LSE Research Online

Article

"Disembedding" the city : crime, insecurity and spatial organization in Managua, Nicaragua

Dennis Rodgers

"Disembedding" the city: crime, insecurity and spatial organization in Managua, Nicaragua

Dennis Rodgers

Dennis Rodgers is at the Crisis States Programme and Development Studies Institute of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Address: DESTIN, London School of Economics, London WC2A 2AE, UK; e-mail: d.w.rodgers@ lse.ac.uk

1. Park, R E and E W Burgess, with R D McKenzie and L Wirth (1925), *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

2. Mangin, W (1970), *Peasants in Cities*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Mass.

3. Jackson, K T (1985), *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Oxford University Press, New York.

4. Caldeira, T P R (1999), "Fortified enclaves: the new urban segregation" in Holston, J (editor), *Cities and Citizenship*, Duke University Press, Durham.

SUMMARY: This paper explores the emergence of a new pattern of spatial segregation linked to rising urban insecurity in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, during the past decade and a half. Rather than fragmenting into an archipelago of isolated "fortified enclaves", as has been the case in other cities around the world, Managua has undergone a process whereby a whole layer of the metropolis has been "disembedded" from the general fabric of the city through the constitution of an exclusive "fortified network" for the urban elites, based on the privatization of security and the construction of high-speed roads and roundabouts. This pattern of urban governance diverges significantly from Managua's historical experience, and rests upon new urban developments that have explicitly favoured the urban elites, both directly and indirectly. These raise critical questions about the nature of relations between social groups within the city.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE DIFFERENTIATED ORGANIZATION of space has long been a fundamental feature of urban theories. The most paradigmatic example is perhaps the "concentric zone" model of urban growth,[1] but the importance of spatial organization is also evident in other ideas about the development of cities, including the emergence of marginal squatter settlements[2] and suburbanization,[3] for example. Space is also a key issue for a growing body of research concerned with the emergence of what has been termed a "new urban segregation".[4] Studies around the world have noted changing patterns of urban spatial organization, as a result of rising levels of crime and insecurity.[5] The increasing fear of crime has led to the development of a new form of segregated spatial organization in cities, particularly manifest in the proliferation of what are termed "fortified enclaves".

Fortified enclaves are "…*privatized, enclosed and monitored spaces of residence, consumption, leisure and work*",[6] designed to isolate their occupants from crime and therefore minimize their insecurity. They typically take the form of self-sufficient gated communities and closed condominiums with high walls, sophisticated surveillance technology and round-the-clock private security protecting residences and on-site amenities. Fortified enclaves can vary considerably. In Buenos Aires, for example, they spread over large areas, often including polo grounds and football pitches within their boundaries.[7] By contrast, in Santiago de Chile they involve the piecemeal constitution of "closed communities" through the privatization of

streets and squares.[8] In both cases, it is the affluent who isolate themselves. This is the most frequent state of affairs, but all social groups build walls. In Johannesburg, for example, poor KwaZulu migrant workers turn their Soweto hostels into "fortified communities" to protect themselves from the hostility they face from wider society.[9]

Notwithstanding their variety of forms, the emergence of fortified enclaves is widely seen to transform cities from open spaces of free circulation to more fractured and fragmented archipelago-like localities, thereby fundamentally changing the character of urban social life. What Harvey[10] has termed the "right to the city" becomes conditional on such attributes as wealth, social class, or residency in a particular area. As Caldeira explains:

"…*in a city of walls and enclaves…, public space undergoes a deep transformation. Felt as more dangerous, fractured by the new voids and enclaves, broken in its old alignments, …public space …is increasingly abandoned to those who do not have a chance of living, working and shopping in the new private, internalized and fortified enclaves. As …spaces …are enclosed and turned inside, the outside space is left for those who cannot afford to go in.*"[11]

The new pattern of segregated spatial organization erodes the very notion of "public space". Those on the "inside" feel little responsibility towards those on the "outside", and no longer relate to notions of cohabitation and interaction but, rather, to an ideal of separateness from those perceived as different.

This logic of spatial separation frequently becomes interlinked with a logic of social exclusion. In her seminal study of the phenomenon in São Paulo, Caldeira[12] observes how the withdrawal by the upper class from public space into enclaves leads to the emergence of a discourse associating criminality and poverty, and generates stereotypical images of the poor as the inherently dangerous "other". This serves to legitimize their spatial exclusion from the lives of the rich in the name of "security", but also actively engenders forms of social discrimination. The poor are stigmatized as unpredictable and brutal "animals" that do not merit human rights. As a result, police patrolling São Paulo increasingly target poor areas, and there are growing calls for a reduction in the civil rights of the poor.

This paper places itself within this research tradition, and explores the emergence of spatial segregation linked to urban insecurity in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, based on evidence gathered during fieldwork in Managua in 1996–97 and 2002.[13] Many of the classic features of the fortified enclave model are present in Managua, but the process of urban reorganization seems also to include additional elements, particularly when considered from the perspective of the poor. Rather than fragmenting into an archipelago of self-sustaining and isolated islands of wealth within a wider sea of poverty, urban space has undergone a process whereby a whole layer of the metropolis has been disconnected from the general fabric of the city.

II. MANAGUA, THE "PALIMPSEST" CITY

THE EXPRESSION "*MANAGUA es Nicaragua*" – "Managua is Nicaragua" – is commonly heard by visitors to the city, and there is some truth to this claim. The city contains almost one-quarter of the country's 5.5 million people and over 40 per cent of its urban population.[14] It dominates the country both economically and politically, and is a primary symbolic

5. Beall, J (2002), "The people behind the walls: insecurity, identity and gated communities in Johannesburg", Crisis States Programme Working Paper No 10, DRC, London; also Blakely, E J and M G Snyder (1997), *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC; Caldeira, T P R (1996), "Building up walls: the new pattern of spatial segregation in São Paulo", *International Social Science Journal* Vol 147, pages 55–66; see reference 4; Caldeira, T P R (2000), *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in Sao Paulo*, University of California Press, Berkeley; Connell, J (1999), "Beyond Manila: walls, malls and private spaces", *Environment and Planning A* Vol 31, pages 417–439; Davis, M (1990), *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles*, Verso, London; Davis, M (1998), *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*, Metropolitan Books, New York; Low, S (2001), "The edge and the center: gated communities and the discourse of fear", *American Anthropologist* Vol 103, No 1, pages 45–58; Low, S (2003), *Behind the Gates: Life, Security and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*, Routledge, New York and London; Marcuse, P (1997a), "The ghetto of exclusion and the fortified enclave", *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol 41, No 3, pages 311–336; Marcuse, P (1997b), "The enclave, the citadel, and the ghetto", *Urban Affairs Review* Vol 33, No 2, pages 228–264; and Salcedo, R and A Torres, (2004), "Gated communities in Santiago: wall or frontier?", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol 28, No 1, pages 27–44.

6. See reference 4, page 114.

7. Svampa, M (2001), *Los que ganaron: La vida en los countries y barrios privados*, Editorial Biblos, Buenos Aires.

8. Fischer, K, J Jäger and C Parnreiter (2003), "Transformación económica, políticas y producción de la segregación social en Chile y México", *Scripta Nova* Vol VII, No 146, page 127, http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn/sn146(127).htm; also Sabatini, F and F Arenas (2000), "Entre el estado y el mercado: resonancias geográficas y sustentabilidad social en Santiago de Chile", *EURE* Vol 26, No 79, pages 95–113.

9. See reference 5, Beall (2002).

10. Harvey, D (2003), "The right to the city", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol 27, No 4, pages 939–941.

11. See reference 4, page 130.

12. See reference 5, Caldeira (2000).

13. The first period of fieldwork, between July 1996 and July 1997, was carried out in the context of a social anthropology PhD at the University of Cambridge (Rodgers, D (2000), "Living in the shadow of death: violence, *pandillas* and social disintegration in contemporary urban Nicaragua", unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, UK), partly funded by grants from the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Trinity College William Wyse Foundation. The second period of fieldwork, in February–March 2002, was conducted as part of the London School of Economics and Political Science's Crisis States Programme, which also sponsored a further visit in December 2002.

14. Instituto Nicaragüense de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC – Nicaraguan Statistics and Census

national reference point. At the same time, however, Managua is in many ways an exceptional feature within the country's social and physical landscape, the focal point of a number of unique processes and events that have made it, and continue to make it, a very particular setting.

In 1851, Managua – at the time a rather sleepy provincial town – was chosen as a compromise capital for Nicaragua over the then more important but feuding cities of León and Grenada. Within a century, it grew into a thriving metropolis of half a million inhabitants that, by the 1960s, had a reputation as a playground for the wealthy. In 1972, however, the city suffered a devastating earthquake that killed 20,000 people, destroyed 75 per cent of the city's housing and 90 per cent of its commercial capacity – including the bustling city centre – and left 300,000 people homeless.[15] Although substantial amounts of international aid poured into Nicaragua to help rebuild its shattered capital, most of it was pocketed by the ruling Somoza dictatorship, and little reconstruction actually took place.[16] As a result:

"…*the destroyed central part of Managua was not rebuilt and …was virtually abandoned. Only a few buildings survived the earthquake, and the central core took on a post-apocalyptic look. …The rebuilding effort that did take place following the 1972 earthquake created new residential areas east-south-east of the city centre… This gives the city the appearance of a deformed octopus. The tentacles of the octopus reach out along major transport arteries away from the old centre, but the octopus's body is riddled with gaping holes.*"[17]

The overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979 by the leftist Sandinista revolutionaries opened the way for ambitious plans to transform Managua, but the subsequent civil war against the US-backed Contras drained state resources and prevented any large-scale reconstruction. A limited number of neighbourhood improvement and squatter-settlement upgrading projects[18] did little to mitigate the city's general lack of structure, which has been compounded further over the years by the slow deterioration of urban infrastructure and the anarchic development of numerous marginal squatter settlements, some in the ruins of the old city centre. As a recent guidebook put it, Managua is now a city with "…*no centre, no skyline and no logic.*"[19]

Although, not surprisingly, Managua is often referred to as "*la ciudad del caos*" ("the city of chaos"),[20] another way of considering it is as a postmodern metropolis, "…*a 'palimpsest' of past forms superimposed upon each other, and a 'collage' of current uses.*"[21] The squatter settlements in the ruins of the old city centre are an obvious exemplification, but the notion also applies more generally. The businesses and services that used to be in the city centre have re-emerged in a decentralized manner, creating a fragmented metropolis of semi-autonomous districts connected by a Byzantine transport network. Perhaps most paradigmatically, the population of Managua has adapted to the post-earthquake shape of the city by mapping old reference points onto the new cityscape, with addresses in the city often designated in relation to past features that were destroyed.

New urban developments have also emerged in the city, particularly following the change of regime in 1990, when the Sandinistas were voted out. As Whisnant notes, the return of wealthy Nicaraguans who had left for Miami following the revolution led to "…*determined efforts by the 'Miami boys' (as they are called) …to recreate their cherished Miami social and cultural 'scene'.*"[22] This transformed the Managua cityscape, as neon-lit bars and clubs appeared and expensive cars began to cruise the streets. More broadly, wider processes of globalization and economic liberalization have also led

to the establishment of international franchises such as Subway, Pizza Hut, the Hard Rock Café and McDonald's, along with a number of new and expensive bars, restaurants, nightclubs, luxury hotels, exclusive supermarkets and two North-American-style shopping malls, the Plaza Inter and Metrocentro malls. Both of these boast multi-screen cinemas, food courts and shops selling a variety of imported consumer items, for example Benetton and Liz Claiborne clothes, Sony electronic goods, original CDs and DVDs, and Victorinox Swiss Army knives.

The overwhelming majority of those catered for by these new city features clearly belong to what can loosely be termed the "urban elites".[23] Although the recent city transformations can be placed within the historical experience of Managua as a "palimpsest" city, they have arguably been complemented and underpinned by a qualitatively different process of urban change. In contrast to the city's past pattern of disorganized urban development, it can be argued that there has been a more purposeful process of intervention in favour of the urban elites. This has sought not simply to superimpose a new urban form over past ones, but rather to actively reshape the overall fabric of the city through an explicit separation of certain urban spaces from the metropolis as a whole. Underlying this new pattern of urban segregation is, arguably, the issue of crime and insecurity.

III. CRIME AND INSECURITY IN CONTEMPORARY NICARAGUA

CRIME HAS EXPLODED in Nicaragua over the past decade and a half, particularly in urban areas. According to Nicaraguan police statistics, crime levels have risen steadily by an annual average of 10 per cent since 1990, compared to just 2 per cent during the 1980s.[24] The absolute number of crimes more than tripled between 1990 and 2003, with crimes against the person – including homicides, rapes and assaults – rising by 460 per cent (Table 1). A 1997 CID–Gallup survey reported that one in six Nicaraguans claimed to have been the victim of a criminal attack at least once in the previous four months, a proportion that rose to one in four in Managua,[25] where 40 per cent of all the country's crime occurs.[26] Not surprisingly perhaps, a 1999 survey conducted by the Nicaraguan NGO Ética y Transparencia found that crime was considered the principal problem affecting the country, by a margin of over 30 per cent.[27]

While the overall trend of increasing crime is no doubt accurate, official Nicaraguan police statistics are problematic. As Godnick et al. note, "…*given the anecdotal information on violence as portrayed in the Nicaraguan press and the general perception of violence in Nicaraguan society, these figures are suspiciously low.*"[28] The national homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants – the accepted international benchmark for measuring levels of violence – is particularly problematic, standing at an average of 15 deaths per 100,000 persons between 1990 and 2003, compared to almost three times that many in Honduras, and over six times as much in Guatemala and El Salvador.[29] During a year spent living in the poor Managua barrio Luis Fanor Hernández[30] in 1996–97, I tallied nine crime-related deaths, proportionally equivalent to a staggering 360 deaths per 100,000 persons. While this calculation is unsystematic and based on a small sample, it certainly suggests that under-reporting is a serious problem in Nicaragua.

There are a number of reasons for this. Both Presidents Arnoldo Alemán

Institute) website: http://www.inec.gob.ni/ estadisticas/proyeccion 2003.htm, accessed 20 July 2004.

15. Black, G (1981), *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua*, Zed Books, London, page 57.

16. Godoy Blanco, J C (1983), "El proceso de estructuración urbana de Managua: 1950–1979", unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, Universidad de Costa Rica, Ciudad Universitaria "Rodrigo Faccio", Costa Rica.

17. Wall, D L (1996), "City profile: Managua", *Cities* Vol 13, No 1, pages 48–49.

18. See, for example, Drewe, P (1986), "Integrated upgrading of marginal areas in Managua", *Cities* Vol 3, No 4, pages 333–349; also MINVAH (Ministerio de la Vivienda y Asentamientos Humanos – Ministry of Housing) (1980), "Programa integral de 2,800 viviendas para Managua", MINVAH, Managua; and see reference 13, Rodgers (2000).

19. Leonardi, R (2001), *Nicaragua Handbook*, Footprint Handbooks, Bath, page 57.

20. La Prensa, 10 May 2004, http://www.laprensa.com. ni/archivo/2004/mayo/10 /nacionales/nacionales-2004051007.html, accessed 23 June 2004.

21. Harvey, D (1990), *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Blackwell, Oxford, page 66.

22. Whisnant, D E (1995), *Rascally Signs in Sacred Places: The Politics of Culture in Nicaragua*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, page 447.

23. My use of the term "elites" is different from the more focused and restricted usages by Lasch (Lasch, C

Table 1:	Nicaraguan crime statistics													
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
All crimes	28,005	30,896	35,924	42,394	47,173	48,737	54,983	62,682	66,040	72,908	75,741	90,145	93,497	97,500
Yearly increase (total)	1,828	2,891	5,028	6,470	4,779	1,564	6,246	7,699	3,358	6,868	2,833	14,404	3,352	4,003
Yearly increase (%)	7	10	16	18	11	3	13	14	5	10	4	19	4	4
Crimes against persons	7,340	9,392	12,072	13,089	15,500	17,934	19,821	23,824	25,804	29,824	26,546	32,011	33,519	33,961
Yearly increase (total)	996	2,052	2,680	1,017	2,411	2,434	1,887	4,003	1,980	4,020	-3,278	5,465	1,508	442
Yearly increase (%)	16	28	29	8	18	16	11	20	8	16	-11	21	5	1
Homicides (total)	672	732	828	762	725	707	662	679	639	561	476	537	591	664
Yearly increase (total)	159	60	96	-66	-37	-18	-45	17	-40	-78	-85	61	54	73
Yearly increase (%)	31	9	13	-8	-5	-2	-6	3	-6	-12	-15	13	10	12
Homicide rate (per 100,000 inhabitants)	18	19	20	18	17	16	15	15	13	11	9	10	11	12

Sources: Granera Sacasa and Cuarezma Teran (1997: 37 – 49) & Serbin and Ferreyra (2000: 185-7) for 1990-2 data; http://www.policia.gob.ni/estadisticas/dosier2003/dosier4.htm, http://www.policia.gob.ni/estadisticas/2002/anuario/indicadores/adnivelnacional_tipologia_anos.htm & http://www.policia.gob.ni/estadisticas/dosier2003/dosier5.htm (accessed 18 June 2004) for 1993 – 003 data. Homicide rate calculated using demographic data from PNUD (2000 & 2002), http://www.inec.gob.ni/estadisticas/proyeccion2002.htm & http://www.inec.gob.ni/estadisticas/proyeccion2003.htm (accessed 18 June 2004).

(1995), *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, W W Norton & Co, New York) or Mills (Mills, C W (2000 [1956]), *The Power Elite*, Oxford University Press, Oxford), for instance. Nicaragua is brutally polarized between rich and poor, and has a Gini coefficient that is the fifth most unequal in the world according to the World Bank (World Bank (2001), *World Development Indicators 2001*, World Bank, Washington DC, Table 2.8, pages 70–72). This situation is compounded by the fact that the country is extremely poor, meaning that: "…*not only is the cake badly divided but, in addition,*

(1997–2001) and Enrique Bolaños (2002–) made fighting crime a major element of their government programmes and "preferred" positive – i.e. low – crime statistics. But probably the most important reason is the inefficiency and weakness of Nicaraguan state institutions. The Pan-American Health Organization has estimated that over 50 per cent of all mortalities in Nicaragua in 1995 were not registered, due to deficient record-keeping by hospitals and a lack of knowledge concerning where to register deaths, for example.[31] However, perhaps the most dramatic institutional weakness concerns the Nicaraguan police itself. Since the change of regime in 1990, a painstakingly slow process of de-politicization, and reductions in both size and budget,[32] have severely affected its operational capacity and efficacy. Police officers have only limited patrolling capacities in urban areas, and are completely absent in 21 per cent of the country's 146 municipalities.[33]

Regionally, the Nicaraguan police force has the lowest number of police personnel per capita and per crime, the lowest budget per crime, the lowest budget per police officer, and the lowest average salaries in Central America.[34] Such penury obviously makes police personnel susceptible to corruption, but it also clearly limits their technical and material capabili-

ties.[35] In a media interview in 2001, Commissioner Franco Montealegre admitted that police were often out-gunned by criminals, especially by the youth gangs that are prevalent throughout urban areas in the country.[36] Not surprisingly, 43 per cent of the respondents to the 1999 Ética y Transparencia survey who admitted to having been victims of crime stated that they had not reported the crime to the police because "…*it was no use*."[37]

The unreliability of official police statistics notwithstanding, the high levels of crime in urban Nicaragua were very visible during my fieldwork in *barrio* Luis Fanor Hernández, both in 1996–97 and in 2002, and were clearly reflected in the practices and the discourses of neighbourhood inhabitants. In 1996, there was a manifest fear of leaving one's home, for example, with people going out as little as possible, and restricting themselves to a few fixed routes and destinations. By 2002, even the shelter of home seemed precarious as houses were barricaded in an almost fort-like manner. An informant called Adilia described the situation in 1997 as "…*living in a state of siege*" and, in 2002, said that "…*things are worse, people are scared to leave their homes, it's too dangerous*." Her mother, Doña Yolanda, dramatically echoed this:

"*There's so much delinquency, it's impossible to live… they'll kill you for a watch… they'll kill you for a pair of shoes… they'll kill you for your shirt … they're everywhere, you've got to watch out… they could be your neighbour, even your friend, you can never be sure… you can't go out any more, you can't wear rings, bracelets, nice shoes, anything that makes us look a little better than we really are… how can we live? It's not possible…*"

For the urban elites, however, the situation seemed to have evolved very differently, as is nicely illustrated by two anecdotes. The first was a conversation with an obviously affluent Nicaraguan seated next to me on the plane taking me from Miami to Managua for the first time, in 1996. When I told him I was planning to spend a year in Nicaragua, he launched into a tirade on how impossible Managua was to live in: it was much too dangerous, there were incredible amounts of crime and violence, you were constantly held up at traffic lights, the roads were so bad that you always risked breaking down and being attacked, there was nowhere to eat, drink or dance safely in the city and, finally, that he had been in Miami to buy a house in order to move there with his family as soon as possible. In 2002, I was again seated next to an affluent Nicaraguan on my flight to Managua, but the tenor of our conversation was completely different. He gushed enthusiastically about how the city had changed: Arnoldo Alemán had completely transformed it, it was now safe and liveable, there were nice restaurants, bars and hotels, and – in bizarre symmetry to my conversation six years previously – that he was moving back to Managua after eight years in Miami.

IV. NUEVA MANAGUA

IT QUICKLY BECAME apparent on my return to Managua in 2002 after five years' absence that the city had indeed changed dramatically, but that it had done so very differently depending on one's perspective. Although the predominant forms of violence had, in many ways, arguably worsened,[38] crime and insecurity appeared to affect the poor and the urban elites unequally. As Doña Yolanda put it, from the perspective of the poor:

"…*nothing has changed, except that we're now five years on, and the future didn't get any better*." "*For the rich…*", as Doña Isabel explained, "…*every-*

there is almost no cake at all, just a small cookie" – Rocha, J L (2002), "Microsalarios y megasalarios: megadesigualdad y microdesarrollo", *Envío* Vol 240, page 25. The population is therefore divided into an overwhelming majority of poor on the one hand and a small minority of variable but comparatively enormous affluence on the other. This latter group includes not only traditionally powerful notable families but also a hotchpotch mix of professionals, businessmen, intelligentsia, returned exiles, as well as foreigners working principally for NGOs and international development agencies. It is difficult to estimate the numerical weight of these groups, but none is very big, either in relation to each other or compared to the impoverished. Consequently, it makes sense to consider them together, particularly as the ultimately small number of new bars, restaurants and malls in Managua – considering the city's size – means that these different sub-groups inevitably tend to mix.

24. Serbin, A and D Ferreyra (editors) (2000), *Gobernabilidad Democrática y Seguridad Ciudadana en Centroamérica: El Caso de Nicaragua*, CRIES, Managua, page 185.

25. *La Tribuna*, 2 May 1997, page 4.

26. Granera Sacasa, A and S J Cuarezma Terán, (1997), *Evolución del Delito en Nicaragua (1980–1995)*, Editorial UCA, Managua, page 32.

27. PNUD (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo – United Nations Development Programme) (2000), *El Desarrollo Humano en Nicaragua*, PNUD, Managua, page 130.

28. Godnick, W with R Muggah and C Waszink

(2002), "Stray bullets: the impact of small arms misuse in Central America", Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper No 5, Small Arms Survey, Geneva, page 26, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications/occasional.htm.

29. Moser, C and A Winton (2002), "Violence in the Central American region: towards an integrated framework for violence reduction", Overseas Development Institute Working Paper No 171, ODI, London, page 47.

30. This is a pseudonym, as are the names of all the individuals mentioned in this article.

31. http://www.paho.org/english/HIA1998/Nicaragua.pdf, accessed 27 June 2003.

32. This is partly related to the Nicaraguan state's budget-cutting efforts to meet stringent IMF- and World-Bank-imposed structural adjustment conditions.

33. Cajina, R J (2000), "Nicaragua: de la seguridad del estado a la inseguridad ciudadana", in Serbin and Ferreyra (2000), see reference 24, page 174.

34. http://www.policia.gob.ni/diap07pm.htm, accessed 3 April 2002. See also Call, C (2000), "Sustainable development in Central America: the challenges of violence, injustice and insecurity", CA 2020 Working Paper No 8, Institut für Iberoamerika-Kunde, Hamburg, pages 24–25.

35. Grigsby, W (2003), "La policía en su laberinto: trampas, claves y pistas", *Envío* Vol 257, August, http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo.php?id=1271.

36. Nicaragua Network News Service Vol 9, No 6, pages 5–11, February 2001, available online at:

thing's different, life has got easier, it's like their city now… you could say that for the rich it's as if there were a nueva Managua [new Managua]."

A variety of factors underpin this two-fold transformation of Managua but, as intimated by my travel companion to Nicaragua in 2002, Arnoldo Alemán has without doubt played an important role. He was elected mayor of the city in 1990 and came to power with a definite urban project for Managua that arguably focused principally on making the city a more comfortable place for the urban elites. This initially translated into a series of ostentatious public works to "beautify" the city, among them a large roundabout with a big fountain that, when lit up, seemed to spout waters of different colours, and the massive Catedral Metropolitana de la Purísima Concepción de María. Other initiatives included regular campaigns to clear traffic intersections of street children and peddlers, painting over revolutionary murals, and the razing of several informal settlements in the ruins of the city centre.

When Alemán was elected to the presidency of Nicaragua in 1996, he continued his campaign to transform Managua, now able to draw upon greater resources. He personally oversaw the building of new government offices in the old city centre, including – at a cost of US$ 4 million worth of Taiwanese donor money[39] – a new presidential palace with a fountain with jets of water marking time to computerized musical melodies. Similarly, Managua's international airport was also completely overhauled in 2000–2001, at a cost of US$ 33.4 million.[40] Furthermore, the national government indirectly stimulated new construction by providing (illegal) tax breaks to companies wanting to put up new buildings. The Pellas Group, for example, spent US$ 20 million on a 14-storey, ultra-modern tower for which they obtained a US$ 2.5 million tax exoneration.[41] Comparable tax breaks were also reportedly given to the Taiwanese and Salvadoran commercial groups that built the Plaza Inter and Metrocentro malls, respectively.

It can be argued that Alemán's "beautification" efforts focused principally on locations directly impinging on the lives of the urban elites, such as the government offices where many are employed, or the international airport.[42] Seen in this way, and when considered together with the new and exclusive bars, restaurants and malls, by the mid- to late 1990s a conglomeration of locations and services that (principally) provided services to the urban elites was clearly emerging in Managua. As my travel companion in 1996 reflected, however, this in itself was not enough to make the city attractive for the urban elites, given the rising crime and insecurity. What was required was a much more vital reorganization of the urban order, which seems to have rested upon two further elements, namely the development of private security and the improvement of Managua's transport infrastructure.

V. THE PRIVATIZATION OF SECURITY

IT IS NO accident that the development of the private security industry in urban Nicaragua has coincided with rising crime and insecurity, and there is a widespread view that the police's inefficiency means that private solutions are necessary to guarantee security.[43] While there was just one private security firm registered with the police in 1990, this rose to 14 in 1996[44] and to 56 in 2003.[45] There were 9,017 registered private security guards in 2003,[46] although the real number is probably much higher, considering that

29,414 firearm permits were issued for private security-guard service in 2000.[47] By comparison, there were 7,664 police in 2003.[48]

Private security is a classic feature of the fortified enclave model of urban segregation. As Caldeira[49] explains in relation to São Paulo, the fearful withdrawal by the affluent into gated communities and closed condominiums is accompanied inevitably by a need to ensure the exclusion from these spaces of the sources of insecurity or, in other words, potential criminals. By virtue of their private nature, fortified enclaves cannot count upon public security agencies to enforce this exclusion, and security becomes a private matter instead. Babb argues that the same logic applies in Managua, where:

"…*the wealthy …shield themselves as much as possible from crime and other social problems, constructing higher walls and better security systems for their homes and hiring armed guards to patrol their neighbourhoods. In doing so, they create segregated enclaves that, in Managua as elsewhere in Latin America, alter the character of public space and public life and enforce rules of inclusion and exclusion…, [with] the streets of Managua …left to those who cannot afford to retreat to enclaves.*"[50]

Babb is both right and wrong in her observations. There is no doubt that high walls and armed guards have proliferated in the city during the past decade. At the same time, however, such security tends to occur in relation to individual residences rather than whole neighbourhoods. The few more affluent neighbourhoods that exist in Managua are not the gated communities that Caldeira[51] and others describe, but concentrations of individually fortified dwellings. It can be speculated that the relatively small size of the urban elites in Managua makes the emergence of self-sustained gated communities a non-viable proposition. These classically are spaces from which residents hardly ever need to leave, as they contain all the social, economic and cultural services that they require,[52] with the businesses involved essentially serving isolated markets. The small size of the urban elites in Managua means that any enclaves would have to be modest in size, and businesses within them would therefore find it difficult to be profitable.

Whether or not this demographic constraint is indeed the reason for the lack of gated communities in Managua, the urban elites in the city have clearly not retreated from public space in the same way that they have done in São Paulo, for example. Rather than living in self-sustained gated communities, they leave their highly fortified individual homes to work and play in the new government offices, business edifices, bars, restaurants and shopping malls around Managua. Private security remains critical, however, as not only do the urban elites essentially live their lives within a limited number of heavily protected locations, but the private provision of security de facto converts public spaces in private ones, as Doña Yolanda intimated: "…*all those nice shops and malls are not for the poor, the guards don't let you in if you don't look rich, and everybody there looks down at you…*"

Because these different locations are spread out across the metropolis, it can be argued that the urban elites in Managua live within what might be termed a "fortified network". Like a fortified enclave, a "fortified network" is separate from the rest of the city and allows those within it to remain isolated from the high levels of urban crime and insecurity. At the same time, it is the interconnection of these privately protected spaces that constitutes them as a viable "system", and it can be contended that the most critical element that has permitted the emergence of this "fortified network" has been the development of a strategic set of well-maintained, well-lit, and fast-moving roads in Managua during the past half decade.

http://www.tulane.edu/~libweb/RESTRICTED/NICANEWS/2001/2001_0205.txt, accessed 16 June 2004.

37. See reference 33, page 178.

38. Rodgers, D (2003), "Dying for it: gangs, violence, and social change in urban Nicaragua", Crisis States Programme Working Paper No 35, DRC, London.

39. Díaz Lacayo, A (1998), "Nicaragua briefs", *Envío* Vol 204 (in English), July, http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo.php?id=1344.

40. Instituto Nicaragüense de Fomento Municipal (INIFOM – Nicaraguan Institute for the Promotion of Municipal Affairs), "Ficha municipal: Managua", http://www.inifom.gob.ni/ArchivosPDF/Managua2.pdf, accessed 21 July 2004.

41. Confidencial, 5–11 May 2002, http://www.confidencial.com.ni/2002288/eportada1-288.html, accessed 26 July 2004.

42. This is not to say that poor people do not work in these offices or that they never make use of the airport. However, it is clear that neither of these new developments was geared principally towards them. The architectural re-modelling of Managua's airport, for example, prominently included the construction of a luxurious duty-free shop stocked almost exclusively with imported items that are clearly beyond the reach of impoverished travellers, and a rather high proportion of the new check-in desks that were built supposedly in order to relieve passenger congestion seem to be used only to cater for business- and first-class passengers.

43. See, for example, La Prensa, 11 March 2003,

http://www.laprensa.com.ni/cronologico/2003/marzo/11/cartas/cartas-20030311-05.html, accessed 14 July 2004.

44. See reference 33, page 169.

45. La Prensa, 3 March 2003, http://www.laprensa.com.ni/cronologico/2003/marzo/03/nacionales/nacionales-20030303-18.html, accessed 18 July 2004.

46. See reference 45.

47. La Prensa, 14 August 2000, http://www.laprensa.com.ni/cronologico/2000/agosto/14/nacionales/nacionales-20000814-05.html, accessed 20 July 2004. The Nicaraguan police admit that they do not have a complete registry of private security firms, and it is accepted that their firearms registry is deficient, with the actual number in civilian possession being at least 50 per cent higher than the officially registered number (see reference 28, Godnick et al. (2002), page 4).

48. http://www.policia.gob.ni/estadisticas/dosier2003/dosier9.htm, accessed 18 July 2004.

49. See reference 5, Caldeira (2000), pages 258–259.

50. Babb, F E (2001), *After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua*, University of Texas Press, Austin, pages 67–68.

51. See reference 5, Caldeira (2000).

52. See reference 5, Low (2003).

53. Wilson, F (2004), "Towards a political economy of roads: experiences from Peru", *Development and Change* Vol 35, No 3, page 529.

54. El Nuevo Diario, 29 January 2000, http://www.-ni.elnuevodiario.com.ni/

VI. ROADS AND ROUNDABOUTS

IN A RECENT article calling for the elaboration of a political economy of roads, Wilson remarks that "...*instead of envisioning roads as neutral lines ...going from ...point A to point B, they should be visualized as stretched-out places where intersecting social relations cluster and adhere.*"[53] As my travel companion to Nicaragua in 1996 bemoaned, the condition of the roads in Managua, with their potholes and lack of adequate surfacing, as well as the constant risk of carjacking at traffic lights and busy intersections, made travelling between different locations a constant gamble for the urban elites during the first half of the 1990s. Although they could protect their homes, offices and bars, there was little they could do to avoid potentially dangerous encounters when moving between the spatially spread-out points of their lives. In other words, despite the proliferation of exclusive locations, they continued to be located within Managua, and this forced them to engage with it, whether or not they wanted to.

It is not surprising, then, that Alemán set out to transform Managua's transport network. A large-scale programme to fill in potholes, resurface and widen the major arteries of the metropolis, as well as build a bypass road in the southwest of the city and replace traffic lights with roundabouts was begun in 1998, ostensibly to speed up traffic and reduce congestion. The proliferation of roundabouts, however, can also be linked to the fact that they reduce the risk of carjacking (since cars do not have to stop), while the primary purpose of the bypass seems to have been to allow drivers to avoid a part of Managua reputed for its high levels of crime. When one considers the road works on a map, a pattern emerges that suggests a rather selective building or rebuilding. Not only do the road works seem predominantly to connect locations associated with the lives of the urban elites, but there has been simultaneously an almost complete neglect of roads in parts of the city that are unequivocally not associated with the urban elites.[54]

Even after Managua changed political hands in 2000, when a Sandinista, Herty Lewites, was elected in place of Alemán's hand-picked successor, Roberto Cedeño, the selective improvements continued. Although Lewites proposed a more equitable urban development programme involving US$ 6 million of road works in 2001, the small municipal budget meant that financial support was needed from the national government – headed by Alemán – and this was not granted.[55] At the same time, however, the national government funded major improvement works on the 45 kilometres of road to Granada, to the tune of US$ 25.8 million.[56] Coincidentally, an increasing number of urban elite families have built homes in the countryside between Managua and Granada, and the ability to drive in and out of Managua quickly and safely is obviously a major concern. A similar logic can also be invoked to explain why 13 roundabouts were built in Managua during the past decade, while Lewites' plan to add 259 traffic lights to Managua's paltry 78 over the next 18 years met with little support.[57] Instead, the Ministry of Transport and the Nicaraguan police both suggested a campaign to educate drivers about the proper use of roundabouts.

While a case can certainly be made that many of the recent transport-related developments in Managua have tended to favour the urban elites, it is important to consider how they are perceived by the poor to understand their true significance. As Doña Yolanda made clear in an interview in 2002, it is not just the homes, offices and leisure locations of the urban elites from which the poor have become excluded, but also the spaces of

connection between these places, that is to say the roads and roundabouts themselves:

> "*Everything that Alemán has done, he's done for the rich. It's all big, luxurious, American-style.*[58] *You go and see the Purísima roundabout, it's huge! The Jean Paul Genie roundabout is massive as well. So is the Güegüense roundabout and the Metrocentro one. You've also seen how they're improving the road to Masaya, no? It now has six traffic lanes, three in each direction. But the thing is that we're not living in the US here, we're living in poor little Nicaragua, where almost everybody is poor. They say that there are thousands of new cars on the roads now, but whose cars are they? Can the poor afford Cherokees and pickups? Of course not! None of these new roads and buildings are for us poor folk, they're only for the rich and their big cars. What have they brought us? Nothing! The buses that the poor use still go on the old, broken roads full of potholes… I tell you, …the roads are not for the poor. It's impossible to go anywhere now with all those big cars cruising around so fast. Have you tried crossing those roads? It's impossible, especially at those roundabouts where you don't know where the cars might come from! Before, the traffic was slower and there was less of it, but now… You know Doña Aurelia, three houses down, no? Her son was killed a few months ago, just trying to cross the road. The car didn't even stop, it just hit him and went right on… It's like they were saying to us that the roads are not ours but theirs… It's as if they've ripped out the parts of the city they want and we're no longer allowed to use them…."*

Certainly, Doña Yolanda's observations are supported by the increase in the number of vehicles in Managua during the late 1990s. There was a 35 per cent rise in the number of vehicles in Nicaragua between 1998 and 2001, compared to a 13 per cent decline between 1995 and 1998,[59] and over 60 per cent of all vehicles in Nicaragua are concentrated in the capital city.[60] The vast majority of new vehicles are manifestly private automobiles; over 70 per cent were cars and pickups in 2001 and 2002.[61] Doña Yolanda's intimation that the new roads are leading to a greater number of road deaths also seems true. Although Nicaraguan police transport statistics must be considered with the same caution as the crime statistics, they do show a sudden rise in traffic deaths in Managua for 1998–2000, coinciding with the major changes to the city's transport network.[62] Furthermore, pedestrians are the largest single group of traffic victims, constituting over 40 per cent of all deaths.[63] Roundabouts reportedly constitute particularly risky locations for pedestrians,[64] and two of the three roads where the greatest number of traffic accidents occur are new transport arteries.[65] These new dangers have meant an increasing circumscription of the city space for the poor, and increasing difficulties in moving about.

VII. "DISEMBEDDING" THE CITY: THE REVOLT OF THE ELITES?

AS SMART REMARKS, "*…all cities attempt to govern their constituent spaces and those who live there, although to variable extents.*"[66] The question is how they do so and for what purpose. It is increasingly acknowledged that the governance of cities is becoming more concerned with the management of space rather than the disciplining of offenders.[67] The classic example of this new form of spatial governance is the fortified enclave that Caldeira and others have observed around the world, which produces order by creating spaces that exclude offensive behaviour. There are many parallels between the fortified enclave model of urban development and the transformation

archivo/2000/enero/29-enero-2000/opinion/opinion6.html, accessed 23 June 2004.

55. La Prensa, 11 October 2001, http://www-ni.laprensa.com.ni/archivo/2001/octubre/11/nacionales/nacionales-20011011-07.html, accessed 18 May 2004.

56. La Prensa, 31 May 2004, http://www.laprensa.com.ni/archivo/2004/mayo/31/nacionales/nacionales-20040531-02.html, accessed 1 June 2004.

57. See reference 40.

58. Doña Yolanda's comment that the urban development of Managua has essentially amounted to an "Americanization" of the city certainly bears consideration, especially considering the way in which the new roads, malls and proliferation of expensive cars are portrayed as examples of the country's "modernization", which is often seen an synonymous with emulating the USA.

59. See reference 27, page 173; also http://www.inec.gob.ni/estadisticas/sociodemografico/parqueautomotor.pdf, accessed 10 July 2004.

60. El Nuevo Diario, 4 June 2000, http://www-ni.elnuevodiario.com.ni/archivo/2000/junio/04-junio-2000/variedades/variedades1.html, accessed 23 June 2004.

61. http://www.inec.gob.ni/estadisticas/sociodemografico/parqueautomotor.pdf, accessed 10 July 2004.

62. See reference 40.

63. La Prensa, 29 January 2004, http://www-ni.laprensa.com.ni/cronologico/2004/enero/29/sucesos/sucesos-20040129-04.html, accessed 18 May 2004.

64. La Prensa, 19 October 2000, http://www-ni.laprensa.com.ni/cronologico/2000/octubre/19/sucesos/sucesos-20001019-01.html, accessed 18 May 2004. There are just two pedestrian crossings in the whole of Managua, only a few pedestrian overpasses and few roads with pavements (La Prensa, 16 April 2004, http://www-ni.laprensa.com.ni/cronologico/2004/abril/16/sucesos/sucesos-20040416-01.html, accessed 18 May 2004).

65. See reference 40.

66. Smart, A (2001), "Unruly places: urban governance and the persistence of illegality in Hong Kong's urban squatter areas", *American Anthropologist* Vol 103, No 1, pages 30–44.

67. Merry, S E (2001), "Spatial governmentality and the new urban social order: controlling gender violence through law", *American Anthropologist* Vol 103, No 1, page 16.

68. Giddens, A (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge; also Giddens, A (1991), *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, Stanford; and Giddens, A (1999), *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, Profile Books, London.

69. Hess, M (2004), "Spatial relationships? Towards a reconceptualization of embeddedness", *Progress in Human Geography* Vol 28, No 2, page 177.

70. See reference 5, Caldeira (2000), page 213; also Harvey, D (1973), *Social Justice and the City*, Edward Arnold, London.

71. See reference 23, Lasch (1995).

72. See reference 10.

of Managua over the past decade and a half. But it can also be argued that the new Managua presents a number of different and intriguing elements. Fortified enclaves are disconnected worlds that are the antithesis of public space, in that they constitute a withdrawal from the fabric of the city, leading to its fragmentation. The new spatial order in Managua, however, has been established not so much through an insular withdrawal from the city but, rather, through the constitution of a fortified network that extends across the face of the metropolis. At the same time, however, the fortified network in Managua nevertheless also constitutes a form of disconnection from the general fabric of the city as a whole, in that it is an exclusive space that is only for the urban elites, its magnitude notwithstanding.

From this perspective, rather than a fragmentation, the process that Managua has undergone can perhaps best be described as a form of "disembedding". I borrow this term from Giddens,[68] who uses it to describe how social, cultural and economic relations can become detached from their localized contexts as a result of modernity and globalization. Following Hess, the notion of "embeddedness" can also be said to have territorial dimensions, particularly in relation to "…*the extent to which an actor is 'anchored' in particular territories or places*."[69] Cities can be seen as primary sites of territorial embeddedness, fundamentally shaping the way that social actors within them live their lives. The "palimpsest" urban history of Managua clearly exemplifies this process, with new urban forms adopting, reinterpreting and being shaped by past ones. However, the recent spatial transformation of Managua has arguably led to the emergence of an urban social form that no longer relates to its wider context, and can therefore be labelled "disembedded". The fortified network of the urban elites excludes others from specific locations, but also from the roads and intersections in the city that connect these locations. In doing so, it actively encroaches on the public space of the city in a much more extensive way than fortified enclaves do, "ripping out" – to use Doña Yolanda's expression – large swathes of the metropolis for the sole use of the urban elites.

The dynamics of spatial organization are perhaps most meaningfully considered in terms of "…*how social groups relate to each other in the space of the city*."[70] Such a perspective focuses our attention squarely on urban governance – for whom and by whom is it being carried out? It can be argued that urban governance in Managua during the past decade and a half has specifically favoured the urban elites, with resources being brought to bear to accommodate their needs and desires, irrespective of the rest of the city. Because those benefiting from the transformation of the metropolis are often also those effecting the changes, the disembedding of Managua can plausibly be said to represent an instance of what Lasch has called "the revolt of the elites."[71] After a decade of popular revolutionary rule, followed by an anomic and spontaneous "revolt of the masses" in the form of rampant crime and delinquency, the Nicaraguan urban elites have decided to go their own way, not so much by withdrawing from the city while remaining within it but, rather, by partitioning it and establishing themselves independently in their own self-determined, disembedded space. In doing so, however, they actively "betray" – to continue the analogy with Lasch – the social contract of the city that comes by virtue of being embedded in a common urban space, and inevitably produce "…*worlds of inequality, alienation and injustice*."[72]