

Increasing Responsiveness: Executive Power
in the Municipality of Guatemala since 1944

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Summary

Relatively young among the Spanish capitals in Latin America, the present Guatemala City has served as capital for 222 years, while other capitals have existed for over 450 years. The City has grown rapidly in the past fifty years and now has a population of over two million. During those fifty years, the mayors--elected or appointed--have scrambled to try to keep up with the ever-growing demand for public services, especially water, streets and urban transportation. The normal relationship between municipal and central authorities since 1944 has been one of political opposition. Only in the wave of democracy--1945-1954--and the current wave--since 1986--have central government and the municipality worked together effectively to improve the quality of life in the dominant urban center of the nation, Guatemala City.

I Introduction

Setting of Guatemala City

Guatemala is the most populous, with over 10 million people, and the second largest, after Nicaragua, of the Central American countries. Approximately half of the population, predominantly rural, are descendants of the Maya maintaining their traditional cultural patterns to a remarkable degree after over 400 years of "ladino"--Spanish--domination. The other half, principally urban, are Spanish speaking and fit easily into the general mold of Latin American society.

The country has a varied topography of rain forest in the north, high mountain ranges in the center with marginal agricultural lands and the principal centers of population, and a rich band of agricultural land along the southern edges of the mountains which produces most of the export crops, especially coffee.

Guatemala City occupies a large mountain valley at 4,900 feet (1,493 m.) in the center of the country. It enjoys a temperate climate with temperatures in the 60 to 80 degrees F. range virtually every day of the year. The City marks a cultural divide among the highland populations, between the Maya who live to the west and the ladinos who live to the east (Elbow 1944).

The City today has over two million people, overwhelmingly ladino. It dominates the political, economic and cultural life of the nation. Guatemala can well be considered a city state, with a single primary urban center. Two-thirds of all manufacturing in the country takes place in the City. Over four out of five of all lawyers have offices in the City.

Except for the northern Peten rain forest, most parts of the country can be reached from Guatemala City in a day by car. To the extent that they share in the national culture, people throughout the country watch the television news from the capital, listen to the capital on their radios and read its newspapers. "Guate" or "La Ciudad" means Guatemala City. Only foreigners say "Guatemala City".

The Capital City during the Colonial Era

1) Santiago de Guatemala 1524-1773. The encounter between the Spanish and the Maya in what is now Guatemala took place in 1523. The Spaniards found well organized groups of the Maya living in the central highlands where they continue to live today making up nearly one-half of the population of modern Guatemala. The Spaniards set up their first capital, Santiago de Guatemala, not far from the present city of Tecpán. They soon moved. Their second capital was destroyed by a mud slide in 1541 causing the Spaniards to seek yet another site for their capital. This they found in the nearby Panchoy valley where they established the third city of Santiago de Guatemala in 1543. This city grew according to the classic gridiron pattern set forth by the Spanish authorities and remains today as a UNESCO-designated cultural monument of humanity. For 230 years Santiago de Guatemala in the Valley of Panchoy, now Antigua Guatemala, served as capital of the colony which included all of today's Central America and the Mexican state of Chiapas. It became the largest and most important Spanish city between Mexico and Lima (Lutz 1982; Jickling 1987).

Recurring earthquakes, culminating in the Santa Marta quake in July 1773, caused the royal authorities to seek a safer site for the capital. In spite of the opposition of Catholic church authorities and local citizens, the decision to move was made in Madrid in 1775 and the town council first met in the Nueva Guatemala de la Asuncion in January 1776 (Zilbermann de Lujan 1987). Located in a broad valley some 25 miles northeast from Santiago, the current Guatemala City has prospered and expanded in ways which would have been impossible in the Panchoy location.

2) Nueva Guatemala de la Asuncion 1776-1821. At the time it was abandoned Santiago de Guatemala had some 30,000 people. The new capital did not reach that population level until 1825, fifty years after its founding. Although the government ordered the population to move to the new city, in fact many chose to stay behind. Slowly the new city took form. Again, as in Santiago, a regular gridiron pattern was laid out. This time the streets were wider and the central park was made four times greater than in the old capital. The public and religious buildings were located again around the

central plaza: the town hall on the north side (where the National Palace is today), the royal palace on the west side, the cathedral and archbishop's palace on the east side and the post office and customs house to the south. The Marques de Aycinena, a leading citizen, was permitted to build his house on the south side of the plaza. Other prominent citizens were granted building sites in the blocks around the plaza. Churches and religious structures were placed around the city often in roughly the position they had been in the old city: the Franciscans to the south and the Dominicans to the east. All of the orders had sites within the limits of the central zone, (now Zone 1).

The Capital of the Independent Nation 1821-1944

1) The 19th Century. During the fifty years between Independence (1821) and the Liberal Revolution of 1871 the city changed little. Colonial patterns persisted. The social center of the city was grouped around the central plaza. Much of the city consisted of adobe structures with straw or tile roofs. The university building was not completed until 1849. Two forts were built to defend the city. A national theater was completed in 1859. A small number of commercial houses handled agricultural exports and imported manufactures, mostly from England. An 1870 map shows street lighting limited to the area around the plaza, to the Calle Real (now 6th Avenue) and to the east toward the theater, and along the street to the west which led to the San Juan de Dios hospital. A central market was constructed over the old cemetery behind the cathedral in 1871. By the time of the census of 1880 the urban population had grown to 55,728.

Modernization of the infrastructure of the city followed the Liberal reforms of the 1870s. The cultivation and export of coffee produced the revenue which made these changes in the city possible. European immigration was encouraged. Railways were constructed connecting the city with both coasts. Banks and commercial houses were established. Church properties were expropriated and used for public purposes, especially schools and government offices. Public education was introduced. For the first time new neighborhoods were developed to the south outside the original limits of the city.

At the end of the century, President José Mariá Reyna Barrios introduced new concepts of city planning influenced by French ideas. A plan for the future development of the city was adopted in 1894 and was largely followed during the first half of the 20th century. It included the Aurora Park and a new boulevard--La Reforma-- which became the pride of the city.

2) The 20th Century. The first great catastrophes for the city in this century were the earthquakes of 1917-1918. The major share of all public and private buildings fell. Many public buildings including the Presidential Palace, the Palace of the Reforma and the National Colon Theater could not be restored. In 1921 it was reported that 40% of the city still lived in temporary housing. One impact was to encourage wealthier families to begin moving from the center of the city toward its southern sections.

During the fourteen years of the dictatorship of General Ubico (1931-1944) there was a major expansion of public construction: a new National Palace, post office and police building were constructed, as well as an airport terminal and the Aurora fair grounds. Some of these structures like the post office and the airport followed colonial styles of architecture. Others like the National Palace and the police headquarters were neo-classical. All were monumental, especially the National Palace which is now slated to become a museum. For conservatives, the Ubico years were the "good old days" of law and order and cleanliness of the city. The phrase tacita de plata ("clean as a whistle") is still used to refer to the city under Ubico. A friend who worked late in those days, remembers how the street cleaners were out sweeping the streets of the central zone from midnight until dawn every night of the year.

The Built Environment of the City

Founded in 1776, Guatemala de la Asuncion grew slowly. It was fifty years before the city achieved the basic infrastructure of the earlier capital, Santiago de Guatemala. Political uncertainty and economic difficulties further delayed the development of the nineteenth century city. Only after the Liberal reforms of the 1880s and the growth of the coffee export economy did the city move forward (Gellert 1995).

The center of the city, now Zone 1, filled out by the end of the nineteenth century. For forty years thereafter there was little change. Old timers today remember when the city ended at 18th Street, approximately the southern edge of Zone 1. To travel further south was to go "into the country". Growth on the other three sides of the city was limited by steep ravines which have only been bridged (and "developed") in recent years. The city today, covering 340 square km., stretches far to the south and is expanding to the east (the road to Salvador), the north (the Atlantic highway) and the west (toward Mixco and beyond). Construction of commercial centers and high rise offices, apartments and homes has boomed in recent years.

Figure 1 about here

Historic Growth of Guatemala City

Population

The city authorities estimate the current population of the metropolitan area to be 2.2 million (Municipalidad 1996). This includes the City proper (the municipality of Guatemala) and the surrounding municipalities considered to be part of the metropolitan area, including Mixco, Villa Nueva, Chinautla, Villa Canales and four smaller municipalities. The same authorities estimate that the metropolitan area is growing at 6% per year: 4% from in migration of people from the interior of the country and 2% from natural growth.

In the 1960s people tended to come to the city from nearby rural areas, such as Chimaltenango. They came to work in the factories that were creating jobs. Since the 1976 earthquake, which severely damaged the central highlands, immigrants have tended to come from those areas; they have not come from the Pacific lowlands. Those cities, Escuintla, Mazatenango and Retalhuleu, have had their own patterns of rapid growth. The violence of the 1980s in the highlands also drove people to the city; they have tended to move directly from the countryside to the marginal areas of Guatemala City. Lacking urban skills, they have often had difficulty adjusting to urban ways. Although many come from Maya backgrounds, they are soon assimilated into ladino culture (Bastos and Camus 1995). Census data shows that no more than 5 to 7% of Guatemala City residents are classified as Indians.

Figure 2 **Population of the Republic of Guatemala and the dominance of Guatemala City since 1950**

Year	Republic	Guatemala City	% of total
1880	1,224,602	50,522	4.1%
1921	2,004,900	115,447	5.7%
1950	2,788,122	284,922	10.2%
1964	4,287,997	572,937	10.1%
1973	5,160,221	700,504	13.5%
1980	6,054,227	840,227	13.8%
1990	9,197,345	1,076,725	11.7%

Source: 1880-1980 Gary Elbow in Gerald M. Greenfield, Latin American Urbanization Westport CT, Greenwood Press, 1994, p.280. 1990 data from (Gellert 1997).

Chapter Overview

This chapter will review the political relationships, accomplishments, and problems of the fifteen mayors of Guatemala City who have governed the City since the Revolution of 1944. The analysis will seek to test the general hypotheses about Latin American urban politics proposed in the opening chapter of this study as they relate to the Guatemalan situation. How did the political environment change for the mayors as the central government moved from democratic systems to autocratic, military-dominated government and finally a return to participatory democracy in recent years? How did these changes affect the governance of the City?

II Second Wave Democracy: The Guatemalan Variant (1944-1954)

Samuel Huntington (1991) in his study of democratization has grouped comparative trends into three "waves" of democracy. The first took place in the nineteenth century. For Guatemala, this period coincides with the Liberal Reforms of the 1880s which changed the earlier pattern of autocratic government. The first "reverse wave" reached its peak during the government of Jorge Ubico (1931-1944).

The second wave of democracy took place after the fall of Ubico and the election of Juan Jose Arevalo in 1945. After fourteen years of highly centralized autocratic rule under Jorge Ubico, the October Revolution of 1944 was a fresh breeze in Guatemala. The revolutionary government of Juan Jose Arevalo (1945-51) enacted laws protecting labor, creating a social security system with worker health benefits, guaranteeing university autonomy, granting the vote to women and illiterates (i.e. the Indian and poor ladino population) and providing for municipal autonomy (Glejises 1991).

The Constitution of 1945 provided for the election of mayors and their councils, for increased municipal autonomy from central controls, and for a broadened concept of local self-rule. A subsequently revised Municipal Code spelled out these provisions in greater detail. An independent municipal credit system was established through the Institute for Municipal Development (INFOM) which administered centrally collected taxes on gasoline, beer and liquor for the benefit of municipalities. Over the years INFOM became almost a little Ministry of Local Government with paternalistic oversight functions. But at the beginning it was created to give meaning and substance to the concept of municipal autonomy that flowed from the spirit of the Revolution of 1944.

A National Municipal Association (ANAM) was created to give voice to municipal concerns at the national level. At first the Association was headed by the Mayor of Guatemala City. Later the presidency was opened to the mayor of any member municipality by a vote of the membership.

Departmental (provincial) municipal associations have been created and are active in several of the 22 departments of the country according to the interest and energy of the mayor of the departmental capital (comparable to a county seat in the United States). An association of Maya municipalities has also been established.

Arevalo was followed as president by Coronel Jacobo Arbenz (1951-1954). Arbenz continued the social programs of his predecessor. He also pushed agrarian reform which won him the animosity of land owners and the United Fruit Company, a major producer of bananas for export.

The Mayors of Guatemala City 1944-54

Name	Years in Office	Work Experience	Accomplishments
Mario Mendez Montenegro	1946-1948	Chief of police Political leader	Extending 6th Ave Expanding water supply
Martin Prado Velez	1949-1951	City engineer	Sewers and street paving
Juan Luis Lizarralde	1952-1954	City engineer	New city hall Infrastructure

1) Political Responsiveness of these Mayors. Mendez Montenegro as mayor was certainly responsive to the central government under Arevalo. They were of the same party and shared the enthusiasms of the 1944 Revolution for democracy and reform. Prado Velez and Lizarralde were part of a pattern of opposition to central authorities. They were more responsive to conservative "good government" political elites.

2) The Built Environment of the City. These mayors were not identified with high profile public works as were their successors. Mendez Montenegro was identified more with social programs and Prado Velez and Lizarralde, like the good engineers that they were, with needed improvements in the underground and less visible infrastructure of the city.

3) Responsiveness of the Municipality in Providing Public

Services. Traditional municipal services of markets, streets, water and sewers received the primary attention of the mayors.

4) Limitations on Municipal Authority. This post-1944 Revolution period was one of enthusiasm for strengthening municipal authority. Municipal autonomy was the slogan of the day. Although resources were limited, authority clearly rested with the mayors to carry out traditional, although limited, municipal functions.

5) Political coalitions. Mendez Montenegro, although popular in his own right as a bright, articulate young leader before becoming mayor, clearly rode the coat tails of the very popular Arevalo presidency. Prado Velez and Lizarralde depended for their support more on a coalition of conservative groups, including prominent business interests and old families, opposing the left-leaning government of Arbenz.

III The Second Reverse Wave against Democracy (1954-1986)

Authoritarian Central Regimes

During the thirty two years from the fall of Arbenz in 1954 until the election of Vinicio Cerezo in 1986, Guatemala was essentially ruled by the military. Even the lone civilian president, Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro (1966-70) held power only through a secret agreement which granted overriding authority to the military (Villagran Kramer 1994).

Coronel Carlos Castillo Armas came to power in 1954 as the result of the intervention of the CIA and the unwillingness of the military to support his predecessor Coronel Jacobo Arbenz. The cold war and anti-Communism gave a convenient rationale for the military governments and the U.S. support which they received. A significant guerrilla uprising began in Zacapa in the 1960s, moved to the capital city in the 1970s and reached its peak in the central highlands in the 1980s. The post-war search for the facts has established that over 40,000 people, mostly non-combatants, were killed during the war. The army was responsible for the vast majority of the deaths.

Attitudes toward Municipal Government

In general the military governments were tolerant of an independent municipality carrying out its traditional functions with a minimum of interference. More or less open elections were

held for the position of mayor. In one disputed election, the military chief of state--Gen. Rios Montt--named the mayor, selecting a candidate who was more to his liking than the leading candidate. Otherwise there was little if any reported intervention in the elections. Only one mayor during this period was a former military officer, Abundio Maldonado, and there is no evidence of special influence by the military on his administration.

Apparently no single representative of the military served as an ombudsman over the city government. The Minister of Government who traditionally supervised local government performed this role as always. In the Coronel Carlos Arana Osorio government this control was effectively used to constrain the politically liberal mayor, Manuel Colom Argueta. In the aftermath of the 1976 earthquake the military cooperated in the clean up activities of the city with the explicit support of the president, General Kjell Laugerud Garcia.

The Mayors of Guatemala City 1954-1986

Name	Years in Office	Work Experience	Accomplishments
Julio Obiols Gomez	1956-1959	City engineer	Water system improvement
Luis Galich Lopez	1959-1962	Physician	Water supply Bus terminal & market
Francisco Montenegro Sierra	1963-1965	Radio & TV commentator	Parking meters Auxiliary mayors
Julio Maza Castellanos	1965-1966	Businessman	Financial reform
Ramiro Ponce Monroy	1966-1970	Sports reporter	Water supply Municipal Assoc.
Manuel Colom Argueta	1970-1974	Lawyer and political organizer	Social programs Urban planning
Leonel Ponciano Leon	1974-1978	Lawyer and municipal aide	Earthquake reconstruction
Abundio Maldonado Gularte	1978-1982	Military and diplomatic	Reconstruction of central market
Jose Angel Lee Duarte	1982-1985	Municipal aide	Underground pking & ped. overpasses
Jorge Saravia	1985-1986	Arquitect	Interim mayor

1) Responsiveness of these Mayors. As a mayor named by a military government, Ing. Lee is an example of the resulting increase in responsiveness to central authorities. Meanwhile, Colom Argueta is clearly an example of the independence of an elected mayor when faced with opposition from an authoritarian central government.

2) The Built Environment as a Measure of Power and Ideology. The conflict and cooperation between the mayor and the central government over the construction of the ring road would be a good case study of how such a project tests the power of central and municipal executives. The mayor in this case was successful in beginning a project which created pressure on the central authorities to support it by building a key bridge with central funds.

3) Responsiveness in Providing Services. Maintaining order during this period of civil war kept police power clearly in hands of the central government and the military. There are reports of the military, for security reasons, closing off streets in the capital without consulting the municipality. The military also stepped into the perennial problem of water supply for the city and during this period undertook the construction of the largest and longest aqueduct in the history of the city (Xaya Piscaya).

4) Mayor-Council Conflict. During the Ponciano administration there existed significant problems of conflict between the mayor and council in resolving public service needs. This conflict over time was so serious and persistent that the Constitution of 1985 provided that mayors and their party are automatically guaranteed a majority of members on the city council.

5) Subsidization. The principal way in which central authorities were able to limit resources for the municipality during this period was their control over the municipality's access to foreign credit for development projects.

6) Coalitions of Power. The autocratic central governments of this period were never seriously threatened by the power of mayors. Such a challenge could have been taken place during the period of popular mayor Colom Argueta but the Minister of Government, private sector leaders and other central authorities successfully stymied the mayor's initiatives, especially in land use planning.

IV The Third Wave of Democracy in Guatemala since 1986

The Transition to Democracy

The Constitution of 1985 set the stage for the election of Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, a Christian Democrat and the return of democracy to Guatemala. This process suffered a setback when his successor Jorge Serrano Elías staged a self-styled coup setting aside the Constitution. He was soon sent into exile himself and was replaced by a Congressionally selected president, Ramiro de León Carpio, who had served well as the Civil Rights prosecutor.

Attitudes toward Municipal Government

The central government during this period has openly supported a broader role for municipalities in the political life of the nation and in administering development funds. The Christian Democratic government of Cerezo created an elaborate system of regional and local development committees, often in conflict with municipalities but ultimately supportive of stronger local government.

Of greater importance, the new Constitution provided for a transfer of funds to the municipalities ear-marked funds for local public works. Originally set at 8% of the national budget, the transfer was subsequently raised to 10%. In addition, a share of the national sales tax (IVA) and the property tax was designated for transfer to the municipalities. The property tax transfer has run into local opposition for reasons that are symptomatic of resistance to any taxation for which Guatemala is well-known.

The Mayors of Guatemala City since 1986

Name	Years in Office	Work Experience	Accomplishments
Alvaro Arzu Irigoyen	1986-1990	Business man	Administrative reform
Alvaro Heredia	1990	Municipal councilman	Interim mayor
Oscar Berger Perdomo	1991-to date	Business man	Improved public services

1) Responsiveness of these Mayors. The visible harmony between central and local authorities at the present time is a remarkable tribute to how responsive local government is good politics. The

current president, Arzu, is there in large part because of his success as mayor. The mayor, Berger, is receiving open and widespread support for his work in the city as a means for the party to build an image and popular support which will carry him into the office of the president on Arzu's PAN party ticket.

2. The Built Environment. The mayor and the president are currently pushing municipal projects as a means of building a party record of accomplishment. The PAN party to which they both belong is doing its best to live up to its motto "responde" - "actions not words".

3) The Police and Urban Services. With the full cooperation of the central authorities, the traffic police function is being transferred to the municipality. These municipal police will also have the authority to arrest criminals caught in the act. It is hoped that they will have a beneficial effect in reducing street crime, a major problem today in Guatemala City.

4) Central-Local Power Conflict. At least for the moment, having the mayor and the president of the same party, of the same outlook and the same determination to make government serve community needs has created a renaissance in local government in Guatemala City.

5) Mayor-Council Relations. The 1985 Constitution provided for the mayor to have an automatic majority on the municipal council. This has ended a long tradition of deadlock between the mayor and council and has provided the basis for more responsive local government. It has also, of course, reduced the checks on the mayor's powers and activities which opposition members of the council are normally expected to provide. In some circumstances, these checks may contribute to more responsible local government.

6) Resource Transfer. Since the introduction of revenue sharing with the Constitution of 1985, Guatemala has put resources in the hands of local authorities on an unprecedented scale. Although these transfers (a designated 10% of the central budget as well as sharing in the IVA sales tax) have been designed primarily to help the poorer, rural municipalities, they have also been a significant help to the expansion of public services in Guatemala City. The shift of the property tax to the municipality, although currently limited to a token amount, has the potent to become be a boon to local government and municipal public services, particularly when they gain the authority to assess property values.

7) Coalitions. The current alliance of local and national

political elites is the exception to the long history of conflict between the municipality of Guatemala City and central authorities. Traditionally the municipality has been in the hands of groups who oppose the central authorities. A de facto system of checks and balances has been the rule. For an activist local government seeking to meet local needs, this has meant stalemate and inaction. The current sense of movement may increase the likelihood that the same party and political outlook will share the presidency and leadership in the municipality in the future.

8) The City and its Surrounding Area. The metropolitan area of Guatemala City includes the municipio of Guatemala and parts of other municipios, including Mixco and Villa Nueva. A coordinating mechanism for the region was created by law in 1956 and was also provided for in the 1965 Constitution. These proposals have never been implemented (Gellert 1997).

In the early 1970s Colom Argueta sought to establish area wide controls. The Municipality of Mixco challenged these controls and the courts set them aside. In 1972 Colom Argueta tried again with a Municipal Cooperation Agreement for the metropolitan area. Again Mixco was able to block this initiative. In 1981 a Central District was proposed to coordinate the urban region of the capital. The proposal went nowhere, for lack of support among the secondary municipalities. None of these regional proposals was opposed by the central government authorities.

At the present time Mixco and Guatemala City are cooperating on the planning of physical infrastructure. There are informal meetings to coordinate their projects of mutual interest and to share the use of public works equipment.

9) Current Problems. Contemporary press coverage of the City identifies these chronic problems:

- Provision of an adequate supply of potable water. Water production is currently between 3.5 to 4 cubic meters per second. An additional 2 cubic meters per second are considered necessary to meet current demand.
- Street crime. Although this is primarily a problem for the national police, the high rate of armed robbery, thievery, and kidnapping are of concern to all residents of the city and to visitors.
- Garbage treatment and disposal. The city's sanitary landfill and the people who live by scavenging from the dump

are long standing problems.

- Sewer systems. These are urgently needed in the poor areas of the city.
- Transportation systems. Organizing improved urban bus transportation networks, especially for outlying poor areas, is a continuing concern.
- Air contamination. Vehicle exhaust especially from trucks and buses, has been a long standing problem.

Other critics add these issues:

- Disorderly urban growth.
- Lack of control over squatter settlements.

The press gives the current mayor high marks for his efforts to improve the city streets, for park development and maintenance, and for improving selected public services. Improvements in the operation of the municipal office which issues birth certificates is cited as an example where service has improved and waiting lines have been reduced. This is a particular problem at the start of each school year when parents must have a birth record to register their children.

V. Conclusions and the Applicability of the Study's Hypotheses to Guatemala City

The mayors of Guatemala City play "second fiddle" in the political concerts of the country. The presidents and chiefs of state dominate virtually all aspects of urban life--especially education, health and social services. The situation is not unlike what is happening in the capital of another American republic, Washington D.C., where elected officials have lost most of their powers to Congressional appointees.

Guatemala City mayors have traditionally struggled in opposition to central authorities. Only briefly at beginning and at the end of the period being studied in this analysis have the mayors and central authorities been of the same party or political persuasion.

The City has grown so rapidly during the past fifty years that it is a wonder the municipal government can keep up with the ever increasing demand for public services. It is well to recognize that the Arzu-Berger city governments have made major

contributions to meeting these service needs. Without their effective leadership, the quality of life in Guatemala City would be significantly poorer than it is today.

Hypothesis 1: Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) policies as a centralizing ideology. ISI was clearly a Guatemalan development policy in the 1960s and continued during the military regimes of the 1970s. It became less important in the 1980s as non-traditional exports became a development priority. The traditional tendency of central authorities to dominate all aspects of political life in Guatemala is rooted in a top down concept of the state which has prevailed since colonial days. Local governments, at best, have authority over specific limited functions including water supply, streets and markets.

Hypothesis 2: The built environment of the capital city as an arena for the play of political forces between the national and local authorities. Appointed mayors, such as Ing. Lee, implemented central government priorities (e.g. parking under the Central Park). All mayors have experienced the desire of central authorities to leave their mark on the city (e.g. the Liberation Boulevard built by Castillo Armas in commemoration of his overthrow of the Arbenz government). Other ambitious mayors, such as Colom Argueta have run into opposition from central authorities, especially in obtaining credit for local public works, which has stymied their initiatives.

Hypothesis 3: The police power will continue to be a central government prerogative. Central authorities in Guatemala have traditionally maintained police powers, in part as a contravailing power to the military. Only recently has the transfer of traffic police to local government begun to take place. Tourist police have also become a local function to combat street crime, but these are in a secondary role in relation to the continuing dominance of the national police. The 1996 Peace Accords placed emphasis on the need to develop a professional, civilian police force at the national level.

Hypothesis 4: Appointed mayors will be more responsive to central authorities than elected mayors. There is no question that in the eyes of Guatemalans elected mayors stand a little taller in their relationship with central authorities. Appointed mayors are the agents of central government and hark back to the days of the dictator Ubico who named his men as "intendentes" to govern local communities.

Hypothesis 5: When mayors and councils agree, they are more able to resist central pressures. Mayor-council conflict was so strong

and debilitating to local authority that the constitution writers in 1985 provided that elected mayors would automatically be assured a majority of the members of the municipal council. This has worked to strengthen the effectiveness of local government. It remains to be seen what resistance a united mayor and council could marshal against a central government with opposing political views.

Hypothesis 6: Mayors are in open competition with central authorities for the support of the capital city electorate.

Elected mayors have often been of opposition parties or otherwise in competition with central authorities. Guatemalans consider this a favorable "balance of power" offsetting the tendency of the central government to dominate all political discourse. The three professional engineers who served during the later Arevalo, Arbenz and Castillo Armas period are cited as examples of this balancing tendency. The Colom Argueta local government similarly balances the excesses of the Arana military regime.

Hypothesis 7: National elites look upon capital city mayors as threats to their power.

In Guatemala the opposition to metropolitan government has, in part, been considered a measure to restrain the power of local authorities. At the present time, the presidency and the mayor of Guatemala City are in the hands of the same political party. This provides the basis for a most welcome, but unusual, cooperation between central and local authorities.

Hypothesis 8: The concept of capital city entitlement to central subsidies and the resistance to local taxes. The Constitution of 1985 created a revenue sharing system which has now been expanded to a 10% earmark of central revenue which is transferred to municipal governments for local public works. This has been less important for Guatemala City but has been a bonanza for smaller towns. Now the central government proposes to transfer the property tax to local authorities but finds that the strong local opposition to taxes has hamstrung the effort.

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Miguel Alvarez Arevalo, director of the Museum of History and "cronista" of the City, 10 March 1998

Victor Manuel Asturias, active politica leader and observer of municipal politics, 28 December 1997

Felix Castillo, long term Guatemala City resident, 7 February 1998

Alicia Cobar, municipal employee with Ponce Monroy and Colom Argueta, 30 November 1997

Lulu Colom de Herrarte, sister of Colom Argueta, 7 February 1998

Roberto Corpeño, friend and associate of Leonel Ponciano, 20 October 1997

Jorge España, long time observer of Guatemalan politics, 30 November 1997

Juan José Falla, Guatemala City lawyer and businessman, 4 Jan 1998

Otto Gilbert, Guatemala City resident, 6 January 1998

Julia Gonzalez, AVANCSO investigator, 7 January 1998

Pablo Gonzalez, consultant on Plan 2010, 10 February 1998

Patricia Jager, director of FEMICA-Central American Municipal Federation, 28 January 1998

Jon Leeth, careful observer of Guatemalan politics, 12 January 1998

Luis Linares, director of public services for Alvaro Arzú, 28 January 1998

Jorge López, INFOM employee, 29 December 1998

Hector Luna Trocoli, newspaper columnist, former congressman and senior government official, 26 April 1998

F. José Monsanto, long time advocate of municipal development, 28 January 1998

Paco Montenegro, son of Francisco Montenegro Sierra, 13 January 1998

José Manuel Montufar, observer of Guatemala City politics,

7 January 1998
Julio Obiols, ex-alcalde, 10 February 1998
Arnoldo Ortiz, former Minister of Government, 13 January 1998
Oscar Pelaez, professor, San Carlos University and staff member
of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies (CEUR),
10 March 1998
Carlos Manuel Pellecer, intellectual spirit of the Arbenz
administration, 8 February 1998
Francisco Pellecer, municipal development specialist, 30 Dec 1997
Juan José Pellecer, critical observer of Guatemala City politics,
8 December 1997
Leonel Ponciano, ex-alcalde, 8 January 1998
Gabriel Ramirez, Guatemala City resident, 29 December 1997
Edwin Shook, early resident of Guatemala City, 23 November 1997
Owen Smith, long term observer of Guatemala City politics,
11 December 1997
Robert Thomas, specialist in Guatemalan migration patterns,
31 December 1997
Marco Topke, long term resident of Guatemala City, 1 December
1997

The Mayors of Guatemala City since 1944

1. Mario Méndez Montenegro, 1946-1948
2. Ing. Martín Prado Vélez, 1949-1951
3. Ing. Juan Luis Lizarralde, 1952-1954
4. Ing. Julio Obiols Gómez, 1956-1959
5. Dr. Luis Galich López, 1959-1962
6. Periodista Francisco Montenegro Sierra, 1963-1965
7. Julio Maza Castellanos, 1965-1966
8. Lic. Ramiro Ponce Monroy, 1966-1970
9. Lic. Manuel Colom Argueta, 1970-1974
10. Lic. Leonel Ponciano León, 1974-1978
11. Lic. Abundio Maldonado Gularte, 1978-1982
12. Ing. José Angel Lee Duarte, 1982-1985
13. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, 1986-1990

14. Lic. Alvaro Heredia, 1990

15. Lic. Oscar Berger Perdomo, 1991-1999

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