

Pezzoli, Keith. 2000. *Human settlements and planning for ecological sustainability : the case of Mexico City*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Except illustrating the use of archives and interview data

CASE STUDY:

State-Society *relations* in land use designation and the illegal urbanization of Mexico City's ecological conservation zone.

Unit of Analysis: The *relationship* linking the government, grassroots organizations (assisted by professional experts), real estate developers, and farmers.

The role of local government is an important piece of this puzzle (the nature of the state-society relationship) in the case studies. So, one question I had to deal with was this:

What role does the local government's "Community Development Office" play in the hotly contested urbanization of Mexico City's ecological buffer zone?

To answer this question I relied upon archival analysis, interviews and direct as well as participant observation. The excerpt below from my book about this case shows how I interwove the archival and interview data I collected.

NOTE: I had a working hypothesis going into this study. The buffer zone was a frontier in relationships of power where the government, community and landholders (agrarian and urban) negotiated access, development rights and production/consumption/distribution of wealth. The buffer zone was NOT ever really expected to be a protected space outside the political reality of Mexico's City's urban sprawl. Key concepts that eventually came out of this work included;

- Frontier in relationships of power
- Industry of destruction
- The desalojo machine

EXCERPT (TO BE DISCUSSED IN CLASS)

The Community Development Program

As specified in the Sub-Directorate's 1985 Programa de Trabajo, the Community Development Program had two elements: (1) the Program of Community Organization for Social Integration, and (2) the Program of Social and Cultural Action. The second element amounted to very little; its highlight was an occasional state sponsored basketball game or beauty pageant. The former element was more significant. At its core were strategies of surveillance and social control. In a

document that listed the activities of the Program for Social Integration, four such strategies were specified (see box 10.4).

In an interview that I conducted with the Director of the Community Development Program, I asked if the Sub-Directorate actually engaged in strategies aimed to repress or "disintegrate" certain popular groups. The response was affirmative:

We are an administrative institution, but we also have a political nature, one-hundred percent. So we have friends and we have enemies; the Coalición is our enemy because they are not with the PRI. As I was telling you, the Coalición is disorganized--in part, our institution contributes to this. It is not a mere accident that I don't take it upon myself to always hand out documents to the same person in the Coalición. I give out a copy here and a copy there. This gives us the advantage. It is one of our methods, a form of *contra-politica*... While these strategies of disintegration exist, and they are well implemented, you won't find them written down anywhere. For example, you see the list of [grassroots] representatives in the meetings with COPLADE, its only those affiliated with the PRI that get invited; we don't invite the Coalition. In this way we selectively support some groups and push others down; this is our business here.ⁱ

In another interview with the Director of the Ajusco satellite office, I asked if the Sub-Directorate actually kept individual files on each of the colonias leaders. Again the answer was affirmative and to my surprise I was handed two files as proof. Each file contained a two page "political profile" of a community leader prepared by an *oreja* (literally translated "ear"--the title given to an undercover agent working for the state). One of the profiles described Jeromino Martinez, a leading member of the Asociación de Colonias del Ajusco, Casa del Pueblo, a popular organization based in the colonia Belvedere. The other profile described Polo Claveⁱⁱ, a leading activist from the colonia Bosques del Pedregal.

The file on Jeronimo Martinez illustrated a fair degree of background research.ⁱⁱⁱ The profile was addressed to the Director of the Sub-Directorate. It characterized Martinez as a dangerous threat and it concluded with the ominous statement: "waiting for your instructions." This report was dated July 31, 1987. Less than one month later, on August 15, 1987, Martinez was arrested by the police while he was in route by bus from Oaxaca to Mexico City. Martinez was arrested on the charge that he was smuggling drugs (supposedly 14 kilograms of marijuana)

and he was imprisoned. Colonos of the colonia Belvedere argued that the charges were false and that Martinez was actually a political prisoner because he led a protest movement against the terms of the land tenure regularization program. I asked the Director if the allegations were true; he said yes, Martinez was in fact a political prisoner.^{iv}

The political profile on Polo Clave, also dated July 31, 1987, was even more damning. It included the observation that: "Apparently he does not belong to a political party, but nonetheless--of all the leaders in the zone of Ajusco Medio--Clave is the toughest. It can be said that he is the base of the political group the Coalición Popular Independente ...he has become an acrid critic of the system and a tireless instigator of disrespectful demonstrations."

The conclusion to the profile on Clave noted that "the advance, slow but sure, of the System in the zone has caused the popularity of Mr. Clave to decline--that is, the decisive intervention of our Delegado in the regularization of land tenure in the zone has been a determining factor in [Clave's] decline." At the end of this profile there also appeared the ominous statement: "waiting for your instructions." Clave was not detained by the police. His brother, on the other hand, is on Mexico's list of desaparacedos (missing persons) (La Jornada, 25 October 1986). Although Clave has managed to avoid becoming a political prisoner he has been repeatedly harassed and this has taken a heavy toll on his family.

I think it is worth noting here what I mean by exacting a toll. Clave has a wife and four daughters, threats against him deeply affect them all. This became all too clear to me one day when I visited his small one room house. I went there that day to continue a series of interviews with Clave but he had not yet returned from work. During the preceding months, I had become quite close to his family; so his wife, Gabriela Clave, invited me in to await his return with her and the four children. While waiting Mrs. Clave began to describe to me how her nine year old daughter suffered recurring nightmares. Every night for two weeks the little girl woke up screaming--having dreamt that her father was being tortured and put to death by "people in the government." Describing the night previous to my visit, Gabriela told me how the nightmares had reached a frightful climax.

Since the father was late in getting home, the daughter, fully awake, convinced herself that the nightmares she was having had become real. From 9:30pm until 12:30am the girl was in a state of panic, crying hysterically: "We must go out and look for daddy, they're going to kill him!" The girl feared for her own life as well: "Mommy, Mommy, I don't want to die." The mother, while telling me all this, broke down in tears. Sobbing, she described to me how the daughter wrung her hands in desperation; how she hyperventilated; how nothing could be done to calm her. The mother actually feared that her girl's heart would stop. She feared that her daughter's torment was so great that she may forever suffer emotional problems. That night, when the father finally got home, the girl fell silent, emotionless. She withdrew. The child, the mother told me, "doesn't have mental problems." But, what will happen?, she added, if this keeps up.

This may seem to be an exaggerated case. However, around the time that the little girl was having her nightmares, the father was one of the principal activists of a popular movement called the Coordinadora de Colonias y Pueblos del Sur. This group was protesting the nearby construction of an office complex for occupation by Gobernación (Gobernación is similar to the FBI in the U.S.). Popular groups mobilized to stop construction of the office, arguing that they had proof its design included "a torture chamber in the basement" as well as "ovens to cremate dissidents to make them disappear" (Menendez, 1987:4; see also La Jornada, 21 June 1987; El Día, 16 July 1987).

In the final analysis the Community Development Program did very little community development. Its primary objective was social control. In addition to the Community Development Program, the Sub-Directorate had a program for ecological preservation. Almost nothing, however, was done along these lines. Most effort was channeled towards land tenure regularization. The distribution of provisional land titles was carried out in 1985 by 20 public notaries and 20 brigades of social workers. This was the first stage of the Plan for Immediate Actions which was implemented without much trouble (Excelsior, 10 May 1985). Popular

opposition developed once the authorities decided to orchestrate the private sale of the land (as opposed to its expropriation) .

It was arranged that colonos had to submit their entire payment directly to the Teresa Family. The Teresa Family (henceforth called Teresa for short) then kept 35% of the payments and distributed the remaining 65% to members of the Belvedere Association. The 65% was paid out to compensate those who had purchased 1,000 square meter lots from Teresa in the late-1960s. This 35/65 deal was an arrangement worked out between Teresa and the other major land holders in the zone.^v The local government endorsed this strategy and actively promoted the transactions. It gave legitimacy to the deals by channeling the procedure through "tripartite contracts" that were official documents signed by the three actors involved: the developer, the state, and the colono. These tripartite contracts were pivotal in the process of political mediation.

ⁱ. Interview with Director of the Community Development Program, Sub-Directorate of Ajusco, Tlalpan, Federal District, 23 September 1987.

ⁱⁱ. This is not the individual's real name. I use a pseudo-name here to protect the innocent.

ⁱⁱⁱ. Including statements such as: "his origin and political formation grows out of relations with CONAMUP, the Preparatoria Popular de Tacuba, The Asociación de Medicos Desempleados, the Union Obrera Y Campesina Popular, and with the Coordinación Nacional de Sindicatos."

^{iv}. Of course, this was publically denied by the Government (El Día, 26 August 1987). Popular groups pressured the state about Martinez's captivity and in October 1987, Gobernación agreed to review his and other cases (La Jornada, 3 October 1987).

^v. This information is based on my interviews with a developer who was a member of the Belvedere A.C. (Tlalpan, Federal District, 28 October 1987); and on my interview with Irma Elizondra, the president of the Belvedere A.C. who was in charge of technical affairs and determined payment schedules (Tlalpan, Federal District, 6 October 1987). According to these sources, Teresa sold 80% of their land to several buyers in the zone during the 1960s (they kept 20% for themselves). These buyers in turn sold the land in lots of 1000 square meters to those people who formed the Belvedere Association. When the regularization process got underway, these middle and upper-class members of the Belvedere Association could not legally prove that they owned the land. Faced with this problem, members of the Belvedere Association got together with several other landlords in the zone and formed a real estate coalition (El Día, 22 December 1986). The objective was to coordinate claims and to minimize the possibility of disputes. The real estate coalition agreed to allow the Belvedere Association to collect all land payments in the name of Teresa. Teresa's claim to the land was recognized by the state, even though Teresa had already sold most of it off. The arrangement was that Teresa would keep 35% of all incoming land payments, while the other landlords would divide the remaining 65% among themselves.