



To Move or Not To Move:

Opportunities and challenges for low-income households to build a house in León Southeast, Nicaragua

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Executive summary

To combat illegal land occupation the municipalities of Utrecht (the Netherlands) and León (Nicaragua) set up an overall urban development plan for León, finally resulting in the León Southeast (LSE) project. With this project the municipality offers cheap plots to low-income households which, after repaying it, build their houses through self-help housing in newly urbanised neighbourhoods, prepared by sites-and-services by the municipality.

Though relatively successful, after almost a decade a third of the households have not built a house yet. In addition, there are also uninhabited, unfinished and demolished houses.

Central to this thesis is to understand why households have not moved to the new neighbourhood where they own a plot. The project offers a wide array of opportunities to low-income households in order to get access to plots and self-help housing, including low-cost plots; sites-and services; cooperation housing NGOs; and access to financial and technical assistance. However, even with all actors involved, in many cases low-income households have such a low and vulnerable socio-economic status that they cannot cope with external shocks, leaving them financially incapable to build a house or unable to maintain living in the house they already built. Additionally, self-help housing initiatives have decreased, leaving households too dependent on NGOs.

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List of abbreviations and terms

Currency: C\$25 = €1 / C\$ 20 = US\$ 1.

AHP: Reparto Azarias H. Pallais.

Alcaldía: The Municipality (City Council) of León.

Arnecom: The maquiladora car parts factory located in Zona Franca.

ASH: Reparto Antenor Sandino Hernandez.

C2C: City-to-City Cooperation.

FSLN: Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional

Fundapadele: Fundación para el Desarrollo de León.

INVUR: Instituto de la Vivienda Urbana y Rural Government organisation overseeing all housing arrangements.

Lino Arguello: A reparto that has been newly built since 2004.

LSE: León South East.

MS: Reparto Mariana Sanson.

NGO: Non-governmental organisation.

Las Poetas: The repartos of AHP, ASH and MS.

FOSOVI: El Fondo Social de Vivienda

Pulpería: Small grocery store normally located within the home.

Reparto: Each sector of LSE named after a famous poet.

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme.

Zona Franca: A factory zone within LSE in an economic free trade area.

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Introduction

From February to May 2009 my fellow co-worker and I conducted research in the urban expansion project León Southeast (LSE), in León Nicaragua. The project is the result of a well established city-to-city cooperation between municipalities from the North and South, León (Nicaragua) and Utrecht (the Netherlands), and the involvement of many different stakeholders on the international, national and local level, and aims at providing a cheap housing solution for low-income households. The project is meant to be self-sustaining, and to be continued by the municipality of León without external funding in the future. In this way the project has the potential to be an example for other housing projects in Latin-America and the rest of the world.

This thesis is a product of four months qualitative and quantitative research on the socio-economic situation of households living in LSE and the impediments other households face in order to actually move to LSE. The focus of the LSE project is to provide homes for low-income households in a peri-urban location which is not only a challenge for the authoritative bodies involved, but, as we will see, even more so for the households intending to or already living in LSE. The continuing mobility of households is at the centre of this research, trying to understand which factors contribute the most to a household's capability to move, and keep living, in LSE.

The LSE project is a practical solution to provide affordable housing to low-income households, and is based on theoretical notions built around concepts like tenure security; home-ownership; self-help housing; North-South city-to-city development cooperation; and pro-poor housing policies. As such, the results not only show the functioning of this particular project, but also add some comments to the general theoretical debate on how to provide affordable housing solutions to low-income households in an increasingly urbanising world.

The low-income household is the core unit of analysis at all stages of the research because it is they who are considered the prime beneficiary and target of the LSE programme. The households and its members are the inhabitants of LSE, and form the community and will define what LSE is and will become in the future. Therefore, the results also address households' opportunities and challenges in order to move to LSE.

Chapters one and two give a contextual geographical outline of Nicaragua and León. The focus is on the local and national economic profile of Nicaragua and León. A key aspect which is highlighted throughout the thesis is the important role of NGOs in the housing process. Also, León's special opportunities for development projects because of its place in the development arena having many city links, will be discussed as this has been a great advantage being able to set up such an ambitious project which requires a lot of financial investment, technical knowledge and the involvement of many other stakeholders in order to create the right conditions for low-income households to build a house.

Chapter three enters into the theoretical framework considered for this research. The chapter presents the literature reviewed on general social housing themes and important concepts on low-cost housing solutions within the framework of the urbanising world. These geographical and theoretical

perspectives provide a starting point to conceptualise and analyse the LSE project. Its conceptualisation is partly based on theoretical concepts and perspectives on how to combat urban slum development and increase households' investments into housing. The results will later be used to analyse how the practice of the LSE project reflect the theory.

Chapter four discusses the conceptual model, and the research questions derived from it as well as the research methodology. The conceptual model depicts households' opportunities and impediments to move to LSE and their overall mobility. The different research questions seek to contribute to the understanding of the mobility of households to and from LSE, especially the main research question '*why do households not move to LSE*', and to demarcate the research objectives. The research includes a socio-economic evaluation of households living in LSE, and compares this to the results of a baseline study done in LSE in the latter part of 2004. It also examines why households that already have a plot has not moved to LSE yet. The methodology explains which research methods and techniques have been used in order to collect the data and discusses the advantages, disadvantages, and shortfalls that were met. The appendix contains the details about each research method used.

The following three chapters discuss the research findings. Chapter five addresses the primary socio-economic indicators of households living in Las Poetas, and Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion. These are compared to the baseline survey findings of 2004 and presents the most important trends and draw a longitudinal comparison. The overall statistics show slight improvements or stabilisation in most categories presented. Focus of the results is drawn to the differences between the households living in Las Poetas, and those living in the new repartos of Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion. It will become clear that there are differences on income level, marital status and employment indicators.

Chapter 6 delves into the physical housing development of Las Poetas and discusses the important role NGOs play for households to build a house in LSE. Also, an overall discussion about housing construction between 2000 and 2009 is presented as well as a map of Las Poetas showing the empty plots which were established through general observations in LSE.

Chapter 7 then delves into the main research objective, discussing the interviews with plot owners who have not moved to LSE. Plot owners were first divided into two main categories: those with an empty plot; and the ones that have built a house. Empty plots owners have not succeeded in building a house yet, and the results give insight in reasons why they have not done so. An important finding is that these households did not encounter NGOs that could assist them. The two most important NGOs when it comes to the total amount of houses built in LSE, were no longer active by the end of 2006. This has limited many households' options to access affordable housing. Another option that households have is to build a house themselves, through self-help housing. A new tool that was set up, was the *Building Materials Bank*, which allows households to take up credit and provide building materials to build a house themselves. However, households argue that this bank is too expensive compared to the prices of the market. Initially self-help housing was seen as the preferable method for households to build a house by the project initiators, but at the time of the research less houses were being built much due to NGOs no longer being active in LSE.

Some households have succeeded in building a house in LSE, but either did not move there or moved away from LSE again. The houses are left rented, unoccupied, or are being sold. These cases represent a different aspect, showing that even if a household has succeeded in building a house, it does not mean the end of the cycle and that the particular household will stay there permanently. Households can suffer external shocks, for instance if someone loses his or her job, becomes a single parent, or gets sick. These external shocks can affect a household's socio-economic situation, meaning that it will move away from LSE again for a shorter or longer period. This will not only affect households which have already moved to LSE, but can also affect those that are trying to build or move to LSE, leaving them incapable of doing so.

The final chapter links the research results to the theoretical framework and discuss the most important findings in practice and how these affect the general theoretical understanding. The conclusions are then presented followed by the recommendations.

Chapter 1: Socio-geographical Context

Nicaragua is located in Central America and shares its borders with Costa Rica to the South and Honduras to the North. It is ranked 110th in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2007/08), and remains a country classified as a middle to low income country. Its people and history have been shaped by processes of colonisation, political revolution and globalisation. The capital; Managua, is the dominant central administrative and commercial city with a disparate proportion of the population located in cities predominantly along the Pacific coast. For the purposes of this research, we will be focusing on the second city; León, and its urban planning initiative *Leon Southeast (LSE)*, set up to house the urban poor.

1.1: Map central America



Source: León City and Department in Nicaragua (*Municipalidad de León*)

1.1 Nicaragua

Nicaragua has a population size of almost 5.8 million people of mainly ethnic mestizo origins (mixed European and Native American heritage) and has maintained a stable population size without significant disputes over indigenous rights as has been the case in other Central American states (CIA World Factbook, July 2008). The majority of Nicaragua's population are Roman Catholic and about 20% practice Evangelical faiths. As a former Spanish colony, Nicaraguans speak Spanish and increasingly more people gain competency in English.

1.1.1 Geographical context

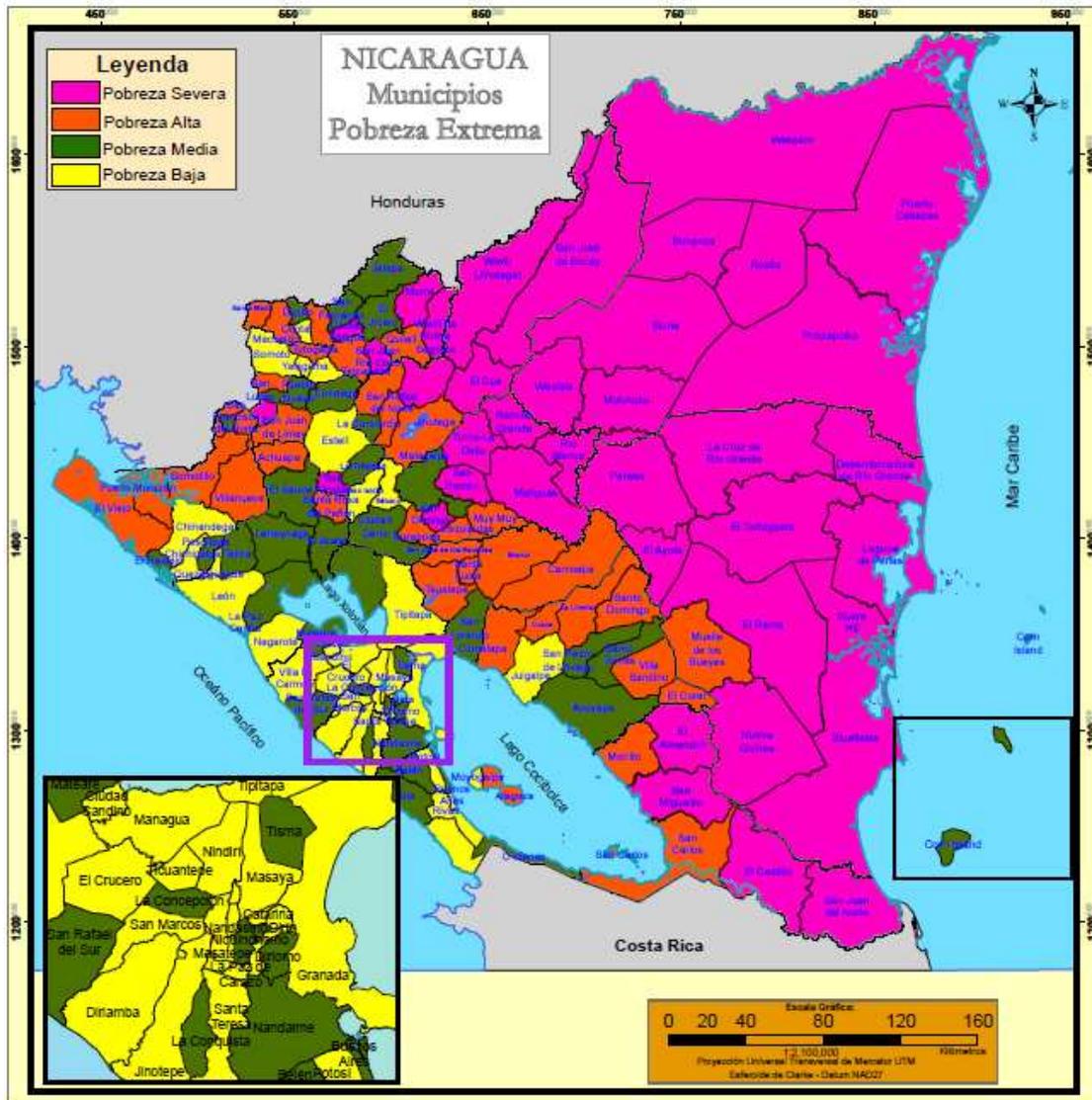
The Caribbean and Pacific waters have provided valuable maritime access and livelihood strategies along the coastal regions. Today the Pacific coast has opened up opportunities for tourism. The country is also comprised of two large lakes and a series of active volcanoes, which have also offered tourist activity potential and fertile soils for agricultural use (West and Augelli, 1989). On the other hand, its location along the destructive plate boundary of the Caribbean and Cocos plates has led the country to

becoming prone to earthquakes. This has also been a factor in urban sprawl of León, as houses cannot build above two stories (Bredenoord, 2005).

Nicaragua's infrastructure is very much concentrated along the Pacific zone with the Carretera Panamericana (Pan-American highway) and Managua-León-Chinandega road networks being the dominant access routes. This factor has seen a concentration of Nicaragua's population in these areas and many people migrating to Managua (Massey, 1987). This clustering of infrastructure and related urban development has led to 80% of the country's population residing on the Pacific side (West and Augelli, 1989, p. 433,).

This east-west divide is also visible in the poverty levels of the country. Nicaragua has quite a polarised series of poverty indicators. From the map below (Figure 1.2: Poverty level departments in Nicaragua) it can be seen that 'severe poverty' (*pobreza severa*) is concentrated in the east coast of Nicaragua while poverty levels in León are considered low (*pobreza baja*). Furthermore, a World Bank report (www.web.worldbank.com) has provided data regarding further urban-rural poverty disparities. According to the report; 70% of Nicaragua's rural population and 30% of its rural population are classified as poor. The urban-rural and regional dichotomy provide for an interesting set of social dynamics and indicators which has lead to migration within and outside Nicaragua.

Figure 1.2: Poverty level departments in Nicaragua



Source: *Institución Nacional de Información de Desarrollo* (<http://www.inide.gob.ni/>).

1.1.2 Historical overview

Nicaragua's history has been one of the most turbulent and bloody in Central America. Since becoming a republic in 1838, the inheritance of a centralised government coupled with a civil legal system has meant that statute and until the 1990s, administrative procedure was premised on the establishment of territorial control and what was to be replicated across Latin America; the slow evolution of regulatory frameworks. From 1911 to 1933, the United States affected virtual protectorate control over Nicaragua in an effort to safeguard its interests and geo-strategic planning. Following the removal of US Marines, Somoza Garcia and his son established a family dictatorship which ruled until 1979.

The gradual build up of disquiet regarding the extensive nature of corruption wrangling in Somoza's rule saw the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) form to counter and eventually overthrow the Somoza dynasty. However, in the early 1980s, extensive disquiet emerged when FSLN entered into diplomatic negotiations with Cuba. This was perceived as a threat on the part of the United States, and

under Regan's tenure, the *Contrarrevolucionarios* or Contras, were funded and given arms by the Reagan administration. This led to bloody civil conflict in the 1980s and a resultant strain on the nation's development. The popular support for FSLN continued until 1990 and reemerged later with Daniel Ortega resuming the role of president in 2007.

The turbulent history and resulting conflict has impeded the establishment of stable state and civil society institutions in Nicaragua. The underlying history and political strife has been an issue relevant in more recent Local Government elections (La Prensa, Nov. 2008).

1.1.3 Current political situation

Being one of the last countries to engage in decentralisation processes (Nijenhuis, 2006), Nicaragua represents an interesting context in which its history of civil strife and colonial legacy has created a geo-political landscape laden with opportunities but more often lacking certain means in the realisation of pro-poor governance.

Following the overthrow of the Somoza regime in 1979, the FSLN party gained parliamentary control and have been a major influence on political affairs in Nicaragua since. In 1988, Law number 40: *Ley de Municipios*, established fifteen intermediary jurisdictions with the eventual aim of deconcentrating administrative power to each jurisdiction. In 1997 a new law (Number 267) extended the competencies of each jurisdiction. However, the devolution of more responsibilities did not come with financial assistance in order to sustain and maintain the delivery of responsibilities (UNDP, 2007, 1.12-13). Because of this situation, local urban governments had to adopt limited projects aimed at targeting the urban poor. UNDP (2007, 1.14) has termed this scenario as a 'sub-utilisation' of the capacities and opportunities to combat poverty. Since the plans for decentralisation, the National Assembly has gradually allocated more funds to local governments (for example, Law No. 466 secures 10% of the national tax intake for local governments since 2010). This has also come with the gradual definition and allocation of government positions to help establish clear competencies for local governments. Different phases also incorporate programmes to tackle key issues affecting Nicaragua's poor. For example, 'Zero Hunger' (*Hambre Cero*) targets 75,000 families likely to be affected by malnourishment. The targeting process becomes manifest through local government via the national ministers for health and agriculture (UNDP, 2007, 1.36). Despite the legislative and central government strategies it has been noted that many municipalities continue to be alienated. In particular, it has been illustrated that León is lacking sufficient bonds to Central

Primary National Statistics (2008)

- 57% Urban Population of which 59% are aged 15-64.
- Mean size of urban households: 4.5 persons.
- 89% of urban population can read and write.
- 75% of homes have access to electrical light.
- 57% have toilets.
- Remittances: 15% of GDP*.
- Unemployment: 3.8%*.
- Underemployment: 46.5%*.
- Textiles form 60% of Nicaragua's exports*.
- 3.6% economic growth (2006)*.

Source: *Institución Nacional de Información de*

Desarrollo (INIDE) 2008.

* *Economic statistics: CIA World Factbook.*

Government (Bredenoord, 2005, p. 27). The legacy of centralised administrative bureaucracies assimilated through colonial institutions has also been acknowledged as an impediment to decentralised governance (Nijenhuis, 2006). Together with many other Latin American countries, a fear of a return to clientelism exists and could be exacerbated as local level representatives are invested with certain state powers (McCarney, 1996). This could occur in light of the current and the new loan scheme for small and microenterprises allocated through CPC committees¹; *UsuraCero* (Usurer Zero). From his research, Van Bochove (2008) has outlined the emerging clientelism that can come from local CPC members being vested with powers of deciding who are the recipients of government loans and who are to directly benefit from other government schemes. As well as referred to in his thesis, it also became apparent in our field observations and informal interactions, that certain disquiet existed with CPC community leaders in light of a claimed need to be politically aligned with the ruling FSLN party and resultant exclusion of community members that don't have such an affiliation.

1.2 León

According to the latest census held in 2005, the León Department had a total of 350.779 inhabitants of whom 174.051 lived in León municipality². It is an important centre in the region and offers several regional functions. There is a university, a regional hospital and it offers various other services (Bredenoord, 2005).

¹ Consejos del Poder Ciudadano or Citizens power councils. These are neighbourhood committees, set up by Ortega to give Nicaraguan civilians access to the political realm.

²The full report on the census of 2005 can be found on <http://www.inide.gob.ni/>. There are numerous sources claiming that the census and its results are not fully correct. Other sources claim that there are more than 200.000 inhabitants in León city.

Figure 1.3: León Department



Source: León City and Department in Nicaragua (*Municipalidad de León*)

1.2.1 Local Context

In 1839 the city became Nicaragua's capital. This shifted a few times between León and Granada depending on the administration in power. León was a stronghold of the more liberal party while Granada was preferred by the conservatives. After a period of civil wars in the 1840s and 1850s, fuelled by the competition between Granada and León, it ended with a compromise in 1857 when Managua was chosen as the capital of Nicaragua.

Following the Sandinista Revolution the FSLN ceased power in Nicaragua in 1979, and León municipality has been a stronghold for the FSLN party since then. Even after losing the national elections in 1990 – which saw Violetta Barrios take over presidency from Daniel Ortega – the local government of León has remained in the hands of the FSLN.

León's government did not change in the 1990s and this was considered favourable for the international cooperation between Utrecht and León on a local level. This was important because the municipalities of Utrecht and León developed the Masterplan for León, which formed the basis for the LSE project, during the first half of the 1990s. However, on the national level it was not advantageous at all as León lacked a good network in the national government (Bredenoord, 2005, p.27). FSLN got back into power in 2007, and so for the coming governmental period León does not have to struggle with a different minded national government. In November of this year new presidential elections will be held.

1.3 Conclusion

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Central-America, marked by a polarised set of poverty indicators, showing a dichotomy between the east and west coast of the country. This divide is also visible in population size and infrastructure, the west being the main transport route, connecting Nicaragua through the Pan-American highway with Honduras and Costa Rica.

Nicaragua's history is one of the bloodiest of Central America, marked by dictatorship and civil war. Between 1980 and 1990 and from 2007 (until the time of writing) it has been governed by the FSLN. The change of power in the national government in this period has had a significant influence on the opportunities of the local government in León, and León has been forced to look for other collaborators to provide support and funding for public projects.

Decentralisation processes have been set in motion, but this has not been accompanied by the financial means to address the growing responsibilities of the local governments. For León this means that the local government lacks the financial means to invest. That León has been governed by the FSLN since the 1980s has enabled the city twinning between Utrecht and León to keep up a long-term relationship, resulting in the León Masterplan and finally the LSE project.

Chapter 2: The León Southeast Project

In the 1950s the city of León only accounted for 30.000 inhabitants. By 2001 it was expected that the city would reach a population of 205.000. Most of this growth would be the effect of natural growth and migration from the rural parts to the urban centre (Bredenoord, 2005). The rapidly growing city was hardly capable of offering sufficient housing to their inhabitants. According to the municipality, the total number of dwellings in 1989 reached 23.000, averaging 6-8 residents in each house. Of these, 50% was in excellent condition, 35% was moderate condition and 15% was in a very bad condition (Bredenoord, 2005). In 1989 the municipality granted 1200 plots for the building of private houses to future residents. In 1991 another major housing plan, allotted 1750 plots to individuals to build houses. However, in 1993 the total amount of applications for a rented house or a building plot was 6000 and it was feared that with the staggering numbers of new residents and the low offer of new plots, León would be submerged by slums (Bredenoord, 2005). In the context of León it has been reported that the needs of the local population are great, particularly in relation to the provision of housing which is below that of the national average (La Prensa, Nov. 2008). This need was met by eventually developing the León Masterplan and the León Southeast project.

2.1 City-to-city cooperation

León city has a total of nine South-North municipal partnerships with different sister cities and regions in Europe and the USA (van Lindert, 2009). These partnerships are important for the city as external funding accounted for 75% of the total investment in public works (Huaer & Lindert, 1997 in van Lindert 2009).

The Utrecht link itself was initiated by Utrecht citizens in the 1980s who sympathised with the Sandinista revolution. Finally this led to municipal agreements between the two municipalities. In 1993 the Utrecht council decided to structurally allocate a budget for development cooperation with León. Since then different short-term projects have been set up and executed. Some examples are a bicycle workshop; a tree planting project which was followed up by the establishment of a tree nursery; and a house and building materials project in the 'William Fonseca' settlement. The latter project was later also model for other housing projects in León (van Lindert, 2009, p. 176). The consolidation of the Utrecht-León link and the early run projects gradually led to a focus on more structural projects leading to the development of the León Masterplan (1996) and finally to the development of the LSE project.

2.2 The León Masterplan

From 1994 to 1996 the municipalities of Utrecht and León focused on the establishment of a Masterplan for León. This was a strategic development plan which provided a long-term vision and plan for the future development of both the rural and urban areas of León. One of the most important themes was its aim at decreasing the illegal occupation of land. This illegal occupation occurred because the growing city was not capable of housing its citizens.

The Masterplan stated the need for massive urban housing and infrastructure development and included the need for economic space for development in different segments of the labour market and it was desirable that the municipality could offer land to entrepreneurs (Bredenoord, 2005). There was

also a demand for space for housing and services like primary schools, health care and community centres (Bredenoord, 2005).

After the development of the Masterplan the municipality decided on the LSE project. In order to guide the urban growth of León, the Alcaldía (municipality of León) wanted to make affordable plots available to low-income households for self-help housing with official property titles for the households (Bredenoord, 2005, p. 69). With only limited resources at the local level the possibilities for the Alcaldía were limited. Through sites and service projects they provided basic infrastructure while it was assumed that public utility companies would install drinking water and electricity³. The idea was that households would build houses themselves (self-building), supported by the financial and technical assistance of NGOs.

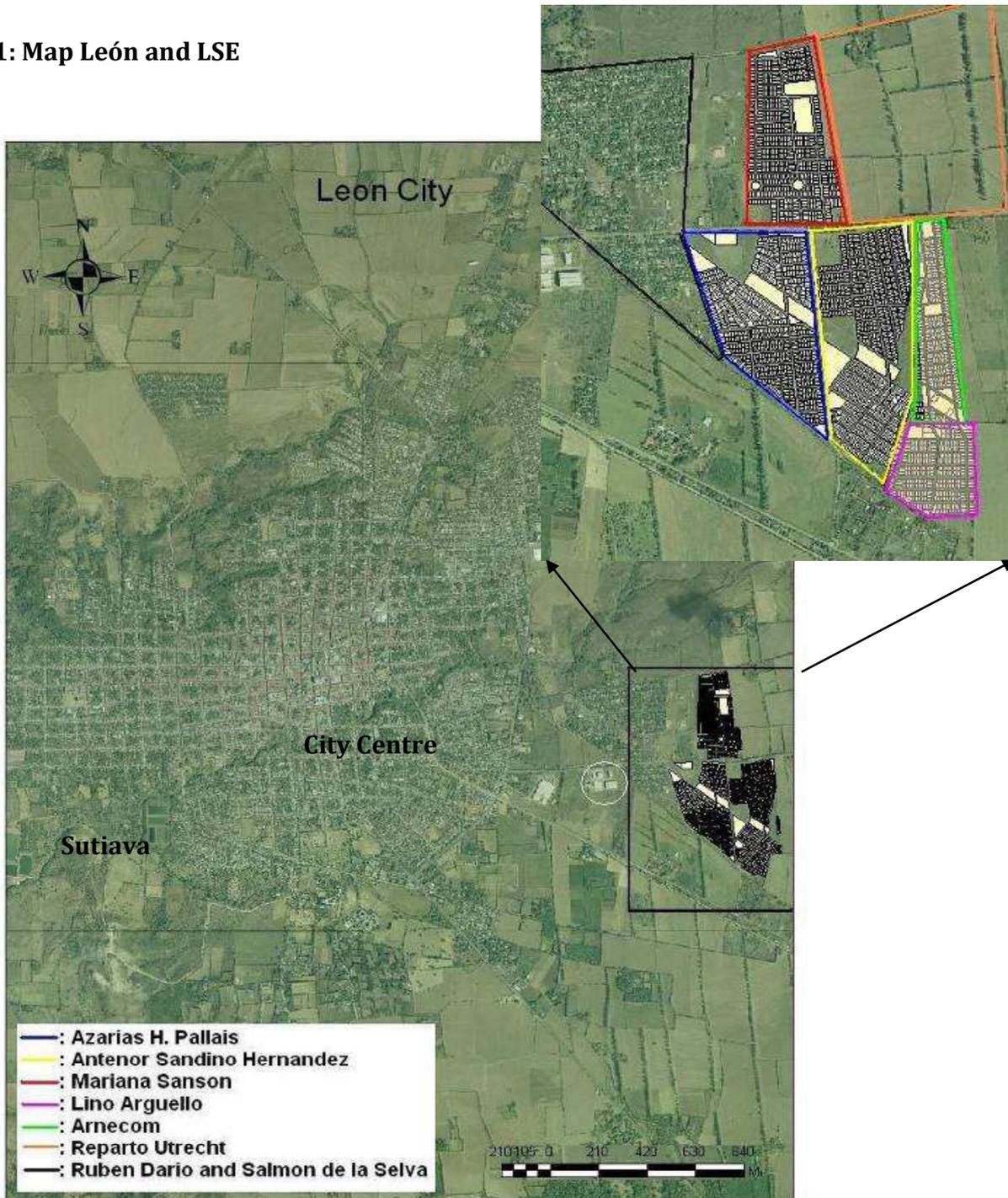
Three different expansion areas were initially presented; one southeast of the city, one north of the city and one southeast of Sutiava. To expand the city to the north or south, bridges had to be built. The land north and far east of the city was also high quality agricultural land. The proximity to the Cierro Negro volcano was another impediment for the area north of the city. Sutiava was not chosen because of the existing airstrip that lies there. Therefore, in 1996, the first option was chosen by the municipality. The older established neighbourhoods of Ruben Dario, Alfonso Cortez, and Salmon de la Selva were already present to the southeast of León. From an economic development view it was also considered an advantage that the new neighbourhoods were situated near existing infrastructure. The location was also perfectly suitable because it was close to the by-pass and close to the main road to Managua.

2.3 León Southeast

Figure 2.1 shows León and the position of LSE. The enlarged map shows LSE and its neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods of Azarias H. Pallais, Antenor Sandino, and Mariana Sanson together form *Las Poetas*. These are located next to each other and lie east of the older, more established repartos of Ruben Dario, Salmon de la Selva, and Alfonso Cortes. Alongside the repartos is the economic area Zone Franca (white circle on aerial photo) which is the factory space used by the Arnecom plant.

³ The neighbourhoods were lotified and the most important roads were paved while the rest of the road network consist of dirt roads. Drinking water and electricity was initially not installed.

2.1: Map León and LSE



The neighbourhoods of Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion are in pink and green respectively⁴. The orange area, named Reparto Utrecht, was not yet developed at the time of the research. The plots had been sold and households were repaying these. At the time of writing housing development should have started or will start soon.

⁴ In the map Maria Concepcion is called Arnecom. During the research it was mostly referred to as Arnecom. We decided to use the official name of the reparto only during writing. In the map this could not be changed anymore.

The research took place in Azarias H. Pallais, Antenor Sandino, Mariana Sanson (referred to as Las Poetas when talking about these three neighbourhoods), Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion. In total these neighbourhoods count 3050 plots. When we are referring to LSE we refer to all these neighbourhoods.

2.3.1 The plots in Las Poetas

The Alcaldía started selling plots in Las Poetas for the first time in 1999. These were sold to low-income households in need of a house who repaid the plots in monthly instalments. After repaying the plot a household receives a property title and they can start building. Repaying the plot used to take a family between two to three years (until 2005). The time for repaying has increased over the years and now it can take up to five years. Between 1999 and 2004 all the plots of Las Poetas were sold and produced, totalling 2330. At the end of 2004 about 35% of the plots had residents (Bredenoord, 2005). The municipality developed and sold two types of plots. The cheap plot (type B) which accounts for the majority of the plots, and a more expensive plot (type A) ⁵. This was done to cover the increased developing costs. By also selling more expensive plots the Alcaldía could get more revenues and use these again for the development of new plots and infrastructure. This is the so-called revolving fund principle. The more expensive plots are found in parts of Azarias H. Pallais and in the southern part of Mariana Sanson.

2.3.1 Lino Arguello and María Concepción

The neighbourhoods of María Concepción and Lino Arguello were developed after the baseline research of 2004. The households in these repartos were not selected by the Alcaldía. Arnecom⁶ bought land from the Alcaldía and developed María Concepcion for some of its employees. The houses built have been supported by the NGO Caritas.

The land on which Lino Arguello is built was bought by Fundapadele (Foundation for the Development of León), an NGO based in León. Fundapadele has also provided housing for households with plots in neighbourhoods of Las Poetas. However, the development of Lino Arguello has been in the hands of Fundapadele completely and they selected the beneficiaries of the plots themselves. Fundapadeles main focus was on beneficiaries who otherwise would not have access to a plot in LSE. These include single mothers, widows, and low-income families (even lower than the ones who can access plots sold by the Alcaldía). There are 390 plots in Lino Arguello and 330 plots in María Concepción.

2.4 Developing LSE

There are many different actors involved in the development of LSE. The municipality of Utrecht and León, and the Netherlands Association of Municipalities (VNG) invested yearly significant sums into

⁵ Between 1999 and 2005 the prices for a cheap plot increased from around US\$250 to US\$425 (Bredenoord 2005). Prices increased further to around US\$550 in 2009.

⁶ Arnecom is a Mexican/Japanese company which manufactures specialised wire components for the car industry. An Arnecom plant is situated between the centre of León and LSE.

the LSE project. The local government is a key actor as the administrator of the project and the national government provided subsidies to some of the housing NGOs which were active in LSE. These have been vital actors for households to accomplish building a house.

2.4.1 The National Government

Two important national bodies, which influenced the housing possibilities in LSE, are the *Rural and Urban Housing Institute* (INVUR⁷) and the *Social Housing Fund* (FOSOVI⁸). INVUR came into working after the approval in 2002. This was succeeded with the installation of FOSOVI which is largely funded by the *Inter American Development Bank* (AIDB) and the national government. INVUR/FOSOVI granted subsidies through municipalities and NGOs for social housing projects, also funding NGOs active in LSE, between 2002 and 2006. Especially the NGOs *Fundapadele* and *Caritas* were granted subsidies, resulting in many houses being donated by these NGOs.

However, the subsidies were stopped in 2006/2007, crippling the funding to *Fundapadele* (the main housing NGO in LSE) and *Caritas*. This development has had a great impact, limiting the possibilities to build and finance a house for poor families.

2.4.2 The Local Government

The local government of León is a key stakeholder in the development of LSE. Just like many other municipalities in developing countries, they lack adequate financial resources. The external financing needed came from the municipality of Utrecht and the VNG. This has been very important in order to initiate the LSE project.

Within the León municipality the LSE Project Office was established to execute the planning. The project office was concerned with the overall management of the LSE project and selling the plots to the families and private investors.

The Project Office is also an important organiser, bringing together the different stakeholders involved in LSE, as well as a negotiator with public utility companies. These companies, especially those of electricity and water, are important because they need to connect LSE's citizens to water and electricity.

2.4.3 NGOs

The main importance of NGOs in LSE is in the area of providing financial and technical assistance for affordable housing solutions for households with a plot in LSE. Different housing NGOs are active in LSE and the four most important ones in LSE are **Fundapadele** (Fundación para el Desarrollo de León), a locally based NGO; **Caritas**, a broad, originally catholic, international NGO; **Habitat for Humanity**, an internationally active housing NGO which also operates in León; and **Ceprodel**, a professional housing NGO.

⁷ *El Instituto de la Vivienda Urbana y Rural*

⁸ *Fondo Social para la Vivienda*

Fundapadele has been involved in the project from 2002 and has been a key housing NGO, constructing most houses now found in Las Poetas in total almost 700 houses (until 2007). Additionally it housed almost 400 low-income households in Lino Arguello. Fundapadele mainly donates houses and the households only pay for the manual labour required to build the house.

The organisation has also built community centres which double up as workshops, classrooms and training centres for people with physical impairments. Overall, Fundapadele has had a great influence on the development of LSE. In an interview conducted with the organisation's coordinator; Doña Jilma, a clear commitment and focus was aimed toward the 'poorest of the poor'. The current capacity of Fundapadele to remain involved in LSE has been significantly reduced with INVURs subsidies no longer in place. As such, Fundapadele lacks the funds to continue the housing provision.

Just as Fundapadele, **Caritas** had only limited experience in the field of housing. Also, they got subsidies from INVUR/FOSOVI, largely donating houses, charging only minimum costs to the beneficiaries. Until the end of 2007, Caritas built a total of 112 houses in Las Poetas and together with Fundapadele they provided a relatively cheap option of housing for households. Caritas also financed the houses in Maria Concepcion. Since the INVUR subsidies were no longer in place at the time of the research, the NGO was not assisting households to build in LSE at that time.

Habitat for Humanity is a professional housing NGO and its operations were mainly comprised of housing credit schemes. In total 47 houses were built with their assistance in Las Poetas (2007). At the time of the research it appeared that Habitat was not funding many individual households, but they do keep close contact with their beneficiaries. Habitat for Humanity was also involved in other housing projects like that of *Juntando Manos*.

Ceprodel is a professional NGO with previous experience in the housing sector. They also collaborated with the housing cooperative *Juntando Manos* in Mariana Sanson where 35 houses were constructed. The total amount of houses built by this NGO is much lower when compared to Fundapadele (33 houses in total in Las Poetas until 2007), but it offers a different housing approach considering self-help housing to lower the construction costs, and community building in a sustainable way (Bredenoord, 2005).

2.5 LSE in 2004

In 2004 students from Utrecht University held a baseline survey on the socio-economic situation of the households living in Las Poetas (results presented in 2005). In 2005 Bredenoord also published '*Urban development strategies in León Nicaragua*' which also presented some of the results of the baseline survey. Many analysis in this thesis refer to the socio-economic and physical situation of LSE in 2004 and how it has changed until 2009, therefore we will briefly discuss this now.

In 2004, LSE consisted of the three neighbourhoods of Las Poetas, with the majority of houses built in Azarias H. Pallais and Antenor Sandino. In total, 2262 plots had been sold and a total of 767 houses had been built (te Molder, 2005). Of these, 476 houses were occupied (62.1%), and the rest of the houses were uninhabited. It was thought that the main reason that so many houses were not occupied was because most of the houses were not connected to water and/or electricity.

2.2: Water tank in Mariana Sanson



Access to running water in Las Poetas was established at the end of 2005 with the building of a big water tank (in Mariana Sanson) financed with a subsidy from the European Union.

Providing Las Poetas with electricity proved even more difficult. The Alcaldía negotiated with *Union Fenosa* (the state-owned electricity company) to get electricity to all of LSE, however, Union Fenosa was reluctant to invest until the demand was sufficient to be cost efficient. They are also hesitant because they fear the low-income households will not pay their bills. Union Fenosa, started building an electricity network in 2003, but not all houses had access to electricity in 2005. In the meantime, families proved to be creative to get access to electricity by illegally tapping electricity (Bredenoord, 2005).

Two other reasons according to Bredenoord (2005) which were negatively affecting households to move or build a house in Las Poetas were the following:

- People did not know how to handle building a house.
- Families did not have the intention to start building immediately.

By making small loans and building materials available through a *Building Materials Bank* the Alcaldía hoped to further increase self-help housing production.

2.6 Conclusion

The North-South city-to-city cooperation between Utrecht and León has enabled the set-up of a long-term urban development plan, eventually leading to the set-up of the LSE project. The aims of the LSE housing and community development project have been thematically situated in Bredenoord's (2005) advancement for a *self-sustaining urbanisation process*. In this process many different stakeholders are active in order to provide (self-help) housing opportunities to low-income households, and the development of LSE has been in constant progress since its initiation in 1999.

The LSE project wants to provide cheap plots to low-income households and through sites-and-services the Alcaldía tries to create the right circumstances for self-help housing.

In 2005 public utilities (water and electricity) were still underdeveloped, but progressing. At the time INVUR was subsidising Fundapadele and Caritas which were able to provide many households with housing assistance and donations. With the loss of subsidies from INVUR/FOSOVI less NGOs were able to provide a cheap solution for housing to the urban poor. The installation of the Building Materials Bank was considered an important new tool to increase self-help housing production.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

The world is increasingly urbanising. In 1950 around one third of the population was living in cities, and 4 billion people inhabited the earth. 1.5 billion people were urban residents of which 0.5 billion lived in slums. In 1990, the world population had grown to 5.3 billion people, of which 715 million were slum dwellers. In 2000 the slum population in the world had increased to 912 million (world population of 6.5 billion). At the moment of writing the global urban population is larger than the urban population and the total amount of slum dwellers has passed one billion, leaving one out of every three city dwellers a slum inhabitant (UN-Habitat, 2006). If the present growth continues, it is estimated that by 2020 1.4 billion people will be living in slums. In this context pressure on cities will keep increasing, often leading to illegal settlements when there are no viable options for households to access affordable land or housing.

3.1 Urban population in Latin-America

Latin-America has the highest urban population with 77% - 433 million people – living in cities. In South-America 81.8% of the population lives in urban areas, in Central America 79.4%, and in the Caribbean 64.3% (USAID, 2010). The urban transition phase is almost completed with urbanisation rates stabilizing and slum growth rates declining in the region (UN-Habitat, 2006).

In Nicaragua one cannot yet speak of an almost completed urbanisation process. Here, in 2010, the urban population accounts for 57% of the population, which is still relatively low compared to Latin-America, with an estimated annual urbanisation rate of 2% for the period 2010-2015 (CIA World Factbook, 2010).

3.2 Housing Situation in Nicaragua

The highest levels of overcrowded houses in Latin-America are found in the region of Central America, with the highest percentage in Nicaragua, 38%. Nicaragua had more than 60 per cent slum households in the cities in 2001, and had among the highest rates of slum growth in the region between 1990 and 2001, 3.4% per year, more than twice the average slum growth rate of the rest of the region (1.3 per cent). According to UN-Habitat (2006), a “slum household” is:

‘a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following: durable housing, sufficient living area, access to improved water, access to sanitation and secure tenure.’

In Nicaragua home ownership is the highest in all of Latin America, with 84% (Stein & Vance, 2007). This, however, is not combined with high levels of secure tenure. When the Sandinistas took over power in the 1980s, they introduced land reforms in order to redistribute the land. Therefore, many families still lack registered legal titles even today. According to UN-Habitat (2006), one-third of the Nicaraguan urban population was recorded as being “owners with no deed” in 2001.

3.3 Social housing

The concept of social housing has a different meaning when used in the context of ‘developed’ countries and that of ‘developing’ countries. In the former case, it points mostly to rented houses from

the central or local government or from non-profit organisations. In the latter case, social housing refers to any form of low-income housing whose provision and the ability to pay for it, however limited, are supported by the state (Barlow and Duncan, 1994; Kennedy, 1995 in Balchin & Stewart, 2001).

With rapid urbanisation and low local and national budgets for housing, governments often struggle to provide adequate and sufficient housing opportunities, especially with regards to low-income households who often cannot afford cost and rent prices of houses.

According to Balchin & Stewart (2001) states act as providers or facilitators of low-income housing through a range of policies concerned with the provision of public rental housing, the upgrading of informal housing; the promotion of self-help housing; and supplying credit for low-cost owner occupation.

3.4 Housing policies

In the 1960s housing intervention in Central America started with the establishment of social programmes executed by national governments through different autonomous housing institutions. The housing schemes associated with these failed to reach the urban poor and were not financially sustainable, most of the institutions either disappeared or was absorbed by other institutional frameworks (Stein and Vance, 2008). From the 1970s to the 1990s, social housing saving funds were created, but these were exclusively targeting employees of the formal private and public sector, therefore excluding large sectors of society working within the informal sectors.

The 1970s saw the rise of alternative self-help approaches to housing policies aimed at low-income households. Both the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank financed sites-and-services and settlement upgrading projects. In sites-and-service projects, low-income households were given plots of land including basic infrastructure like electricity, sewerage and drinking water. However, the costs of basic services were included in the price of plots making them too expensive for the lowest income groups. The scale of these projects was also considered too small to cope with the urban housing challenge.

During the 1980s the role of the state shifted from being a provider of housing solutions to becoming an enabler of the housing market, setting the norms and regulations, and facilitate core funding. Stein and Vance (2008) offer some examples of housing solutions in different Central American countries like ABC subsidies (saving, subsidy, credit) in Costa Rica and El Salvador, and save and loan programmes in Honduras.

3.5 Secure tenure and title deeds

One of the main targets of the Millennium Development Goal is that of *'improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020'*. UN-Habitat has launched a number of papers and programmes to meet this target. An important link was that between tenure security and poverty reduction, launched in 1999 by the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure (Payne, Durand-Lasserre and Rakodi). Secure tenure is an important component in the realisation of the right to adequate housing in a rights-based approach to urban development with the aim to assist governments to promote innovative systems of land tenure and land management (UN-Habitat, 2004).

It is generally agreed that informal growth has become the most significant mode of housing, and gaining access to housing through legal channels is the exception rather than the rule for most households (UN-Habitat, 2006). Because of this, many inhabitants live with informal tenure systems, meaning that the land they occupy is either illegal, quasi-legal, tolerated or legitimised by customary or traditional laws which can be tolerated or ignored by the authorities (UN-Habitat, 2006). According to UN-Habitat (2006) non empirical evidence suggests that between 30 % and 50 % of urban residents in the developing world lack any kind of legal document to show they have tenure security.

Many occupants of dwellings in new informal settlements appear as 'owners' while they are actually tenants or owners without titles. In Latin America the Inter-American Development Bank estimated that around 60 per cent of the urban poor are home owners without titles.

3.5.1 *The role of secure tenure*

The importance of secure tenure vis-a-vis housing improvements done by illegal occupants of land is a subject which goes back to Turner (1967) who first argued that if people would not be afraid of evictions they would invest their savings and labour into their houses and community. The provision of secure tenure was considered a key development tool to accomplish this, something that neither the public nor the private sector was ready for at the time (Brown, 2006). Hernando de Soto's *The mystery of capital* (2000) has taken the debate even further, arguing the role of land titling for secure tenure in order to reduce poverty. According to de Soto (2000) there is a direct link between property ownership and economic development. He argues that though the poor have many assets, they lack property titles which could serve as a collateral for loans to invest in their houses or businesses to lift themselves out of poverty. Not only will property titles improve housing and neighbourhoods of the poor, tenure legalisation will also legitimise their assets, turning them from 'dead' capital into productive capital, which can alleviate their poverty. De Soto argues that legal title deeds accelerate the process of housing improvement; improves the functioning of the housing market; and improves poor people's access to formal finance.

There is an ongoing debate about de Soto's claims and so far there is little evidence that actually links tenure rights and poverty alleviation. One of the difficulties is to establish, from a methodological point of view, the extent to which changes in the social and economic characteristics of households affected can be attributed to titling (Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009).

3.6 *Different forms of tenure security*

Secure tenure means one is being safeguarded from violent, forced evictions. Tenure is secured through land titling programmes and title deeds. Secure tenure for households is not a dichotomy, either being legal or illegal, formal or informal. It is a relative concept and a matter of perception as well as law (Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009).

According to van Gelder (2010) there are three different forms of secure tenure namely legal tenure security; de facto tenure security; and perceived tenure security. Legal tenure security is the actual legal status of security, having a title deed which gives the holder legal security backed up by state authority. De facto security is based on the actual control of the property, regardless of the legal status in which it is held (van Gelder, 2010, p. 451). In this case, tenure security can be based on the time of

occupation or the size of a settlement. Perceived tenure security is the tenure security perceived by the households, mostly referring to the likelihood perceived by a household to be evicted from the land they live on, sometimes complemented with other factors that may cause involuntary relocation such as threats from (land) conflicts with neighbours, gangs or family members (van Gelder, 2010, p. 451).

In the case of LSE the title deed is given after repaying the loan, giving the family the legal status of owning the land. This is also considered important because the legal status should incentivise a family to invest in their house. From a theoretical perspective, the legal status obtained by getting a title deed should be equal to the perceived and the de facto security. However, the perceived and the de facto security can differ from the actual legal status. The redistribution of land by the Sandinistas in the 1980s is an example where actual legal tenure security might have been overlooked by the government, leading to the loss of land for families. In such cases the de facto security status differs from the legal one. Because tenure security in LSE is accomplished through a title deed we will focus on the presumed advantages and disadvantages according to the literature.

3.6.1 Possible advantages of land titling

Land titling programmes have a number of presumed positive outcomes: increased tenure security; promotion of active urban land and housing markets; positive impact on housing investment; increasing property value; improved access to mortgage; increase of household incomes, employment and labour mobility; a vibrant housing market; improved access to credit; empowerment of women through land ownership and increased workforce entry; and increased property tax revenue (Turner, 1967; De Soto 2000; Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009; Brown, 2006).

De Soto's book on the Mystery of capital has had a large impact on the link between land titling and economic development. The World Bank and also UN-Habitat recognise the importance of land titling as a means for upgrading informal settlements and combating illegal occupations. However, whether land titling is the only way to accomplish this and the extent to which land titling programmes influence actual economic development, is still hotly debated.

Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi (2009) discuss the impact of land titling programmes. They find little evidence suggesting that investment in land and housing and access to formal credit under land titling programmes have increased other tenure options. They do find evidence on increased tenure security, but point out that high level of tenure security also exist in many informal settlements and that land title is highly valued in those countries where the eviction threat is higher.

Brown et al. (2006) also discuss potential benefits of formal individual titles, and they claim that investment in housing depends not only on legal title, but also perceived status while there is no proof of improved access to credit. They note some increases in the value of housing and conclude that it is fundamental for the debate whether the provision of title deeds are an essential component for tenure security or a threat to communities that will ultimately lead to gentrification and further squatting.

A critic of de Soto, Gilbert (2002), argues that although there are few dangers for households with regard to official title deeds, he is worried about the rhetoric of de Soto and his advocacy of the

supposed advantages of legalisation⁹ (Gilbert, 2002, p. 22). He further argues that in many cases title deeds have not lead to healthy housing markets¹⁰, nor have they improved a household's ability to access formal finance and concludes that the danger lies in the idea that the market will provide services and infrastructure after title deeds are offered.

Another negative aspect of land titling mentioned is that it is often costly; it is rarely adapted to the great variety of land rights and tenure categories; and access to mortgage is difficult when there is no effective formal financial system (Buckley and Kalarickal in Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, p.445, 2009). UN-Habitat (2006) states the following on accessing formal finance:

'Yet many examples from around the world show that whilst titling has benefited many slum communities, and deserves a place in tenure policies, it has not necessarily increased access to credit or prevented growth of new informal settlements.'

In some cases land titling programmes actually reduce security of tenure. Sometimes increased tenure security can increase the desirability of a neighbourhood, leading to market-driven displacement of households and gentrification of attractive areas (Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009).

3.6.2 The role of tenure security in the LSE project

There is a difference, however, between the role of formalised tenure security in LSE and that often discussed in the literature. Securing tenure is often used in established informal/illegal settlements, where title deeds are used as a tool to formalise tenure, with the expected effect that this leads to improved investment in housing and communities by its inhabitants. The main difference compared to securing tenure in informal existing settlements is that in LSE title deeds are needed before a household can start building a house *and* that the houses are built in newly formed neighbourhoods, prepared by the local government through sites-and-service projects. The title deed is granted after repaying a plot after which a family can invest in a sustainable way. It is believed that families will not invest – in a sustainable way – on illegally obtained plots without legal security (Bredenoord, 2005).

3.7 Constructing houses through assisted self-help housing

Governments of developing countries can hardly provide sufficient housing opportunities in the rapidly urbanising countries, especially not housing suitable and affordable to low-income households. These governments face a twofold responsibility of improving the quality of existing slum and squatter settlements, and providing land and housing to those without shelter. Large scale public housing schemes are rare and are mostly being realised in countries that show a relatively strong economic growth (Bredenoord and van Lindert (2010). The LSE project belongs to the latter, providing (new) land to households in need of a house.

⁹ These supposed advantages referred to here is the claim that title deeds alone will generate economic development for those involved: legal title deeds accelerate the process of housing improvement, improves the functioning of the housing market, and improves poor people's access to formal finance.

¹⁰ One reason for this is that these settlements are mostly found in undesired areas.

The actual construction of houses in LSE is a matter of private initiatives and the project philosophy has been to create the conditions that will enable households to build their houses through assisted self-help housing. Self-help housing means that households receive technical, organisational and financial assistance from local governments, NGOs, and Building Material Banks, in order to be able to build a house. Self-help housing also encompasses the gradual building of a house over a couple of years or improving a house bit by bit, adding new rooms and buildings. The way these homes are built depend primarily on environmental, cultural, technical and socio-economic factors (Bredenoord and van Lindert, 2010). Self-help housing is a means to overcome the large deficit of affordable houses for the urban poor. UN-Habitat (2005, p.166) states the following:

'Assisted self-help housing is the most affordable and intelligent way of providing sustainable shelter. It is cheap because it is based on minimum standards and incorporates a substantive amount of sweat equity. It is useful because individuals and communities engaged in it acquire precious skills. It is practical because it responds to people's actual need and levels of affordability. It is flexible because dwelling units are often designed to be able to expand over time. But all construction, and particularly incremental upgrading, requires a suitable supply of building materials, components and fittings.'

Assisted self-help housing includes both a public and a private element. The public element is the assistance in the provision of public services and infrastructure which is an important role of the (local) government. The private element is that of home ownership.

There are two forms of assistance for self-help housing – 'basic' assistance and 'additional' assistance. Basic assistance concerns the plot, the house and the neighbourhood:

- A plot in an adequate urban land development, at affordable price and pay-off conditions.
- A legal land title.
- An access road and main infrastructure, including drinking water, electricity and a sewage solution.

Plate 3.1: Building Materials Bank

These three components of self-help assistance are present in the development of LSE. Provision of an affordable plot and the legal title are important components of the housing scheme and necessary to obtain before building. The legal land title should incentivise households to actually invest in their new homes. Basic infrastructure is also provided to some extent, though electricity and connection to running water was not accomplished initially.

Additional assistance concerning the construction of the house are the following:

- Technical assistance such as advice and a building permit.
- The provision of good quality building materials.
- The promotion of micro-finance solutions.

Building Materials Bank

To further assist households in building a house a Building Materials Bank (Banco de Materiales, BdM) was set up in 2006. Households can buy the necessary equipment and materials to build a house. They can use the bank to improve a house, for instance building another room or build a new house. The building materials bank grants long term loans and assists with technical advice.

- The support of housing cooperatives.

(Bredenoord and van Lindert, 2010, p. 285)

Also additional assistance is present to households in LSE. A building materials bank has been installed which, besides giving technical assistance, is also capable of giving loans to households. Housing NGOs are at the core of the actual building process and in the last years housing cooperatives and micro-finance institutions have also been active in LSE.

3.8 Conclusions

In the context of an ever urbanising world, combating illegal land occupation and slum development is of growing importance. Though urbanisation rates are stabilizing and slum growth rates declining in Latin-America overall, Nicaragua has a relatively low but fast growing urban population. Nicaragua also has the highest percentage of overcrowded houses and slum households in Latin-America.

A wide range of housing policies have been developed since the 1960s, but none really benefited the lowest-income-households. Improved tenure security and self-help housing are now important tools which are considered to improve the housing provision of poor by the poor.

Already in 1967 (Turner) pointed to the importance of secure tenure as an important development tool for people to be investing their savings and labour into their housing and community. Secure tenure has become one of the most important tools to combat illegal occupation and slum development, not only to improve illegal settlements, but also as a tool to decrease poverty levels.

Land titling programmes are now one of the main tools used to secure tenure. However, many argue that secure tenure is not only a matter of legal title, but also of de facto and perceived security. These three forms of tenure security determine people's tenure security and therefore their investment into housing and community. It is still debated to what extent secure tenure actually influences possible advantages like improved housing markets; positive impact on housing investment; increasing property value; increase of household incomes, employment and labour mobility.

Within the LSE project title deeds are given to households after they have repaid their loans, making it possible to start constructing a house. Secure tenure (through title deeds) should lead households to invest in their houses in a sustainable way. The philosophy of the project has been to create the conditions that will enable households to build their houses through assisted self-help housing which is believed to have the ability to overcome the large deficit of affordable houses for the urban poor.

The LSE project provides affordable plots through sites-and-services, and tenure security through official title deeds. Assisted self-help housing is possible through the involvement of housing NGOs and Building Materials Bank which can provide technical and financial support and access to (cheap) housing.

Chapter 4: The research model, questions and research methodology

The conceptual model and research questions are central to the research. The conceptual model acts as a frame to simplify and understand the main variables of the research and how these affect each other, leading to the research questions. These will be discussed in detail followed by the methodology. The methodology explains which interview techniques were used during the research and how the quality of the research is safeguarded.

Households with a title deed not living in LSE:

- Empty plot
- Uninhabited house
- Rent their house
- Partly constructed
- Damaged house

Opportunities/challenges to build a house and move to LSE:

Shocks: Changes in socio-economic status households:

Households living in LSE:

The conceptual model depicts the 'road' a household travels to construct a house and live in LSE. The box at the top, *Households with a title deed not living in LSE*, represent households with a title deed living outside LSE. After the acquisition of a plot and repaying the loan, the property title is given to the family and they can start constructing a house on the plot. Within the household survey more than 90% of the families living in LSE had the property title. The households represented in this box can own an empty plot still looking for a housing opportunity for the first time, have a house built which is either uninhabited or rented to someone else, or are in the process of building a house. These households are the ones that are interviewed regarding reasons why they have not moved to LSE.

The next box, *Opportunities/challenges building a house and move to LSE*, represents households' opportunities and challenges to build and move to LSE. Again, this box represents households at different phases – households which need to start building and others re-evaluating to move (back) to LSE because they have already built a house there. The arrows in between the boxes represent the ongoing process of negotiation between individual households and opportunities and challenges to move to LSE. Possible opportunities and threats to build a house are the availability or lack of NGOs and self-build opportunities. These are shaped by the socio-economic situation of a household that is vulnerable to shocks (next box). Other possible opportunities and challenges to move to LSE can be distance; security; speculation; available public services; and community. These are just some factors which could affect a household's desire to move to or build in LSE. The arrow from this box to *Households living in LSE* is when a household succeeds in building a house and actually move to LSE.

The box *Shocks: changes in socio-economic status of the household*, represents the vulnerability of households. Possible shocks are becoming unemployed, divorced, or sickness of a family member. These shocks have a negative effect on the possibilities of households to build a house and move to LSE. The circular arrows between opportunities and shocks emphasize an ongoing negotiation leaving a household incapable to build a house.

The final box is *Households living in LSE*. These households have succeeded in building a house in LSE after they got assistance from an NGO or built one themselves. The circular arrows show the ongoing negotiation between living in LSE and the possible shocks to a household. A possible outcome is that a household is no longer able to maintain living in LSE, moving back to where they were living before moving to LSE. This is represented by the arrow leading back to the box *Households with a title deed living outside LSE*. These houses are then left uninhabited, rented, or looked after.

In this way the conceptual model includes both research populations: the questionnaire held in LSE under its inhabitants and the in-depth interviews held with those owners of plots *not* living in LSE. It also shows the ongoing mobility of moving to LSE and leaving it again, in an ongoing process negotiated between households' opportunities to build and move to LSE, the (vulnerable) socio-economic status of households and their capacity to keep living in LSE.

4.1 Operationalisation

The household is the main unit of analysis for this research project and is not a clear concept. According to the UN the concept of household is:

“Based on the arrangements made by persons, individually or in groups, for providing themselves with food or other essentials for living. A household may be either; a) a one-person household, that is to say, a person who makes provision for his or her food or other essentials for living without combining with any other person to form part of a multi-person household; or b) a multi-person household, that is to say, a group of two or more persons living together who make common provision for food or other essentials for living.”

In the case of LSE a household is by no means a clear house and predefined family structure, but a unit of varied sizes, ages, gender compositions and comprised of various quantities and forms of capital. In the pilot tests conducted in the surveys it became clear that LSE households vary in structure. In some cases seasonal employees and remittance senders may return for periods at a time. In that way households are always changing in composition. The level of analysing households in the follow-up survey is on neighbourhood level. The neighbourhoods are defined by proximity and are organised along road networks and streets within each zone.

Households with a title deed living outside LSE: A title deed is provided by the Alcaldía., and this document states the plot is owned by a specific person. The households interviewed do not live within the parameters of LSE concurring with those presented in chapter 2.

Opportunities and challenges: These consist of opportunities and challenges created by external stakeholders and represent a multitude of variables, ranging from possible negative aspects of the intended neighbourhood a household is moving to (as perceived by the household), to the lack of opportunities offered by external organisations like NGOs or the Alcaldía. These opportunities and challenges differ from the socio-economic status of a household, but can be affected by it.

Shocks to the socio-economic status of a household: The social and economic status of a household derives from the survey. Among others, these include household composition, marital status, job and income security, and the income and income sources (remittances, income through formal and informal employment). All these variables together form the socio-economic situation of a household and largely influence the possibilities households have to build a house, move to LSE and keep living there. Shocks to the socio-economic status can influence households in all phases to move to LSE.

4.2 Research Objective

The overall research objective is to show the current socio-economic status of households living in LSE and to develop a better understanding of the heterogeneous factors impeding households to build a house and finally move to LSE. A better understanding of these factors creates greater understanding of problems faced by households to move to LSE and the effect this has on its overall development.

4.3 Research Questions

The research done in León included two different populations, one living in LSE and one living outside LSE, and includes three different research techniques. Firstly, a questionnaire was held in LSE on the socio-economic situation of the households living there. Secondly, general observations were done in LSE to determine empty plots and uninhabited houses, and finally in depth interviews were conducted with plot owners not living in LSE. The results gathered are presented in three result chapters, each addressing the most important findings. The research questions used in these chapters are presented below.

4.3.1 Socio-economic status of households in LSE

Households in LSE need to be sustainable in order for them to live there on a long-term basis. Marital status and income security are important indicators of how sustainable households are. The socio-economic trends in Las Poetas will give information about their sustainability.

How has the socio-economic status of the households living in Las Poetas changed in the period 2005-2009?

By comparing the socio-economic situation of the households of Las Poetas to Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion it is possible to show how the selection of households influences the socio-economic situation and possibly the development of the particular neighbourhoods.

How do households living in the repartos of Maria Concepcion, Lino Arguello and Las Poetas differ in their socio-economic situation?

4.3.2 Physical development of LSE

The involvement of NGOs have had an important impact on the physical development of Las Poetas, however, there are still numerous empty plots.

How important has the role of NGOs been in the physical development process in Las Poetas until 2009?

Has the role of NGOs in the housing process changed?

4.3.3 Households that have not moved to Las Poetas

The final result chapter explores the main research question; *why households that own a plot do not move to LSE.*

One group of households has not built a house on their plot so far.

Why do households not build a house in Las Poetas?

The other group of households have already built a house there, however, they have still not moved to Las Poetas.

Why have households which succeeded in building a house in Las Poetas not moved there?

Instead, these owners either leave their house uninhabited, have someone look after the house or rent it.

Which factors make owners choose to leave their house uninhabited, rented or looked after?

A final comparison is between owners of the cheaper plots and the more expensive ones.

Are there different reasons or impediments to not move to Las Poetas between owners of plots type A and B?

The combined results of the research draw an overall image of the development and status of the socio-economic situation of households living in LSE and the physical development of LSE since its

initiation. Adding the final focus of problems for households to move to LSE give way to analysing its development.

What is the impact of the lack of households moving to LSE for its overall development?

4.4 Ethical considerations

An important aspect of conducting research in a developing country are the ethical considerations which form the basis of doing research. Desai & Potter (2006) discuss some important principles to take into account when doing research.

One is the notion of voluntary participation which is respected through 'informed consent'. This revolves around the idea that a research participant is fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in the research in order for the participant to make a conscious decision whether or not to participate in the research. We tried to achieve this at all times during the research by being open and clear about our research objectives.

Another important ethical consideration is the 'no harm' principle. This means a research participant should not be put in danger, being it physical or psychological, because of participating in the research. This is respected through participant confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality means personal data will not be shared with third parties. Names of people in the questionnaire and surveys are therefore not written down. Anonymity is even stricter, leaving participants anonymous throughout the study. A lot of information has been collected during the research, and this information is handled with as much care as possible. We do acknowledged that it is impossible to guarantee 100% anonymity because we have shared our results with the local Alcaldía. The importance of confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents was therefore communicated towards the LSE project office in handling the information given with care.

León Municipality has many friendship connections and city-to-city cooperations. This has lead to a great amount of research being done in LSE in recent years, by some referred to as LSE turning into a research zoo¹¹. When people in LSE are interviewed regularly by different researchers, it might create an expectation of the improvement in their situation based on the information given to the researchers. The research being done in LSE may therefore distort the relationship between LSE's inhabitants and the Alcaldía as the Alcaldía will be held responsible for the lack of action to improve basic services.

4.5 Limitations of the research

The amount of research and different research techniques, as well as covering two different research populations in less than four months was a challenging task. Working with a team of Nicaraguans to conduct the follow-up survey, interviewing households in León, interviewing NGO employees and a focus group with community leaders in LSE are examples of the wide array of research methods we

¹¹ During the five months my co-worker and I did our research in LSE we learned of many different studies being done there and we would often run into other researchers conducting their research in LSE.

used. All of which require time, a different set of skills, and are set in an environment with different cultural values than ours.

4.5.1 Time

Time was the main variable affecting the research. The design of the successive stages of research (follow-up survey, general observations and in-depth interviews) were tightly planned in order to complete the research on time. Already four weeks had passed before we were ready to initiate the questionnaire in LSE. We needed time to address some changes to the questionnaire of 2004 and time to test it. After this it took a few weeks to sign the contract with the Nicaraguan research team before we could actually start. In the meantime we visited the research area and familiarised ourselves with the surroundings both in LSE and León city. We also contacted some of the housing NGOs in this phase, introducing ourselves and the research we were about to do. This proved beneficial later when we returned to some of the NGOs to conduct interviews.

The follow-up survey was an important part of our research. This was requested by the municipality of Utrecht and Utrecht University, and took a significant part of the time we had. After completing these and the observations, there was about a month left to conduct the interviews which was also planned. Doing the interviews was a time consuming process. We visited more than 80 houses and conducted twenty one interviews. Unfortunately we were not able to interview anyone selling their house in Las Poetas in the end, however, taken the time we had for conducting all the research into account we are satisfied with the work done.

4.5.2 Language and interview skills

All the research was done in Spanish. For some parts of the research this was harder than for others. The questionnaires were not really affected by this because of the rigid, preset questions and answers. That we started off with these was also an advantage. Working together at first with a Nicaraguan co-worker enabled us to get used to the 'Nicaraguan' Spanish and get comfortable with the questionnaire.

Interviewing requires a combination of knowledge, language and basic interview skills. Through the survey and observations we had been doing in LSE, we gained a lot of knowledge about the different processes which shaped LSE. This knowledge was used to set up the semi-structured interview. The possibility of misunderstanding someone is always present, but most of the interviews were recorded, enabling us to check the interview at a later time. Sometimes you are not capable of responding in such a way as one would in his or her own language. Interviewing went easier with every new interview held.

4.6 Research Methodology

The research design gave way to an integrated methodology using complementary research methods. This design enables the researcher to consolidate strengths, cross-check and triangulate information (Mayoux. L in Desai & Potter, 2008). A wide array of research methods were used – qualitative, quantitative, and participatory. Besides formal research methods, informal interviews and conversations were held with inhabitants in LSE and other people who somehow had a connection with the LSE project or other housing projects.

4.6.1 The follow-up survey

The first part of the research consisted of a follow-up survey on the socio-economic situation of the households in LSE. The baseline survey was done in 2004 by students from Utrecht University and formed the basis of the 2009 questionnaire. In order to compare both questionnaires it was necessary to keep changes to a minimum. Changes were made accordingly and the questionnaire was piloted before starting the actual research¹².

We decided to include all of LSE's neighbourhoods in the follow-up research despite the fact that the Alcaldía of León was not involved with selecting the households in Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion. These neighbourhoods were developed after the questionnaire of 2004, but are now part of LSE. During the initial field visits we noted differences in the quality of houses, access to electricity (legal or illegal) and empty plots between the neighbourhoods of Las Poetas, Lino Arguello and Mariana Concepcion. We included the new neighbourhoods to investigate the socio-economic status of households in all of LSE and to keep the opportunity open for further research.

Though there are differences at a household level between the neighbourhoods of Las Poetas, the socio-economic comparison will be presented for Las Poetas as a whole. This allows us to analyse the socio-economic trends of households in Las Poetas between 2004 and 2009 and to compare the households of Las Poetas to the ones living in Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion.

We set up to conduct 600 questionnaires managing a total of 375 questionnaires¹³. Almost a quarter of the total research population is considered non-respondent. We considered drawing another sample and conducting more interviews. This would prove difficult to manage given the time frame and it would require the extension of the contract. More important, however, was that the sample drawn was representative, a new sample would by probability leave the same shortfall. We therefore decided not to conduct more interviews and acknowledge the validity of the questionnaires done. The non-response rate is not a sign of unwillingness to cooperate with the researcher, but rather a research outcome showing the amount of houses not occupied during the day in LSE. Combined, the unoccupied and uninhabited houses constitute more than a third of all the houses in LSE. We also acknowledge a slight bias in the results considering that the households which we did not manage to interview are more often those that are working outside León or abroad and are therefore harder to reach.

We also acknowledge that the results do not represent households working outside León or abroad to the same extent as households working in or closer to León, as they were harder to reach.

4.6.2 General Observations

The second part of the research consisted of 'general observations'. These were conducted in order to map the plot status of LSE. This was done to update the map of empty plots in LSE for the Alcaldía and to determine possible respondents for the in-depth interviews. We categorised the plots into the following five categories and mapped them accordingly with a small research team:

¹² The questionnaires of 2004 and 2009 can be found in Appendix I and II respectively.

¹³ See appendix IVa for the details of the sampling technique and the field visits.

- empty plots
- uninhabited houses
- houses for rent
- houses for sale
- plots for sale

4.2: Preparing for observations in Las Poetas



The general observations were conducted by going into the field and counting plots and houses, however, there were some difficulties in establishing if a house was inhabited or not¹⁴.

4.6.3 In-depth interviews

The final stage of the research consisted of in-depth interviews with owners of plots in Las Poetas who were still living in León city¹⁵. We decided to hold the interviews with owners of plots in Las Poetas because this information was more important to the Alcaldía of León and to Utrecht.

The in-depth interviews were held to get insight into reasons for not moving to Las Poetas. We had divided the different plot statuses into the five categories just listed and wanted to conduct interviews with owners of all the different plots.

Different plot statuses assumed different reasons for households to not move and these were necessary to explore. Therefore the interview was semi-structured, meaning that it consisted of a set of fixed questions which were asked to all interviewees, but leaving enough room for different questions depending on the case. The interview is in Appendix III.

4.6.4 Other research methods

Beside the survey and the in-depth interviews a wide array of interviews with different stakeholders in LSE were conducted. The formal interviews all had a semi-structured approach. These included interviews with the NGO's of Fundapadele, Ceprodel and Habitat for Humanity. Furthermore there were formal interviews with Enrique Lopez, who lead the LSE Project until 20010, and the former director of Habitat for Humanity. Also a focus group discussion was held with the community leaders of the different repartos in LSE. Besides these, many informal interviews were conducted with different persons (formerly)connected to LSE or working on other social housing projects.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter intended to provide guidance and an conceptual framework which reflects a households mobility in order to try and move to LSE, showing that this is an ongoing process, continually under pressure from external shocks and internal changes of a households socio-economic situation. The research questions aimed to give way to analyse the opportunities and challenges faced by households

¹⁴ See Appendix IV c for detailed information on the sample technique and the interviews.

¹⁵ For the scope of the research interviews were only held with plot owners living in León City. However, people owning plots can be living in the whole of León Department.

to move to and remain in LSE. The overall research objective is to get a better understanding of the multitude of factors influencing household decisions and challenges to build a house and move to LSE. Both households living in LSE as those still needing to move are part of the research. The methodology and different research techniques used, are complementary, and each is chosen based on its strengths for the particular research.

Chapter 5: Socio-economic status of LSE's households

In 2009 the LSE programme had been running for almost ten years. The Alcaldía sold 3050 plots in LSE and on 2200 of these houses were built. Within the framework of the urban development strategies of LSE the Alcaldía created actual possibilities in the housing sector by providing sites and services for self-help housing. NGOs were seen as a vital partner in this process, providing financial, technical, and social support for households. Sustainability can be achieved by community participation throughout the whole process while economic space has been made available in order to create economic possibilities for households in LSE (Bredenoord, 2005).

Results presented in this chapter are from the baseline survey, done in 2004, and from the follow up survey in 2009. The results give an overview of the socio-economic development of households living in Las Poetas from 2004 to 2009. This leads to the following research question:

How has the socio-economic status of the households living in Las Poetas changed in the period 2005-2009?

The research also includes the socio-economic status of the two new repartos built after the baseline research of 2004 – María Concepción and Lino Arguello. These two neighbourhoods will be compared to Las Poetas to show whether or not there are differences between the socio-economic situation of the different neighbourhoods due to the different selection criteria. The following research question was drawn up:

Do the households living in the repartos of Maria Concepcion, Lino Arguello and Las Poetas have a different socio-economic situation?

This last research questions helps us to distinguish different households types in the different repartos. This will be of importance once we discuss reasons for households to not move to LSE in chapter 7.

5.1 The population of LSE

In Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 the two population pyramids of LSE in 2004 and 2009 respectively are shown. The population pyramids are typically those of a developing country, with a broad base of youth, pointing at high birth rates, but with short life expectancy, shown by the small top of the pyramid. Because LSE was a particular new area the population pyramids were more shaped by the migration of families into LSE than by natural population growth. Overall 51.2% of the inhabitants were women and the remaining 48.8 were men. This has not changed between 2004 and 2009. The average age has slightly increased from 21.7 in 2004 to 22.8 years in 2009. Furthermore, in 2009 50% of the population was younger than 20 years old which also increased by one year when compared to 2004.

Figure 5.1: Population pyramid LSE, 2004

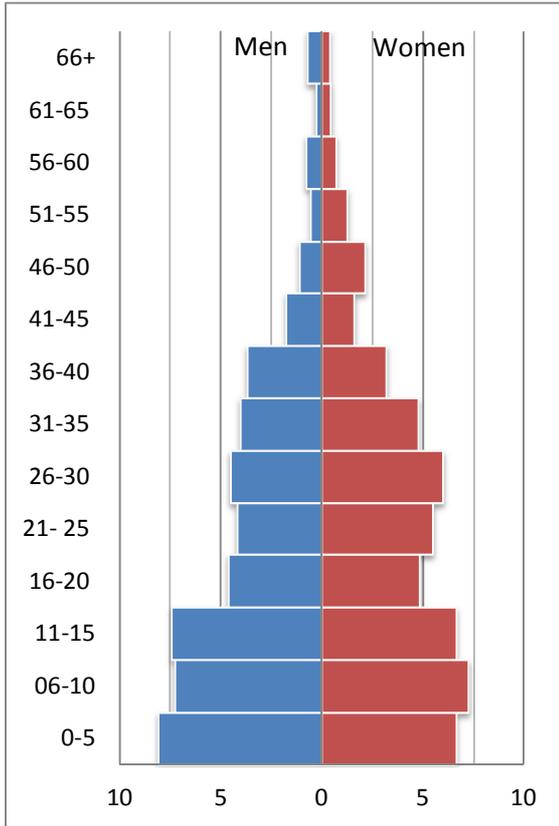
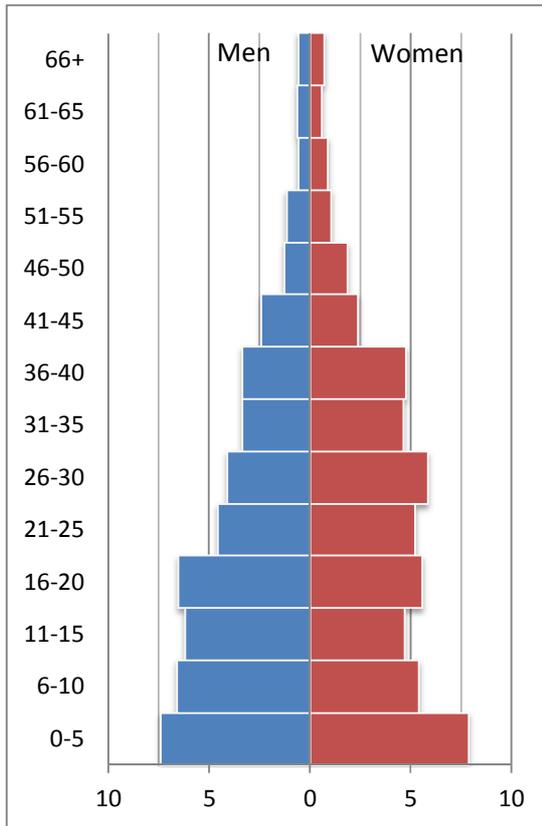


Figure 5.2: Population pyramid LSE, 2009



A polarisation is noticeable between men and women in the different age groups which accounts for both 2004 and 2009. In the age category between 0 and 15 years old in 2004, there were more men than women in LSE. In 2009 this has slightly changed as women now account for a higher percentage between 0 and 5 years old. This could be influenced by natural population growth. The two remaining categories still see more men than women however. Why this difference was so clear in 2004 especially is unclear.

On the other hand, generally speaking there were more women present in the age categories from 21 and up. In 2004 there were some age categories which contained more men but in 2009 there were more women present in almost all categories. This is mainly because many of the families moving into LSE were headed by single mothers. We will look at that now.

In Table 5.1 the civil status of the heads of households in LSE is shown. The three biggest categories are presented here. Almost one out of five households in Las Poetas were headed by a single mother. They are seen as one of the most vulnerable groups as they don't have any partner. That means they lack direct support in raising children and securing an income.

The remainder of the respondents in Las Poetas consist of divorced persons, singles (without children) and widows. These account for 4.2%, 1.7% and 2.9% respectively. Compared to 2004 we note little changes. The amount of married couples has declined while those partnered increased.

Table 5.1: Civil status head of households in LSE in 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Married	37.2	32.2	62.9	35.1
Partnered	36.7	40.2	22.6	48.6
Single mothers	19.6	20.5	11.3	10.8
Number of respondents	409	239	63	74

Table 5.1 also shows the civil status of head of households in María Concepción and Lino Arguello. In María Concepción married couples formed by far the biggest group. Partnered households consist of unmarried couples who are living together. These, and single mothers, form smaller groups when compared to the households of Las Poetas. That only few households were headed by single mothers and that the rate of married couples is much higher here than in the other repartos is a indication of a stronger social position of the households.

Lino Arguello shows a different pattern. About the same percentage as in Las Poetas were married. However, almost half of the heads of households were partnered which accounted for the highest percentage of the repartos. Single mothers were half that of Las Poetas. Fundapadele targeted vulnerable groups for housing in Lino Arguello. Single mothers were part of this group because for them it was harder to get access to plots and housing. The fact that so many people were partnered compared to the other repartos was an interesting point put forward during an interview with the director of Fundapadele. In this interview the director of Fundapadele commented on the fact that many of the single mothers got a partner after they moved into their new house. This trend however does not show in the development of the head of households in Las Poetas where the percentage of single mother increased. It will be interesting to see whether this development of fewer single mothers will be the case in future research in Lino Arguello.

On a social scale this seems as a first clear difference between Maria Concepción and conversely Las Poetas and Lino Arguello. With fewer households headed by single mothers and twice as many people married it seems that these households are more stable. Firstly, these households have more income generating capabilities. Both partners can earn an income instead of just one. Also, when there are (small) children, this gives the possibility for one persons to look after the children while the other person works.

5.2 Activities of LSE's inhabitants

To create an overview of the activities of the inhabitants of LSE they were grouped into two categories namely the economically inactive population (Table 5.2) and the economically active population (Table 5.3). These two categories follow those used in Nicaragua's census of 2005 (Instituto Nacional de Información para el Desarrollo, 2005). The economically inactive population consists of students, domestic chores and a 'other' category. Domestic chores consist of housewives. The 'other' category includes pensioners and persons from 14 years and older not looking for a job nor studying. Someone was considered a student when going to school anywhere from primary school to university. Going to

primary school is mandatory by law from the age of six and takes six years to complete (National law and policies on minimum ages – Nicaragua). Therefore the sample includes respondents aged 6 and older.

The economically active part of the population consists of persons from 14 years and older who were either employed or looking for a job. Nicaragua ratified the ILO Convention No. 138. This means that the minimum age of admission to employment in Nicaragua is from 14 years and older in which case when the parents have to be present when signing a contract (National law and policies on minimum ages – Nicaragua). Therefore the minimum age that a person can be economically active has been set at 14 years. In the sample only five cases were found of children of 15 year who were considered unemployed. In all other cases children in this age category were going to school.

Table 5.2 shows LSEs economically inactive population. In Las Poetas there have not been significant changes over the period 2004-2009. Students consisted of a slightly smaller percentage of the population. This corresponds with the population pyramids (Figure 5.1: Population pyramid LSE, 2004 Figure 5.2: Population pyramid LSE, 2009) which show a slightly older population in 2009 and a decline of children in the age group between 6 and 15 years. This group consists of children that are obliged to go to school.

Table 5.2: Economically inactive population LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Studying	66.8	64.2	65.3	73.5
Housewives	25.1	29.3	24	18.4
Other	8.2	6.6	10.7	8.2
Number of respondents	870	441	75	147

The other two repartos both have lower percentages of domestic chores than is the case in Las Poetas with those in Lino Arguello being the lowest. Also more persons were studying in Lino Arguello than in the two other neighbourhoods of LSE.

Table 5.3 shows the economically active population of LSE. In Las Poetas there was a rise in unemployment between 2004 and 2009 with 15.5%. The unemployment figures were lower in the two other neighbourhoods of LSE. For María Concepción it was 12.6% and for Lino Arguello 10.1%. These figures might seem somewhat contradictory to the assumptions made earlier in this chapter. The households of Lino Arguello actually had the lowest unemployment rate and note the highest percentage of persons studying. Though this could prove the assumption wrong that these households had a weaker socio-economic status, more variables have to be taken into account when deciding this. In paragraph 5.3 the employment and economic activities of the inhabitants will be discussed in further detail which should give a better understanding of the situation.

Table 5.3: Economically active population of LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Employed	86.5	84.7	87.4	89.9
Unemployed	13.5	15.5	12.6	10.1
Number of respondents	688	511	103	148

5.2.1 Work places of LSE inhabitants

Table 5.4 shows the working place of the inhabitants of LSE in 2004 and 2009. The sample includes those respondents who were engaged in an economic activity¹⁶. Over the period 2004-2009 no major changes have occurred in the neighbourhoods of Las Poetas. Most notable was the increased share of persons working in Zona Franca and of the people working abroad.

Table 5.4: Working place inhabitants LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
LSE	21.8	18.5	12.2	20.3
Zona Franca	3.7	6.9	42.2	9.8
León city	63.5	63.5	35.6	60.9
Outside León	9.5	8.1	10	6.8
Other country	0.5	2.5	-	2.3
Number of respondents	595	433	90	133

¹⁶ This concurs with the employed population presented in Table 5.3

The number of people working in the 'zona franca' has almost doubled. More people within Las Poetas rely on a job in the Zona Franca compared to 2004, indicating the growing importance of the plant of Arnecom for the inhabitants of Las Poetas. Also for the other two repartos of LSE, Arnecom was an important employer. The neighbourhood of Maria Concepcion was built for employees of Arnecom and it is shown that many people were still working there. In Lino Arguello the share of persons working in the Zona Franca was also higher than in Las Poetas.

It was found that more people in Las Poetas were working abroad in 2009. As a percentage of the whole economically active population this is rather low but compared to 2004 this has grown in importance to households. This figure was about the same for Lino Arguello. Working abroad is an income earning strategy by sending back remittances which are earned abroad back to the household. Households which have a member working abroad increase their income by receiving remittances from that family member. The increase of persons working abroad shows that more households were using this strategy to increase their income. Most members of the households were working in the neighbouring country Costa Rica. Also household members were working in the United States and Guatemala. That none of the residents of Maria Concepción were working abroad was an indication of the financial status of households. Apparently these households did not need remittances to increase their income. Paragraph 5.4 will discuss the income and remittances of households in more detail and will give further clarification to this.

Less inhabitants of Las Poetas were economically active in LSE in 2009 compared to 2004. These activities consist mainly of 'pulperías' but also internet cafes and workshops for bicycles, woodwork or metal treatment. These economic activities within LSE have decreased. Part of the explanation might be that there is little activity during the day which makes business in LSE harder. Most people work in León city. This workforce consists mostly of street vendors and market sellers. Fewer people of María Concepción work in León city compared to the other repartos. The fact that many people work in Zona Franca influences this.

Finally there were those people working outside León. This category consists of those persons working outside the municipality of Leon in cities like Chinandega or even farther away in Managua, the capital. Those who work as far as Managua often only come back to LSE at the weekends. The share of people working outside León has declined. Of the people who work outside León are leaving early in the morning and only return late in the evening.

5.3 Employment and economic activity

There are two economic sectors that can be distinguished. The formal and the informal sector. During the research however this division was not strictly upheld from the researchers perspective. This means that it was not the researchers decision whether the work was formal or not, but that it was decided by the respondent whether he or she worked in the formal or informal sector. This paragraph does not deal solely with the formal and informal character of the economic activity. It presents a wider array of results that are all closely linked and form the basis for income generation of the households of LSE. These also include results on the duration and type of the economic activity and on the type of income which was earned. The combination of these results draw an overall picture of the

economic activities and income earning capacities of LSEs inhabitants. By comparing the different repartos on all these variables it also shows some of the differences which exist regarding income earning activities. The sample still includes those respondents that were engaged in an economic activity.

Table 5.5 shows the type of employment in LSE in 2004 and 2009. It shows the formality of the activity and whether this concerned a fixed employment or temporary one. The latter one also includes seasonal work. This is work that can only be done in a certain season and as such it is not a fixed job that enables someone earning an income throughout the year. Examples can include seasonal work on a farm or working in construction. This accounted for about 2% in Las Poetas and Maria Concepción and slightly less than 1% in Lino Arguello.

We notice a big jump in the formality of the employment in Las Poetas compared to 2004. In 2009 67% of respondents were working in the formal sector. Part of the explanation might have to do with the fact that the research of 2009 did not apply formality of work as strict as was done in 2004. The rise in formality has also been accompanied by an increase in the share of fixed employment versus temporary employment. These two trends suggest that households in Las Poetas have increased their job security.

Table 5.5: Type of employment in LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Formal	48	67	81.1	62.1
Informal	52	32.6	18.9	37.9
Fixed	67.5	72.1	82.2	69.2
Temporary	32.5	27.5	17.8	30.8
Number of respondents	595	433	90	133

María Concepción recorded both the highest percentage of respondents working in the formal sector and with fixed employment. This can be linked to the large percentage of respondents working in Zona Franca for Arnecom.

So far the profile of Lino Arguello has not showed much difference from that of Las Poetas. Table 5.5 shows the formality and duration of employment. Though these were only small the share of respondents with formal employment was lower than in Las Poetas. Also a smaller percentage was engaged in fixed employment.

Table 5.6 shows the type of income earned in LSE in 2004 and 2009. This has been divided into fixed and variable income. In Las Poetas more respondents relied on a fixed income in 2009 compared to 2004. Over 50% of the respondents received a fixed income.

Table 5.6 : Type of income in LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Fixed	42.2	52.9	81.1	45.9
Variable	55.1	45	16.7	53.4
Number of respondents	595	433	90	133

In Maria Concepción over 80% of the respondents received a fixed income and was a lot higher when compared to Las Poetas and Lino Arguello. In Lino Arguello less than half of the respondents received a fixed income. The final table on economic activities will clarify some of the main differences between the households of Las Poetas and Lino Arguello when it comes to income generating activities,

Table 5.7 shows the three main categories of employment in LSE in 2004 and 2009. These categories and their meaning were based on those used in the census of Nicaragua in 2005 (Instituto Nacional de Información para el Desarrollo).

Table 5.7: Categories of employment in LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Employee	50.1	53.1	73.3	44.4
Propia empresa	15.8	10.9	5.6	6
Cuenta propia	31.8	35.6	20	49.6
Number of respondents	595	433	90	133

Someone is considered an employee when *'he or she works for an employer, the state or a private enterprise for a wage'*. A respondent belongs to the category 'propia empresa' when *'he or she operates an own company or business or exercises on their own a profession or trade, having one or more employees, workers, labourers, etc, on a wage or salary'*. The final category of employment is 'cuenta propia'. A respondent belongs to this category when *'he or she operates his or her own business, farm, etc, and those who exercise on their own account a profession or trade. They have no paid employees or workers, working alone, but may use a relative as an assistant without pay'*.¹⁷ This last category thus includes the self-employed.

¹⁷ These three definitions are according to those used in the VIII Censo de Población y IV de Vivienda (2005) which can found in the following link:

When comparing the employee category results of the repartos of LSE with the results on fixed income found in Table 5.6, it shows that these correspond. The fixed income mainly consists of persons earning a wage. The variable income consists of the two other employment categories. In Las Poetas there have been small changes in the employment categories. We notice a small increase of households relying on a salaried economic activity. The share of self-employed has increased while the share of propia empresa decreased. Despite the dropped share of propia empresas this category was almost twice the size of that in the two other repartos. These businesses were often well established. One could think of internet cafes with pulpería, workshops and metallurgies. The neighbourhoods of Las Poetas were almost 10 years in development giving these kind of companies time to establish. The newer repartos of María Concepción and Lino Arguello knew a shorter period of development leading to the fact that those businesses were less present.

The share of employed persons in Maria Concepción is higher when compared to the other repartos while the share of self-employed is much lower than recorded in Las Poetas and Lino Arguello. This fits the overall results presented in this chapter.

Table 5.7 also gives a good indication of one of the main differences between Las Poetas and Lino Arguello when it comes to income generating activities. Though most variables presented in this chapter so far showed a lower socio-economic situation in Lino Arguello this did not seem to come out very strong. It has already been shown that the share of persons earning a salaried income in Lino Arguello was the lowest of LSE. Table 1.7 shows that almost half of the respondents in Lino Arguello were self-employed which is much higher than in Las Poetas. Jobs related to this include street trade, selling foodstuffs, small pulperías and market sellers. These activities provide an income to a household and are often fixed jobs (shown by the small difference of fixed jobs between Las Poetas and Lino Arguello in Table 5.1) but the income earning capacities of these activities are less secure and stable (variable) than income coming from a salaried job or maybe a propia empresa. This high percentage of self-employed can also give some insight to some other outcomes discussed. One of these outcomes was that unemployment in Lino Arguello was the lowest of the repartos (see Table 5.3). Being unemployed might just be seen as not an option. Therefore residents try to use any possibility to earn an income through a self-employed activity. Also the share of domestic chores was the lowest in Lino Arguello (see Table 5.2). Assuming that women make up the biggest part of household chores this implies that less women in Lino Arguello were economically inactive, instead considering themselves domestic workers, compared to Las Poetas and Maria Concepción. Again this implies a greater need for income generating activities which might be found through self-employed activities.

5.4 Income composition of households

Earning income through an economic activity or by receiving remittances are two ways income is earned by households. This can be through formal and/or informal activities, temporary work, fixed and salaried jobs. All these have been discussed and have given an insight of these activities in the

different repartos of LSE. Now we will discuss the actual income of the households of LSE. This has been divided into income and remittances.

5.4.1 Average Income of the different repartos

Table 5.8 shows the average income per capita in LSE in 2004 and 2009. First it shows the difference of per capita income between the three different repartos. In Lino Arguello the per capita income was the lowest followed by Las Poetas. In Maria Concepción the income per capita was almost twice as much as that of Lino Arguello. The table also shows an increase compared to 2004. In Las Poetas the average income per household increased from C\$451 in 2004 to C\$956 in 2009¹⁸. In order to analyse this correctly it must be adjusted for inflation. This is done by using the average consumer indexes of 2004 and 2009 in Nicaragua¹⁹. The C\$451 per capita income of 2004 would equal C\$744 in 2009. The purchasing power increased with 28% compared to 2004. Also note that the income in Lino Arguello is higher when compared to the adjusted income of 2004. The increase of per capita income is a trend that corresponds with the previous findings. More people relied on waged labour, with fixed income and formal sector employment growing. Furthermore, the differences between the repartos also correspond with the previous findings. It shows the better economic situation of someone living in Maria Concepción. A difference mostly influenced by the fact that so many were working for Arnecom with fixed employment and wages. The difference in income between Las Poetas and Lino Arguello can also be explained by the previous findings. These were not as big as those found with Maria Concepción but it becomes clear how the income is affected by the economic activities of the inhabitants. More respondents in Las Poetas were active in formal employment, relied on fixed wages and worked as an employer compared to those respondents of Lino Arguello. This shows in the per capita income.

Table 5.8: Average income per in LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Average income per household	C\$1327	C\$2918	C\$3849	C\$2200
Average income per capita	C\$451	C\$956	C\$1386	C\$823

5.4.2 Remittances received in LSE

Another way of securing income is through remittances. These can be obtained when a member of the household moves abroad to work for a shorter or longer period of time and sends back money.

¹⁸ In 2009 €1 was almost C\$25

¹⁹ Average consumer prices Nicaragua 2004 and 2009 <http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/Nicaragua/Inflation-Average-Consumer-Prices-Indexed-to-Year-2000/> 11 April, 2011

Remittances could also be sent by a parent, brother or an ex husband or wife living abroad, not being part of the household but still helping the family by sending money. The in-depth relationship between sender and receiver is not the focus here however. The main goal now is to show whether or not families in LSE received remittances and how much. We have already seen that more members of the family were working abroad than was the case in 2004 (Table 5.4). Table 5.9 gives an overview of the percentage of households receiving remittances and the average income of those remittances.

Table 5.9: Remittances received in LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Households receiving remittances	8%	13.3%	9.5%	13.5%
Average remittances per household	C\$1947	C\$1673	C\$1766	C\$1058
Average remittances per capita	C\$35	C\$46	C\$45	C\$32
Number of respondents	33	32	6	10

In 2009 13.3% of the households in Las Poetas received remittances compared to 8% in 2004. In 2004 the remittances accounted for 7.8% of the total income (income plus remittances). In 2009 this share has dropped to 4.2%.

In María Concepción 9.5% of the households received remittances and the income per household is higher than in the other neighbourhoods. Table 5.4 showed that none of the household members in Maria Concepcion were working abroad but still almost one out of ten households receive remittances. Apparently these households still have strong connections to family members abroad. The average remittance received is the same as in Las Poetas. The share of the remittances on the total income was lower, being 3.1%.

In Lino Arguello about the same percentage of households received remittances as in Las Poetas, 13,5%. It seems that the socio-economic status determines the need for additional income to be higher in the repartos of Las Poetas and Lino Arguello. The average of the remittances sent to Lino Arguello however were lower than those in Las Poetas and María Concepción. The share of remittances on the total income was 3.7%.

5.4.3 Savings

A last component to look at are the savings of households. These as such are not part of the income generating capabilities but more a result. Savings can also be an interesting component for NGO's and micro-finance institutions active in LSE. When families obtain credit for either the land or buying a house, the savings could indicate their capability to repay these loans. For micro-finance institutions savings could also allow for greater opportunities to give out micro-credit to families. The micro-credit organisations are mentioned here because they have become more prevalent in LSE in the last years. They might also prove to become more important as an actor in LSE when it comes to handing out

small loans in order to start a small shop for example. During the interviews we have met some families who used these micro credits. More on the involvement of micro-finance in the economic development in LSE can be read in my co-workers thesis on the local economic development of LSE²⁰. Apart from the interest of NGO's involved, savings are important for households themselves and show whether there is space within their budget to do so.

Table 5.10 presents the savings in LSE in 2004 and 2009. In 2009, 20.5% of the families saved money. This was a big jump compared to the 8.6% of the families in 2004. Just as with the remittances more families were capable of saving money, which is also in line with the increase in income. The average savings have increased slightly but if we take inflation into account they might not have increased as much as we saw with the average income. There is another way of looking at it though and that is through the percentage on total income (income plus remittances) that is saved. The total savings in Las Poetas have increased because more households were saving money. This has led to an increase of the percentage of the income saved. In 2004 2.6% of the income was saved. In 2009 this increased to 3.6% of the total income.

Table 5.10: Savings in LSE in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009	2009	2009
	Las Poetas	Las Poetas	María Concepción	Lino Arguello
Households saving money	8.6%	20.5%	25.4%	19.3%
Average savings per household	C\$608	C\$850	C\$2371	C\$633
Number of respondents	35	49	16	12

In María Concepción 25.4% of the households saved money. What jumps out though were the average savings. These were almost four times as much as those of Las Poetas and equal 11.6% of the total income. Again it reflects the socio-economic status of these households. On the other hand the savings compared to Las

Poetas are important keeping in mind the differences in average income and remittances.

In Lino Arguello 19.3% of the households saved money. On average these were the lowest of all repartos, with C\$633. In total 2.8% of the income was saved. Unlike the share of remittances, households in Lino Arguello saved the least compared to the other repartos.

We have seen that in all repartos more households have been able to save money. And, compared to 2004, a bigger percentage of household income was saved in all repartos. With average income increased overall in the repartos compared to 2004 the savings also followed this trend. There was a big difference discovered in saving capacities between households of Las Poetas and Lino Arguello on one side and María Concepción on the other.

²⁰ Negotiating Household Challenges and Opportunities. Local Economic Development in LSE. This is written by my co-researcher, Conor Flavin

5.5 Conclusions

The chapter presented a socio-economic comparison of Las Poetas between 2004 and 2009 to see how the households that are living in Las Poetas have changed in that period. The research question that followed was:

How has the socio-economic status of the households living in Las Poetas changed in the period 2005-2009?

Broadly speaking, the comparison was divided into three blocks, the social status, the economic status and the last part, the income. On the social scale we saw little changes. The population pyramids presented show the influence of birth rates on the population as well as the emigration. The marital status has changed slightly with less married couples. Though this change is small it indicates that it is an unstable situation. The immediate difference between the marital status of the households in the different neighbourhoods and the general differences in the economic situation also indicates that these are linked. Whether a stable marital status makes for a economically strong household or that an economically strong couples more often stay together can be debated. It seems that this relationship works in both directions. Being married, is argued, is also better for a stable family than living together, which is seen more as a phase after divorce and being single(mother). These changes can have a big impact on the possibilities of a household, either on those already living in LSE or on those that still have to move to LSE.

Economically the households in Las Poetas have a better situation now when compared to 2004. The economic part showed an overall increase in formal employment, fixed jobs and with that, a more structural income with an increase in households receiving a salary. Still, about a third of the inhabitants of Las Poetas was self-employed. An important part of the increased economic security of the households seems to be taken by Arnecom. The share of people working at Arnecom has increased and is not only important for the people living in Las Poetas but also plays an important role for those living in Lino Arguello and María Concepcion. That so many households rely on Arnecom when it comes to earning a living can also be dangerous for LSE. When the repartos rely too much on the plant consequences can be great in case, for example, the plant Arnecom is moved. Or, as was the case during the time of the research, an economic recession affects Arnecom. We talked to quite a few persons whose contracts were not extended because of this.

Another change which is affecting Las Poetas is that less people were economically active within the repartos. As the non-response rate showed, just as the daily visits to the neighbourhoods, few people are present in LSE during the day. This has a negative impact on the economic possibilities for (home)businesses (think of pulperías, workshops) and on security issues. Few economic possibilities can negatively influence people wanting to move to Las Poetas in case they have a small business. Less security in the neighbourhoods negatively affects the desirability of wanting to live in Las Poetas.

The increased security of the economic activities is finally reflected by the increased average income of the households. Income and remittances have increased, also leading to more households saving money.

Do the households living in the repartos of Maria Concepcion, Lino Arguello and Las Poetas have a different socio-economic status?

The differences between the repartos are clear. The households in Maria Concepcion have a higher socio-economic status than the households in Las Poetas and Lino Arguello. The main reason for this is that the households in Maria Concepcion were selected to live there by Arnecom, and that most of the households have a family member employed by Arnecom. In Las Poetas the households are selected by the Alcaldía based on the need for a house and their socio-economic status will therefore vary and tend to be lower than the average household in León. The households in Lino Arguello are selected by Fundapadele and specifically target the poor who will often not be able to afford a plot offered by the Alcaldía nor the expenses required to build a house. Thus, the conditions for the selection of households to the different repartos will determine the initial socio-economic status of each reparto and with that, influence the opportunities for the different neighbourhoods.

Chapter 6: The physical housing progress of Las Poetas

NGO's have exercised an important role in the housing process since the introduction of the project. They are seen as the organiser of social housing projects for social target groups. They should apply for governmental subsidies and take care of granting loans to families. Their role also included the role of a social organiser and trainer of groups of families (Bredenoord, 2005). All in all NGOs are at the centre as a facilitator for the social self-help housing ideals of LSE. With a third of the plots still empty in 2009, the main question is why so many households have not built a house. In order to answer that question we first turn attention to the role of the NGO's and self-help housing in the housing process look at the housing development in Las Poetas between 1999 and 2009. This leads to the following research question:

How important was the role of NGO's in the physical development process in Las Poetas until 2009?

Secondly, we wondered with so many plots still empty, if the role of NGO's had changed over time.

Has the role of NGOs in the housing process changed?

Beside NGO's, assisted self-help housing has been a major focus of the project. Which houses were self-built proved difficult to establish. By looking at the development of Las Poetas between its initiation and 2009, we try to analyse whether households are also still building houses themselves:

Are households still building houses themselves?

These research questions should shed light over the housing process in Las Poetas.

6.1 The role of NGOs in the housing process

Different NGO's have been active in LSE over the last decade. These differ from each other in approach and the type of house they build. Also their degree of cooperating with the Alcaldía as the financial contribution for the households involved differs. For instance, Fundapadele did not cooperate with the Alcaldía after purchasing the land to build Lino Arguello while the cooperation with the NGO's of Habitat for Humanity and Ceprodal was much closer (Bredenoord, 2005).

Table 6.1 shows the amount of houses built per NGO until 2007 (*Source: Informe de labores programa León Sureste, 2007*). The ones put forward here are those which built most houses. Fundapadele has constructed most of the houses in Las Poetas. Second on the list is Caritas, which built a 112 houses.

Table 6.1: Number of houses constructed per NGO in Las Poetas until 2007 and

	2007
Fundapadele	678
Caritas	112
Habitat for Humanity	47
San Vicente de Paul	41
Ceprodel	33
Self-built	203
Building Materials Bank	20
European Union	40

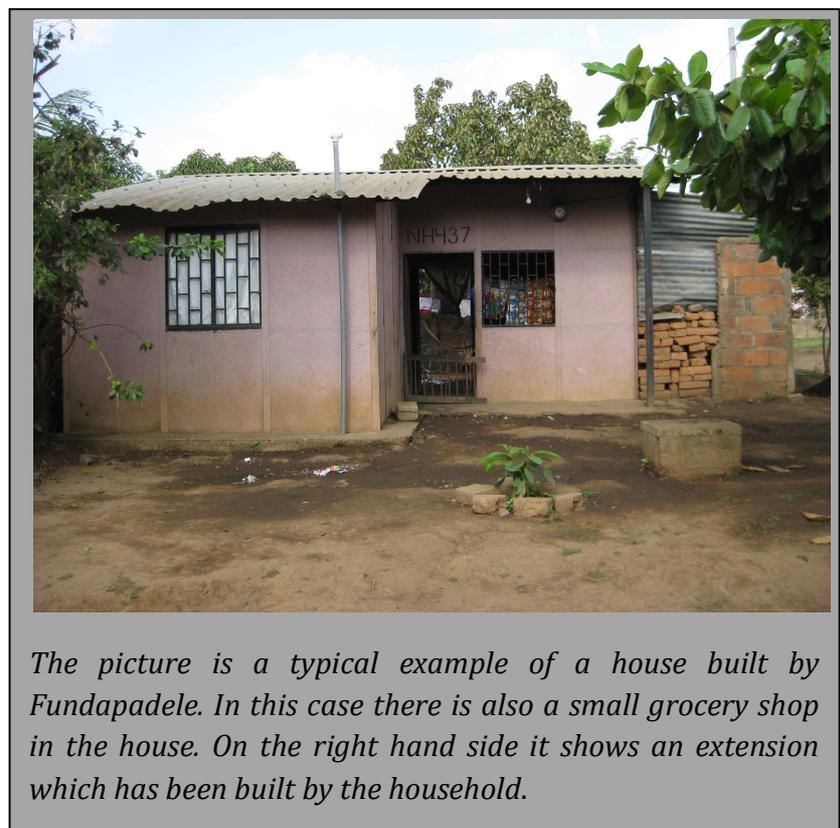
All NGOs build different houses varying in cost, size and quality. Fundapadele builds prefab houses. These can be put together by connecting the different parts that are premade. The house has an L- shape which gives the opportunity to build an extra room when a family wants to do so (at a later stage). The involved households pay for the manual labour costs to put the house together. These costs are between US\$250-US\$450.

Fundapadele has been the main constructor of houses in Las Poetas and built the whole of Lino Arguello. At the time of the research, Fundapadele was not constructing any houses in Las Poetas, mainly because of a lack of funds. The main funding of Fundapadele came through INVUR-FOSOVI subsidies which were no longer in place at the time of the research.

The contribution to houses built by Caritas are also relatively low, according to Bredenoord (2005) on average a households share was about €300. However, the houses built by Caritas are of better quality compared to the prefab houses of Fundapadele. The construction costs of a house built by Fundapadele were around \$1.850 while the construction costs of a house from Caritas were around \$3.000. Caritas also seeks to involve the families in the building process and help with technical assistance. In 2004 only few houses had been built by Caritas but at the end of 2007 Caritas was the second biggest NGO that provided housing.

Habitat for Humanity and Ceprodel are two NGOs still present in León and are more expensive options for households compared to Fundapadele and Caritas, and have also constructed less houses overall. San Vicente de Paul built all houses before 2005 and is no longer active. The European Union also built houses in Las Poetas. Finally there have been 203 houses built by households themselves.

Plate 6.1: House built by Fundapadele



The picture is a typical example of a house built by Fundapadele. In this case there is also a small grocery shop in the house. On the right hand side it shows an extension which has been built by the household.

The own contribution of households for houses built by Ceprodel and Habitat for Humanity are higher than with the previously mentioned NGOs. The contribution to a house built by Habitat was estimated between US\$1.900 and \$3.500 and the contribution to a house built by Ceprodel was about \$1.750. The lowest-income groups cannot afford that. Also the construction costs of these houses are higher, \$3.000 and \$6.000 respectively. Both NGOs put emphasis on including the family into the construction process and providing technical assistance (Bredenoord, 2005). Habitat was not constructing for individual households at the time of the research but was involved in other housing partnerships, like the housing cooperative Juntando Manos. They were also depending on the funding from INVUR/FOSOVI. Both Ceprodel and Habitat for Humanity worked in close cooperation with the Alcaldía.

6.1.1 The role of self-built housing

Table 6.2 shows the percentage of houses constructed by NGOs. In Las Poetas, over 80% of the houses have been built by them. Like we noted before (chapter 2.4.3), with *built by NGO* we mean that an NGO was involved and that the house of the respondent is that built by a specific NGO. Whether an NGO fully donated a house, or that a house is financed by an NGO while the household tries to lower the costs of building by constructing as much as possible themselves, is not taken into account. In 80% of the cases an NGO was involved leaving 10% of the houses self-built by families. Compared to 2004, the share of houses constructed by households themselves has decreased, indicating that the building process relies more and more on NGO involvement.

Table 6.2: House constructed by NGOs in Las Poetas

in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009
Yes	78.2	82.8
No	21.8	10.5
Number of questionnaires	409	239

Only few families built houses on their own. According to table 6.1 the total amount of self-built houses in Las Poetas at the end of 2007 was 203. On the total amount of produced houses in Las Poetas (2.262) this is slightly less than 10%. During the field research in 2009 one low-quality house was observed that had very recently been constructed by a family (see plate 6.2). The low-quality houses were initially built by many households (until 2004-2005). That also coincides with the self-help housing ideas, gradually building of a house, often made of low-quality materials, put together to create a shelter, then slowly improving the house over the course of time. Similar low-quality houses were not encountered. Those that have been built are of a better quality and difficult to distinguish from houses built by NGOs. These self-built houses are more established, built from better materials. During the observations we noted few active housing construction sites and therefore assumed that few households were building houses themselves. Another problem was that it was difficult to establish whether a house was under (active) construction or that construction had stopped and that a

house was being demolished. In the next chapter, when discussing the interviews held with plot owners, we will discuss two households which were building a house themselves.

Plate 6.2: Self-built house in Mariana Sanson



Example of a low quality, self-built house in Mariana Sanson. This was the only example of such a self-built house which was observed during the field trips.

That few of these low-cost self-built houses were encountered has to do with NGO involvement. During the interview with the director of Fundapadele one of the main motivations for them to get involved in LSE was put forward:

'When we came to LSE there was a sea of poorly, self built houses. The need for proper housing was present'.

After that, Fundapadele got involved and provided many of the poor households with housing. According to Bredenoord (2005) some 160 families had built a house on their own in 2005. These early constructed self-built houses were probably similar to the one depicted in plate 6.2. After Fundapadele got involved, many of these were substituted by the prefab houses offered by Fundapadele and in 2009,

these kind of self-built houses are hardly ever constructed. For the self-help construction, this means that the cheap variant, affordable to low-income houses is no longer used. One can imagine that households will be more reluctant building such a low-quality house, with other households having good quality houses which were mostly donated. This has mainly affected low-cost self-help housing initiatives. Self-building initiatives of higher quality are reserved for those households with a higher income. Construction costs of building a house from stone, and of good quality, will at least cost a household US\$5.000. This is out of reach for low-income households with an average income of US\$100 or less per month.

In Table 6.3 the amount of donated houses is shown. These were calculated over all the heads of households who owned the house. In total 65.4% of the houses built in 2009 in Las Poetas were donated which concurs with the percentage of respondents having a house from Fundapadele. The share of donated houses and paid for was the same as in 2004. Only those households still paying declined. That donated houses account for the same percentage in 2009 as in 2004 is a reflection of the fact that few houses were built from 2005 by the donating NGOs Fundapadele and Caritas.

Table 6.3: House status Las Poetas in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009
Donated	65.4	65.4
Paid for	20.1	21.8
Paying	14.3	6.9
No response²¹		5.3
Number of Respondents	364	188

6.2 The Housing development in Las Poetas

Within the system of the housing project, families first buy a plot and repay this to the Alcaldía. After repaying they get the property title and can start construction. The very first plots were sold in Azarias H. Pallais in 1999/2000, followed by the plots of Antenor in 2001/2002 and finally the plots of Mariana Sanson in 2003/2004. The construction in the neighbourhoods followed the same timeline. Azarias H. Pallais is the oldest of the neighbourhoods and was developed first, starting in 2000. Development in Antenor Sandino began in 2001 and in Mariana Sanson construction started in 2003. In Figure 6.1 the neighbourhoods of LSE are shown.

²¹ The 'no response' in 2009 has been included because it is over five percent. This probably happened due to errors made by the interviewer.

Figure 6.1: The neighbourhoods of Las Poetas



In 2009 the project was ten years under way. In that period three surveys were carried out which also recorded the total number of empty plots in LSE. The first survey was conducted in 2004, the second one in 2007 and the last one in 2009. In table 0 the total amount of houses built and the percentage of empty plots and uninhabited houses is presented.

In 2004, all 2.262 plots had been sold and a total of 767 houses had been built in Las Poetas (te Molder, 2005). Of these, only 476 houses were occupied (62.1%). The rest of the houses were uninhabited. It was thought that the main reason that so many houses were not occupied was because many of them were not connected to water and/or electricity (also in chapter 2.5). In 2004 almost 34% of the plots had a house.

Table 6.4: Total amount of houses built in Las Poetas since 2000

Year	Total amount of houses built in Las Poetas	Percentage of plots occupied	Percentage uninhabited houses
2004	767	33.9%	37.9%
2007	1.284	56.8%	-
2009	1.429	63.2%	13.1%
	2.262	63.2%	1014

In 2007 the Alcaldía conducted a research. Then, 56.8% of the plots in Las Poetas contained a house. The percentage of uninhabited houses was not accounted for. The latest research on housing in Las Poetas was conducted in 2009. Over the whole of Las Poetas the total percentage of plots

built upon was 63.2%, leaving little over a third of the plots empty. Different percentages on uninhabited houses were found in 2009 but we use the one found during the questionnaire held in LSE (see Appendix IV). According to the questionnaire, over 13% of the houses were uninhabited in LSE. This does include Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion. The former having more than average percentage of uninhabited houses and the latter a lower percentage. It shows that the amount of uninhabited houses has decreased since 2004, partly acknowledging the assumption that with improved access to water and electricity households would move to their house. Still, almost one in six houses in LSE are uninhabited. Also, in Lino Arguello this was a big problem as many houses were uninhabited while all plots contained a house. One reason can be that the houses have no official access to electricity, though they illegally tap it. Also, these households have the lowest socio-economic situation of all households living in LSE and are therefore more vulnerable. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Because the plots were first sold, then repaid, and construction followed after that, the exact commencement of building per neighbourhood is somewhat arbitrary. In the beginning, it would take a household on average two to three years to repay the plot. Therefore we take 2002 as the starting year of the first houses built. Table 6.5 shows the amount of houses produced per year. In the first period, between 2000 and 2004, 767 houses have been built. On an annual base (with 2002 as starting year) that accounts for 255 houses.

In the three year period, between 2005 and 2007, 517 houses were built, averaging 172 houses annually. The faster pace of construction expected in 2004 had not occurred, even though water supply and access to electricity had been improved in many parts. This can be explained because Fundapadele and Caritas had been able to supply many houses because of the subsidies through INVUR/FOSOVI. Most of the houses were therefore constructed in that period. In 2006 these NGOs might still have been building some houses, but in 2007 this had stopped.

Table 6.5: Amount of houses produced per period

Year	Total amount of houses built in Las Poetas	Amount of houses built annually
2000-2004	767	255
2005-2007	1.284	172
2008-2009	1.429	108
	2.262	178

In the final period, between 2008 and 2009, another 145 houses had been built in Las Poetas²². Annually that accounts for the construction of 108 houses. It becomes clear that the amount of houses constructed is decreasing.

The empty plots are also calculated per neighbourhood to see whether or not there are any differences found. At the time of the research in 2004, the far majority of houses

were built in Azarias H. Pallais, only some houses had been built in Antenor Sandino and a very small number in Mariana Sanson. Therefore the amount of empty plots per neighbourhood were not calculated over 2004. Table 6.6 shows the empty plots per neighbourhood in Las Poetas. It shows that the percentage of empty plots has declined but also that the decline slows in the neighbourhoods where construction started earlier. In Azarias H. Pallais only five new houses have been built between 2007 and 2009. In Antenor Sandino, and even more in Mariana Sanson, more houses were built in that period, 34 and 106 respectively. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that households have repaid their plot later in Antenor Sandino and Mariana Sanson because the plots were sold later. Also, it is possible that the households of these two neighbourhoods have taken longer to repay the plot because of the increased costs. After repaying, households there are now building their homes. Table 6.6 also shows that the percentage of empty plots in each neighbourhood come closer together. Looking at the few houses built in Azarias H. Pallais and the ones built in Antenor Sandino, it seems that there is a core group of households which don't built a house.

Table 6.6: Empty plots per neighbourhood, 2007-2009

Urbanización	Total plots per reparto	Percentage empty plots 2007	Percentage empty plots 2009	Amount of houses built 2007-2009
Azarias H. Pallais	703	34.9%	34.1%	5
Antenor Sandino	907	41.9%	38.1%	34
Mariana Sansón	652	54.1%	37.9%	106
Total Las Poetas	2.262	44.8%	36.8%	145

Three quarter of all the houses built in the last two years have been built in Mariana Sanson, which includes the 35 houses built by the housing cooperative Juntando Manos (see plate 6.2 for information

²² The research in 2009 was conducted in April, so in total 145 houses were built in 16 months.

about the cooperative). Unfortunately it is not clear whether or not NGOs were involved, and if so to what extent, in the construction of the rest of the 109 houses. Fundapadele, Caritas and Habitat for Humanity were not active, so it would be interesting to know which NGOs had been assisting households. The other possibility remains that there are still some households constructing houses themselves.

Overall the construction of houses has not been going the way it was planned. At the start of the project it was thought that 5000 plots would be available and built upon by 2009. In total 2.262 plots had been developed in Las Poetas of which more than a third were still empty in 2009. Another 720 plots have been produced in Lino Arguello (390) and Maria Concepción (330) and all these plots contain a house. The remaining 2000 plots were still to be developed in 2009. The plots of the new neighbourhood (reparto Utrecht), were sold though and the families were repaying these at the time of the research. Construction in this new neighbourhood has started or should be starting any time at the time the thesis is published.

6.3 The spatial distribution of empty plots

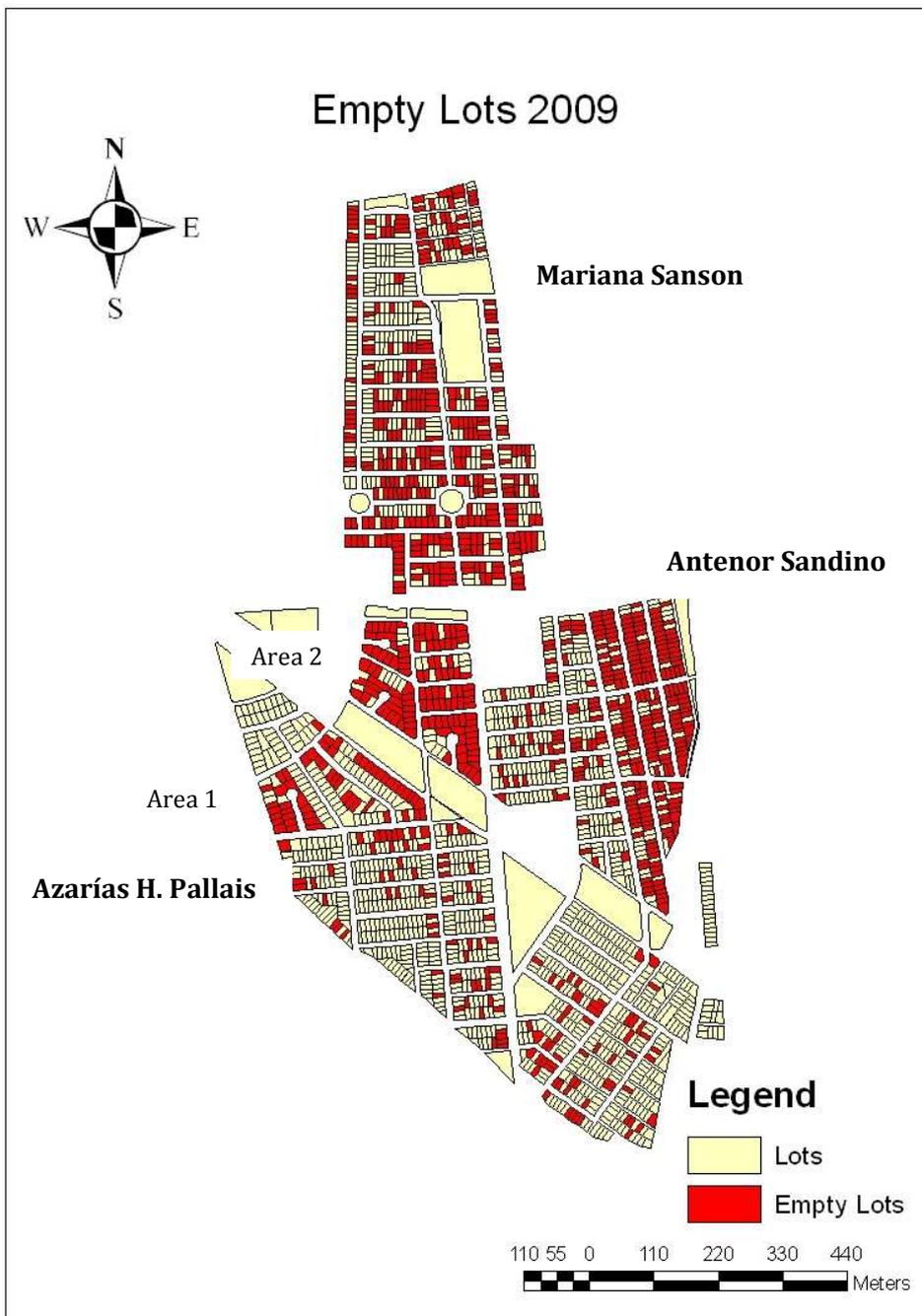
Empty plots are found throughout the neighbourhoods of Las Poetas. However, there are certain parts where very few houses have been built. Figure 6.2 shows the repartos of Las Poetas and the empty plots. Looking at the map the three repartos can be distinguished. The one on the top is Mariana Sanson. The other two repartos lay on opposite sides of the road which runs north south through the middle of the neighbourhoods. On the left hand side is Azarias H. Pallais and on the right hand side Antenor Sandino.

In Azarias H. Pallais construction started around 2002. Looking at Figure 6.2, two main areas with a substantial amount empty plots can be recognised. Area 1 is in the western part of the neighbourhood and consists of type A plots (expensive ones). The other area of mainly empty plots lies east of the electrical lines, which diagonally cross through the repartos, and is referred to as *area 2* in the map. These are also expensive plots. The empty plots in Azarias H. Pallais belong to the longest vacant ones, being empty for almost ten years.

In Antenor Sandino housing construction started around 2003/4. The division of empty plots is east-west. In the eastern part of the neighbourhood almost no houses have been built. This is mainly because of legal issues concerning the land housing construction in this part (also referred to as Antenor Anexo) started later²³. With less options for households receiving assistance from NGO's, housing development has been slow. It is possible that the fact that so many plots are still empty also makes it less desirable to build.

²³ This was put forward in the interview with Enrique Lopez.

Figure 6.2: Empty plots in Las Poetas in 2009



In Mariana Sanson housing construction started in 2003. In 2004 only very few houses had been built and most plots were not connected to water or electricity then. This was established in 2005 and most of the houses were also connected to electricity (either legally or illegally) in 2009. It has been shown that in the last two years most of the houses built in Las Poetas were built in Mariana Sanson. With 36 of the 118 houses built by the housing cooperative Juntando Manos (see plate 6.2), they played an important role in the total amount of houses constructed between 2008 and 2009.

The southern side of the reparto, south of the two 'roundabouts', also consist of expensive plots and almost all of these were empty in 2009. That so many expensive plots in both Azarias H. Pallais and Mariana Sanson were empty led to the hypotheses that there existed different reasons for not building between owners of the different plot types and that there could be speculation. The remaining part of Mariana Sanson are cheap plots. There seems to be no real spatial difference in the distribution of empty plots.

Plate 6.2: Houses built by the cooperation Juntando Manos



Juntando Manos is a small-scale housing cooperative established in 2004 which built 35 houses in Mariana Sanson. Ceprodel, together with financial support of the Swedish Cooperation Centre, incorporated the mutual self-help housing formula Ceprodel introduced in Uruguay before. There are also some other actors involved like Habitat for Humanity and DIGH (Dutch International Guarantees for Housing).

The cooperative and its members have bought the plots from the Alcaldía and repaid these. Afterwards they started constructing the houses, which was accomplished in 2007. Each member pays a monthly fee to the cooperative which then repays the loan. The loans take twenty years to pay off.

The design of the house has been made with the joint support of the cooperatives members and the housing NGO involved is are of high quality. The costs of the house have been lowered as much as possible by using manual labour provided by the members of the cooperative.

There are also empty plots scattered throughout the repartos. Those in Azarias H. Pallais are among the longest vacant plots and we can safely assume that all the households owning a plot have repaid them. These families either have great difficulties building a house or maybe they no longer want to build a house or never intended to do so. Households owning an empty plot in Mariana Sanson have had the least time to build and future building should clarify if households are still capable of building. The results already showed that most houses built in the last two years have been built here. The households trying to build a house after 2006-2007 have been affected more by the fact that few NGOs were active. That all the repartos have about a third of the plots empty indicates a core group of families that either can't get their houses built or don't intend to anymore. During many informal conversations with residents in LSE respondents pointed to the fact that they knew multiple empty plots were owned by the same family. During the interviews with owners of plots

living outside LSE, we also encountered two respondents owning more than one plot and we also interviewed families in which different persons owned a plot, for example both daughters of a respondent also owned a plot. In some cases, and especially with persons owning a expensive plot, it

seems very plausible that other reasons than moving to LSE to live were considered. Opportunity to own a formal piece of land, including a title deed, would have been a more likely reason. It is also possible that people used the opportunity to buy a plot to hand it over to their children in the future. All these perspectives have been put forward in both formal and informal settings and these reasons will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter.

6.4 House occupation in Las Poetas

The housing occupation in Las Poetas is not static. What is meant by this is that it is not the case that every house is occupied by its owner, or even occupied at all. Families who move to Las Poetas might also move back for various reasons leaving the house *deshabitada* or rent it to someone. The intention of the programme was meant to provide families in need of a house with a piece of land so that they could build on it. This has also been given as the main reason for families to buy a plot. The possibility of becoming independent and the possibility of owning house were the main reasons for respondents to buy the plot in the first place. Despite this, housing occupation has not only been by the beneficiaries who intended to live in Las Poetas.

Table 6.7 shows tenure status of the houses in Las Poetas. It becomes clear that the amount of owners living in the house has declined. Fewer families who bought the plot and built a house have been actually moving to Las Poetas themselves.

Table 6.7: Tenure status in Las Poetas in 2004 and 2009

	2004	2009
Owner	89.7	79.4
Renting	5.1	10.1
Looking after house	5.2	7.9
Number of respondents	409	239

Instead of living in the house themselves there are different options for occupation. Families either rent the house or have someone else look after it. The 2004 questionnaire did not separate renting and looking after the house. We know however that 10.3% of the respondents were not the owners of the house.. It is estimated that around 5.1% of them were renting it, the other 5.2% were looking after the house. An increasing part of the houses in which the owner is not living were thus being

rented. It is possible that the longer a household does not move to LSE, and the lower their intention to do so, the more likely it is that they rent their house to someone. In such cases households use their house for income generation. Looking after a house has also increased but not as much. The difference between the two is that those who look after the house don't pay rent. As such the owners are not financially gaining money. The house is merely occupied in order to prevent people from either damaging or stealing things in or from the house. In most cases the ones living in the house are family of the owners. Part of the people who are looking after the house are often doing so because the original owners are not living in León but are working abroad. This can be for a longer period when they have fixed jobs but many are seasonal workers, often active in Costa Rica. A household could prefer a family member living in their house because they can trust them and it could be easier to move into the house when needed.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter has given an overview on the housing progress in Las Poetas and showed how NGOs are central to this process. It has become clear that the amount of houses produced is decreasing. This is largely so because less NGOs were donating houses.

How important is the role of NGO's in the physical development process in Las Poetas?

It has become clear that the role of NGOs is significant. Many households have relied on an NGO in order to build a house, and this has largely been done by donating houses. Between 2002 and 2005 most houses were constructed on an annual bases (255). The research in 2005 anticipated that with improved services, especially the connection to water and electricity, would create a boost in newly constructed houses. Instead, the yearly amount of houses constructed in Las Poetas between 2005 and 2007 ended up lower (172). Without the assistance of Caritas and Fundapadele fewer houses had been built in Las Poetas. It can be concluded that low-income households don't have the capacity to built a house themselves and that this is partly the result of the donations. Almost no low-cost self-help housing occurred in Las Poetas, severely limiting opportunities of the poorest households.

Then again, during those same years, two whole new neighbourhoods were developed in LSE housing 390 households in Lino Arguello (assistance of Fundapadele) and 330 households in Maria Concepción (assisted by Caritas). Had that capacity been used in Las Poetas fewer plots would have been empty, especially considering that these NGOs were affordable to most households. What did happen in Las Poetas was a large reduction of uninhabited houses, from just under 40% in 2005 to around 10% in 2009. This does coincide with improved access to water and electricity.

During the final period, 2008-2009, another 145 houses were built. Considering the fact that the major housing NGOs were not active in LSE this is still a fair amount of houses built. Juntando Manos was one of the new housing initiatives able to house families and new opportunities are being explored. However, it is unlikely that these initiatives have the capacity to house families in the scale that Fundapadele and Caritas have been doing.

Has the role of NGOs in the housing process changed?

The role of NGOs as such has not changed. Their importance as a housing producer has been stressed. Many households don't have the capacity to build on their own and need the financial and technical assistance of NGOs, and without Fundapadele and Caritas households have fewer options to build. There is a core of empty plots in Las Poetas, and new urbanisations are being developed. Self-help housing initiatives need to be in place to assist these households in building houses. As such, the future role of housing NGOs might change from the large scale housing donations to more technical assistance approaches. Different housing cooperatives might come into play and possibly the Building Materials Bank can play a larger role in the future, assisting households both technically and financially. This is needed to create enough capacity for future construction of houses.

Are households still building houses themselves?

It has been showed that self-building is occurring less, and that when it happens it is done more often by 'better of' households. Still, it has also been difficult to exactly establish the amount of houses built

by households themselves because it was hard to know in what stage some of the houses were (uninhabited, building in progress or no longer building). In the last two years slightly over a hundred households have built a house and it is unclear what percentage did this on their own. There are thus still households building houses themselves but this is becoming more and more the exception. The following chapter will discuss in more detail the problems faced when building a house without the assistance of an NGO.

Chapter 7: Why do households not move to Las Poetas?

The households that do not move to Las Poetas can be divided into two groups. The first one consists of families that have not built a house. The second group consists of families that built a house but have not moved to Las Poetas. The main research question concerning the reasons/impediments that families encounter for not moving to Las Poetas is the following:

Why do households not move to Las Poetas?

The first category is the largest. Almost a third of all the plots in Las Poetas were empty in 2009. The previous chapter showed that there were a total of 833 empty plots in Las Poetas. That so many plots are empty creates certain problems for the neighbourhoods. There are not enough people around to make home based economic activities viable. These include small grocery shops and workshops such as repair shops or woodwork shops. The provision of certain basic services, like electricity and water, is more difficult because private companies do not want to build the infrastructure when there are not enough paying customers. This is not only reflected by the lack of people but also has to do with the socio-economic situation of these households. It also increases the level of insecurity in the repartos. Security issues are considered a big problem by both residents and would be residents. There are few people present during the day because they are working in the city centre or outside León. Therefore, there is little social control. The empty plots, and unoccupied houses, add to this. That so few people were present during the day was also reflected by the high non-response rate of 23% of the questionnaire. To understand why families have not built on the plot the following sub question was developed:

Why did households not build a house in Las Poetas?

The previous chapter made clear that the majority of empty plots can be found in specific places within the different neighbourhoods. The type B plots in the south of Mariana Sanson and the ones in Azarías H. Pallais are two examples. Because a large part of the expensive plots have not been built upon the following research question was drawn up:

Are there different reasons or impediments to not move to Las Poetas between owners of plots type A and B?

Not every family that has succeeded to build a house actually moves to Las Poetas. Chapter 6 showed a decrease in the percentage of the actual owners living in the house. Around 10% of the houses were rented and another 8% of the houses were being looked after by someone. In total some 280 houses were unoccupied in LSE when we take the 13% uninhabited houses encountered during the questionnaires. In order to answer the main research question *why do households not move to Las Poetas* the following sub question regarding the families that have not moved to Las Poetas while they succeeded in building a house were drawn up:

Why have households, which succeeded in building a house in Las Poetas, not moved there?

These owners have different reasons to not move to Las Poetas. The follow up question then needs to address why households choose different options for their house. Why do some rent their house, while others leave it uninhabited or have someone look after it?

Which factors make owners choose to leave their house uninhabited, rented or looked after?

Empty plots and the different types of houses occupied by others persons than the owners of the plot have different negative impacts on LSE.

What is the impact of the lack of families moving to LSE for its (future) development?

The chapter will discuss the plot status of the respondents first, followed by a short overview on the socio-economic situation of the respondents. Then we will discuss the results of the interviews, starting with cheap empty plots owned by single headed households, followed by empty plots of other household types and expensive empty plots. The second part analyses plot owners who have succeeded in building a house but who did not move. We discuss two cases of uninhabited houses and two cases in which the household is renting their house. The final results are on three different households which were in the process of constructing the house themselves.

7.1 Plot status of respondents

Of the twenty one interviews conducted, two households owned two plots. One household owned two empty plots of which they were selling one. The other household owned a plot with a house that was uninhabited and one plot that was empty.

The total amount of plots in the sample is thus twenty three. There were also three cases of pending property titles. In two cases the interview was conducted with someone else then the person who was listed as the owner of the plot.

7.1: Status of respondents' plots in Las Poetas

		Plot A	Plot B
Empty plots	14	5	9
Unoccupied houses	2	-	2
Rented houses	2	-	2
Empty plot for sale	2	1	1
Under construction	3	2	1
	23	8	15

Table 7.1 shows the summary of the plot status of the respondents in the interview. Of the twenty three plots in the sample fourteen were empty. Of these, nine were type B plots and five were type A. Two plots in the sample had unoccupied houses, both of which were type A. There were also two houses rented, both type A plots. The final two plots in the sample were for sale, both of which were empty. One was type A and one was type B.

7.2 Socio-economic variables

The in depth interviews also gathered socio-economic information of the household to be able to compare a single household to the ones living in LSE. A household in the interviews includes the head of the household (owner of the plot) and his or her spouse and/or children living with them. This is also known as the nuclear family. Other family members of the head of the household living in the house have not been included into the socio-economic comparison.

The interviewed group was heterogeneous. The youngest respondent was twenty three years and the oldest one was sixty three years. Seventeen interviewees were women and four men. Table 7.2 shows the civil status of the heads of households interviewed. Ten respondents were married. There are eight single mothers in the sample and one couple was living together. Another two were single women.

Table 7.2: Civil status head of households interviewed

	Amount	Percentage
Married	10	47.6%
Single mother	8	38.1%
Living together	1	4.8%
Single women	2	9.5%
Total	21	100%

In total six heads of households were unemployed. Three of them were married, two were single mothers and one was living together. A third single mother was working at the bakery of her parents but did not earn any income. In total four households did not have an income - the three single mothers and one of the married couples.

The income earned by the different households also varies widely. The highest monthly income earned was C\$10.000 (US\$500) per month compared to no income at all. The average income of the households interviewed was C\$4.233 (about US\$ 211). This is almost the same as the average income of a household living in Las Poetas, C\$4.041 (about US\$ 202).

7.3 Why households buy a plot

The primary reasons to buy a plot in Las Poetas were to ‘independisarse²⁴’, ‘having more privacy’ and ‘owning a house of your own’. These answers were given independent from the type of plot, the income of the household or the type of household. All responses are closely linked and reflect the need for a house. One respondent bought the plot for his sister working outside the country and another one for their disabled child.

7.4 Empty plots owned by single headed households

The options present for a household are in more than one way defined by their marital status. Firstly it can determine whether or not a household will get assistance from an NGO at all. Not having children, regardless of whether or not a couple is married, can be a major obstacle in getting assistance. Also, these single headed households have less economic possibilities as they don’t have a partner that contributes to the income of the household. Therefore some housing NGOs are too expensive. Early in chapter 5 the marital status of households in the different repartos was discussed. It showed a difference between the marital status of households living in Las Poetas and Lino Arguello compared to those in Maria Concepcion which was also reflected in the socio-economic situation.

In total eight single mothers and two single women were interviewed. They represent almost half of the sample. Though this is not representative to the whole population it is clear that this group is

²⁴ Independisarse means as much as becoming independent. Many of the plot owners are young (couples) for whom LSE offers a great possibility to own a house and live on their own.

particularly vulnerable and is often incapable of building a house. Single mothers encountered a multitude of challenges moving to Las Poetas. For those repaying their plot after 2007 it was hard to get help from an NGO especially without the assistance of Fundapadele and Caritas. That three quarter of the houses in Las Poetas headed by single women were built by Fundapadele shows how much these rely on them.

In Las Poetas only one out of three head of households were married. Almost one out of five households were headed by single mothers and another 40% were living together. Generally speaking we can say the latter group consists of previously married women who now live with a new male partner. Marital status is fragile and becoming a single headed household severely impacts the options for building a house. The following statement from one of the interviewees reflects this:

'After buying the plot my husband left me which completely changed my situation. All of a sudden I was alone while I had to take care of my two children myself. Besides that, one of my children got stomach problems and I have to pay for her medicines. I work in the evenings and a nanny looks after my children. I rather pay for someone than to leave my children alone with the men.'

This is an example of what can happen to a women when she becomes a single mother. She has to pay for everything herself and, in this case, the fact that one of her children is ill puts even more pressure on her. Her last remark was somewhat unanticipated but gives insight into the housing situation. Even though she needs the money she would rather pay for someone else to look after her kids. She does not want her brothers to do so. This reflects her need to live somewhere else.

Health insecurity is another factor limiting households budgets. Sickness of a family member requires them to allocate a substantial portion of the household on health care. This was supported by another story was told during an informal conversation with a respondent in Lino Arguello during the general observations:

'My neighbour sold his house. He was very sick. He could not afford the treatment he needed, which was around a US\$1000. He then sold his house in order to get the money'.

The lowest income of households often not exceeds US\$50 per month. In a case like this, the value of the house is used to survive.

Another problem single mothers encounter is that moving to Las Poetas is more difficult for them. They don't have a partner. Financially they are more vulnerable as no one else can contribute to the income. Also, there is no one who can look after the children or the house in case they lived in Las Poetas. As such, a lot of the single mothers are not actively pursuing to build a house. One such respondent said the following:

'I am living here with my parents, four sisters and a brother. Two of them also have children. I wanted to become independent and have more privacy. I bought the plot when I was still working. At the moment I am going to school and I don't have a lot of money. I went to a few NGOs but none of them were building. I still want to go to the Building Materials Bank. At the moment my goal is to build a house in some years. If I had a partner

maybe we could build a house together but being alone with my children this is not possible. People would steal everything’.

This interview stipulates the lack of money and the fact that no NGOs were building again. She was not considering building a house herself because of the lack of a partner and dangerous because things will get stolen. It seems now that building a house is something for the future. Maybe a project that will build or getting a boyfriend who can help achieve this.

Besides not having a lot of options, there are also other reasons mentioned:

‘I don’t want to live there because it is far away from my family’ and ‘I can’t live so far away from the city, when I go to work I cannot leave my children alone’.

These single mothers rely on their family to help them when it comes to looking after their children. They would not have this help when living in Las Poetas because they lack the social network. They don’t have the resources or time to bring their children to their family every time they go to work either. Of the single mothers two were unemployed and a third was working but without receiving an income. For these households there are simply no options to build a house other than through donation and even if a house was donated it remains questionable whether or not they would move given the problems mentioned. All these reasons make that many single women were not actively looking for other opportunities to build a house. Under their circumstances they are better off living where they are.

For singles it is also difficult to get assistance from an NGO. Often NGOs only assist families with children. It must also be said that singles are not the target group which is also reflected by single persons living in Las Poetas, 1.7%.

7.5 Other household types with empty plots

There are also married couples with children who had not succeed in building a house. We will discuss the ones owning a cheap plot first. Married couples have advantages over single headed households. First of all two people can earn an income and share the care over their children. Getting help from an NGO is also easier. Within the sample half of the interviews were with married couples. One interviewer revealed the following:

‘We paid for the plot in one payment in 2006 with money we borrowed from my brother-in-law. It is very expensive to buy the plot with dollars and we were able to loan the money from him.’

This view has not been put forward before but paying in dollars can put more pressure on (re)payments. This family had the advantage of being able to borrow money from a relative which has favourable conditions over loaning money from a bank. The money has to be repaid however. The interview follows:

We went to different NGOs to help finance a house. Ceprodel is too expensive for us so Fundapele is one of the few viable options. So far we could not get the help needed however.

Both parents were working and earned a combined income of C\$2000 (US\$100) monthly. This is lower than the average income earned per household in Lino Arguello giving a good indication how difficult it is for these families to finance the building of a house. In another interview:

'We paid off the plot in 2008. We are living here with sixteen persons so we need to 'independisarse'. We don't have money to build however and there are no NGOs building that we can afford. We went to the Building Materials Bank but that is very expensive.

The interview shows the same kind of problem encountered by others. The household cannot find a housing NGO (which they can afford). In this case only one person was working and this was not enough to build a house themselves. They also consider the Building Materials Bank too expensive.

7.6 Difficulties encountered by households with expensive plots

First we focus on the empty plots in order to establish difficulties encountered by these households. The households in the sample differ considerably from each other in socio-economic aspect. There are two single mothers, and three married couples. Of the married couples one does not have children, another couple has two children who don't live with them anymore, and the third one has two young children.

They also have different incomes, from the highest earning household within the sample to a single mother without any income. As such we cannot say that we found a 'standard' type household that bought the expensive plot. There are also some similarities. The plots were all empty for at least two years, and one plot was paid off as early as 2003. Also, three of the plots were bought with money earned abroad, two respondents had worked in the United States and one in Costa Rica. The price of a expensive plot is relatively cheap when earning the amount outside Nicaragua. However, to construct a house can be more difficult depending on someone's savings or the job they have after returning to Nicaragua. Having a (secure) job is a vital component in order to build a house. This also became clear with owners of expensive plots.

'When we bought the plot we both had a job. We repaid the plot in 2006 and contacted Pro Mujer²⁵ and Habitat for Humanity afterwards. Both did not have projects at the time. In the last year and a half we both lost our jobs and we cannot afford to build a house. We did receive remittances but my mother in law in the United States is without work now too and comes back to live here. We own two plots. One was for our children and one was for us. We are now thinking of selling one and build a house on the other plot with the money we receive after selling.'

This shows multiple changes to the households situation. The family members both lost their jobs and don't have money to build. They no longer receive income through remittances either. The couple was living alone in the house but now other people are coming back to live in the house. Their need to build a house became greater now that their need for privacy grows.

Another respondent worked in Costa Rica when the plot was bought for her. She says:

²⁵ Pro Mujer is an NGO focused on women which amongst others hands out micro loans to women.

'I now work in the bakery of my parents and live with them. I don't earn an income though. Therefore I can't afford a house. I am only living in León for the last seven months and have not tried contacting any NGO.'

Not all the families with expensive plots did actually inform NGOs whether they could get assistance to build a house. Two examples said the following:

'We are not in a hurry to build. We are waiting for sidewalks and better services like public lighting in the reparto.'

Another said:

'We have not talked to any NGOs, there is a lot of politics involved and you have to have the right preconditions in order to get help. We rather save money and build something ourselves.'

The first comment is of one of the few respondents who did not have a direct need for a house. They were also the only ones in the sample that owned the house they were living in and it is therefore a valid question whether they 'deserved' the plot.

The second remark is different from others. The politics involved have to do with political affiliation, being Sandinista or not, and with the prerequisites NGOs set up to select beneficiaries. We never saw or read that someone had to be Sandinista in order to get a plot or to get help from NGOs but there were people referring to the involvement of politics. In Nicaragua this is still a precarious situation.

7.7 Households which not moved to Las Poetas

The second category of people not moving to Las Poetas consists of owners of a plot that have succeeded in building a house but did not move there. Their houses were either left unoccupied, rented or someone would be looking after it. In total we interviewed four respondents with a house in Las Poetas.

7.7.1 Uninhabited house in Las Poetas

Two houses were rented and two were uninhabited. One of those houses was already built in 2002. It was unoccupied because it regularly flooded during the rainy season. This house is situated in the very south of Azarias H. Pallais, and the owner said that the infiltration zone situated just south of the house could not cope with all the water during the rainy season. During the research we often spoke to people who said that the neighbourhoods could not handle all the water, leading to local floods and piles of water all over. The owner of the particular plot also owned an empty one.

Another owner of an uninhabited house was a married couple with children. The following was recorded from the interview:

'We bought the plot in 2000 and paid it off in 2003. The house was obtained through Fundapadele. First my brother lived in the house and we moved there afterwards. However, my mother got sick so we came back to take care of her. When she gets better we will move back to Antenor Sandino.'

This is an example of how changes in the health situation of a family member lead them to leave the house. It also shows that this family not moved into the house immediately.

7.7.2 Rent house in Las Poetas

The other two examples come from houses which are rented. 10% of the houses are rented and another 8% are looked after. Unfortunately we did not interview someone of the latter case to also see whether, and if so how, these case differed. One reason for not moving to Las Poetas but let it instead was put forward during the following interview:

'We repaid the plot in 2005 and got a house through Fundapadele. We did not want to move to Mariana Sanson because I have a pulpería and there are not enough people living there that I can sell to. Also, it is not safe enough to have a little shop there. I would always have to worry for people breaking in. Now my brother lives there. He has a place to stay and someone is watching the house. I am not sure when we will move. We will wait until there are enough people living there and I can move my pulpería.'

This is an example where the lack of houses and people present during the day in Las Poetas negative influence someone's desire to move. In addition, the lack of security in the neighbourhood is such that they don't feel that it is safe to move their home business. This finding supports the assumption that security issues impact the decision to move or not, and reflects a primary concern of prospective inhabitants.

The other owner of a house which was rented gives yet another insight of reason. He stated:

'I repaid the plot in 2006 and got a house through Fundapadele. I bought the plot for my children to have. Now the house is rented and with that money I pay for my children's education. I am not sure when we will move to the house in Antenor Sandino. It depends on when my children will finish studying.'

His primary motive was to buy the plot for his children to have. This can negatively influence his desire to move as soon as possible. Now his reason for not moving is financially driven, earning income by renting the house. One could doubt whether or not the person even intended to move to the house at any stage.

Closer inspection finds that the house they are living in is owned by the parents of his girlfriend with whom he is he is living together. Where they were living before is unknown. Maybe they lived in overcrowded house which would have made them move to Las Poetas instead of renting it. The man was also unemployed which made renting the house more attractive. This is an example of a household which need for the house is unclear and whose desire to move to Lino Arguello is low. Looking at this case like this different outcomes seem to have been possible.

With only two respondents in each case it difficult to establish the relationship between leaving a house uninhabited or renting it. When will a family chose what option? Is an uninhabited house a first stage, followed by renting it, or is there no relation between both and is the decision based on other factors? We saw that in 2004 almost 40% of the houses were uninhabited. It was thought that this was mainly caused due to the lack of electricity and access to water. The amount of uninhabited houses

dropped which partly supports this assumption. Many houses were still uninhabited however and even more are only looked after sporadically. Part of these uninhabited houses are left uninhabited because the owner because is not living in León. He or she could be living and working in Managua or working abroad.

When they are in León they sometimes live in LSE or – in case it is rented- live in the house they used to live. When they have a partner it is more likely that he or she is not living in the house in LSE because it is far away from family and friends and far away from the city centre.

It is also shown that the reason for renting the house (or have someone looking after it) is done primarily to prevent people from breaking in. Another reason for renting it to earn an income. It is more likely for households owning a house to have the house occupied, either renting or looked after with the decrease of security. The choice between renting or looking after then depends whether a family intends to live in the house on the short term or not. If this is not the case a family can chose to rent it rather than have someone look after it.

Many plots were bought with money earned abroad and the owners can still be working abroad or go seasonally. When a family member is working abroad other choices can determine whether to leave the house uninhabited, rented or looked after. It is possible that leaving the house uninhabited, instead of renting it, depends on the cycle being away from León. When someone returns often it less likely they rent the house because the owner want to live in the house when in León or the rest of the household will live there. When small children are part of the household, the partner staying behind might not want to move to LSE without partner. In that case a household rents the house or has someone look after it.

Finally, it is more likely for a household to rent the house, instead of have someone look after it, the longer the house is uninhabited. With this, the assumption is that a households intention to move also decreases. The greater increase of rented houses compared to people looking after houses is an indication this is happening.

7.8 Families in the process of building a house

There were three families in the process of building the house, two owning a cheap plot and one an expensive plot. One of the houses was originally constructed with the help of Caritas. The interviewee said the following:

'We bought the plot for our daughter, who is deaf. After repaying the plot in 2006 the house was built with the help of Caritas. She could not move there on her own however so the house remained unoccupied for a while. In that time the windows and doors of the house were stolen. We are repaying a loan that we took to pay for an operation for our daughter and now we are trying to get another loan in order to get the house ready again.'

The house has been built with the help of an NGO, left uninhabited and has now become a house the family has to fix first before anyone can live in it. This house has gone through the different stages and it shows what can happen to a house when unoccupied.

Another example how a change in the socio-economic situation of a household can affect construction options:

'When I repaid the plot there were no NGOs that could help me build a house. I was working at that time and started building some walls. I lost my job so now I can't do anything.'

The person is a single mother and after losing her job she has no options to continue building. This means the plot will stay (partly) empty and it leaves the house vulnerable to thieves, stealing stones for instance. Finishing the house is fully dependent on finding a new job.

The final respondent building a house was married and had acquired an expensive plot, repaid in 2007:

'We bought the plot so we could live there once we got married. Because we don't have children we could not find an NGO that could assist us. We started building the house bit by bit. We have not built a septic tank and latrine yet and the house is not connected to the water.'

This couple has thus started building themselves with money they loaned from a bank. However:

'I lost my job a few months ago and since then we have not been building. We are still repaying the loan and until we have done so we cannot loan more money.'

Losing her job meant they could not continue building. Her husband was still working and with that money they were repaying the loan. They still intend to finish the house. This shows again what the loss of job means. In their case there is still room to manoeuvre. The one working has a very good salary compared to that of an average household. That they have been able to loan money from a bank already indicates this because not most households are unable to do this.

These three cases illustrate different situations. Again, there is not one type of household or type of plot owner that has the same problem. Instead, what these cases learn us is that every household is very vulnerable to changes in their socio-economic status. The lack of job (and income) security means that all households might have to deal with the loss of job. When this happens they mostly have no means of continue building.

7.9 Self-building almost to a halt

We just presented some cases of families constructing a house themselves. The last chapter already showed that few households built a house themselves. In most cases not finding an NGO equals no house. This makes the development of LSE very dependent on NGOs while self-help housing initially was seen as the individual effort from households to build a house. The Alcaldía, housing NGOs and other stakeholders needed to provide the right environment for households to build a house. More self-help building would allow for more construction overall. We have seen that the financial capacities of households are low and vulnerable to change. This makes it very difficult for a family to build a house themselves. The reasons to not build themselves can be put into two main categories. The first one is that it is simply considered too expensive to do so. Low-income households simply do not have the means to build a house themselves unless it is made of cheap materials. This type of houses are

almost not built. Building a house from proper materials is much more expensive and out of reach to the poorest households. A second reason is that people are very hesitant to build. Many households claimed that it is insecure to build because building materials can get stolen overnight. This slows down self-building even more.

The set up of the building materials bank should give households another option and incentive to build a house themselves. Households can buy the necessary equipment and materials to build a house. They can use the bank to improve a house, for instance building another room or build a whole house from the ground. The building materials bank grants long term loans and assists with technical advice. However, so far it does not seem to offer a proper alternative as many respondents say:

The building material bank is too expensive.

Or:

'More expensive than buying materials on a market.'

Many respondents rule out the materials bank as a viable option. Building a whole house with the help of the materials bank would cost a family between US\$5.000 and US\$6.000. This, as a simplified example, would cost a family US\$50 per month on a loan of ten years. This is a too big an investment for many households. It should also be considered that a real culture of long term loans on housing does not exist. A ten year loan on a house can still scare a household simply because they are not used to it. The Building Materials Bank was originally set up as a tool for households to build a house. However, it built a few houses but is not a viable option to support households financially and technically with self-building initiatives.

The second reason that negatively influences people has to do with the insecurity of the neighbourhoods. There have been several examples of people's houses which became victim of robbery. Building materials, fences, barbed wire, even windows and doors are stolen. Building a house yourself costs time. Taking up a loan, building, repaying the loan, getting a new one and continue building. This cycle is repeated. As you don't build the house overnight there is constant danger of things getting stolen. This does not make people want to invest in it. Some comments put forward:

'It is too dangerous to build, they will steal things.'

Or,

'I don't want to risk losing the few things I have.'

And,

'It is insecure, they will steal everything.'

Insecurity is thus negatively affecting prospective self-builders. If money is not the main obstacle, security is yet another threshold for households in their decision to build a house themselves. This is an important factor in thinking about possible solutions towards self-building.

7.10 Conclusions

The interviews showed a variety of problems encountered. One of the most important results is that all household types are vulnerable to changes in their socio-economic status, being it financial or concerning health, leaving them incapable of building a house and moving to LSE. However, it has shown that some household types have greater difficulties to build a house and move to LSE. Singled headed households, and especially those by women have very few options to build. For households without children it is more difficult to be assisted by an NGO.

Why have households not built a house in Las Poetas?

The main reason for people not to have built a house is because they did not encounter a suitable NGO. For the lowest income groups and particularly single headed households, not receiving help from Fundapadele or Caritas equals not building a house. Other housing NGO's are often too expensive. We also saw some examples of households that did not receive help because they did not meet the conditions set by NGOs. Families building themselves have become more of an exception. This means that the construction of houses has become very dependent on housing NGOs.

Are there different reasons or impediments to not move to Las Poetas between owners of plots type A and B?

The main problem for not building is mostly linked to the fact that a household does not encounter an NGO which can assist them in building a house. This accounts for both owners of cheap plots as for those owning expensive plots. The reason why NGOs don't assist the specific plot owners does differ. Some households could not get assistance from NGOs because they were considered 'overqualified'. These are more often owners from an expensive plot. These households are mostly not able to get a loan from a bank either therefore they don't build a house. Other owners can't get assistance because they don't have a family with children or are a single headed households. None of these owners can get help from an NGO, severely limiting their options. Few households were building themselves neither. It is expensive and single headed households (with or without children) find it even harder to build because they lack that extra income or manpower to do so.

There were more cases of owners of expensive plots that did not need to move immediately, instead they are waiting for a better opportunity to build. With many of the expensive plots empty in Mariana Sanson and Azarias H. Pallais it is likely that owners are less motivated to make the move. Though we did not find any direct evidence, it is a safe assumption that many of the owners of an expensive plot don't want to move to LSE. Instead, they seized the opportunity to buy a plot which can always be transferred to their children. It also became clear that many expensive plots were bought with money earned abroad and that the economic situation of those households, once back in Nicaragua, can be very different. These households are thus also susceptible to changes in the socio-economic situation which affects their options to build. Becoming a single mother or unemployed are the two developments which negatively influence households the most. This can, and does happen to all households.

A final reason for so many empty plots is that the owners are still working abroad or often do so (seasonal work). They have a plot but not the time to build. When they are abroad often, their

willingness to build will only decline further especially when there is no one to look after the house when they are gone.

Why have households, which succeeded in building a house in Las Poetas, not moved there?

The percentage of owners living in the house decreased from almost 90% in 2004 to just below 80% in 2009. Besides that, another 10% of the houses built are completely uninhabited or only occupied occasionally, for example in the weekends or visited only once in a while. It showed that this negatively affects the security of the neighbourhoods of LSE. It also decreases the amount of people present during the day, limiting economic opportunities.

Different reasons for not moving to LSE became evident. The main reason to not move are changes in the socio-economic situation of a household. On a social scale becoming a single parent severely limits the possibilities of a household. Often this affects women who become single mothers and therefore do not want / can't move. They often thought of the neighbourhood as insecure and have fewer options for people to look after their children and they lack the social network when moving to a new neighbourhood.

Job and income insecurity means that household members can lose their job(s) leaving less room in the budget. The increased costs of living on their own cannot be paid for, meaning they will not move to LSE.

Health insecurity is another change which affects households options to move. Sickness in the family was mentioned as a reason to leave the house in one of the interviews. Selling the house has also been mentioned as a way to pay for medical treatment. Health insecurity and the treatment costs illness can bring along negatively influence households possibilities to move to LSE and sometimes force them to leave LSE.

Other households did not want to move to Las Poetas because of economic motives. People with a grocery shop for example did not want to move because they could not earn enough money. These respondents also thought of LSE as too unsafe to have a shop.

Which factors make owners choose to leave their house uninhabited, rented or looked after?

Houses that don't have the original owner living in will instead be rented, left uninhabited or have someone looking after it. Results showed that in case the house is fit to live in (basic services like water and electricity and no flooding during the rainy season), people will generally prefer to have someone live in the house because it is safer.

It also appears that the longer a family is not living in the house they built, the more likely it becomes they don't leave it uninhabited. Instead, the house is rented or a family member will look after it. When a household don't intend to move it is more likely for them to rent the house.

Whether households which have a family member working abroad (for a longer time or for seasonal labour) decide to rent the house, have it looked after or leave it uninhabited depend on different factors. In general these households also prefer not to leave the house uninhabited. When someone is working abroad or returns to León on a more regular basis (think of someone coming home every

weekend after working in Managua) it can be decided to leave the house uninhabited, having a neighbour or family member occasionally visit it. These are the houses for which it is difficult to establish whether or not they are occupied. When a family member is away for longer periods of time or when the socio-economic situation of the household members remaining in León makes it more difficult to move to LSE, the house will be looked after or rented. The latter will be more likely when a household does not intend to move to LSE in the near future. In case a house is rented this means that the owners' motives have changed. Assuming they bought the plot to build a house and live in it, now the primary function of the house is to earn money. This means that their intentions to move to LSE are more long term.

What is the impact of the lack of families moving to LSE for its future development?

Empty plots mean less people living in the neighbourhoods. This negatively influences (daytime) activity in the neighbourhoods and lessens home-based economic opportunities.

Secondly it means that it is much harder to create a community – which is already a long process – because whole parts of neighbourhoods are empty. From the perspective of assisted self-built housing, community development is seen as very important. If people can rely on their community for help – in the broadest sense – this can speed up the process and encourage people to build a house. In line with this, a stronger community will be better capable of achieving improvements at the neighbourhood level.

It has not been referred to yet, but the community of Maria Concepcion shows the extra possibilities they have with an active community organisation and a strong company, Arnecom, behind them. This has resulted in public lighting of the whole neighbourhood, the set up of micro-enterprises, a shop where rice and chicken is sold very cheaply and a guard patrols the neighbourhood during the day and night. The other neighbourhoods of LSE have not managed to do this. There are also no empty plots here.

Thirdly, less people present in the neighbourhoods decreases security which, as seen throughout the results, is a factor of increased concern for both people living in LSE as it is for people wanting to move to LSE.

Owners that are not moving to LSE form different problems. Instead of moving they leave their houses unoccupied, rent it or have someone look after it. There are differences in how these different occupancies influence LSE.

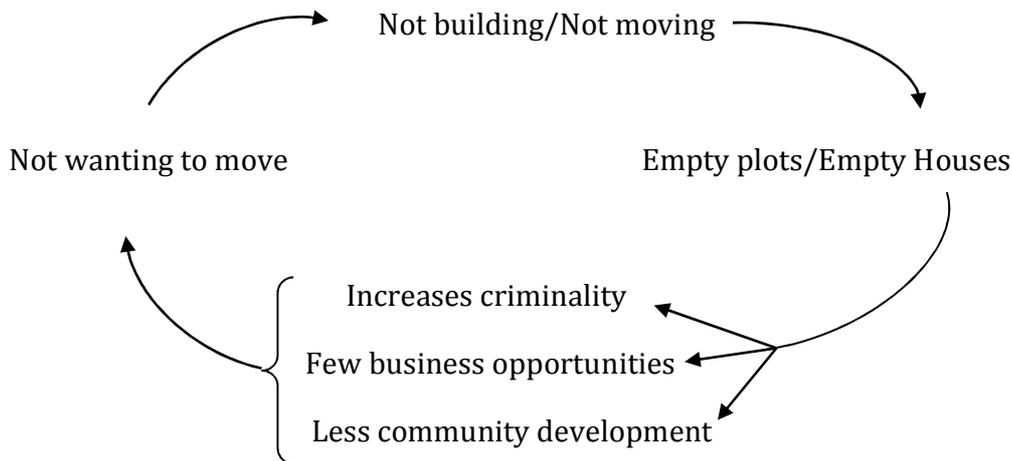
Empty houses have the same impact as empty plots, it means less people are living in LSE and the negative effects community development and insecurity. Empty houses are a potential target for thieves, are being neglected and partly demolished.

When a house is occupied, be it rented or looked after more people are living in LSE which can increase community activity and security. However, how well these inhabitants influence community development is debatable. It shows that people looking after houses are not always present. Some people only reside in a house during the weekend or some days during the week. These occupants don't have the same positive effect on community development which the original owners could have.

The problems ‘caused’ by not moving to Las Poetas are also twofold. Firstly they negatively influence the progress of LSE itself. It is becoming less secure and community development progress is affected by it. Economic opportunities within LSE are also affected by it, as we also noted with less people being economically active compared to 2004.

Secondly, these problems make LSE a less desirable place to live thus affecting people’s motivation to move to LSE. In Figure 7.1 the vicious circle of not moving to Las Poetas is depicted.

Figure 7.1 Vicious circle of not moving to Las Poetas



If people don’t build a house or are not moving to LSE, plots remain empty and houses are left unoccupied. This increases criminality because empty houses get targeted by thieves while there is a lack of social control. Economic opportunities are limited and community development is harder. This in turn negatively influences the image of Las Poetas (and LSE as a whole) which makes people hesitant to move, thus resulting in empty lots and people not moving. It is this vicious circle (also noted by Bredenoord, 2007;2008) that needs to be broken. In our opinion it is vital that LSE remains a neighbourhood that people want to live in and move to and does not change into an undesirable and dangerous place. That a third of the lots are still empty of itself is not a problem. Many families have been able to build a house which often was referred to as:

‘Something I never could have dreamed of accomplishing in my life.’

This is accomplished by the project and all the actors involved. It is also a long term programme that is set up to continue for years. It might need time for people to dare and invest money in a house on a loan which takes years to repay. This can prove especially true when self-help housing will increase with less help from NGOs. The involvement of NGOs and especially the donation of houses may have had a negative influence and decimated families taking building into their own hands, now waiting for projects. That it takes more time to build houses on these empty lots is not a problem itself. It only becomes so when LSE’s reputation and insecurity makes the neighbourhood undesirable to live in.

Chapter 8: Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

The thesis' main focus was on the development of LSE, with the opportunities and challenges households encounter to build a house. That less NGOs have been actively building, and that self-help housing efforts are decreasing have both attributed to less houses being built in the last couple of years of the project. We saw that the low-income households owning plots in LSE are particularly vulnerable to shocks to their socio-economic situation. These have a direct impact on the possibilities of the households to build a house, to move to their house in LSE, or forces them to leave LSE again. Considering the findings in the research and the theoretical framework on which the project is based – how well do practice and theory match, and are there already lessons to be learnt from the LSE example?

8.1 The role of title deeds and tenure security

In the theoretical chapter the role of tenure security on households' investment in their homes was discussed. A popular way of 'providing' tenure security is through title deeds. In the case of LSE the focus has never been on what the title deed meant to a household because a title deed follows after repaying the plot, it is both an official paper as well as the point to start building. During some of the interviews people would also be proud of the title deed and show it. The project has been able to provide both plot and legal tenure status to low-income households. However, the theory discusses some of the advantages of providing title deeds, of which increased investment into housing is one of the most important ones.

8.1.1 Increased investment into housing

As mentioned in Bredenoord (2005), it is believed that families will not invest – in a sustainable way – on illegally obtained plots without legal security. Whether or not this will happen is not possible to trace. We can change it around and ask: Have households invested more in housing because of the title deed? Though we have not done research to this particularly, results on housing opportunities and challenges seem to depend mostly on the socio-economic status of households, and externally to housing opportunities offered by others (read donations). That a household has a title deed does not seem to increase their efforts or investment into building a house. In case a household bought a plot with the intention to build a house and move to LSE (which is mostly the case), actually building a house is a matter of opportunity, not tenure security.

In some cases title deeds can be slowing down LSE's development. Households that are not building houses and that are not likely to do so in the near future, use their property title as a legal means to keep hold of the plot, stalling LSE's development. This is one of the most negative side-effects, and the LSE Project Office is looking at ways to combat this. One way is to demand a house being built within a certain amount of time or the land will be taken back and sold to another family. Although this sounds like a logical step to incentivise building efforts, it would also mean decreased tenure security. When the local government is able to retake the land and property title of a family, why would it hand out property titles in the first place?

Another way in which title deeds can slow down LSE's development is when they are transferred. During the interviews we met people whose title was in the process of being transferred, and cases in

which someone bought the plot for a son or daughter. Transferring titles take time and can slow down the building process.

8.1.2 Improved land and housing markets

Another practical reason to use property titles is the idea of improved land and housing markets. This is not important in the LSE project. Land is sold to specific beneficiaries, and the titles are not meant to be sold to others. Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi (2009) mention three situations of post-titling sales²⁶: *distress sales; sales in peri-urban city settlements to which residents have been relocated to; and gentrification in prime urban areas.* The *distress sale* is something that we also see happening in LSE. In cases where households were selling their plot, they primarily did it because the households could not build a house because of the socio-economic situation, and the need for money was high while the opportunity to move to LSE was very low. Distress sales as such do not endanger the project. When dealing with low-income households, vulnerable to shocks, the need to sell the plot is always present. When selling a plot can save a life, of course it will be sold. The second and third situations do not really reflect LSE's situation. Residents have not been relocated. However, location was often mentioned as a negative aspect, and that it influences people's desire to move to LSE. The final situation of property sales they argue is when a location is so desirable that higher income households want to live there, buying up property. This is not the case in LSE. The problem is more likely to be that higher income households (owning the expensive plots) do not intend to move to LSE. This affects LSE's development even more because the plots are located on each side of the main road when entering LSE. Instead of nice houses built alongside the road, giving LSE a positive and nice appearance, now one sees mainly empty plots.

Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi (2009) continue saying that 'in most cases titled households continue to regard their properties primarily as homes, the basis for family and community life and an asset to bequeath to their children, and they are unlikely to sell them'. This is an important aspect, and also reflects situations encountered with households owning plots in LSE. Regardless whether or not they have moved to LSE, households are often proud about the fact they own a piece of land, and even more so a house. We firmly believe that the far majority of households bought the land with the intention to move to LSE, wanting and needing a place for themselves, and later for their children. For those reasons most households do not wish to sell.

8.1.3 Improved access to mortgage

This is something that clearly has not happened in León. Even interviewed households which according to Nicaraguan standards can be classified as middle-income households the least, hardly ever get access to official loans from a bank, and having a property title does not increase the chances of this.

²⁶ They speak about post-titling, thus titling in illegal settlements. This differs from the situation of LSE, but we can analyse what the effect of title deeds are in this case too. In chapter 3.6.2 we already acknowledged that the land titling programme of LSE differs from others.

8.1.4 Alleviating poverty

According to de Soto (2000), formalising tenure unlocks ‘dead capital’ with the possibility of alleviating poverty. Of course, adding anything substantial to this point of view is outside the scope of the research. However, the research is part of a longitudinal research on the socio-economic situation of households in newly developed neighbourhoods in which land titling do play an important role. According to van Gelder (2010) it is especially difficult to establish the effect of formalising tenure security on the economic development of households. So far, the socio-economic development of households living in LSE showed a positive trend in general. However, we do not attempt to link this progress to moving to LSE and acquiring tenure security. The development of households so far, if linked to anything, is the presence of Arnecom, and that a large amount of people living in LSE work there. At the moment, we cannot link moving to LSE to an increase in the economic situation of households in any way. Moving to LSE has brought along more costs. Buying furniture and paying for water and electricity all add to the expenses of households.

Plate: 8.1

‘Families who move to Las Poetas often don’t have any experience with what it is like to live on their own. All of a sudden they have to pay for water and electricity. Often they lack furniture which then also needs to be bought. The costs of moving and living are all of a sudden overwhelming and some families simply can’t cope with this. They then move back to where they were living, leaving the house unoccupied.’

It has become clear how difficult it is for households to move to, and stay in, LSE. So far, the economic development of the neighbourhoods is also progressing slowly, and fewer opportunities exist to employ economic activities in LSE than in the city centre of León, also affecting economic development of households in a negative way²⁷. One possible positive outcome on the social status is that many single mothers, who own a house, now have a partner. This is not statistically proven, but shared in interviews with Fundapadele and Juntando Manos.

8.2 Self-help housing

Creating the right circumstances for self-help housing is seen as a way to enable low-income households to build homes themselves. UN-Habitat (see chapter 3.7) discusses the possible advantages of self-built efforts because it is affordable and flexible to the local needs. Self-help housing was also part of the philosophy of the LSE project, shaping the right circumstances through sites-and-services, and the provision of title deeds. These self-help housing efforts had been initiated at the start, with the construction of low-quality houses which were affordable. Self-help housing in the last few years of the project has decreased. Some families are still building themselves, as discussed in the interviews, but these houses are of better quality and more expensive to build, and therefore not affordable to the lowest income households. That low-cost housing are not initiated anymore (apart from one exception) has primarily to do with the NGO involvement (donating houses has decreased households’ will to invest in a house themselves while others got it for free). Instead, many families are waiting for

²⁷ For more information on the economic opportunities read: *Negotiating Household Challenges and Opportunities. Local Economic Development in LSE*

a better opportunity to build, meaning waiting for assistance of an NGO. In particular, the lowest income groups have little opportunity to build a house themselves nor can they afford NGOs' houses which are more expensive. These families have become passive; not being capable or empowered to get a house through means other than by donation or worse, not wanting to invest in building a house other than through donations. People also have relatively high housing standards in Nicaragua. For those wanting to build a house, insecurity is negatively affecting their efforts. Many building materials get stolen overnight, and even doors and windows on unfinished houses are not safe. The combination of both aspects is diminishing self-help housing efforts although there is a great potential for this, and it will probably become more important for the development of LSE if no large scale housing projects return. We can thus say that self-help in LSE is not living up to the expectations, and that new initiatives are important to keep producing houses.

8.3 New restrictions on buying plots and not building

The multitude of problems encountered by households in building a house have not gone unnoticed by the local government in León, nor have the unoccupied houses, houses for sale or rent gone unnoticed by the NGOs involved. New regulations are planned or were implemented with the sale of the new plots of the Utrecht reparto. One of the changes we heard while doing the research has to do with the selection of families, that it has become more difficult for single headed households to obtain a plot. This has been done because it is known that these households struggle more than others to build a house and move to LSE. Thus, it may help to increase housing production which is one of the main goals of the LSE project office, however, households headed by single mothers are important beneficiaries of plots, and often are in great need of a house. For this group it has now become even more difficult to obtain a plot which is a missed opportunity to improve the lives of single mothers. Another regulation is made on the time a plot can remain empty before the title deed will be withdrawn from the family. We are not sure whether this regulation has already been included in the contract or if it is still to be done. With this regulation, the project office clearly wants to reduce the time plots remain empty. This regulation could prove a huge incentive to build because if it is not done, the household runs the risk of losing the plot.

The owners of plots in Utrecht reparto will probably be affected by these new regulations. The development of the new neighbourhood will test the capabilities of households to build. Situated at the far east of LSE this new part will be the furthest away from the city centre. Lying more remote, and adjacent to a neighbourhood that has still many empty plots (lying east of Mariana Sanson) the development of the reparto has a lot of ground to cover. If housing NGOs continue to be unable to house the amount of families done before, then many of the owners of these plots have to manage to build a house themselves. The progress of the new neighbourhood will show how well households will be able to do so. We have seen that in many cases households just don't have the capacity to do so, and the major problem with taking back the land of a household is that it is very difficult to establish whether a household does not build because they don't want to live in LSE, or because they can't afford to build. When this is unclear, the true beneficiaries of the plot programme run the risk of being punished for not being able to build. This is especially the case because it is possible that households able to afford a house but don't want to move to LSE will build a house, but then rent it, while the households wanting to become independent and need a house can't afford to build and lose their plot.

8.4 Conclusions

The research results has been divided into three main parts. First it has delved into the socio-economic situation of the households living in LSE, including a comparison between the situation of those families living in Las Poetas in 2004 and 2009. The second part was about the physical development of Las Poetas between 2004 and 2009 with a focus on the status of the plots. The last results chapter discussed reasons why households did not move to LSE and elaborated more on the main research questions.

These three parts have given an overview of LSE's physical development with the household as its focal point. In the end the physical development is dependent on the capacities of households to succeed in building a house in LSE. We will now discuss the most important conclusions drawn from the research.

8.5 LSE's development

Chapter five presented the socio-economic situation of households in LSE in 2009 and compared the changes in the socio-economic situation of the households in Las Poetas in the period between 2004 and 2009.

Overall, the comparison of Las Poetas showed a better economic situation of the households in 2009. More respondents were engaged in formal employment and had fixed jobs than was the case in 2004. This was also reflected in the average income of households, which has increased. However, this positive trend depends a lot on Arnecom where many inhabitants of LSE work.

The results also showed that the marital status of the heads of households is insecure. Less people were married in 2009. It also showed that the marital status of a household and the economic situation are linked and that changes in marital status (becoming a single parent) have a negative impact on the households economic and social capacities, directly affecting its opportunities to move to LSE.

There is also a decline noted in the amount of economically active people within LSEs borders. Most of the inhabitants are working in the city of León or work outside León. Because of this, few people are present during the day which negatively affects economic opportunities for home businesses like grocery shops and workshops. It also increases the insecurity of LSE because there is little social control.

The comparison between the households in the neighbourhoods of Las Poetas and those of Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion showed significant differences in the socio-economic status of the households living there. These are caused by the way households were selected by the different NGOs and stakeholders involved. The existing differences between the households of the different neighbourhoods within LSE also reflect their opportunities. Difference between the neighbourhoods are found on housing quality, access to electricity and water, community development, safety issues, empty plots and different results on the amount of uninhabited houses and rented ones. Generally speaking we can conclude that the better the socio-economic situation of the households living in the specific neighbourhood, the better the standards. Comparing the different households types was also useful in analysing the households which have not moved to LSE.

8.6 The physical development of LSE

Chapter six showed the physical development of LSE. It thereby researched the importance of NGOs in the housing process, and looked at the role played by self-help housing. It concluded that very few households have been able to build houses without NGO support. Self-building effort is low, but some households are still doing it, though it appears more a strategy of the 'higher' income households. The major housing NGOs Fundapadele and Caritas did no longer have the financial means to support households with the donation of houses. This is reflected by a gradual decrease in housing production.

The amount of houses built per year decreased, measured over three periods, decreased. The anticipated increase in housing construction and the amount of households moving to Las Poetas with the improvement of basic services in 2005 did not happen. However, there was a sharp drop in the amount of uninhabited houses which decreased from 40% in 2005 to around 10% in 2009.

The amount of houses built per year over the whole period between 2000 and 2009 has been relatively constant, but the NGOs did not have enough capacity to fulfil the demand of houses in LSE. It is therefore important to increase self-building initiatives to keep developing LSE, especially in the wake of yet another reparto being ready for housing developments.

There appears to be a core group of plots which remain empty. Slightly more than one third of the plots in each of the neighbourhoods in Las Poetas were empty. Besides that, a disproportionate part of the expensive plots remain empty, mainly found in the southern part of Mariana Sanson. Though we noted similarities between challenges to build a house between households owning expensive plots and cheap ones, there seem to be a number of owners who don't intend to move to LSE at all.

8.7 Main reasons for households not to move to LSE

The final results chapter delved into the opportunities and challenges why households not move to LSE. These households were divided into two categories; those who did not build a house and those that had succeeded in building a house but did not move into it. The following conclusions were drawn.

The research did not encounter a single household type which was incapable of building a house. All households are vulnerable to socio-economic changes which limit the possibilities of those households in building a house, moving to LSE or remaining in LSE.

8.7.1 No NGOs

The majority of the households could not build a house because they did not encounter an NGO which could assist them. In most cases not finding an NGO equals no house. From 2006 the main and cheapest housing solutions offered by Fundapadele and Caritas were no longer in place, limiting low-income households opportunities to get access to housing, slowing down annual housing production. Other households never got access because they did not meet the preconditions set by an NGO in order to receive assistance. Single headed households and couples without children had difficulties receiving aid. Other households, with an above average socio-economic status, were seen as overqualified. This was often the case for households owning an expensive plot.

8.7.2 Low socio-economic status for households give little room to build

The main challenge for households to move to LSE is the susceptibility to shocks to the socio-economic situation. Having a secure job is a vital component in order to build a house. Without a secure job, investing in a house is difficult, there are few financing opportunities (loans), and households just can't afford to build a house. Losing a job leads to the loss of income, and directly means fewer opportunities.

Becoming a single parent also makes it more difficult for a household to move. It can include the loss of income, and it is harder to take care of children as a single parent, especially in a new neighbourhood with no social ties and without the direct help from family members (this help will be present in the house they live outside LSE). When these households did not build a house yet, it will mostly mean that building a house is no longer a priority. Not because the person does not want to become independent anymore, but because they can't afford to build, nor does LSE offer the right services needed. Distance to LSE becomes more of a problem, child care when the mother is working is more difficult.

Another shock is health issues within the family. This can keep a household from moving to LSE because the increased spending on medicines does not leave enough money to spend on housing. Having a sick child also means more intensive caring, and this is more difficult in a new neighbourhood without the assistance of the family. It can also mean that a family (temporarily) leaves LSE to take care of a family member for instance. Or, like we also discussed, someone selling their house to pay for a treatment. Even without experiencing shocks, most households simply lack the financial means to build a house themselves.

8.7.3 Security issues

Security per se is not necessarily the single reason for people to not move to LSE, but it plays a negative role in many decisions to move to, or build a house in LSE. Owners of home-based activities do not want to move to LSE because they perceive it unsafe. Additionally, the lack of people present during the day make it unprofitable to start, for instance a grocery shop.

Lack of security does play a vital role in the self-help housing process. Many respondents said they did not want to build themselves because building materials, even doors and windows get stolen overnight. This is an important conclusion, and because the self-help housing needs new initiative, making LSE more secure would be a great starting point. Even small-scale initiatives on the street level, having a vigilante patrolling a few blocks could reduce criminality. This kind of initiatives should be encouraged, especially from the community leaders. A more hands-on approach from the community could prove valuable. Lessons can be learned from María Concepción where a well functioning community, lead by enthusiastic leaders, created local solutions, like a security officer patrolling the premises.

8.7.4 Community building

Community building in newly developed neighbourhoods is a long-term process but an important one. We already saw how the lack of social ties can negatively influence opportunities to households and community building also increases self-help housing efforts. Besides this, community level solutions could prove a valuable way to use the people living in LSE to improve their own neighbourhoods.

8.8 Uninhabited, looked after and rented houses in LSE

Houses that don't have the original owner living in will instead be rented, left uninhabited or have someone looking after it. Results showed that in case the house is fit to live in (basic services like water and electricity) people will generally prefer to have someone live in the house because it is unsafe to have it unattended. It also appears that the longer a family is not living in the house they built, the more likely it becomes that they rent it instead of having a family member look after it. This also depends on whether a household intends to move to LSE or not. When they decide they don't want to move it is more likely for them to rent the house.

Decisions on whether to rent the house, have it looked after or leave it uninhabited depends on different factors. Not enough interviews were held with owners of the different kind of house status to have a conclusive idea about the exact correlation between the options. This would be an interesting point of view for further research, creating a better understanding of households decisions what they will do with the house in case they don't move to LSE.

Some arguments follow from results of the interviews. If someone is working abroad or returns to León on a regular basis a decision can be made to leave the house uninhabited. Also, when there is an intention to move to LSE on a short term it is possible that a household decides to leave the house uninhabited. In the last case it is also possible to have a family member look after it until they actually move. Other reasons for leaving the house uninhabited are; not suitable to live in; intending to return to the house in the short term; deciding what to do with the house.

When a family member is away for longer periods of time or when the socio-economic situation of the household members remaining in León makes it difficult to move to LSE, it is more likely the house will be looked after or rented. We assume that the less likely it is a household moves to LSE, the more likely it is they charge rent for the house.

8.9 Households not moving to LSE negatively affect its development

There are families that do not succeed in building a house resulting in empty plots, and there are households succeeding in building a house that don't move to LSE. Instead those houses remain empty, or have other people living in them than the owners of the plot.

Empty plots mean less people living in LSE. This decreases security because fewer people live in the neighbourhood. Fewer people living in LSE also negatively influences (daytime) activity within the neighbourhoods and with this economic opportunities. It also means that it is much harder to create a community because parts of neighbourhoods are not developed. Besides negative influences of empty plots, empty houses worsen security because they are targeted by thieves. Uninhabited houses are also a source of dissatisfaction for inhabitants throughout LSE.

The problems caused by not moving to Las Poetas are also twofold. Firstly they negatively influence the progress of LSE itself. It is becoming less secure and community development progress and economic opportunities are affected by it in a negative way. This makes LSE a less desirable place to live thus affecting people's motivation to move to LSE.

So far 2.262 households in Las Poetas have succeeded in moving LSE and an additional 720 households have houses in Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion. This is accomplished by the project and all the actors involved. A long term programme is in place to keep providing plots to low-income families. That it is taking more time to build houses on these empty plot is not a problem itself. However, it is important to keep looking for potential housing solutions, and strengthen self-help housing initiatives. When too few houses will be produced, and empty plots stay part of LSE, it will only become more insecure, making LSE an undesirable place to live. This should be avoided.

8.10 Recommendations

The first threat to LSEs development are the empty plots. If the housing NGOs are not capable of assisting individual households it is very important to promote more self-building. The building materials bank has been erected in order to provide families who want to build with another tool to achieve this. Unfortunately, many families regard the bank as too expensive and therefore exclude it as a valid option. It is important to get more households to build a house themselves again so a re-evaluation of the functioning of the building materials bank to provide loans and materials to individual households is needed.

The second threat to LSE is that fewer homeowners are moving to LSE (compared to 2004). That less people are moving to LSE and that houses are uninhabited or only temporary occupied are a result, as well as a catalyser for security issues and have a negative impact on community development. Increasing security in LSE lies at the core of improvements to be made. More involvement of the present inhabitants should be promoted to increase this. It is also important to create better opportunities for single headed households to move to LSE as they are often plot owners who have not built a house due to their socio-economic situation. Two general improvements are the need for better neighbourhood security and community development. Community development was also a central issue for the proper working of the neighbourhoods, and seen as an important tool for successful self-help housing. Community development is also important considering the fact that many people see the lack of social ties when they move to LSE as an additional difficulty. In the case of single mothers, affordable day care and after school childcare can be an important tool to make it easier for them to live in LSE. A good community initiative could also be to bring single mothers together and set up a system for day care.

Other possible improvements to increase security are public lightning throughout LSE; more police; neighbourhood watch or private security. We acknowledge that these improvements are not the task of the local government per se. Policing, for example, is a matter for the national government. Negotiating public services with the companies has been pursued by the local government throughout the process and it has proven to be difficult. These companies don't want to provide their services when there are no certainties for them to earn back the money invested. Also, the local government has a very limited budget which simply does not allow them to spend money on all these issues. Still, these should be present in the minds of all stakeholders active in LSE.

Local government can promote improvements through the community. Community activity in general has decreased and the inhabitants of LSE believe that the problems should just be fixed by the local government. This points to a passive, laissez-faire attitude which is not improving community

development. Through the community it should be put forward that the local government is not the main actor to address safety issues and provide public services and that there is not enough funding to do so either. More is thus expected to come from the community. The community of Maria Concepcion has taken matters into their own hands. By paying for a guard and getting public lightning they increased security. This proves beneficial for all the families living there. This community is active and has motivated leaders. A stronger incentive should also come from the different community leaders of the other neighbourhoods in LSE in order to activate and positively encourage its members to improve their community in all ways possible. Possible promotions can include the set up of a group of single mothers who can strengthen their ties, discuss problems they have and possible solutions others came up with as well as helping each other out with child care. Looking into the possibility of using members to guard the neighbourhoods at night is another possible initiative.

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Facultad de Geociencias – Geografía Social

Encuesta para el censo de hogares

Febrero – Mayo 2009

Jarko Tijssen – Conor Flavin

Datos de encuesta

Número de encuesta:.....

Fecha:...../...../2009

Nombre del encuestador:.....

Nombre del encuestado:.....

Número de lote:.....

Número de casa:.....

Barrio / Reparto:.....

Más casas por lote? No / Sí.

Cuántos personas viven en el lote?

Más familias por lote? No / Sí, Cuántas:.....

1. ¿La persona es jefe del hogar? Sí / No
 - Si no, donde está.....?
2. ¿Cuál es el sexo del encuestado? F / M

Observación

La casa fue construida por un ONG?

Sí / No / NS

¿Cual ONG?..... (nombre completo)

Características de la vivienda / Uso de materiales

Piso	Paredes	Techo
Enladrillado	Ladrillos/bloques	Madera
Tierra	Prefabricadas	Tejas
Embaldosado	Madera	Zinc
	Metal	Plástico / cartón
	Plástico / cartón	Nicalit

Condición de la calle: tierra / calle grava

Pórtico: Sí / No

No	Nombres	Apellidos	Sexo F ó M	Edad	Estado civil	Relación	Educación	Ocupación	Condición De Actividad	Categoría de Trabajo	Donde Trabaja?	Temporal/ Fijo	Tipo de Ingresos	Contribución Al Hogar?	Ingresos X mes
1.															
2.															
3.															
4.															
5.															

Datos Socioeconómicos

Estado civil	Relación	Educación	Ocupación	Condición De Actividad	Categoría de Trabajo	Donde Trabaja?	Temporal/ Fijo	Tipo de Ingresos	Contribución Al Hogar?
1. casado	1. jefe	1. Sin instrucción / analfabeto	1. trabaja, que tipo exacto	1. patrón / propia empresa	1. formal	1. LSE	1. fijo	1. fijo	1. sí
2. divorciado	2. esposo / a	2. Alfabetizado	2. desempleado, por cuanto tiempo	2. cuenta propia	2. informal	2. Zona Franca	2. temporal	2. Variable	2. no
3. viudo	3. hijo/a	3. Primaria incompleta	3. ama de casa	3. asalariado		3. León Cuidad	3. estacional	3. comisión de corredor	
4. madre	4. abuelo / a	4. Primaria completa	4. estudia	4. trabajo familiar sin remuneración		4. Otro Municipio		4. salario a destajo	
5. soltera	5. yerno / nuera	5. Secundaria incompleta	5. otra, es decir....			5. Managua (La capital)			
6. ajuntado	6. padres / suegros	6. bachillerato completo				6. Otro parte de Nica..			
7. otro..	7. nieto / a	7. Técnico / universitario.				7. Extranjero, donde?			
	8. Sobrino / a	8. Masters completo							
	9. otra,.....								

Error! Reference source not found.

1. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo tiene?

.....

La vivienda

2. ¿Cuántos años ha vivido en esta casa?

.....

3. ¿Dónde vivía usted antes de mudarse aquí?

- a. En León Sur Este (¿cual reparto?).....
- b. En la ciudad de León (barrio/reparto):.....
- c. En otra localidad del Municipio de León (comarca):.....
- d. Otro municipalidad de León.....
- e. Otro Departamento de Nicaragua:
- f. Otro país:
- g. NS
- h. NR

4. ¿Desde que obtuvo el lote, cuando empezó construir a su casa?

.....

5. ¿Cuál fue el motivo principal para mudarse a LSE?

.....
.....

6. Su familia más cercana (hijos/as, hermanos/as, padres) donde vive:

- a. En León Sur Este (¿cual reparto?).....
- b. Otro barrio de león
- c. Otra comarca del municipio
- d. Otra ciudad
- e. Otro país
- f. Más de uno.....

La casa, el lote y alrededores de la casa

7. ¿Tenencia de la casa?

- a. Propietario
- b. Alquilar (Sigue a pregunta 12)
- c. Cedida por servicio (ejemplo: cuidador de casa)
- d. Gratis
- e. Otro.....

8. ¿Tiene título de propiedad? Sí/No

- a. lo compró a LSE Alcaldía
- b. de otra persona)

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- c. El titulo está en trámite
- d. no

9. ¿El lote en que viven es

- a. Donado
- b. Pagado
- c. Esta pagándolo por C\$ por mes
- d. Esta alquilándolo porC\$ por mes
- e. Otro, es decir.....
- f. NS
- g. NR

10. ¿Cómo financió su lote?

- a. Yo mismo / he ahorrado dinero
- b. Con ayuda de mi familia / amigos
- c. Con ayuda de una organización de financiamiento, cual organización
- d. Con ayuda de un ONG
- e. Otro es decir.....
- f. Más de uno.....
- g. NS
- h. NR

11. ¿Tuvo problemas con financiar el lote?

- a. Sí, cual.....
- b. Algunas veces.....
- c. No
- d. NS
- e. NR

12. La casa en que viven es

- a. Donada
- b. Donada con mano de obra propia
- c. Pagada
- d. Esta pagándola porC\$ por mes
- e. Esta alquilándola por.....C\$ por mes (Sigue a pregunta 18)
- f. Otro, es decir.....
- g. NS
- h. NR
- i. *Donado con ayudante pagado*

13. ¿Cómo ha financiado su casa?

- a. Yo mismo / he ahorrado dinero
- b. Con ayuda de mi familia / amigos
- c. Con ayuda de una organización de financiamiento
- d. Con ayuda de un ONG
- e. Otro es decir.....
- f. Más de uno.....
- g. NS
- h. NR

14. ¿Tenía problemas con financiar la casa?

- a. Si cual.....
- b. Algunas cual.....

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- c. No

15. ¿Usted es el primer habitante de este lote y esta casa?

- a. sí, (sigue a pregunta 18)
- b. no
- c. NS
- d. NR

16. ¿Quién vivió aquí antes de usted?

- a. Familia
- b. Amigos
- c. El dueño de la casa
- d. Desconocidos
- e. NS
- f. NR

17. ¿Por qué le han dado este lote a usted?

- a. Tienen otra casa en León
- b. Se mudaron afuera de León
- c. Tenían mas lotes en LSE
- d. Servicio familiar / de amigos
- e. Otro es decir.....
- f. NS
- g. NR

18. ¿Está satisfecho con los servicios en su calle?

- a. Sí
- b. No. Si no, cual servicio en particular.....

19. ¿Su familia tiene un medio de transporte?

- a. No
- b. Sí, bicicleta / caballo / carro / motocicleta/.....
- c. NS
- d. NR

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Organización social en LSE

20. ¿Tiene un círculo de amigos en LSE?	Parte nueva	Parte vieja	No
21. ¿Tiene contacto con sus vecinos?	Mucho	Poco	No

22. ¿Cuándo tiene problemas económicos dentro su familia, como soluciona?

- a. Dentro la familia
- b. Con apoyo de vecinos
- c. Con apoyo de amigos
- d. Instituciones financiera
- e. ONG
- f. Otra
- g. Más de una.....
- h. NR
- i. NS

23. ¿Usted visita la casa comunal?

- a. Sí, para.....
- b. No

24. ¿Se siente seguro en su reparto?

- a. Si, completamente
- b. Si, está bien
- c. Mas o menos
- d. No mucho
- e. No es seguro

25. ¿Según usted, cual es la mejor manera de desarrollar su reparto? Es por.....

- a. Iniciativa propia
- b. Por la municipalidad
- c. Por la asociación comunal
- d. No puedo
- e. Otro,.....
-
- f. NS
- g. NR

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Otros ingresos

26. ¿Tiene otros tipos de ingresos en su hogar (que no ha dicho antes)?

- a. Agricultura urbana
- b. Remesas, de.....(personas),
C\$por mes (cuánto)
- c. Migración estacional
- d. Ayuda de ONG
- e. Ayuda de familia / amigos
- f. Alquilar habitaciones / casas
- g. Pensiones
- h. Otros, es decir.....
- i. NS
- j. NR

27. ¿Están todos los ingresos en dinero o también en especie?

- a. Solo dinero
- b. Solo en especie, es decir.....
- c. Combinación de dinero y en especie, es decir.....
- d. NS
- e. NR

28. ¿Usted ahorra dinero?

- a. No
- b. Sí, más o menosC\$ por mes
- c. NS
- d. NR

29. ¿Hay actividades para ganar dinero en su casa?

- a. No.
- b. Sí
 - Que tipo.....
 - ¿Dónde vende sus mercancías?
 - a. En la casa
 - b. Ambulante (en la calle)
 - a. En el mercado
 - b. En el centro
 - c. Otro, es decir.....
 - ¿Cómo obtuvo el capital fundamental para empezar con estas actividades?
 - a. Lo ahorró
 - b. Lo prestó al banco
 - c. Lo prestó a la familia / amigos
 - d. Obtuvo en crédito (de donde.....)
 - e. Más de una.

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f. Otro, es decir.....

- ¿Sus niños ayudan con esas actividades en la casa?

- a. No
- b. Sí

29. ¿Qué son las necesidades por su familia mas o menos importante?

	Muy importante	Importante	Más o menos Importante	No muy importante	No es importante
1. Seguridad en el reparto					
2. Vivir cerca de su familia					
3. Servicios básicos					
4. Proximidad al centro de león					
5. Encontrar trabajo					
6. Transporte					
7. Financiamiento					

30. ¿Usted tiene comentarios?

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Appendix II



Universiteit Utrecht

Facultad de Geociencias – Geografía Social

Encuesta para el censo de hogares

Septiembre – Octubre 2004

Anke op het Veld - Catelijne Berkhof - Anne te Molder

Datos de encuesta

Mapa del Lote

Número de encuesta:.....

Fecha:...../...../2004

Nombre de la encuestadora: Anke, Anne, Catelijne

Nombre del encuestado:.....

.....

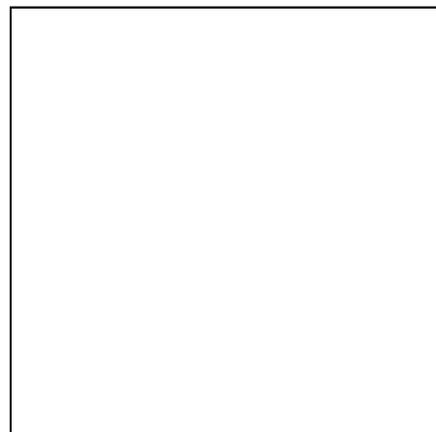
Número de lote:.....

Número de casa:.....

Barrio / Reparto: Mariana Sansón, Antenor Sandino H., Azarías H. Pallais, Etapa:.....

Más casas por lote? No / Sí, ve número de encuesta.....

Más familias por lote? No / Sí:



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1. ¿La persona es jefe del hogar? Sí / No
2. ¿Cual es el sexo del encuestado? F / M

Observación

La casa fue construida por un ONG? Sí / No

Características de la vivienda / Uso de materiales

Piso	Paredes	Techo
Enladrillado	Ladrillos/bloques	Cemento
Madera	Prefabricadas	Tejas
Tierra	Madera	Zinc
Embaldosado	Metal	Plástico / cartón
	Plástico / cartón	

Condición de la calle: tierra / calle grava / pavimentado / asfalto

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Nombre	Sexo	Edad	Estado civil	Relación	Educación		Ocupación	
	1. M		1. casado	1. jefe	1. Sin instrucción / analfabeto	8. bachillerato completo	1. trabaja	
	2. F		2. divorciado	2. esposo / a	2. Alfabetizado	9. tecnico superior incompleto	2. desempleado, por cuanto tiempo	
			3. viudo	3. hijo/a	3. primaria incompleta	10. tecnico superior completo	3. ama de casa	
			4. soltero	4. abuelo / a	4. primaria completa	11. Universidad incompleta	4. estudia	
			5. ajuntado	5. padres / suegros	5. ciclo basico incompleto	12. Universidad completa	5. otra, es decir....	
			6. madre soltera	6. nieto / a	6. ciclo basico completo	13. Preescolar		
				7. otra,.....	7. bachillerato incompleto	14. NR		
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
condición de actividad	Categoría de trabajo		Dónde trabaja?		Temporal / fijo	Tipo de ingresos	Contribución a hogar	Ingresos x mes
1. patrón / propia empresa	1. formal		1. LSE		1. fijo	1. fijo	1. sí	

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2. cuenta propia	2. informal	2. Zona Franca	2. temporal	2. Variable	2. no	
3. asalariado		3. León	3. estacional	3. comisión de corredor		
4. trabajo familiar sin remuneración		4. Managua		4. salario a destajo		
		5. otra parte de Nica, ...				
		6. Extranjero, dónde?				
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

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Los ingresos

3. ¿Qué tipo de ingresos tiene su hogar?
 - a. asalariado
 - b. cuenta propia
 - c. propia empresa si sí → encuesta de negocios
 - d. agricultura urbana
 - e. remesas, de.....(personas),
C\$por mes (cuánto)

 - f. migración estacional
 - g. ayuda de ONGs
 - h. ayuda de familia / amigos
 - i. alquilar habitaciones / casas
 - j. pensiones
 - k. otros, es decir.....
 - l. NS
 - m. NR

4. ¿Están todos los ingresos en dinero o también en especie?
 - a. Solo dinero
 - b. Solo en especie, es decir.....
 - c. Combinación de dinero y en especie, es decir.....
 - d. NS
 - e. NR

5. ¿Cuanto es su ingreso mensual en total / del hogar?
 - a. menos de 250 C\$
 - b. 251 - 500 C\$
 - c. 501 - 750 C\$
 - d. 751 - 1000 C\$
 - e. 1000 - 1500 C\$
 - f. 1501 - 2000 C\$
 - g. 2001 - 3000 C\$
 - h. 3001 - 4000 C\$
 - i. 4001 - 5000 C\$
 - j. Más de 5000 C\$
 - k. No tiene ingresos
 - l. NS
 - m. NR

6. ¿Después de pagar la casa, agua, electricidad, cuanto queda para vivir, por alimentación, ropa, etc.?
 - a. bastante
 - b. suficiente
 - c. insuficiente
 - d. nada
 - e. NS
 - f. NR

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7. ¿Usted ahorra dinero?
- a. No
 - b. Sí, más o menosC\$ por mes
 - c. NS
 - d. NR
8. ¿Su familia tiene un medio de transporte?
- a. No
 - b. Sí, bicicleta / caballo / carro / motocicleta/.....
 - c. NS
 - d. NR
9. ¿Usted usa este medio también por su trabajo o ingresos?
- a. No
 - b. No, para ir a estudiar
 - c. Sí, para transportar propios productos, por ejemplo al mercado
 - d. Sí, para transportar productos de otras personas
 - e. Sí, para transportar personas (taxi)
 - f. (Sí,) Otro, es decir.....
 - g. *Para ir a trabajar*

La vivienda

10. ¿Desde cuando vive usted en LSE?
- Desde.....(mes).....(año)
11. ¿Dónde vivía usted antes de mudarse aquí?
- a. En León Sur Este (p.e. Rubén Darío o en otro reparto)
 - b. En la ciudad de León (barrio/reparto):.....
 - c. En la municipalidad de León (comarca):.....
 - d. El departamento de León.....
 - e. Otra parte de Nicaragua:
 - f. Otro país:
 - g. NS
 - h. NR
12. ¿Cuál fue el motivo principal para mudarse a LSE?
-
-

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La casa, el lote y alrededores de la casa

13. ¿El lote en que viven es
- a. Donado
 - b. Donado con mano de obra propia
 - c. Pagado
 - d. Esta pagándolo por C\$ por mes
 - e. Esta alquilándolo porC\$ por mes
 - f. Otro, es decir.....
 - g. NS
 - h. NR
14. ¿Cómo ha financiado su lote?
- a. Yo mismo / he ahorrado dinero
 - b. Con ayuda de mi familia / amigos
 - c. Con ayuda de una organización de financiamiento
 - d. Con ayuda de un ONG
 - e. Otro es decir.....
 - f. NS
 - g. NR
15. La casa en que viven es
- a. Donada
 - b. Donada con mano de obra propia
 - c. Pagada
 - d. Esta pagándola porC\$ por mes
 - e. Esta alquilándola por.....C\$ por mes
 - f. Otro, es decir.....
 - g. NS
 - h. NR
 - i. *Donado con ayudante pagado*
16. ¿Cómo ha financiado su casa?
- a. Yo mismo / he ahorrado dinero
 - b. Con ayuda de mi familia / amigos
 - c. Con ayuda de una organización de financiamiento
 - d. Con ayuda de un ONG
 - e. Otro es decir.....
 - f. NS
 - g. NR
17. Entonces usted es el dueño/la dueña de la casa?
- a. sí
 - b. no
18. ¿Usted es el primer habitante de este lote y esta casa?
- a. sí, sigue a pregunta 21
 - b. no

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- c. NS
- d. NR

19. ¿Quién vivió aquí antes de usted?

- a. Familia
- b. Amigos
- c. El dueño de la casa
- d. Desconocidos
- e. NS
- f. NR

20. ¿Por qué le han transmitido este lote a usted?

- a. Tienen otra casa en León
- b. Se mudaron afuera de León
- c. Tenían más lotes en LSE
- d. Servicio familiar / de amigos
- e. Otro es decir.....
- f. NS
- g. NR

21. ¿Hay agua por la calle? Sí / No / Se está construyendo

22. ¿Cuáles son sus gastos por el agua al mes?

..... C\$ / no tengo / ilegal / pozo

23. ¿Cuáles son sus gastos por la electricidad al mes?

..... C\$ / no tengo / ilegal

24. ¿Cuáles son sus gastos por combustibles al mes?

..... C\$ / no tengo Para cocinar: Leña / Gas / Electricidad

25. ¿Cuántos cuartos tiene su casa?

..... cuartos: dormitorios / sala / sala, cocina incluida / cocina / baño

26. ¿Hay una pila séptica? Sí / No

27. ¿Hay una letrina? Sí / No / Inodoro

28. Usted está satisfecho con en su barrio

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- b. Su barrio reparto / etapa? → 39
- c. No

38. ¿Por qué no participa o participa poco en las actividades?

- a. Tiene otros asuntos de atender.
- b. No cree que sea necesaria su participación.
- c. El barrio/la etapa no está bien organizado.
- d. No se toman en cuenta las decisiones de la comunidad.
- e. No existen recursos para resolver los problemas.
- f. No le interesan las actividades.
- g. Otro,
- h. No existen problemas
- i. NS
- j. NR
- k. *Tiene poco tiempo viviendo*
- l. *No le invitan*
- m. *No hay*
- n. *No le gusta*

39. ¿En que tipo de actividades en su barrio usted participa?

- a. Reuniones
- b. Gestiones de solicitud y/o demanda
- c. Proyectos de mejoramiento físico
- d. Proyectos sociales
- e. Fiestas y actividades sociales
- f. Cursos
- g. Actividades deportivas
- h. Actividades religiosas
- i. Otra,.....
- j. Ninguna
- k. NS
- l. NR

40. ¿Usted participa en alguna manera en el desarrollo de su barrio?

- a. Gestionando apoyo y haciendo demandas ante las instituciones y organizaciones.
- b. Con trabajo voluntario para la realización de proyectos (mano de obra).
- c. Con aporte financiero.
- d. Con aporte material.
- e. Impulsando actividades de recaudación de fondos (rifas, fiestas, excursiones, kermés, etc.).
- f. Otra,
- g. Ninguna
- h. NS
- i. NR

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41. ¿En general, cuánta gente participa en actividades en su barrio?
- a. Nadie
 - b. La minoría
 - c. La mitad
 - d. La mayoría
 - e. Todos
 - f. NS
 - g. NR
42. ¿En cuales actividades participa más la gente?:
- a. Reuniones
 - b. Gestiones de solicitud y/o demanda
 - c. Proyectos de mejoramiento físico
 - d. Proyectos sociales
 - e. Fiestas y actividades sociales
 - f. Cursos
 - g. Actividades deportivas
 - h. Actividades religiosas
 - i. Otros,.....
 - j. Ninguna
 - k. NS
 - l. NR
43. ¿Se han resuelto algunos problemas en el barrio con la participación de la población?
- a. Sí, por ejemplo.....
 - b. No
 - c. NS
 - d. NR
44. ¿Usted se siente comprometido a su barrio?
- a. Sí, por ejemplo con.....
 - b. No
 - c. NR
45. ¿Según usted, cual es la mejor manera de desarrollar su barrio. Es por.....
- a. Iniciativa propia
 - b. Por la municipalidad
 - c. Por la asociación comunal
 - d. No puedo
 - e. Otro,.....
 - f. NS
 - g. NR
 - h. Apoyo del extranjero

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46. Como se siente aquí en el barrio?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

47. ¿Usted tiene comentarios?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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Appendix III



Universiteit Utrecht

Facultad de Geociencias – Geografía Social

Entrevista de personas con lote en LSE

Mayo 2009

Jarko Tijssen

Datos de encuesta

Número de encuesta:.....

Fecha:...../...../2009

Número de lote:.....

Número de casa:.....

Barrio / Reparto:.....

Nombre del encuestador:.....

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3. ¿La persona es jefe del hogar? Sí / No
- Si no, donde está.....?
- ¿Cuál es el sexo del encuestado? F / M

No	Nombres	Apellidos	Sexo F ó M	Edad	Estado civil	Relación	Educación	Ocupación	Condición De Actividad	Categoría de Trabajo	Donde Trabaja?	Temporal/ Fijo	Tipo de Ingresos	Contribución Al Hogar?	Ingresos X mes
1.															
2.															
3.															
4.															
5.															

Datos Socioeconómicos

Estado civil	Relación	Educación	Ocupación	Condición De Actividad	Categoría de Trabajo	Donde Trabaja?	Temporal/ Fijo	Tipo de Ingresos	Contribución Al Hogar?
1. casado	1. jefe	1. Sin instrucción / analfabeto	1. trabaja, que tipo exacto	1. patrón / propia empresa	1. formal	1. LSE	1. fijo	1. fijo	1. sí
2. divorciado	2. esposo / a	2. Alfabetizado	2. desempleado, por cuanto tiempo	2. cuenta propia	2. informal	2. Zona Franca	2. temporal	2. Variable	2. no
3. viudo	3. hijo/a	3. Primaria incompleta	3. ama de casa	3. asalariado		3. León Ciudad	3. estacional	3. comisión de corredor	
4. madre	4. abuelo / a	4. Primaria completa	4. estudia	4. trabajo familiar sin remuneración		4. Otro Municipio		4. salario a destajo	
5. soltera	5. yerno / nuera	5. Secundaria incompleta	5. otra, es decir....			5. Managua (La capital)			
6. ajuntado	6. padres / suegros	6. bachillerato completo				6. Otro parte de Nica..			
7. otro..	7. nieto / a	7. Técnico / universitario.				7. Extranjero, donde?			
	8. Sobrino / a	8. Masters completo							
	9. otra,.....								

1. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo tiene?
2. ¿Cuándo tiempo vive usted aquí?
3. ¿ La casa donde vive ahora, es
 - a) Propia/o de familia
 - b) Alquilada
 - c) La está cuidando
 - d) Posa sin pago
 - e) Otro.....

4. ¿Cuándo obtuvo el lote?

.....
.....
.....

5. ¿Has cancelado el lote, cuando?

.....
.....
.....

6. ¿Tiene usted el título de propiedad?

.....
.....
.....

7. ¿Cómo financió su lote?

.....
.....
.....

8. ¿Usted ahorra dinero?

.....
.....
.....

9. ¿Cuál fue el motivo principal para comprar un lote en LSE?

.....
.....
.....

10. ¿Cuál es el primer motivo que usted no va a mudarse a LSE?

.....
.....
.....

11. ¿Está satisfecho con el lote que compro'?

.....
.....
.....

12. ¿Tiene usted una idea cuando va a mudarse? ¿Cual cosas pueden influir esto?

.....
.....
.....

13. ¿Pensaba para vender, alquilar?

.....
.....
.....

14. Usted tiene un cuidador para su lote en LSE?

.....
.....
.....

15. Ha buscado financiamiento o ayuda de un ONG o cooperativa y como va los condiciones?

.....
.....
.....

16. Obtuvo credito / Ha prestado dinero para pagar para su lote?

.....
.....
.....

17. Usted tiene otros planes para hacer algo con su lote?

.....
.....
.....

Appendix IV

Methodology questionnaire

The sample

To get all neighbourhoods equally represented in the sample we decided to use a cluster sample. This makes sure all neighbourhoods are equally represented according to their share of houses compared to the total sample population. Table 0.1 shows the cluster sample.

Table 0.1: Cluster sample of LSE

Neighbourhood	Number of houses	Percentage houses compared to total number of houses present in LSE	Number of questionnaires
Azarias H. Pallais:	421	23.2%	140
Antenor Sandino:	477	26,3%	158
Mariana Sanson:	276	15,2%	91
Maria Concepcion:	269	14.9%	89
Lino Arguello	368	20,3%	123
Total	1811	99,9%	601

The first column shows the total number of houses present in each neighbourhood, totalling 1811 houses in the whole of LSE. This is translated into a percentage in the second column, representing the share of each neighbourhood to the total amount of houses present. In total we wanted to conduct 600 interviews. The final column shows the targeted amount of questionnaires to be held in each neighbourhood.

The second requirement was composed of a systematic sampling technique. In order to be equally representative, we randomly chose a starting point for each of the neighbourhoods. In this way we potentially avoided the error of periodicity. After this starting point, every third house on the list was visited. This number was calculated by

dividing the total number of houses by the number of questionnaires in each neighbourhood.

Into the field

During four weeks, visits to LSE were made twice a day, often seven days a week. In the morning a team would go between 7 am and 12 pm, followed by a second visit in the afternoon between 2 pm and 5 pm. After 5 pm it would start getting dark and it was not considered safe to continue the survey. We decided to visit each house three times at most if no one was home which was also done during the baseline study. Visiting a house three times seemed achievable given the time we had. A third attempt was normally done during a weekend to reach people working during the week. If no one was there the third time, the questionnaire remained unanswered for that address and noted down as a 'non-respondent'.

The Alcaldía provided us with a sample list containing all the plots and built houses of Las Poetas. The list was one year old, so it did not include houses built during the last year. The Alcaldía only had maps of the plots in the neighbourhoods of Lino Arguello and Maria Concepcion, and the field visits showed no empty plots in these two neighbourhoods. By counting the amount of plots on the maps we were able to determine the amount of houses in these neighbourhoods.

We did not have a clear view on the response rate or the availability of people before we started, however, 600 questionnaires were considered feasible because the same amount of questionnaires were held in 2004. Finally, 375 questionnaires were held.

Table 0.2: Response rate

	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents	375	62,4%
Uninhabited	79	13,1%
Empty plots	8	1,3%
Non respondents	139	23,1%
Total	601	99,9%

Table 0.2 lists the response rate. Seventy nine of the houses visited were uninhabited. The majority of these houses were fully constructed and it appeared as if a family was living there. By asking neighbours we were able to determine whether or not a house was inhabited. Eight of the plots were empty. These are considered errors in the sample because all the plots in the

sample list were supposed to have a house. According to the data file with the information in the questionnaires, one of the respondents had no data and should therefore be considered as a non-respondent. This error has been corrected by only using the data of the respondents in SPSS, and this leaves the amount of respondents at 375.

Methodology observations

Into the field

We managed to recruit a team of foreign students living in León. Together we visited LSE in order to map the plots. The team received a short training to learn to recognise uninhabited houses and how to behave in the field. Behaviour in the field meant that the research teams should try and be as less obtrusive as possible. Off course, it is impossible that groups of mainly white women get by unnoticed in LSE. Still we asked to try and keep some distance and only ask neighbours whether a or not a certain house was inhabited when it could not be identified by observation.

The difference between the result on uninhabited houses from the questionnaire (13%) and the observations (3% Las Poetas and Maria Concepcion and 10% Lino Arguello) show that many of the houses which seem occupied are actually uninhabited most of the time. Often someone will be looking after a house, visiting it at times to mown the lawn, check on it or take care of the plants. In other cases someone is working abroad for periods of time, leaving the house empty in between. These houses seem occupied but are actually uninhabited. For further results on unoccupied houses we use the amount found during the questionnaire as we feel that is the most reliable one.

A house can also be in different stages of construction, making it difficult to establish whether it is under construction, unoccupied or 'rípío' (see Appendix V for pictures of the different types)²⁸. Therefore the status of the house of a respondent was sometimes different then was thought before.

Houses for rent and plots/houses for sale were noted down when there was a sign in front of the house declaring it as such. These only form a very small portion of the sample, 0.3% for houses for rent and around 1% for sale. In reality many more households in LSE are actually renting - which we know from the questionnaire. The percentage of people selling is the combined result of plots for sale and houses for sale. This was done unintentionally after the results were gathered.

After all the plots were mapped, this was used to determine respondents for the in-depth interviews.

Methodology in-depth interviews

The Sample

The in-depth interviews are of qualitative nature. This means that the amount of in-depth interviews do not need to be representative for the whole population. These serve

²⁸ In the cases of rípío construction of a house had started but the household, for whatever reason, was no longer completing construction. That would leave a plot with a few walls, sometimes half a house or overgrown with vegetation.

to get a better understanding of reasons why people are not moving to Las Poetas. We assumed different reasons for not moving to LSE between owners with different plot statuses. We used a purposive sampling technique to include all the different owners.

The goal was to get around twenty in-depth interviews. Most of the people who are not living in Las Poetas have an empty plot. We therefore decided that we wanted half of the interviewees to have an empty plot. In the sample, two interviews were allocated to each of the repartos. The ten interviews left were randomly distributed amongst the different categories. Then we randomly picked plot numbers from the sampling frame.

	Empty Plot	Uninhabited House	House for Sale	House for Rent	Plot for Sale
Azarias H. Pallais (cheap)	2	1		1	
Azarias H. Pallais(exp)	2			1	
Mariana Sanson(cheap)	2		1	-	
Mariana Sanson (exp)	2			-	1
Antenor Sandino	2	1	1	2	1
Antenor Sandino (annex)	2			-	

Forty plot numbers were drawn at first (two samples) which allowed us to visit another house on the list in case a respondent could not be reached. This was done because of the limited time that was left to conduct interviews. The Alcaldía provided the addresses of the families in the sample.

Within the first week all the addresses were visited, either successfully or not. Running into a high amount of non-response another sample was needed²⁹. This was drawn in the same manner as the first one.

In total four samples (some eighty addresses) were drawn which formed the basis of the sample. During the interviews many different cases were encountered. The plot was bought for someone else; the person owning the lot actually lived outside León and the address listed was of the parents; the plot was transferred.

²⁹ As with the survey, non-response means nobody was encountered to interview. There is no case in which a person declined to cooperate with the interview.

To get access to these cases a second technique, called 'snowball' sampling, was used. This technique is used for non-probability samples. Respondents are gathered from acquaintances of other respondents. This created the opportunity to interview another son or daughter who had a plot in case the one on our list was not present. We also saw a sign in León city of someone selling her plot. When seeing this we asked about it and interviewed the owner.

Conducting the interviews

Interviews were held during the week, mostly starting in the afternoon until 7 pm. Going in the morning proved quite useless as hardly any people were at home at that time. From 7 pm onwards it was getting dark and no further interviews were held for safety reasons. When the interviewee was at home he or she cooperated with the interviewer so we did not record non-respondents.

We visited a total of eighty houses. It was a time consuming process to get one interview. More often than not no one would be home. There were errors in the sample with outdated addresses or the person owning the plot was living outside León or working abroad. In other cases the person owning the plot had bought it for someone else, usually a family member. The property titles of these plots were often in the process of being transferred. If possible the interview would then be conducted with the person that was going to get the plot. In the end twenty one interviews were conducted.

Appendix V:

Plate IVa : Two Houses 'deshabitada' in Azarias H. Pallais (houses built by Habitat for Humanity)



IVb : House ripio or deshabitada?



IVc : Empty plot in Azarias H. Pallais



IVd: Uninhabited house for sale in Mariana Sanson

