Impact of Gang Violence on "Transporte Colectivo Público Urbano" in Guatemala City

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Lastly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the people who currently endure insecurity, exclusion, and barriers to accessibility and equity. The countries of Central America are commonly and often excluded from academic circles and research, but the struggles and more important the successes of these countries should not go unnoticed and unmentioned.

Abstract

Today, Guatemala is the largest economy in Central America. A recent study completed by the World Bank indicates Guatemala has the potential of moving 160,000 people out of poverty through continued economic growth and expansion (World Bank 2017). However, high rates of inequality, gang violence, and barriers to inclusion, have contributed to the sprawl of the built environment and transportation networks throughout the country. A key aspect of growing sustainably, efficiently, and equitably, for metropolitan areas in Guatemala, specifically Guatemala City, is the improvement of the public transportation network. In recent years, residents of Guatemala City have increased their use of private vehicles, and decreased their usage of public transportation, in efforts to improve their safety against gang violence.

In addition, the lack of enforcement of the public private partnership supplying transit in the city, risks the lives of individuals who are most dependent on the system. Between 2010 and January 2017, 1,138 passengers, drivers, and bus assistants were killed throughout the country. The deaths are attributed to increased gang violence, and the targeting of drivers and bus assistants by gang members. As Guatemala continues to move towards a majority urban population, eliminating the barriers to mobility and accessibility of the transportation networks, is crucial to ensuring economic growth and decreased rates of inequality.
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Glossary

MAGC: Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City
Transporte Público Colectivo Urbano: Public Collective Urban Transportation
Mestiza: (in Latin America) a woman of mixed race, especially the offspring of a Spaniard and an American Indian
Zona Gris: People belonging to marginalized populations
Ladino: A Word commonly used by people who speak Spanish, and do not consider themselves indigenous
Mano Dura: “Hard Hand” policies, often leading to higher incarceration rates, and harder sentences
Mano Extendida: “Extended Hand” policies that are created with a community development focus, or grassroots
Introduction

The Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City (MAGC) is the largest and most economically significant metropolitan area of Guatemala. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations predicts 66% of the world’s population will live in urban areas by 2050 [United Nations 2014]. Today urban centers are rapidly expanding, becoming crucial to regional and global markets, and key drivers in a country’s GDP. Guatemala’s population shifted to majority urban population with 51.9% of people living in cities or metropolitan areas in 2013 [Katun 2032]. Urbanization, poverty, inequality, and violence have played a significant role in the development and growth of Guatemala’s cities. Violence resulting from gang proliferation has begun to influence the way people approach the built environment and “transporte colectivo público urbano” [public transportation].

Understanding the factors that lead to the proliferation of gangs and how this violence impacts the use of public transportation is critical to a country like Guatemala. Guatemala is the largest economy in Central America with the potential for continued and rapid economic expansion (World Bank 2017). Per World Bank estimates, if Guatemala’s economy grows at a rate of 5% for the next 5 years and if that growth is not created at the expense of the poor, the marginal impact on poverty and equity could enable 160,000 people to escape poverty (World Bank 2017). However, the shift from rural to urban areas occurred rapidly,
limiting the mitigation and planning efforts municipalities could successfully implement. The report “Urbanization and Growth” by the Commission on Growth and Development at the World Bank discusses the role of urbanization in developing countries; “making urbanization work well is something that countries that want to grow quickly must learn to do (xi).” Planning effectively for urbanization includes mobility and equitability of public transportation in urban areas of Guatemala, especially in the MAGC.

The high concentrations of goods, services, and industry have fueled the urbanization of the MAGC. The metropolitan area today, grew from a single city, Guatemala City, its extent encompassed in a single municipality. Unregulated and market-driven development led to the expansion of Guatemala City into a metropolitan area that expands into several adjacent municipalities. Vielman and Merida describe

La ciudad ha crecido fuera de sus límites jurisdiccionales, conurbándose hacia otros municipios colindantes, con lo cual puede afirmarse que se inició el proceso que la convirtió en la actual Área Metropolitana [The city has grown outside of its jurisdictional limits, encroaching towards other adjacent municipalities, which we can confirm initiated the process that converted it into the current metropolitan area] [Vielman & Merida 2006].

Migration from rural to urban areas, a large concentration of goods, services, and jobs, and its transportation connectivity to region, country, and other countries have all contributed to a growing population.

With the rapid urbanization of the MAGC, the increased rates of homicide, transit related deaths, assassinations and kidnappings of bus drivers have shifted circulation patterns and re-prioritized the personal vehicle. Today the roads and key arteries of the MAGC are currently operating at two or three times the original intended capacity. To increase accessibility, mobility, and economic growth it is crucial to understand how the public transportation system is regulated, planned, and how its vulnerabilities affect the most marginalized.

The topic of gang violence and its impact on transportation has not been thoroughly

The topic of gang violence and its impact on transportation has not been thoroughly studied. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to study the intersectionality of gang violence, transportation, and urbanization as a first step in creating sustainability in the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City.

Figure 1.1 Metropolitan Areas of Guatemala 2006
The methodology changed over the course of the thesis process, originally, the purpose was to complete a quantitative analysis of homicide rates and ridership levels. However, due to limited accessibility and transparency of data, the research question was approached through a qualitative lens.

The literature review was completed in two phases: the first was by utilizing Columbia University resources to gather knowledge, theories, on the subject matter. The second part of the literature review was completed by gathering resources not available online or in the United States, and analyzing the theories, policies, and perspectives from academics in Guatemala City.

The largest limitation is the limited literature studying the effects of gang violence on public transportation. Gang proliferation has been studied extensively throughout the world, and there is literature that focuses on gangs in Guatemala and the City of Guatemala. This literature mainly focuses on the policies created to address the violence [Jütersonke, 2009] and the exclusion of individuals who eventually turn to gangs as a resource and source of empowerment [Bruneau, Dammert, & Skinner, 2011].

Interviews were used to bridge gaps in the literature, data, and online research. Interviews were conducted with local planners and professors in Guatemala City. Outreach for
interviews mostly consisted of email and some phone calls. Participants were selected by 1) the individual had written an article or section of a book that discussed the topic of gang violence, urbanization, or transportation; 2) Professor Weiping Wu connected the researcher to an individual who’s worked extensively in Guatemala City, this individual provided a list of potential interviewees; 3) Professor Clara Irizabal-Zurita connected researcher to academics studying similar topics.

A total of 6 participants were interviewed in person in New York City and Guatemala City. The professionals interviewed included a transportation planner from the Municipality of Mixco and the Municipality of Guatemala. Two interviews were conducted with professors from the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City. The last two interviews were conducted with PhD Candidates from Columbia University and the New School of New York.

The challenges of completing the research include the limited studies on the impact of gangs on public transportation, even more specifically in Guatemala City. Another limitation of the literature includes that the Center for Regional and Urban Studies is one of the few academic entities that is studying transportation, urbanization, and other aspects of the city, but it is possible that the center only offers one perspective on the subject matter. Other limitations include limited access to data. There are sources that provide statistical data through annual reports on different topics of which transportation is one small aspect. Data sharing in Guatemala is growing and being developed by municipalities, but because it is relatively new, accessing the data available is difficult and limited. In addition, data on transportation is limited to ridership of the Transmetro stations, and even this data is not detailed to a level where correlations or regressions could be calculated between ridership and other variables.

Studies have shown that corruption is common in Guatemala, speaking out against this corruption can pose a threat to individuals, therefore lack of transparency is one of the limitations. The last two limitations include that recent efforts have been created to regulate growth and plan of the city through the Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial (POT) [Land Use Plan], but some of these measures are relatively new (last year or two) and there isn’t enough information yet to study their impact. Lastly, Guatemala City today is a metropolitan area that has encroached on other municipalities of the Department of Guatemala. However, the boundaries of the metropolitan area have not been defined and therefore studying the extent of the area and its influence is difficult.
The following provides a background on four components critical in contextualizing the history, current state, and impact of gang violence on public transportation: government composition of the government entities influencing the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City, the civil war, the history of gang proliferation, and the urbanization of the country. Understanding the current governmental structures of government in the country and how they influence the development of the built environment is critical to understanding how the public transportation system of the MAGC has developed. In addition, Guatemala has had a long and turbulent history of violence. The Civil War between 1962 and 1996 is one of the most influential periods of violence, and the exclusion created during this era is still present in Guatemalan society today. The exclusion created through the civil war, and the post-conflict structures resulting from the war lead to the start of gang proliferation. Understanding why gang violence arose during the war is critical to also understanding how and why it impacts public transportation today. Lastly, all the components mentioned above occur in the context of a rapidly urbanizing country and metropolitan area. Therefore, understanding why and how the country has been urbanizing is critical to the subject matter.

Jurisdictional Composition of the Guatemala City and Country

The term municipality is applied to the governing entity of a city or town. Municipal-
ities in Guatemala are autonomous and do not depend on central government for regulation or funds. In fact, the decentralization of government and autonomy of local municipalities is one of the largest achievements of the Asociación Nacional de Municipalidades [The National Association of Municipalities] [“Municipalidad de Guatemala,” 2017]. This organization advocates for decentralization of the Guatemalan government, as it believes the needs of residents are better served at the local scale.

The growth and development of the metropolitan area is managed by the Municipality of Guatemala. The Municipality of Guatemala is one of the 17 municipalities in the Department of Guatemala. The Municipality of Guatemala is further divided into 23 zones. The Municipality of Guatemala collects revenue through a series of taxes, including property, a yearly beautification tax, and other local taxes.

Civil War and Post-Conflict Guatemala

Guatemala’s turbulent history and a growing divide between low income and wealthy, and ladinos (term used by Spanish-speaking Guatemalans to identify themselves) and indigenous people, have significantly contributed to the inequalities that characterize Guatemala’s society today. The exclusion of indigenous people is one of the leading causes of the Civil War; the conflict began in 1962 and ended in 1996. During the Civil War 200,000 people were killed; 83% of the victims were of Mayan decent [Guatemala Memory of Silence, 1999]. In addition, 1.5 million people were displaced from their homes [Bruneau, Dammert, & Skinner, 2011]. Most of the “human rights violations perpetrated during the conflict were carried out by state forces and military groups [“PBS News Hour,” 2011]. The war and post-conflict structures severely impacted the livelihood and well-being of the country’s population, further limiting accessibility and equitability.

Women, young men (ages 13-25), indigenous people, and low income populations have been impacted the most by exclusion in post-conflict Guatemala [Bruneau, Dammert, & Skinner, 2011]. After the civil war people in Guatemala experienced higher access to the legal justice system and organizations working to improve and protect human rights. However, the marginalization of women, indigenous people, low income, and youth populations continues today.

History of Gang Violence in Guatemala

The increase in gangs is associated with “institutional weaknesses, inequality, and uncertain separation between the legal and illegal spheres” [“PBS News Hour,” 2011]. The proliferation of gangs began in the 1950s before the start of the civil war and in the 1980s in Guatemala City [IDB]. Gangs have impacted several regions of the country, but the highest concentration exists in Guatemala City. Some of the gangs that appeared in the capital during the 1980s are still operating today. The origin of gangs varies; some gangs began as groups with social and political aims, others were incentivized by power and money. Outside of Guatemala City areas with large populations of indigenous people have also experienced proliferation of gangs. Lastly, the deportation of gang members specifically from Los Angeles, California to Guatemala has also contributed to increases in gang membership [Seelke, 2014].

The two major gangs in Guatemala are the Mara Salvatrucha (MS) and 18th Street [Bruneau, Dammert, & Skinner, 2011]. Efforts have been made to determine the number of individuals who consider themselves part of a gang throughout the country. However, several limitations exist in accessing accurate information due to secrecy and the legality of the actions by gang members. An estimate completed by Guatemala’s Policía Nacional Civil [Na-
tional Civilian Police] in 2006 indicated gang membership could be between 8,000 and 10,000 other estimates have anticipated up to 14,000 members in the country.

Measures to deal with gang violence have mostly consisted of increasing incarceration rates and creating minimal thresholds for arrest of potential gang members. In addition, “[p]olicymakers in Central America have expressed ongoing concerns that U.S. deportations of individuals with criminal records are exacerbating the gang and gang-related citizen security problems in the region” [Seelke, 2016: 9]. The violence of Guatemala has become especially critical as crime rates continue to increase. Guatemala is now considered one of the three most dangerous countries in the world for a country not at war, the others include Honduras and El Salvador [“Business Insider,” 2016]. The proliferation of gangs is impacting public spaces and possibly transportation use [UNDOC 2016].

Urbanization of the Department, Municipality, and City of Guatemala

Through a combination of emigration between municipalities and immigration to the United States, the composition of the population and where it resides has changed greatly. The 17 municipalities that compose the Department of Guatemala consist of 2,196 square kilometers comprising 2.03% of the total territory in the country [Lopez, 2013]. In the 63 years between 1950 and 2013, the number of people emigrating between municipalities rose from 326,000 to 1,236,000 [IDB]. The emigration occurring in the country occurs through a term defined by Robert Thomas as “step-wise migration,” where migrants move into large cities in phases; the scale of the town/city people are moving into is larger than the previous. The departments that witness the largest drops in population due to immigration to the United States include Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, and San Marcos.

In addition to emigration and immigration, in 2013 the country shifted to a majority urban population [Lopez, 2013]. The urban area that is the focus of this thesis is Guatemala City.

In 2002, the last to date census was completed. It indicated the Municipality of Guatemala contained 18.18% of the total urban population. The two adjacent municipalities (Mixco and Villa Nueva) and Quetzaltenango contained 15.56%. The rest of the urban population either resided in municipalities with populations between 10,000 and 200,000 people.

Causes for the rapid urbanization of the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City include a high concentration of industry, commercial activity, and services. Both the population and area of the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City have continuously and rapidly expanded over the last century. This is evidenced by a rate of growth of 4.5%, exceeding the growth rate of any other city in the country beginning in the early 1800s [Garrera, 2008]. In the years that followed, the rate continues to increase with a drop in the 1980s associated with the state of violence of the civil war. The city begins to increase once again after the peace agreement of 1996 ending the civil war.

The expansion of the metropolitan area has impacted the built environment, transportation access, and mobility of the neighboring municipalities. Without planning and regulation, the growth of Guatemala City encroached on 8 of the 17 municipalities comprising the Department of Guatemala. These municipalities include Mixco, Villa Nueva, Amatitlan, San Jose Pinula, Santa Catarina Pinula, Villa Canales, San Miguel Petapa and Chinateula. The encroachment has led to massive increases in density, especially for the municipalities adjacent to the Municipality of Guatemala. In Figure 3.1, the density of residents per sq. km. demonstrates that in the 1950s the municipalities of San Juan Sacatepequez and San
Jose Pinula, located in the periphery of the department, had the highest densities, with 204 to 242 residents per sq. km. However, Figure 3.2 demonstrates a shift in the concentration of density in the department from the periphery to the central municipalities. Specifically, in Figure 3.2 we can see that the municipalities of Guatemala, Mixco, Villa Nueva, and San Miguel Petapa in 2013 had densities ranging between 1,250 to 5,121 residents per sq. km.

If we compare the growth of these 4 municipalities to cities in the United States, the municipality of Guatemala grew from a city of similar density to that of Salisbury, MA to a city with the density of Boston, MA in 63 years. San Miguel Petapa increased to a density 112 times that of its density in 1950. The municipalities of Villa Nueva and Mixco each dropped in density in the 10 years after 1950 however, after 1960 each municipality continued to grow.

In 2013, Mixco had reached a density 42 times its density of 132 residents per square kilometer in 1960 and Villanueva reached a density 74 times its density of 114 residents per square kilometer in 1960. Most individuals migrating to Guatemala City in the 1970s traveled from smaller cities, 35% of migrants “come from a municipality located within 25 miles of the capital, and 60% originate in an area 50 miles or less from Guatemala City” [Lopez, J.F.M 2013:77]. The main city supplying migrants into Guatemala City is Quetzaltenango.
Public Transportation in Guatemala is referred to as “transporte público colectivo urbano” [public collective urban transportation]. It is an integrated system with four types of transit. The main four types of transportation systems have common knowledge names. The first is referred to as the Transurbano, the second as Transmetro (Bus Rapid Transit), and the fifth is referred to as the Extraurbano also known as the “liteguas.” The transurbano service is utilized by most residents commuting within or to/from the MAGC. The Extraurbano is divided into two types of services “Extraurbano Largo” [long distance extraurbano] and “Extraurbano Corto” [short-distance extraurbano] this system is managed and regulated by the Dirección General de Caminos [General Management of Travel] and in MAGC, managed in collaboration with the STP. Long distance trips are considered any trip that extends a radius of 35 km from the core of the MAGC. The fifth category is for transportation systems that serve as a connection from the other areas of the Metropolitan Area and connect to one of the four systems listed below. The systems that can traverse the Metropolitan Areas of Guatemala City (MAGC).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Transportation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Servicio de Transporte Público Colectivo Urbano [Public collective urban transportation service]</td>
<td>Transurbano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servicio de Transporte Público Colectivo Urbano Masivo de Autobuses [Service of the public collective urban transportation of extensive buses]</td>
<td>Transmetro (Bus Rapid Transit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servicios Especiales de Transporte Público Colectivo Urbano [Special Services of public collective urban transportation]</td>
<td>Festivals, Party, Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cualquier otro Servicio de Transporte Público Colectivo Urbano que autorice el Concejo Municipal [Any other service of public collective urban transportation authorized by the council of the municipality]</td>
<td>No Example Provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servicios de Transporte Extraurbano [Service of the “Extraurbano”)</td>
<td>• Línea Corta [Short Line]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Primera Categoría [First Category]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Segunda Categoría [Second Category]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Servicio Turismo [Tourism Service]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Servicio Internacional [International Service]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the issues with this service is that there is not a regulation of the departure and arrival times. In addition, once a firm has a license to operate there is no limitation to the number of buses they can have. This chapter will cover why public transportation is important to the development of the MAGC, the components of the transportation system, the vulnerabilities of the system, and the transit authorities responsible for the transportation of the MAGC.

One of the problems surrounding the infrastructure and transportation of the MAGC, per Carrera, E. and Contreras, J., include the needs of the “transporte público colectivo urbano” “han rebasado las capacidades de las municipalidades al actuar separadamente [have surpassed the capacity of the municipalities as they continue to work separately] [Carrera 2008: 17].” The extent and development of the system and the people it is serving have surpassed not only the boundaries of the Municipality of Guatemala but also the capacity. The “transporte público colectivo urbano” transcends several municipalities and even departments.

However, despite the current reach of the system, “transporte público colectivo urbano” is not able to efficiently meet the needs of residents and therefore not able to oppose the migration towards private vehicle use. Amanda Morán Mérida in her book Aporte de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala: A La Solución de la Problemática del Transporte Colectivo Urbano. [University of San Carlos Input: For the Solution to the Problem of Collective Urban Transportation] list the following as the key issues with the “transporte público colectivo urbano” system [Morán Mérida 2010]:

- Constant increase of fares
- Environmental Pollution
- Deterioration of the bus units
- Abuse and mistreatment of passengers
- Deficiencies in the administration that lead to a lack of transparency over the income and cost of operation
- Lack of municipal regulation over entire system
- Vulnerability against violence

Private firms do not use money saved through subsidies for the betterment of the system.

Other literature sources focused on the “transporte público colectivo urbano” system of the MAGC agree with most the items listed by the author. However, the vulnerability of public...
transportation against gang violence is a subject that is frequently discussed in newspapers, news channels, and simple hearsay. However, the vulnerabilities and insecurity of the system to gang violence and extortion have not been extensively studied.

The need for an organization to manage the development of the transportation system has been expressed for over 50 years, especially in the late 1960s in response to growing development and congestion of Guatemala City. In 1970, the first symposium addressing development was held and the largest recommendation to come from this meeting was a need for the Municipality of Guatemala to organize studies to have all urban transit be public and managed by the municipality of Guatemala as the way to resolve problems associated with public transportation service [Mérida 2010]. The need for regulation became even more evident in 1973 when private transportation companies decided to raise the fares from 5 quetzales to 8 Monday through Saturday, and 10 on Sundays. The rise in fares lead to protest and was eventually met by the Municipality of Guatemala reducing the taxes on fares from 7.5% to 5% and a subsidy of 600,000 gallons of diesel each month.

In 2009, the Agreement COM-42-2009 named “Reglamento Para La Operación y Prestación de Servicios En El Sistema Integrado De Transporte Público Colectivo Del Municipio De Guatemala Y Sus Áreas De Influencia” [regulate the operation and benefits of the integrated public collective urban transportation system] was enacted, outlining the responsibilities and ability of four transportation authorities in managing the development and growth of the “transporte público colectivo urbano” system of the MAGC. The authorities are the following:

- El Concejo Municipal [Municipal Council]
- EMT- La Junta Directiva de la Empresa Municipal de Transporte de la Ciudad de Guatemala y sus Áreas de Influencia [Board of Directors of the Private Municipality of the City of Guatemala and its Areas of Influence]
- STP- La Superintendencia de Transporte Público Colectivo Urbano [The Authority of Public Collective Urban Transportation]
- La Entidad Metropolitana Reguladora de Transporte y Tránsito del Municipio de Guatemala y sus Áreas de Influencia Urbana [The Regulating Metropolitan Entity of Transportation and Transit of the Municipality of Guatemala and Its Areas of Urban Influence]

The purpose of the four authorities is to:

“regular la operación y presentación del sistema integrado de transporte público colectivo urbano, así como el funcionamiento de las Centrales de Transferencia y sus demás instalaciones, tanto por el transporte público colectivo urbano, como por el transporte extraurbano que ingresa al Municipio de Guatemala.” [regulate the operation and benefits of the integrated public collective urban transportation system, including the transportation provided by the extraurban system which crosses the Municipality of Guatemala][ Acuerdo COM-42-2009].

The agreement oversees the development and the regulations of the four types of “transporte público colectivo urbano.”

However, despite the regulation granting the existing authorities the ability to oversee the public partnership and the regulations that are applied to private firms, many professionals, academics, and residents believe the systems are not being properly managed and the private firms have too much power. The power dynamic between the private companies and the public sector has exposed the system to extortion and violence. The public-private partnership that supplies the “transporte público colectivo urbano” is different than what we are accustomed to in the United States. This partnership is not made with one private entity, one time. Instead, this is an ongoing partnership where private firms can apply for a license to operate a route that is approved by the Municipal Council. The municipality subsidizes diesel fuel gallons to a private company and in return charges 5% of each ride purchased on the buses. The private firm hires drivers daily to drive the buses on specific routes. Drivers are
quota is money the driver keeps as their income.

The quotas imposed on the drivers are contributing to the inefficiency of the system. For example, a driver who is given a quota by a private company now has the incentive to acquire more passengers and increase the turnaround of the passengers. The transurbano bus drivers compete with one another to serve passengers. Part of increasing the turnaround of the passengers includes dropping passengers in areas that are not designated stops. Because the bus drivers do not abide by the designated stops, the infrequent or inefficient stops increases congestion.

The Transurbano system is one of the three systems that have been targeted by gang members. Bus drivers are targeted and asked to pay a daily quota. If the quota is not paid to the gangs, the drivers run the risk of being injured, kidnapped, or assassinated. Thus, drivers of the Transurbano are not only expected to pay for their daily quota to the private transportation companies but also to pay a quota to gangs. In addition, passengers are also exposed and are many times assaulted on the Transurbano routes. One of the main reasons the Transurbano system is targeted is that its bus drivers carry cash and the passengers also carry cash.

In comparison to the newest transportation system, the Transmetro only uses prepaid fares. But the Transmetro is limited in the areas it serves as the concentration of Transmetro stops are in the core of the MAGC. The shift towards a pre-paid card is a solution many professionals, academics, and residents advocate for to reduce the number of assaults and assassinations.

In the ten years between 2005 and 2015, vehicle ownership grew by a total of 131.33% and motorcycle ownership grew by 561.75% [Martin, 2016]. Many of the main roads, arteries, and highways traversing the city are currently operating at two, three, or sometimes four times their original intended capacity [Castañeda, 2017]. The shift towards privately owned vehicles has changed the way in which people travel within the MAGC, and it is partly due to the failure to address violence and insecurity around transit. Private vehicles also represent social status in Guatemala and this also contributes to the move towards the vehicle [Carrera, 2017].

One of the limitations of studying the transit system of the MAGC is that the area of influence has extended into other municipalities, but currently no boundaries exist outlining the area of influence. In addition, the management of the transportation system is complicated by the autonomy of municipalities. As mentioned in the background of this thesis, the MAGC has encroached on the municipalities of Mixco, Villa Nueva, and San Miguel Petapa, which are impacted and regulating some of the growth.
Gang Violence in Post Conflict Guatemala

In the 36 years of the gruesomely violent conflict during the Civil War in Guatemala, approximately 200,000 people were killed and 1.5 million people were displaced. The echoes of the government, economic, and social failures continue to impact the lives of Guatemala’s population today. The violence, exclusion, and inequality that lead to, and existed during, the Civil War have manifested in other aspects of Guatemalan society.

“Understanding structures that were imposed during the war and how they exist in post-conflict Guatemala are critical to understanding how and why individuals turned to gangs as a solution to the social, economic, political, and spatial exclusion they were exposed to on a daily basis.” [O’Neill, K.L. & Thomas, K, 2011: 113]

The structures of exclusion are the political, economic, and legal systems in Guatemalan society and spatial regulation of the built environment in the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City. Each of these factors is crucial to understanding how gang violence is impacting the development of the country, and specifically the “transporte público colectivo urbano” system of the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City.

The peace treaty ending the civil war was signed in 1996. In the aftermath, Guatemala experienced three years of reduced homicides, insecurity, and crime. However, beginning in 1999 violence began to increase once again throughout the country. Hal Brands in his article
“Crime, Irregular Warfare, and Institutional Failure in Latin America: Guatemala as a Case Study” describes an increase of 120 percent in murders throughout the country after the civil war between 1999 and 2006. The increases affect residents of Guatemala City. In the capital city murders reach “an astounding 108 per 100,000 inhabitants (compared to the world average of 9 per 100,000)” [Brands 2011: p 230]. One of the reasons behind the increase is the spatial history of the war; specifically, what communities and areas were most impacted by the violence from the war.

During the civil war, the spatial concentrations of violence were mostly in rural areas of the country containing large populations of indigenous people [Steinberg, 2003]. As described in the Background Chapter, 83% of the 200,000 victims were of Mayan origin. The areas with the highest incidents of deaths during the war are some of the most affected by gang proliferation. However, there are a few urban exceptions. For example, in 2004 and 2006, public opinion surveys completed by the Latin American Public Opinion Poll exposed high numbers of victimization particularly in Guatemala City. In the two years between the 2004 and 2006 surveys, there is a large increase in crime with the highest jumps occurring in urban areas.

“In a 2004 survey ….12.8 percent of the individuals surveyed in Guatemala reported that they had been victims of crime in the past year, which increased to 19.8 percent in 2006; if only urban areas are considered, these numbers jump to 18.1 percent in 2004 and 25.3 percent in 2006” [O’Neill, K.L. & Thomas, K, 2011: 110]. The increases in victimization also coincide with increases in gang membership. Estimates indicate that during the same time, specifically in 2006, gang membership was comprised of 14,000 individuals [Bruneau, Dammert, Skinner, 2011]. After the civil war, the urban epicenters of violence in the country were the southeastern departments, the Department of Peten, and Guatemala City (Kuternbach 2014).

Gang membership in Guatemala is mostly comprised of young men ranging between 14 and 35 years [Ranum, 2011]. The reasons individuals join gangs varies across existing literature including identity, empowerment, solidarity, economic access, participation, and limited opportunities in marginalized communities [IDB]. Even further, the obstacles and exclusion that lead youth to participate in gangs varies between indigenous and urban areas of the country. In areas with large indigenous populations youth are driven towards gang membership as a sense of empowerment and income. In contrast, ladino youth are most affected by “dysfunctional families and failed school-to-work transitions” [Kuternbach 2014: 129]. The failed transitions specifically relate to the difficulties in gaining economic and political access when youth are entering adulthood. For urban youth, “urbanization and migration are important factors influencing the relationship between, state, society, and youth producing high levels of fragmentation and the erosion of social cohesion” [IDB year: 129]. The dysfunctionality of families is characterized by both families that 1) have been separated as family members move to the United States either fleeing violence or seeking economic opportunity; and 2) families exposed to violence and repression during the civil war. The dysfunctionality and fragmentation that youth are exposed to in urban areas specifically in the MAGC have created an environment where gang violence has permeated the spatial and built fabric of the metropolitan area.

Further, the MAGC provides little to no physical spaces for youth to interact and socialize. The highest gang participation is currently happening in Guatemala City and this proliferation is changing the physical built environment and circulation patterns. Urban areas during the civil war, specifically the MAGC, exposed its residents to different aspects of violence during the conflict. The peace accords included steps and provisions to reduce
This is really evident in Guatemala City, which after the civil war underwent an urban renewal period. However, several of these projects have reclaimed public space that once belonged to the masses for a few elite individuals. In Guatemala City, the spatial exclusion is reinforcing the socio-spatial paradigms and inequalities that lead to gang proliferation.

The manifestation of gang violence has particularly affected the “transporte público colectivo urbano” system of the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City. Transportation has become one of the sources of revenue for gang members. In an interview with gang members, Saul Elbei explains that many gang members describe the victimization of transit riders, bus drivers, bus assistants, and business owners participating in a public private partnership with the city as necessary. The assassinations of the last three are considered critical to ensuring that gangs receive payments and are taken seriously in the MAGC.

Recent literature also suggests that policies in Guatemala created to address gang violence have accelerated the gang proliferation. Oliver Jütersonke describes the different approaches to urban violence reduction in Central America, dividing interventions into two categories: Mano Dura [hard hand] and Mano Extendida [extended hand]. The first generation of interventions focuses on harder punishments including higher incarceration rates, longer jail time, and stricter cut down on actions associated with gang participation and gun violence. Instead of successfully addressing the causes and issues associated with gang violence, the policies work to aggravate the situation and further radicalize the gang into organized crime. Similar policies have been enforced in other countries of Central America and elsewhere, including the U.S., to deal with issues of gang violence. These policies have largely proved ineffective because they do not address the core issues leading to the proliferation of gangs. Several of these policies have increased gang membership.

Some of the "mano dura" policies have created unjust and unwarranted arrest of youth, contributing to the further exclusion of youth from society through a series of spatial and judicial measures. Guatemala police would arrest youth for congregating in numbers of more than three or for displaying gang behavior (source). Once youth entered the legal system they could be stranded for months awaiting proper legal assistance and further exposed to gang life within the prisons. The ineffectiveness of the policies implemented to resolve gang violence is partially due to the outcomes of the civil war.

“After years of repressive military dictatorships that culminated in the atrocities leveled against the civilian population during the war, the 1996 Peace Accords mandated a decrease in the size of the military and the creation of a police force dedicated solely to civilian security, the Policía Nacional Civil (PNC). In a country that has relied for so many years on brutal authoritarianism to maintain order, the meager number of police cannot control rising rates of homicides, gang-leveraged extortion, and street crime” [O’Neill, K.L., & Thomas, K, 2011: 103].

Gang-leveraged extortion has changed the environment of the MAGC changing the dynamics of the “transporte público colectivo urbano.” The approaches the MAGC and the country of Guatemala take to reduce the exclusion and marginalization of youth in the coming years will deeply influence the patterns of growth of not only the MAGC but other urban areas of the country.
Violence Against Bus Drivers & Assistants of “Transporte Público Colectivo Urbano”

The vulnerabilities of the “transporte público colectivo urbano” system are discussed, one of the most prevalent vulnerabilities is the risks bus drivers of the Transurbano and Extraurbano are exposed to in Guatemala. The risks associated with being a bus driver or bus helper have quickly escalated and made the professions ones of the most dangerous in the country. Saul Elbein, interviewed owners of transportation businesses participating in the Public Private Partnership with the Municipality of Guatemala and gang members who have participated in the extortion and assassination of drivers. In the article a business owners describes:

“Driving an urbano bus had become—and remains—for more lethal than infamously dangerous jobs like logging or deep-sea fishing. Workers in these jobs earn about $36,000 per year but compared with urbano drivers, they’re well compensated for their risk. The latter only earn on average $38 a day. No Guatemalan in his right mind would buy a bus” [Elbein, 2013: 27].

Between 2009 and 2012, a total of 627 drivers and 198 assistants were killed throughout the country of Guatemala. A little more than 50% of these deaths were concentrated in the MAGC [Camus, 2014]. The impact of these deaths transcends the “transporte público colectivo urbano” system impacting families, children, and communities.

In a report from the Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos [Attorney General of Human Rights, 2017], the following table lists the total assassinations between 2010 and
2016, and January 2017 occurring in public transportation throughout the country. Figure 1.5 demonstrates that the assassinations have traversed several aspects of the “transporte público colectivo urbano” in the country. In most countries, a system that is informal, unregulated, or sprawling leads to inequalities to accessibility and mobility. In Guatemala, the current Public Private Partnership and the structure of this partnership is leading to the deaths of employees of the system. The extortion and assassinations that are traversing most the branches of the system in the case of Guatemala are leading to the death of individuals, who leave families, children, and communities behind.

An article released in February of 2017 by the Prensa Libre, “Cinco Taxistas Mueren En Hechos de Violencia” [Five Taxi Drivers Die in Acts of Violence], states “las autoridades de esa institución (PNC) han reconocido que los hechos violencia se han incrementado” [the authorities of this institution (National Civil Police) have recognized that the acts of violence have increased]. Authorities at the local, municipality, and federal level have failed to address the core of the issues that lead to the assassinations and insecurity of the “transporte público colectivo urbano.”

The failure of the country to address the root causes of violence, inequality, and in this case the vulnerabilities of the transportation system is leading to the continued and growing deaths of individuals who are simply trying to gain a livelihood. One of the political actions responding to the deaths of the bus drivers and assistants are widows of the victims who organized and formed the Asociación de Viudas del Transporte (AVITRANS) [Association for Widows of Transportation]. The purpose of this organization is to gain political support from government and social recognition as they are “deslegitimadas por ser pobres, mestizas y procedentes de la ‘zona gris’ de las colonias de esta metropolis” [delegitimize for being poor, mestizas and from the marginalized colonias of the metropolitan area] [Camus, 2014: 11]. The marginalization of youth and indigenous people is one of the things leading to gang violence, as youth seek, empowerment, access to public spaces and society.

When discussing the deaths of the drivers and assistants, one of the lead advocates of this organization stated,

“Siento que cada cosa ha tenido su pequeña participación, empezando por los transportistas, porque se quieren beneficiar con subsidio... la mayoría de transportistas... se han logrado enriquecer a costillas de los que han muerto y del subsidio” [Camus, 2014: 10].

Efforts to reduce the assassinations and extortions have included the Municipality of Guatemala “prohibit[ing] buses from pulling over at unsanctioned stops, since assassins' preferred to flag down buses at random points” [Elbein, 2013: 28]. However, this restriction is not en-
forced by transportation authorities or followed by bus drivers. In addition, efforts have been made to move the Transurbano service towards a prepaid card. But the prepaid card does not address circumstances in which the business owners are being extorted, or when a bus driver is being extorted because a private firm is refusing to pay. In addition, the informality of the Transurbano system is one of the causes for insecurity with the transportation systems.

During my research trip to Guatemala City 5 taxi drivers were killed on February 14th 2016, the day after a group of taxi drivers circled around the Municipality of Guatemala with writing on their back window saying “No Más Violencia” [No More Violence]. In addition, 5 days later a larger protest was organized by taxi drivers with the “No Más Violencia” and black ribbon displayed on the back of the car (Figure 6.1). The participants demand security and the ability to earn a living wage without having to risk their lives. Despite the dangers that exist with the positions of bus drivers and bus assistants’ individuals voluntary take on these jobs, because in many areas of the country there is no alternative. The limited opportunities that exist for youth, for indigenous populations, or simply someone looking to make a living are reinforced by post conflict structures. The increase in the extortions and assassinations can be explained by the following:

“Para los jóvenes de estas colonias la onda es “ver varos [dinero]” y el recurso del asalto y extorsión al transporte público ha sido una vía cómoda y fácil, que les garantiza un flujo fijo y elevado de plata” [For youth from these neighborhoods the goal is to “see” (acquire) money the extortion and assault of public transportation has been an easy and comfortable medium, that guarantees a steady, fixed, and high level of money] [Camus, 2014: 120].

Therefore, if the root causes that are excluding youth and indigenous people from participating in society, politics, and the economy are not addressed, then the assassinations and extortions will not be reduced.
Intersection of Urbanization, Transportation, & Gang Violence

The theoretical frameworks surrounding studies of transportation, gang violence, and urbanization in the MAGC are rooted in anthropological, economic, political, geographical, sociological, and psychological [Soto 2007] perspectives, with little literature focusing on planning perspectives. However, the intersection of these three conditions is a topic that is impacting the planning and development of the MAGC and is shaping the lives of residents of the area. The effects of the violence and the urbanization have permeated into the daily lives of residents. The state of violence has created a “[m]iedo al vecino, al desempleo, a la falta del transporte, al secuestro, a las balas perdidas” [fear towards our neighbors, of unemployment, the lack of transportation, abductions, and stray bullets] [Soto, 2007:103]. The daily occurrence and frequency of violent incidents has created apathy towards violence. Many residents of the MAGC view kidnappings, extortions, and assassinations by gangs as part of everyday life. This chapter will further consider the overlap between urbanization and gang violence and how it is changing the patterns of circulation and the built environment in the metropolitan area.

Hal Brands describes how violence in different forms contributes to the normalization of crime:

“They have carved out nodes in a variety of illicit activities-drug smug
The planning approaches in a metropolitan area that continues to grow with this situation are further complicated but need to move towards sustainable transportation and infrastructure of the built environment. Further, “[u]rban sprawl and suburban developments hug the outer zones, making the capital’s metropolitan area slightly uneven and, at times, obviously unplanned [O’Neill, K.L. & Thomas, K: 84]. The unplanned and unregulated growth of the metropolitan area provides a series of complications for residents of the MAGC. As investment in the core of the MAGC has grown, the central areas become less available to locals and have over time transitioned into centers of commerce, service, and business. With the growth of the core, the development of residential neighborhoods has expanded. Most residents of the MAGC cannot afford to live in the center, causing more residents move to the periphery or to areas that are more affordable.

The Chicago School of thinking described that cities grow in rings, and there is a juxtaposition between the populations of the core and periphery. Something similar occurs with the MAGC. In the early stages of growth, the core of the area consisted mostly of informal economies and low-income people. However, after the civil war the dynamic between the core and periphery changed, and the center became the focus of urban renewal and development of the city. However, what is of most concern today is the growth occurring at the periphery. The current transportation is not able to properly serve all residents living in the periphery of the MAGC.

This lack of transportation with rapid urbanization has aggravated the congestion that currently clogs the road and highway networks of the city. The limitations of the transportation system are further aggravated by the violence that surrounds the use of transportation. The violence around the transportation systems in Guatemala has encouraged more people to use individual vehicles. Further, the safest form of public transit, the Transmetro, only serves the core areas of the MAGC. The Transmetro is the first BRT system in Guatemala, and currently is one of the most efficient and successful in Guatemala. The Transmetro was the first service to only use prepaid cards eliminating the cash flow that many gang members target. In addition, the Transmetro is guarded by safety officers located on every bus and at stations. Further, following an interview with one of the planners of the Municipality of Guatemala, I was given a tour of the command center of the Transmetro, featured in Figure 7.1 Cameras are located at all stations of the Transmetro and are constantly under watch by members of the municipal police and employees. However, the Transmetro does not meet the needs of the most marginalized groups, who do not live in the core of the MAGC. Efforts to expand the Transmetro are included in the Municipality of Guatemala’s 2020 master plan, but efforts to expand the service into other municipalities part of the Figure 1.7 Transmetro Command Center.
metropolitan area has been thwarted by a lack of capital. In addition, the Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial [Land Use Plan] has planned for high densities across areas near current and future corridors of the system. As part of this thesis I analyzed the income distribution of the populations in the zones with Transmetro stations available. But there is a need for further research to assess if this system is serving populations across incomes and statuses or if it is safe and efficient service that is only serving higher income populations and contributing to the inequalities of Guatemalan society.

A second manifestation of the effects of gang violence on the built environment and transportation network of the MAGC includes the increase of gated communities. Currently the process of requesting a neighborhood to become gated requires the approval of the mayor of the municipality to which the neighborhood belongs to. More and more neighborhoods are requesting gated communities as a solution to the insecurity and violence created by gang proliferation. However, these gated communities are reducing the extent of the road network accessible to the public, further contributing to the problem of congestion. The congestion we see in the MAGC is further aggravated as the number of residents petitioning to have a gated community increases. It is also not uncommon to see a transportation business participating in the Public Private Partnership to develop a new route from a gated community to another point of transfer. The unplanned and unapproved routes further complicate the issues of congestion, mobility, and accessibility of the MAGC.

The gated communities and move towards vehicle ownership is a solution many residents have taken upon themselves to ensure their safety and security. The issues of insecurity are not only limited to the most marginalized population. Mario Soto describes:

Insecurity is so high that some have taken on the efforts to ensure their own safety. This state of emergency is compounded by widespread corruption within the police force, leading wealthier citizens to employ private guards and thereby find an alternate way to ensure their personal safety and protect their merchandise [Soto, 2007: 104]. The current inability of governments to address the issues of violence continue to shape how people living in areas like the MAGC chose to live, but more importantly what type of life they have access to.
Conclusion

Findings

During interviews with local planners and academics working in the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City, individuals revealed two of the largest detriments to the improvement of the “transporte público colectivo urbano” include low tax revenues and limited ability for cross municipality collaboration [Castañeda, 2017]. The decentralization of the Guatemalan government was one of the key components of the peace accords of 1996. It was a specific response to the deaths and damage the government inflicted on the country’s population. Municipalities do not have the incentive or systems in place to develop public transportation that extends beyond their municipal boundaries even if most of the commutes and trips in the metropolitan area traverse several municipalities [IDB].

The policies and regulation that were created in 2009 address most of the issues regarding the vulnerabilities and ineffectiveness of the system. However, the policies are not enforced and therefore, even if the regulation is in place, the Public Private Partnership exposes riders and employees of the system to insecurity and violence. In addition, the Public Private Partnership gives too much power to the transportation business owners. The business owners are not focused on supplying the system in a way that is beneficial to the population of Guatemala, but instead they are focused around what is more profitable to them. In
addition, because of the lack of enforcement, bus drivers do not follow the regulations. An example is bus drivers will make other stops at areas that are not designated as stops by the municipality. The willingness of bus drivers to stop at other locations is something that works to the advantage of gangs who are extorting the drivers and contributing to the insecurity and violence of the system. In addition, the transportation businesses receive subsidies from the municipality, but the money saved from the subsidies is rarely used to improve the bus fleet or system.

Exclusion and inequality lead to limited accessibility for low income and marginalized populations. The extent to which this is affecting people is still being understood today. In regards to transportation and gang violence, exclusion and inequality play a significant role in how these two conditions have developed in the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City. Spatial exclusion has furthered the inequality gap by limiting the access certain to the city. Social, economic, and political exclusion have each contributed to the limited access that leads youth to join gangs.

The increases in gang violence have lead many residents of the metropolitan area to seek gated communities to protect themselves from the violence of the metropolitan area. As the number of gated communities increases, the network of roads publicly available for circulation becomes more limited. A reduced network impacts the congestion of the metropolitan area, which currently is one of the largest problems municipalities are trying to solve. In addition, new routes are created connecting these gated communities to other parts of the metropolitan area, leading to increases in congestion. More importantly, these new routes are unplanned and may not adequately serve the needs of the metropolitan area.

**Recommendations**

The first recommendation is to create a metropolitan planning agency that oversees the development and growth of the Metropolitan Area of Guatemala City. The agency would be able to implement metropolitan-wide decisions regarding transportation. Both academics and professionals I interviewed expressed the need for such an agency [Carrera & Jose, 2017]. This agency would manage the current and future transportation routes of the metropolitan area and its areas of influence. The management would also include fare regulation and enforcement of the Public Private Partnership regulations. Managing of the Public Private Partnership would include fines for companies whose bus drivers stop outside of designated stops. In addition, the agency could require all buses to move towards a prepaid card system.

The agency would also be responsible for studying the current transportation patterns of the system and residents, to be able to make informed decisions about planning. Lastly, the agency would assist in providing capital for transportation projects.

Two examples of collaborations across local governments towards metropolitan issues includes the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) “is the comprehensive regional planning agency and Council of Governments for the nine counties and 101 cities and towns of the San Francisco Bay Region” [ABAG, 2017]. Some of the successes of this collaboration include a regional resiliency plan, which targets the highest vulnerabilities of the area and implements programs to assist in mitigating these hazards. The purpose of a metropolitan agency is to provide leadership in a region, set an agenda and plans for implementation, to address issues that impact more than one city/municipality [Clark, 2005]. Several of the municipalities are currently implementing transportation projects to address issues in transportation including safety of passengers and employees, however, a metropolitan agency, would
allow for the further advancement of these projects through collaboration and support.

One of the most critical recommendations is more data collection across all platforms. There are entities that have access to data that can assist studies around transit and gang violence, but gaining access to this data is difficult or limited. As it relates specifically to public transportation in the MAGC, there is a need for better ridership data of not just the Transmetro line, but of all transportation systems.

It is expected that in 2017 Guatemala will release census data that was collected in 2016. This data will be critical in analyzing the current state of the MAGC and the areas of influence. However, the last census was completed in 2002. Making accurate predictions or estimates regarding the changes in demographics will be difficult to the lack of collection between 2002 and 2016. Therefore, the last recommendation in regards to data is consistency in the collection of the data.

The extent of the current public transportation network is large and effective in moving people around the MAGC. Therefore, my recommendations are more along the need to manage and plan routes for the entire system, not just the Transmetro. If the strengths of the Transmetro system are utilized and reinforced, the current transportation system could be built up to a level in which it is equitably and efficiently meeting the needs of its residents. There needs to be higher efforts to not just improve security for passengers but also for employees of the system. In addition, there is a need for higher regulation around subsidies that are provided to companies participating in the Public Private Partnership, specially regulation that encourages the investment into the current bus fleets and network.

Lastly, one of the key elements is addressing the limitations that exist in studying both youth and gangs is the vulnerability of these populations and risks involved in studying the groups. Youth and gangs are some of the most marginalized populations in Guatemala further studies are needed to understand how the processes that are leading to the exclusion of these populations and what could be done to address their inclusion in society. In addition, literature on Guatemala and Central America is limited, there is little interest academically in understanding how these countries are impacting their residents and their perspective regions. I was fortunate enough to have traveled to Guatemala and have acquired literature that is not readily available. I believe that as cities continue to urbanize, and in the case of Guatemala as the economy grows, the importance of addressing exclusion of youth are crucial in diminishing inequality gaps and reducing gang violence.
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