

Article

Unearthing Truth: Forensic Anthropology, Translocal Memory, and “Provention” in Guatemala

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Abstract

This article deliberately examines the search for truth after decades of conflict in Guatemala. Excavations of mass gravesites and the painstaking exhumation processes carried out by professional forensic anthropology teams continue to allow families to locate lost relatives—reclaiming truth and supporting calls for justice. For Guatemalans, the search for truth now transcends national borders, especially among migrant communities in the United States. The family remains the central unit through which the work of Guatemalan forensic anthropologists is undertaken. In an effort to engender deeper insights about these exhumation processes from a social science perspective, this analysis promotes the use of specific “tools” in Guatemalan forensic anthropology investigations. The first is an exhumations concept map, which yields important questions meant to stimulate meaningful analysis. The second, Story Maps, is a technology application with the potential to mediate digital access to the emerging Guatemalan translocal space. The research in this analysis suggests that these “tools” strengthen Burton’s notion of “provention” in Guatemala.

Keywords

forensic anthropology; Guatemala; provention; Story Maps; transitional justice

Issue

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1. Introduction

Guatemala continues to recover from the armed conflict that plagued the country for decades. A brutal civil war that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands saw violence that disproportionately targeted indigenous communities in the Guatemalan highlands. Family members of victims continue to seek the truth and push to hold perpetrators accountable, both in country and among diaspora communities abroad. Exhumations carried out by professional forensic anthropologists have come to embody the search for truth in Guatemalan society given requests by the indigenous to locate their lost relatives. This phenomenon transcends

borders as communities of Guatemalans, particularly in the United States, continue actively to pursue truth. Forensic evidence has proven able to bring closure to indigenous families and successfully establishes detailed scientific records (Snow, Peccerelli, Susanávar, Robinson, & Ochoa, 2008, pp. 91-95). As such, exhumations have become an integral part of the transitional justice context in Guatemala. As Guatemalans emigrate, though so too does their quest for closure—creating a phenomenon of translocalism.

The Guatemalan forensic anthropology engagement over decades introduces a historical perspective to a research inquiry pertaining to the relative newness of transnational life. Like that of Bryceson’s research,

the transnational focus in this article is on family members (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002, pp. 3-30). Given the state's lack of acknowledgment regarding the internal violence that terrorized Guatemala's indigenous Maya population, the identification of the disappeared by family members contributes to the transitional justice of the country by challenging impunity and clarifying history (Mazzucelli, 2015).

Transitional justice in the Guatemalan context is defined as the way a society "transitioning" from "repressive rule or armed conflict deals with past atrocities" and, more specifically, how the society "overcomes social divisions or seeks 'reconciliation'" among its diverse peoples (Call, 2004, p. 101). In the practice of transitional justice—a relatively new field in its own right—a recent phenomenon has emerged, causing an intersection of two disciplines that might otherwise be unlikely. Since the late 1980s, the process of exhuming human remains in post-conflict settings for the purposes of building criminal cases, creating a historical account or providing closure for victims' loved ones has gained momentum. This reality has created a space for hard science—namely forensic anthropology and archaeology—in transitional justice practices and literature. Unlike truth commissions and retributive trials, however, forensic anthropology's entry into post-conflict settings as a restorative tool is underrepresented in the existing social science literature. Forensic anthropologists are able to reflect on the use of their trade as it relates to human rights, yet typically through their unique lens. They are able to analyze, for instance, how effectively they can identify a victim, his or her cause of death, age, gender, etc., from their remains. This sort of analysis is extremely useful. However, social scientists typically seek to understand the broader implications for victims, communities, local and state power structures, etc., of the tools utilized to promote transitional justice. Research in this vein, as it pertains specifically to the use of exhumations, requires more attention.

The responsibility inherent in this research is to be aware "that to write social science is not just passively to 'report findings' but to enter into a whole range of power relations. Thus, instead of the disinterested observer we sometimes imagine ourselves to be, we are in fact changing what we observe by the very fact of reporting it, if not in the actual observing itself" (Luker, 2008, p. 8). In Guatemala only several thousand remains have been identified in recent years from among the hundreds of thousands of documented disappearances. The situation has led to sociopolitical cleavages that remain pervasive in Guatemalan society. This reality urges on-going forensic investigation and academic inquiry into exhumations that reveal these "underlying" cleavages. The ambition of state leaders who commit heinous crimes against their populations is to write historical narratives, which forget to relate that violence ever occurred or that the "disappeared ones"

ever existed. In Guatemala, the millions of documents still being microfilmed provide evidence of mass atrocity in records that were kept meticulously over time by state officials (Mazzucelli, 2014; visit to the Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive, with reference to digitized documentation, <https://ahpn.lib.utexas.edu>). As millions of documents are digitized in a broad international cooperation, the site that houses Guatemala's historical memory (Doyle, 2005, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB170>) becomes a focal reference place to encourage critical reflection and proactive inquiry beyond the country's borders.

In the spirit of intellectual curiosity, as the authors reflect on the linkages between forensic anthropology and transitional justice, the "social-psychological element, reflected in the notion of reconciliation" is explored in the Guatemalan case (Kauffman, 2005, p. 2). The notion of restorative justice is particularly relevant with its focus "more on transforming social relations so that past atrocities will not take place again" (Crocker, 1999, pp. 43-64), thereby laying a foundation for what may be defined in the 21st century as the emergence of mass atrocity "provention" (Sandole, 2014, pp. 24-26). In citing "provention" to frame our reflections on mass atrocities in Guatemala, the authors reference the research of John Burton, the Australian public servant and academic whose writings pioneered the conflict resolution field for over 40 years during the postwar era. The neologism "provention," introduced by Burton in the conflict resolution literature, is the "prevention of an undesirable event by removing its causes, and by creating conditions that do not give rise to its causes" (Burton, 1990, p. 3). According to Dunn, provention is "a general theory of positive social change, where conflict is a central problem area, where the goal is the dynamic of a peaceful society (constituted at all levels of human behavior), where the relationships are sustained by legitimate mechanisms of reciprocated support and not by coercive measures or by elites, by virtue of their own authority" (Dunn, 2004, p. 128). There is perhaps no context that demonstrates more explicitly the need for "provention" than Guatemala. In thinking about the steps necessary to "remove [underlying] sources of conflict, and more positively to promote conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control behaviors" (Burton & Dukes, 1990, p. 161), it is critical to recall the internal armed conflict that lasted thirty-six years. Guatemala's internal violence claimed the lives of two hundred thousand people with tens of thousands more "forcibly disappeared" during the latter part of the last century.

Forensic anthropologists have continued to work tirelessly since the end of the conflict to uncover and identify remains, to build evidence for cases ultimately to be levied against perpetrators, and to work bringing closure to families. This work in Guatemala to "respect these spaces that belong to the communities" (Maz-

zucelli, 2015, p. 66) persists as the State refuses to acknowledge past transgressions on a massive scale. It is this work that places the family at the center in the experience of locality in Guatemala, as the transformation of the cultural landscape occurs slowly, thereby speaking in ways to the manner in which “provention” has been framed.

2. Unearthing Guatemala’s Twentieth Century Landscape

This article references existing literature in its selection of a cultural approach to analyze the twenty-first century Guatemalan landscape (Henderson, Nolin, & Peccerelli, 2014, pp. 98-99). This approach relies on a postmodern view of culture defined as “a system of meaning and identity that accounts for why and how people in any particular setting act as they do” (Ross, 1997, p. 67). Of central importance is interpretation, which researchers on the ground explain is “based on our knowledge and experience with the mass grave exhumation in Guatemala” (Henderson et al., 2014, p. 99). Reflections on the process to exhume and identify “disappeared ones” (*desaparecidos*) murdered during the twentieth century internal armed conflict in Guatemala, 1960–96, reveal the role of the family as integral to the collection of forensic evidence and the return of bones “to be properly memorialized, thus ending their long years of hiding in plain sight” (Snow et al., 2008, p. 116). In the quest to understand the specificity of the Guatemalan context, particularly to establish the family as the unit of analysis through which its twentieth century’s postcolonial landscape is uncovered, psycho-cultural interpretations may, as Taylor explains, provide “inter-subjective meanings which are constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act” (Taylor, 1985, p. 36).

The relationship between the indigenous and the landscape in Guatemala has been shaped over many centuries by internal violence. The memories of brutality perpetrated initially by European colonizers and, more recently, by the State, especially the Army (Henderson et al., 2014, p. 101) are buried deep in the individual and collective mass consciousness across generations. The graves of those murdered, of the forcibly “disappeared,” are waiting to be uncovered by families in remote areas throughout the countryside as well as central locations in urban cemeteries (Snow et al., 2008, p. 89). In 1997, the creation of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG) established a non-governmental organization (NGO) that began gradually, in painstaking ways, to establish trust with families by documenting evidence to discover what happened in Guatemala (Peccerelli, 2014). Forensic investigations are undertaken to create spaces to find the disappeared; as a result, evidence is gathered, truth is known, and forced disappearance becomes visible. One case details the story of Mili-

tary Base No. 21, established in 1971, located outside of Cobán, Alta Verapaz (Henderson et al., 2014, pp. 108-110). After its deactivation in 2004, a Regional Training Center for Peace Keeping and United Nations Operations (CREOMPAZ) began to work in a place where victims of forced disappearance lay buried. Names and remains, the identities, of the disappeared remained invisible, hidden underground, for decades.

Family members participate in the excavation process, evoking “the strong connection the survivors have to the dead” (Henderson et al., 2014, pp. 108-110). The experience of locality in Guatemala is that families engage in the grassroots transformation of the cultural landscape as participants in acts of resistance: what is repressed and denied in historical terms is altered in physical space (Henderson et al., 2014, pp. 108-110). Appadurai’s insights are in particular respects still relevant: “A good deal of the violence associated with the foundational ritual (Bloch, 1986) is...the force that is required to wrest a locality from previously uncontrolled peoples and places. Put in other terms (de Certeau, 1984), the transformation of spaces into places requires a conscious moment...” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 183). The family is the protagonist in “a conscious moment” during “the process of excavation and exhuming a mass grave” that Henderson et al. argue is “an act of place making for the victims and survivors” (2014, p. 111).

The Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation’s (FAFG’s) vocation to gather forensic evidence during the process to identify remains establishes a connection to the land that families share. The process of exhumations continues in Guatemala given the overwhelming need to respond to families who “want truth,” seek justice, “want the bodies back” just as these families “want everyone to know their families did nothing wrong” (Peccerelli, 2014). The protagonist in Guatemala’s narrative of cultural transformation is the family, whose members search for truth “in a country thick with political and legal impunity” (Henderson et al., 2014, p. 101).

In Quiché, north of the country near the border with Mexico, (Mazzucelli, 2015, p. 67) the working space created to attempt even a small mass grave exhumation “requires an active level of engagement with the cultural landscape” (Henderson et al., 2014, p. 110). The journey these indigenous families embark upon in the search for truth as an act of historical reconciliation is part of the story created by Dr. Snow (1928–2014). His work as a pioneering forensic anthropologist (McFadden, 2014, p. 1) inspires the lives of those who devote their lives to uncovering the truth of historic transgressions perpetrated against local communities by states around the globe (Koff, 2005, p. 10). Dr. Snow is respected as the father of a movement to apply scientific inquiry to uncover human rights violations that states from Argentina to Ethiopia continue to ignore (The Economist, 2014). In Latin America, the

continuation of Dr. Snow's work sustains hope to those families who search for their loved ones through exhumations of bones in unmarked graves.

In Clyde Snow's case, the process of identifying victims really emerged in 1979 in the wake of an American Airlines crash that killed 273 people. Snow worked with a computer programmer to develop a program that could match victims' information and dental records with skeletal remains (Vaughn, 2001). This was done under the auspices of an investigation. Yet, the experience also suggests something more. Identifying the victims was the primary goal. Anyone could easily cross-reference any survivors with the flight manifest. Meticulously determining the identity of remains, however, suggests a desire to provide victims' families with some sort of closure. This is very much consistent with forensic anthropology's entry into the transitional justice discipline. Nonetheless, in specific contexts the goal of accumulating evidence has overshadowed the original intent of taking care of the victims' needs. This finding has significant implications in reflecting on the potential to nurture restorative justice and thereby sustain "provention" in the Guatemalan context. Clyde Snow's engagement in the country with that of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation's (FAFG's) team consistently placed the victims' needs and those of the family members at the forefront of their work.

Forensic anthropologists follow in the footsteps of Clyde Snow by writing new chapters in the story that is his legacy to the world. The Guatemala case affirms this legacy as one in which each family in civil society plays a specific role. In light of her work on different continents, Clea Koff explains that, in forensic anthropologist investigations "interacting with the dead, we affect the living: we alter their memory and understanding of past events" (Koff, 2005, p. 260). In this article's inquiry, re-writing history for states takes place at a level under the ground as graves are exhumed. This is a different image of international relations: the bones that speak rely on evidence that nuances more traditional systemic explanations identified by political theorists (Waltz, 1959, pp. 1-15). Moreover, rewriting history by exhumation applies scientific inquiry in a radical departure from the instrumentalist focus on the elite construction of narrative (Jesse & Williams, 2011, pp. 11-12). Koff relates that "it's clear how our work affects the memories of families, as the dubious relief afforded by the contents of a body bag replaces fears and wonderings about missing relatives. At that moment, the event that has been remembered as responsible for the disappearance of a loved one is re-remembered as the event that caused that person's death" (Koff, 2005, pp. 260-261).

3. Integrating Maps to Deconstruct the Guatemalan Context

The exigencies of the Guatemalan case linking forensic

anthropology and transitional justice concerns led Dylan Heyden to create an exhumations concept map that represents a starting point in developing a broader understanding of exhumations in general by seeking their deconstruction. The purpose of the map is to guide scholars and practitioners to ask relevant questions and to draw conclusions that touch upon a deeper reality that must inform "provention" efforts in exhumation contexts. The map uses a common metaphor—exhumations as a "tool." It is common to hear this phrase used within the literature (Eppel, 2014). Scholars use this terminology, however, to refer to exhumations as a mechanism. This makes the concept much less tangible. A tool like a hammer or a saw is something that can be more carefully deconstructed. After all, the hammer or saw is made up of certain materials, produced by a certain company, used for specific tasks, and is often not the only tool being used to complete a task. Applying this metaphor to exhumations, the same sort of questions may be asked. The exhumations concept map reflects this reality.

As introduced in this article, Heyden's creation of the exhumations concept map, aims to augment the existing body of work by focusing simply on the use of exhumations in more recent historical post-conflict settings. His research demonstrates that exhumations in general are used in diverse post-conflict environments. Yet, the way exhumations manifest themselves varies greatly, thereby warranting further study. In this context, Guatemala is one of the most important cases in which exhumation processes may be explored further due to the duration of its internal armed conflict as well as its ethnic dimension. A common metaphor that links each separate facet is used—deconstructing the characteristics of exhumations as a "tool" to guide this analysis. The term "tool" is employed quite frequently in the literature in order to refer to exhumation as one of many mechanisms that contribute toward the truth, justice, and reconciliation. However, taking this language literally and thinking about exhumations in a way that parallels a hammer or a saw is useful. Here, for instance, concept mapping is integrated to organize and discuss the importance of the following questions: 1) Who asks for the tool to be yielded?; 2) Who wields the tool?; 3) What is the make or brand of the tool?; 4) How is the tool used in relation to other tools?; and 5) Whether the tool is being used to build or tear down structures? This analysis may be used less to make sweeping normative claims about exhumations; ascribing value judgments is problematic in that this suggests exhumation processes can be replicated elsewhere producing similar outcomes. These claims also fall victim to the problem of defining success and failure for transitional justice, which may vary greatly depending on different actors' preconceived notions of these ideas.

At this juncture, the authors reflect in the constructivist tradition on the applications of Story Maps

(<http://storymaps.arcgis.com/en>), which, Mazzucelli suggests, may broaden virtually different contexts as digital public spheres. Narratives of indigenous family as well as inter-ethnic relationships in Guatemala may thereby be explored in more depth. This idea relates to a visit by Mazzucelli in Guatemala City to the interactive exhibit “Why Are We the Way We Are?” which highlights inequality and racism throughout the history of the country. The exhibit, based on substantial anthropological and historical research, aims to address the central themes influencing power relations in Guatemala. The historical journey upon which the visitor embarks allows for an understanding of “the construction of inequality and racism as a tool of domination and oppression in order to benefit the country’s small economic and political elite” (Paniagua, 2012, p.34). The series of artistic and curator resources are meant “to engage the interest of visitors” thereby provoking their questions pertaining to their own positions on inequality and racism (Paniagua, 2012, p.34).

The exhibit is participatory in its approach with an audience that is directed at ladino (a mix of mestizo or hispanicized) children and young people from the capital. These younger generations generally “do not have access to appropriate opportunities to learn, reflect, and engage in dialogue about issues such as racism, prejudice and inequality,” (Paniagua, 2012, p.34) which is a measure of the exhibit’s success. Yet, little is known about the follow up to the discussions about racism, prejudice and inequality in the classroom, when everything returns to “normal” in the aftermath of the visit to the exhibit (Paniagua, 2012, p.34). Of greater significance in thinking about the linkages between transitional justice and forensic anthropology is that although the exhibit “presents the armed conflict as a tragic episode which is part of the larger historical framework of oppression and racism of the country,” enough information is not offered to allow the visitors to understand that the impunity for these crimes today is evidence of the persistence of racism and inequality (Paniagua, 2012, p.34).

Given the need to follow up about discussions pertaining to racism and inequality in the classroom by pointing to their persistence in society as a result of the internal armed conflict, the uses of Story Maps take on a particular relevance as a fundamental way to strengthen “provention” efforts. This is true within the Guatemalan society as well as on a more transnational scale through the diaspora given its growing participation in the exhumation process. Although the FAFG is just beginning to reflect on ways to serve Guatemalan families in the diaspora, it is possible to reflect on potential applications of Story Maps, to relate the translocal context to a global audience by relying on data that forensic evidence provides (Mazzucelli, 2014, p. 91). The use of Story Maps may achieve such visualizations through careful inclusion of family member testimonies, responses to forensic investigations as the remains of loved ones are identified,

images of local oriented exhumation processes, maps that detail the areas in which exhumations occur, narratives that relate the journeys of family relatives to exhumation sites, multimedia content that speaks to migrant experiences in Guatemalan local communities in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere, and text depicting the narrative of translocality as this is established by different family members. The narrative may chronicle the journeys of the diaspora thereby relating locales of origin in Guatemala to destinations families identify as they emigrate. In other words, these journeys may establish the necessary connections that nurture “provention” more broadly in the translocal space. In this context, the selection of Story Maps must be assessed over time with respect to the Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) being applied in the mass atrocity response context with particular focus on the ethical and security challenges in question (Mazzucelli & Raymond, 2016, forthcoming).

The migration from Guatemala over the past several decades indicates that, while the family inside the country remains the locus of “provention” concerns, emerging translocal connections among family members in the diaspora assume increasing significance (Mazzucelli, 2015, p. 69). The indigenous Maya and ladino (mixed) peoples may be distinguished as “two migration streams from Guatemala” without reliable empirical data to visualize the breakdown for either stream (Jonas, 2013, p.1). During the 1980s, the close relationship between the internal armed conflict and the economy led to a significant increase in migration for “a combination of political and economic reasons” (Jonas, 2013, p. 2). One reason to focus on the Guatemalan diaspora concerns its cohesive presence as a large congregation in specific areas: 750,000 in Los Angeles; and 250,000 in Langley Park outside DC (Trull, 2015, p. 1). Fredy Pecerelli explains: “Over 1.5 million Guatemalans...are there because of the conflict...have people that are missing...that forcibly disappeared” (Trull, 2015, p. 2). In Langley Park, the Guatemalan locality is produced in the search for the peace that finding the remains of a loved one can provide (Trull, 2015, p. 3).

The term coined by Schiller and her colleagues, namely, “transmigrants,” which refers to immigrants who build “social fields by maintaining a wide range of affective and instrumental social practices spanning borders,” (Faist, Fauser, & Reisenauer, 2013, p. 12) is relevant in exploring the Guatemalan translocality. The diaspora is a group comprised of members who experienced territorial dispersion over time resulting either from a traumatic experience or specialization in long-distance trade (Cohen, 1997). The Guatemalan diaspora is emerging as a community which, although without propinquity, links “through solidarity to achieve a high degree of social cohesion through a common repertoire of symbolic and collective representations” (Faist et al., 2013, p. 15) in the production of translocality.

As the FAFG expands its services to the United States, relations between the Guatemalan locality in country and the one in Langley Park or elsewhere are likely to become more intricate as the need to nurture “provention” deepens. Grassroots activism can persistently contest through place-making what the State continues to ignore. Given its role as the NGO providing forensic anthropological expertise and services to connect these localities in a global context, the FAFG may begin to expand the translocal space that “dignifies victims of enforced disappearance and other violations by uncovering evidence, disclosing their stories, giving them a name and a proper burial, and reuniting them with family members” (FAFG, 2015, p. 2).

The article’s findings assert that the FAFG’s engagement relies on the “social ties,” (Faist, 2004, p. 4) that may be defined as the smallest analytical units in a translocal space. For the purposes of this research, social ties “represent a sustaining and continuing series of pluri-local practices between at least two individuals” (Faist et al., 2013, p. 54). In order to deepen these social ties, the FAFG has a vocation to be present for the Guatemalan diaspora “enhancing respect for human rights by uncovering truth, grave by grave, fostering knowledge about the past and providing tools to promote accountability” (FAFG, 2015, p. 2).

Given the polarization that still exists in the Guatemalan society, there is a danger that the country is likely to remain a “divided nation of “remembers” and “forgetters” for whom the “future continues to look very much like the past” (Kauffman, 2005, p. 24). Story Maps can, through the integration of collected empirical data, make visual, in the emerging context of diasporic interventions, what observers assert: in Guatemala, local efforts—among them exhumations—had the most success in changing “lived experience and perception” (Arriaza & Roht-Arriaza, 2008, p. 152). In other words, empirical data from the ground may provide a basis to understand the memorialization that

exhumation processes embody visually, in yet another way, by reflecting on their meaning geospatially (Ferrand, Thomas III, & Dunning, 2012).

4. Exhumations as a “Tool”

Guatemala is perhaps the most important country in which to begin specific qualitative research on exhumations through a social science lens. Its content is unique with arguably one of the longest sustained periods of internal armed conflict in recent memory. The violence in the country is very much rooted in sociological and ethnic inequalities. Exhumation processes are simultaneously a specific lens with which to explain these issues and an explanatory framework. Inequalities play out in the daily operations of truth seekers while their work helps to elucidate broader transitional justice concerns, including the backlash that has influenced the transitional justice context. Only by speaking with the different actors engaged in exhumation processes, including forensic anthropologists in the field, and, when possible, families, relevant government officials, and others offering services to victims’ living relatives, can the purpose of the inquiry be realized. That purpose is to drill down to the local level of analysis within Guatemala to assess the extent to which “provention” is nurtured by evaluating different achievements, challenges, and trends in exhumation processes within families, and the larger communities in which they live, with respect to a broader transitional justice context.

Since exhumations have become so engrained in the transitional justice culture, it is important to understand the process on the ground and, more specifically, how the exhumation process impacts the family within the larger community. The Guatemalan context provides a starting point to assess the relevance of Story Maps and the exhumations concept map (see Figure 1) introduced in this article.

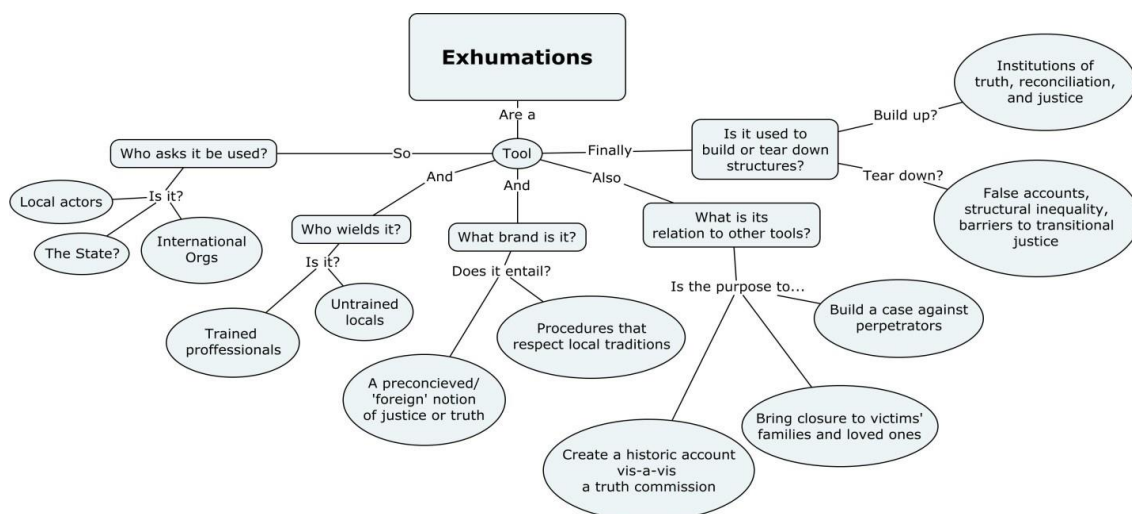


Figure 1. Exhumations concept map.

The following sub-sections reflect, on the five main questions posed in the concept map as these pertain to Guatemala drawing comparisons when helpful to elucidate the exigencies of the local context: 1) who asks for the tool to be used or who initiates exhumations?; 2) who wields the tool or which actors are physically conducting exhumations?; 3) what brand is the tool or what is the mandate and what does it reflect?; 4) what is its relation to other tools or is exhumation being used to support a truth commission or trials and is there any accompanying psychosocial support for victims' families?; 5) is the tool used to build or tear down structures or what are the ultimate long-term impacts exhumations hope to achieve?

4.1. Who Asks for the Tool to Be Used?

Perhaps one of the most telling components of any attempt to incorporate exhumations into a transitional justice process is determining which actors called for their initiation in the first place. This is different than those who physically do the digging. Exhumations are often initiated by international organizations, the State or local actors. This information is important because it clearly explains the origins of the mandate that forensic anthropologists are given in their efforts to discover the truth. Each level also has its own trade-offs.

The local level offers the best ability for families of victims in the most impacted communities to have a voice in the process. In her research on exhumation processes in Zimbabwe, Shari Eppel reflects, "In Zimbabwe, the reburials were a locally controlled process, which occurred when the government responsible for the massacres remained in power" (Eppel, 2014, p. 405). She argues that in spite of the repressive regime that maintained power, the rural community of Matabeleland was able to benefit through locally oriented exhumation processes. Local efforts also have the added benefit of taking into consideration the local contexts, which broader efforts cannot. For instance, Laura Arriaza and Naomi Roht-Arriaza argue that in Guatemala, local efforts—among them exhumations—had the most success in changing "lived experience and perception" (Arriaza & Roht-Arriaza, 2008, p. 152). The authors contend that exhumations specifically are a local endeavor. While by law the exhumation of a clandestine grave cannot proceed without a representative from the Public Prosecutor's office or a judge—sometimes hindering the process—the endeavor is purely local (Arriaza & Roht-Arriaza, 2008, p. 152). Once remains are recovered and identified, communities organize public reburial ceremonies consistent with local traditions. In the case of Guatemala, the impact the conflict there had on the Mayan community is strong.

Local oriented exhumation processes, therefore, emphasize the necessity for communities to heal and remain consistent with the Mayan *cosmovision* or cos-

mology that proper burial is necessary to maintain the balance of the living and the dead. As Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza reveal, communities, national NGOs, and religious authorities typically fund exhumations. The authors also explain that, at the time the article was written in 2008, the efforts of two forensic anthropologists, which began in the early 1990s, led to 700 persons being identified. The Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) documents nearly 200,000 victims over the course of the conflict (CEH, 1999, p. 17). The Guatemala case highlights the potential funding and resource problems that might exist with respect to a conflict of such magnitude, which is one of the difficulties of local exhumation processes.

Besides being less capable of adapting to local realities, state-led exhumation processes require a state-level admission of conflict. In cases where violence was perpetrated by the state itself, as in Chile, Argentina, Peru, or Guatemala, the likelihood of successful state-led exhumations depends largely on the ability of state power structures to transition into ones more likely to admit wrongdoing. This has occurred to varying degrees in Chile, Argentina, and Peru; yet much less has been done in Guatemala (Navarro-García, Pérez-Sales, & Fernández-Liria, 2010, pp. 1-18). This reality makes the need to nurture "provention" critical, notably through exhumation as "place-making" in country while strengthening translocal connections among families that comprise the Guatemalan diaspora.

4.2. Who Wields the Tool?

Once actors decide to instigate exhumation processes, they often decide who will be involved in the physical labor of excavating sites and identifying remains. For the most part, this involves employing highly trained forensics teams; in some cases, locals have assumed responsibility to begin digging up mass graves. The impacts of this can be detrimental to what is, for all intents and purposes, a crime scene. Forensics experts precisely document their findings, which, in some cases, are then utilized in legal proceedings or to support a national truth commission. Forensic anthropologists and transitional justice practitioners are often critical of instances when local actors seek to act on their own. In Guatemala, as the experiences of the FAFG reveal:

The process of exhuming reveals the truth and evidence required to challenge impunity (EPICA, 1998). Surviving family members and loved ones have the right to know the truth. Losses associated with the disappearance of a loved one are as permanent as is the crime (Boss, 1999). The family member's involvement, whether providing testimony, *antemortum* data, DNA sample, and/or being present at the exhumation, is cathartic and allows for the mourning process to close (EPAF,

2012). One point the Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team (EPAF, 2012) and the FAFG emphasize during every stage of the forensic process is the importance of dignifying the dead. Since the victims of Guatemala's internal armed conflict were reduced to 'bare life', these victims have been buried in clandestine graves without the proper burial according to their spiritual and cultural beliefs (CEH, 1999). The time and effort spent properly exhuming, identifying, then returning the remains to family members disassembles the 'bare life' state the victims were reduced to during the internal armed conflict. (Henderson et al., 2014, pp. 106.)

For the members of the FAFG Team, respecting these spaces that belong to the families means that:

Through forensic and social anthropological processes, the FAFG exhumes the truth of Guatemala's brutal past to fulfill the promise of the fundamental right to life for the victims and survivors, as well as historical clarification. Since 1992, the FAFG has exhumed 6,990 remains in 1,513 investigations throughout the country (Figure 1). At first, the FAFG focused their forensic efforts upon known sites such as rural massacres, but now it is concentrating on the search for the disappeared *—los desaparecidos—* people whose whereabouts and fate are unknown (FAFG, 2010). The epicenter of the search for the disappeared is located at La Verbena cemetery, in Guatemala City, where the FAFG hypothesizes that individuals of forced disappearance during the internal armed conflict are hidden in the depths of bone wells (Snow et al., 2008). (Henderson et al., 2014, p. 106.)

In Guatemala, the FAFG's efforts to centralize the work of exhumation as "place-making" integrate the family into the process without sacrificing the integrity of forensic evidence collection. The Foundation's vocation to provide closure for the families while engaging the judicial process demonstrates a two-pronged approach to "provention" as the focus remains on restorative justice. This inquiry seeks to establish Guatemala as a baseline from which to assess other investigations.

4.3. What Brand Is the Tool?

In the survey of the literature, the degree of universality required among forensic methods in order adequately to identify remains and use findings for evidence purposes was briefly discussed. With this in mind, it is important to consider that in each instance where forensic teams enter a post-conflict setting they are influenced both by their pre-conceived notions of justice and reconciliation as well as their particular mandate. In the cases of both the ICTY in Bosnia and

the ICTR in Rwanda, when both employed forensic teams to carry out exhumations of mass graves, one of the primary purposes of both bodies was to compile evidence that would ultimately be used in criminal proceedings. Consideration for victims is present in varying degrees in both cases. Indeed victims were by no means completely shut out of the process; yet, the mission of justice, first and foremost, is clearly outlined in both mandates.

In contrast, other local oriented processes have created more grassroots community-led ways of dealing with remains once they are identified. Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza explain that in Guatemala:

Once bodies have been...identified, many local communities organize massive public reburial ceremonies. These are moving, impressive affairs, during which hundreds of people turn out to accompany the coffins to the burial ground, prayers are said, food and memories are shared and a marker or memorial is erected (2008, p. 167).

The success in Guatemala of a community-spearheaded exhumation process stands in contrast to the re-traumatization that survivors have undergone in Rwanda. The key variable is definitively context, which speaks most definitively to the profound need to retain the focus on the family in the quest to nurture mass atrocity "provention" as a civil society imperative.

4.4. What Is the Tool's Relation to Other Tools?

The relationship between exhumation processes and other transitional justice "tools" has been implicitly addressed in the previous sections. Two primary functions that exhumations often have support either a truth commission, justice proceedings or, to some degree, both the commission and proceedings. In Chile, the connection was less straightforward. The truth commission prompted exhumation processes, which ultimately led to trials. Guatemala was a little more dysfunctional as well (Navarro-García et al., 2010, pp. 1-18). Yet, in other cases, exhumations represent the first attempt to gather information. Ultimately, because forensics often supports other transitional justice mechanisms, the use of trained forensic experts is critical. Otherwise the information becomes unusable. It is important to note also that very few contexts solely involve exhumation processes. There are also no direct links between exhumations and other mainstream transitional justice processes such as reparations. Yet, as Navarro-García et al. point out, in Latin America a clear connection between psychosocial services and community oriented exhumations does exist (2010, pp. 1-18). This is likely due to the fact that re-traumatization is a main concern, especially with the employment of exhumation processes. The most im-

portant concept is that exhumations are not applied in a vacuum. There exists an inevitable interplay between exhumations and other transitional justice tools.

4.5. *Is the Tool Used to Build Up or Tear Down Structures?*

The notion of the larger purpose of exhumation processes is perhaps the most complex question to tackle. This is because the question is more theoretical in nature. To understand whether or not exhumations are being utilized along with other tools to build up structures—supporting broader concepts like representative democracy, rule of law or other institutions for peace—or tearing down barriers to reconciliation, goes beyond the other tools that exhumations support. Instead this question seeks to read *between* the lines of a particular mission or mandate. For instance, a reading of Eppel’s piece on Zimbabwe reveals her opinion that exhumations in the Matabeleland region of the country were largely successful. The language she uses points to the underlying goals of exhumations in this context: to mitigate potential causes of future conflict. She argues that after reburials, “major family rifts linked to unresolved grief, displaced anger and fear were resolved” (Eppel, 2014, p. 411). In this case, the purpose of exhumations was to tear down structures. In Spain, the goal is similarly to tear down structures, in particular the ‘pact of forgetting’ and culture of taboo surrounding the civil war that pervades to this day (Rubin, 2014, pp. 105-107).

Perhaps, though, it is unfair to separate the act of tearing structures down and building new ones. In Spain, if exhumations prevail, Spanish citizens may be able to build upon the truth to create a system, not of forgetting, yet, rather, of facing the past. In Guatemala, the dichotomy between building new structures while tearing others down is also present. Consider that reports indicate the majority of victims during the civil war in Guatemala were of indigenous origin (Arriaza & Roht-Arriaza, 2008, p. 155). By employing exhumation techniques and revealing this truth, Guatemalan activists are actively tearing down the racism that fueled the conflict in the first place. Simultaneously, communities are marking gravesites and creating structures that memorialize the atrocity. These are structures of memory that communities create to sustain “provention” as a strategic imperative while simultaneously working to mitigate other barriers.

Yet, for organizations like the ICTY and the ICTR, their support of exhumation techniques ultimately relates directly back to supporting the very legal framework from which they originated. By trying criminals for human rights violations in international courts, these organizations give more legitimacy to themselves and the ability of international human rights law to be applied in future contexts. There is unquestionably a degree of concern for local communities in which in-

ternational criminal tribunals like the ICTY and ICTR operate. Still the purpose of exhumations for these organizations ultimately transcends the local, or even state, context to reach the international environment. Building a case in Rwanda is indeed important for the Rwandan people; from a legal perspective, however, this experience creates a precedent for similar criminals elsewhere.

5. **Drawing Lessons from the Maps in the Guatemalan Case for a Broader Research Inquiry**

Both the concept map and Story Maps elucidated in previous sections represent two distinct tools aimed at 1) producing richer research insights and 2) guiding practitioners in the field, both in order to drill down to the roots of barriers to “provention” in the Guatemalan context. The questions that make up the concept map, for instance, when applied to Guatemala could each represent a starting point for more thorough inquiry. Months of research, for instance, could be devoted to understanding why exhumation processes were initially orchestrated by local actors—not state or international ones—and the sociopolitical and ethnic cleavages that prohibit an authentic state recognition of the conflict. This, however, is beyond the scope of this article. The point is as a research tool these lines of questioning can serve to go beyond surface level examinations that focus strictly on the impacts of exhumations—taking them for granted. Instead the process of deconstructing that this concept map promotes encourages drilling down to the structural roots of conflict and discovering how they can be overcome. This concept map also serves to benefit practitioners in their understanding of local contexts, especially power dynamics. Questions like “what is the tool’s relation to other tools” also serves to promote self-awareness of practitioners’ roles in the general transitional justice panorama.

Similarly, if Story Maps were integrated in the Guatemalan context, the application would serve a similar purpose. This article has illustrated, for instance, the translocal experience of Guatemalans and the diaspora communities in Los Angeles and Langley. Story Maps have the power to mirror the translocal space on a digital platform, visualizing narratives and data geospatially. Not only could this tool serve to solidify the family as the central unit of analysis; it would also serve as a public resource for those with and without ties to the conflict. Certainly the potential of such a technology to memorialize the conflict in a timeless digital space is in line with the broader goals of “provention”—particularly with respect to achieving an official recognition of wrongdoing.

In Guatemala, families have proven to be central to the work that forensic anthropologists have achieved thus far. There is, however, a tremendous amount of work still to be done. Social science research has also

only begun to scratch the surface of forensic anthropology's role in the broader transitional justice context in Guatemala. While the goals set forth in this article are modest with respect to the amount of research that remains, the authors hope that scholars continue their efforts to unearth truth in a country that so desperately seeks this commitment to clarification in light of past transgressions.

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Conflict of Interests

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