Have Drawn”: Tourism, *Indigenismo*, and the Mayan Anti-Modern

Over the course of the twentieth century, imagined Maya came to occupy a discursive space in which their ancient civilization was linked with modernism and progress and their contemporary society was equated with backwardness. Their folkloric charm, meanwhile, had money-making potential for Ladino and foreign developers of the tourism industry. The sectors controlling public discourse doubly negated the Maya, who was neither heir to a magnificent past nor participant in an unfolding future.

“What Would I Do for the Rest of the Day?”: Time, Space, and Money in Agromodernism

Agriculture and *roads* were the two words that marked the opening salvo in a campaign of development that mixed past and present and helped make the Guatemalan modern anti-modern. *Finqueros*, the finca owners who were the political winners in the Ubico regime, directed virtually all road development.¹⁷ Campesinos unwillingly provided unpaid labor to make it happen. Adopting the discourses of futuristic agroindustry asserted by the PAU, Guatemala’s leaders reinforced retrograde finca agriculture while simultaneously opening the nation for further foreign penetration. They strengthened both the nation’s agroexport and sub-subsistence *minifundia* agricultural portfolios, putting Guatemala on

¹⁶Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala*, 54.

¹⁷This assertion is based on readings of decades of AGCA documents from the Ministerio de Agricultura y Caminos, Fomento, and the Ministerio de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas. All sources, including the trade press and government propaganda of the era, confirm finqueros’ centrality in the road-building process.

the losing end of the global commodity market and establishing much of the modern face of its twentieth-century poverty, both national and local.

The John Deere tractor never replaced the machete in Guatemala, but in homage to the dream of its doing so, *fincas* would have to be connected by roads. Forced labor staffed both the farms and the road-building crews.

In his memoirs Carlos Manuel Pellecer, a labor leader of the 1940s, tells the story of a U.S. magazine reporter traveling in the Mayan highlands during the 1930s. The reporter ran into a Mayan who was selling orchids and tried to buy them all. “No,” the campesino told him, “I can only sell them one by one.” The surprised reporter asked him why. “If I sold them all,” the campesino replied, “what would I do for the rest of the day?”¹⁸ Pellecer went on to describe the reporter’s excoriation of the lazy, backward Indian—a diatribe based in a “time is money” attitude (he used English for this phrase) that Pellecer viewed with disdain.¹⁹ What the foreigner didn’t understand, he explained, was that, thanks to the vagrancy law, which forced campesinos to work 280 days a year or suffer one to two months in prison, people had to look busy all the time. Without his armful of orchids, the Mayan man might be subject to a sudden request: produce your *libreto de jornalero*—the little booklet in which workdays were recorded, often falsely, to extract even more labor from the poor—or go to jail.²⁰

The reliance on agroexport fueled by underpaid, often Mayan, manual labor, reinforced in the Ubico era, has crystallized in myriad and lasting ways in the local culture of development. If in the first world temporality came to be defined by factors such as the speed of the assembly line, the hourly wage and yearly salary, the rate of return on investment—resulting in a now-naturalized formula of efficiency, speed, mechanization, and wage earning that links time intimately with money—in Guatemala, capitalist consumption of the hungry rural body as a valueless, timeless thing produced very different results. There is little to no cultural consensus that time equals money; but space does: a big plantation, a plot of corn, a stall in a market, a hut in a ravine. As Guatemala modernized, families, already conditioned to migrating, distributed themselves more widely over space—some in the village, some on the *finca*, some in the city, and, later, some in the United States—establishing ever more ephemeral households as sites of dispersed production. Wage labor was unavailable in sufficient quantities to support the population, and what wage labor there was paid only a pittance, forcing families to find other ways to survive. Meanwhile, Guatemalan capital enterprises from big to small developed within the context of labor exploitation, eschewing mechanization and efficiency: why get a washing machine when a servant will launder by hand for pennies? Why buy a forklift when workers will haul loads with tumplines?

Guatemalan underdevelopment, poverty, and chaos are not signs of the lack of modernization. They are the products of it. The Ubico state mobilized

¹⁸Pellecer, *Memoria en dos geografías*, 74.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 75.

²⁰*Ibid.*

modernist discourses and fascist forms of corporate socio-political organization while promoting a racist lord and peon economy. In short, totalitarianism, the agro-economy, the exploitation of Mayan and mestizo workers, and imperialism, itself steeped in racist ideology, all became written upon the landscape and embedded in the Guatemalan culture of development.

Imperialism and the Landscape: Creating Space from Above and Below

The [U.S.] War Department temporarily renamed the Pan-American Highway the Ruta Militar de Emergencia (RUME) but called it, more popularly, the Pioneer Road. While the Bureau of Public Roads would later nix some route changes, the U.S. War Department nonetheless blazed the main trail of Guatemala's highway network. They did it with forced labor and entered into the task with extraordinary naiveté about the state of Central America's physical plant. On arrival in the isthmus, Col. Edward C. Kelton was amazed to discover that there were only two cement factories. There was almost no power equipment and no steel at all. Kelton also found that Washington was more concerned with shipping strategic materials to Europe and the Pacific than down to Central America. The Grace Line and UFCO contributed to transport, ripping up old railroad tracks for supplies. Trained labor was another problem. The U.S. Army provided the bulk of specialists, but locally peons were plentiful. They were unpaid campesinos rounded up by the fully militarized Guatemalan Highway Department. "Conscript labor was assigned to the rume on the same basis as that customarily followed for the highway department," was how Kelton dryly described the process in his final report.²¹

Ch. 2 Chaos and Rationality

The Dialectic of the Guatemalan Ghetto

Chaos is an all-pervasive feature of life and of development in Guatemala. Water systems and electricity, where they exist, don't work. Officials are corrupt, and the bureaucracy is torturous. Businesses open and close at random hours. Supply and distribution are incomplete and unreliable. Public transportation is disorganized and dangerous. The list is endless. And chaos hinders rationality at the ground level as well. One person opens a successful tomato stand, and suddenly there are dozens, and no one can make money. One poor worker saves up to buy some land and discovers she's been cheated on the deed, such scams being a veritable cottage industry. But chaos and rationality are dialectical, and taken together they explain much of historical change in Guatemala. Amidst the chaos is an alternative rationality, one built from the ground up with its own

²¹ *Design and Construction of Pan American Highway*, passim (citation, 232).

internal logic. Amidst the top-down rationality of the state is nested chaos—in the case of the revolutionary state, a chaos of social democracy that unleashed discourses of economic justice which threatened the capitalist power structure as it emerged from the Second World War into the era of the Cold War.

The story of Guatemalan development during the middle years of the twentieth century debunks a popular and pernicious notion, namely, that capitalist development left countries like Guatemala behind because there simply wasn't enough of it. In fact, the state liberally applied high-modern, rational planning. It didn't work, and it still doesn't work. Plan-rational social engineering is top down, and it fails to confront the economic and social realities that thwart it. Expanded to its logical conclusion, this argument suggests that capitalism simply cannot develop places like Guatemala because it also develops the poverty and need and chaos that stymie its very rationality. Capitalist development, then, should be reread: when unmitigated by socialist measures that redistribute wealth, it is not *against* third-world conditions, but a cocreator *with* and *of* third-world conditions. It is no coincidence that the United States overthrew the Guatemalan government precisely when it began to take steps in recognition of this inherent contradiction in capitalism.

“To Make Patria”: Saving El Gallito

“A Thousand Bothers”: The Early Years of the Worker Neighborhoods

The rules, not the residents, caused the “thousand bothers.” The government awarded the lots to the poorest of the poor but provided neither aid nor services such as plumbing, sewers, electricity, or garbage collection. Regulations required inhabitants to build a solid dwelling, not a barraca, or hut, though this was allowed as a temporary measure, within five years, although mortgages and loans were out of their reach. For ten years residents could not rent, sell, subdivide, or otherwise transfer or make money from their property, which in the eyes of the law wasn't even really theirs since the government failed to register it officially.²² In short, penniless people received naked dirt plots and were expected, collectively, to build a city neighborhood.

Faced with mismanagement and necessity, the poor created a complex mix of strategies related to acquiring, keeping, and developing land in neighborhoods like El Gallito. The creation of space in the neighborhood exemplifies chaotic elements that characterize contemporary Guatemalan development: mistrust, litigiousness, and competition; popular notions of justice; deliberate opacity and double-dealing to keep the state confused; and the forging of a geography of small enterprises that, like an underground constellation of points of production, sustains human life, however miserably. None of these strategies was either

²²All the relevant legislation can be found in the appendix of Morán Mérida, *Condiciones de vida*. See government Acuerdos of 11 February 1928, 4 June 1928 and 14 June 1928, 135–41.

born in or caused by neighborhoods like El Gallito. Instead, El Gallito opens a window—politically, socially, and economically—on the making of modern culture in this particular corner of what would later be known as the third world.

Petitions for urban lots, stretching all the way from the 1930s to the 1960s, show rhetorical and political strategies. After the initial lotteries of the late 1920s, properties were awarded by petition, and petitioners soon overwhelmed the government’s capacity to deal with them. A poor person’s first choice was where to send the petition. Levels of authority overlapped within the bureaucracy, a source both of confusion and of opportunity to manipulate the system. Petitions sent as a personal appeal to the president sometimes proved more effective than those directed to Public Works; usually, the president’s secretary forwarded them without comment to Public Works, but on occasion an executive directive would be attached. The narrative forms of these appeals for aid from on high reference a tradition of client–patron relations hundreds of years old that were at the heart of the Ubico state.

As early as 1932, with the government already swamped in requests for properties, the official in charge of the neighborhood commented that enforcing building codes would free up land. In practice, this rarely happened.²³ Instead, lots, as they became available, were granted through such opaque mechanisms as political favoritism, pure dumb luck, and vicious denunciations and legal maneuvering.

In general, the government was hostile to city livestock and agriculture, and, afraid that poor residents would sow all the ravines, parks, and streets with corn, Public Works had worked hard during the mid-1930s to extirpate maize cultivation in its city neighborhoods.²⁴ Their success was only partial. Even today, especially in the metropolis’s outer zones, milpa cornfields can be seen terraced into the near-vertical slopes of Guatemala City’s ravines.

“Because of Social Causes We Do Not Understand”: Land Invasions of the 1940s

The great Guatemala City ravine invasions of 1945–48 mark the birth of the modern Guatemalan ghetto. Propelled by a changing physical landscape, a tolerant political economy, and a heightened sense of possibility in the years following the Revolution and the end of the Second World War, migrants began to set their sights on the capital at a markedly increased rate. The city itself, meanwhile, was absorbing neighboring municipalities, transforming local networks of production as city-supplying farmland became part of the urban fabric, itself needing to be provisioned by farms farther abroad. Within the city’s historic heart, citizens emboldened by new civil liberties and inspired

²³AGCA B/22238 (Fomento: Lot. El Gallito), June 1932, Exp. (Susana Flores R.). In 1941 the government began more systematic enforcement of building codes in El Gallito, but the measure does not appear to have resulted in a great number of lots becoming available. Acuerdo of 9 April 1941, in Morán Mérida, *Condiciones de vida*, 141.

²⁴AGCA B/22240 (Fomento: Lot. El Gallito 1934), March 1934, Exp. (Rafael Hernández).

by greater employment opportunities in construction, industry, and services began to migrate more intensively within the metropolis. In short, an always mobile populace became more so, and a city already lacking in infrastructure and housing became, slowly, the metropolis marked by the *asentamientos precarios* (precarious settlements, or shantytowns) that prevail today.

The individual land invaders drop out of sight, but it is known that their shantytowns suffered terribly when a storm ripped through Guatemala City in October 1949. It devastated many precarious neighborhoods, including those in the Palmita and El Gallito ravines. What had been an eviction and control problem became one of emergency relocation.

“Swarms of Women in Rags”: Two Modernist Neighborhood Dreams Are Dashed

The director’s dreams of social hygiene in Colonia Labor, never realizable in the first place, were shattered by the influx of storm refugees. A frustrated Marroquín Gómez was still trying to place families all through 1951. Touched by their misery, he petitioned his ministry for special dispensations for some of the worst hit but was told that it was out of Public Works’ hands. In February of 1950 the government had attempted to rationalize the chaos by transferring management of Colonia Labor, along with another neighborhood, Colonia 20 de Octubre, to the Crédito Hipotecario Nacional (CHN), the national mortgage bank.²⁵ The result, however, was more chaos. Confusion and overlapping of authority made it harder for officials to place storm victims, many of whom waited for years for aid that often never came.

Those who did ultimately get housing were most likely to get it three years later, when the government opened the finca Bethania for settlement in 1952. Located to the northeast across the ravine behind El Gallito, Bethania is an excellent example of midcentury urban space formation. Today part of zone 7’s archipelago of densely populated poor and working-class neighborhoods that run the ridge between the El Naranjo and La Barranca rivers, Bethania began life as an isolated farm. Its story shows grass-roots revolutionary politics, modern housing solutions that failed utterly, institutional confusion, and urban planning thwarted by unforeseen disasters such as the storm, by unprecedented levels of poverty and need, and by chaos.

Amidst the din, civil engineers continued to point out that roads to connect the finca both to the Pan-American Highway and to the city center would be of

²⁵The CHN was charged with sales and distribution of houses; it did not own these properties until later in the decade. AGCA 3/Caja Clas. 161/64, 16.1, 163 (MCOP: Camp., Col., y Esc. 1951), 8 August 1951, Sec. de Obras Públicas; AGCA 3/Caja Clas. 161/64, 16.1, 163 (MCOP: Camp., Col., y Esc. 1951), February 1951, Exp. (Andrés Samayoa Santos); AGCA 3/Caja Clas. 161/64, 16.1, 163 (MCOP: Camp., Col., y Esc. 1951), 9 May 1951, Sec. Priv. de la Presidencia.

great utility. In 1961 there was still no bridge over the ravine to Bethania.²⁶ The neighborhood, by that time run not by Public Works but by the Instituto de Fomento de la Producción (INFOP), suffered chronic problems both with access and basic services such as light and electricity. Public health was also disastrous. According to the fifth-grade newspaper of Bethania's Escuela Experimental Indoamericana—a school linked with rural “fundamental education” trials—three children a day were dying in Bethania from parasites and malnutrition in 1953.²⁷ The situation would get no better under the anticommunist regimes after 1954.²⁸ By decade's end, government files on Bethania would be stuffed with expedientes from the hungry, desperate, ill, and unemployed.

“Land, Bread, and Industrialization”: Revolutionary Government and the “Global Biopolitical Economy”

In contemporary Guatemala, bodies are still riddled with parasites and wasting away from malnutrition. Like the traje-clad body, the rifle-bearing body in camouflage and war paint, the decaying body in a mass grave in a mountain village, the puffy body in suit and tie at Harvard Business School, this scarred, stunted, brown corpus is a symbol of corporate capitalist modernity and all it has brought to Guatemala and the globe.

In short, during the age of rapid modernization, body, region, nation, and globe came to be linked in very specific ways. The historical interplay of chaos and rationality exposes how that happened. During the Revolution, Guatemalan national leaders drew on global technologies of modernization—a body of thought produced within a contested field of cultural production that in the global West was intimately related with the rise of corporate capitalism, as scholars like David Noble have demonstrated.²⁹ Over time, both popular pressure from below and discourses of development from above that challenged the corporate capitalist model influenced the revolutionary state to attempt to engineer a radical socioeconomic restructuring of the landscape.³⁰ The landscape (“chaos”),

²⁶AGCA 3/Caja Clas. 121.13, 121.11, No. Ord. 47085, 47083 (MCOP: Colonias, 1947/50), 13 November 1948 (Partido Frente Popular Libertador), 8 November 1948 letter, Ing. Amílcar Gómez Robelo, Jefe de Urbanismo, to Sub-Director de O.P. Ing. Carlos Cipriani; *Actas de la Municipalidad de Guatemala*, 6 September 1961, Acta 76.

²⁷*Horizontes*, Órgano de publicidad de 50. grado de la Escuela Experimental Indoamericana, Colonia Bethania, no. 1, Year 1 (20 July 1953), 3; Morán Mérida, *Condiciones de vida*, 94.

²⁸A dutifully anticommunist neighborhood improvement committee arose soon after the invasion in 1954 but to little effect. AGCA 3/Caja Clas. 121.1 (MCOP: Col. y Camp., 1955), June 1955, Exp. (Sub-Comité de Vivienda, Comité Pro-Mejoramiento de la Colonia Bethania).

²⁹Noble, *America by Design*. Following Herbert Marcuse, Noble (xxiii) argues that “the history of modern technology in America [i.e., the United States] is of a piece with that of the rise of corporate capitalism.”

³⁰There is no way of knowing what the agrarian reform and all the political superstructure it entailed might have accomplished in Guatemala, though scholars view it positively. I am no exception. I believe that lower-class citizens had begun to exert control over development and that they would have continued to do so—and, indeed, that they did, under the very different conditions of the Cold War state.

however, is not so easily transformed by social engineering (“rationality”).

Democratization, development, and modernization were at the top of the agenda for both the Arévalo and Arbenz administrations. To their chagrin, the astronomical growth of the union movement both incurred the wrath of the United States and pushed them further than they wished to go.³¹

Pushed by the Confederación Nacional Campesina de Guatemala, a confederation of twenty-five rural unions formed in 1950, Arbenz launched a comprehensive agrarian reform in 1952. The idea of agrarian reform predated Arbenz’s presidency.³² It enjoyed advocacy not only from the labor movement and the Communist Party, but also from international finance and major, mainstream Guatemalan political parties as well. Yet campesinos and authorities had different goals for agrarian reform. The campesinos wanted land for their own purposes, and the authorities wanted to increase production. By increasing agroexport revenue, elites could foster a domestic market and build industry. Moreover, the backward campesino would learn high-technology farming and would be slowly drawn into the national sphere through education, social welfare, and highway construction.³³ Geography, systematicity, and space intersected in this thinking in a vision of widened exchange in the context of an economy stalled by uncommodified land, much of it fallow. The agrarian reform was a market- and value-oriented scheme based both on increasing private ownership of the means of production and on mechanizing and modernizing the inputs, process, and distribution of that production with fertilizers, irrigation, tractors, trucks, highways, and ports. It was part of a vast project that involved engineering not only the landscape but society as well.

Only a few years later, after the cia invasion, U.S. dollars and military rulers would bring Arbenz’s developmentalist dreams to fruition. The bulk of the population, though, would find their dreams dashed. They would find that they were not to speak in a democracy, but to be spoken to by dictators. They were not to consume, but, as dispensable cheap laborers, to be consumed.

³¹During the Revolution of 1944–54 Guatemalans formed 536 unions, 15 labor federations, and 2 confederations. *Páginas Sindicales Guatemala*, 14.

³²In 1949 Arévalo had signed Decree 712, the Law of Forced Rental, which empowered campesinos to compel landowners to rent them fallow lands, two years at a time, in return for 10 percent of the harvest. “Decreto No. 712 del Congreso: Arrendamiento obligatorio de parcelas de terreno en fincas rústicas, por dos años,” *Recopilación* 68 (1949–50), 173–74. For an example of calls for agrarian reform during the Arévalo period, see *Cooperación, Revista del Departamento de Fomento Cooperativo* (Guatemala), I:2 (May 1949), 3.

³³Decreto No. 900 del Congreso, “Ley de Reforma Agraria” of 17 June 1952, *Recopilación* 71 (1952–53), 20–31; Guerra-Borges, “Semblanza de la Revolución Guatemalteca de 1944–1954,” 6:14; Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside*, 26, 38–39, 74, 81; *Más de cien años*, 2:244. According to Handy (39), Arbenz’s economic program was extensively based on the thinking of George Britnell, a Canadian economist who had prepared a report on Guatemala’s economy for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, that is, the World Bank, in 1950.

“Condemning Them to Perpetual Poverty”: Agrarian Reform and the Fight over Chaos and Rationality

In early 1954 Robert Dillon, a un agronomist who had been doing fieldwork for the institute since its inception, submitted a confidential memo to the government outlining his concerns. Dillon was passionate about agrarian reform. He wanted it, but he wanted a market-oriented plan, one that would be gradual, free from sudden expropriations (with tenant-workers buying lands), and supported by technical aid from state and international institutions. Not only was the government creating mayhem by expropriating lands before distributing its own property, it was giving lands to the wrong people. In effect, according to Dillon, unskilled finca laborers won the most territory, disadvantaging more skilled farmers found in the crowded Mayan highlands and causing a labor shortage. The plots were too small, and beneficiaries were tilling with hoes and machetes. Speculators would show up, wait for the Agrarian Bank’s credits to be distributed, and during the ensuing party sell the drunken campesinos packages of the wrong fertilizers and useless tools. Awakening with a hangover, campesinos would discover that they were broke and on their own. “You are condemning them to perpetual poverty,” Dillon told the government.³⁴

Whether or not Dillon’s assessment was correct will go unanswered. The United States and the Ubico-oriented wing of the Guatemalan military overthrew the revolutionary government and brought the experiment to a close.³⁵ A CIA-designed and -supported army under Col. Carlos Castillo Armas “invaded” the nation in June 1954. The Revolution was over, and the era of terror, violence, and dictatorship had begun.

However, while democracy, civil rights, and, needless to say, agrarian reform went by the wayside, much of the Revolution’s program continued under a new guise. This is because the Revolution had brought to the nation the idea, if not the reality, of systematicity in keeping with global high modernism. That there ought to be such systematicity was never again at issue. But systematicity is neutral. The war was fought over its application.

The invasion of 1954 marked a tremendous change in politics, but less of one in the business of development. If the Revolution of 1944–54 was a period of social democratic high modernism, the decade or so that followed was one of anticommunist high modernism—a period in which the high modernism of the Revolution, stripped of its social democratic content, melded with the reactionary modernism of the Ubico days within the polarizing context of the Cold War.

³⁴AGCA MAC/427 (Planificación Agrícola 1955), 16 January 1954, Robert Dillon, Ing. Agrónomo, Experto Técnico de la O.I.T. de la Naciones Unidas, “Confidencial: Informe sobre la reforma agraria en Guatemala.”

³⁵Grandin convincingly argues that the growth of the Communist pgt, not the agrarian reform, spurred the United States to invade. See *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 52.

Ch. 3: Oficios de su Sexo

Gender, the Informal Economy, and Anticommunist Development

Antonia's life certainly played out against a backdrop of radical political change. When she arrived in Guatemala City, Ubico had only recently cemented his dictatorial rule. She was still a resident when its citizens poured onto the streets and sparked the Revolution of 1944, and she wrote her cleverly anticommunist petition after that Revolution had been crushed. Assuming she lived into her fifties, one would think she witnessed the civil war that turned into genocide and, a decade later, the putative return to democracy and the coming of the postmodern age. One has a tendency to think of revolutions and dictatorships as tearing people's lives apart, yet Antonia and many like her lived lives that show more continuity and, to stretch the meaning of the word, stability than they do change. Development, both as visited on the population from above and as created by people like Antonia from below, helps explain why.

“The Revolution Charted the Course”: The Continuity Behind the Change

In highly gendered ways, leaders after 1954 teamed the Ubico-era State-as-Father with an aesthetic State-as-Mother in their efforts to extend modern relations of exchange, continuously referencing femininity and family in their public language and institution building. The failure of development to provide opportunities for real families, however, guaranteed the growth of the on-the-ground conditions that state-led development would need to fix, creating a dialogical vicious circle that underpins Guatemala's convoluted political history with a grim continuity.

On one hand, gender ideology and gendered aesthetics helped to disguise this shift in ideological underpinning; on the other, the examining of gendered discourses reveals the slippages between transnational discourses of development and the ideological universe of the Guatemalan military and economic elite, which was far from homogenous and never totally in line with the United States. Gendered ideas and projects open a window on the workings of development-as-myth that came to characterize neoliberal globalization, and help to reveal subterranean mechanisms of continuity between revolution and counterrevolution in Guatemala. Gendered language appeared in everyday life, in political propaganda, in development, in institution building, and in social and economic thinking. As Joan Wallach Scott has pointed out, gender is not only “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes,” but also “a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated.”³⁶ In the first decade

³⁶Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” (citations from 1067 and 1069, respectively). Joan Scott went on to publish a collection of her essays on gender and history that greatly influenced further debate—*Gender and the Politics of History*. Among Latin American historians influenced by Scott was Stern (*The Secret History of Gender*), who highlighted a “contested patriarchal pact” that was at once shaped from below even as it mediated social

of counterrevolutionary Guatemala, anticommunist high modernism replaced social democratic high modernism. As part of the process, gender emerged as a wide field upon which political legitimacy, nation building, and development in general were partially enacted on a multiplicity of levels. The result was not equality but tragedy.

“Oficios de su Sexo”: The Gendered Myth of the Informal Economy

Oficios de su sexo is just a phrase, but it is a phrase located at the nexus of popular everyday discourse and the developmental projects that over time transformed society. As Guatemala modernized, its already separated families modernized, and its citizens gave rise to a widened informal economy that defines the nation to this day. Families were at the heart of this creation, and women were both at the heart of families, often as single heads of household, and at the heart of constructing this economy from below.

The phrase *oficios de su sexo* as well as the many feminized projects of developmentalists both national and international that I will shortly explore, evidence how a myth has been made of the economy itself. Since development, at its core, addresses the economy, debunking this myth is essential to understanding the real historical dynamics that shaped the making of modern Guatemala.

Putatively, the word *economy* refers to the collective activity of enterprises that produce growth. Guatemala’s gross domestic product (GPD) grew steadily throughout the twentieth century, but the growth of misery far outpaced it. So too did the growth of the informal economy, a popularized version of the term *informal sector*, coined by the British economist Keith Hart and soon used by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Africa in the early 1970s.³⁷ The informal economy refers to the world of people who vend on the streets without a license, make tortillas, wash clothes and clean homes, shine shoes, hawk snake oil, beg, or even sell their bodies in an attempt to survive in a world where growth excludes them. Around three-quarters of the Guatemalan population, excluding the significant percentage now in the United States, work in the informal economy.³⁸ The simple truth is that for most people the informal economy is *the* economy. It defines the financial reality in which they live. In fact, if the word *economy* were to be defined as the bulk of a population’s financial and productive activities, it would refer not to Guatemala’s formal sector, but to its informal sector. The rendering of these informal activities as not the economy is

and political relationships. For further work on gender, power, and politics, see the Special Issue on Gender of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81:3–4 (August–November 2001), and collections including French and James, eds., *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*, and Dore and Molyneux, eds., *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*.

³⁷Chen, “Rethinking the Informal Economy.” Hart coined the term, Chen writes, in a journal article in 1971; the ILO used it in 1972.

³⁸“Encuesta nacional de empleo e ingresos 2002,” Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

ideological, from their exclusion from the GDP to neoliberal institutions' efforts to incorporate these sectors.

For present purposes, suffice to say that if the Revolution of 1944–54 saw the making of the modern Guatemalan ghetto, the anticommunist years from 1954 to the mid-1960s saw the maturation of Guatemala's contemporary informal economy.³⁹

The phrase *oficios de su sexo* hides two facts: women were at the center of both the family and the economy, and they were building economic structures that were not transparent to transnational business.⁴⁰ In the early 1970s, around the time Hart was giving the informal economy its name, a survey of over a thousand informal street vendors in Guatemala City showed that 80 percent of them were female single heads of household.⁴¹ Then, as throughout the century, the most important businesses needed for survival in any city neighborhood tended to be owned by females.

Manufacturing the State-as-Mother: Applied Propaganda and Applied Sociology

Immediately after the invasion, the office of the first lady took on new prominence and importance in Guatemalan politics. As one hand of the rightist propaganda machine painted the Arbenzes as evil, the other portrayed Castillo Armas and his wife, Odilia Palomo Paíz, as Guatemalans extraordinaire.

Beginning in the Castillo Armas administration, the anticommunist state built on and expanded the feminized social services bureaucracy first introduced during the Revolution. In effect, they built an aesthetic State-as-Mother. If during the Revolution the original idea had been to provide a minimum level of social security—a social safety net—in keeping with the economics of Keynes and in response to the demands put forth in the major union platforms, under anticommunists, the idea of “social welfare” (*bienestar social*) took on the tinge of motherly, state-based charity.

The development industry, dovetailing with the media and communications revolution, was as dedicated to creating symbols, representations, and beliefs and individualistic capitalist consumers as it was to building roads and sewers.⁴²

³⁹Before the time period under discussion, the spread of the coffee economy and liberal rule from 1871 forward was the biggest factor in structuring family and economy alike. See Cambranes, *Café y campesinos*, and Williams, *States and Social Evolution*.

⁴⁰For more on globalization, the informal economy, and women's labor and their role in development, see Acosta-Belén and Bose, “U.S. Latina and Latin American Feminisms,” as well as the edited volume by the same authors: *Women in the Latin American Development Process*.

⁴¹*El Imparcial*, 22 August 1972 (clip).

⁴²The birth and growth of the un and the oas accompanied not only the rise of the CIA, but of vast U.S. development investment projects ranging from the Marshall Plan to the work of USAID. President John F. Kennedy created USAID in 1961, after Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act of the same year. Although USAID was a new institution, its functions had

In dialogue with this transformation, the post-1954 anticommunist regimes in Guatemala drew on sophisticated technologies of propaganda and social engineering as part of their development programs. Women and families became a key focal point of policy intervention even as new institutions promised maternal comfort to the poor. The State-as-Mother failed miserably. Real mothers, though, and real families coped with modernization, helped to create the economy and weave the social safety net, and were protagonists in defining the texture and structure of survival that endure in Guatemala to this day.

“Dios se lo Pague”: Women, Families, and Real Nets and Networks

When, however, did the Guatemalan family dissolve? Readings of thousands of *expedientes* from the 1920s to the 1960s indicate that the nuclear family—understood as a married, monogamous man and woman living and caring for their children together—was not a social norm in Guatemala. Marriage, often at a very young age, was common, but fidelity and stable cohabitation were not. The predominance of migrant labor in agriculture, domestic service, and food and crafts distribution that kept vendors moving around the country undoubtedly contributed to the rise of alternative models of sexual behavior, assuming, probably incorrectly, that the monogamous, geographically rooted couple had ever historically been a model in the first place.⁴³

As far back as the 1920s expedientes to the government reveal that people made no effort to hide their single parentage, their relationships with *concubinas*, or the status of their children born out of wedlock. When Ubico’s government began investigating petitioners’ morals in the 1930s, variation from the model of the monogamous nuclear family was never taken as a reason to doubt a person’s honor; the police were only looking for subversive political activity⁴⁴. As social workers began to pick up where police investigators left off, a concern for the preservation of a nuclear family model that had never existed in the first place

been long standing in other agencies: the Department of Agriculture’s Food for Peace program (distribution of agricultural surplus); the International Cooperation Agency (economic and technical assistance); the Export-Import Bank (local currency functions); and the Development Loan Fund. See http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid. The postwar period brought the demise of the popular front and the dismantling of leftist politics alike, even as new technologies, including the hydrogen bomb, air and automotive travel, and television, transformed societies. In the industrialized world, advertising, marketing, public relations, industrial design, mass retail, and mass media and entertainment took their still-recognizable forms. The development industry became a vast employer as it used these technologies dialogically to promote liberal, consumerist individualism.

⁴³There are no reliable statistics available, so this observation is based purely on readings of the primary documents and applies specifically to the poor, that is, the vast majority of the population. All of the cited AGCA collections show a marked predominance of split families and single parents, even correcting for expedientes from El Gallito and La Palmita, where the government gave special preference to single mothers.

⁴⁴This comment is based upon the reading of multiple police reports of the 1930s, from which many of the family histories presented in this work are taken. Interestingly, as police reports gave way to social workers’ reports from the late 1940s forward, *women’s* loose sexual behavior began to emerge as a trope.

became steadily more prevalent. The power of the myth, however, aided in the construction of the anticommunist state and its ideology of development, even as that anticommunist state built on the structures of the democratic Revolution that preceded it.

Informal credit, home businesses, and shady rental deals conducted outside the state's gaze played a huge part in ensuring survival, and they informed how people created the Guatemalan landscape. While this web of homespun economy functioned and continues to function, it could not prevent poverty-borne disaster. At midcentury the state became involved with a very few of the hardest-hit cases, through its growing and uncoordinated web of social workers, found in the Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social (IGSS) and in various government ministries and dependencies. The case files of these social workers give a glimpse into poor households and how they functioned.

What is life like in a world where labor is worth nothing? It might arguably be tolerable when people manage to cluster in mutually supporting social formations, family or otherwise, but the catch-22 of starvation-wage labor is that the social conditions it engenders tend to break families and communities apart. As we have seen, women played a critical role in weaving Guatemala's real social safety net. They and the children were also the most likely to fall through it.

“To Make a Woman Literate Is to Create a Teacher”: Ideology and Integrated Community Development

In twentieth-century Guatemala, misery bred chaos, established it as order, and reproduced it in an evolving social landscape. Split families, street crime, begging, constant migration, child labor, passed-out-on-the-sidewalk drunkenness: these were not the result of people's values but manifestations of necessity and pain. Like values, however, they became historically embedded as customs: having a slew of children to increase the family income; hitting the cantina until blindness sets in on payday; and, in a later era, organizing the street kids in gangs; hiring the *coyote* and fleeing north. Here the dialectic of chaos and rationality I explored in chapter two intersects with the themes of gender and development. [...] The counterrevolutionary state, with its U.S. backers informed by anticommunism and modernization theory, adopted and expanded its predecessor's social welfare bureaucracy, even as its economic policies, intentionally or not, exacerbated the causes of on-the-ground poverty. In this transition lies the gendered rise of the State-as-Mother and of the first lady and social welfare in general as political cover—as gendered political aesthetics.

The history of the idea of integration under Guatemala's anticommunist regimes is one that references the broken national family just as much as it does the broken everyday family. In the absence of meaningful agrarian reform or democracy, the Castillo Armas government and its backers promoted ethnic integration as the way to fix the backward highlands. An international conference held in

Guatemala City in 1956, reportedly pushed through by U.S. advisors, focused on “all aspects of the fusion of Indians and ladinos” and was sponsored by the Seminario de Integración Social, an “autonomous cultural institution” founded in 1954.⁴⁵

“The whole of space is increasingly modeled after private enterprise, private property and the family—after a reproduction of production relations paralleling biological reproduction and genitality,” writes Lefebvre.⁴⁶ From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s Guatemalan state officials and their foreign partners used globally discussed practices and technologies to bend development to help achieve their political goals. If only people could be made to think of themselves as individual citizens interacting with a benevolent state directing them paternally toward prosperity while caring for them maternally through charity and aid, perhaps their Communist tendencies could be held in check.

Given the complete failure to produce hegemony and prevent war in Guatemala, it is easy to lose sight of the successes of the development-culture industry. Yet successes there have been. To this day people clamor for development, even though state-led and global development projects have done little but increase poverty and cloak violence from above. If the idea of development has enjoyed widespread acceptance, so too has the gendered notion of a broken, inferior informal economy, even though this phrase masks the fact that this economy is largely responsible for sustaining human life, while the formal economy is arguably responsible for taking or exploiting that life. Finally, gender continues to be a powerful element in constructing a language of good and evil that both veils reality and informs the construction of social and physical space.

Ch. 4: Making the Immoral Metropolis

Infrastructure, Economics, and War

How have poor teenagers—especially young men—come to be the emblem of all a society’s and city’s problems? The answer is as simple as it is commonsensical: via a dynamic of downward moral displacement in which the dominant logic makes it imperative to impose punishment, social engineering, and repression on the victims of the system’s very nature by shifting the blame for the badness onto them and thereby avoiding a substantive discussion of the problems’ real origin. Downward moral displacement is seen in virtually all societies. U.S. citizens, for example, need only think of the public language that justifies imprisoning enormous percentages of young African American men. Downward moral displacement works both because the culture industry promotes it and because people buy it. Its formula is seductively simple: bad neighborhoods

⁴⁵*El Imparcial*, 24 May 1956.

⁴⁶Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 376. Lefebvre was arguing against structuralism’s determinism, propensity to classify, and tendency to see the public, not the private, sphere as leading development.

with bad cultures, revolving around bad drugs, produce bad people who do bad things. Downward moral displacement taps into the baser part of human nature—fears, prejudices, and the quite understandable desire not to be robbed or stabbed or otherwise disturbed by the ever-growing underclass that capitalist modernization produces. If we could just fix *them*, people think, the world would be near perfect.

What makes Guatemala unique in this regard—downward moral displacement being seen all over—is the history of war that conditions its language, attitudes, and conceptions concerning good and evil. Even as developers were building highways and other infrastructure that brought the nation fully into the automobile age and forever transformed its economic and social reality, that same reality occasioned the outbreak of civil war. The city, expanding exponentially with the fervor and insecurity of a poor population in tremendous flux, not only sprouted new neighborhoods and markets and byways. It also came to encompass a geography—both spoken and physical—of good and evil, of safety and danger, and of public and private upon which life and death depended. Death squads, torture chambers, army barracks, safe houses, hidden arsenals; places where bombs might go off or where relatives were last seen alive; neighborhoods taken by el *pueblo* or occupied by los *militares*: these became very real features on the city's moral map. Over time, the war conditioned the culture of development. It brought a secrecy, a hopelessness, and deep levels of mistrust. Finally, the dynamic of good and evil in Guatemala has contributed to the fragile cohesion of consensus in this nation where capitalist hegemony has never taken root. If there is agreement about nothing else, there is at least widespread acceptance of the fact that the *mareros* are bad.