City of fear : feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public space in Monterrey, Mexico

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▶ To cite this version:

HAL Id: tel-03651740
https://theses.hal.science/tel-03651740

Submitted on 26 Apr 2022

Université Paris Cité

Ecole doctorale 624 SDS

UMR 245 CESSMA

City of fear : feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public space in Monterrey, Mexico

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Thèse de doctorat de Géographie du développement

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Présentée et soutenue publiquement le 4 février 2022

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Titre : Ville de la peur : sentiments d'insécurité, pratiques quotidiennes et espace public à Monterrey, Mexique

Résumé :

Le sentiment d'insécurité dans les villes est particulièrement important en raison de la présence d'attaques terroristes, de la criminalité et de la violence dans le monde. La violence urbaine en Amérique latine a augmenté de façon exponentielle depuis les années 1990 et a donné lieu à des recherches sur la manière de mieux la comprendre et de la combattre. Les solutions au niveau des villes deviennent plus pertinentes, car la violence urbaine dans la région n'est pas un sujet politique abstrait, mais plutôt un problème qui touche et transforme profondément la vie quotidienne. C'est le cas de la ville de Monterrey, au Mexique. La guerre contre la drogue qui a débuté au Mexique en 2006 a déclenché plusieurs événements violents dans les territoires disputés par les cartels. Les agressions directes allant du vol à l'homicide sont devenues des questions de vie quotidienne, touchant en premier lieu les secteurs vulnérables de la société. Alors que le récit commun est que la ville a changé du jour au lendemain, la violence structurelle, telle que les inégalités socio-spatiales, est restée sans réponse pendant des décennies et a constitué le terrain fertile pour des formes plus directes de violence. Ce n'est que lorsque cette violence a touché des espaces autres que les quartiers marginalisés qu'elle est devenue une crise. En 2013, certains niveaux dramatiques de violence ont reculé et muté, tandis que d'autres formes de violence ont émergé avec des acteurs et des niveaux d'intensité différents. Pendant ce temps, les citadins se sont appuyés sur des solutions individualistes face à une action publique inefficace.

Dans ce contexte, l'espace public a également été l'objet de disputes, le scénario de la confrontation, le point d'observation et d'analyse, et le laboratoire de solutions potentielles. Les espaces publics ont d'abord été évités, puis transformés par des stratégies de fortification ou d'ouverture. Cependant, dans une société fortement inégalitaire, les possibilités de faire entendre sa voix, de se distancier de l'espace public ou de le transformer ne sont pas à la portée de tous. Ces solutions spatiales, bien que séduisantes, ont une portée limitée et peuvent même parfois favoriser les inégalités. Cette capacité inégale à influencer les politiques publiques et à accéder à des espaces publics sécurisés, ainsi que l'absence d'action publique efficace pour tous les groupes sociaux, conduisent à un recours excessif aux pratiques individuelles et à la normalisation de la violence, notamment dans les secteurs les plus vulnérables.

Dans un tel environnement, le sentiment d'insécurité et la vie quotidienne ont souvent été négligés, car il existe des problèmes plus importants et plus "réels" auxquels il faut prêter attention. Néanmoins, ces éléments apparemment banals ont un impact. Cela nous amène à la question de recherche centrale de ce projet : Quel est le lien entre le sentiment d'insécurité, les espaces publics et les pratiques quotidiennes dans un contexte de violence chronique ? À la croisée de la géographie, de l'urbanisme et de la sociologie, cette thèse présente une analyse multi-niveau du sentiment d'insécurité, des espaces publics et des pratiques quotidiennes dans un contexte de violence chronique. Cette recherche observe comment les incidents extraordinaires et ordinaires s'intègrent à la vie normale à Monterrey, quelles stratégies matérielles et immatérielles sont mises en place, et comment les inégalités socio-spatiales y jouent un rôle.

Mots clefs : espace public, violence urbaine, sentiments d'insécurité

Title : City of fear : feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public space in Monterrey, Mexico

Abstract :

Feelings of insecurity on an urban context are particularly significant due to presence of terrorist attacks, crime, and violence around the world. Urban violence in Latin America has increased exponentially since the 1990s and has given way to research on how to better understand it and combat it. Solutions at city level become more relevant, as urban violence in the region is not an abstract political subject, but rather a problem that deeply touches and transforms everyday life. Such is the case of the city of Monterrey, Mexico. The war against drugs that began in Mexico in 2006 triggered several violent events in territories disputed by drug cartels. Direct aggression ranging from robberies to homicide turned into matters of everyday life, touching the vulnerable sectors of the regio society first and most. While the common narrative is that the city changed overnight, structural violence such as socio-spatial inequalities had gone unattended for decades, and they were the fertile ground for more direct forms of violence. It was not until this violence touched spaces other than marginalized neighborhoods that it became a crisis. By 2013, some dramatic levels of violence receded and mutated, while other forms of violence have emerged with different actors and levels of intensity. Meanwhile, city dwellers relied on individualistic solutions in the face of ineffective public action.

In this context, public space has also been the object of dispute, the scenario of confrontation, the point of observation and analysis, and the laboratory of potential solutions. Public spaces were at first avoided and then transformed through strategies for fortification or aperture. However, in a highly unequal society, not everyone has the same power to make their voices heard, nor to distance themselves from public space or transform it. These spatial solutions, while appealing, have a limited scope and at times may even foster inequality. This unequal capacity to influence public policy and to access secure public spaces, along with the lack of effective public action for all social groups, lead to an over-reliance on individual practices and to the normalization of violence, especially in the more vulnerable sectors.

In such an environment, feelings of insecurity and the daily life have often been overlooked since there are larger and "more real" issues at hand that require attention. Nevertheless, these apparently banal elements have an impact. This leads to the core research question of this project: What is the link between feelings of insecurity, public spaces, and daily practices in a context of chronic violence? At the crossroads of geography, urbanism and sociology, this thesis presents a multi-level analysis of feelings of insecurity, public spaces, and daily practices in a context of chronic violence. This research observes how the extraordinary and ordinary incidents become part of normal life in Monterrey, what material and immaterial strategies are put into place, and how socio-spatial inequality plays a role in them.

Keywords : public space, urban violence, feelings of insecurity

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"I can say that I can change the world, but if you let me, I can make another world for us".

This is (not) for you.

ABBREVIATIONS

AVGM: Alerta de Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres

BLO: Beltrán Leyva Organization

C5: Centro de Coordinación Integral, de Control, Comando, Comunicaciones y Cómputo del Estado

CDG: Cartel del Golfo

CDS: Cartel de Sinaloa

Centro PSC: Centro Public Space Circuit (see CHAPTER 5)

CCINLAC: Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones de Nuevo León A.C. (created in 1975)

COP: Community Oriented Policing

CONAVIM: Comisión Nacional para Prevenir y Erradicar la Violencia Contra las Mujeres (created in 2009)

CONAPRED: Consejo Nacional Para Prevenir la Discriminación (created in 2003)

CONEVAL: Consejo Nacional de Evaluacion de la Politica de Desarrollo Social (created in 2005)

CPTED: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

CPV: Censo de Población y Vivienda INEGI 2020

CVNL: Cómo Vamos Nuevo León

ENVIPE: Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública

FB: Facebook

FC: Fuerza Civil

FGJ: Fiscalía General de Justicia de Nuevo León

FOMERREY: Fomento Metropolitano de Monterrey

IMPLANC: Instituto Municipal de Planeación y Convivencia (created in 2013)

INFONAVIT: Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores

IPHP: Instituto Promotor de Habitaciones Populares AC (created in 1962, developer of the construction of the Loma Linda Polygon)

ITESM: Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey

MAPSP: Macro Plaza – Alameda Public Space Probe (see CHAPTER 4)

MMA: Monterrey and Metropolitan Area

MVV: Mi Vecino Vigilante (neighborhood watch in Loma Linda Polygon)

PDUMty: Plan de Desarrollo Urbano de Monterrey

PROXPOL: Modelo de Proximidad

SEDESOL: Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Secretaría de Bienestar from 2018 on at a national level)

SESNSP: Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública

SSPNL: Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de Nuevo León

UANL: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León

WA: WhatsApp

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Unless otherwise indicated translations are those of the author.

All names of interviewees and contributors have been changed.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"I think everyone enjoys a nice murder, provided he's not the victim."

Alfred Hitchcock

"There is fear hanging in the air of the sleeping halls, and the air of the streets. Fear walks through the city, fear without a name, without shape. All men fear it and none dare to speak."

Ayn Rand – Anthem

"Are you watching closely?"

Christopher Nolan – The Prestige

Snapshots

As I write this, I look at my Facebook feed. An association fighting for justice for abductees and their families shares the news of yet another abduction in the highway from Monterrey to Laredo. While others leave for the beach, members of the association combed through rural spaces and found clandestine graves where nearly 500 bodies of victims of organized crime from past years in a rural town in Nuevo León. A few scrolls down, yet another set of posts about security: put your keys next to your bed, be careful of spam phone calls, and memes. Users joke on a post informing that bodies were found buried in a soccer field in a suburb, attributing it to animosity between opposing teams. Likes, smiley faces, and GIFs. A user asks about where to get the COVID 19 vaccine near his house. This post is sandwiched between a

photo of police detaining a skinny man no older than 21 and another post were a user asks if the sound they heard last night were firecrackers or gunshots (many smiling emojis).

I scroll down. A man shares a photo of his boy's first outing to a large stadium. There is also an update on a missing woman: her mutilated body was found in a neighborhood in the periphery. A private college shows their most recent placemaking transformation. A user shares that, due to unemployment, he is selling hamburgers out of his garage. A youth group leader narrates that when he was conducting a sports session with children police arrived with guns to force them to vacate a park. Another user shares a set of images about how this city is the best place to live.

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An upper-class woman tells me she is afraid to leave her house because, being recently engaged, she is afraid someone will cut off her finger and steal her ring. A lower-class man tells me that things happen -he has been mugged twice- but you have to get used to it. A lower-class woman says that nowadays danger is not confined to a specific neighborhood, but there is nothing to do about it. Waiting for the bus, a woman talks to a girl around 13 years of age, who I assume is her daughter. She is wearing a uniform. The bus arrives, the girl says goodbye to the woman and gets on the bus. A man watches the girl up and down and makes a gesture with his mouth. On the platform of the metro, a dark-skinned man with a backpack is being searched for drugs, markers or weapons by the police. Another man dressed in office attire passes by without any problems. He carries a nicer backpack.

-

 "Do you know what burnt human flesh smells like? It smells like *carne asada*, but not quite. My apartment smelled like that for a while", a man narrates. He lived a few blocks away of a casino where over 50 people burned to death on a fire ignited by *narcos*.

-

A colleague from France asks a colleague from Mexico trivia about cartels, asking if he has met El Chapo, saying he is a fan of *narcos*, and asking for recommendations about drugs. "What's the worst thing that happened to you in Mexico?", he asks me excitedly.

-

I tell colleagues in France that my former hometown is dangerous. "It's the same here", they insist.

The topic

Cities have been centers of cultural and social transformation, of exchange of goods, ideas, and knowledge. Nowadays, cities are growing chaotically and at unprecedented rates. With an increasing number of inhabitants comes tensions arising from inequality, and a disorganized urbanization. And from these complicated interactions emerges urban violence. Urban violence challenges the image of a city not as a stage for positive interaction but rather as a chaotic and

dangerous space. Security related to urban violence has become an important topic for researchers, government representatives, city dwellers, and city makers in recent years. It is featured in the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the topic was recently included on the Urban Agenda for the European Union. One of the highlighted interests is how to make public spaces safer.

Urban violence is often equated to crime. Therefore, analysis and solutions implemented are oriented to make crime easier to detect and hard to commit, while simultaneously counting off the individuals' negative perception as irrational. From the late 1960s on, there has been an interest to transform the city in order to tackle violence as crime. As we can see with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Design-out crime, Crime Prevention through urban design and planning (CP-UDP), the city itself is the subject of transformations to prevent violence -or rather to prevent crime. And no efforts should be spared to protect non-criminals from criminals: increasing police presence in conflictive neighborhoods, surveillance through sophisticated sensors and cameras, making anti-terrorism barriers less of an eyesore, putting higher fences around potential targets, installing alarms. Transforming the built environment to make a city safer is highly appealing. And to mitigate negative perceptions of security, the goal is to persuade city dwellers that there is nothing to fear.

These modifications however vary in their effectiveness and have other ramifications. And so far, they seem to be having the opposite effect: in the name of security city makers impact negatively walkability, privacy, accessibility, and social cohesion. Cities become more fragmented and unequal. The transformation of the built environment to prevent crime is the prerogative of powerholders, who then determine who deserves protection and from whom. The focus on the spatial transformations often neglects to consider the structural issues behind violence, and disregards the needs of security of those users who lack resources and influence to physically transform their environment. These users of public space may rely more on immaterial solutions to be safe, such as protective strategies or avoidance (Brownlow, 2005, p. 583). Socio-economic class determines whether a person is regarded a potential victim or a potential victimizer, and mediates the levels of trust in authorities, the level of personal responsibility attributed to personal security, and how public space is interpreted as safe or unsafe.

Policy makers, practitioners, and researchers are baffled when observing that, even in spaces with low crime rates city dwellers express heightened feelings of insecurity. Conversely, individuals in spaces with high crime rates are apparently not as worried. Under the crime-centric approach, this is often brushed aside as people being irrational or extraordinarily resilient, since crime rates supposedly tell the real story.

Urban violence and crime are used interchangeably. However, not all crime is violent, and not every violent act is categorized or treated as crime. Crime does not tell the whole story of violence, which can be structural and direct. Additionally, the relationship between crime and perception is not direct nor intuitive (Rader, 2017): low crime rates do not necessarily imply a positive perception of security, much less for vulnerable populations; perception is frequently dependent on more than crime rates and individuals' paranoia. This apparent disconnect

between so-called real and perceived insecurity has led to research further on the city dwellers' feelings of insecurity.

Feelings of insecurity -although harder to measure than crime- often translate into landscape (López Levi, 2011, p. 70) and into practices in everyday life. Spontaneity, danger, excitement, and the plight of people needy of public spaces are sacrificed to placate fear of violence, social entropy, and anarchy. While public space gives a sense of stability in its immediate vicinity, it also functions as a scapegoat and the antithesis of the reality outside its frame (Ellin, 1997, p. 256).

Feelings of insecurity on an urban context are particularly significant due to presence of terrorist attacks, crime, and violence around the world. In Latin America, urban violence has increased exponentially since the 1990s and has given way to research on how to better understand it and combat it. Solutions at city level become more relevant, as urban violence in the region is not an abstract political subject, but rather a problem that deeply touches and transforms everyday life. In this context, public space has also been the object of dispute, the scenario of confrontation, the point of observation and analysis, and the laboratory of potential solutions. Voices come from all fronts, suggesting that the best solution is zero tolerance, military action, social programs, foreign intervention, peacebuilding or all of the above simultaneously. The problem of urban violence gets further muddled in a highly unequal society. Experiments, solutions, and more importantly the demand for security grows and scientific research struggles to keep up with a problem that mutates depending on the context. On the operational side of things, the predominant perspectives have been focused on universal one-size-fits-all spatial interventions and quantitative measurements. In such an environment, feelings of insecurity and the daily life have often been overlooked since there are larger and "more real" issues at hand that require attention. Nevertheless, these apparently banal elements have an impact. In contexts of chronic violence, although violence has been a matter of study for years, there is still a gap in the body of knowledge related to feelings of insecurity and daily practices to which the present project wishes to contribute. This leads us to the core research question of this project:

What is the link between feelings of insecurity, public spaces, and daily practices in a context of chronic violence?

Let us observe a case in Mexico for answers. In Mexico, the growth of organized crime had taken its toll in the society's feelings of insecurity. Levels of violence have reached those found in contexts of war. Fear of being part of the collateral damage from confrontations between organized crime and authorities, or direct aggression in the form of kidnapping, murder, extortion, home breaking, assault, and robbery had a profound effect on the collective behavior. Such was the case of the Mexican city Monterrey and its Metropolitan Area in the State of Nuevo León.

The case of Monterrey, Mexico

Monterrey is a city located in the state of Nuevo León in northeast Mexico (see Map 1). It is the capital of the state, the heart of the Monterrey Metropolitan Area (MMA). In 2015, 1,109,171 inhabitants lived in Monterrey, and 4,689,601 in the MMA (SEDATU et al., 2018). Since the early XXth century it has been the birthplace of companies that grew to become major economic actors at a national and international level, such as CEMEX, OXXO, FEMSA, Cervecería Cuauhtemoc Moctezuma. This established the MMA as the "industrial capital of Mexico", an image that persists to this day with international companies setting shop here.
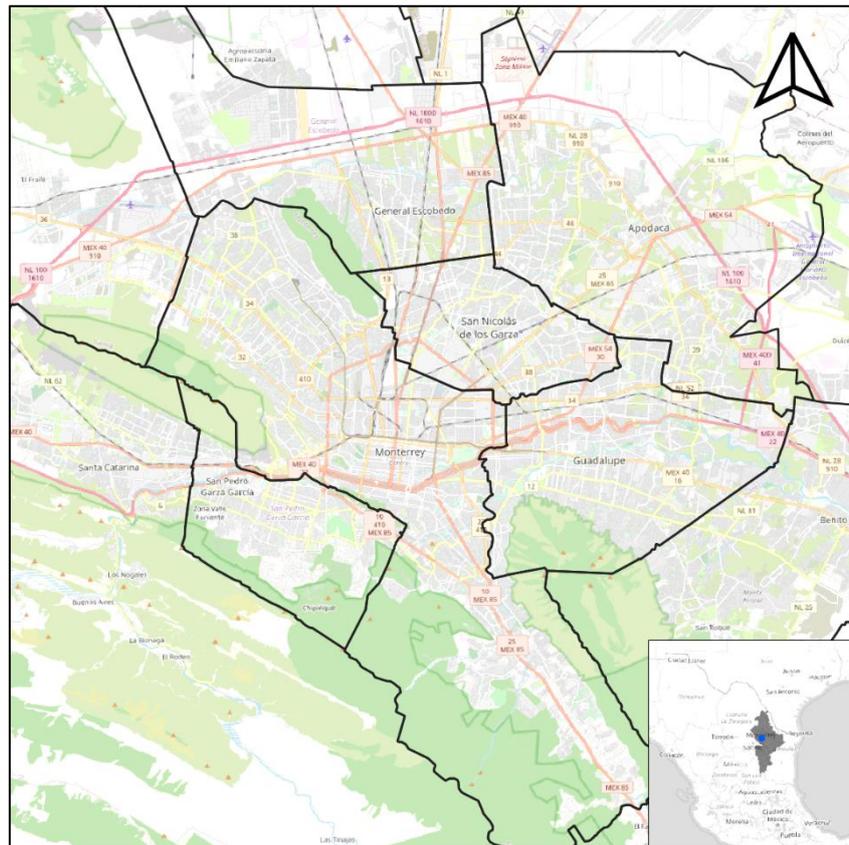
Map 1 Location of Monterrey and its Metropolitan Area (MMA).
Source: INEGI, 2021, with annotations by the author.

At a national level the MMA stands out for several reasons: it is the second largest metropolitan area in Mexico, and the closest to the border with the United States, making it an important node for international exchange. Being the headquarters of large companies, it is also from here that the Mexican private sector influences public policy at local, state, and federal levels. It is also a postcard of inequality. MMA is the location of the wealthiest municipality in Latin America (San Pedro Garza García), whose high-end boutiques contrast with improvised housing made of scrap materials. In present times, every few months there is a new announcement of the construction of the tallest skyscraper of Mexico or Latin America in Monterrey, while at ground level, streets lack sidewalks or infrastructure for pedestrians.

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Having been born and raised here, I know this city very well. Growing up, it was drilled into us that Monterrey was an exceptional place to live through sayings such as "being Mexican is a matter of pride, but being *regio* is a blessing" (although variations of this phrase exist for many other territories in Mexico). Monterrey prided itself of being a large metropolis with a calm atmosphere, where one could have the benefits of a large city without the security constraints. This changed in 2008 with the increasing direct confrontations between the military and drug cartels. These incidents came as a shock for a normally safe city. The population became afraid and devised ways to protect themselves. Afterwards there have been calm periods, but feelings of insecurity did not go away, although their manifestations changed over time, depending on the city dwellers' environments, personal experiences and characteristics, and their position in society.

The general discourse in Monterrey is that the city changed overnight. A city that was once considered one of the safest in the country turned into the scene of gruesome violence as it was overtaken by drug cartels. Why did this drastic change happen? This project questions the predominant narrative of an overnight change: the change was not so sudden. Several factors were at play in zones of the MMA that created environments marked by poverty and inequality where illegality took hold. These social factors and zones had been unattended for decades as they do not uphold the local collective image of prosperity and wealth that allegedly set the MMA apart from the rest of Mexico. However, violence reached unsuspected heights, touched other less vulnerable sectors, and could not be ignored any longer.

Finding dead bodies hanging from overpasses and *narcobloqueos* in the city are rare nowadays, but violence related to organized crime came with a rise in common crime. This effect integrated organized crime violence in everyday life in public spaces. Actors from the public and private sectors, the media, and the general population took action first to deny what was happening, then to face it, and finally, to integrate and normalize it. I experienced the process of people going from being afraid to being tired of being afraid, of talking about violence as one talks about the weather. Still, the dramatic levels of violence receded, but they left traces on the social and spatial tissues. Several of the laws, structures, institutions, practices, and representations produced during this period remained and continue to shape the city and its inhabitants. Other forms of violence have emerged with different actors and levels of intensity, touching the vulnerable sectors of the *regio* society first and most. Everyday life, feelings of insecurity, and public spaces: these three concepts appear interconnected, they touch and merge. However, these three concepts are as common as they are ambiguous and elusive.

The concept of insecurity can have plenty of meanings -from food access to a personal sense of inadequacy. For residents of Monterrey chatting around a *carne asada*, over a beer with colleagues, making small talk in the doctor's office, it has one meaning: violence. Violence from organized crime and from common criminals. Violence that is close to home and familiar spaces. Violence that affects everyday life.

How do the events and representations of violence at a macro level reflect on the feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public spaces at a micro level?

A frustrating incident that occurred repeatedly was that when I explained violence in Monterrey to French acquaintances, they would often refuse to believe what I was saying. A surprisingly frequent retort was that they, having spent two whole weeks in a Mexican city, had the time of their lives and did not experience any violent incidents at all; therefore, I was lying. Also, their Mexican friends told them that violence was not that bad. Other times conversation would be cut short with an insensitive comment such as "no wonder! Those countries are all the same!" (this was less frequent than the former case). Another remark was that I did not look or talked as a "traumatized" person would. Trauma is seemingly prerequisite for a believable story. Trauma guarantees authenticity, but only certain types of trauma are accepted. Spectacle and dramatics are in high demand: a thousand-yard stare, tears, shaky hands, and paralyzing flashbacks. It turns out that trauma can be expressed in various ways.

After hearing about organized crime history, abductions, homicide, and other crime rates, an outsider standing on a street in Monterrey may look around and wonder what all the fuss is about. People crowd the streets, going to and from work, living their lives. The unnerving stillness or the overwhelming chaos expected from a city facing a crisis is nowhere to be found. The more traditional inquiries about feelings of insecurity would likely reveal that the situation is better than expected because life goes on. A closer look will reveal that behind that apparent normalcy hides a fatigue of being afraid amidst helplessness. The city functions not in spite of insecurity, but having integrated insecurity into its functioning.

The population however faced a breaking point. In theory, one would think that the more violent events one faces, the more fear one is likely to express in well-known forms such as avoidance. That happened during the early stages, but it was unsustainable, particularly for those who could not afford to isolate themselves and avoid public spaces, usually the lower classes and the poor. As violence came and went, and then came again in different forms and places, people in MMA went from being scared to being angry and finally, to being tired of being scared, which turned into a normalization and trivialization of violence. This fear, tiredness, and anger manifests itself in a silence and withdrawal: mind you own business and carry on. In such situations, the degree of personal responsibility in staying safe is high.

Está subiendo mucho la inseguridad[1] is a common phrase, often followed by a reply such as *ya sé, ya no puede uno salir a gusto*[2]. Insecurity here refers to a feeling of unease when leaving home, circulating in public spaces. Insecurity is also linked to a fatalist premise: there is nothing to do about it but to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Do not complain because there is no one to hear you, do your best to protect yourself, but do not be paralyzed by it: deal with it. Not being outside in peace in this context means having to be alert, knowing that something can happen, but there is not much to do about it. Everyday life runs its course, but uneasiness lingers. Violence appears to be perpetually on the rise. But what else is there to do? As the governor says: *a jalar que se ocupa.*[3]

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[1] "Insecurity is very much on the rise".
[2] "I know, you cannot go outside in peace".
[3] "Let's get to work, we need it." This is the motto of the governor of Nuevo León, a phrase that encapsulates the value of hard work of the resident of Nuevo León and Monterrey in particular.

Several measures were put into place by the public and the private sector to tackle violence, with varying degrees of success, that go from legislation to emergency numbers and urban projects. However, these solutions are perceived as having little to no effect on the everyday worries of the average inhabitant of the city. Inhabitants had experiences of being at best ignored by authorities, and at worst, of being victims of abuse by those who are supposed to serve and protect. The already negative relationship with authorities was further blemished as inhabitants learned of cases of involvement at federal, state, and municipal levels, only giving more credence to the long-standing axiom that all authorities are corrupt. This apparent helplessness with regards to law enforcement has contributed to the normalization of violence.

Violence has been accepted and normalized, and feelings of insecurity are part of everyday life in MMA in different ways. However, not all types of violence in public space are treated equally. There are types of violence that are acceptable to report and talk about, whereas others are silenced, minimized or ignored. The dominating narrative focuses on crime as the only source of feelings of insecurity and establishes that victimization is the same across groups. This narrative obscures the everyday violence facing vulnerable or marginalized populations in public spaces.

What is the role of socio-spatial inequalities in the manifestation of feelings of insecurity and the transformation of public spaces and daily practices?

How does the normalization of violence affect feelings of insecurity, everyday practices in public spaces, and the dominating representations of territories and populations?

Distrusting authorities, seeing that security is only available for those with enough money, status or influence, and perceiving violence as widespread, residents of MMA are left to their own devices to prevent victimization, avoid risks, and restitute damages after the fact. As inhabitants perceive that there is little to be done outside of their personal reach, there is an emphasis on the individuals' responsibility in staying safe in public space. In turn, this emphasis shapes the way violence is collectively represented. Reactions to violence were chaotic, pragmatic, and disjointed. Inhabitants sought to stay informed, to protect themselves and their loved ones. Communities have formed spontaneously for this purpose. Research and practice have established the importance of collective action and citizen participation at neighborhood level as key elements to address violence. However, in the case of MMA, there is a historic lack of participation and classism, along with a high value placed on individual action as the ultimate solution. This adds to the issues stemming from insecurity produced by violence, and the few collective initiatives that exist -and that are not sponsored by the private sector- face issues of mistrust, apathy, lack of resources, hopelessness, and instability.

What kind of practices -individual or collective- are integrated into everyday life to stay safe in public spaces and by whom?

How these questions were answered

The project transitioned from a macro level to a micro level analysis. First I built a theoretical framework on literature regarding urban violence, feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public spaces. I carried out documentary research to explain in detail the history of the conception and use of public spaces in MMA and the evolution of their significance to the population. Through documentary research I analyzed inequality and its relationship with violence at a metropolitan level, and how these issues that were neglected for years ultimately led to the well-known conflict with drug cartels -a point in time that is often referred to as the moment everything changed.

As I approach present day, the city, and individuals' perception, documentation became less abundant. While observations were useful to understand the dynamics and general uses of public space, to properly assess the link between public space, everyday practices, and feelings of insecurity it was important to reach out to residents to obtain firsthand information of experiences. This choice is supported by evidence of other similar cases where the shift from a quantitative to a qualitative methodology and an observation of small groups has proven successful (J. M. Jacobs, 1993; Koskela & Pain, 2000; Moser, 2012; Moser & McIlwaine, 1999; Shirlow & Pain, 2003; Winton, 2007). However, the sensitive nature of the subject makes inhabitants of MMA wary towards certain methods that are otherwise often used for research on violence and practices.

Insecurity is seen as an over-diagnosed and under-treated subject: the inhabitants of MMA see plenty of data collection carried out by the authorities, universities, and other research institutions but they do not see effective solutions that improve their daily lives. Even prior to the security crisis, mistrust came from what inhabitants perceive as an ineffective or non-existent response to general public problems by authorities. The inhabitants have little confidence in long-term projects or projects that lack short-term results. And regarding insecurity and violence, there is a fear of participating in these sorts of research when inhabitants do not see an immediate benefit, and they may even believe they are putting themselves in danger by participating. Violence is a very sensitive topic as people feel vulnerable when they talk about it.

To answer the aforementioned research questions that relate to present issues of feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public spaces, this project relied heavily on fieldwork and qualitative methods on-site. During this stage of research on the field several qualitative methods and tools were put into place, such as interviews, participant observations, digital ethnography, participatory actions, and workshops. One of the goals was to transition from macro levels to micro levels and determine how the macro level representations of violence ultimately impact the micro levels in terms of feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public spaces. Input from participants in each stage of the process helped identify the subsequent cases to analyze.

The project consisted of three phases. The first one allowed to understand representations of violence, feelings of insecurity, public space, and daily practices at a city level and define a

neighborhood-level case study: the Loma Linda Polygon (LLP). The second phase was an in-depth dive into the selected case. This phase consisted on observing the physical and social characteristics of the LLP, as well as its individual and collective strategies for security. Finally, the third phase was focused on analyzing the feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public spaces from populations that were left out of the dominating conversation of insecurity in the locality. There was a continuous back and forth between the macro and micro levels to situate the selected case within the larger context, observe how phenomena at city level is reflected on individuals, and where the perspectives of insecurity from certain groups fit into the larger representations of insecurity and other groups defined by gender and social class.

While first-hand experience of living in MMA for over 25 years was useful to navigate the context, this research project required multiple visits to establish a baseline, to define and afterwards analyze the case study and its inhabitants' everyday practices, to identify main actors and underrepresented populations within the case study, and to communicate with laymen, local specialists, and other stakeholders.

Contributions to scientific discussions

Urban violence in Latin America and in Mexico is a highly researched topic. There has been no shortage of scientific and non-scientific sources: reports, newspaper articles, conferences, series, seminars, short and feature-length films, songs, fiction and non-fiction books, blog entries, art exhibitions, etc. This documentation is produced by NGOs, researchers, bands, sculptors, amateur sleuths, fans of narco culture, bureaucrats, concerned citizens, and activists -local, national, and international. The range of topics is vast: housing, distribution of crime, domestic violence, transportation, economic impact, youth gangs and territory, public policy, human trafficking, victimization, data analysis of crime, prison, judicial systems. It has become a development problem. Amidst such a massive production, *what is the contribution of this thesis?*

Contributions at a local level

As mentioned earlier, an area that has been under-explored is the everyday aspect and its correlation and position within the larger urban context. Research on urban violence often explores the extraordinary. As the process of research revealed, the dramatic violence from drug cartels is very well documented. This is less the case of everyday experiences of violence and of territories within the city. As interviewees often put it: everyone knows violence is a companion of everyday life, but studies rarely reflect these perspectives of *la gente de a pie*. In Monterrey, there has been an interest in analyzing the effects of violence in the highly impoverished sectors or the most affluent. Furthermore, how the security concerns of a certain group are perceived by another group is rarely addressed.

In the case of Monterrey, research that has an impact on public policy has been carried out through the sponsorship of the private sector. Such studies are often done by economists and often focus on violence exclusively as crime, and have oftentimes neglected or mislabeled

societal and spatial elements (such as labeling malls as "public spaces" in the same category as a public park). More recently, public space and its relationship to violence have sparked the interest of city makers. Now "public space" is a concept enunciated by the upper classes and researched in private universities. Public space is also the new hot topic for local architects and urbanists who want to dip their toes into activism and international notoriety without a critical perspective. There is an emphasis on the possibilities of solving violence through spatial transformations. And as mentioned earlier, crime-centric and space-focused approaches have several shortcomings.

During a seminar in 2020, a colleague familiar with Monterrey pointed out what they perceived as a lack of originality of this research project: according to them, violence there has been already documented in the group of neighborhoods of choice. They went on to detail issues of poverty, police violence, and negotiations of voting in exchange of improvements, along with the killings of youths. Indeed, these dynamics have been analyzed thoroughly. However, the issues enunciated are much more common in the informal settlements and impoverished *colonias* that surround the case study. As shown by this and other interactions with laymen and specialists -even those familiar with the city-, the polygon goes unnoticed when observing the zone at large. It is only when zooming in that this polygon appears quite different from its surroundings. This presents with specific situations that impact the representations, practices, and perception of public space and violence, but it has gone largely unnoticed.

The LLP is representative of a point in history that has special meaning and presence in the collective image of the city: the golden era of the benefits of industrial activity, where factory workers were all allegedly provided with affordable housing and services. The *colonias* of this polygon were the beginning of the end of these types of projects. This polygon is also representative of the configuration of public space in housing developments that were highly popular in MMA between the 40s and 70s.

The conditions of socio-spatial inequality, poverty, structural violence, and segregation of these sectors in Centro and northwest have been analyzed and documented by researchers as part of larger phenomena at a metropolitan level (Alcalá Alí, 2015; Aparicio Moreno et al., 2011; Cerda Pérez, 2010; Sandoval Hernández, 2005, 2008; Soto Canales, 2018). Outside academia, there have been reports produced locally on domestic violence, addictions, gangs, and other long-lasting problems of violence in the sector in which the case study is located (the Zona Norte) (*Diagnóstico sociocultural de San Bernabé*, 2013; Facultad de Economía, 2014; García Justicia, 2013; Zapata Novoa, 1999). However, few studies delve on the impact of violence in everyday life on these sectors, besides the high criminality. Although they are not necessarily manifested as fear and avoidance, feelings of insecurity and risks of victimization are part of everyday life here. This impact, while unexplored by academic research, is well-known for residents, social workers, journalists, and activists in these sectors and beyond. However, due to historic stigmatization and sensationalist news, outside perceptions tend to overstate or depict inaccurately the experiences of insecurity there. The analysis of LLP is also an opportunity to observe how a community of neighbors is affected by insecurity and violence in their everyday lives, and how they articulate daily practices to minimize risk and victimization. The observations at a micro-level are highly contrasting with the aggregate data

resulting from macro-level studies. Experiences of insecurity at a neighborhood level are better defined, more personal, and clearer for the users. However, this level has been unexplored, as well as the qualitative dimensions of insecurity.

As detailed in CHAPTER 7, there are several public space projects in the locality to allegedly improve security in MMA. These projects are justified as necessary to clean up and make the zone safe, and mostly consist of the insertion of expensive top-of-the-line urban developments in an otherwise precarious environment. Already in the northwest zone there are enclaves of private high rises for the upper classes amidst lower-middle class *colonias* from the 60s and 70s. With their corresponding fenced off properties, neighborhood groups, and private security, this is a current and a more radical version of what we will observe in the LLP: the tensions that arise from inequality and insecurity at the level of neighborhoods that are present but unexplored. The study of LLP is a perfect example to fill in the gap of understanding the stark contrasts between socio-economic classes which is invisible when observed at a large scale. This situation of contrasting socio-economic profiles separated only by a street or a name is common in MMA, in Mexico, and in Latin America. In this sense, this case study proposes a framework to analyze similar cases.

Contributions to theory and methodology

This research project contributes to the body of knowledge of feelings of insecurity, public spaces, and daily practices in a context of chronic violence, where focus is often placed on more urgent or more spectacular matters. Furthermore, the goal of this thesis is to propose a framework to observe urban violence through a more holistic perspective that situates the specific micro-level situations within the larger context. This thesis prioritizes the focus on feelings of insecurity rather than fear of crime to propose a more robust way to assess the perception of insecurity in a context where violence is normalized or where individuals avoid overt expressions of fear.

Although this study focuses on a particular case, this does not limit the contributions to the general body of knowledge of feelings of insecurity and public space (J. M. Jacobs, 1993, p. 829). The approach chosen for the present study not only analyzes a group of neighbors in a polygon facing violence in everyday life in public spaces, but sets it in the larger context of the immediate surroundings and the city in which it is located. This is fundamental, as feelings of insecurity are informed by personal and environmental variables as well as social representations.

A micro-level study puts general theories of feelings of insecurity and cities to the test, as well as the effectiveness of public policy and strategies that aim to solve these issues, especially considering that many of the studies on this matter aggregate observations on a larger level (city, metropolitan area), erasing highly contrasting areas. It allows us to question the dominant discourse and its validity, as well as to understand better if this discourse in both research and policy making is actually representative of the population. Furthermore, it allows us to identify which populations (if any) are left out.

This project seeks to contribute to the discussion on qualitative and participatory approaches to study urban violence. Literature shows the importance of participation on both academic research and the implementation of solutions regarding urban violence: neighborhood watches reporting crime (Bennett et al., 2009; Fuentes Díaz, 2018), participatory design of safe public spaces (Davey & Wootton, 2016; Saville & Cleveland, 1998), how public spaces can in turn strengthen social cohesion (Montemayor, 2019), and how participatory research can give a more accurate image of how urban violence is experienced by city dwellers (Colak & Pearce, 2015; Coughlin et al., 2017). At times, literature and reports of implementation present these processes under an overtly optimistic light and often prioritize European or North American perspectives even in Latin American contexts. The observations carried out on LLP and MMA contribute to the discussion on the possibilities, but also on the limitations of participatory approaches for research and implementation on insecurity and violence. This discussion is particularly meaningful in a context of mistrust and lack of collective action, which are present in MMA and other Mexican cities.

On this note, mistrust and unwillingness to participate had an important impact on the chosen methodology. This resulted in the use of a multiplicity of strategies. This diverse range of research methodologies helps overcome significant challenges in face of hidden interactions, unspoken agreements, and unavailable information (Moncada, 2013). It allowed to read between the lines and obtain information even when confronted with silence or avoidance. In the face of this silence, the use of social media was critical. It allowed me to observe discussions and reactions of city dwellers in real time. The documentation of this process contributes to the discussion on how social media can be used for qualitative research. However, this does not imply that interviews or in-person actions were ruled out.

Throughout this research project, strategies that are often recommended for the purpose of analyzing feelings of insecurity, everyday practices, and public space where put into place. Results were not always as positive as other cases have indicated (especially in cases of application in Monterrey and Mexico). The documentation of this process allowed to question the validity of these strategies for research in contexts of chronic violence. Additionally, this project observed well-established solutions -that have been validated internationally and that have been highly acclaimed as effective- implemented in Monterrey to mitigate violence. Observations revealed that in the case of Monterrey, these solutions have failed in achieving these goals. In this sense, this research aims to contribute to the discussion of how theories developed in high-income contexts work when implemented in comparatively low-income contexts facing chronic violence (Doyle, 2019).

The roadmap

PART 1 – LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE consists of three chapters, the first of which presents an overview of scholar work on urban violence -a matter of much debate in scientific literature and a subject of controversy and contradiction for policy makers. I present several points of view to establish the theoretical background from which this work builds upon. I then

focus on the ways urban violence has been a product and a producer of city forms and city lives. Urban violence in Latin America has been, as mentioned earlier, a subject of interest in the past years. It is a vast and highly nuanced topic that has been tackled from a multiplicity of disciplines. So, in CHAPTER 2 I present an overview of the trends of violence in Latin America and its link to social and territorial organization, focusing on the issue of inequality. I then situate Mexico and Monterrey within this context of violence. In CHAPTER 3 I present the main axes of research of this project: feelings of insecurity, public space, and everyday practices. I establish their relevance on the general understanding of urban violence, drawing on the works of sociologists, criminologists, and urbanists, and their pertinence for this particular case.

PART 2 – THE CITY AT A GLANCE consists of four chapters in which I analyze the case of Monterrey and its Metropolitan Area. Starting with CHAPTER 4, I present the methodology used for the case study of Monterrey in detail, along with the specific challenges faced, such as the availability of official data, the issues of mistrust, and how the sensitive nature of the subject affected the choice of methods. I also present the limitations of methods that are traditionally proposed to assess feelings of insecurity when applied in context of chronic violence and how these limitations affected the process. I present the structure of the process of analysis of feelings of insecurity at city level that led to the observation at a neighborhood level and then finalized with the assessment of specific populations in the chosen territory. In CHAPTER 5 I present the evolution of the city -and more specifically, the production and use of public space- and the socio-spatial conditions of inequality that predate the crisis of violence in the late 2000s. CHAPTER 6 continues with an exploration of matters of inequality linking it to structural violence and the impact these conditions had in the upsurge of direct violence and crime from the drug cartels and the military. Through a chronological and thematic register, I go over the dramatic incidents of violence that took place in the locality and how these affected several aspects of life in public spaces at a metropolitan level. Even after the apparent "end" of visible confrontations and after many city dwellers felt they could go back to normal life, violence from organized crime altered the city, from the choices of transportation to trust and a rise in violence against women. Violence, and in particular direct violence from crime, motivated a series of transformations of public space, which are detailed in CHAPTER 7. In this chapter, I discuss the most evident transformations of public spaces carried out by the elite and the private sector, who have the resources to affect the public agenda. In the local discourse of security, these interventions cannot be overlooked. However, whatever changes occur in the select public spaces that were modified by the elites, their impact on the population at large is minimal -particularly on the lower middle and lower classes. Socially and economically vulnerable populations depend on transformation of practices rather than the transformation of environments.

PART 3 – LOOKING CLOSER contains three chapters dedicated to the analysis feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public spaces, zooming in on city dwellers, and proceeding to the neighborhood level and the case of the LLP. Informed by observations, interviews, and digital ethnography, among other tools, in CHAPTER 8 I present the extent to which feelings of insecurity motivated by urban violence affect everyday practices in public spaces, as well as representations of danger and victimization. Social class and gender mediate not only the

individuals' degree of contact with public spaces, but the perception they have of it in terms of security and the normalization of violence. The dominating discourse of security related to practices foregoes these considerations, proposing a one-size-fits-all program of strategies that are both contradictory and impractical. Having gone through the analysis of feelings of insecurity, everyday practices, and public spaces in the city, I then shift to the last level of analysis: the neighborhood. In CHAPTER 9 I present first how the LLP fits into the larger scheme of the city, from a historical perspective and its relevance on the discourse and representations of urban violence in the locality, and this is linked to earlier discussions of inequality presented in PART 3. I then present an in-depth dive of the LLP in terms of violence and characteristics of public space. Lastly, in CHAPTER 10 I analyze the way insecurity has affected the daily practices of residents of LLP. This part details the functioning of an informal neighborhood watch, their priorities, how they interact with authorities and the surrounding areas, and whose feelings of insecurity, incidents, and practices are prioritized and which populations are voluntarily and involuntarily left out of the discussion. These perspectives are situated in the larger context observed in previous chapters.

On a personal note

Throughout this process I have repeatedly explained in the manner of an elevator pitch what my research is about, both inside and outside of academia. When explaining my focus on urban violence, for European interlocutors, it is an ideological and political matter: you are either left or right of the political spectrum depending on how concerned you are over violence and security. Violence is a matter overblown by groups of power and fearmongering media; it is an abstraction, an invention to manipulate the masses. This clashed with the perspectives of Latin American interlocutors, there was an agreement about what violence is: an experience of everyday life in cities. Violence is an epidemic, many said. The degree of urban violence experienced in Latin America is so far removed from the European experience that it is hard to understand why would anyone make a fuss about it in the framework of everyday life.

However, when reframing the discussion to feelings of insecurity and everyday life in public spaces, there was a point of convergence: people bring up personal experiences, which included the points of view of marginalized individuals and women. These experiences shared similarities even when occurring in different countries and continents. This research project has been referred to as useless musings that disregard the "obvious" -that crime is bad and zero tolerance is the way to go-, as well as evidence of the interest from the far-right in manipulating cities and city dwellers. The fact that this research subject has sparked such passionate, personal, and polarized answers lets me know that there is yet much to be discussed and discovered.

The key elements here are contextualization and dialogue. However, it is hard to have a dialogue when there is an imbalance of which one or both sides are unaware. On 2018, there was a panel of mayors of different cities organized by the United Nations in Paris. A Mexican mayor was invited and she presented the work that has been done in a rural community to

improve communication with citizens. Among other subjects, she mentioned that the elderly faced mobility difficulties and insufficient healthcare. During the Q&A session, an enthusiastic member of the audience suggested using an app that allowed people to share medical equipment such as wheelchairs. Discussion between him and another audience member continued about the types of services in such apps. The Mexican mayor thanked them, but did not explain that the rural community she was talking about has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the country, the highest number of houses lacking electricity, drinking water and drainage, and that streets are not paved.

For Mexicans, it is considered a privilege to be in such forums, and one should not bother the audience with such negative information. The image of Mexico beyond the border must be first and foremost positive and attractive. It is drilled into Mexican people that we should all be ambassadors -or rather promoters of tourism- if we "make it" outside of Mexico ("making it" usually means just being present in another country, preferably in the Global North). Put your best foot forward. Show that you can adapt. Do not talk about bad things. Talk about the good things that Mexico has to offer. Tell people about how welcoming, friendly and generous we are with foreigners.

After I made a public post related to my work, a Mexican acquaintance remarked the following about it:

> If people in Europe are not talking about Monterrey, it means you are not doing anything worthwhile with your job. I say that with respect because I admire your work: ¡*pon el nombre del país en alto*![4] Things like that are important to share, for the good of the economy, society, foreign investment, etc.

Another one wrote to me saying:

> It is very important to take into account what image foreign investors have of Mexico. Those opinions are important because we will always want foreign investments: money and everything related with wealth is what makes the world turn. At least in my mind, it is not that I feel inferior. It is just that I live in a world where people can choose where to put their money to make a country grow.

These persons are not CEOs, influencers or ministers of economy or tourism. They are average middle-class people with a regular job in a regular office. These comments are emblematic of what a "good Mexican" is supposed to do: it is a personal responsibility to boost foreign investment and garner positive recognition from a superior culture. There is the implicit belief that Mexicans are automatically considered as inferior in "first world countries" (a belief reinforced by the country's colonial history, a long and complicated relationship with "the first world" a.k.a. the United States), and that North America and Europe are more "evolved", more "civilized". If we ever leave the country, we must do everything in our power to simultaneously hide the bad and showcase the good (the bad being racial and social signifiers only recognized by other Mexicans). Do not embarrass yourself -and therefore the nation. Show them that you too can speak in English, that you too can have cultured discussions about Italian art and French

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[4] A literal translation: "Elevate the name of the country!", to represent Mexico properly.

gothic cathedrals, that you too went to college. *Que no se te note el nopal en la frente*[5] is a common recommendation, so that when they ask, you can answer "why yes! Believe it or not I am Mexican" and impress them with your capacity of blending in. Invite them to Mexico, treat them well, you never know how much the average Joe from "the first world" can boost the image of Mexico.

This mindset hinders the discussions one can have about problems in Mexico, such as violence, in international settings. Violence is one of those negative things that scare people off, that put the country in a bad light. And even in forums dedicated to discuss these topics, there is a level of voluntary and involuntary self-censorship, especially outside of academia. Race and class play a role in being appointed to represent Mexico in an international event more so than expertise on a subject: not everyone "looks the part", speaks fluent English or can afford to travel. Being appointed to participate in an international event or with international participants is a prize. Oftentimes representatives sent to these events are either woefully unaware or misinformed of the topic, as their job is to do damage control: tell an international audience that the problem of violence is not as bad as it sounds. Yes, there are some issues, but authorities are on it. And it is more likely that success stories are going to be presented rather than an analysis of the problems. Lessons learned will be presented favoring North American or European perspectives.

In the past years scientific production of literature on urban violence has increased in Latin America. However, biases towards European and North American approaches to urban violence are still favored. And conversely, European and North American city makers sometimes overcompensate and romanticize Latin American cities, giving cities like Monterrey the recognition from the Global North that it desires but neglecting to discuss these imbalances.

Talking about violence in Mexico in an international setting is a faux-pas for Mexicans and a bizarre and unfathomable topic for Europeans. Acquaintances in Mexico insisted that this project should be an opportunity to showcase the best of the best of what Mexico has to offer, and in that sense, I am glad to say that this project is a complete failure.

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[5] An expression literally translated as "hide the nopal on your forehead".
Having or showing a nopal (barbary fig, a species of cactus a plant commonly found in Mexico and it is featured in the national flag) on the forehead means that the person can be identified as Mexican due to negative signifiers of race and class -that are often only evident to other Mexicans: being dark-skinned, having indigenous features, being lower class, lacking schooling, and/or doing something embarrassingly distasteful, ignorant or tacky. Being Mexican is equated to negative attributes and identity -being an "indio" and therefore the least adequate representative of the country.

The soundtrack

The following is a list of songs that I chose for this document because they fitted thematically, they are about the territory, period in history or situation in question, they were created by artists from Monterrey or they set the mood for the chapter.

INTRODUCTION
Cirque du Soleil – Pokinoi
AG – Terrible thing
Ramin Djawadi – Light of the seven
Roberto Cacciapaglia – Seconda navigazione
Ramin Djawadi – The rains of Castamere
Red Hot Chili Peppers – Dani California
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/69THfD0MNQjdBVOAgX0VM3

CHAPTER 1 – The theory of urban violence
Moriarty – History of violence
Alien Ant Farm – Smooth criminal
Foster The People – Pumped up kicks
Blink-182 – Violence
The White Stripes – Seven Nation Army
Bedroom Walls – Do buildings and cops make you smile?
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/69rLmBVKZQNnIjZ9IUwTVj

CHAPTER 2 – The Latin-American experience of cities and violence
El Gran Silencio – América
Celso Piña – Macondo
La Sonora Dinamita – Amor de mis amores
Grupo Galé – Ven a Medellín
Agustín Lara – Arráncame la vida
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0PtVzwaxugBXJteAJNWWrT

CHAPTER 3 – Different approaches
Shivaree – Goodnight moon
Taylor Swift – Eyes open
Black Sabbath – Paranoid
Ed Sheeran – Bad habits
Linkin Park – Numb
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0ExAaEQ70VhbTkVyJqv3sx

CHAPTER 4 – Research in a violent context
Apocalyptica – Path
Kraftwerk – Tour de France
Daft Punk – Face to face
Bôa – Duvet
Bonobo – Between the lines
Stan Getz, Bob Brookmeyer – A nightingale sang in Berkeley
Vicente Fernández – Volver
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7FcLYoBPmYl7wK4RZRIp0S

CHAPTER 5 – Monterrey: a fragmented city
Vicente Fernández – El corrido de Monterrey
El Piporro – Soy de Monterrey
Raza Obrera – Rosita Alvirez
Las Leyendas, Freddie Martinez – Casas de Madera
El Gran Silencio – Venadito Callejero
Bronco – El Sheriff de chocolate
Celso Piña – Cumbia sobre el río
La Verbena Popular – Mercado sobre ruedas
La Verbena Popular – Un domingo en la Alameda
Plastilina Mosh - Mr. P-Mosh
Kinky – Mexican radio
Jonaz – Noreste caliente
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/25RqVZfifdHPAHtV9uKbLY

CHAPTER 6 – Violence in the city
Control Machete – Cheve
Plastilina Mosh – Peligroso Pop
Banda el Recodo – Y llegaste tú
Los Cadetes de Linares – Jesús Malverde
Banda el Recodo – Acábame de matar

Los Cadetes de Linares – Las tres tumbas
Grupo Violento – Ni arrancándote la piel
La Treviñosa – Corrido de Agapito Treviño
Cartel de Santa (feat. Mr Pomel y el Basi de Efecto) – Crónica Babilonia
El Gran Silencio – Decadencia
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3xp6Qzm5bXiIBLcWyMwcM8

CHAPTER 7 – Rewriting public spaces
Cabrito Vudú – Resolana
La Verbena Popular – Cambia de lugar
Jonaz – Sonido Paposho
El Gran Silencio – Lo que no fue no será
Cabrito Vudú – Río Vallenato
La Verbena Popular – Independencia
Celso Piña – Cumbia Campanera
Zurdok - ¿Cuántos pasos?
Carlos y José – Árboles de la barranca
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6ur9e1Sm0BPBqVveKRSFrc

CHAPTER 8 – The city dwellers' reactions
Cartel de Santa, Julieta Venegas – El dolor del micro
El pelon del mikrophone – La cumbia tribalera
Rodrigo González – Asalto chido
Kinky - ¿A dónde van los muertos?
Intocable – Eres mi droga
Pesado – Ojalá que te mueras
Zurdok – Platique con mi pistola
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0ep5YdwIJjWOUXXLAWeVRU

CHAPTER 9 – The polygon
Los Rancheritos del Topo Chico - Monterrey Iv
Los Rancheritos del Topo Chico – Silla de Ruedas
El Gran Silencio – A paso del Norte
El Gran Silencio – Frases del coyote
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0a01fTd5OCpq8855GA4blQ

CHAPTER 10 – The inner dynamics
El Gran Silencio – Sound system municipal
El Gran Silencio – Libres y locos
El Gran Silencio – Danger
El Gran Silencio – Dormir soñando

Green day – Warning
Intocable – ¿Y todo para qué?
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/01Bw3jIXZkhUOlQaaKsi5Z

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS
Chavela Vargas – La llorona
Alanis Morrisette – Versions of Violence
Taylor Swift – No body no crime
Belinda Carlisle – Heaven is a place on Earth
Aperture Science Psychoacoustic Laboratories – Still Alive
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5yYYIaLpX6xYQEC03jgFL8

BONUS: The Defense
Paulo Buonvino, Skin – Renaissance
See-Saw – Yasashii Yoake
Santa Esmeralda – Don't let me be misunderstood
Britney Spears - Circus
Alanis Morissette - Diagnosis
Taylor Swift – Delicate
Aperture Science Psychoacoustic Laboratories –Want you gone
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1gnVgemSiX39vCQdYAtz19?si=394380e9f56044ed

The teaser trailer

These are stills from the teaser trailer for the thesis.

The poster

PART 1 - LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

Chapter 1 - The theory of urban violence

To understand the issue at hand, we must first dive into the existing literature of a concept that is at the core of the present study: urban violence. We begin this chapter by revising the definition of violence and to then explore the concept of urban violence. This first step is already a challenging task, as the consensus in existing scientific literature is that urban violence is a complicated term to define to the point of deeming its discussion "an utopian if not impossible task" (Body-Gendrot, 1995). Moreover, the challenge is double, as both the notions of "violence" and "urban" are complex and polysemic.

Nevertheless, regardless of the academic discussions of what is or is not urban violence, city makers have taken action to prevent it. My goal in this chapter is also to analyze the constant tensions between forms of social analysis and forms of urban action, and how they have converged or diverged, making a link between analysis of violence and the urban form. This chapter discusses the different uses of the concept of urban violence -often synonymous of

"crime"- in the pragmatic approach of security, and how this is reductive of a highly nuanced issue. We then explore how security has been a guideline for city making throughout history. How and why violence is an urban affair? How are cities a product (or a producer) of urban violence? It is in the mid-XXth century theories for city making and security that we can observe a precedent for configuration and uses -or lack thereof- of public space, and its relationship with violence. Theories and practices in urban planning and urban violence also start to trace the complicated and sometimes misunderstood relationship between urban violence, inequality, and disenfranchised communities and territories.

This chapter explores the ways in which urban violence has been tackled through both the transformation of spatial and social organizations: the evolution of both approaches, the limitations of over-reliance on spatial transformations -exemplified with the case of the CPTED methodology-, and finally the opportunities and obstacles for social transformation through qualitative and participatory approaches in the production of knowledge and solutions to tackle urban violence.

1.1 On urban violence

It is a common belief that violence implies physical harm exclusively. However, scholarly work in the past decades has broadened this definition. A frequent choice in literature is to kick-off discussions on urban violence with the definition of violence put forward by the World Health Organization, due to its concise presentation: "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al., 2002, p. 5). The report further states that violence can be sorted into three broad categories: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. Violence may include collective or individual actions, they can be spontaneous or organized, ritualized or routinized, legal or illegal.

Violence as an exercise in power disbalance to legitimize the use of force can go beyond the physical and direct forms. Galtung's work (1985, 2004) contributed to broaden the definition of violence to include less visible manifestations. So emerges the concept of structural violence -in addition to direct violence-: the systemic action of a dominant structure, an organized long-term scheme that hinders the development of individuals. It is an invisible phenomenon, and which begets other direct and visible forms of violence. Unlike direct violence, which at times are easier to identify and condemn, structural violence is legitimized by culture and embedded into a social structure. Structural violence is exerted not by a single actor but by all who belong to a certain social order, and at the heart of its manifestations is social inequality: sexism, poverty, racism, or a combination of all of the above. The lack of a clearly identifiable perpetrator, the institutional and cultural legitimization, and the dilution of responsibility across a social structure often results in the minimization of these non-direct violent incidents and shifting the responsibility of oppression to victimized individuals: their victimization is either harmless or deserved.

As Farmer points out (2004) everyone seems to have their own definitions of both "structure", "violence" and "structural violence", which has also caused much debate in the scientific community. Other researchers -and anthropologists in particular- have built upon the concept, such as: Bourdieu's symbolic violence, Scheper-Hugues' everyday violence (the production of social indifference to suffering through institutional processes, based on her observations in Brazilian shantytowns), Farmer's "pathologies of power", Taussig's "culture of terror", Scheper-Hugues and Bourgois' proposition of a continuum of violence. It is clear that violence encompasses a wide array of events, ranging from macro-level and at times abstract conflicts, to the micro-level and concrete actions that affect everyday lives of individuals, nested in an imbalance of power. However, a major drawback is the risk of conceptual stretching at the expense of precision when aiming for universality and robustness of the definition (Moncada, 2013, p. 3). To analyze violence -and moreover, to figure out what to do about it and how-, it is frequently necessary to refer to concrete situations that describe in detail the context and the interactions that take place. These situations are diverse and in constant mutation. For this reason, anthropologists refer to "violences", plural (Mondragón, 2017, p. 51). Thus, for the purpose of the discussion at hand, the "urban" provides a framework for precision.

What makes violence an urban matter? For Carrión-Mena (2008, pp. 30, 43) there is a lack of understanding of the link between "city" and "violence", stemming from an initial definition of violence as a set of attributes rather than social relationships. The author enunciates 3 broad perspectives from which urban violence is observed: where urban has a causal quality of violence, where urban is a specific type of violence, and finally, where urban violence is simply synonymous to "violence". The role of social relationships, along with the role of the culture previously mentioned by Galtung, are also present in the interpretation proposed by Lourenco (2012, p. 153). Acknowledging the absence of a unique definition of urban violence, he presents two possible interpretations: a) a sociological one, centered on actors and their relationships with society and b) an anthropological one, based on a cultural definition of violence and on the acceptance of the existence of codes in which violence arises as an identifier.

Moser's introductory roadmap of urban violence (2004) is widely cited as a relatively practical framework of analysis. In this roadmap- based on her findings in Central America-, the author categorizes manifestations of violence in urban areas as: political, institutional, economic, economic/social, and social. Moser details the structural causes and trigger risk factors that underlie violence, along with the costs and consequences of violence in urban settings, advocating that a better understanding of the phenomenon can help reduce violence. Ten years later, Moser & McIlwaine (2014) gave a follow-up on this assessment. The authors note the need to move beyond causes, costs, consequences, and checklists, and towards an understanding of the historical, geographical, spatial, and structural elements.

In their recent work, Pavoni & Tulumello (2020) also present a critical view of Moser's work, noting that the initial roadmap covers typologies that are not specific to the urban space, and it is not clear as to what makes them "urban". Their work provides a much-needed deep dive on how urban violence is addressed in the existing scientific literature. They mention that they have been unsuccessful in finding discussions of what is specifically urban in the

manifestations of violence in urban spaces. Their review reveals that few authors provide a explicit definitions of "urban violence". The existing definitions were organized into four typologies:

1. From psychiatry: urban violence is a set of experiences, often limited to forms of physical violence.
2. From legal and positivist approaches to criminology: includes violent crime and deviant behaviors.
3. From humanitarian consultancy: urban violence includes psychological damage, material deprivation, and focuses on the use of force.
4. From ethnographic works: violence as an object of media representation related to crime.

The limitations across these broad definitions found by the authors are the omissions of the urban, structural, and non-criminal dimensions. Seeking to define urban violence, the authors present the simultaneous characterizations of the "urban" as a space and the process (urbanization) within the "urban". On the one hand, the urban is the container, the physical environment. What makes violence an urban matter is essentially that it occurs in a city. Only referring to urban from its fixed and spatial characteristics is limited. As Wirth states "as long as we identify urbanism with the physical entity of the city, viewing it merely as rigidly delimited in space (…) we are not likely to arrive at an adequate conception of urbanism as a mode of life" (1938, p. 4). Urbanization can also be seen as a global process of networks and flows, going beyond the spatial boundaries by, for example, positioning localities in relation to global flows of capital, as posited by Brenner (2009; 2014). On this matter Springer & Le Billon (2016) note that even the most seemingly place-bound expressions of violence are part of a wider assemblage of space. They consider violence as a processual and unfolding moment, rather than an outcome. Then to understand urban violence, it is necessary to take a step back and understand the relationships in space and time, and how the seemingly fixed urban space is the result of historic, social, cultural, and economic developments through time. Several authors state that violence in cities is the natural consequence of urban growth. Violence is part of the human condition -as madness, sickness, or death- but only acquires significance in a specific social and cultural context (Mondragón, 2017, p. 54). For sociologists, these contexts can be the rural or urban, traditional or modern, focusing on the differences in size, levels of social cohesion, and diversity.

According to Wirth the size of the population aggregate has an important effect on the relationships between city dwellers, as it becomes impossible to establish personal connections with a large community. City dwellers depend on secondary rather than primary contacts: impersonal, superficial, transitory, segmental, utilitarian, and anonymous (1938, p. 12). This leads to a loss of sense of community, participation, and an indifference to others' needs and expectations (constituting a state of anomie). Besides the size of the population, there is also the potential differentiation between city dwellers: the population is likely to be heterogeneous, with differences in occupations, cultural life, and ideas. These differences may in turn lead to further separations. Furthermore, the issue of density compounds the potential for conflict. Close living and working together of individuals lacking emotional ties fosters competition.

The effects of urban violence come from a lack of concern for the wellbeing of others, and from the competition between sub-groups (and even within them) that share certain characteristics. Hannerz (1980, pp. 66–67) and Pavoni & Tulumello (2020) criticize the position of the city as a closed system, and of the urban reduced to a question of human inhabitation. The city is part of a larger network, affected by external forces, and includes entities, practices, and relations beyond the physical limits of the city. Furthermore, the issues of impersonal and superficial relationships between city dwellers and social disintegration do not occur in the same way for all inhabitants or sectors of a city. Facing chronic urban violence, links may be broken at a large scale while simultaneously strengthening other links in a smaller scale.

Urban violence covers events that infiltrate the everyday life through acts and words that, even if they are not part of a penal code, gradually erode the social tissue. The concept of "incivilities", first used in France in the early 1990s and in the United States in the late 1970s enters the field as a way to designate these types of violence in the everyday life that go beyond criminal infractions. LaGrange et al (1992, p. 312) use the concept of incivility to encompass what other scholars refer to as signs of crime, early signs of danger, urban unease, broken windows, cues to danger, disorder, or prelude to trouble. Incivilities manifest themselves as a) disorderly physical surroundings and b) disruptive social behaviors.

Thus, perception of urban violence is based on a composite of images and experiences in everyday life. However, when focused on a crime-oriented quantitative approach, this dimension of subjective perception and experiences -ie. feelings of insecurity- is neglected. Including these subjective indicators can provide researchers and policy-makers with a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of violence (Doyle, 2019). To do this, qualitative approaches are a necessary complement, as will be detailed further on in this chapter. The assessment of feelings of insecurity is a core topic of the present work, the theory of which will be explored in depth in CHAPTER 3.

Aside from the theoretical complications of a definition from an academic perspective, the term "urban violence" has been used by policy makers and law enforcement agencies to categorize levels of aggression and make them treatable from a legal standpoint (Carrión Mena, 2008, p. 44). However, these stakeholders soon come across a similar impasse: urban violence, even when reduced to a category of aggression, can be too broad and too ambiguous. In France, for example, "*violences urbaines*" is synonymous to "riot", and in English-speaking countries, urban violence also refers to civil or urban unrest. In the United States the "urban" element of violence has racial undertones. Urban violence is also reduced to a typology to refer to crime happening in a city. Body-Gendrot notes that in several countries "delinquency" or "criminality" are used in lieu of "urban violence" to avoid ambiguity. And while the term "violence" raises questions on social matters, its reduction to "criminality" divides the population into guilty parties and honorable citizens, releasing social structures from their participation (2001, pp. 31–32). Nevertheless, to address violence, it must be measured somehow, and the most agreed upon measure is homicide rates.

Homicide rates as indicators of levels of violence

Regardless of the apparent ambiguity of "urban violence" as a concept, it is a phenomenon that needs to be measured. Rates of homicide are often cited and accepted as a metric for violence: the more homicides there are in a city, the more violent it is. Institutions around the globe produce rankings each year noting the top 5, 10 or 20 most violent cities in terms of homicide rates. Latin American cities are often heading the list, but which cities are mentioned and on which position vary depending on who makes the list, whose data they are using (and how they collected it), and how they are interpreting it.

It is undeniable that there is a problem of violence that has been growing in the region. But are homicide rates then an adequate measure? The experience of the Global South, and particularly in Latin America indicates otherwise (Oberwittler, 2019). The first complication comes from the lack of consensus in what a "city" is: the way a city is defined affects how homicide rates are determined (K. Aguirre et al., 2017). Second, homicides are used as indicators since due to the gravity of the event, it is more likely to be reported to authorities. Authorities are responsible to keep track of these and report on them. But, as the situation in Latin America reveals -and as it will be shown throughout this work of research- the accuracy of these numbers from authorities is far from ideal. Data of homicides in a city can be gathered by many stakeholders -local, national, and international- in media, health, law enforcement, to name a few. And the classification and interpretation of it varies. Homicides are often grouped without distinction between types of homicide. As homicides become a more common incident, the need for distinction is more apparent. An example of this is the concept of "feminicide" (as will be discussed in CHAPTER 6). Furthermore, in contexts of heightened mistrust in authority, it is unlikely for a witness to report a homicide, much less when law enforcement has proven to not only ignore and neglect investigation, but to be the one responsible for crimes. Data can be misrepresented by means of using different metrics or by purposefully altering it for political convenience.

Lastly, not every country has available statistics to consult, skewing the information for the purpose of comparison. Ironically, even with various stakeholders gathering information, the data for smaller units (sectors within a city) can be unavailable. Willis (2017) is critical of this widespread acceptance of homicide numbers by policy makers, laymen, and scholars, as it hides the influences prominent in the production of bodies and numbers. When considering these limitations, the promise of an unbiased image through hard facts and numbers merits questioning. This does not mean that rankings based on homicide rates are useless, but the aforementioned issues need to be considered, particularly when this information is the basis to measure violence for research and policy making.

Although violence and crime -from robberies to homicides- may overlap, not all crime is violent and not all violence constitutes a crime, nor all violence is direct or physical. This overly pragmatic approach limits the scope of the debate and obfuscates the understanding of the immaterial, structural, and indirect dimensions of urban violence.

1.1.1 The spectacle of taming the feral city

There is an element of spectacle in both urban violence and urban security. Pavoni & Tulumello's assessment is that "the discussion of urban violence seems to be oriented by a common quest: the attempt to make violence visible, either through the inventory of its physical manifestations, the examination of its structural instantiations, or the deconstruction of its discursive representations" (2020, p. 60). It is only when urban violence has manifested itself as direct, criminal, and lethal that it is considered a development problem, often neglecting that it has been brewing for a long time, hiding in plain sight under indirect actions.

Suddenly feral, wild, and failed cities emerge apparently out of nowhere. Authors discuss about "an increasing number of cities (…) gone wild, becoming not centers of vibrant cosmopolitanism, but alarming evidence that the urban world has begun slipping out of control" (Manaugh, 2009, p. 58). These cities are predominantly in the Global South, and more specifically, in Latin America. This assessment depicts cities as becoming "feral" overnight disregarding their position in a wider network and the precedents of violence such as inequality. It also presents violence as an absolute oddity, and the city as a homogeneous nightmarish experience of collapse and disorder. This narrative does not account either for situations in which urban violence is so pervasive that it is banalized and integrated into the functioning of the city (Koonings, 1999), nor the differences within the social structures that diversify the perception of insecurity.

Discourses of urban violence often depict it as an anomaly, as opposed to order, and especially, to security. The wild and feral cities need to be tamed. Urban security is the means to purge the city of violence and fear. The problem is then assessed through a quantitative lens, and from a highly pragmatic perspective, the city is only the physical space where violence happens. Thus, it also has the potential of being intervened to foster order, control, and security. However, this pursuit of absolute security incurs in others forms of violence, as the state monopolizes the use of violence (direct or structural) to secure the city, often excluding the most vulnerable or criminalizing sectors of the population.

One milestone at an international level was the launch of the UN-HABITAT Safer Cities Program in 1996, at the behest of African mayors seeking to tackle urban violence at city level. Cities are challenged by violent events, and thus seek solutions on how to foster security and tackle urban violence. Moser (2004, p. 12) identifies the following policy approaches to violence and urban-focused interventions: criminal justice, public health, conflict transformation/human rights, citizen/public/community security, social capital, and urban renewal. Each of these approaches tend to different types of violence, ranging from crime to social violence, from immaterial solutions -looking to rebuild social cohesion- to material transformations, specifically in the case of urban renewal. Their goals to reduce, manage and contest violence may have overlapping outcomes (Moser & McIlwaine, 2014, p. 338).

The element of spectacle is also present in the search for solutions of security: they have to be visible and tangible. This has led to an emphasis of the "urban" side of "urban violence". As observed in the next section, there is an over-reliance on the physical, direct, and criminal

dimensions of urban violence, neglecting social relationships, structural elements, and qualitative aspects of perception of everyday life in a violent environment.

1.2 Shaping the city through the lens of violence

Throughout history, cities have been engaged with keeping its citizens safe from threats, internal and external. As stated by Bannister & Fyfe (2001) "the history and geography of the city can be read as a series of interventions in urban space designed to address a range of fears and anxieties". The contemporary city can simultaneously be a source of information, a product and a producer of insecurity, and the subject of transformations to combat violence. But who are the citizens that are protected and from whom? How and when does security become a guideline for urban planning?

Perhaps one of the most emblematic features of the link between cities and security is the wall of European medieval and Renaissance cities. Danger was on the "banlieue", the space outside of the city walls. With the demographic growth and the new means of production of Industrial Revolution, the European city outgrew its premodern limits of walls. The transition from feudalism to capitalism motivated new ways of building and city planning. Philosophies on urban planning in the late XVIIIth century and early XIXth century favored the application of science and technology to solve the many issues of the new urban life -housing, health, education, law and order, security, spiritual enlightenment- around a healthy organization of work. Through architecture and urban planning economy, morals and even work ethic could be improved. These concepts can be seen on the works of utopian socialists: Charles Fourier's Phalanstère inspired Robert Owen's attempt of organization of New Lanark in Scotland (1786) and New Harmony in Indiana (1825-1827), as well as Jean-Baptiste André Godin's Familistère in France (1859-1884). Along with others, such as Claude Nicolas Ledoux's Cité idéale de Chaux, the resulting arrangements proposed spaces and buildings for a humanist industrial revolution, where scientific and social progress contributed to the solution of citizens' problems, with varying degrees of completion, permanence, and success. But perhaps one of the more evocative works of these period when it comes to security is Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon: an institutional building for containing criminals or workers in radially disposed cells with a guardhouse at the center.

From the end of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, European proponents of utopian philosophies of social order found fertile ground for experimentation in Latin America. González de Oleaga (2018) exemplifies this with the case of Paraguay. Government's "racial whitening" policies offered incentives for mostly European immigrants to settle, whose perceived industriousness would "rub off" on the local population and boost the local economy. On their end, the newcomers saw the new territory as an empty space to start anew while benefiting of religious freedom, security, and tax reductions. These goals did not come to fruition, as the new self-managed colonies were limited to their own symbolic, and physical limits. Instead of becoming a network of hubs from which prosperity would spill over, these communities had little impact on the local population and small contact each other, effectively

becoming islands, "as if they had become prisoners of the very metaphor that had given rise to them" (2018, p. 37). In present day, these endeavors are portrayed as failed non-repeatable experiments from foreign settlers.

Utopian principles of the city as an articulator of order were applied not only to ideal new cities but also to the cities that already existed. For example, London and Paris struggled to accommodate an expanding population resulting in overcrowded spaces, disease, crime, and social unrest. Several attempts were made to modernize Paris, but the most famous instance of it was overseen by Georges Eugène Haussmann and Eugène Belgrand. The redesign of Paris started in 1853 with the goal of clearing slums and opening up spaces to "breathe" to prevent epidemics. The redesign strived for a sense of standardization that gave the city a sense of spatial and social order, as imagined by the new bourgeoisie. One of the ways to achieve this was by the construction of straight wide boulevards. The scale of these boulevards contrasted with the medieval streets and alleys that existed in Paris. While streets had been used for walking and socializing at a small scale, the boulevards were to cover great distances at a much larger scale and connect isolated zones while responding more to vehicles than to people. Symbolically, the boulevards connected to monuments celebrating state power. Order in terms of law enforcement was integrated in these urban elements, as their width made it difficult to block them with barricades as means of protest, and it eased the access of troops to fight public rebellions. Moreover, boulevards tackled the potential class conflicts by leveling working-class boroughs. Since the risk of conflict or invasion with neighboring territories was no longer a concern, attention was now directed towards the inside of the city to understand what made it dangerous, besides issues of public health. Precedents of the introduction of the spatial dimension for understanding urban insecurity can be found on the field of criminology in the early XIXth century. André-Michel Guerry and Adolphe Quetelet produced cartes thematiques in France that depicted not only crime categories but also socio-demographic characteristics, and set the foundation of the 'cartographic school'.

During the first half of the XXth century architects take on the role of master planners, the directors of an urban opus where every movement was foreseen and nothing went to waste. With the aid of emerging social scientists, the coded characteristics of users could be standardized, their movements, purposes, and needs mechanically integrated into master plans. Le Corbusier's idea of a machine for living would take a much larger scale. Spatially the city was to start anew, each building an oeuvre of efficiency and functionality standing on its own, universal and unbound by historical or social context. Its ideal user was a universal man, with standard measures and standard needs, likewise untethered by peculiarities of cultural background or gender (Ellin, 1997).

The CIAM model found success within neoliberal economies with an anti-socialist political view, most notably in the United States (Mehaffy & Low, 2018). Here the CIAM model was advertised by automobile and oil sectors to promote a car-centric vision of the cities of the future. Motorized mobility changed the scale of the city: it needed to accommodate traffic, and inhabitants had a way to cover long distances easily, fostering urban sprawl. This however left those who could not afford a suburban life and private transportation to manage urban life in

spaces that were not conceived at a human scale (see Figure 1). Streets were out, highways were in.
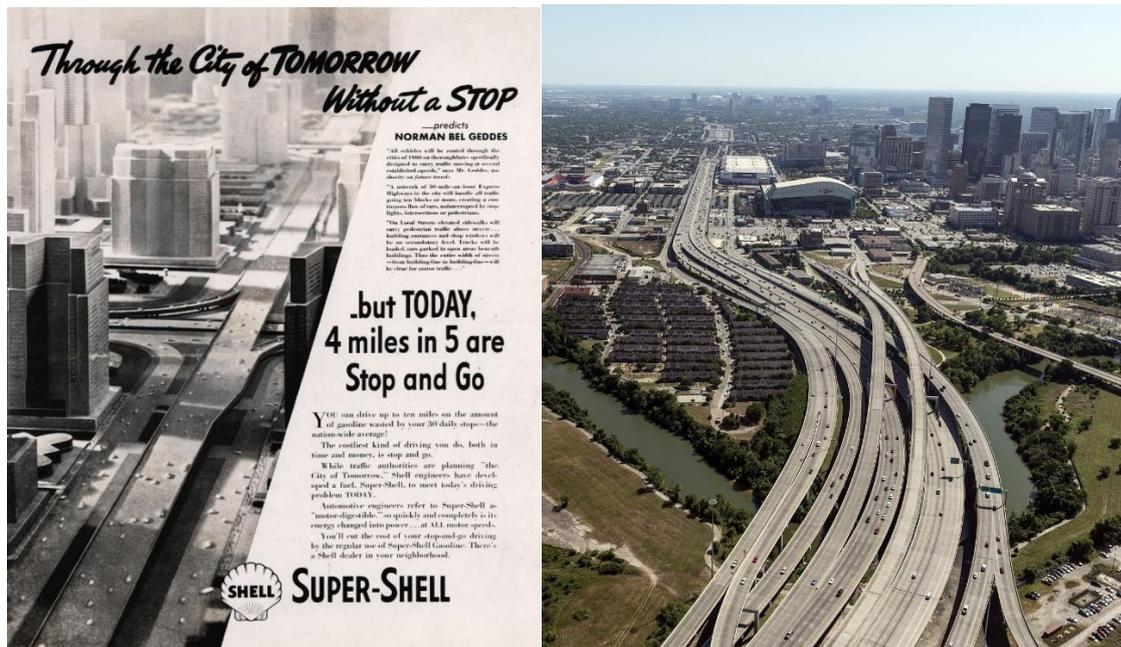

Figure 1 Motorized mobility shaped the American city.
The priority is to accommodate traffic rather than people.
(left) "Through the city of tomorrow without a stop". Advertisement by Shell Oil Company for a futuristic city depicting express highways where "the entire with of streets (...) will be clear for motor traffic", 1937.
Source: Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved on 07/07/2021.
https://i.pinimg.com/originals/c1/97/65/c19765ac5ac71490f1400e5be7d67d85.jpg
(right) Freeways in Houston, Texas, 2020.
Source: Click2 Houston. Retrieved on 07/07/2021. https://www.click2houston.com/news/local/2020/01/23/ask-2-why-do-houston-freeways-have-multiple-names/

Modernity demanded control over time and space for the interest of production and efficiency. By the 1950s, isolated slabs and blocks of mass-produced housing units became the staple of the architectural and urban production in North and South America and Europe. The notion of control can be illustrated by the gradual suppression of public spaces' plurality of uses. As established in the Athens Charter, it was important for both the architectural and urban environments to have a clear separation of functions. Urban planning of the XXth century favored zoning for specific uses: residential zones, financial districts, commercial zones, etc. It also allowed a better control over activities, eliminating risks, and facilitating the identification of deviances from the purported uses.

Along with shifts towards specialization and control amidst rapid changes in urbanization came new academic disciplines interested in understanding urban life. Sociologists of the Chicago School were early proponents of studies to understand behavior and its relationship with the social and spatial environment of the city: the link between behavior and factors such as population density, characteristics of neighborhoods and buildings, and presence of ethnic groups. They used first-hand, immersive methodologies to conduct studies on racism, poverty, and patterns of urban growth, among other matters. On the topic of the relation between crime and space, the Chicago School introduced the social disorganization theory linking crime rates

to neighborhood characteristics, where an individuals' residential location shapes their probability of getting involved in crime and delinquency. Supporting this theory, Shaw and McKay (1942) provided a refinement of the preexisting geographical and criminological theories. Their study on juvenile delinquency and urban areas built upon Burgess and Park's Concentric Zone Model to show patterns of growth of crime rates, and relating them to other social problems like poverty, health, etc.

The rationalist paradigms were the subject of criticism during the late 50s and early 70s. Conceptually, the modern urban dwellers amounted to a monolithic society with homogeneous tastes and aspirations. In practice, industrialization produced accelerated changes, which in turn generated conflict among city dwellers, such as tensions between the working class and the industry owners, and cultural clashes from increased geographic mobility. These conflicts were taking place in a grim spatial environment produced by modernist theories. The architectural and urban theory that lauded machinal and technocratic planning resulted in a sterile, anonymous, unappealing, and alienating environments in practice. Zoning reduced public space to circulation, and destroyed the human scale of neighborhoods. This in turn eroded social cohesion and favored anonymity. The construction of massive rationalist towers and housing blocks razed communities, displaced homes and businesses, and increased social segregation. Disenfranchised communities had no place in the ideal of a modern society, and the refusal to acknowledge and include these populations created several problems of violence in urban spaces.

Although modernism fell out of favor, urban configuration was still a product of power relations, where those who could afford it would distance themselves from "problematic" areas, such as the inner cities in the United States. As a reaction to the modernist artifice, this era was marked by a desire to reconnect with nature and the past, as embodied by the American suburb: a peaceful life in the country, away from the dangerous and polluted city. This American dream was only affordable for the upper classes. Meanwhile, tensions increased in the urban centers, as the public space lost even more its social functions to give way to commuters' vehicles, and zoning started in the previous decades made social inequalities more evident.

The United States became a trailblazer when it came to crime prevention research and action from the 60s on. In 1965, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice was established. In 1967 it published a report titled "The challenge of crime in a free society", detailing the effects of crime -particularly violent crime- in the country. It is also within this framework that the notion of fear of crime emerges as a point of interest to observe alongside factual crime data. This era was marked by social and political movements for equality and justice. There was also a dramatic increase in crime from the 1960s to the 1980s in the United States. This phenomenon reshaped the cultural and political scene and everyday life, stirring an interest on understanding criminals and victims, -typologies, modus operandi, motivations- and how to prevent crime. It is also during this period that several theories, methodologies, models and experiments regarding how the built environment could foster security, with a focus that shifts constantly between human and spatial organizations.

1.3 Shifts in paradigms: human vs. spatial organization

Observing several of the approaches developed mainly from the second half of the XXth century to this day, there has been a constant shift between those human- and spatial-oriented. Van Soomeren (1989) presents a concise summary of these approaches, where onus on social and spatial elements varies, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The human orientation is focused on the social and economic causes of crime, while the spatial orientation concentrates in physically reducing opportunities for violence and crime.

Jane Jacobs' pioneering contributions on this domain have been well documented. In her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1992) she explores why people may have a negative perception of security on the streets -and therefore, they avoid them-, and how to contribute to make streets safe. Critical of the premises of modernist city making, she first and foremost advocates for the human scale -as she opposed projects in New York to raze neighborhoods and build freeways. This position led to evaluate issues of insecurity at a human scale. The dominant position at the time was that to solve these problems the solution would be to simply erase poor -and allegedly inherently violent- neighborhoods. Jacobs states in no unclear terms that insecurity that gives rise to fears and concerns of using public space cannot be tagged as a problem pertaining exclusively or naturally to the slums, the older parts of the city, minority groups or the poor.

By exploring these notions through positive and negative examples of towns in the United States, she makes several points as to what makes streets safe. First, the streets are subjected to almost unconscious forms of control not by police but by its users: for example, having people around may deter someone from littering or openly harassing another person. Second, that a moderate density -as opposed to a low density like that of the American suburb- with a diverse population that actively uses streets. Streets therefore should ease socialization. She acknowledges that it is not simple to make people to use the streets for no reason, or watch spaces they don't want to watch just for the sake of making them safer. These uses must be integrated into their everyday life. And while not focused strictly on security, her work -particularly, her observations regarding the delimitation of public and private spaces, eyes on the street, and activity on the streets- was very influential on various methodologies that aim to improve security in cities, such as the theory of defensible space (1972).

Oscar Newman's defensible space focuses heavily on architectural design and physical possibilities of control. Applied on housing projects, it suggests that the design of the buildings should facilitate natural (passive) surveillance and foster territoriality. Newman identified urban spaces that favor criminality with the goal of providing guidelines to design spaces that avoid deviances. Newman's work inspired the research produced by Barry Poyner and Alice Coleman. In "Design Against Crime – Beyond defensible space" (1983) Poyner offers prescriptions for settings such as housing developments, schools, and transport. Coleman's work "Utopia on trial. Vision and reality in planned housing" (1985) examines the indices of social malaise, such as vandalism, litter, and graffiti in post-war housing blocks. The defensible

space approach has been criticized for its apparent focus on spatial determinism, and its insufficient attention to social factors. More recently, the notion of geographical juxtaposition -also refered to as "wider environment"- posited as part of the defensible space theory has been re-examined by authors such as Cozens, Love, & Davern (2019), particularly related to proximity and spatial levels. The authors point out the lack of literature on crime prevention focused on physical factors outside the crime location, an aspect to which the present research contributes through the exploration of macro- and meso- levels of the case study in PART 3 and PART 4. Jacobs' and Newman's work were of great influence to the theoretical and practical foundations of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

1.3.1 A critical note on the over-reliance on spatial transformations through CPTED's shortcomings

CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) is a highly popular methodology to address the issue of violence through urban interventions: it is for the most part easy to understand and transmit, and the promise of preventing crime through spatial transformations is very appealing. However, in recent years CPTED has mutated into something quite different from its origins. The methodology has no single author, although one of the common themes from the theories that preceded it is the focus on housing and neighborhoods. As originally presented by C. Ray Jeffery (1971) who first coined the phrase CPTED, it included considerations of psychological conditioning, social ecology, social psychology, architecture, and urban planning.

From an official standpoint, CPTED has evolved in two generations. First-generation CPTED methodology emerging in the 70s leaned much more into Newman's theories of the built environment as means to reduce crime opportunities and reinforce the symbolic ownership of a place to a group. It included the following concepts:

- Natural surveillance
- Access control
- Territorial reinforcement
- Image and milieu

In the late 90s, Saville and Cleveland introduced second-generation CPTED, acknowledging the downsides of focusing on offenders and opportunity. As stated by the authors "1st generation CPTED (…) can create a modern-day fortress" (1998). In this iteration, authors reintroduced 4 concepts of social dynamics, as well as a focus on small-scale environments as opposed to large territories in a community:

- Connectivity
- Social cohesion
- Community culture
- Threshold capacity

This renewal of the methodology was influenced by Jacobs' work, focusing on specific social and cultural dynamics existing in each individual neighborhood. It is worth noting that second-generation CPTED is not meant to replace the first generation; it is a complement of it.

The evolution process of this theory has not been as linear as it appears. Having its start in housing projects in North America, it was later implemented in a wide variety of contexts. CPTED assessments are carried out equally for residential areas, malls, schools, public parks, banks, and community centers. CPTED became popular among urban planners, law enforcement, and criminologists alike as a prevention strategy in the 70s and 80s. While the 90s saw an increase in research that contributed to refine the theory of CPTED, spatial descriptions of urban locations replaced social descriptions and notions of strengthening community supports, as the attention to crime reduction and prevention continued to grow. One of the earliest and most emblematic deviations from a social-oriented focus was the inclusion of target hardening by some researchers and practitioners (which is not officially a principle of CPTED). Borrowed from police and the military, target hardening refers to the strengthening of security around an object -such as a building- to deter or delay an attack.

Variations of the theory emerged such as environmental criminology, situational crime prevention, Design Out Crime, and Crime Prevention through Urban Design and Planning (CP-UDP), which are spin-offs of crime opportunity theory (Saville, 2017) – based on the rational choice perspective, where a perpetrator will take choices that provide the greatest benefit. Approaches based on crime opportunity theory focus on identifying or removing likely offenders and suitable targets and allowing a better surveillance of a space. Often it includes strategies such as placing barriers, removing greenery to allow better vision, removing potential hiding spots, removing spaces that would allow individuals to loiter -such as benches-, installing cameras, and guardhouses, and even making spaces purposefully uncomfortable so that there will be less individuals i.e. potential criminals staying put in one place. Its most pernicious form it becomes hostile/defensive architecture. While its proponents argue that it helps maintain social order, critics posit that such strategies enforce social divisions, as they target homeless individuals disproportionately, and it affects vulnerable populations, such as the elderly.

Law enforcement and architects have been especially keen in applying CPTED but due to the nature of their realms of activity, their aim is to deter criminals with little consideration of the social environment. Often the scope is limited to the architectural object or an urban element. Law enforcement as target audience for CPTED is partially to blame for the deviations from the initial theory.

Despite semi-centralized efforts (Mihinjac, 2020), there is a generalized confusion of what CPTED is. There is also a disconnect between theory and practice. Already the list of principles in first and second generation varies in existing literature, ranging from 3 to 6 elements (Ekblom et al., 2013); some of them include target hardening (Kruger, 2005; E. G. Phillips, 1996), others do not (Camacho Duarte et al., 2011). Beyond the literature, in recent practice, CPTED is a catch-all term for actions ranging from fortified spaces to restorative justice actions taking place in a public park, urban art, bullying, and everything in between. Nowadays, projects sporting the CPTED label oftentimes include concepts such as beautification and

lockdown of vacant plots as "CPTED principles". Although research and practice has shown repeatedly that tackling urban violence requires more than policing and surveillance, law enforcement and urban interventions are still at the core of many projects in Western Europe, North America, and Latin America.

While there has been a push from researchers to re-introduce social elements into the methodology to keep up with the times, crime-opportunity-based variations are very popular. In an ecosystem mostly populated by architects and law enforcement actors, manuals and guidelines abound, presenting one-size-fits-all lists of principles. They include lists of architectural typologies and recommendations to protect each one of them to cure any crime-related ailments in any space imaginable, public or private. Strategies regarding community participation are often mentioned in passing or as an unfortunate necessity: work needs to be done to persuade the community that the project is correct. Other times participation strategies proposed are rather performative or do not allow to get accurate information to deal with violence. This has resulted in spaces designed with the purpose of making crime hard to commit and easy to detect, but leaving place for nothing else, or with cosmetic changes that do not last long. And those who bear the brunt disproportionately are vulnerable populations, either because there is no space for them in these over-securitized spaces or because they are criminalized.

CPTED is marketed and adopted as the ultimate solution for crime prevention, from domestic violence to drug traffic. However, not all crimes can be solved by clever transformations of the space in which they happen. Furthermore, the interest in crime leaves out other forms of violence. In the United States CPTED has been used to design schools to prevent school shootings. It has also been criticized here for fostering racial violence and exclusion: CPTED principles of natural (or artificial) surveillance are, for example, enforced by neighborhood watches in predominantly white spaces to target and criminalize those "who do not belong", often people of color or poor individuals (Yasin, 2020). In these cases, all the principles are there, however, they are exercised by a group to defend themselves from another. In France and the UK, along with situational crime prevention, it is criticized as a tool of repression and surveillance. In Europe, space-oriented approaches have been introduced to regional and national codes, programs, and legislations, such as the Secured-by-Design in the UK, the Police Label Safe Housing in the Netherlands, the code of urbanism in France, and the European CEN standard (Acierno, 2010), and mostly as means for securitizing buildings. CPTED has gained popularity in the past two decades in the Global South, especially in Latin American cities as an urban response to the problems of insecurity. Members of law enforcement in Chile and Mexico are particularly active in CPTED communities, and CPTED principles have been included in local urban agendas, mostly without criticism (see CHAPTER 2).

However, studies on the effectiveness of CPTED have given mixed and inconclusive findings, related to the ambiguity and confusion of theory (Reynald, 2011) -as discussed earlier in this section. It may be successful in preventing certain types of crimes in specific contexts. Critical studies on the CPTED methodology find that the focus is more on results than on processes based on crime risks in local contexts. Particular criticism is made of the lack of adaptation of the methodology, the inflexibility in principles and applications (P. Cozens & Love, 2017;

Ekblom et al., 2013), and the disregard of the contexts of application (Ekblom, 2011). The authors mention the over reliance on target hardening resulting from the application of CPTED without sufficient community participation. And for the case study of the present research project, Cozens et al's (2005, p. 342) observation of cultural and social factors as a limit is especially pertinent: negative socio-economic and demographic conditions may nurture fear, reduce the inclination to intervene, and result in the withdrawal of the individual into their homes. Reynald (2011, p. 78) argues that the ultimate test of effectiveness is the opportunities for guardianship -and how this willingness to participate depends on personal circumstances-, suggesting the importance of the immaterial elements above the material transformations.

1.3.2 Re-introducing the social element to address urban violence

There is no question that the built environment has an important effect on perception of security. Urban interventions to foster security are appealing for their simplicity and may be effective for surface-level problems. However, urban violence is compounded of more than direct or criminal violence. The sole transformation of the physical space is reduced to a cosmetic and temporary solution, if not accompanied by actions aimed to the restoration of the social tissue, tackling structural elements such as inequality, and with long-term support from stakeholders -particularly authorities. Furthermore, large-scale spatial transformations are often the prerogative of groups of power and those closely linked to them. Vulnerable communities find themselves in the position where the only means of protection facing chronic violence is through social organization.

Researchers have identified that social engagement is essential to the durability and effectiveness of urban interventions, particularly if the intention is to tackle urban violence, not only in the form of crime, and at times, social action by itself may even be more effective than spatial transformation. As observed in the previous section, there have been efforts to re-introduce the social dimension into the spatial strategies to prevent crime, since this angle is not new, but interest in it has varied over time.

From the aforementioned Chicago School emerged the model for Community Crime Prevention. The goal was to modify predisposition of would-be offenders by carrying out actions of community support. In impoverished neighborhoods, actions focused especially on youths, unemployment reduction, and consolidation of social networks. Community-oriented policing is another strategy that concentrates on the relationship between law enforcement and the population. It had been in fashion since 1980 in the United States and the United Kingdom, and was broadly received by other Latin American, European, and Asian countries in the mid-1990s (Vásquez, 2012). Officers and residents are equal partners coming together to co-produce practices to prevent rather than repress violent conducts. In doing so, these practices become more effective -as the community is engaged in them- and earn legitimacy.

As the public discourse in the United States declared that cities were increasingly dangerous places to live, the model for Community Crime Prevention was criticized in the late 1960s for

being perceived as ineffective in reducing crime rates. Hope (1995, p. 23) argues that due to the difficulty of separating means and ends to discern failure of implementation from failure of theory. Still, criticism entailed a new orientation, shifting to transform the relations between the potential criminal, the potential victim, and the environment. Now the focus was on the education of the victims to limit opportunities for victimization. Two strategies emerged in the 1970s to promote citizens' informal self-policing, particularly to deal with property crimes: intentional organization and environmental modification.

In the 1980s in the United States and the UK and 1990s in France scholars paid more attention to incivilities, and on how on how visible signs of community disorder related to criminal behavior and negative perceptions of neighborhoods, to the point that social action was less attended to than spatial modifications and repressive tactics, such as the Zero Tolerance strategies. Discussions on community were focused on reducing crime and comparing the effectiveness of individual and collective responses to it. While retaining the focus on crime, community programs at the time varied between the victimization perspective and the social control perspective. Lewis & Salem (1981) summarize the differences between these perspectives as follows:

Table 1 Comparison of Victimization and Social Control perspectives. Source: Adapted from Lewis & Salem (1981).

Concept	Victimization perspective	Social control perspective
Crime	An event defined by criminal statutes. Experienced by the individual. Key actor: victim (their victimization is the manifestation of crime)	An indicator of the decline in the local moral order. Key actor: offender Crime demonstrates the lack of social control in the community.
Responses	Citizens respond to crime individually or collectively. Individual responses are isolating and crime producing. Collective responses are crime reducing and community building. Most citizens react individually.	Local institutions respond to crime, aiming to strengthen the socialization and social control capacities of the community. Successful responses to dis-organization and crime depend on the level of provincialism (control by the community of land and its use).
Community	Crime disintegrates the community. It is difficult to unify communities in areas with high crime. Individual responses to crime decrease social cohesion and social control.	Community is the context in which crime affects the moral order. Community is a set of institutional relationships through which solidarity is maintained. Communities create crime by the way they are organized.
Intervention	Community crime prevention programs are designed to decrease victimization by increasing the potential victim's understanding of risks. Collective efforts by citizens reduce crime in the community by limiting opportunities for victimization.	Crime prevention programs are designed to increase the socialization and social control capacity of local institutions that support the conventional moral order. A strong emphasis is placed on working with adolescents.

In Louis & Salem's evaluation, even within the crime-centric approach, there is room for a discussion on how crime is symptomatic of deeper issues in a society. The utility of community strategies depends on the adequate assessment of the experience of the city dwellers, which is not captured by the hard numbers of crime statistics. Thus, it becomes necessary to have a better understanding on how city dwellers experience and perceive crime and violence to co-produce both knowledge and solutions.

1.3.3 The role of qualitative and participatory approaches in the co-production of knowledge and solutions

Qualitative research offers a dynamic framework with a more nuanced and multifactorial perspective on feelings of insecurity in everyday life. It integrates an awareness of socio-spatial and temporal contexts. Feminist research in particular has contributed to develop the use of qualitative and interpretative methods that emphasize subjectivity and participation to analyze insecurity (Koskela & Pain, 2000; E. A. Stanko, 1995; Stern & Wibben, 2014). As for the proposition of solutions, Koskela & Pain (2000) question the approaches of "designing out fear" and the need for qualitative studies aimed at women's fear of crime.

Participatory research is a flexible approach that allows the researcher to implement qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. On this topic, Fals Borda's work in Colombia set the foundations with participatory action research (PAR) as a way to articulate science and society through empirical perspectives. PAR requires close work with stakeholders and there are plenty of techniques to foster participation and incentivize direct communication with city dwellers, such as workshops, online consultations, and co-designing practices, among others. The information resulting from these processes may be the base of further analysis, although frequently the process itself is a large part of the research.

Besides aiming to bridge the divide between researchers, practitioners, and laymen, PAR frequently involves taking steps towards concrete action: it helps participants bring forward not only problems but also ideas for solutions (Moser & McIlwaine, 2006, pp. 91, 106). Participatory research can contribute to the articulation of the city dwellers' perspectives for policy making facing urban violence. Participatory processes have gained attention in urban design, community development, and security. In France, participation became an essential element in public policy and the production of public spaces since the 1970s and 1980s. According to Fleury & Tonnelat (2012) this leads to a better appropriation of space by city dwellers, as well as allowing authorities to improve on the durability of new spaces. Arnstein (1969) has depicted participation as ladder, each step representing different levels of participation. The author groups these levels in three categories:

- non-participation: a substitute for genuine participation -powerful actors impose their agendas on the population.
- tokenism: participants are informed or consulted about an initiative; they may give input on the matter. However, this input will not have an effect on the end result.

- citizen power: power holders and citizens create partnerships to share planning and decision-making responsibilities, their input is heard and leads to change, and/or the final say is left in the hands of the citizens.

The author also cites specifically actions for city planning in which citizens are allowed to advise or plan but citizens hold little authority (1969, p. 220).

UN-HABITAT included the promotion of participatory urban planning, management, and governance in its strategic plan for 2008-2013. Initiatives such as the PROXPOL project in Spain -and later adopted in Mexico- put citizen participation at the heart of police action. This is an update to community policing strategies where there is a constant communication between police and city dwellers, allowing the community to participate in defining and solving problems through prevention rather than reaction (Herrera et al., 2012). However, for many practitioners, participation is an ambiguous notion. It can be having meetings with citizens to inform them of what will be done, or it can be giving a budget for citizens to do as they please. Either way, the box for participation is checked.

There is a lack of a critical perspective on the obstacles for engaging with communities in co-producing knowledge and the effectiveness of participatory solutions in mitigating or preventing urban violence in contexts of chronic violence. This matter will be explored in CHAPTER 4 and CHAPTER 8. Qualitative participatory methods allow to observe dimensions that are mostly left untouched by qualitative methods on traditional studies of violence. Nevertheless, the limitations of PAR in general require consideration. As detailed by Moser & McIlwaine (2006, p. 91) concerning research conducted in Latin America about urban violence and participation:

- It is not a replacement for ethnographic research.
- The extent to which people are genuinely empowered is contested.
- There are data analyses constraints. Researchers need to mediate findings, choosing what to highlight.
- There are security risks for both researchers and community members when working in violent communities.

Some of these limitations are also found in solutions resulting from participatory processes to implement projects. On the one hand, participation is perceived by the more traditional stakeholders as good PR at best and as a waste of time at worst. They may consider the public is not educated enough to be involved, and without proper framing, these participatory processes can indeed be futile. On the other hand, community-based solutions are regarded by other up-to-date practitioners under a highly positive perspective. In prevention, there is the assumption that if it comes from the community, it is good (Walklate, 2001), to an almost unquestionable extent -as opposed to the institutions who have taken the power away from communities. However, this perspective does not foresee the inadvertent harm resulting from participatory actions. And when intended harm results from a participatory process -for example, a self-organized neighborhood watch targeting outsiders- it simply is disowned from the notion of participation for the sole reason of not being positive. This dark side of participation only recently explored in scientific literature. The work of Carpentier et al (2019)

goes on further detail about the issues of power and on the need to distinguish the outcomes from the participatory process, which are not necessarily ethical or beneficial.

Participation has several obstacles. As Arnstein mentions (1969, p. 217) on the side of the powerholders they include racism, paternalism, and a resistance to redistribute power; and on the side of the powerless, roadblocks include the poor community's political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledge-base, difficulties of organization facing futility, alienation, and trust. These last difficulties are multiplied in a context of violence.

While citizen participation can potentialize effectiveness of strategies to prevent crime and violence, it does not occur homogeneously across social groups. According to Bateson (2012) and Fuentes-Díaz (2018) victimization and participation go hand in hand: individuals who have had experiences of victimization are more likely to be involved in neighbor-led initiatives or groups. In these groups, individuals connect with others who share the same worries and experiences, such as a neighborhood watch.

Neighborhood watches and participation against violence and crime

A neighborhood watch is a staple of intentional organization in strategies of community crime prevention; it is described as one of the most widespread methods to reduce crime: neighbors come together to tackle the more pressing issues of insecurity in their community. These groups may be spontaneously formed by residents or by law enforcement through programs of community crime prevention or community-oriented policing. Ideally, a neighborhood watch is part of a set of institutional actions aimed to measure and tackle crime, such as home security surveys, citizen patrols, educational programs, victim support services, increased foot patrols. In reality -and in particular in debilitated or impoverished contexts- a neighborhood watch may carry out some of these activities on their own within their means and without support from authorities, either due to mistrust on the neighbors' part, or to disinterest from authorities.

Interest in evaluating its effectiveness goes back to the 1980s in the US and the 1990s in the UK. Since then, results of evaluations are mixed and show that some programs work well while others less so, and others outright fail. Holloway (2013) explores three reasons for this: a) measurement failure, b) program failure, and c) theory failure.

Victimization is not the sole factor that motivates or deters participation. Referring to studies on the profile of engaged citizens in crime prevention, Hope (1995, pp. 44–45) mentions that members of groups are less likely to come from poor, crime ridden communities, where there are high levels of suspicion. The author rather proposes that the success of this approach would better be identified in relation to the "vertical" dimensions of relations that connect local institutions to sources of power and resources in the wider civil society. In this sense, approaches that focus on communities neglect to address the community's power -or lack thereof- or meet with resistance to do so: "The paradox of community crime prevention thus stems from the problem of trying to build community institutions that control crime in the face

of their powerlessness to withstand the pressures toward crime in the community, whose source, or the forces that sustain them, derive from the wider social structure" (Hope, 1995, p. 24).

In recent years, citizen participation has been placed at the basis of co-design practices to prevent crime and violence. However, this participation is often performative -in the form of tokenism, as mentioned previously-, particularly when the goal is to solve any and all forms of violence through spatial interventions. And thus, while there is value in social actions, they are still an accessory to the material transformations and have concerning gaps, which are missed when participation is regarded as inherently positive. For example, children are asked to define the ideal spaces through drawings, producing charming images of flowers, rainbows, grass, pets, and toys. And while this informs of what an ideal space is for this population, the answers provided may or may not involve perceptions of insecurity, especially in contexts where violence is normalized. The emphasis on the spatial element and the semi-inclusion of participatory/crowd-sourced aspects have led to strategies that are at opposite ends of the spectrum but are nonetheless limited in the goal of reducing urban violence.

Naïf urbanism and the simulation of participation

While there is indeed empirical knowledge to be valorized, oftentimes the will of a community to participate is used by -ideally- well-meaning actors for "naïf urbanism": DIY, low-cost, punctual, and visually appealing actions (inspired by tactical urbanism) to allegedly improve social cohesion and prevent violence. While tactical or guerrilla urbanism emerged as a means for disenfranchised groups with limited funds to claim agency and make their voices heard through ephemeral interventions, it has been co-opted by more privileged groups -either due to their positions of power, their education or socio-economic status in the community at large- as means to supposedly give back to a community and solve urban issues, from sustainability to violence to post-COVID 19 resilience.

Brenner (2020) mentions that tactical urbanism is mobilized from below, from outside the control of groups of experts of institutions, and as an alternative to the shortcomings of neoliberal urbanism -in theory. In practice this is not the case, and much less in contexts of inequality such as the Global South. Authorities, institutions, and professionals-turned-activists -usually with a background in architecture- and who do not live in the targeted disenfranchised neighborhood arrive there to activate and generate communities, solve violence, reclaim public spaces from vehicles and/or promote social cohesion. All it takes is paint, creativity, the residents (sometimes), and international backing, experience and/or funding.

The participatory element is incidental as means to legitimize a top-down project: the architect/activist/authority knows best, the residents must follow suit to complete their vision. Frequently, this results in a glorified urban art project. If and when residents participate providing free labor it is dressed up as community building exercises -the cure for anomie and individualism. Although the empowerment of local residents is highly questionable, these actions could provide with the setting for public education on urban matters. However, dissidents are frequently classed as naysayers who oppose positive change or who do not

understand the project. In some cases, the participants are other enthusiasts in tactical urbanism -with a formal education or common language in design- coming from other places in the city -they will not live daily with these transformations (which happened in the case study of this thesis and it is explored in CHAPTER 7). These interventions, besides disregarding the local practices of public space uses, lack follow-up and evaluation. They keep being promoted as a solution: by mixing participation -or a semblance of it- (which is seen as incontestably noble and positive) and a visual language shared at a global scale, this is highly appealing to many. For all their well-meaning ideas of elevating the local characteristics or perspectives, most of these interventions look essentially the same (see Figure 2). This approach implemented in Latin America as a way to combat violence is explored in detail in CHAPTER 2.

Figure 2 Four tactical urbanism projects in different cities, by different authors.
In spite of the aim to elevate local expressions, the resulting interventions have a homogeneous visual language.
(upper left) Bike lane and pedestrian path done by the Auckland Council in New Zealand after COVID-19 lockdown, 2020.
Source: American Institute of Architects. Retrieved on 05/07/2021. https://www.aiany.org/membership/oculus-magazine/article/summer-2020/movement-politics/
(upper right) Zümütevler Square Interim Implementation to increase pedestrian safety and encourage slower traffic, done by Superpool with the Bernard van Leer Foundation and Maltepe Municipality in Istanbul, Turkey, October 18, 2019.
Source: Superpool. Retrieved on 5/07/2021. https://www.superpool.org/work/zumrutevler-square-interim-implementation
(lower left) Tactical urbanism intervention to restructure traffic in San José, Costa Rica done by the German Development

The smart/safe city and the involuntary participation

With the advent of new technologies that allow for the collection and analysis of massive amounts of data, there is an increasing interest on using "smart" tools to tackle violence. These can take the form of CCTV and apps to report crime, to intelligent lighting or face recognition devices. Paired with the issues stemming from gaps on crime data and the celebration of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship, smart cities for safety are lauded as a sensible solution. A general informatization of urban services and infrastructure should allow for a more efficient management of a city, included security.

Over the last decade, the Smart City has become an increasingly popular urban policy approach of cities worldwide. The development of the concept of smart cities has called for a synergy between state-of-the-art technology and urban development to make cities better in terms of efficiency and sustainability. By capturing data in real time, manufacturers of the smart city - frequently large technology providers - aim to digitalize government and community services, and measure and manage electricity, waste, traffic, and of course, groups of people.

The smart city, presented as driven by supposedly neutral technology, is often considered to be a universal solution to varied urban issues in different cities, from sustainability to security. From the Smart City derives the Safe City, where technology and algorithms can help identify potential criminals and prevent criminal acts. One of the more infamous features of the safe city are the facial recognition tools through image processing by surveillance cameras.

And although technology can prove to be helpful in data gathering, many issues arise that are subject to criticism. The safe city focuses on a predictive logic produced by the crossing of present and past data, and it acts on the effects and not on the causes. Therefore, predictability and control of conflicts replace the need to identify social, structural, or environmental factors linked to urban violence. The allegedly neutral data processing risks repeating exclusionary patterns and exacerbating the existing gaps between social groups. This is in a way a repetition of the early XXth century modern ideal with a technological update, with additional issues of governance and privacy (Rodrigues, 2016).

Conclusion

The concept of violence sways back and forth between the tangible and the intangible, the direct and the structural, the material and the immaterial. Similarly, the urban goes from being static space to a fluid process. Both concepts have dynamic qualities, and therein lies the difficulty to apply a fixed definition. Authors coincide that the exercise of power can manifest itself beyond the scope of physical imposition: "violence is violence (…) regardless of how it is exercised; quickly or slowly, intended or not" (Galtung, 1985, p. 146). Scheper-Hugues and Bourgois' proposition of a continuum of violence is especially pertinent for the case we will observe further on, where structural violence, symbolic violence, everyday violence, and intimate violence overlap (2004). Likewise, Scheper-Hugues' reflections on everyday violence and its normalization is an ever-present phenomenon in the case study, which challenges the notions of how feelings of insecurity are expressed, how it impacts public spaces and daily practices, and lastly whose notions of "violence" and feelings of insecurity are integrated into the dominating discourses and taken into account for public policy and city making.

However, as seen throughout this chapter, there has been several concerning gaps between the theoretical analysis of violence and the actions against violence and insecurity, either from urbanists or law enforcement. From an operational perspective, urban violence -and its apparent cure: urban security- have been at the heart of discussions of policy and city making, whether it is because of terrorist attacks, civil wars or high crime and homicide rates, reducing both to direct manifestations. Urban space is reorganized as a response to the increasing levels of crime and the lack of trust in state's ability to secure the city. However, this is often done from within a static and quantitative framework, leaving out dimensions of urban violence that do not fall into these characterizations. In this sense, the mitigation of feelings of insecurity provoked by an environment of urban violence is only a matter of conveying a sense of security through spatial organization and by addressing quantifiable criminal offenses, disregarding perceptions linked to social or economic vulnerability provoked by inequality. Moreover, the direct and spectacular violence that often motivates transformations of the urban space is only symptomatic of deeper, pervasive issues, such as inequality, poverty, and segregation. The spectacular dimension of solving violence through spatial transformations and its consequences -many of which have gone unaddressed by practitioners and researchers- will be analyzed in detail through the case of Monterrey.

Moser & McIlwaine (2014, pp. 331–332) comment on the initial optimism of addressing urban violence as another development problem, that could be solved by an opportune and thorough diagnosis and by policies aimed at safety and security. The authors comment on the need to recognize that violence is not going away, but that it may deepen, transform, and mutate. This joins the dimension of irreversibility introduced by Galtung (2004), where even when violence is mitigated, some of its manifestations leave marks that do not heal. Furthermore, in striving to rid it of all trace of violence, other forms of symbolic or structural violence appear. This is not to say that ignoring or resigning to violence is the answer, but rather, as stated by Lawrence & Karim (2007) "accepting its intrinsically, and responding to its energy rather than trying to remove it".

Urban violence is deeply rooted in inequality and larger issues beyond criminality. Violence appears to be an innate consequence of life in cities due to social disintegration, particularly in vulnerable communities. And while often pigeonholed as intrinsically violent, urban violence is not exclusive to the more marginalized areas of a city, but it exists in different levels and the conditions of precarity and stigmatization set other types of complications for its measurement, causes and, consequences. Pavoni & Tulumello conclude (2020, p. 59) that, while quantitatively there is an undeniable increase in violent events in the Global South, the understanding of the urban and violence as processes will allow not only to move beyond a static (and quantitative) approach, but also to attributing it as a problem of development pertaining almost exclusively to the Global South or "failed" states or cities. It will allow to observe the dependence on a wider process of urbanization and global relations of uneven development and colonialization. This also points to the need of qualitative and participatory approaches that provide information on the subjective perception of insecurity.

As we have seen throughout this chapter, approaches to understand and address urban violence oscillate between the spatial and the social. Urban security has gradually become a concern to integrate into urban design, city management, and governance through strategies pertaining to transforming the material and immaterial aspects of the city. Designing out fear turned into one of the main concerns of the XXth century. And in this sense, the CPTED methodology dominates discussions of crime and violence prevention, with mixed results and an effectiveness that is still to be concluded. This methodology has been implemented in the case study of the present project, with little critical analysis. The observation of this methodology in action in the city of Monterrey allowed to question the real effectiveness of what is often touted as the be-all end-all strategy of crime prevention. Furthermore, it provides grounds for further analysis for the circulation and reproduction of ready-made, one-size-fits-all models applied uncritically by urbanists worldwide.

We can conclude that solving urban violence and negative perceptions of security through cleverly designed public spaces is a tall order. Although the physical environment can aid on preventing crime and violence, without involvement of the target community and multiple stakeholders beyond law enforcement, or without considering the larger social forces at play, projects of spatial transformation at best do not last, and at worst, they exacerbate inequality and violence. Ideally the role of the urban environment is to be the scenery, not the protagonist, for social change. And even in space- and crime- centric approaches, there is a recognition of the need to integrate the social dimensions. This however has not been completely achieved due to several obstacles, ranging from the theoretical to the ethics in implementation. And while recognizing the positive aspects of participation to tackle urban violence, this chapter contributes to the recently explored 'dark side' of participation. The assessment of possibilities and limitations will be further explored through the evidence obtained with the analysis of Monterrey in PART 2 and PART 3. The issues that hinder strategies to address urban violence are exacerbated in contexts of chronic violence and precarity, as is the case of Latin American cities, which we will explore in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 -   The   Latin-American experience of cities and violence

Having explored the theoretical framework of urban violence, we will proceed to explore the concept of urban violence in the Latin American context and in Mexico. Besides its increase in the past decades, the specificities of the context -such as inequality- potentialize the effects, and call into question well established theories of how to analyze and tackle the phenomenon. The impact of the phenomenon that is not only an obstacle in large-scale development but also translates as an issue of everyday life. For this reason, various stakeholders in the region have put forward multiple studies that document and analyze the history, causes, and consequences of violence in Latin America, along with solutions. The subject is broad and complex, and has been analyzed from several perspectives: economy, politics, human rights, etc. The present chapter explores the issue of violence resulting from the socio-spatial transformations from the second half of XXth century on -when urban development and urban violence both increased dramatically in the region.

Solutions to urban violence -as urban violence itself- come in many forms, from international agreements to social programs for specific populations and individual actions. While an in-depth analysis of these solutions is beyond the scope of this study, this chapter delves on the answers to the issues of chronic violence that are pertinent for the case study. Throughout the chapter we will place the situation in Mexico within the Latin American context: why is it noteworthy? How is it representative of the phenomenon of urban violence in Latin America? How can the observation of the Mexican situation contribute to the larger body of knowledge of urban violence and security?

2.1 The Latin-American context of violence

Urbanization and violence have developed exponentially in Latin America in the past decades. Both have become one of the most relevant issues in Latin American cities for policy makers, city dwellers, researchers, practitioners, public and private organisms, and local and international institutions for a wide variety of fields -from law and criminology to urban design

and sociology. Interest stems from the particularities of the Latin American context, the complex and multifaceted nature of urban violence, its link to the rapidly growing urban areas in the region, and the fact that it has become a development concern. Research and practice have increased simultaneously to understand the phenomenon of urban violence, and to implement strategies to mitigate it. Nevertheless, this production is still lagging in the face of a phenomenon that grows, mutates, and whose very nature makes it difficult to assess. As Winton (2004) explains, there is a prolific theoretical and empirical output from scholars specialized on studying violence in these regions. And while violence is not unique to urban areas, nor to the South, the economic, social, and political environment potentializes the effects of violence here.

Koonings (1999) posits that the difference between violence in Western Europe and in Latin America is that in Europe violence during the first half of the XXth century has taken the form of armed conflicts, while in Latin America it has been present in spite of formal institutional frameworks that, in theory, should guarantee order and stability. However, the roots of violence in the region can be traced back to the brutal actions of repression against native populations perpetuated by European colonizers: from the destabilization through the destruction of social structures of natives to the direct physical violence. The stratified structures of castes and social hierarchies established by colonizers has an impact that is felt to this day. Independence was afterwards obtained for the most part through violent armed conflict. And in the aftermath, groups and individuals contended for power, leading to internal struggles and to the instauration of authoritarian military regimes, and later on to democracy with varying degrees of legitimacy or stability. This shift has led to the democratization of violence with the use of force no longer exclusive of armies or paramilitary groups (Koonings, 1999).

As mentioned earlier in CHAPTER 1, a common metric to determine the levels of violence is homicide rates. Critical literature of the limitations of the indicator has emerged from the monitoring of cities in Colombia, Brazil, and El Salvador (K. Aguirre et al., 2017; Oberwittler, 2019; Willis, 2017). It is worth then to keep in mind that homicide rates are a proxy to describe the degree of violence facing the continent. Thus, by this metric, since 2000, levels of violence dropped or stabilized everywhere around the world, except in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDP, 2013b). Nine of the top ten most violent countries in the world outside of war zones are in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a regional homicide rate at least three times the global average and citizens there register a heightened sense of insecurity (Muggah, 2017, p. 1). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019, p. 13,20), in 2017 countries in the American continent reported 37% of the global total in a region that accounts for only 13% of the world's population.

Gender-based violence

An armed conflict creates dynamics of violence that focus not only on the defeat of the enemy, they acquire different characteristics that affect the population as a whole, even those not involved directly in conflicts. The militarization of public security to combat organized crime -as is the case of Latin America- had an important impact on the rise of homicides of

both men and women. As discussed by Aguilera et al (2008, p. 72) armed conflict aggravates situations of exclusion and discrimination against vulnerable populations such as women, particularly those residing in precarious environments.

The role of gender in violence has been gradually included in studies of homicide (UNODC, 2019, pp. 29–30). Homicide continues to be a largely male phenomenon motivated by gang violence and organized crime. However, homicide of women is not exclusively motivated by involvement in delinquency, but by perceived transgressions to their position as women in a male dominated society. Furthermore, other differences of note are the modalities in which violence against women is carried out, its effects, and the tolerance and minimization of it from society and the victims themselves (Buvinic et al., 2005). In the case of Mexico, violence against women was relegated to the domestic sphere. Multiple feminicides, abductions of women from the street, and the display of women's mutilated bodies in public spaces -once considered a fringe phenomenon limited to cities such as Ciudad Juárez- is now a nationwide problem. While women continue to bear the burden of victimization of domestic violence, in Mexico and Latin America, the public space has become increasingly dangerous for women as well.

Gender is crucial to understand perception of insecurity in everyday life (see CHAPTER 3), and it emerged as a highly pertinent issue in the case study of the present thesis (see CHAPTER 6, CHAPTER 8, and CHAPTER 10. Sexual violence continues to be misunderstood, and it is sorely underreported. This reluctance is particularly widespread in developing countries, where there is a stigma attached to being a victim or violence against women is normalized as part of everyday life.

Besides international rankings and homicide rates, what makes Latin America stand out is the degree in which concern over insecurity is more relevant, and the experiences with crime and violence more common and closer to the individual experience, as opposed to other countries -an argument also sustained by Kessler & Focàs (2014, p. 139) and Briceño-León (2007, p. 29). Most homicides are the product of interpersonal violence in everyday life in cities. Violence is a constant presence in the daily life of the inhabitants. And beyond the impact in the national and international agendas, urban violence marks the rhythm of daily lives in Latin American cities. It defines their daily choices of mobility, the social relations they establish, and the construction or modification of their physical environment. With the purpose of being safe, spaces, behaviors, and ways of interacting are transformed. I argue that this makes the observation of everyday practices all the more pertinent in the case study of the present document, which will be further detailed in CHAPTER 3.

Violence is a complex and multicausal phenomenon, where several factors that produce it or are associated with it act often simultaneously. In this regard, causality is rather an explanation of probability: the more factors present, the more likely for a phenomenon -violence- is to take place. Arriagada and Godoy (1999) present three categories of factors:

a) Factors related to social position of the individual: gender, age, levels of schooling, experiences of abuse.

b) Economic and cultural factors: socio-economic level, job situation, media representation.

c) Contextual factors of a disruptive nature: situation of the region (such as being in a post-war period), gun ownership, drug traffic, alcohol consumption, absence or presence of effective institutional control.

Likewise Briceño-León (2007) posits a sociological model to explain violence in Latin America, integrating situational and cultural instances of social life. The model goes from the large-scale processes to the meso-social elements that foster violence, and lastly to the micro-social (see Table 2). In Briceño-León's model, situational elements resulting from accelerated urbanization have an important impact, but not in a vacuum. They combine with cultural and social elements and trickle down to the individual experience. This is also supported by the aforementioned Arriagada & Godoy (1999, p. 9) who mention that the effects of rapid modernization and urbanization leave no time for individuals to adapt facing multiple factors of instability linked to these processes. Along with Bourgois & Scheper Hughes' (2004), these authors explain how the large-scale (and at times abstract) aspects of urban violence may interact with the individual concrete everyday life experience (see CHAPTER 3), which is especially relevant for the case study at hand.

Table 2 Sociological model to explain violence in Latin America, adapted from Briceño-León (2007, pp. 39–65)

Macro-social level	Situational: • Increasing urban inequality • Increasing education and unemployment Hinge: • More aspirations and less ability to satisfy them. • Loss of capacity of the family as a form of social control. Cultural: • Less power of Catholicism as a form of social control.
Meso-social level	Situational: • Urban segregation and density • Local market of drugs and impunity Cultural: • Masculinity
Micro-level (individual)	• Increasing gun ownership among the population • Excessive alcohol consumption • Incapacity to express feelings verbally

Although violence can take different forms in the region -from armed crime to domestic violence- the pattern of escalating violence is predominantly urban, and most often examined

as a series of case studies (Villarreal Montemayor, 2016), as is the case of the present study. According to Glebbeek & Koonings (2016, p. 4) the following are characteristics that make contemporary violence and insecurity in the region "urban":

- Violence is applied as a strategy to control urban space by armed actors that have distinct connections with the political economy and the urban geography of the city. Violence is used to secure the use of urban territories and communities for economic gain, while protecting privileged segments of urban society.
- The visibility and human and spatial impact of violence is high due to the demographic density of the urban environment.
- Violence and insecurity have become endemic aspects of urban life and the urban condition. Violence is perpetuated through direct experiences and through sociocultural reproduction.
- Violence as a strategy for domination and control leads to the fragmentation of urban space: it generates hybrid arrangements for legitimate coercion and to informal forms of sovereignty.

As for who are the "armed actors" that perpetrate violence, a short answer is that high homicide rates in countries such as Mexico, Honduras, and Brazil are driven by gangs and organized crime -non-state groups- involved in drug traffic, but this is only a partial account. Lines are blurry when it comes to the differentiation between legal and criminal, official and unofficial, making the precise categorization of them is impossible in Latin American cities, according to the aforementioned authors. On the one hand, the state does not monopolize violence: as affirmed previously, non-state armed actors use it to dispute and control territories or communities. And on the other hand, law enforcement commits acts of violence or incurs in extra-legal action in an attempt to preserve order. Furthermore, this relationship between violence, state and non-state actors turns more complex organized crime groups garner enough power to work with law enforcement through infiltration or coercion. Such is the case of Mexico, where former soldiers became one of the most dangerous drug cartels: the Zetas. Their power surpassed at times the capacities of the military and the police, influencing policy makers and having police officers working for them. Besides being bought off by drug cartels, federal and local law enforcement used violence against city dwellers, especially in the poorest areas. Further details of these dynamics can be found in CHAPTER 6.

Beyond the violence perpetuated by criminals, there is also the structural violence that is not necessarily perpetuated by armed actors, nor is it as visible, and devolves into direct violence from several actors. Inequality -resulting from structural violence- rests at the heart of the phenomenon of violence in the region. The urban development of the region has had an important role in making inequality a part of the physical environment, thus contributing to the increase of violence.

> **Poverty, inequality, and violence**
>
> Inequality and poverty are often conflated. Despite a substantial reduction of poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, the UNDP considered the region to be the most unequal in the world (2013a). Authors establish that although not exclusive, violence tends to flourish in marginal spaces such as slums (D. Davis, 2016, p. 3; Moser, 2004, p. 6). This relationship however is not as automatic as well-off sectors tend to believe: lack of economic means does not automatically beget violence.
>
> However, as Buvinic et al. states (2005) poverty generates feelings of stress and frustration that can result in violent behaviors if combined with constant exclusion, lack of jobs, neglect from corrupt and ineffective authorities, and the possibility of alternative sources of revenue, governance, and power. As explained by Koonings & Kruijt (2007, pp. 2–3) poverty and exclusion are the backdrop of violence and insecurity: "they lower barriers and inhibitions and tent to make non-violent practices less attractive and legitimate. Not only do the well-to-do and local governments often associate poor people with violence (…) but the poor themselves also experience violence as victims, as the principal problem of everyday life."

2.1.1 Violence, modernist urban growth, and socio-spatial inequality

The modern and contemporary Latin American city has been characterized by several authors (Carrión Mena, 2008; D. E. Davis, 2006; Janoschka, 2002; Koonings & Kruijt, 2007; Prévot-Schapira, 2001) as a model where spaces and services are unequally distributed and which favors segregation, exclusion, and fragmentation. In turn, this produces violence of different kinds, whose manifestations range from non-criminal violent behavior to the control of areas by drug cartels. And while inequality has a long history in the region, it is from the second half of the XXth century that it becomes evident in the formal and informal production of the city.

Davis (2016, p. 4) posits that a common aspect among countries facing chronic violence -such as Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico (which Briceño-León (2007, p. 33) categorizes as displaying of high intensity of violence, only surpassed by Colombia and El Salvador)- is a tradition of city planning based on the modernist idea about how to growth national economy through industry, with a strong focus on the spatial over the social. As mentioned in CHAPTER 1, modern city planning is largely defined by its rupture with tradition and the envisioning of a city as a tabula rasa when possible, but also for its onus in order, functionality, and production. The Latin American region was shifting towards an industrial model which required a new spatial order, in which housing for workers, zoning, and the location of factories near transportation infrastructure and other resources was prioritized.

An example of modernist planning and its gaps: Brasilia

An emblematic project of modernist urban planning in Latin America is the city of Brasilia, a project by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. Security was a motivation to build an entirely new capital: relocating the capital from the coast to the center of the country would protect it from attacks. Symbolically, it was meant to represent unity and progress. It was also meant to represent a clear break from the colonial past and traditional forms of spatial and social organization that were inadequate to boost the capitalist and industrial development project of the nation (Vidal, 2014).

The new plan incorporated rationalist ideas set by the Charter of Athens about how a city should be planned, with green belts, housing blocks, main axes for motorized circulation without stops, and clearly defined zones design for efficiency -and potentially, to transform social order. According to Vidal (2014) freedom of formal expression and symbolism were prioritized over considerations of preexisting conditions of the territory -the author mentions that no preliminary geographic or sociological studies was required for the design contest. The project would be, as mentioned in CHAPTER 1, ideally untethered by physical, social or historical contexts, marking a new beginning.

The city was planned as a monument to modernity and to the triumph of democracy. Viewed from the sky its form was meant to represent a cross marking a new settlement and a plane taking flight (see Figure 3), evoking the national project of progress, of a new city for all.
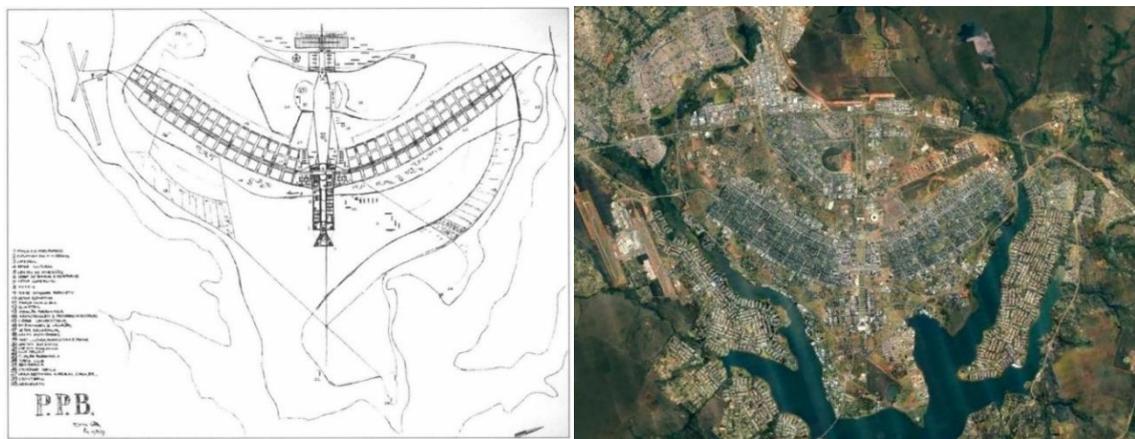
Figure 3 Brasilia: project and aerial view.
(left) Project plan of Brasilia by Lucio Costa, March 1957.
Source: Vidal, L. (2002). Retrieved on 14/07/2021. http://books.openedition.org/iheal/1474
(right) Brasilia viewed from above.
Source: Google Earth, 2019.

In practice, the plan fell short. Housing, initially envisioned as large blocks where social classes would mix, had to be hastily built. To be finished on time, the blocks were made smaller with less apartments, and therefore, less possibilities for a diverse population to live in. The sheer dimensions and zoning made public spaces difficult to use: the city was designed for car flow, not for pedestrians, who were left to walk the monumental distances in the heat.

> For all its formal symbolism, the plan of Brasilia was restrained: there was no opportunity for growth. This was exacerbated with the city being declared a world heritage site in 1987. It did not consider, for example, that the workers who came to build Brasilia would settle on the outskirts of the city, and satellite cities would have to be more or less improvised around the monument city.

The experiment of Brasilia exemplifies the problem of modern planning, even in transformations in pre-existing urban tissue. This period coincides with an exponential growth in the urban population (Briceño-León, 2007), which quadrupled in the developing world between the 1950s and the mid-1980s due to rural migration to the new urban centers. However, these rural populations did not find a place within the logic of modernist industry-oriented development. Even within the city, those who were less able to participate in industry were less favored in the new structure. These transformations motivated by industry are especially pertinent to observe in the case of Monterrey, the industrial capital of Mexico since the early XXth century.

Like for the utopians in the XIXth century, Latin America became laboratory to test and implement modernist ideas of city making. Contraposed to the rural environments, the city was supposed to be a place where order, security, progress, and stability prevailed. Prévot-Schapira (2001, p. 35) mentions that, contrary to the north American city, urban expansion in Latin America is the result of public policy and market mechanisms that expel the poor. In the modern north American city, the poor populated the inner city and the middle-class suburbs were in the periphery. Conversely, self-built and ill-equipped human settlements dominate the periphery in Latin American cities. The new arrivals from the country, lacking resources and education, concentrated in informal settlements in residual spaces, and mostly in the outskirts: *favelas* in Brazil, *colonias de paracaidistas* or *colonias de posesionarios* in Mexico, *pueblos jóvenes* in Peru, *villas* in Argentina, and *campamentos* in Chile.

The city is then divided into the formal and the informal, defined by the degree of accessibility of services and the degree of definition of property rights. The attention received from planning authorities enters into play as well. The middle- and upper-class inhabitants of the formal city have housing and public services -among others, attention from law enforcement. All the while, inhabitants of the informal city have to devise their own strategies to solve basic needs for services and livelihood while facing the constant threat of displacement and the burden of stigmatization.

As stated by Kruijt (1995, p. 53) the informal sector is the refuge of the poor whose function is mainly to provide scarce possibilities of survival. Inhabitants of informal settlements bear the stigma of poverty -and in this case, of violence as well. A characteristic of the informal sector in Latin America is the combination of mechanisms of both solidarity and exploitation. On one hand there is a support system defined by family ties, religion, ethnicity or territory, and at times, complicity of the state. Areas that are most affected by violence is where the state tolerated informality. On the other hand, there are few regulations that protect those who

benefit from the system from abusive conducts by the providers of informal services; the logic that prevails is that of survival and the satisfaction of pressing needs, taking at times advantage from vulnerable populations, i.e., those who cannot access these goods or services any other way: women, elderly, children, refugees, etc. Informality sustains spatial inequalities and produces a socio-political environment where residents are under constant surveillance and/or must negotiate with state authorities to maintain their livelihoods (D. Davis, 2016, p. 3).

Authorities were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the phenomenon of urban growth and of managing the complications of formal urban life. Urban authorities failed to recognize the informal settlements, establishing the foundations of socio-spatial segregation and a stigmatization of those outside of the formal city as a disease to be contained. Thus, authorities resorted to penalize and at times even destroy these informal neighborhoods. By the late 1960s and 1970s state actors recognized that the lack of attention to informal settlements hindered urban development as a whole. And thus, pressured by international organisms and private actors, they sought to integrate the informal areas. This was hard to do due to lack of resources, the need for political negotiation with informal leaders, and a lack of a coordinated institutional framework to tackle economic disadvantages and urban planning. Moreover, these informal settlements had grown almost to the size of the formal city. The solutions proposed to relocate settlers, regularize land ownership, and provide infrastructure were of a limited scope.

Violence, socio-spatial inequality, and vulnerable populations

In the absence of state mechanisms for social stability, members of these marginalized communities often formed networks to help each other. However, in the face of larger threats of constant exclusion and precarity, informal community leaders emerge to provide protection from the state and some degree of stability to the community in the form of services and sources of income. Moser (2004, p. 4) argues that the 'livelihood security' of the poor and their ability to access resources to ensure survival are closely linked, in an interconnected vicious cycle, to violence: "This relates not only to the spatial, economic, and social constraints that the complex layering of endemic violence imposes on their daily lives, but also to the fact that, as citizens, their insecurity is closely linked to the failure of the state's public security systems to protect them."

In slums the drug bosses and gangs are the de facto power holders (Glebbeek & Koonings, 2016, p. 4). They act through direct domination over residents and territory, or by coopting the provision of services. A degree of tolerance and cooperation from authorities and law enforcement was required for these dynamics to take place and function. The relationship between the informal (or criminal) actors, residents, and the police is complicated here. Police cooperated or turned a blind eye to illegal actions, but they also extorted vulnerable residents. Police could be either the competition for the control of the territory and the population or the protectors of informal leaders. And these networks of complicity grew stronger and reached beyond the limits of the neighborhood, particularly when it involved illicit economic activities. Confrontations become more frequent and more violent.

Becker & Müller and Davis (2013; 2006) explain the increase of violence through changes in economic activities. With the closing of factories and firms due to globalization, informal

employment was not a condition of the poor anymore. Vulnerability, informality, and violence spread back to the formal city, especially in neighborhoods that had historically relied on commercial activities. Sale of illicit goods linked informal street vendors to more dangerous and violent markets, such as drugs and guns. This opened already vulnerable neighborhoods to internationally linked criminality and violence. Moreover, even those whose livelihood was not linked to these activities were affected by these transformations, as spaces of illicit activities became scenarios of violence and scared people off. As Scheper-Hughes noted in her study of Brazil (2009, p. 220) for the lower classes every day is terror as usual, and it is when violence suddenly explodes into open violence against the "less dangerous" social classes that a state of emergency occurs.

And as violence starts to appear in formal middle-class settlements, prior conditions of illegality, informality, and inequality remained unaddressed, compounding to the increase of both structural and direct violence. Nevertheless, even as violence turned into a generalized concern, it still tended to be associated with certain neighborhoods, spaces or sectors in the city, stigmatized as "no-go areas" while their inhabitants are in turn stigmatized as undesirables (Koonings & Kruijt, 2007, p. 4). Violence was often seen as a problem exclusive of poor and/or informal settlements. These dynamics of neglect followed by an apparent explosion of violence that touches the middle classes are clearly exemplified in the case of Monterrey, as detailed in CHAPTER 6 and CHAPTER 8. Social and spatial solutions to the problem of violence are not only mediated by a preventive or reactive perspective, but also by social class in a fundamentally unequal environment.

Arriagada & Godoy (1999, p. 9) state that, in the context of fast transformations in the economic environment, the emergence of new economic needs, the deterioration of quality of life, inequality of income and land distribution, delinquency appears as a) a way for self-defense of those displaced (as traditional delinquency: theft, burglary, etc.), or b) a new means to produce income through corruption (economic delinquency), or through new modalities (such as money laundering, fraud, etc.). The violence that is closer to the every-day life of citizens is violence linked to both small scale and larger criminal organizations. Violence here is an instrument of control from extra-legal actors with power and connections, and a normal part of everyday life for residents. In such contexts, levels of violence can match those see in conditions of war-time aggression, albeit with less clear-cut identifiable actions. Furthermore, violence can become so embedded into the social tissue that a group may function not despite of it, but because of it, particularly when other non-violent legal alternatives are not available. It becomes invisible to those outside, as they do not recognize marginalized groups as part of their own and even deem their victimization as deserved. It is unrecognized as violence by victims and perpetrators, as it becomes a normalized part of their lives.

The association and stigma expressed by more privileged inhabitants is that lack of economic means translates automatically into criminal behavior, thus, the poor sectors are seen as a threat to security and wellbeing. This categorical interpretation defines the poor only as perpetrators of violence, and excludes the consideration of the degree of victimization poor sectors are submitted to due to lack of access to resources, the stigma of poverty, and the institutional neglect. As Koonings & Kruijt further elaborate: "they are ignored by those social sectors that

do take part in urban consumerism and modernity, and are targeted by the security forces as the new social enemies. At best, a class of second-rate or informal citizens is constituted, for whom insecurity has become a permanent fact of life" (2007, p. 4).

2.1.2 Urban violence in Mexico in the XXIth century and the position of Monterrey

Mexico used to be considered an exception among Latin American countries transitioning from authoritarian regimes to democracy due to its low levels of violence (Villarreal Montemayor, 2016, p. 10). In recent years, the extent of violence has matched that of Iraq and Afghanistan (D. Davis, 2016, p. 3). A 2014 report from the Mexican government estimated that the death toll amounted to 16,000 murders executed by drug cartels. While nowadays violence and security are highly prioritized in the Mexican public agenda, there are important gaps in its documentation. Research has traditionally focused on outlining the history of crime and violence in Mexico City, the country's capital and the largest city (which was infamous in years past for its high crime rates). Scholarship on state-making in Mexico had previously prioritized the study of formal institutions, leaving aside the role played by hidden informal violence and coercion (Villarreal Montemayor, 2016, p. 10). Moreover, quantitative information of crime prior to the 1920s do not exist. Data that does exist focuses on criminal justice activity rather than crime evolution. As will be further explored in CHAPTER 4 and CHAPTER 6, it glosses over periods of intense violence in Mexico, as well as violence committed by the military and the police. And often information about crime has been doctored by authorities to improve perception of security. Even considering these gaps in data, homicide rates are alarmingly high, as mentioned earlier, and crime is a common experience. Crime in the Mexican cities is experienced as common crime and organized crime (Benitez Manaut, 2009, p. 173). The severity of direct violence as it is experienced now is rooted in structural violence, inequality, and in the relationship between organized crime and the State, which has changed over time in Mexico.

It is worth noting that, unlike many countries in Latin America, Mexico did not have a military dictatorship. This does not imply the existence of a proper democracy. Between the 1920s and 2000, the presidency was held by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) uninterruptedly. During its long tenure, it was an open secret that there were agreements of collaboration between members of cartels and authorities and law enforcement - from the local public officials to the federal administration-, such as turning a blind eye in exchange for money or favors.

On the one hand, the transition towards democracy by the late 80s and early 90s did not considered the transformation of systems of public security, justice, defense, and intelligence, leaving the country's authorities ill prepared to deal with crime. On the other hand, transitioning to democracy, the PRI began to lose its grip on organized crime. Furthermore, during this period there was a boom for drug demand in the United States, resulting in the incorporation of Mexico in the route of cocaine traffic from Colombia. With a growing market

for drugs and a dwindling control from the state, organized crime gained power, influence, and autonomy. And while this occurred, urbanization and inequality set the foundations for the violence seen today. The systemic neglect of vulnerable populations was the fertile ground for illegal actors to take hold in the fast-changing cities that were moving towards industry.

Considering that scientific production of urbanization and violence had been predominantly about Mexico City, Monterrey merits attention. Like Mexico with regards to Latin America, it was also considered an exception among Mexican cities for peace and progress. Since the beginning of the XXth century it turned into the most important industrial hub of the country. Its location near the border with the United States made it an important point for commercial exchange. The case of Monterrey is particularly relevant to analyze the transformations of urbanization and violence mentioned earlier in this section.

This city faced violent events from 2006 onwards that, to date, have changed the way its inhabitants perceive, construct, and use public space. The figures for violence in the form of homicides have an important geographical link, with the most populated cities having the highest homicide rates (Aguayo Téllez & Medellín Mendoza, 2014, p. 65). Monterrey -the case study of the present thesis- is one of the three most populated cities in the country. Although news of incidents of violence related to the conflict against drug traffic in Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Guerrero or Michoacán circulated in the late 90s and early 2000s, residents of Monterrey perceived that those conflicts were not a relevant concern locally -just like in a city level, violence is considered an issue only for the informal and impoverished sectors of the city. Even as violence came closer in the neighboring state of Tamaulipas, there was a sort of certainty that the city would be impervious to drug-related violence. Sánchez Santana and Pérez Esparza (2014, p. 100) posit that this belief stems from the economic position of the city, its social capital, and institutional support. The community prided itself of their hard work, wealth, peace, and the symbolic and economic distance from the rest of the country. As I will discuss in further detail in CHAPTER 5 and especially in CHAPTER 6, the alleged absence of poverty in the city was seen as synonymous of peace (going back to the aforementioned issue of stigmatization of the poor as inherently violent). Violence was, according to general knowledge, something that happened in zones stricken by poverty and corruption. Knowing of these events in other states, people would say "they are only killing among their own". This changed in 2006 when president Felipe Calderon declared a war on drugs. On account of the corruption and ineffectiveness of law enforcement at a local level, the military was deployed to combat drug cartels. What initially appeared to be a matter of concern in the macro-scenario turned into concrete situations that affected the everyday lives of inhabitants of Monterrey.

In the national panorama, Monterrey is where the organized crime demonstrated the hold it had at a social level. It went from being allegedly one of the safest cities in Mexico to match the levels of gruesome violence of Ciudad Juárez and Tamaulipas -a situation once unthinkable. And what looked as an explosion had actually been brewing for years, invisible for the middle classes, contained in marginalized neighborhoods, not because of their supposed tendency towards direct violence, but because of structural violence that deemed them less worthy of stability and support. Moreover, it was in Monterrey that organized crime pulled large-scale actions never before seen in the country, showing the hold it had at a social level (Redacción,

2010). The circumstances that led to the surge of violence and the aftermath are explored in detail in CHAPTER 6.

The case of Monterrey is relevant to the body of knowledge on urban violence, insecurity and public space. It is representative of phenomena of inequality and urban history present in other Latin American cities, but it also serves to observe the apparent aftermath. Its favorable economic position and the extreme reliance on the private sector has turned the city into a laboratory for experiments on urban security, implementing solutions from both the Global North and the Global South -especially from the United States and Colombia, respectively. However, these apparently foolproof solutions are put to the test here, revealing concerning omissions in theory and practice that can also be found in other cases in the Global South and in vulnerable communities in the Global North.

2.2 The Latin American responses to urban violence

Urban violence has grown in the past decades in Latin America, and so has the production of knowledge and the implementation of solutions from academia and policy makers. Latin America is the subject of multiple experimentations on urban violence, a context in which well-established theories of spatial and social transformation have been put into place and tested. As shown in CHAPTER 1, a large part of theories related to the analysis and the solution of urban violence through social and spatial transformations have emerged in the United States and the UK. Approaches such as social disorganization, broken windows, and social capital are imported and applied as policy programs to reduce urban violence in Latin American cities. Often these theories and models are reproduced and go uncontested by local practitioners, as their longevity and (apparent) international validation is almost synonymous to effectiveness. And unfortunately, there is often a lack of follow-up and evaluation due to lack of material and human resources to do so. Programs are launched during one administration and abandoned the next, and lack cross-department cooperation.

Another issue is that whenever possible authorities call for the expertise of practitioners from Europe and North America who, while knowledgeable on their subject, are unfamiliar with the particular situation of Latin American cities. Lastly, there is a strong emphasis on the spectacle of combatting violence (see CHAPTER 1): actions must be visible, universal, and as immediately effective as possible. Doyle (2019) points out that results of implementation of classic theories of security in Latin America are mixed or do not have the same levels of effectiveness. This is due to the contextual differences between the places of origin of these security practices and theories -high-income countries- and the middle- to low-income environments in which they are being currently implemented. Frühling (2012) states that analysis on security should go beyond the comparison between the implementation of strategies in Latin America and their North American or European counterparts, as claims of effectiveness of certain programs are at times exaggerated. Likewise, Müller (2010) argues that most related studies in security and policing issues in Latin American suffer from

decontextualization. He and Wisler & Onwudiwe (2008) point out the need of a more nuanced theoretical analysis, as well as an approach through ethnography, towards security, as most of the analyses on the subject are rooted in uncritical liberalism or are driven by policy requirements. And hopefully this research project contributes to this nuance.

With this in mind, we will explore several of the many strategies implemented in Latin America to combat and mitigate chronic and deadly urban violence. These strategies form a spectrum: on one extreme, there are actions that rely completely on authority and the state, and on the other, there are citizen-based security practices that function independently. In addition, origins of urban violence have involved transformations of the territory, and so do the responses (D. Davis, 2016, p. 4). A second spectrum appears: one that goes from material to immaterial solutions. An element that articulates both spectrums is citizen participation. In the following sections we will observe the way in which citizen participation has been gradually integrated into material and immaterial transformations to address violence in Latin America.

2.2.1 Immaterial transformations: from *mano dura* to community-driven strategies

Early attempts to control violence at a local level focused on repressive action, also known as *mano dura* and *tolerancia cero*: tougher penalties, assertive law enforcement, and longer sentences to deter would-be drug traffickers and gangsters (Muggah, 2017). This did not work as planned. Law enforcement is in charge of citizen security is among the most notorious perpetrators of urban violence in the Global South (Moncada, 2013). Latin American police forces are neglectful, incompetent or ineffective, and operate in arbitrary and violent ways (Glebbeek & Koonings, 2016). *Mano dura* policies have not only been ineffective in reducing crime and violence, but they have also resulted in human rights' violations and a heavier police presence in vulnerable communities, who are victimized by law enforcement and informal illegal leaders.

Local level strategies were also accompanied by nation-wide action against drug traffic supported by the United States. Such is the case of Colombia and the Plan Colombia. This agreement precedes Mexico's Mérida Initiative -an agreement with the United States to assist in the fight against organized crime and drug traffic. It was signed into Mexican law in 2008 and marked the beginning of the use of federal armed forces to combat drug cartels. This open armed conflict contributed to the fragmentation of Mexico's criminal landscape: from 8 major drug cartels in 2006-2012 to over 300 by 2018. The splintering of drug cartels has made the security environment more violent and less predictable (Ellis, 2018, p. 4), and brought direct armed violence to the city dwellers' doorsteps. While some actors have acknowledged the need to experiment with new approaches to public security and building security from the ground up, trial and error have revealed several lessons, as detailed by Muggah (2017, p. 2):

- Policing, criminal justice, and penal systems are poorly managed and underprepared.
- Corruption, impunity, and collusion between police and criminal groups can undermine public security and safety measures.

- Criminalization and stigmatization of segments of a population can strengthen the power of criminal organizations.

From the 1990s on, the concept of citizen security was used in Latin America through studies of international programs of cooperation, such as the IDB, UN-Habitat Safe Cities program, the World Health Organization, among others (Ribeiro & Maitre, 2010). This concept seeks to generate a more democratic and holistic vision of public security, aimed at prevention, participation of diverse stakeholders, and a better relationship with law enforcement. Citizen-based security practices have gained popularity, with mixed results and a variable involvement of actors such as public authorities, the private sector, international organizations, and activists.

Community-oriented policing (COP) has been around since the 1960s in the United States. Since the 1990s, police reforms in Latin America have included a community policing program aiming to improve the relationship between the community and the police. Colombia introduced efforts to implement community policing in the 1990s taking inspiration from the Neighborhood Policing model in Barcelona (Frühling, 2012). Since 2008, Rio de Janeiro introduced the Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora (Pacifying Police Unit – UPP) program in traditionally violent favelas, particularly those controlled by organized crime. Surprise attacks to arrest and kill drug traffickers where a common tactic, often leading to the deaths of residents and therefore to a highly tense relationship with law enforcement. In contrast with militarized policing, the UPP is a proximity police corps that is permanently present in the favelas. It is joined by programs for social and economic development, and urbanization and regularization of services.

Community policing was introduced to Mexican policing strategies in the late 1980s. It was mostly implemented in Mexico City, then the biggest and most dangerous city in account to its high rates of delinquency. It was later revived in the 2000s as part of the US-Mexico cooperation through the Plan Mérida for the Programa para la Convivencia Ciudadana (SSPC, 2019). The Modelo Nacional de Policía y Justicia Cívica (MNPyJC) was approved in July 2019, and this model contemplates the following components for community police programs:

- Sectorization: division of the territory in zones to distribute police elements accordingly.
- Response time: aim for a standard response time of 5 minutes.
- Filing reports: receive reports, systematize the treatment of information and its canalization for investigation.
- Measuring incidence: based on 911 calls, reports filed, social media, and meetings with neighbors.
- Performance evaluation: monitor each officer's performance in relation to medium- and long-term goals, promote training.
- Meetings with neighbors: meet with neighborhood groups at least twice a month.
- Meetings with command: monitor performance by sector based on transparency, accountability, and criminal incidence.
- Attention of victims: legal, medical, and psychological care for crime victims, monitoring and channeling.

While this model is fairly comprehensive, the implementation has not been entirely successful. Literature on prior experiences in Mexico City has found that proximity police (called Policía de Barrio in this case) incur in illegal and abusive conducts (Müller, 2010, p. 33). Cooperation is further hindered by strong sentiments of mutual distrust between police officers and residents. Trust in police is sustained by personal experiences, such as positive or negative interactions with police officers. Additionally, trust from city dwellers and the attention they receive from law enforcement varies greatly depending on the neighborhoods' demographic composition, reputation, and socio-economic status. When the police corps that is closest to the inhabitants fails to help or mistreats them, this affects the perception the inhabitants have of police corps in general, even in high-income relatively peaceful contexts. In contexts facing chronic violence, knowledge circulates among city dwellers of victimization at the hands of the police or the military, from petty bribes to incrimination, abduction, torture or murder. This supports findings in the Monterrey case study, with the added complication of a chronically violent context, which will be detailed in CHAPTER 8.

How effective is COP? It depends on the territory. Referring again to the case of Brazil's UPP, Chétry (2013) notes that, while they were seen as an immediate success by specialists, associations, and residents, its implementation has seen several problems. The criteria to determine which *favelas* will benefit from UPP is unclear, and most of them are located in well-off areas of the city. The pacification of territories and the regularization of services has increased not only quality of life but also the price of real estate, which leads to the expulsion of the poorest residents who cannot sustain these costs. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, illegal power holders emerge in vulnerable communities. However, at times powerful gang leaders are the ones that maintain order in these communities and even provide for them -either through violent or paternalistic actions (Chétry, 2013). Police action to make law prevail can paradoxically disrupt the existing extra-legal order that ensures a certain level of stability - where a community carries on not despite of the rule of violence but because of it. For example, in Rio de Janeiro, the UPP's actions are seen as positive in territories where traffickers do not maintain order (due to their low levels of power and influence in the hierarchy of organized crime). Conversely, the UPP is seen as disruptive and unwelcome in territories where gang leaders had control over violence. Additionally, criminals have migrated to other favelas with less police presence. Not every gang leader has the power to exert domination over territory, and it can be concluded that the effectiveness of COP such as UPP to mitigate violence depends on the level and types of influence criminal actors have over a given territory.

In Mexico community-policing initiatives have garnered support from politicians (as it shows a direct tangible action), NGOs, and national and international practitioners and researchers. Support comes in large part from the assumed potential of this "international best practice" to contribute to an efficient, democratic, and accountable policing (Müller, 2010, p. 33). Nevertheless, its limitations suggest that such programs should be considered as efforts in symbolic policing and discursive display, there is a real will to tackle structural problems of law enforcement but they often lack proper evaluation.

COP considers among its actions the creation of neighborhood watches to better gauge the perception of insecurity in a community and to foster communication. These government-

sanctioned organizations are not always trusted nor well received by residents. Evidence from case studies in Brazil show that leaders of these groups are suspected to work with criminals or politicians to advance their own careers (Freire & Farias, 2011). In the case of the Mexican 2019 program it also considers ways in which authorities can facilitate the organization and follow-up of these groups. In truth, citizen participation does not define the priorities of police activity, and law enforcement lacks preparation to interact with city dwellers. And amidst desperation and mistrust, city dwellers are ill prepared or unwilling to communicate with police (Frühling, 2012, p. 85).

As violence becomes an everyday concern, residents do not wait for authorities to reach out and facilitate this organization. Confronted with an under-resourced, untrustworthy, and overwhelmed police corps, residents organize groups to deal with violence on their own. Within these groups and without support from authorities, citizens engage in a variety of security activities: from creating a small network of mutual help or forming a neighborhood watch to patrol the streets, to the hiring of a private security patrol and at times even vigilante justice against perpetrators in the community. Smartphones and social media have facilitated this organization, as meetings and information can be divulged through online communities (Vélez, 2018). The exploration of a neighborhood watch is the focus of the last level of analysis in the present study. Details can be found in CHAPTER 4, CHAPTER 8, and CHAPTER 10. These groups are formed depending on attachment and social capital of a determined community. While the limits of these communities are oftentimes symbolic, urban violence and the interest to secure and protect the formal from the informal have made them tangible and visible.

2.2.2 Material transformations: the fortified/fragmented city

Davis (2016, p. 4) argues that solutions to urban violence have often taken form of territorial transformations, from urban planning practices to policed segregation: "the more the social and physical separation of the formal and the informal city, the more the violence, and the more the pressure to use police as means to eliminate 'disorder' of formal areas and insure that the 'pathologies' and activities of poor residents in informal areas do not spill over into the formal city." One of the more evident transformations is the gated communities that are created for the upper classes.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the physical separation of the formal and the informal city obeyed the transformations towards an industrial and capitalist economy. Exclusive defensible spaces with clearly defined barriers promoted by real estate markets date back to the 1960s in Brazil and Mexico -especially in Mexico City in the form of vertical housing- and to the 1970s in Chile. Country clubs and summer colonies from the first half of XXth century for the upper classes precede these enclaves, but now they were integrated into the urban areas and they were permanent residences. The offer of security was certainly appealing, but living in these gated communities was also an indicator of social status. Gated communities were also presented in

Mexico as first world developments, in tune with the trends of developed countries -and particularly with the goal of imitating United States' lifestyle (Guerrien, 2005).

Jorquera Limón (2011, pp. 43, 46) states that Latin American countries that faced guerrilla or political-military instability and adhered to neoliberalism and globalization late show a delay in the emergence of gated communities. It was a process that began in the larger metropolis and that expanded later to the smaller cities. While during the accelerated mid-century growth of Latin American cities saw the emergence of informal settlements in the periphery, by the late 1980s gated communities appeared also on the periphery for the upper and middle classes. The author also posits that modernity in Latin America is a way of life that puts insecurity and fear first. Insecurity and fear stem from the gaps of material development and the actors' perception -especially for the middle classes- and are summed up as: fear of exclusion, fear of the other, and fear of chaos. These three fears in turn motivate the middle and upper classes to distance themselves from the lower classes in order to preserve what believe they can lose. In an unequal environment like Mexico, the wealthy feel especially threatened by delinquency and are particularly sensible to these changes. Additionally, it is the wealthy who have the means to demand action from authorities or to carry out changes themselves. With time, delinquency grew, and so did the perception of insecurity of the upper classes and their demand for security, exclusivity, and separation from the source of chaos and danger -the lower classes.

The emergence of gated communities also demonstrates the individualistic and commercial nature of solutions to urban violence. In contexts where the state is unable to guarantee security, it is up to the individual to seek a solution. The market is often willing to provide alternatives for those who can afford them. Facing a democratization of violence, the offer of gated communities also becomes more diverse, now also available to middle classes who want the protection that perimetral walls apparently offer.

Early gated communities were absorbed by the urban sprawl and surrounded by less affluent neighborhoods. As cities keep growing and land becomes scarce and costly, gated communities get situated further away from the city. This aggravates the dependency on private mobility. Programs of aggressive construction of housing in the early 2000s in Mexico populated the periphery with neighborhoods for the lower classes. However, without proper access to services such as transportation and healthcare, many of these neighborhoods remained empty. This created new problems of insecurity in a periphery that could not be attended by the police.

All the while, violence grows, and even leaving the gated community by car -ie. a safe means of transportation- to go to a private school or a secure mall entailed a risk. This phenomenon changed how defensible residential spaces are built, fostering the emergence of fortified enclaves. Caldeira (2000, p. 258) defines them as spaces for the middle- and upper-classes that have the following characteristics:

- They mix housing, office complexes, shopping centers, schools, hospitals, and entertainment centers.
- They are private property for collective use of homogeneous users.
- They emphasize the value of the private and devalue what is public and open in the city.

- They are isolated by walls and fences. They are turned inward away from the street, and controlled by security personnel who enforce rules of inclusion and exclusion.
- They are flexible and can be situated almost anywhere in the city. They may be situated in rural areas or on the old periphery, besides slums or informal self-built settlements.

Caldeira explains how the reading of these enclaves as prestigious spaces have required changes in the elite's values: previously, owning a detached house was the ideal lifestyle, while living in collective housing was seen as something for the poor. Convenience, high levels of criminality, heightened feelings of insecurity, and the desire for social differentiation from the lower classes that now inhabit the periphery have made fortified enclaves popular among the elite. Nevertheless, rather than mitigating violence, the disconnection and fragmentation can be seen as factors that maintain high levels of crime (Guerrien, 2005). The individualistic and short-term solutions appeared counterproductive as they produced and reproduced socio-spatial fragmentation.

CPTED in Latin America: scattered attempts at socio-spatial transformations for security

As mentioned in CHAPTER 1, CPTED has gained popularity in Latin America in the past years, especially in Chile and later in Mexico. In Mexico the International CPTED Association is represented in 10 cities and states. However, the International CPTED Association's actions are unfocused and fluctuate depending on the market's demands. CPTED leaders in Chile, Mexico, and Latin America intervene in smart city surveillance, forums of law and history of cities, actions for peace through forgiveness, youth engagement, resilience, reeducation of prison inmates, women's employment, training for police officers, and it now also includes artistic interventions with participation of residents and basic activism guidelines. CPTED practitioners propose the same methodology to secure slums, upper class malls, and middle-class parks, and regardless of whether the actions for security will be carried out by the state or city dwellers. As of late, CPTED in Latin America has publicized activities that involve children, which is appealing for public image. While a holistic approach is required, this broad set of actions are unconnected: CPTED goes where the market requires it to go, spatially and thematically.

While theory says otherwise, oftentimes what practitioners present as CPTED is the mere fact that actions are happening in a building or an open space. Combined with a theoretical interest in integrating participation and design and the complicated conditions of governance and participation in Latin America, this leads to performative strategies of participation to produce some sort of spatial modification with a limited impact.

The demand for visual and immediate solutions, the notion that CPTED is the ultimate universal solution to any and every form of violence happening in a city, and the lack of interest from authorities to evaluate the functioning of the project also complicates a critical reflection. CPTED promoters are not transparent about the limitations of the methodology, both because they lack deeper training and because it would diminish legitimacy with

potential clients. And the participatory angle, as mentioned in CHAPTER 1, is also an appealing selling point, even if it is for show. These limitations are explored in CHAPTER 4 as observed in Monterrey.

CPTED, as developed initially in Canada and the US for residential spaces in high-income countries, was not meant to be implemented in spaces without paved streets, electricity or water, or where security problems go beyond incivilities and the limits of a neighborhood. CPTED forums are dominated by Anglo-Saxon inputs that show positive results. CPTED experiments in Latin America seek to align to this discussion as a means to legitimize their practice and forgo criticism. In Mexico, part of its appeal comes from international validation. Furthermore, the perception of what a security problem is in Latin American cities varies greatly: what constitutes an incivility -an important element in CPTED- differs; given that violence is a chronic issue, there are matters that become normalized.

Cozens & Melenhorst and Ekblom (2014; 2011) note the hegemonic discourse from developed countries regarding CPTED and the lack of comparative international studies. Authors also point out that little attention has been given to context, CPTED principles appear to stay intact aiming at universality of the methodology. Evidence from the case study of Monterrey contradict several postulates of this methodology, as we will see in CHAPTER 7, CHAPTER 8, and CHAPTER 9.

Answering to trends and lacking a critical perspective, more recent CPTED projects that wish to pursue security through participation in Latin American cities are more about making spaces walkable, sustainable, sanitary or appealing or simply getting residents to work together in ephemeral spatial projects. Therefore, the CPTED modifications presented as "security-based" are mostly the basic blocks for a minimum of quality of life in cities, with or without the security factor. This is clearly a positive step, but a participatory CPTED workshop to conclude that users want streetlamps in a park where there are none is hardly giving new information, it may reduce crime but it it is unlikely to have deep changes in violence. These actions are more interested in delivering the product to the client or sponsor than to actually guarantee security and participation from city dwellers.

2.2.3 A look at the social urbanism experiment and its impact in Mexico

When discussing urban violence in Latin America, Medellin, Colombia is an obligatory stop. For decades, it has been the referent for the worst-case scenario of the degree of violence from organized crime. Nowadays, it is hailed worldwide as an example of how to effectively combat violence. This is an interesting situation considering that for decades solutions have consisted of importing theories and practices from Europe and North America. After years of focusing on law enforcement reactive approaches, and simultaneously facing issues stemming from inequality and insecurity, a new practice has emerged to tackle the problem through humanitarian and participatory socio-spatial actions: social urbanism.

Social urbanism is a concept coined by the government of Medellín between 2004-2011, under the leadership of Sergio Fajardo. Ortiz (2017) defines it as state-led interventions that address violence and inequality through improvements in transport, education facilities, and public spaces in low-income, crime-ridden, and marginalized communities -those who are affected the most by violence. Participatory governance mechanisms and power exchanges are at the heart of these solutions. It involved top-down and bottom-up planning, design, and implementation process.

Traditionally, security is seen as a matter of protecting groups from other groups that mean them harm. When this approach is applied at a city level, it tends to create fragmented spaces and foster inequality: there are those who deserve (and afford) protection and those who deserve repressive surveillance. The shift here is focused to marginalized communities. But rather than displacing the communities, or concentrating on punishment or repression, social initiatives go hand in hand with spatial interventions for these marginalized communities, who are frequently those that are touched first and most by poverty, violence, and insecurity. These zones are provided with parks, schools, libraries, clinics, and dignified public transportation. These new spaces seek to enable initiatives of social, economic, and political integration. Furthermore, inhabitants are active participants in the processes of design and implementation of the initiatives. One emblematic project is the Metro Cable, an elevated transportation system that connects vulnerable communities living in hills to the city, reducing to 10 minutes a journey that was previously 2 hours long (see Figure 4). Close and constant work between the authorities, the residents, and citizen initiatives are at the heart of these projects, in which the urban transformations are the scene for social improvement, not the protagonists.
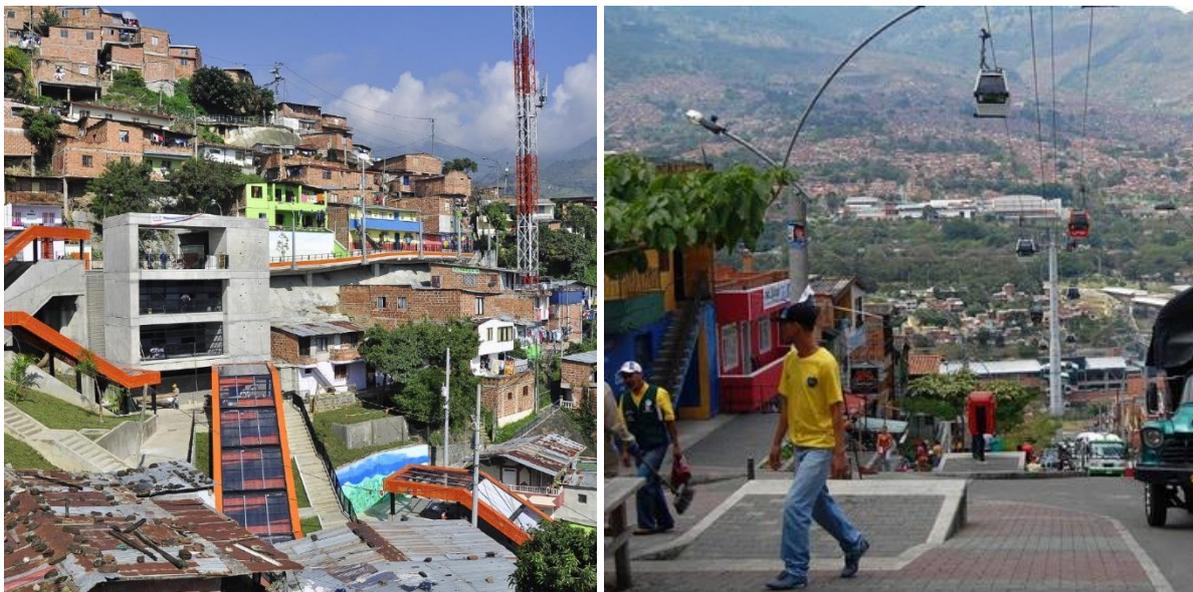
Figure 4 Improvements in accessibility and transportation in Comuna 13 in Medellín, Colombia: stairs and metrocable. June 9, 2015.

Source: Plataforma arquitectura. Retrieved on 08/07/2021. https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/768182/gustavo-restrepo-el-urbanismo-puede-acorralar-al-narcotrafico
https://elpais.com/elpais/2015/07/31/seres_urbanos/1438322400_143832.html

The city of Medellin has seen improvement in situations of violence, however human rights organizations are cautious of overly optimistic data and continue monitoring the evolution of this ambitious project (Martínez-Rivera, 2011). Furthermore, the limitations of participation in contexts of chronic violence discussed in CHAPTER 1 merit consideration. The projects have received criticism from city dwellers who believe that these transformations are mostly cosmetic and have done little to address more deep-seated issues.

Although the context of violence in Medellin can be seen as an extraordinary situation of violence, shifts on perspective on how to understand insecurity and how space contributes to the solution are enriching for other contexts facing lesser degrees of violence. The Medellin Model has gained recognition and attention of professionals in urbanism around the world seeking to improve cities, such as the World Health Forum and UN Habitat. However, it is worth noting that the dominating (and often reductive) discourse celebrates how violence was solved with clever and appealing spatial interventions in one of the most dangerous cities in the world. This assessment overlooks local dynamics that were occurring simultaneously that led to a declining homicide rate, and as Doyle (2019) mentions, attempts to clearly define the causal links to demonstrate the effectiveness of policies have been limited.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 1, the idea of solving violence through spatial interventions is highly seductive. Less seductive are the activities with several stakeholders and the community. These activities can take years and may even culminate in a spatial intervention: the material is then the backdrop and the city dwellers the protagonists. But often practitioners forgo the immaterial actions and jump straight to the material interventions. With international acclaim, the notion that participation and its results are incontestably noble and good PR, and tactical urbanism as a reaction against neoliberal urbanism, the Medellin model -or at least, a part of it- has been enthusiastically replicated in other cities in the United States, Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, Italy, among others (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Artistic interventions in vulnerable settlements inspired by social urbanism in various cities.
(left) Macro mural depicting a butterfly in Bogotá, Colombia, May 22, 2019.
Source: Twitter – Enrique Peñalosa. Retrieved on 12/07/2021.
https://twitter.com/EnriquePenalosa/status/1130975973023932417/photo/1
(center) Macro mural in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, by Pintalto Inc., July 1, 2019.
Source: Facebook – Favorite F words. Retrieved on 12/07/2021. https://www.facebook.com/favoriteFwords/posts/colorful-macro-mural-in-aguadilla-pr-so-beautiful-these-artist-collective-is-mad/434786420697799/
(right) "El ave de los sueños" - Macro mural in Cerro de la Campana in Monterrey, Mexico by Colectivo Tomate, 2018.
Source: México bien hecho. Retrieved on 12/07/2021. http://www.mexicobienhecho.com/iniciativas/colosal.aspx

Mexico is no exception. One example is the Macromural in Palmitas, Pachuca (or rather the Cubitos Painting Project): a project supported by the federal government through the Programa Nacional para la Prevención del Delito in 2015 and inaugurated in 2018 (see Figure 6). Private and public actors and artists came together to create "the world's largest mural" by painting houses in an impoverished and crime-ridden *colonia* in Pachuca, Hidalgo. The goals: create social cohesion and attachment to the territory, combat violence, generate employment, self-esteem, and tourism. The project even led to the creation of the label "Barrio Mágico" to designate these kinds of unusual tourist spots in the country. Once inaugurated, the project made the rounds on social media and international publications, being praised worldwide for its visual appeal, its monumentality, and its noble goal of combatting violence through art. Avantgarde artists, activists, architects, and urbanists from the Global North or from privileged sectors in Latin America flock to this and similar spaces to see the quaint actions that lead to -allegedly- less violence without the nefarious use of CCTV and police force. Students of schools of architecture and urbanism from France and North America walk up and down the streets and stairs, led by a bilingual guide who explains the before and after. Occasionally they talk to locals, but whatever negative feelings are expressed, they are not featured in the blogs and Instagram posts. Visitors leave afterwards, idealizing the lessons learned from their less fortunate fellowmen, unaware of the consequences of the project.

At ground level, residents still wait for the mythical change. The intervention is literally at a surface-level. The *colonia* located on a steep hill saw no improvements to accessibility or pedestrian circulation. Cracks, holes, and slanting roofs are still visible in the dwellings, but now they are painted green, blue or yellow (see Figure 7). In its implementation, the lack of expertise and of involvement of multiple stakeholders was evident. The artists were appointed directly by public authorities to carry out not just the paint but also the diagnosis of the sector and workshops with residents. The social action was to get residents together and paint what the artists defined, hoping that social cohesion would happen spontaneously. All the while, neighbors who manifested their discontent were ignored or silenced.

Figure 6 (left) Before and (right) after: the Palmitas Macro Mural project in Pachuca, Hidalgo, 2018.
Source: Journal du design. Retrieved on 21/07/2021. https://journal-du-design.fr/art/macro-mural-par-germen-62277/

Figure 7 Colorful walls as a backdrop for inadequate streets for pedestrians in Palmitas.
Images of the results of the Macro Mural in Colonia Palmitas in Pachuca, Hidalgo. March 3, 2018.
Source: Milenio & Forbes Conrad. Retrieved on 21/07/2021. https://www.milenio.com/estados/estrategia-para-bajar-violencia-y-adicciones, https://www.forbesconrad.com/blog/pachuca-murals/

After its conclusion, the project did not receive no follow-up and it was criticized for opacity and corruption and even violent repression of protests. Three years later, while authorities claimed crime diminished by 80%, residents say otherwise: "it's still the same, delinquency is still here. The only benefit from the paint is that it looks pretty, but besides that it hasn't help for something transcendental, all is the same" (Dávila, 2018). As for the creation of employment and attachment, this has not been the case either. Shop owners who were forced to take down their signage (because it crashed with the mural's aesthetics) were not compensated nor given alternatives. After being robbed several times -during, and after the mural-, owners abandoned their shops (Lizárraga, 2016). The few that remain open have few clients, as opposed to the promises made by those in charge of the project: this will become a highly attractive tourist spot, tourists will come to stay here.

The Macromural has left a sour taste among residents. Due to the arbitrary decisions, the mistreatment and unfulfilled promises by authorities, residents feel cheated and used for a project they did not ask for but they were willing to do something to improve their community. All the while, international notoriety legitimized a project that was ineffective at best and damaging at worst. Authorities, artists, and private actors have used the community's image for their own gain, falsifying the impact the project had, and eventually they replicated these actions elsewhere. COMEX -a large conglomerate that funded the project- and the artists repeated the same activity in Cerro de la Campana, an impoverished *colonia* in Monterrey, to prevent crime (see CHAPTER 7). This project is an example of the issues discussed in CHAPTER 1 with regards to *naif* urbanism and the circulation of ready-made models for city making and prevention of violence: the lack of critical perspectives, the misrepresentation of processes and results, the romantization of these solutions, and the performance of participation.

Conclusion

Urban violence has been referred to as a defining feature of the Global South (Moncada, 2013), and as a development concern (Aguilera et al., 2008; Moser & McIlwaine, 2006) and an endemic problem for Latin American cities (Glebbeek & Koonings, 2016), leading to label countries such as Mexico as "failed states" (Benitez Manaut, 2009). The Global South, and more specifically, Latin America, has been the subject and the producer of abundant literature on urban violence. Google image search results for "cities" and "security" show futuristic renders of cities and results relating to cybersecurity, while "cities" and "insecurity" results depict cities of the Global South. Likewise, results for a search on "urban violence" are also related to cities of the Global South, where Latin America predominates. Building upon the literature reviewed in this chapter, I sustain that violence in Latin American cities is not only a development concern in the macro-political arena, but also an everyday experience for city dwellers in the region.

In the specific case of Mexico, drug cartel violence has been a subject of interest for laymen and experts on the subject. Multiple studies have been produced about the evolution of organized crime, the causes and consequences at a political level, the involvement of the United States, the main actors in an international conflict, its cultural significance, etc. (Admin, 2011; Benitez Manaut, 2009; Michael, 2013; US Department of Homeland Security, 2010; Villarreal Montemayor, 2016). And while an exploration of organized crime in Mexico is beyond the scope of the present study, it is the fight against organized crime that made violence a general concern, and in a way, broke down the barriers between the formal and the informal city in terms of security. The focus of this study is not the narco actions at a large scale, but rather how these actions became a concern of everyday life, as will be explored in the following chapters.

Based on the theoretical framework, I sustain that there exists a recursive relationship between city and insecurity. A city becomes exclusionary when it is built only for those who produce. A city that favors inequality favors illegality and therefore violence and crime. In Latin America, socio-spatial and economic inequality is a product of a history of informality and un- and under employment. Informality touches not only livelihood strategies, but also social organization, political practices, status, identities, and territorial occupations. Place of residence has a strong impact on opportunities in life, from the basic needs of such as utilities to education. These informal spaces were fertile ground for the emergence of parallel powers in the form of organizations and criminal leaders. Residents turn to these extra-official actors and these actors exert their control by offering the inhabitants of those places the services and social assistance that the state is unwilling or unable to provide.

In turn, high levels of urban violence have produced solutions that seek to transform the material and immaterial elements that contribute to it, with diverse degrees of involvement from the state and the city dwellers. For a long time, there has been an emphasis in repressive policies, individualistic solutions, and socio-spatial transformations that broaden the gap between social classes in cities. There have been gradual changes to propose a more humane, holistic, and participatory approach to violence that tackles not only direct criminal violence

but rather inequality. However, there has been a lack of analysis on their consequences, which paradoxically can harm the target community, such as the disruption of pre-existing social networks between residents.

Projects -social or spatial- do not get enough follow-up or evaluation, unless there is involvement from international organizations. And even then, it is common for authorities to present an overly positive -or downright fake- information to continue receiving political or financial support. Projects are implemented following concepts often developed in high-income contexts, where they have proven to be effective, and have mixed results or are counterproductive in low-income settings. For example, Doyle (2019) cites that policies based on the broken windows approach have resulted in gangs becoming more organized and more violent. This is the case for CPTED in Monterrey. Based on observations of the case study, I criticize the limitations of imported security practices to the Latin American context, as detailed in CHAPTER 4 and CHAPTER 7. The Medellín Model is pertinent for the case study due to the fact that stakeholders from the private sector were heavily inspired by the experience to replicate it in Monterrey (see CHAPTER 7). Owners of multinationals established in Monterrey traveled to Medellín and have brought in Colombian consultants such as Sergio Fajardo to advise on these projects. However, the effectiveness of the Medellín Model is still contested. In the best-case scenario, it is complicated to assess the impact similar interventions may have. In the worst-case scenario, acritical reproduction of models frequently lacks the social activities that support the positive impact that they have had in the community, and they are limited to the mere visual elements. These creative and visually attractive elements are only effective when accompanied by a large-scale work of social interventions of restorative justice, as evidenced by the case in Pachuca, Hidalgo. It is tempting to believe that one well-designed space will solve problems of insecurity. But these partial actions can do more harm than good. Both the traditional and more innovative answers to insecurity at city level will be explored in the case study in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 - Different approaches

After analyzing literature on urban violence and its presence in Latin American cities at a large scale, this chapter will explore the three main axes of this research project: feelings of insecurity, public spaces, and daily practices. This chapter will present an overview of the scientific literature on each of these elements, its pertinence to the case study of the city of Monterrey, and how they are connected to each other. Additionally, this chapter presents the relevance of matters of social class and gender as differentiating elements for these three axes.

The first section focuses on the concept of feelings of insecurity in relation to fear of crime, how it is influenced by personal, social, and environmental factors, and how has evolved as a subject of research and public policy. The second section zooms in on public spaces, first to look at their symbolic role in the modern Latin American city (continuing the debate presented in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2), and then to analyze how it is conceptualized as a product and producer of feelings of insecurity. Lastly, the third section presents the interest of analyzing feelings of insecurity as an everyday experience, leading to the discussion of micro and meso levels of analysis and qualitative approaches -which will be continued in further detail and applied to the case study in CHAPTER 4. These perspectives are interesting because this research project aims to show how answers to urban violence are simultaneously present at the city, neighborhood, and individual levels, where the neighborhood level is used to articulate the individual and the city levels.

3.1 Fear of crime or feelings of insecurity?

City dwellers understanding of the urban is a product of images and experiences, positive and negative. As England & Simon state (2010, p. 203) geographies of fear are often based on social perceptions of risk of victimization. In urban spaces, boundaries can be challenged and unease, anticipation of danger can occur. Approaches to understand this unease, what produces it, how people react, and how to mitigate it have evolved since the 60s. The understanding of fear of crime and the urban realm stems from US and UK national street crime surveys in the late 60s. The goals of these instruments were to construct social indicators to measure quality of life and to improve the measuring of street crime by complementing federal statistics. The results from these studies sparked an interest on the emotional reactions of the interviewees.

From then on, further research in different contexts has confirmed the social and spatial distribution of fear, monitor its impact upon individuals and communities, and consider strategies to reduce it. Hale (1996) did a comprehensive review of the literature about fear of crime. The author thoroughly explains consequences of fear of crime, how it is measured, what variables are used to explain fear of crime, and strategies employed to reduce it.

Nevertheless, since the 1970s, fear of crime as a concept came under scrutiny. Authors such as Bannister & Fyfe (2001), Hale (1996), and Robert & Zaubermann (2017) argue that a consistent definition of fear of crime is elusive. It can be conceptualized as an individual's assessment of risk of victimization, as an emotional reaction to crime, or as unease with regards to social changes and disruptions.

Fear of crime is interpreted as a consequence of risk and vulnerability directly linked to experiences of victimization, but further observations revealed a dissonance between risks and perception. Expression of fear occurs more frequently than victimization. Greater levels of fear do not imply greater victimization or risk: it is common for people who have not experienced victimization and/or are at low risk to express high levels of fear. Conversely, one could have experiences of victimization and do not express fear. The "crime" dimension of the concept is also limiting. As seen in CHAPTER 1, violence and crime are often used as synonymous. Crime is one of the many forms that violence can take, and it is not the only factor that sustains city dwellers' perception of insecurity (Rader, 2017) : low crime does not necessarily imply a positive perception of security, much less for vulnerable populations. For example, the presence of groups of youths who are not committing any crimes may make elderly people nervous. This is a phenomenon particularly pertinent for contexts of chronic violence, inequality, and socio-economic vulnerability: an individual who has no other choice but to face violence in everyday life in a variety of situations tends to normalize and even trivialize violence, while still being aware of the risks present.

In the mid-1970s, scientists established the idea that fear of crime not only reflects (direct or indirect) victimization, suggesting that it represents more general feelings of malaise: fear of crime as a sign of broader community problems and conditions of disorder (Donder et al., 2009, pp. 3–4). Basic definitions of "fear" are that of an "unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger; an anxious concern; a reason for alarm" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) and the "anguish over real or imagined risk or harm" (RAE, n.d.). Taken in its most literal form, fear as a way to understand perceptions and reactions to insecurity is reductive. Fear is not the only emotional response an individual can have to it, as research has shown repeatedly. Facing this multiplicity of reactions, researchers and practitioners have frequently confounded all emotions and judgements towards crime under the umbrella concept of "fear of crime" (Hunter, 1978).

Inquiries about fear of crime tend to ask subjects to recall past experiences, often establishing victimization it as a static notion. However, Trickett (2011) posits that victimization is rather a process, where categories -including those of victim and offender- may blur and overlap, even within the course of a single day. Understanding victimization as a process can help connect individual experiences and external elements that inform the perception of insecurity beyond crime.

French research has favored the use of the concept of "feelings of insecurity" rather than "fear of crime". On one of the early studies of violence, crime, and delinquency in France, the report produced identified four elements to perception of insecurity: fear of victimization, emotion, exasperation, and collective anguish (Peyrefitte et al., 1977). Fustenberg's work (1971) establishes two levels of feelings of insecurity expressed by individuals:

a) Personal level: referred to as "fear" in Fustenberg's work, it alludes to the risk or concrete experiences of victimization. It is constructed based on personal experiences that produce a perception of danger combined with the individual's perceived vulnerability. The perceived vulnerability is dependent of physical traits of the individual as well as lifestyle conditions, their awareness of what constitutes a threat, and their attitude towards it.

b) Social level: referred to as "concern" in Fustenberg's work, it relates to worry towards social problems not related to personal risk. It depends on the apprehension the individual may have with regards to larger social issues.

In short, it is the difference between seeing a certain environment or situation as dangerous and feeling directly threatened by said environment or situation, in function of the traits and history. Elaborating on the focus of the individuals' perception, Noble (2016) identifies three types of personal dispositions that affect how an individual perceives his or her own risk and victimization: personal experiences, socio-cultural representations, and individuals' characteristics. With regards to the individual and the collective, England & Simon (2010, p. 203) state that the people one sees when in urban space can affect perceptions of safety (or lack of). Cultural identity, including who is safe and who is part of one's community, are also deeply affected by who appears in public space. Feelings of fear and safety shift based on one's social and spatial position. While developed in a different context, these observations of people in the public space, belonging, and social positions were noted in the case study of this thesis; as we will see in PART 2 and PART 3, who is seen as a suspect in public space is related to stereotypes of social class and who claims ownership over public spaces.

Leaning less on individuals' traits and perception and more towards the contextual aspect, Roché (1993) builds upon Fustenberg's "concern" -or social level- to propose that it is also related to the worries about order and its representations. He also noted that incivilities have an impact on feelings of insecurity. In English-speaking literature, Hunter is credited with relating incivilities to the then used concept of fear of crime. It is noteworthy that the author mentions that he "lump[s} under the broad concept of fear finer distinctions made by some among 'concern', 'risk, and 'fear' " (1978, p. 2). He argues that incivilities are more predictive than direct experiences of criminal victimization. Incivilities have also been known as "signs of crime", "early signs of danger", "urban unease", "broken windows", "non-normal appearances", "cues to danger", "disorder", "soft crimes" or "prelude to trouble", as listed by LaGrange et al (1992, p. 312). These authors define incivilities as low-level transgressions to rules of social life that signal the erosion of conventionally accepted norms and values, which can be a) disorderly physical surroundings (trash, litter, abandoned shops, graffiti, abandoned cars) or b) disruptive social behaviors (drinking, disorderly youths, loiterers, inconsiderate neighbors). In summary, per Hunter's argument (1978) social disorder leads to incivilities

which lead to fear of victimization. Depending on cultural and social contexts, individuals may interpret them as signs of risk. As we will see in the following section, the physical surroundings have been the subject of much debate with regards to crime prevention and perception of security. Carro et al. and Valera & Guàrdia (2010; 2014) propose a more comprehensive integration of individual and contextual elements that inform feelings of insecurity. According to these authors, feelings of insecurity are structurally linked to three factors:

1. personal variables – includes variables associated to personal vulnerability (gender, age), coping strategies (social support, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral control).
2. social representations of dangerous environments – variables related to direct or indirect previous experiences in the place and its surroundings, processes of social influence that determine representation of a dangerous place. This can also be influenced by traditional and social media.
3. environmental variables - characteristics of the space including physical (visual control, illumination, vandalism, time of the day) and social aspects (presence of potential aggressors, available opportunities of social support, patterns of space occupation).

The concept of feelings of insecurity therefore designates the perception of and reactions to phenomena of victimization and criminality, but it also considers signs of social disorder and incivilities -non-criminal situations. Furthermore, it also considers environmental features, both physical and social, along with the individuals' characteristics and experiences. Based on the aforementioned literature, I argue that the concept of feelings of insecurity is by far more comprehensive than fear of crime. The present study builds upon this notion to assess perception over big and small incidents of violence -which regardless of its classification in law enforcement- affect how users perceive and use public space.

3.1.1 Misinterpretation and contextualization of feelings of insecurity and perspectives of vulnerable groups

Whether or not referred to as feelings of insecurity, empirical analyses of the causes and consequences of a negative perception of security since the 1970s have tended to focus on the characteristics of individuals and groups who express greater levels of fear in surveys (Brunton-Smith & Sturgis, 2011, p. 332; Hale, 1996). However, those who are more likely to be heard about feelings of insecurity are not necessarily representative of a situation of insecurity. This perspective also fails to address the fears and concerns of disenfranchised and vulnerable groups -even in high-income countries- who may be voluntarily or involuntarily silenced -for example, women, the poor, racial minorities, and immigrants.

Discussions in the Global North have presented heightened feelings of insecurity as motivated by xenophobia, racism, and nationalism. Robert & Zauberman (2017, pp. 47–53) state that political opinion and belonging to a group that sees their identity and social position threatened determine the degree of concern over security in France: far-right supporters are more likely to express feelings of insecurity. Likewise, fear or feelings of insecurity are used interchangeably

to posit that power holders and the media manipulate public opinion by exaggerating threats: turning minor issues into full-blown social panics and placing the blame of insecurity on racialized individuals or the poor. Therefore, discussions on feelings of insecurity are frequently associated with right-wing politics. This certainly occurs; however, discarding the discussion of feelings of insecurity is also a limiting and counterproductive position with regards to improving conditions of vulnerable populations. Scientific literature in North America and Europe has indeed noted that feelings of insecurity are related to a resistance to alterations of the status quo (Furstenberg, 1971) -ie. a conservative mindset; an example of this is the post-September 11th concern about terrorism (Kinsella, 2007, p. 1). If the understanding of feelings of insecurity is limited to these conditions, giving credence to them would indeed be detrimental to those being presented as, say, terrorists. However, this interpretation also denies the assessment of feelings of insecurity as an issue of everyday life and also from the perspective of disenfranchised populations. Feelings of insecurity are not exclusive to dominant groups and have a variety of motivations and manifestations: fear is not the only expression nor xenophobia its only motor.

In cities of the Global North direct experiences of violence in everyday life are infrequent. They are a non-issue for the majority of the population, or at most an abstract problem. By contrast, in Latin American countries violence constitutes a concrete and personal risk for a large part of the population. Borrowing the differentiation of "fear" and "concern" presented by Furstenberg, I argue that violence is a concern for the Global North, and a fear for the Global South. For example, with regards to the personal level, Robert & Zauberman (2017) mention that, along with ideology, education and personal income have an effect on perception of insecurity: the higher the revenue and education levels, the lower the fear expressed by individuals. This is not the case for countries like Mexico, where individuals with high levels of education also express high levels of personal fear (high education being associated in this context with above average income, and therefore, someone with money worth stealing from). Income also made no difference in the fear of being abducted: experience tells that victims come from all walks of life (see CHAPTER 8). As Bell-Martin & Marston (2019, p. 7) observe, despite important variations in income in the case of Monterrey, nearly all of the city dwellers risked falling victim to violent crime, with variations in socio-economic sectors. In the context in question, two elements have a remarkable impact on perception: social class and gender.

Feelings of insecurity, gender, and social class

Scientific production has put forward the fact that studies on insecurity have for a long time neglected to consider the impact of gender and class on the experience of urban life, which in turn has challenged the previous ways in which insecurity is observed and analyzed (Baron, 2011; Ceccato & Nalla, 2020; Donder et al., 2009; S. L. Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Koskela & Pain, 2000; Moser & McIlwaine, 2004). Discussing how insecurity is perceived, Trickett (2011) argues that victimization is not a static image but a process influenced by gender, as men and women receive different messages about victimization and risk thorough socialization. What is a very real threat or risk for female city dwellers may be

invisible for male city dwellers. Additionally, even if visible for male city dwellers, the problem can be interpreted differently: violence against women can be recognized as an abstract social concern by male city dwellers, but it is a concrete personal threat for female city dwellers.

Gender expectations play an important role. It is common for women to be socialized to be more open about their feelings, while men are socialized to be silent about them. Women are allowed -and expected- to be afraid and express themselves as victims. Moreover, men are expected to perform fearlessness, bravery, and control (Brownlow, 2005). A study by Sutton & Farrall (2004) noted the link between men who are concerned with self-presentation and low levels of fear. Masculinity is incompatible with vulnerability and fear; thus, men are less likely to directly express fear. However, in a context of chronic violence and victimization, where the majority of the population is concerned, they may express it in different terms, as seen in CHAPTER 8.

However, even if research reveals a disparity between male and female expression of fear, this does not mean that women's feelings of insecurity are being addressed. The male quantifiable experience tends to be considered as synonymous to a "universal experience" (Baez et al., 2017; Criado Perez, 2019; Wang & Burris, 1997) and this has an effect on the assessment of perception of insecurity and the solutions put into place. The female experience is considered as anomalous (E. Stanko, 2013), irrational (Falú & Segovia, 2007), and -at best- a secondary issue. Violence perceived by women is normalized and left unattended unless it is deemed grave enough or it coincides with the "universal experience".

From an intersectional perspective, gender is an important differentiator but it is not the sole factor that affects how feelings of insecurity are expressed by city dwellers or interpreted by others. As discussed by Grineski et al on their study of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico (2013) intersectionality emphasizes context, allowing the observation the way in which structural elements of social location blend with more personal aspects of experience. Not all male experiences are given the same weight: men who do not embody hegemonic masculinity are more likely to be othered; race, sexual orientation, class, age, and income also come into play to minimize or silence their experiences. Conversely, not all female experiences are equally ignored. Concerns raised by upper-class women are more likely to be heard by decision makers than those of lower-class men.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 2, inequality is rampant in Latin American cities. Not only are the poor frequently left to their own devices to solve basic infrastructure, but they also face more policing and penalization for their actions (Wacquant, 2009). These everyday challenges for the lower class may become worse in a violent context. Poor families who rely on networks for social support see them disrupted, producing isolation (McIlwaine & Moser, 2004). This adds to the problem of stigmatization, where the lower classes are presented as the ones responsible for violence and their own victimization. Victims of direct and structural violence may recognize it as a problem, but as we will observe in CHAPTER 8, CHAPTER 9, and CHAPTER 10, they cannot allow themselves to express the same level of fear as the upper classes: fear is not paralyzing, it is an ever-present element, there is no

other option but to deal with it. The subject of gender related to feelings of insecurity will be explored in the following sections of the present chapter with regards to its relation to public space and daily practices.

Nevertheless, even considering that feelings of insecurity are an important topic for city dwellers, it appears in the agenda of cities in Latin America as a political tool, limiting its importance. Whether or not the population expresses heightened feelings of insecurity is used by the opposition to discredit or criticize the government in turn. Likewise, the limitation of information about insecurity is used to present a more positive image of the present situation. For cases such as these, as Dammert comments (2007, p. 89), experts in security have resorted to exclude "fear" from public policy due to its volatility and weaponization.

When it comes to policy making, not all feelings of insecurity are given the same weight or importance. Those with lower social class tend to suffer disproportionately from armed conflict as compared to those with higher social class, but public policy regarding security is not necessarily articulated around those who are more victimized. Not everyone has the same capacity or likelihood to impact public actions, nor to change their situation through direct action. As mentioned earlier, high feelings of insecurity are expressed in the more traditional way by individuals who are not necessarily the most victimized. Oftentimes they are also the ones who are more likely to address authority about insecurity, and thus, inform public policy: they may trust authorities more, they feel confident in voicing their concerns, or they belong to a dominant group. High-income environments are also contexts where -compared to low-income countries- there is an assumption of more trusting relations in the broader institutional framework of society and the state (Doyle, 2019). This is the case especially for populations who face violence in everyday life but cannot change it directly: they perceive insecurity, and while they may be fearful they also tend to minimize it as there is little they can do about it. Furthermore, their relation to authorities is also less favorable -and as seen in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2, the dominant groups may consider their claims as illegitimate, their situation as deserved because of supposedly individual failures- and their claims are less likely to be taken into account. Urban space can be seen as a space of fear for many and those fears are not restricted to any one age, class, gender or race, although those social markers can play a role in geographies of fear (England & Simon, 2010, p. 203).

Public policy has focused largely on crime rates. Insight over non-quantifiable and non-criminal issues may be interpreted as irrational -particularly those expressed by individuals othered due to their gender, race, age or sexuality, and therefore, less real and less deserving of attention. Nevertheless, they have a real impact on the way inhabitants use, perceive, and even transform their environments. The focus on crime and the neglect of other elements leads to incorrect conclusions about perception of security (for example, stating that perception of security is much better than initially believed) and an overreliance on quantitative data, technology, and police action. This adds to the argument of authors cited in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2 about the need for ethnographic and participatory studies in smaller scales to better understand perception of violence and insecurity urban environments. However,

applying qualitative approaches in a context of chronic violence comes with its own set of complications, which will be explored in CHAPTER 4. It is also important to complement the feedback from individuals' perception with the understanding of the wider social context, such as the local community characteristics and neighborhood-level social processes (Brunton-Smith & Sturgis, 2011, p. 332). Wilkinson et al's work (2017) make a case for the importance of context, emphasizing time and place, even within the framework of surveys.

The lack of contextualization or consideration for wider social forces has led law enforcement and other decision makers to consider that negative perceptions of security are overblown by hypersensitive individuals. Therefore, rather than examining the reasons for this heightened perception and who expresses it, public policy often focuses on improving how crime and law enforcement are perceived. For example, decision makers may create campaigns that inform city dwellers that crime is being dealt with, that police officers are trustworthy, and that whatever worries they may have are unfounded. Such actions were part of the recommendations proposed by the Observatorio de Seguridad y Justicia to improve perception of insecurity in Nuevo León (the state where Monterrey is located) (Observatorio de Seguridad y Justicia, 2021; Observatorio de Seguridad y Justicia & Consejo Nuevo León para la planeación estratégica, 2021). These strategies, while necessary to a certain extent, aim to persuade the population that their perception of insecurity is overtly negative because they ignore crime rates.

Conceptualizing insecurity as a problem imagined by conservatives and the media, and as a product of misinformation about crime rates- avoid deeper discussions about who, how, and why feelings of insecurity may be high. The solutions stemming from these two perspectives will hardly address profound and structural issues. This is especially impactful for vulnerable populations whose experiences of violence has been traditionally denied credibility and whose concerns are not only at a social level, but are personal threats.

The concept of feelings of insecurity is a more robust to assess perception of violence in urban space than fear of crime. Nevertheless, its breadth may also present difficulties. Therefore, it is necessary to establish the limits of observation of feelings of insecurity. In the case of this study, I resolved that the most pertinent approach was to frame it in the realm of public space and everyday practices.

3.2 The public space

In the more traditional sense, public space is opposed to private space: it is publicly owned, free, open and accessible to everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, socio-economic level or race: markets, parks, squares, plazas, community centers, and connecting spaces, such as sidewalks and streets (UNESCO, 2020). The term appeared in the 1960s following the work of Habermas (1962) about the public sphere (originally *Öffentlichkeit*). For several decades, as Fleury & Tonnelat (2012) point out, the interest on public space was often limited to the pragmatical, the technical, and the functional, especially in the fields of geography, architecture and urbanism. It was until the 1970s that new perspectives from sociology emerged recognizing the simultaneous urban and social issues present.. Public space is therefore not only the

physical: it is processes and relationships that emerge in spatial-temporal context that mutate, with social, political, and cultural significations as (J. Jacobs, 1992; Ramírez Kuri et al., 2017). It is the setting where strangers develop interactions and social mixing, where expressions of citizenship take place -from celebrations to protests. It is also the scene for interactions that are not always positive, and so it is also a place where conflict takes form, from clashes between citizens to crimes and conflicts with authorities. Public space can be the backdrop for a conflict or it can be the object of dispute itself.

Borja & Muxi (2003) suggest that public space ought to be multifunctional and accessible to all -seconding the first definition in this section- but also it should stimulate social identification and cultural integration. However, this use is not as democratic as it may appear. Social inequality, violence, and the perception of security determine who uses it and how. By definition, the public space belongs to no one on a permanent fashion. Rather, it is own by its occupant, and so, the ownership is fluid, temporary, and constantly changing, or as put by Contreras Delgado et al (2015, p. 11) it is an infinite process of transitory colonizations. Additionally, a single public space can mean different things depending on the time of day and for different socio-demographic groups. In this sense, it is linked to the perception of insecurity, which varies in a similar way.

Public space can also be a mirror or a barometer that tells us about the state of mind of a society (Borja & Muxí, 2003). Even anodyne public spaces of everyday life can inform us about this. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic and the first lockdown on the first semester of 2020, images circulated online of empty parks, plazas, cafes, bridges, marketplaces, and streets, that would otherwise be bustling with activity. Later in 2021, images showed crowds retaking the streets, now sporting masks. Public spaces are effective to tell stories about how a large-scale crisis -such as urban violence or a pandemic- impacts the everyday lives of common individuals.

For a long time studies of insecurity and public space explored how public space is interpreted by the criminal (Carter & Hill, 1979). Design-Out Crime and CPTED, for example, are mostly concerned with how the design of environment influences offenders' opportunities. Therefore, public spaces are altered to make crime easy to detect and hard to commit. These modifications however vary in their effectiveness and have other ramifications, such as negatively affecting privacy, accessibility, and social cohesion.

When shifting the interest towards non-criminals perception of public space in relation to crime, the belief that visible signs of disorder are closely related to criminal behavior has long been a part of conventional wisdom and of research: spaces emit unmistakable cues that inform individuals of risk (LaGrange et al., 1992). Studies have shown significant relationships between social and physical incivility and perceptions of risk. However, what an incivility is depends on the cultural and social context. Furthermore, tackling incivilities may be a surface-level strategy that will not resolve more deep issues that make violence a problem.

In recent years -as seen in CHAPTER 1, CHAPTER 2, and CHAPTER 7- public spaces have become the places for experiments carried out by well-meaning albeit ill-prepared activists and professionals, and by authorities and private investors for financial and political gain.

Organizations such as UNESCO, UN Women, Interamerican Development Bank, and GIZ have taken interest on making public spaces inclusive, sustainable, and safe or simply open it up to carry out activities for the wellbeing of a community. Public space, it appears, is the new currency for many would-be city rescuers and as a contestation of neoliberal and top-bottom urbanism. From tactical urbanism to CPTED and real estate, projects are dressed up with buzzwords such as resilience, walkability, mobility, pedestrianization. However, these interventions have often failed in integrating the context-dependent ways in which users perceive and use public spaces, particularly in violent and segregated environments. One could say that a park is a park regardless of where it is, be it Mexico or Canada, a universality that is often defended by the proponents of the aforementioned approaches. For this reason, it is important for this study to observe the peculiarities of public spaces in Latin America and how this impacts the way feelings of insecurity are analyzed.

3.1.2 Public spaces in Latin American cities facing chronic violence and socio-spatial fragmentation

In CHAPTER 2 we explored the Latin American city and socio-spatial inequalities. Zooming in, how do they take form in public spaces? As discussed in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2, XXth century modernist ideals changed the way cities -and public spaces- were used. Modernist urban planning sought to, in the words of Duhau (2001), domesticate the street. For this it was important to clearly differentiate the private from the public spaces, in which recreation, circulation, consumption, and coexistence of strangers occurred in the framework of civic rules and physical elements.

Latin American urban planners and decision makers pursued these modern ideals while at the same time valorizing the transformation into independent nations and distancing themselves from their colonial past. Public spaces played an important role in making these ideas a part of the urban landscape through grand emblematic projects such as grand parks and large avenues with monuments. These projects were largely inspired European models. However, Latin American cities were faced with particular conditions that turned these public spaces into something very different, namely poverty and inequality. Therefore, these new public spaces were not accessible for everyone, as they were not equally distributed. As seen in CHAPTER 5, the quality and accessibility of public spaces was conditioned to social class.

Contreras Delgado et al's work (2015) notes the lack of consideration for immaterial aspects of public space -streets in Monterrey- such as appropriation, territoriality, and co-existence. Jorquera-Limón (2011, pp. 43–45) argues that in Mexico in general, public space has been confounded with its formal legal definition in urbanistic guidelines. To this, it is worth noting that there have been times -such as the case study- where "public space" is not mentioned in urbanistic guidelines at all; they rather use "infrastructure" or "sports equipment". The term "public space" in legal documents is fairly recent. On the one hand, this disregards public space as anything beyond the physical and the utilitarian. Also, it confines the notion of public space to property, disregarding its public character -this is, something accessible to all. The author

argues that this way a public space could qualify as private not only due to its legal ownership but by its limited accessibility.

Giglia (2003) notes that public spaces is where links of belonging can be built. However, this construction of a sense of belonging faces several obstacles. A sense of belonging or appropriation is determined by social class. Markowski (2003) posits that public spaces in Latin America have two tendencies: isolation and high levels of differentiation. The ideal of public space as a learning experience and as the setting to construct citizenship is obstructed by social disparities that designate which physical spaces merit attention -those for the upper classes- and which ones are neglected, making social differences tangible and visible (see Figure 8). It is hard to construct a common sense of citizenship and belonging when city dwellers are constantly reminded that their social status determines the quality of spaces they can access.
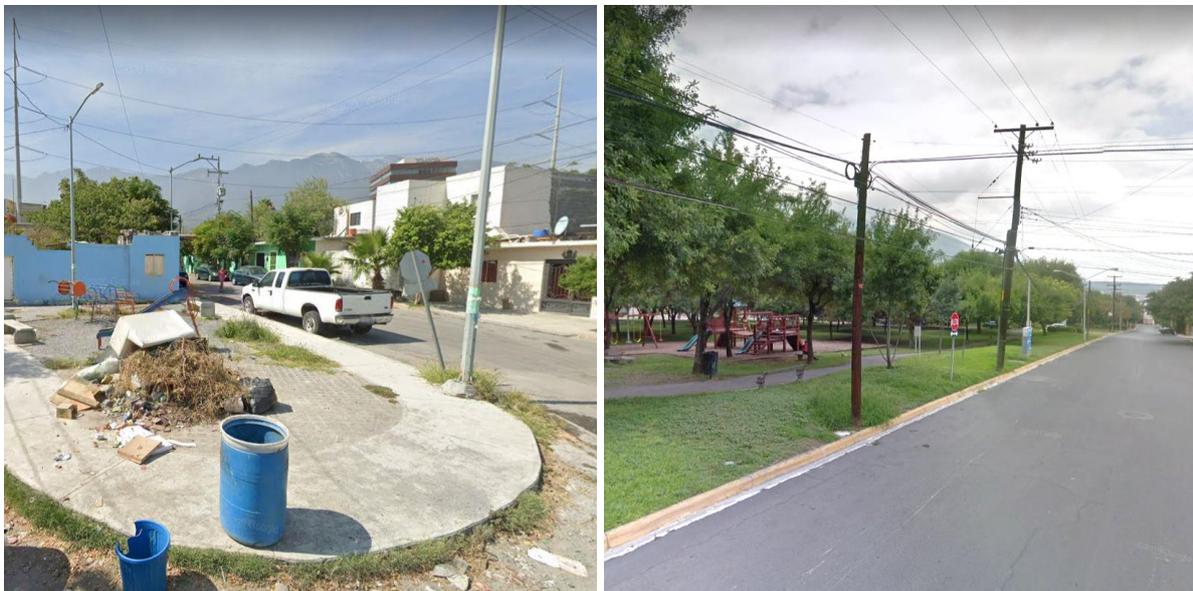
Figure 8 Two contrasting public parks in one municipality, 3 km. apart, both managed by the same public authority (San Pedro -part of the Monterrey Metropolitan Area), 2019.
Source: Google Street View. Retrieved on 26/07/2021.
The park in Colonia Los Pinos (left) -a lower class settlement- is a residual space in one block, where garbage and debris have been dumped, with sidewalks with overgrown weeds, broken sidewalks, broken metal slides, and no shade. Meanwhile, the park in Mirasierra (right) -an upper-class neighborhood- is well maintained, it has trees and municipal-grade garbage bins, there is a buffer between the play area and the street, and the recreational equipment is new and made of plastic.

Contact with the public space in Mexico is a matter of class differentiation. If one's source of entertainment or work was the public space, this was synonymous to not being able to accede to private environments, due to resources, education or ethnicity. The upper classes favored private or semi-private spaces, such as malls and gated communities, as an indicator of status. The neglect of public spaces, Jorquera-Limón comments (2011, pp. 43–45), fosters anti-civic or acivic attitudes: marginal forms of survival and everyday use, as well as a wide variety of practices that generate fear and insecurity: drug traffic, violence, theft, crime. With the increasing experiences of violence, it is also a matter of self-preservation. The fact that public spaces became the scene for violent confrontations led those who could afford it to avoid public

space. Those who could afford it further fortified their neighborhoods and controlled the access of "undesirables" to otherwise public spaces. Meanwhile, this distancing and fortification of public spaces was not an option for the most vulnerable. Violence in public spaces either cut off the livelihoods of informal workers who depended on public space interactions or put them at high risk of either being victims of direct violence or being recruited to collaborate with organized crime.

As for the interpretation of public spaces by non-criminal users, it is a well-established fact in literature that city dwellers take cues from their neighborhoods and the built environment of how afraid to be (Furstenberg, 1971, p. 607). The urban space supports and produces images of insecurity: vandalism, decay, informal commerce, poor garbage collection, poor lighting, patterns of occupation, etc. Good design and adequate management of public spaces contribute to environmental and economic sustainability and to the enhancement of community cohesion.

However, as mentioned earlier, what qualifies as an incivility or a sign of disorder and the weight it has on feelings of insecurity depend on social and cultural contexts. What constitutes decay in one context may be perfectly tolerable in another. In an environment where neglect is the norm, trash for example is going to be seen as unpleasant but not necessarily as a definitive sign of danger. And as discussed in CHAPTER 2 and CHAPTER 7, actions to drastically improve maintenance can even have the opposite effect, as they may alienate the target population.

Proponents of *naif* urbanism argue that incentivizing public space use is categorically good. They lament the abandonment of public spaces as modern life has distanced us greatly from its potential for spontaneity. The discourse also yearns for simpler times, with a slower pace of life to appreciate greenery in open spaces. Urbanistic guidelines and laws, they argue, suffocate the many possibilities of public space, and therefore, suffocate freedom, inclusion, collaboration, etc. This romantic nostalgia for times past where allegedly public spaces were the places of social encounter par excellence begs the question: where they ever so? And then, for whom? Or is this a nostalgia for something that never was? While this may have been at least partially true for urban centers in Europe, it is much less so in Latin America. This alleged distance from public space is not the experience of city dwellers who are part of informal economy and whose livelihood depends on contact with people in the public spaces. The idea of retaking the multiplicity of uses disregards the fact that public space in Latin America is defined by its liminality. Public spaces -especially for the lower classes- are oftentimes used as an extension of the private. It is hardly unusual for the street to be a place to sell, eat, sleep, do homework, watch films, do parties, park cars, etc., with or without consent from the state, and -contrary to the idealistic vision of public space as a place for communion. Others -rather than making public space an extension of the private realm- try to avoid it at all costs or to filter it out (for example, cars allow users to move through public space while minimizing the contact with it). These conflicting uses produce clashes and chaos.

The lack of strict application of urbanistic regulations has not produced freedom, equality, and pleasant experiences; on the contrary: it has fostered insecurity and injustice (Petzold Rodríguez, 2015). The public space is the site and object of disputes between the state, the informal and informal vendors, between cars and pedestrians. Users demand the state not to

open it up but to set clear boundaries, and the state is either unwilling or unable to do so. As in the larger scale of the city, this absence motivates the appearance of informal leaders and forms of abuse that go unchecked.

3.1.3 Public spaces, gender, and violence

The issue of gender in public spaces is often a matter of debate, particularly when the understanding of public space is limited to the physical: a sidewalk is no less of a sidewalk regardless of the gender of the user. Public spaces are conceptualized with a universal/standardized user in mind. A closer look calls into question just how "universal" this user really is: a male individual, who is neither handicapped nor in charge of another person (which is often a women's responsibility). Public space is not neutral with regards to gender, as it reflects values associated with masculinity (Herrera Sormano, 2019), and in this sense, it penalizes female city dwellers more. Gender studies have shown that in public space, men dominate women in multiple ways, not always in a dramatic way, affecting the reading of public spaces (Lécuyer, 2019). This is not to say that women are naturally vulnerable. However, as Baumann points out (2019), as women grow up and find themselves in public spaces they face a certain number of constraints: what clothes to wear, what routes to take, how to walk, how to look, how to plan ahead. In short: how to be safe in public spaces.

Research has consistently shown that women report higher levels of fear in public space in surveys. This can have several explanations, the first stemming from women's social and physical vulnerability (Hale, 1996; Hirtenlehner & Farrall, 2014; Pain, 2000). The risks of danger while navigating the public space are more tangible and well defined for female city dwellers, as they play an important role on their everyday life in public spaces. This can be attributed to what Ferraro (1996) defines as the shadow of sexual assault hypothesis: a non-sexual victimization devolving into sexual assault. Lieber's work on feelings of insecurity of French women in public spaces (Lieber, 2002; Rivière, 2008) revealed that there is a type of fear specific to the female city dweller. This gendered fear is associated with the particular dangers of being a woman in public space, with a clear sexual connotation. The author notes that this fear tends to be taken for granted: the fear of sexual assault is a constant presence. Fear of crime for women is implicitly a fear of sexual violence, when a relatively minor aggression can turn into rape. Street harassment is a daily security problem for women in public space all around the world. Nevertheless, in many places this is not a crime, and -as seen in CHAPTER 8 and CHAPTER 10- it is so commonplace and ephemeral that it is neither reported by victims nor taken seriously by law enforcement (UN Habitat, 2010). Furthermore, this event is often minimized if there was no physical violence involved.

Although cues of danger from the built environment can be identified by individuals regardless of their gender, female city dwellers tend to be more alert to material and immaterial cues, owning to the fact that the consequences are more serious and restrictive in their everyday life (Ceccato & Nalla, 2020, p. 267). Due to fear, women restrict their uses of public space -such as mobility- more than men (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010), they experience the tangible consequences and are able to identify them more so than men -while also being victimized largely by men.

This does not mean that all male city dwellers are exempt from violence or victimization. Those who do not present themselves under the cultural idea of masculinity are constantly tested in the public space. Brownlow (2005, p. 583) refers to Connell's (1995) notion of 'protest masculinity': a set of exaggerated practices and behaviors adopted by marginalized men in response to powerlessness, anger, and frustration over the exclusion from the dividends of hegemonic masculinity. These performances to claim whatever power and legitimacy they can occur in public spaces. The author also notes that the exclusion from the economic sphere of normative masculine development suggests the subsequent significance of public spaces as sites of masculinity performance (Brownlow, 2005).

3.3 The daily practices

Insecurity exacerbates personal vulnerabilities, it acts as a divisive presence where people live and congregate, it reduces the desire or willingness to participate in social encounters. It is feelings of insecurity regarding violence that damages the fabric of cities affecting quality of life (Bannister & Fyfe, 2001, p. 808). As Lefebvre (1991) notes it is important to enter the street as a lived space, where perceptions of security are constantly changing. And in this sense, users of public spaces adjust their practices constantly as part of their navigation of spaces in everyday life. The everyday life experience is relevant for the case study because, as mentioned previously and explored in the analysis of the case study, it is when violence becomes a direct and personal experience that action is taken. these actions can take many forms, from individual to collective, from material to immaterial.

In criminology, a first link between everyday patterns, place, and crime can be found in the perspective of routine activities theory. As summarized by Patino et al (2014, p. 48), this theory states that criminal acts require convergence in space and time of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardians against crime, and relates crime patterns to the everyday patterns of social interaction. However, the focus in this case is not the criminals' understanding of everyday patterns, but the non-criminal's integration of risk management into daily practices.

Daily practices reflect, on the one hand, uncertainties and fears, but also patterns of behavior aimed at protection. Daily practices and mental maps are strongly connected with feelings of insecurity, and therefore are informed by similar factors, such as personal experiences, contact with people, representations of insecurity, the built environment, etc. Feelings of insecurity often shape mental maps, and therefore, everyday geographies. As explained by England & Simon (2010, p. 203) these mental maps, accumulated throughout a lifetime, are constructs that one uses to make daily decisions -for example, incur in practices to create safe environments for oneself or to avoid certain areas perceived as dangerous. According to Brownlow (2005, p. 583) strategies adopted to cope with feelings of insecurity are cultural products of discursive significance and open to interrogation and analysis, especially as they influence or reproduce social relations of power. The author cites two categories of coping strategies:

- Protective strategies: seek to reduce or deter the risk of victimization by increasing ability to deter or resist a criminal act - carry pepper spray (or in some countries, a gun) when going out.
- Avoidance: to stay clear of particular people, places, or situations that are perceived to be risky or dangerous, especially strangers and/in public spaces -dimly lit, dark, known for (or perceived to have) high crime rates, etc.

Protective or avoidant strategies can be put into place simultaneously. Choosing these actions can depend on the time of day, the company, the person's clothing, the means of transportation, but also on the individual's personal characteristics, namely socio-economic status and gender. Relating again to the strong socio-economic disparities, avoiding spaces at certain times is not always possible for everyone. For example, due to lack of economic means to switch routes, individuals will risk taking a dangerous walk instead of getting a taxi.

It is common that, after a highly visible incident of violence (abductions, murders, rapes, series of armed robberies in public spaces) that defies conventional explanations security recommendations are given for people who could be the next victims. To cite an example, the murder of Joanna Yeats prompted police to emit recommendations to other women such as: do not go out alone between 8:30 AM and 4:30 AM. The recommendations were criticized by members of the University of Bristol's center for gender and violence research as well-meaning but impractical. Also in the UK, after the murder of Sarah Everard (who was kidnapped and murdered by a police officer with precedents of violence), women shared tips to stay safe: tracking journeys, informing friends of your arrivals and departures, setting up a phone for SOS calls, wear sensible shoes. Discussions also noted that no practices were good enough without addressing misogyny and other structural problems. Sandberg & Tollefsen (2010) state that women are expected adapt their spatial behavior to avoid risks more so than men (see CHAPTER 8).

Among the consequences of fear of crime, Hale (1996, pp. 82–54) mentions that people afraid of victimization change their habits as follows:

- They tend to stay at home more, in surroundings they have made safer.
- If they go out they tend to constrain their behavior to safe places at safe times.
- They tend to avoid activities they perceive as dangerous, such as walking down some streets, getting too close to certain 'types of people', travelling on public transport, or going to certain forms of public entertainment.

From this preliminary list, one can affirm that public space is concerned when it comes to changes in daily practices to stay safe and that practices are mostly individual. The author makes note that responses to fear of victimization can also lead to collective responses, which in turn can lead to a mitigation of fear. Admittedly, the author warns that this effect is not present among those who expressed lower ratings of social control. I add that these typologies are only partially applicable to the cases such as cities in Latin America facing extraordinary situations of violence. In these contexts of high victimization and heightened feelings of insecurity, daily practices can indeed involve a large number of precautions and preventive measures. However, hypervigilance and a drastic transformation of everyday practices gets

tiresome, especially when dramatic events become routine. Furthermore, those who have less capacity of social control (vulnerable or marginalized populations) cannot sustain drastic changes of avoidance of public spaces.

As I write this, an interstate road connecting Monterrey to the south of the United States has been the scene of abductions -70 individuals missing since October 2020. And while this is a tragedy and signifies more violent events to come, it is not necessarily on the radar of city dwellers who do not use this road or are in any way connected to these incidents -from families to advocates and activists. A study by Vilalta (2016) revealed that participants in areas affected by drug violence were also more negatively affected in their daily routines, but no evidence was found to support that war on organized crime mediates the relationship of fear of crime with daily routines. And as we will observe in the following chapters, city dwellers' concern is directed towards incidents that trickle down from these highly visible incidents into their everyday lives (see CHAPTER 5) -which indeed may at times involve abductions.

While analyzing the dramatic forms of violence in Brazil, Scheper-Hughes presents the following question: "what if the disappearances, the piling up of civilians in common graves, the anonymity, and the routinization of violence and indifference were not, in fact, an aberration?" (2009, p. 220). Violence and its consequences are taken for granted especially for those who are most exposed to them. Scheper-Hughues & Bourgois (2004) build upon these concepts of everyday violence to propose a continuum of violence, which spans the routine, the ordinary, and the normative direct and structural violence of everyday life to the excessive and the extraordinary violence. Literature has often focused on these extraordinary events, neglecting to observe the more ordinary events in the very same contexts which are still present.

I argue that in unspectacular forms of violence become normal and invisible in contexts were dramatic and spectacular violence takes the spotlight. What is a petty theft compared to a tortured body dumped in a public park? As we will observe in CHAPTER 6 and CHAPTER 8, law enforcement prefers to focus on "real" violent incidents. Furthermore, what is normal varies through time and it also depends on how much social control individuals can have over these situations. High rates of victimization affect the capacity of individuals and the community to identify certain acts as violence, and this in turn impacts the social relations and levels of tolerance. Tolerance levels differ and evolve from one society to another, but as explained by Hume (2004, p. 64) and Moser & McIlwaine (2006, p. 93), when violence becomes a normal part of everyday life, forms of violence that were unacceptable in the past may become so, particularly if they are essential to the functioning of society. Violence induces fear, but in contexts and communities facing it constantly, with few ways of avoiding it and meager support, there is also resignation and a sense of fatalism -as observed by Lorenc Valcarce in Argentina (2011)- but it even more prevalent in vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, normalization of violence in vulnerable communities has remained at the margins of the exploration of feelings of insecurity in mainstream literature, and especially on literature oriented towards public policy, diagnosis, and action. How normalization is manifested in a context of chronic violence and its link to social class (and inequality) is explored in detail in CHAPTER 8.

3.3.1 Neighborhood level and research on violence and insecurity

For the purposes of this research, daily practices are observed within the framework of public space. And based on prior experience on the field, these practices are often discussed by individuals by referring to their neighborhood -their *colonia*. What a neighborhood is can be defined by it localization in the city, by its predominating function or use, by its social composition and image or symbolism (*colonia popular, colonia de posesionarios* or *fraccionamiento privado* are examples in the Mexican context in which a neighborhood is associated to the social status of its occupants), or by its morphology (Humain-Lamoure, n.d.). At an operational level, the neighborhood is a unit of management of the city. However, this definition limits the understanding of the neighborhood in terms of social representations, forms of attachment, and belonging, as mentioned earlier when discussing public spaces. What city dwellers may refer to *their neighborhood* can in fact go beyond the strict institutionalized borders: it can be a group of neighborhoods, the surrounding streets or blocks, or it can be only a part of the neighborhood (for example, marking differences between those who live north or south of a certain edge, node, path or landmark). According to Tönnies (1988), besides this sense of belonging, the idea of community includes mutual commitment based on homogeneous culture, shared experience, and close interdependency. It is hard to establish this kind of relationships at the city level (Wirth, 1938), and city dwellers' experiences can be better understood at a neighborhood level.

Familiarity has an effect on feelings of insecurity. Certainly, it does not only happen within the neighborhood; it can also be present in roads one takes every day, in other neighborhoods where friends or family live: spaces where the individual may have access to a support network and may have a certain sense of control (even if they do not feel entirely safe). This control comes from residents knowing the real levels of violence (as opposed to news reports and rumors, which often put lower-class neighborhoods in a bad light) or from their knowledge of how to handle dangerous situations (see CHAPTER 8). Conversely, the lack of familiarity and knowing a neighborhood from news reports only can make it appear more dangerous than it is. A frequent remark coming from interviewees living in neighborhoods with high levels of violence was that it was dangerous, but it was more dangerous if you know no one or are unfamiliar with it. Additionally, familiarity, a sense of belonging, and control are instrumental for gang activity. As Freire & Farias (2011) describe in their study of youths in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, the mere fact of wearing the wrong color can be interpreted as a challenge in a space dominated by a gang.

The neighborhood is a lived space, a territorial structure produced and imagined by the individual, infused with social information from the common use of public spaces and by neighborly relations, which makes it intelligible for a community (Di Méo, 1994). Still, it is worth noting that this assessment of sharing is limited when one takes into account the effects of chronic violence in a neighborhood: residents become distrustful and prefer to keep to themselves as means to stay safe, they may also avoid public spaces -even in their own neighborhoods-, and they police their use, chasing out those who are not part of their *colonia*

just in case (as we will see in the case of Monterrey). Simultaneously, smaller units of organization or new links of trust may develop within or between neighborhoods, such as networks of relatives or neighborhood watches.

Observations at a neighborhood level helps us understand the differences in perception between different groups in the same environment. These differences could otherwise be rendered invisible when working at a larger level. It is also at a neighborhood level where we can observe both individual and collective daily practices put into place, that depend on the solidity of a network of social relations. The question is how these networks are created and maintained in a context where chronic violence has deteriorated social interaction and trust.

The neighborhood is an articulator between the individual and the collective representations, making it a pertinent point of observation for this study. Working with larger levels of analysis (city, metropolis, region) has a problem of aggregation, especially in a non-uniform or especially unequal population -as is the case with issues of inequality and territory in Mexican cities. However, a smaller unit lacks sufficient sample size to be statistically significant.

From the criminology perspective, Burton-Smith & Sturgis (2011, pp. 331–340) comment that neighborhoods factor in on how individuals perceive their risk of victimization. They identified four main mechanisms through which neighborhoods influence perception of insecurity:

1. Incidence of crime.
2. Social and organizational characteristics.
3. Visual signs of disorder.
4. Neighborhood moderating effects.

As mentioned in previous chapters and this section, there has been a tendency to understand fear of crime as a consequence of unfavorable spatial conditions. Much of neighborhood-based research has focused on relationships between incivilities and fear, putting much of the focus on the causal effect of physical elements and fear (Solymosi et al., 2015). Yet, authors note that despite the theoretical importance and policy relevance of these claims, the empirical evidence base is lacking and inconsistent. Furthermore, there is a lack of evidence about this interpretation of incivilities and the influence of the physical environment of the neighborhood in developing countries. Signs of disorder vary within cultures and even neighborhoods. As explored in CHAPTER 9 and CHAPTER 10, incivilities are a nuisance for cohabitation in the case study, but are not necessarily a sign of alarm.

It is important to note that neighborhood characteristics are not the sole factor that affects perceptions related to risk, victimization or violence. As previously seen, the individual experiences and demographic characteristics play an important role. Individual differences in fear of crime are moderated -either exacerbated or ameliorated- by more than spatial elements, such as neighborhood socio-economic characteristics, crime, diversity of residents, and (as seen in CHAPTER 9) the position and relation with other neighborhoods. Observations departing from a neighborhood are also relevant in a highly socio-spatial unequal city, where spatial and social changes are dramatic in one street. For these reasons the neighborhood level analysis is used in the present study to articulate several factors. It is a point of departure to observe dynamics are a more focalized level, such as streets or sections within neighborhoods.

Data from the neighborhood level can be used to situate individuals within a specific local context.

3.3.2 A note on the multi-level approach and the qualitative methodologies

Within studies of insecurity, crime, and violence there is a tendency to prioritize quantitative approaches. Security becomes an issue of general importance to include in local, regional, and national agendas of development, and for its adequate solution, the problem needs to be measured and quantified. This is not without its challenges and limitations. As mentioned throughout the document so far, the validity of quantitative methods and the focus on crime have been both called into question.

The aforementioned lack of empirical evidence in neighborhood-level studies, especially in the context of criminology and policy making, is due in part to failures of quantitative methodology in earlier studies. Brunton-Smith and Sturgis (2011, p. 332) identify two issues: first, the lack of robust neighborhood-level data in early studies; second, inappropriate analytical strategies.

Authors such as Moser & McIlwaine (2012), Moser & McIlwaine (1999), Carrión & Núñez (2006), and Bromley & Stacey (2012) suggest approaches that go beyond statistics and crime.

Are surveys the most apt tool to measure how violence is perceived?

The validity of surveys as tools to assess accurately feelings of insecurity has been discussed in scientific literature since the 1990s, particularly in feminist research. On a general note, Solymosi et al (2015, p. 195) comment that "surveys, no matter how event-specific, still present a static picture of something past (…) even if experience-based questions move closer to capturing the most expressive dimensions of public insecurities about crime, results may still not reflect fully the dynamic way in which this is experienced by other people over time in their everyday lives as they participate in their routine activities." Likewise, in Koskela & Pain's work on women's fear of crime (2000, p. 270) the authors discuss about the limitations of surveys related to feelings of insecurity and environmental transformations: "tending to rely on before and after attitudinal surveys, research as often failed to capture the complex and dynamic relationships which people have, both with the built environment they use and in their emotional responses to crime". Therefore, it is necessary to precede or complement surveys with qualitative methodologies.

The validity of surveys to measure feelings of insecurity is called into question even for contexts that are not facing large-scale phenomena of violence. Their shortcomings are further expanded in violent contexts. As explained by Bell-Martin & Marston (2019, p. 26) violent contexts -such as the case study in question- are characterized by security, logistical, and informational constraints that impact possibilities for data collection.

Besides violent cities being low-information contexts, another problem of inaccuracy is sampling bias. According to the aforementioned authors, sampling biases are built into violent contexts precisely because they are violent. Since speaking about violence may endanger an informant, those who speak up are likely to have an atypical profile. Regardless of these issues, surveys focused on fear of crime are often used to inform public policy for citizen security. The limitations of surveys and quantitative data for the analysis of feelings of insecurity in a violent environment are explored in CHAPTER 4.

The study of feelings of insecurity requires careful framing of the concept, which in this case means through public space and daily practices. Solymosi et al (2015) state that approaching feelings of insecurity as an everyday experience that changes depending of the environmental context, made up of spatial, temporal and personal variables, goes beyond what could be possible to measure with traditional survey methodologies.

In recent years, researchers and practitioners have looked into qualitative and participatory approaches at micro-levels to understand and prevent phenomena pertaining to feelings of insecurity, and to complement a data-driven quantitative approach. As mentioned in CHAPTER 1, interest in participatory design strategies has increased recently, even if it is at a surface level. As for research, the aforementioned authors argue in favor of qualitative methodologies that observe social networks, relationships, internal dynamics, and social context.

There is also the issue of levels and scale. The geographical scope and resolutions of surveys are large, to the point that they lose relevance on smaller levels (Benbouzid, 2011, p. 262). Different smaller territorial levels with widely different conditions are grouped together, their differences end up erased, and the resulting data do not offer enough detail on neighborhoods, for example. However, solutions are proposed -and have an impact- at a local level based on these very general images of crime and victimization in a city. There is thus a case to be made for a multi-level approach and the everyday experiences.

Arguably, the more we zoom-in on any given territory, the more resolution we get of a problem. However, the neighborhood level is particularly relevant for this case study as a jump-off point to understand how city dwellers navigate it in contexts of chronic violence. Furthermore, it is from the neighborhood-level analysis that we can articulate fear as a macro-level social phenomenon and the personal experiences. Still we cannot ignore the larger context of the city. To understand the phenomenon of violence and its impact on everyday life in public spaces it is necessary to establish and explain the relationship with its larger urban context, as these do not exist in a vacuum (circling back to the issue of contextualization mentioned in earlier sections).Qualitative methodologies present what could be considered as constraints, such as the difficulty of conducting in-depth activities with a large number of people. This however is rather an opportunity to observe the phenomenon of insecurity and its impact in everyday life, which has been unexplored.

At the beginning of this study, I carried out observations at a city level to assess the general perception of insecurity related to territories. Once this had been established, and after further

research, I concentrated on a specific case study within the city of interest. This process is treated in depth in CHAPTER 4. There was a continuous back-and-forth between micro and macro levels. These shifts were important to contextualize and understand the position of the neighborhood within the larger socio-spatial context.

Conclusions

Forms of social and political violence have been extensively examined. Nonetheless, authors comment on the lack of understanding of how ordinary people cope with chronic urban violence, and of the role of physical factors outside the specific locations of crime (P. Cozens et al., 2019; *Urban Resilience in Situations of Chronic Violence*, 2012, p. 9). These are areas in which the present research seeks to contribute through the observations of the links between feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public spaces in Monterrey. As Dammert (2007, p. 94) notes with regards to Latin America, the massive spread of fear of crime has not been accompanied by an increase in its analysis, but rather on descriptions of who feels it, without any significant progress on the motives. Beyond scientific production, the lack of social analyses has produced public policies that do not recognize the depth of its impact in everyday life. The observations I carry in a Latin America will contribute to the discussion of the analysis of the "ordinary" and everyday impact of violence in extraordinary circumstances.

It is also worth mentioning that intercultural exchange of scientific production on this topic have been limited. French research has traditionally maintained its own line of work in this topic. This has produced a convergent evolution of sorts in matters of insecurity and violence, where similar concepts have been produced independent from English-speaking scientific work. However, the debate and exchange have likewise been limited between the French-speaking scientific community and the rest who have adopted English as a *lingua franca* - ironically enough. Conversely, Latin American research has often prioritized North American approaches and has neglected to consider the specificities of the context or how these approaches may not be entirely applicable. The study I present contributes to an inter-cultural discussion of urban violence.

Dissecting the concepts of fear of crime vs. feelings of insecurity is relevant for this process since the ambiguity of the terms leads to different approaches, treatment of information, and conclusions (for example, discarding non-criminal incidents or treating fear as the only reaction). It is also pertinent to call into question the "crime" dimension for the case study in which normalization of violence is commonplace and 9 out of 10 crimes go crimes go unreported. Ceccato & Bamzar (2016) note that the most successful definitions are those that appreciate the way in which it acts to constrain activities in everyday life. As evidenced by literature, the concept of feelings of insecurity is more adequate to assess perception in a violent context. Having observed that feelings of insecurity are context-dependent everyday experiences that vary in space and time (Solymosi et al., 2015), we observe how they manifest in public spaces and in everyday life. Based on previous experiences in Mexico, and especially in Monterrey, insecurity is very often mentioned in casual conversation in relation to public

space and its impact on ordinary people and routines: how insecurity has motivated people either to go out less or to go out while being alert because they have no other choice. Furthermore, I argue that normalization in contexts of chronic violence skew the ways in which individuals respond with regards to feelings of insecurity, and these nuances are taken into account for this study.

Conditions of public spaces in the context of Latin America and Mexico require consideration to understand why they function (or not) and what their role has been as objects of dispute or scenes of violence. The unfinished modernity, as Duhau names it, echoes to this day in the form of privatized public spaces, where access and quality is conditioned to social class. Public space plays a role of differentiation in social classes, which only increased with chronic violence. Either through avoidance or through protection, violence motivated changes in practices, but only persist for the dominant groups. Throughout this chapter, we observe that gender has constantly emerged as a central variable in the understanding of feelings of insecurity, public space, and daily practices. However, traditionally an androcentric vision has prevailed in studies of insecurity (Falú & Segovia, 2007). This has affected the design for data gathering and treatment, where women's feelings of insecurity are labeled as irrational.

Geography and international studies are both deeply rooted in masculinist and imperialist ways of viewing the world (Laliberte et al., 2010). This project takes into account these notions of supposed universality in theories and practices that remain unchallenged but that, as observation of the case study revealed, are worthy of discussion. Throughout this chapter, we relativize the most predominant views on various elements of analysis to the context of Latin American and Mexican cities.

PART 2 - THE CITY AT A GLANCE

Chapter 4 - Research in a violent context

This chapter details the methodology used to answer the research questions of this project. The first section of this chapter explains some of the limitations to take into account regarding data availability in Monterrey, as well as issues of mistrust and participation. These aspects presented particular challenges for the study, and guided the methodological choices throughout the process.

The next section presents the general overview of the process of research, showing how I went from the a metropolitan and city level to the neighborhood level and the population within it. Next, I present in detail the three phases of the project: the first approach at a city level and the way in which the information collected led to the selection of the case study; the immersion into the case study and the research to place it within the larger context; and finally, the observation of underrepresented groups and misrepresented processes of participation for security. For each of the phases I present the tools that were used, along with the reasoning behind these choices.

4.1 Points to consider related to availability of data in Monterrey

4.1.1 The uses and limits of official data

The macro-events of organized crime, such as the evolution of cartel operations, their composition and evolution, the public policies, and their effects on the city or the state as a whole have been thoroughly documented. From international sites such as InSight Crime to local news outlets like El Norte newspaper, information on these matters has been produced in the form of articles, books -for general and specialized audiences-, reports, and even music and film -both fiction and non-fiction-, all of which were fundamental for CHAPTER 6.

Regarding common crime, the Procuraduría General, the Fiscalía General del Estado de Nuevo León, and the Semáforo Delictivo are official sources pertinent to monitor the state of crime in Nuevo León and its municipalities. Regarding perception of insecurity, each year, the INEGI carries out the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security (Encuesta nacional de victimización y percepción sobre seguridad pública (ENVIPE)) and shares the results online. With the support of the public sector, the private sector has launched several initiatives to understand and tackle crime in MMA, such as the Así Vamos survey by Cómo Vamos Nuevo León, and several observatories of crime funded by local enterprises.

It would appear that the information regarding crime is abundant. However, there are several caveats to take into consideration. First is that the goal of this study is to understand feelings of insecurity. And as previously explored on CHAPTER 3, while crime factors in, it is not the only element. The link between crime and feelings of insecurity is neither direct nor intuitive: low crime does not translate into a better perception and vice-versa. Nevertheless, observing crime statistics could be a starting point to observe general trends: the most common crimes, who reports them, where do they happen, etc. However, the climate of mistrust makes official statistics of crime unreliable.

In the best conditions, for a crime to be recorded, three conditions must be met:

1) A person must be aware that a crime has been committed.
2) The crime must be reported to the authorities by the perpetrator, a victim or a witness.
3) The corresponding authority must recognize that a criminal act took place.

If these conditions are met, the recording of crime usually goes as follows:

1) The crime is reported, and it is related by authorities to previous incidences to determine if it constitutes a crime or not.
2) If it is indeed a crime, the crime is recorded by police along with details such as types of offences.
3) The crime is detected, the investigation connects it to the victim, and it may proceed to legal action.

The process can be disrupted in different stages. In many cases, the victim or the witness is unsure of whether the incident constitutes a crime that merits a report. Police officers themselves may disregard some incidents and prioritize others, and even persuade victims not to file reports. And in the case at hand, many residents of Monterrey (and in Mexico in general) have little trust in police and do not see the point of reporting crime, since restitution of goods or the punishment of the offender is rare.

When sharing observations about violence and insecurity in MMA, a question often asked by European colleagues was: "if things get so bad, why don't people call the police?" When I repeated this question to interviewees of MMA the answer would be: "you are kidding, right?" They would wonder if I came from a *colonia riquilla* -a rich neighborhood-, meaning that I was asking this because I was most likely unaware of everyday conditions: calling the police when a crime happens is not the first thing city dwellers in MMA do (as exemplified by statements such as Figure 9). For many, calling the police is a hassle and yields no results. This is a well-known fact (and actually, a fact I grew up with).

Figure 9 Warning in local commerce in Centro Monterrey that reads "the person who robs will not be reported to the authorities. We will settle things right here."
This warning illustrates a common understanding: police are unlikely to help.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Consulting the existing available information on crime reports in Monterrey, property thefts and fraud are incidents that are mostly taken seriously by the population, meaning that they merit an official report. The Así Vamos report of insecurity in Nuevo León states that 62.7% of respondents consider that property theft is the main problem of security in their municipalities, followed by organized crime, and violence in *colonias* (fights, gangs, disputes between neighbors). According to the ENVIPE survey there is at least one victim of crime in 27.7% of households in Nuevo León in 2019 (INEGI, 2019). And as depicted in Graph 1, crimes against property are the most reported incidents in 2020, and among them, thefts.

Graph 1 Crimes reported in Monterrey in 2020.
Source: Data Mexico (2021) based on information from the SESNSP.

First thing to consider is the dark figures -estimations of unreported crimes. Only 10.4% of crimes are officially filed to the Fiscalía in the state of Nuevo León (INEGI, 2020). The dark figure in Nuevo León of 92.9% is slightly above the national average of 92.4%. This excessively high dark figure makes data on crime hardly representative of real crime trends. Per my observations and exchanges with residents and law enforcement, direct and indirect experiences and conceptions that stop city dwellers from reporting are in MMA are:

- Reporting is considered a waste of time (since reporting does not entail damage compensation and most crimes go uninvestigated and unpunished),
- The incident may be deemed not serious enough by the victim or law enforcement,
- Victims do not know how and where to file a report,
- The procedures are perceived as long, complicated, and confusing,
- Lack of evidence available,
- Fear of retaliation from the criminal,
- Fear and mistrust of law enforcement (due to their involvement with criminals, and negative experiences of extortion, humiliation, discrimination).

Thus, residents choose carefully which incidents to report. Even in an incident such as theft, something considered serious enough to report, there are several issues to take into account when observing official crime data before drawing conclusions. The fact that a crime is more reported than others does not imply a higher incidence. And while the main reported incident is property theft, according to the ENVIPE survey on victimization, car thefts are on the 3rd place and finally burglaries are placed 7th. The main events of victimization in Nuevo León are thefts on public spaces and public transportation (INEGI, 2020, p. 10), which do not appear in Graph 1. For these reasons, police statistics provide an inaccurate image of crime, and at most, can be used as a broad starting point to observe how specific types of crime behave, but they are not representative of real crime trends. Details on how crime is dealt with by city dwellers and their relationship with law enforcement can be found on CHAPTER 8.

Another limitation comes regarding the accessibility of data of criminal incidence in specific territories. Villarreal (2016, pp. 10–13) highlights the shortcomings of crime data in Mexico in

the XXth century, such as the focus on crime trends in Mexico City, and the incomplete data in states facing intense violence 1940s and 1970s, such as Veracruz and Guerrero. Even on homicide rates, a commonly used indicator of violence levels, Villarreal points the inaccuracies of reported deaths which confound rates of civilian casualties and criminalize homicide victims.

Data at smaller levels, such as municipalities, sectors within municipalities, and neighborhoods is hard to access. Official data of crime incidents -detailing typologies and locations- is guarded by authorities and it is not easy to access. This access is even more complicated when it concerns specific periods of time and *colonias*. On September 2019 I issued a formal petition to FC to obtain information about criminal incidents ranging from 2016 to 2018 of the four *colonias* that integrate the LLP and four neighboring *colonias*. Information of this kind had been displayed by FC officers in one of the meetings I attended with neighbors of LLP (see Figure 10).
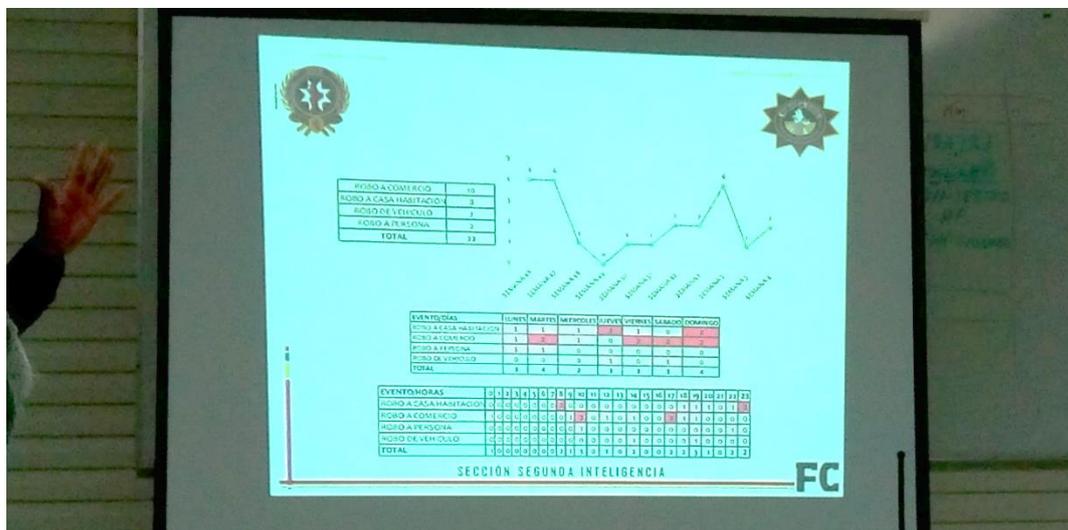
Figure 10 Data presented by FC during meeting with neighbors.
Photo: Author, February 2019.

During this meeting I talked to one of the officers responsible for this presentation, and kept in touch with them weeks afterwards to clear up fieldwork information. Concerning specific data on incidents in the polygon of interest, he recommended I write a letter detailing what information I wanted and for which purposes, and gave me an e-mail address to send it. The answer from the FC representative was negative (see ANNEX 1). They argued that:

> the disclosure of the information of particular interest presents a real, demonstrable, and identifiable risk and represents a significant damage to the public interest, since the figures of each of the concepts to which the applicant refers must be considered necessary tools to achieve the purposes of this Police Force and if the required information is provided (...) it would empower people whose objective is to impede the purposes pursued by this Police Institution to quantify the power of force or shock in certain operations, in the fight against antisocial behavior, crime prevention and control, as well as administrative offenses. (…)

There is no certainty that the information requested when it is made public will not be used to the detriment of this police institution (...) it is in the public domain that the physical integrity of the police elements attached to this Corporation is highly compromised in the actions that they carry out on a daily basis (...) Currently there is no system and / or filter that determines that applicants are or are not persons outside organized crime and / or persons whose objective is to prevent the goals what this institution is pursuing (Fuerza Civil, 2019).

To summarize, the disclosure of information regarding crime in LLP was denied due to the fact that FC had no certainty about my identity and that this information would not be leaked to criminal groups and hinder their activities. Thus, giving me information represented a risk, regardless of the nationwide mechanism for transparency and accountability that gives citizens the right to access information,. The safekeeping of this information contrasts with the fact that plans and tables of incidents were shown during a presentation for neighbors, detailing type of incidents, dates, and precise locations, of which most of the attendees took photos.

This lack of access to specific information of crime rates is not singular to this research project. On her study about gang activities, suicide, and domestic violence in MMA, researcher Cerda Perez came across a similar predicament, not being able to obtain information corresponding to the years 2010 and 2011 from authorities (2012, p. 225). Cerda Perez and Villarreal (2016, p. 13) note that changes on federal government administration, the mobilization of federal forces into Nuevo León, and the depuration of police corps and local agencies have affected public access to crime statistics. The inconsistency of variables across years and agencies complicate the comparison of data.

Facing these limitations of the accuracy and availability of data, it is worth looking at other sources in the locality. As previously mentioned, (and further detailed in CHAPTER 6), the private sector has taken action in monitoring security. Information of observatories from the private sector can be visualized in the CIVIX platform. This platform shows reports that range from potholes to abductions, but it has several limitations. As shown on Figure 11, most of the reports concern public services and infrastructure: garbage collection, public lighting, traffic lights, and water leaks. The second largest category is reports concerning roads: car accidents or blocked streets. Security incidents are the third most reported issue, in which the most reported incidents are "risk situations" (without any further explanation), homicides, gang activity, abandoned cars, and thefts. Another element that limits the accuracy of these reports is the form of contact. Reports can be done through social media, in person, through phone calls or through the dedicated app. As shown on Figure 12 most reports are done through Twitter, which is not among the most used social media platforms in the country. The second form of contact is through the app. The app has many functionalities, but according to Google Play it has barely over 10,000 downloads total, not specifically from residents of MMA.
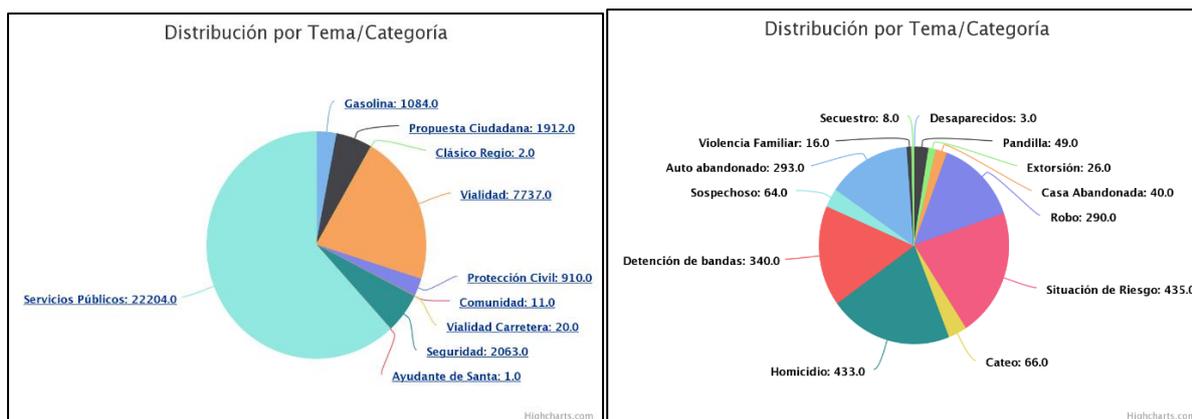
Figure 11 Categories of reports on CIVIX platform for the period January-December 2019 (left), and (right) Zoom-in on the category of "security".
Source: CIVIX. Retrieved on 23/04/2021. https://analisis.civix.mx
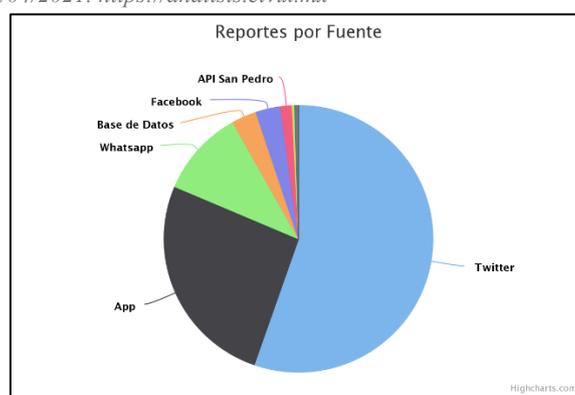
Figure 12 Forms of contact for the reports received for the period January-December 2019.
Source: CIVIX. Retrieved on 23/04/2021. https://analisis.civix.mx

As we can observe, official data is far from presenting an accurate image of criminal incidence. Still, it can be used as a proxy of crime and crime reporting in the community: what are the problems that the population considers grave enough to merit a report. Crime, as detailed in CHAPTER 3, represents only a dimension of perception of insecurity. Qualitative methods can contribute not only to make sense of the reasons behind the official numbers, but to provide a more nuanced assessment of feelings of insecurity in different levels of the territory.

4.1.2 The impact of mistrust and violence on the research process and choice of methods

The surge of violence deeply affected Monterrey's city dwellers in many levels. Inhabitants witnessed shootings, robberies, killings, and kidnappings on a daily basis, in addition to the constant communication of highly mediatized incidents on local media. At the beginning it was believed that the conflict stayed within the limits of so-called conflictive zones: the *colonias populares*, the rural periphery, and spaces where powerful politicians and business owners lived. As the conflict escalated and individuals witnessed organized crime-related violence in otherwise unlikely spaces, there was an increasing perception that violence was everywhere.

Talking about violence became as common as talking about the weather or traffic jams. In this chaotic environment, it was difficult for civilians and authorities to identify where the danger could come from. Authorities were overwhelmed trying to control the armed conflict against the cartels in urban environments, communication with civilians was ill managed, not to mention that law enforcement also abused their power and victimized the population. In addition, common criminals took advantage of the chaos to incur in violent and more profitable crimes than before. Common criminals would pretend to be cartel members to scare their victims into giving in. The few reported cases were rarely solved or punished and a lack of transparency and information from authorities gave way to extraofficial information and urban legends.

The population was left to fend for themselves amidst contradictory and unreliable information from the media and authorities, a constant flow of extra-official information, and personal experiences with violence. This created an environment of uncertainty, which lead to hypervigilance. Danger could come from any stranger anytime, and one had to be suspicious of everyone in order to stay safe: do not talk to strangers, do not answer the phone if the number is from out of town, do not give addresses on the street, do not answer questionnaires, mind your own business and don't be a good Samaritan, do not open the door to anyone who knocks, be wary of kids with smartphones, be careful if you board a taxi, be careful where you sit on the bus. These sorts of recommendations did not come out of nowhere. They came from cases where people had been victimized in the alluded situations: phone extortions, break-ins, abductions, rape, violent robberies, etc. Regardless of the context of these victimizations, these were the practices people adopted in their everyday lives. Some of these incidents were indeed very common, others not as much. But it was hard to distinguish a real threat and people did not want to risk it: protect yourself against anything and everything.

Such a constant state of alert was unsustainable, particularly for those who could not afford to isolate themselves and avoid public spaces. As time went on, organized crime became less of an everyday problem but several of their modus operandi remained active in common criminals (see CHAPTER 8). Crime did not decrease and many practices of protection also remained, particularly those that did not dramatically altered everyday life. As is the case of feelings of insecurity, these practices are not homogeneous and depend on the individuals' personal characteristics, socio-economic background, and experiences with victimization. Nevertheless, there are some practices of security that remain the same for everyone, namely the suspicion of individuals in public spaces. At best, they will ask you for money, at worst, they will try to rob you.

This suspicion of the stranger in public space has had an impact on many aspects, among them, researchers. Residents of MMA across social classes distrust the researchers' credentials and intentions. They see no immediate benefit in giving information to a researcher, and at times they believe they are putting themselves in danger. Who knows what the researcher is going to do with that information? As detailed in the following sections of this chapter, the barrier of mistrust was ever-present in the research process.

People in MMA went from being scared to normalize violence, and to being angry and tired of it. This fear, tiredness, and anger manifests itself in a silence and withdrawal: mind you own

business. As observed by Celestina (2018, p. 375) "in a context where faith in the police is meagre, impunity levels are high, where some believe that gossip can kill you, where there is lack of protection mechanisms which would prevent armed groups and members of criminal gangs from seeking retaliation, many find social silence the best survival strategy." People prefer not to get involved. This is a statement confirmed throughout this research from several sources, from residents to activists and other researchers working in MMA.

Throughout this process of research, I was confronted several times by individuals who either thought I looked suspicious or got angry and aggressive when asked about violence. Any attempt to diagnose violence in the city is seen as one more useless activity from the nebulous authorities. Many of them explained that they were angry of knowing the government does nothing when they very well know what the situation is. The hypervigilance of the inhabitants of Monterrey limited the choice of methods that could be put into place, as well as the reach these methods could have. City dwellers in the context of study are often wary and mostly uninterested in participation (see CHAPTER 8). On the one hand, local culture places great value on individualism (see CHAPTER 5) and disregards participation, and on the other hand, even prior to the crisis of violence, city dwellers have experienced frequent actions of data collection reflected little on improving their environment (thus, participation is considered a waste of time).

With this mistrust as an obstacle, an alternative to conduct the study would have been the in-depth observation of an individual's life in public spaces to understand their feelings of insecurity and perhaps extrapolate regarding the context. However, considering previous experiences of research, the individuals willing to participate in such actions in Monterrey are rarely representative of the population. Due to the inclusion of certain interlocutors more than others due to practicality and availability, for example leaders in a community, the results from research may contribute to marginalization of already marginalized voices, as observed by Bell-Martin & Marston (2019), who incidentally derive their conclusions from fieldwork in Monterrey and Medellín, Colombia.

Furthermore, the goal of this research project was to analyze the collective representations of feelings of insecurity, public space, and daily practices. For this reason, it was important to choose methods that could provide opportunities to observe and interact with groups. Moreover, this presented the opportunity to test the degree of effectiveness of certain processes of quantitative and qualitative data gathering in a context of anomie, hypervigilance, and mistrust as consequences of chronic violence. In the following sections we will observe how the issue of mistrust played an important role in the election of methods to carry out this research, as well as examples of similar situations observed by other researchers.

4.1.3 Social media: the new public forum

Social media plays an important role in the daily lives of inhabitants of MMA. In 2013, Nuevo León was ranked as the 3rd state with the most social media users in the country (Anguiano, 2013). People use it to stay in touch with their friends and families, as a source of entertainment,

as a source of income, and when it comes to everyday life in public spaces, it is used as a source of information -to share information news or events in real time, to ask questions and recommendations- and to organize collective action. The virtual environment is prolific in the production and dissemination of urban violence, from small incidents in a *colonia* to events of national interest. Even in Communities of general interest or topics unrelated to security, the topic appears, often related to the events of the week, and often in jest -as part of the normalization of violence. The increasing prominence of social media in everyday life as a virtual public space -and more specifically with violence and territory- made the observation of Facebook and WhatsApp indispensable for this research as a tool, as a data source, and as a context (Baker, 2013).

Social media's importance increased during the most intense periods of violence in public space, a matter discussed in detail in CHAPTER 6. Citizen-led blogs, YouTube channels, and Facebook pages gave uncensored details of organized crime activity. But social media also worked as a way to navigate public spaces safely and organize daily life. Violent events took place in public spaces, creating dangerous situations for bystanders, and it was important for inhabitants to stay informed to avoid hotspots. The reliable information on real time came from social media, not traditional sources such as TV and radio, to the point that journalists would follow leads from social media and traditional sources include social media posts in their broadcasts. Authorities also integrated social media into their activities as a way to communicate with city dwellers (see CHAPTER 8). Furthermore, social media has become an important tool for community organization i.e. neighborhood watches.

The perceived anonymity provided by being part of a community of thousands allows users to boldly express their opinions on social media, knowing that they will be backed by hundreds of likeminded Members of the Community in question. Comments supporting the dominating discourse of a certain Community are upvoted and celebrated, while those less popular opinions with regards to the dominating discourse receive a high amount of general attention. For example, a comment denigrating woman can be celebrated in a security Page and condemned in a women's issues Page. The Comments section are opinions that one can find offline, albeit not as unfiltered. These are the kinds of conversations often happen offline among close friends -an inaccessible and possibly biased environment one as a researcher is not privy to. Online they happen between strangers in public forums. Belonging to an online community allows them to add their voices to the existing collective image of their Community of certain topics related to security.

Based on fieldwork information, users are not concerned with the protection and harvesting of personal data. When it comes to security online, users are more concerned with being followed by criminals online who are waiting for the right moment to kidnap them. Law enforcement's campaigns online focus on phishing, spam, and frauds. Other concerns that are apparently more common but not addressed by authorities nor by the dominating discourse is the overlap between social media, sexual harassment, and public space.

Social media forums created around a topic are perceived as a safe-enough space for expression, as opposed to face-to-face interaction with a researcher. It should be noted that opinions expressed on social media can be exaggerated and without the proper

contextualization, conclusions drawn can be highly inaccurate. For this reason, the use of social media joins interviews, direct observations offline, meetings with groups, and other activities that will be further discussed. This back-and-forth allowed me to have a less monolithic image of the meanings of insecurity, public space, and daily practices for different groups and territories. With regards to the case study, it allowed me to place it within a larger context: What issues of security do the subjects of the case study react to? How do they compare to other groups? How common or distinct are these issues from other groups? What other groups?

Certainly, there are plenty of fake news and spam circulating on all Communities, no matter the platform or member count. While posts shared on FB Communities and on WA Group Chats are unreliable and should be verified constantly, they allow to observe the collective representations, perceptions, and reactions towards matters of insecurity and violence of a large number of city dwellers of the locality. Even local authorities and traditional media engage or take action based on information they see circulating on social media.

I monitored social media -Facebook, and WhatsApp- between 2017 and 2021 to observe the general reactions and representations of violence in MMA within online communities interested in security. I followed Communities that share news of security and violence in Nuevo León and Monterrey, from both journalists and citizens. Not all news of violence that were reported on traditional media were treated equally nor they were given the same degree of attention and dissemination by these Communities. Admins and Members ignore certain posts and amplify others by commenting, sharing, and liking. This showed the different biases regarding spaces, victims, perpetrators, and scapegoats.

I also followed FB Communities of with more specific goals or topics that also touched matters of security and public space (e.g. communities of different sectors of MMA, communities of women, communities of activists, neighborhood watches, government agencies, associations, etc). Many of them relate their activity to a specific territory. This allowed to observe how popular incidents were treated within these Communities and how they differed from the reactions in the Groups and Pages of general interest in violence and security. The reactions and the information shared in these larger groups allowed to understand the reactions within the subjects in the case study. The results of these observations are discussed on CHAPTER 8 and CHAPTER 10, where these results complement those from interviews, surveys, literature reviews, and observations with regards to feelings of insecurity and representations of violence and public space.

Social media is vital for the organization of groups of neighbors, and the case study was no exception. I was added to the WhatsApp and Facebook groups of the MVV neighborhood watch, and I observed its behavior between 2018 and 2021. This gave me an invaluable opportunity to be at the heart of discussions of security that neighbors have through these two platforms, which are their most important means of communication. I could be virtually present each time a neighbor was attacked and asked for help, each time the neighborhood alarm was activated, or each time issues of the last neighborhood meeting were discussed. The results from observing this group in particular are discussed in CHAPTER 9 and CHAPTER 10, where I delve on the inner workings of the neighborhood watch and their perceptions regarding violence, participation, public spaces, and security in their *colonia*.

Differences in access to social media and internet

As of 2015, 59.6% of homes in Monterrey had internet access and 54.1% had at least one computer. While internet access is still limited, there is at least one mobile phone per household in 86.2% of cases (Data Mexico, 2021). Most internet users possess a smartphone and they use it mostly to access social media, send mails, and for instant messaging. Connectivity is increasingly common; however, this does not imply equal access or usage across populations. As of 2020, the most used social networking platforms in Mexico are Facebook (94%), WhatsApp (89%), and Facebook Messenger (78%), and 99% of users access social networking platforms through mobile devices (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2020). The main wireless communications service providers include free access to Facebook, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. On the one hand this makes the use of apps very practical to receive and transmit information -Facebook and WhatsApp in particular. On the other hand, this means that users rely heavily on social media for information since internet navigation (for example, visiting webpages or using search engines) can be billed additionally.

It is worth noting that there are still limitations to internet access and usage of social media. According to a study by the Asociación de Internet Mx, 68% of internet users in Mexico are mostly middle class (2018). And while mobile phones are much more commonplace, this does not mean that users have permanent mobile internet access. The same study states that most internet users connect through WiFi (56%), while 39% of users connect through data plans. Most of them connect from their homes (86%). Nevertheless, there is an increasing use of connections in public spaces (23% in 2018, 4% more than in 2016).

And as the COVID 19 crisis has made clear, access to technology does not mean technological literacy nor the access to functionalities outside of communication. The main barrier for access to internet is the lack of coverage from internet providers, followed by the high prices, and not knowing how to use it. Throughout fieldwork, some adults and elderly individuals had access to smartphones, however they cannot take advantage of the functionalities and they had problems using apps other than those that came preinstalled on their devices. They may still have profiles in social media -often made by their younger relatives- to stay in touch with their families. They will still use the basic functionalities of FB: posting on their personal profiles and commenting, but they are less likely to produce more elaborate content on their own, such as video recording, voice messages, Stories, Saves, etc. They tend to forward chain messages, fake news or images produced by someone else. Also, being less familiar with how to identify fake profiles, they are prone to scams or believing they have been hacked. These individuals rely on their children or grandchildren to carry out tasks on their devices. As an interviewee observed: "it used to be the parents that said 'if you misbehave, I'll take away your phone'. Now it's the other way around. Kids say 'if you punish me, I won't help you with your phone', and since parents don't know how to use them that makes them hesitate" [6] (interview Jaime, August 15, 2019).

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[6] Antes eran los papás que decían 'te portas mal, no hay celular'. Ahora es al revés. Los muchachos dicen 'si me castigas, no te ayudo con el celular' y como los papás no le saben le piensan.

4.2 Overview of the process of research

The process was essentially divided into three phases that go from the macro level (metropolitan area and the city) to the micro level (of specific groups in a neighborhood), and places the meso level (the neighborhood) as articulator. The results of each of the phases - derived in large part from information from city dwellers- determined the procedures followed on the next; each phase zooms-in on a more specific level in terms of territory and populations as illustrated on Figure 13. Phase 1 consisted on establishing a baseline around the topics of insecurity, public space, and daily practices at the city level. How are these topics conceptualized by authorities, residents, and researchers in the locality? How are they linked with territory at a metropolitan scale? With the results obtained, a case study was defined for Phase 2. This phase consisted on the specific analysis of the case study -the neighborhood-: the socio-spatial characteristics of public space in the zone, its position within the larger context, who are the most active actors, and how residents deal with insecurity through daily practices. Based on the results obtained, I proceeded to the third and final phase: the analysis of feelings of insecurity, everyday practices, and public space through the eyes of often ignored users of these spaces.

Fieldwork was an essential part of the research process. Three fieldwork visits took place between April 2018 and September 2019, each visit corresponding to a phase of the research process. However, contact with the specific population of the case study was kept during and in between field visits through social media. A final phase was originally intended to create a collaboration project between a group of students and the population of the case study; however, the COVID 19 crisis made this impossible.
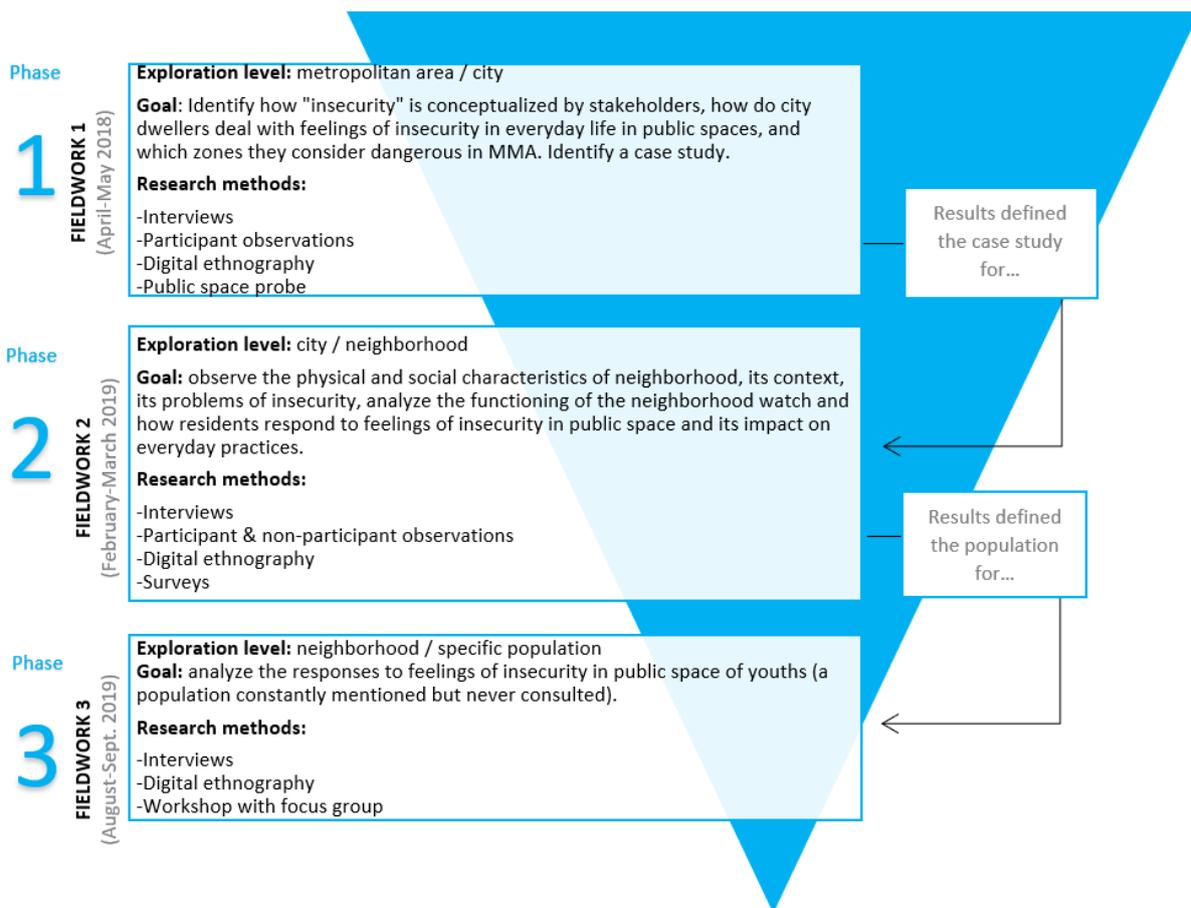
Figure 13 Diagram of the process of research, from the macro to the micro level.
Source: Author, 2020.

4.3 Phase 1 - The first approach and selection of the case study

Phase 1 fieldwork was carried out in April-May 2018 with a duration of 7 weeks (6 April 2018 - 17 May 2018). The goal of this first exploratory visit was to gauge the way insecurity, public space, and daily practices are conceptualized by several sectors across social classes, from laymen to authorities in different municipalities of MMA. The purpose was to have a wide panorama of the way these three concepts are perceived to then shift focus to a more specific case. Throughout this first phase concepts emerged repeatedly across different populations when talking about the link between feelings of insecurity, public space, and everyday practices, such as representations of territory, vulnerable populations, the neighborhood level, and citizen-based security practices. These topics became the common thread to follow along the process of research.

4.3.1 Interviews, observations, and digital ethnography

The first interviews were with upper and middle-class individuals and families residing in southern Monterrey, Centro, Escobedo, San Pedro, Guadalupe, and San Nicolás, as well as public officials and researchers. To avoid the risk of a biased sample, various methods were necessary to widen the scope and include diverse interlocutors from different territories and social classes. Due to the issues of mistrust mentioned earlier, the contact was established through acquaintances and former colleagues that could vouch for my identity and intentions. On one occasion, I accessed the *Colonia* Los Pinos with the help of a colleague that used to live there. This is a lower-class settlement with high crime rates in San Pedro, near the Santa Catarina river,. To get information from several individuals and knowing that they would be reluctant to participate in these activities and mistrusting on these kinds of studies, we set up a small stand to sell clothes and other items during a weekend. This way we could establish a conversation with them.

These first interviews with individuals from different social classes and living in different municipalities revealed important differences on how feelings of insecurity and everyday practices are mediated by social class. The upper classes expressed high levels of fear, they tend to avoid contact with public space, often relying on cars to do so. The predominating trends were focused on strategies on how to prevent housebreakings, how to keep cars safe, how to identify phone scams, and how avoid displays of wealth on social media. Meanwhile, for the lower classes, recurring to private spaces or cars was not a possibility. Their worries were related to the risks of leaving home when it is dark and using public transportation, or the conflicts with drunk or drugged neighbors. Rather than fear, they expressed how they deal with issues such as robberies: the robber is usually someone everyone knows in the *colonia*. The upper and middle classes talk about how lower class *colonias* are dangerous and should be avoided, and how they should be razed, as they think that is where thieves come from. Conversely, individuals residing in these *colonias* admit that there are many problems, but they affirmed it was not as bad as most people think. Additionally, residents of these *colonias* are not as afraid because they know what to expect of their environment. Across classes, individuals relied on networks around them to support each other and stay informed of issues in their neighborhoods. These contrasts and similarities related to social class are discussed in CHAPTER 7 and CHAPTER 8.

During these early observations, women, immigrants, the poor, and youths were groups that were often mentioned, both as particularly vulnerable and as the causes of insecurity. Another colleague and I volunteered for a weekend on a soup kitchen for immigrants -as they were frequently mentioned by the local interviewees. There we talked to the manager and to a group of immigrants from Tamaulipas, Puebla, and Oaxaca. Some of them had left their hometowns due to violence. Most of them related experiences of being criminalized for the way they looked, having being denied help by the police, and being chased out of public spaces by the police. At the same time, they blamed immigrants from South America for problems of insecurity.

One of the topics that was brought up constantly was the security and women: they are oftentimes mentioned as being more prone to victimization, but at the same time, city dwellers affirm that everyone is equally at risk. Individuals acknowledged that women are at risk in public space, but talking about the cultural and social causes of violence against women is cause for derision. Youths' security, particularly girls, is mentioned as something families worry about -fearing they will get robbed or attacked on their way to and from school. At the same time, youths, particularly boys, are mentioned as the ones responsible for social disorder.

Residents across social classes pointed out the relevance of social media as means to stay informed about violence and to get in touch with their loved ones and their neighbors. I asked residents for pointers on what FB Pages to follow. I also followed popular FB Pages with thousands of followers recommended by the site's algorithm, as well as Pages from journalists working for local news outlets dedicated to security, such as Alerta Nuevo León, Alertas Relevantes Zona Sur Monterrey, Alertas Relevantes Zona Norte, Alerta Roja MTY, Alerta Roja Monterrey y Area metropolitana, Noticias Relevantes Monterrey NL, and Ray Elizalde Noticias. These pages have between 85,000 to 150,000 followers. FB and WA groups were rife with urban legends about networks of abductors mixed in with real news about violence against women and shootings. FB Pages reproduce and amplify many of the prevailing negative opinions seen until that moment regarding insecurity and the poor, impoverished *colonias*, Mexican and Latin American immigrants, women, and youths.

Women's victimization is a particularly debated topic, especially when protests occur -which are treated as threats to national security by these Pages and their Followers. Individuals occasionally acknowledge that public space is dangerous for women, but they are reluctant to criticize social conventions that put women in a vulnerable position, at the risk of being called "feminazis". The entire responsibility of security is placed on the victim. FB Groups react violently when the subjects of machismo and feminism are brought up. As one researcher commented alluding to how to treat the subject on the field: "the moment you explicitly bring up 'feminism' or 'machismo', people stop listening to you, especially if you are a woman talking to a man. Sometimes even if you are talking to a woman[7]" (Field notes, May 2018).

Having obtained information from city dwellers of MMA across social classes, next came the interviews with authorities. I carried out interviews with the C5 of Monterrey and C2 in San Pedro (in charge of monitoring police reports and emergency calls), and individuals working for the municipalities of Monterrey, San Nicolás, and Guadalupe in different departments. This first exploration of notions of security from the perspective of authorities revealed that security and urban development are a binomial in different ways.

Interviews with law enforcement mentioned the role of urban development -particularly in more recent initiatives- and pointed me to urban development agencies at state and municipal level. The CPTED methodology was often mentioned as one of the actions implemented to improve security in public space, as well as collaboration with the private sector (see CHAPTER 7). Likewise, interviews with government agencies regarded as leaders on matters

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[7] En el momento en que mencionas "feminismo" o "machismo", la gente ya no te escucha, especialmente si eres mujer y estás hablando con un hombre. Y a veces hasta si hablas con otra mujer.

of crime prevention -like San Pedro, Guadalupe, and San Nicolás- mentioned the need for citizen-based security practices and outreach to vulnerable communities. And while these elements are deemed necessary on paper for some of the spokespeople, the reality at other levels within the agencies and on the field is very different, were a more traditional approach prevails. Government agencies for urban development at large are more concerned with land value, image, and roads. From this perspective, security and public spaces are linked because they must be made safe to maintain a desirable image for investments. Urban developers and architects subjugate most of the decisions in city making to revenue, rentability, and international relevance. And on the other hand, interviewees working in law enforcement admit that they do not have the capacity for outreach, being overwhelmed by crime.

Across classes, government action is deemed insufficient, either because they are incompetent and corrupt, because there are not enough police officers or CCTVs, or because there is a lack of opportunities of education and employment. Whatever the government is doing, it happens "up there" -disconnected from reality, as many interviewees said. From the authorities' point of view, they remarked on the difficulties of getting municipalities to work together in tackling violence and on the lack of resources needed to work effectively at a large scale, but they also mentioned that city dwellers do not cooperate or "lacked culture to value what's good for them" (Field notes, May 2018). The results of these interviews are discussed on CHAPTER 6, CHAPTER 7, and CHAPTER 8.

Like the interviews with private individuals, the first contact with interlocutors working in government agencies came through former colleagues. At this level, the fact that I came from a French university added not only legitimacy but prestige, which made interlocutors more willing to talk to me. During many of these interviews I was forbidden from recording or taking pictures. In the case of the visit to the C5 headquarters I was asked to leave my phone and any other electronics at the reception.

Following these interviews, I carried out participant observations on the functioning of public spaces, both the most iconic ones (see CHAPTER 5), those that are part of everyday transit in Monterrey, and of the more novel security-based projects (see CHAPTER 7). Being aware of the rising trend of citizen-based security practices and citizen participation in urban planning as means to combat insecurity in the locality, I assisted to meetings for citizen engagement for public space projects. This provided information on how these participatory processes are put into place and the degree of response from the general public.

These interviews were done with the goal of exploring notions of insecurity, public space, and daily practices in the locality. The information collected at this stage was also helpful to understand the degree of participation I could expect from a random sample of the population. With this information from authorities and city dwellers on insecurity (in terms of perception, crime, policing, and public action), its link to public space, and how it impacts everyday life in it, I proceeded with a more specific activity with users of two iconic public spaces in the locality.

4.3.2 Public space probe in Macro Plaza and Alameda

The activity was held over two weekends in two iconic and well-visited squares in downtown Monterrey: the Macro Plaza and the Alameda. These public spaces are visited by residents of all municipalities of MMA, mostly lower and lower-middle class particularly during the weekend, which presented a good opportunity to obtain information on their perceptions of insecurity. The activity (the Macro Plaza Alameda Public Space Probe - MAPSP) consisted in temporarily installing a canvas with a map of the MMA and two human figures that displayed the labels of "victim" and "victimizer" (see Figure 14). Participants marked their place of residence on the map and wrote down characteristics of a victim and a victimizer (see Figure 15). Then participants answered a set of open questions about the concept of insecurity, daily practices, recommendations to be safe, and places they considered dangerous (see ANNEX 2).
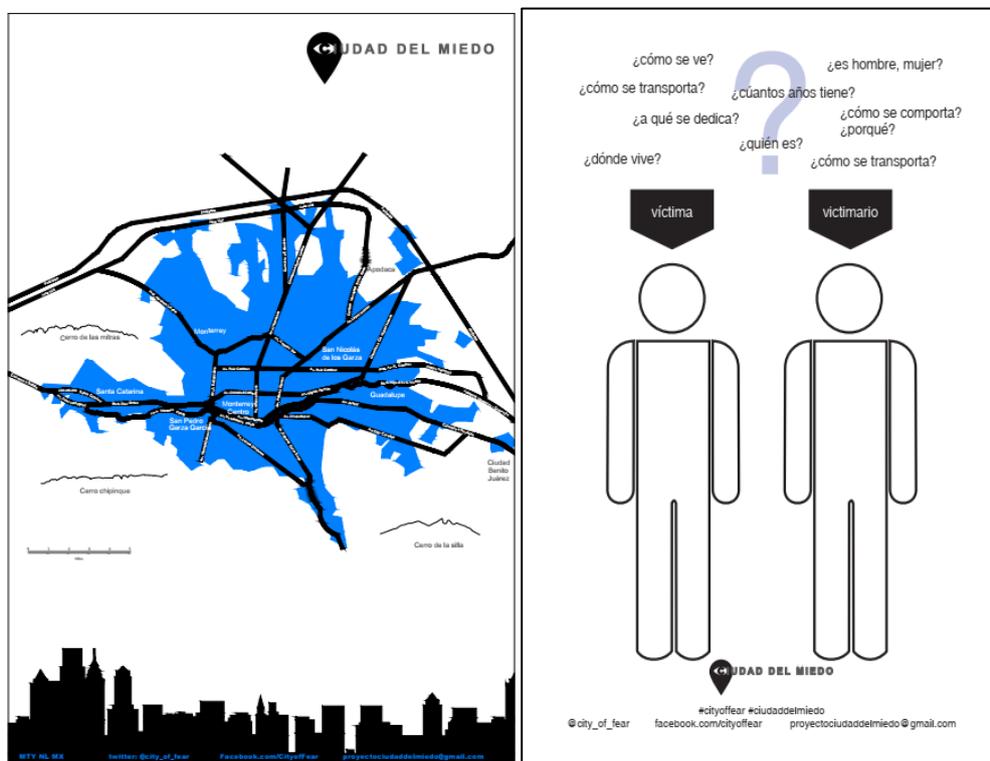
Figure 14 MAPSP material: a map of MMA and two human figures.
(left) Side A of the canvas: the map of MMA. Source: Author, 2018.
(right) Side B of the canvas: two human figures labeled "victim" and "victimizer".
Source: Author, 2018.

Figure 15 Participants writing characteristics of victims and victimizers in the Macro Plaza and colleague interviewing two participants.
Photo: Author, 2018.

The goal of the questionnaire for the public space probe was to identify how participants conceptualize feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public spaces: to what extent has insecurity affected their lives, who are the actors responsible for insecurity, how do they stay informed about insecurity, recommendations they would give on how to stay safe, and which zones or places in MMA they consider unsafe. Information regarding the demographic characteristics of the participant was also collected, including their means of transportation, level of education, and *colonia* of residence.

The open-ended questions purposefully omitted explicit mentions of public space or specific demographic groups. Likewise, the question regarding dangerous places or zones in MMA was purposefully broad, leaving the possibility open for participants to mention sectors at a metropolitan or city level, *colonias* or even places as specific as banks, parks or a particular bus route. This provided information on the levels of territory to which participants attach the notions of unsafe places. I invited 5 former colleagues to help with the implementation: two men and three women in their mid-20s. The first step was to obtain a permit from the town hall to carry out this activity. One of the colleagues got in touch with a friend of his to expedite the process. We were instructed to stay in front of the Foro Lucía Sabela, since that weekend, on another section of the Macro Plaza, there would be an event of publicity for a candidate in the upcoming elections for mayor. Once we set the canvas on the Macro Plaza, the presence of the publicity event motivated passers-by to ask what we were doing.

The process allowed us to carry out observations on how this section of public space was used. As was the case of other public spaces previously observed, male users predominate. The few female users were usually accompanied, mainly a male partner, while male users were walking alone or in the company of a female partner or their children. Residents are usually unwilling

to answer surveys due to fear of extortion, so the intention of this activity was to install an unusual object to attract the attention of users.

The canvas indeed worked for this: passers-by were curious but did not immediately approached us. Sometimes they approached warily to take a look at a cautious distance, and as soon as we talked to them, they would change course or pretend to take a phone call, and leave. There were participants who were willing to answer as long as they could read all the questions first and attest that they posed no threat. Others cut the survey short when we got to a question they deemed uncomfortable or invasive, oftentimes this was the case for *colonia* of residence or means of transportation (we gave the option to disclose only the municipality in which they live). Throughout the days, we noticed the various attitudes regarding our process. For starters, we were asked if we were part of the candidate's campaign. We explained that this was part of a PhD research project for a French university. For some, this was a surprise and made them want to participate. For others, this prompted more questions, particularly from male individuals to female interviewers. Occasionally, individuals reacted negatively when asked to participate. Some of them, mostly older male individuals, stayed to angrily tell us off and express that these activities are useless and delusional. Nevertheless, for its limitations and complications, the results of the Macro Plaza were by far better than those obtained in the Alameda.

Participants' reactions to the interviewers' gender

When female interviewers mentioned the nature of the project to middle class or older male participants and pointed at me as the person responsible for it, they "tested" us: they would question us on various topics, from politics to local history, to then state that we were not as knowledgeable as we thought, with phrasing such as "see? All that French university education and for what?"[8]. Male participants would also point out what they perceived as gaps in the questionnaire and explain how to correct them. To move things along, we limited ourselves to say that it was for a school project and pointed to one of the male interviewers as the project leader. With this, the tests stopped and we could proceed with the questionnaire. Then the answers to the questions came in the form of lessons of morality or explanations, for example, "listen, girl: let me explain to you the problem with insecurity[9]", "look, the thing is very simple[10]" or "look here: there is one thing you have to know about criminals[11]". We tried to use this willingness to over-explain to our advantage, stirring the conversation towards the topics of the questions. Male interviewers seldom had situations explained to them as lessons. Rather male participants relied anecdotes to them. And while information was still useful, the difference of the interactions with male and female collaborators was noteworthy.

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[8] Ahí está, ¿no que mucha universidad francesa?
[9] Mira, niña. Te voy a explicar cuál es el problema con la inseguridad.
[10] Mira, la cosa es muy sencilla.
[11] Mira, ahí te va, hay una cosa que tienes que saber sobre los criminales.

Taking into account the number of people that circulate in the Alameda, I decided to carry out the canvas activity in this space to compare and contrast the answers obtained here with those from the participants from the Macro Plaza. Participation was even more limited here, but it was an opportunity to carry out participant observations. My colleagues noticed at least 3 individuals who were surreptitiously taking photographs of us with smartphones when we installed the canvas. One of my colleagues pointed out that "they are *halcones* [lookouts]. They probably think we are college students[12]" (Field notes, April 2018). College students are targeted because they often carry valuables, such as smartphones or laptops, and they are seen as an easy prey. Two colleagues stayed next to the canvas, while the rest of us spread out to invite other people for the canvas and the questionnaire. After a while, we convened at the spot of the canvas to talk. Joaquín and Mary had stayed near the canvas, and reported that they invited passers-by to participate, but were mostly ignored. They also noticed that the persons with the smartphones had continued taking photographs and had been circling them.

Miguel, Ines, and I talked about our experiences in getting people to participate and answer the questionnaire. While some people reacted in a confrontational manner in the Macro Plaza, the reactions in the Alameda were evasive. Users were guarded: Ines said that she approached two men who were sitting on a bench and they pretended not to hear her or see her "as if she wasn't there". She also noticed that a man followed her, another took a picture of her, and for this reason she could not continue. Miguel had approached a young woman, he said "she looked clearly uncomfortable from the moment I approached and I kept my distance. She excused herself to take a call, and put the phone to her ear without saying any words and I was just…standing there. It was pretty awkward[13]" (Field notes, April 2018). We came across a group of 4 pollsters for a phone company. They said that they also had difficulties to get people to answer their survey. We also came across two young women from San Luis, who were looking for a police officer since one of them had just been robbed. I was able to document the activity in the Macro Plaza through photographs, however in this case of the Alameda, my colleagues strongly advised against pulling out smartphones or cameras, since we had already been identified as "not belonging there" (Field notes, May 2018).

Nevertheless, the information collected during this public space probes offered a starting point to analyze how insecurity and public space is conceptualized by a sample of the lower and lower-middle classes residing in MMA, as well as the impact it has in their daily practices. These results are discussed in CHAPTER 8. Moreover, the cartography resulting from the participants' identifications of dangerous zones in MMA provided a starting point from which to observe zones based on residents' perception and representations of insecurity and territory. This in turn provided the basis to define the case study.

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[12] Son halcones. Se me hace que creen que somos estudiantes.
[13] Se veía bien incómoda desde que me le acerqué y mantuve mi distancia. Se disculpó para hacer una llamada, se puso el teléfono en la oreja sin decir nada y yo…nomás ahí parado. Bien incómodo.

4.3.3 The definition of the case study

During the public space probes, we asked individuals to name zones that they perceive as dangerous in MMA. While many of them answered "anywhere", there were others who identified specific neighborhoods or sectors as particularly dangerous specifically in the center and northwest part of Monterrey.

During the interviews on this Phase 1, individuals remarked on the need to stay in touch with their neighbors. And at least on paper, authorities acknowledge the importance of citizen participation and neighborhood groups to help combat violence. For these reasons, I sought to establish contact with groups of neighbors on this zone focusing on security. Such groups abound on Facebook. I reached out to them, however not many carry out activities "offline" - outside of social media. This is where the informal neighborhood watch "Mi Vecino Vigilante" (MVV) in the northwest sector stood out.

I initially found out about them through a local TV news program. The TV segment interviewed neighbors gathered on the streets of the *colonia*, where they expressed their annoyance at the constant thefts and robberies in the vicinity. They described how they had come together to help each other and deter thieves, and that they were asking for help from the government. Later I found them on Facebook as well. After answering the verification questions to join the FB Group, the first person I contacted was Alberto, the administrator of MVV's Facebook page. Like other administrators from other groups (some of which blocked me when I started asking questions), being contacted by a stranger who was not a resident of the zone was suspicious. I explained thoroughly the reasons for me contacting him. At first, Alberto refused to answer questions in much detail. The response improved marginally after checking my identity through articles and institutional online publications. Once again, the factor of the French credentials added legitimacy to my demands. When he confirmed I was female, the communication improved (my FB user name can sound masculine). After this, I was invited to meet on-site with Joel, the group founder, and the group of neighbors. MVV started in *Colonia* Loma Linda, but it congregates the inhabitants of three neighboring *colonias*: Unidad Modelo, Villa Alegre, and Lomas Modelo. They created a neighborhood watch to be in touch with the police, install alarm devices, and communicate among themselves when they see a suspicious event or ask for help if they are victims of a crime. To communicate and organize the community, they use Facebook and WhatsApp Communities.

I must admit that I knew little of this cluster of *colonias* in particular at the time. My knowledge of the zone was, like for many residents outside of the northwest sector, limited to the sector's general reputation conflictive and dangerous zone. Documents analyzing the zone often focus on inequality and poverty. When I commented to other individuals and even other researchers living in the city about the possibility of fieldwork in Loma Linda and neighboring *colonias*, the questions about security started: "Why there? Are you sure? Isn't it a *colonia de posesionarios*? Isn't it dangerous? Aren't you afraid?[14]" (Field notes, April 2018). The collective image of the zone evokes the Penal del Topo Chico (and the mutiny that took place

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[14] ¿Por qué ahí? ¿Estás segura? ¿Qué no es una colonia de posesionarios? ¿No es peligroso? ¿No te da miedo?"

in 2016), the *colonias* Tierra y Libertad and Valle de Santa Lucía, which started as *colonias de posesionarios* in the 1960s, the many Fomerrey *colonias* from the 70s and 80s, and are now known for precarious housing, gang activities, and violence.

Only one public official in an urban development agency, Emma, in the municipality of Guadalupe mentioned something different: "You are playing with the rich kids there if you compare them to the neighbors. If you want to watch real danger, you'll just need to cross the street[15]" (interview Emma, April 30, 2018). She had been a public official for decades and was well acquainted with the zone. One of her previous jobs was to accompany candidates for public election to do tours in *colonias* populares: hear the residents' complaints and negotiate votes. Emma continued:

> those *colonias* [Tierra y Libertad, Valle de Santa Lucía, Emiliano Zapata] the higher you go up the Topo Chico, the worse it gets. It is a complicated zone, with many deficiencies, lots of poverty, lots of violence. It is always the same. And then, across the street, you have the Loma Linda and the Modelo. They don't like them. And there are always plans and promises to improve the zone, but it is complicated[16] (interview Emma, April 30, 2018).

With this information, I defined the Loma Linda Polygon (LLP) -grouping the four *colonias* involved- as the case study for this research project to analyze the link between the feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public space (see Map 2).

Nuevo León, Mexico

Monterrey and its Metropolitan Area

Colonias of the Loma Linda Polygon
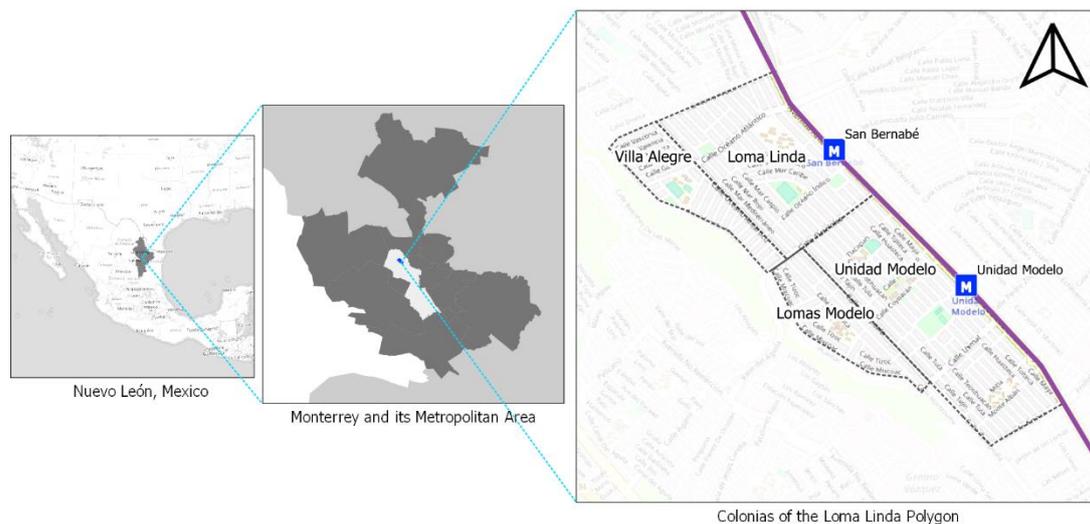
Map 2 Location of LLP and the limits of the 4 colonias in the city of Monterrey.
Source: OpenStreetMap (2019), modifications by author.

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[15] Estás jugando con los riquillos, si los comparas con los vecinos de por ahí. Si quieres peligro de verdad, solo ocupas cruzar la calle.
[16] Esas colonias [Tierra y Libertad, Valle de Santa Lucía, Emiliano Zapata] entre más subes al Topo Chico, peor se pone. Es una zona complicada, con muchas carencias, mucha pobreza, mucha violencia. Es el cuento de nunca acabar. Y cruzando la calle, tienes a los de la Loma Linda y la Modelo. No los quieren. Y siempre hay planes de mejorar la zona, pero es complicado.

4.4 Phase 2 - Immersion into the case study and its context

A second visit was made in February-March 2019 for a duration of 9 weeks (31 January 2019 - 31 March 2019). During this period, I resided in an apartment in Unidad Modelo. Here I carried out direct observations of the flows of people and vehicles in the LLP, and the uses of public space throughout day and night, and experienced firsthand the issues of daily life in LLP. I participated in several activities organized by the neighbors of MVV, and carried out interviews with several members. Being introduced to the community by Joel and Alberto, two individuals who live in Loma Linda and who the community trusts, allowed me to gain access to people and spaces that would have been inaccessible otherwise, and even more because of the type of information I was looking for. Residents are highly suspicious of strangers asking questions, particularly if they are about daily practices and if they are not clearly identified as belonging to a political party or a government office. The information recovered at this stage was compared to the information obtained in Phase 1 to analyze how the macro-level representations of insecurity, public space, and daily practices compare to those at meso- and micro-level. Furthermore, the results of Phase 2 allowed to define the next level of analysis for Phase 3.

4.4.1 Observations and interviews with actors inside and outside of LLP and MVV

The first meeting in person with Joel and Alberto eased the communication. My background as resident of Monterrey, familiar with jargon, customs, and experiences of violence, had positive and negative effects. On the one hand, the communication was relatively easy. Alberto mentioned that, since my FB user name sounded masculine, he was mistrusting at the beginning, until I explained I was female. As a woman, I was not perceived as a threat, but on the other hand, they did not really take me seriously as a researcher at the beginning. He also mentioned that having on board someone working in Paris could help them attract the attention of other residents who had not yet joined them. Having had experiences in other local projects based on collaboration with inhabitants, I offered to share with them the results of the activities in which they participated, and also for them to share it on social media with neighbors. We agreed to be very careful about data and to be as transparent as possible. This benefited both parties: they received reports and data that could be used for future strategies, and the experience of being involved in a European research project was good for their image, as they explained. And I was able to participate and observe the inner workings of a private and highly mistrusting community. I also got them in touch with other organizations that had contacted throughout my fieldwork. These agreements built on trust and collaboration was what made the next stages of research possible.

The first general meeting I attended was on the Loma Linda football field, a space well known by the neighbors where young people come and play during the evenings. I got a chance to ask

questions to the audience based on the results of the activities on Phase 1. These first answers from the group reflected many of the concerns over population, social classes, territories observed at a metropolitan level. However, in this case, the observations were more personal and much more linked to everyday experiences in public spaces in the neighborhood.

After the first live event I went to, I was deemed trustworthy enough for Joel and Alberto to add me to the WA Group Chat of the neighborhood watch, which they had previously refused to do. Being in the WA Group Chat allowed me to observe firsthand the reactions on real time to several incidents within the LLP and get notified about events and meetings. Throughout the project, I held several interviews with Joel and Alberto, where they explained the history of the group and the difficulties they face. Among them is the issue of getting neighbors to act. They say that there are many followers on FB and WA, but when they organize meetings, people do not go. They say that the MVV project has not been well received by neighbors, particularly men. They narrate some violent reactions that these neighbors have when invited to participate, a reaction that I also experienced. Joel and Alberto put me in touch with other neighbors engaged in the project. The following meetings organized by Joel and Alberto were with smaller groups. They say that it is difficult to mobilize neighbors and getting them to engage. So, they organize block meetings (see Figure 16). They get in touch with someone living in a certain street who is already part of MVV, and ask them for permission to do the meeting in their garage or in front of their house. Like in the football field, a neighbor provides chairs and Joel and Alberto bring in multimedia equipment.

Figure 16 Police officers addressing the audience during the block meeting at Calle Mar del Norte in Colonia Loma Linda.
Photo: Author, 2019.

During these meetings, I sat along with the neighbors. Like in the general meeting, the audience was mostly female, some of them followed by young children. This contrasts with the results from Phase 1, where the users I came in contact with were predominantly male. Some neighbors did not join us on the street, but were attentive of the meeting from their living room windows or behind the bars of their garages and porches. Most neighbors are shy and prefer not to ask questions during the meetings. But before and after the meetings, I joined in on the conversation in smaller groups that stayed for a while and chat. These conversations were very informative on the everyday experiences with insecurity in public spaces and how it affects daily practices. During the public space probe on Phase 1, women were indirectly mentioned. During these conversations with neighbors a topic that emerged repeatedly was women's feelings of insecurity in public spaces. And while adult and elderly women make up for most of the audience in the neighborhood meetings and the most active members, their concerns pertaining to gender and vulnerability in public space are not the main topic of discussion, and when they are, they are indirectly addressed, which will be discussed in detail in CHAPTER 10. Women advocated for their security and that of their loved ones, as they narrate the experiences of young and old, male and female family members, with a strong concern over children's and teenagers' security.

FC officers were present during the meetings with neighbors. They were contacted by MVV and added to the FB and WA communities. This contact was in part thanks to the group's appearance on the news. Besides their presence and participation in meetings, FC officers invited the assistants for two visits to their training grounds in Escobedo. They set up a date and a meeting spot for an FC bus to pick us up. These visits were coordinated by the Unidad de Vinculación Ciudadana, the department within FC in charge of communicating with citizens. The first visit would have consisted of a visit to the premises where they would show us the equipment and other elements. However, due to weather conditions they decided to schedule another visit on the following weekend. Nevertheless, we were directed to a meeting room where FC Intelligence Department showed statistics and cartography of crime in the LLP between November 2018 and January 2019, as well as recommendations for everyday practices for security (see Figure 17). The classifications of personal safety, public transportation, streets, and driving pertain to recommended practices in public space, but this concept is not used by the police nor by the neighbors. A second visit was scheduled for us to watch training sessions, talk to police officers, interact with children, and have breakfast with the police officers.

Besides presenting data and recommendations, they explained that establishing a link of trust with neighbors was key for effective law enforcement. Officers also told of experiences of intervention in conflictive neighborhoods, where police officers have been attacked or where neighbors reject the presence of police. They also talked about the negative image the police have as corrupt and inefficient and that they are trying to solve that by having direct contact with the neighbors and through community-oriented policing. These interviews and meetings gave information about police activity and the ideal security practices at metropolitan and neighborhood levels, which are analyzed in CHAPTER 8 and CHAPTER 10.

Figure 17 First visit to Campo Policial #1 de Fuerza Civil in Escobedo.
Photo: MMV & author, 2019.

4.4.2 Interviews with actors outside of the limits of the polygon

Contrasting with the results of Phase 1, where immigrants and youths were commonly signaled as the main criminal actors at a metropolitan level, MVV, neighbors, and police expressed that the danger for the LLP came from youths from the *colonias populares* that surround the polygon. For this reason, I interviewed a group of activists residing in Valle de Santa Lucía and a resident of Burócratas Moctezuma (see Map 3). These interviewees are well acquainted with the zone in general, and with the security problems of their *colonias* of residence in particular, and were particularly sensitive to the social issues in the territory. The results from these interviews helped to establish how different issues, such as the relationship with authorities and representations of insecurity differ between social classes and territories. These results are discussed in CHAPTER 8, CHAPTER 9, and CHAPTER 10.
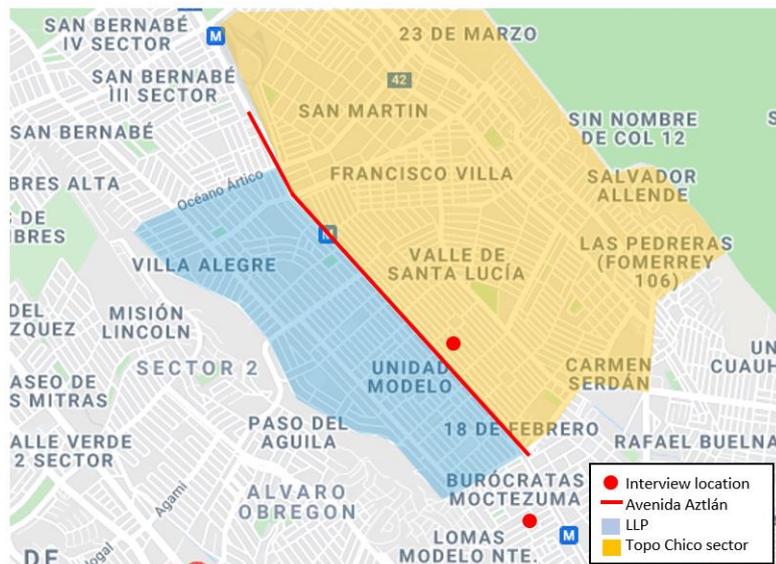
Map 3 Location of LLP and the interviews of the neighboring colonias.
Source: Google Maps (2019), modifications by author.

I contacted the members of a group of activists that run a zine about the sector, and they lived a few blocks north of Avenida Aztlan, right in front of the LLP. Once again, the first contact was through Facebook, where they upload the zine, photos of everyday life in the zone, and any other news of local culture. The zine is run by Armando and Cristina, two teachers in their early 20s. On the first contact through Facebook Messenger, they were less hesitant to respond than Alberto of MVV. Again, I explained the purpose of my research and shared links of my laboratory as proof. With this, they agreed to meet me for an interview. Knowing that I was not a resident of the zone, they suggested we met at a pharmacy near the San Bernabé metro station. Armando fetched me and led me to the house he shared with Cristina. They invited Flora, a 26-year-old resident of Colonia Emiliano Zapata who does photography for the zine. During the interview, the three of them talked about the origin of the zine, their respective backgrounds, and the issues of insecurity and inequality in the Topo Chico sector. As the interview came to an end, they told me that if I wanted to come and take pictures of the sector, I should call them so they would come with me, because taking pictures was risky if I am an outsider. Armando walked me back to the pharmacy. He said that it was not safe to come and go without the company of someone that lived there.

The interview with Salvador from Burócratas Moctezuma required less logistics. I got in touch with him through a colleague. Salvador is an architect working in construction and he has lived in Burócratas Moctezuma all his life. We met in an establishment near Avenida Aztlan, on the side of LLP. The interview was shorter, and he talked about the experiences of violence in his *colonia* and the relationship with law enforcement. He opened with the statement "you cannot talk about the zone without talking about insecurity". Violence and insecurity are elements of everyday life for him and his neighbors, he says, since the surge of violence of the late 2000s. He commented that getting used to it is a necessity because one way or another, one has to go out and work. He considers that paranoia and not going out only makes fear worse. He mentioned the importance of being familiar with the zone, but at the same time, he is aware

that women are particularly vulnerable. He narrates that his mother and a friend of his sister have been chased and touched by strange men on the streets of the *colonia*. It is worth noting that the profile of these participants -like that of the MMV leaders- was extraordinary due to their professional and educational background, their willingness to get involved in collective action, and to talk about their experiences of violence with someone they do not know personally.

4.4.3 The process of observing public spaces in the neighborhood

As previously stated, for this field visit I resided in an apartment in Unidad Modelo. This allowed me to be immersed into the everyday life of the colonias, and to observe flows and uses of public space at different times of the day. It was also practical to live there and to be within walking distance of the next MVV meeting. During the time I lived in the zone, I moved mostly on foot and used public transportation. When I arrived, N, the owner of the apartment showed me around. He listed nearby services such as supermarkets and transportation, as well as recommendations on how to get there safely. "Nothing has happened that I know of, but just in case[17]" he said (field notes, February 2019). He indicated that it was safer to move around inside the neighborhood to get to the metro, and to avoid walking down Avenida Aztlan whenever possible, especially at night.

When my 3 colleagues and I were leaving the first meeting in the football field it was already dark. We stayed for a while to help putting everything away and to pass flyers to the neighbors about the research project. Most of them told us to be careful and stay safe. As we were leaving Joel offered to drive us to the metro station 500 meters away. We declined his offer and told him we were walking. He said that we should be careful, but since we were a group with men, we should be fine. He suggested we walk down the main distributor street that was better lit, and told us to come to the next block meeting.

Indeed, this distributor street was better lit that the smaller streets. However, the sidewalks in particular were dark. Like in many streets in MMA, they are narrow, uncomfortable, and full of obstacles, so we walked on the road, paying attention to passing cars as usual. At 9 PM, there was not much noise nor movement. The narrow part of the block faced this distributor street, so that there were very few doors or windows (see Figure 18). Many of the walls had graffiti and gang signatures. Jokingly one of my colleagues said "In Océano Indico, no one will hear you scream[18]" (field notes, February 2019). On the metro ride, my colleagues commented on the visit. Comparing it to other lower-middle class *colonias* in Monterrey, Guadalupe, and Santa Catarina, they said "it is not best, it is not the worst. It's pretty average[19]" referring to their first impressions of the physical elements of LLP.

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[17] No ha pasado nada que yo sepa, pero por si acaso.
[18] En Océano Índico, nadie te oye gritar.
[19] Pues no es lo mejor, pero no es lo peor. Está bastante promedio.

Figure 18 Walking down Océano Indico Street to San Bernabé Metro Station from Loma Linda football field at night.
Photo: Author, 2018.

After hearing so many warnings from neighbors and watching incidents being reported on the MVV WA Group Chat, I admit that the first night I walked alone on these streets with the goal of carrying out observations and documentation I was nervous. A friend of mine had given me a can of pepper spray "just in case". The first outings were mostly on a 5-block radius from my temporary dwelling. I was mindful of my appearance, per recommendations of Joel and Alberto: jeans, loose T-shirt, no bags, no phone in hand, no jewelry. As the weekend approached, silence was substituted by loud music from inside the houses and from cars. There is hardly a zone in the *colonia* that is silent. However, there is no movement on the streets. The parties happen inside the houses. I experienced the problem of noisy neighbors during two weekends. One was a loud party playing *banda sinaloense* 3 blocks away. Inside the apartment, a decibel meter marked over 68 db. To test the comments of the neighbors, I called 911, who politely noted the report. The police never came and the party went on until 5 am. Later, the neighbor next door who played classic *norteñas* on his stereo every Sunday morning while cleaning his car.

I carried out several walks in the 4 *colonias* in different moments. When mentioning my outings to Joel and Alberto, they recommended me not to go out at night, and if I had to, to keep my phone at hand and notify the group if I saw anything strange or if anything happened to me. Luckily, there was no need. As I got acquainted with the zone and identified the darkened streets, I got much more comfortable with going out at night. Nevertheless, there was the issue of street harassment. There are very few pedestrians during the day, but this changed during rush hours, particularly on the main streets. While coming to and from the metro station and on the documentation walks, I was harassed by male pedestrians and drivers frequently: on the metro, on the main and secondary streets, on parks. Most of the time they made inappropriate comments, other times I was followed until I entered a shop. At least once I noticed a man taking pictures of me in the metro. However, this level of harassment is not rare in the city, nor is it rare for women living here. When discussing this with other women, they said that it is

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annoying but to ignore it. Others recommended me to wear headphones. To prevent these incidents, I resorted to invite a male colleague to join me on the walks.

Once while out walking, a police officer with whom I had talked to during the MVV meetings sent me a message saying that he saw me and to be careful. To be honest, I did not know whether to feel concerned or reassured. There also was the risk of being perceived as a potential criminal. Pedestrians are highly suspect in general, since people who do not live in the LLP blocks have no reason to be walking there (see CHAPTER 9 and 10). On the WA Group Chat there were frequent reports of individuals that "looked suspicious" walking down the streets of the LLP. Other times, all it was needed to be reported to the group was to be sitting alone in a park bench during working hours. I was mentioned as a suspicious individual at least once (to my knowledge); luckily Joel and Alberto told them that I was not a criminal. On the rare occasions I came across residents standing or talking on the street, they would eye me suspiciously. Greeting them, making oneself noticed lessens the risks of confrontation. This is not always possible since the streets are very empty.

The photographic documentation of the public space of the LLP was complicated due to the distrust that a person in the street with a camera or a cell phone inspires in the neighbors. They often photograph the suspect and report it to Facebook and WhatsApp groups and sometimes to the police.

4.4.4 "Careful with that camera of yours" - Taking photographs in a sensitive environment

Between 2013 and 2016 my work assignments in Monterrey involved long walks several days a week on various sectors of MMA and taking photographs of streets and buildings. Being confronted by neighbors, drivers, and police was a common occurrence during these outings. Even when wearing visible badges, neighbors were mistrusting. They would yell at us, or they would take photographs of us to report us to the police or other neighbors. My colleagues and I were not concerned by the risk of being robbed, but rather by the confrontations with neighbors for taking photographs in public space. The generalized mistrust of being in the public space did not start with murders: it started with teenagers surveilling the streets equipped with a phone, ready to call their bosses if they saw anything of interest. Others also used this kind of communication to alert their colleagues of empty houses for them to break in.

The reactions were not the same in every *colonia*. While participating in an activity with students of ITESM in downtown San Pedro in 2014, we had a mildly violent confrontation with a neighbor. We arrived in a bus marked with the logos of the institution. We descended, and the instructor explained the history of the street while students took photographs of the general area. A neighbor came out of one of the houses and blocked the bus until the police came. We explained to the officers what the activity was about, gave the numbers of the coordinators at the university, and they took our IDs. We were instructed not to take photographs and to stay in the main streets.

During an activity carried out with a group of colleagues to diagnose the state of public spaces in a *colonia* popular in Santa Catarina, neighbors did not call the police or confront us directly or aggressively. We approached a woman to ask her for information. She asked calmly who was our employer and why were we there. We explained the purpose of our work, and she said that we should be careful, that the entire *colonia* knew we were there by word of mouth and that we were being watched. She remarked that out demeanor revealed that "it is obvious you are not from around here, so be careful. Don't have your cameras so visible."

Throughout fieldwork activities, I was constantly advised by collaborators, the neighbors, and other contacts to be careful when taking photographs. The first outings, where I was less familiar with the state of the *colonia*, I did part of the documentation of the state of public space in the LLP with a GoPro strapped to my chest hidden on a scarf. Once I gained more confidence and was better acquainted with the movements of the residents and the spaces and proper timing, I took photographs with a smartphone.

I conducted a discussion group with individuals who have experience doing photography on public spaces for artistic and professional purposes or research in MMA. Individuals who responded to the call were a small group of professional and amateur photographers, researchers, educators, and athletes, all of them living in MMA. Upon touching the issue of mistrust and photography, Norma, a female professor at the university summed it up as follows:

> In Monterrey, you are suspicious even for looking out the window. Even when there is no law that forbids photography there is a culture of fear and mistrust that turns occupying the street, walking, documenting, observing, taking photographs into an act of heroism[20].

Two participants, male and female, working for construction companies added:

> I agree. A lady once chased me because I was taking photos of a plot of land [in Juárez].[21]

> Yeah, same. Once they almost arrested us because a neighbor complained [on the south sector of MMA].[22]

A female historian shared her experience working on documenting architecture in the locality, mentioning the impact the surge of violence in the late 2000s and the experiences outside of MMA:

> I've been forced to erase photos from my phone, if you take out a camera it's worse. They frequently tell me the same, referring to the period of violence in the city. In the

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[20] En Monterrey eres sospechoso hasta por asomarte a la ventana. Aunque no existe una ley que impida tomar fotos hay una cultura del miedo y la desconfianza que hace que cuando ocupas la calle, caminas, documentas, miras, fotografías se convierta en un acto de heroísmo.

[21] Confirmo, una vez me correteó una señora después de verme tomando fotos a un terreno.

[22] Sí, igual. Una vez casi nos arrestan por que un vecino se quejó.

municipios [municipalities outside of MMA] it's worse, I was detained in Marin last year.[23]

This was followed by a male professor who commented:

> A crazy neighbor tried to run over [a female colleague] on the middle of the street because she was taking photographs of her house while she was giving a class on the street and she used her phone to show the architecture of the *colonia* [near La Purísima].[24]

A female accountant shared the following anecdote:

> Once while driving, I pulled over to take pictures of an old building in Centro. There was an auto repair shop next door. 4 guys went out armed with pipes apparently wanting to dissuade me. I rolled up the windows and hauled it out of there.[25]

Other participants have a more positive opinion, although they still expressed their reservations with taking photographs openly on the street:

> Jogger, male: There's no problem with photos. I've recently started going out wearing a GoPro to record and I am kind of worried to have it on sight.[26]

> Architect, male: Just wear a badge. It shouldn't be forbidden. I did it for García and San Pedro. Be confident and they will not bother you.[27]

> Photographer, female: In my experience, it depends on what you are photographing and where, if it is with the phone it is somewhat normalized and no one makes a fuss, but with the camera they get touchy.[28]

> Doctor, male: Depends on how you do it, once a police car arrived because we were taking pics next to the street.[29]

Other participants commented this is not a situation unique to Monterrey. Participants mentioned similar experiences in Mexico City, Veracruz, Zacatecas, and Yucatán. Mariana, a researcher from Monterrey who carried out fieldwork in Mérida for her PhD commented that she was doing photography for her documentation of the uses of a square downtown:

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[23] A mí me han hecho borrar fotografías en varias ocasiones del teléfono, si sacas una cámara es peor. Seguido me comentan lo mismo refiriéndose al periodo de violencia en la ciudad. En municipios peor, en Marín me detuvieron a finales del año pasado.

[24] Una vecina desquiciada le echó el auto encima [a mi colega] en medio de la calle so pretexto de que estaba tomando fotos a su casa mientras ella estaba dando una clase en la calle y usaba su celular para mostrar la arquitectura de la *colonia*.

[25] Yo una vez estaba manejando y me orillé en una calle del centro a tomarle fotos a un edificio antiguo. Al lado había un taller y de ahí salieron como 4 batos con tubos y finta de querer disuadirme. Procedí a subir la ventana e irme manejando en chinga.

[26] Fotos no hay pedo, últimamente he estado saliendo con la GoPro para grabar y me da algo de pendiente tenerla a la vista.

[27] Cuélgate una identificación al cuello. No debe estar prohibido, ya me pasó en García y San Pedro. Plántate muy segura y ni te molestan.

[28] En mi experiencia depende de con qué estés tomando la foto y qué zona, si es con celular pues está algo normalizado y nadie la hace de pedo mucho, pero con cámaras si se ponen mamones.

[29] Depende de cómo lo hagas, una vez si nos llegó una patrulla porque estábamos tomando fotos junto al camino.

People were paranoid, they were scared. They kept asking me what I was taking pictures of, who I worked for, what I was doing. I printed a makeshift badge and they sort of left me alone. But still people asked.[30]

It is noteworthy that most of the experiences of having issues with neighbors or the police come from women. With this information, from personal experience, and other discussions that emerged throughout this research process, we continued the discussion and concluded that individuals who do not look clearly threatening or intimidating are more likely to be confronted by neighbors. Most of the time, it was upper- and middle-class female residents who confronted photographers. From the resulting discussions, participants listed the kinds of situations and places where it is safe to take photographs (or at least, when one is less likely to be engaged in a confrontation – see Table 3):

Table 3 Acceptable and unacceptable conditions to take photographs, according to participants.

Acceptable	Unacceptable
• Taking photographs in your *colonia* of residence or where people know you. • Taking selfies. • Photographing crowded spaces. • Touristic spots (Macro Plaza, Morelos, Santa Lucía). • When it is clear you are taking a picture of someone you know. • From moving cars or buses. • Using a smartphone. • Taking photos of something above eye level.	• Taking photographs in *colonias* (as opposed to streets, public transportation or parks). • Taking photographs in *colonias* where you do not live in. • Taking photographs of cars or private property. • When it is clear you are photographing a car, a house or an "uninteresting" building. • Using a large camera.

Enrique, a man in his mid-30s who lives in between Monterrey and Mexico City, presented the perception of a regular neighbor. He is not a researcher or has any interest in taking photos on the street, but by his own admission he is "the typical paranoid neighbor who confronts [photographers] or calls the police[31]". He explained his position as follows:

[When] I see a stranger taking pictures, I don't know what his intentions are. In my *colonia* there are armed robberies (…), there are armed motorbike drivers doing rounds. I've been robbed on the bus two blocks from my house (…) in my street, they stole cars from the neighbors who were just arriving to their houses. They were waiting for them in a taxi. Taking photos could be the next level or their new modus operandi.

The municipality doesn't solve the problem of lighting (…) we as citizens are on our own. (…) Calling the police is a cry for help, although deep down the feeling is of being abandoned by authorities (…) With all this, any person standing still observing houses in

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[30] La gente está bien asustada. Se me aceraban a preguntar que a qué le estaba tomando fotos, que para quién trabajaba, que qué estaba haciendo. Me imprimí un gafete y así me dejaron en paz, más o menos. Pero de todos modos preguntaban.

[31] [soy] el típico vecino paranóico que confronta [a los que toman fotos] o le habla a la policía.

the *colonia* is suspicious. And even more if they have a camera. Because then they not only have the narration of how the *colonia* works during the day, they have pictures. I'm surprised of how normal this is for me. I didn't realize until I wrote it down.[32]

He is not alone in this. Neighbors part of MVV and other groups of security on FB constantly alert each other about "suspicious individuals on the street" or "suspicious persons taking photos to the cars and houses" (see CHAPTER 10).

4.4.5 Observing reactions to surveys in a dangerous environment

Before the national security crisis, people were already reluctant to participate in surveys, which only increased after the crisis. This is due in part to the recurrent instances of extortion, which according to the ENVIPE is the 2nd most frequent type of crime (INEGI, 2020, p. 10). Victims received phone calls where the caller would cite the victim's full name, home address, and other personal information, claiming they were under surveillance. The caller, frequently claiming to be a member of a cartel, threatened the responder's wellbeing (or that of a supposedly abducted relative) and demanded money within a tight deadline. Both authorities and rumors stated that victims were targeted due to their displays of wealth on social media (such as vacations, school uniforms, check-ins at restaurants, etc.). However, lists of addresses and phone numbers from communications and polling companies have been leaked or bought by criminals who extort random people by phone. Thus, people became wary of questionnaires no matter the source, from government surveys to school projects.

Besides the perceived risk of divulging information to a stranger, rumors circulate about criminals posing as pollsters to trick victims into opening their doors and then forcing themselves in and robbing them. This was the case of the most recent Censo de Población y Vivienda, the nationwide survey carried out by the INEGI in 2021. These rumors circulate online in the form of FB posts and WA messages, while news sites give credence to these incidents without any substantial evidence. However, the INEGI and other public authorities put out information on how to identify an official pollster and numbers to call to verify their identity. Still the course of action for the population is to not trust anyone. Yet, while the population criminalizes pollsters, pollsters are often victims of crime while out on the streets, particularly female pollsters. INEGI employees had been victims of robberies and at least in

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[32] [Cuando] hay un desconocido tomando fotos, no sé con qué intención está tomándolas.
En la *colonia* asaltan a mano armada, y hay motonetos armados también que circulan por las calles. A mí me asaltaron en el pesero a dos cuadras de mi calle (...) En mi calle van dos veces que roban coches a vecinos que estaban llegando a sus casas y los estaban esperando en un taxi.
Tomar fotos puede ser un siguiente nivel o una nueva manera de operar.
La Alcaldía no resuelve el asunto de las luminarias (...) como ciudadanos estamos a nuestra suerte.
Llamar a la policía es un grito de auxilio, aunque la sensación en el fondo es de abandono por parte de las autoridades (...) Con todo esto, cualquier persona quieta que esté observando las casas de la *colonia* es sospechosa. Y si trae cámara fotográfica, más. Porque no solo lleva el relato de cómo funcionan los horarios en la *colonia*, lleva las imágenes.
Me sorprendí de lo normalizado que tengo todo esto. No me había dado cuenta hasta que lo escribí.

one case in Oaxaca, a pollster was shot. There are even cities and localities in the country where pollsters will not go because of the risk of getting killed or kidnapped.
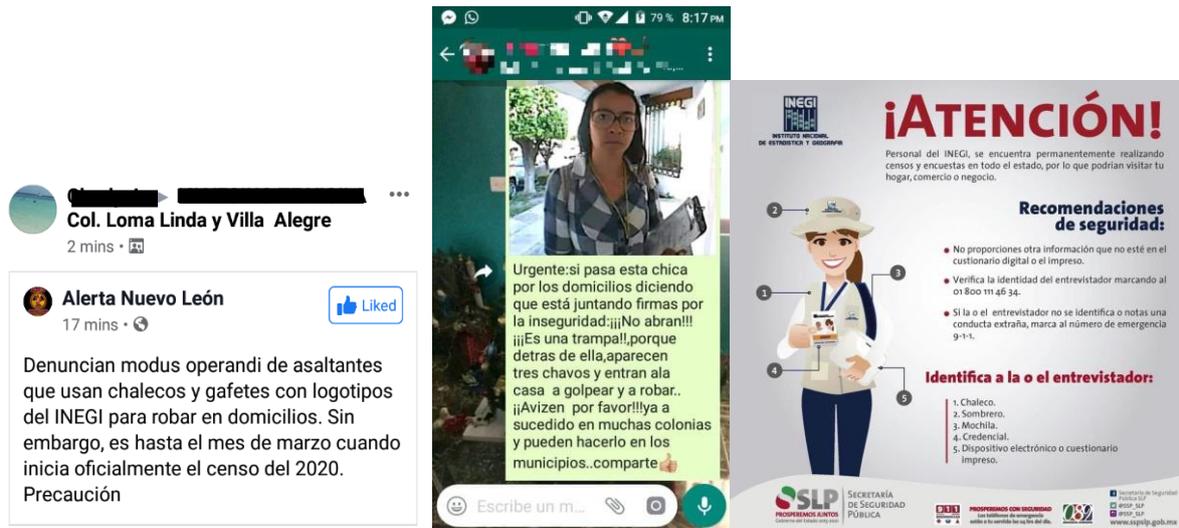
Figure 19 Rumors about pollsters being criminals in disguise.
These images are shared on social media urging people to be careful about census operations.
(left) Facebook post alerting of criminals disguised as pollsters prior to the INEGI census is shared on a page of the colonias of LLP, January 2020.
Source. Alerta Nuevo León. Retrieved on 16/01/2020.
(center) Message forwarded to the MVV Group Chat alerting that a woman was doing a survey about insecurity and that it was a ruse for her accomplices to break into the victims' home.
Source: WhatsApp   –   MVV   Group   Chat.   Retrieved   on   15/02/2019.
(right) These rumors become so widespread that the INEGI and authorities emit information on how to identify an official pollster, along with phone numbers to call to verify their identity or report them.
Source: Secretaría de Seguridad Pública. Retrieved on 16/01/2020.

Then there are the questionable practices of data gathering from survey companies to mitigate the lack of participation. I was approached in a public park by pollsters for a large-scale survey about credit and banking in Monterrey. Being familiar with the difficulty of getting people to answer, I usually participate. The pollsters had to meet a quota of answers and not many people were willing to answer a survey that lasted for almost an hour. They also had to record the conversation to show evidence of their process, so the pollster gave me the answers to recite for several sections, and also reported another age and other false demographic information to meet the quota of age and gender. This is a common practice. Likewise, during the public space probe carried out at the Alameda a group of pollsters we talked to remarked the difficulty of getting people to talk to them.

During one of the visits, I got in touch with Como Vamos Nuevo Leon (CVNL) to know more about their experiences with surveys and research of insecurity in Monterrey and Nuevo León in general. Every year they publish a study of citizens' perception of government and public policy issues. The study consists of four main topics of which the perception of citizens is measured at the municipal level: Social Development, Security and Justice, Mobility and Urban Development, and Good Governance. The sample population of the survey aims to be representative of the general population from the perspective of the state, the municipalities of the state, and the MMA, as well as gender. Their instrument consists of a 30-40-minute

questionnaire applied to inhabitants of the state of Nuevo León. This instrument is designed by researchers from the Facultad de Economía of the UANL and its application is coordinated by CVNL. In the most recent iteration, Así Vamos 2019, nearly 4,000 households were consulted, 80% of which belong to the metropolitan area.

Concerning the field experiences of the pollsters, CVNL confirms what was observed throughout the fieldwork and exchanges with other local researchers: the inhabitants of *colonias* of medium and high socio-economic level are more reluctant to answer a survey, while in *colonias* of low socio-economic level inhabitants answer more easily. The representative of CVNL mentioned that, if a satisfactory amount of answered surveys is not obtained in one *colonia*, the survey is then carried out in another *colonia* that meets the same profile. This may explain the very low rate of no-response. With regards to the fieldwork, CVNL said it is necessary to notify the police to avoid alerting neighbors to the field activity of the pollsters, particularly in the municipality of San Pedro Garza Garcia. This is because there are fraudulent survey practices and residents view people walking in residential areas as suspicious and call the police. Pollsters have also been victims of crime while doing their jobs.

In terms of the design of their instrument, they have refined questions that respondents refused to answer. These questions referred to the monthly income of the respondent, the number of cars they owned, area in square meters of their homes. The reason of answer refusal is similar to that found in the survey application for this research work: the questions refer to indicators of socio-economic status; respondents are afraid of making their possessions known and, therefore, of being targets of thieves. Questions on victimization were removed from the instrument due to the difficulty in obtaining responses. These questions hindered the possibility of getting the respondents to finish the survey, which required more time and resources dedicated to finding respondents who would be willing to answer. This coincides with my experience of the refusal from the surveyed population to answer questions regarding ownership of cellphones, Wi-Fi access, or if they had children.

In the case of CVNL, while they are aware of the difficulties of obtaining the responses from the sample population due to mistrust and the problems pollsters face both as suspects and as victims in an environment of chronic violence, there is no real acknowledgement or documentation of these obstacles or their impact on the results. I interviewed other individuals that have carried out surveys for smaller projects. Most of them admit they have cheated one way or another because individuals do not want to answer surveys and if they see you on a public space with a clipboard, they are most likely to walk away. "The few answers you get, you just copy-paste them on the other forms, so at least in part it is not all a lie[33]" (field notes, April 2021). Another issue they commented was the difficulty of obtaining answers for smaller projects, as opposed to larger pollsters: they have the resources to call any amount of numbers until they reach their quota of answers. They say that they cannot do that for a small study focused on how a specific space works: "you can be there all day and not get enough answers.

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[33] Las pocas respuestas que sí hay, las copias en los otros cuestionarios. De perdido así no todo es inventado.

Maybe if you are there all week, all day long. But people are very touchy to answer surveys because of insecurity, unless you give them something"[34] (field notes, March 2018).

Polling until achieving an amount of answers can be a way to circumvent the lack of response at city level. However, this is not viable when it concerns specific territories of smaller size than a city. Concerning perception of security, the results obtained would not give an accurate depiction, since it is highly variable between neighborhoods due to their composition. In a neighborhood, there is a finite amount of people who cannot be replaced by looking for surrogate responders on similar contexts. And with the mistrust due to violence and insecurity, the rate of non-responders rises significantly.

Like CVNL, there are other surveys at a national and state level periodically carried out to measure insecurity. However, most of them focus on the state level, and the information is aggregated at state or metropolitan level. Such an obstacle was also identified by UN Women on their study of women's perception of insecurity in MMA (2019). The aggregate may reflect the perception at a metropolitan or city level and provide a baseline, but further research is required for an assessment of the meso- and micro-levels. And as we have seen, it is at the meso- and micro levels were perception of insecurity is more clearly defined.

Still, as mentioned in CHAPTER 3, surveys are a quantitative tool constantly sought out by researchers on insecurity to gauge the populations' perception. There is no shortage of the use of surveys for local studies on insecurity -particularly from private actors monitoring these topics- and their validity is hardly questioned. On the contrary: they are used for decision-making, as we have also seen in this chapter with regards to crime rates and FC action. It is noteworthy that most of the quantitative studies on insecurity in Monterrey are carried out by economists, and tend to privilege crime and relationships with law enforcement as a defining factor of perception, leaving out qualitative notions. These studies benefit of the high level of trust placed on quantitative information, considered to provide the real, undisputed, and measurable truth. A team that recently conducted a survey of perception of policework in MMA by one of these private observatories declared that "unlike what we hear from people every day, the perception of insecurity is not that bad according to our study" (Observatorio de Seguridad y Justicia, 2021).

With this information, I decided to carry out a survey, which may appear counterintuitive. However, this gave me the opportunity to document the shortcomings that are apparently very common but rarely addressed by practitioners and researchers. I presented the idea to Joel and Alberto, who were immediately dismissive because they were certain that people would not answer. After discussing possibilities, we agreed that they would take care of the distribution of the survey, since neighbors know them and trust them. I proposed a printed version on paper and an online version (see ANNEX 3). On each I included the logos of the university and the laboratory, as well as the logos of MVV, e-mails, phone numbers and FB pages for further information, an explanation of the purpose of the survey, and mentioned explicitly that the

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[34] Puedes estar ahí todo el día y no tener suficientes respuestas. Tal vez sí estás ahí toda la semana, todo el día. Pero la gente es muy quisquillosa para contestar encuestas por la inseguridad, a menos que les des algo.

survey was completely anonymous and voluntary. Once this content was deemed satisfactory by Joel and Alberto, we began the production and distribution.

The original intention was to apply the survey in person, but due to the lack of pedestrian activity and distrust of people and the history of false surveys culminating in violent robberies, we decided to distribute surveys through intermediaries and define drop spots to deposit the questionnaires (see Map 4). With the help of Joel and Alberto, 13 shop owners allowed the installation of mailboxes displaying the logos of the university, MVV, and information about the survey (see Figure 20). The addresses of the mailboxes were also included on the final version of the survey.

Map 4 Location of shops where the mailboxes were distributed.
Source: Google Maps (2019), modifications by author.

Figure 20 Mailboxes installed in grocery stores in LLP with the authorization of the owners.
Photo: MVV, 2019.

1500 surveys were printed and distributed in the LLP with the help of MVV coordinators. Joel and Alberto offered to take care of the distribution of surveys. Because they are in charge of the MVV group both online and offline, they are often visiting neighbors and receiving people

from the neighborhood in their respective houses. Joel and Alberto also posted information about the survey repeatedly on MVV FB and WA Groups. They also shared on these sites the link to the online survey.

Meanwhile, with the help of two colleagues, I attempted to do the surveys in person. This activity allowed to observe the reactions of the inhabitants towards us as pedestrians and when addressed to answer a survey. The streets were mostly empty, occasionally a group of men were hanging out on their porches, and we would ask them to answer the survey. Some of them told us they rather not. We deposited the questionnaire in the mailboxes or on the doors. There were occupants who peeked out of the windows without saying anything; others took pictures of us as we were walking away. In the houses where there were people in the garage or with the door open, we would ask if we could leave the document and explain who we were, what we were doing, and what the document was. Some neighbors agreed, others politely said no, and some reacted in a hostile way, particularly men. Some reacted aggressively when they saw us approaching their houses or their cars with a document.

Like in the MAPSP, female volunteers were chastised and tested by older male residents. One man quizzed me on grammar and spelling rules and when I was not able to answer he said that "the questionnaire was garbage because it was done by someone ignorant" (field notes, March 2019), and he was not going to answer it because of my incompetence. Other individuals refused to receive the questionnaire but went on long rants about politics and government corruption. And at one point or another, we were told our work was useless or people pretended not to see us.

I interviewed Saul, 60-year old owner of an *estanquillo* in Unidad Modelo who agreed to distribute the questionnaires and install the mailbox. He mentioned that people who come to his establishment do not want to answer the survey or even to take it home, and that there have also been aggressive reactions. He gave a lengthy assessment of the experience:

> I agreed to put the mailbox and the survey because I believe we have to do something. Insecurity is a daily problem. I showed the survey to my neighbor, he's a lawyer, and he said it was well done. That gave me confidence too. But people don't want to answer. I tricked some people into answering it [he laughs] My girls helped me, asking clients the questions and writing down the answers, but one guy got really aggressive! He yelled at me and left the food he had already paid for! People don't want to answer stuff like 'do you have children?' or 'do you have wifi?' They think that if they answer that, someone can identify them and rob them. I even challenged some guys over that. I showed them the surveys people answered and told them "if you can identify someone from that pile, the food is free". That didn't persuade them, they were very pigheaded. 'No, no, no,' they say. 'I don't want problems, it is very risky, I don't know what you are going to do with that.' Even people I know and that know me. They know I am hardworking and honest, that I wouldn't hurt them, and that I am one of them, this is my house. If they have

questions, they know where to find me. But everyone is on edge[35] (interview Saul, March 30, 2019).

This assessment was supported by Joel and Alberto's accounts. They said:

> It's a shame people don't want to answer. We told them in the group chat, that they should take the opportunity of participating. But they are touchy, especially about questions like 'do you have a smartphone?' or 'in what *colonia* do you live in?' or the ones about experiences. People don't want to mention if they have gadgets, or what transportation they use. Someone could think that they have money because of that, and people think someone can find them and come rob them or their children[36] (interview Joel & Alberto, March 30, 2019).

In total, 68 surveys were answered in both physical and digital formats. Most of them were from members of MVV. And while the sample is small -considering the group has over 300 members in WA and over 1400 members on FB-, it provided a basis of information to analyze representations and feelings of insecurity, practices, and the relationship with public space. This information complemented the digital ethnography, interviews, and observations carried out, and the results of these activities are discussed on CHAPTER 9 and CHAPTER 10. Although surveys proved to be ineffective to gather information in contexts of chronic violence, they are a tool that is frequently recommended and used by researchers for a wide variety of subjects. The implementation of surveys allowed to observe reactions of the population and to delve into research methods in contexts of chronic violence and mistrust. These observations supported the need to use various methods to assess feelings of insecurity and daily practices among the population of the area of study.

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[35] Yo acepté que pusieran el buzón y la encuesta porque creo que tenemos que hacer algo. La inseguridad es problema de a diario. Le mostré tu encuesta a mi vecino, es abogado y dijo que estaba bien hecha. Eso me dio confianza. Pero la gente no quiere contestar. Medio vacilé a algunos para que la contestaran [ríe]. Mis hijas me ayudaron, les preguntaban a los clientes y escribían las respuestas, ¡pero uno se puso bien agresivo! ¡Me gritó y me dejó la comida que ya había pagado! La gente no quiere contestar cosas como '¿tienes hijos?' o '¿tienes wifi en tu casa?'. Creen que, si contestan eso, alguien los puede identificar y robarlos. Hasta le aposté a unos eso. Les mostré las encuestas que ya habían contestadas, y les dije 'si puedes identificar a alguien de ese montón, la comida es gratis'. Pues ni así, son bien necios. 'No, no, no,' me dicen. 'No quiero problemas, es muy riesgoso, no sé qué vas a hacer con esa información'. Hasta gente que conozco y que me conoce. Saben que yo trabajo y que soy honesto, que no les haría daño, y que soy vecino, esta es mi casa. Si tienen preguntas, saben dónde encontrarme. Pero todos están nerviosos.

[36] Es una lástima que la gente no quiere contestar. Les dijimos en el chat, que aprovecharan la oportunidad de participar. Pero andan de nervios, sobre todo con las preguntas de '¿tienes smartphone?' o '¿en qué *colonia* vives?' o las de las experiencias. La gente no quiere decir si tiene aparatos o qué transporte usa. Creen que alguien puede ver eso y pensar que tienen dinero, y la gente cree que alguien los puede encontrar y venir a robar o a sus hijos.

4.5 Phase 3 – Under/misrepresented groups and processes

This phase took place during a third fieldwork visit between August and September 2019 and lasted 4 weeks (August 5, 2019 - September 5, 2019). The objective of this trip was to give continuity to the activities started at the LLP during the previous visit, such as interview local authorities from security departments and additional observations of the LLP and neighboring *colonias*. During this phase I also carried out work with the unrepresented group of young users of public spaces in LLP.

Based on the results of Phase 1 and Phase 2, youths and female users of public spaces in the LLP were repeatedly mentioned as being the most at risk by residents inside and outside of LLP, police, and activists. However, the discussions regarding general security rarely take into consideration the experiences of women and youths, except for groups of activists dedicated specifically to women's and youths' issues, although not exclusively security. Perception of adult female users in LLP and beyond was explored at length during Phase 2. Therefore, Phase 3 was dedicated to the feeling of insecurity of youths and their everyday practices in public space. During this period, I was also able to participate on a CPTED training course that was taking place in Mexico along with several participants in MMA. Since CPTED has become increasingly popular in novel projects of public space in Monterrey, this presented with a good opportunity to get firsthand experience on the methodology and test the scope of the approach.

4.5.1 Workshop with the focus group of youths

Often absent from the talks on prevention and neighborhood watch, young people are seen both as potential victims of crime and as potential perpetrators. However, based on observations, the interaction with them occurs in a framework of authority where they are told what they should do and they are chastised for their actions. The daily practices to avoid crimes proposed by adults and the police are built around the fears or situations that they imagine are the youths' concerns, but they do not ask them. They often focus on specific risk situations where technology plays an important role, such as interacting with strangers online or challenges that are shared through social media.

With the collaboration of Pedro, a psychologist and high school teacher at a campus in San Bernabé (west of the LLP), we created a workshop titled "Deconstructing insecurity in public space[37]". Pedro's experience working with youths from the area was extremely beneficial for the design and implementation of the workshop. The objective was to carry out a diagnosis focused on youths between 11 and 15 years of age regarding their feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public space. At this age, youths are allowed to develop a certain level of

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[37] Deconstruyendo la inseguridad en el espacio público

independence in their movements (Bromley & Stacey, 2012, p. 431). We started the preparation of the workshop before the visit to Monterrey and continued on site. Thanks to Joel and Alberto we were able to carry out the activity in the secondary school of LLP.

A first interview with the director of the secondary school allowed us to recognize the main issues related to the feeling of insecurity of the students and to adapt the workshop. In the aspect of criminal incidence, the director indicates that the students are involved in problems of gang activity and vandalism. There are cases of drug dealing in the vicinity of the school, although cases of consumption in school are scarce. On the other hand, in the aspect of social incidence, it was expressed that there is a lack of involvement on the part of the parents of the students, with cases of neglect or violence in the families. One factor that quickly emerges in the conversation is concern about the use of technology. Like the police and parents of children and teenagers in LLP, the director expresses that the smartphone contributes to family disintegration and puts students at risk of being victims of strangers online. With this information we defined the final structure of the activity (see ANNEX 4 and 5). The principal assembled two groups, one of 15 girls and another 15 boys, from first to third grade of junior high school. The workshop was held in the school's auditorium (see Figure 21 and Figure 22).

The workshop consisted of presenting different concepts and questions on feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public space. The participants defined these concepts and answered the questions through word maps with sticky notes, open discussions, drawings, and participatory cartography. We dedicated two-hour sessions to each group. They would identify elements or situations of risk, ways in which they act to stay safe in public spaces, what violence is, and how it affects their lives. Both boys and girls were quiet at first, many of them avoided sitting in the front rows. Pedro presented most of the activity and I gave follow-up explanations. By giving examples or framing the questions in terms of everyday occurrences in common environments the communication improved significantly. Both groups were very responsive to activities involving crafts. We provided the groups with poster boards, markers, stickers, rulers, and sticky notes. On the walls we put labels for several topics were participants were expected to place their answers on sticky-notes. Girls in particular were more enthusiastic with the activities that consisted on drawing. They asked for permission to go get their own markers and color pencils, and decorated their poster boards with washi tapes, stickers, and doodles. With participatory cartography activities, girls had an easier time identifying streets and landmarks than boys.

Figure 21 Group of girls brainstorming and presenting what insecurity is in their daily lives.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 22 Group of boys writing down what makes them feel unsafe in public space.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Men and women are perceived as vulnerable in their journeys between home and school for different reasons. The main daily problem identified in public space by the female group is sexual harassment, while for the male group it is physical violence and gang activity. Groups of both genders share with adults the concern of being victims of muggings with and without violence, kidnappings or homicides. When compared with the city and neighborhood level observations, the fears and concerns expressed by the youths of this secondary school are mostly unaddressed. This vulnerable population is identified at these two levels as being at high risk of victimization, particularly female youths. Youths in these social classes and territories are much more in contact with public space than adults, and therefore more likely to experience victimization. Moreover, a segment of participants in the workshop come from

colonias populares. Police, activists, residents, public officials, and other stakeholders express concern over the security of youths and women, and emit all sorts of recommendations. These recommendations however fail to address the real concerns of these vulnerable populations. The results of this activity and how they compare to the larger discourse of insecurity promoted at a city and neighborhood levels in MVV are discussed in detail on CHAPTER 10.

4.5.2 Observation of participatory methodologies in applied CPTED

As mentioned in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2, CPTED has been a popular methodology adopted in Latin American cities to tackle violence, and in Monterrey it has been adopted in the past decade. The most recent iteration of the CPTED methodology proposes to integrate the users' experience and to use several activities to diagnose the elements of urban environments with them, which could be useful for the purposes of my research. For these reasons, I participated in an online CPTED training with other professionals of Mexican cities in the summer of 2019. We were assigned to carry out various exercises individually to diagnose a space and propose socio-spatial solutions for crime prevention, following the CPTED methodology. This process did not yield results for reasons that I will explain in this section, but it did provide an opportunity to observe the common obstacles that come with carrying fieldwork to diagnose insecurity in public space and how they were dealt with by other individuals.

The training assigned one week per phase of the diagnosis, amounting to four weeks total. During this time, participants would select a zone to carry out the diagnosis and to do a project proposal to solve a problem of insecurity. This diagnosis consisted of the analysis of social factors and of crime data, analysis of the built environment, identification of elements that incentivize crime, and a series of participatory activities with the community in the zone: exploratory walks, questionnaires, participatory cartography, and brainstorming sessions. Finally, participants would produce a proposal: a masterplan with solutions integrating the data obtained, including a Gantt chart for activities to come. During this time participants were also required to participate in online discussions, answer tests, and read various documents of theory and examples of work in other cities.

I experienced several difficulties to carry out the assignment related to the conditions of mistrust and lack of involvement that is typical in MMA (even prior to the crisis of security). Instructors suggested this was an individual problem, as other participants were completing the tasks without a hitch. I got in touch with other participants of this training in MMA to confirm this, revealing that they also were facing difficulties but they were misreporting results. The experiences shared by these participants further support arguments previously mentioned in this chapter regarding the complications of documenting public spaces in *colonias* of MMA, obtaining information, and engaging citizens to participate. Moreover, the evidence brings into question the so-called success of CPTED in Mexican cities facing chronic violence, as the

methodology continues to be promoted as an effective and universal solution. The results of this experience are detailed in CHAPTER 7.

Conclusion

As we have observed throughout this chapter, this research project has faced several challenges when it comes to data gathering. First, official quantitative data has important limitations -from those exposed by research such as the real pertinence of crime and homicide rates (see CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2), to those related to the specific context of Monterrey. This project adds to the current literature explored in PART 1 that supports the use of qualitative and participatory methods to analyze urban violence in public space. Direct observations were useful to understand the dynamics and general uses of public space. And when it comes to the experiences of everyday life, it was important to reach out to residents to obtain firsthand information of experiences and to properly assess these interactions. This, however, was no easy task, as I was confronted with challenges related to combination of two factors: the sensitive nature of the research subject and the mistrust of the city dwellers of Monterrey. How to carry research on a topic that people do not want to talk about? Navigating these obstacles allowed me to integrate city dwellers' voices which shaped each phase of research.

Current literature on the matter of fieldwork in violent contexts has focused on the experiences and risks of researchers and their informants, such as Chacón & Salazar's study on researchers' risks in Ciudad Juarez (2020), Rosemberg's work on anthropologists' studies of violence in Mexico (2019), and Nleya & Thompson's work on researchers' perceived risk in Khayelitsha, Cape Town (2009). As a female individual in public space, I was considered part of the at-risk population of victimization -from harassment to abductions- in a city especially dangerous for women (a female colleague went missing in my former *colonia* of residence). However, there is less information regarding the challenges of working in high-risk, low-information contexts, where many methods and tools traditionally used are hard or impossible to implement due to mistrust from the population as a consequence of post-violence hypervigilance. Only until recently have studies emerged on these aspects, such as Lupu & Michelitch's work on survey methods for the developing world (2018), Treven & Rivera's work on fear, suspicion, and silence as unsurmountable obstacles during fieldwork (2017), and Bell-Martin & Marston's work (2019) on data collection strategies in Mexico and Colombia. This project contributes to this discussion.

This research process was immediately confronted with an obstinate silence and avoidance from potential participants due to feelings of insecurity. A researcher -or anyone for that matter- approaching individuals or organizations inquiring about violence is immediately seen suspiciously. Additionally, people feel talking about violence puts them at risk and they distrust certain practices that are often used and recommended for this type of research. Several activities were carried out that did not yield the expected results or were confronted with difficulties due to heightened feelings of insecurity: photographing streets, doing surveys or carrying out participatory activities. Nevertheless, the documentation of this process

contributes to the body of knowledge of an apparently well-known (according to local practitioners) but hardly discussed barrier to obtain information in a sensitive environment.

Social media was an important part of the process. Overlapping with the security crisis, the internet was turning from being a static experience to a mobile one, and the digital landscape became increasingly connected with the real. Coinciding with Airoldi (2018), fieldwork for this research project was conceptualized as a mixture of online and offline observations. From public Facebook groups to private WhatsApp group chats, the goal was to observe how information about violence is interpreted in the online communities of Monterrey and how social media is used for everyday life and community organization facing violence. On the one hand, digital ethnography allowed to observe what are the dominating narratives about violence, and how different groups react to them -supporting them or contesting them. On the other hand, it allowed me to observe the online and offline organization of a neighborhood watch. This research project contributes to the emerging body of knowledge of digital ethnography and everyday life in contexts of chronic violence.

As we can observe, this research project relied heavily on fieldwork. The project demanded different methods adapted for each phase and level of analysis, while also dealing with mistrust and lack of participation due to perceptions of risk. In spite of these challenges, it was possible to carry out the transversal analysis of feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public spaces at different geographical levels.

Chapter 5 - Monterrey: A fragmented city

To understand the phenomenon of urban violence in Monterrey, it is important to first understand the conditions of the territory: its social and spatial configuration, its history, and its identity. This chapter goes over the evolution of the history of Monterrey from its foundation to the early 2000s. History of the city is fairly well documented in the locality. The goal of this chapter is not to present a detailed account of the history of city making. It is rather to analyze the evolution of the place public spaces have had in the locality. This will allow us to understand the present state and relationship city dwellers and city makers have with them. Furthermore, the explorations of this chapter will allow us to understand how public spaces are perceived, used, and transformed in the aftermath of organized crime-related violence that we will see in subsequent chapters.

Throughout the chapter we will find some transversal topics: social structure, industry, inequality, local identity, violence, and their impact in city making. The chapter divides the city's history in three periods: from the foundation of the city to the early industrial development of the late 1800s, from the late XIXth century to the first half of the XXth century, and lastly from the 1960s to the 2000s.

5.1 The early settlement

Monterrey is the capital of the state of Nuevo León. It is located in northeast Mexico. The city is located in an open plain between the Sierra Madre Oriental, the Llanura Costera del Noreste and the Altiplano Septentrional (see Map 5). These mountain ranges are part of the American Cordillera that cross almost the entire American continent. In the Monterrey Metropolitan Area, they form hills that have orientated the urban growth, along with the Santa Catarina River. This is the MMA's principal watercourse; it crosses the entirety of the urban area from west to east and it runs dry most of the year. Other main courses of water are La Silla River, and streams: Topo Chico, Talaverna, Elizondo, and Arroyo Seco, which have been modified due to urban expansion. Rainfall is scarce in winter, and all the watercourses in the urban area have meager or no flow, except during September. Copious rainfall overflows the channels,

damaging the urban settlements located near them. The climate is semi-arid, and seasons are not well defined, with 30°C happening in January, for example. It is one of the warmest major cities in the country (the average high in August is 35°C), it also experiences extreme weather changes.
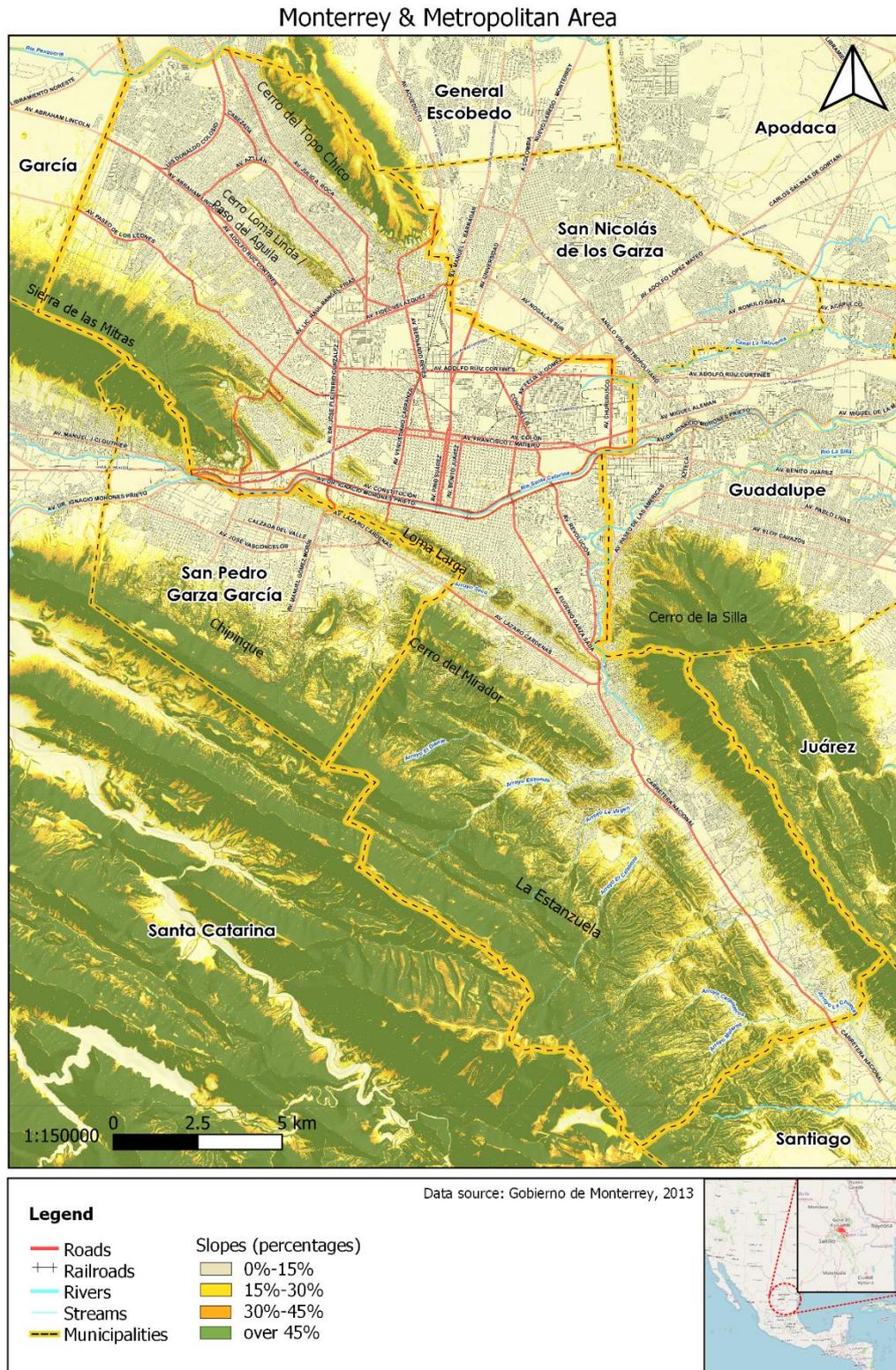
Map 5 Location of Monterrey and its Metropolitan Area, indicating mountains, natural watercourses, and main roads.
Source: IMPLANC (2014).

The total population of Monterrey in 2020 was 1,142,994 inhabitants, being 50.6% women and 49.4% men. The age ranges that concentrated the largest population were 20 to 24 years (97,487 inhabitants), 25 to 29 years (86,837 inhabitants) and 15 to 19 years (86,276 inhabitants). These age ranges represent 23.7% of the total population (INEGI, 2021). Monterrey is the center of a metropolitan area that comprises 11 municipalities: Apodaca, Cadereyta Jiménez, Escobedo, García, Guadalupe, Juárez, Salinas Victoria, San Nicolás de los Garza, San Pedro Garza García, Santa Catarina, and Santiago. This is the second largest Metropolitan Area in the country. Traditionally, Monterrey has had a preponderant role in the country's economy for its industrial activity. In present times, its economy relies on commerce and it contributes to Nuevo León's GDP of over 18,900 USD, which is 88% above the national average (Secretaría de Economía y de Trabajo, 2021).

The "capital of industry of Mexico" had modest beginnings. In 1596 Diego de Montemayor founded the city under the name of Ciudad Metropolitana de Nuestra Señora de Monterrey with twelve families that added up to little more than 30 people. The settlement consisted of a few small blocks of houses built of wood, mud plaster, and hay roofing. It stayed a small village for most of the XVIIth century, with few inhabitants and a meager agricultural production. There were two previous attempts at founding the city (1577 and 1582), which failed due to the harsh natural conditions and conflicts with the nomad tribes that populated the area. The foundation was on the interest of territorial occupation and presence in the north of the Nueva España, since Monterrey did not have mines or other natural resources, unlike other novohispanic towns. In later years, *criptojudíos* of Spanish origins arrived to the northeastern region of the New Spain to escape prosecution from the Spanish Inquisition that had a stronger influence directly on Mexico City and the south.

In 1612, the city's layout was established in accordance with the Spanish law of settlements in New Spain (Azevedo-Salomao & Ettinger-McEnulty, 2005, p. 3). It specified dimensions, proportions, and guidelines for future transformations of the public squares of the founded towns. The layout consisted of a grid with two main axes crossing at the Plaza de Armas, the city's first public square. At the crossing one could find the church -now Monterrey's Cathedral. The Plaza de Armas was the heart of city, materially and symbolically (see Figure 23). It was surrounded by rustic houses and shops of wood and hay extending to the west. Civic, religious, and military events took place in this square.
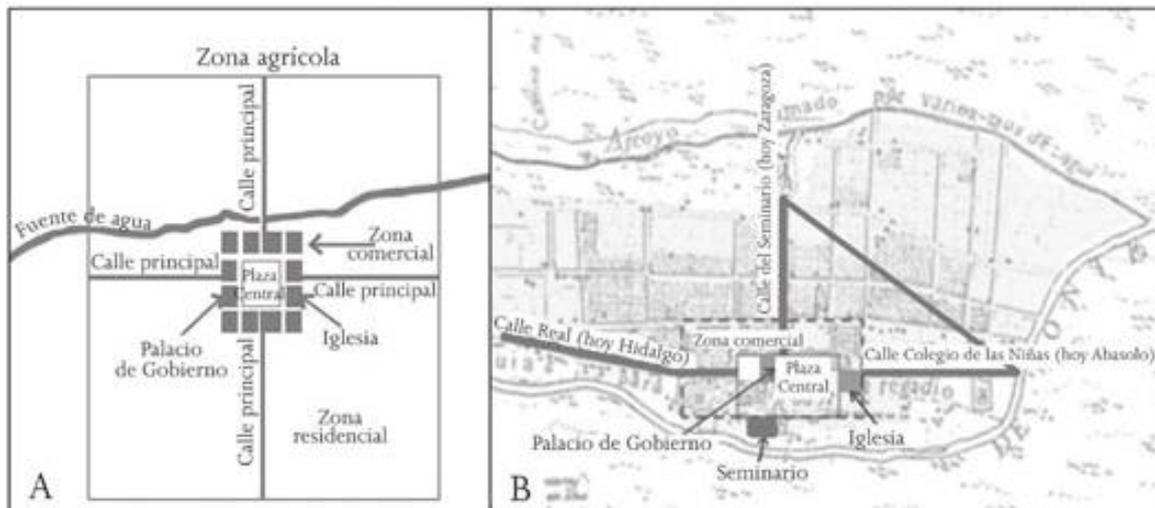
Figure 23 Comparison between (left - A) model of colonial cities and (right – B) the original layout of Monterrey.
Source: Aparicio Moreno et al. (2011).

Commerce and public space have a deep relation since pre-Columbian times. Street markets and street vendors are a traditional feature of Latin-American cities, and this small town was no exception. The Plaza de Armas was the heart of the city around which one could find the main buildings of the religious and political authorities. It was also a place for commerce, as vendors would sell their wares there. After the construction of the "Casas Reales" – the town hall- on the western side of the Plaza de Armas in 1653, merchants moved to the plot of land behind it, the corrals of the Casas Reales, also known as the Plaza de la Carne. As its name indicates, merchants sold meat or live animals there once a week. Spanish law dictated that produce and meat should be sold in separate open markets. They were not permanent, but they had fixed days of use. Items such as wine, clothing, and furniture could be sold in shops. These were the first local manifestations of the link between commerce and public space that would evolve throughout the city's urban history. Segregation is already present in these early stages of urbanization. As observed by Aparicio Moreno et al (2011), the first settlers were joined by tlaxcaltecas, who were allowed to settle south of the Santa Catarina River on the foot of the Loma Larga (now *Colonia* Independencia). The river became a barrier to keep the indigenous groups away from the Spanish settlers, but close enough to use them as builders.

The population fluctuated in the following years due to natural crises and colonial expansion. By 1750s, the town reached up to 3,000 inhabitants. However, with events such as the colonization of Tamaulipas (neighboring state to the east) and a flood, population dropped to 1 000 people. Religious architectural landmarks articulated local life in the small town, such as the San Francisco Convent and the Bishop's Palace. Ecclesiastical authorities directed the development of the city. Andrés Ambrosio de Llanos y Valdes, bishop of Linares, worked with Jean-Baptiste Crouset -a French-born architect educated in Italy and Mexico City- to plan the new distribution of the city in 1792. The ambitious plan contemplated an expansion to the north, renovations to the church and town hall, a military barracks, a hospital, a convent, and several new squares and parks. A conflict between the bishop and the governor put a halt to the

project in 1797, of which only the hospital (now Colegio Civil) and the convent were partially built.

By 1803, the city consisted of 6 blocks from north to south, and 12 blocks from east to west populated by 6 412 inhabitants. The city's urban layout had remained mostly unchanged. Most of the city's streets were unpaved, had no sidewalks, and were continuously in need of repairs due to water damages of the overflowing of the Santa Lucia River, Ojos de Agua del Roble, and the Ojos de Agua de Santa Lucia. As a rural town, most of the public squares farther from the city were actually large plots of land where those in the vicinity would keep livestock. Others were used weekly for temporary markets, civic events or to execute criminals on occasion.

With the Constitution of 1824, the Nuevo Reino de León was declared a state. By then the city's population had doubled to 12,282 people. The Constitution also specified the new forms of territorial administration, one of them was the "municipio". It was also within this new framework that the local government created the position of "city engineer", setting a precedent for what would be a department of urban planning. At the time, architecture or urban planning were not academicized professions in the region, so the role of city engineer was undertaken by European and American foreigners or locals with experience in building and planning, many of them with a military background. Due to the lack of specialists on occasion the position was left vacant. It was also during this period that the project of the Repueble del Norte, an expansion of the city to the north originally conceived by Crouset, was carried out by William G. Still. Tasks related to cartography, design, engineering, urban planning, and topography were done mostly by foreigners from Italy, Germany, France, United States, and Spain. Large construction projects were few and far between.

<u>Conflicts in the locality in the 1800s</u>

During the first half of the XIXth century, the local administration focused on security. The region was called "tierra de guerra viva" -a land of living war-, due to the regular attacks from *indios borrados*, *rayados,* and *chichimecas*. These tribes were hunted down and sold as slaves, and in later years, they were imprisoned or forced to work as servants or into public works. The last of these confrontations was registered in 1875. The security policies of the state of Nuevo Leon considered it necessary to eliminate all those nomadic indigenous peoples as they were considered a threat to social order. It is worth noting that, although the local tribes were all but eradicated, the negative perception towards indigenous individuals has not changed in its essence, and it is reflected on the current social-spatial distribution of the city.

Another security problem of the time was the attacks from filibusters and bandits. As a countermeasure, mayors of every town in the region of Nuevo Leon were ordered to assemble an infantry unit, formed by civilians. Men of Spanish origins, sons of widows, artisans, traders were exempt from this service (Cazares et al., 2009, p. 210). These measures were not well received by the population, and sanctions were imposed on defectors. According to Derbez each neighborhood would have a judge to keep the peace and calm, and the patrols would go through the streets to "prevent damages from the lazy and the idle" (in Cazares et al., 2009, p. 236), a local precedent for a neighborhood watch.

From September 1846 to July 1848, shortly after the annexation of Texas to the United States, the city of Monterrey was invaded by the North American army. While an American governor commanded the American troops and managed tax payments, the local government (*cabildo and ayuntamiento*) collaborated with the national army to preserve the peace and combat abuses to the population by the foreign army, who had settled in many of the public squares of the city, including the Plaza de Armas. These situations at times culminated in disturbances, destruction of private and public property, and murder. Documents of the time indicate that street lanterns had to be stored at night and alcohol sales were penalized. Citizens were encouraged to denounce the loss of property and demand restitution; there is however no evidence that these demands were answered (Cazares et al., 2009, p. 223).

5.2 The industrial bourgeoisie and its impact in the upcoming decades

Many characteristics of the local identity and socio-spatial structures in the present have its roots in the pace set by the industrial activity that emerged in the late XIXth century. According to Landa (2012, p. 48) what distinguishes the upper class in Monterrey is not its longevity, but its origins: "the *regiomontano* society is not made up of landowning *criollo* families, but rather smugglers and small merchants turned captains of industry".

According to Aguirre (2016), in 1890, various internal and external causes converged that were linked together and marked of the definitive emergence of the bourgeoisie as a class subgroup with specific characteristics, namely:

1. US economic protectionism as a measure to promote the reconstruction of the country, especially in the production of the metal used mainly in principle for the laying of railways.
2. *Porfirista* policies - "less politics, more administration" - as the consolidation of a liberal regime, which ceded to private capital what was previously controlled by the church, and allowed large tax exemptions.
3. Arrival of foreign capital.
4. Tax exemptions for industries under state governors Bernardo Reyes and Isaac Garza. The government of Bernardo Reyes was a turning point in the history of Monterrey. Reyes was a military man appointed by President Porfirio Díaz as governor of Nuevo Leon from 1885 to 1909. Reyes' public policy set the groundwork for the midcentury boom of industrial activity of the XXth century and improvements in education, public health, and urban expansion.
5. The accumulation of capital in the region due to its favorable position during the intervention of the United States, the American Civil War, and the French Intervention in Mexico. Monterrey was a key connection towards the Mexican eastern coast for the trade of cotton between Confederate States and Europe during the American Civil War.
6. The proximity and commercial relationship with the United States, especially with Texas.

The city had an advantageous geographical position which made it an important commercial node for local and international products, such as textiles, corn, beans, piloncillo, citrus, and sugar.

7. Skilled craftsmanship, and -with the increasing expansion over rural lands- a growing number of landless farmers forced to integrate the city and the nascent working class.

Several industries existed prior to the 1900s, however their owners fled the country during the Revolution of 1910, and came back after the conflict calmed down. Afterwards, companies such as Cerveceria Cuauhtémoc, Vidriera, Ladrillera, Titán, HYLSA, CEMEX, and Fundidora, many of which were founded during Reyes' government, became the titans of industrial production of Mexico. Industries became a staple of the city's social and spatial identity. The tallest structures in Monterrey were not the churches' bell towers, but the factories' chimneys -which appear in the city's coat of arms. City dwellers told the time of day not by church bells but by the factories' whistles. Factory owners articulated urban development around industrial production, distributing housing and services for their managers and workers. The era of industry-provided welfare between the 1940s and 1960s during which many families thrived is celebrated to this day.

As stated by Landa (2012, p. 34) industry had a hand in shaping the identity, morals, and values of the city through education, institutional control, and propaganda inside and outside of the factories. Workers were given publications about codes of conduct and values to pass on to their families. Local industries created educational institutions for their workers' children, from primary to vocational schooling. This influence was further solidified in 1943 with the creation of the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM). It came at the behest of a group of local business owners led by Eugenio Garza Sada (the quintessential industrialist of Monterrey to this day, a highly respected figure -as is his family name-, whose frugality and work ethics are almost legendary). Its goal was to provide local industries with engineers and specialists educated in the latest American developments, paired with a conservative ideology. The campus, the curriculum, and the overall structure of this private institution were modeled after American universities, and more specifically, after Garza Sada's experience at the MIT (since his family fled to the US during the Revolution). To be admitted at Tec a candidate must attest for a sound "moral background" and obedience (having the right people vouch for the candidate's moral standing). The ITESM became an ideal to strive for among the population. Today it is an exclusive private institution sponsored by local industrialists -who have a hand at the curriculum- that provides college education to those who could afford the tuition. And for a while, it practically assured a well-paying prestigious job, as well as the opportunity to rub elbows with future managers and heirs of local fortunes.

In the 1930s, industry owners created the Acción Cívica Nacionalista with the goal of combatting communism. This would be the precursor of the Partido Acción Nacional, a conservative political party and one of the four main political parties in the country. Monterrey was also the birthplace of white unions. The earliest precedent was created by Luis G. Sada in 1918 in Cervecería Cuauhtémoc, inspired by the Rockefeller Plan in the US, to suppress workers' attempts to unionize. White unions were created by industry owners to keep workers from striking. Going over the origins and growth of white syndicalism in Monterrey, Sánchez

(2011) explains that the high profits of the companies allowed them to anticipate workers' demands (such as housing) before they were expressed through strikes, which allowed them to keep control over workers. This way, industry owners perpetuated the myth of the benevolent patriarch who gives employment and welfare.

Nevertheless, strikes did occur in the 1930s, some of them where violently suppressed -on one occasion, protestors in the Plaza Zaragoza were shot from the headquarters of the Acción Cívica Nacionalista, killing 4 and injuring dozens. Shooters -industry owners- were evacuated and protected by the police (Hernández Alvarado, 2017). The narrative constructed by authorities, industry owners, and the media regarding protests is that those involved were communists wanting chaos, and disgruntled and unproductive employees. Industry owners succeeded in depicting collective action, striking, protests or complaining as illegitimate. The negative perception of collective organization persists to this day, as many believe that the closing of the largest industry was because unions' greed. Conversely, the sacrifice of oneself for the company -and in consequence, for one's family- and working were depicted as the ultimate display of moral worth. As Landa observes (2012, p. 56) industries were unbothered by strikes for decades, largely because of good salaries and benefits, but also because of their careful hiring. Being a relative of someone who belonged to a union was reason enough to be rejected due to "links to communists". In the present, companies continue to prioritize hiring students from private colleges (such as the ITESM) for upper management, as they are supposedly familiarized with corporate culture and its values.

The general attitude towards entrepreneurs and business owners is overwhelmingly positive. To this day, there are city dwellers who get defensive over criticism of the private sector. The common sentiment among residents and public officials is that a state or a city should be managed as a business, putting profit and productivity first, and citizens' access to resources should be determined by their morality and their productivity. The presence and influence of millionaire owners of multinationals in MMA is a matter of personal pride for residents. Business owners are the ultimate proponents of the aspirational *regio* mindset: powerful and wealthy self-made men (allegedly) who know the value of hard work.

Thus, the private sector has a long history of being perceived by the population as the alternative and even anti-thesis to the public sector. Where the government is inactive, the private sector reacts; where civil servants are corrupt, business owners are honest. Where politicians look to benefit themselves from their position, the entrepreneur puts his business - and according to public opinion, his employees- first; where the government is always in debt and lacks management skills, the business owner is wealthy and knows where to place resources to solve problems. Owners of these industries became household names and examples of what a good industrialist should be: Zambrano, Calderón, Muguerza, Garza Sada. And while this emblematic quality has decreased in the present, descendants of these families still hold positions of power, either as business owners or as politicians, influencing local and national policies.

The private sector has replaced the public sector in several aspects of urban life, from health to urban development, to the point that public institutions not only rely heavily on the approval and support of business owners, but articulate public policy in function of their interests. The

impact of industry owners in the present image of the city and local identity cannot be understated. Business owners were and are important actors of the urban development of the city of Monterrey. Their role in city making and later in addressing the crisis of security will be explored throughout the following sections and chapters -particularly in CHAPTER 6 and CHAPTER 7.

Grupo Monterrey: the power of industry in public policy

The relationship between the local and state elected officials and private sector has been mostly agreeable. Public officials commonly strive to maintain a positive relationship with business owners. Candidates for public election who have a career as business owners are perceived by the public as a better choice, as voters assume that they know the meaning of hard work, resource management, and looking out for their employees.

The voice of business owners weighs heavily on public actors, and this voice is heard through many channels. One of them is the Grupo Monterrey. It emerged during the first industrialization period of the city in 1890. This group consists of conservative owners of the largest companies and fortunes in the city, most of which have not changed hands since their inception. Along with FEMSA and its subsidiaries, CYDSA, VITRO, and ALFA -all of them part of the Sada legacy- other names and industries have thrived and joined the Grupo Monterey, such as CEMEX under Lorenzo Zambrano. Nationally, the power of businessmen is assessed not only by their wealth but also by their influence and growth of their companies. In this sense, Expansion, a news magazine targeted to business markets in Mexico and Latin America, listed among its top 100 Mexican leaders the CEOs of FEMSA, Alfa, Xignux, VITRO, CYDSA, Lamosa, Verzatec, and Banregio -all of them companies from Monterrey (Redacción, 2008). Other national and multinational companies in the MMA in the 2000s and 2010s are Cervecería Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma, Axtel, Maseca, Protexa, Selther, Gamesa Galletera, Del Fruto, Del Valle, Organización Soriana, Grupo Allen, British American Tobacco, Grupo FAMSA, IMSA, Fondo Valores y Empeños, Industrias Monterrey, Televisa Monterrey, Azteca Noreste, Grupo Multimedios, TV Azteca Noreste, Grupo Salinas, Siemens, and VDS.

Their impact goes beyond the limits of Monterrey and Nuevo Leon as their unity makes Monterrey the center from which the group influences the elite in the entire country to oppose or support the government (Zavala Echavarría, 1977, p. 165). The Grupo has supported federal and local authorities to defend the interests of the national and international private sector in the city and the country.

5.3 Forging the image of the modern city through public space in the XIXth and XXth centuries

After more than two centuries of a slow growth, Monterrey started to show progress in urban and economic development during the second half of the XIXth century. By 1853, the population of 26,795 inhabitants was mostly rural, depending on agriculture, cattle raising, and more importantly, commerce. Textile factories in neighboring towns -such as La Fama, El Porvenir, and La Leona- and small shops that manufactured agricultural equipment emerged preceding the industrial growth of the early XXth century. Later, the city improved its train connections other towns -Tampico, Torreón, Matamoros, Laredo- and with Mexico City (Flores, 2009a, p. 11). This new connectivity had an important impact on the growth of the city as became the center of social, political, and economic activity of the northeast. On the first decade of 1900, the main economic activity shifted from agriculture towards industry and production of materials such as steel and glass. With 81,000 inhabitants by 1910, it became the fourth most populous city in the country.

This economic activity consolidated the image of a modern city, built around manufacturing and industry and the reproduction of European models. As mentioned in CHAPTER 2, with regards to the urban space, this phenomenon of modernity is present in Latin American cities. Large urban projects expanded the original colonial configuration and motivated the upper classes to relocate to new residential zones. Large-scale public spaces were built (promenades, avenues, plazas) aiming to represent simultaneously the process of modernization and the memory of the fights for independence through ornament and monuments reminiscent of European trends (Duhau & Giglia, 2016).

5.3.1 Expansion of the city and the symbolic public spaces (1860s-1910s)

During the government of Santiago Vidaurri, the city was expanded towards the north with the Repueble del Norte and the east with the plan for the Repueble Verea in 1865 (now Nuevo Repueblo). Between 1853 and 1854, the colonial settlement of *tlaxcaltecas* at the foot of the Loma Larga became a neighborhood for workers and immigrants called Repueble del Sur. The orthogonal layout of the Primer Cuadro (the original city center and the Repueble del Norte) was prolonged in this expansion, but the topography -namely the Santa Catarina River- contributed to establish a differentiation.

Public spaces were transformed at this time: from embellishments, such as the transformation of the Plaza de Armas carried out by French troops when they invaded in 1865, to the restriction of selling meat in public squares for sanitary reasons and the secular renaming of public squares and streets to commemorate the heroes of the Guerra de Reforma. The budding economic prosperity also allowed the creation of new spaces for commerce and leisure. One of the largest projects at the time was an urban forest in the new northern expansion of the city: the Alameda. Traditionally, an *alameda* is a place planted with *álamos* (poplars), although it is also used for any kind of trees. Between 1842 and 1858 the local government bought plots of land for this

project, extracted water, and acquired trees to be planted here. By 1878, the Alameda had paths, benches, and sidewalks (Espinoza, 2019c). A ranger was designated to reside in this urban forest for maintenance and safekeeping. This area remained a forest in the middle of the budding urban expansion and a geographical landmark that differentiated the old town and the Repueble del Norte for several decades.

Between the 1890s and 1910s, new public and private buildings were erected and pre-existing architectural landmarks were improved throughout the city as a way to showcase progress and the transition to urban life, in an attempt to leave behind the image of a small provincial town. Some of these public squares were attached to churches, as is the case of La Purísima, others to educational institutions, such as Colegio Civil, and a few more were the neighborhoods' parks, but commerce -permanent or temporary, legal or illegal- was still a powerful driver for public space use (Espinoza, 2019a, 2019b). Smaller workshops for carpentry and ironwork, fine clothing stores, and smaller factories of furniture and other durable goods joined the larger industrial activity. New public market halls were also built near squares, where commerce continued outside with formal and informal street vendors. Merchants installed their shops near squares and larger markets, benefiting from the visibility and the constant transit of potential clients. Items sold in places such as the Mercado Colón were made produced locally, such as tools, textiles, and produce. Another relevant public space project linked with commerce was the San Luisito Bridge. It connected the San Luisito neighborhood (Repueble del Sur, now Colonia Independencia), populated by national immigrant workers, to the more aristocratic city center. The bridge was a covered steel structure, and it was also a space for commerce.

One of the most emblematic public spaces built at the time was the Calzada Union and Calzada Progreso, inaugurated in 1892. Both streets had very meaningful names to evoke the processes of modernization of the early XXth century and the Porfirista policy. At the crossing, the monumental Arco de la Independencia celebrated the historic fight for independence, and showcased local craftsmanship and mastery of Neoclassical ornament. This ambitious project was located far from the city center, in a zone largely unpopulated. In spite of its symbolic purpose, the Calzada would remain unpaved until 1919.

Public squares used to keep animals during most of the XIXth century were transformed into proper public parks. The local government paved squares and equipped them with benches, walkways, streetlamps, planters, trees, fountains, and kiosks inspired in French styles. Statues commemorating the heroes of the war for independence were installed on the more emblematic squares. With the improvement of conditions of parks in close proximity to dwellings and the commercial activity inside and around these spaces, public spaces became an extension of the home, a place for socialization and leisure, for civic and political events, and an identifying element for the community through its depiction of modernity and prosperity. Neighborhoods in the Primer Cuadro were identified by the name of their square or park.

The betterment of public spaces was not homogeneous or equally accessible. The improvements in public squares in well-to-do sectors and the refinement of construction of public buildings contrasted with the neglect of streets, most of which would remain unpaved for decades to come -especially in the less affluent *barrios*. Paved streets were a sign of progress well into the XXth century, although the so-called progress was unequally distributed

in the territory. It is worth noting that these transformations happened during the administration of governor Bernardo Reyes in Nuevo León, charged with implementing Porfirian policy between 1885 and 1909. Díaz's government was characterized by a Eurocentric modernization of the country. Díaz forbid natives to walk the main streets or sit in public squares unless they wore European slacks and closed shoes instead of their traditional cotton pants and sandals (Galeano, 2010). The *indio* had no place -literally and figuratively- in the forward-looking project of a modern city.

While some public squares were improved, others disappeared entirely or decreased in size with the accelerated construction of schools, churches, hospitals, markets, and public buildings. The Alameda, the city's urban forest, lost half of its surface due to the construction of the Penitenciaría, built at Reyes' behest in 1886, and also a part of the land was sold to private owners. Although the state did not have the death penalty, prison keepers gave inmates the opportunity to flee through the Alameda, only to be shot to death allegedly for escaping. This practice of *ley fuga*, besides being illegal, was applied not only to dangerous criminals but also to the enemies of the regime.

5.3.2 Social class, territory, and the golden age of industry (1910s-1960s)

As was the case in other Latin American cities during the 30s and 50s, the ideal of the modern metropolis as envisioned by the elites had to face the realities of massive immigration, dramatic socio-economic disparities, and a rapid growth of a working class (Duhau & Giglia, 2016). This in turn clashed with the vision of a modern immaculate urban environment, with the emergence of working-class neighborhoods and self-constructed slums lacking basic infrastructure.

In the case at hand, the industrial activity created a new social class of workers who found housing in the neighborhoods created by industry owners in the proximity of factories. Crises in the neighboring mining states and the economic development of Monterrey attracted immigrants from San Luis Potosí, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas since the late 1800s. These newcomers worked in construction, such as the edification of the State Government Palace in 1895. They settled on the Repueble del Sur and on the empty land in between factories and train stations in the north, such as Del Golfo and La Nacional. These settlements were considered a problem for public security, and set sharp territorial disparities and social stigmatization that continue to this day.

The housing crisis led to the first process of metropolization between 1940s and 1960s, as housing projects for the upper and middle classes were built in the municipalities of Guadalupe, San Nicolás and San Pedro Garza García (see Map 6). Territorial divisions related to origin, position in industrial production, and socioeconomic classes emerged. Businessowners and upper management (frequently American and European immigrants or better-educated locals) had access to suburbs far from the city center; middle managers and part of the working class could acquire decent housing near the factories, and the lowest classes (the poor, immigrants, informal workers, low-tier industry workers) lived in informal settlements on the spaces left in

between. As one descends on the socio-economic structure, formal public spaces become neglected or absent.

Evolution of Monterrey & Metropolitan Area - 1900-1960
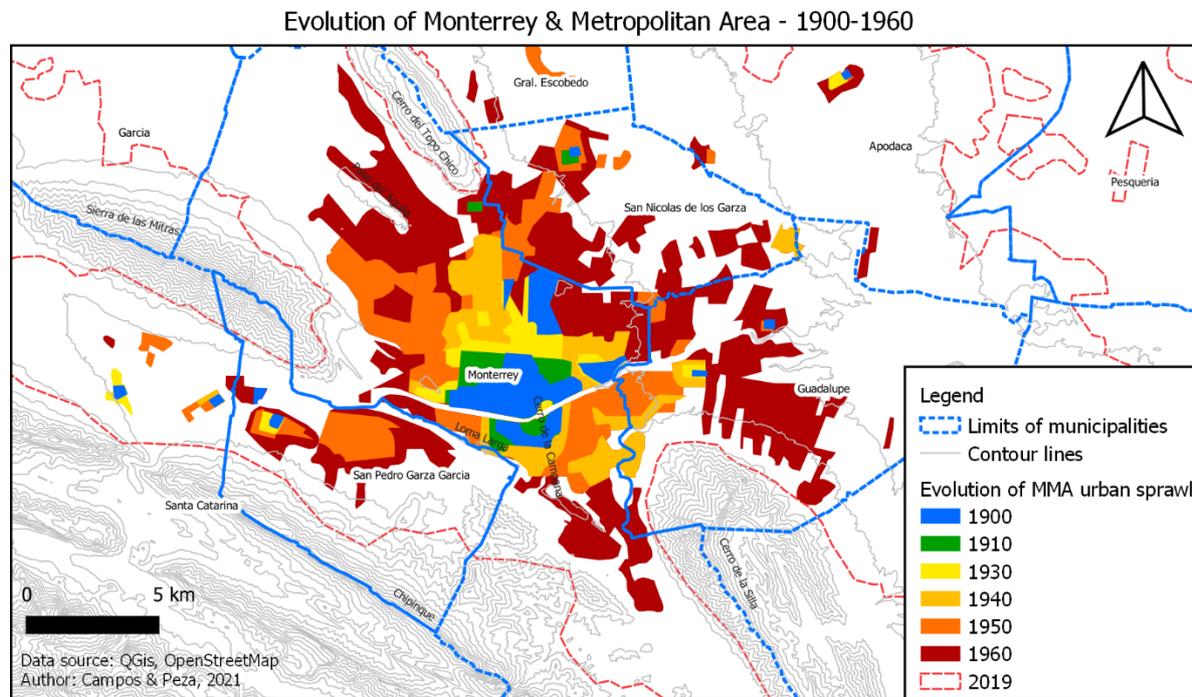
Map 6 Evolution of MMA urban sprawl from 1900 to 1960s, indicating the perimeter of the metropolis in 2019.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021.

American models of urbanization for the upper classes in the periphery

Due to the city's proximity to the American border, its shared culture with Texas (once a part of Mexico), its economic activities, and the instability within the country after the revolution, Monterrey consolidated its position as a point of trade between the northeastern part of Mexico and the United States. In terms of cultural and social exchange, whereas upper-class young professionals of the region used to migrate for higher education to Mexico City, now they did so to the United States. Although the contact with the United States had existed in the past, this was the start of the adoption of the American Way in many aspects of the local life.

Meanwhile, concerning urban development, the influence of North American trends of design, urbanism, and construction were seen in domestic and commercial architecture of the rapidly growing city. Whereas modernist architecture in other cities, such as Mexico City, was produced by the public sector (such as the construction of hospitals, public collective housing, schools, bus stations), in Monterrey it was produced mostly by the private sector. The industrial activity thrived, and businesses continued to bloom within the city giving way to factories, office buildings, and individual housing developments of made out of steel, brick, and concrete (materials produced by local industries).

As is the case for Latin American metropolis during the 30s and 40s, there was a massive development of neighborhoods for middle and upper classes. In the case of Monterrey, this new process of urbanization took place in the western part of the Primer Cuadro -to which the upper classes had relocated in the early XXth century- (*Colonias* Maria Luisa, Obispado, Mirador) and eventually south of the Santa Catarina river and in the neighboring towns of San Pedro, San Nicolás, and Guadalupe. Young engineers trained in the United States where in high demand to design and build modern dwellings in Art Déco and California styles in the emerging *colonias residenciales*.

In 1946 both the ITESM and the UNL opened their schools of architecture, and the first local generation of architects were active by the mid-50s. The new housing developments replicated the layouts of the American suburbs and broke with the orthogonal layout of Monterrey Centro. California-style chalets and streamlined homes came into fashion. *Colonias* such as the Vista Hermosa, Regina, Del Prado, Alta Vista, Mitras, Valle, Chapultepec, Paraíso, and Anahuac displayed clearly defined properties with lawns, garages, long windows, thin columns, and cantilevers on long blocks of houses surrounding a central park or promenades. The new landscape contrasted with the vernacular architecture in the city center. The American styles were mainly adopted by upper-classes, and regarded as aspirational by the lower classes.

With the new sprawl came another essential element of the American way of life for the upper-middle and upper class: the car. New *colonias* now offered modern houses with garages and wide streets for cars to drive by. Cars meant modernity, independence, paved streets, cleanliness, and status. It became a social marker that distanced the suburban owner from the pedestrians – *la gente de a pie*- that had to walk the neglected streets of the city center and use rickety public transport. Walking was synonymous to poverty and individual failure. Home ownership became an important aspiration, along with owning a car and having college education. The Condominios Monterrey, the city's most important collective housing project promoted by the federal government, was built in 1964 as a response to the housing crisis of the time. However, unlike in Mexico City, collective housing in Monterrey was not widely accepted: the ideal dwelling was an individual house with a front yard.

The most prestigious of these projects was the *Colonia* del Valle in 1946 in San Pedro Garza García, a neighboring municipality east of Monterrey. This was an initiative from Alberto Santos, a business owner who aimed to create an exclusive neighborhood for the richest families of Monterrey. Soon, the wealthy new residents quitted downtown and built modern mansions and houses reminiscent of the American suburbs, with private schools, high end shops, wooded promenades for pedestrians, bridges and wide streets for cars.

Upper-middle- and upper-class neighbors flourished even farther in less urban environments to fulfill the American dream of the suburbs. The lack of adequate spaces for children of the upper classes was a concern and a selling point for the new urbanization projects that appeared in municipalities that were starting to become part of a metropolitan area. For example, in Guadalupe and San Nicolás, ads for the new *colonias* in the 1940s advertised the health benefits and appeal of fresh air, parks, gardens for children, and trees (González Franco & Nagel Vega, 2020). Green spaces were highlighted as necessary to cool off in the 40°C heat in the summer. This was contrasted with the unsanitary conditions of the Primer Cuadro.

Housing for the working class and the residual spaces for the poor in the city center

Between the 1910s and 1930s, local government remodeled and maintained public spaces in middle class neighborhoods in the Primer Cuadro sporadically. Due to the constant lack of funds from the authorities, neighbors living in proximity to these spaces organized groups to collect money through public events, such as dances and fairs, with the moral support of authorities. Through these activities, electric lighting, kiosks, and other urban furniture was installed.

The situation in the city center changed with the gradual move of its upper-class inhabitants to the modern new periphery, giving way to new spaces for commerce. This transformed the urban tissue and the local life. The Calzada Union (now Calzada Madero) was a popular spot due to its varied offer of commerce and entertainment. The avenue was 5 kms long avenue with greenery and wide areas for pedestrians. In the 30s it was a space for weekend strolls for middle class families where one could find cinemas, shops, restaurants, and theaters (Esquivel et al., 1995). A feature of this avenue was its Californian and Art-déco architecture that appeared in the 20s and 30s, and its white-and-red paving stones, which became representative of the streets of the city center. Open air arcades and entire streets dedicated to shopping and emerged in the Primer Cuadro in the 40s, as well as cinemas, hotels, schools, and office buildings.

Beyond these points, public spaces were ill maintained, especially in spaces for the lower class. For example, the Plaza Del Golfo, near the homonymous train station north of the city, was a well-known spot for prostitution and smuggling (Espinoza, 2019d). The Golfo train station was far from the city center, and over the years, immigrants settled near it. The Plaza del Golfo was an informal plot of land with an intense pedestrian transit and in need of repairs. It was levelled in 1896, and its periphery was occupied by street vendors in 1916. By the 1930s, Plaza del Golfo was an array of tarps that covered stalls where visitors could buy food or gamble. The consensus was that this gave a poor image of the city, and it was suggested that a wall should be built around the square. By the 1940s, public spaces were not at the top of the list of concerns of the growing city, but rather housing -an issue that would continue in the 1990s and 2000s. According to González & Nagel (2020, p. 164), 122,000 residents of the city were living without basic services such as water and drainage by 1947, much less public parks with trees.

Since the 1900s, industry owners had acquired land to create housing developments for their workers, which included hospitals, schools, theaters, churches, and parks. However, it was in the 50s that these projects became larger. The Compañía Fundidora de Fierro y Acero Monterrey was one of the industries with the most consequential impact on the urban configuration of the city. Founded in 1900 by Italian, French, and American industrialists, this product of Reyes' policies was the first smelting company in Latin America, and the country's foremost producer of steel. Fundidora's industrial complex was located in 226 ha. polygon on the east of the city. From the start, it needed to provide housing for its foreign and local higher-ranking personnel. In 1903 the *Colonia* Acero was built within the limits of this polygon (they were demolished in the 60s to expand the industrial facilities). This was the first of several

housing projects for Fundidora workers; then came the Fraccionamiento Acero in 1928 (Landa Ruiloba, 2018). But perhaps its most emblematic project was the Colonia Buenos Aires, built in 1950. It was located near the ITESM campus and Parque España, a park donated for public use by one of the heads of Fundidora. At the time, it was Fundidora's the largest housing project, with modern homes and a wooded walkway that connected to a school. Social housing for workers of different levels continued in the north and south of the city, especially in San Nicolás. The *Colonia* Regina was inaugurated in 1947 on the limits between Monterrey and San Nicolas near the headquarters of Coca Cola Mexico. The Barrio Garza Sada by Vidriera Monterrey was built in 1951. The Colonia Cuauhtémoc in San Nicolás, comprising 1,318 houses for workers of Cerveceria Cuauhtémoc, was inaugurated on 1957, and it provided housing for both middle managers and workers in this municipality.

The situation for lower classes was quite different. Immigrants from rural neighboring states made for a large part of the lower classes who lived in informal settlements surrounding the factories, the train stations, and some industrial neighborhoods. Unlike the local classes of established workers for the local industries, their dwellings were not part of a formal plan nor were they built or designed by architects. They lived in *tejabanes*: shacks they built themselves with scrap wood. As time passed, these spaces near the factories and train stations were also urbanized for lower workers of the industries. This was the case of the Colonia Terminal, planned as the "first *colonia* for workers" in 1934. Then in the 1940s, 100 families arrived and occupied illegally one unurbanized section of the new *colonia*. A resident explains the stark contrast between the houses:

> "While the [illegal houses] were almost all made of wood and many of them rickety, the [legal houses] were made of *material* [concrete], they were perhaps not ostentatious, but they were definitely of middle-class people with a future[38]" (Zapata Vázquez, 2002, p. 26).

The author explains the relationship of the ruling party (the PRI) and the residents, where residents voted for the party and they were promised deeds and land ownership regularization. Zapata Vázquez also explains the importance of the inhabitants to be recognized as legal residents of *Colonia* Terminal, as this belonging to a formal *colonia* gave them a legitimate place in society. These *colonias populares*, like many others for the lower classes at the time, did not have parks nor paved streets. Residents visited spaces such as the Calzada Madero nearby for weekend strolls; young children played on the streets and risked being run over by cars because "no one has bothered to build parks" for them (González Franco & Nagel Vega, 2020, p. 164). This contrasted with the clean public spaces for upper-class families in the periphery, and with the image that the city of Monterrey was fostering of prosperity and modernity.

By the 1950s, well-maintained public parks were an oddity in the city due to lack of resources (such as water), corruption, and disinterest from the authorities, especially in *colonias populares*. And while some efforts were made by specialists and philanthropic instances, the

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[38] (…) mientras las primeras [casas ilegales] eran casi todas de madera y muchas de ellas vencidas, las segundas [casas legales] eran de material, si no ostentosas, sí de gente de clase media y con futuro.

city experienced a deficit of green spaces and the remaining parks and squares were in a state of neglect and disarray, plus the lack of paving and sidewalks. The elimination of public spaces in favor of buildings and streets that started in the early XXth century increased. Parks and squares in the Primer Cuadro were not public spaces, but vacant plots of land. Building broader streets was a priority with the growing use of cars as the main means of transportation for the upper classes. Likewise, old buildings were also demolished to give way to new edifications, in a pursuit of a modern image that persists to this day.

5.4 Public spaces in the post-modern metropolis (1960s-2000s)

Between the 1960s and 2000s, economic activity shifted from industry to commerce and services. Monterrey attracted national and international investments in construction, banking, services, and commerce. The urban sprawl continued growing and integrated the neighboring municipalities, as Monterrey became the focus of economic activity of the state. The flourishing economic activity also attracted immigration from the southern states of Mexico and from Central America.

Although income and quality of life are noted to be high compared to other Mexican cities, large gaps between social classes become more evident and affixed during this period, hindering social mobility and manifesting themselves in the territory at different scales. Ethnicity, class, origin, income, and education defined access to employment, but also access to services and infrastructure such as transport, health, and public spaces. As Saucedo Villegas argues (2017, p. 5), these changes have contributed to the reorganization of the collective imaginary of wealth and social mobility. Additionally, international competitivity in a globalized economy motivated the emergence of an active metropolitan marketing -as described by Baby-Collin (2010, p. 23)- to create images or transform the cities to be attractive for foreign investments, tourism, entrepreneurship, etc. Public spaces are conceived and transformed not for their use in everyday urban life, but for their potential as an object for consumption and for promotion of a city band.

5.4.1 Socio-economic segregation at a metropolitan level

Monterrey grew rapidly and uncontrollably expanding from the limits previously defined by the Santa Catarina River and the mountains. Sousa (2010, pp. 37–38) identifies 4 phases in the process of metropolization:

- 1940-1950: Guadalupe and San Nicolás

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- 1950-1960: San Pedro Garza García
- 1970-1980: Santa Catarina, Apodaca, and Escobedo.
- 1980-1990: Juárez and García

The author describes this process as the interactions of centrifugal forces and its components: economic satisfiers, governance, annual growth rate of the population, regional and national immigration rates, reproductive cycles, and supply of urban land ready for development, among others, which mobilized the inhabitants of the new metropolis. Physically, metropolitan expansion was initially constrained by topography. This initially conditioned the growth to a west-east axis along the Santa Catarina River which began in the 1950s, and later to the northwest-southeast axis by the 1980s, following the Monterrey-Apodaca highway to the north, and the Garza Sada-Carretera Nacional highway to the south (see Map 7).
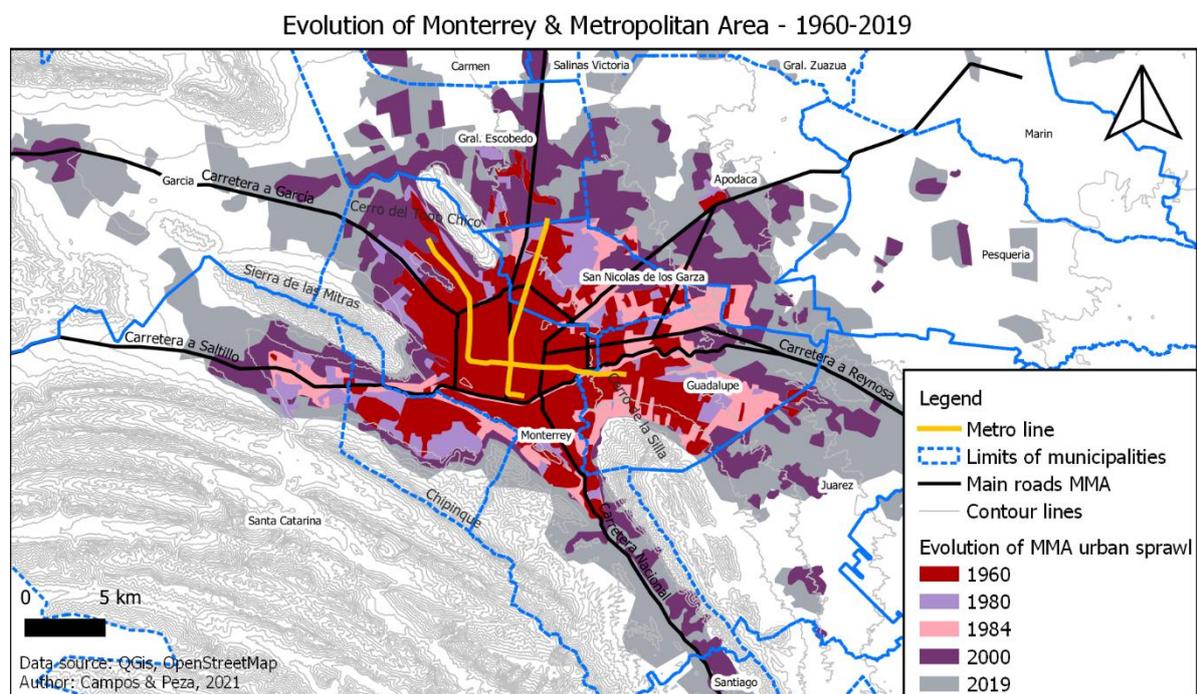
Map 7 Evolution of MMA urban sprawl from 1960s to 2019.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021.

The city grew to the north with *colonias populares* of the lower classes, and to the south with neighborhoods of the elite. This distribution is not homogeneous. As discussed by González & Villeneuve (2007), contrasting socio-residential spaces appear next to each other well into the 1990s and 2000s. The authors define these socio-residential spaces by quality of dwellings, socio-economic status, family status, migration, and socio-professional status. The mountains, one of the symbols of the city, have come to reflect socio-economic disparities, are they are the living spaces of the very rich or the very poor. The upper classes were living in *fraccionamientos* at the foot of the Cerro de la Silla and Cerro de las Mitras, attracted by privacy, views of the city, exclusivity, and status. Meanwhile, the poorest residents settled illegally at the foot of the Topo Chico and the Loma Larga, and oftentimes right next to the formal housing developments.

The main incentive for urban expansion was the housing crisis which worsened since the 1950s. On the side of the formal city (going back to the concepts detailed in CHAPTER 2), more *colonias populares* were built in Monterrey, San Nicolás, and Santa Catarina for lower-level industry workers -the last projects of this kind (the case study of this document is one of them. It is also an experiment of a joint effort between the public and private sectors for housing for the working class (see CHAPTER 9)). A crisis came with the closing of Fundidora in 1986, and with it came also the restructuring of the local economy that relied less on industrial manufacturing and more on services. As for the public sector, federal agencies emerged to facilitate acquisition of houses for workers, such as Fondo de la Vivienda (FOVI) del Banco de México, el Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores (INFONAVIT), and the Fondo de Vivienda del Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales para los Trabajadores del Estado (FOVISSSTE). By 1970, Monterrey had 1,600,000 inhabitants. About 80% of the population of the entire state lived in the new Metropolitan Area. By the 1990s, the MMA had 2.6 million inhabitants.

Defining social classes in Monterrey after the 1960s

The 1960s represented the end of the economic bonanza of the Mexican Miracle, and with it, came major changes in politics and the economy. The middle classes in Mexico by the 1960s, as defined by Walker (2013) were professionals, intellectual workers, white-collar workers, technical workers, small business owners, and PRI functionaries. Comparatively they were highly educated, carried out nonmanual labor, and lived in urban environments with access to cultural, leisure, and health services. By the 1990s the de facto hegemony gave way to democracy and state-led development was replaced by a neoliberalist model of global competition. As Portes & Hoffman (2003) point out, the reduction of public sector employment and the stagnation of formal sectors led to transformations in social structures. The present era registers an increase in income inequality, concentration of wealth in the top decile of the population, rapid expansion of micro-entrepreneurs, and a stagnation or increase of informal proletariat.

Some approaches to define social classes are based on consumption of goods -such as home appliances and vehicles-, technology, quality of housing, and income. However, when a study by the UANL (2014) concluded that 60% of the population of Nuevo León are middle class and a OECD study (2019) revealed that an income of 14,200 MXP (606€) was considered upper class, Monterrey residents ironized about their newfound status, and commented on their expenses and conditions of their environment that were definitely not upper or middle class: drug dealers, potholes, deteriorated buildings. As Walker and the INEGI (2010) agree, social class depends on more than income: middle class refers to material conditions, a state of mind, and a political discourse that have mutated throughout the years, which complicates the definition and cartographical illustration. The INEGI (2010) shows that nationally 2.5% of households are upper class, 42.4% are middle class, and 55 % are lower class, but they point out that "this is a merely statistic identification open for researchers to try a description that better synthetizes the composition of these strata".

Education, spending, number of household members, computer ownership, and levels of schooling are considered to define social class. Middle class in Monterrey is also related to a certain level of stability and the history of economic industrial growth: "in a country where poverty was common, being middle class or upper middle class meant being part of the same elite" (Argüelles, 2019). It is also related to imitating the real upper class: owning a house, having a car, college education, having vacations abroad or living in a *fraccionamiento cerrado*. Locally, some images prevail of what middle class or upper class means, even if they are no longer quantifiably valid. For example, owning a computer is still considered a social marker of wealth, even if they are more common across classes. For the purposes of this case study, based on information by the aforementioned studies by INEGI, Walker, and Portes & Hoffman, social classes are defined as follows:

a) Upper class: owners of private companies, top-level managers of public and private companies and state institutions.
b) Middle class
c) upper-middle: college educated workers employed by private companies and public institutions in positions of high responsibility and microentrepreneurs with employees.
d) lower-middle: non-manual formal proletariat (vocationally-trained salaried technicians and white-collar employees with high school or some college education) and small business owners.
e) Lower class: manual formal proletariat (skilled and unskilled waged workers with labor contracts), informal workers with primary level schooling.

Housing away from downtown Monterrey became increasingly commonplace, now also through housing from private developers aimed at middle and lower classes. During the 1960s over 150 urbanization projects of housing units were approved, out of which 100 were located in the emerging periphery, and half of them were *colonias populares* (Aparicio Moreno, 2012, p. 102). By the 1970s, the middle classes were leaving the city center in favor of better equipped *colonias* in the south such as Contry la Silla, Brisas, and Pedregal. With housing located far from sources of employment, car-based mobility increased, as well as the exclusion of workers. The growth of the urban sprawl and the lack of mixed uses fostered dependence on automobiles for everyday mobility intensified and reached new heights in the 2000s.

As for the informal city, during the late 60s and early 70s, immigrants from rural states came from San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas, and Michoacán, and had come to Monterrey seeking employment. Not finding a position in the industries, they had small or no revenue and no access to housing. They resorted to illegal occupation of vacant plots of land in the Loma Larga (next to the *Colonia* Independencia), on the Santa Catarina river bed, and Topo Chico on the north. Chambers and landowners protested against what they considered a rip off by *paracaidistas* and *posesionarios*. One of the most emblematic initiatives of this era is Tierra y Libertad located at the foot of the Cerro del Topo Chico, and in proximity of the case study of this thesis (see CHAPTER 9). The illegal occupation of land became the setting of violent

evictions by the police and the military, and later a bargaining chip for local politicians who promised regularizations for the occupants.

Federal and state institutions emerged to regularize the 170,000 posesionarios in Monterrey (Sandoval Hernández, 2008, p. 177): Fomento Metropolitano de Monterrey (FOMERREY), Organismo Promotor de la Vivienda en Nuevo León (PROVILEON), and Programa Tierra Propia (G. Garza, 1999, p. 549). This was a complicated task due to the unwillingness of the settlers to leave the plots they had already occupied -in many cases the army intervened to evict them- and the lack of monetary resources from the state and the federal government to compensate landowners. By 1975, 5300 families were living in land regularized by FOMERREY, out of which 2000 were regularized from being illegally occupied. They created 7 *colonias*: 2 in Monterrey, 2 in Guadalupe, 1 in San Nicolás de los Garza, 1 in Escobedo and 1 in Ciénega de Flores (outside of MMA) (Díaz, 2014). In spite of corruption and lack of proper management (Martínez Torres, 2009, pp. 32, 51), by 1985 the FOMERREY project had urbanized 45,000 plots and built 4,000 houses. By 2009, FOMERREY had created more than 285 *colonias*, among them, Fomerrey 35, Fomerrey 36, San Bernabé.

In 1988 the Hurricane Gilberto, one of the strongest tropical cyclones recorded in the Atlantic Ocean up until then, impacted Monterrey. Floods and violent currents of wind caused heavy damages on the city and left hundreds of people homeless, adding to the already precarious issue of housing. The construction of the first metro line in 1991 was an important development to connect municipalities through public transportation. The line connects the northmost side of Monterrey to Guadalupe. And in 2005 a second line was built connecting the northern limits of San Nicolás to the Primer Cuadro.

The municipalities differed in terms of socioeconomic level. Garza (1999, pp. 550–551) ranks them by considering education level (over primary school) and income, and characteristics of dwellings: having permanent roofing, more than one bedroom, access to piped water, and plumbing. The *colonias populares* of the lower classes struggle with access to water, pavement, and garbage collection services, while the dwellings of the upper class located in San Pedro are comparable to those in high-income countries.

As shown in Figure 24, San Pedro and San Nicolas have consistent highest levels of socioeconomic development. Monterrey is at a medium level; the author explains that this is due its position as the center of industrial activity with large population of workers and rural migrants. Plus, since the early 1990s San Pedro became a more attractive hub for services and commerce than Monterrey. Juárez, Escobedo, and Apodaca registered very low levels of socio-economic development, as they were mostly rural environments at the time. Guadalupe was a favored space for the middle classes, as it was conveniently close to Monterrey, boosting its socio-economic development in the 1990s. Zooming in on Monterrey, population density is a proxy of socio-economic status: higher density correlates to lower quality of housing, lower income, and lower levels of education. As seen in Map 8, the lowest levels of density are located in the south of Monterrey, while the highest levels are located north, at the foot of the Topo Chico. In CHAPTER 5, we will observe more in detail what these socio-economic disparities entail in the context of the security crisis of the 2000s.
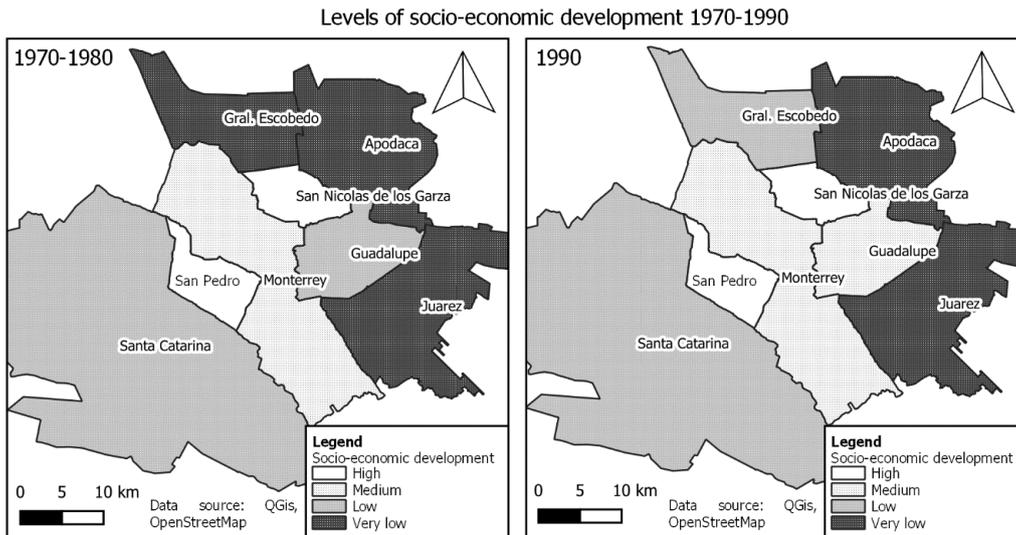
Figure 24 Levels of socio-economic development in (left) 1970-1980, and (right) 1990.
Source: Author, 2021, based on information by Garza (1999, p. 551).
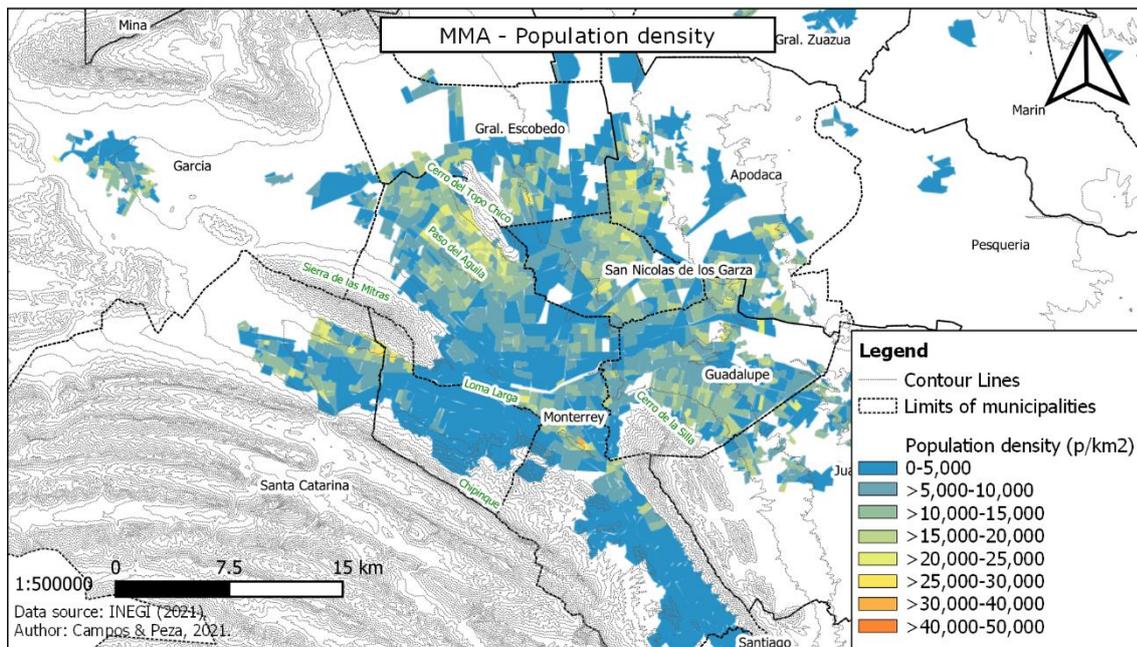
Map 8 Population density in the metropolitan area.
The lowest levels of density are located in the south of Monterrey, the highest levels are located north, at the foot of the Topo Chico.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, based on information by INEGI (2021).

Solís & Puga (2011) observe the effects that place of residence has on educational achievement and job prospects in Monterrey. Structural transformations since the 80s have modified spatial patterns of urban poverty, creating zones of permanent residential segregation with limited social mobility. Monterrey shows high levels of socio-residential segregation in function of income, employment, migration, and education. In terms of population density, as of 2021, it is fairly low in the entire MMA. *Colonias populares* in each municipality are the most densely populated. They are the most dependent in public transportation. The service however is

deficient and these residents spend an important part of their income in other types of mobility to compensate this -such as taxis and ride-sharing. These territories are also lacking in adequate public spaces, and many of them resort to going to the city center to find spaces for leisure or outdoors activity. The long distances to travel also make them more at risk of robberies and other types of violence. Socio-spatial inequality and its link to violence will be further addressed on CHAPTER 6.

Furthermore, inhabitants presuppose certain traits according to ethnicity, but also, to their municipality, sector or *colonia* of residence: for example, for someone living Satélite (*fraccionamiento* south of Monterrey), the assumption is that they are middle-class, went to a private school or university (or at least, they are part of those circles), and work in an office. For someone living in Niño Artillero (*colonia popular* north of Monterrey), it is assumed they are lower class, went to public school, they know their way around gangs, and that they do not have access to formal employment. The stereotype of *colonias populares* is that they are dangerous.

Through the lens of a local culture built around self-sufficiency and hard work, the poor are stigmatized as guilty of their position because of laziness, without considering other structural factors that could be involved. The individual is othered when failing to fit into local ideals of wealth, place of residence, place of origin, work, class, gender, and ethnicity. As definitions of wealth, proper work or proper place of residence shift and more elements come into play, so have the definitions of local identity and the ideals of spatial and social organization.

5.4.2 From *Corrido de Monterrey* to *Noreste Caliente*: local identity and ideals over time

In simple terms, *regiomontano* -or *regio* for short- is the demonym for the residents of Monterrey. The local identity is deeply rooted in the late XIXth-early XXth century transformations, where Monterrey became a prominent industrial hub, and stood out as a progressive capitalist society. This period set the basis of the archetypical image of Monterrey as a rough region that fostered industrious, frank, and hardworking people. However, what a resident of Monterrey is or should be has evolved over the years -an evolution that here we will differentiate as the *regiomontano* in the 1900s-1960s and the *regio* from the 1960s and on. Alfonso Reyes -son of the early XXth century governor who greatly boosted industry and modernization- defined the *regiomontano* as:

> The *regiomontano*, when he is not a man of knowledge, he is a man of wisdom. Without a hint of mockery, it could be affirmed that he is a hero in shirt sleeves, a champion in a worker's blouse, a philosopher without knowing it, a Mexican with no pose for the monument and I even believe that he is a happy man[39] (Reyes, 2002, pp. 181–182).

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[39] El *regiomontano*, cuando no es hombre de saber, es hombre de sabiduría. Sin asomo de burla pudiera afirmarse que es un héroe en mangas de camisa, un paladín en blusa de obrero, un filósofo sin saberlo, un mexicano sin posturas para el monumento y hasta creo que un hombre feliz.

As opposed to the men of the big city, the *regiomontano* is unpretentious. He is a worker in one of the many factories of the city, and proud of being part of the so-called economic motor of the country. He is first and foremost pragmatic, he dismisses frivolity and has no time for unnecessary complications. His wisdom comes not from pompous academicism but from pulling himself by the bootstraps. To this day, the resident of Monterrey prides himself for the ability of his ancestors of creating a zone of industry and economic activity out of nothing. In the middle of adverse natural conditions, the people of Monterrey managed to flourish economically making their city an attractive metropolis, allegedly without the help of federal government, and most importantly, Mexico City. Part of the *regiomontano* identity is defined by its adversarial relationship with the *chilango* - residents of Mexico City. Mexico City has always been a protagonist in the Mexican political and geographical scene as the capital, and a cultural and economic center. Residents of Mexico City set themselves apart from the rest of the country (or *provincia*), which is perceived as the big city looking down on other towns.

Since its foundation, Monterrey was mostly isolated from the capital. In the XXth century, the city maintained its distance from the federal government, "an enemy of the *regiomontano* spirit" (Landa Ruiloba, 2012, p. 12), a position nurtured locally since the 1800s but that gained force with the industrial prosperity that began in the early 1900s, and that is still present. Monterrey managed to compete with Mexico City. But, as residents pointed out, Monterrey had a more wholesome and easygoing lifestyle. It was also safer because allegedly there were jobs for everyone, unlike Mexico City which was infamous for its levels of crime and poverty.

Landa (2012, p. 55) posits that that after the Revolution, Monterrey became more closed in on itself. And by the 1960s, "anything that questioned its supposed economic and cultural superiority was treated almost as heresy". This intolerance to dissent and the focus on economic progress at all costs also led to diminished intellectual and cultural production. The city focused on the improvement of systems to guarantee economic progress through business and industry, in no small measure due to the influence of large business owners. The industrial precedent, according to García Justicia (2018, p. 48), created a culture of superiority, simultaneously hedonistic and materialistic. If the *regiomontano* is the modern man of Monterrey, I posit that the *regio* is the postmodern version.

The *regio* and the culture of work

The *regiomontano* ideal was a noble factory worker who sacrificed everything for his workplace and who does not unionize. Continuing this path, the *regio* ideal is a middle- or upper-class entrepreneur or employee of one of the many companies in the city. He is college educated, ideally from a private institution. And when he is not any of these, the *regio* will put forward his birthplace or work culture as means to legitimize his claim of superiority. The *regio* works long hours without adequate compensation, as a firm believer on *ponerse la camiseta* as a way to indicate their commitment and be eventually granted more responsibilities, a better position, and prestige. Work and the projection of an image of wealth through material goods are the means to prove one's superior standing. As personal compensation, the *regio* indulges in beer (produced by local industries), soccer (sponsored by local beer companies), and *carne asada* and noisy parties to socialize. Those who do not partake are seen as odd, and mocked as not being *regio* or manly enough. The working environment in highly competitive. Access to

jobs is defined by contacts, alma maters, ethnicity, place of residence within Monterrey, and gender. City dwellers are defined by their productivity and engagement to work (García Justicia, 2018): the poor are poor by choice.

Figure 25 Illustrations of values were installed on the halls of the Metro to educate the population on work ethics.
(left) "Love for work. Laziness is so slow that poverty does not take long to reach it." (right) "Courtesy. Do not demand as a right what you can ask as a favor."
Source: Saucedo, 2017.

The *regiomontano* celebrated the family names and the heads of industry such as Garza Sada, who embodied honesty, generosity, humility, work, education, prevision, and wit. This celebration is not entirely dead. Garza Sada's values (summarized in an "ideario") are still the moral backbone of FEMSA (one of the companies he founded) and other private organizations (see Figure 25). However, the contemporary *regio* also finds guidance elsewhere. He idolizes abstract concepts such as private sector, foreign investment, and the local can-do attitude. He admires Elon Musk and Steve Jobs and their "shark mindset". The *regio* takes great pride in having millionaires living in the MMA.

The *regio* identity and ideals are full of double standards; they are narrow and it is easy to miss the mark. The *regio* claims to be cosmopolitan, but insists on alienating those who are different or express different opinions. He is conservative, placing great importance on Catholic traditional values and the nuclear family unit, and is against homosexuality and feminism - although he has no problem in sexualizing the female body while also condemning female sexual agency. The *regio* is machista, who counts women -*regias*- as assets that make the city appealing for investments, along with meat, high rises, stadiums, American malls, and mountains.

Collective action in the *regio*'s individualistic imaginary

The *regio* claims to be *entrón* -unafraid of confrontations, willing to defend his rights- to the point of violence. However, the *regio* rarely protest against injustice. This is influenced by industry owners' position against collective organization and protests -attributed to laziness, lack of morals, and the product of negative influences from the outside.

The *regio* will not tolerate any criticism of injustice related to an individualistic culture centered around work and productivity: "if you don't like it, leave. Monterrey is not for the lazy."[40] The *regio* believes that the only way to change things is to work on oneself: don't litter, mind your business, don't tell lies, work hard, respect your elders. Complaining or demanding action from the government in the form of protest is undignified and met with derision. It means that one cannot afford to substitute a mediocre public service with a private service or that one is weak, lacking the toughness to suck it up and deal with it. It also means that one is not fulfilling the *regio* ideal of self-sufficiency: those that protest are greedy, lazy people who want the government to solve their problems instead of solving their problems themselves. Supposedly, protesting is something that lazy *chilangos* and poor people do, not the hardworking *regios*. For the *regio*, criticism from the outside of their way of life can only be rooted in ignorance, laziness, and envy.

There is rarely a legitimate motive to protest: small issues are meaningless, and large issues cannot be transformed by collective action. The conversation begins and ends with "the government is corrupt and won't hear you"[41]. The *regio* does not protest against the government because he is independent and does not need the government to solve his problems: he can do it on his own. This individualistic mindset has affected the way in which violence is discussed, not as a social problem with multiple ramifications but as bad choices of individuals. Likewise, prevention of risk is an individual responsibility (see CHAPTER 8).

The *regio*'s relationship with Mexico and the idealization of the Global North

While the *regiomontano* was defined by its difference regarding Mexico and the *chilangos*, the *regio* is defined by its assimilation of American culture and the disdain for Mexican culture (unless presented as an object for tourist consumption). The *regio* sees Monterrey as the ultimate economic motor of the country and therefore, disdains other states, particularly those in the rural south facing extreme poverty. *Regios* argue that "people of the south want everything the easy way. There you can reach out and pull a mango. Here if you don't work, you don't eat. As simple as that"[42]. The phrasing varies, but this sentiment is almost a mantra that has been passed on through generations, and as Salmerón points out (2018), shows that the local discourse is constructed without considering economic and geographic realities. Even in political discourse there is a message of exceptionalism and separatism, as it is perceived that

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[40] Si no te gusta, vete. Monterrey no es para huevones.
[41] El gobierno es corrupto y no te van a hacer caso.
[42] Los del sur lo quieren todo fácil. Allá es de estirar la mano y agarras un mango. Aquí el que no trabaja no come, así de fácil.

the state's financial contributions to the federation are used to support poor and lazy *indios*, who allegedly worked less and thus deserve less. Conversely, the *regio* is perceived by other states as stingy, uppity, arrogant, and self-centered (Cantú Garza et al., 2016).

The image of wealth is equated to the image of "first world cities" in Europe, Asia, and North America -anything coming from these zones is perceived as intrinsically superior (even if the imaginary of North America is limited to Texas). Thus, the *regio* aspires to be associated with those lifestyles and images, and is constantly seeking to imitate or to seek validation from these allegedly superior cultures. The mere presence of American or European visitors is enough to validate the local perception of superiority with regards to the rest of the country (Flores, 2009a, p. 11). Due to its proximity to the United States, speaking English is important, although not equally accessible to all of the population. There are private schools that offer most of their classes from kindergarten to junior high mostly in English. Speaking English is perceived as indispensable for upward social mobility. Some middle- and upper-class residents boast of being more familiar with American politics than with Mexican or local politics (even if they have never lived in the United States). Meanwhile, deported Americans with Mexican ancestry that have settled in Monterrey are discriminated for their aspect and shunned for their perceived arrogance i.e. speaking in English (Muela, 2016).

The *regio* insists that Monterrey figures amidst the great metropolis of the world, comparable to London, Paris or New York. There is a strong need of being recognized outside of Monterrey -to make their hometown proud with their accomplishments-, within Mexico and outside it. There is, however, only a certain amount of acceptance of who and what can be representative of Mexico. The *regio* is also deeply embarrassed when a public figure does something they consider inadequate in an international setting, believing all eyes are on them and that Mexico / Monterrey is the laughingstock of the world.

The idea is to bring one's better representatives forward, and persuade the "first world" that Monterrey is their equal. So, for example, when Yalitzia Aparicio, a Mexican actress of indigenous descent, gained international recognition from her work in the film "Roma", she was heavily criticized for her appearance. *Regios* were embarrassed to be associated in the international scene with someone who looked "like an *india*". The launching of "Ya no estoy aquí" on Netflix in 2019 brought a wave of anger and embarrassment among the *regios*, who were very vocal about their displeasure of how the film portrayed Monterrey. The film relates the story of a young man living in the slums of Monterrey in 2011 and the effects of organized crime and violence. Middle and upper class *regios* were upset not because it was a false depiction, but because Monterrey was being represented internationally by what they considered the worst elements of society. The ideal *regio* prides himself of not looking Mexican, presenting Monterrey as predominantly white or light skinned. The *regio* will proudly celebrate European or North American ancestry but will hide or deny any degree of *mestizaje*. The *regio* often explains that he is not racist: he is classist. He does not necessarily judge others by the skin color but by their social status and the appearance of wealth. It just a coincidence that the lower classes have darker skin. That is just the natural order of things.

5.4.3 Local identity and public spaces

The ideals of cultural superiority, the culture around work and industry, the rejection of the Mexican culture, the idealization of North America and Europe, and the rejection of the "other" are reflected in the urban configuration. *Semper Ascendens* is the motto of the city, an idea that seems to be present in the perennial construction of buildings, underpasses, overpasses, the demolition of historical buildings to make way for contemporary design, or simply new and utilitarian spaces. Real estate development, construction, and local identity are related (it is no coincidence since one of the local multinationals is a cement company).

The *regio* not only aspires to modernize the city like his ancestors did in the first half of the XXth century. The contemporary *regio* wants to erase any reminder of the city's modest origins and replace it with symbols of progress that show the city is worthy of a "first world country". Monterrey, Landa affirms (2012, p. 11), is a city of modern vocation and a proud denier of the past, where "there is no history, only work". From the obsessive desire to project a cosmopolitan image in the construction of the city comes a disdain for the historical, the vernacular, and the ordinary. Upper class actors, supported by the government, determine the spatial transformations of the city in terms of investments and trends (the latest trend being skyscrapers). Likewise, throughout history, governors and mayors have had a flagship large-scale project. Anyone with enough money and influence can declare themselves a constructor or urbanist, and proudly announce that they did not require any formal training to define what the city needs. "Urbanist" is often a fancy word for "bureaucrat".

City dwellers perceive the construction of these projects as evidence of an active and productive administration and a healthy private sector, and also signify Monterrey's belonging to the "first-world" (which often means to copy what happens in the south of the United States). In terms of urban forms, Monterrey is in a constant battle to set itself apart from the post-card image of Mexico, of being "modern", of reminding anyone who may hear that they are not a small provincial town. One does not find here pyramids or colorful colonial facades (except when done explicitly to imitate this image for tourists), mostly due to a deliberate effort to purge the city of old buildings and imitate buildings that supposedly abound in high-income countries, with a notorious fetishization of skyscrapers and highways as symbols of progress (see Figure 26). Any criticism or questioning to ethics of construction, mobility or inequality is interpreted as an attack or motivated by envy.

The city is meant to be enjoyed at a distance, from the inside of a car, through photographs, and by an international visitor, or by clients rather than users. High-rise buildings and flashy large-scale projects such as stadiums, highways, and shopping centers are presented as highly innovative, although they frequently communicate the same trifecta of benefits: job creation, raising the value of land, and putting Monterrey on the map. These projects seek to demonstrate that the city, even though it is Mexican, has an innovative and cosmopolitan aspect. This will attract foreign investors -ideally, North American, Asian or European- who will be impressed by how big, tall, expensive, and fashionable the new buildings are, maybe thinking that this city "is just like Dubai". Beneath the shiny new facades, the city tells another story. A story of unregulated and improvised constructions, inequality, and neglected public spaces.

Figure 26 The construction and reproduction of the collective image of Monterrey.
(left) A public post that reads "Monterrey: the city that does not look at the past and always looks at the future progress".
Source: Facebook – Monterrey en imagenes. Retrieved on 11/11/2021.
(right) A post that reads "traffic and mountains. A very regio day" summarizes the importance of the landscape and vehicles in everyday life. September, October, 2021.
Source: Facebook – Monterrey en imagenes. Retrieved on 11/11/2021.
(center) A public post by a FB user that reads "People of other states: Monterrey is only a ranch! The ranch:", and the post displays over 50 photos of various landmarks of the city. The caption refers to the belief that Monterrey is looked down by people from other states (related to the precedent of the city having to prove that it is as competitive as Mexico City). When people from other states or cities criticize Monterrey as being less progressive is because of their conservative mindset, not because of its skyline. It is also worth noting that most of the towers that appear in these images are located in San Pedro, not Monterrey. March, 2021.
Source: Facebook. Retrieved on 11/11/2021.

Public spaces, pedestrians and class in Monterrey

Everyday life is intrinsically linked with going outside and with social standing, a notion embedded in common phrases in Spanish. *La gente de a pie* and *el ciudadano de a pie*[43] are an expression used to talk about the common people. It is rooted in the idea that car ownership is something for the more privileged individuals. *A nivel de calle*[44] is another expression to refer to the experiences of everyday life of common people. *¿Qué piensa la gente de a pie?*[45] *¿Qué está pasando a nivel de calle?*[46] are questions often asked, at times to literally refer to pedestrians and streets, but also to simply refer to laymen, the average city dwellers, those who cannot afford a car. These expressions acknowledge that car owners are no ordinary city dwellers. Additionally, there is a stigma attached to being a pedestrian. Given that public transportation is less than optimal, city dwellers will prioritize buying a car, even it is second-hand because, as they say, *es más triste andar a pie* (it is sadder to go on foot). There is never enough place for the cars, and most people will bring forward that the solution is as simple as "building first-world highways, like the ones in Houston" (field

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[43] People or citizens on foot.
[44] At a street level or at a ground level.
[45] What do the people on foot think?
[46] What is going on at a street level?

notes, May, 2018). Drivers are at war against the pedestrians, who are described as lazy, imprudent, primitive, stupid, poor, ignorant (for example, they are criticized as such when they cross a street that has no stoplights or forgo using a deteriorated and inconveniently placed footbridge that triplicates the distance they have to walk). Between January and May 2019, 117 pedestrians were run over by cars only in the Primer Cuadro (Villegas, 2019). The official position is that it is the pedestrians' fault because they have "no culture" and that they have to be educated to respect cars for their own good (see Figure 27). This position is shared by most city dwellers, with some citing Las Vegas as an example of good pedestrian culture. Public space is for cars.
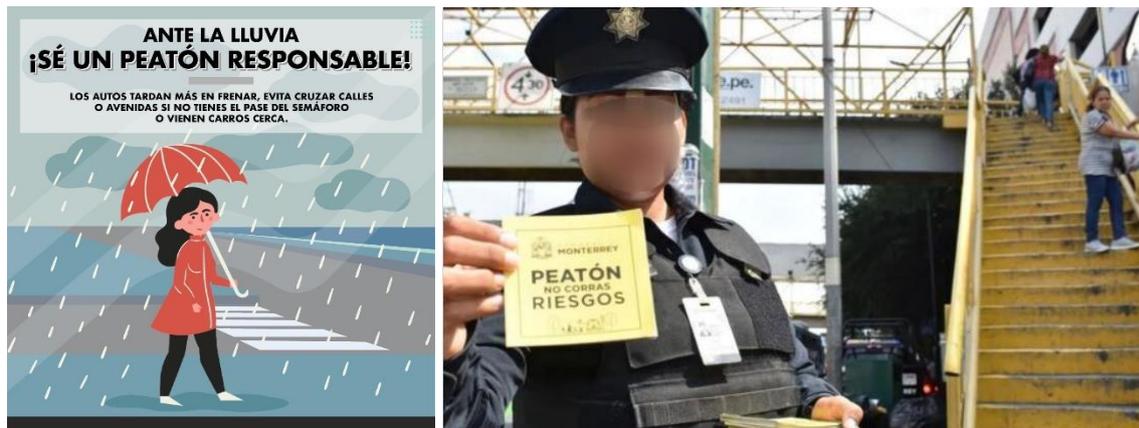
Figure 27 Educating pedestrians to respect cars if they want to stay alive.

(left) An image by the Municipio de Monterrey advising pedestrians to be careful when it rains. The caption reads "be a responsible pedestrian! Cars take longer to break. Avoid crossing streets or avenues if you do not have a the green light or if cars are near)", May 2021. It is worth noting that pedestrian stoplights are virtually non-existent in the city.
Source: Twitter – Gobierno de Monterrey. https://mobile.twitter.com/mtygob/status/1395428577072619521
(right) Photo from an article describing the police's campaign to distribute flyers to educate pedestrians on how "not to put themselves at risk" (telling them to use footbridges that are often dangerous, and wait for the cars' stoplights to cross, July 2019.
Source: El Rincon de Maquiavelo. https://elrincondemaquiavelo.com/se-fomenta-cultura-de-peatones-en-monterrey/

There are of course the conceptual, practical or philosophical difficulties of defining public space that have been addressed in scientific literature (see CHAPTER 3). However, beyond that, it is unusual in refer to public spaces as *espacio publico*[47] in everyday language in Monterrey, except in specialized circles -academia, public policy, architecture. City dwellers -*el ciudadano de a pie*- and law enforcement refer to *la calle* or *la vía pública*[48]. Public space is often conceptualized as the the moments in between origin and destination: *camino a…, yendo a…, cuando sales, estando afuera* or simply *afuera*[49]. It is also evoked as the open spaces outside specific familiar spots: *afuera de mi casa, en la esquina, en mi colonia, aquí enfrente, afuera de la oficina, de la tienda, de la casa*[50]. The term *espacio público* is as neglected as the space itself.

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[47] Public space.
[48] The street.
[49] on the road to…, going to…, when you go outside, being outside, outside.
[50] outside of my house, on the corner, in my neighborhood, here in front, outside of the office, the shop, the house.

A space that is not used for commerce is considered vacant. There is no value to a public space where one cannot consume, build or spend. Public space is not a space to stay: it is a place of transit, a void between safe private spaces, and a space for those who cannot afford anything better. In the imaginary of Monterrey, public spaces are idle spaces, waiting for a profitable real estate project, a parking lot or roads for cars. The outside is dirty, ugly, and it has become more dangerous over time; if one is there is not necessarily by choice. In recent years, there has been an interest in public spaces transformations as the end-all be-all solution to various societal issues, among them, violence.

5.4.4 The ambiguous relationship with public spaces in the Primer Cuadro

There are however specific public spaces that are considered worthy of this name in the community, clearly defined as proper places to walk, cycle, gather, eat, etc. One only has to see the local TV news outlets to see them: whenever they require footage of crowds or people walking, it is invariably the same places that are part of a circuit for leisure. These proper public spaces are concentrated in the Primer Cuadro in a haphazard circuit, which will henceforth be referenced as the Centro Public Space Circuit (Centro-PSC): The Macro Plaza, Barrio Antiguo, Calle Morelos, the Santa Lucía Riverwalk, and Fundidora park (see Figure 28).
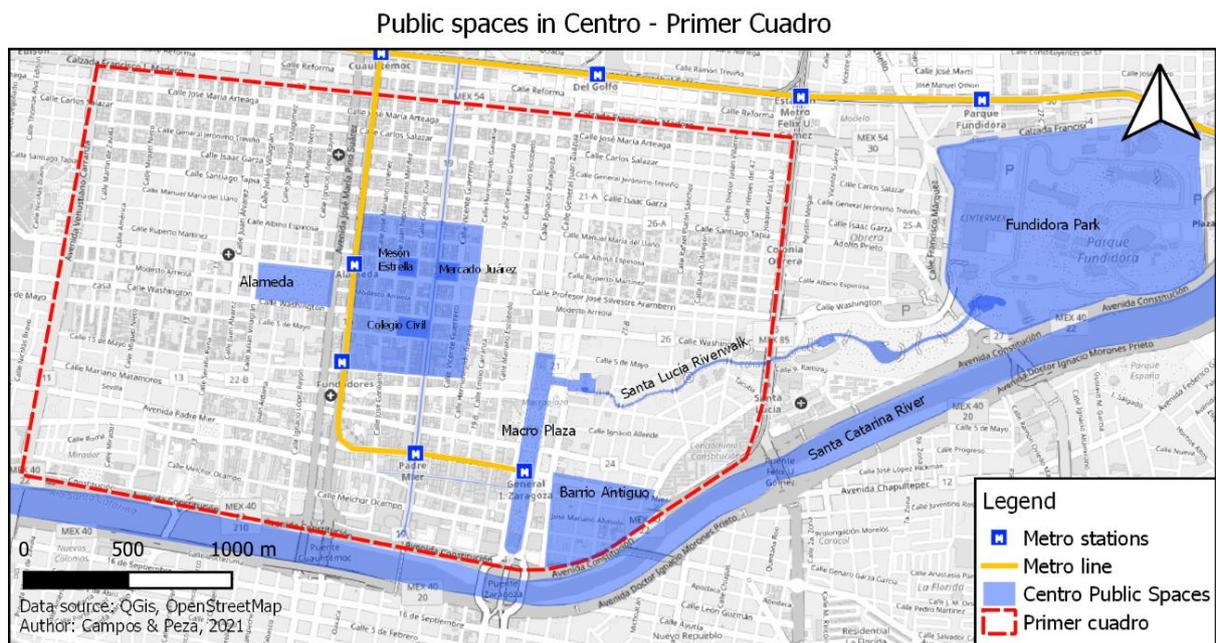
Figure 28 A circuit of public spaces on downtown Monterrey.
Source: Google Earth (2021), modifications by author.

Since the 70s, the Primer Cuadro developed a reputation for being a derelict and dangerous place filled with transients, criminals, and old and useless buildings. As the city extended its periphery and its inhabitants migrated to the dormitory towns of Guadalupe and San Nicolas, the city center fell into disrepair. The city center remained as a space for business activity, low end commerce, and offices of the state government. From the 1980s on came a series of public space projects made to communicate the image of a modern city that are now part of the aforementioned Centro-PSC.

The Primer Cuadro repels and attracts: it represents what the *regio* aims to leave behind, hide or destroy. But it is simultaneously a significant space for local identity, it is the site of government offices, it has intense traffic, and it is coveted by investors as prime real estate. As for the regular city dweller, the Primer Cuadro has a wide variety of options for shopping and entertainment, it is well connected in terms of public transportation, and it has the few spaces in the city dedicated to pedestrians -and therefore, accessible for *la gente de a pie*.

The appeal of the Centro Public Space Circuit

Most of the spaces in the Centro-PSC were created from the 1980s on, independent from each other, in an effort to make the city more appealing for tourism and investments -and several were flagship projects of the mayor or governor in turn-. They have become part of the local collective imaginary of the Primer Cuadro and *regio* identity. Whereas in many countries, the idea of a weekend outing is to leave the city, here people travel more than an hour by bus from the surrounding municipalities to visit these spaces downtown.

There are several reasons to explain their popularity. A study conducted by Contreras Delgado (2015, p. 52) revealed that the Macro Plaza and the Paseo Santa Lucía are two of the most representative spaces in the city (see Figure 29). This is because they are representative of the city, they are important in the landscape, they are the busiest, and they are points of reference. I add that these spaces are part of the oldest sector of the city, and they have an important connection with the history and identity of the lower middle-class residents of Monterrey. Older families come here and remember when their parents used to live in the city center, they retell stories about their youth, walking the streets, going to school or the shops they visited and what happened to their owners. These spaces are not made for everyday use in mind, but everyday use is part of their history. Even without historic or nostalgic value these spaces are attractive for younger city dwellers as well. They create new attachments to these spaces that offer a spectacular environment for their special occasions, such as weddings, christenings, graduations, first dates, Christmas celebrations, concerts, national holidays, art projects, engagements, and birthdays. Their appeal to tourists is an important reason of why they are well maintained.

They are visually appealing and have unique spatial features, to the point that brides and grooms and *quinceañeras* have photo sessions of their special days here. The well-maintained industrial relics, neoclassical buildings (or imitations of old buildings), hills, green areas, and bodies of water make for a picturesque and romantic backdrop with interesting contrasts, all within close proximity. Young photography enthusiasts come here to practice their skills.

Couples come to these spaces for their dates to stroll around, where they do not have to be bothered by oncoming traffic.

They are also accessible through public transportation, either by metro or by bus. Parking buildings nearby are also available. They are also heavily visited due to the fact that many government offices are located in close proximity. Compared to other public areas for leisure in MMA, they are also pedestrian-friendly spaces with a wide variety of activities for entertainment that are inexpensive or cheap. From museums and concerts to public spectacles by amateur comedians, visitors can have a good time without having to pay an admittance fee, all within a walkable environment -although not always in the best of conditions. The presence of visitors during the weekends is all but guaranteed, which has made them economically interesting for informal vendors, street performers, and business owners, as well as for politicians during their campaigns.

Finally, these spaces are mostly secure. Visitors can grab a snack, sit down and chat and allow their children to run without many concerns for their safety. Since there are many government offices within these spaces the police are present and there are security cameras in some sections. There are however some caveats for this security, as visitors in certain spaces are specially surveilled due to their aspect or age. During weekdays and during office hours, they are mostly populated by men (especially in Morelos and Macro Plaza): office workers on a break, individuals coming and going to government offices for permits and other procedures, retirees, immigrants waiting for an appointment, informal workers, street vendors, and individuals looking for jobs. Female users are less likely to stay here during the day, especially if they are alone, as they are frequently harassed by male users. Men come to rest, but also to watch young women walk by, particularly young employees, young girls from junior high, high school or college level on their way to take the bus or the metro. As the day goes by, the ratio difference between male-female users becomes less stark. There are also the occasional scammers asking people to participate in bogus surveys and then ask for a donation for a non-existent charity or sick relative.

Although there are connections between the spaces of the Centro-PSC, there are no zones of transition. Scales and borders change drastically without a sense of unity. Once inside them, it is easy to forget about the more common characteristics of public space in the MMA: broken sidewalks, cars, violence, obstacles, pollution, trash. In sum, each of these spaces provide something rare in the MMA: greenery, wide open spaces, cleanliness, activities for all ages, public transport connectivity, zones to cool off as temperatures above 35° are a common occurrence all year long, and to a certain extent, security.

The hunger for high quality public spaces is made patent by the presence of visitors in this circuit. However, rather than improving the existing parks in the MMA or creating new ones, authorities have saturated the circuit with profitable activities. The presence of thousands of visitors does not translate into a reevaluation of what is missing in public spaces elsewhere. Users become potential clients, and thus, the space becomes saturated with all sorts of activities to profit off them, from the commercial activity in Morelos (that has many repeated stores) to the incessant programming of for-profit events in Fundidora. These well-kept spaces for tourism and profit contrast with other spaces that are transited by locals in their everyday life

and that are also in the Primer Cuadro, and most of all, with the spaces for lower classes in the periphery.

Figure 29 The post-card images of the proper "public spaces" to sell the city brand.
(upper left) Macro Plaza. Source: Author, 2019.
(upper right) Parque Fundidora. Source: Turimexico. https://www.turimexico.com/estados-de-la-republica-mexicana/nuevo-leon-mexico/sitios-turisticos-en-nuevo-leon/parque-fundidora-nuevo-leon/
(lower left) Santa Lucía Riverwalk. Source: NomadaNews. https://www.nomada.news/historias/a-12-anos-de-la-inauguracion-del-paseo-santa-lucia/
(lower right) Barrio Antiguo. Source: Flickr – FotosdelChoko. https://www.flickr.com/photos/fotosdelchoco/15704069825

The Macro Plaza: a grand park for grandiose aspirations

The Macro Plaza project began in 1982 with the goals of creating a financial district with high rise buildings, promoting the image of a proper metropolis, attracting tourism and investments, and removing chaos and insecurity from the city center. It transformed the historic -and small- Plaza Zaragoza into a large public square, wanting to imitate Central Park in New York. 31 blocks of XVIIIth and XIXth century buildings were demolished for this purpose. Although this idea of a Manhattan-like landscape populated by skyscrapers was never fulfilled, the controversial project has become a staple of urban and social life in the city.

Besides these permanent elements of culture and public service, the Macro Plaza's program of activities varies throughout the year. It is the place were demonstrations happen, such as national holiday festivities, the celebration of victories of local football teams, and protests. Depending on the season (and prior engagements with political allies) one can find marketplaces on the southern part, as well as job hunting fairs or school supplies sales on the

northern part. Museums, public service buildings, and monuments are scattered both inside and outside of the perimeter. The public square is a box of architectural mementos, where one can observe the brutalism of the Teatro de la Ciudad right next to the vernacular XIXth century Capilla de los Dulces Nombres, one of the very few buildings that survived the demolitions of the 80s. The minimal Faro del Comercio exists alongside the almost baroque Fuente de Neptuno. The contrasting styles of the Palacio de Gobierno and the Palacio Municipal crown the northern and southern extremes respectively.

To keep the landscaping in shape, authorities fenced out most of the areas of grass (previously they shooed people who sat on the grass). There are few spaces to sit, as most of the benches are made of concrete or metal and they are less than ideal in temperatures of over 35°C. Trees are rare on this space, since it is built in the fashionable logic of postmodern architecture: an elevated platform with subterranean parking lots and streets. Except for the Jardín Hundido on the northern sector, shade is scarce, and most of the surface of the Macro Plaza is made of concrete, making it uncomfortably hot.

Activity intensifies in the whole square as the weekend approaches. Friday afternoon through Sunday, visitors come from Monterrey and neighboring municipalities, arriving by car or by public transportation. Most of them are low-middle- and lower-class families with young children, as well as teenagers and young adults. On summer days, children play on the Fuente de Neptuno or the fountains of the Palacio de Gobierno, although it is supposedly forbidden. From the Macro Plaza visitors have many choices of iconic places to visit for free and on foot, safe from cars, which is rare in the city. The Macro Plaza is the hub of fortuitous connections to culture and services, but also to other very well-known and frequented public spaces for leisure. Part of the stroll also includes the eastern section of Calle Morelos, perhaps the only street in Monterrey that is adapted for exclusive pedestrian use and it is regularly maintained. This street has existed since before the XXth century as a commercial space. As it was closed off to vehicles in the 1970s, it has become one of the preferred spaces for shopping and weekend strolls. In the present, some of the older buildings are preserved as fast food restaurants and shops to buy bridal gowns, suits, everyday clothes, videogames, shoes, and other items, for a moderate price. Nowadays, the street continues to be visited by users from all over the MMA, even if they do not come explicitly to shop.

Barrio Antiguo: the tolerated historical remnants of historical architecture

A polygon on the east side of the Primer Cuadro survived the demolitions. This polygon, known as the Barrio Antiguo, is the oldest neighborhood in the city and it went through a restoration process with the intention of transforming it into a zone for commerce, culture, and as a tourist attraction between 1988 and 1994. The restoration focused on facades and pavement, taking elements such as cobblestones and color palettes more akin to Colonial towns of the south rather than the zone's real past. This was to make Barrio Antiguo into a profitable and worthwhile space for tourism, on par with other historic centers in center or south Mexico, along with the authorization of nightclubs that turned into a nightlife hotspot for visitors and tourists. Nevertheless, Barrio Antiguo does not have the same characteristics due to the

different reasons behind the evolution of architecture for each zone (Prieto González, 2016, p. 15). It does not reflect the glorious industrial period either: its architecture is rather modest and austere. This was treated as something inferior and even shameful to preserve, and for this reason, it required an upgrade, modeled after 'proper' historic centers. Although there has been interest from local academics to further the knowledge and the valorization of this vernacular architecture in Barrio Antiguo and the city center at large, there is still a generalized belief that this zone, with its old buildings, does not measure up to the aspirations of grandeur and modernity (a belief confirmed by the wave of high rise buildings to be built there in the near future).

There is a lack of incentives to preserve these buildings. The initiative -and the monetary costs- of preservation and restoration fall upon the owners of the buildings who disagree on the constrains imposed by preservation laws that block them from acting freely on the plot of land containing a historic building. For this reason, owners deteriorate the buildings intentionally: the gradual unreported and unlawful demolitions from the inside, the removal of structural elements to provoke a demolition (and then calling for the backing of Protección Civil to argue that it represents a risk for the public), or even setting the building on fire intentionally. With the building gone, the plot of land is used for warehouses, office buildings, auto repair shops, but most frequently as parking lots. Ironically, the new buildings often emulate the old architecture that was demolished.

Parque Fundidora: the ghost of industrial past

The Fundidora closed in 1986, but it maintained its status as a marker of identity beyond its active years when the land it occupied became a public park. Its furnaces, warehouses, and workshops were converted to museums, cinemas, and event venues in the 1990s. The industrial facilities were declared monuments for industrial archaeology. When it comes to public space in Monterrey, the Parque Fundidora is an unavoidable reference.

Visitors, particularly older families, tell about their parents or grandparents having worked in the old industrial complex that is now an urban park. For the older generations that did experience this, it is very touching to reenter the spaces where they once worked and see the furnaces, warehouses, and chimneys transformed into museums or monuments. Visitors have many activities to choose from, from museums and art-house cinemas to cultural activities for children and adults. Most people visit the park because it is one of the few spots in the city with extensive green areas, trees, spaces for children to run and play in grass, and pathways for cyclists and joggers.

Fundidora Park is in a process of constant transformation. However, in recent years the park has been saturated with music festivals, marathons, private events, and concerts to turn in a profit. Government and real-estate developers have frequently sought to build more flagship projects in the park. As mentioned earlier, a public space is a considered a plot of land waiting for a profitable project to be built. These initiatives have been met with some resistance from the public, but it has been mostly due to park use restrictions, lack of political support or funds.

This has changed in the past recent years, as new permits are granted to build mixed-use high-rise buildings in the zone (see CHAPTER 7).

Santa Lucía Riverwalk: the American dream

The Riverwalk was a flagship project that was finished for the Universal Forum of Cultures Monterrey 2007, emulating the San Antonio Riverwalk. The Riverwalk appears to be an environment closed in itself, as points of access or contact with the surrounding streets are limited. One of the more clear-cut points of interaction with its surroundings is La Capital, a high-end apartment building with direct access to the Riverwalk on the north side. Other than that, it would appear that the Riverwalk and whatever happens around it are worlds apart. The 2.5-kilometer path ends in the Fundidora Park. The Riverwalk is peppered with restaurants, sculptures, and fountains, and kept under close surveillance by guards.

Even within the Centro-PSP spaces there are differences in socio-economic classes of users. Lower income families visit Macro Plaza and Morelos more, while higher income families visit Fundidora.

Beyond the circuit, the streets of the Primer Cuadro are highly transited by lower classes in everyday life, some more than others due to its intense and varied activity -commerce, health, education, public services, offices, industry, etc.- and connectivity through public transportation. However, these streets are not as well-maintained. They do not serve the *regio* ideal of selling the city brand, and the priority of street use is for cars, not pedestrians.

Avenida Benito Juárez, Mercado Juárez, Colegio Civil, and Mesón Estrella

This avenue connects to the Puente del Papa that goes over the Santa Catarina River and crosses the entirety of the Primer Cuadro to the metro line in Colón. This avenue is a distributor of public transportation connecting to almost all the MMA. Being heavily transited by pedestrians, there are shops all along the street. These low-end shops offer clothes, food, and all sorts of food and objects for the passer-by. However, the street also connects to the Mercado Juárez on the east side and to the Colegio Civil zone and the Mesón Estrella on the west side. These three sectors have existed as places of commerce for almost a century. The Mercado Juárez, as mentioned earlier, has existed since the early 1900s. Nowadays, it is a market on a three-story building where one can find traditional food, musical instruments, household items (mops, brooms, and cookware), and esoteric products and services -such as card readings, *limpias*, herbs, and Santa Muerte paraphernalia. This activity spills over to the surrounding streets.

The Mesón Estrella across the street is a series of blocks around a covered marketplace where one can find fruits, vegetables, and wholesale products such as snacks, baking products, disposable tableware, plastic toys (see Figure 30). The Mesón Estrella is noisy with the cries of produce sellers announcing their prices, music blasting from stands, and car horns. North of

the Meson Estrella is the Colegio Civil zone: streets around the Colegio Civil (a cultural center of the UANL) where one can find makeup, clothes, toys, movies, school supplies, and other wholesale items. And in all of these spaces, there are many options of street food, from smoothies and chips to seafood and cabrito.

Unlike the Centro-PSC, these spaces are heavily visited all times of the day, every day of the week. They are visited predominantly by lower-class individuals looking for specific products or just passing by, students, the remaining residents of the Primer Cuadro (many of them are elderly), and by small business owners from around the city who buy here wholesale products and resell them in smaller shops. However, regardless of their intense traffic and its historic significance, the physical environment is seriously deteriorated. The interiors of old houses in these spaces have been hollowed out to make way for merchandise. The streets are full of potholes, cracks, and broken or nonexistent sidewalks. The streets are a free-for-all, where produce stands, food carts, cars, buses, taxis, bikes, motorcycles, wheelbarrows, and pedestrians compete for the right of passage. This however does not deter visitors.

Alameda Mariano Escobedo: the antithesis of the *regio* ideal

The Macro Plaza represents the *regio* ideal of public space: a large clean space for grand displays of the *regio* ingenuity. In contrast, the Alameda represents the past the *regio* culture strives to hide. Once an emblematic space of an up-and-coming city, the park from the XIXth century has been slowly consumed by urban growth and formal and informal commerce, and is now used mostly by Mexican immigrants that the *regio* wishes to be set apart from.

The Alameda Mariano Escobedo is only a few blocks away from the Macro Plaza. It is located near a metro station and Avenida Juárez, which is heavily transited by public transportation (see Figure 30). The Alameda is well known for being a meeting spot for immigrants from neighboring states that come to Monterrey to work in construction or domestic services. Locals use the derogatory names of *Embajada de San Luis* or *Parque del chirigüillo* to indicate that the park used mostly by lower class Mexican immigrants from San Luis, Zacatecas, and other states. Since it is close to the intercity bus station, this is a spot where newcomers arrive. The Alameda is a hub for public transportation, a space for immigrants to meet and find jobs, and a place for low-priced leisure. With an ever-present flow of users, it is a prime space for street vendors. The park is surrounded by shops where users can buy inexpensive food or leave their baggage attended for a fee. Although it is often lacking in terms of maintenance, the Alameda is alive all week and much more embedded in everyday transit, unlike the polished Macro Plaza where activity is low during the weekdays and it increases drastically during the weekends. The Alameda is, according to public knowledge, a potentially dangerous zone. For this reason, police patrol cars are often stationed around the park.

Santa Catarina River: prime real estate

Lastly, we have the Santa Catarina River, one of the landmarks of the city (see Figure 30). Being dry for most of the year, it was used for many purposes. From the late 1970s on, soccer

fields were traced on the riverbed and provided space for sports for the MMA, and particularly for residents of the *Colonia* Independencia, the *colonia popular* in the Loma Larga who had no adequate public parks. The Pulga del Puente del Papa was a flea market that existed for years in the bridge that connected the Primer Cuadro to the *Colonia* Independencia and on the river bed. Every weekend city dwellers of various social strata would visit the flea market to acquire second-hand goods, many of them coming from the United States. Sandoval & Escamilla (2010) analyze the history of this commercial spot, its link to the *Colonia* Independencia, and its functioning. By the early 2000s, private initiatives installed parking lots, go-cart tracks, circuses, and golf courses. The free spaces that remained were often used by city dwellers for driving lessons. Every few years rainwater accumulated and took with it anything in the riverbed. The passage of Hurricane Alex in 2010 finally limited activities in the riverbed, however this has not stopped entrepreneurs and politicians from wanting to build in it, next to it or over it. Every once in a while, a new project emerges visualizing a stadium, a building, a highway, and other ambitious signifiers of "first world developments".

Figure 30 Emblematic public spaces in the Primer Cuadro that do not fit the marketing of the city brand.
(upper left) Street near the Meson Estrella and Colegio Civil, August, 2021.
Source: Facebook – Monitor urbano. https://www.facebook.com/luabelaoficial/posts/1662663957257352
(upper right) Santa Catarina river, April 2021.
Source : Jornada. https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/04/15/estados/mugre-y-muerte-fluyen-por-el-rio-santa-catarina-que-atraviesa-monterrey/
(bottom) Northeast access of the Alameda. Source: Author, 2019.

5.4.5 The neglect of public spaces in the periphery

In the 1970s, spaces planned for industrial and commercial developments were scrapped and transformed into plots for housing. There were several large-scale projects that were not built, such as linear parks along the main circulation axes of the periphery. The rapid and disorganized territorial expansion that amounted to over 450 ha. per year made it difficult to provide urbanizations for the working class with water, garbage collection, drainage, and electricity, let alone adequate public spaces. Urban green space decreased drastically between 1980 and 2005. However, this did not happen equally for all the population.

Legal framework for urban planning and public space

The administration and operational scheme of urban planning regulations had remained virtually unchanged until the first decades of the XXth century. From 1927 to 1976, there existed seven urban planning laws for the city (Leyes de Planificación) and eight proposals for a master plan (Flores, 2009b, pp. 290–291).

In 1980 the Ley de Desarrollo Urbano created three commissions to create and oversee urban planning (included in these commissions where chambers of banking, commerce, and real estate). It was also this year 1980 that the first planning document for the state within a federal framework came into existence: the Plan Estatal de Desarrollo Urbano de Nuevo León. And in 1988, the city had its first urban planning document: the Plan Director de Desarrollo Urbano del Area Metropolitana de Monterrey 1988-2010. The focus of urban planning law has been on construction, buildings, and of course, housing. There are few mentions of public spaces, besides the need for general hygiene, maintenance, and ornament and its use for sports and entertainment. Other than that, they are defined as spaces for commerce, sports, or spaces for circulation of vehicles (particularly since the 1950s).

Public action however has come second to private initiatives. State and municipal decisions on urban development were influenced by studies and councils formed by industry owners. The city grew responding to the needs of proximity and distribution of human labor as industry owners saw fit, which contributed to a chaotic urbanization.

A comparative study by González & Sánchez (2013, pp. 37–38) shows the disparities in quality and maintenance of public spaces in high-income and low-income neighborhoods in San Pedro and Santa Catarina, respectively, by 2012. The authors note the lack of public lighting, garbage collection, the disrepair of sidewalks, and a dire state of neglect in public spaces of the lower class. This in turn affects the frequency in which users visit parks. The authors also mention how these contrasts were predetermined by their conception decades prior:

> residential zones for the middle-lower and lower class were born with a smaller endowment of public space: narrower sidewalks, less green spaces and recreational areas, etc. (…) The mixed use of the land with space for commerce and services has not been

planned, they emerge depending on the needs of the residents, but without order or congruence.

Parks were included in the plans for middle-class neighborhoods as a requirement for building permits, but the developers were required to cede these lands to the municipality, who would then be responsible for their organization, design, and maintenance. As we have seen throughout the history of this city's urban planning, parks and plazas appear at random, and they are hardly ever part of a larger plan. Car ownership became even more important due to distances between housing and places of work, the inadequate public transport, and the precarious state of streets, but also as a social marker. The aspirational automobile-based mobility increased a demand for wide streets and parking. Public spaces for pedestrians are sacrificed to park or move cars. Large avenues appear anywhere in the city, and there is rarely space for pedestrians.

As the wealthier social classes traded the city center for San Pedro and the south of Monterrey as their place of residence, new spaces for commerce and leisure were built closer to the more well-to-do sectors of the city. Continuing with the tradition of elevating the names of the industry leaders (also, the forefathers of the wealthy Sampetrinos), many of the streets of San Pedro were named after the most prominent local figures, many of them business owners, such as Roberto Garza Sada (brother of Eugenio Garza Sada), Roberto Margain, Humberto Lobo, Antonio L. Rodriguez, and of course, the man behind the creation of the zone, Alberto Santos. The MMA's first American-style mall, Mol del Valle, was inaugurated in 1982 in San Pedro. This was followed by Galerías Monterrey, was built in 1983 on the west of Monterrey, followed by Plaza San Agustín, Plaza La Silla, and Plaza Valle Oriente in the 1990s and 2000s. These malls substituted the public square and the park as places to buy and socialize. As San Pedro gradually attracted large businesses in the late 1990s, high rise buildings serving for corporate headquarters changed the landscape, imitating once again the financial districts of American cities. Due to the reliance on cars, these projects came with large parking lots. At ground level, these buildings had esplanades or decorative gardens, but hardly any pedestrians to walk through them.

While the upper classes had these permanent buildings as a substitute for public space, lower classes temporarily transformed pre-existing public spaces for informal commerce: the *tianguis* or *mercadito*-street markets- that occupied the neighborhood streets and squares several times a week, the *pulgas* -flea markets were one could find second hand clothing or American merchandise-, and the street vendors selling clothes, food, and household items. In some cases, informal vendors were relocated into permanent buildings (Sandoval Hernández & Escamilla, 2010). The mercadito is one of the many manifestations of the informal economy happening in public spaces as a consequence of globalization (see CHAPTER 2).

These commercial uses of public space were, of course, not new, as the marketplace is a staple of Mexican urban life. Although street markets do not have permanent infrastructure, they are installed in the same spaces every week, to the point that users refer to it by the name of the street or the neighborhood. Vendors do not necessarily live in the neighborhood, and travel to different locations of the city to sell their products. On the *tianguis* one can find different types of products: fruits, vegetables, clothing, electronics, flowers, toys, pirated movies, antiques, as

well as merchants who offer games like *lotería*. One can also find small temporary restaurants or vendors that selling food to eat while walking. As the mercadito shows, even when the streets were less than optimal even for car traffic -whose importance was increasing- the lower classes improvise to satisfy the need of public spaces in everyday life.

Conclusion

In this chapter we went over the history of the city, from the modest foundation to the metropolitan expansion. Existing work on the history of the city has often presented evolution of the city and public space independent from each other. Public squares in the city center, for example, are well documented through detailed accounts of the dates of foundation, main events -particularly during the 50s and 60s-, and neighbors' anecdotes, often with a tint of nostalgia, but mostly as isolated from the urban transformations around them. The present chapter connects both by presenting the phases of metropolitan growth, the main motivations for this, and the place public spaces had within each period of evolution.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 2, the phenomenon of urban violence in Latin America is related to the modern urban developments that took place between the 1950s and 1980s (D. E. Davis, 2016). Monterrey is the staple of modern industrial development, as it was and is considered the most important industrial hub in the country. During the late XIXth and early XXth century, when the city was mostly confined to the center, production of public spaces was closely linked to a nationalist discourse. As explored by Contreras Delgado (2015, p. 49), the ideology of the nation state during this time was a phenomenon of a profoundly territorial quality. Monumentality was instrumental for the transformation of national glories into literal spaces and objects. This celebration of the nation was also the opportunity to showcase the growing economic and productive power of the state of Nuevo León and the city of Monterrey. However, informality and public spaces are frequently excluded as they do not uphold the values of modernity, national pride, and development. Studies on local urban history of the first half of the century rarely address inequality, informality or poverty, favoring a homogeneous narrative that celebrates the main actors of industry, upper class neighborhoods or emblematic spaces that showcase wealth.

As observed throughout this chapter, housing and industrial activity have been major motor for urban expansion. The city's articulation was done for and by industries aiming to project an image of progress and order well into the XXth century. To go back to concepts mentioned in CHAPTER 2, access to the formal and informal city was determined by the city dwellers' position in the industrial production scheme. Important changes occurred from the 1960s on -such as a gradual shift from industry to service-based economic activity, migration, integration to a globalized economy- which made informality harder to ignore. And as the housing crisis grew chaotically, the metropolitan area expanded. Public spaces of everyday life lost importance in city planning, except in the higher income neighborhoods, and as spaces for car-based mobility in the metropolis.

By the 1980s, the significance of public spaces as the celebration of local identity has shifted towards other spatial signifiers. The significance retained was that of the utility of public spaces, either for direct profit or to create appealing images for investments. On the one hand, public space was seen as something for the lower classes who could not afford private services. And on the other hand, a handful of public spaces in the Primer Cuadro have received constant attention and are the subject of depredation in favor of profitable buildings and transformations. All the while public spaces of everyday life in the periphery of the postmodern city were neglected, particularly in lower class *colonias*. Lack of adequate public spaces does not imply a lack of need or uses in them. The lower classes improvise and adapt these spaces.

As Prieto-González (2011) notes, since the late 1990s Monterrey has joined a global trend of creating urban policies based on constructing icons in the city: the bigger, the better. The author argues that this has permitted the creation of an imaginary city – one that substitutes the real city, and puts marketing above all. While spaces such as the Macro Plaza and Fundidora have retained some of its symbolic significance, skyscrapers and flashy buildings have gradually substituted public spaces as emblematic elements of the city, adding to the disdain of public spaces. Individualism, as seen in this chapter, is a highly regarded value in Monterrey. Poverty and inequality are thus interpreted as shortcomings of lazy individuals, and it is also an affront to the aspirational images of wealth. Monterrey has experienced increasing inequality that manifests itself in the territory and in public spaces that has gone unattended -to the point of denying it exists in the city. This lack of attention of inequality and poverty and its interpretation as an individual problem contributed to the explosion of violence in the late 2000s as we will see in CHAPTER 6. Likewise, the responsibility of the individual as the sole way to improve any situations have also affected the solutions put into place, as we will observe in the following chapters.

Chapter 6 - Violence in the city

Having gone over the evolution of the city up until the early 2000s, this chapter presents - through a chronological and thematic approach- the conditions prior to the period of violence between 2009-2013, the main issues that arose during this period, the role of the public and private sectors, and the aftermath. This discussion is essential because the events that took place during this period defined not only the types of crime that occur today, but also uses, practices and readings of public space by city dwellers that we observe today as part of everyday life.

The first part of this chapter goes into detail about the conditions and geographies of inequality in Monterrey, the representations of poverty and inequality, its relationship with violence, and the lack of attention this phenomenon received from the authorities. In this part, I contest the common narrative that the city transformed overnight -unattended inequality was a fertile ground for more direct and dramatic types of violence. On the next part, I discuss the explosion of organized-crime violence, the incidents that marked the relationship that the population has with public spaces, the actions of the public sector, and the role of traditional and social media. I then present the actions undertaken by the private sector which, as mentioned in CHAPTER 5, is a major stakeholder in public life. Lastly, I present the "end" of the conflict -or rather the sudden silence- after 2012, and the repetition of violent events in the present day. The goal of this chapter is not to be an exhaustive report of drug cartel violence in Monterrey, but rather to discuss the conditions that contributed to the articulation of public spaces, everyday practices, and feelings of insecurity in the present day (which are discussed in CHAPTER 7 and CHAPTER 8).

6.1 The denial of pre-existing socio-spatial inequality

It is a common assertion from public representatives and residents that poverty does not exist in Monterrey. And when comparing themselves to other regions, the *regios* affirm that they do not depend on federal handouts, everyone in Monterrey works for their living, and those who do not are poor by choice. Through think-pieces with titles such as "Nuevo León, the most neoliberal state with the least poverty" (J. Garza, 2019) and a constant comparison with the poorest states in Mexico by local politicians and inhabitants, the state and the MMA are

depicted as a sound place for investments. A senator of Nuevo Leon -elected later as governor in 2021- affirmed during an interview in 2015 that he had confirmed that "in the north of Mexico we work, in the center they administrate, and in the south they rest (…) it may sound cold, but it's the truth" (Vergara, 2021). The governor of Nuevo León, while advocating for the suppression of social aids during a conference, stated that for the poor "it's convenient to be poor to receive money from social programs" while also claiming that people in Chiapas do not work and bring in Latin American immigrants to work for them, and that teaching people to work was more important (Montalvo, 2018). These statements are anything but new or original (see CHAPTER 5). They are constantly repeated across sectors and social classes, they have been engrained into the collective image of the territory, and affect public policy and its inhabitants, particularly the way those more vulnerable are perceived -or invisibilized.

6.1.1 Poverty, inequality, and the territory

While indeed salaries are higher and there are low levels of precarious employment than in other large cities such as Mexico City and Guadalajara, MMA has several structural deficits in social and urban development, and there is a high inequality in opportunities in employment and education (Sánchez Santana & Pérez Esparza, 2014, pp. 103–104; Solís & Puga, 2011, p. 236). According to the CONEVAL 2020 report on the evolution of poverty in the state of Nuevo León, in 2008 only 34.9% of the total population of the state (88% of which is located in the MMA) was not classified as poor or vulnerable in terms of income or social resources. This report was widely commented by the local media and politicians as it shows that since 2008 the rates of non-poor and non-vulnerable population grew and rates of extreme poverty decreased (see Graph 2).
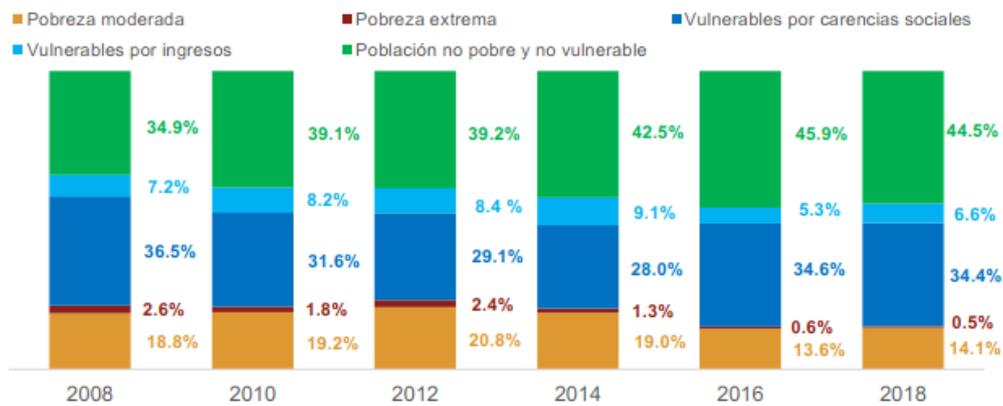
Graph 2 Evolution of poverty and resource and income vulnerability in Nuevo León.
Source: CONEVAL (2020, p. 17).

Although there is indeed a low percentage of the population in extreme poverty in Nuevo León, an average of 32.3% of the population between 2008-2018 is classified as vulnerable for lack of access to social resources. The social resources as defined by the CONEVAL are education, health, social security, quality housing, basic infrastructure (water, drainage, electricity), and food.

Martínez Jasso et al. (2009) produced a study for the Consejo de Desarrollo Social of Nuevo León identifying polygons of poverty in the MMA: social spaces lagging behind in development and where public policies have not reached or have not done so adequately and sufficiently (see Map 9). The goal of this study was to contribute to the improvement of programs for social development and tackle poverty and social disadvantages. According to the aforementioned study, these polygons of poverty have any or several of the following conditions (see Table 4):

Table 4 Conditions of polygons of poverty in the MMA.
Source: author, based on information by Martínez Jasso et al. (2009, p. 10).

Social characteristics	Spatial characteristics
- Unstructured or single-parent families (particularly led by women), and the presence of disabled or socially maladjusted individuals. - Low expectations or stimuli for youths, which enables dropping out of school or low performance, and in some cases, delinquency, drug consumption, and/or other types of social marginality. - Immigrant population with other cultures, languages, and ethnicities that complicate their social insertion.	- Inadequate housing, often located on marginal areas or illegal land. - Environmental degradation, deficient services, difficult accessibility, no local economic initiative (abandoned shops, vacant lots, etc.)
Interior and exterior collective image of abandonment and decay, creates a situation of stagnation and occasionally of marginalization, only surpassed by neighborhood demands when the most active part of the population is organized	
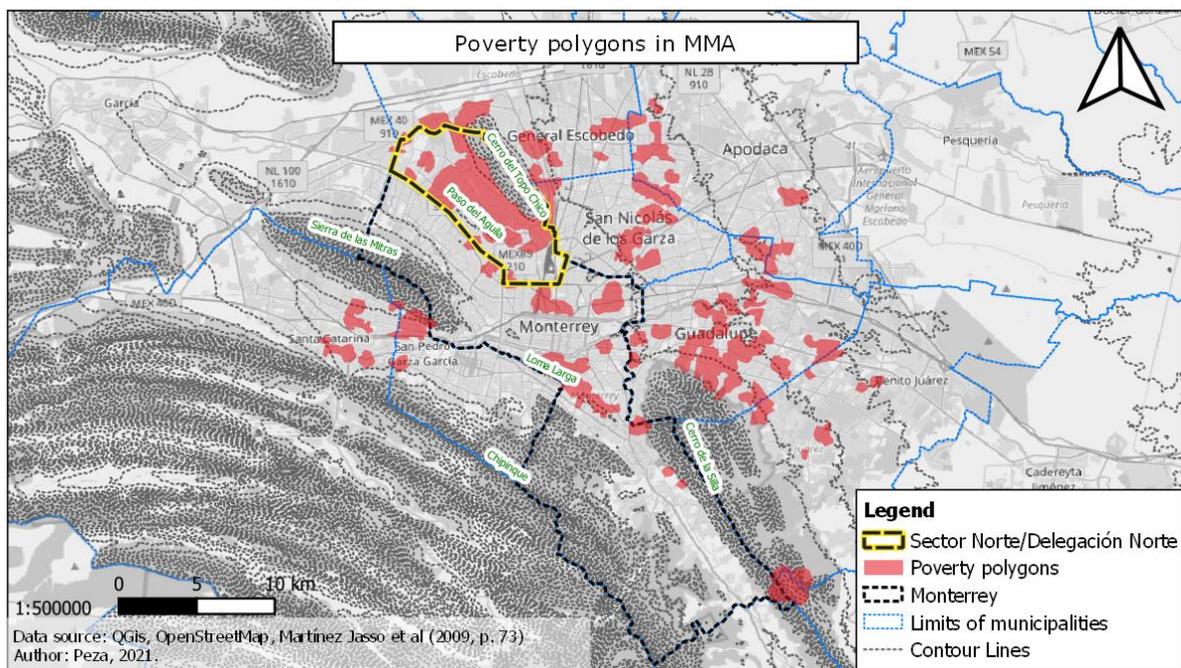
Map 9 Poverty polygons in the MMA.
Source: Author (2021), based on information by Martínez Jasso et al (2009, p. 73).

The study follows guidelines from the SEDESOL and CONEVAL to map and interpret poverty as a heterogeneous and multivariate phenomenon that integrates issues of material and immaterial nature. It is noteworthy that the study considers the organized participation of neighbors as a strategy to overcome difficulties in marginalized *colonias,* as this would become a staple of upper-class projects that were to come years after the security crisis.

Poor and vulnerable populations are concentrated in *colonias populares*, some of which have existed since the 1910s, while others are the product of informal settlements or relocations from the 70s on. As depicted in the map, in Monterrey these polygons of poverty are located near the city center -north of the Primer Cuadro and on the Loma Larga-; at the base of the Cerro del Topo Chico in the northwest (where the case study is located – see CHAPTER 9 and 10), and on the south at the base of the Cerro de la Silla.

Being located in the mountains, they are vulnerable to natural risks from rain and landslides. Houses are of low quality, some made of bare concrete and poorly isolated, while others are made with scrap materials like cardboard or metal sheets and lack basic infrastructure or services. It is common for more than one family to occupy a housing unit, overcrowding the small spaces. Most residents have low levels of formal education -most only have secondary level-, and perceive low income from both formal and informal activities.

Public space is deteriorated, as streets lack pavement or require repairs. Trash collection services do not reach these places. Streets are often littered with construction rubble, trash, and overgrown weeds. This makes transit difficult, particularly for the elderly and handicapped individuals. Streets are used by pedestrians, drivers, mercaditos, children at play, and informal food vendors. In spite of the dire conditions, the space is multifunctional, although not always within a common consensus nor with positive results as conflicts arise. Issues of domestic violence, thefts, muggings or fights between gangs of youths are common, as are conflicts with drunk and noisy neighbors. Like in many Mexican cities facing high rates of poverty and inequality, in spite of the high incidence of violence and crime present in these zones police seldom intervene. For residents it is counterproductive to call the police for help. They cannot pay *moches* (bribes) for them to act, and in their experience, police will find a way to criminalize them. Residents are automatically tallied as lazy, conflictive or criminals by authorities for living in these *colonias.*

6.1.2 Stigmatization of *colonias populares* and the neglect of authorities

As mentioned in CHAPTER 5, access to education, employment, and public services -among them, security- is determined by *colonia* or sector of residence, among other factors. Stereotypes exist, for example, about residents of San Bernabé or Fomerrey that hinder their ability to be hired. An interview I had with Carmen, 51, and Gerardo, 49 gives us more light on this matter. They work in an association that helps convicts, ex-convicts, and their families, as well as residents of high-risk neighborhoods. Having worked in over 200 *colonias,* they are well aware of the issues of structural violence facing residents of these zones. On the issue of stigmatization and marginalization, they state the following:

> [Neighbors] want to shut us down because they say we bring criminals here. The police stop the guys [ex-convicts who come to learn to use computers] when they come here every Friday, and this is not even a wealthy *colonia.* [When applying for a job] a person will be asked for more letters of recommendation than any other, just for living in *Colonia* Independencia or for how they look.

> You can tell only by seeing them, they walk different, they move different. Due to their appearance even in the metro they are pushed aside (…) The people who live in these communities are angry at society. A group of kids [from a marginalized *colonia*] walks down the street, a nice car drives past them, and the people in the car close the windows and lock the doors. They notice this. The way people treat them marks them. People

living in stigmatized communities are more humiliated by the so-called "good people" than in prison [51] (interview Carmen & Gerardo, April 17, 2018).

These factors add up to racial discrimination to produce a polarized and stratified environment of low social mobility. According to CONAPRED director Ricardo Bucio Mújica, Nuevo León has some of the highest levels of discrimination in the country based on religion, indigenous or immigrant origins, skin color, and socio-economic status. He states that Monterrey has high levels of intolerance towards indigenous populations, immigrants from other states, women, and homosexual men (CONAPRED, 2011; Ochoa, 2014). According to the place of residence, people with lighter skin tones tend to be better educated, have better salaries, and get higher positions of well-being distribution. Those with darker skin -particularly women- have less possibilities of education and employment (Orozco Corona et al., 2019).

Studies of inequality in Monterrey

For decades, the issue of inequality has been largely neglected by authorities. Early studies on matters of poverty were produced in the late 1960s from a strictly economic perspective (Barkin, 1969). These studies were controversial at the time, as the city experienced an economic boom that favored large sectors of the population, and it countered the experiences of many who still benefited from the industrial bonanza of the 1940s and 1950s. Since the early 2000s the production of interdisciplinary studies linking poverty, inequality, and territory has increased in academia. However, despite evidence, in the words of governor Jaime Rodriguez, "the recipe [to improve society and economy] is not academia, it's not the experts. The recipe is common sense" (Morán, 2018). Discussions or criticisms of the systemic conditions of poverty and unequal access to resources and opportunities are interpreted by authorities and residents of all classes -and occasionally even among researchers- as a forced explanation for laziness, mediocrity or as an imposition of a political agenda from the capital.

Social programs from the public sector exist in these polygons to tackle issues that affect quality of life; however, they tend to lack a long-term planning and continuity. More often than not, public programs depend on the heads of the executive branch at the state or the municipality levels. As their terms come to an end, so do many programs. If the next governor or mayor comes from a different party, the programs' activities may change or stop -to avoid crediting the outgoing administration for new achievements. In the best-case scenario, they are renamed or replaced. Indeed, they end up focusing on placating immediate needs such as food,

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[51] [los vecinos] nos quieren clausurar porque dicen que traemos delincuentes. Los policías los detienen todos los viernes que vienen. Y eso que esta no es una *colonia* de muy altos ingresos. [Para conseguir trabajo] una persona por el solo hecho de vivir en la *colonia Independencia le* piden dos cartas de recomendación más que a cualquier otro, por vivir en la zona, por la apariencia física. Nomás de verlos caminar, se ven diferente y por la pura apariencia hasta en el metro te hacen a un lado (…) La gente que vive en esas comunidades está enojada con la sociedad. Un grupito de chavos va caminando, pasa a lado de ellos un carro bueno, y sube los vidrios y pone seguros. Ellos se dan cuenta, la gente los marca mucho. La gente que vive en comunidades estigmatizadas es más humillada por la "gente buena" que en los penales.

school supplies, construction materials, and medical aid, but lacking action attending structural aspects of violence and poverty in the long term. And although research is carried out to understand the needs and perceptions of the population, it does not always mean this will be taken into account in the application. Furthermore, human resources that work in these initiatives lack the specialization or sensibility to address these issues, and even when they do, the limitations of follow-up, spatial and temporal scope, funding, and continuity are still present.

Residents of impoverished *colonias* often organize themselves to negotiate with candidates: improvements in their *colonias* in exchange of votes. This kind of participation has been stigmatized as pertaining to low strata of society. Residents are depicted as being easily manipulated in exchange for food or favors, and as lacking strong political standing or morals, veering towards the party that offers the most. Instability pushes residents in precarious environments to center their attention on satisfying basic needs. Nancy, 29, is a social worker part of the social prevention department in the wealthy municipality of San Pedro with Fernando, 40, a police officer. Having worked in several polygons of poverty in this city, they state that:

> Colonia Los Pinos [settlement near the Santa Catarina river in San Pedro] has always had aids. Everything was rebuilt, something you don't see in other municipalities. It may be excessive. The municipality has to urbanize spaces, but the people's responsibility is to take care of them. People have no culture. We give them talks trying to change this mentality so that they pull themselves up by the bootstraps.

> In Los Pinos they didn't have water, the municipality paved the streets, installed parks, community centers, spaces for exercising; they gave them construction materials for their houses but they sold them. They don't want be better.

> It's always the same *colonias*. People don't want to change, they refuse to be helped, or they say "help me but by giving me things", they don't take outreach talks seriously. Sometimes we do an activity and they don't attend, unless we offer cookies or food at the end (…) Children tell us that they are struggling with school, we propose them after-school help and they say "nah, I don't really like school, it's boring", and we don't understand why they refuse, when they are telling us the problems they have and we are trying to help them[52] (interview Nancy & Fernando, May 7, 2018).

[52] *Colonia* Los Pinos siempre ha tenido apoyos. Todo se les reconstruyó, nunca he visto eso en otros municipios. En ayudas está de más. A lo mejor su obligación es de que esté urbanizado, pero también su obligación es de cuidarla. La gente no tiene cultura, les das una plática donde buscamos cambiar la mentalidad de la persona, que por ellos mismos salgan adelante.
En los Pinos que no tienen agua, se ha pavimentado, se han puesto parques, centros comunitarios, espacios de ejercicio, material para construir su casa lo venden. Las mismas personas de los Pinos no quieren salir adelante. Siempre es trabajar con las mismas *colonias*. La gente no quiere cambiar, se niega a ser ayudada, o de "ayúdame pero dándome algo", realmente no le toman la importancia a pláticas. A veces que queremos hacer algo y no van, pero si llevamos galletas o hay algún convivio (…) Cuando trabajábamos con los niños, que nos decían que batallaban con la escuela, les ofrecíamos tutorías y decían "es que la verdad no me gusta ir a la escuela". Y no entendemos, porque te estamos apoyando con tutorías en las tardes, me dices que tienes problemas, y no quieren la ayuda.

It is worth noting that San Pedro counts on public resources and private backing to carry out these actions. So, these are to a certain extent the better managed initiatives in MMA. Regardless of the difficulties linked to inequality and social mobility, residents of polygons of poverty are blamed for lowering the quality of life and damaging the image of MMA, and they pass this blame onto immigrants from other states living there.

As is the case in Latin American cities, extreme cases of slums coexist next to luxurious neighborhoods. Evidence shows the interdependence in terms of what happens in one affects the other. When it comes to crime, it diffuses across neighborhoods. Polygons of poverty contain *colonias* that were well known in the MMA as spaces of violence long before the war on drugs. Violent crimes in these areas were often featured in 'nota roja' newspapers. Nevertheless, violence takes different forms and in these *colonias* it was not exclusive of public space nor necessarily only manifested itself as crimes. These polygons and their *colonias* experience several forms of systemic violence and precarity that make them extremely vulnerable, and drug cartels exploited these vulnerabilities.

6.1.3 Geographies of violence and inequality

A study by Cerda et al (2012) analyzed the geographic correlation between suicide, domestic violence, and social aggressions stemming from gang activity in *colonias* of MMA between 2006 and 2009. The study observed the *colonias* with the highest suicide rates in 2006-2009. By 2008, 14.9% of violent deaths were by suicide -15.7% of which were male victims, 11.6% were female. Relating this to areas of incidence, 37% of suicides are located in 116 *colonias* in MMA. They observed that there were other pathologies of aggressivity in these *colonias,* such as domestic violence and gang activity, adding to the personal causes of suicide such as depression, isolation, guilt, and rejection. The study identified 11 high risk *colonias* in the MMA where the three phenomena intersect.

In Monterrey, there is a cluster in the northwest section, at the foot of the Topo Chico (see Map 10). Social, spatial, and economic vulnerability mentioned earlier combine with violence in these areas with high rates of suicide, fear of gang aggression, and domestic violence - particularly against women. All this happens amidst social uncertainty and precarious conditions stemming from the aforementioned problems of illegal land occupations, unregularized plots of land, faulty or non-existent services and infrastructure, and natural risks. Many forms of violence were already a part of everyday life before cartel conflicts in the *colonias* illustrated in the map and others such as La Alianza, San Bernabé, Fomerrey 112 on the northwest; San Ángel, Altamira, and Independencia on the south, and Moderna and Constituyentes del 57 on the center. The map only shows the zones at highest risk in Monterrey, but there are between 130 and 205 *colonias* in the state facing issues of violence.
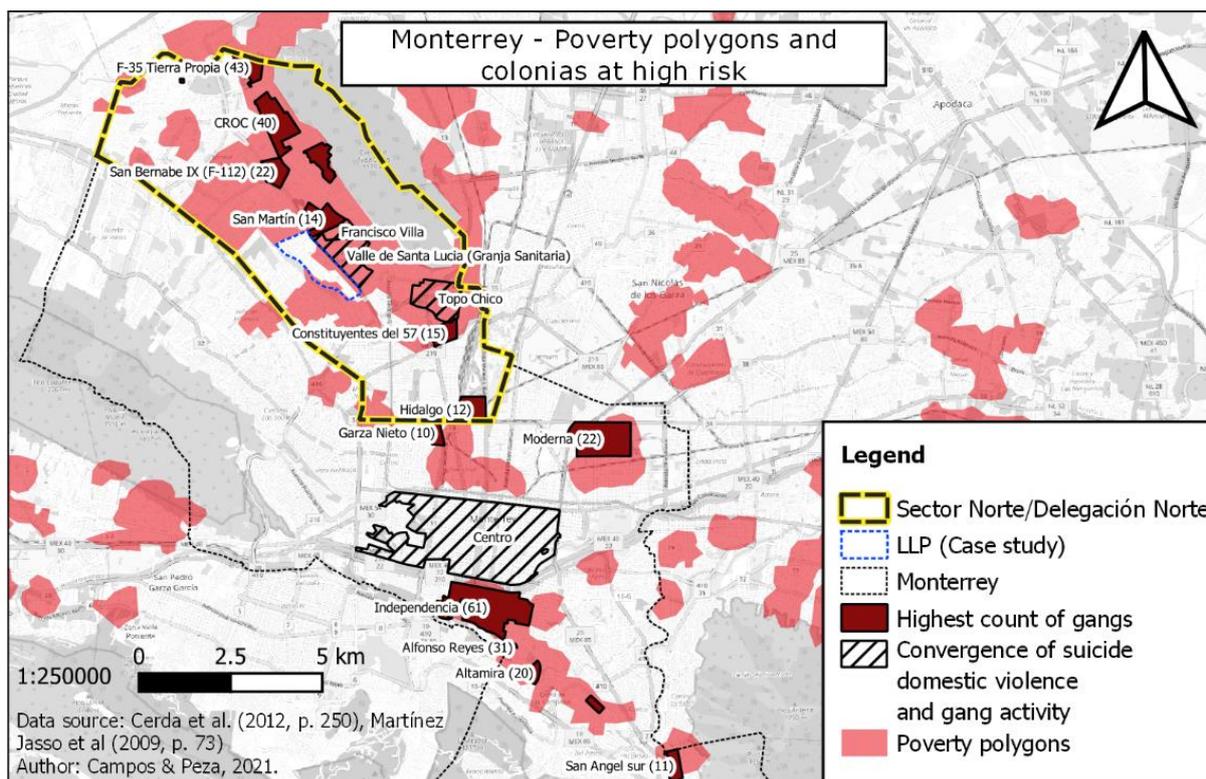
Map 10 Poverty polygons and colonias at high risk.
The map shows the polygons of poverty discussed in the previous section, along with colonias with the highest count of gangs in Monterrey between 2006-2009 (number of gangs in parenthesis next to the name of the colonia), and the colonias in which phenomena of suicide, domestic violence, and gang activity converge.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, based on information by Cerda et al. (2012, pp. 250, 255) and Martínez Jasso et al (2009, p. 73).

Gangs had concentrated in polygons of poverty in previous years (see Map 10). Facing lack of job and education opportunities and marginalization, youths -particularly males- form groups to get validation, social capital, and a common identity through music, graffiti, and by claiming spaces as their own to defend. Some of these gangs have existed for decades. The conflict between sectors in a single *colonia* is occasionally pushed onto younger generations by their parents or grandparents, adding to the reputation of violence of the zone. However, since the early 2000s, gangs grew in number and occupied more territory. Once again referring to the study of Cerda et al., the authors identified 1,600 gangs in 2006, 1,907 in 2007, 1,905 in 2008, and 1,926 in 2009. 94.4% of them are located in 16 out of 23 *colonias* with identified gangs.

In Map 10 we can observe the *colonias* with the highest count of gangs in Monterrey between 2006-2009; during this period gangs grew in number and areas all over the MMA, counting more than 26,000 youths. By 2008-2009 gang activity tripled in Escobedo. This is due to the displacement of some gangs from the northwest of Monterrey due to targeted police action. It is noteworthy that gangs were connected across municipalities; some groups shared the same name and symbols and claimed spaces in different municipalities of MMA. The presence of gangs justified the criminalization of youths, and a rise on detentions of minors by the police. Since 2010 cases of adolescent minors subjected to trial went from 14 cases to 875, most of them coming from *colonias populares* (Cerda Pérez et al., 2012, p. 220). Conversely, during

this period there was a lack of social programs and public policies dedicated to the outreach of *pandilleros* and families living in the afflicted zones (see Figure 32).

Figure 32 Walls tagged as territory of Cartel del Golfo in Cerro de la Campana, 2017.
Source: Instagram – Fanny Grimaldo.. Retrieved on 09/03/2021. https://www.instagram.com/p/CIGsujGh97-/

Violence related to drug traffic took hold of these vulnerable zones first in the mid-2000s. Nancy considers that teenagers living in precarious *colonias* were the most vulnerable: "The narco got them with money, a considerable amount for the kids living there. Taking into consideration the needs of their families, they would get involved. Or sometimes they would be threatened to join[53]" (interview Nancy, May 7, 2018). For many youths it was difficult to stay out of the conflict: it was easy money, and staying out of it was not an option.

As bought-off gangs and drug cartels claimed sections of territory, even if they were not part of any group, residents would be associated to an opposing cartel because of the street they lived in and they risked being attacked. Joining gangs was a way of keeping themselves and their families safe. Once people got involved with cartels through apparently innocuous activities -like working as lookouts-, it was virtually impossible to leave. Gangs who were previously involved in street fights, petty crime, drug dealing, and vandalism now incurred in robberies and kidnappings. Besides quotas of money or valuables, drug cartel recruits would also have quotas to fulfill of abduct men to serve as foot soldiers and women for human trafficking and prostitution. Gradually their assignments became more complex and dangerous, risking death, torture or other forms of physical violence against themselves and their loved ones if they refused or underperformed.

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[53] El narco los captó con dinero, una cantidad considerable para ellos. Tomando en cuenta las necesidades de la familia sí se animaban. O a veces los amenazaban.

> **_Malitos & narquillos_: euphemisms and class in everyday talks of organized crime**
>
> Residents of MMA at first denied violence, and when faced with the pervasiveness of it, they minimized it -literally using diminutives to refer to actors of organized crime- to avoid direct discussion. One of these euphemisms was los *malitos* -"the baddies". This comes from a local TV show for kids from the eighties, where the main character -a clown- faced and outsmarted *los malitos* in each episode: rural outlaws, bandits, thieves. These antagonists displayed *norteño* outfits, mannerisms, and language, similar to the present-day stereotypical image of a *narco*. *Los de la letra* - "the guys of the letter"- was used to refer specifically to the Zetas -the letter Z in Spanish-, out of fear of saying the cartel's name. However, the *malito* was not always as obvious as a man in a hat arriving in a Hummer surrounded by armed men. An associate of a cartel could be a well-dressed graduate setting up a front for money laundering. An otherwise unremarkable resident in an upper-middle class *colonia* would show unusual signifiers of wealth -such as new expensive cars and large new additions to their house- prompting neighbors to whisper "*se me hace que es malito*" or "*¿no andará con malitos?*[54]" Thus, the line between "the good ones" and "the bad ones" was not as clear for the upper classes.
>
> Conversely, the *narquillo* –"little narco"- was a more direct term. It was uttered contemptuously to refer to low ranking foot soldiers or drug dealers, particularly from *colonias populares*. Public discourse has pushed the narrative that the narco provided marginalized youths with opportunities of wealth and social mobility that would otherwise be inaccessible, where a common drug dealer could become the leader of a drug empire -a narrative aligned with the local meritocratic mindset (Iniesta, 2020). However, this extraordinary path was not the reality for the majority of the individuals recruited. The *narquillos* were the ones who bear the brunt of violence from law enforcement and other cartel recruits in *colonias populares*, and whose bodies may end hanging from an overpass or thrown in a *narcofosa*. Meanwhile, the *malitos* reaped economic benefits while remaining untouched by law enforcement, or they were apprehended and escorted out of their residence in San Pedro or any other exclusive *fraccionamiento* in MMA.

Carmen and Gerardo's assessment of the public sector's role is that it failed in preventing the real causes of poverty and violence:

> As long as these spaces [polygons of poverty] that are scary are segregated and neglected, this won't get better. Violence will not be under control. The state has no way of intervening or when it does it's too late. For example, when there is a homicide, there's a hundred police officers from all divisions hanging out, the person is already dead, and the murderer already left. But there is no one when it comes to preventing school

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[54] "I think he is a baddie" or "could he be meddling with baddies?"

desertion. A kid who drops out and that is surrounded by certain factors is in very high risk of becoming a criminal[55] (interview Carmen, April 17, 2018).

Despite evidence of the contrary, poverty and inequality are neglected and often treated as individual problems rather than as social issues by authorities and residents. Efforts aim to make it less visually evident without tackling the roots of the problem. The media, the public and private sector, and the inhabitants spare no effort to showcase the presence of multinational companies, American- and European-looking individuals or places, millionaires, luxury brands, private schools and colleges, skyscrapers, a constant activity of construction, active nightlife, and the proximity to the United States. Paradoxically, these elements made MMA an attractive spot for organized crime. Additionally, Monterrey is one of the largest cities in Mexico, and its proximity to the border of the United States made it an appealing territory for drug traffic. As symbolic and physical walls were built to keep away the residents of *colonias populares* and police came down hard on gangs of teenagers, drug lords established their residences in the affluent neighborhoods of the city.

6.2 Trauma: Drug cartel presence in Monterrey

While a common narrative was that organized crime-related violence appeared overnight, cartel presence was not a new phenomenon in Nuevo León and Monterrey. Ironically, drug lords and their families sought refuge in MMA from the violence in Juárez, Tijuana or Culiacán. They settled in affluent neighborhoods of San Pedro in the late 1990s where their children could attend private schools and universities. Their presence there made those zones neutral. Partnering with locals, drug cartels took advantage of the healthy environment for businesses for which *regios* pride themselves to create shell companies and other ventures for money laundering in the MMA. Cartel members were welcomed into the real estate scene to invest large amounts of money in public and private projects -and to build icons of wealth, progress, and prestige (see CHAPTER 5 and CHAPTER 7). As Astorga points out: "back when traffickers only lived, invested, and laundered money in the state, and killed in other parts of the country, it was not something that kept the political and business groups awake at night" (Morales Oyarvide, 2010).

Prior to 2010, there was an understanding between authorities and the cartels; law enforcement did not intervene in the cartel's businesses and territory. The collusion at federal, state, and municipal level made Santa Catarina and San Pedro headquarters of the Cartel del Golfo for storing and distributing drugs, respectively. With the arrest of their leader Osiel Cárdenas in

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[55] Mientras estos espacios que están cero atendidos que causan mucho miedo estén segregados y olvidados, esto no tiene forma de mejorarse. Por lo tanto, no hay manera de controlar la violencia. El estado no tiene forma de intervenir o interviene tarde. Por ejemplo, cuando hay un homicidio, hay 100 policías ahí de todos tipos nomás haciéndose bolas porque la persona ya está muerta y los asesinos ya se fueron, y cero presencia del estado en la prevención: cuando un adolescente deja la secundaria. Un muchacho que deja la secundaria que tiene ciertos elementos que lo rodean está en un riesgo altísimo de convertirse en una persona que comete actos delictivos.

2003, the CDG lost their grip of Santa Catarina and San Pedro to the Cartel de Sinaloa through their branch, the Beltran Leyva.

Drug cartels in MMA

With the control of borders after 9/11, drugs were harder to move into the US. As federal actions took place to limit drug traffic in the usual borders -such as Tamaulipas- drugs stayed and were sold in Mexico. Looking for alternative roads, MMA was prime territory to control distribution to the US and northeast Mexico, and for selling and consuming drugs.

The Cartel del Golfo had traditionally controlled northeast Mexico, and it was one of the largest cartels in Mexico (Dudley, 2017). The Beltran Leyva was responsible for selling and transporting drugs, for enforcing security against the CDG, and to penetrate security and political forces. By 2008, they had separated from the CDS, became the Beltran Leyva Organization, and moved onto their former ally's territory.

Another group entered the conflict: The Zetas. The Zetas originally were the armed wing of the CDG: defectors from the special forces of the Mexican Army sent to the northern Mexico to conduct operations against drug trafficking.

Due to their military background, the Zetas changed the criminal model of drug cartels: highly trained and organized, this enforcement wing of the CDG diversified activities and started extorting in exchange for protection, as well as bribery of police forces, and they opened CDG plazas to other endeavors like human smuggling. They grew to the extent that they could independently control CDG routes and plazas. The Zetas started breaking away from the CDG in 2009 and by 2010 they were an independent criminal organization fighting against their former bosses.

The fracturing of the main drug cartels and the presence of more than one cartel in a given territory brought on new levels of violence. Besides their own internal conflicts, drug cartels targeted law enforcement officers and departments, either for working with an opposing cartel or for trying to tackle drug trafficking and violence altogether. At first these murders happened in rural areas or highways where they dumped bodies as a warning. By 2006 they were being executed in populated areas of MMA.

It was the Zetas who marked the population the most. By 2010 they were operating completely on their own and against their former boss, CDG. And in their fight for "la plaza" -a turf- they changed the way cartels had operated until then, particularly when it came to violence. The Zetas were known for their extreme brutality, as they would engage in terror tactics to intimidate enemies and the population at large: beheadings, torture, and mutilations. Other organized crime groups matched Zetas' violence when fighting back, while other less influent groups used the Zetas' name and reputation to commit extortion.

What had once been a refuge and semi-neutral territory for money laundering turned into a disputed territory and a battleground for four drug cartels and the military. By 2009, violence

previously identified as happening in other regions, other states, or in polygons of poverty exploded and happened in spaces that were considered safe and neutral.

In order to take hold of *the plaza*, drug cartels needed to increase their numbers to fight directly against their enemies and get resources. They recruited first and foremost in the aforementioned polygons of poverty. For unemployed individuals, or informal workers, it was a profitable scheme to work for drug cartels as *halcones* or lookouts. Informal shop owners and unemployed youths were given cellphones -a luxury for many- and money in exchange for reporting the presence and movements of the police and the army. As previously stated, gangs were already widespread in MMA: they were an asset for organized crime groups first as their eyes and ears on the streets, and then as soldiers. Taxi drivers were equally useful, as they circulated inconspicuously in MMA. This opened the doors to illegal taxi services: unregistered units that worked for the cartels patrolling, transporting drugs, robbing passengers, and abducting individuals.

As conflicts and fragmentations between drug cartels escalated, vendettas were carried out in the shape of attacks on the lives of enemy cartel members and people associated with them, and attacks to the sources of income of the enemy cartel. Up until 2009, violence was still not considered a pressing issue of everyday life, as the targets were clearly politicians, narcos and their associates, and public officials. The general consensus was that being careful about places and company should be enough to stay safe. Once shootouts touched restaurants, night life hubs, places of leisure, universities, streets full of traffic, monuments, parks, and other supposedly secure spots -as opposed to marginal neighborhoods-, violence could not be denied nor avoided anymore.

6.2.1 The explosion of narco violence in secure spaces

2009-2013 is identified as the period when violence became evident and deadly for everyone - colloquially referred to as "el desmadre". Armed forces and federal police had been deployed in the region triggering the highest homicide rates in the history of MMA. During this period, several highly visible and lethal events took place in emblematic spaces of the Monterrey, spaces that were supposed to be secure or at least where one could pretend violence was controlled.

#balaceraTEC

One of the more emblematic incidents happened on March 2010 in an unlikely venue: the ITESM. Two students were murdered by the military near the campus at night, who were in pursuit of a group of members of a cartel. After beating them and shooting them, the scene was altered by the military to make it look like the students were gunmen. This information was widely spread by the media. For this reason, and the fact that they were from another state, the event was minimized by many; some even applauded that the rich were finally knowing what violence and fear felt like (González Ramírez, 2015). The official version was contested by parents and colleagues of the deceased. The incident was perceived as unfortunate but "niche"

situation of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, concerning only ITESM population and families. Nevertheless, the fact that ITESM students, traditionally part of the elite, could be murdered exiting a campus made the population uneasy.

#balaceraMTY Barrio Antiguo

Then came the loss of Barrio Antiguo, which symbolized the point of no return and the start of changing practices to avoid becoming collateral damage. Barrio Antiguo, like many other iconic spaces downtown, was visited by thousands each weekend, from all walks of life, it was a profitable spot for entrepreneurs, among them, drug dealers. This space of leisure had been gradually taken over by the cartels for money laundering and for drug distribution since 2008, who opened bars with or without licenses with the help of authorities. This was a well-known fact for patrons and authorities. As a patron puts it: "armed men became something normal (…) but we turned a blind eye (…) there was a certain feeling that Barrio was bulletproof. This is, the Zetas took over, and they controlled the entire city, it as hard for something to happen there (…)" (Ontiveros, 2019). This of course changed with the growing tensions between cartels. Once Zetas broke with CDG in 2010 they started extorting locale owners to use their bars and restaurants to make business -such as recruitments and money laundering-, alert them of the presence of their enemies or law enforcement, allow the distribution and consumption of cocaine and marihuana or to give them money. Refusing to cooperate would result in physical violence, threats, kidnappings, torture or death. Some owners turned a blind eye for fear of retaliation, and others closed their businesses overnight and fled after seeing their colleagues beaten or threatened. For patrons, it only meant that one had to avoid hot spots, mind their own business, and be careful of who they hang out and what they said. Other more weary and affluent patrons moved the party to the nascent nightlife zones in San Pedro.

Once operating secretly, cartel members now were anything but inconspicuous, arriving in luxurious vehicles -sometimes escorted by the police-, flashing guns and money, and surrounded by young women. As tensions escalated into armed violence in the city, users and residents of Barrio Antiguo were quite literally caught in the crossfire. For a time, the well-known fact that Barrio Antiguo was controlled by the Zetas gave people a sense of security: it was their territory and thus it would be hard for something bad to happen there. However, the most dramatic event came in May 2011 when gunmen opened fire to the façade of the Café Iguana while it was operating with people partying inside the venue and on the street, killing two patrons and two employees. This event led to a more dramatic decrease of clientele, as bar owners closed and left for good and patrons avoided the place. It was then, the common narrative tells, that people knew no place was safe.

#balaceraMTY Casino Royale

Another event that marked this period was the Casino Royale attack. The casino had opened in 2007 and like several other businesses of the kind, it had been attacked several times by organized crime. However, the most violent incident happened in August 2011. A group of Zetas gunmen arrived at the casino and opened fire on patrons and employees. They later doused the premises with gasoline and set them on fire while a crowd of 150 people, mostly women, tried to escape. Some managed to leave during the shooting, others who hid were

trapped. The emergency exits were locked and the fire and the panic spread. 52 persons died from suffocation, and many more were injured and hospitalized.

The attack was meant to send a message to the casino owners for failing to pay a weekly fee to the cartel, and allegedly, the situation grew out of control for the perpetrators.

After this event, 3000 additional military and elements were deployed in the city. However, neither the police nor the military were trusted by the population due to their implication in murders, abductions, and other actions of questionable legality and humanity against civilians. Residents of MMA could be victims of both the cartels and the military.

While these events resonated due to their visibility, magnitude, and location, these were by no means the only occasions in which civilian casualties were part of a coverup or collateral damage. It was common for groups of criminals to arrive to casinos, restaurants, bars, shops, and businesses -both formal and informal- during working hours and open fire to threaten or kill an enemy in the premises, scare owners for not collaborating with them or rob the place. Besides the dramatic violence executed in plain sight to attract attention from authorities and opposing cartels, homicides and abductions happened daily. The sight of mutilated bodies, the smell of corpses burning in the hills, the sound of gunfire, and the risk of being abducted, robbed, tortured or killed became part of everyday life.

6.2.2 Homicides, abductions, and robberies

According to the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública Nacional, between 2004 and 2010, rates of robberies increased by 60.4%, homicides increased by 148.8%, and abductions by 200% in Nuevo León, most of them happening in MMA (Aguayo Téllez & Medellín Mendoza, 2014, p. 69).

While highly violent homicides and abductions had been a rarity in previous years, they were the most spectacular and use as means to instill fear between drug cartels Additionally, less spectacular forms such as simple thefts, house robberies, and car thefts were an everyday concern for the population. Narco recruits would be tasked with selling and transporting drugs, and fulfilling quotas of valuables: money, cars, car parts, jewels, electronics (computers and cellphones). Many women working informally as domestic service employees for upper class families would be coerced into cooperating with criminals by informing them of their bosses' absence and to be let into the houses to rob them. Armed and backed by cartels, robberies escalated in terms of violence against the victims.

As for homicides, a common saying during the early stages was "they are only killing their own[56]", meaning the killings only targeted narcos or at most, dirty or uncooperative public officials. The Director of the Agencia Estatal de Investigaciones, Marcelo Garza y Garza, was murdered allegedly by orders of BLO in September 2006, while leaving attending a public function with his family in San Pedro and after announcing the dismissal of corrupt police

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[56] Solo se están matando entre ellos.

personnel. In November, a deadly shootout between members of the CDG and CDS in the parking lot of a mall in the municipality of Guadalupe. The casualties were a former policeman, a cartel member, and a bystander. By then it was the deadliest incident of 2006, raising the body count to 55. Simultaneously, federal law enforcement detained 2000 drug dealers in 2006. On February 2007 the military, elements of the Policía Federal Preventiva, and the Agencia Federal de Investigación were deployed as part of the Operativo Nuevo León. Soon came the narcomantas: threatening messages to authorities, enemies, and traitors left on dead bodies, frequently with signs of torture. In March 2007, a body was found in the highway Monterrey-García. This was the 30th execution since January 2007 in Nuevo León. A narcomanta was stabbed onto the body, with a message addressed to the Secretary General and Attorney General of Nuevo León -the former quitted his post on July. The body count went up to 107 that year. The first steady increase in homicides happened in late 2009. Now the common saying became "when it's your time, it's your time[57]" -there is no escape from the possibility of dying violently or being abducted.

A recent study by Dorantes-Gildardi et al. (2020) shows that there is no homogeneity in homicide rates across municipalities, revealing crime focal points located within Apodaca, Monterrey, Cadereyta, San Nicolás, and Guadalupe (see Figure 33). Santa Catarina, on the other hand, is not among the top places of casualties, but consistently presents homicides during the whole period of analysis. During the period between 2011-2012 homicides were related to urban environments, with highways playing an important role (such as Carretera Nacional, Av. Gonzalitos, Av. Fidel Velazquez, Av. Garza Sada, etc.): they often act as boundaries between municipalities, they are escape routes, car chases happened there, they are at times empty at night, and bodies were dumped there as warnings. While this study provides clues about the geographies of homicides in MMA, it is worth noting that the study is based on crime information from El Norte, a local newspaper. As we will see in the last section of this chapter, the media is not entirely unbiased when it comes to reporting incidents depending on socioeconomic class and location. Furthermore, changes in public administration in 2012 entailed, among other things, less reporting of violent incidents on the media.

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[57] Cuando te toca, te toca.
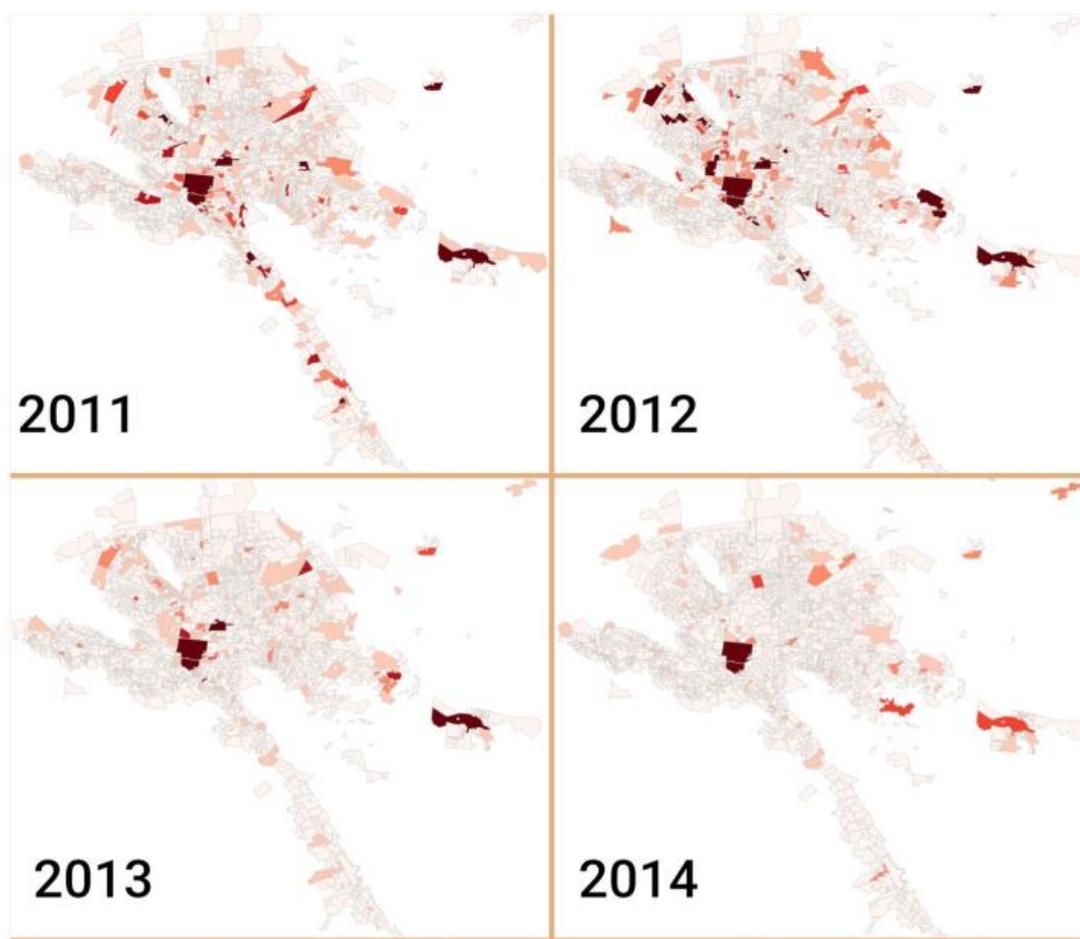
Figure 33 Geospatial yearly distribution of homicides in MMA. Dark colors represent higher number of casualties.
Source: Dorantes-Gildardi et al. (2020), modified by author.

According to Robledo (2017, p. vii), 50% of homicides were related to organized crime and common crime. Homicides committed by drug cartels could be especially brutal and serve as warnings. The aforementioned author (2017, pp. 22–26) presents a timeline of some notorious deaths, from the body of a 16 year-old found hanging from an overpass to the grim discovery of 49 human torsos in Cadereyta in a *narcofosa*. The *narcofosa* -a mass grave for those killed by cartels- became also emblematic of the second phenomenon that grew exponentially during this period: abductions.

Discussing abductions is complicated, in large part due to limited quantitative information available. Along with the limitations of crime rates in general and even considering the many limitations of homicide rates (see CHAPTER 2 and CHAPTER 4), official data exists in some capacity. This is not the case for data of missing persons (Gatti & Irazuzta, 2019). Data from the Registro Nacional de Datos de Personas Extraviadas o Desaparecidas (RNPED) and the Procuraduría General de Justicia de Nuevo León (PGJNL) is limited, contradictory, and inconsistently recorded over the years. Nevertheless, even with missing information, it is possible to see an increase in registered cases from 2007 on (CADHAC, 2016). The RNPED removes cases where the crime is typified as kidnapping or human trafficking, even if the victim is not yet found. However, the missing data is confronted with the grisly reality of bodies

in narcofosas. Between January 2009 and June 2016, the PGJNL counted 116 mass graves in Nuevo León (Carrizales, 2016). The body count of abductees, however, is inconclusive. Victims cannot be identified as bodies are mutilated and others were destroyed with acid, making it "practically impossible to know the dimensions of the problem of abductions in Mexico, and more specifically, in Monterrey" (CADHAC, 2016, p. 27), according to a report by CADHAC -an citizens' association for human rights in the city.

Words like *ejecutado* (killed most likely by a cartel), *encajuelado* (dead body found in a car trunk), *encobijado* (dumped body wrapped in blankets), *levantado* (abducted from the street), *fusilado* (killed by gunshot), *colgado* (body found hanging from a bridge or overpass) *entambado* (body found stuffed in a metal barrel often with cement or acid to accelerate decomposition), and *descuartizado* (mutilated body) became part of the vocabulary used to describe the type of violence that ended one's life. Additionally, there was less lethal modality of the *secuestro express*: the victim would be taken off the streets by criminals for a few hours, in which they would be forced to retire as much cash as possible from ATMs. In another variant, the abductor would call the family to extort them for as much money they could gather in a short span of time. Being abducted off the street, regardless of actual wealth, was a real concern for people of all classes.

<u>Involvement of the authorities as perpetrators</u>

The increasing presence of the military did not imply a reduced feeling of insecurity by the population. Over the years the federal forces as well as local police had been implicated in abductions of civilians unrelated to organized crime, as well as violations of human rights. Civilians were detained without warrants and taken into custody, never to be heard of again (something that happened more frequently from 2012 on). Other times, the police and the military abducted individuals (such as factory workers and immigrants) to hand them or sell them to drug cartels. Even police officers were victims of abductions. Innocent bystanders were killed by the military while confronting cartels. They planted guns or drugs on the victims and reported them as dead cartel members. These actions were not investigated and the perpetrators were seldom brought to justice. The families of the abducted asked in the authorities' premises for the whereabouts of the detained, and received contradictory stories. Authorities denied any involvement from state agents, insisting that the thousands of abductions were isolated cases committed by independent perpetrators. Many who wanted to report the disappearances or the murders were threatened into silence. With the support of Human Rights Watch (2011) collectives of the victims' families urged the state governor Rodrigo Medina to condemn these actions, however once again authorities failed to act.

The levels of victimization and the government's inaction and involvement in crime led to the creation of associations such as Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Nuevo León. The FUNDENL is mostly integrated by women (many of them, mothers of missing persons) and they conduct independent actions to find abductees, from offering advice and guidance to families of abductees to searching on the field for narcofosas. Violence also led to a series of protests -something unusual in the city- to demand the government to act (in one of them the governor participated). In his work "Primavera regia pospuesta" González Ramírez (2015) documents the various events between 2010 and 2013 that motivated citizens to protest.

Who is a worthy "victim"?

Previously, it was considered that a kidnappable victim should have above average wealth, influence, power, and notoriety. For a while, drug cartels targeted high profile individuals to negotiate ransom money or influence. However, this would also change over time. According to the CADHAC report (2016) individuals from all walks of life could be abducted without being wealthy or involved with criminals, and they could be victimized by drug cartels and law enforcement. The report noted that most of the reports of missing persons concerned young poor males, working mostly as vendors or drivers.

While there was an acknowledgement that anyone could be a victim of abduction or homicide, simultaneously there was a belief that victims "andaban en malos pasos" -they were involved with the wrong people or they were criminals; once again, ascribing personal responsibility to victimization. Concerning abductions, the governor Rodríguez Calderon stated: "moms never want to admit that their kid is wrong and the best excuse is to blame the government (…) [being in the wrong place in the wrong time] is the best excuse for a mom" (De la Fuente, 2015). Like his predecessor Rodrigo Medina, he blamed the victims' families for wanting the government to solve what was most likely a voluntary disappearance or the consequences of being involved in crime. Cases of female abductees were brushed off by saying that she probably ran away with her boyfriend.

In the case of Monterrey, there is also the issue of social class, place of origin, *colonia of residence, and* even occupation. A significant number of abductions were reported in marginalized *colonias*. However, it was treated as an issue related to the 'violent nature' of these zones, and blamed on the background of the residents, either as immigrants or for supposedly being involved in criminal activity. Their cases were dismissed by authorities and other MMA residents because of their area of residence, as they alleged that the victim was most probably hanging out with the wrong crowds.Not every death is considered a tragedy, especially if the victim is not seen as innocent, careful, or of sound moral standing (see CHAPTER 8).

6.2.3 Gender-based violence in the security crisis

Like in the case of the early stages of cartel-related violence in Mexico, violence against women was not a particularly concerning issue in MMA. Like many forms of violence in the locality, gender-based violence was commonly conceptualized by residents as only physical abuse in domestic partnerships, and pertaining to the lower classes. Gender-based violence in the public space is normalized: it is the cost of not being able to afford access to private spaces and private transportation. Nevertheless, gender inequality is present in MMA across social classes, which is accentuated by other factors such as race, age, place of residence, and socio-economic status. *Regio* society places high value on traditional gender roles and gives a lower value to tasks and attributes traditionally pertaining women (see CHAPTER 5).

The late 90s and early 2000s were marked by the phenomenon known as the Muertas de Juárez: the abductions and killings of women, which were eventually labeled as "feminicides" by Lagarde, Radford, and Russel (Falquet, 2014). The violence committed to the female bodies was especially gruesome. The mutilated bodies of young women were found in landfills and deserts, with marks of torture, sexual violence, and rape. The demands of justice from the victims' families were unattended, minimized, and ignored by the police, who blamed the victims and their families for their lack of responsibility and questioned their morality. Facing the lack of action, women formed collectives to demand justice, search for their loved ones, and communicate on the situation.

Failure to recognize other forms of violence -such as sexual, emotional or economic- in various contexts and social classes has contributed to the escalation to murder. As Aguilera et al. explain (2008, p. 79) in environments where less lethal forms of violence are minimized, normalized or ignore, feminicide is the ultimate expression of violence against women. Along with the surge of violence from organized crime, homicide of women rose alarmingly. As mentioned in CHAPTER 2, this happens during armed conflicts which aggravates situations of exclusion and discrimination against vulnerable populations. Segato points out that violence of societies with a prevailing patriarchal vision grows in countries at war, even those facing "informal war" like Mexico. Violence against women is the way in which men send messages of power and control (Rinaldy, 2019). Segato proposes that the impersonal and systemic violences against women, exposed in broad daylight are "femigenocides".

While the large majority of abductees reported in Nuevo León are male, organizations that advocate for abductees noted the differences of cases involving female victims. 65% of female abductees were between 11 and 30 years old, while 65% of male abductees were aged between 18 and 40 (CADHAC, 2016, p. 23; Observatorio sobre desaparición e impunidad, 2017). Female abductees were also more economically vulnerable than their male counterparts, most of them being students or housecleaners, and most of them perceived low wages (between 800 – 4720 MXP/month). Women abducted by the military were the victims of sexual torture, or they were abducted for forceful prostitution by drug cartels. Concerning homicides, women were the victims not only of criminals working for cartels -for example, as collateral damage- and in public spaces but also of their own families in private spaces.

As opposed to direct drug-related violence, there is a lack of documentation on feminicides in MMA and Nuevo León. Most scholarly studies about this phenomenon in the territory concentrate on its depiction on local media and legality (Ávila Sánchez & Jáuregui Díaz, 2020). It is worth pointing out that data of feminicides is inconsistent across platforms and institutions at federal, state, and municipal levels. First, and as it has been previously discussed, crime in general is rarely reported in Mexico and in MMA and trust in authorities is low. Second, gender-based violence is even less acknowledged than other crimes by victims, witnesses, and authorities. Third, if the incident is recognized as a crime by the victim, the added victimization of retelling the incident to an officer who will question the victim's precautions or background deters victims from coming forward. Lastly, when it comes specifically to gender-based killings, authorities lack the knowledge to identify what makes a feminicide, and records confound this with homicide.

The direct and ubiquitous violence experienced apparently across social classes and territories obscured the specificities of gender-based violence. Concerning homicides during the period of extreme drug-related violence, the data, while inconsistent, revealed that victims were predominantly male. Homicides could be identified as organized-crime related or not. However, on cases non-related to organized crime the particularities of gender-based violence were not taken into account. The assessment that individuals, regardless of their gender, were allegedly murdered as a consequence of a violent or criminal confrontation, obscures the specific characteristics of murder of women.

In a territory facing chronic violence, the discourse and experiences point to the omnipresent nature of risk: violent crime can happen anytime, anywhere, and to anyone. So, one must be prepared for this. The traditional misogyny converges with the novel degrees of direct violence producing contradictions in the mainstream discourse: women are constantly reminded that they are in a vulnerable position, and that they have to take care of themselves. Simultaneously, it is said that women do not require special institutional attention since violence is everywhere and anyone can be a victim. Responsibility over the causes and consequences of victimization falls on the potential victim. 2007 marked a shift in location of homicides of women. Women have been historically killed in their homes by members of their household. Since the start of the war on drugs women are mostly being killed on the streets, in addition to an increase of the rates of women killed in their homes (see Graph 3).
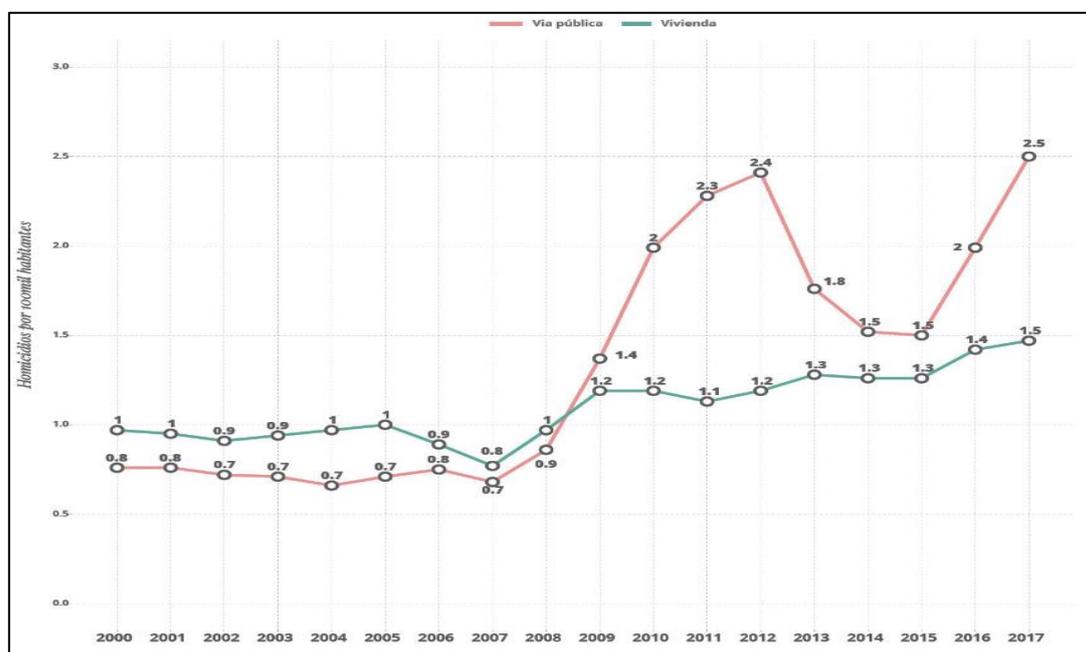
Graph 3 National rates of female homicides according to place, showing two peaks of incidents happening in streets in 2012 and 2017.
Source: Data Civica (2019) with information from INEGI and CONAPO.

Most of the existing legal documentation focused on the penalization of physical violence in domestic spheres. Several changes happened on the late 2000s to the legal considerations and

mechanisms to tackle gender-based violence. The Ley General de Accesso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia was enacted at a federal level in 2007, acknowledging gender-based discrimination. The Comisión Nacional para Prevenir y Erradicar la Violencia Contra las Mujeres was created in 2009 to analyze gender-related violence. Feminicide was incorporated to the Código Penal Federal only until 2012. This law acknowledges the particularities of gender-based homicidal violence, such as marks of sexual violence or humiliation, the exhibition of the victim's body in a public space, the potential emotional link between the victim and the perpetrator, and precedents of any other types of violence (domestic violence, for example) inflicted on the victim by the perpetrator.

The 2007 law created the Alerta de Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres. It consists of emergency actions from the government to tackle and eradicate feminicidal violence perpetrated by individuals or a community. On November 18 2016 the AVGM was dictated for the state of Nuevo León, focusing on the municipalities of Apodaca, Cadereyta Jiménez, Guadalupe, Juárez, and Monterrey. Regardless of the federal dispositions, their effective application at municipal levels is not guaranteed. Since the AVGM was declared there have scarcely been any improvements on reduction of gender-based violence. Even taking into consideration these severe problems of data inconsistency, Nuevo León is the 4th state in the country with the most Feminicides with 61 women murdered in 2019 and 24 more only in the first 4 months of 2020 according to the SESNSP (Padilla, 2020). A study by the CONAVIM (Redacción, 2021) placed Monterrey as the 3rd municipality in the country with the most Feminicides in 2020, behind Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez.

Although gender-based violence against women is certainly not new neither in the country nor in Nuevo León, in the past decade it has grown exponentially and it has been introduced into mainstream discussions and the political arena due to the activism of collectives advocating for unsolved abductions and murders supported by feminist groups. Although several steps have been taken to punish and typify gender-based violence against women, feminicides are on the rise in MMA and the issue is banalized by a population facing the allegedly more pressing issue of criminal violence through armed force.

The main concern of authorities has been to create the legal and institutional framework, without strengthening the pre-existing organisms or communicating with citizens. In November 2015 the State of Nuevo León created the Fiscalía Especializada de Atención a la Mujer, later renamed to Fiscalía Especializada en Feminicidios y Delitos Contra las Mujeres (FEFDCM), as part of the Fiscalía General de Justicia de Nuevo León. The leadership of the organism has been inconsistent, changing over time and lacking expertise on gender-related violence. Unlike the Fiscalía Especializada Anti-secuestros, the Fiscalía of crimes against women is not featured in the page of the FGJ. And unlike the FGJ, there is no webpage, contact or Facebook Page for the FEFDCM. Nonetheless, in 2020 the FEFDCM boasted its technological advancements in offering over 300,000 online services -without specifying what these are-, and that they have managed to digitize over 75,000 investigation files. The same year the FEFDCM admitted they lacked the resources to attend to the more than 500 cases each attorney has to look through. Between September 2019 and August 2020, the FEFDCM dictated over 330 sentences for the crime of feminicides and domestic violence. Most of the

research is focused on the macro-level issues of the problem of violence against women and the legal framework in MMA. Its only until recently that studies have been produced focusing on women's perception of violence in public spaces in MMA (see CHAPTER 8), such as the UN Women's report of street harassment and sexual violence in public transportation (2019) and the Así Vamos survey (2019). The latter document is part of the actions carried out by an organism created by the private sector to monitor insecurity in MMA.

6.2.4 The public sector' actions in the face of violence

Two key characteristics of the public sector facing drug related violence were denial and opacity. At the beginning, public authorities denied any possibility of drug violence in the state. On March 2001, the governor Fernando Canales affirmed "the narco is no match for me" (Redacción, 2011). A year later he would admit that the state was sieged by organized crime and that there are negative forces in the state to hinder progress and employment (Alanís, 2002). After the arrest of the CDG in 2003, evidence surfaced relating the complicity of the then governor of Nuevo León Natividad González Parás, who already was signaled for acts of corruption.

Since early 2000s, the cartels infiltrated all levels, from street gangs to police officers and elected officials. An already ineffective public sector was compromised, which aggregated to the internal divisions taking place within the cartels and disputes over MMA. These divisions were also reflected on the municipal and state police forces, who were bought off by the cartels. Police forces acted not only outside of the law on their own, but they were linked to organized crime, whom people named "polizetas" to denote their collaboration with the Zetas (Vera, 2018). State authorities reported that 30% to 40% of the police corps were colluded with the cartels (Benítez, 2010, p. 42).

Narcobloqueos made evident just how unprepared and outnumbered federal and state law enforcement were. According to Proceso (Redacción, 2010) there were no prior records of narcos taking streets, avenues, and expressways of a city, without the opposition of the police or the army. Armed cartel soldiers appeared in broad daylight on the most important avenues and they forced drivers of cars, trucks and buses to block the road, paralyzing traffic. Usually this action was carried out to divert law enforcement elements and resources, while the cartel attacked other zones in MMA.

With unprecedented unanimity, the lack of action from the public sector was criticized by businessmen groups, representatives from the United States -whose government had issued a warning for American citizens traveling to Nuevo León-, and even the clergy (Indigo Staff, 2007). They denounced the lack of investigations and results, and the negative impact of insecurity on investments and economic growth. Still, in 2008 heads of the departments of justice and public security assured to an American newspaper that what was happening in Tamaulipas would not happen in Nuevo León (Redacción, 2011) and that the crisis of transnational drug cartels was over. On the matter of crime in the state Aldo Fasci Zuazua, director of the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública stated at the time:

[local minor cells of drug dealers] are the main concern, not transnational drug cartels (…) not all delinquency is related to drug traffic, there are specialized cells, working in a particular territory or area of specialty (…) some *levantan* [abductions without intention to collect a ransom], collect, blackmail, kidnap [for ransom] there are cells dedicated to carjacking, others rob banks. (Notimex, 2008)

In 2010 a report of the Ministry of National Defense signaled Monterrey and 8 other municipalities among the top 19 zones of risk for soldiers (Redacción, 2011). The refusal to recognize the early manifestations of violence stemmed from the incapacity of the public sector to combat violence and insecurity. This was both for the lack of capacities and for the corruption of public officials of all levels. As an example, after the 2011 attack on the Casino Royale the mayor of Monterrey, Fernando Larrazábal, blamed the president of the Tribunal for Administrative Litigation for allowing the casino to reopen after being shut down for failure to obtain construction permits. She in turn blamed Protección Civil for not verifying emergency exits upon its reopening. Evidence emerged implicating the mayor in the extortion of the casino owners. In addition to this, as stated earlier, public programs failed to tackle structural violence, poverty, and inequality that existed long before cartel violence but that created fertile ground for it to take root. Now overwhelmed by organized crime, these initiatives were even more deficient. Furthermore, both private and public sectors were interested in maintaining the image of economic attractivity of MMA.

San Pedro: Mano dura approach and the appearance of peace

San Pedro, home of politicians, wealthy families, public officials, business owners, and drug lords, was emblematic in the locality for its approach to security. Since the mid-2000s public officials were gunned down here, and later, the municipality was a prime target for robberies, which increased dramatically. High-profile individuals were extorted or kidnapped in exchange for cooperation, money or properties, and killed when they did not cooperate. Villarreal Montemayor (2016) produced a thesis about the transformations of everyday life for the San Pedro elite: while some families migrated to the United States -either as a consequence of being victims of violence or as a preventive measure- those who stayed, fearful of being the victims of violent crimes, invested heavily on personal security (bodyguards, armored cars, alarms, fortified apartments, etc).

For many, these incidents were not meant to happen there; they happened in violent, poor, and corrupt zones. The exodus of their wealthiest residents and business owners also meant significant economic losses for the most affluent municipality in Latin America and the state. Facing this, Mauricio Fernandez, a local politician and descendant from the Garza Sada family, ran for mayor and won under the slogan "San Pedro Blindado" (armored San Pedro) in 2009. Fernandez promoted anti-crime policies and a "mano dura" strategy (see CHAPTER 2). He explicitly acknowledged the hold of drug cartels during his campaign in the municipality saying "BLO have reserved San Pedro, because many of their families have lived here for years" (Redacción, 2009). With the support of businessmen, he established an intelligence body: el "Grupo Rudo" (the Tough Group, those who did the dirty work). On their functioning he stated that:

the toughness (of the Grupo Rudo) comes on the side of the police, and we are going to keep doing as much as we can (…) we apply toughness to a matter that I don't want, which is crime, through municipal, state, and federal police (…) we pay for any information to identify criminals and such. I get the money to do it (Mendieta, 2016).

This group operated illegally and covertly, they were paid for information, and to enforce security. Through them an agreement was achieved with BLO to keep the peace by giving them free reign to continue the pago de piso in the budding nightlife centers and to sell drugs. Fernandez' links with the private sector allowed him to increase the number of police officers, improve their training, and implement world-class certification processes for the police. Conversely, he implemented a database of domestic service employees -many coming from marginalized *colonias- to prevent robb*eries, and promoted the installation of CCTV for street surveillance.

With the apparent guarantee that San Pedro was crime-proof, many economic activities migrated there from Monterrey; prices of land soared and it was a prosperous time for the construction of high rises, bars, and commercial plazas with state-of-the-art security measures. There were constant patrol and surveillance operations to prevent robberies, while points of control were placed in the access points of the municipality to interrogate drivers and pedestrians coming in. San Pedro residents limited or stopped contact with the rest of MMA, never leaving the municipality. Once again, the elite defined the course of action: other municipalities attempted to copy the fortification of San Pedro by increasing their police forces and applying heavy sanctions, but lacked the economic support from the private sector. The fabricated peace in San Pedro meant that violence moved to the other municipalities.

Escobedo: an experiment in community-oriented policing

On the opposite extreme -economically and geographically-, the municipality of Escobedo implemented the Modelo de Proximidad for the Escobedo Police (PROXPOL). Originating in Spain, the implementation of the model started in the municipality under the administration of Clara Flores between 2009-2012. Unlike the mano dura approach, PROXPOL aims first to remediate the mistrust regarding police officers and prevent crimes through social actions close to the population (Herrera et al., 2012), particularly youths. Two elements are at the core of PROXPOL: the citizen and the police officer. Police officers go through additional training to improve interactions with residents. They are assigned to specific areas to establish communication with the neighbors. Another important point was the "dignification of municipal police": providing them with better working conditions and proper equipment, from shoes to vests, and giving them better salaries. The model consists of five key actions: weekly meetings with the neighbors; surveys to residents to evaluate police services; meetings between big and small businessowners with the security team of the municipality to analyze survey results and create prevention strategies; talks and activities for crime prevention in schools and churches; patrolling by police officers formed in attention to the victims, crime prevention, and conflict mediation. The international validation was publicized, as the PROXPOL experiment in an environment of chronic violence was commented on by various experts. At a national level, mayors of municipalities in Chihuahua, Guanajuato, Veracruz, among others, visited Escobedo with the intention of replicating the experiment (Jiménez, 2019; Ulloa, 2019).

Nonetheless, this experiment was less notorious in MMA than the San Pedro fortification, and according to inhabitants of Escobedo, it has not been as successful as the official communications affirm.

6.2.5 Violence, traditional media, and the transition to social media

Media contributes to the way a public problem such as violence is constructed. Literature has often focused on the role media plays in a "culture of fear": the media fabricates or exaggerates fears to manipulate audiences and serve a political agenda (Donovan, 2004; N. D. Phillips, 2017). This position considers that most people gain their information about crime through the media rather than through direct experience (Furedi, 2002, pp. 51–52). This is not the case of Monterrey and organized-crime related violence. Local media in Monterrey has indeed helped shape discourses around violence, but it did not create the narco as a folk devil. If anything, the media did not reveal the gruesome nature of violence in certain zones or for certain groups, while reveling on the spectacle of it for other groups.

Multimedios: the people's advocate

Traditional media played an important role in the lives of residents of MMA even prior to the security crisis. Founded in 1968, Multimedios Televisión is the undisputed leader in the northeast zone in TV, radio, and press. When citizens want a problem solved, they call Multimedios. For example, if a neighborhood has not had water, garbage collection or electricity for days or weeks, and calling public service offices has not yielded any results, residents call Multimedios. Families of handicapped people or those suffering from an illness, or individuals who lost their homes or businesses due to accidents or natural catastrophes present their case to Multimedios. Then the broadcasting station decides either to comment briefly on their situation or to send reporters and cameramen to do a section or an interview with the parties involved.

On the one hand, the local media gives wide visibility to the case in question, and it can reach people who are can help -for example, by donating clothes, medical equipment or medicines, food or helping people find a job. On the other hand, local media is well connected politically, so it is on the interest on both allies and opposition to project a positive image. This positive image is fostered by solving the problems that are shown by the media. The media plays up the ineffectiveness of public services in a certain situation presented by citizens, voicing things such as how is it possible that a law-abiding sector is deprived of a certain service. Residents are aware of this and use it to their advantage. With its regio values and conservative editorial line, Multimedios is both a mirror of the regio society and it also contributes to shape public discourse, for example, around who was an innocent victim and who was "asking for it".

The performance of the media could be summed up in overreporting at the beginning to underreporting at the end, with the constant bias dependent on political sway, actors involved, and territory. Edmundo, a consultant on security and intelligence in Monterrey who works for the private sector, explains the relationship between the private sector, the public sector, and the media, and the reasons behind the overflow of information and the sudden silence after 2012:

> [the media] didn't report half of it back then or they reported it as they wanted. I received real-time information every day, all day long, from the C5 and the intelligence hub of [company in Santa Catarina]. Even today, it is so much what happens every day, it can't make it to the TV or the newspapers. There wouldn't be any place left for anything else. What they do report is what we cannot ignore because it happens right in front of us, on broad daylight, or what happens in the spots everyone knows are dangerous -San Berna, Apodaca, *Escomiedo*, Juárez. Like, back in 2010, they couldn't stay silent about the *colgados* or the *narcobloqueos* because it was so obvious. The media are afraid, but it is convenient for them to shut up about some things. [Upper-class residents and industry owners] are well connected and they have the media and politicians on speed dial to tell them to keep it on the down low for a while. San Pedro is more unified in that sense. [Felipe] Calderón didn't listen so much to the private sector of Monterrey like [Vicente] Fox did, that of course didn't sit well with them. That's one of the reasons that the media went crazy for a while reporting on shootouts, murders, and torture early on: they wanted to make it clear that Calderon's policies were inadequate, but those were real things that were happening, there is no denying that. That changed with Peña Nieto [president in 2012]. They went quiet all of a sudden, except for stuff that was shocking but that wouldn't have any retaliation -where people don't care, *colonias pobres*[58] (interview Edmundo, September 26, 2018).

For most of the period of violence, local news outlets reported every day on violent events, to the point that not every incident could be featured. Depending on political engagements the media outlets had, they would report on crime in a municipality governed by their opposition to put them in an unfavorable light. Local news reports would depend on the pre-existing representations and geographies of violence. Edmundo also explains the link between media reporting violence, inequality, and territory in MMA:

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[58] [los medios] no reportaban ni la mitad de lo que pasaba. Yo recibo información en tiempo real, todo el día, del C5 y de la unidad de inteligencia de [compañía en Santa Catarina]. Incluso hoy, pasan tantas cosas, no todo pueden ponerlo en la tele o en el periódico. No habría espacio para nada más. De lo que sí reportan es de lo que uno no se puede sordear porque pasa enfrente de ti, en pleno día, o lo que pasa en lugares donde sabes que es peligroso - San Berna, Apodaca, *Escomiedo*, Juárez. Fíjate, en el 2010, no se podían guardar lo de los colgados o los narcobloqueos porque era bien obvio. Los medios tienen miedo, pero también les conviene callarse algunas cosas. [Gente de la clase alta y dueños de industrias] están bien conectados y tienen línea directa con medios y políticos para decirles que la calmen con reportar algo. San Pedro está muy unificado en ese sentido. [Felipe] Calderón no le hizo mucho caso a la iniciativa privada de Monterrey como [Vicente] Fox, y pues eso no les gustó. Es una de las razones por las que los medios reportaban a lo loco de balaceras, asesinatos y torturas al principio: querían dejar claro que Calderón no estaba haciéndolo bien, pero de que estaba pasando todo eso, estaba pasando, ni como negarlo. Eso cambió con Peña Nieto [presidente a partir de 2012]. De pronto se callaron, excepto por cosas que eran impactantes pero que no tendrían muchas consecuencias -donde a la gente no le importa, *colonias* pobres.

There are many factors: the looks of the victim, their age, where do they live, if they are well-off or poor. For example, if a rich girl from San Pedro is raped, they would probably comment on it for shock value, unless she's well connected or Mauricio's [Fernandez, mayor of San Pedro] team blocks it. If a poor girl from Valle Verde [*colonia popular*] is raped, they don't care. If someone is murdered in Cumbres [upper class sector], again, shock value, because that's out of the norm: you kinda expect people to get murdered in *colonias populares* but not in *fraccionamientos tipo bien*. However, if a *balacera* happens in La Indepe, they are probably going to talk about it, because it is remarkable, and it easy to point fingers and say 'as always, the vandals of La Indepe causing problems', particularly now that they want to build stuff there, they want people to have a negative opinion of La Indepe. But if there is a *balacera* in San Pedro, they will keep quiet, because some people there have a lot of pull.

With the controversial election of Peña Nieto in 2012 media control strategies used by the PRI made a comeback, and the federal government chose not to disclose any more information about violence. In Nuevo León, incidents linked to organized crime were denied or concealed by the governor, the Agencia Estatal de Investigaciones, and the PGJNL. The sudden silence of news gave the impression to some that violence that had been on the rise since 2007 was receding, and to others familiar with the PRI way of work, this meant that information was being kept from the public. Even prior to this silence, trust in traditional media was dwindling. City dwellers were witnesses of violent events that were omitted, censored or misreported in the news. In this climate of mistrust and the increasing personal and direct experiences of drug-related violence, anonymous blogs and social media became important tools for information and organization.

The rise of blogs and social networks as legitimate sources of information

There are several factors for the rise of citizen-based reporting online. Drug cartels had been using social networks such as Youtube, Facebook, and MySpace to communicate their activity and instill fear and respect prior to 2006. Videos of the executions and torture of their enemies were shared by them on social media. Journalists had been threatened, harassed, kidnapped, and killed for their publications related to drug traffic. Media was also censored by compromised figures of the public and private spheres. As Monroy-Hernández & Palacios (2014, p. 87) state, users in Mexico turned to social media to circumvent the centralized control of broadcast media, to publish anonymously or pseudo-anonymously, and to reduce personal risk by diffusing responsibility among many users rather than one journalist.

Another factor for this shift was that authorities deliberately changed procedures, complicating the access to crime scenes for journalists in Nuevo León. Previously, journalists would stand-by at the Green Cross, who were the first responders for crime scenes, and get information firsthand. In 2012, this role was transferred to the Servicio Médico Forense (SEMEFO). A journalist commented on an interview with *Proceso* about these changes:

We [journalists] used to be stationed at the Green Cross. Now we watch social media, where they tell us about the situations and we move there. You have to be attentive to Twitter and Facebook and to the contacts in the stations. Neighbors call newsrooms of

newspapers and TV channels and tell us if there are police cars outside a house (…) there is violence, and a lot and it is not pretty, like they want to make us believe (Campos Garza, 2013)

Citizen-reporting sites and blogs were anonymous and relied on witness reports. They were often not attached to an individual but to a brand created by the administrator(s), emulating the design and writing style of traditional news outlets. The most popular of these sites is Blog del Narco, launched in March 2010 by a user known as "Lucy". Listing a physical address in Monterrey, it was one of the top 50 most visited sites in Mexico. It is still functioning, and it provides exclusive content of drug cartel violence, but more specifically the viral execution videos drove the site's popularity. Per the site's own description:

> [Our] main source of information is the people. The idea to create Blog del Narco appeared when the media and the government try to pretend that in Mexico NOTHING IS GOING ON, because the media are threatened and the government is bought off, we decided to create a means of communication in which we can tell people what's going on, relate the events as they happened, without adjustments or modifications to our convenience. (…) we have never intended to compete with the big news companies (…) (Blog del Narco, n.d.)

Due to the gruesome and exclusive content blog admins have been accused of being narcos themselves or staging the photographs they share. Unlike traditional news outlets, information they share is not censored and it is shared in real time. At the time of its creation, social media was growing in popularity but it had not yet taken off as it has today. So, an attractive feature of the site was the comments section and the chat were an online community was created around drug-related violence. Blogs also became the targets of drug cartels, who offered money in exchange for information about bloggers or their families. Identifiable web managers and bloggers were threatened, doxed or killed.

The Blog del Narco, like many other blogs and social media sites, are both a space of information and of entertainment, as fans use them to keep up to date on the latest developments of their preferred cartel or narco and show their support. Observing the Blog del Narco, Monroy-Hernández and Palacios (2014) comment that address the issue of the socio-economic profile of its online community. Participants seek support in coping with violence displayed on the blog and present on their everyday lives. They discuss the narco lifestyle -praising or insulting it and their cartel members-, engage in flame wars, and comment on the viciousness of execution videos. Regarding the comments, they state the following:

> a distinctive aspect of the blog is the notoriously abrasive and often crass nature of the user comments (…) written with a Spanish vernacular often associated with lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This may suggest that interest in narco-culture tends to be high in disadvantaged communities with low levels of education and few opportunities for social mobility, which drug cartels can exploit." (2014, p. 92)

Later on, blogs integrated complementary social networks such as Youtube to share videos, Twitter to share and receive information, and Facebook for outreach. As time went by and violence increased, social media became more popular, and Pages or Groups emerged on social

media platforms without being blogs in the first place. Unlike the blog, social media allowed people to communicate briefly and quickly about incidents of everyday life in a violent environment -related to organized crime or to common crime- in real time. In previous years, hashtags and Twitter accounts would signal the presence of sobriety test points so that drivers who had been drinking could avoid them. Later on, #mtyfollow or #balaceramty were used to inform about the location of *narcobloqueo* or a *balacera* in real time, so that people could know take precautions or avoid the zone. Information from these twitter hashtags would be shared by users to their immediate network of friends and family through other social media, like Facebook or WhatsApp. Marta recounts her experience using this information:

> For example, I was stuck in traffic and well…that's nothing new, but there was something weird. Then I received a message from my sister telling me that there had been a *balacera* and that there was a dead body. Well…at least then you know what's going on, why there's something weird, and to take other routes if possible. Also, one time I was waiting for the bus downtown, and I saw a lot of people walking in the opposite direction. I heard someone say "there are a lot of policemen there". My sister found on Twitter that there had been a *balacera* or an arrest or something there. So, I walked some more and took a taxi (interview Marta, March 3, 2018).

As Marta relates, this kind of information was useful to allow her to navigate the city and adapt her everyday routine. José also tells about the use of social media in everyday life:

> It was more reliable. Multimedios or any other would take their time. On Twitter people just told it how it was. You could see the narrative being constructed. Contradictions and all, but it was fast, and there are many trolls of course, but it was sort of a team effort from people from different places assembling the information. We used to check it before and after visiting friends. If there was something on the zone and #mtyfollow we would make less noise, and the host would let us crash in the living room (interview José, March 13, 2019).

Traditional news outlets use social media as a complement. Some of them resort to read live tweets or messages they receive to their official social media accounts. Keeping up with trends, Multimedios TV and its news outlet Telediario Monterrey joined Facebook and Twitter on 2009. As of March 2021, Multimedios Television has 3.3 million followers on Facebook and 1.85 followers on Twitter; Telediario Monterrey has 2.1 million followers on Facebook and 1.1 million followers on Twitter.

6.3 The role of the private sector in the crisis of violence

> "Look, girl, you are going to write down my number, you are going to call me,
> and I'll explain to you how the private sector fixed insecurity[59]."

> Local public official during a congress on public security at ITESM,
> Monterrey, August 2019

The crisis of security coincided with a period of decline of the Grupo Monterrey. After a period of uncontested growth and leadership, the Grupo Monterrey's influence began to dwindle in the 1980s. Local researchers Nuncio and Palacios (Redacción, 2008) explain that after the murder of its patriarch Eugenio Garza Sada in 1973, the Sada family and the companies it owned splintered, which contributed to the weakening of the group, along with the closing of Fundidora. The loss of control over the banking sector -and others in the upcoming decades- to international stakeholders meant a lack of access to financing instruments. The leaders of the oldest and largest industries of the Sada legacy were unable to evolve and modernize, as they upheld outdated practices regarding management, business, and society.

The eventual defeat of the hegemonic political party in the early 2000s and the changes in government also destabilized the influence of these industry leaders. During the first change from PRI to PAN, politicians related to the wealthy families behind the companies of the Grupo Monterrey held cabinet positions at federal levels. This was not the case for the government of Felipe Calderon. While they still held influence, they were not as favored by the federal government as they had been decades prior.

The crisis of security impacted businesses established in the locality, as it drove away potential clients and investors, particularly when the United States embassy and other international organisms issued travel warnings to Nuevo León and MMA. Business owners and employees were victims of extortion or direct violence from cartels. Since 2009, business owners, afraid for their and their families' security fled to Texas (Durin, 2012) -as they had done during the revolution in 1910. Late August, Lorenzo Zambrano, CEO of the multinational CEMEX, chastised the self-exiled: "those who leave Monterrey are cowards. We have to fight for what we believe. We have to recover our great city! *Regios*, let's rescue our land![60]" (Zambrano, 2010a); "*Regio*, stay to defend what our ancestors painstakingly built. Fight, demand, act[61]" (Zambrano, 2010b).

On August 2010, through national newspapers, the remaining business owners of Monterrey called for president Calderon to deploy the military to the state. Days later, the president of FEMSA was attacked, two of his bodyguards were killed. A few days later, a narcomanta addressed to him and Lorenzo Zambrano, threatening them for calling for military action

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[59] Mira, niña, vas a apuntar mi teléfono, me vas a marcar, y yo te explico cómo la iniciativa privada resolvió la inseguridad.

[60] Quien se va de Monterrey es un cobarde. Hay que luchar por lo que creemos. ¡Tenemos que retomar nuestra gran ciudad!

[61] Regio, quédate a defender lo que con tanto esfuerzo construyeron tus ancestros. Lucha, exige, actua.

(González Ramírez, 2015, p. 28). Soon after the Casino Royale attack, a group of businessmen met with president Calderon. These were the heads of VITRO, Alfa, Frisa, Proeza, Xignux, Limusa, FEMSA, Soriana, CYDSA, and CEMEX. Facing the security crisis, the heads of industry revived the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones de Nuevo León (CCINLAC or Consejo Cívico for short). This organization existed since the 1975, but it had been mostly inactive until 2011 with an increased budget to demand action from the government, but also to take action themselves. Through the CCINLAC, the private sector coordinated activities to monitor, combat, and prevent violence during and after this period. Nuevo Leon became both a battlefield and a laboratory for experimenting with new initiatives sponsored by the private sector, not without limitations and unanswered questions.

6.3.1 Monitoring and combating violence by the private sector

As violence grew, private protection of assets and personnel was not enough to guarantee the security of the private sector.

One of the main issues was that public institutions in charge of dealing with insecurity were collaborating with criminals. The cartels had already infiltrated several levels of government, and the police was compromised as they also worked for them. The aforementioned *polizetas* escorted cartels' convoys, transported material, carried out kidnappings, and gave out privileged information. On May 2009, the military detained over 80 police officers after finding out they were on the CGD payroll (Emmott, 2009). These detentions were met with retaliation from the cartels.

Another issue was the lack of intelligence on crime data, from data collection and analysis to its use for decision-making. Each municipality from MMA had its own way of processing emergency calls. Emergency services, such as firefighters, the Red or Green Cross had other separate numbers to call. Other numbers also existed to report incidents such as vagrancy or faulty infrastructure to the municipalities. This overabundance of communication channels made crime reporting complicated for the citizen. Services were not open 24/7, and often lines to a certain service would get flooded with calls that could not be solved by them and they were not interconnected to ease redirection of calls. It was not clear for the average citizen what constitutes an emergency, what was the correct interlocutor. Furthermore, this confusion added up to the pre-existing mistrust on public action -police action in particular. Facing a complicated system and fearing retaliation, threats, ill treatment or at the least a waste of time, incidents went unreported. Lastly, accurate data about crimes was either non-existent, unreliable or altered, and it was inconsistent across platforms. And whatever data was available it was hardly treated adequately due to the lack of capacities and trained personnel in the public sector.

A group led by Zambrano was formed to define solutions on these issues with the participation of Secretaría de Seguridad Pública, the UANL, and the ITESM, among other institutions. One of the results was Fuerza Civil, established in 2009, a new state police force funded mostly by the private sector but working as part of the Secretaria de Seguridad Pública. This elite force tried to prevent the mistakes of other local police forces. Policemen frequently turn to work for

the narco due to the risk their job entails and the meagre salary they receive. They do not have a comprehensive screening process -some policemen have a criminal record- and their training does not enable them to deal with dangerous or complicated situations. Taking this into account, Fuerza Civil's recruitment process was stricter, the pay and insurance was better, the training was more rigorous, and police officers were better equipped.

Along with Fuerza Civil came the creation of the Universidad de Ciencias de la Seguridad and the Centro de Coordinación Integral, de Control, Comando, Comunicaciones y Cómputo del Estado (C5). The former was created to train the future FC members, which were recruited through the military, through the HR departments of businesses involved and the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública. The C5 is a communication center that centralizes reports from inhabitants, directs them to the corresponding authorities, and analyses and processes this information. The C5 facilities are in the southern sector of the city and were designed by the same company that built the Pentagon in the US. It was inaugurated in 2009, and since then other subdivisions have emerged in MMA such as the C2 in San Pedro and C4 in Monterrey.

Another initiative that emerged was the Semáforo Delictivo in 2009. It is "a tool for accountability, evaluation, and analysis to understand violence in Mexico and its behavior by comparing some states with others and between them through time". The SD is used across public organisms to visualize the existing data of crime from the Sistema Nacional de Seguridad del Secretariado Ejecutivo, marking in red, yellow, and green depending on the increase or decrease of crime. This dispositive for data analysis is now used in several other states and cities in the country. In 2009-2010 the Centro de Integración Ciudadana was established by local businessmen in San Pedro, with the goal of easing the reporting of crime and other issues such as traffic, paving problems, or garbage. They developed a platform to visualize incidents on MMA named CIVIX. Last came the 911 number. It was put into place on January 2016 with the aim of standardizing the reporting system, in order to have a single database, especially on the issue of insecurity. Incident reports of all kinds - from a water leak to an armed confrontation - can be made to 911, which connects to the C5. C5 operators take the report and forward it to the agency responsible for resolving the problem, including the state's various police forces. The information is then treated to create cartographies and strategies for immediate and short-term solution -such as patrol assignations- and medium- and long-term solutions, such as social interventions and programs.

Limitations and biases of these initiatives

The degree of success of these actions has been variable. Since its inception, there has been involvement of dubious influences on the creation of FC, such as Jorge Tello Peón, who was accused of facilitating the escape of El Chapo Guzmán. As the base of intelligence and police forces, the C5 and its subcenters have been the target of several attacks by organized crime. In 2010, the C5 was attacked by unidentified individuals by gunshots and grenades, and in 2011 the Director of the C5 was murdered. FC was not operational until September 2011. The promise of decent salaries and insurance was attractive for many, and the screening process was not as strenuous. González Ramírez (2015) criticizes the FC as being " born as a solution for businessmen, not for the population (…) their reaction was to protect themselves". This is telling, considering that the 911 number for citizens to report crimes was established 5 years

after FC was operational. In recent times, FC elements have been accused of abuses against civilians and corruption (Campos Garza, 2020).

As for the data collection, elements of the C5 in Monterrey, the C2 in San Pedro, and the intelligence unit of FC state that between 80% to 90% of incidents of violence and crime go unreported, while INEGI data states that it is up to 92.9% in the state of Nuevo León (INEGI, 2020, p. 21). The centralization of information has been delayed due to complications in homologating technology. CCTV has been a constant problem for this, since each municipality goes on their own to acquire and install cameras without consulting C5. For these reasons, cameras acquired by the municipalities are not up to C5 standards, complicating or making impossible the connection to the headquarters and the uniform treatment of information (interview EG, May 4, 2018).

On data treatment, there are severe biases in the way the information is processed which are concerning. While effective to visualize the reports received in different categories in a concise manner, their geographical analysis is limited to the municipal scale, resolution on a smaller scale is unavailable. The classification of crime at times appears arbitrary. The one used by the Fiscalía de Nuevo León until 2019 was the following: theft, injuries, homicide, sex crimes, domestic violence, corruption of minors, crime in educational institutions. This last one includes theft, property damage, and breaking and entering all within educational institutions. As of 2021 the variable "rape" was added to the SD, while robberies have been detailed and analyzed for years. Robberies are divided into 5 categories, and SD now has two variables of robberies concerning cars.

The creator of SD, a real estate businessman, has publicly referred to reports of domestic violence as a "distraction" from proper police work, as something to be attended to by citizens, and chastises victims for asking for help (Roel, 2019a). It is worth noting that the platform SD, its creator and collaborators push a conservative narrative through the SD social media and website. Santiago Roel, a professional in real estate and creator of SD, affirms that Nuevo León has low crime rates due to "the better work they do than other states (…)" with the private sector, that Nuevo León society is very similar to that of the United States thanks to the vision of Garza Sada, and that "the state with the most wealth and lowest poverty" (Roel, 2019b). The SD website constantly produces articles against social aids, and particularly against current president Andres López Obrador. There are times where the SD emits conclusions such as rapes being at an all-time low without considering the issues behind under-reporting gender-based violence against women.

Since 2011, initiatives by the private sector have come to include actions in the public space to prevent violence. These actions have shaped the public agenda and are presented as stemming from citizens. However, the degree of involvement of multinational business owners in public policy under the guise of citizenship begs questioning. This discussion is presented in CHAPTER 7.

6.4 Post-trauma: the semblance of an end, the aftermath, and the renewal of violence

2012 brought on important changes in federal and local administrations. The PRI was back in the presidency with the controversial election of Enrique Peña Nieto. At state level, it meant that the president and the governor Rodrigo Medina were both aligned under the same party - in 2015 the municipality of Monterrey would enter the fold too, as PRI candidate Adrian de la Garza was elected as mayor. This translated into concealment of violent incidents to portray federal administration in a positive light, as the party had done for decades.

All throughout 2013 governor Medina, his cabinet, and the media communicated the declining rates of crime and violence in the state and the success of law enforcement against organized crime. These assessments were hard to believe, to say the least. The personal experiences of victimizations of residents told otherwise. Moreover, the pre-existing mistrust regarding authorities only grew with the evidence of complicity, the institutional cover-ups of crimes, and the opacity regarding accurate information since the early stages of organized crime violence. As noted by organisms such as Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, the private sector, and activists, official reports were far from truthful. Citizens did not report crimes for fear of retaliation from the narco, the military, and the police. Victims' families were threatened to not pursue processes on homicides and abductions, many of them done by the military. These were tallied as related to organized crime to support the narrative of an effective action by the authorities. Regardless, Medina pushed the narrative of a transition into peace, lauding the so-called Nuevo Leon Model in diverse forums, particularly those involving American investors, with the goal of promoting a positive image of the state and its economy. During a meeting with the American Chamber of Commerce in May 2013 he stated:

> Yesterday I had a productive reunion with the ambassador of the United States who told me he was very impressed with the numbers of economic growth in the state. And he asked 'How are you doing it, what is the key for Nuevo León to stand out in an extraordinary way from the other states of the Republic?' I told him that Nuevo León has built for years and generations a deeply rooted culture of work but it has been able to adapt, we have understood how the world moves regarding investments (Campos Garza, 2013).

Later in the Bloomberg Mexico Conference in New York he talked about the success of the new police forces in Nuevo León and commented on limiting the information to the public: "I think there should be less talk about the topic of security. And I mean the authorities, not the media (…) the population needs to feel safe" (Campos Garza, 2013). Remembering this period, José, a 35-year-old data analyst living in Guadalupe comments:

> There was no outcome to the war. It is as if the last chapter of the book did not exist. I remember it was something that happened overnight. The government stopped talking about it, the media too, the army was not as notorious on the streets (…) What didn't go away was the crime, and the feeling that something might happen to you anytime. It was silence. We tried again to pretend nothing was going on. The thing is that nobody felt

safe again. There was no closure. We couldn't get on with our lives, not the same. It is not that I am afraid of shootings all the time, but it is not over, you cannot leave it behind[62] (interview José, March 13, 2019).

While at first the main course of action had been to stay silent and deny what was happening, now the public sector communicated extensively about the supposedly decreasing rates of violence and their effective strategies. For example, Mauricio Fernandez' tough approach to crime and Clara Flores' PROXPOL model were both positively received by residents of San Pedro and Escobedo respectively. They have been reelected three times since 2009. Later on, the topic of security featured prominently in candidates' agendas, as well as their experience on this topic as public officials (see Figure 34).

Figure 34 Candidates for an election and the discourse of security.
(left) Candidate for governor Clara Luz Flores, mayor of Escobedo in campaign for the position of governor in 2020.
Source: Radio Formula. https://www.radioformula.com.mx/noticias/20210321/ya-basta-de-las-mismas-promesas-clara-luz-respalda-arranque-de-campanas-de-alcaldes-y-diputados/
(right) Publicity of Aldo Fasci Zuazua, Secretary of Public Security, as an independent candidate for mayoral elections in 2018. Caption reads: "Do you want to continue like this?"
Photo: Author, 2018.

The most notorious of these cases was Jaime Rodríguez Calderón. An important part of his 2014 campaign for governor was his firsthand experience with narco violence: when he was mayor of the municipality of García, he was ambushed by the Zetas who opened fire on his vehicle. These experiences and his attitude towards crime contributed to his victory and he assumed the position of governor in 2015.

The spectacular and dramatic violence in the city has receded in many sectors, although not necessarily because the state's or the municipalities' strategy had worked. Leaders of cartels have been detained in the armored town of San Pedro and the upper class *colonias in MMA.*

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[62] No hubo un desenlace con esa guerra. Es como si no existiera el último capítulo del libro. Recuerdo que fue algo de la noche a la mañana. El gobierno dejó de hablar al respecto, los medios también, el ejército desapareció, los bloqueos armados (…) Lo que no desapareció fue el crimen, y el sentimiento de que algo podría pasar. Se acabó con un silencio. Volvemos a intentar negarlo. El detalle es que nadie se volvió a sentir seguro. No hubo un cierre. No pudimos seguir con nuestras vidas. No igual. No es que ande todo el tiempo con miedo a que haya balaceras, pero no se terminó, no lo puedes dejar atrás.

*Often, t*hey were responsible for the fortification of the neighborhood in which they lived. With regards of the municipal fortification model and the involvement of organized crime, editorialist S. Fourcade (2014) sums it up as follows:

> We absorbed a lie as if we wanted it to be the most absolute truth in the universe. We decorated it and enlarged it. Later, we even began to repeat it to explain the supposed political perfection that the sampetrinos had developed (…) Nothing happened in the west and the dead [murdered victims] apparently preferred other zones (…) Pacts with the crime and shady relations between authorities and mafias. Executions and extortions continued but the strategy aimed towards other municipalities (…) The term 'armored' is synonymous to 'oasis for capos' (…) When a drug dealer is captured it means that he is no longer useful.

Between 2001 and 2015, 33 members and bosses of the Zetas, CDS, BLO, and CDG had been detained in San Pedro (Milenio Digital, 2015) calling into question the already dubious claims of the municipality. One successor of Fernandez criticized the fortification strategy, calling it a myth:

> The armoring is an advertising slogan. It has been shown over the last five years that it is not a concept around which a security strategy was designed. The real security is done based on more than the training of [police] forces (Campos Garza, 2018).

Over the years, cartels have been weakened after the deaths and the arrests of their leaders. Fragmented and weakened, the cartels did not have the capacity to execute any of the dramatic strategies previously seen in MMA. After a brief respite, internal conflicts to take leadership roles have given way to factions and new organizations, and the repetition of patterns from years prior. Nonetheless, crime and homicides are on the rise even among public officials, as well as abductions, robberies, and kidnappings. In the words of Gerardo:

> People say that "violence went down", that is not true. The only thing that went down was the audacity to do shootouts right on the street. But the violence, the impunity, the weapons, that continued. It's coming back. We start seeing those things again[63] (interview Gerardo, April 17, 2018).

Cartel factions have morphed, splintered, and merged. This time, the conflict involves Cartel Jalisco Nuevo Generación, CDG, BLO, Cartel del Pacífico, the Zetas, and Cartel del Noreste in Monterrey. Like almost 15 years ago, murders are happening in the outskirts of MMA, in rural settings, in impoverished sectors, and occasionally, in San Pedro. Body parts are once again appearing near the premises of the police, narcomantas are found on bodies near highways and gunshots are heard during the weekends. The municipalities of Monterrey, Guadalupe, Santa Catarina, and San Nicolás and others outside of the MMA, such as Anahuac, Cadereyta, Linares, Santiago, Salinas Hidalgo, Cerralvo, and Parás are targeted by organized crime due to their highways and railroads connectivity to the US and the rest of the country. Another change in operation is the collaborations between large cartels and smaller

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[63] Dicen "bajó la violencia", no es cierto. Bajó el descaro de estarse balaceando en la calle. Pero la violencia, la impunidad, las armas, eso siguió. Ahorita otra vez. Otra vez empezamos a ver esas cosas.

independent organizations. This reorganization of the cartels' structures and strategies adds chaos to the operations and complicates the identification of members. All the while, authorities such as the Agencia Estatal de Investigaciones are threatened by cartels for protecting their enemies, and the police forces that emerged during the early 2010s are accused of corruption and abuse of civilians.

A record peak of violence came in 2019 for Nuevo León with over 35,000 homicides. According to Aldo Fasci Zuazua, Secretary of Public Security, 8 out of 10 homicides are related to organized crime. On June 2019, an armed group opened fire against police officers in the municipality of Juárez, as a warning. Once again, authorities assume that communicating on the matter is making it worse. Fasci Zuazua affirmed that this rise in homicides was most likely an answer to declarations he made regarding combat against drug traffic: "there have been 7 deaths (in June), but I won't comment anymore because this is not solved with declarations" (Maldonado, 2019). Silence is still on the table as a proper strategy.

In February 2021, after a record of 914 homicides in 2020, the Secretaría de Defensa Nacional started the Operativo Metropolitano, with the goal of deploying elements to reduce high impact crimes: violence and the traffic of drugs, arms, money, and fuels (Campos Garza, 2021). Once again, crime and violence are on the rise. An annual report produced with the Regional Security Office of the US Consulate in Monterrey (OSAC, 2020) details the following regarding crime in MMA:

> Violent crime (e.g. homicide, abductions, sexual assault, armed robbery) and non-violent crimes (e.g. financial scams, extortion, vehicle theft, burglary, petty drug crime) continue to be a serious concern for those living or working in the district. Organized criminal elements contribute to the high level of crime in the region. While many of those killed in organized crime-related violence were similarly involved in criminal activity, innocent bystanders have also been harmed (…) anyone who projects the perception of wealth and is unfamiliar with the area can easily become a target of opportunity.

Conclusion

A common narrative is that violence hit Monterrey overnight, that the city went from being one of the safest in the country to being the scenery of deadly confrontations and where anyone could be killed or kidnapped. This change was not as sudden as the narrative suggests. I challenge this narrative by putting the spotlight on the conditions of inequality and socio-spatial segregation. I argue that denial has been a common theme throughout the history of the rise of drug related violence. First, there was (and is) a denial to recognize poverty, discrimination, segregation, low social mobility, and an unequal access to resources, as these phenomena counter the general discourse about opportunities and growth from the upper and middle classes of MMA. Monterrey seeks to project an image of innovation and prosperity, while creating physical and symbolic barriers to separate the "good ones" from the "bad ones", and to hide marginalized populations from foreign investors, tourists, and wealthy residents. Violence was depicted as a problem that flourished naturally in polygons of poverty due to bad decisions of its residents, a relationship that, as authors such as Buvinic et al. (2005) and Koonings & Kruijt (2007) explain, is not as direct as it seems (see CHAPTER 2). Organized crime took hold of the highest and lowest sectors of the *regio* society. Members of drug cartels were welcomed as investors by the upper classes and gained influence and immunity. Meanwhile, drug cartels recruited foot soldiers in the *colonias populares*.

Then, there was the denial of authorities to recognize the initial violence committed by drug cartels, in no short measure because of their involvement in facilitating their accumulation of power and influence. It was not until violence touched more privileged spaces and populations in MMA that it became a concern for authorities. The actions taken were a reaction in the face of an emergency. Overwhelmed by the situation, compromised by organized crime, and lacking in capacities in several fronts, the state failed to address the increasingly brutal violence. The private sector became deeply involved in monitoring and combatting violence. As Schmidheiny (2006, p. 22) points out there is a continuing pressure by Latin American civil society for business to meet needs that governments are not meeting. On the one hand, the Grupo Monterrey participated in demanding military action in Nuevo León. And on the other hand, business owners of multinationals funded security projects, new bodies of police and intelligence units, turning the state into a laboratory for solutions that were later replicated in other Mexican states facing violence. Residents, meanwhile, perceived they were being misinformed or kept in the dark when the media did not report on incidents they witnessed or was censored. This led to look for reliable information elsewhere, establishing online blogs and social networks as legitimate sources and later as spaces for organization.

Denial from the population came in the form of the role of personal responsibility. Like poverty, victimization of violence was simultaneously was depicted as individuals' problem (either for not being careful enough, for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and lastly, for keeping the wrong company) and a preoccupation of everyone: anyone could be a victim, but not every death was considered a tragedy. Some people "were asking for it". This led to an indifference towards victims from marginalized groups and women.

At the same time, homicide and abductions became real concerns for the population, who perceived that anyone could be a victim. The discourse from the population went from "they are killing their own" to "when it's your turn, it's your turn". As mentioned in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2, homicide rates are a common metric to determine levels of violence, but they are not entirely accurate. And as explained in CHAPTER 4 for crime in general, and this chapter for abductions and homicides, there are many obstacles for recording incidence, resulting in numbers below the actual incidence. However, even with these caveats, the magnitude of the problem and risks of victimization were evident. Another problem that arose, like in other Latin American cities facing armed conflicts (see CHAPTER 2), was gender-based violence. While violence against women was not new, it reached new heights in frequency and brutality after 2010s. One of the most notorious shifts was that violence against women was no longer confined to the private spaces and reached the public spaces as well.

Common crime such as robberies and thefts rose along with the dramatic and brutal executions that have been described in this chapter, making residents hypervigilant and transforming perception and uses of public space, some of which remain to this day. The crisis of violence not only widened the gaps of class in a city already marked by inequality (Fisher & Taub, 2017), but also changed drastically the ways in which city dwellers use public space and relate to each other. And as the city braces itself for another wave of violence and authorities repeat the same pattern of more than a decade ago, new demands to attend other forms of violence arise, while many of the social problems remain unsolved.

Chapter 7 - Rewriting public spaces

In this chapter, I present the transformations of the configurations of public space as a result of heightened feelings of insecurity. I will discuss the two predominant approaches to the transformations of public space facing organized and common crime. First, we will observe the fortification approach that looks inward and defines clear lines between the public and the private, between safety and danger, materializing social divisions as only those who can afford to enter these spaces are guaranteed security -to a certain extent. This comes predominantly as gated communities, a typical solution in contexts facing crime and violence. Next, I analyze the more recent trend of aperture: the supposed removal of social and physical barriers in public spaces with the goal of tackling violence through equality. Here I present the initiatives directed by the private sector that have started a trend in public spaces in the city and the country. The projects in Monterrey take great inspiration from CPTED and Colombian social urbanism, approaches that include citizen participation to transform public space, which the decision makers present as part of their success. In the last section of this chapter, I question the performative character of citizen participation, how the private sector's arbitrary decisions in city making are legitimized, and how the discourses of legitimization are received by different groups. Besides documentary research, the interviews, digital ethnography, and participant observations I carried on-site throughout several years contribute to this chapter.

7.1 Violence as an everyday risk distancing the users from public spaces

Between 2010 and 2013, no space was safe. As Saucedo Villegas sustains (2017) public spaces and privately-owned open spaces became equally dangerous. However, public space was perceived as especially risky, where that there was less protection. A street, stopping in a red light while driving, a road, a soccer field or a public bus could be the scene of a crime, from a run-off-the-mill robbery to abduction and homicide. Bodies were found hanging from overpasses or footbridges of heavily transited streets, while body parts were dumped in parks, vacant lots, and streets. The criminals' goal was to make the consequences clear for those

willing to oppose them, and to show what they could do in broad daylight in frequented public spaces that were part of everyday life (see Figure 35).

Figure 35 Dramatic sights of violent deaths inflicted by drug cartels in everyday spaces.
(left) Man hanging from an overpass in Av. Revolución and Av. Chapultepec, Monterrey, June 8, 2011.
Source: Vanguardia. Retrieved on 21/02/2021. https://vanguardia.com.mx/cuelganadosenpuentedemonterreyunoestabavivo-741599.html
(right) Two men hanging from a footbridge over Av. Gonzalitos, Monterrey. June 6, 2011.
Source: Estado Narco. Retrieved on 21/02/2021. https://paisdelnarco.wordpress.com/2011/06/06/dos-colgados-en-monterrey-nuevo-leon/

Even as these dramatic events receded, witnessing them -along with the apparent high risk of being a victim of a homicide or an abduction (see CHAPTER 6)-, and experiencing the prevalence of common crime left markings on the territory and the relationship with public spaces that persist to this day for the following reasons:

1. Violent incidents took place on safe, familiar, crowded, and everyday urban settings in broad daylight. Shootings and murders were not only happening far away in desolate spaces like the *rancherias*, or in the *colonias populares* – which the population already identified as dangerous, such as Independencia, San Bernabé or La Alianza (although they are still stigmatized and discriminated against). They happened on Avenida Gonzalitos -a well-known and heavily transited axis in Monterrey-, Morelos -the highly popular pedestrian street downtown-, and the ITESM -the private college for the children of the elite. Violence and the risk of violence appeared to be everywhere, especially in public or semi-public spaces, from schools to supermarkets, restaurants, and parks. José, age 33, recalls one incident:

   > I saw the heads they dropped on the Guadalupe's clock, the one on the overpass that goes over Av. Constitución. I was driving home. I passed by the clock and there were heads covered in black trash bags. But you could tell they were severed heads. It's not like one is able to pull over. And it's not really a space for pedestrians. But it was impossible to miss. I just proceeded on my way home [64] (interview José, March 13, 2019).

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[64] A mí me tocó ver las cabezas que pusieron en el reloj de Guadalupe, el que está en el paso sobre constitución. Yo manejaba rumbo a mi casa. Pase por el reloj y ahí había tres cabezas cubiertas con bolsas negras de basura.

2. Types of crimes that were once seen as risks only for high-profile and wealthy individuals, now they were also happening to the middle and lower classes. Criminals were not targeting only the elites of San Pedro to demand exorbitant ransoms or middle-class neighborhoods for robberies. Lower class neighborhoods previously believed they were spared of thefts because they had no luxuries. Anyone with a bank account or a slightly better lifestyle in their community (e.g. driving a car, owning a modest business, going out on vacation, owning a plasma TV, having an office job, studying in a university, etc.) was considered kidnappable or a potential victim of theft. Middle- or lower-class individuals were abducted from public spaces for whatever money they may have, but also for forceful recruitment or sexual exploitation.

3. The very real cases of murder, theft, and abductions committed by cartels were the basis of the modus operandi of common criminals later on. Robberies became more violent; sometimes common criminals would claim to be part of a cartel. They counted on the established precedents to scare their victims into compliance. City dwellers preferred to err on the side of caution and treat any threat as a potentially high-risk incident: maybe it was a common criminal bluffing, maybe it was a cartel member who had been following the victim for a while.

4. Organized crime paid off taxi drivers, street vendors, gang members, and small shop owners to alert them of any movements in certain parks or streets. Anyone loitering in public spaces was a suspect of being an informant.

5. Direct and indirect experiences with violence were highly common: from hearing gunshots in the proximity and being caught in the crossfire, to being robbed or having a close friend or relative being abducted or murdered. A report by the Observatorio sobre Desaparición e Impunidad (2017) shows that 35.12% of abductions -conducted by criminals or law enforcement- happened mostly in streets.

6. City dwellers were witnesses of violent events that never made the news or any official declaration. Information from authorities was inconsistent with that of traditional media and social media. This inconsistency between first-hand accounts and official information damaged trust in authorities.

7. The extraordinary nature of the violent events hindered the capacity of city dwellers to distinguish a real threat from a rumor. What once sounded like a farfetched story was now a plausible incident.

8. Police was at best overwhelmed and outnumbered by organized crime, and at worst it collaborated with cartels abducting, murdering, and extorting individuals or simply turning a blind eye on crime. City dwellers were afraid of being victimized by the police and certain that they would not be able to assist.

In sum: you can be a victim anytime, no matter where you are, where you live or who you are. No one will help you. You are on your own. Violence is conceptualized as a nebulous matter: inescapable, but hard to seize. Issues that range from incivilities to murder merged into that singular concept that make public space especially dangerous. And since anyone can be a

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Pero se notaba que eran cabezas cortadas. Tampoco era como que me iba a orillar. Y aparte ahí no es para peatones. Pero no podías no verlas. Yo me seguí para mi casa.

victim and authorities are equally useless for everyone, it is up to the individual to take precautions. If one cannot protect oneself from *everything*, the next best thing would be to protect oneself from *something*. Regarding public spaces, this meant to cut off contact with it as much as possible (this, as we will observe in CHAPTER 8, is not a possibility for everyone). These circumstances affected feelings of insecurity and the relationship with public spaces.

7.2 Fortification: from the gated community to the vertical suburb

The unprecedented surge of violence, a climate of uncertainty, and a lack of effective strategies made way for an unbalanced management of the city based on hastiness to mitigate violence. Security became a decisive element for public policy and city making. However, the problem of violence exceeded the capacities of authorities. Security became a problem for each individual to solve, and marketable affair for the private sector. And when it came to the urban tissue, this was a period of prosperity for real estate development.

The urban tissue of MMA grew in all directions. *Fraccionamientos* -for the middle and upper classes-, new malls -big and small-, shops, highways, high rises, and urban icons emerged. Heightened feelings of insecurity played a role in these transformations. Users wanted to limit exposure to the feral public spaces, leading to their neglect and the search for substitutes that guaranteed security. Road construction and maintenance, and residential and commercial typologies dominated discussions of public and private investment allocation, and public space was a notoriously absent element. Whereas in past decades it was either taken for granted or ignored, this time it was actively avoided since it was there that the more spectacular events of violence happened.

Organized crime and city making

Valenzuela Aguilera comments that the large earnings of organized crime (the third source of income in Mexico) are usually reinvested/laundered in investments in mega-projects (2016, p. 40). Investments from organized crime were well received by local private entrepreneurs and public actors who became associates to setup and fund projects in MMA, from high rises and commerce buildings for the well-to-do clientele, to low-end commerce in less affluent neighborhoods. This, combined with the local trend of branding the city through large projects, blurred the lines between the legitimate and the illegitimate entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, both could decide on a whim to build a large edification because it is a sound investment, regardless of zoning or codes.

The boom in real estate coincides with the arrival of heads of drug cartels to the city. Since the early 2000s drug cartels influenced the configuration of the city: shell corporations set by higher-ranking drug cartel members ventured into real estate speculation, buying, selling, and building properties. Their influence and money allowed them to get permits for

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construction, alcohol sales and gambling, and to change land uses. Bars, restaurants, stores, and night clubs of questionable legality opened in middle-class residential areas, as well as in lower class zones known for night life, prostitution, and crime. Casinos in particular were popular venues for the middle and upper classes, and contributed to a boom in gambling addiction in the region. Furthermore, casinos displayed the kind of extravagance that upholds the aspirational images of wealth (see CHAPTER 5). This was seen as positive, since it attracted tourism with an active nightlife. Now the upper middle class did not have to go to Las Vegas to gamble, with luxurious casinos were open 24/7. And when the direct and dramatic violence hit, these investors -who partnered with drug cartel members and built whatever buildings they fancied- simply left.

7.1.1 Different versions of gated communities

Like in many cities around the world facing a surge of crime, gated communities became a predominant typology for new housing developments. Years prior, living in a *fraccionamiento cerrado* or *colonia privada* in MMA was a marker that distinguished the inhabitants as wealthy or belonging to an upper class. Even in San Pedro, home of wealthy residents, the *fraccionamiento cerrado* was an exclusive and outlandish but somewhat aspirational feature. It marked the place of residence of their wealthiest families, who had a very particular need of security and privacy. Amidst the crisis of violence, the *fraccionamientos* effectively became gated communities now available for middle and lower middle classes since 2008, where security became a coveted feature.

On other cases, neighbors demanded authorization from municipalities to fortify their *colonias*; fearful and desperate to be safe, the upper classes carried out these actions without waiting for the authorities' approval in San Pedro, Monterrey, and San Nicolás (see Figure 36). Ironically, some of these fortifications were done and paid for by cartel members who lived in these *colonias* and who also wanted to be safe from robberies. Middle- and upper-class *colonias* that manifested an ostentatious lifestyle were the targets of organized crime.

The stark contrast between upper-class and lower-class *colonias* -built side by side- was further emphasized by the installation of walls with barbed wire, fences, guard booths, and security cameras. These measures perturbed traffic flow and were particularly cumbersome for pedestrians -students, maids, informal workers, users of public transport- who cut through *colonias* to get to their destination. In various cases, pedestrians were now forced to walk long distances to get around the fortified area. These spaces, besides lacking infrastructure for walking, are also poorly lit, isolated, and unguarded. This represents the risk of being run over by cars or being robbed. Brand-new and reconverted *fraccionamientos* alike criminalize the few pedestrians that walk their streets. Although there were *fraccionamientos* for high and low budgets, they still represent luxury, making them targets of robberies. According to an article published in El Norte, at least 105 robberies were committed in 76 *fraccionamientos cerrados* in MMA between January and August 2016 (Ramos, 2016). The article also mentioned that robbers circumvented surveillance by arriving in a car and being impeccably dressed. Likewise, there was the fear that guards working in the *fraccionamiento* worked as lookouts for criminals.

Figure 36 Different versions of a fraccionamiento cerrado.
Access (left) and street (center) of the lower-middle class gated community Residencial Parques Diamante in García, Nuevo León.
Source: Habítala. Retrieved on 23/02/2021. https://habita.la/anuncio/index/8640
(right) Fence installed in a colonia in Guadalupe. Photo: Author, 2018

As land became scarce and expensive, *fraccionamientos* were built each time farther away from the city center, and the cheapest were built in Juarez, Apodaca, and Pesqueria, as noted by Soto Canales (2013). The lack of services and infrastructure -parks, green spaces, transportation, hospitals, schools, grocery stores, police- has demotivated many from living there (see Figure 36). The acquisition of a car amounts to the price of the new house, since these developments lack in public transportation. The unused houses are frequently occupied by homeless individuals or they are used as hideouts for common criminals. In the day, houses are practically empty, and at night, residents have to deal with illegal occupants of the empty properties and the risk of walking on darkened streets in isolated neighborhoods where the police do not always respond.

Car ownership, urban sprawl, and security

The number of private vehicles had increased drastically since the 90s due to a booming economy, inadequate public transportation, and aspirational elements. Yet, the crisis of violence and the growth of the urban sprawl contributed to a spike on demand. Stolen cars were a source of income for organized crime. Cartel foot soldiers targeted first the most expensive vehicles, either to drive them or to sell them, or stole parts that were sold in illegal auto shops all over the MMA. Auto theft escalated in frequency from 2007, as well as in degrees of violence since 2010 to the point where it was classed as a grave felony. The upper classes purchased armored vehicles, while others sold their luxury-brand cars at low prices to get rid of them quickly, and acquired modest second-hand vehicles. Everyday life for commuters was also altered by *narcobloqueos*. They were afraid of being part of the crossfire or being robbed of their vehicles when stopping in a red light. *Narcobloqueos* were -like many of the other actions previously mentioned- frequent and eventually talked about as an annoyance that worsen traffic jams and made people late for their jobs.

Getting rid of cars altogether and switching to public transportation represented a risk that those who could afford a car wanted to avoid. Additionally, public transportation does not

cover the entirety of MMA (much less the growing periphery), and a ride to work can be 2 hours long, as opposed to a 30-minute drive. Taxis are an alternative, but it was known that drivers mugged or abducted their passengers. For these reasons, residents prioritized cars, even if it was second-hand. Being inside a modest car was still perceived as more secure than using public transportation, as it placed the users in a bubble, protecting them from the outside. This high demand for cars resulted in a constant construction of new highways, overpasses, and parking lots at the expense of green areas and spaces for pedestrians. Between 2011 and 2021, the number of registered vehicles went up by 44% (from 1,792,405 to 2,587,209), whereas the population increased only by 28% between 2010 and 2021 (from 4,653,458 to 5,969,564) (El Horizonte, 2021). The expansion of the urban sprawl with the construction of fortified residential enclaves on natural reserves and on rural areas, the neglect of public spaces and greenery, along with the rise of demand for cars as a secure and necessary means of transportation contributed to air pollution.

New commercial typologies as substitutes for spaces lost to violence

Several factors contributed to the boom of new commercial typologies: the decay of well-known areas for commerce and leisure -such as the Primer Cuadro and Barrio Antiguo- (see CHAPTER 6), the relocation of businesses to San Pedro (to stay safe), the emergence of badly-equipped *fraccionamientos* in the growing periphery, the need for fronts for money laundering, and the potential clientele's demand for secured spaces. *Plazas comerciales* -shopping malls of different sizes- emerged in several areas of MMA. They contained offices, cinemas, shops, restaurants, chapels, laundromats, and other services, all with security personnel and parking - highly coveted in a city where mobility depends on cars. They could be big box centers that, unlike their predecessors in Monterrey and San Pedro in the 1990s (see CHAPTER 5), the offer here was aimed to a lower income.

Smaller typologies emerged often referred to as *fibras*. This is due to the accronym for *Fideicomisos de Inversión en Bienes Raíces* - a trust intended to finance the purchase and/or construction of real estate, to obtain income from the rentals of offices, commercial premises, hotels, among others. These types of mini-malls emerged in aging middle- and upper-class neighborhoods from the 70s and 80s, where residents, fearful and fed-up with thefts and violence sold their properties to live elsewhere. These changes however were met with resistance from those who stayed, who were against their neighborhood changing from solely residential uses to commerce, feeling that besides violence and crime, now they had to deal with the troubles of car flow, incivilities, and noise from the mini-malls, especially at night. For partygoers this was a safe alternative to Barrio Antiguo or Centrito in San Pedro: they had private security, restaurants in the upper floors of the *fibra* turned into nightclubs for the evening, they had parking spaces right in front of the building, and they were located away from zones connected to public transport with heavy pedestrian flow -meaning, users could go from their homes to the venue by car without setting foot on the street. Still, the promise of security was short lived, as the *fibras* attracted common and organized criminals that extorted owners or to buy and sell drugs. While popular at first, the businesses installed there have a rapid turnover rate, and these plazas have been less used as the years go by.

7.1.2 High rises, mixed uses, and *distritos*

As mentioned in the previous section, land available to build single-family homes were each time farther away from the urban centers, making commutes longer and thus, reducing the attractive of *fraccionamientos* to those who could afford them. High-rise buildings are an alternative for middle and upper classes, and they have often been the subject of controversy in terms of land use, legality, and corruption. The crisis of violence brought forward new features for these high-rises, namely CCTV, exclusive parking with surveillance, security and maintenance personnel 24/7, access control, exclusive pools and gyms, and a clear limit between interior and exterior, public and private.

While the first wave of high rises took place in San Pedro, San Jerónimo, and Cumbres, on plots of land that were relatively isolated on the hills (see Figure 37), many of those that came after were embedded in the urban tissue of lower-class, low density, single family neighborhoods, since land is comparatively less expensive. Some of these projects have been built in zones that have a history of robberies and violent crimes.

Figure 37 High-rise buildings on San Pedro's side of the Loma Larga (right), 2018.
Source: Centro Urbano. Retrieved on 23/02/2021. https://centrourbano.com/2019/03/21/crece-desarrollo-vertical-ofen-monterrey/

Snapshot of Torres Udhei

Torres Udhei is an apartment complex built in 2010 next to *Colonia* Del Maestro, Balcones de Aztlán, and Morelos in the northwest sector of the city, not far from a metro station (and in the same sector of our case study -see CHAPTER 9). Not only is this apartment complex in a zone traditionally known for its security problems, but it is also located right next to the Penal del Topo Chico, an overcrowded state penitentiary known for the illegal activities carried out inside by drug cartels. Since I am not a resident, I was not allowed to park inside. After my identity has been cleared at the entrance by the guard at the booth, I meet with my host. The differences between the outside (the *colonia*) and inside of the apartment complex

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are dramatic (see Figure 38). Lawns are well-maintained, there is a large pool and equipped terraces for residents.

Clara, a French teacher who lives here with her partner, showed me around the building. Her balcony overlooks the court of the building, where other residents are having a *carne asada*. The complex is surrounded by a wall, and the gardens around the buildings provide an additional barrier between the exterior and the interior, as well as increasing the appeal of the immediate surroundings. As we climb the stairs, she points out that the building's windows towards the south are opaque, to let the light in but to block the view of the Penitentiary. We climb to the top terrace, where a plastic plate from the perimetral barrier has been moved:

> someone moved it a few months ago to sneak a peek of the Penal. Sometimes you hear them when they are playing soccer and sometimes people cheer them on. We saw the flames during the mutiny in February. Before that we saw one guy trying to escape. But other than that, you don't notice them. It's practically like living in San Pedro. And driving to work from here is convenient enough (interview Clara, 01/07/2016).
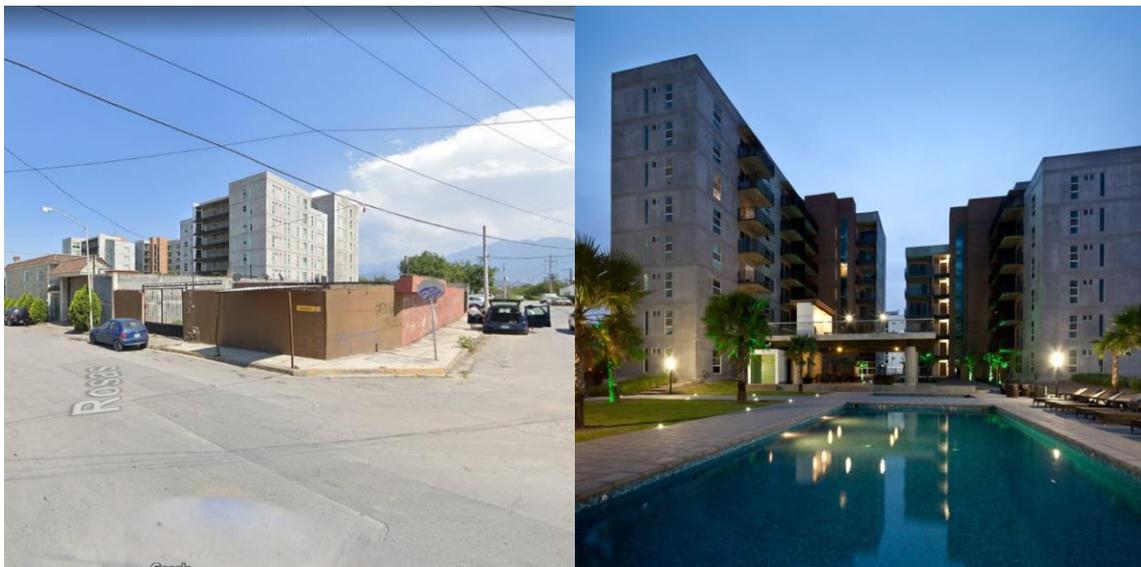
Figure 38 Torres Udhei
(left) inside of Torres Udhei apartment complex, June 2020.
Source: IDEKA. Retrieved on 23/02/2021. http://ideka.com.mx/desarrollos/torres-uhdei/
(right) View of Calle 20 de Agosto, Colonia Balcones de Aztlán, outside of the apartment complex, June 2020.
Source: Google Street View. Retrieved on 23/02/2021.

While many of these individual towers are mainly residential and are completely closed to outsiders, newer bigger projects in recent times include large commerce areas at street level, effectively merging the *fraccionamiento* and the *fibra* into a high-density vertical project. Often named *distritos*, these mostly self-contained mega-projects were built in the outskirts of San Pedro and of Monterrey for the upper classes. One of the groups to persuade is the population of San Pedro, the south of Monterrey, and places in the west like Cumbres, who after the violence crisis, have stopped leaving their safe enclosures. They aim chic young professionals,

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highly educated, well-traveled, and interested on living in urban centers -as opposed to living in a suburban house. Projects are marketed as emulating "first-world" lifestyles, akin to living in a NY-style loft on a trendy neighborhood.

In buildings that have been erected in the south and west of the city in previous years, this aspirational fantasy was fulfilled by creating terraces over the parking lot basements with partially open malls, as is the case of Nuevo Sur (inaugurated in 2014 – see Figure 39). This allows residents to visit fashionable shops and cafés without setting foot on the street. Users from the outside arrive by car to participate on the simulation of walkability in spaces that are literally elevated and disconnected from the real streets. Blind walls surround the parking basements -occasionally with a narrow sidewalk and plants- complicating pedestrian access on foot for the neighbors across the street. As many of these projects come closer to the urban centers, they drastically transform and set clear boundaries as to not mix with the less affluent surroundings and residents. Clearly defined limits aim to persuade the upper classes that they can find beautiful open spaces outside the border of San Pedro and that they have nothing to be afraid of. The presence of security guards and points of access control with no pedestrians is an attractive feature. These projects require large spaces for parking, since both users and residents are unlikely to use public transportation.
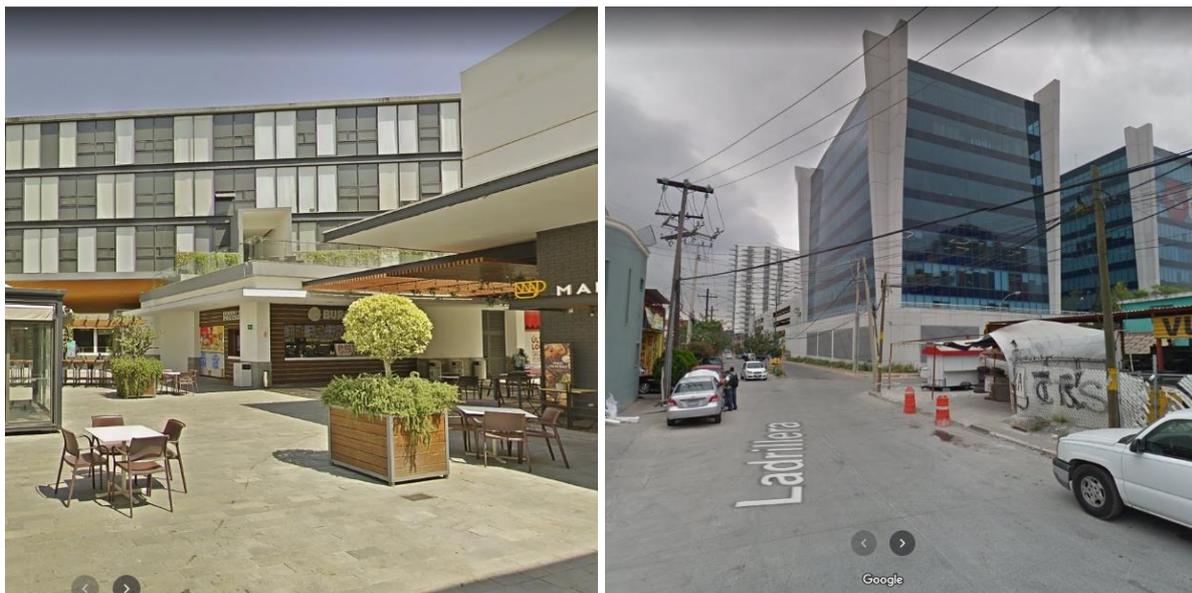
Figure 39 Contrasts inside and outside of Nuevo Sur, a mixed-uses project south of Monterrey.
(left) the terraces with trendy coffeeshops and (right) the exterior surrounded by cars, vulkas, meager sidewalks; the complex's towers rise above and next to a colonia, Nov. 2017.
Source: Google Street View. Retrieved on 19/01/2021.

7.1.3 Gentrification to counter violence in the Primer Cuadro and the public space as an accessory

Like in the times of the construction of the Macro Plaza, a common narrative is that the city center is deteriorated, abandoned, and in need of investments from the private sector to make it a space worthwhile of a so-called first-world city. While it is true that the built environment is indeed in a state of disrepair, there are several sectors of the city center that remain inhabited

by elderly families and that still preserve life at a neighborhood level. However, with the violent events, the exodus of business owners from the city center gave further credit to the narrative of abandonment and deterioration, while the needs of those who live there continued being ignored.

As a way to recover the Primer Cuadro for the upper classes, the private sector and public authorities have put forward Renacentro: a regeneration plan for the city center, which consist of an aggressive development of upscale high rises -as of 2020, it amounts to 32 towers and 6900 apartment units (see Figure 40). To legitimize these initiatives, the projects are marketed with the traditional features of putting Monterrey on the map by building the most futuristic and highest towers and activating the state's economy, with occasional mentions of regeneration and mobility. As the mayor of Monterrey, Adrián de la Garza, explains:

> The areas for leisure that the city of Monterrey has in the center of the city are double of what any other municipality in the metropolitan area has and it is necessary to benefit from it, investors know it, they are benefitting it and, above all, it to be for the benefit of the citizens here in Monterrey, in addition to that we will obviously have a regeneration of the capital of Nuevo León (…) What we are looking for is to make a product that reaches the people who work in the center, where they can walk to work and return without having to move their vehicle[65] (Gobierno de Monterrey, 2020b).

For authorities and investors, the city center is prime real estate, regardless of its current occupants and uses. The unveiling of an official plan arrives late with regards to the construction activity that has already occur -unplanned and uncoordinated- for more than a decade in the MMA. High-rise projects have been built both in the Primer Cuadro and on the south and west parts of the MMA since the early 2000s, not without controversy -mostly because of the traffic jams, demolitions and permits of questionable legality, accusations of corruption or the clashes between the new and existing uses.

Distritos with their promise of chic environments have gone from emerging in the well-off outskirts of MMA to middle- and lower-class neighborhoods in the city and most recently, to the Primer Cuadro. The matter of fact is the city center in general does not possess the attributes of these aesthetic aspirations. Years of neglect, illegality, and insecurity have taken their toll, and the streets are mostly used by low- and lower-middle class workers, informal business owners, students, homeless individuals, and the elderly residents. Seedy bars, warehouses, marketplaces, cheap stores, and auto-repair shops are ever present uses, and streets are in disrepair, roamed by shabby buses that transport the lower classes. Many of the current residents are elderly families who are forced to sell their properties, and they perceive that these kinds of projects disrupt their daily lives. While these projects receive government attention and approval, the actual residents' needs of security and infrastructure are never met.

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[65] Las áreas que tiene la ciudad de Monterrey en el centro de la ciudad, duplican cualquier otra área de esparcimiento que tenga cualquier otro municipio de la zona metropolitana y hay que aprovecharse, los inversionistas lo saben, lo están aprovechando y, sobre todo, va a ser en beneficio de los ciudadanos de aquí de Monterrey, además que obviamente tendremos una regeneración de la capital de Nuevo León (…) Lo que estamos buscando es hace un producto que le llegue a la gente que trabaja en el centro, que se pueda ir caminando a su trabajo y regrese sin necesidad de mover su vehículo.

Figure 40 Skyscrapers in Monterrey.
(left) "Monterrey of the future" – renders of skyscrapers to be built on the Primer Cuadro, Sept. 2020. Source: Grupo
Reforma. Retrieved on 18/01/2021. https://youtu.be/nj-we4unGXQ
(right) Image of the "tallest tower in Mexico" next to the Obispado, March 11, 2020. Source: Real Estate Market &
Lifestyle. Retrieved on 03/09/2021. http://realestatemarket.com.mx/noticias/mercado-inmobiliario/27491-hotel-hilton-
garden-inn-monterrey-obispado-la-torre-mas-alta-de-mexico

It only takes a walk near the towers that have already been built to fathom what their contribution to public space will be. Walking in these zones is complicated due to the construction in process. For all their technology, materials, and investments, they share the same configuration: a large base for parking, commerce, and terraces with exclusive amenities; a tower whose design originality is only skin deep; and a base surrounded by a blind wall.

Although projects present the justification that people are going to be able to work and shop all in close proximity to their homes, the prices to buy or rent an apartment not for the average worker in Monterrey. In some of the already existing buildings, they are secondary residences for upper-middle class individuals. One of the first questions potential buyers ask is how many parking spaces are allocated per apartment: without comprehensive improvements to public transportation, car use will still be a priority over other means of transportation.

Many of the new downtown projects are located near the Centro-PSC (see CHAPTER 5). In those cases, the new projects also profit from the already existing public spaces to fulfill this fantasy of the stylish stroll on an urban environment: they promote exclusive views and access to these public spaces, and they seek to capitalize on the touristic potential with hotels and commerce as part of the high rise. In other cases, such as the Semillero (erected in 2012), the project promoters have used the square as an accessory to carry out placemaking activities to make the environment appealing, as this strategy has become trendy among city-making enthusiasts in the city. Other than that, the public space is left largely untouched by the new developments.

Security is only available for the paying customers within the perimeter, and in doing so these projects -in the Primer Cuadro and the MMA- create voids: corners, empty unkempt streets, dead end streets, spare pieces of land. These leftover spaces between large-scale projects are momentarily appropriated by the lower classes (Saucedo Villegas, 2017): youths use them for recreation and sports, informal vendors install street markets, residents or clients of nearby services use them as a parking space -an ever-present need in MMA-, or by public and private institutions to carry out events. Illegal activities are part of these improvised uses. These non-

places lack an explicit owner or use, and are occupied by criminals as distribution points for drugs and guns, or for dumping bodies.

7.2 Aperture? Experiments by the elite on security through the transformation of public spaces

7.2.1 The nostalgia and the simulation of safe streets (for fun and for profit)

There is a generalized nostalgia for a peaceful past of Monterrey. Adult residents often reminisce of walking in specific places downtown - such as Barrio Antiguo, La Purisima, La Alameda, la Plaza Zaragoza, la Plaza del Chorro-, and the feeling of a close-knit community. These spaces were emblematic of traditional life at a neighborhood level; they were appropriated and used by their residents to socialize, run errands, go to work, go to school, play. Even if they not lived this experience, adults talk fondly about sitting on the porch and chatting with their neighbors at night, while kids played on the streets, or that they could go to the park or walk to the store without fear of anything bad happening.

The crisis of violence made people distance themselves from public space, more specifically, those who could afford to take this distance. The wealthy residents of San Pedro, Cumbres or Carretera Nacional -all upscale zones- stopped going to other zones to visit friends, go to school or shop. Anything beyond the borders of their territories -and occasionally those with a similar profile- was a feral and lawless land. Confined to the limits of the "armored" municipality of San Pedro, the residents had limited options for leisure in secure open spaces. To remediate this, the municipality of San Pedro created San Pedro de Pinta in 2011, where two streets downtown are closed on Sunday mornings for pedestrian use. Project coordinators in the municipality are part of the oldest and wealthiest families in town with training abroad in matters of culture and urban spaces. San Pedro de Pinta is sponsored by local companies and supported by UDEM and ITESM.

The project offered the wealthy San Pedro residents an option for activities in public space but within the limits of their fortified zone. In a way, the success of this project comes from the stark class divides and the lack of public space in MMA. This initiative provides a pleasant experience of street life: clean, secure, chic, and with a program of activities that aspires to be akin to Washington Square in Manhattan, while limiting any drawbacks such as trash, transients, traffic or unsightly street vendors. One finds hip stands of organic or ecofriendly products with menus in English, people of all ages going around on bikes or skates or jogging in top-of-the-line sportswear, storytellers entertaining small children, people doing picnics, families taking photographs with the colorful backdrops, local lifestyle bloggers mingling in between yoga sessions, concerts, and pet playdates, and students of local private schools doing community work by giving information and reminding people about rules. While the activities

carried out in these spaces may seem unremarkable in other high-income contexts, they are rare in the local daily life and are markers of social status (see Figure 41).

San Pedro de Pinta caters particularly to the tastes of the wealthy inhabitants of San Pedro - who otherwise avoid spaces like the Macro Plaza or Santa Lucía unless it is for a wedding at the Casino Monterrey or a photoshoot- and those living in other zones who aspire to belong to that social group. Like the Plaza Zaragoza in the 1950s, it was a place of socialization for the well-to-do families, who then are featured in high society magazines (see Figure 41). Residents of San Pedro praised the project for bringing back the opportunities for wholesome activities and the small-town feel that had been lost to violence with a "first-world" twist, and for the security measures put into place, as the San Pedro police is present to supervise.

Figure 41 Activities in San Pedro de Pinta
(left) teenagers playing badminton and (center) a storyteller surrounded by children laying in mats, Feb. 2020.
Photos: *Facebook*/*San* *Pedro* *de* *Pinta.* *Retrieved* *on* *20/01/2021.* *https://www.facebook.com/spdepinta/photos/2880654758682263*
(right) Visitors of San Pedro de Pinta featured in a high society magazine, January, 2019.
Source: Chic Magazine. Retrieved on 10/01/2021. https://issuu.com/chic_monterrey/docs/cma_monterrey_638/107

Although its intention of recovering -or creating- a culture of public space use is commendable, there are several points that merit criticism. Closing off a street for play or informal commerce is certainly not a new practice in this context, but it has previously been regarded as an activity of *colonias populares* (for example, lower classes who could not afford to rent a venue for a party), it is not a coordinated activity, and it is not necessarily supported by authorities or companies. Now done by and for residents of San Pedro it has been presented in international platforms as an innovative experience in placemaking, walkability, and citizen participation, while matters of inequality or accessibility across classes are hardly ever commented on. San Pedro de Pinta is hardly an organic, spontaneous or democratic appropriation of the streets. It is carefully curated for the elite, sponsored by companies with support from authorities. Those who do not belong to the social class feel like they do not belong, and many users drive from other municipalities for the experience of walking. Come Monday, the simulation is over and the streets go back to their rightful owners: the cars.

As the extreme events of violence dwindled, so did affluence to San Pedro de Pinta, and it apparently came to an end due to the COVID 19 crisis. Nevertheless, with over 15,000 visitors

every weekend, San Pedro de Pinta revealed that residents of San Pedro and beyond enjoyed -and needed- having safe streets to play and socialize, and politically it was a way to gain visibility through attractive events of easy implementation and low costs. Mayors were engaged to create similar recreational open streets (*vías recreativas*) in 9 municipalities through the compromises in the agenda of the CVNL under the concept of "streets for families" (Pueblo Bicicletero, 2013). In Monterrey, the project was implemented in March 2013 under the label ConVive Monterrey Centro and Norte, with the collaboration of the Municipality of Monterrey, Secreatría de Desarrollo Humano y Social, the IMPLANC, Secretaría de Vialidad y Tránsito, and the Secretaría de Policía Municipal. The project lists among its goals the promotion of values (ethics, respect, sustainability), and concerning public space (Gobierno de Monterrey, IMPLANC, 2013):

> II. to recover public space to facilitate culture, recreational activities and sports as a habit of health and improvement of the quality of life and social wellbeing

> XI. to promote the use of alternative transportation, encouraging respect for bicyclists, pedestrians and public transportation.

> XII. to plan the adaptation of municipal public spaces with the necessary facilities

The dynamic was similar to San Pedro de Pinta: close off a segment of a street once a week for pedestrians. These open streets were more accessible to lower classes and they provided safe and clean zones for several activities. Visitors could bring their own bikes or rent them -one of the more sought out activities-, play soccer or volleyball, join a class of martial, dancing, graffiti, or painting. Sponsors were allowed to distribute t-shirts, hats or water, and there were segments for commerce. Police personnel would carry out exhibitions of K9 units and mounted police.

Throughout its implementation Convive Monterrey changed location, days, and schedules, and it registered a turnout of 100-600 attendees per event in 2015 (Gobierno de Monterrey, 2015). Outside of the city center, the overall opinion of users was positive -except for a minority of shop owners- who appreciated the space to spend time with their families at sundown (considering the summer heat makes it uncomfortable to be outside during the day). In the city center, some residents were upset the streets were blocked. The Vias Recreativas program has been discontinued due to changes in administration, however there have been similar initiatives carried out throughout the years, many of which are for private-run sports events. The project was reactivated for a brief period on August 2020 to propose an option for sports during the COVID-19 crisis, on its sixth day of activity it registered 3,500 users (Redacción, 2020b).

Figure 42 Activities in Vias Recreativas on the Primer Cuadro.
(left) Volleyball and (center) grafitti demonstration on the city center on the first iteration of ConVive Monterrey, March 17, 2013.
Source: Fermin Tellez. Retrieved on 24/02/2021. http://fermintellez.blogspot.com/2013/03/ciclovia-convive-mty-fotos.html
(right) Members of runners' associations training for the Maratón Powerade. July 21, 2019.
Source: Eit Media. Retrieved on 24/02/2021. https://www.eitmedia.mx/index.php/local/item/47185-entrenan-corredores-en-via-deportiva-monterrey

<u>Calle Morelos: where security (allegedly) meets sustainability, public space, and rentability</u>

We will now observe a more permanent transformation of public spaces marked by violence. The Primer Cuadro, as seen in the previous section, is a coveted space for urban development and also in need of rehabilitation, both because of its lack of appeal to the upper classes and because of the effects of violence. After the tragedies in the Primer Cuadro, and more specifically, the Barrio Antiguo (see CHAPTER 6) became much less profitable: businesses closed and Barrio and the thousands of patrons sought entertainment elsewhere (such as the aforementioned *fibras*). Residents of Barrio Antiguo are mostly elderly people that have lived there most of their lives, and they had mixed feelings about this. On the one hand, the constant threat of violence made the place dangerous. On the other hand, they were glad that they could finally have peace and quiet during the weekends.

Earlier iterations of public space projects to foster activities in the public space through placemaking and counter the effects of violence were the installation of ephemeral parklets in Plaza de la Purísima and Calle Morelos, promoted by both the IMPLANC and the Laboratorio de Convivencia Ciudadana (and rarely done by actual residents of these spaces). The Calle Morelos project eventually became a permanent renovation in 2015, whose goal was "to rescue/recover the Center of Monterrey through urban mobility that will activate the real estate market" (Field notes, Feb. 2016), and promised to respect the historical architecture of the neighborhood and include neighbors in decisions. The result: the 20-million-pesos rescue plan amounted to only one street connecting an inaccessible point of the Macro Plaza, across a parking lot and two streets with heavy traffic, to a dead point on the east-most extreme. The project was widely publicized, earning national prizes for its materials -such as the XXIV Premio Obras CEMEX in 2015- and its new design, and it was celebrated as an experiment for better spaces for people.

Soon after the street's inauguration and its many praises for walkability a gourmet market took residence in this street, proposing an upscale gastronomic experience for tourists, demolishing

an early XXth century building, and amidst suspicions of corruption for the authorization. Other than the gourmet market, there are offices and hip restaurants, many of which have revamped their facades to more "Mexican-looking" styles. The street mixes international languages of *naif* urbanism with Mexican-pueblo aesthetic (incidentally, local vernacular architecture of the XIXth and early XXth century used earth tones. Colors such as bright pink, green, and orange are more typical of the south and center of the country, but it is what locals and tourists expect from historic and tourist-friendly zones in Mexico). Plans have been revealed of building a 39-story high tower to be built in north to Calle Morelos.

The project's limited scope, its goal of improving a space to make it profitable for real estate over actual social needs, the clash with residents, and the lack of maintenance have yet to be addressed. Although the project praised itself for its socialization processes and for its interest in restoring life at eye level -under the label of social urbanism-, tensions with residents were constant throughout the project, as we will explore in the next section of this chapter. Regardless, with the support of the private sector, the mayor and the governor, the project was built.

As for the Calle Morelos' walkability ambitions, walking is certainly more pleasant. However, since the day of the inauguration, the traffic flow has been chaotic. The street lacked signs, which were later supplied by the residents. Cars still parked anarchically regardless of the bollards -many of which have been knocked over-, public lighting is defective, and the tarps that were frequently featured in promotional images of the project damaged the historic buildings with their structures. By 2016, night life had made a comeback -along with the aforementioned nuisance of noise, damages to public and private property, illegal parking, and thefts. Due to the lack of socialization of the project and without the presence of an organism to keep managing it, the street appears in disrepair. Amidst major issues such as insufficient and defective public transportation and lack of public spaces, Calle Morelos is a glorified paving project and the first step towards gentrification of Barrio Antiguo, preparing the way for high-rise buildings (see Figure 43).

Figure 43 Contrasting sights of the Calle Morelos.
(left) Colorful facades in Barrio Antiguo and a yarn-bombed tree in Calle Morelos, May 2021. Photo: Faret, 2021.
(center) Trash and other damages in Calle Morelos, July 2019. Photo: El Norte. Retrieved on 18/01/2021
(right) Render of a 39-story high tower to be built in north to Calle Morelos. Source: El Norte. Retrieved on 05/09/2021.

7.2.2 The private sector's branding as "citizens" and its interest in public space and violence

The security crisis altered the everyday life of many and for the private sector, this meant significant monetary losses as the city scared away investments, clients, and suppliers (Vidaver-Cohen, 1998). As mentioned in CHAPTER 6, the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones de Nuevo León (CCINLAC) was reactivated following the crisis of violence. This council existed since 1975 after the death of Garza Sada "as a means [for business leaders] to place demands on the federal state as a civic and not as a business block" (Villarreal Montemayor, 2016, p. 112). From the CCINLAC came several initiatives to measure crime and ensure accountability from the public sector. One is Como Vamos Nuevo León (CVNL). It started in 2012 to evaluate the performance of the mayors of the municipalities of MMA and the governor of Nuevo León. CVNL organizes discussion forums where municipal and state governors meet to answer questions and be evaluated on various issues to which they have committed themselves to act. As seen through the actions of CVNL, the CCINLAC has gradually expanded their areas of interest from corruption to violence prevention, guidance and evaluation of private and public urban projects as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. A new vocabulary and interest in public spaces (starting by the use of the term "espacio público") has been popularized in the upper classes through private colleges (ITESM, UDEM, and UR) and groups such as Movimiento de Activación Ciudadana (MOVAC), Reforestación Extrema, CVNL, and ForoMty.

Figure 44 Diagram showing the main bodies and actions within the CCINLAC.
The yCo. label is a recent addition to group actions of public space transformation and violence prevention.
Source: Consejo Cívico. Retrieved on 05/09/2021. https://consejocivico.org.mx/proyectos.php

A report by the CCINLAC states that "since [1996] we have been perceived as the ultimate citizen representatives to act facing the imbalances caused by governments" (Consejo Cívico, 2019). Through the CCINLAC, the private sector is the self-appointed representative and educator of citizens, and the evaluator of government actions. All initiatives are presented as stemming from citizen concerns, or "100% citizen proposals". However, a group funded by millionaire heads of multinationals with a team of professionals in project management and funding procurement have a very different access to resources, expertise, and political influence than an average citizen of MMA -the CCINLAC reported a revenue of over 30,000,000 MXP in 2019. The "Projects" section of the CCINLAC website states that "[we] organized citizens are incorporating a citizen agenda to public management" (CCINLAC, 2021). Information published regarding sources of donations shows that 77% comes from private companies. The second most relevant source is international foundations with a 14% of participation (CCINLAC, 2021).

The organization currently lists over 130 affiliated groups: universities, chambers of real-estate, commerce, industry owners, pet associations, upper-class neighborhood associations, and "activists" in public space. Associations involved in public space projects that will be observed in the following sections are often the same. Oftentimes they present themselves as grassroots supporters of actions by the CCINLAC, giving the impression of a diverse group of enthusiastic citizens, when in reality some of these organizations were created or funded by the companies that lead the CCINLAC. Having a say on "citizen" round tables or projects organized by the CCINLAC associations -other than as member of the audience- is invite-only. Decisions appear to be unilateral and vertical (Sepúlveda, 2015), with board members answering to heads of industry behind the CCINLAC.

Contrary to their promises of citizen participation, not any citizen can emit an opinion and be heard by the organisms in the CCINLAC. Observing the lists of members, affiliates, and the roaster of alleged experts/citizens on different topics, names appear repeatedly in different positions in different groups. The human resources within these groups are all part of a hermetic ecosystem, sharing a similar set of values and background. The pattern that emerges is of bilingual upper-middle and upper-class college graduates -ideally, from ITESM-, with experience abroad, with work experience in companies of the CCINLAC, with some experience in social responsibility of companies and philanthropy, and the occasional expat.

Presidents of the CCINLAC are heads of chambers of commerce and industry and of ITESM, who have often been affiliated to the conservative PAN and have later ran for public office (L. García, 2015). As of October 2021, the newly elected governor of Nuevo León appointed the president of the CCINLAC as the new Secretary-general and the director of the COPARMEX (Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana - Mexican Employers' Association) as the Secretary of Economy. This is hardly the profile of the average Monterrey resident. A position in the CCINLAC and its affiliate groups is not open to anyone, much less if it is remunerated or involves decision making. At ground level, participants in activities may at times be genuinely interested neighbors, but as we will observe further on, opinions of common citizens that differ from the line of work of the CCINLAC associations are mostly ignored.

7.2.3 *Noblesse oblige*? Violence as a motor for the private sector's rebranding of public spaces

As mentioned in CHAPTER 5, the local private sector has been very active in city making as developers but also as decision makers influencing public policy. Concerning security, they had a consequential influence in monitoring and combatting violence, as detailed in CHAPTER 6. As this proved to be insufficient, since the early 2010s, one of the fronts targeted by the private sector to improve security was public space. Members of the CCINLAC -such as FEMSA and CEMEX- traveled to Medellin to learn about social urbanism (see CHAPTER 2) and CPTED, and later reproduced these models and integrated them into public policy. Through the corps of associations, foundations, and other organizations, the private sector intervenes the public space. The projects are imbued with a veneer of citizen participation, sustainability, and security through aperture (instead of isolation).

The elite and the companies behind the projects continue the legacy of the early XXth century industries of explicitly appointing themselves as leaders and role models who define how the city should be made, and stepping up when the public sector cannot fulfill its missions. Like during the industrialization period of Monterrey, the territorial transformations -and often the public policies created afterwards- obey the interests of local conglomerates and their location within the urban tissue.

Distrito Tec: attempts to erase the territorial markings of violence

A project that articulates security, marketing, real estate development, the private sector's pull, and contemporary trends of public space as a selling point is the Distrito Tec led by the ITESM. The ITESM is emblematic of the effects of the security crisis. Even before 2010, students were often robbed: studying in a notoriously expensive school, they were likely to carry laptops, smartphones, and money, making them attractive targets. Regardless of the security measures implemented on campus, students, teachers, and staff became targets for criminals as violence increased in MMA. This exodus increased after the murder of two out-of-state students in March 2010 (see CHAPTER 6), with 15% of student population leaving in the following 18 months.

Facing economic losses, Lorenzo Zambrano, CEO of CEMEX - second largest building materials company worldwide- and chair of the board of trustees at ITESM, assigned a new rector in 2011. The goal was to improve the image of Campus Monterrey, to preserve its prestige, and to reestablish it as an attractive destination for wealthy local and national students, and foreign students -particularly from North America and Europe. Their presence is associated with quality, wealth, and high status and they are more likely to afford the tuition prices (to compensate losses, the tuition increased from approximately $50,000 MX in 2005 to $70,000 in 2010s and as of 2020 the cost per semester is of $125,000 MX, or 14 times an average monthly salary in Nuevo León). Around 2012 the ITESM developed an initiative to "take the role as leader to face the challenges of the environment in which [they] live" (Distrito Tec, n.d.).

Aiming for prestige through international notoriety, the regeneration plan for the 24 surrounding neighbors was conceived by Sasaki, a Chinese-American design firm specialized in urban design and place branding. In 2013 the ITESM assembled a team of business and marketing specialists, along with architects and enthusiasts in urban matters and citizen engagement to carry out the Distrito Tec plan. In 2015 the project became part of the official urban development plans for the city of Monterrey.

While crime and deadly violence against ITESM students were the trigger of the project and an official apology from the federal government was issued as recently as 2019, security is not mentioned in the action axes of Distrito Tec. It was part of the discourse of preventing violence through aperture in the early stages of the project, and the Programa Parcial de Desarrollo Urbano Distrito Tec makes a brief mention of it among its citizen participation goals: "the contribution to actions and urban elements to reduce insecurity in the zone" (Gobierno de Monterrey, IMPLANC, 2015), and on the demographic profile it mentions the insecurity crisis between 2009 and 2013. Elsewhere the meaning of *seguridad* is that of "safety" -referring to accidents on the street. The omission of the notion of security is most certainly calculated to keep the attention on the appealing side of the project: the improvement of mobility, opening the campus, and removing barriers between the campus and its surroundings.

In the project's communication there is a shift from the usual focus on skylines and monumentality. The scale and reach of the project (a plan for the next 15-20 years covering 452 ha.) are indeed impressive, but communication towards local stakeholders -especially residents- and at international level has focused on the citizens' role in appropriating public space through small scale and tactical urbanism (the degree to which residents are really involved will be discussed further on).

Figure 45 The Distrito Tec promotes itself as a project that benefits the entire city and creates economic value.
(Right) "The college tragedy that change the course of an entire city", June 23, 2021.
Source : WRI Mexico. Retrieved on 07/09/2021. https://wrimexico.org/bloga/la-tragedia-universitaria-que-cambi%C3%B3-el-rumbo-de-toda-una-ciudad
(left) "Distrito Tec: an innovative program that fosters economic and social development and urban regeneration", October 1, 2015.
Source: Arquired. Retrieved on 07/09/2021. https://www.arquired.com.mx/sustentabilidad/distritotec-un-innovador-programa-que-impulsa-el-desarrollo-economico-y-social-y-la-regeneracion-urbana/

Contrasting the human-scale marketing, Distrito Tec has brought forward several new upscale housing projects for students and young professionals. Usually, *foraneo* students (out-of-state students with limited resources) were the main users of housing, public spaces, services and infrastructure around the campus, with some tension with the families residing in the zone who complained about noise during the weekends. Unlike local students who usually live with their families in the wealthier areas, they depend less on cars. The new options are more structured, but less affordable for *foráneos* and *becados* -scholarship students who cannot afford a full tuition. Trendy restaurants and cafés are displacing mom-and-pop *fondas* of homemade everyday food, and everyday life is becoming more expensive for the less affluent students and families who live there. In the words of a local activist:

> They are going to be displaced from this area, that is, if you do not have money to buy the apartment [2-5 million MXP or 87,000-217,700 Euro] or rent it for at least 15,000 MXP [653 Euro], then you will have to stop studying here or you will have to go to other neighborhoods. Crude economic displacement, no more no less, a displacement that has already begun with the families who had lived for decades in the neighborhoods surrounding the Tec and who now cannot, and do not want, to endure the circulation of thousands of cars that "progress" brought them[66] (González Ramírez, 2019).

Manufacturing interest in public space: CCINLAC and ITESM

Norma, a female professor of architecture, remarks about the newfound popularity of public spaces as a topic of interest in schools of architecture:

> Back then [prior to 2010] I came back from studying abroad with my winning idea of including public spaces as a topic for architecture students, but I was told that it was not appropriate. Back then they look at me like I was mad and now it stuns nobody [to include public space in the curriculum] People started talking about it since 2010. By 2015 it was a topic that everybody was familiar with, everybody knew about it, and everybody had already thought about it[67] (interview Norma, January 15, 2021).

José, a data analyst and ITESM alumni also notes this sudden interest:

> Back in the early 2000s, sustainability was all the rage for the Tec. Tec-speak was all about recycling, certifications and diplomas of sustainability, energy. Master courses and conferences on sustainability. Now it's the same, but with public space. Honestly, normal people do not give a damn. But all of a sudden, Tec alumni are talking about

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[66] Van a empezar a ser desplazados de esta zona, es decir, si no tienes dinero para comprar el depa o rentarlo en al menos 15 mil pesos, pues tendrás que dejar de estudiar aquí o tendrás que irte a otros barrios. Desplazamiento económico crudo, ni más ni menos, desplazamiento que ya comenzó con las familias que tenían décadas viviendo en las colonias aledañas al Tec y que ahora no pueden, y no quieren, aguantar la circulación de miles de autos que les trajo el "progreso".

[67] En aquel entonces [antes de 2010], regresé de estudiar en el extranjero con mi idea ganadora de incluir espacios públicos como un tema para estudiantes de arquitectura, pero me dijeron que no era apropiado. Me vieron como si estuviera loca y ahora a nadie le sorprende [incluir espacio público en el currículo]. La gente empezó a hablar de eso desde 2010. Para 2015 era un tema con el que todos estaban familiarizados, todos lo conocían, y todos ya lo habían pensado.

how beautiful the streets look. Yeah, right…those where the same people who would look down on you because you rode the bus to school[68] (interview José, March 13, 2019).

The marketing of Distrito Tec has provided an arsenal of new vocabulary relating to public space aimed at a specific population: the well-to-do inhabitants of the upper classes who are now discovering public space. This comes as a surprise for many who are familiar with the elitist view traditionally held by ITESM staff and alumni about public spaces. Nowadays they proudly share any new development happening around the campus and show off pictures of them cycling around the campus, and talk about mobility.

In 2019, the ITESM launched a Licenciatura en Urbanismo. It is worth noting that the bachelor's degree focuses more on construction, entrepreneurship, and 'cities of the future' more than it does on social sciences. The same year, the ITESM also announced the C+Lab in their School of Architecture, stemming from the Distrito Tec, with the goal doing consulting work, research, and outreach on urban sustainability, social innovation, and participative governance. The UANL has had several graduate programs on urban affairs for over a decade, but it has lacked the marketing power of the ITESM.

The CCINLAC, through Distrito Tec, has popularized concepts such as public space, walkability, regeneration, participation, complete streets, placemaking, and tactical urbanism. It shows aspiring investors that certain aesthetics of public spaces can make urban and commercial projects more attractive, profitable, palatable, and that it can garner international relevance. This shift has motivated an increasing number of platforms, self-appointed experts, and consultants from the upper classes on public space activation, regeneration, and resignification. Their proposal is superficial, only reproducing uncritically the discourse popularized by ITESM and CCINLAC. Ultimately, the emerging interest in public space is not focused on users, but on customers: it is not about improving uses, but improving its image to brand it and sell it, varnishing it with terminology of social and environmental justice and innovation.

The influence of the ITESM, its projects, and its sponsors -especially CEMEX- surpasses the borders of the Distrito Tec. The Distrito Tec argues that these changes are for the good not only for them as a business, but for the entire city. The Distrito Tec in Monterrey is the blueprint to be reproduced in other ITESM campuses facing violence around the country. The Centro CEMEX Tec de Monterrey para el Desarrollo de Comunidades Sostenibles, founded in 2010, carries out projects on social entrepreneurship and innovation in vulnerable communities in Nuevo Leon and other states. Furthermore, the CCINLAC and the ITESM are responsible for

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[68] Antes, a principios de los 2000s, la moda en el Tec era la sustentabilidad. El lenguaje del Tec era todo sobre reciclaje, certificaciones y diplomas sobre sustentabilidad, energía. Cursos de maestría y conferencias sobre sustentabilidad. Ahora es lo mismo, pero con espacio público. La verdad, a la gente normal le vale madres. Pero de la nada, ahora resulta que tienes a estudiantes del Tec hablando de la belleza de las calles. Sí, cómo no…son los mismos que te hacían menos porque llegabas en camión a la escuela.

importing and reproducing models for crime prevention through spatial transformations that are applied uncritically in several contexts.

<u>Projects by the elite in low-income territories</u>

A similar approach was orchestrated by the private sector in impoverished *colonias populares* facing violence. Previously, the social responsibility of companies had been focused on donating articles, planting trees or sponsoring educational programs, now they include urban planning with projects such as Polígono Edison (2011) north of the Primer Cuadro, Campana-Altamira (2018) in south Monterrey and the Distrito Independencia (2011) south of the Primer Cuadro. As mentioned in CHAPTER 5 and CHAPTER 6, these are among the most vulnerable territories in the city -socially and economically. Besides the issues related to illegal occupation of land, lack of services such as water and electricity, and the precarious conditions of housing, these *colonias* have high rates of violence linked to common and organized crime, domestic violence, drug addiction, school drop-out, and unemployment. Moreover, they are located in spaces of interest for companies of the CCINLAC: FEMSA is in close proximity to the Polígono Edison and the Independencia and Campana-Altamira are near the ITESM (sponsored by CEMEX). Regarding Campana-Altamira, CEMEX -the company responsible- states the following:

> Our business cannot prosper in a world of poverty and inequality, which is why we collaborate with government, companies, and members of the society to build sustainable, inclusive, secure, and resilient cities. (…) For CEMEX it is important to increase the opportunities to position ourselves as a responsible and sustainable business in all aspects (CEMEX, 2018).

While security is practically omitted from the discourse surrounding Distrito Tec, it was featured heavily in projects regarding these *colonias populares*, along with inequality and poverty. With the argument of security through equality and territorial interventions in mind, social urbanism and CPTED are a fundamental part of the program of activities, more so than in the Distrito Tec whose discourse is more oriented towards sustainability. The projects adhere to goals of improving security, peace, inclusion (social, economic, and urban), housing, education, and health. Besides implementing workshops for education, culture, and employment, the program leans heavily on improving the image of public spaces and getting citizens to participate under the label of "creating citizenship". In more recent projects -such as Campana-Altamira-, the discourse of security has been dropped altogether and has been substituted by walkability jargon.

Projects involve companies of the CCINLAC as sponsors, who set the agenda for collaboration with the public sector, and bring in consultants, national and international NGOs, and enthusiasts in social issues and urbanism to manage these activities, carry out observations and follow-up. Project sponsors also bring in many of the "citizen" associations under their wing to provide an image of diversity of skills and interests. Although the projects seek to "join efforts to solve urban public problems and work with authorities (…) without substituting their presence or obligations" (Cómo Vamos Nuevo León, 2013), the public sector really comes in as a collaborator and helper. For example, in Polígono Edison the projects' goals were

established by the Polígono Edison Trust and the then mayor of Monterrey signed to be held accountable for their implementation through the CVNL platform.

The permanence and durability of the projects also begs questioning. For example, in the case of the Centro Comunitario Independencia: hailed as an icon of "social architecture" and the engagement of the private and public sectors, the community center is in a state of disrepair in the present, as there has been a lack of maintenance from authorities to keep it running. It has also been the dumping grounds of bodies. And in the case of the Polígono Edison, for all its promises of crime prevention through environmental and social action, the public spaces appear deteriorated as soon as contract of FEMSA's appointees came to an end.

Private universities are heavily involved as well, especially the ITESM. After decades of neglect, the *colonias* Independencia, Altamira, and Campana -stereotypically conflictive territories- have become the grounds for institutions to experiment with trends of social urbanism as means to prevent crime and violence. For example, the Centro Comunitario Bicentenario de la Independencia in the eponymous *colonia* was a project done by the Catedra Blanca CEMEX workshop of the ITESM School of Architecture. More recently, students go to these *colonias* as part of their community service program. However, their approach has been criticized as lacking sensibility towards poverty, inequality, and privilege. Recently, ITESM students were criticized for trivializing poverty, as they play-pretend building houses with cardboard to understand "how many people live in our country" (see Figure 46), and many up-and-coming students use the opportunity to participate in projects to gain notoriety as alleged experts.

Figure 46 Trivialization of poverty by ITESM students.
The now deleted post by the department of Servicio Social (community service) stated that freshmen students were "building cardboard houses to be aware of the reality of many people" in Mexico, August 5, 2018.
Source: Plumas Atomicas. Retrieved on 01/09/2021. https://plumasatomicas.com/noticias/extraordinario/tec-de-monterrey-casas-de-carton-insensibilidad/

The performative character of these "humanitarian" projects is further revealed in the permanent large-scale projects. This has been the case of the Independencia. Throughout the years, there have been uncoordinated projects by private and public actors that have symbolically and physically cut off this sector from the rest of the city.

The Distrito Independencia project seeks to transform the violence- and poverty-stricken sector into a world-class commercial and touristic hub, i.e. building more high rises. The project has been publicized as a series of investments to "give more identity and quality of life to its inhabitants" (field notes, April 20, 2019) (it is to be understood that they are lacking in identity). It includes the construction of the Memorial de la Misercordia: a 160-meter-tall monumental cross with a community center on the base. The project is backed by the Archdiocese of Monterrey and local businessmen to "symbolize the common faith of the inhabitants of Nuevo Leon and give hope" (field notes, April 20, 2020). The project promoters advertise that it will be the largest cross in the world, the fourth tallest structure in the city, and it will help 'sanitize' a one of the oldest *barrios*, traditionally known for its violence and immigrant population. Next is the Interconexion San Pedro-Monterrey: a 6-lane highway that will connect the municipality of San Pedro with the Macroplaza. This project prioritizes the needs of motorized mobility of the Sampetrinos. It aims to ease the connection to the city center of a municipality that has constantly distanced itself from the rest of the MMA -to the point of implementing check-points on its borders and voluntarily cutting off contact with the MMA during the years of the security crisis. In the end, the message is clear: regardless of the speeches and prizes for humanitarian action, these vulnerable territories are only worth as land to sell. Social urbanism is an intermediary stop.

Figure 47 Priorities of the city: cosmetic temporary improvements, mobility for the wealthy, and the monumentality of religion. (left) A simplified version of a macro-mural in Colonia Independencia (i.e. the municipality donated paint to residents), June 29, 2018.

Source: El Universal. Retrieved on 26/02/2021. https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/denuncian-proyectos-urbanos-en-monterrey-que-impedirian-memorial-de-la-misericordia

(center) Render of the Interconexión San Pedro – Monterrey.

Source: Contextual. Retrieved on 05/09/2021. https://contextual.mx/contenido/interconexiones-vemos-regeneraciones-urbanas-no-sabemos

(right) Render of the Memorial de la Misericordia, a monumental cross to attract tourism.

Source: Facebook – Monitor Urbano. Retrieved on 05/09/2021. https://www.facebook.com/MonitorUrbanoMonterrey/photos/a.340537926136635/1669718659885215/

7.3 Legitimization of projects

7.3.1 Influence of the private sector on public policy of urban planning

As seen in the previous sections and chapters, the private sector has an undeniable influence on the public agenda. The Instituto Municipal de Planeación y Convivencia de Monterrey (IMPLANC) was created in 2013. It is a decentralized public organization that provides technical expertise in urban planning, urban sustainability, risk prevention, and environmental care. Since its inception it has promoted a less traditional approach to urban planning, integrating notions such as mobility, mixed uses, sustainability, and human scale. The IMPLANC is in charge of the creation of the Plan de Desarrollo Urbano (PDU) 2013-2025 of Monterrey. On the one hand, the IMPLANC has introduced topics of sustainability and human scale. But on the other hand, there is a clear influence on the PDU of the projects that were already underway by the private sector. They share sources, vocabulary, consultants, and goals; one could argue that elements of the PDU are subjugated to the private sector's program of activities.

Going back to the *distrito,* it has been a popular term among real-estate developers to call any mixed-uses and/or high-rise project, although it is usually for large-scale projects. The *distrito* has been also used in studies commissioned to private consultants to classify areas in Monterrey -reminiscent of mid-century urban planning in single-use zones- which oversimplify the nature of the city. An example of this is the AECOM master plan for sustainable mobility (yet another project to intervene the Santa Catarina River prioritizing cars) that marked a commercial district, a park district, a culture district, etc. *Distrito* became an official subdivision of the municipality of Monterrey in the PDU 2013-2025, approved in 2014.

The PDU also defines strategic zones for urban interventions. Several of these are zones of influence of large institutions such as conglomerates and public and private colleges, and are named after them in the PDU. Additionally, several projects in the "planned" zones for urban interventions which had already began before the PDU was even approved and are featured in the document as examples to follow. By then, the Polígono Edison and Distrito Tec were already underway, and the UANL projects would follow suit. And the IMPLANC would soon launch its very own Calle Morelos. The PDU was a step to make it official.
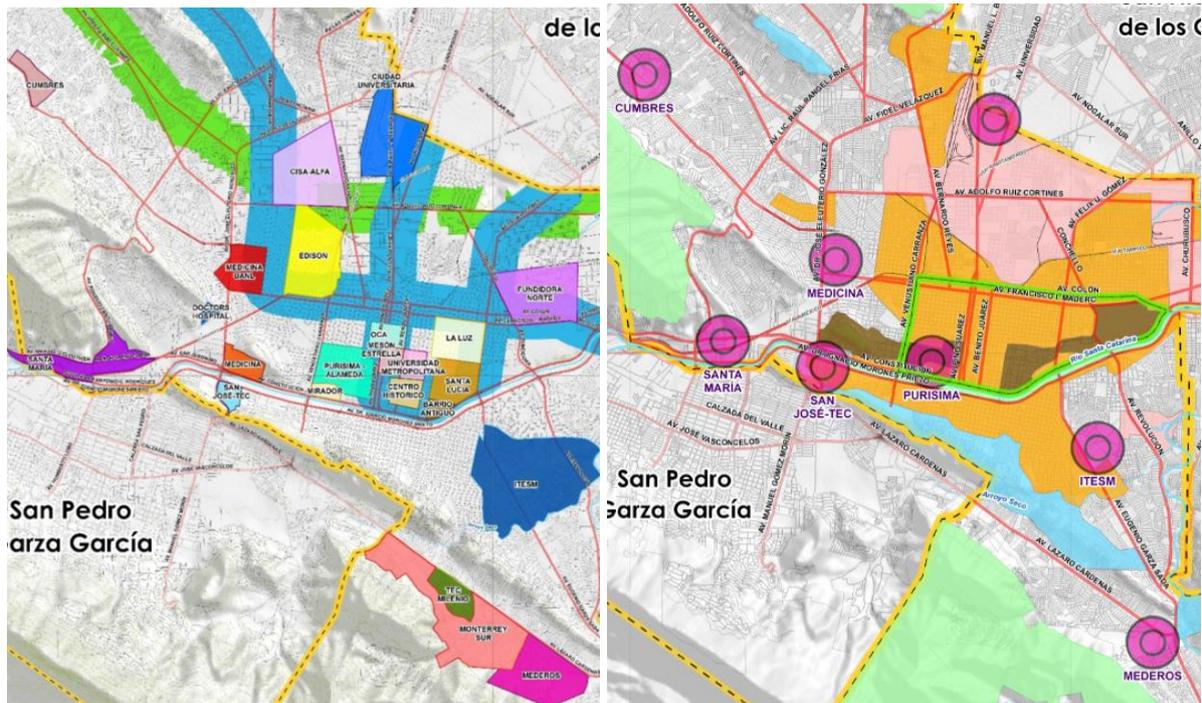
Figure 48 (left) Map of Strategic Zones and (right) map of zones of urban improvement.
Action is concentrated in the city center.
Source: IMPLANC (2014).

The link between security and public spaces is highlighted in the plan, as it makes note of the experience of Medellin, Colombia as an example. The document mentions the surge of violence as a factor that contributed to the neglect of public spaces (IMPLANC, 2014, pp. 42, 115). The document alludes to the negative effect violence has on economic growth studies carried out by Colombian experts in Mexico to gain insight on the social issues behind the security crisis. It also mentions the need for natural surveillance, human scale, social innovation, and participation as ways to mitigate criminality and violence. It quotes Guillermo Peñalosa on the importance of citizen engagement in urban projects aimed for security, and Jorge Melguizo on the link between public space and violence (both of which are invited by the CCINLAC project managers to consult frequently). Under "Programa de Convivencia" the Plan details three axis for social action:

- Social prevention of violence and crime in urban public spaces
- Urban cohesion for the human scale
- Citizen culture

It refers to the utility of CPTED methodologies to impact crime incidence through spatial measures, but continues to highlight the role of participation and social dynamics. Later on, under "Urban rehabilitation" the Plan refers to a study carried out in Bogota in 2009 and states that urban renovation should be implemented in places where loss of density and population has increased insecurity and motivated a waste of infrastructure: renovation of traditional barrios, reforestation and remodeling of public spaces, creation of underground parking, re-densification, and the creation of bike paths and pedestrian streets. It lists among the areas of interest first and foremost the city center of Monterrey and *colonias* such as Topo Chico, Nino

Artillero, Emiliano Zapata, Industrial, Independencia, and *colonias* part of the Poligono Edison (IMPLANC, 2014, p. 125).

The fact that concepts of human scale and participation are included in the PDU is not indicative of their application nor of their comprehension by city makers. Rather it shows an appeal to trends. And despite the repeated mentions of public spaces, *convivencia* (coexistence), and human scale, the PDU was also modified to allow the construction of high rises in zones of interest of real-estate developers.

7.3.2 Instagramable potential, international validation, naif urbanism, and the discourses of legitimization

As we have observed until now, violence gave way to contrasting transformations of the physical environment. On the one hand, we have the aggressive construction of high-rises at all costs. And on the other hand, we have human-scale projects -although they essentially prepare the terrain for more high rises.

Another noteworthy transformation is the language used to promote these projects. While the typical arguments of land-value, investment opportunities, international notoriety, security, and aspirational images of wealth are mentioned, new buzzwords on the field of urbanism have been included such as reconstruction, rescuing, revitalization, urban regeneration, mobility, transport-oriented-development, and sustainability. These are however is far from the concerns of the average city dweller. This window dressing seeks to imbue high rises with qualities outside of what the project really offers: parking, malls, expensive apartments, and security - allegedly.

The construction of high rises is heavily publicized and discussed by experts, laymen, government officials, and promoters in terms of capital gain, attraction of investments, and international visibility. Publicity focuses on the spectacle of the towers against the skyline and of being the site of the tallest building in Mexico or Latin America -appealing to the *regio*'s belief in their own cultural superiority. Talking with residents who are not into real estate investments or that are not the target demographic of the project, many of them support high rises for what they represent: the *regio*'s superior entrepreneurism and "sticking it to the *chilangos*". As one interlocutor said "finally, Monterrey will look like a first world city![69]". Online communities of laymen and urbanists alike from Mexico and Latin America celebrate that the "biggest tower in Mexico/Latin America" is inaugurated or planned in Monterrey yet again. For many in these forums, gentrification is another term that is mentioned as a positive: gentrification means cleaning up and improving a deteriorated space. Most of the criticism is often limited to traffic or nuisances that will come with the construction process or legality. As local journalist Benjamín Castro puts it:

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[69] Por fin, ¡Monterrey va a verse como ciudad de primer mundo!

[these towers] rise over a city in ruins in terms of infrastructure, roads, and violence. The municipalities have "eased" these developments to attract investments, by accelerating construction permits, land use changes, and the fusion or divisions of plots of land. Through bribes, large real estate developers get their permits in a few days, that would take years for us mortals to obtain. (…) The taxes received (…) represent millions besides the bribes, that should be used to improve roads, overpasses, drainage, etc. but this is not done because it is not planned in the Municipal PDU and there is no law that requires it (2018).

Neighbors of El Semillero, a high-rise project in Primer Cuadro, have complained about traffic jams, water pressure, and disturbances of construction. These grievances are depicted as trivial matters: if you don't like it, move. Criticizing issues of transportation is often taken as an offense. There are higher goals. Ricardo Padilla, the real-estate developer and architect behind the project, has eloquently expressed to his narrow-minded colleagues (perhaps in homage to James Carville's 1992 quip): …*es la densidad, estúpido*! -it's the density, stupid. The project's slogan dares the consumer to "be smart, live differently" (see Figure 49). Criticism or opposition to high rises denotes a lack of worldliness and intelligence.

Figure 49 Selling the new (allegedly) dense, vertical, sustainable, and walkable city.
(left) Ricardo Padilla -architect, real estate developer behind El Semillero, and president of the Consejo Consultivo para el Desarrollo Urbano Sustentable in 2014- explains a diagram titled "restoring urban sustainability by architectural strategy", while wearing a t-shirt that states "it's called density, stupid!", October 31, 2020.
Source: Youtube. Retrieved on 01/09/2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sUubwd_oVE
(center) Placemaking interventions in Plaza de la Purísima, May 17, 2014.
Source: Facebook –Plaza La Purísima. https://www.facebook.com/plazalapurisima/photos/753073194732960
(right) Project presentation "Be smart, live different".
Source: Chic Magazine. Retrieved on 19/01/2021.

An idealized simulation of supposedly American and European life in public space can happen only (if ever) within the boundaries of the high rise: secure, clean, exclusive, with impressive views of fashionable buildings, and high-end restaurants for a homogeneous population. To prolong the illusion for the paying customers, transformations of the immediacies are paramount, as done in Distrito Tec, the parklets in Plaza de la Purísima, and Calle Morelos.

Placemaking interventions make the unsavory immediate surroundings invisible or less offensive to the paying customers' sensibilities.

A similar language of legitimization as the one discussed above for high rises is employed in public space interventions. For example, the project of Calle Morelos apparently had it all: depending on the audience, the IMPLANC -the public structure responsible for the project- would mention crime prevention and recovery of public spaces, historic preservation, real-estate investments, tourism and foreign investments, social urbanism, citizen participation, international notoriety, and an array of buzzwords related to sustainability and mobility. Likewise, the Distrito Tec's the discourse changes its emphasis, from sustainability to economic development and innovative entrepreneurship.

Not only placemaking and tactical urbanism are used to make streets appealing and supposedly pedestrian-friendly: they also provide an entry to international platforms of trends in urbanism, a key factor for local justification and validation. Projects involving the CCINLAC give a fair amount of visibility to their participation on national and international contests and forums specializing in architecture, urbanism, marketing, and citizen participation. The CCINLAC's organizations have created international events to discuss these trends and present their initiatives. On these events, the project representatives showcase the visual language shared with any other placemaking or tactical urbanism project in the Global North: a bright rainbow of street painting, DIY urban furniture with recycled materials (especially pallets), metal chairs, cozy storefronts with fairy lights, bicycles, picnics, street art, trees, plants, and above all, citizens supposedly creating all these elements and enjoying the public space.

Unlike high rises which resound with professionals and laymen alike, these projects speak in particular to progressive urbanism and architecture enthusiasts -who do not live in the areas of implementation-, with its discourse full of urbanism jargon, its originality in the context of Monterrey, and its adherence to international aesthetics of *naif* urbanism. Projects such as San Pedro de Pinta, Calle Morelos, Polígono Edison, and Distrito Tec are easily understood in international placemaking platforms of citizen-driven projects, where they are shared uncritically. The validation is double: international placemaking groups validate their stance that placemaking is a democratic tool that can work even in violent spaces of the Global South; the international attention is interpreted locally as approval of the decisions made. This approval comes from the surface reading of the project -without familiarity with the context-, and the biased briefing from promoters of the projects. Project managers spare no expense to bring in experts from around the globe, and show how much they approve of their projects, and to communicate that the project is similar to something done in the Global North and that they received attention from the Netherlands, France or the US (see Figure 50). Presence of American or European visitors in conferences or even the meetups to paint walls and remove rubbish also validates their strategies. This means that Monterrey is able to speak an international language, and therefore, the actions taken are unarguably correct.

Figure 50 First world aspiration and validation as important parts of the discourses of legitimization.
(right) "First world street" The Calle Morelos' project managers announce that representatives from the Netherlands approved of the project, January 30, 2015.
Source: ABC noticias. Retrieved on 03/09/2021. https://abcnoticias.mx/global/2015/1/30/calle-de-primer-mundo-2512.html
(center) "NL is the first state with first-world crossroads", a news site announces that pedestrian crossings are being painted in Distrito Tec that are similar to those in Tokyo, July 5, 2019.
Source: Dominio Medios. Retrieved on 03/09/2021. https://dominiomedios.com/es-nl-primer-estado-en-contar-con-intersecciones-viales-de-primer-mundo/
(right) "Distrito Tec receives important international prize on buildings for colleges", July 28, 2014.
Source: Monitor Universitario. Retrieved on 03/09/2021. https://www.monitoruniversitario.com.mx/generales/distrito-tec-recibe-importante-premio-internacional-sobre-edificaciones-universitarias/

Thus, the aesthetic value of the end product is the parameter to judge the success of the project. As a local urbanist stated: "photogenic spaces are safe spaces (…) which means more eyes on the street and more security. Calle Morelos in Monterrey, Mexico became one of the favorite spaces in Monterrey to take pictures" (field notes, August 11, 2021). The *instagramable* potential makes the project worth it, as it can be used as a backdrop for photos, making the city attractive to visit and invest. While these interventions are depicted as the ultimate solutions to improve quality of life in any urban space, it appears as if the Primer Cuadro and the CCINLAC's projects are the only places with real possibilities to do so, and only after taking a course by so-called experts in placemaking -trainers and trainees are both often part of the same circles. These actions are absent elsewhere in MMA, which calls into question the alleged universality of these tools. Meanwhile, for decades, lower-class residents of MMA have improvised public space uses without private sponsoring, without an elaborate urbanistic terminology, without international pretentions, using materials at hand (rather than buying quaint and expensive recycled furniture - see Figure 51) and for commercial uses or for entertainment. These appropriations are rather seen as signifiers of poverty and informality.

Figure 51 "Re-appropriation of public space" vs. "taking over streets". The worth of an action of public space depends on class and location.

(left) food trucks and picnic tables as part of the Festival Callejero organized by the award-winning Distrito Tec, 2017.
Source: Distrito Tec. Retrieved on 25/02/2021. http://distritotec.itesm.mx/proyectos/callejero/

(center) pedestrians and street vendors in the Primer Cuadro that illustrate an article titled "Street vendors take over the streets of Monterrey".
Source: Milenio. Retrieved on 17/10/2021. https://www.milenio.com/politica/puesteros-ganan-terreno-en-calles-regiomontanas

(right) a family installs a food stand in a colonia popular to earn money during the COVID-19 crisis, 2020.
Source: Ramírez, 2020.

Furthermore, the focus on aesthetics disregards one of the key elements of human-scale projects: people -most importantly, users and residents of the area to intervene. Closing streets for pedestrians -or anything that may disturb car traffic- in general is not positively received by residents of Monterrey. One project manager in Calle Morelos expressed their frustration with uncooperative neighbors exclaiming "[they] don't understand the project![70]" (field notes, January 10, 2016). Oftentimes, the residents' priorities are much more mundane than the elevated goals of the aspiring professionals in public space regeneration. As an interviewee pointed out:

> Look, normal people care about where to park their car that is safe and close to the entrance, or drainage. I sort of knew about those terms because I hung out with architects in college, but now I see everyone uses them…well, not everyone really. Just *wannabe's* or *gente bien* but like *con ganas de baño de pueblo* or looking for a charity case or to pretend they are doing something of high purpose. They think that they are changing the world painting lines on the street. And you want to believe them because they are the ones who supposedly know. Maybe I'm just too ignorant, but to me they are only painting lines. People don't care or don't understand. And they call you stupid or backwards. I mean, sorry: nobody paid me a trip to Amsterdam to learn how to paint streets[71] (interview José, March 13, 2019).

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[70] Los vecinos no entendieron el proyecto.

[71] Mira, a la gente normal le importa donde estacionar el carro que esté seguro y cerca de la entrada, o le preocupa el drenaje. Yo medio sabía esos términos porque cotorreaba con arquis en carrera, pero ahora todo mundo los saca…bueno, no todos. Solo *wannabe's* o gente bien con ganas de baño de pueblo o queriendo hacer caridad o hacer como que hacen algo importante. Dizque cambian el mundo pintando rayitas en la calle. Y les quieres creer porque ellos son los que dizque saben. A lo mejor estoy muy ignorante, pero para mí nomás están pintando rayas.

These projects usually do not last without their promoters, as they do not come at the behest of the community. Project creators do not involve the community, nor do they care to do so authentically, as they assume they would not understand the "intricacies" their proposal. This lack of involvement is rarely documented. The projects of *naif* urbanism aim to satisfy a hypothetical visitor or investor, while the users affected by the projects are ignored or disrespected. Criticism, once again, denotes a lack of understanding of high-brow purposes and concepts, regardless of its motivation…*¡es el urbanismo social, estúpido!*

7.3.3 Social urbanism, CPTED, and the pantomime of citizen participation

Involvement in public action is not habitual for city dwellers in Monterrey. However, the private and the public sector have noted the importance of participation to improve security. Motions of participation, togetherness, community, collaboration, etc. were integrated in the PDU 2013-2025, as mentioned above. However, project managers are aware of the lack of participation, because residents are disinterested or believe it is useless. This belief does not come out of nowhere. Collective action and public initiatives have let down city dwellers repeatedly, and politicians make empty promises of abstract development and economic growth and have little positive impact on their everyday lives. When it comes to urban affairs, the average resident's priorities lie on solving the immediate needs of mobility to and from work, and defending their private property. The discourse of public space regeneration is all well and good…as long as it does not profane the sanctity of parking spaces and streets for cars. Again, this stance makes sense in a city where cars are not only an utmost necessity due to neglect of public transportation, but also a social marker (see CHAPTER 5), and in more recent years, a way to avoid crime.

Presentations, articles, and videos about the projects of public space show the fruitful meetings where citizens of all ages participate actively and their opinions figure on the project's outcome: the ITESM, FEMSA, CEMEX or any company behind the project cares about what residents have to say. This appears to be far from true.

The artificial activation of consenting communities

The private sector has appointed itself as responsible to re-educate city dwellers on urban affairs and participation. This comes in the form of hiring community managers/activators in some of the projects. Community managers come usually from private colleges, have worked in projects with companies or associations of the CCINLAC, and have stumbled onto this line of work by chance. They may have some notions of social justice, but it is rare for them to have training in social work - one community manager I met was an engineer, another one was a writer, and another one was an industrial designer, all from ITESM. Most of their discourse is fairly homogeneous, full of terminology made popular by the Distrito Tec and IMPLANC.

A la gente no le importa ni le entiende. Y luego te dicen estúpido o retrógrada. O sea, perdón: a mí nadie me pagó el pedo para ir a Amsterdam a aprender a pintar calles.

They are appointed to "activate" communities in spaces that will be the subject of a social urbanism transformations (see Figure 48).

They attach themselves to existing neighborhood groups or new ones ignoring the ones that exist already. The differences are notorious from the outside: the group led by community managers has professional image and logo designs and talks about tactical urbanism and organizes art festivals, while the group that emerged organically is mostly concerned with parking, faulty infrastructure, and keeping suspicious individuals on check. As long as their contracts last, community managers are there to play-pretend the role of an activist, and persuade residents or to steer them in the right direction (i.e. the project that has already been defined), not to listen to residents' complaints or ideas. They rarely disclose they are being paid to "activate" a community: usually they pretend they are activists or very motivated citizens or residents. In some cases, they live temporarily in the community. For some community activators, this has been a stepping stone towards better paying corporate jobs or public function.

Having attended meetings of several of these projects as a neighbor between 2013 and 2016, reactions I observed were mixed. In Urbania -a high-rise in the Primer Cuadro- only a dozen or so residents attended, usually friends of the community manager, who pretended to be just a common tenant who was casually given a budget by the building managers to throw block parties. Neighbors were mostly upper-middle class who did not want to get involved, as they saw no interest. These dynamics were also present in the IMPLANC, where they created a "Laboratorio de Convivencia Ciudadana": one or two persons were paid to act as "the voice of citizens" in IMPLANC presentations (often sitting among the audience) and to do placemaking in the name of peacebuilding. Being part of this so-called citizen lab was invite-only. As for other meetings in the Primer Cuadro, the community managers attached themselves to neighbors' groups that were already formed. Among residents of the zone, those who do participate in any extent are a very small minority. In the words of a participant: "[other residents] call us crazy, they look at us funny, and they never want to come. We are always the same 10, 15 people" (field notes, October 28, 2015). Most of participants were somewhat persuaded that collective action was positive, and at times were grateful that the community activator was willing to help them. But they connected little with their pre-fabricated buzzword discourse. Those that did engage in a longer term were another small unrepresentative sample: college-educated, they do not have an office job, or were either architects, urbanists, artists, or had a pre-existing interest in public space trends. It can be concluded that "creating" or "activating" a community means to create a group composed of a very select minority that supports the top-down decisions and present them as average citizens.

Participation and social urbanism in projects in MMA

Social urbanism projects imply, at least in theory, active engagement with the target communities of users (Martínez-Rivera, 2011), who usually inhabit impoverished and violent neighborhoods. The typically seen activities of painting streets or buildings are not the final goal, but part of a larger program of activities to foster social cohesion. This is an important part of the process, since violence is related to a weakened social tissue and mistrust among residents. Painting a mural or a street will not solve this problem, much less when taking into

account structural violence facing these communities. Listening to these groups of users and transforming their needs and wants into actions requires time and expertise, and the result is not necessarily an artistic and marketable project. There should be room for improvisation or adjustments based on the users' input. In projects in vulnerable communities facing violence in MMA, there is no such room. These projects are managed like any other privately-owned project: they have established goals, a defined timeframe to work, and assigned tasks for each of the actors involved. Citizen participation is a minor box to tick. And within a fixed timeframe and a product to deliver, project managers focus on persuading citizens into being allies (or free labor) rather than listen to them. The product is usually an array of painted surfaces. It is cheap, it is easy, it gives international notoriety, and dressed up with social urbanism jargon, it is morally justifiable.

For example, the Colosal macro-mural is yet another iteration of an artistic intervention done on a marginalized settlement to prevent crime (see CHAPTER 2). In 2018, the ITESM, COMEX, CEMEX, the municipality of Monterrey, NGOs, volunteers, and students doing community service painted the facades of the Polígono Campana-Altamira to "create social cohesion and improve their self-esteem" (field notes, April 20, 2019). A plethora of associations related to the CCINLAC companies were involved on this "citizen" project, among them, the Colectivo Tomate, a collective that works for "the rescue of public spaces" and the "culture of peace and conflict resolution". This collective put into place the Pachuca Macromural and now repeated the experience in Monterrey.

As mentioned by one of the interviewees, "normal people do not care" about public space, unless it is to park a car or to avoid getting hit by one. In an environment where deterioration and violence are the norm, the lack of adequate spaces for pedestrians is hardly a priority, and ultimately these spatial projects alienate potential users. Sarah, a psychologist working in the Centro Comunitario Independencia noted that part of her work consisted on persuading neighbors to visit the brand new and expensive building:

> Youths sometimes would come by, with a bit of curiosity and a bit of mistrust. But in general, people were like 'is this for us? Are we allowed in?', because they know that these kinds of pretty buildings are not normal there, because it's the kind of place they are kicked out of or where it is expensive to enter. But it was mostly the women who came because we gave courses to make things to sell (interview Sarah, March 6, 2021).

It is not that residents asked for these improvements: they are decided for them by the private sector and supported by the public sector. Residents will not always oppose such transformations, but they will not get involved. With over 50 artists and almost 200 volunteers from the ITESM, residents of the *colonias* Campana-Altamira were a minority of participants in the macro-mural. Citizen participation in this case means asking residents what shape they like better, what part they wish to paint themselves, and setting up workshops to paint side by side with ITESM students. Children are placed front and center to validate the project: children are capable of seeing the good in this projects that so many adults oppose or ignore. Being against this project is being against the innocent wishes of children (see Figure 52).

Likewise, in other "participatory" projects organizers make open invitations on social media for volunteers to come and paint. And usually those who come are already involved in forums of urban art, volunteering or similar topics, and they are always familiar faces. The matter of fact is that the project needs to be done with volunteers, even if they do not live in the *colonia* to intervene. The goal of social cohesion is missed entirely. Without real involvement of the end users, these projects do not last. They are just another project for upper-class volunteers to feel good of doing charity work in a marginalized space. In the end, residents are blamed for the failure because they did not take the opportunity to work on an activity imposed on them by a multinational company. After all, the project was featured in an international webpage, and even international students came to take pictures and paint.

Figure 52 Children at the forefront and colorful backgrounds to legitimize projects in marginalized neighborhoods.
(left) Inauguration of the Colosal macro-mural in Poligono Altamira-Campana with children posing, July 27, 2018.
Source: TEC. Retrieved on 26/02/2021. https://tec.mx/es/noticias/nacional/institucion/colosal-el-proyecto-de-mejoramiento-urbano-multicolor-fotogaleria
(right) The Movimiento de Activación Ciudadana (MovAc) invites people to come to Polígono Campana-Altamira to "help us [MovAc] achieve our goals" and paint "a tactical urbanism" (sic) for children. September 3, 2021.
Source: Facebook – Hello Cities. Retrieved on 04/09/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/HelloCitiesMx/posts/4697488693637253

Questioning the validity of CPTED participatory processes

As mentioned in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2, CPTED methodology has gained popularity in Latin America as an efficient methodology to prevent crime. Monterrey is no exception and as seen in this chapter, CPTED has been integrated into the local PDU, particularly the participatory aspects. As mentioned in this chapter and CHAPTER 4, achieving participation in a territory marked by violence and mistrust is complicated. However, CPTED promoters swear by the method, declaring that it yields results regardless of the context: all it takes is to pay the local CPTED organization for the training and they will teach anyone how to prevent crime through clever spatial transformations and citizen participation.

I participated in a four-week long CPTED training online for Mexican participants, some of which were in MMA. The course required experience either in design or crime prevention, but it was mostly aimed at individuals interested or involved on crime prevention regardless of their background: individual practitioners, researchers, public officers, etc. While participants had some knowledge regarding crime or law, the majority lacked experience in community engagement, fieldwork, qualitative methods or urban affairs. The elaboration of an urban masterplan -one of the requirements- is not clear for individuals unfamiliar with CAD tools.

While the instructors stated that this was a simulation of the minimum conditions in which a CPTED diagnosis could be carried out successfully, the time frame indicated by the organizers was insufficient to properly apply the participatory methods. The structure of the training exercise and the expected results are similar to assignments of schools of architecture that usually are done during a semester (which is not surprising since the creators of the training are architects themselves). Community-based participatory research can be severely hindered by perceived vulnerability of the target population and distrust. One or two weeks were not enough to convene groups of people for an exploratory walk with a questionnaire to evaluate public space, much less to build trust with an individual with no solid ties to the target community or a specialized team, as was the case of many participants. And in Monterrey, there was the added condition of temperatures above 40°C in August (when the training took place), which drastically reduced the interest in doing activities outdoors. I expressed these concerns to the training management, but they were rebutted by saying that everyone else was doing the activity with no issues whatsoever.

The difficulty of participation also arose for trainees carrying out the activities in at least two other areas of the MMA, even with the support, presence, and infrastructure of the local government agencies such as DIF, SEDUE, IMPLAN, etc. In fact, the people that signed up for the training were not doing any of the activities. The training was a department requirement, and they made their employees do the legwork for them. Guillermo and Roberto were two employees of an urban development agency in MMA in this position. Having already taken the same CPTED training earlier that year, they were redoing the activities for their boss, and the results would be used for actual projects of the municipality.

I met with them as they were concluding one of the community-based assignments (the exploratory walk and questionnaire), which are supposed to be done simultaneously. They explained that they had visited one *colonia* with severe problems of drug dealing, robberies, and domestic violence to get the answers for the questionnaire. Guillermo explained the following regarding the application of the questionnaire:

> You can't approach people with a 'hey, can you answer this questionnaire?' No way. You arrive telling them that you come from the municipality to repair the lights or for food distributions. And you make conversation, get them to talk. They know who's who, who sells, who buys, who steals. You even get the junkies to tell you what lights to fix. But if you tell them it's an activity about insecurity, they won't answer. A questionnaire, they won't answer, unless you have something to give them. Maybe you approach people that are hanging out near a store, but no one wants to be out doing an "exploratory walk" in this heat. With what they said, we took some general notes and we are going to fill in the

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questionnaires with that with different pens to dissimulate[72] (interview Guillermo, August 9, 2019).

As for the exploratory walk, they said that they did *an* exploratory walk, not in the same *colonia* as the one of the questionnaires nor with residents of said *colonia*: they walked around their offices with women who were visiting for a cultural activity. In the words of Roberto:

> These are public offices, there's always people here. And we take the opportunity to ask them to participate with this so we can get the pictures they [CPTED instructors] ask of, you know, people doing the walk. You tell them, you do the walk around the building, they tell you about the lights, the sidewalks, and the garbage bins and whatnot. It's basically the same[73] (interview Roberto, August 9, 2019).

Another participant in a different municipality also shared his experience. He commented that while he did have experience working with people, there was not enough time to get them together for the community-based activities. The training was also a requirement for him, but he did not have subordinates to help him. He resorted to invite his family to do the exploratory walks around his own neighborhood. He commented that falsifying answers to questionnaires of the municipality was not unusual because "people don't want to participate".

Although this was a small simulation of the implementation of the CPTED methodology with the goal of fulfilling a training requirement, the personal experience and the information shared by other trainees sheds some light on the complications of applying such strategies in contexts of violence and mistrust. All these common complications are unacknowledged by the CPTED training and scientific literature on the methodology, leaving it up to participants to deal with them on their own. And while it is not the goal of this section to propose a clear-cut solution on how to improve the training, when it comes to the proper implementation of CPTED for a real project in conditions of violence and mistrust, a long-term plan, constant presence, and multiple stakeholders are key to build trust with the community. The results of this activity also raise questions about the alleged success of CPTED in Monterrey and other Mexican and Latin American cities, since it would be safe to assume that gaps in the trainees' background, mistrust and lack of response, falsified results, and insufficient time are not unique to this case.

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[72] No puedes llegar de que "oiga ¿me contesta un cuestionario?" N'ombre. Llegas diciéndoles que vienes de municipio para reparar luminarias o para entregar despensas. Les tiras un rollo, les sacas plática. Los vecinos saben quién es quién, quién vende, quién compra, quién roba. Hasta los teporochillos te empiezan a contar sobre qué luminarias no sirven. Pero si les dices que es para inseguridad, no te contestan. Un cuestionario no te lo contestan, a menos que tengas algo qué darles. Chance y si te les acercas a la gente que esté chill-eando afuera de una tienda, pero nadie quiere andar que "haciendo una caminata" en este calorazo. Con lo que nos contaron, llenamos los cuestionarios con plumas diferentes, para sordearle.

[73] Como aquí es público, siempre hay gente viniendo. Y aprovechas para decirles que participen y para tener fotos que te piden [los instructores de CPTED] de la gente haciendo la caminata. Les dices, haces el recorrido alrededor del edificio, y te empiezan a decir que si las luces, que si las banquetas, que si los basureros. Sale lo mismo.

7.3.4 *Barrios sí, distritos no*: genuine participation against imposition

Residents in the areas of influence of Distrito Tec, Distrito Independencia, and Calle Morelos have rejected the projects imposed by companies and public authorities. Residents are often against these projects for what they see as unwanted modifications to their way of life and environment. Many see these actions with apprehension and mistrust, as they feel that eventually they will be forced to sell their homes and leave. Others are annoyed by the actions on the street that obstruct car flow and the noise of the street festivals that the project managers organize. While promoters speak about sustainability, mobility, community, spaces for children, and innovation, the residents of Calle Morelos and Distrito Tec who are against the project talk about land uses, permits, parking, cars, corruption, and sewage -a more traditional terminology used to describe issues in the void that is public space for most of the population. The point of contention is in many cases the use of cars. Neighbors are upset because the construction works, the broad sidewalks, the constant activities on the street, and the bike paths have worsened traffic jams in the zone, and they believe that removing parking spaces will affect negatively the businesses. Their concerns clearly do not align with the goals of sustainable mobility defended by the projects. However, these are the concerns of many of the residents of Monterrey that are not involved in city planning.

Naysayers are frequently depicted as old fashioned and unknowledgeable of the benefits of these internationally approved activities, as evidenced by reactions such as "It is a shame that you want to continue living in a gray and dark city. These close-minded neighbors." (Facebook post, 14/11/2019) and sarcastic remarks such as "poor you…I hope they overcome the trauma of not being able to make a U turn as they please" (Facebook post, 19/03/2020). The aspects of international relevance, the history of violence and poverty, and the promises of economic benefits are played up by the private and public sectors and the media to disqualify the rejection of projects in marginalized *colonias* such as the Independencia. From the perspective of even well-meaning volunteers in these projects, it is the opposition's selfishness, ignorance, and short vision that allegedly impede them from collaborating towards sustainability and community building. However, direct communication with those who oppose the project reveal otherwise.

In-depth interviews conducted by Prieto González (2016, pp. 21–22) with residents of Calle Morelos revealed that "the dissenting voices are not against the project but they ask the authority to pay attention to formalities, respect, pedagogical capacity, be open to dialogue and have empathy with the people, and to avoid impositions or aggressivity and rudeness". In the case of Calle Morelos, residents did not trust the institute's decisions nor the permanence of the project if ever the institute disappeared -as is common in the locality. Likewise, a study by Ramirez (2019) shows opinions of neighbors in favor and against the Distrito Tec. In the best of situations, residents are in favor of humoring the project (in the case of the ITESM, they trust that the reputable institute knows what is better for them) and believe that change has to start somewhere, but others perceive that they are ignored or disrespected.

Residents in various intervened areas express that it is difficult to voice opposing opinions in meetings with community managers or project representatives. Ramirez (2019) notes that those who have questions or concerns are bullied by other neighbors for interrupting or for being negative and for not contributing with solutions. This mindset is not unique to Distrito Tec, and it is a very common dynamic in workgroups of any kind in MMA: unless you can propose a better solution, don't complain and be grateful of what's being done. And in the case of Calle Morelos, residents say that they were even fearful of publicly expressing their views of the project, and they have often felt cheated and let down by the project representatives (Prieto González, 2016, pp. 21–22). On their end, project managers expressed frustration at the "stubbornness" of residents.

As many of these projects are integrated into public agenda, they are subjected to official public consultations. However, unlike success stories, they are rarely communicated on Facebook. Official notices are published on the government's websites that are not easy to navigate, the language is cryptic and inaccessible, and meetings are scheduled at odd times and with short notice, therefore ensuring that few people assist. In other cases, there is a lack of transparency of the impossibly high rates of approval that project promoters announce about consultations they make. For example, The collective Academicxs de Monterrey 43 has called into question the concerning biases of the consultation of the Monumento de la Misericordia project, which reports that 99% of the consulted residents approve of the project (Académicxs de Monterrey 43, 2019).

Residents in Independencia, Distrito Tec, Campana-Altamira, and Calle Morelos wonder about the reasons behind the sudden interest for *colonias* that have been neglected for decades, and about the hastiness to impose decisions without warning residents or proposing alternatives. As Silva (2017) notes, skepticism towards projects by the elite is rooted in a history of corruption -a common feature of life in Mexico-, lack of transparency, and the paternalistic nature of Mexican corporations. This mistrust is proved right when sustainable/participatory projects give way to a larger master plan. The case of the Distrito Independencia is the most egregious example. As mentioned in the previous section, the land of Independencia and the surrounding *colonias populares* of the Loma Larga is targeted to build two mega-projects for cars, pricy real-estate, and tourism promoted by religious representatives, chambers of commerce, and authorities.

Affected residents formed the Junta de Vecinos en Resistencia de las *Colonias* Independencia, Tanques y America, to oppose the project, and they have been supported by several local researchers and activists. The stigmatized residents of Independencia have found unlikely allies in the privileged residents of *colonias* adjacent to the ITESM campus, under the slogan *barrios sí, distritos no* (yes to neighborhoods, no to districts – see Figure 53). Both groups reject the imposition of projects presented as modifications in the name of sustainability, social cohesion, investments, and tourism. However, residents in general have contrasting opinions regarding the planned interventions. While some residents are completely against them, there are others who do see no interest in joining the actions to manifest their displeasure, as they believe that with or without their voice, the projects will be carried out. They recall other projects that were met with resistance and in the end, they were built anyways. Others attest for the real needs of

renovation, especially in Independencia. The latter group are often against the projects because they see them as a waste of money that could be better spent in hospitals, street paving, drainage, and housing.

Figure 53 Residents protest against distritos.
(left) Residents protest against Distrito Tec in front of the campus, June 14, 2019.
Source: Facebook / Del Mero San Luisito – Independencia Tanques America. Retrieved on 19/01/2020.
https://www.facebook.com/Colonia.Independencia.Monterrey/posts/2326327350786046
(right) Independencia residents protesting against Distrito Independencia, May 11, 2018.
Source: Centro de Medios Libres. Retrieved on 26/02/2021. https://www.centrodemedioslibres.org/2018/05/12/barrios-si-distritos-no-colonia-independencia-monterrey-nuevo-leon/

Conclusion

The explosion of dramatic violence between 2009 and 2013 marked the population and the territory, putting forward new ways to read and modify public space, mediated by social class, that emphasize socio-spatial differences and an individualistic approach to security (elaborating on the theoretical framework presented on CHAPTER 1, CHAPTER 2, and CHAPTER 3). Public space was synonymous to being at risk, thus motivating a separation from public spaces -particularly during the first years and for the upper classes. Gated communities and high rises provided areas separated from the dangerous public spaces and safe substitutes of them. However, these forms incentivized unsustainable mobility and a chaotic growth of the urban sprawl, making access to (the illusion of) security dependent on purchasing power. Fortifications evolved from horizontal to vertical, physical and social separations in idyllic environments are key to give customers a sense of security and to set clear limits between them and the feral outside. The more progressive high-rise projects extend the simulation to the outer immediacies, while others simulate it on the inside and close off. Public space is nevertheless a need of the population that authorities fail to address. It is satisfied by the improvised uses of unclaimed spaces for one sector, and the permanent and exclusive spaces created for another. These differences -and needs- are further accentuated amidst a climate of ubiquitous violence.

In this chapter I question the scope, effectiveness, and legitimacy of actions from the private sector and challenge the role of the private sector that often goes unaddressed in current studies of public spaces and security in Monterrey. At first glance, these unprecedented interventions put forward by the private sector concern territories of all social classes -as long as they are areas of influence of large companies- and promote a gentler approach to violence and public spaces, which focuses on aperture, equality, and sustainability. With their apparent successes in other Latin American cities facing violence (Doyle, 2019), social urbanism and CPTED gained popularity among decision makers of the private sector, as these methodologies promise to solve violence through social cohesion rather than strictly policing. Participation takes a central role, as proponents suggests that users' involvement correlates with the durability and effectiveness of said projects, not to mention community building (Mihinjac & Saville, 2019; Saville, 2017). Additionally, there is the spectacular dimension of addressing violence (see CHAPTER 1): these solutions are highly visible. Participatory design practices such as tactical urbanism and placemaking are put into place for these purposes. These projects also adopt the aesthetics and vocabulary of North American and European trends of naif urbanism. The international dimension validates decisions taken and fulfills the *regio* ideal of notoriety.

By observing several projects in Monterrey, I continue with the discussion presented in CHAPTER 1 and CHAPTER 2, and question the validity of highly regarded methods to tackle violence at an urban level, namely social urbanism, tactical urbanism, and CPTED. Besides the private sector's co-optation and simulation of the participatory aspects, several situations such as mistrust and lack of participation in a context of chronic violence were observed. These situations -while they are well-known by practitioners at a ground level – have been neglected by both scientific literature and city makers' discourse in favor of success stories and demonstrations of universal applicability.

CSR literature related to Latin America has often focused on philanthropic actions and management. The case of Monterrey is particularly interesting to observe corporate impact on urban planning in a context of violence. As Schmidheiny (2006) affirms CSR has been more focused on social issues than environmental issues, as opposed to their Northern counterparts, and in the case of the corporations in Monterrey -like in other Mexican, Brazilian, and Chilean cities-, there is a long history of involvement in such issues. Thus, it is no surprise that CSR programs have included violence prevention. Public space is the new entrepreneurial trend for some who embrace the opportunity to experiment with DIY-urbanism. The "citizen" and "participatory" dimensions of the projects from the private sector also begs questioning. As Logsdon et al. (2006, p. 54) observe, corporations are treated by Mexican society as real citizens. Companies in Monterrey present themselves as citizens, and their projects as stemming from citizens' demands. As explored throughout this chapter, the validity and authenticity of this claim is doubtful. An illusion of a citizen consensus is produced through the strategic placement of professional "activists" and community managers in territories of interest, the careful selection of engaged citizens to check-off participation, and the creation of associations -all part of a privileged and hermetic circle. Citizen participation is perceived by project managers as a frustrating experience that blocks the corporate leaders from acting directly.

The private sector in Mexico is, as Silva (2017) notes, a father figure that is unafraid to impose sharp expectations upon its children -a perspective that is often also expressed in this case by residents. Projects are already decided before city dwellers can argue or reject them. Social urbanism with citizen participation is going to happen -ironically- whether the citizens like it or not. As seen in this chapter, this acceptance falters when users perceive a negative impact on their everyday lives. Still, their displeasure is often ignored due to the influence of the private sector on the public sector and its control on the narrative.

Lastly, the transformations of public space are presented as being for the benefit of the entire city. As evidenced by the larger plan, the benefits are superficial even for the target population, as these projects are done to create spectacle rather than solutions. Once the photos are done, projects often lack follow-up, maintenance, and support from the local authorities. Economic and social violence continue, now with a colorful backdrop. Stripped from their buzzword-filled discourse, the projects prepare spaces for economic competitivity and investments on real-estate. As in the previous century, the private sector is the self-appointed leader of urban affairs, continuing, as Sousa González points out (2010) with the historical pattern of a city made for and by the elite, this time as a consequence of violence.

The majority of the population is unconcerned and unbenefited from these initiatives. Words from the newly elected governor of Nuevo León sum up the role security plays for his cabinet: "investors want to send their money, their companies, their corporate heads to live [here], they want security" (Gracia, 2021). The public sector's goal with regards to security is making investors as comfortable as possible, whatever the average resident of Monterrey can perceive is secondary.

When it comes to city making, what started with a discourse of improving security has shifted towards preparing the city for real estate development, public spaces in unprofitable areas are left untouched. Apartments in towers and houses in *fraccionamientos* are being built and bought, and residents still depend on cars for everyday mobility and security, while avant-garde city makers amuse themselves painting sidewalks. Nevertheless, material solutions -moving to a *fraccionamiento cerrado*, renting an apartment in a *distrito* with surveillance, acquiring a car, or closing off a *colonia* or transforming it through tactical urbanism- are not a possibility for all city dwellers of Monterrey. Based on these observations, I posit that those who cannot afford material solutions transform their daily practices and perceptions of public space. The ways in which these immaterial aspects are interpreted and applied are explored in CHAPTER 8.

PART 3 - LOOKING CLOSER

Chapter 8 - The city dwellers' reactions

The way in which many inhabitants of MMA use and interpret public space and their relationships with others were transformed by the upsurge of dramatic violence explored in previous sections. Material transformations seen in CHAPTER 7 were popular but they are limited to certain spaces and certain groups. In this chapter I explore the ways in which heightened feelings of insecurity transformed their everyday practices in public spaces. I also analyze how violence in public spaces has affected discourses and representations of groups and territories.

The first section is dedicated to the exploration of the relationship with law enforcement. This issue was mentioned in CHAPTER 4 as part of the challenges of data availability and in CHAPTER 6 to explain the complicity of law enforcement with criminals. Here we will dive deeper to understand how law enforcement is perceived by city dwellers and the ways in which they communicate (or not). The second section deals directly with feelings of insecurity and everyday practices. This section analyzes how inhabitants of MMA deal with the risks of victimization in an environment of chronic violence. Another point touched here is the actors

and geographies of violence. As mentioned in CHAPTER 4, the information obtained in this regard oriented the choices in the following chapters. Lastly, I analyze the problem of violence against women in public spaces. As mentioned in previous chapters, it has increased in frequency and gravity in the past decade and has an important impact on everyday life. Across the sections, we will observe the ways in which socio-spatial inequality, normalization of violence, and individualism interact. This chapter is supported by existing studies, but a significant part of the content comes from the fieldwork activities described in CHAPTER 4: the interviews with inhabitants and other stakeholders of MMA, the public space probe, and digital ethnography.

8.1 Socio-spatial inequality and the city dwellers' relationship with law enforcement

Law enforcement is -or should be- the first interlocutor when a crime or a violent event occurs. While residents of MMA identify security as a top priority -even in the middle of a worldwide pandemic- incidents reported to authorities seem to tell a different story, as seen in CHAPTER 4. Calling the police is not a normal thing to do in the context in question. It is estimated by the INEGI that only 1 out of 10 crimes are reported to law enforcement nationwide and in Nuevo León for several reasons; according to the Así Vamos survey 71.6% of respondents believe that it is very unlikely that crimes will be investigated or sanctioned (Cómo Vamos Nuevo León, 2019, p. 59). Reforms at national and local levels have sought to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement facing the upsurge of organized and common crime in the late 2000s and early 2010s. However, a long history of corruption, abuse, human rights violations, and lack of accountability have contributed to a negative perception of the police in Mexico (Meyer, 2014) and Monterrey is no exception to that.

8.1.1 Trust, territory, and law enforcement

Nuevo León is among the top 5 states in the country were inhabitants have high levels of trust in law enforcement, only second to Yucatán, according to the INEGI ENVIPE survey (2020). These results are the average of the levels of trust on each of the law enforcement corps present in Nuevo León: national and state level corps (military, Guardia Nacional, Policía Federal, Policía Estatal, Policía ministerial), and municipal-level corps (Policía municipal, and Policía de Tránsito). However, levels of trust vary for each police corps present in Nuevo León. Trust is especially high for the military and the Guardia Nacional, and even slightly above the national average of 87.4% and 82% respectively. Guardia National is very recent, it was created in 2019 as part of the presidency's strategy to fight organized crime, and initially its members were part of the military and federal police force. Likewise, these two corps are considered to be the least corrupt (see Graph 4). On the opposite end, residents of Nuevo León trust traffic police (policía de tránsito) and municipal police the least, and they consider them the most corrupt. Incidentally, these are police corps that are more regularly in contact with the population.

Levels of trust vs. perception of corruption of law enforcement corps in Nuevo León
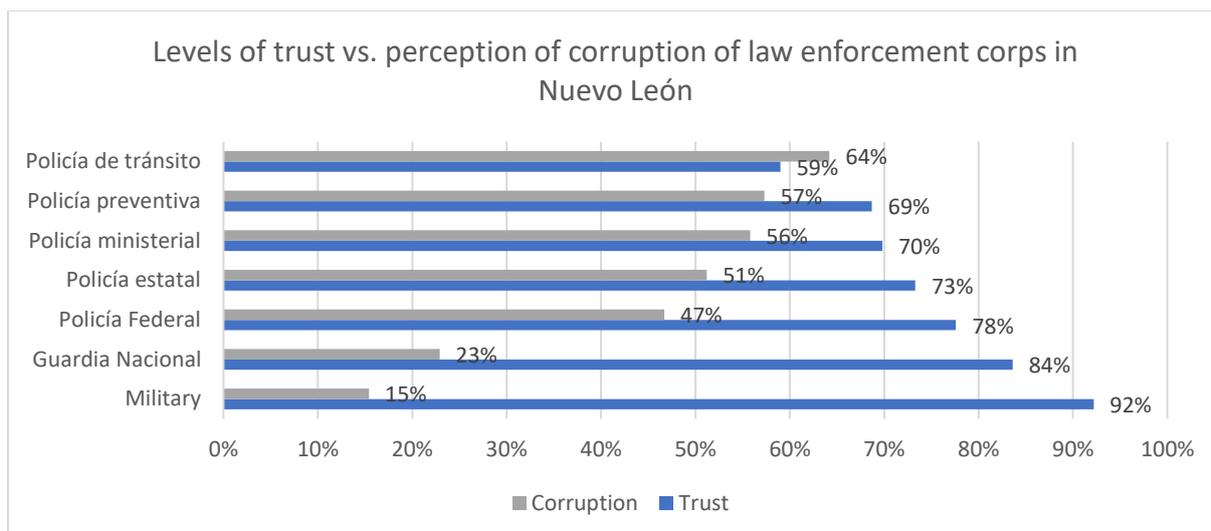
Graph 4 Comparison of levels of trust and perception of corruption of law enforcement corps in Nuevo León.
The percentages are related to the sampled population that answered positively to evaluations of trust and negatively to evaluations of corruption of the various bodies of law enforcement.
Source: Author, 2021, based on information from INEGI (2020).

It is worth noting that based on fieldwork observations and local studies, residents do not always see the difference between police corps, grouping them all under the "police" umbrella. This failure to differentiate state and municipal police corps is higher than in other Mexican states (Observatorio de Seguridad y Justicia & Consejo Nuevo León para la planeación estratégica, 2021, p. 18). Confusion of who is responsible for what is very common across stakeholders, from authorities to city dwellers.

As we shift the level of observation from state to metropolis, the level of trust varies for each municipality. The Ley de Seguridad Pública de Nuevo León specifies the responsibility of police corps and municipalities. This law also mentions the need for an intermunicipal organism to coordinate work of federal, state, and municipal law enforcement. This is of course the ideal scenario. In reality, the intermunicipal coordination organism received no follow up after 2009. State and municipal law enforcement corps are legally able to participate in preventing crime and aiding the community across municipalities. On the positive side, this means that any police corps is capable by law to attend a report from 911 if the de-jure unit is not available -which is often due to lack of personnel. On the negative side, inhabitants and sometimes even officers themselves are unclear as to what kind of help they can provide. The experience of asking any police officer for help and them telling the victim or witness that they need to call someone else is very frustrating.

Inconsistency and instability also have an impact on the relationship with police which also varies across municipalities. Each municipality has its own police force and their own way of organizing police action, thus the police changes with each administration: different procedures, perimeters of action, targeted issues, attributions, and even names of the corps. So, for many it is not the San Pedro or Monterrey police, but the "policía de Mauricio" or "policía de Adrián", referring to the mayor in turn. For example, residents of San Pedro demanded the new mayor to "bring back the police" of the previous administration, who they felt was

"certified by the US, more capable of defending their municipality" (Félix, 2019). In San Pedro, authorities put great care on police image and avoiding bad publicity, and the municipality has economic support from the private sector that resides here. For this reason, inhabitants of San Pedro express the highest levels of trust -above the state average- and inhabitants of Cadereyta have the lowest levels according to the Así Vamos report by CVNL (2019). The study also found that 85.2% of respondents living in San Pedro believe that in general, police are respectful of citizens, as opposed to 51.6% of residents of Monterrey.
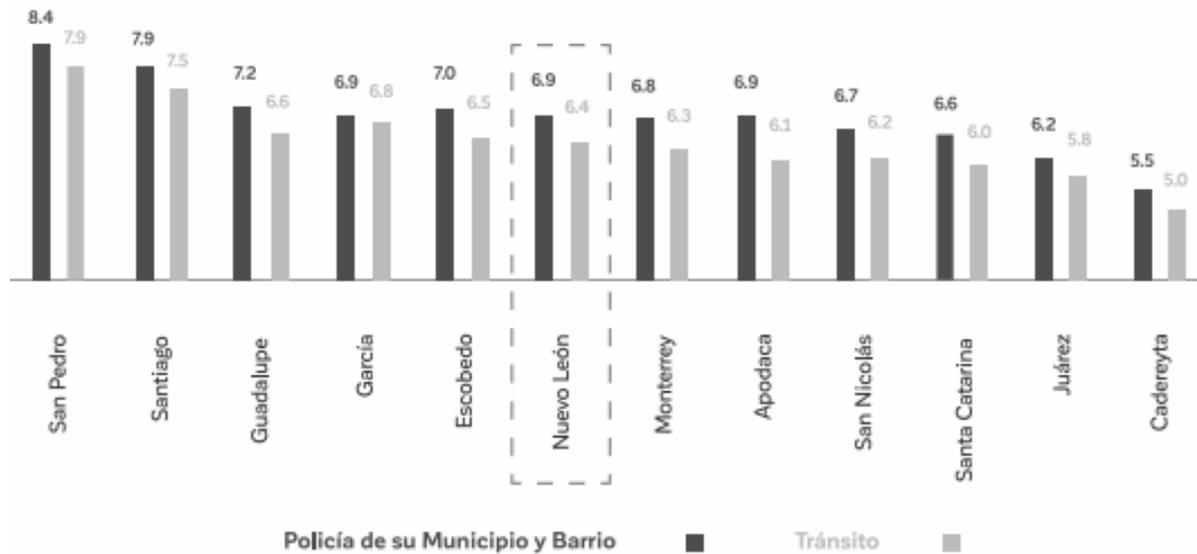
Graph 5 Evaluation of trust on police corps according to inhabitants of each municipality of MMA.
10 is the highest score and 1 is the lowest.
Source: CVNL (2019, p. 60).

The Observatorio de Seguridad y Justicia and the Consejo Nuevo León produced a report on trust in Nuevo León state and municipal police corps based on the ENVIPE 2020 survey results. This study shows that perception of corruption, unfairness, and inaction from officers, elevated feelings of insecurity, experiences of victimization, low engagement in social issues, and knowing of incidents of police violence near places of residence impact negatively the levels of trust on the police (2021, p. 14). It also revealed that men tend to trust the police more than women. However, while these results are useful at the state level, there are several caveats to take into account. The study does not consider responders' socio-economic status or zones of residence, which condition heavily the interactions with police. And, as mentioned in CHAPTER 4, there are some biases that condition the response to surveys. Individuals who trust authorities are more likely to participate in research and therefore report a more positive perception. Finally, the recommendations of this study on how to improve trust on police corps rely on large-scale communication campaigns to humanize police officers and better training for them. The recommendations of the report invalidate whatever claims the population may have, particularly the more vulnerable sectors, and devises ways for law enforcement to send a message to city dwellers, not the other way around. It disregards socio-spatial inequalities in the territory and gaps in police action that cannot be covered with public relations.

8.1.2 Communication between law enforcement and inhabitants and its many obstacles

On the few occasions when inhabitants want to reach out to law enforcement, it is not as clear-cut as it is often presented by authorities. For years, there were different numbers in each municipality to get in touch with different departments of law enforcement or first responders. To remedy this, since January 2016, the 911 number was implemented to unify and centralize reporting of all emergencies (health, natural risks or accidents, security, and public services). Still, there is also 089 to make anonymous non-urgent reports, 088 for the Coordinación Nacional Anti-Secuestro. As for 911, the experience from callers is that they rarely receive help and that lines are saturated. Residents want to be able to call a number and receive immediate help. For this reason, authorities propose numbers to reach directly to municipal offices: phone numbers to report noisy neighbors and faulty infrastructure in municipalities, and WhatsApp numbers of different government agencies (see Figure 54). This adds to the confusion of where one should ask for help when mayors, departments, traditional media, social media, and law enforcement all have different advice on who to call and how.

El Bronco's impact on social media usage for city dwellers and the public sector

Jaime Rodriguez Calderon's campaign for governor of Nuevo León (he won), and later for president (he lost) contributed to the popularization of social media. Running an independent candidate, on both occasions he shared his personal phone number and social media pages so that voters could text him or send him a message through Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. As mayor of García, he had used these tools to allow people to contact him and report issues.

His opening of personal social media to the population of Nuevo León (and eventually to the whole country) meant that all sorts of requests would come his way: people would ask for help with medicines, school supplies, crime, faulty infrastructure, job seeking, interviews, petitions, etc. or just sending goodwill messages. One only had to log in to Facebook or install WhatsApp and one had a direct line with the governor -I even messaged him regarding urban development projects in 2015 and again in 2017, receiving an answer on both cases. These actions contributed to his popularity and motivated inhabitants to download and create their accounts on WhatsApp and Facebook to stay in touch with him. As of March 2021, his Facebook public page has 2.8 million followers. Seeing the popularity of this strategy, other candidates and public officials followed suit.

Later during this administration, social media was also integrated into public organisms, as departments created Facebook pages and WhatsApp accounts -they do not necessarily answer requests through them, often they are used only to publish updates, due to the large number of messages, notifications, and requests from the general public. Social media turned into an indispensable tool.

Figure 54 Lists of emergency numbers and contacts for various purposes in MMA.
These numbers may also change with every new administration.
(upper left) Infographic of the functioning of 811, 088, and 089, February 14, 2017.
Source: Gobierno de México. Retrieved on 01/04/2021. https://www.gob.mx/911/articulos/llamadas-de-denuncia-como-debes-
realizarlas-para-obtener-el-mejor-resultado?idiom=es
(upper right) List of emergency numbers published by the Municipality of Guadalupe, August 11, 2020.
Source: Twitter – Municipio de Guadalupe. Retrieved on 01/04/2021.
https://twitter.com/municipiodegpe/status/1292970865257254912
(lower left) List of emergency numbers shared by local news station, July 27, 2020.
Source: Facebook – Telediario Monterrey. Retrieved on 01/04/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/Telediariomty/posts/10158459042796093
(lower right) List of numbers to report noisy neighbors, June 26, 2019.
Source: Facebook – Vecinos Ruidosos. Retreived on 01/04/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/2343756199233385/videos/382704152355676

Residents themselves will look for phone numbers of departments of public services or people they know within them. Proximity is an important factor for residents. Those who can will try to call directly a police officer they may have seen doing the rounds in their *colonia* if the need arises. And while this practice skews the 911 data, it is at times the most effective way for inhabitants to get immediate attention.

Law enforcement has shown a lack of sensibility for communication and give out contradictory indications. Diverse law enforcement agencies ask city dwellers to report suspicious vehicles, activities or individuals. As stated on Figure 55 – upper left: without a report there is no crime to pursue. What qualifies as "suspicious" is left to the witness to define. The answer given by

the SSPNL Facebook Page as to what constitutes a "suspicious activity" was "any situation or person that you think is doing something to commit a crime or a misdeed" (field notes, December 23, 2019). Simultaneously, inhabitants are often asked to be mindful of what they report to 911, since 80% of the calls they receive are fake reports or prank calls. As stated on Figure 55 (right), a fake report may mobilize resources that could be used for a real emergency any false alarm may be penalized.

Figure 55 Posts from the SSPNL Facebook page with instructions that add to the confusion on reporting.
(left) Facebook post inviting users to report suspicious vehicles near homes or workplaces, informing of the possibility of anonymous reporting to 089 phone number, and adding the indication "Remember that if you don't report, there is no crime to prosecute.", May 19, 2020.
Source: Facebook – SSPNL. Retrieved on 30/03/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/seguridadpublicanl/photos/2989651054461972
(center) Facebook post indicating two numbers to report suspicious activity, December 23, 2019.
Source: Facebook – SSPNL. Retrieved on 30/03/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/seguridadpublicanl/posts/2671540222939725
(right) Facebook post informing about prank calls to 911, January 30, 2021.
Source: Facebook – SSPNL. Retrieved on 30/03/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/seguridadpublicanl/photos/3690733304353740/

FC officers on the field stress the importance of calling 911 to counter the dark figure. They also say that not all calls will be attended due to lack of personnel or because the call is about a minor incident -this includes domestic violence, street fights, robberies, drunk and disorderly individuals, sexual harassment, pickpocketing-, unless there is a patrol car already in the area. Their main concern is to have data to work with. So, inhabitants can call 911 for these minor incidents and hope there is a police car nearby. They also tell inhabitants that if there are enough reports, their *colonia* will be prioritized when assigning units. But they also tell them not to call twice over one incident, because this saturates the 911 line.

Community-oriented policing in Monterrey

Mistrust, fear of extortion, and misinformation have contributed greatly to unreliable data of crime (see CHAPTER 4 and CHAPTER 8), deriving into ineffective and inaccurate strategies to tackle insecurity. Mistrust in law enforcement and the inconvenience of contacting the police also contributes to what incidents residents identify as important enough to go through the process of filing a police report. For this reason, local law

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enforcement has sought to improve communication with inhabitants, with mixed results. At a national level, community-oriented policing (COP) had been a part of the Iniciativa Mérida. Since 2010 there have been actions from mayors to implement it, the most notorious case being the municipality of Escobedo and the PROXPOL model (See CHAPTER 6). The notion of proximity to citizens as part of the municipal police corps attributions was integrated into the Ley de Seguridad Pública de Nuevo León on a 2013 reform (Ley de Seguridad Pública del Estado de Nuevo León, 2019, p. 47 Art. 130-132), which also contemplated specific vigilance of *colonias* and the creation of a committee of residents. The definition of Guardia Auxiliar as the main actor of COP at neighborhood level was added until 2017 under Article 140. Despite these definitions on paper, COP and neighborhood-level organization is still underdeveloped in the community. Communities of neighbors emerged in the past decade as a means for neighbors to protect each other and their property, but residents still rely heavily on individual measures. Furthermore, not all neighborhood groups are treated the same by authorities, as residents perceive that upper-class *colonias* are listened to, and the lower-class *colonias* are blamed for disorder. These differences disturb the effectiveness of COP that have been introduced in the locality. The limits of COP and the interaction with neighborhood groups is analyzed in detail in CHAPTER 10.

On occasion, in order to get the attention of law enforcement, inhabitants deliberately report situations as more dangerous than they really are. For example, reporting drug consumption to get the police to come to stop a street fight. Other times, neighbors ask each other to call and report an incident at the same time, or call and say that the report is being done on behalf of several repeated incidents. In the end, because of these contradictory indications, residents either over-think or over-report incidents, and mostly they do not report at all. When they are left waiting for the police to come, it is less likely they will report again. If they get an answer and the problem was, according to police, not as serious, they are told not to exaggerate and that they made them waste resources. Law enforcement then has no accurate data to estimate when and where to assign elements, and puts the blame of this on inhabitants.

Based on interviews and digital ethnography, city dwellers perceive that the middle- and upper-class *colonias* receive a better treatment in general from authorities and police and have a better perception of law enforcement than those of lower class *colonias* -or those that look like lower class individuals. Individuals across social classes prefer to deal with criminal matters through damage restitution and prevention. Still, the upper and upper middle classes get help through contacts and acquaintances in positions of power or in many cases deal with these incidents internally, relying on private security or citizen patrols. They are more confident interacting with police. For example, they are more likely to call the police to report offenses or suspicious individuals -as illustrated in CHAPTER 4 regarding the reporting of strangers taking photographs in upper and middle class *colonias*. And while trust may remain low, they are more likely to give police officers the benefit of the doubt. In turn, police officers are more likely to treat them respectfully and organize activities with them -although these are still rare.

During interviews and presentations, officers remarked on the daily interactions with city dwellers beyond the framework of citizen outreach. They notice a general lack of respect and

collaboration, as people insult them without provocation or react aggressively. However, they also point out that upper class city dwellers see themselves as customers and the police as their employee, and they do not respect them as authority. On the other hand, they see that their relationship with lower classes is also complicated:

> Some people from certain zones immediately go for the "don't you know who I am?" or "I'm the one paying your salary", people who have nice cars are disrespectful to our colleagues in Tránsito…pulling the "How can we fix this between us?" and they offer them money to avoid fines. Others get very aggressive if we interact with them[74] (interview, Officer A, February 13, 2019).

> People are so used to abuse from the police that even when we try to do things right, they already against us. Maybe they had issues with municipal police, but we [Fuerza Civil] are not like that. But there are *colonias* where we can't even go in, because people will not cooperate[75]" (interview, Officer C, February 13, 2019).

FC is a state police corps that emerged in the midst of the conflict with cartels. One of its goals was to be perceived as more trustworthy and better prepared. FC in particular took upon themselves outreach activities that would correspond better to municipal police. However, as a state police corps, they shift patrol territories often, which limits the degree of trust they can establish with a community. Another limitation to fostering trust is that police forces categorize and prioritize some *colonias* over others in function of the reports they receive, even if they do not attend to them. They cannot respond to every call and this in turn makes them look incompetent. There are *colonias populares* where the police will not intervene due to their reputation as conflictive. Residents of lower-class *colonias* are the most vulnerable and see violence of all kinds every day. However, they are less likely to file a report due to bad experiences with the police and stigmatization. Stories of police brutality, neglect, extortion, insensitivity, and humiliation during the process of reporting abound, as are anecdotes of police patrolling impoverished zones, looking for people committing misdemeanors to extort them or incriminate them for something they did not do. Furthermore, there is little sympathy for these territories from the general population of MMA, who stigmatize these inhabitants as criminals.

The confusion and futility of filing a report

Reporting an incident is considered difficult, time consuming, and even counterproductive. The structure of law enforcement and procedures continues to be perceived as labyrinthine, despite recent efforts striving for streamlining them. Aside from the 911 calls, an incident is officially recorded and investigated only when a victim or a witness files a report at the Fiscalía General de Justicia de Nuevo León's Centros de Orientación y Denuncia (CODE) in person. And while the COVID 19 pandemic has accelerated the implementation of filing a report through videocalls, inhabitants of MMA are still unaware of the processes and prefer not to do it for the

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[74] Gente de ciertas zonas luego luego salen con "¿qué no sabes quién soy?", gente con carros buenos le faltan al respecto a nuestros compañeros de Tránsito...salen con "¿cómo nos arreglamos, poli?" y ofrecen moches para que no los multen. Otros reaccionan agresivamente cuando nos acercamos en las *colonias*.

[75] La gente está tan acostumbrada al abuso de la policía que hasta cuando tratamos de hacer las cosas bien, ya están predispuestos en contra. Puede que sea por problemas con la policía municipal, pero nosotros [Fuerza Civil] no somos así. Pero hay *colonias* en las que no podemos ir, porque la gente no va a cooperar.

reasons explained in CHAPTER 4: the processes are long and useless, and their time is better spent repairing the damages, warning others, and being more careful. Results for filed reports are not encouraging either: in 44.5% of the cases there was no follow-up to the investigation.

As stated by victims of violence in public spaces in the locality, the location of the CODEs also plays a role in the unwillingness to report. City dwellers do not know where they are, and they are not easily identifiable or accessible. The location of the CODEs responds more to the authorities' need for proximity to offices of other public departments than to the adequate coverage of MMA: most CODEs are located inside facilities of public security agencies attending other issues, such as missing persons, roads and traffic, state investigations, and missing vehicles. As a result, Monterrey Centro is oversaturated with CODEs along vehicular axes, and the rest of Monterrey and other municipalities are underserved.

As shown in Map 11, there is a cluster of CODEs concentrated in Monterrey Centro, traditionally the hub of bureaucratic activity, and along the Gonzalitos-Fidel Velazquez axis. In contrast, the southern and northwest sectors of the city are lacking in CODE coverage. The northwest sector on the side of the Cerro del Topo Chico (A) is a high crime area of lower and lower middle-class housing with only one CODE. There are no CODEs south of the ITESM area in the south sector of Monterrey (C) and in Cumbres (B), where upper class neighborhoods coexist with informal settlements and *colonias populares*. Elsewhere, CODEs are located in or near town halls (in the case of Santa Catarina, San Nicolás, Apodaca, and Juárez, this is one CODE per municipality). Due to the municipalities' extensions and lack of connectivity, sectors are left without coverage, as is the case of the northwest part of San Nicolás (E). The municipality of Guadalupe is divided by the Santa Catarina-Constitución-Morones axis; the northern sector (D) is cut off from the southern sector, where 3 CODEs are located.
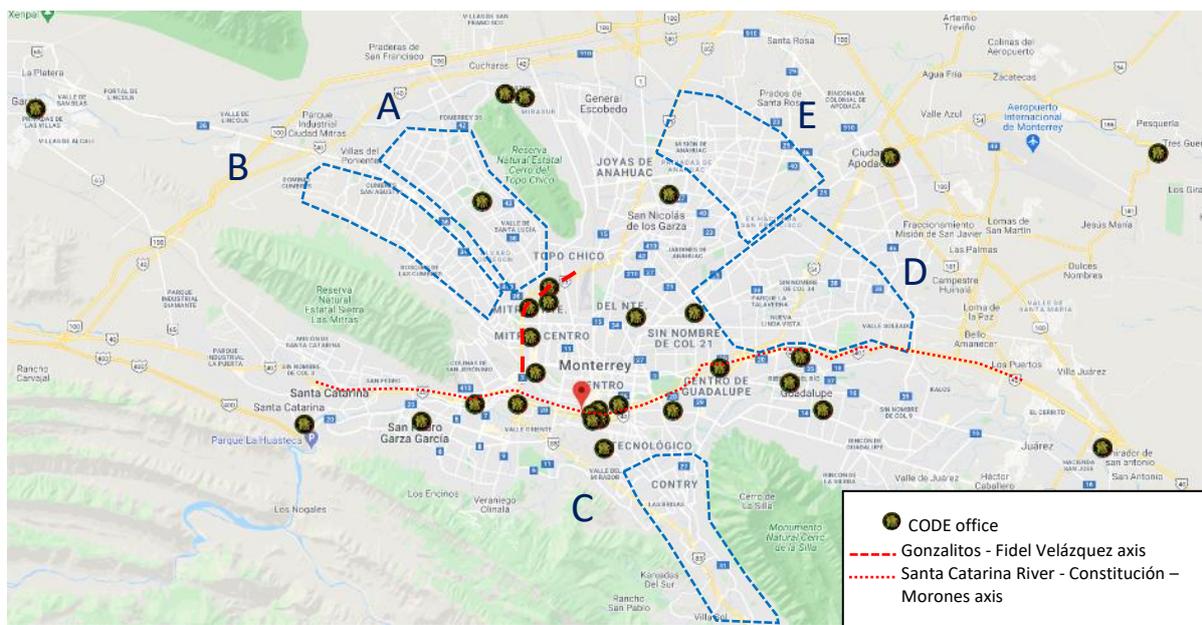
Map 11 Location of Centro de Orientación y Denuncia (CODES) in MMA.
Source: Fiscalía del Estado de Nuevo León (2021), modifications by author.

<u>Violence in public spaces and the non-answer from law enforcement</u>

As detailed in CHAPTER 4, incidents in public space are frequent but underreported in Nuevo León (INEGI, 2020, p. 10). From harassment to pickpocketing or a physical altercation, victims do not consider these incidents are worth the hassle of filing a report. Per the experience of the interviewees -and personal experience- reporting such an event taking place in public transportation or the streets is a frustrating process. There is seldom security personnel present. Calling 911 or a security guard yields no results. At most, the victim is told what s/he should have done and to be more careful next time, to go to a CODE, or even told "what do you want us to do?". As will be detailed further on, it is the individual's responsibility to avoid incidents on public space. The aggressor is usually gone or lost in the crowds, and unless the victim has been hurt, there is little to be done. Both victims and security personnel -private or public- know it is fruitless. Sometimes incidents like street fights or incivilities are reported to 911 but they are not necessarily followed by a formal report.

Victims of incidents in public space are often lower-middle or lower class, with a working schedule that is highly restrictive of time off, even for emergencies. The CODEs are not easy to locate, they are nowhere near their homes, their routes of public transportation or their jobs. And they cannot take time off to go to the CODEs without risking getting fired. As an interviewee said, "my job is worth more than my cell phone. It's not like they are going to find it.[76]" (field notes, April 2019). Another issue commented by interviewees is that they do not report incidents because the CODEs ask them to present evidence. For the one-off cases of violence committed by strangers in public spaces, this is virtually impossible to obtain. Interviewees feel that they have to play detective just to be able to present their report to the authorities. The victim is often put in the position of having to do the legwork to secure video recordings from the security cameras -if any-, to go around questioning witnesses -if they are willing to say something-, or to have their phone ready to record an incident at all times.

In cases of vandalism, thefts in stores, or incidents in houses -such as break-ins or carjacking- interviewees also stated that they delay reporting unless they have gathered enough evidence, such as video recordings, purchase statements, photographs or managing to catch the criminal in the act or even setting traps (resulting in a rise on sales for home security cameras). However, they are also wary of the danger of physically confronting the criminal and for the risk of being themselves accused of wrongdoing for extra-officially detaining an individual. The fact that evidence is easier to gather in the case, for example, of break-ins and carjacking also contributes to the fact that these are one of the most reported incidents in MMA, unlike the ephemeral or at times "subtle" violence in public space.

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[76] Vale más mi trabajo que el celular que me robaron. Tampoco es como si lo fueran a encontrar.

Violence against women in public spaces and the non-response from the police

Violence against women is treated separately and rarely integrated into the discourse about violence in general. There is violence, and then there is violence against women. The former is a matter of concern for all levels of action -from the army to neighborhood watches- while the latter had been relegated to institutions that deal with women's rights and domestic abuse. As mentioned in CHAPTER 5, the increasing rates of victimization in public spaces and demands from activists gave way to legislation and creation of institutions that deal with violence against women. However, at ground level, these initiatives have little to no impact on women's trust in authorities, and much less on the rates of victimization of women in private and public spaces. This exemplifies the disconnection between what happens "up there" (referring to decision makers and elected officials) and what the average city dweller experiences.

Violence against women in the public space is especially common but is sorely unreported. At best, authorities are not trained to attend the victims. Women's testimony is often questioned and discarded based on their physical aspect, place of residence, origin, education or economic background, or on the grounds of the victim not presenting any evidence. And at worst, women have been victimized by police officers -from extortion to rape or abduction. Authorities and society blame and humiliate the victim for the crime committed against them. The sentiment of mistrust, neglect, and not being heard or believed is particularly present in female inhabitants and with cases of sexual violence in public spaces. In October 2020, the FGJ made a post on FB about the reports circulating online about attempted abductions of women. They affirmed that since there were no official reports they could not investigate it. To this, women expressed their reasoning and indignation (the original texts in Spanish can be found on ANNEX 9):

- Female user: (…) people do not file a report and they don't do it because people don't trust that the authorities are going to help, or you have to give evidence. The only thing [victims] have on their minds is escaping.
- Female user: we cannot deny that this week there were more attempted abductions (personally it happened to me on Monday at 4 pm), we cannot deny that we do not dare to file a report because no one does anything, they delay answers, or it is a waste of time. Not too long ago I filed a complaint for sexual harassment against a man who entered my yard to masturbate while watching me and they didn't do anything…if it is about an abduction by organized crime, I guess you are going to do even less…let's be realistic, please.
- Female user: but when they report you do not believe them, bunch of crooks!
- Female user: what's the use of reporting? So that you can tell me like you told my sisters that they don't have evidence, that I have to be covered in bruises? You wait until things happen, you don't prevent, it is useless to create thousands of institutions that do not protect us. I BELIEVE THE PEOPLE MORE BECAUSE THE POLICE DOES NOT PROTECT ME, MY FEMALE FRIENDS DO!

- Female user: how are you going to have reports if when women do it you minimize them? for you, if they are not hurt, kidnapped, raped or murdered there is no crime to pursue. You are supposed to be here to prevent this mess but you don't. If something happens, what then? You file it away because you apparently need them to be caught in the act or be recorded and even then YOU LET THEM GO! Terrible service.
- Female user (reply): exactly, that's why no one files a report, what the fuck for? They tell you that if you don't have evidence, you are crazy or are making it up. And that happened to me.
- Female user (reply): to me too, it wasn't the same case (and I'm thankful to God) but it was something lighter and it was the same. They only gave me the document for me to leave.

As observed in this example, the female users are aware of the impossibility of presenting evidence in cases of violence committed against them in public spaces. Women are disproportionately victimized in public spaces, but their claims are discarded by civilians and authorities, unless they can present hard evidence of something happening to them. Moreover, the overall bad experiences when dealing with law enforcement makes residents of MMA to downplay any complains related to the treatment of victims of gender-based violence: the police is equally incompetent for everybody.

Conversely, information from the C5 headquarters and municipal services reveals that the incident reported the most to emergency services is noisy neighbors -up to 75% of the calls received. Noisy neighbors who play music at over 70 decibels from Friday until the early Monday morning -or at times all week long- have been a staple of life in MMA, often normalized and unattended by police, who consider it a waste of time and resources. The noisy neighbor, often drunk, ignores the neighbors' demands to keep the music down, and the issue escalates to physical violence and neighbor disputes -insults, littering, more noise, vandalism, thefts- that lasted for years and affected perception of security in the *colonias*. With the increasing violence during the late 2000s and early 2010s, inhabitants were fearful of confronting a possibly drunk, high or armed neighbor who could be part of a cartel. With the opening of phone lines for noise complaints, people started reporting more. Unlike incidents in public space, noise is more reported because people consider it an obvious disturbance that can be caught in the act and that does not require much effort from the police to solve, with the added possibility that drug dealings may be taking place. It is only since 2016 that some municipalities have implemented specific actions and fines for noisy neighbors, although action is still perceived as ineffective and insufficient. Per their own admission, there are not enough officers to attend all the reports. This in turn affected the perception of police action, as one interviewee states "if they cannot deal with a noisy idiot, there's no way they are going to come if someone is stealing or killing someone. What's the point of calling then?" (interview Salvador, February 19, 2019).

8.2 Feelings of insecurity and everyday practices in the public spaces of the metropolis

A survey carried out by CVNL in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed inhabitants of MMA consider that security should be at the top of the public agenda, second only to unemployment (Cómo Vamos Nuevo León, 2021, pp. 20–21). Security in this case includes homicides, robberies, and police presence. In García, Santiago, and San Pedro residents place it as the number one priority. Lower middle- and lower classes, more than being afraid, are exhausted of violence, security, and crime. The upper classes could afford distancing themselves from public space by never leaving "safe" zones and express high levels of fear and anxiety (Villarreal Montemayor, 2016). Conversely, the lower classes and those whose livelihoods depend on contact with the public space resorted to adapting and in some cases normalizing violence. Salvador, living in the Colonia Burócratas Municipales comments on living in a violent environment:

> You have to adapt. Those who are paranoid lock themselves in their houses. But that only makes you more afraid. And you have to move, to go out to work. And if you are afraid all the time, you don't move. You cannot be afraid all the time, so you adapt, you learn, you pay attention[77] (interview Salvador, February 19, 2019).

As depicted on Graph 6, men of lower class living in the state of Nuevo León have the highest perception of security at 29.5%. Upper-middle class women have the lowest perception of security at 10.6%. Perception of security varies across MMA. According to the 2019 Así Vamos Survey, San Pedro is considered the safest municipality according to 95% of respondents, followed by Santiago with 84% of respondents considering it safe. Contrariwise, over 50% of respondents living in Monterrey, Juárez, and Cadereyta report feeling unsafe or very unsafe (Cómo Vamos Nuevo León, 2019, p. 57).
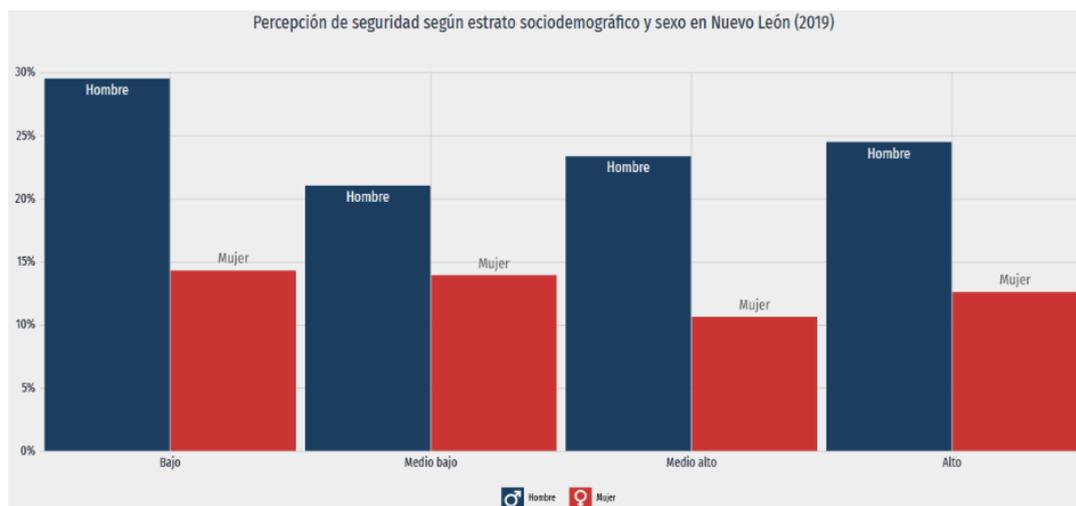
Graph 6 Perception of security by socio-demographic status and gender in Nuevo León in 2019.
Source: Data Mexico (2021), based on ENVIPE 2019 survey.

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[77] Te tienes que adaptar. Los paranoicos se encierran en sus casas. Pero eso nomás hace que tengas más miedo. Y pues te tienes que mover, para salir a trabajar. Y si tienes miedo todo el tiempo, pues no te mueves. No puedes tener miedo todo el tiempo, por eso te adaptas, aprendes, pones atención.

These perceptions are a consequence of the violent period between 2009 and 2013 and the persisting high criminality in the locality. Before this period, common crime was perceived as much less frequent and violence was allegedly concentrated in specific territories. With organized crime conflicts came a surge of common crime, and even zones that were relatively safe became targets of crimes that were increasingly violent and numerous. Signs of violence were part of the urban landscape: from graffiti of cartel-affiliated gangs to broken glass from carjacking and of course the more spectacular signs such as dead bodies and narcomantas.

8.2.1 Same storm, different boat: the lost nuances of the dominating discourse of violence

For some, violence represented a significant transformation of their lifestyles. For others, it was one more unfortunate element to consider within their pre-existing experiences of direct and structural violence in their everyday lives. The lower classes and vulnerable populations were hit first and most (see CHAPTER 6), while the middle and upper classes were experiencing violence in ways they had previously seen as alien or pertaining to other strata of society. As time went on and the dramatic violence receded, so did certain practices. However, not all violence receded for everyone, much less for the lower classes. Common crime remained as a daily risk. Some practices adopted during the period of dramatic violence remained, especially those that did not altered drastically everyday life. The dominating discourse of violence that emerged focused on the individuals' responsibility of protecting themselves and their property, and it is articulated in function of the concerns of the upper and middle classes from a male perspective.

This dominating point of view is illustrated by the recommendations for good practices to stay safe emitted by law enforcement. The SSPNL, FC, and the FGJ have Facebook pages that are updated regularly with crime prevention strategies (see Figure 56). Posts show how identify phishing or fake news and alerting about the dangers of online shopping or dating. They advise how to prevent extortion and abductions by not putting stickers outside one's home that give personal information -such as family names, football clubs, or hobbies-, removing tags with names from the backpacks of children, and changing routes when driving. They tell people to avoid showing off wealth or giving out information about their vacations on social media –this could inform a potential thief looking through their social media that there is no one in the house. These recommendations are interspersed with Amber alerts, listing a parent or grandparent as a possible suspect and how to apply to join police forces, which contradicts the scenarios of the unknown abductor.

Figure 56 Security priorities according to communication from law enforcement concentrate on internet usage.
(left) Facebook post explaining what is adware, February 24, 2021.
Source: Facebook   –   Fuerza   Civil.   Retrieved   on   19/04/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/fuerzacivil/photos/4015314041846991.
(center) Facebook post alerting over the dangers of sexting and leaked nude pictures, February 4, 2021.
Source: Facebook   –   SSPNL.   Retrieved   on   17/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/seguridadpublicanl/photos/3696418580451879/
(right) Facebook post explaining what a hater is and how to deal with them, September 14, 2021.
Source: Facebook – SSPNL. Retrieved on 15/09/2021.

These recommendations come across as tone deaf in a state listed as highly dangerous due to feminicides, homicides, and various types of violence in public spaces, and where cybercrime is not the main threat discussed by city dwellers. They are constructed around the fear of, for example, an abductor who has been monitoring their mark's routines, catfishing them on social media, following them from a cautious distance, waiting for the opportunity to strike and negotiate a ransom. These recommendations are based on high-profile abductions based on wealth, which is not the modus operandi that presents a risk for the majority of the population. This official position disregards that abductees from the lower classes are targeted by human traffickers to recruit them for cartels or to exploit for sex work without doing much research on the victims' wealth or habits beforehand. In the case of women however, abductions of women are also carried out by not only anonymous criminals, but also by family members and significant others.

Recommendations also are oriented towards security of cars. Owning a car is the safest and most efficient means of transportation because it places a barrier between the user and the public space, and it is also a social marker. Car owners worry about car parts -or the entire car- being robbed right outside their homes, places of employment or parking lots. For car owners, it is important to walk as little as possible between the door of their destination and the place where the car is parked. Having to park on a street and not right in front of their destinations represents a risk: public spaces do not guarantee security, as opposed to a parking space where at least if something happens, one could complain to the owner of the establishment. The few times these official measures address incidents on public space, they are patently evident: pay attention and do not talk to strangers. Other times they are simply contradictory, such as advising to have hands free in case self-defense is required, and also having a phone in hand at all times in case one needs to call for help (see Figure 57). While the incidents addressed by FC, FGJ, and SSPNL do happen, these recommendations leave out much of the everyday

experiences of insecurity in public space, particularly for the lower classes who are much more in contact with public spaces.

Figure 57 Recommendations on how to stay safe in public space are few and also contradictory.
(left) Facebook post recommending to change routes at least once a week to avoid being robbed, October 2, 2018.
Source: Facebook – FGJ. Retrieved on 18/05/2021. https://www.facebook.com/fiscalianl/photos/2296338060586547/
(center) Recommendation to have hands free in case of needing to act fast, September 14, 2018.
Source: Facebook – FGJ. Retrieved on 18/05/2021. https://www.facebook.com/fiscalianl/photos/2286740508212969/
(right) Recommendation to have a phone at hand at all times, September 17, 2018.
Source: Facebook – FGJ. Retrieved on 18/05/2021. https://www.facebook.com/fiscalianl/photos/2288378731382480/

How to avoid being a victim in public spaces according to city dwellers

One of the first differentiations that emerged for participants of the Macro Plaza-Alameda Public Space Probe (MAPSP) was the link between the degree of concern with security to socio-economic class and territory. MAPSP participants were mostly lower-middle and lower class, and the majority used public transportation. As opposed to upper classes who are mostly concerned with break-ins and carjacking, when asked about the effects of insecurity, most MAPSP participants spontaneously related the effects of insecurity with being in the public space. When discussing about different ways of being safe, we touched upon common strategies, among them, private security. One participant remarked about the use of bodyguards or guards in *fraccionamientos* cerrados:

> Those are for people of la Del Valle [upper class *colonia* in San Pedro known for its wealth] As if we could hire bodyguards. There's barely enough money for the bus ride. You get used to it. Well, maybe you don't get used to it, but you are careful, you are not ostentatious. There are people who don't go out but one has to go to work.[78].

Security is seen as a product available to those who can pay for it, as opposed to a right. And in the face of inadequate and insufficient public action and lacking the capacities to create or inhabit security islands (see CHAPTER 7), lower-middle and lower-class residents of MMA focus on practices that help them be safe. According to the answers about the effects of insecurity and everyday practices, *tener cuidado*, *cuidarse* is key -being careful. This *cuidado* is especially related to *salir* and *andar en la calle* -going out and being on the streets- and the

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[78] Esa es la gente de la Del Valle. Uno qué va andar contratando guaruras. Si muy apenas tiene uno para la gasolina. Te acostumbras y ya. O bueno, no te acostumbras, pero vas viendo, no andas de ostentoso, tienes cuidado. Hay gente que mejor no sale pero pues uno tiene que salir a jalar.

individuals' responsibility. But what exactly does it imply? MAPSP participants associate *cuidado* to:

- vigilance of one's surroundings
- being mindful of one's aspect
- being careful of times and places
- taking care of one's belongings and valuables
- distrusting strangers
- being careful of what kind of people one is associated with

Keeping the eyes open, identifying suspicious behavior is important. In the spirit of self-preservation, it is also recommended to avoid dangerous situations. This includes not intervening when witnessing a robbery or harassment: mind your own business.

Describing the profile of a "victim", MAPSP depict it as someone who is distracted and unaware of the dangers of being in the public space, and also relate these traits to social class. MAPSP participants describe victims as rich or middle class -they named, women and business owners-: they have money and/or lack street smarts to adequately interpret public space through the prism of insecurity. Participants also provided contrasting traits of a victim's personality: they are both a braggart and shy; both vigilant and distracted. They also described a victim as pacific and religious to their own detriment: their morals make them naïve and will impede them from fighting back.

According to the participants' characterization of a "victim", they are ostentatious in their aspect, and display wealth on the public space by sporting jewelry, watches, or smartphones. A victim can be someone who wants to show off, not knowing they are calling attention to themselves by announcing they are ripe for the picking. Therefore, this characterization of the victim complements one of the often-mentioned recommendations: avoid being *ostentoso* -flashy- by not wearing jewelry, not having too much cash, and not having a phone out all the time. Minding one's appearance is also key to minimize risks of victimization. Being inconspicuous is key.

Being mindful of times and places is also a recommended practice. MAPSP described a victim as someone who is out at night, and who is in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nighttime was identified as a particularly dangerous moment, particularly for youths and women. However, *salir del trabajo* -leaving work- was also frequently mentioned as dangerous for anyone (leaving work late is fairly common and oftentimes leaving before dusk is not a possibility) and recommended being careful when leaving work. MAPSP participants mention one must be careful when using public transportation. Taxis are identified as especially dangerous, as they sometimes set up their passengers to be robbed or abducted. At least two male participants narrated recent experiences being violently robbed by a taxi driver and his accomplices.

These practices coming from a predominantly male sample contrast with observations and interviews -particularly with vulnerable populations such as women (as detailed in the next section of this chapter) and teenagers (see CHAPTER 10)- where it is revealed that minding

one's appearance is a fine line to walk and it is not as clear-cut as not carelessly wearing jewelry. For example, being dressed as a modest college student could be anodyne near the university campus or in a bus line leading there, but it can be a marker of social status on certain metro stops or when walking to their *colonia* of residence. Having a smartphone at hand can also be unremarkable in certain places, but as night falls this can make someone a target. If they are in a *colonia*, having a smartphone at hand can even make the individual appear suspicious.

Mentioning practices to be safe in the public space was not an easy task for MAPSP participants. As a male MAPSP participant said "there's a moment where you have to adapt, because you have to go out, always at a reasonable hour[79]". In some cases, the individual was unaware of which practices they have integrated into their everyday life, other times the individual did not even consider themselves as potentially in danger, particularly as males. An upper-class man with little experience navigating public spaces may overestimate the danger, while a lower-class man can even say that insecurity has not affected him at all. The common blanket statement *tener cuidado al salir* (being careful when going out) denotes an attempt at unifying what could contribute to being safe, while not being able to extract themselves from the milieu in which violence proliferates and with a strong focus on the individual's responsibility.

Conceptually, in a context of chronic violence, this could translate into protecting oneself from anything at all times. In practice, each person adopts different practices depending on the perception of their own vulnerability and experiences, and they prioritize scenarios in function of the familiarity with the spaces they visit. In a context of chronic violence, it would appear that no practice is enough, leading inhabitants to banalize and normalize violence as an element of everyday life in public spaces.

8.2.2 The use of social media on everyday security: (mis)information and community organization

In the MAPSP social media came second to TV as the participants' main source of information. As mentioned in CHAPTER 6, social media's importance increased during the most intense periods of violence in public space. Since then its use has evolved and gave way to spontaneous organization and to share and produce information (Blandford et al., 2013). Since 2016 Facebook Communities -this is, Groups and Pages- rose in popularity in MMA to share information relevant for everyday life dedicated to specific and small territories (see Table 5). While Mexico, Nuevo León, and Monterrey were already popular topics to create Facebook Communities about, new ones emerged focusing on smaller municipalities in MMA, sectors within municipalities, neighborhoods, and even specific places such as parks or streets.

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[79] Pues llega un momento en el que te adaptas, llega un punto en el que tienes que salir, siempre a una hora razonable.

Table 5 Differences between Facebook Pages and Facebook Groups.
Source: Author, 2021, based on information from Facebook.

Pages	Groups
• Public	• Private or public
• Followers 'Like' the Page to receive updates on their newsfeed.	o Private groups are searchable but their content is only seen by members.
• Top-bottom engagement: Admin, Editor or Mod creates posts, Followers engage with Comments, Shares and Likes.	• Users' request to join has to be approved by admins. Users may be required to answer questions before being admitted.
• Engagement with the Page from a Follower can appear on their contacts' newsfeed.	• Bottom-top engagement: Members create posts and engage with Comments, Shares, and Likes. Admins and Mods can remove Members or posts.
• Popular to share information focused on the city or a sector.	• Popular for organization of small communities such as *colonias*.

Facebook Communities for information on large topics and territories

The topic of security is both a source of information and entertainment, and these Pages (as we will see further on) perpetuate the dominating discourse about violence. Often groups for sales evolved to groups for sharing useful information for the residents of a community (and vice versa), about various topics, among them security. Later, other Pages emerged dedicated to security updates from the start. These sites are mostly citizen-managed, some repost news from reporters from local news outlets to give their audience "the most relevant news in Monterrey". Facebook Pages on violence and security focusing on a state, a sector or municipality, are often managed by a single user or at most 10 administrators and moderators who share information as they see fit. Members can also send Admins posts to share or tag the Page on other posts on FB they consider merit visibility -or rather virality-, ranging from petitions and reports of missing persons to memes of a recent situation in MMA or the country.

The information shared -as text, images or links to news sites or videos- is often not verified, so fake news run amok along with real information. To avoid any demands for clarification, users and admins put the disclaimer *solo comparto* ("I'm just sharing") or *circula en redes* ("circulating on social media") -something also used widely by traditional media when they share unverified information. Pages repost urban legends and claims that support the already established position against certain groups or municipalities and *colonias* in MMA. Pages reproduce and shape discourses of urban violence, and as mentioned in CHAPTER 6, a symbiotic relationship between social media and traditional media has developed over the years. These pages are also an outlet for violence from the users. On posts communicating arrests of criminals, followers comment in great detail the kind of torture they merit and the physical violence they would like to inflict on the detained individual. Local FB Communities are chaotic in general. FB Groups with thousands of users tend to be more so because anyone can make posts. Without appropriate moderation, pornography, memes, scams, and sales may overflow the Group, and focus can be easily lost. For this reason, Facebook users create redundant Groups and Pages to try to preserve a theme and avoid spam. Additionally, these Communities dedicated to large territories can give way to smaller more focalized groups

dedicated to a specific neighborhood or subsector. In turn, these focalized groups can jump into action and organization offline.

Urban legends in a violent context

The widespread access to information through a simple Google search has made it easier to confirm or debunk a rumor; however, particularly through social media, rumors and urban legends are now easily created and quickly spread. Anxiety increases the need for rumors, and dependence on them, as tools of understanding and of social interaction. (Donovan, 2004, p. 9). These anxieties and need for information are even more intense in crisis-bound low-information contexts. In times past, urban legends about organ traffickers or abductions were shared as a joke and those who believed them where either very young or considered especially gullible. Violence inflicted by the state and the drug cartels turned these rumors and urban legends into facts.

It came to be of common knowledge that the events reported by news outlets were only the most sensational and that the real data (the everyday experiences) was less divulged. They were so common they were not worth reporting anymore. Even when data was unavailable and authorities stopped communicating about incidents, the city dwellers had direct experiences with highly dramatic events of violence. Through third-party retelling, personal experience, or the media news of violent events from the day before were shared. No more was it a matter of "my sister's best friend's aunt saw something weird while camping", but "did you hear the gunshots last night?" or "did you know the man they found on the park near your mother's house?" or "my neighbor was abducted". In such an environment, rumors that tap into the sensitivities of a hypervigilant and victimized demographic spread quickly, threatening an already feeble sense of security. As Donovan points out the underlying idea is that such rumors carry information that may not be available elsewhere. They also cover an emotional and political terrain different to that of news coverage and official public discourse (2004, p. 9). Posts about "how rapists choose their victims", "new modus operandi of a sex traffickers' ring" or "reasons why you should keep your keys by your bed" that date back to pre-social media times and have been proven to be false continue to make the rounds as chain messages in WA. Some posts are about incidents in other cities and other countries, but still they keep circulating; no incident is too farfetched. Even when confronted with evidence, users prefer to share and believe hoaxes. In the words of users of security groups: "well, it may be fake, but it says that we should be careful, and that is always valid" and "it doesn't matter if these posts are old. It is very important to share them" (field notes, September 2019). Another put it more bluntly: "nowadays I prefer to believe everything. You never know" (field notes, September 2019).

8.2.3 Normalization of violence and local identity

Unlike in the early stages of the crisis of violence, MMA residents do not deny violence exist. However, violence -like death- is something to joke about but it is not to be directly acknowledged nor discussed seriously, and even less when it pertains to public spaces: both are disgusting, larger than what an individual can fix, and ideally one should avoid them. Discussions about violence outside of jokes and memes begin and end with a broad assessment of how corrupt the government is and with the reinforcement of the individuals' responsibility of their own safety.

Insecurity is a concept that is very close and personal for residents of MMA. Experiencing violence is engrained into everyday vocabulary, it is both the setup and punchline of jokes. It is even a point of national pride linked with Mexican traditions. A common saying is that Mexicans laugh about everything, including death and tragedy, an idea popularized in the 40s and 50s: Mexicans are so comfortable with death, they laugh at it. Humor is a way of coping with the pervasive violence, the constant risk of victimization, and the overall helplessness with regards to authority: another day, another set of murders, another rape, another robbery, another abduction. *Regio* culture, always trying to go one step further from the Mexican identity, not only laughs at it: violence has turned into a rite of passage. Part of the *regio* culture of resilience now includes having the cold blood to not get irritated about violence, accept it, and deal with it (see Figure 58 and Figure 59).

One who gets frightened of gunshots or violence *le falta barrio* -lacking street smarts. They are either sheltered -usually as a consequence of not being lower class or being able to afford secure environments-, from out of town, or not manly enough. You know you are *regio* if you are used to asking if those where firecrackers or gunshots or if you do not answer numbers starting with 55 (most likely a phone extortion). The assertion made by the Facebook poster on Figure 59 (left) was copied by many MMA residents, some of them adding that surviving an abduction and dying of COVID-19 would not be very "on brand" with their *regio* identity. The dominating discourse about dealing with violence is also constructed around traditional masculinity and regional identity.

Figure 58 Humorously linking violence, territory, and identity.
(left) public Facebook post: "the more dangerous the colonia, the better the tacos", May 11, 2018.
Source: Facebook – Spider Cholo. Retrieved on 20/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1261949027270813&id=553598834772506
(right) Facebook post from a male user to a female friend complimenting her by comparing her traits with zones in Monterrey:
"Check her out: cold like Chipinque, desired [hard to get or expensive] like Cumbres, and dangerous like the Topo [Chico]",
February 6, 2021.
Source: Facebook. Retrieved on 6/02/2021.

Figure 59 Meme-ing the experiences of living through periods of intense violence and practices adopted to stay safe.
(left) Public Facebook post: "surviving the time of the Zetas and not COVID-19 wouldn't be very 'regio' of me", alluding that
regios survived the massacres of the Zetas, June 17, 2020.
Source: Facebook. Retrieved on 19/05/2021.
(right) Public tweet from a user from Monterrey: "do you guys also have your mom's phone number saved under her name
instead of 'mom' just so in case someone stole your phone they wouldn't call her pretending an abduction, or did you miss
Calderon's term?", alluding to the common phone extortion tactic, September 11, 2020.
Source: Twitter – arccturus. Retrieved on 19/05/2021.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 5 complaining about anything in a personal capacity is frowned upon. An example can be found when one complains about noisy neighbors, a minor incivility. When complaining about it or looking for support in online communities, the complaining

party is very apologetic, recognizing the right to party but also asking for comprehension of their need for peace and quiet. To legitimize their plight, they usually add that they have a baby, a sick relative or an elderly parent at home. Their complain is met with mockery: why are they so pressed about what someone else is doing? Stop being *metiche* -nosy- and a pussy. They are being annoying and possibly jealous. Suck it up. They could throw a party and annoy them back. They must not be *regio* if they are so thin-skinned.

As described in CHAPTER 4, middle-class male interviewees at different phases of research reacted with anger and aggression when informed about the project's goals. This is not out of indignation about homicide or crime rates, but out of despair: what good is it to talk about it when everybody knows the situation is bad? What good is it to answer surveys or discuss when everybody knows authorities do not act? This anger stems from the expectations of masculinity in a *machista* society, where men are expected to be protectors and not show fear: violence is so common that surpasses what an individual in the role of protector could manage. Middle class *regio* men reacted negatively when confronted with their own vulnerability as individuals, incapable of solving a problem larger than themselves.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 3, men tend to minimize their feelings of insecurity because of expectations of masculinity. This does not entail that victimization in public space does not exist for men. This is consistent with the findings of the MAPSP: 25% of male participants acknowledged that insecurity exists, but that it does not affect them, and 47% of male participants mentioned that it has affected others around them. It is worth noting that male and female MAPSP participants recognize feelings of insecurity that include fear and unease as something to live with in public spaces.

There is a tone of fatalism when talking about violence, especially from the lower classes. The upper classes express fear, apprehension, and decry the moral decay of society, and are quick to condemn the poor and the uneducated as sources of this decay. Conversely, lower classes who are in constant contact with public space express not only fear but resignation. Interviewees at different phases of the research process talk about *adaptarse* and *acostumbrar* -adapting and getting used to it. What else is to do about it? One's safety is a matter of personal responsibility. Being a victim means that one was not careful enough. Learn and do better next time.

8.2.4 Representations of territories and actors of violence

Along with landmarks and distinctions of social class, the city is interpreted and imagined through the lens of urban violence (see Map 12). When asked to identify dangerous zones in MMA, one of the most popular answers was "anywhere". As one MAPSP participant explained "you have to be careful because nowadays there are thugs everywhere, no matter how nice the *colonia* looks[80]". The *colonia* was the unit mentioned the most when discussing "dangerous zones" -a purposefully broad concept left to the participants' interpretation. When MAPSP

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[80] Hay que poner atención porque ahorita en cualquier lado hay malandros, por muy bien que se vea la *colonia*.

participants provided personal anecdotes and feelings of insecurity, they refer to their *colonias* first and places they frequent second. This is where feelings of insecurity acquire more nuance and precision. Insecurity is not in the realm of politics or abstract concern; it is a personal issue facing everyday life in public spaces, even the ones more familiar to them. Participants talked about experiences in their *colonias*: robberies, of darkened streets, and of having to walk their children to and from the bus stop. The familiarity with the context also played a role. When asked about dangerous zones, a common answer was "*colonias populares*". Inquiring further, participants mentioned *colonias* by name which resulted in the following map:
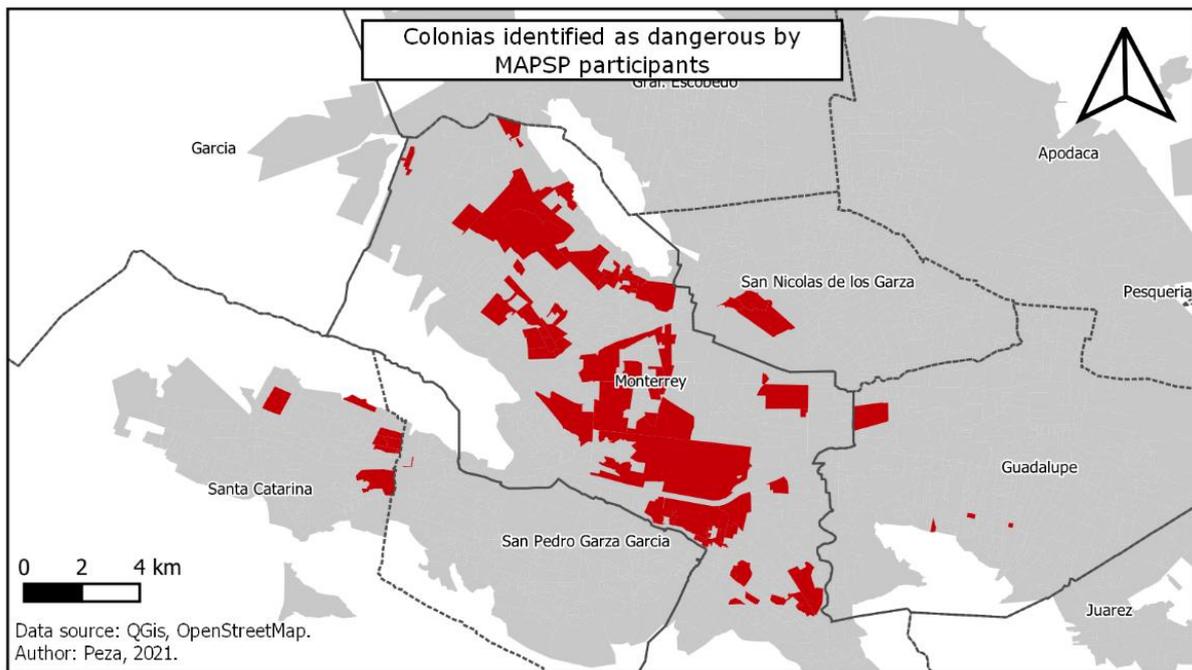
Map 12 Colonias identified as dangerous by MAPSP participants.
Most of the colonias mentioned are located in Centro and Sector Norte in Monterrey.
Source: Author, 2021.

Several of these *colonias* were mentioned in the early interviews, such as San Bernabé, Granja Sanitaria, and Independencia. As opposed to the upper classes who often refer to these spaces as dangerous due to their reputation but have rarely visited them, the MAPSP participants mention them as dangerous because they know them, either because they live or lived there, or because they visit frequently. They explained that they know their *colonia* is dangerous, and for this reason they are mindful of their schedules or who they talk to, and also that they would not invite their friends because they do not know the *colonia* and they would not want to be responsible if something happens. This situation was also confirmed by the experience of two activists working in Fomerrey 35 -a *colonia popular*- who during an interview narrated the following:

> I asked a lady living in Fomerrey 35 if she went out on vacation. No, someone has to stay home because she knows that the three guys on the corner are looking out for places to

steal and buy marihuana. They [residents of *colonias populares*] know if they have an uncle or someone, they know who they have to protect their girls from. They know the same as you know in your own neighborhood who's the party guy, who blocks the street with the car, who litters, who is noisy, or who walks their dog. They know each other and know who they have to protect themselves from. Here [middle-class *colonia*] the unknown is a source of fear. I live in a *colonia* of a higher [social] level, and I don't know who may come to rob me or rape me. I don't know what could happen. Fear starts from the unknown. They are not afraid: they are careful. It's like "careful with El Chuky, because he's armed and if he's high, you never know" [81] (interview Carmen, April 17, 2018).

Soto Canales (2018) carried out a study with residents and former residents of *colonias* that have been stigmatized as dangerous by the media. In it, the interviewees express the feelings of insecurity inside and outside their *colonias*, but also of exclusion and segregation, and how they are treated differently by residents of middle-class *colonias*. Participants of this study narrate how they have experienced insecurity in other "nicer" parts of the city, but it is their *colonias* that people are scared of. They also narrate how "outsiders" of the *colonia* are afraid of visiting, from parents of friends to uber and taxi drivers, but once they see that it is a *colonia* just like any other, they only have the "normal" perception of insecurity that they would have anywhere else. In other cases, the prejudices against the *colonia* prevail, as visitors will not set foot on such an allegedly dangerous place. As one participant in Soto Canales' study says about the traits attributed to her *colonia* of residence: "insecurity? It is everywhere. Drug addiction? Everyone consumes drugs anywhere. Prostitution? There even are designated spaces" (2018, p. 100). They do acknowledge that the period of violence of 2009 transformed the dynamics in their *colonias*, but that in the present the differences with other less stigmatized spaces is not much. This is consistent with interviews I carried out with middle- and upper-class individuals, who affirm that danger is everywhere, while singling out lower-class *colonias* as the places of residence of criminals.

Other zones mentioned as dangerous besides *colonias* were public transportation -especially taxis- and streets, parks, the exterior of venues -such as marketplaces, malls, and shops- and metro stations. In short: public space. These were places MAPSP participants visited regularly. Some even mentioned the Macro Plaza and the Alameda -where the activity was taking place. Familiarity plays an important role. A male MAPSP participant commented he knew homeless people who lived on subterranean spaces of the Macro Plaza. He said that they and the immigrants napping in the Alameda are "crazy". And while he said that he had been in a precarious situation where he depended on meal centers, he also said that they are bad for security and that they should be closed down because they bring in criminals.

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[81] Le preguntaba a una señora que vive en Fomerrey 35 que si salió de vacaciones. No, se tiene que quedar alguien porque ya sé que esos tres que vienen en la esquina nomás andan robando para comprar mariguana. Ellos ya saben que tienen algún tío o alguien, ya saben que tienen que cuidar a sus niñas. Pero lo saben cómo una sabe en el vecindario quién es el de la fiesta, quien atraviesa el carro, quien tira basura, quien es escandaloso, quien saca a su perro. Ellos ya se conocen y saben de quién cuidarse. Acá el punto es porque lo desconocido es lo que genera mucho miedo. Yo que vivo en una *colonia* de nivel más alto y no sé quién va a venir a robarme o a violarme. No sé qué me vaya a suceder. El miedo se va generando por lo desconocido. Ellos no tienen miedo, tienen precaución.

As opposed to the victim who was characterized as predominantly upper or middle class, the victimizer was characterized by MAPSP participants as poor, uneducated, as an immigrant from other states or from Latin America, or a resident of *colonias populares* -and often these groups overlap. The victimizer is also predominantly male. This anti-poor, anti-immigrant sentiment was also present on social media. Observations of social media coincide with the information obtained from interviews and the MAPSP. News where the criminal is an immigrant often display the individual's nationality on the headline, motivating an influx of racist and xenophobic comments. Likewise, with news -real or false- about the passage of Latin American immigrants through Mexico, Page Followers react negatively, commenting on their experiences of dealing with immigrants in their *colonias* and posting about the alleged ignorance, criminal tendencies, and laziness (a cardinal sin in *regio* culture). It is also an opportunity for local residents (and immigrants with enough social capital) to boast the superiority of Monterrey against the rest of the country.

On their end, Mexican immigrants are aware that they are treated poorly because of their place of origin. During an interview I carried out with a group of male immigrants from Oaxaca, Puebla, and Tamaulipas, they mentioned that they too are careful of their appearance: they try to look clean -even if their clothes are old- and avoid carrying backpacks. If possible, having a job where a uniform is required gives them some security. Like many MMA residents, they too are wary of taxis, they believe the municipal police is more corrupt than the state police, and they believe that the immigrants from South America are criminals. They see that they are targeted because they "look like they are not from here" -one of the participants refused to say his state of origin, only stating "I live in Monterrey"-, and they frequently are victims of extortion by police:

> if you have some cash, the issue goes no further. If not, they detain you just because. If someone robbed a store and you were passing by, they are going to point the finger at you just because of where you come from. A couple of cops detained me once just because I was walking and searched me and they told me "what are you doing here? Are you a fugitive? For you, there is no law that can help you."[82] (interview Mateo, 9/10/2018).

In MMA there is little sympathy for petty criminals, particularly from *colonias populares*. The population living in these sectors are criminalized by both authorities and residents of other areas of the city. An example of this came from an online publication by a zine from Topo Chico, a stigmatized *colonia* popular. They published a text from SA, a friend of a man who was shot by FC when he attempted to steal a car (the original post in Spanish can be found in ANNEX 6), in which he wrote:

> There are bad officers, and good ones, but the ones that make these types mistakes have to pay for them. They killed someone, and they planted a weapon on him, that's

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[82] Si traes dinero, hasta ahí llega. Si no, te detienen nomás porque sí. Si alguien robó una tienda y tú ibas pasando, te lo van a colgar a ti nomás por de donde eres. Un par de policías me detuvieron una vez por estar caminando y me esculcaron y me dicen "¿qué haces aquí? ¿eres prófugo? Para ti no hay ley que te apoye".

misfeasance. Yes, my friend was [illegally forcing open] a car, they had to detain him and put him in jail, but he didn't have to pay with his life. Regardless of what a dick he was, he had family, children, and friends who are in pain. But we know how the law works around here: impunity and corruption.

I've been tortured for smelling of pot, they treated me worse than a murderer only for smelling, they beat me till they got tired, and they threatened us if we talked about it. I had sequels of that and no way of reporting it, we know about retaliation of those fuckers. I have a lot of anger and pain; I can't stop thinking about all this mess we have[83] (Av. Aztlán, 2017).

To this, commenters showed their support of the actions of the police and celebrated the death of the person (the original reactions in Spanish are located in ANNEX 6):

"I wish there were more officers like that."

"Why should we worry about the suffering of his family if he didn't care? He knew what the risk was, and if the cop didn't do it, the owner of the car would have beat him."

"I hope the police kill them all, it is the best that could happen."

"He was robbing. What did he expect? If he was a good and hard-working person, nothing would have happened."

"Don't you have empathy for the people who get stuff through hard work only to have it taken from you by a rat? One less rat on the streets!"

"What if it was your car? Or if the police officer was your relative?"

"Sorry for your loss, but I think that those of us who put in the work to have a little or a lot are fed up with delinquents."

City dwellers revel on violent detentions or deaths of criminals, but in MMA, vigilante justice is an oddity. As seen in the previous section of practices, city dwellers prefer to avoid acting as it is seen as safer. It is noteworthy that, while police are usually perceived as corrupt and useless, violent police action is celebrated against what many perceive as an avatar of crime: an individual with supposedly shaky moral standing, bad upbringing, and living in a bad *colonia* received his comeuppance. In this narrative, death is not random and innocents are never killed: they must have done something to deserve it (see CHAPTER 6). However, as revealed by the MAPSP activity, the resulting image of the characteristics of a victimizer (and a victim) are contradictory. According to participants, the victimizer can be well dressed and

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[83] Hay policías malos, también buenos, pero los que cometen este tipo de errores tienen que pagar por ellos. Mataron a una persona y todavía le plantan un arma, eso es abuso de autoridad. Sí, mi amigo estaba abriendo un carro, tenían que detenerlo y que pagara con cárcel el delito, pero no tenía que pagar con su vida. Sea como haya sido de cabrón, tenía familia, hijos y amigos a los que nos duele. Pero ya sabemos cómo se maneja la ley por acá: impunidad y corrupción.
A mí me han torturado por oler a marihuana, me trataron peor que a un asesino solo por oler, me golpearon hasta que se cansaron, aun así, nos amenazaron si hablábamos de eso. Yo tuve secuelas de esos golpes y ni como denunciar, si sabemos que las represalias de esos putos. Traigo mucho coraje y sentimiento, no dejo de pensar en todo este desmadre que tenemos.

poor, he blends in the crowd and he is easy to spot, he is not from Nuevo León and he is a local. He is a *nini* (term used to shorten the expression in Spanish "ni estudian, ni trabajan" or NEET in English: "not in education, employment or training") and he is a corrupt politician. The victimizer was also depicted as someone evil, godless, and liberal, as opposed to the supposedly religious victim.

Teenagers and children appear as both potential victims and potential delinquents. Interviewees from *colonias populares* and MAPSP responders mention them when telling experiences or concerns, for example, having to escort their teenage children -especially girls- or giving them recommendations of how to act. A male MAPSP participant said "all the children now were born with insecurity; it is normal for them[84]". This assessment of intergenerational differences, of children and teenagers growing up with violence, and how they perceive violence in the public space is explored in CHAPTER 10. Teenagers and children are also mentioned as potential attackers: gang members or *ninis*.

Individual responsibility is also related to the reasons behind violence. Unemployment and lack of opportunities for working or schooling are mentioned both as a failure from the government to provide them and as a personal failure of individuals who want an easy way out of poverty. MAPSP participants mentioned the lack of education, which in this context refers to either lack of training to hold a job or lack of moral values. Not being educated (in the sense of schooling) is a personal decision of not wanting to put in the effort. Family was another frequently mentioned issue that is interpreted at an individual level: families taking the easy path and not parenting their children create criminals. Being a victim is a matter of personal responsibility, and becoming a criminal is likewise an individual's bad choices stemming from laziness or lack of morality.

8.3 Violence against women in public space: who cares?

8.3.1 Overview of the female victimization in public space

Research carried out by UN Women (2019, p. 22) in MMA revealed that 91.6% of female participants have experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime while using public transportation, and 84.7% of responders had experienced sexual violence in the year prior to the study. 50% of responders have experienced four of these incidents:

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[84] Todos los niños de ahora nacieron con la inseguridad, se les hace normal (Macro Plaza, no. 80).

- ogling,
- catcalls or unsolicited comments of sexual connotations,
- men rubbing up against them,
- masturbation,
- exhibitionism,

- groping,
- stalking or following,
- insults,
- being photographed without their consent

Feelings of insecurity and vulnerability are not uniform for women, varying across groups. For example, for adult women, taxis and ride-hailing services are more dangerous because in them they are at risk of being locked and assaulted by the driver. In general, this means of transportation have been known in the locality for coordinating robberies and abductions, but this is particularly true for women. On the other hand, young women perceive the metro and buses as more unsafe due to the amount of people and the anonymity and closeness it provides for assailants. Young women oftentimes wear headphones or look at their phones to deter potential harassers. However, in the eyes of the male-centered security strategists and thieves, this means that the woman is not paying attention to what is happening around her, making her an easy target. During interviews, girls, teenagers, and young women were mentioned as being especially in danger because they are desirable and virginal.

Depending on their means of transportation and the places they will visit throughout the day, women make decisions on their appearance, although they note that this is not a guarantee of safety. However, wearing makeup, elaborate hairdos, fitted clothing, skirts, dresses, heels, strappy tops, and shorts guarantees they will be harassed, and then they will be blamed for it. Women who use public transportation tend to favor pants and regular tops. If they need to look more presentable (for example, a job interview or a party) they prefer to take a certified taxi or an uber. While these are considered safer options, there is always the looming risk of being sexually harassed, kidnapped or recorded by the driver.

Besides age, differences in socio-economic classes impact perception and victimization as well. Women who suffer sexual violence in public spaces the most are domestic workers, workers in factories, teenagers and young women, immigrants from other states and Latin America, indigenous women, and handicapped women. On the other end of the spectrum, women in MMA who affirmed that street harassment does not exist are from upper and middle classes, tend to be more conservative, depend entirely on private transportation or have never taken the bus, and frequent private securitized establishments.

Differences between ages and socio-economic classes apply to the victimizers' profile as well. Women feel unsafe around men, either alone or in groups, in public spaces in general. However, they tend to be more wary of older men, who are more likely than younger men to touch them, chase them or masturbate in front of them. Conversely, men in MMA argue that it is the poorly-educated individuals, residents of *colonias populares*, and Mexican and Latin American immigrants who are to blame for sexual harassment. When victimizers are revealed to have a different profile -locals, hardworking, white, better educated-, men tend to question the victims' background.

While often depicted by authorities and city dwellers as oblivious and ignorant, women that are in constant contact with public space are cognizant of cues of threats and on a state of alert. Besides social class, gender quickly emerged as another differentiating factor for MAPSP participants. At first participants affirmed that insecurity is everywhere and anyone can be a victim, but as we moved on with the activity provided more nuances regarding women's security. Men consulted in the MAPSP remarked on the danger of walking on empty or badly lit streets, but women's cues for danger were more diversified. For men, a street with people is safe, whereas for women it depends on how many men or groups of men are present, or if there are other women there. Men are fearful of physical violence resulting from robberies in dangerous spaces, whereas women are fearful of physical and sexual violence -unrelated to robberies- in spaces that men otherwise perceive as innocuous. For example, a well-lit bus stop may appear safe enough for a man, but for a woman alone at night this represents the risk of receiving unwanted attention from a man. Women are also likely to change their regular routes if they experience street harassment. However, this is not always possible, particularly for those that depend on public transportation and have to take the one and only bus that goes to their points of destination.

To a certain extent, men and women acknowledge women are more at risk. According to the Así Vamos survey, 80% participants -male and female- believe that women cannot go out alone at night, and 8 out of 10 participants think that women are in higher risk than men in MMA (2019, p. 66). This information is consistent with the findings of qualitative research carried out in this project. When talking about the general profile of a victim and a victimizer during the MAPSP, the victim was depicted as a woman walking alone or a pregnant woman, while the victimizer (not exclusively of gender-related violence) was depicted as a man.

When asked about the impact of insecurity, 76% of MAPSP female participants spontaneously mentioned security in public spaces among their concerns, as opposed to 54% of male participants. Likewise, spontaneous mentions of victimization came from 76% of female participants, as opposed to 63% of male participants. And when discussing everyday practices to be safe, most of these practices were addressed to a general population, but men and women spontaneously mentioned that women in particular needed to be more careful when going out, especially teenagers. Activists, traditional media, and online communities centered around security share information every day about women being abducted on their way to and from theirs schools and their jobs, as well as news about bodies of women found dumped in garbage bags, mutilated and raped.

8.3.2 The deafening silence: minimization and normalization of violence against women

As stated by a local educator: "nowadays, it is very trendy to talk about harassment" [85] (interview Jaime, 15/08/2019). Diana, a woman living in Guadalupe, gives more information

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[85] Estos días está muy de moda hablar de acoso.

about this trend: "back in my days, those things didn't exist [harassment]. Well, not that they didn't happen. I mean, you knew that on the buses there were nasty men, or on the way home from school, there were always dirty old men saying things to girls. But no one talked about it[86]" (interview Diana, 12/03/2018).

Due to the increasing violence against women that came with the conflict against organized crime, activists began signaling the specific circumstances in which women disappeared or were murdered (see CHAPTER 6). Feminist activism in the country and the state popularized vocabulary that gave names to concepts that were not clearly defined in the past: *acoso, abuso sexual, violencia, violación, misoginia, feminicidio,* among many others. Nevertheless, there is shame on being labeled as a "feminist" or "feminazi" for complaining about gender-based violence by using such words. Women in MMA do not talk spontaneously about street harassment outside of specific spaces such as feminist groups or groups explicitly talking about women's issues. Even within these spaces, women are apologetic (field notes, August 2019):

> Not to be a feminazi or anything, but we are at a disadvantage on the street, and you don't know what a strange man could do. They say things to you and it is worse if you are alone.[87]

> With the way things are, it is our responsibility to be careful. It's not all men's fault. There are good men and bad men.[88]

On narrations with the goal of warning others, women refer to their female audience as *niñas, chicas, chavas*, and rarely as *mujeres*, perhaps due to the age of the poster or because "girl" is less threatening and more deserving of respect. When sharing experiences of harassment in public spaces, women tend to use unspecific vocabulary, referring to men who stared at them, yelled at them or followed them. When commented among women, the meaning of this is clear: harassment. However, men interpret this as women seeing threats where there are none: staring, yelling or following women is not violence. In these discussions, expressions such as *ni que estuvieras tan buena* are uttered to discredit the woman's claim, meaning that the woman in question is not attractive, so she must be lying about receiving unwanted attention from men. In other cases, women in MMA downright reject the idea that women are in any sort of danger any more than men in a context of chronic violence: violence is there for everybody and it is up to each person to be careful and not to blame others for their carelessness. This is often motivated by not wanting to appear weak or not to adhere to *regio* values of self-sufficiency, strength, and resilience.

Due to feminist activism in the locality, young women and teenagers have become more conscious of gender-based violence and they are more likely to ask for help or to share their experience on social media to alert others. Yet, seeing that violence is an everyday occurrence

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[86] En mis tiempos, no existía eso [del acoso]. Vaya, no es que no pasara. O sea, sabías que en el camión había señores cochinos, o que yendo o viniendo de la escuela, nunca faltaba el viejo cochino que les decía cosas a las niñas. Pero nadie hablaba de eso.
[87] O sea, no es por ser feminazi ni nada, pero es que sí una está en desventaja, y no sabes qué vaya a hacer el fulano. Los hombres te dicen cosas y más si vas sola.
[88] Para como están las cosas, tenemos que ser responsables de cuidarnos. No toda la culpa es de los hombres. Hay hombres buenos y hombres malos.

for women in public space and that it is mostly unaddressed by those around them, men and women trivialize and normalize sexual violence, and advice younger women to do the same. Some women affirm that they receive sexual comments from strange men on the street but they decide to ignore them or they take them as compliments. In turn, men celebrate expressions that condone these conducts, particularly if they come from conventionally attractive women. Men and women say that women who get offended are unattractive, crazy, hysterical, sexually frustrated or are exaggerating. If one woman says she enjoys that kind of attention, that means that all women enjoy it, even if others disagree: "no" means "yes".

However, when women attempt to discuss the specific types of violence they suffer in public spaces due to their gender, their complains are mocked and minimized. Attempts to criticize the structural aspects that perpetuate violence against women are usually met with expressions such as *a nosotros también nos matan* from men, meaning that they are also being murdered at alarming rates but unlike women, they carry on without complaining.

It is remarkable the extent to which violence against women is trivialized in a city infamous for feminicides and gender-based violence, which have shifted from the domestic to the public realm. Violence against women is taken as a joke, especially when it is being denounced by a woman. It is common for city dwellers to share their experiences of violence in Facebook Groups to alert others in the area in question, including gender-based violence in the public space. With hundreds of thousands of Followers, FB Groups aimed at security in Nuevo León and Monterrey are not niche communities, unlike feminist groups focused on the same territories. Complaints from women about "minor" violent incidents, such as being touched or photographed without consent are met with jokes, insults, victim-blaming, suggestions of what the victim should have done, and questions of the veracity of the complaint, predominantly by male users (see Figure 60). Female users react by sharing and occasionally by commenting their disapproval of such a situation. The reception of these complaints about gender-based violence contrasts with that of stories about thefts or other types of crimes: they give the same amount of information (or sometimes even less) after the incident happened, and they are posted to alert others, but the story about theft is not questioned, and the victim is rarely told that "they gain nothing by sharing this here".

Figure 60 Female User narrates an incident on the metro where a man was taking pictures of her sister.
Male users react by blaming the victim, accusing her of fabricating the story, and indicating what she should have done.
Source: Facebook – Alertas Relevantes Zona Norte Mty.

Online and offline, violence against women is a source of comedy and humiliation. Around Halloween 2020, a driver was spotted around town. His car was decorated with body parts hanging from the trunk dripping red paint emulating blood, and the phrase "por pinche tóxica" (roughly translated as "what you get for being a fucking toxic woman") written in red. To say this was tasteless in a state where women experience alarming levels of gruesome violence is an understatement. Feminist activists and sympathizers shared the image on social media and demanded action from authorities (see Figure 61 - left).
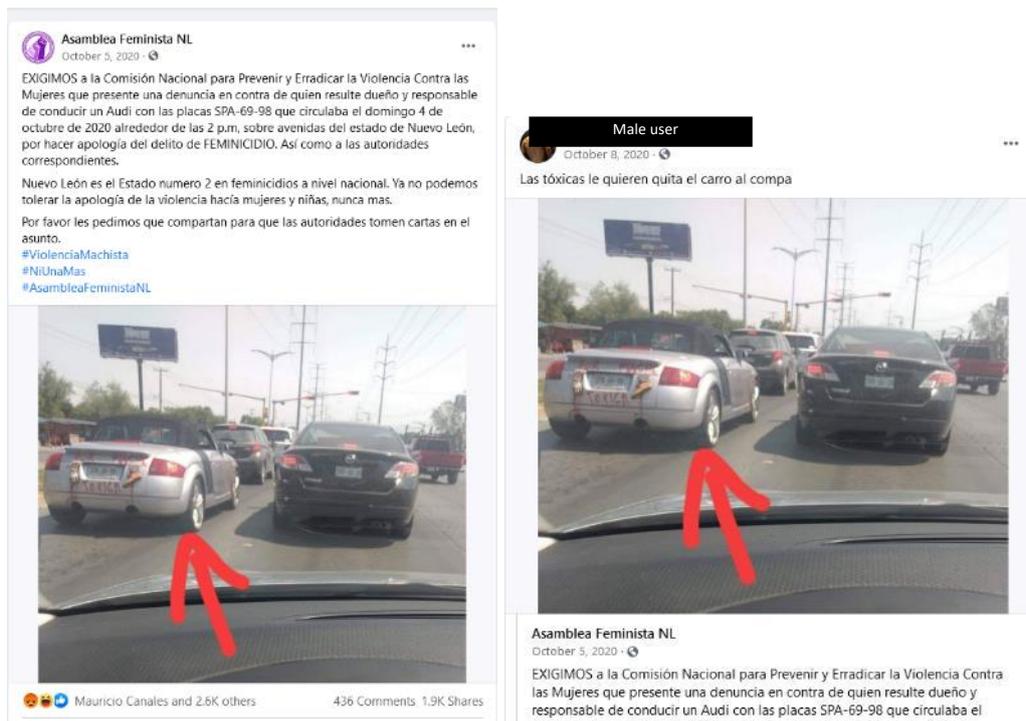
Figure 61 Reactions towards Halloween decorations trivializing feminicides. .
(left) Feminist collective advocating against gender-based violence in Nuevo León shares a photo of a car decorated for Halloween circulating in Monterrey making fun of feminicides. October 5, 2020.
Source: Facebook – Asamblea Feminista NL. Retrieved on 10/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/AsambleaFeministaDeNL/posts/193016852279851
(right) Male user shares the same image from the Asamblea Feminista, adding "the tóxicas want to take away this mate's car".
October 8, 2020.
Source: Facebook. Retrieved on 10/05/2021.

Observing the reactions on Figure 61 – right, where a feminist group denounces the incident and calls for the authorities to act, approximately 1400 clicked "angry", and over 600 users clicked "haha". 90% of the "angry" reactions are from female users, while 90% of the "haha" reactions are from male users. The post was shared by male and female users outside of feminist communities, some calling for empathy, while others made light of the situation. Calling someone "tóxico/ tóxica" came from relationship advice posts recommending people to cut off toxic people in their lives. "La tóxica" became a common way to refer to women who are controlling, dramatic, and capricious. Male users shared it on their personal FB Walls and tagged their girlfriends saying "this is going to be you, baby! Behave!" and female users tagged their partners saying "this is so me!" in a humorous tone, acknowledging their own "toxicity". Others decried the "snowflakes" who get offended by anything and cannot take a joke. A year prior, amidst the "un violador en tu camino" protests worldwide in 2019, Fuerza Civil police officers detained a group of men in Santa Catarina and force them to do the dance that women used to protest gender-based violence (see Figure 62). Most users reacted with tongue-in-cheek criticisms of the execution of the dance, and celebrated FC officers for "finally doing something right" and hoping they would detain feminists and force them to do the same.

Figure 62 Reporter shares the video of men being forced to do a feminist dance by Fuerza Civil officers, December 10, 2019. Source: Facebook Page – Ray Elizalde Noticias. Retrieved on 11/05/2021. December 10, 2019. https://www.facebook.com/rayelizalder/posts/3254366964589816

On FB security Pages there are abduction notices circulating daily, as well as news of feminicides, and other violent incidents against women (see Figure 63). Often these are shared with the goal of helping locate the missing person or the assailant. However, the community reacts in other ways too. In the case of sex crimes, abduction alerts, and violence against women, violent language is directed towards the victim. If the victim is a teenage girl or young woman, Followers make crude comments about the victim's sex life, their aspect, and their social class. Followers also comment on how young girls are "developing faster, are dirtier, and have desires of women" (field notes, September 2019). As the UN Women report revealed, both men and women consider that girls are responsible for their victimization for the way they dress. In the case of abductions and rape of adult women, the victim is insulted for their lack of foresight, their actions or lack thereof. If the victim is a child, the insults and judgements are directed towards the mother. These comments come from both male and female users. Victims are judged for choosing "bad fathers", for being young or unwed mothers, for the number of children they have, and for being poor. At times these characteristics appear in a single case and the criticism is vicious. Feminicides in MMA are the subject of much speculation of the victims' sexual history, the alleged psychosexual pathologies of the murderer (if and when they are caught), and a chain of responsibility of the victim and other women around her. This is consistent with findings of the MAPSP, where male participants shared that women in their neighborhood have been murdered because of their dubious morality, and expressed that "there is much insecurity for women, but they also provoke it[89]" (field notes, May 2018).

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[89] Hay mucha inseguridad para las mujeres, pero también lo provocan.

Figure 63 "She should have known better". Reactions to female victimization.
(left) Facebook User shares a set of images where a relative of a female victim of domestic violence shares her story and asks people to share the images to alert others about the victim's partner. The Facebook User that shares this to the FB group opines: "these kids today...they could be studying instead of having babies and being delinquents. Well, I hope there will be justice and the parents respond for their ineptitude in raising their kids", November 6, 2019.
Source: Facebook Page – Unidad Modelo / Valle de Sta. Lucía / Loma Linda / Villa alegre online. Retrieved on 10/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/534684893364758/permalink/1429247427241829
(center & right) Post reporting a missing 10-year-old girl who ran away from her home in Juárez, Nuevo León; Page Followers advocate for physical violence "as a lesson" for the child, April 28, 2021.
Source: Facebook – Noticias Relevantes Monterrey NL. Retrieved on 10/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=294807148874579&id=100050358885489

8.3.3 Solutions and recommendations for women

From a male perspective, violence against women is an individual problem that can be solved by avoiding places, not going out at night, being alert, wearing decent clothing, carrying self-defense weapons, and by not provoking the wrong kinds of men (see Figure 64). Recommendations for women on how to stay safe is a popular subject, as long as the structural causes are left out of the conversation. Based on interviews with city dwellers, direct observations, talks with law enforcement, and digital ethnography, women are made entirely responsible for their security. They are expected to know martial arts and which pressure point to hit in the body of an assailant; they are expected to carry whistles, pepper spray, Tasers, and be alert all the time, be able to identify potential assailants, and carry out almost military-grade reconnaissance everywhere they go to identify potentially dangerous spaces, traps, safe spots, moving vehicles, lookouts, cameras, etc. and how to position themselves in public space to minimize risks. Trainings and talks from specialists on security often paint a caricature of women as oblivious and vain, frequently with their noses stuck on their phones or on a mirror fixing their makeup or their many jewels, unaware of their environment or the dangers around them, when in reality it is quite the opposite.

Figure 64 Security recommendations for women.
(upper left) Female user shares chain status update about rapists' victim selection process. This chain text has been circulating since 2007 at least, December 8, 2019.
Source: Facebook – Alertas relevantes zona norte Mty. Retrieved on 8/12/2019.
(upper right, lower left & lower right) Images received through a WhatsApp chain message with instructions for homemade pepper spray, how to position oneself on the street, and how to incapacitate an assailant.
Source: WhatsApp. Retrieved on 09/02/2019.

Strategies that circulate focus on how to avoid being the victim of a rapist or a kidnapper and are mostly shared by women (see Figure 64). These recommendations circulate in the form of chain status updates or chain messages through Facebook and WhatsApp. The transmission of these messages tends to increase after tragic and highly mediatized incidents in the country of a woman being attacked in public spaces. Many of the recommendations are impractical and focus on highly specific instances, while others do not contribute with anything that women are not already familiar with.

Practices for women to stay safe are also rife with contradictions. For example, they are expected to have their phone at hand at all times in case something happens and always be in touch with family members, but they are also told not to have their phone visible because that

makes them an easy target. Recommendations simultaneously say that women should resist an abduction or sexual assault but that they should not resist a robbery (see Figure 65). This contradictory advice disregards considerations for the common conducts of victims facing these scenarios. Women tend to resist or attempt to escape from a robber more frequently than men. This is because a robbery can potentially devolve into sexual violence. On the other hand, it is also a common occurrence for victims of sexual violence to panic and freeze, among other things, for not wanting to make the assailant angry. After the fact, no matter what their course of action was, women are mocked and chastised. Anecdotes abound of women suffering injuries because they refused to let go of their belongings, usually their purses. And the woman in question is ridiculed for defending her cheap purse and their worthless content: "typical of women: they rather die than lose their bag[90]" (field notes, August 12, 2019).

Figure 65 Contradicting recommendations for women.
(left) Recommendations for women to fight back in case of an attempted abduction, November 14, 2019.
Source: Facebook Page – Alertas relevantes zona norte mty. Retrieved on 14/11/2019.
https://www.facebook.com/alertasrelevanteszonanorte/posts/151136662931479
(center & right) Group admin shares news of a woman who was shot when resisting a robbery. Group Members react saying the victim did not react appropriately, March 12, 2021.
Source: Facebook Group – Alertas Relevantes Zona Norte Mty. Retrieved on 11/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/293091774494396/permalink/1172860143184217/

Conversely, when they react to street harassment by calling a guard, insulting or hitting the assailant, they are told they are exaggerating and they misinterpreted a person's intentions. This question of exaggeration and misinterpretation is found often in the narrations of incidents of violence in public space: the woman in question does not act or reacts too late because they did not want to be judged as crazy and possibly accuse an innocent individual of wrongdoing. Furthermore, women often do not react because rarely anyone jumps in to help. Women are also mocked for complying or for not calling for help. And invariably the blame goes to the victim: "you know how bad things are, you have to be stupid not to take care of yourself[91]" (field notes, August, 2019). These kinds of judgements come from women, but mostly from men.

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[90] Típico de las viejas: antes muertas que sin bolsa.
[91] Si ya sabes cómo están las cosas, de tonta que una no se cuida.

Men in MMA are quick to emit well-intentioned recommendations to women after the fact, but they completely disregard women's particular experiences, such as asking the victim why they have not notified the police -which people rarely do for property crimes, much less for sexual violence. Seeing this, other women get exasperated and react negatively to this, which in turn makes the male individual frustrated because he was only offering good advice. On other occasions, men provide a list of actions the victim should have taken that range from impossible to painfully obvious: throwing acid on the genitals of the assailant (provided she had vials of acid on her person), stabbing the assailant (provided she had a blade), calling her boyfriend (provided she had one), buying a Taser, taking self-defense lessons, taking an uber, not going out, running away, screaming etc. Finally, men provide their own scenarios in which they were present to stop the attack.

Figure 66 Men reacting to calls to action to protect women.
(left) Post shared by a Facebook User inviting fellow men to walk women home at night.
(right) Similar post inviting fellow men to beat those who abuse women or girls on the street. Facebook User reacts saying that it is better not to interfere because "we don't know the motives".

As depicted in Figure 66, young men in particular fantasize of heroically stopping a violent assailant and protecting women around them, particularly after peaks of feminicides or viral cases of violence. In reality, women rarely receive help when they are being shoved by their partners on the street, or when a man is touching them without their consent. As expressed by the Facebook user that comments on one of these calls to action in Figure 66 (right), they prefer not to meddle because they do not know the motives behind such actions. At most, someone will stay behind to chastise the victim for lacking self-respect, not screaming or fighting back.

8.3.4 Three cases of violence against women in public spaces and solution attempts

Throughout this research there were several large-scale incidents that took place in the locality in which authorities reacted at incidents of sexual harassment and violence against women in public transportation and public spaces. These cases merit attention not only because of their visibility, but also because they prompted an exceptional reaction from authorities -although it was not the most adequate for each case. They also show the extent to which the online and offline spaces interact in terms of violence, particularly against women.

Making the metro secure for women and the failure of the *vagón rosa*

Following incidents of sexual harassment and demands from feminist activists, in March 2018 the municipality of Monterrey implemented the *vagón rosa* – a "pink car". It was intended first and foremost as a way to protect women from being sexually harassed by men in the crowds of the metro, but it is also for the use of handicapped passengers, the elderly, and children. The local news framed it as women demanding an exclusive car for them. And in turn, the same day the measure was declared, the population already biased against large-scale changes in favor of women's security emitted bad-faith criticisms of this measure, even if they were not metro users (see ANNEX 7). Men and women criticized the waste of public resources for pink paint, believing feminists were literally demanding a pink vehicle. People also believed that radical feminists were demanding an exclusive section due to the innate right of women for a comfortable seat, while men were forced to already overcrowded spaces. Since this measure has already been implemented in Mexico City to prevent sexual harassment, it was also received with the common *regio* aversion to anything remotely related to the Mexican capital.

Homophobic "concerns" were expressed over where lesbians and gays would go. Other so-called "questions" were about men with children (in a city where few men are responsible for childcare and ignoring that the pink car was also for people with children), and how men could state to be women and that their gender identity had to be respected (and mentioning that this had happen in Mexico City). Others condoned sexual harassment, saying that women use the metro to be touched by men and enjoy male attention -this was stated by both men and women. Other men stated that in the absence of women, they would have to molest other men. Metro users accused feminists of being intolerant and discriminatory. Once again displaying the importance on individual action, male and female users argue that "you can't change the world, it is up to teach person to take care of themselves" and that if women do not like using the metro, they should call an Uber driver. In sum, the measure is seen as an annoyance

The pink car was a failure, as there was no plan for implementation other than reserving a car for women and hoping for the best. It was only implemented in one of the two metro lines, and signaling was done only in some of the stations, and the personnel was insufficient throughout the day to maintain order. Local news mostly focused on the delays and the nuisances for workers as consequence of the pink car, without mentioning sexual harassment. They also gave credence to the bad-faith criticisms on social media, among others, that women also rape, also harass, and also have dirty thoughts, and that "they have tried to turn men into second class

citizens" (A. Garza, 2018). And while there is no denying that men can indeed be victims of harassment, it is hardly comparable to the degree, frequency, and nature of women's victimization in the state.

Voces Femeninas, a feminist association that had advocated for the measure, carried out on-site observations about the perception and the implementation of the measure on the peak hours of the afternoon. Contrary to what transportation authorities announced, Voces Femeninas remarked the absence of FC officers, and the presence of only half a dozen guards to reinforce the measure in one of the largest stations. They questioned men who were in the pink car, but female passengers defended the men:

> Another man around 30 years of age was asked why he was with the women not respecting the new rule in the metro, to which his wife answered rudely: "excuse me, why? He is my partner! (…)" a woman who witnessed the scene yelled: "that's bullshit! What are you going to do to me if I want to rape and harass? Are you going to kick me out too?"[92] (Redacción, 2018)

Voces Femeninas also consulted with female users. Four out of five women approved of the measure saying (Redacción, 2018) "it was about time"[93], "men will have no other choice but to respect us"[94], and "I do not fully agree, but yes, I have also felt men rubbing up against my body and, *hijoles* (and made a gesture of disgust)"[95]. Likewise, a female reporter for a local channel interviewed women in the pink car during the early hours, where guards were still present to reinforce the measure in the largest station. Surrounded only by women, the interviewees affirmed (2018):

> "It is fine by me because men are vulgar, they push you, they rub against you when there are many passengers."[96]

> "The bad thing is that if you are joined by your husband, he has to go over there [points at the other car], and you have to wait for him. My husband likes to come with me and we have to be separated."[97]

> "To me it is not the solution because deep down it should be education in the family, this is not going to eradicate disrespectful men. It is a measure we are thankful for, that they want to protect us, but it is not the solution."[98]

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[92] El otro hombre también de unos 30 años de edad, se le preguntó que por qué viajaba con las mujeres y no respetaba la nueva regla en el metro, a lo que su esposa contestó de modo grosero: "¡Achis, por qué, es mi pareja!" (…) una mujer que había presenciado la escena gritó: "Esas son pende… ¿Y qué vas a hacer si yo te quiero violar y acosar? ¿También me vas a correr del metro?"

[93] Ya era hora de que lo hicieran.

[94] A los homres no les va a quedar otra que respetarnos.

[95] Yo no estoy muy de acuerdo, pero sí, también he sentido a los hombres pegarse a mi cuerpo y este, híjoles…, dijo haciendo muecas de desagrado.

[96] Por mí está bien porque los hombres son muy vulgares, te empujan, se te pegan cuando hay muchos pasajeros.

[97] Lo malo es que si te acompaña tu esposo, se tiene que ir para allá [señalando al otro vagón], y lo tienes que esperar. A mi esposo le gusta acompañarme y tenemos que separarnos.

[98] Para mí no es la solución porque en el fondo debe ser la educación en la familia, esto no va a erradicar a los hombres irrespetuosos. Es una medida que agradecemos que nos quieran proteger, pero no es la solución.

Since then, the pink car has been intermittently implemented, usually around the International Women's Day, after petitions and protests from feminist groups. Awareness of the issue of women's victimization on the metro has increased, although the pink car is still poorly applied. During the first hours or days of implementation there are guards present, but they eventually disappear or are present only in a few stations, and men enter the car. At first, female passengers try to remind male passengers to respect the space, only to be met with insults. These aggressive reactions have dissuaded women from asking men to change cars. In some cases, men stand their ground with the purpose of irritating female passengers. Videos where a woman is seen forcefully removing male passengers circulate rapidly through social media, where netizens ridicule the woman and use it to show "the feminazi's intolerance and violence" (notes, February 2020). The focus continues to be the chaos for workers and the alleged inequalities to which men are subjected.

Organized sexual violence against women in the metro

In February 2020, another large-scale incident related to sexual harassment and the metro took place. A FB group went viral in MMA communities of security and feminist activism called "Sretuorf" ("Frouters" spelled backwards). This group had been created on September 2019 originally with the name "Sretuorf metro MTY" and at the time it was discovered it had over 2,000 members. Members of the Group shared anecdotes about groping, stalking, masturbating on, and raping women in the metro of Monterrey, along with pictures. Members asked for advice and gave tips to target victims: modus operandi, times, stations, profiling of women. Indigenous women, female Mexican immigrants, and female students of all ages were featured prominently in their anecdotes of abuse -in some cases, sharing schedules of when and where it is easier to attack them. Men also set dates to coordinate attacks on the metro. After telling of sexually assaulting an indigenous woman, one of the Members stated:

> (…) and remember, let's keep this movement alive, no matter the pink cars, the police, the guards, let's look for ways to keep it up. Word of advice: if you see a colleague on a mission and you see he has his eyes on a prey, do not interfere. Wait for another one [woman], there are many. Don't screw with another man's work because he's already prepared mentally. I'm saying this because during my whole story there were at least four other fuckers who wanted to snatch her from me and I had to push them hard to be able to maneuver, I took pictures of that bastard india [derogatory for indigenous woman], if you want I can share them, cheers! #elcazachiriguitas [hunter of "chiriguitas", a derogatory term for indigenous women] (see ANNEX 8 for original post).

The poster explicitly acknowledges the women-only car and the more normal presence of undercover guards to prevent crimes. On another post, a Member of the group mentioned that if they were detained by guards or police, they could get in touch with him since he allegedly had a friend in FC. The group started garnering unwanted attention in late January. The news gained traction not only from feminist groups but also from security FB Communities -the same communities that usually make fun of violence against woman, share content that ridicules violence against women, and are quick to call fake any story of sexual assault shared

by a woman. The same audience that said that women are always inventing things to be mad about condemned such actions. Men instantly distance themselves from the harassers, saying "those are not men, those are trash". However, the calls to action here focused on only a few individuals like the most active user LM. The profile of YG, the creator of the Group, was especially controversial because it appeared to be a female user. It later came to light that the users behind the profiles stole the images from users who were unaware their names and pictures had been stolen.

Young women organized a protest in a metro station and demanded authorities to carry out investigations and to ensure the security of female passengers and the adequate enforcement of the pink car (see Figure 67). The director of Metrorey, the metro operating company, told the protestors to denounce incidents to 911 or to the police when they happened. It got to the point where the FGJ -again, surprisingly- took action. A week later, the Fiscalía arrested a 45-year-old man (Redacción, 2020a). The group was deleted, although the admin mentioned that they were doing a backup. And for everyone except female users of the metro, there was nothing more to be said.

Figure 67 Women protesting at Cuauhtémoc Station in the Metro of Monterrey after the discovery of the Facebook group of sexual abusers, February 23, 2020.
Source: Excelsior. Retrieved on 14/05/2021. https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/protestan-mujeres-en-metro-de-monterrey-por-casos-de-acoso/1365818

Sudden wave of abductions of women: a real fear for women in Monterrey and a moral panic for the police

Between 2018 and 2019 cases and rumors circulated about incidents where a stranger forcefully hugged or grabbed women in malls, metro stations, and other crowded spaces. As the woman tried to break free, the stranger loudly said something like "calm down, honey, you're making a scene". Onlookers believed this was a couple fighting and that the woman was being dramatic, and did not intervene, even as the victim screamed for help. The stranger was joined by an accomplice to corner the victim. According to victims, if someone intervened, they usually asked the man if everything was fine, not the woman (Muriel, 2018). The woman would try to ask for help, but was deemed just another "toxic" girlfriend being crazy. Women were fearful of these situations and many created personal networks to help each other. Men on the

other hand downplayed the issue, wondering what if women act out these situations with the men to rob the good Samaritan that was there to help, and that it was better not to intervene because it is a problem between the couple. News about these incidents began in Mexico City, and some women in Monterrey also shared similar experiences. Recommendations circulated for women to escape these "calm down, honey" situations, such as yelling "fire", using an app, calling the police or grabbing onto someone.

The morning of October 15th, 2020 posts emerged on Facebook from female users from all over MMA narrating attempted abductions and other aggressions: women from Escobedo, Guadalupe, Santa Catarina, the northwest sector of Monterrey, Juárez, and Apodaca took to social media to share their experiences of strangers trying to grab them from the streets, of being cornered by strange men, or being followed by cars whose passengers grabbed them. These anecdotes were screenshot and shared via WA, and they also reached FB Communities of security, where male users expressed skepticism, once again asking why the victim did not report it to the police if it indeed happened. Occasionally victims answered that they did not do it because they did not have any evidence other than scratches. The victims are asked to do what 9 out of 10 victims of any other crimes in MMA avoid: call the police. The victims shared photos of injuries, details of the incident, and locations -approximately the same amount of information that sexual abusers from the aforementioned FB Group gave. However, unlike that case, the FGJ and the SSPNL declared that these stories were false. The SSPNL stated on FB that since there were no official reports, there were no cases to pursue. The FGJ also addressed the issue on a FB post, discrediting the stories and essentially calling it a moral panic:

> With regards to the viral WhatsApp and social media "chain" about *levantones* or abductions of women, we inform that those messages are unreliable because none of these incidents have been reported to the State. Let's be careful with the information we receive and let's not contribute to whomever wants to upset susceptible persons.

> We are aware of the violence women suffer, for that reason we have created a specialized Fiscalía that focuses on those cases. However, fake posts that seek to cause fear are also aggressions against women, because they complicate their daily lives. Again, we ask you not to pay attention to these posts that have no backup from the public or private sector, because otherwise we only cooperate to creating a hostile environment. Thank you for all your comments (see ANNEX 9).

In sum, the FGJ's official position was that women believe any hoax that circulates on social media about abductions of women in Nuevo León -the 3rd place at a national level for human trafficking in 2017- and in Monterrey -one of the main destinations for sexual exploitation (Guardiana, 2021). The real threat here was the dissemination of posts. Female FB users expressed indignation about the FGJ's lack of sensibility and explained that people -and especially women- do not trust them and do not report. Most male FB users mocked the FGJ, threw the regular accusations of corruption and complicity, and partially placed the blame of on women for not reporting.

Feminists: the folk devil is an angry woman in the public space

Feminist activism has increased in the past decades, but, while it has garnered attention, it is far from being accepted or supported by city dwellers of MMA. It was noticeable that while there is a regular flow of social media posts about shootings, car accidents, arrests, robberies, abductions, Amber alerts, and politicians' mishaps, there are peaks of activity throughout the year focusing on women's "hysterics" and the risk they represent for society. One of these peaks is the International Women's Day on March 8. Feminist activists lead protest against of victimization and impunity of gender-based violence in the country, occupying emblematic public spaces to voice their demands, and are portrayed and treated as a threat to national security.

FB Pages dedicated to Monterrey spend the day constantly posting about the "violence committed by radical *feminazis*". Posts that put feminists in a negative light -no matter the source, veracity or location- circulate all week as "relevant and impactful news" for the locality, along with along with memes trivializing women's claims (see Figure 68). These are the very same pages that share Amber alerts, reports of missing women, and all sorts of recommendations for women and promote women-only self-defense lessons. At the same time, they share images of actresses, models or historical figures to celebrate "real female bravery" and anecdotes of "proper women" condemning feminism.

In a city occupying the 3rd place in feminicides nationwide, city dwellers ridicule, trivialize, and condemn this unseemly behavior through expressions such as "sell me 10 feminists to sell them to Palestinian terrorists that will teach them their place, so they will stop screwing people over" (Facebook post, October 18, 2020). Men and women celebrate arrests and violence against protestors. Men comment how tolerant they have been but that protests are getting out of hand and that they need to coordinate to put women in their place through violence and rape. Women distance themselves from the protestors, using the now common expression of a *mí no me representan* ("they don't represent me"), and are propped up as reasonable women against those who support protests. These discourses are also reproduced by news outlets and impacts the real world. This rage and calls to action against feminist activism and the prompt response of police to arrest protestors contrast with the usual inaction, resignation and individualism favored in the face of violence. In the midst of manifestations against the growing gender-based violence and impunity, the main concern offline and online is the public spaces and private property that is damaged by protestors, and protestors are portrayed as criminals. Beyond this peak of activity, any other day feminists are brought forward as the butt of the joke or a scapegoat for economic instability and immigration. This goes as far as the presidency accusing feminists of being a group manipulated to destabilize the government.

Figure 68 Composite image of a sample of posts from a security FB Page of Nuevo León.
The posts include the news of an Egyptian leader allegedly supporting violence against women (accompanied by the Page's comment: "let us hope that the feminazis don't get mad about this note and they protest") and concerns over the supposed destruction of businesses, urging users to share the information. The most common reaction registered to these posts is of anger. June 2019-March 2020.
Source: Facebook – Alertas Nuevo León & Alerta Roja MTY. Retrieved on 11/05/2021.

Conclusions

Building upon the theory analyzed in CHAPTER 3, this chapter explores the relationship between feelings of insecurity, everyday practices, and public space. As observed in CHAPTER 7, material transformations -towards fortification or aperture- are not enough to mitigate violence: they focus on specific territories and are not affordable for the economically

vulnerable city dwellers. They are also often the ones whose livelihood and everyday life depends on contact in public spaces. There are several topics that appear throughout the chapter, namely, socio-spatial inequality, class, and gender, which mediate feelings of insecurity and daily practices.

I began this chapter exploring the relationship with law enforcement who is ideally in charge of security of city dwellers. However, this is not the case due to a plethora of reasons: awareness of police corruption and their involvement with criminals, confusing processes, risks of victimization at the hands of law enforcement, lack of communication and sensitivity to treat crimes, high turnover rates, insufficient effectives, inconsistency, high rates of unpunished and unsolved crimes, and unequal treatment depending on the inhabitants' *colonia* of residents, class, and aspect. While at a large scale there is a positive perception of police corps (even better than other states) this contrasts with the observations at city and neighborhood levels. While some *colonias* (middle and upper class) benefit from a relatively good relationship with officers, other less privileged *colonias* are left unattended or are constantly criminalized. These situations, along with the notion that decisions from the public sector have no effect on the average city dwellers' lives, contribute to the prioritization of individual solutions to stay safe.

Studies have often focused on fear and avoidance as the main reactions in terms of feelings of insecurity and practices in the face of violence. On the one hand, avoidance and a state of constant alert -common during the early 2010s- were unsustainable in the long term, particularly for those whose livelihoods depended on the contact with others in public spaces. On the other hand, a negative relationship with authorities contributes to the normalization of violence as a coping mechanism facing high victimization and helplessness: urban violence is not a matter of "if" but "when". City dwellers are *con el pendiente* (meaning that they are worried or concerned), but they are also resigned, and constantly mention the need of adapting: if you already know something can happen, be prepared. The normalization and trivialization of violence skew the notion of what incidents could become unacceptable. Furthermore, in the local discourse, it contributes to the lack of discussion of structural violence: there will always be poor people and rich people, there will always be violence against women, there will always be victims and criminals: why complain now? That is the natural order of things and there is no way to change it. Urban violence is like rain: you cannot control rain, and if you know it is going to rain and you do not carry an umbrella with you, then that is your problem. The lack of social control and support contributes to the normalization particularly for vulnerable groups, and in general, it contributes to the over-reliance on individual measures.

In Monterrey social class determines the degree of contact one has with public space, and thus, it also determines the exposure to urban violence, the capacity to avoid public space, and the practices to prevent victimization. The tendency to read the public space as dangerous persists across social classes; however, I posit that levels of feelings of insecurity and everyday practices vary depending on social class and gender. Based on fieldwork results, I sustain that chronic violence, mistrust in authorities, individualism, and socio-spatial inequality lead to different expressions of feelings of insecurity that go beyond fear. Upper classes -as shown by Villarreal Montemayor (2016)- have a wide array of possibilities: acquisition of products or services, drastic transformations of lifestyles or environments (see CHAPTER 7), and most

importantly, the avoidance of public spaces altogether. The middle classes look for alternatives for leisure, shopping, education, transportation, and entertainment that can put a distance or a barrier between them and the public space, or avoiding certain public spaces at certain times. The lower classes' possibilities are more limited and the threats are more diverse as they are more in contact with public space. Lacking the means and the possibilities to transform or avoid public spaces, they rely on immaterial solutions, such as knowing your way around public spaces and being alert and prepared. However, across social classes, another consistent element is the over-reliance on individual solutions: victimization depends on how well/ill prepared the potential victim is. While city dwellers argue that staying safe is a matter of common sense, fieldwork revealed the many contradictions of the empirical definitions of victims and perpetrators. However, the notion of perpetrator is also linked to territory, as individuals residing in certain *colonias* are frequently identified as potential criminals and treated as such by authorities. Bad personal choices are what turns people into criminals or victims: choosing to disobey the law and wanting an easy way out of poverty for the former, and lack of preparedness or awareness for the latter.

Throughout this chapter one of the sources of information was social media. Veracity of the information divulged is certainly up for debate. However, social media has taken an important role in city dwellers lives, and as we have observed, the virtual and the real public spaces interact: information shared through social media affects the way city dwellers navigate and interpret public spaces and violence, while simultaneously reproducing the dominating discourses. And while the individualistic approach prevails, social media has given way to forms of collective action of sorts, either to divulge information or to promote organization of groups -which will be the subject of discussion in the two subsequent chapters.

I observe that discourses of violence and security are based on perceptions of the upper-middle and upper classes and on a masculine perspective, and often leave out the perceptions and experiences of socially and economically vulnerable groups. The dominating discourse establishes that violence does not discriminate: it can happen to anyone. This statement disregards the differences of risk and victimization for different groups. As stated in CHAPTER 6, violence against women is at an all-times high. Intersecting with class, women of the lower classes are more in contact with public space, have less resources to distance themselves, and are more victimized. Violence facing women in public space is not a product of women's overly-active imagination, urban legends or paranoia. But as security is conceptualized from a male perspective, discussing and addressing gender-based violence is controversial, particularly when trying to tackle structural issues (which makes the feminists' demands for social justice all the more irritating in a context of pervasive misogyny and individualism). As evidenced by the amount of recommendations given to women on how to stay safe, men and women recognize that women are disproportionately victimized in public spaces and they are in constant alert, facing violence that ranges from street harassment to abductions and rape. This is presented as a fact of life. But when the problem of violence against women is presented not as an individual's lack of precaution but as a systemic problem, then women are exaggerating -allegedly they are no more victimized than men-, and any proposition for collective action (as opposed to the highly regarded individual precaution) is infuriating. Men and women step up to defend a misogynistic social structure: men that attack

women are not men, but monsters, #notallmen, or as the commonly used thought-terminating cliché states: "this is not about men vs. women, it is about bad persons vs. good persons". Outside of academia, activist circles or institutions that deal with gender-based violence, women frequently minimize their experiences, as there are few spaces where they will be taken seriously or where they will not be blamed for them. Even then, everyday violence in public space is still considered a minor event, not something important enough to discuss -particularly when compared to feminicides or abductions. Both men and women emphasize the importance of individual precautions, such as not provoking men with their appearance and of being prepared for aggression at all times. Gender-based violence is simultaneously acknowledged and minimized; it is experienced everyday by women but it is kept silent.

Chapter 9 - The polygon

Up to this point, there have been mentions about the Sector Norte and several of its *colonias* throughout this document: In CHAPTER 5 it was featured in the process of expansion of the city in the 60s; studies referenced in CHAPTER 6 and fieldwork results discussed in CHAPTER 8 place this sector as one of the most violent and impoverished in Monterrey. As mentioned in CHAPTER 4, results from fieldwork directed the research towards this sector and lastly to a specific group of neighborhoods there.

In the present chapter I delve on the specificities of the Sector Norte, and more specifically, on those of the polygon of interest: the Loma Linda Polygon (LLP). I present the social and spatial characterization of the Sector Norte in the history of the city and in present times, and relate these characterizations with manifestations of violence. I present an overview of the history of the LLP to understand its configuration and its position within the city; for this purpose, hemerographic sources were particularly useful. I then focus on a characterization of the LLP in terms of demography, economy, its position and relationship with the surrounding *colonias* of this sector, and the issues of crime and violence facing the residents. Lastly, I analyze the state of public spaces in the LLP, how they are used and perceived by residents, and its relationship with violence. Interviews with residents of LLP and neighboring *colonias*, on-site observations, and digital ethnography were important sources of information for this chapter.

9.1 The Sector Norte and the Loma Linda Polygon

The Loma Linda Polygon (LLP) is a cluster of four *colonias* -Unidad Modelo, Loma Linda, Villa Alegre, and Lomas Modelo- located in the Sector Norte (North Sector) of Monterrey. This grouping was determined for this study due to the urban history of the sector, the socio-economic profile of its inhabitants vis-à-vis the surrounding *colonias* -both of which will be discussed in the following sections of the present chapter-, and the links between the inhabitants of each *colonia* which give way to security practices (explored in CHAPTER 10).

The LLP is located at the foot of the Paso del Águila hillock (also known as Cerro de las Ánimas) -the natural barrier in the southwest side with Valle Verde, Paso del Águila, and

Genaro Vázquez. It borders at the northwest with *Colonias* San Bernabé and San Bernabé II Sector, at the southeast with Colonia Burócratas Moctezuma, and at the northeast with the main axis of transportation in the sector, Avenida Aztlan. This street is the barrier between the LLP and the lower class *colonias* at the foot of the Cerro del Topo Chico (see Figure 69 and Figure 70): Valle de Santa Lucía, San Ángel, Las Pedreras, Tierra y Libertad, Francisco Villa, and San Martín. The LLP is served by 7 bus lines and by a metro line, with two stations connecting directly to it: San Bernabé Station on the side of Loma Linda and Unidad Modelo on the homonymous *colonia* (see Map 13).

The Sector Norte -in which the LLP is located- is officially labeled as Delegación Norte in the most recent PDUMty, but it is most commonly referred to by city dwellers as Sector Norte, Zona Norte or Norponiente. It is an extensive valley between the Cerro del Topo Chico in the north and Avenida Abraham Lincoln in the south. It borders to the north with the municipality of Escobedo and to the south with Zona Poniente or Zona Cumbres (named Delegación Poniente in the PDUMty). The hills also set the orientation of urban growth, as it is directed to the northwest, towards García and Escobedo. Set on the natural rainwater flow paths of two hills, the zone is prone to floods and landslides on both the Topo Chico and Paso del Águila (see Map 14).

Figure 69 View of LLP from the Unidad Modelo metro station, the Paso del Águila and the Cerro de las Mitras in the background.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 70 View of the LLP and Cerro del Topo Chico from Paso del Águila.
Photo: Covarrubias Muñiz, 2020.

Map key

- **M** Metro stations
- Metro line
- Main roads
- LLP
- Delegación Norte
- Limits of districts
- Monterrey
- Limits of municipalities
- ·········· Contour Lines

Data source: QGis, OpenStreetMap
Authors: Campos & Peza, 2021
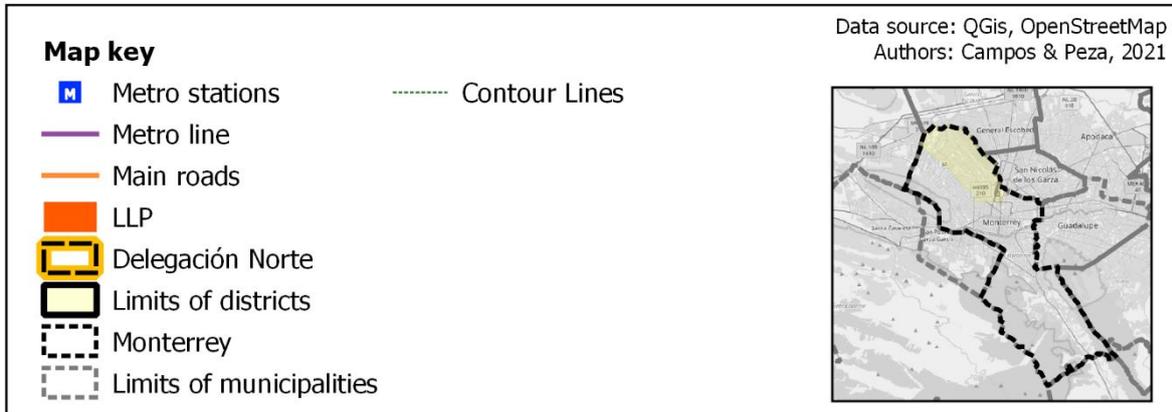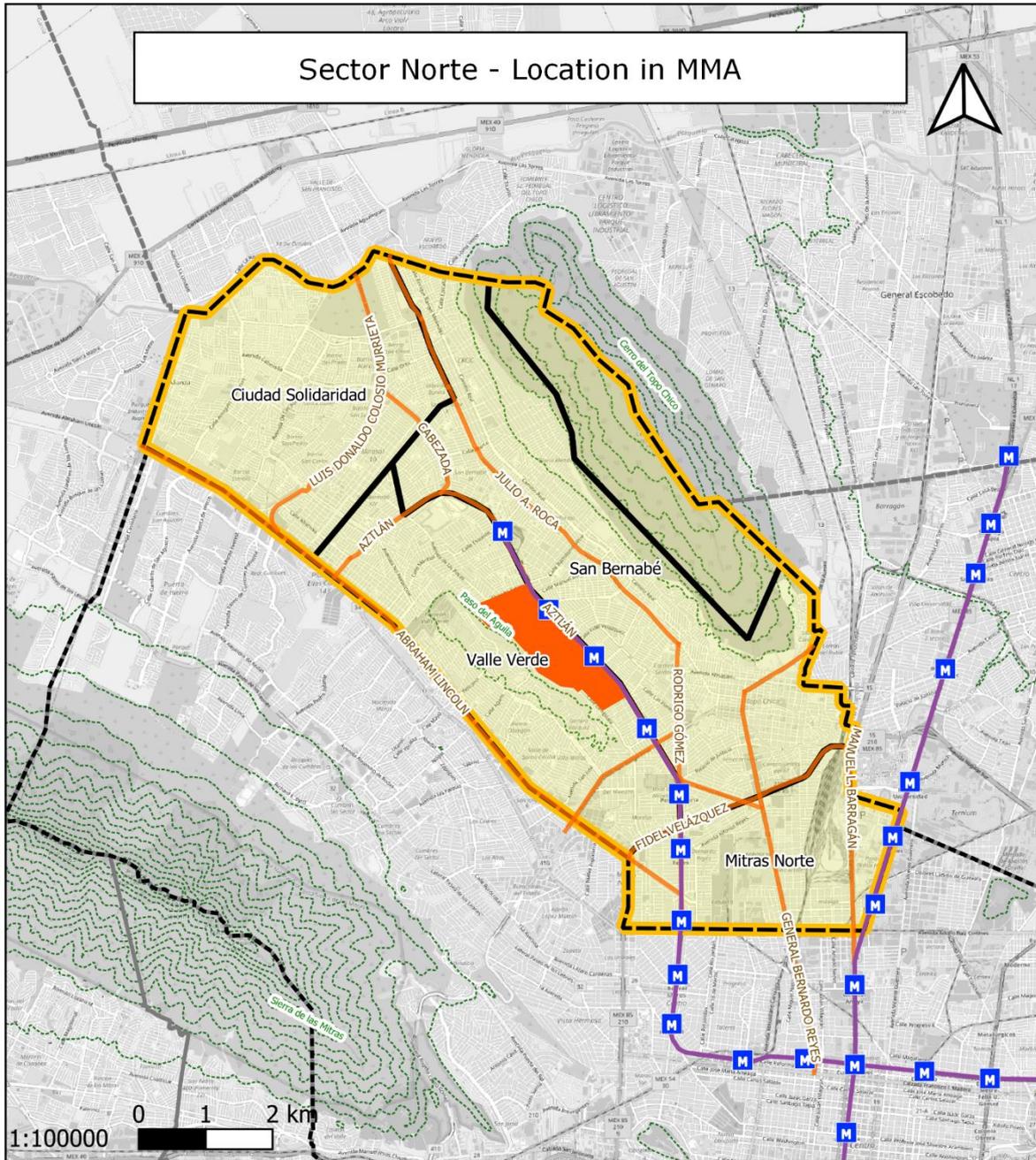
Map 13 Sector Norte – Location in MMA.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from OpenStreetMap and the PDUMty (IMPLANC, 2014).
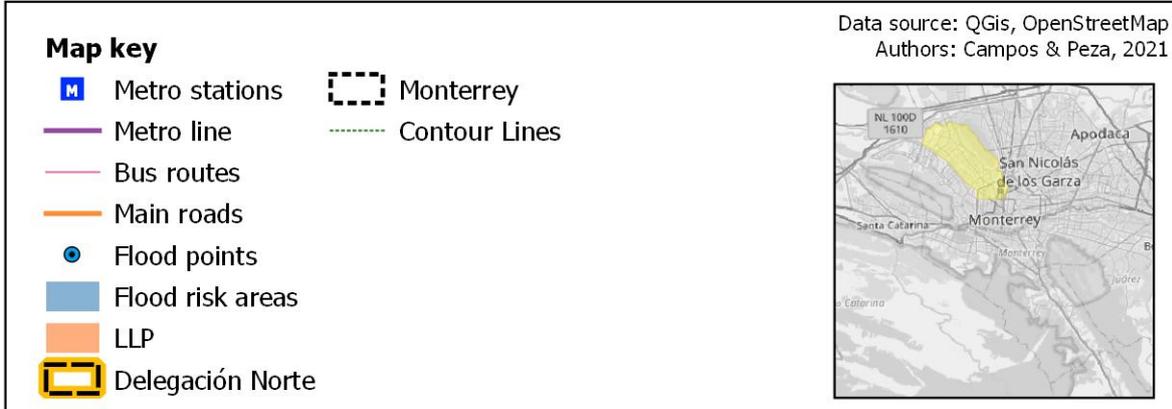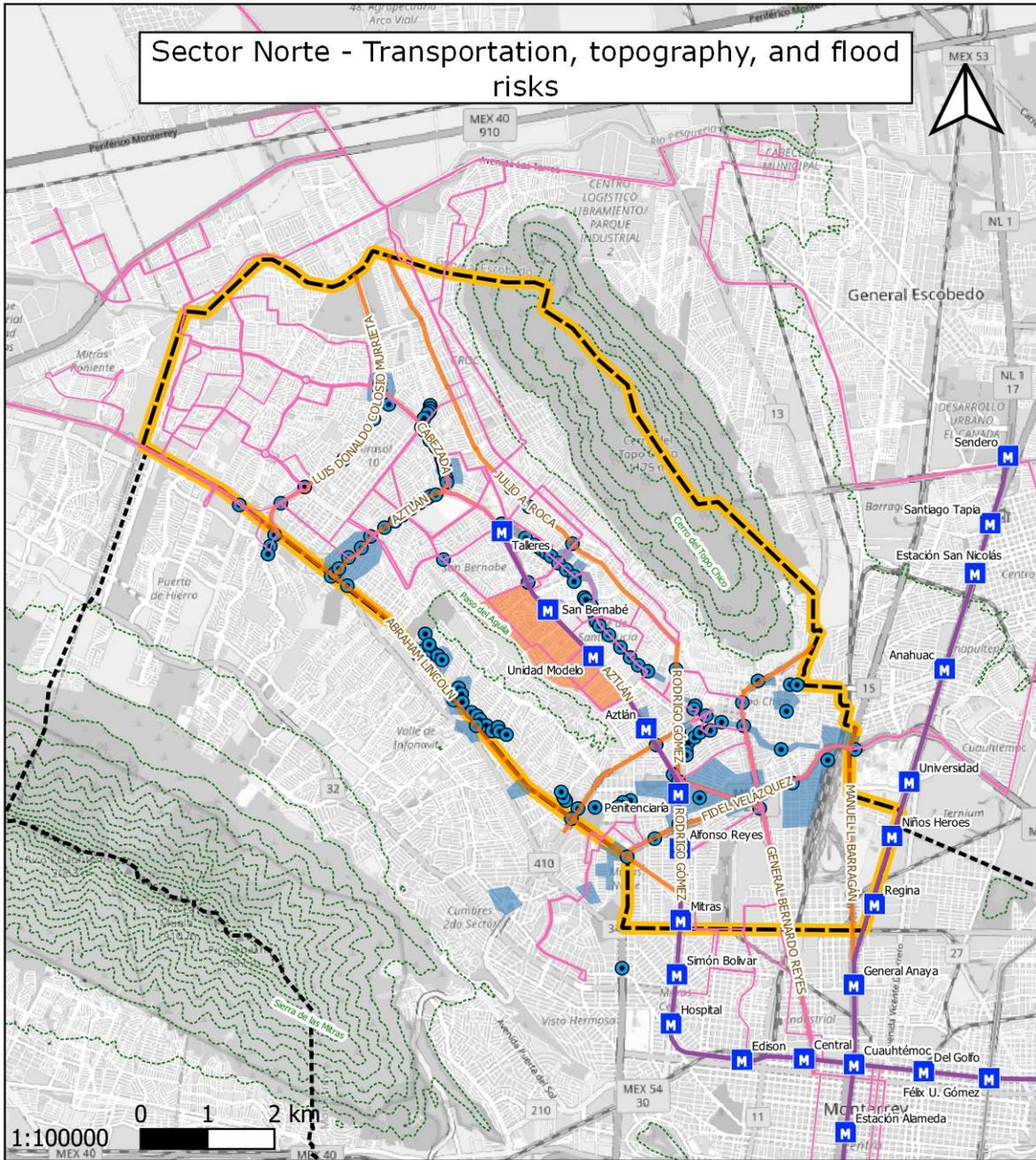
Map 14 Sector Norte – Transportation, topography, and flood risk areas.

Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from OpenStreetMap.

Map 15 Urban Marginalization Index in Monterrey.

Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, based on information from CONAPO (2010).

In the PDUMty, the Sector Norte is divided into 4 districts in function of the main axes of transportation: Ciudad Solidaridad, San Bernabé, Valle Verde, and Mitras Norte (see Map 13). Each District has distinctive features, with Mitras Norte being the closest to the original city center and the oldest. This language of divisions of districts however is not how the residents of MMA refers to the zone. In everyday conversation, residents refer to spaces in the Sector Norte in function of paths (Avenida Aztlán), natural and artificial landmarks (el Penal, el Cerro del Topo), nodes (Talleres metro station), and by the names of *colonias* regardless of their district. The Sector Norte became part of the MMA by the 1950s as a product of formal and informal housing during the heyday of the *regio* industries.

As depicted in CHAPTER 6, the Sector Norte is an area with a high concentration of poverty polygons. Compared to the rest of Monterrey, the Sector Norte contains a large number of *colonias* with high or very high rates of marginalization (see Map 15). However, looking closer, it is possible to observe that the LLP has a different profile than its neighboring *colonias*. The Urban Marginalization Index by the CONAPO (2010) reveals that the LLP stands out from its neighbors, as being the only spaces with a very low index of marginalization (see Map 16). According to the socio-economic indicators used for the study, this means that in average the LLP is better placed in terms of basic education, healthcare, and housing conditions -concrete flooring, low levels of overcrowding, home appliances, and hydro-sanitary facilities. Similarly, the study by Martínez Jasso et al (2009) considered socio-demographic factors, such as the composition of families, education, and origins, along with spatial characteristics -such as quality of built environment- to define polygons of poverty, which have been discussed in CHAPTER 6 with relation to violence. In this study, the northwest edge of the LLP is considered as part of the polygon of poverty, however the number of individuals classified as poor and the levels of social development lag within the LLP are the lowest in the entire polygon of poverty.
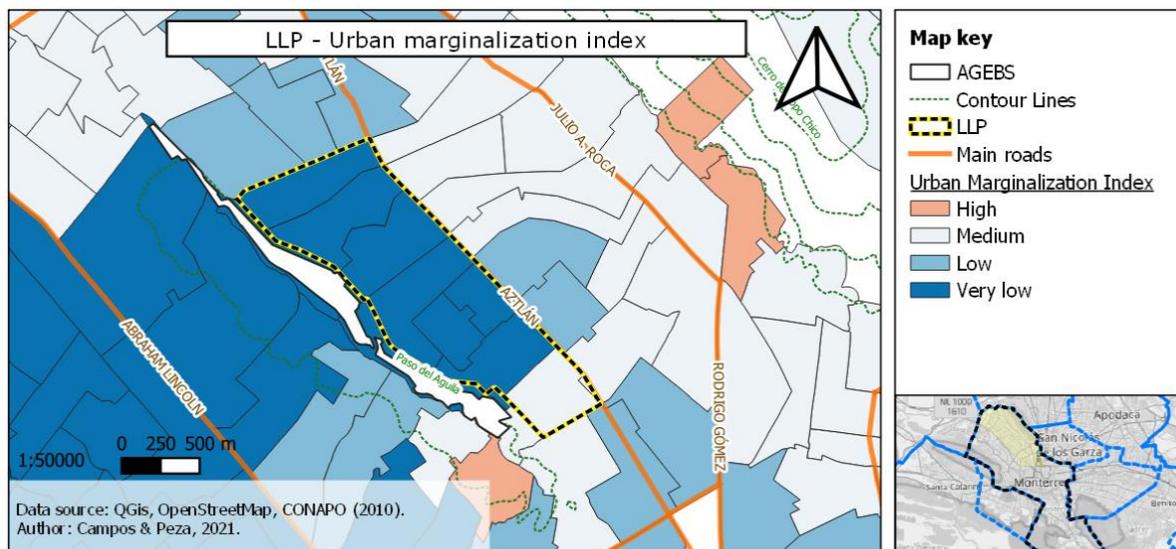
Map 16 LLP – Urban marginalization index.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with data from CONAPO (2010).

The LLP had a head start, considering its background as a model project for housing for workers while around it *colonias populares* emerged without proper planning. It had the benefit of planned services and infrastructure (albeit delayed and hardly sufficient coverage), while paving and drainage are an issue to this day for the *colonias* at the foot of the Topo Chico. And while the conditions of the built environment and public spaces in LLP are not ideal -as explored in the next section- they are better than those in the surrounding *colonias*. Besides the more favorable conditions of the built environment, the LLP has fewer inhabitants than the neighboring *colonias* and less conditions of overcrowding (see Map 17).
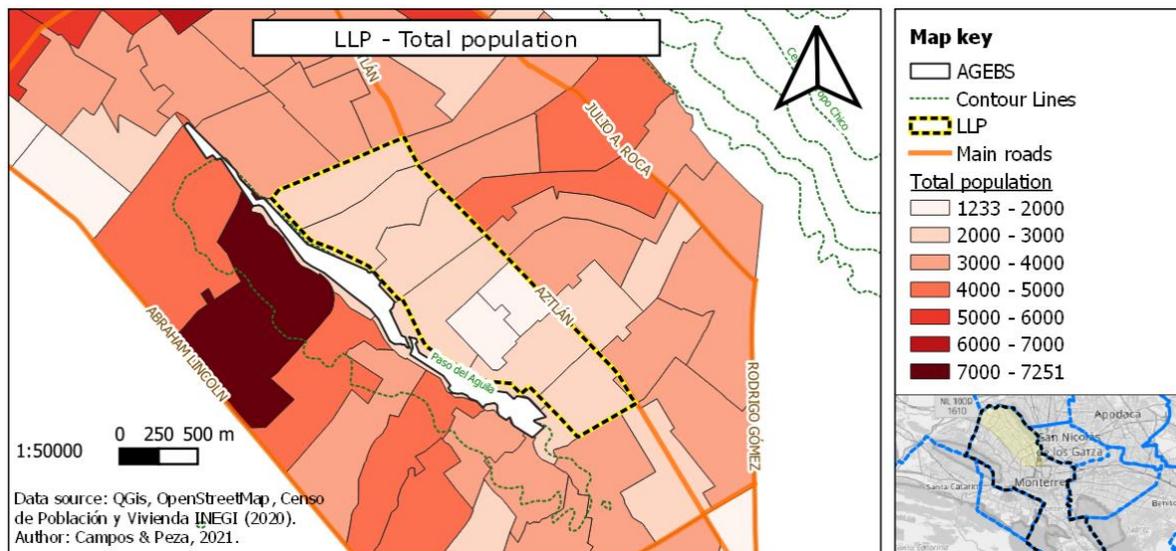
Map 17 LLP – Total population.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020 (2021).

Access to education is still a strong indicator of inequality (Álvarez Rojas, 2013). Staying in school is defined by the availability of adequate education infrastructure, resources and background of the family, and location of schools, among other factors. In a city with deficient public transportation such as Monterrey, the travels to and from school represent a high cost for families and a reason for children to not pursue higher levels of education if they are not near their homes. Often primary and secondary schools exist embedded in the *colonias*, but not high schools. Furthermore, the risks of coming and going to school in public transportation amidst violence also play a role. In the end, the poor are more likely to drop out early. That said, residents of LLP in average have higher levels of education -up to high school-, compared with their neighbors, where secondary school is the highest in average (see Map 18). Moreover, the number of residents aged 15 and over without schooling is among the lowest in the sector (see Map 19).
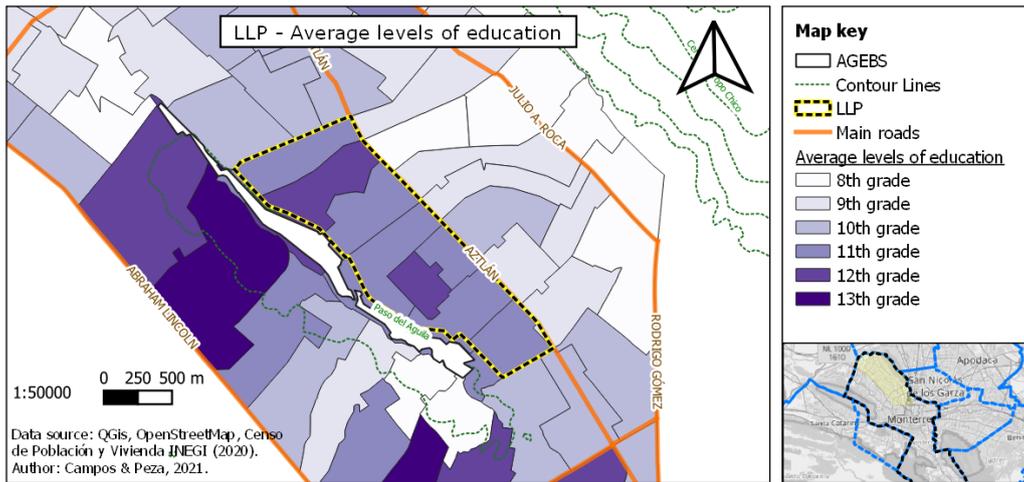
Map 18 LLP – *Average levels of education.*
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from CPV 2020 (2021).
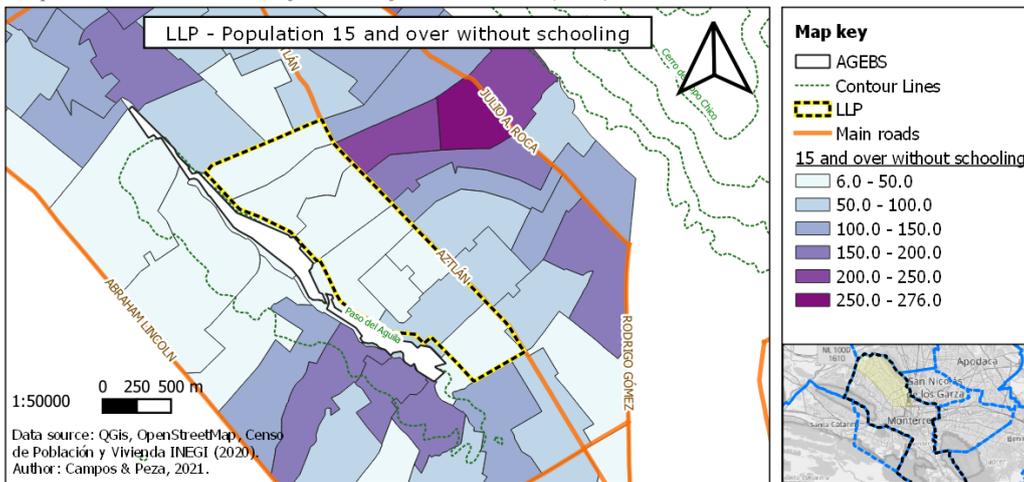
Map 19 LLP – *Population aged 15 and over without schooling.*
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from CPV 2020 (2021).
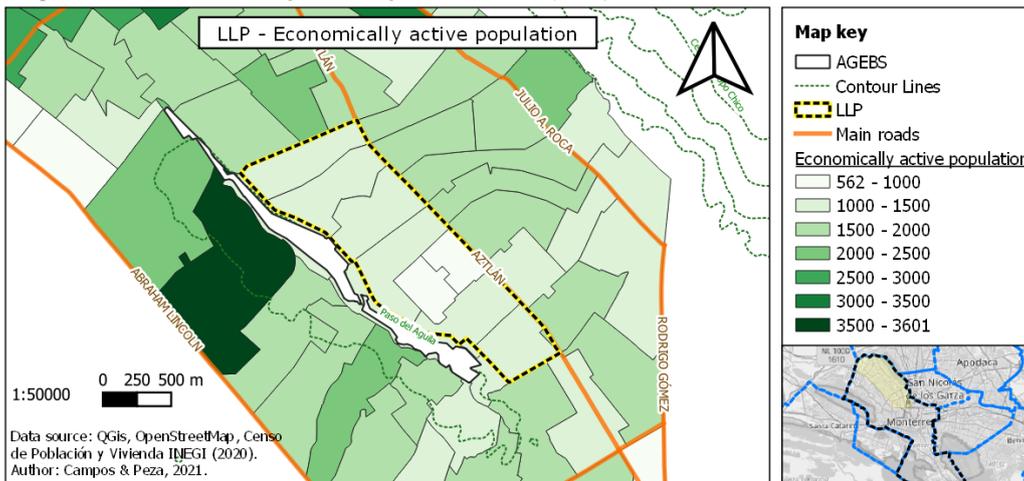
Map 20 LLP – Economically active population.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from CPV 2020 (2021).

The LLP however is placed low in number of residents that are part of the workforce in comparison to the surrounding *colonias* (see Map 20). This is due to the fact that 27% of inhabitants of LLP are aged 60 and over, and 18% are minors (see Graph 7). Most of the elderly residents are part of the families that first settled in the LLP in the 1960s and 1970s. The LLP is also surrounded by *colonias* that the population of MMA -included that of the Sector Norte-consider dangerous due to the perception of high levels of violence and negative experiences here, as observed in CHAPTER 8. Research however gives a more nuanced portrayal of these *colonias*, as it delves into the accumulation of disadvantages -such as poverty and stigmatization- that limit choices of education, employment, and sense of belonging (Assusa, 2019). These are factors that also contribute to the high number of gangs around the LLP (see Map 21).
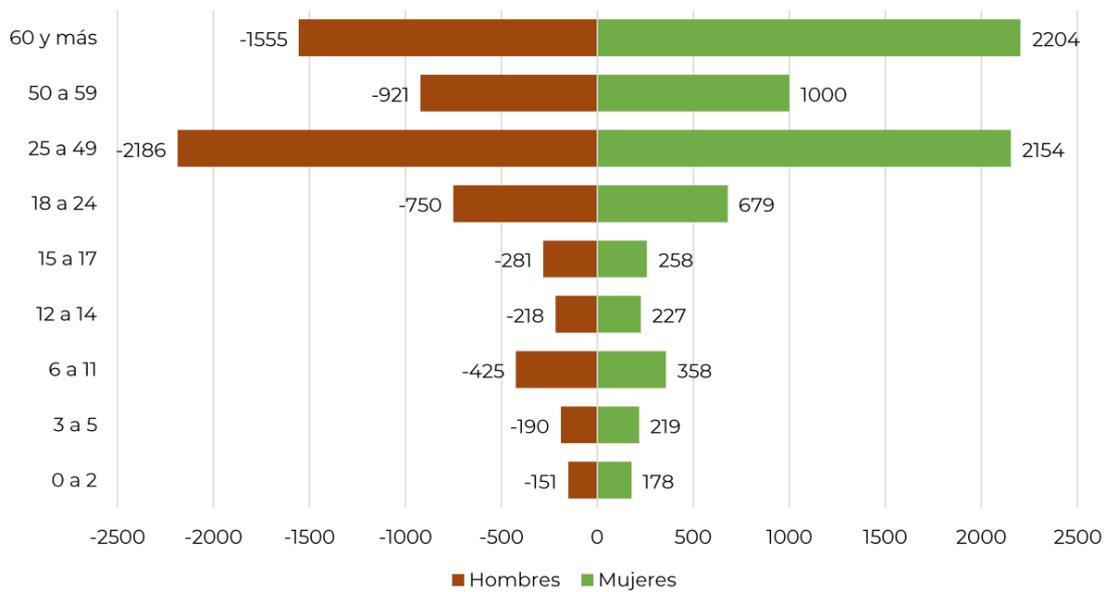
Graph 7 Male and female population of LLP.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from CPV 2020 (2021).
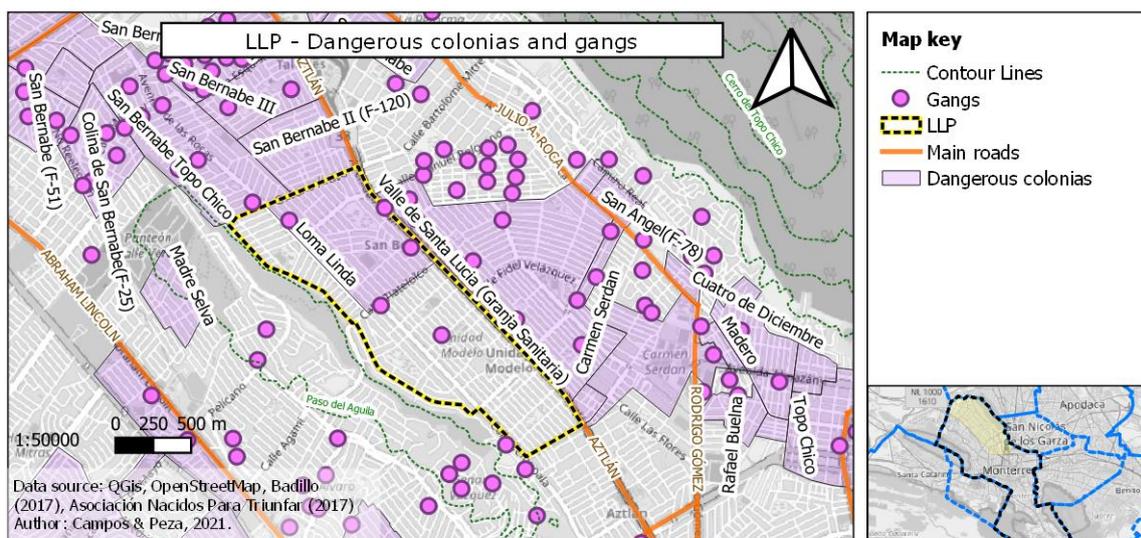
Map 21 LLP – Dangerous colonias and gangs.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from Asociación Nacidos Para Triunfar (2027).

In general, the LLP stands out in the Sector Norte, which in average is seen as impoverished, and it is easily overlooked in this environment. The natural barrier of the Paso del Águila hill puts it more in contact with the *colonias* on the side of Avenida Aztlán than with those on the side of Avenida Abraham Lincoln, whose socio-economic profile is similar to LLP -or in some cases, higher. It is worth noting that in some cases the differences between the LLP and its neighbors are relatively subtle. However, the structural conditions of precarity previously mentioned in CHAPTER 6 and more specifically the precedents of inequality explored earlier in this chapter have contributed to a heightened perception of disparity: the LLP, a formal *colonia*, where its residents have cars and better housing, is perceived as being vastly better off by those around it -they are the snobby rich kids, as interviewees said in previous sections of this chapter and in CHAPTER 4. And contrarywise, LLP residents perceive those outside of the perimeter as being in highly precarious conditions, and therefore, a source of danger.

9.1.1 A brief overview of the collective imaginary of violence and the history of the Sector Norte

The Sector Norte could easily be a staple of *regio* culture: it is located between two hills -a physical characteristic of the city and a matter of local pride-, it has a deep link to the industrial past, it is served by the first metro line to ever exist in the city, and the Topo Chico is the namesake and birthplace of an emblematic and very popular brand of sparkling water. However, this is not the case. Searching on Google Images for hills in Monterrey shows the Cerro de la Silla, the Cerro de las Mitras, and the Sierra Madre, but the Cerro del Topo Chico is nowhere to be seen (outside of memes disowning it as a proper hill). And when images do appear, they are taken at a wide angle, as if to avoid showing what exists at the foot of the hill and what Monterrey is not: impoverished communities, small improvised housing, and unpaved streets. Searching for "San Bernabé Monterrey" will show professional photographs of the Centro Comunitario San Bernabé built in 2014 along with a few photos of deteriorated houses from the 70s and 80s. The query results for "Zona Norte Monterrey" shows some pictures of the Monterrey skyline and the hills, along with logos and profile pictures for Facebook groups, listings for homes in MMA, and images that illustrate news articles of thefts, murders, and police action arriving to crime scenes in the Sector Norte (see Figure 71).

Figure 71 Results for "Zona Norte Monterrey" in Google Images, May 4, 2021.
Source: Google Images. Retrieved on 26/09/2021.

This exercise represents how the Sector Norte is conceptualized in the locality: the sector is not part of the collective *regio* imaginary of aspirational world-class panoramas. It is not upscale, new or glamourous. It exists however as part of another imaginary: that of *colonias populares* plagued by poverty and violence (see CHAPTER 6). The Penal del Topo Chico was a staple of the sector, a prison controlled from the inside by drug cartels. Word plays on the names of *colonias* in Sector Norte identified as dangerous by their residents and non-residents are part of everyday language and allude to crime and violence, such as: *Fomerrey ciento-miedo, Niño Pandillero, Infiernavit Valle muerte, and Granja Sanguinaria* (respectively: Fomerrey 112, Niño Artillero, Infonavit Valle Verde, and Granja Sanitaria -later named Valle de Santa Lucía). These are also *colonias* associated with poverty, crime, thieves, gangs, robberies, murders, and drugs -traits that are mentioned by residents of these *colonias* and those living elsewhere.

Regardless of the present disdain and neglect, the Sector Norte has its place in the history of urban development of Monterrey (see Map 22). The land at the foot of the Topo Chico was assigned in the early 1600s to the González family for them to extract minerals from the Cerro del Topo Chico. The hill had no minerals besides limestone -which would be used by the cement plants later on. However, the area became known for its hot springs, which allegedly had healing qualities. The Topo Chico Hot Springs became a touristic attraction for locals and visitors from the United States since the late 1700s. The popularity of the healing hot springs grew steadily over the years, particularly for Americans after the Mexican-American War from 1846 to 1848. Two hotels were built to accommodate visitors in 1843 and 1893, respectively. In the late 1800s an American investor was permitted to make improvements to the existing facilities and build a railway to connect with the city center. In 1887 a mule-drawn streetcar connected the Estación del Golfo to the zone then known as Hacienda del Topo Chico (also known as the Hacienda de San Bernabé), and then an electric tramway in the 1907. In 1894 and 1900 two companies settled in the Topo Chico to exploit the springs and sell them as bottled sparkling water. Later on, they merged and became the Compañía Embotelladora Topo Chico, that exists to this day. As a mostly rural area far from the city center, it was an appealing destination for a weekend retreat; its use remained mostly unchanged and the sector was apart

from the urban sprawl until the mid-1940s when the Penal del Topo Chico -a penitentiary- was built.

Map 22 Current limits of the Delegación Norte according to the PDUNL over the evolution of Monterrey's urban sprawl. Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, based on information by Delgado et al (2013).

By then, Monterrey was experiencing an unprecedented growth of population due to the boom of industrial activity, and the city became one of the main destinations of national immigrants in Mexico. The city, unprepared for the population growth, faced a housing crisis, and the urban tissue grew, unplanned and uncontrolled. On the one hand, *colonias* were built at the behest of industry owners for employees. On the other hand, those outside of the industrial formal economy -namely, rural immigrants- had no access to housing and resorted -like others in their circumstance during the early XXth century- to build informal housing on the residual spaces between the formal *colonias* or in the periphery of the growing metropolitan area. CHAPTER 5 explored the issues at a metropolitan scale, and in this section, we observe the transformations of the Sector Norte of Monterrey during this era -more specifically, those that pertain to the LLP and its surroundings.

9.2 Two sides of Avenida Aztlan: a story of socio-spatial inequality and the precedents for violence

The 1960s brought important changes in the city and to this sector. In this sense, the Sector Norte and the LLP display the palette of approaches to the housing crisis at the time, and capture several of the complexities and socio-spatial contrasts of the industrial organization of territory and its future repercussions in a violent environment. The first case pertains directly

to the history of the LLP (see Map 23): the Unidad Modelo project, and the *colonias* built around it afterwards -Loma Linda, Lomas Modelo, and Villa Alegre. The Unidad Modelo was made specifically for the workers of emblematic and powerful industries of Monterrey, and which as lauded as innovative at the time locally and nationally. The second case concerns the informal housing at the foot of the Topo Chico, north of Avenida Aztlán. Unlike the LLP, the stakeholders were the lowest classes of the population, and those who were not part of the industrial economic activity and could therefore not access nor benefit from formal and legal housing arrangements. Within these situations of socio-spatial inequality, Avenida Aztlán was regarded as the axis that separated the responsible *regio* factory workers from the lazy immigrant *posesionarios*, the middle class from the lower class -an image that remains to this day. The conditions explored here set the precedent for the violence seen today in the sector.
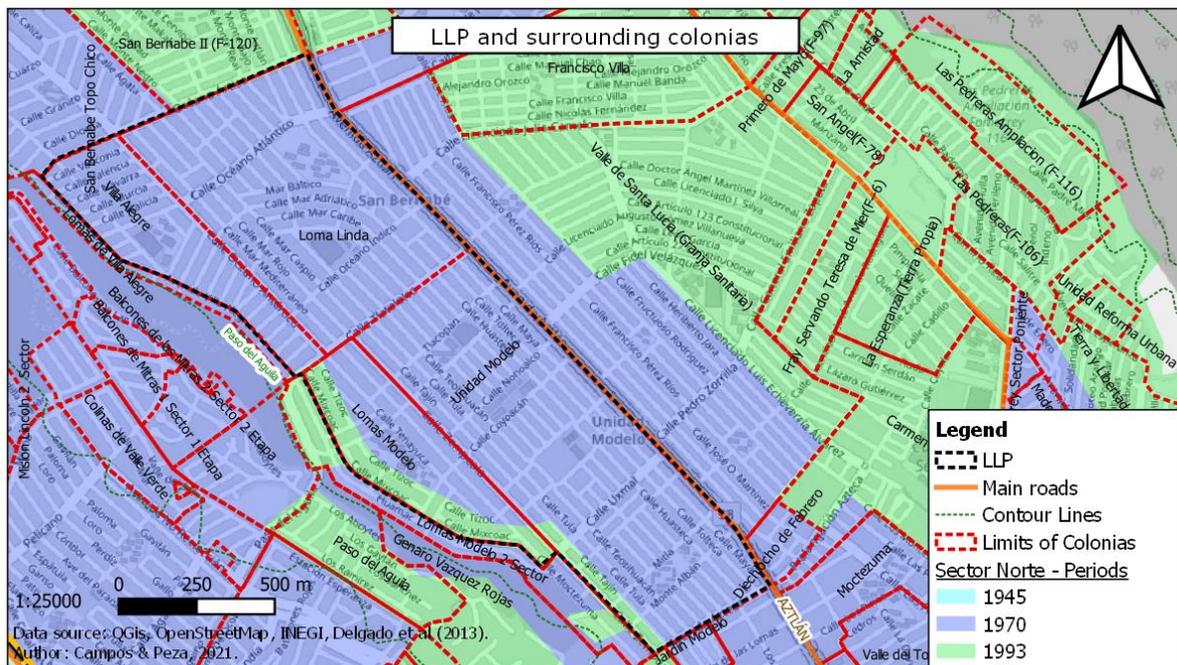
Map 23 The evolution of the urban sprawl, the LLP, and the surrounding colonias, from 1945 to 1993.
Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, based on information by Delgado et al (2013).

9.2.1 South of Avenida Aztlan: the housing experiment for workers

In 1962, 30 local industry owners came together under the Instituto Promotor de Habitaciones Populares AC (IPHP) to secure funds from the Interamerican Bank of Development and Secretaría de Hacienda to build housing for lower class workers. And for this purpose, they set their sights on the Sector Norte. The first plots of land for housing projects -located in the vicinity of the Penal del Topo Chico- in the Sector Norte came from the owners of a local coffee company in 1962. However, the IPHP aimed for a larger and more costly project for houses of workers south of Avenida Aztlán.

Of the four *colonias* that make up the LLP case study, the oldest is Unidad Modelo. Plans for the project started in 1962, and the construction works were officially kicked-off in December

1963 (see Figure 72). It is also one of the oldest formal housing developments of the era, and an emblematic project of working-class dwellings. Large-scale social housing projects were underway to palliate the housing deficit (see CHAPTER 5) in Monterrey Centro, Santa Catarina, and San Nicolas. The Unidad Modelo was endorsed by the IPHP, private banks, national and local public actors, and international organisms: Centro Patronal de Nuevo León, the Fondo de Operación y Desarrollo Bancario a la Vivienda, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, and the Agencia Internacional para el Desarrollo, among others. The Unidad Modelo project sought to offer affordable housing to workers of local companies with payment facilities, mainly in the industrial production sector, such as Celulosa y Derivados, Cigarrera La Moderna, Fábricas Orión, Trailers del Norte, Aluminio Regiomontano, among others (El Porvenir, 1966). The masterplan consisted of 2,311 individual housing units from 120 to 300m^2 for 15,000 residents, in addition to 56 commercial lots. Publicity at the time presented the typology named "*casa tipo popular*": a house for a single family with up to 4 rooms and a front yard or garage (see Figure 73). Compared to other contemporary modernist houses in affluent neighborhoods, these were much simpler and economical: the façades were less ornamented, the windows were smaller, as were the plots of land and the corresponding architectural program. The design maintained staples of the style, such as flat elongated roofs in cantilever or supported by slim free-standing columns, a general distribution that prioritized horizontality, and they were built with concrete -produced by one of the local industries (Figure 74). Publicity also mentioned prices and available mechanisms of payment for the workers of the above-mentioned companies.

At the time, this project was groundbreaking and widely publicized in the media; it was indeed -as its name announced- a "model", repeatedly presented in national forums about the housing crisis as an example of how industry owners worked with the public sector to provide decent housing for their workers. Business owners and heads of state from around the country were invited to the Sector Norte to visit the projects that were making the headlines about the efforts to solve the housing crisis. The project implementation however was far from ideal, starting with an inauguration that had to be relocated due to bad weather. The project failed to reach its goals on time, delaying the delivery of houses to the workers that had already paid. By May 1965, over 500 workers had issued the first payment for a house - 10% to 20% of the value of the property. In July 1965 the IPHP finally delivered the first 18 houses to their owners, and the housing complex had only 198 houses finished, which was called the first sector. Pavement had only been finished in the main streets. By September 1965, 200 families -little over 1000 individuals- were already living in the Unidad Modelo without electricity, which was installed that month. By the end of 1965, 500 houses were inhabited, and workers continued submitting applications. However, other services were still lacking: electricity came and went, there were no phone lines, and streets were not entirely paved (see Figure 75). A bus line to connect the *colonia* with city center was inaugurated in 1966, and the first school for children of Unidad Modelo was delivered in late 1967.

Figure 72 Two newspaper clippings of Periódico el Provenir announcing the beginning of the construction of Unidad Modelo (left) and that due to weather conditions (right), the inauguration ceremony would take place in the Condominio Monterrey downtown (El Porvenir, 1963).
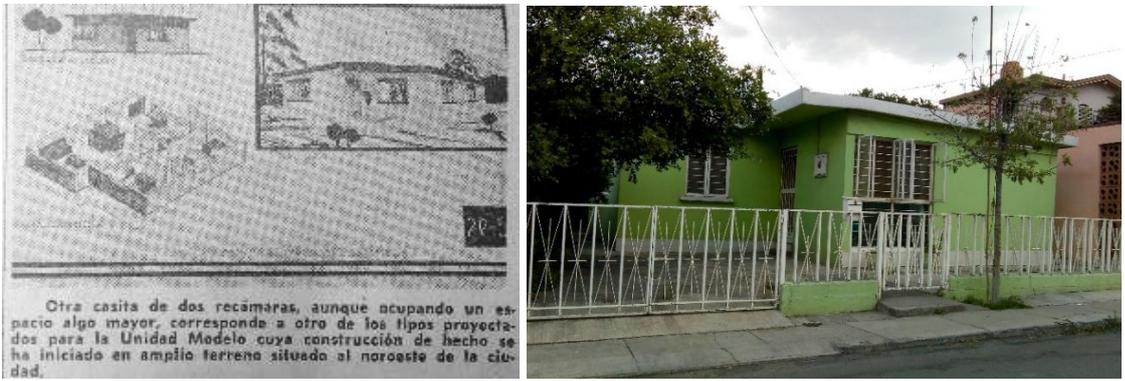
Figure 73 Architecture of the Unidad Modelo.
(left) Architectural rendering of a two-bedroom house for Unidad Modelo (El Norte, 1963) next to (right) a house in Unidad Modelo in the present. Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 74 Information about the typologies in Unidad Modelo.
(left) Article from the Periódico el Provenir describing the modern features of the house, their costs, and payment plans (El Porvenir, 1964). (right) Photograph showing one of the houses built in the Unidad Modelo, with the Cerro del Topo Chico appearing in the background.

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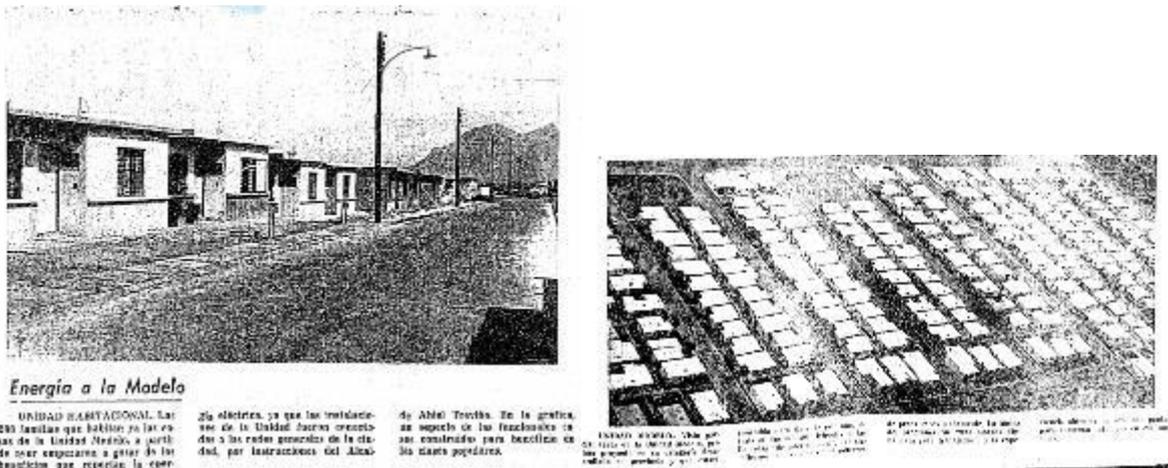
Figure 75 Progress of the construction of Unidad Modelo.
(left) Newspaper clipping showing the facades of the Unidad Modelo and commenting on the newly installed services of electricity and the Cerro de la Silla in the background (El Porvenir, 1965c). (right) Aerial view of Unidad Modelo (El Porvenir, 1967).

By July 1967, the construction of Colonia Loma Linda began. The announcement and development of the Loma Linda project was much less publicized than its predecessor, although the size was roughly comparable: 2,000 houses more for over 10,000 residents. The process of construction however appears to be much more fast-paced. The construction of the two following *colonias* in the LLP, Lomas Modelo and Villa Alegre began around 1969, with even less media attention -other than mentions in the early 70s about the construction of schools in the MMA, and among them, schools and nurseries in the LLP. Calls were open for commerce owners to install their shops in the LLP and new homeowners kept arriving. There were already security problems in the new *colonias*, due to the isolation and lack of public services. On a contemporary article detailing the deficiencies of public services on formal and informal settlements in MMA, a journalist states the following (El Porvenir, 1971):

> Other more recently constructed *colonias* of more recent formation and with basic service facilities, such as those located to the northwest of the city and which had the Unidad Modelo as their first experiment in popular urbanization, have registered an extraordinary demographic increase and horizontal expansion, and suffer from the lack of means of communication and security or police surveillance.

> In this extensive new urban sector, there are no telephones, post offices or telegraph offices, to the serious detriment of the residents, who in the case of telephone communication are unable to resolve any emergency or urgent calls. The closest public telephone to the center of the Unidad Modelo is located at the Ruiz Cortinez and Central Avenue traffic circle, which is a distance of approximately six kilometers. The

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neighborhoods of Loma Linda, San Bernabé, San Martín, Villa Alegre and Lomas Modelo are, of course, more isolated.[99]

The Sector Norte was being populated with little planning other than for the construction of dwellings in the urgency of the crisis. The Sector was still far away from the city center and industries. Lack of public lighting and surveillance made the streets dangerous, both due to the risk of crime and due to traffic. In projects such as these, land was ceded to the municipality for public use. It is up to the municipality to design and maintain them, and public space planning was not a priority, besides it being a space for circulation, as mentioned in CHAPTER 5. Already in 1974 newspapers reported traffic jams in the sector. An article at the time informed that a new avenue and an open-air amphitheater were going to be built in the LLP to solve traffic and give the community a space for culture and leisure (El Porvenir, 1974). The amphitheater was not built, but the avenue mentioned exists to this day (Océano Antartico-Zempoala axis), marking the southern limits between Loma Linda-Unidad Modelo and Villa Alegre-Lomas Modelo.

9.2.2 North of Avenida Aztlán: the problem of "*pepenadores*" and "*posesionarios*"

While these activities were taking place south of Avenida Aztlán, another housing problem of a completely different social characteristics was happening on the other side of the street. North of Avenida Aztlán, the families of close to 400 garbage collectors were living in unsanitary conditions on land at the foot of the Topo Chico (see Figure 76). In the vicinity of the garbage dump, the so-called *pepenadores* built their houses with scrap materials, and in 1965 they demanded a solution from the local government.

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[99] Otras colonias de más reciente formación y con instalaciones de servicios básicos como las que se encuentran al noroeste de la ciudad y que tuvieron como primer experimento de urbanización popular a la Unidad Modelo, han registrado un extraordinario incremento demográfico y de expansión horizontal, y resienten la falta de medios de comunicación y de seguridad o vigilancia policiaca. En ese extenso y nuevo sector urbano no hay teléfonos, ni oficinas de correos y telégrafos, lo que redunda en grave perjuicio de los residentes, que en el caso de la comunicación telefónica se encuentran impedidos para resolver cualquier emergencia de llamadas urgentes. El teléfono público más próximo se encuentra en la rotonda de Ruiz Cortinez y Avenida Central, que es una distancia aproximada de seis kilómetros. Mayor aislamiento desde luego, sufren las colonias Loma Linda, San Bernabé, San Martín, Villa Alegre y Lomas Modelo.

Figure 76 Two articles detailing the solutions proposed for two sectors of the population: the garbage collectors and the electricians.
(left-center) The mayor, the staff, and the garbage collectors stand on the skirts of the Cerro del Topo Chico were a "colonia para los pepenadores" will be erected, with the Sierra Madre in the background. The article goes on to state that the new colonia will be located right across the Unidad Modelo development and states that the housing problem has been solved. (right) A second article explains that land will be provided to the garbage collectors and that houses will be built for the electricians (El Porvenir, 1965a).

Figure 77 The contrasts between solutions proposed for the formal colonia and the informal settlement.
(left-center) An article states that the additional construction of 300 houses for the Unidad Modelo has been approved, summing a total of 700 units. (right) The local charity clubs offer to help the municipality of Monterrey in providing land for the garbage collectors (El Porvenir, 1965b).

The contrasts between solutions put into place are remarkable for two sectors separated by one avenue. Albeit with a less than ideal performance, the construction of more houses for the Unidad Modelo, and the subsequent Loma Linda project were announced, prolonging the joint effort between large business owners and local and national public organisms. All the while,

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the housing problem of the garbage collectors was being solved through charity donations and land designation, leaving the garbage collectors to build their houses themselves (see Figure 77). The publicity for the Unidad Modelo project showed photographs and descriptions of modern houses and touted progress in hydro-sanitary works, and the services in the new urban development -commerce, paved streets, schools, lighting (although they were not immediately installed). On the other side of the street, the articles alluding to the area at the foot of Cerro del Topo Chico and to the plight of the garbage collectors described improvised houses with undrained tin roofs and cardboard walls. This situation is part of a larger phenomenon of the housing crisis, led by those who were left out of the industrial dynamics.

The early 60s were the time of massive occupations of land in the periphery of Monterrey, most of them Mexican immigrants. The occupations of land were later organized by leftist groups of students, members of the PRI party, and even landowners who orchestrated "invasions" to negotiate prices of the land with the government. The Movimiento Urbano Popular Independiente Tierra y Libertad was created in 1973. Tierra y Libertad became an iconic movement of urban policy in Latin America and has been documented thoroughly since its inception and throughout the decades in articles, documentaries, and PhD thesis (Ávila Méndez, 1981; Generación 1974-1977, 1979; Sandoval Hernández, 2008; Vellinga, 1988). They formed an organizational structure to defend themselves against forceful evictions. Through these structures the occupants collected funds to provide infrastructure for their community, such as schools, a clinic, and even a jailhouse. The following are some of the *colonias* that were founded through these organized occupations (Díaz, 2014):

North of Avenida Aztlán
- 1971: Mártires de San Cosme
- 1973: Tierra y Libertad
- 1974: Avance Proletario
- 1975: Francisco Villa
- 1975: Liberación Proletaria

South of LLP
- 1972: Genaro Vázquez Rojas (south side of LLP)
- 1972: Felipe Ángeles (south side of LLP)

East of LLP
- 1972: Moctezuma (east side of LLP)

Hundreds of thousands of individuals occupied plots of land with precarious improvised housing in spaces of prone to natural risks and in unsanitary conditions in Monterrey. Due to the magnitude and urgency of the phenomenon, the state created the FOMERREY in the early 70s to regularize land ownership (see CHAPTER 5), and it started its activities in the Sector Norte. The first *fraccionamiento*, Fomerrey Uno, located on the skirts of the Topo Chico near San Martín (see Map 23) was achieved through a negotiation with the landowner, who had a debt with the state government. People were relocated to this new sector, but these spaces were ill prepared for housing, lacking services and infrastructure such as pavement, electricity, water, transportation, and drainage. The new residents built their dwellings with scrap materials, as they were only provided with a space to inhabit legally and little else. These conditions were not exclusive of the *Colonias* Fomerrey. And while they have improved gradually, the Fomerrey name became synonymous to marginalization, along with other *colonias* founded by *posesionarios* -a stigma that remains to this day. Everyday life here is subjected to lacking or deficient services -even more so than in the formal *colonias*-, violence,

abuse of police, overcrowded and precarious housing, and political clientelism, (Sandoval Hernández, 2008, p. 177), where improvements must be negotiated with politicians in exchange of votes. These *colonias* were especially vulnerable to the surge of violence starting in the late 2000s, as analyzed in CHAPTER 6.

Movimiento del 18 de Febrero de 1976: a precedent of violence in the Sector Norte

One of the most impactful violent events in this time in the Sector Norte was not a product of crime or gang activity: it was a police attack amidst the housing crisis. On February 1976, residents of Colonia San Angel were opposed to the works to install electricity in the zone, as they would be charged for them. They also perceived that the urbanization schemes from FOMERREY in this zone were politically motivated to disband the self-organized movements for housing. Because of this, grenadiers were posted in Avenida Aztlán to control the access to Granja Sanitaria and San Ángel (see Figure 78). Police presence and arbitrary violence against inhabitants of the sector was unfortunately, nothing new, and residents tried to block the access of police to their *colonia*. Midnight between February 17-18 police tried to detain a group of residents and they resisted, neighbors joined and threw stones at the police, as well as youths from *Colonias* Francisco Villa and Granja Sanitaria, while police called for reinforcements to surround the area (see Figure 78). Officers opened fire against civilians, leaving 6 dead and over 15 injured. Police fled the zone, and later fired against their own vehicles: the official version would be that police arrived to solve a conflict and that civilians fired first.

This attack and the flagrant fabrications around it by the authorities motivated protests around the city that lasted for over 50 days and in which thousands of people participated: students, bus drivers, workers, residents from *colonias de posesionarios*, and small commerce owners. The movement demanded the compensation of families of the dead and the injured, and the punishment and destitution of those responsible. Despite the mobilizations, these demands were not answered, and motivated the increase of police and military presence at the foot of the Topo Chico in the 1980s. Documentation of this incident online has increased notably in the past 5 years (Díaz, 2019; Rodríguez Martínez, 2017, 2020; Rubio Cano, 2019). And while this event is commemorated by many residents of the Sector Norte or those with ties to the *colonias* involved in the movement, it is not widely talked about by residents of other sectors Monterrey, outside of specialists in local modern history.

Figure 78 Diagram showing the location of police and residents during the attack of February 1976, November 7, 2019. Source: Antihistoria. Retrieved on 02/06/2021. https://antixhistoria.org/2019/11/07/lucha-hogar-y-dignidad/
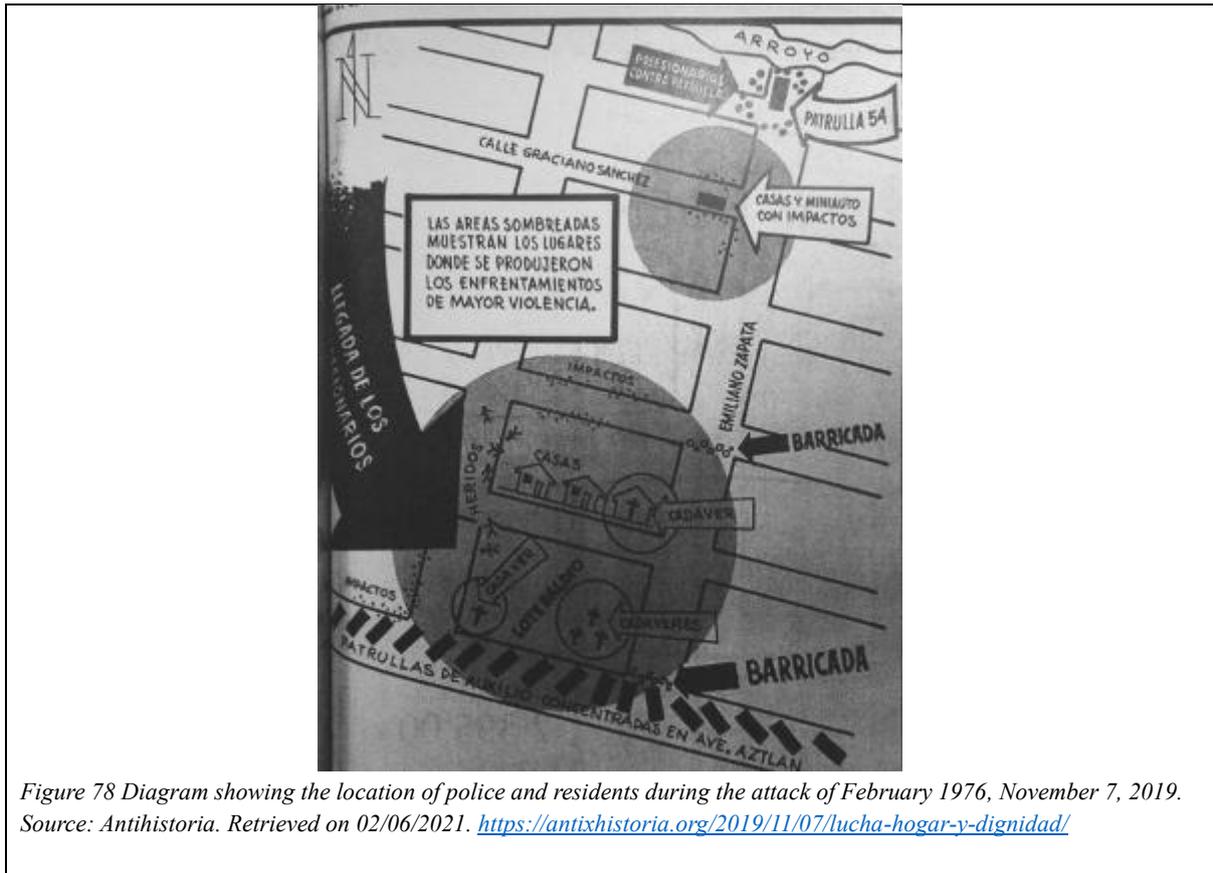
9.3 Perceptions of violence from the north side and their relationship with LLP

Today, the population of the *colonias* north of Aztlán is perceived by the inhabitants of LLP as the place of origin of the criminals who attack them, along with the *colonias* on the top of the Paso del Águila (Valle Verde and Genaro Vázquez), Burócratas Moctezuma on the east, and San Bernabé on the west. In the words of a male resident of Loma Linda: "we are surrounded by conflictive *colonias*: la Granja, San Bernabé, Genaro Vázquez.[100]" But what do the residents of the so-called "*colonias* conflictivas" opine on the matter? Armando, Cristina, and Flora, agreed to an interview to explain this. They are a group of young activists who a zine about the Sector Norte. They admitted that they are somewhat of an anomaly, since they see that in general MMA residents do not engage in activism, much less advocating for *colonias populares*. Another factor that they see that sets them apart is their higher socio-economic background. Cristina and Armando, unlike Flora, are not originally from the sector, coming from more affluent zones. They speak Spanish and English, they work as English teachers, and are college educated from private and public universities. Cristina has experience living abroad and her parents were PhD holders. And in the case of Armando, he mentions that his light skin

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[100] Estamos rodeados de *colonias* conflictivas: la Granja, San Bernabé, Genaro Vázquez.

tone makes him stand out. Their education sets them apart in a zone where secondary school is the highest level of education residents have on average. They commented that for residents of this sector, access to education (high-school level or above) is the ticket out of there.

With a background on social sciences, Armando and Cristina are aware of the several structural problems the *colonias populares* face, are very well documented on the aforementioned history of the sector, and they have been involved on activism for several years. They moved here to help the community and they decided to create the Facebook page and publish a zine, inspired by other similar initiatives in MMA. They wanted to create a publication that contrasted the image of the zone perpetuated by traditional media, where crime and violence is the main feature narrated by law enforcement and without the perspective of the residents.

Like for neighbors in LLP, for them FB has given them the opportunity to share their work, receive feedback from users, and connect with other initiatives elsewhere in the country and beyond. They remark that the reactions offline to the zine have been lackluster, as residents do not understand what their purpose is, often thinking they come from a political party or simply that their endeavor is useless. They publish anonymous anecdotes from their readers, where they tell their experiences of violence on public space and abuses by the authorities (some of which have been discussed in CHAPTER 8). Other groups of residents at the foot of the Topo Chico have taken to social media to showcase their *colonias*. They do not deny the issues of drugs and violence: rather they create an identity around it that is relatable to others living in the same circumstances in MMA, and they also display other aspects of their *colonias* that go unnoticed amidst stigmatization, discrimination, and shame.

Police brutality is a common occurrence in the sector, and for this reason, residents do not trust the police and are hostile to them. Armando, Flora, and Cristina say that when the community does need help, they do not call the police, as they are unlikely to come and help them (see CHAPTER 8 for quotes of this interview on the subject). They see that the police occasionally do rounds, looking out for drunk or disorderly individuals to extort or pump numbers of arrests. This contrasts with the image of collaboration and outreach presented by FC, but is in line with what FC officers narrated of hostility towards them in *colonias populares* in CHAPTER 8. Flora states that as you go up the Cerro del Topo Chico, you see less pavement and the houses look shabbier. And like almost every other interviewee in MMA, they refer to the period between 2009 and 2013 as the time were everything came crashing down. She has lived here since she was born, and she narrates how the period of violence affected an already vulnerable zone:

> Before it was gangs and street fights, and the police aggressively detaining people. Then came the killings. Then, violence against women went up. There are less gangs now, but robberies are more common[101] (interview Flora, February 17, 2021).

A problem they share with LLP is the risk of victimization of women and children. The three of them are parents of toddlers, and they have worked with children in the locality in the past.

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[101] Antes eran las pandillas y los pleitos callejeros, y la policía y detenciones con violencia. Luego vinieron las matanzas. Luego subió la violencia de género. Ahora hay menos pandillas, pero hay más robos.

Flora noted that "the youth was taken away by organized crime"[102] (interview Flora, February 17, 2021). She tells that she stopped participating in activities outside or far from her house because of the problem of insecurity with children. They agree that children do not play on the street, but on the other hand, they see that children are also frequently mistreated by their parents. The three of them agree that one of the most important problems of inside and outside the sector is misogyny and violence against women. Flora and Cristina comment on the frequency of street harassment inside and outside of the sector. The effects of abuse against women and girls around them but they cannot do anything about it. And they mention that girls are particularly vulnerable and are objectified by their older male neighbors, and that children in general they lack protection by their families. They see that women in the community bear the brunt of inequality, and that they have no way out.

They say that social programs are insufficient and that they do not tackle the real problems in the community, such as the lack of sex education, gender inequality, alcoholism, drug dependency, domestic violence, malnutrition, lack of schooling and job opportunities. Cristina remarks that the stigmatization of the zone has real consequences, in that politicians do not come to fix things, and that other zones of the city consider that people living in this sector have "a gene for delinquency", which makes it hard to move forward. Activists working in this sector concur on this assessment: a home address in Valle de Santa Lucía on a job application hinders employment possibilities (see CHAPTER 6). Residents of Valle de Santa Lucía work hard to leave the sector: "only those who study can get out. The goal is to move to a *colonia privada*"[103] (interview Armando, February 17, 2019). Afterwards, they say, they do not return, and pretend they belong somewhere else. Being from La Granja or Fomerrey is shameful, because other residents of MMA, particularly from upper classes, associate it with poverty and crime.

Regarding the relationship between the Topo Chico sector and LLP, the three of them remarked that residents of LLP are very snobbish; that they have a sense of superiority that they attribute to living in the "proper" *colonias*, as opposed to the *posesionarios* in Topo Chico, stereotypes that persist even within the sector. For example, residents from surrounding neighborhoods at the foot of the Topo Chico say that the Granja Sanitaria is full of *albañiles locos* (referring to construction workers that use drugs and are violent). Topo Chico residents see LLP residents as *fresas* or *riquillos* in comparison (uppity or wealthy). They find it funny that for all their snobbery, they come to buy food from street vendors on the Topo Chico side because their products are cheaper. But when youths from Topo Chico go to the parks on the LLP side, they are chased away by neighbors or the police. Armando and Flora mention that many robbers from Topo Chico go to Unidad Modelo and Loma Linda to steal.

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[102] A la juventud se la llevó el crimen organizado.
[103] Solo los que estudian pueden salir. El objetivo es irse a una colonia privada.

9.4 Reported crime, violence, and victimization in public spaces of LLP

To observe the behavior of crime, the information detailed in CHAPTER 4 and CHAPTER 8 has to be taken into account: the official numbers of reports do not depict an accurate image of the criminal incidence and violence in LLP, but rather an idea of what crimes are reported and by whom. One of the available sources is the Crime Map from El Norte, a local newspaper. This shows only the violent incidents that made it to the news and it was last updated in 2017. It shows 14 dramatic incidents, most of them at the foot of the Topo Chico: victims being gunned down in their homes or places of work or from cars in movement (especially taxis), and the dumping of bodies from moving cars -at least one female victim. Another source available is the CIVIX platform, which members of MVTV have used to report issues. As discussed in CHAPTER 4, this platform is mostly used to report faulty public services and infrastructure as well as security problems. In this latter classification, between the years 2018 and 2020, there were 29 reports made in LLP (see Map 24), out of which 16 were of incidents occurring in Colonia Loma Linda. On the one hand, these highly publicized incidents contribute to the stigmatization of this zone as a place where anyone can be killed at any moment. At the same time, residents agree that the news do not show what happens daily in the zone, nor do they depict their real concerns of insecurity.
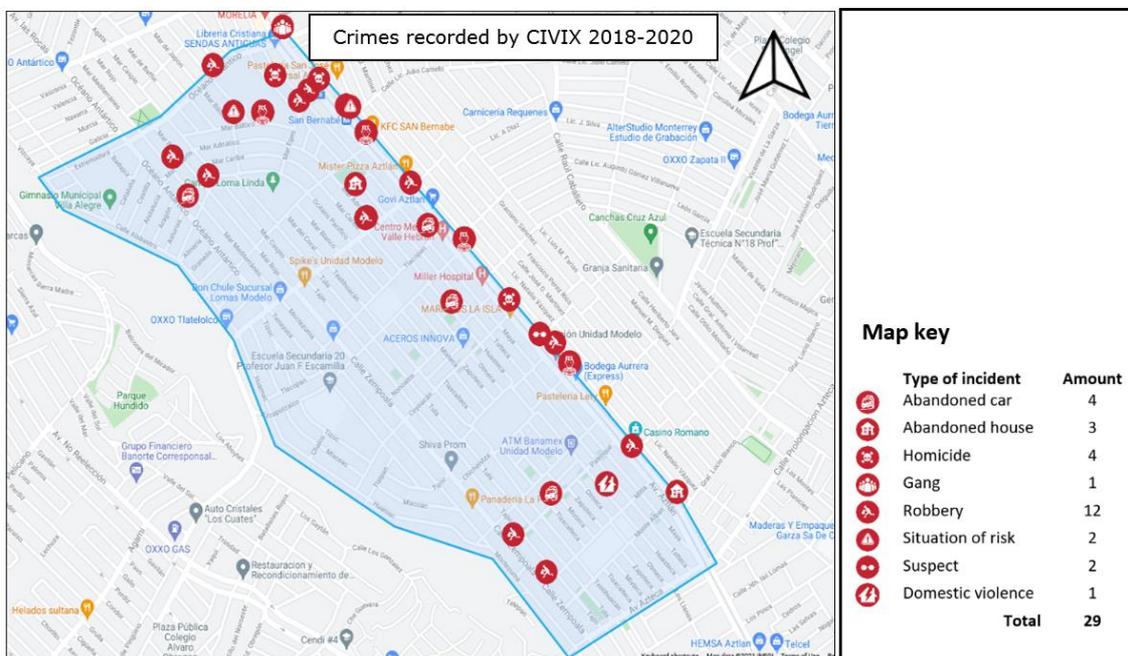
Map 24 Incidents reported in the CIVIX app between 2018-2020 from the LLP.
Most of the recorded incidents occurred in Avenida Aztlán.
Source: CIVIX (2021), modifications by author.

Most of the reported incidents occurred in the proximity of Avenida Aztlán -whose physical conditions will be explored in the following section of this chapter. The most reported incidents are robberies to pedestrians. The victims were youths (students) and women of different ages, and the aggressor often climbed out of a moving vehicle -a car, a taxi or a motorcycle- to threaten the victim at gunpoint or assault them physically to steal their bags, their money, and their smartphones. The second most reported incidents are abandoned cars and homicides. Cars are reported often because they look suspicious, they accumulate trash, and they occupy parking spaces. All reported homicides happened in the proximity of Avenida Aztlán, 3 near the north corner of Loma Linda and 1 in Unidad Modelo. All victims where male, and incidents occurred in bars, except one where the victim was shot in broad daylight in a park in Loma Linda. Out of the 29 incidents -an extremely low number for 3 years of intense criminal activity according to neighbors-, only 6 incidents are noted as closed cases by the CIVIX platform: one murder, 3 robberies involving a taxi and 2 motorcycles, an attempted car theft, and one faulty streetlamp. The CIVIX platform supposedly connects the reports to the corresponding services and works together with C5's 911 services to centralize and share statistics, which we will observe next. Over the same period of time, the FGJ has very different data. In this case, most reports came from Unidad Modelo (see Graph 8). Once again, thefts are the most reported crimes in the LLP, followed by domestic violence, except in Lomas Modelo where domestic violence is the most reported crime and thefts are second (see Graph 9).
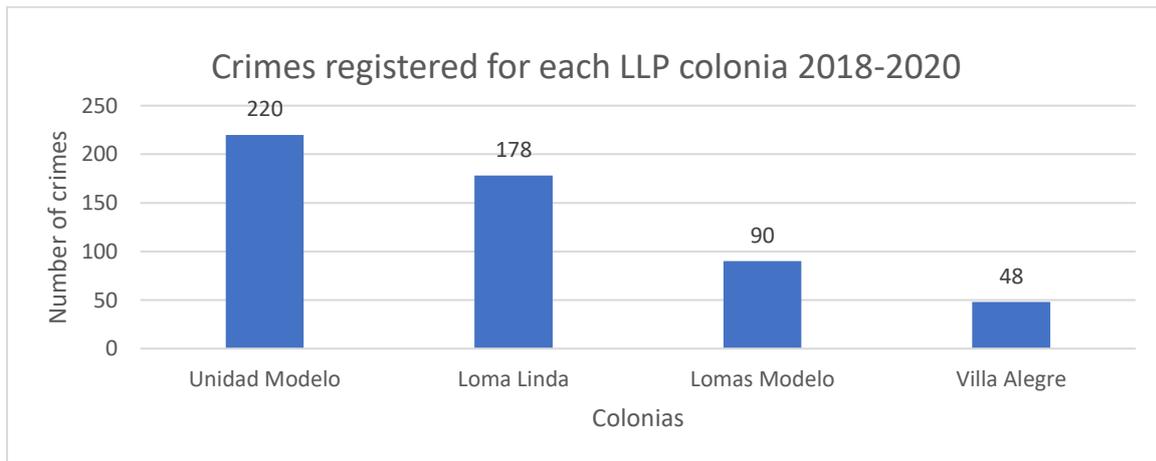
Graph 8 Total of crimes registered for each colonia between 2018-2020.
Most of them were registered in Unidad Modelo.
Source: Campos (2021), based on information from the FGJ.

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Graph 9 Crimes reported to the FGJ between 2018-2020 in each of the colonias of the LLP.
Thefts and domestic violence are the most reported crimes in Unidad Modelo, Loma Linda, and Villa Alegre. In Lomas Modelo,
domestic violence is reported more than theft.
Source: Campos (2021), based on information from the FGJ.

Zooming in on subtypes of thefts, each *colonia* has a different problem (see Graph 10). Between 2018 and 2020, simple thefts were reported the most in Loma Linda, car theft was the most reported incident in Lomas Modelo, and robberies to small businesses were the main problems for both Unidad Modelo and Villa Alegre. This can be partially explained due to the configuration of uses: Unidad Modelo has the highest count of small businesses (224 according to INEGI (2020)) distributed along main streets, several of which have low pedestrian traffic at night and are badly lit. These conditions will be explored in detail in the following section.

Graph 10 Disaggregation of the most reported crime -thefts- by subtype in each of the colonias of the LLP between 2018-2020.
Source: Campos (2021), based on information from the FGJ.

Information from the FGJ does not allow to map the location of these incidents, but it does allow to observe the profile of victims and perpetrators. In 84% of the cases, the perpetrators were male (309 cases) around 30 years old. As for the victims, domestic violence is the first

causes of victimization for women, followed by thefts, while thefts and injuries are the two main events of victimization for men. It is worth observing the specificities for victimization through thefts, considering the overlap of victimization for men and women (see Graph 11). Of the thefts reported to the FGJNL, men are mostly the victims of larceny and car theft: an object such as a car is stolen without direct contact with the perpetrator. Victims being robbed of their vehicles while driving them is not common in the locality. Conversely, this possibility of physical harm is present in the cases reported by women, who are predominantly victims of robberies to small businesses and robberies. Per reports in CIVIX and interviews with members of the community, perpetrators in both cases are often armed and physically violent towards the victim. Members of MVTV, police, and users of LLP public space narrate experiences where women of all ages have been injured during a robbery.
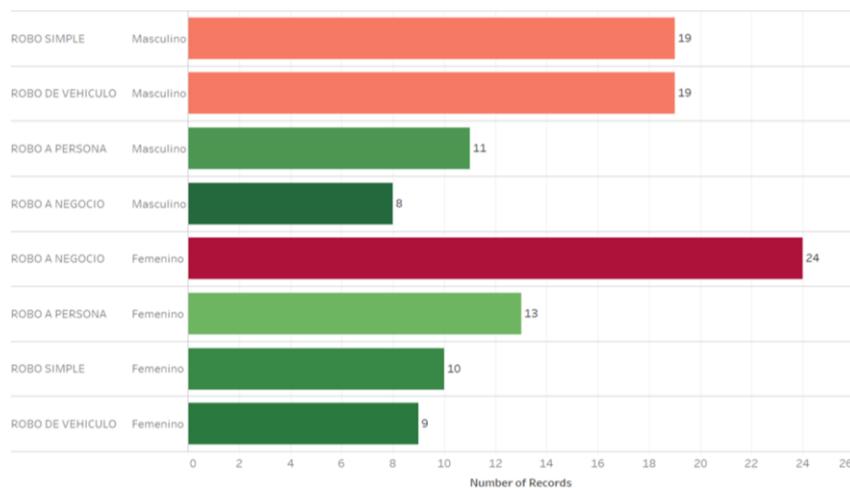
Graph 11 Types of victimization disaggregated by gender of the victim for the crimes reported in LLP between 2018-2020. Source: Campos (2021), based on information from the FGJ.

It should be recalled that classifications are established by the Semáforo Delictivo which, as observed in CHAPTER 6, have several concerning gaps. They have been adopted by the FGJ, and thus, this is the same language that members of MVTV adopt to communicate with authorities. This language and classification leave little room to engage in discussions of concerns of security with law enforcement that are not related to thefts (see CHAPTER 10).

9.5 Public spaces and everyday violence in LLP

9.5.1 Streets, parks, and permanent uses of the LLP

There are 6 main streets inside Loma Linda and Unidad Modelo that connect Villa Alegre and Lomas Modelo to Avenida Aztlán. Zempoala-Océano Antártico is one long axis that runs parallel to Avenida Aztlán, marking the limit between Loma Linda-Unidad Modelo and Villa Alegre-Lomas Modelo (see Map 25 and Photo set 1). The PDUMty marks Zempoala, Azteca, Avenida Aztlán as *corredor de mediano impacto* (medium impact corridor), and Océano Antartico, Tlatelolco and Uxmal as *corredor de bajo impacto* (low impact corridor). These

denominations establish the type of commerce and services permitted (noting that they exclude industry – see Map 26). Despite it is mostly used for housing, commerce is an important activity in the LLP. The main streets are populated by formal and informal commerce: printers, restaurants, stationery stores, food takeout, rotisseries, convenience stores – plenty of Oxxos and 7 Elevens, and *vulkas* -auto-repair shops- can be seen along the streets with some single-family homes in between. Businesses, particularly those in the Océano Antartico-Zempoala axis, in Avenida Aztlán, and on the wider north-south main streets are prone to robberies, as observed in the previous section.

Inside the neighborhood this use is reversed: the single-family dwelling predominates with some shops in the areas near parks and schools. There are also small temporary shops inside the houses, selling food, candy, snacks, and photocopies. They are normally advertised with a sign on the front with the indication to ring the bell to ask for service, while others set up shop at night in the garages. There are also signs in houses where the resident offers other services such therapy or afterschool tutoring. There are even some *quintas* dispersed in the LLP: houses rented as party venues, usually with a pool. According to the code (IMPLANC, 2014), the LLP is a zone for *habitacional multifamiliar* use -multifamily residential occupancy-, and many of the shops that exist should not be allowed due to their type of activity or because they are located in spaces not intended for commercial use.

The main streets are 4 lanes wide -except Avenida Aztlán which has 6 lanes-, while the secondary streets within the *colonias* are 2 lanes wide (see Photo set 1 and Photo set 2). There is almost no signage to cross the wide streets safely, and like in many Mexican cities, jaywalking is not an issue, but the sole alternative to cross a street where cars will not stop to let pedestrians pass. Unidad Modelo and Loma Linda are limited by main streets, and Lomas Modelo-Villa Alegre are limited on the southwest by the steep slopes of Paso del Águila. Residents of LLP comment that gangs and thieves come from the other side of the hill -meaning *Colonias* Genaro Vazquez and Valle Verde- and they hang out on the empty unsupervised spaces just above Lomas Modelo and Villa Alegre, or hide there when they come down to steal. On this border there is no commerce, and only one side of the street is occupied by housing, so there is even less pedestrian movement. These natural spaces also are used to dump construction waste, as new fraccionamientos and *colonias* keep growing. There are several abandoned houses where individuals dump trash or broken furniture, or where gangs of youths occasionally break in to hang out. Plots of land are scattered across the LLP. They are occasionally fenced out, but in the ones that are open people park their cars, dump garbage or construction waste, or burn trash, and like the slopes of the hill, they are a problem of security and hygiene.
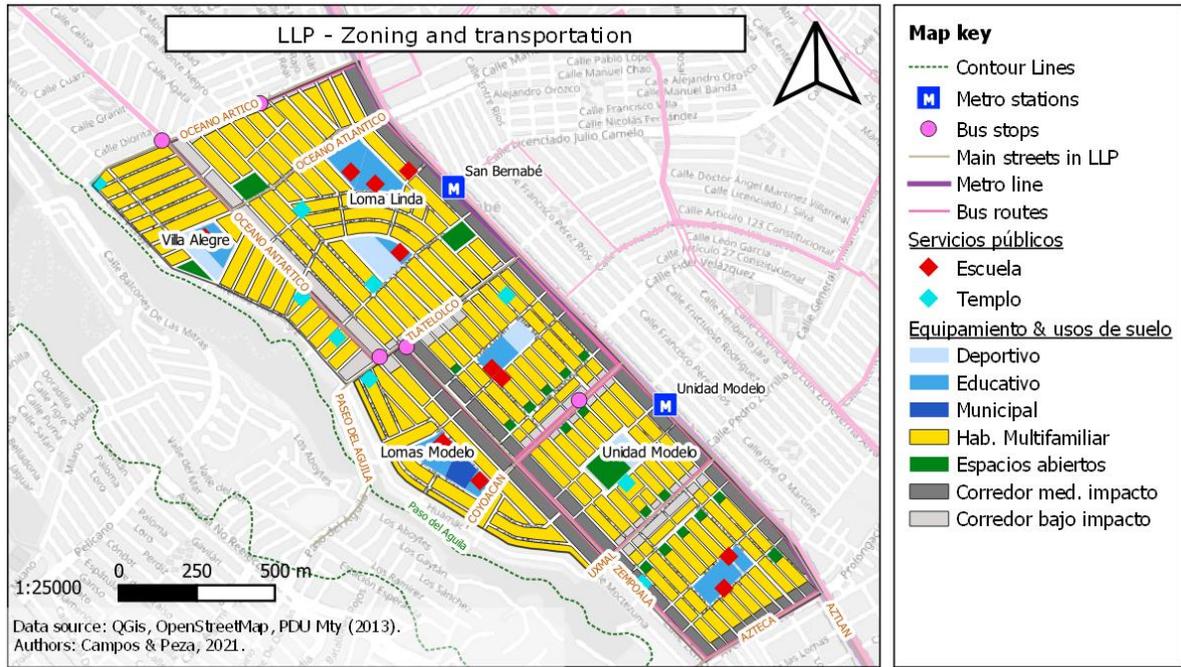
Map 25 LLP – Zoning and transportation.

Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from the Plan de Desarrollo Urbano de Monterrey.
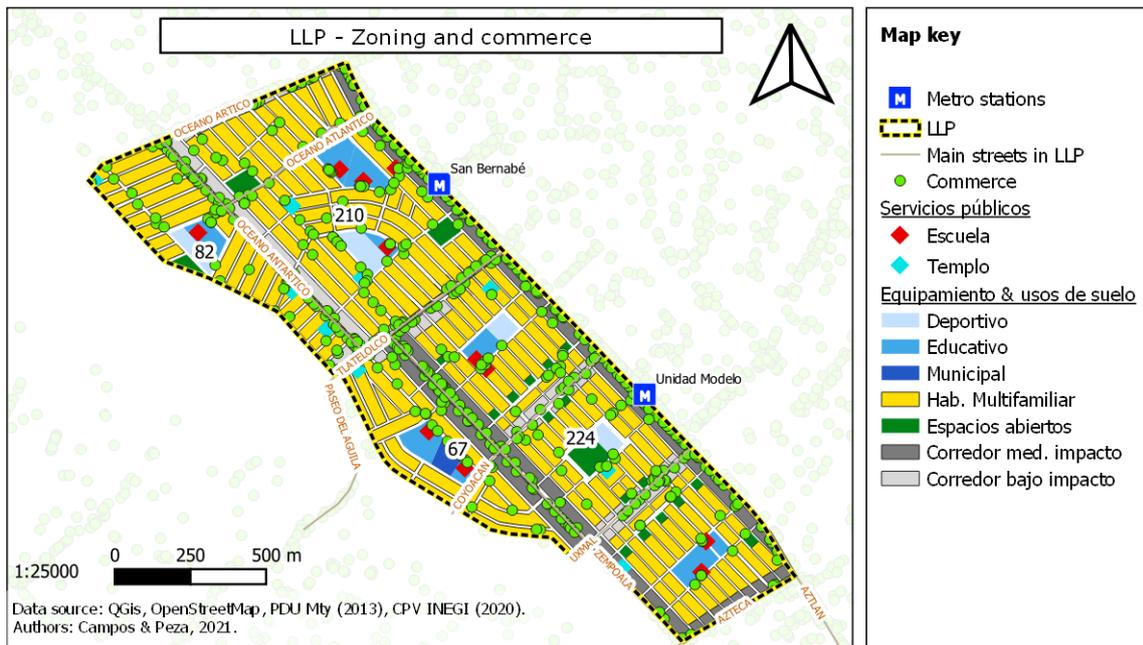
Map 26 LLP – Zoning according to the PDU Mty vs. the existing commerce according to the INEGI count (the numbers indicate the total of shops per colonia).

Source: Campos & Peza, 2021, with information from the Plan de Desarrollo Urbano de Monterrey.

Photo set 1 - Main streets of LLP

Avenida Aztlán. Author, 2019.

Avenida Zempoala (Unidad Modelo). Google StreetView,

Avenida Azteca (Unidad Modelo) to the southwest. Author, 2019.

Avenida Tlatelolco (Loma Linda) to the southwest. Author 2019.

Photo set 2 – Secondary streets

Secondary street (Unidad Modelo). Author, 2019.

Secondary street – Calle Tlalpan (Lomas Modelo). Author, 2019.
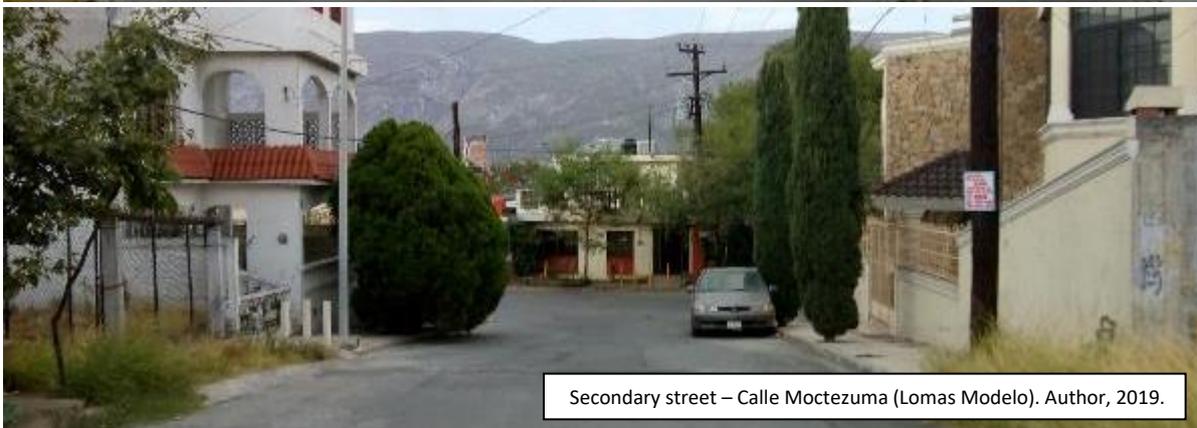
Secondary street – Calle Moctezuma (Lomas Modelo). Author, 2019.

Secondary street – Calle Granada (Villa Alegre). Author, 2019.

The blocks of Unidad Modelo-Loma Linda are rectangular in shape, and the narrowest side of them has blind walls. On the main roads there are facades of shops and houses on the narrow side of the block. Inside of the *colonias*, this creates empty spaces where there is no activity and thus no natural surveillance from users (see Figure 79). Those who can afford it turn their homes into small fortresses. Originally, most houses were of a single floor with space in the front for a garden or a garage. Many of them have evolved into two-story-high houses. Elements of protection are everywhere: houses have large iron fences that cover most of the street-level façade to prevent car thefts and break-ins (see Figure 80). Windows sport iron bars, and shards of broken glass or metal spikes are placed on the edges of perimeter walls to prevent break-ins. Schools and shops have barbed wire around the perimeter as well (see Figure 81). During the colder months -from December to February, several houses have cardboard or metal sheets and plastic tarps installed on the fences of the facade. In other cases, and particularly in the service corridors, they are left indefinitely so that they block the view from the street to the inside of the house. Most of the life of the *colonia* happens behind these bars and on the inside of cars, which many residents depend on to circulate even within the *colonia*, and thus the streets are mostly neglected.

Figure 79 View of blocks of Loma Linda.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 80 Houses in Loma Linda and Unidad Modelo for two different budgets.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 81 (left) primary school in Unidad Modelo and (right) secondary school in Loma Linda.
Photo: Author, 2019.

The limits between the private and the public are very clearly defined. However, residents are possessive over their facades and the spaces immediately in front of their houses, to the point that they build all sorts of permanent or semi-permanent structures on the sidewalks or as additional parking space (see Figure 82). Sidewalks on the main and secondary streets are narrow (some less than 1m. wide) or non-existent. They are frequently destroyed or cracked, obstructed by illegal garage extensions, flower pots, DIY concrete benches, cars, discarded furniture, utility poles, trash, tree roots, garbage cans, and construction materials (see Figure 83 and Figure 84).

Figure 82 Permanent and semi-permanent fixtures on sidewalks of Unidad Modelo and Loma Linda.

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Figure 83 Construction debris and trash on sidewalks of Lomas Modelo (left) and Villa Alegre (right).

Figure 84 Deteriorated sidewalks on Loma Linda.

Like in most *colonias* of MMA, streets are dedicated mostly for car use. Main and secondary streets are occupied on both sides by parked cars, reducing 4-lane streets to 2 lanes and creating traffic jams in rush hours on the main streets. Secondary streets are not wide enough to allow for parking on both sides and the flow of cars in the middle, so drivers park their cars over the sidewalks (see Figure 85). Car parking creates several issues, starting with the obstructions for the more vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, and for pedestrians in general. And coupled with the obstacles already present, cars invading the sidewalks create hiding spots for thieves, according to the inhabitants, and also a source of conflict between neighbors (see CHAPTER 10). Pedestrians circulate on the street within the neighborhood because it is more comfortable (see Figure 86). They use more the sidewalks on the main avenues, despite their poor conditions, to avoid being hit by cars that circulate here at a higher speed.

Figure 85 Vehicles parked over sidewalks in Loma Linda and Unidad Modelo.
Photos: Author, 2019.
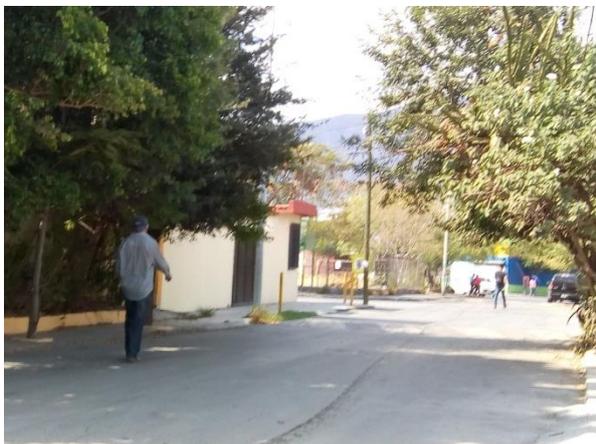
Figure 86 Pedestrians walking on the streets of Loma Linda.
Photos: Author, 2019.

Avenida Aztlán

Avenida Aztlán is the six-lane avenue that separates the LLP from the Topo Chico sector. It is highly transited by cars at all times, and it is a hostile environment for pedestrians. Sidewalks are deteriorated and obstructed, but unlike in the *colonia*, walking on the street is not a possibility. Cars park along the side of the road and pedestrians are at risk of being hit by speeding cars. Avenida Aztlán has also been the scene of murders and violent incidents (see Figure 87), as seen in previous sections of this chapter. The street is prone to flooding on rainy days (see Figure 88), adding to the complications of walking here.

Figure 87 (left and center) Street level views of Avenida Aztlán. Photos: Author, 2019. (right) Avenida Aztlán as the scene of a murder.
Photo: MVTV, 2020.

Figure 88 (left) Avenida Aztlán flooded during a rainy day. (right) Pedestrians walking on the side of Loma Linda in the rain.
Photos: Las Noticias Monterrey, 2020.

The elevated metro line that goes over Avenida Aztlan is an important means of transportation for the Sector Norte and the LLP; it highly congested during the mornings and afternoons. During the day, street vendors install tables to sell candy, snacks, and cigarettes on the entrances of the stairs of the San Bernabé and Unidad Modelo stations (see Figure 89). The spots near the metro stations are particularly dark and full of obstacles, making it dangerous during the day and more so at night. Besides the reported crimes, individuals are often robbed

here when they are leaving the metro and walking to their destination. Residents of LLP make a note of walking inside the *colonia*, which although lighting is scarce, it is better lit than Avenida Aztlán. Furthermore, the lack of pedestrian transit, and the anonymity provided by the speeding vehicles, the dark, the lack of activity in the buildings at night, makes it one of the most dangerous spaces in the *colonia* (see Figure 90). It is a difficult space for pedestrians to avoid, since it is the main road that connects public transportation with the LLP.
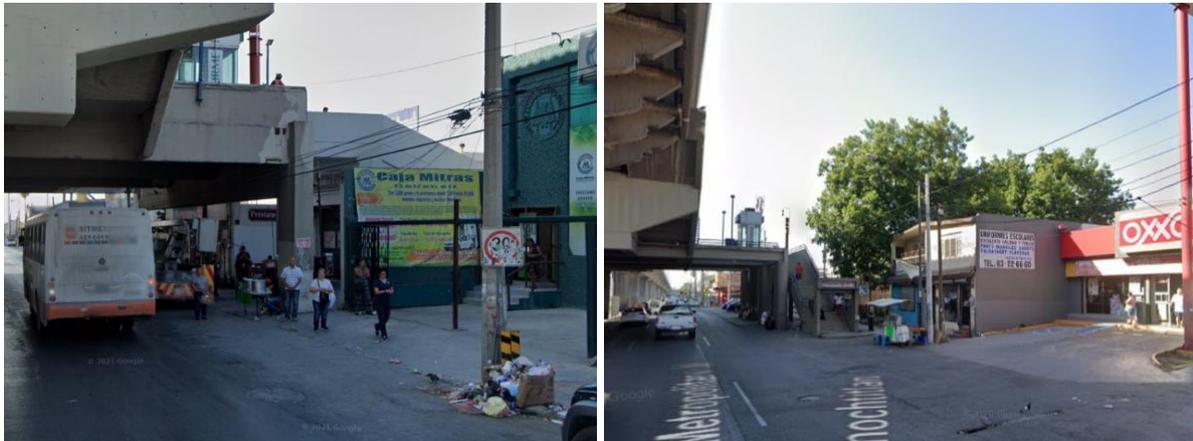
Figure 89 (left) San Bernabé Metro Station and (right) Unidad Modelo metro station.
Photo: Google StreetView, 2019.

Figure 90 Avenida Aztlán at night.
Photos: Author, 2019.

Parks in LLP

Unidad Modelo has the highest count of public parks: 16 parks of approximately 1,000 m^2 each, concentrated in Calle Nonoalco, Calle Coyoacán, and Calle Uxmal (see Figure 91). It also has a walled-off baseball field located near Calle Tlatelolco (see Figure 92). Although both Unidad Modelo and Loma Linda have plenty of open spaces for diverse activities, their image is unappealing. Areas where greenery should be are barren, or have been substituted by slabs of concrete that are uninvitingly hot in the weather of 40°C. Recreational structures -if any- are rusty, dirty, unstable, and graffitied. In Loma Linda they are fenced off, presumably to protect

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children from running towards the streets and being hit by a car (see Figure 93). There are overgrown trees and corners and nooks are used to put waste from cleanups, waiting for it to be picked up by municipal services. the parks are littered with trash or tree branches. This in turn results in neighbors depositing trash bags or debris here as well. In the case of Lomas Modelo and Villa Alegre, the topography adds to the complications of use and maintenance. Villa Alegre has officially one park (see Figure 94), and the park in Lomas Modelo is not registered -which is only a partially fenced-off space at the foot of the hill surrounded by barren land (see Figure 95).

Figure 91 Parks in Unidad Modelo.
Photos: Author, 2019.

Figure 92 Unidad Modelo baseball field, nooks at the entrance are littered with waste from cleanups and garbage.
Photos: Author, 2019.

Figure 93 Park in Loma Linda.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 94 Park in Colonia Villa Alegre.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 95 Park in Colonia Lomas Modelo.
Photo: Author, 2019.

One of the better kept spaces is the Loma Linda soccer field (see Figure 96). It is surrounded by areas with playgrounds for children, paths, and benches. Like in Unidad Modelo, there is a small guardhouse for police that is used irregularly. The deteriorated state of these spaces contrasts with the relatively well-maintained areas of artificial grass. However, nooks designed

as dugouts are filled with trash bags and broken furniture deposited there by neighbors, spectators, and passers-by, and homeless individuals use these spaces to relieve themselves.

Figure 96 Soccer field in Loma Linda.
Photos: Author, 2019.

One of the largest parks is a 16,000 m^2 polyvalent space (located near the Unidad Modelo metro station) with basketball and soccer courts, a pool, and spaces to walk and playgrounds (see Figure 97). The pools are not used, and there is almost no shade in the park. There is one police guardhouse where FC and other police corps are stationed from time to time. The guardhouses have been a constant issue for neighbors, who would like to have police present in their *colonia*. Since it is a large park, it attracts users from other *colonias*, who are promptly evicted by residents. It is also the scene of conflicts between gangs or other groups of youths, and police keep a close eye on youths in this park, even if they are just playing sports. However, residents have noted the presence of exhibitionists and harassers in the parks, and are highly suspicious of individuals just loitering on these spaces. Neighbors report them to the police, arguing that they are strangers from other *colonias*. For some, sports equipment is a positive feature to keep teenagers and children from joining gangs or doing drugs; for others, it is a source of problems, as teams play late at night.

Figure 97 Polyvalent park in Unidad Modelo.
Photo: Google Street View, 2019.

9.5.2 Uses, users, and feelings of insecurity at different times of the day and of the week

<u>Daytime</u>

In the rush hours in the morning and in the afternoon the streets are transited by cars and pedestrians going to and from their jobs by bus, metro, taxi or ridesharing services. There are 4 bus stops signaled in the LLP, they are either bus shelters or a post sign. These are however not the only places where the buses stop to pick up passengers or let them off. But it is up to the users to identify where the bus stops -knowledge acquired either by asking someone or by using the bus.

Pedestrians taking public transportation are often victims of robberies. Notwithstanding the incidents inside the vehicles, walking between the stops and their homes is dangerous. It becomes a problem for pedestrians who circulate very early in the morning, very late at night, or during the day -moments when there are no crowds or groups of people walking and when it is dark. With no activity to speak of and no one to watch -as previously mentioned, the paths that connect north-south are often surrounded by blind walls with no natural surveillance-, they are often victims of robberies. During the week, homemakers, children, and their caretakers represent most of the population that circulate on foot in the area near schools at noon and during the afternoon. According to the neighbors, adults go to the schools to pick them up to "prevent something bad from happening". This responsibility falls mainly on the women - mothers, aunts, grandmothers - but due to muggings and attacks, men occasionally to pick up the children. The neighbors see this as a sign of how bad things are in terms of security, since childcare is supposed to be a woman's responsibility.

Street markets are installed on three main streets in Unidad Modelo -Calle Palenque, Calle Coyoacán, and Calle Tlatelolco (the limit with Loma Linda)- on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during the morning or in the evening (see Figure 98 and Figure 99). Although they

provide entertainment, a place to eat, and spaces to sell and buy all sorts of products - vegetables, clothes, toys, cosmetics-, residents of LLP affirm that every market day thieves take advantage of the chaos and the movement to steal batteries from cars, objects left unattended at homes, or snatch wallets from distracted clients.

Figure 98 (left) Market in Calle Coyoacán in Unidad Modelo and (right) market in Calle Tlatelolco in Loma Linda.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Figure 99 Market in Calle Coyoacán in Unidad Modelo.
Photo: Google Street View, 2019.

The rest of the day, pedestrians are scarce -as evidenced by their absence in photos used to illustrate this chapter. The secondary streets inside the *colonias* are mainly for passing through. However, there is no reason for people who do not live there to circulate or linger on the street outside of rush hour. Shops and bus stops are all on the main streets. During the day, children are at school, the adults are working, and many of the residents drive rather than walk.

The people who remain as lookouts for the *colonia* are mostly housewives and the elderly, and it is relatively easy for them to identify outsiders. In this sense, the community is hypervigilant and criminalizes pedestrians, often calling the police to shoo someone standing outside of their homes, or alerting other neighbors that there is a stranger walking down the street, or even sitting on a park bench. Neighbors say that the thieves identify regular users of different spaces and wait for the right moment to attack. Pedestrians from outside the *colonia* are often youths, construction workers or individuals asking for money from house to house. Parks, according to neighbors, used to be safe. Now they say that there have been robberies there too, and at

least one murder during the daytime in 2019 (see Figure 100). The parks are also frequently tagged by local gangs.

Figure 100 (left) Park in Mar del Norte and Océano Indico in Loma Linda at night.
Photo: Author, 2019.
(right) The park was the scene of a daylight murder on May 2019.
Photo: MVTV, 2019.

Besides being wary of pedestrians who look like outsiders, taxis, ridesharing services, motorcyclists, and large unknown trucks are suspicious. The modus operandi is: a vehicle stops near the pedestrian, the assailant descends from the vehicle and threatens or hits the victim and steals their bag, smartphone or wallet. Other times, they grab the victim's bag while the vehicle is moving, dragging and injuring them, and giving the criminals a quick exit.

Women and youths are often victims of violent daytime robberies in the public space. Taxis and ridesharing services have been known to attempt to kidnap their passengers, especially women. And there are several unregistered taxis circulating the LLP. Unregistered taxis are often the only ones willing to take passengers to the dangerous *colonias* around the LLP. During the weekends there is more movement outside the houses, as visitors circulate (by car) to social gatherings held inside the house or in the garage. This, says a neighbor, was less frequent due to armed robberies and motorcycle robberies on Sunday afternoons. Visitors' cars were often broken into, or robbed of batteries and rearview mirrors.

Nighttime

One of the problems frequently mentioned by residents is lighting in LLP and how it fostered feelings of insecurity and increased crime. At night the streets are poorly lit and empty, especially around schools. Although there are lampposts, most of them emit faint yellow light, or they do not work. The renovated soccer court in Loma Linda and the basketball courts in Unidad Modelo have particularly potent white lights. The main streets are sparsely lit, with light blocked by the existing trees. Many of the streets at the inside of the *colonia* are dark,

except for the lights coming from the garages, the interiors of houses, and from shops and street vendors open at night (see Photo set 3).

Photo set 3 – Main and secondary streets of LLP at night

Main street – Calle Zempoala (Unidad Modelo / Lomas Modelo). Author, 2019.

Main street – Calle Tlatelolco (Unidad Modelo). Author, 2019.
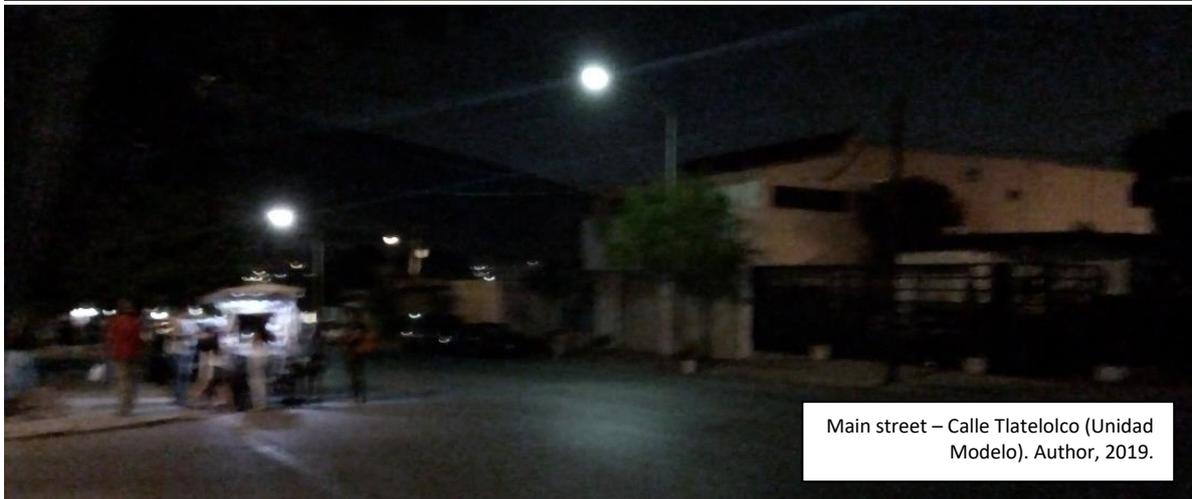
The streets are remarkably empty and (for someone who is unfamiliar with the zone) unnervingly silent during weekdays. On the main streets there were occasionally taco stands or a few stores still open at night. The OXXOs on the corner only serve through a small window, a practice that became de rigueur for the franchise employees due to frequent violent robberies. At night during the weekends, there is loud music; the noise that starts at noon and continues

until early the next morning is one of the most reported problems to the emergency numbers, as explored in CHAPTER 8. Walking alone at night is dangerous, not only because it is hard to see obstacles or potholes, but also because vehicles make rounds to attack unsuspecting pedestrians, and thieves take advantage of the dark and the hiding spots provided by parked cars. However, it is very common for workers to come home at late at night. One of the most important points of entry is Avenida Aztlán, which out of the main streets, is mentioned by LLP residents as being the most dangerous.

Conclusion

As explored in CHAPTER 4 and in the present chapter, residents of Monterrey think of this sector as homogeneously impoverished, dangerous, and a product of *posesionarios* -unless they have either lived there, worked there, or have ties to the LLP. This is consistent with the theory analyzed in CHAPTER 3 and fieldwork results in CHAPTER 8 with regards to familiarity. Even a researcher in social sciences apparently well acquainted with the city assumed the case study would have the exact same issues as the rest of the sector. As mentioned in prior sections, the LLP is often overlooked as being one more violent *colonia* in a violent sector. Fieldwork showed that those familiar with the LLP (especially residents) counter these generalized statements: there are plenty of thefts and violent incidents, but they refuse to be grouped so categorically with the rest of their surrounding *colonias*, particularly when it concerns comparisons of socio-economic levels. Residents are proud of being part of the bonanza provided by industries -an island of social security (such as those described by Duhau & Giglia (2012)) amidst the chaos of the *posesionarios*.

The urban history of this sector set the stage for issues of inequality, as happened in other Latin-American cities that were rapidly growing in the XXth century. An influx of immigration from rural populations brought on housing crises, and solutions were put into place, defined by class and position in the industrial process of production. The LLP is an example of this -not to mention that it was a groundbreaking experiment at the time. However, the conditions of inequality with regards to its neighbors were never completely resolved. The LLP has constantly perceived itself threatened by their informal neighbors -subjected to a historic accumulation of disadvantages. The crisis of violence detailed in CHAPTER 6, security "equalized" the city: you are at risk of being shot in the nice formal *colonias* too (Soto Canales, 2018). Still, the stereotypes have prevailed and authorities' actions to provide solutions to social inequality are highly limited. Even with the shared experiences of violence and the generalized negative perception of law enforcement, LLP is more likely than its neighboring *colonias* to receive attention from the police, as we will see in CHAPTER 10.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 4, reports of crime only show a very partial image of what the experience of violence really is. In this case, it shows us that robberies and thefts are reported the most. It is remarkable that in three *colonias* of LLP the second most reported incident is domestic violence (and the most reported incident in one of the *colonias*), despite the low interest from authorities and the discouragement from reporting it. Gender is also a

differentiator in victimization: most crimes reported are committed by men, and women are frequent victims of robberies in small businesses and shops in the LLP. Interviews with residents provide much required nuance to experiences of victimization, and reveal the many incidents that are not communicated to the police.

Adding to the aforementioned phenomena of inequality and crime, the configuration and deteriorated state of public spaces in LLP contributes to insecurity. The main streets that surround each *colonia* concentrate commercial activity, while the inside of the *colonia* is predominantly residential. Streets are empty most of the day as residents depart for their jobs or studies. Jacobs' (1993) eyes on the street are absent, except for housewives, the elderly, and school-aged children -i.e. vulnerable groups. The conditions of the public space prior to the upsurge of violence were not ideal, but the increasing crime rates and risks of being in the exterior have worsen the state of neglect and the residents' distance from them. Residents are not very concerned with the presence of graffiti or garbage unless it is in their immediate vicinity; as mentioned in this chapter, residents are very protective of the fronts of their houses. Abandoned houses or plots with accumulated garbage are discussed as problems of hygiene, not security. Still, residents are unlikely to intervene on their own because they believe it is not their responsibility, and if there is another neighbor involved, they will try to avoid any confrontations -although they may complain about it online. The element most identified as worrisome for security is public lighting, either because they cannot see if there is a potential aggressor or because they are afraid of hitting someone with their car in the dark. Violent incidents are frequent on the streets of the LLP even during daytime. However, nighttime is the most critical moment. Activity on the streets is even more reduced than during the day, and the streets of LLP are unsafe due to the lack of lighting. And while pedestrians are victimized the most, the public space is predominantly interpreted through the eyes of drivers. Like in the rest of the city, streets are seen as spaces for cars.

The extraordinary incidents such as murder are highly visible and tell how dangerous the LLP can be, however, residents are much more concerned with less spectacular incidents, such as the invasion of what they consider *their* public spaces by strangers of other *colonias*, fearing that they come to steal -this is discussed in detail in CHAPTER 10. As mentioned in CHAPTER 5 and CHAPTER 7, public spaces are not spaces to stay: parks and courts are there to play sports or for children to play, and occasionally hold meetings; streets are for car transit and on specific moments for commerce. Pedestrians are then seen a nuisance for car flow and a potential thief. Any deviation from this program is notorious and suspicious, particularly if the user looks like they "do not belong" there. Still, the pedestrians that use the streets are in frequent danger: the conditions for walking are very inadequate and they are often seen as easy targets for criminals. These conditions are accentuated for the elderly, youths, women, and handicapped individuals.

Chapter 10 - The inner dynamics

Results from the observations conducted in the case study have informed previous chapters on matters of police action, the city dwellers' representations of crime, and more specifically, the analysis of the Sector Norte and the case study of the LLP in CHAPTER 9. Having covered the historical, social, functional, and perceptual aspects of the built environment of public space and their relationship with feelings of insecurity from the residents, the present chapter will focus on the dynamics of a neighborhood watch active in the LLP.

The first part of the chapter will set the context of community-oriented policing (COP). I have already presented the theoretical background of this strategy on PART 1 and how it has been integrated into public policy in Mexico and Nuevo León in CHAPTER 8. Here I go into further detail about some of its shortcomings of application based on fieldwork results. This context is important because the observed case attempts to create this connection between city dwellers and police officers. The next part of this chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the organization and structure of MVV: How does it work? Is it effective against violence? How is it perceived by city dwellers? What kinds of impact does the group have on feelings of insecurity, practices, and public space? How are the issues of participation dealt with by the group?

On the final section of the chapter I analyze the group's priorities and actions regarding violence in public spaces, the interaction with law enforcement, and the kind of impact the group has on practices in public space and on the prevention of violence. I examine how the dominant discourses of violence are either reproduced or challenged in this group, and I seek to answer the question: who is in and who is out of these discourses? Who is silent (or silenced), even involuntarily? Finally, I present an analysis of these silent populations and their feelings of insecurity and practices in public spaces. The information presented is the result of following the activities of a MVV, a neighborhood watch in LLP between May 2018 and February 2021. During this time, I carried out observations, interviews, digital ethnography, surveys, and workshops, the results of which help answer the questions enunciated above.

10.1 Community-oriented policing and neighborhood organization online and offline

10.1.1 Contextualizing community-oriented policing: socio-spatial inequality and differences between theory and practice

Regardless of the definitions on paper, the implementation of an effective COP model has been deficient. Outside of Escobedo, efforts to actually integrate COP into municipal police corps took place as late as 2015 and in some cases until 2019 and 2020. Confusion regarding roles and competencies of police is commonplace for city dwellers and even the police and public officials themselves. Regarding Guardia Auxiliar officers -the recently implemented proximity police force-, the mayor of Monterrey mistakenly defined them as "personnel that, although they have all the requirements to be a police officer, they lack paperwork [to become police officers] and they focus on *colonias*"[104] (Gobierno de Monterrey, 2020a), a statement which undermines the actual role of these type of police. This idea that proximity police officers in *colonias* are less prepared or have less power is shared by residents, who often do not rely on the Guardia Auxiliar (or any of its predecessors) because they think they will solve nothing. Residents do not know who they should ask for help and in which cases, so they will skip the *colonia* officer and look for a higher ranking official from other police corps.

As for the residents' committees in *colonias*, most residents of MMA -and even police officers- are unaware that this possibility exists in the law, they ignore where to go to for more information or what the legal requirements are. It is worth noting that on the Centro and south sector of Monterrey several of these officially registered committees emerged with the so-called initiatives for community activation in CHAPTER 7 (see Map 27). In these cases, the meetings with law enforcement are often organized by the project managers, not by the neighbors themselves. Other unofficial groups and neighborhood watches (often emerging through social media, as we will observe in the next section), may also reach out to the police for information and help. On their end, police officers affirm that organization of neighborhood watches is very important and helps them establish a more positive link with the community (see Figure 101). Nevertheless, the outreach from and to police in middle class *colonias* and on private-funded urban development projects contrast heavily with the negative and violent experiences of residents of lower class *colonias*.

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[104] Son elementos que, aunque cumplen todos los requisitos para ser policía les falta una documentación y está más enfocada en las colonias.

Map 27 Officially registered neighborhood watches in Monterrey.
On the Centro and south sector of Monterrey several of these officially registered committees emerged with the so-called initiatives for community activation.
Source: Google Maps (2021), modifications by author.

Figure 101 Interactions of neighborhood groups and the police.
(left) Online meeting between comissioner of Seguridad Pública y Vialidad de Monterrey and neighbors of Distrito Tec and Mesa Metrópoli Monterrey. June 19, 2020.
Source: Facebook – Seguridad Pública y Vialidad de Monterrey. Retrieved on 06/05/2021. https://www.facebook.com/spv.monterrey/posts/1154774204888384

On July 2020, the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública y Vialidad de Monterrey organized a series of virtual meetings with residents of *colonias* around Distrito Tec, which is unusual in the locality. A user remarked: "why only these *colonias*? Is it because they are *fraccionamientos*?" (Seguridad Pública y Vialidad de Monterrey, 2020) -referring to the common notion among city dwellers that *fraccionamientos* are neighborhoods for the upper class. This user is not alone in this assessment. Interviews with residents in *colonias* of the Sector Norte reveal that the treatment they can expect from law enforcement depends on their area of residence. Flora, a 25-year old saleswoman living in Emiliano Zapata, an impoverished *colonia popular* in Monterrey (located across the street of the LLP case study, see CHAPTER 9), narrated the following:

> [The police] don't come up here when we need them, and when they do come up here, they are violent, they take it out against the neighbors. Like, a lady was shot, the neighbors went out to help her, the patrol cars arrived, and they ended up beating the neighbors. The police murdered a young guy in Avenida Aztlan, he was unarmed, but they said he was a criminal. And there is a lot of abuse against women and little girls here but they don't do anything. Girls from this sector have been murdered, but they [authorities] forget quickly about the women murdered here. They don't matter, their cases are not investigated, unless politicians can profit off their death and look good (interview Flora, February 17, 2019)[105].

To this, her colleague Armando commented:

> We don't call them. The cure is worse than the disease. They end up blaming you for things you didn't do. They may say that you were carrying drugs. They are violent particularly against men from around here. They search their bags and sometimes they plant stuff in them. One man was beaten on his way home, he had medication on his bag because he had a heart condition. The police said it was drugs, they tried to get him to give them money, and they beat him. Then the neighbors went out to defend him and everybody started throwing hands, I think there were shots fired too (interview Armando, February 17, 2019)[106].

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[105] [La policía] no viene aquí cuando se necesitan, y cuando vienen, se ponen violentos, la agarran contra los vecinos. Por ejemplo, una señora que le dispararon, los vecinos salieron a ayudarla, llegaron las patrullas, y terminaron golpeando a los vecinos. La policía asesinó a un muchacho en Avenida Aztlan, iba desarmado, pero dijeron que era un criminal. Y hay mucho abuso contra mujeres y niñas aquí pero nunca hacen nada. Han asesinado chavas de aquí, pero [a las autoridades] se les olvida rápido de las mujeres muertas de aquí. No importan. Sus casos no se investigan, a menos que los políticos puedan sacar provecho para verse bien.

[106] No les llamamos. Sale más caro el caldo que las albóndigas. Terminan inculpándote por cosas que no hiciste. O te dicen que traes drogas. Se ponen violentos en especial con los hombres de aquí. Les abren las mochilas y a veces les plantan cosas. A un señor lo golpearon cuando iba rumbo a su casa, traía medicamento en la mochila

Another interviewee, Salvador, tells of his personal experience with the police in Burócratas Moctezuma a high-crime *colonia* east of the LLP (see CHAPTER 9):

> I don't trust them. They have threatened me to give them money. They almost arrested my brother because he was smoking pot on our porch. Once some armed guys in a truck tried to abduct me. But the police are busy hunting junkies or drunkards to extort (interview Salvador, February 19, 2019)[107].

These opinions coming from residents of neighboring *colonias* contrast with the relationship members of the LLP neighborhood watch have with police officers. Across social classes there is a constant tension between the demand of law and order and the mistrust and low opinion people have of police. However, the rejection of interaction with the police is more present in residents of lower-class *colonias*. Participation and collective action are already rare in MMA as it is, the differential treatment city dwellers may receive in function of their social position or *colonia* of residence further hinders the potential effects of COP in the communities that would need violence prevention the most. Middle-class *colonias* are more likely to participate, as is the case with the LLP neighborhood watch.

10.1.2 Neighborhood groups: from online forums to offline action

In CHAPTER 6 and CHAPTER 8 we observed how city dwellers of Monterrey use social media as means of communication and the impact it has on representations of groups, and the shaping and reproduction of discourses of insecurity at a city level. I will now focus on these forms of communication and organization at a neighborhood-level. Online FB and WA Communities emerge spontaneously focusing on general wellbeing on a specific *colonia* to post less attention-grabbing information than the large-scale Communities, but which is more pertinent for groups of neighbors. These Communities -often in the form of FB Groups- allow users to seek help and share information useful for everyday life in their *colonias*, such as informal sales, government procedures, school schedules, fundraisers, employment opportunities, but also to complain or ask for help regarding neighborhood nuisances. Texts, videos or photographs allow reporting in real time, thus incidents can be easily confirmed or rebutted. WhatsApp is convenient to organize small communities through Group Chats (a group of friends, family members or neighbors of a *colonia* or group of *colonias*). Group Chats allow for much more privacy, members need to have a legitimate cell phone number to be added to the Group Chat. Based on observations during fieldwork, WA is at times much more accessible for the elderly than Facebook. It has the added dimension of perceived closeness to the contacts in WA. Being an instant messaging app, it is useful for issues that need an immediate answer, or to send information live, while Facebook Communities are mostly used for non-urgent matters. For example, female users may ask their Facebook friends or

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porque está enfermo del corazón. La policía dijo que eran drogas, trataron de sacarle dinero y lo golpearon. Luego salieron los vecinos para defenderlo y empezaron los madrazos, creo que también dispararon.

[107] No confío en ellos. Me han amenazado para sacarme dinero. Casi arrestaron a mi hermano por fumar *mota* en el porche. Una vez unos vatos armados pasaron en camioneta y me querían levantar. Pero la policía está más ocupada cazando *mariguanos* o borrachos para sacarles dinero.

Communities for recommendations of transportation services, but they are more likely to send a message to their family's or friends' WA Group Chat if they are being followed on the street.

It is fairly easy to join a FB or WA community and post about a problem. However, even when violence is a common problem acknowledged by all (albeit with their biases and stereotypes), no one wants to be the first to demand action, unless they know they will have guaranteed support from others. This is especially the case if they want to bring up matters they should not be complaining about and for which they are going to be mocked, such as noisy neighbors or government inaction. This wariness of mockery biases what kinds of problems appear in groups. Additionally, members post their grievances expecting not a solution, they do it to vent or to seek validation from others in the same situation. Once one member decides to complain about something, other neighbors pile in, making fun of the person, mentioning their own problems or taking advantage of the attention to promote their businesses.

In turn, these Communities for *colonias* can give way to neighborhood watches -groups dedicated specifically to the security of the *colonia*, where residents can alert each other of the presence of strangers or of the occurrence of incidents such as damaged infrastructure, presence of trash, noisy neighbors or crime. Users also share news related to the topic of security or to the community, report incidents, and give recommendations to stay safe. These Communities (usually in the form of FB Groups) are more manageable since the target area and its population is smaller and many have set their admittance to Private. Neighborhood watches are mostly formed unofficially without institutional support -and thus invisible to authorities for COP. Residents have to reach out to them. Their approach to security is very traditional, focusing on the defense of private property -which often includes public spaces, as many middle-class residents dislike the use of *their* public parks and streets by those who do not live in their *colonia* (however, as observations in CHAPTER 8, CHAPTER 9 and this chapter reveal, being chased out from a public space is due mostly for the aspect of the individual and stereotypes about less affluent *colonias*). This modality requires more organization and is more dependent on users' active participation. However, even though security is a daily concern, it is complicated to get neighbors to participate -online and more so offline. So, it is common for Communities to stay as in the middle ground of a mutual aid group or to report infrastructure were one can also occasionally mention security-related incidents without it being the central topic.

Groups that spring into action are mostly located in middle-class neighborhoods and above; they hold meetings and collect money to pay for maintenance of common spaces, alarms, private security, petition the municipality for repairs, and to stay in contact with police (see Figure 102). Groups for neighborhood management are part of the features of *fraccionamientos privados,* where a group is necessary to monitor the maintenance of common areas and the payment of private security.
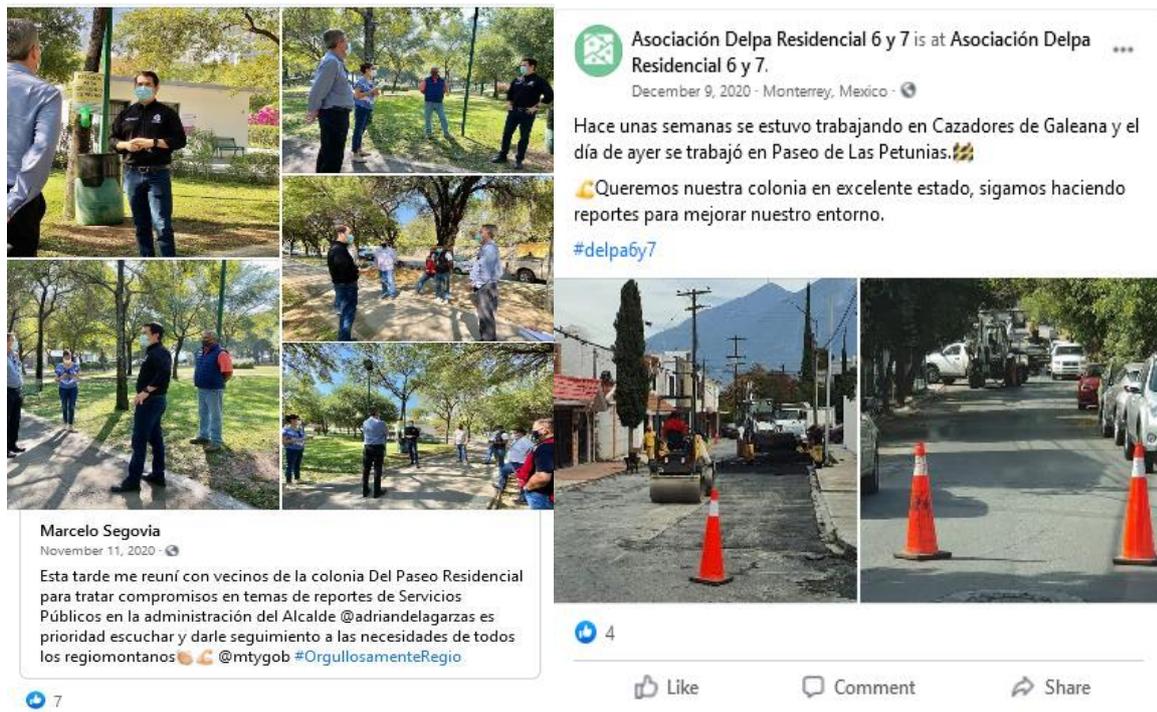
Figure 102 Groups in MMA getting the attention of authorities.
(left)Meeting between neighborhood committee of Del Paseo Residencial with elected official to discuss reports of faulty infrastructure, November 11, 2020.
Source: Facebook – Asociación Delpa Residencial 6 y 7. Retrieved on 06/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/AsociacionDelpaResidencial6y7/posts/3448799405188384
(right) Results of the meeting: repairs of pavement in two streets of the colonia, December 9, 2020.
Source: Facebook – Asociación Delpa Residencial 6 y 7. Retrieved on 06/05/2021.
https://www.facebook.com/AsociacionDelpaResidencial6y7/posts/3525375870864070

For a group to jump to offline action, there needs to be a leader. Neighborhood groups that last are created and led by middle-class male residents who are comfortable addressing authorities and who are respected in their community. Sometimes they created the group after other neighbors have gone to them for help. The community recognize them as trustworthy and knowledgeable. They are familiar with how the government works -working as lawyers, bureaucrats, reporters, notaries or employees in different offices. Being well connected and knowing their way around bureaucracy and hierarchies of public officials is a plus. And there are rare cases where the leader is simply a highly motivated neighbor. Without these leaders, the groups do not last. Once the leader has made himself visible to the group, members go to him to ask for help solving problems. However, initiatives from leaders is not always well received; altruistic actions and community organization is unusual in Monterrey. Residents wonder what they are gaining from it. In cases observed in LLP and other *colonias*, leaders were promptly accused of working for a political party. On one case in an upper-middle class *fraccionamiento* south of Monterrey, the leader of a group was criticized by leaders of other *colonias* for suggesting residents to demand police to patrol the streets, and stop paying for private security -and therefore, damaging the community by leaving it unprotected-, so they were probably working also with criminals. In other cases, neighbors treat the leaders as employees, expecting them to solve each and every problem of infrastructure in the neighborhood -even those that have not been explicitly mentioned to them. Non-members see,

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for example, that a leader managed to get public services to collect garbage in a park, they wonder why the leader did not bother to tell them about the problem of garbage in the rest of the parks of the *colonia*, and feel that the leaders are only working for their friends. Beyond leadership, perception of the groups -whether it stays as an information group or transcends to offline action- is mixed. For some, it is a useful tool to get help and information, while others consider it a place for gossips and snobs. Members that mention a problem that is not popular (loud neighbors, for example) will face derision, motivating them to leave the group.

10.2 Mi Vecino Vigilante (MVV): neighbors organizing against violence

Mi Vecino Vigilante (MVV) is an informal neighborhood watch (not legally constituted as an association, nor does it receive government support). It was created by Joel A. in 2015, a neighbor from Loma Linda, after witnessing several robberies in the street in front of his house, listening to anecdotes from other neighbors regarding crimes and acts of violence, and in the face of the lack of response of the authorities. He was later joined by Alberto, another neighbor who wanted to help with online community management. MVV began with neighbors from Loma Linda, and afterwards neighbors from Villa Alegre joined in, followed by Lomas Modelo and Unidad Modelo.

The group is not the only neighborhood watch active in the LLP. Neighborhood watches became popular due to the rise in common crime that came with the rise in organized crime in MMA. However, few groups go beyond online activities of communication between neighbors. And while chaotic, the group has managed to organize themselves online and offline with police and other local actors with the aim of improving security and social cohesion, which makes it stand out from other groups both in the sector and in the city. The group has gained visibility and importance because they have a visible presence in the *colonias*. Their first activities were to create an online community. Later they started distributing posters around the *colonia* (see Figure 103), as means to communicate that the streets are being watched. Eventually they managed to get in touch with the police, and being perceived as legitimate, they began with the collection of funds to install collective alarms in the *colonias*. And their actions eventually caught the attention of the media, who interviewed the group about their demands of security. This group has also become popular for the mutual help between neighbors for matters unrelated to security. By sharing posts, they have managed to collect funds, toys, and medication for neighbors in need. Their actions have been notorious enough that people have spontaneously manifested curiosity about who is behind the posters they see on the street. The visibility and their longevity make it an interesting case to observe in a context where long-term projects and collective action are rare.

Members are mostly lower-middle class. Coordinators highlight that many residents of LLP are college educated and remark that their profile is different from the neighboring *colonias*, who they perceive as a threat, as discussed in CHAPTER 9. And while it is peculiar in the sector in which it is located, this kind of organization is not unique, especially in middle-class

neighborhoods located right next to lower-class neighborhoods. The shared problems of insecurity, the personal experiences, and in some cases, the family ties between residents from the different neighborhoods in the LLP motivated them to participate.

Figure 103 Signs placed in Loma Linda and Unidad Modelo.
Photos: Author, MVV, 2019-2020.

10.1.3 Social media at the heart of neighbors' everyday life in LLP

MVV was born as a Facebook page and then it integrated a WhatsApp group. As is the case of many of these groups in the locality, in essence these communities emerge as virtual spaces for mutual help. The Facebook Group is private and has over 1,400 members and 2 admins. The Page has over 2,200 followers. To join the Facebook Group, one has to answer several questions. This is done to avoid the massive entry of users, for security and organization of the group. And although the goal was that of neighbors self-organizing to be alert about security, other topics easily leak here. Given that the neighbors of the zone are already "there", members and admins take the opportunity to ask for information or share news or images. The Facebook group's description is frequently changed to update rules and e-mail addresses. The most recent iteration reads:

> We encourage solidarity ties between neighbors, and recover public spaces for the benefit of our families, reduce the opportunity that the offender has, and scare off the offender. REPORT HERE IN THE GROUP (assaults, thefts, crime) that have HAPPENED to NEIGHBORS or RELATIVES here in Loma Linda and neighboring *colonias* (…) WE ENCOURAGE MANY TO BE WATCHFUL NEIGHBORS! MOST URGENT MATTERS ON OUR WHATSAPP AND TELEGRAM GROUPS [listing of contact an email address, a phone number, and the links to WhatsApp and Telegram groups] TO JOIN, YOU WILL HAVE TO ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS. OBLIGATORY! Rights of admission to the GROUP MVV reserved! We in this group try to DO SOMETHING

for the NEIGHBOR. WE TREAT TOPICS WITH RESPECT and in this group WE WILL ALWAYS ASK YOU FOR CORDIALITY AND RESPECT. We are the ones responsible for the POSTERS in several houses and streets of *COLONIAS* LOMA LINDA AND VILLA ALEGRE, and other *colonias*. WE ARE ALSO THE ADMINISTRATORS of the NEIGHBORHOOD ALARMS located in LOMA LINDA AND VILLA ALEGRE[108]" (field notes – MVV description, 2021).

Per the group's description, there is an acknowledgement of the loss of public spaces. They aim to recover them, as they feel they have lost them to crime. What was the previous situation that they wish to go back to? The description is emphatic on their actions and the neighbors: they stress the importance of acting in benefit of their community. This is due to the perception that if they do not take care of one another, no one else will, as the police is not always reliable, and list the steps they have taken. The group's description puts several words in uppercase because they are answers to the most recurrent questions (they often remark that people do not read the information they put out): why was my request to join refused? In what *colonia* are you located? Are you the ones of the posters? Are you the ones with the alarms? The remarks about cordiality and respect are also alluding to the common situation of people posting something in the group and other users piling up to criticize or mock, eventually turning into a chaotic flame war of gifs, memes, and publicity, and they end up calling the administrators to mediate the situation. This results in a "both sides were wrong" type of resolution, whatever the subject of the conversation was.

For the sake of convenience, the activity of the Facebook group has been complemented with WhatsApp Groups. According to the administrators, there are more people watching what happens on WhatsApp than on Facebook, and it is easier to add people with a phone number, and it is easier for the users to ask to be added, rather than looking for the group on Facebook. Seeing that other FB and WA neighbor Communities become saturated of posts that ultimately

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[108] Fomentar lazos solidarios entre vecinos, y recuperar los espacios públicos en beneficio de nuestras familias, disminuir la oportunidad que tiene el delincuente, y ahuyentar al delincuente. REPORTE AQUÍ EN EL GRUPO INCIDENTES (agresiones, robos, delincuencia) que les HAYA SUCEDIDO a VECINOS o a sus FAMILIARES aquí en la COLONIA LOMA LINDA o ALREDEDORES.

¡MOTIVAMOS A MUCHOS A SER *VECINO VIGILANTE*!

REPORTES DE MAYOR URGENCIA A NUESTROS GRUPOS DE WHATSAPP o TELEGRAM.

[los administradores agregan aquí direcciones de correo, números de teléfono y links para acceder a grupos de WhatsApp y Telegram]

PARA INGRESAR a ESTE GRUPO AL DAR "UNIRSE" DEBERÁ RESPONDER UNAS PREGUNTAS. ¡RIGUROSO! Nos reservamos el derecho de entrar al grupo MI VECINO VIGILANTE

Nosotros en este grupo tratamos de HACER ALGO por el VECINO. TRATAMOS LOS TEMAS CON RESPETO, en este grupo SIEMPRE TE PEDIREMOS CORDIALIDAD y RESPETO.

Somos responsables de los CARTELES en varias CASAS y CALLES de las *COLONIAS* LOMA LINDA y VILLA ALEGRE, y otras *colonias* alrededor.

También, SOMOS LOS ADMINISTRADORES de las ALARMAS VECINALES ubicadas en las Cols. LOMA LINDA Y VILLA ALEGRE.

many ignore, the administrators have established two WA groups: "Vecinos Vigilantes" (VeVig) and "Asuntos Generales" (AGen). AGen is mostly a free-for-all group, where neighbors are free to share anything to the community. Here, neighbors share chain messages, prayers, greetings, memes, news, fake news, funny videos, they advertise garage sales, ask for information about street markets or the COVID 19 vaccine scheduling, they fight over political candidates -until they leave or are kicked out-, and ask about police, suspicious individuals, and crime. The WA Groups' members are mostly over 45 years old. For the less tech savvy and the elderly, sending chain messages is an easy way to stay in touch and essentially signal their presence to the group. They use chain messages to interact with the community, which can be in the form of text, images, video, and audio. However, their phones become saturated with the multimedia content that gets download automatically. In the end, many of these messages get ignored. Every day there are between 15 to 30 chain messages in the AGen group along with other messages asking questions about everyday life in LLP, and up to 200 text messages with reaction stickers when there is a noteworthy topic being discussed. This is the opposite in the VeVig group. Messages in VeVig must be exclusively about insecurity, otherwise the message is deleted by the administrators. If the user continues messaging about other topics, they are suspended and admins reach out to him/her to let them know about the rules. Here urgent incidents are shared in real time. And since there are police officers added to the group, many neighbors in the WA VeVig group prefer to report incidents here instead of calling 911.

In addition to unnecessary postings in the application, administrators are faced with the problem of user limit, as the application limits users to less than 260 people. To date, there are 253 users added to the WhatsApp group. As of February 2019, a new group was created on the Telegram app, which allows other types of interaction and a larger number of users. However, this process is complicated by the fact that many of the users are seniors who have difficulty handling smartphones. Some of them resort to having their grandchildren in charge of their profiles, as noted in CHAPTER 4. Added to this, there are people in the WhatsApp group who do not live in the area, or who even live in Canada or the USA. According to the interviews with the coordinators, they are close relatives of seniors who live in the LLP but do not have a smartphone or who are not technologically literate. Then, their children or grandchildren enter the group and in case something happens they rely the information through a phone call or a text message.

10.1.1 Offline activity: an uphill battle against feelings of insecurity

Seeing the popularity this group gained online in FB and then in WA, Joel and Alberto began organizing in-person events. They advertise the time and place of the meetings in the online communities, which take the form of block and general meetings. The block meetings are held at night on the street, in front of a neighbor's house with the permission of the owner (see Figure 104). The general meetings, on the other hand, happen in parks or common spaces for the *colonia*, mainly the Loma Linda soccer field and the polyvalent park in Unidad Modelo (see

Figure 105). During these meetings, Joel and Alberto show a PowerPoint presentation to explain the group's goals, activities, and achievements. They explain the process for joining the Facebook and WhatsApp Communities to join, the functioning of the alarm, the costs to have alarm activation permits, give recommendations for everyday practices, and they wrap up the meeting with a word from FC officers. At the end of the meeting, Joel and Alberto pass around a sign-up sheet and distribute pamphlets informing the community about MVV and how to join them.

Figure 104 Block meetings in the porch of a neighbor's house (left) and on a park due to COVID 19 (right).
Photos: MVV, 2020.

Figure 105 General meeting with neighbors at the Loma Linda soccer field.
Photo: Author, 2018.

Meetings are supposed to start at 7 pm or 8 pm, but this is rarely the case. Often, at the beginning of the meeting there are 6 people and as the meeting progresses more people approach or there are people listening from inside their homes. Attendance numbers oscillate between 10 to 20 people. Most neighbors are shy and do not speak up easily. In the general meetings, most are unwilling to sit in the front row, and even if there are chairs available, they prefer to stand in the back. It is before and after these meetings that neighbors spontaneously gather in small groups and talk to each other about their experiences of insecurity.

The audience of meetings consists predominantly of women of around 40 years of age. Elderly women 60 years of age and above are also present, however their presence is less for the general meetings due to mobility issues and the risks of victimization and the limited visibility and risk of an accident. Men are also present, but in a lesser degree. Other than small children in the company of their caretakers (mostly women), younger neighbors are not present in these meetings (people under 20).

In-person meetings are important, particularly to reach out to the elderly residents who are, as Joel and Alberto put it "our eyes and ears everywhere. They are the ones that are at home most, and they know everyone. They are very observant, and they care a lot about the *colonia* because they were the first to settle here"[109] (interview Joel & Alberto, February 2, 2019). One of their most active allies in Unidad Modelo is Lourdes, a 68-year-old resident who is well-known by her neighbors and is often a person they come to when they have a problem. In-person meetings are an opportunity to try and help palliate the limitations of technological illiteracy. As Lourdes states, her and others her age and over have required to learn to use smartphones, although they still depend on their grandchildren to do it. She mentioned that the lack of skills using smartphones and apps limit the degree of participation she and others in her position can have online. During meetings, the conversation often takes a brief detour from alarms and patrols to explain residents how to add contacts on their phones, how to download WhatsApp, how to send messages, and how they can be added to the WA Group Chat.

Like in several cases throughout this research project, the main informants' profile is extraordinary in a context where lack of participation is the norm. They are willing to carry out actions that go beyond social media, they were open to speak about events, and that they are the ones that are in close contact with the police, and so they are confident and comfortable enough to speak to them directly. And in the case of Lourdes, she has held public office, has members of her family who also work in public services. These individuals are trustworthy in their community, and neighbors often rely on them to solve conflicts and communicate with authorities.

Joel and Alberto often patrol the streets in their own cars. They circle the *colonia* with a dashcam and share photos or videos to FB and WA. They have also placed posters around the LLP -particularly in Loma Linda- to make the presence of the neighborhood watch known. In the words of Alberto:

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[109] Nuestros adultos mayores son nuestros ojos y oídos en toda la zona. Son ellos quienes están en casa con más frecuencia y conocen a todos. Son muy observadores y les importa mucho la colonia porque fueron de los primeros en establecerse aquí.

> Ever since we started doing rounds and putting up posters with our logo, the thieves moved to Lomas Modelo and Unidad Modelo. [The neighbors] jokingly tell us it's our fault, but we tell them to join us[110] (interview Joel & Alberto, February 2, 2019).

Joel and Alberto comment on the struggle of getting the neighbors to participate. In their experience, the neighbors do not want to get involved in person, although Facebook groups that talk about the neighborhood are very active. As Lourdes remarks:

> People complain a lot but they do not act. They say that insecurity is going up again, but they won't call the police, they won't talk to each other. They want things to be solved, but they don't do anything to help solve them[111] (interview Lourdes, February 18, 2019).

Another issue is that neighbors do not want to be identified as being part of a group of security, because they believe that they may be perceived as having things worth stealing, they are afraid they will be targeted and observed. As mentioned in CHAPTER 4, they are very against giving information for surveys or participating in activities in public. Many fear retaliations from denouncing crimes. For example, as Joel went over the process of how to activate the alarm by phone and under what kinds of circumstances, he assured the neighbors that the alarm system does not store names.

10.3 Actors, discourses, and silences of security in MVV: feelings of insecurity and everyday practices

10.1.4 The groups' priorities

The consensus among members is that "it all began with the killings[112]" (field notes – general meeting, May 14, 2018) referring to the period of violence in 2009-2013. The mark this period left on city dwellers cannot be overstated. Members present during the meetings share personal experiences of victimization from criminals on the streets or in their homes. These experiences range from theft of rocking chairs, plants, or garbage bins from outside of their homes to violent assaults with bats, robberies at gunpoint, and thieves breaking down walls to rob. Undeniably, residents of LLP have frequently been confronted with crime and violence (see Figure 106 and Figure 107). Two words that are repeatedly brought up when speaking about motivations to join the group are *impotencia* (feeling incapable of acting) and *hartazgo* (being fed up by crime happening every day). While the list of possible incidents to report varies (see Figure 108), the group is mostly concerned with four issues: breaking and entering, carjacking, thefts, and robberies to pedestrians by criminals on foot or riding a vehicle. As mentioned in CHAPTER

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[110] Desde que empezamos con los rondines y a poner posters con el logo, los ladrones se movieron a Lomas Modelo y Unidad Modelo. [Los vecinos] nos dicen en broma que es nuestra culpa, pero nosotros les decimos que se nos unan.

[111] La gente se queja mucho, pero no actúan. Dicen que la inseguridad va de subida otra vez, pero no le llaman a la policía, no se comunican entre ellos. Quieren que las cosas se resuelvan, pero no hacen nada para ayudar a resolverlas.

[112] Todo empezó con las matazones.

9, the circulation of unauthorized taxis is often brought up during the meetings. Per their experiences, members agree that taxis and motorbikes are the vehicles criminals use the most, and occasionally bikes. To this, during a meeting, a neighbor who manages taxis explained how to identify registered and unregistered taxi units. Ridesharing apps are also a source of concern. Besides fear of being robbed or kidnapped -a fear mostly expressed by women-, there is also a fear that these cars do rounds to identify individuals or houses to rob.

Figure 106 Neighbors share information about their recent experiences of violence.
(left) Facebook post reading: "they are robbing this house. I dial 911 and there's no answer."
(center) Report of an armed robbery against a group of boys in Unidad Modelo.
(right) Report of an armed robbery where robbers pretended to be sicarios.
Source: MVV Facebook group, 2019-2020.

Figure 107 Neighbors share information on the WA and FB groups of the MVV.
(left) Member of the WA group reports a homicide in a park in Loma Linda. Another member says they have already dialed 911, May 22, 2019. Source: MVV WhatsApp group. Retrieved on 22/05/2019.
(right) Admin of FB group shares the screenshot of CCTV saying that there are 5 individuals from Genaro Vazquez robbing in Lomas Modelo and Unidad Modelo, August 11, 2020.
Source: MVV Facebook page. Retrieved on 15/06/2021.

Figure 108 Image shared by MVV group coordinators.
The image shows a list of the kinds of incidents that can be reported to the groups: robberies, burglaries, vehicles, threats,
suspicious individuals, abductions, shoot outs, disturbances, fires, gas and water leaks, first aid emergencies, January 21,
2021.
Source: MVV Facebook Page. Retrieved on 15/06/2021.

Surveillance: every (poor-looking) pedestrian is a potential criminal

In the spirit of preventing these types of incidents, the presence of strange vehicles and -most frequently- individuals is constantly reported in the WA VeVig group with a photo and the location of the suspect. The goal is to be alert in case they see this person. It is noteworthy that on the WA group many of the photos of suspicious individuals are taken from the inside of cars. Among the reasons to be featured as a potential criminal are: knocking on doors to ask for money, work or information, standing on the street, sitting in a park bench (see

Figure 109). If they are available, police will go to the address indicated to investigate and ask the person to move along if they cannot prove that they have any specific business being there. Whatever the case may be, as experiences of victimization and violence in public space continue to be frequent (see Figure 106), members of MVV prefer to err on the side of caution.
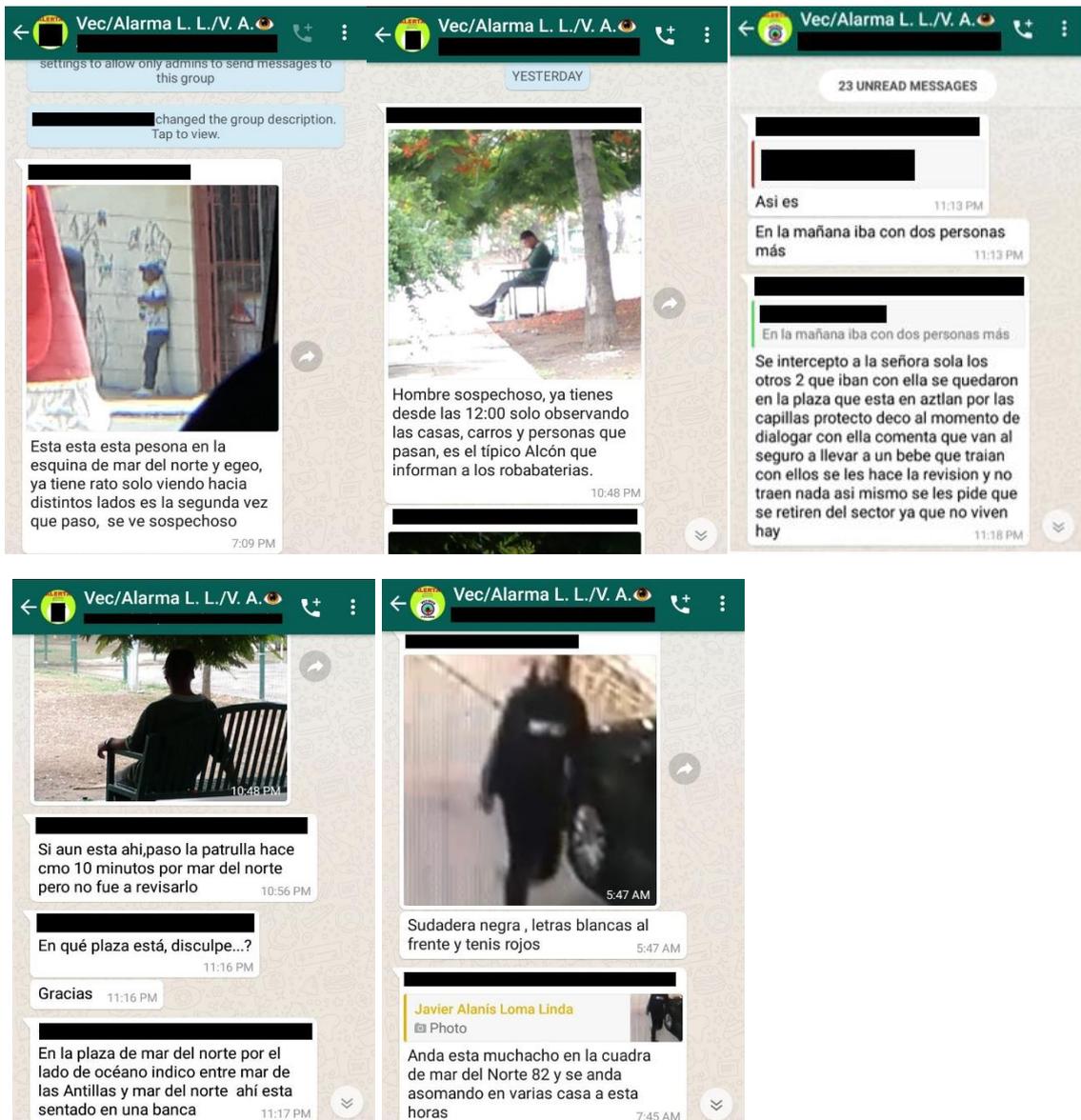
Figure 109 Reports of suspicious individuals in the LLP made to the MVV WhatsApp group.
The suspicious activities depicted: leaning against a wall, a woman walking with a stroller, a man walking down the street looking at houses, sitting on a park bench. Most of them were approached the police to tell them to leave the zone since they do not live there.
Source: MVV WhatsApp group, 2019-2020.

From time to time, a neighbor will approach the suspicious individual only to find out that they were waiting for someone, but neighbors will rarely confront a suspicious individual unless they know they have the upper hand. Self-preservation prevails over civic duty of helping neighbors. While the negative perception of Latin American immigrants is present, it is superseded by the negative image of neighbors from the surrounding *colonias*, as explored in CHAPTER 9. Residents are quick to report when someone from the other side of the hill or from across Avenida Aztlán is walking in their neighborhood. One participant mentioned that he has been stopped by police for walking, and that it was unfair since he lives here and that

the ones they should stop are people from San Bernabé. While the label often used is "*gente de otras colonias*" (people of other neighborhoods), their actual place of residence is less important than their aspect or their body language related to stereotypes. The *gente de otras colonias* is dirty, has tattered clothes or is dressed like a *cholo* or *pandillero* (gang members). They are "looking around", or knock on doors asking for money, offering their services as handymen or selling items -which residents immediately disbelieve and class as suspicious activity. Residents are often surprised to find out that a robbery was committed by a well-dressed man. But most importantly: a suspicious individual is a pedestrian. Interestingly enough, most of the reports by neighbors are done from the inside of cars.

A pattern that emerged on incidents in which residents indeed confronted, threatened or even physically attacked a suspect: the individual was male, young (around 20 years of age), slim, short, they are walking alone on foot or on a bike, and are dark skinned. Larger and older individuals or groups are left alone, as well as those in vehicles; the neighbors report them but will not approach them, unless they feel they can win the battle, so to speak. Even if the individual can prove he is not a criminal, police and residents tell him he cannot be there, walking down the street or sitting in a park bench, using public spaces that apparently do not belong to him. If the police cannot shoo them away, residents will continue reporting him, believing that the police have left a potential criminal free. Reactions towards these individuals are disproportionate. The theft of objects left in front of the houses is frequently mentioned along with the nostalgia of being able to sit in one's porch without fear. Objects such as plant pots, rocking chairs, garbage bins or toys will often be picked up by *pepenadores* and *carretoneros* (unofficial garbage collectors that go through the *colonias* with a horse drawn cart or a tricycle). And as narrated in Figure 110, this is infuriating enough for a neighbor to almost run over the collector. The confrontation seems unfairly stacked in favor of the middle-class driver of a 4x4 pickup truck against a man in a bicycle over the theft of a garbage bin. Facing constant robberies and thefts, residents will take whatever victories they can, no matter how unbalanced they may be.

Figure 110 Theft of garbage bins and confrontations.
(left) a member of the group shares CCTV footage of a stranger stealing their garbage bin from their front door. February 26, 2019.
Source: MVV Facebook group. Retrieved on 15/06/2021.
(right) MVV admin shares a post advising members to pay attention to their garbage bins, as they are taken by people passing by, accompanied by an image. The author of the post tells that scrap metal collector grabbed a garbage bin, the owner chased him with his car and ran over the collector's tricycle, July 16, 2020.
Source: MVV Facebook group. Retrieved on 15/06/2021.

The state of public infrastructure and services are also a topic of interest for the group in terms of security and participation. Joel and Alberto oftentimes post information about the broken window theory to motivate neighbors to report and care for the aspect of their environment if they want to feel more secure. Lack of public lights, presence of trash, and abandoned houses are among the main problems of services and infrastructure related to security. Streetlights that do not work make the streets unsafe at night and early in the morning. Trash bags can contain body parts, or may simply be an uncivil neighbor -or someone from other *colonia*- dumping construction debris where they should not and therefore would be committing an infraction (see Figure 111). Individuals also dump trash bags, broken furniture, and construction debris in abandoned houses.

Figure 111 (left) User reports a man lying on a street in Loma Linda and that she called 911 but they did not come, March 22, 2019.
Source: MVV FB group. Retrieved on 15/06/2021.
(right) User reports a suspicious-looking garbage bag dumped on a street in Unidad Modelo, March 23, 2021. Source: MVV FB group.
Source: MVV FB group. Retrieved on 15/06/2021.

Neighborhood alarms

In 2018 MVV raised funds and installed the first neighborhood alarm near the soccer court in Loma Linda. The people who paid were given access to a telephone number through which they can activate the alarm with a call or an SMS and pay a fee for maintenance. This alarm is connected to the offices of the FC. The process of activating the alarm is confusing for the neighbors. It has been activated by mistake several times, and on other occasions, it is activated too late or it is not activated at all until it is verified by different channels that a crime is in fact taking place. In several events, neighbors first send a message about the suspicion of a person breaking into a house, followed by a series of confused and confusing messages asking what happened, where, if it was serious, at the same time that they call neighbors in the area to find out if everything is okay. And while members have access to the alarm, they do not know how to use it. So, they tell the group to activate it for them. All this before the alarm was triggered. One of these events culminated in the arrest of a criminal who was fleeing from a house after stealing. This incident was later reported by the news, praising the work of the police and the neighbors. On the opposite side, a woman was robbed at gunpoint walking at night, and she tried to activate the alarm, but failed. She later called the administrator, who told her that the alarm was working. Days later, she borrowed a phone to send a message to the VeVig WA group that the alarm did not work, and the administrator blamed her for not using the WA group to ask for help as she was being robbed (her phone was stolen), while simultaneously telling her not to bring these kinds of issues into the WA group as "they have to respect that there are police officers in the group" and that her complaint about the alarm was not pertinent. The alarm provides a sense of security, it is occasionally useful in case someone witnesses from afar a robbery taking place in a house or someone trying to steal a car (something that takes

time), but it is not useful for a victim who is being attacked on the street (which happens fast), which appear to be less important than crimes against property.

10.1.5 Perception of the group and engagement with residents

An element that is crucial for the group is civism. In this, Joel and Alberto are not alone. Them and the neighbors often share motivational images, infographics, quotes, and chain messages about what it means to be a good neighbor: being kind, respectful, responsible, helping others, hardworking, honest, trustworthy, vigilant. A common cliché repeated by leaders and members is that of *los buenos somos más* -referring to the fact that there are more good people than bad people, and therefore they can do more to combat bad people. As mentioned earlier, group leaders have an important role to play as mediators between neighbors, as coordinators of activities, and in being the unofficial link to solutions of problems in the LLP and the community at large. For many members, checking what is going on in the WA and FB group is part of their daily routines. Likewise, if they hear something or see something suspicious, they will first check with the online MVV communities. However, this is also a problem, because they will delay helping someone or getting authorities involved unless they have confirmation and support from the group.

Neighbors in general do not report problems of infrastructure or crime to authorities because they do not think they will be resolved. Besides doing rounds to prevent crime from happening, Joel and Alberto also take note of the aforementioned issues to report them to departments of public services of the municipality. They also make collective reports of issues brought to them by MVV members. Other neighbors also report faulty equipment to them so that they in turn can report it. Joel and Alberto then follow-up on reports and put before-after images of FB (see Figure 112). They comment that this is vital to keep the trust of the community in that the actions of the group have a real positive impact and to motivate members to do the same. For larger issues such as sewage or a complete street without lights that have not been solved even after reporting or have caused greater damages, members of MVV at times resort to calling Multimedios to report the issue -a local channel that, as mentioned in CHAPTER 6, has an enormous pull to help solve public problems.
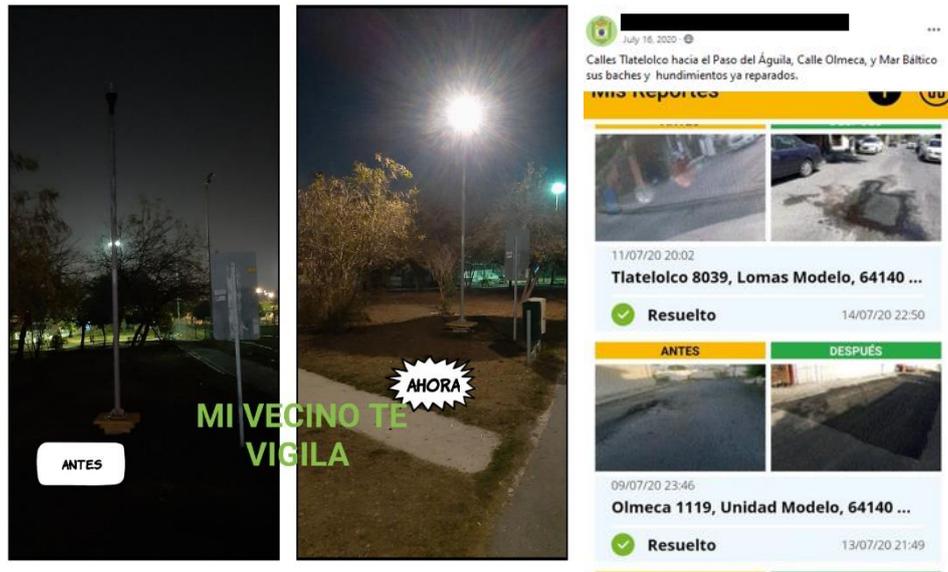
Figure 112 MVV members show that their information can have an impact.
(right) Before-after image of lights fixed in a park in Loma Linda, January 27, 2021.
Source: MVV Facebook group. Retrieved on 14/06/2021.
(left) Screenshot of follow-up on reports of potholes in Unidad Modelo and Lomas Modelo, July 16, 2020.
Source: MVV Facebook group. Retrieved on 14/06/2021.

And while reports of unknown individuals walking down the street or abound in online communities, members are very hesitant to discuss problems involving neighbors with the same zeal. At most, they will address this issue in private with the de-facto leaders around them, such as Joel, Alberto or Lourdes. Openly mentioning that a neighbor or MVV member is causing trouble often results in conflict. For example, a female member of MVV heard screams coming from a house in Lomas Modelo. She messaged MVV WA group and mentioned that it sounded like a child crying for help and shared the address so that others could give more information. The occupant of the house -a male lawyer- turned out to also be a member of MVV. He argued that the child was screaming because he was throwing a tantrum, that his mother abandoned the family, got very upset because he considered he was being wrongly accused, and the group sided with him -even though the female neighbor was exercising the maxim of the group of reporting suspicious situations.

Noisy neighbors are a similar issue that is present every weekend, but it is only brought up if the noisy neighbor in question is not part of the group. Neighbors call the police directly before trying to resolve the noise problem with the person responsible. This is because the noisy neighbor usually reacts aggressively, escalating into physical violence when asked to turn down the volume. A female neighbor commented: "you just don't know what state they could be in. They can get rude or aggressive, sometimes my husband would go and tell them something, but he's had bad experiences, so it's better to go straight to the police, but they don't come,"[113] (field notes – block meeting, February 15, 2019). Car parking and littering is also source of conflict between neighbors, since many decide to park their cars or place their garbage bags in

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[113] Es que no sabes cómo ande. Puede ponerse grosero o agresivo, a veces mi esposo iba a decirles algo, pero ya ha tenido malas experiencias, así que mejor directo le hablamos a la policía, pero no vienen.

front of other people's houses. Maintaining the appearance of peace and conviviality in the group is prioritized over direct or indirect discussion.

Implicitly, complains are not allowed. Whenever someone complains on the WA and FB groups about, for example, that regardless of repairs of streetlights there are still robberies committed day and night, the reactions are along the lines of "then do something", "if you do not act, do not judge", "then propose something yourself and don't judge those who do something for the community". Opinions vary with regards to the effectiveness of the MVV group. Members comment that they feel safer being part of the group, knowing they have somewhere to call to for help. They also say that most of them joined because they had been victims of a crime. Others express their interest in being informed and that it is necessary "to take care of one another, protect one another, if the police are not going to"[114] (field notes – block meeting, February 15, 2019).

Conversely, there are residents of LLP that are completely against joining the group. Alberto and Joel mention that they have had bad experiences when trying to invite neighbors to join them, as they get aggressive and insult them. The opposing neighbors feel that their "little meetings" are not going to solve anything, and that these groups are only to meddle on other people's affairs. They think that talk about participation and collaboration is sentimental nonsense. Women in MVV mention that their husbands think the group is only for gossip. Neighbors who are against joining the neighborhood watch are mostly male, and they frequently state that it is up to each person to protect themselves and their property. However, even within the MVV group, there are some members who do not agree with getting involved beyond being part of FB or WA groups and receiving information.

And while they promote collective action, there is still an emphasis on personal responsibility. Like in the case of the MAPSP results in CHAPTER 8, recommendations of everyday practices circulate, advising neighbors to: be vigilant of their surroundings, to be alert, mistrust strangers, not to flaunt wealth, not to wear jewelry, not to walk alone, not to have routines, not to be on the phone, walk in the opposite direction of traffic, not carrying unnecessary things, and to be prepared. Other recommendations are as ambiguous as "apply security precautions" (see Figure 113). In actuality, few people put these in practice, other than being alert and mindful of their appearance. Changing routes daily is not a possibility for those who move on foot, as there are limited alternatives to move in well-lit streets. These recommendations are written from the perspective of men, who think that women insist on carrying handbags for the mere pleasure of going around with "unnecessary things" hanging from their arm, and that their vanity gets the better of them to the detriment of their own security, as they wear earrings and necklaces. Like the results discussed in CHAPTER 8, the stereotype that prevails is that the victim is naïve, distracted, and that they have only themselves to blame for wearing expensive jewelry. If only they had been more attentive, if only they had taken another street, if only they had been more alert. This contrasts with the experiences of both men and women who have been attacked even if they are very modestly dressed. Questioning these recommendations is disincentivized,

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[114] Es necesario cuidarnos unos a otros, protegernos entre nosotros, si la policía no lo hace.

usually telling people that they are responsible for their own security and that you cannot be too careful.

Figure 113 Lists of recommendations created and shared by MVV with help of the police, May 30, 2019.
Source: MVV. Retrieved on 03/09/2020.

The group is not immune to the divulgation of fake news and urban legends. Members often share information about mysterious signs drawn on the sidewalk, possibly marking their homes to be robbed -which later turned out to be markings of municipal topographers. Members share messages from other pages with the disclaimer "*solo comparto*" -essentially saying that they are only sharing the post and that they cannot provide more information about the content. It does not matter if the incident they are sharing occurred years ago or in another state in the country: they share it just in case. You can never be too careful. Another topic brought up often in chain messages and posts of questionable veracity is the protection granted to criminals: allegedly, if the victim acts in self-defense, they can go to prison for hurting a criminal (see Figure 114). Conversely, they celebrate hoax messages that say that self-defense killings are not punishable by law. Participants rarely question if the information shared is real. The debate goes from the celebration of finally being allowed to kill thieves (although, as seen in the previous section, they rarely engage with a suspect unless he is smaller and darker) to criticizing those who say that it is not right. These examples show what the predominant view with regards to authority is: residents feel unprotected by police, and while left to their own devices to defend themselves, they feel that they will be punished for doing so.

Figure 114 Examples of chain messages shared in MVV.
(left) ironic list of things to do when being robbed, respecting the rights of the thief, September 3, 2020.
Source: MVV Facebook page. Retrieved on 03/09/2020.
(right) Hoax message about a law approved by Congress that allows self-defense, October 23, 2020.
Source: MVV WhatsApp group. Retrieved on 23/10/2020.

10.1.6 The complicated collaboration with law enforcement

According to Joel, from the beginning, the FC police corps were part of the MVV group. They are part of the WA groups, they come to the meetings, and occasionally carry out activities to communicate with the group and establish trust (see Figure 115). In the words of Alberto: "having a neighborhood watch with active participants has forced the police to do their job. They know we are going to call them if anything happens, and us being vigilant helps fight crime" (interview Joel & Alberto, February 2, 2019). Lourdes has mentioned that thanks to the influence of one neighbor, they managed to get the attention from the municipality and to get them to assign a patrol car for the *colonia*. During the block and general meetings, FC officers comment frequently on their intentions of being of help to the community, since there are few groups like these -that have such an active membership online and offline- and that their eyes on the street were valuable for them to do their work.

Figure 115 FC officers explain the reporting process and give recommendations for security practices in a general meeting in LLP.
Photo: Author, 2019.

Twice during the fieldwork carried out for this project, FC's Unidad de Vinculacion Ciudadana organized visits to the FC headquarters in Escobedo. A small group of 10 to 15 neighbors were present for both events -once again, facing the difficulty of mobilizing members of the group. The first visit was with the purpose of getting to know FC officers' methods and data. The second visit was much less heavy on official content and more focused on creating opportunities for one-on-one interactions between neighbors and police officers. For this meeting early on a Saturday morning, officers invited children as well. After training, there were activities for the children and the adults with K9 units, toy patrol cars, and mascots. Afterwards, visitors were invited into the cafeteria to have breakfast along with the officers, where the heads of department sat and talked with the guests (see Figure 116).

Figure 116 Meeting with MVV members, FC police commissioner, and officers at the Fuerza Civil headquarters.
Photos: Author, 2019.

During these interactions in the LLP and on the FC headquarters, the officers showed statistics and cartography of crime in LLP, and also presented lists of recommendations and precautions to take in different environments: for personal safety, at home, on public transportation, on the streets, while driving, and while visiting the bank. As seen in CHAPTER 8, they put an emphasis on the personal responsibility, particularly regarding vigilance and minding one's appearance -being modest and discreet. The information they prepared was based on 911 reports, which as mentioned in CHAPTER 4 and CHAPTER 8, have large gaps that do not reflect accurately the issues of insecurity residents face. Being aware of the high dark figures of crime, one of the topics that was mentioned frequently was the official reports to the CODE and 911.

As mentioned in CHAPTER 8, residents delay or avoid reporting for many reasons, one of them being that they are required to present evidence. A female neighbor commented that her granddaughter had been robbed of her phone in LLP, but that they figured out who it was and were trying to set him up to record him admitting the crime. FC officers assured her that this was not necessary but that she should report it to the CODE. She persisted on her plan to gather evidence, though. On a similar note, when MVV members learn that the police managed to apprehend a thief, they alert the group about it. Members who have been victims of a similar crime are invited to go to the CODE to report it, in the hopes that the person the police caught is the one responsible, and that their testimony will help to secure his conviction (see Figure 117 and Figure 118).

Figure 117 A successful report and capture.
(left) A member of the group reports a young man on a bicycle. Twelve minutes later, another member says that the young cyclist robbed someone. (center) The group is informed that the police captured the man. (left) A user forwards messages giving out the name of the suspect, the crimes he committed, and that he was captured by the Guardia Auxiliar de Monterrey. They add: "those who have been victims of a robbery by this person go and file a report to the CODE in Aztlán". Another user remarks: "sure, if we do not file a report, he is set free for lack of evidence against him", August 29, 2019.
Source: MVV WhatsApp group. Retrieved on 29/08/2019.
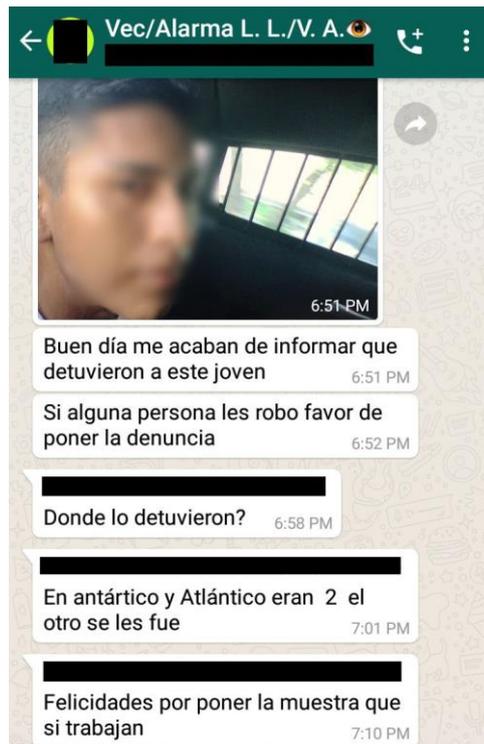
FC officers mentioned that they have only 8 or 9 units to patrol the Sector Norte, which for FC goes from Avenida Abraham Lincoln almost to the limit with the municipality of Garcia. They emphasized the lack of resources and personnel to attend complaints of noise and fights and armed robberies in the entire sector, and invite neighbors to call only in case of a real emergency. During these meetings they explained as well what an emergency is. They also provided suggestions on how residents can organize themselves to solve problems of noisy neighbors -the most reported problem to 911- without calling the police each time. They explained how their chain of command works, and how their assign patrolling, which goes back to their insistence for neighbors to report incidents to 911. FC officers remarked that if they have the accurate data, they will be able to assign more units to the LLP. They reminded members of MVV that 911 works as a dispatch for all sorts of emergencies, as they are aware that residents in LLP and in the city in general have many numbers to call, and do not know which is the right one for every incident that they witness. In MMV, since the officers are part of the WA group, many members contact them either through the group or individually to their phone numbers.

Neighbors feel more confident dealing directly with an officer they can easily identify than with a depersonalized service such as a 911 switchboard. Although there has been a response to reports in WhatsApp, 911 is not notified always by the witness or the victim, so many of these incidents remain invisible within the official quantification. FC officers mentioned that, while they will try to attend if they are called through WA or on their phones, 911 reporting is more important for them -again, to keep data accurate. This is not well received by neighbors.

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Neighbors pointed out that there are times in which they call 911 for an emergency and there is no answer, or help never comes. FC officers told them to keep trying, and that at times they are unable to attend a dispute over a parking space and a robbery that are happening simultaneously in the same perimeter, and that they must attend the most dangerous incident first. A male neighbor complained on the insistence of gathering data, saying "you already know what is going on. We tell you but you do nothing. You let thieves go. We need you to be there in the colonia, arrest thieves, scare them away"[115] (field notes – FC meeting, February 13, 2019). FC officers' comment that they cannot be everywhere and that there are not enough police officers for every corner of every block in the LLP, much less in MMA.

FC officers seem to also be at loss as to what to say or do, other than trying to give neighbors what they want, which is also impossible due to lack of resources. In the confusion, they shift the responsibility to residents, as Lourdes exemplified:

> I used to do rounds myself to write down which streetlamps were not working. Alone, and at times, I even joined the cops on their patrol cars or on foot. I have pestered them so much that they ask me what do I think is most effective way for them to work here. As a neighbor, you have to be like that, make sure they do their jobs.

> There are two guardhouses, but they closed in 2013 because of threats to the police. We have asked authorities to open them again, because police officers need to have presence here. They put me in charge of the guardhouse [in Unidad Modelo].[116] (interview Lourdes, February 18, 2019).

Lourdes expressed that she is glad to be of help to the community and to the police, and knowing that the police listened to what she and other neighbors had to say is positive. However, although some neighbors are happy to help and know the community well, others perceive that the police are outsourcing their job to them.

Like in many other sectors of the city, residents are not very well informed about what police corps is present. LLP residents even mention "*judiciales*" -a police corps that does not exist anymore. FC officers are aware that neighbors may or may not differentiate between police corps. The bad experiences neighbors have had with law enforcement reflect badly on any police officer, regardless of the institution to which they belong. And while there are municipal police present in LLP, it is FC that has been present the most with the neighbors. They are, however, a state police force, and these activities should be carried out by municipal police. Unfortunately, they admit that there are not enough police officers in FC and that their zones assigned and officers are constantly changing. This presents an obstacle, since each time there is a change, neighbors and officers have to start the process of communication and trust all

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[115] Ya saben lo que pasa. Les decimos, pero no hacen nada. Dejan ir a los ladrones. Necesitamos que estén ahí, que arresten a los ladrones, que los espanten.

[116] Yo salía a hacer rondines sola para anotar las luces que no funcionaban. Sola y a veces, me les pegaba a los policías en sus patrullas o a pie. Les doy tanta lata que me preguntan cuál es la manera más efectiva para que ellos trabajen aquí. Como vecino, tienes que ser así, asegurarte de que hagan su trabajo.

Hay dos casetas de policía, pero las cerraron en 2013 por amenazas a la policía. Les pedimos a las autoridades que las abran otra vez, porque los policías tienen que tener presencia aquí. Me pusieron a cargo de la caseta de [Unidad Modelo].

over. The general attitude of FC with the group is in stark contrast with experiences of abuse narrated by residents of the neighboring lower-class *colonias*. However, even residents of LLP have had negative experiences with the police. Presence of police is both a positive and negative. On the one hand, members of MVV like the fact that they can have a direct line with the police, and that they are part of the WA groups where they can report incidents and the police answers and attends to the situation, even if they do a drive by to scare off a would-be thief. On the other hand, some people are reluctant to work with police because they have been extorted or been victims of violence at the hands of police. Hernán, a 60-year-old neighbor in Unidad Modelo, narrated the experience he and his neighbors have had with the police:

> A robber broke into my neighbor's house. It was late at night, but he was up and heard something in the corridor. The corridor is all closed up: it has bars covering it and a metal door with the lock. There is a window in the corridor, and the robber was trying to force it open. He didn't notice when [the neighbor] came and locked him in the corridor. Basically, he was in a cage. He rang and rang the police but they were nowhere to be seen. It wasn't until he saw a patrol car on the street, he practically stepped in front of it to stop it, and long story short, they accuse my neighbor of unlawful deprivation of liberty. And he was the one being robbed! My neighbor was very angry and back talked to the officers, who asked for a bribe to take the robber and not him. And of course, they took him and release him like a few blocks away, as they do. And he's not the only one. Police extort who they can[117] (interview Hernán, March 3, 2019).

This kind of experience confirms what is often reinforced by hoaxes, chain messages, and memes: if you act in self-defense, the one who is going to jail is you. The fact is that police officers ignore laws themselves, or they threaten city dwellers with arresting them to extort money from them.

10.1.7 The presence of women, the absence of youths, and the silence of both

Women and teenagers are constantly mentioned in the group as being the most likely victims of crime and violence in public spaces. However, input from their perspective is not considered. The role of women is contradictory in this group. A large part of the members of MVV are female and active on the group. However, the group is largely unconcerned with gender-based violence in public space or anywhere else. Female members of MVV report having being followed by strangers on cars or on foot while walking any time of the day. They also comment

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[117] Un ladrón se metió a la casa de mi vecino. Ya era tarde de noche, pero estaba despierto y oyó algo en el pasillo. El pasillo está todo cerrado: tiene reja cubriéndolo encima y una puerta de forja. Y hay una ventana que daba al pasillo y el ladrón ahí estaba forzando, tratando de meterse por ahí. Y pues no se dio cuenta cuando [el vecino] llegó y que le cierra a la puerta y le pone candado. Como quien dice, lo dejó enjaulado. Y llame y llame a la policía, pero ni sus luces. No fue sino hasta que pasó de pura casualidad una patrulla, prácticamente se les puso enfrente y para no hacerte el cuento largo, a él lo terminaron acusando de privación de la libertad. ¡Y él era al que iban a robar! Mi vecino estaba bien enojado y les habló fuerte a los policías, que le pidieron un moche para llevarse al ladrón y no a él. Y se lo llevaron [al ladrón] pero lo soltaron unas cuadras después, como siempre. Y fíjate que no es el único. La policía extorsiona a quien pueda.

that they are most likely to be robbed of their purses and being injured. And while incidents they narrated of harassment and intimidation did not always escalate to physical violence, they made them very nervous of going out: "it was as if I was the carcass, and they were the vultures. You are not at ease, not even when you are walking with children, they don't care.[118]" (field notes – block meeting, February 15, 2019). Likewise, women are highly aware of the possibility of being kidnapped by a moving unmarked vehicle, a taxi, or a ridesharing car.

As seen in CHAPTER 8, women report sexual harassment on FB communities of security wanting to alert others, and often are met with minimization or ridicule. Women resort to normalize and minimize themselves these problems. In MVV, harassment is rarely brought up on the online communities, unless it escalated to physical violence or robbery, or the poster is doing it for someone else, legitimizing the claim. In the small groups of conversation among women prior to meetings, female participants note the attacks on women, young and old:

> we have to be careful. As women, they see us as weak or easy targets, and walking alone, it is worse. We have to go and walk our girls from and to the bus stop or the metro. An elderly lady has been also robbed twice, they dragged her from her bag and she ended up in the hospital. They don't respect that they are girls or that they could be a grandmother[119] (field notes – block meeting, May 14, 2018).

For women in LLP, the "eyes on the street" are not a guarantee of protection. The presence of groups of men do not make them feel safe. On the contrary: it makes them alert. However, their fears and concerns are brushed aside. On a WA message, a female member of MVV remarked that women and the elderly are often the victims of robberies on their way to and from the metro stations. She volunteered to walk with them and invited other members to call her if needed for this. She was told to post this in the AGen group, not the VeVig group to avoid interfering with police activities, similarly to how the woman who complained that the alarm did not work for her was told not to address the security group with those kinds of comments. During an interview, Lourdes narrated several events of violence that women in her family have faced walking in the LLP:

> My daughter [in her 40s] is very trusting. I always tell her to pay attention to her purse, and to the young girls [teenage granddaughters], I tell them not to talk to strangers. I have told girls that I see alone on the street to be careful. A boy from her school fondled one of the youngest. I called FC and they patrolled the area of the school for a few days. A friend of mine owns a salon in the Avenida Zempoala. The thieves locked her in at gunpoint to rob her. She still works there because she owns the place but she was scared.
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> Nothing has happened to me because I am careful. For example, with taxis; I used to need them a lot to distribute food supplies from the DIF [a public institution of social assistance and welfare of families]. What if the driver took off with the trunk full of food?

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[118] Haz de cuenta que yo era el muerto y ellos los buitres. No puedes andar tranquila, ni porque vas con los niños, les vale.

[119] Tenemos que tener cuidado. Como mujeres, nos ven débiles o como blancos fáciles, y caminando solas, está peor. Tenemos que ir y acompañar a nuestras ñias yendo y viniendo de la parada del camión o del metro. A una señora mayor la robaron dos veces, la arrastraron con su bolsa y terminó en el hospital. No respetan que son niñas o que sean abuelitas.

So, I start chatting with them. If the taxi driver is chatty, he is usually trustworthy, or if he is old. I always leave important documents at home. But I have been followed by strange cars, I change my bag and lock the doors as soon as I get home. Once a car that followed me parked in front of my house. I had a whistle and I started making noise to alert the neighbors. Even if there was no one, they got scared and left. I didn't leave the house for a week[120] (interview Lourdes, February 18, 2019).

The dominant perspective is masculine or gender-neutral: everyone can be robbed or kidnapped. And while this is true to an extent, the risk of escalation to sexual violence is much more present in women. It is a known fact, but it is never mentioned explicitly. This is consistent with the findings at city level discussed in CHAPTER 8. However, these issues from the female perspective are rarely ever brought up. Women limit themselves to report suspects, attempted break-ins and robberies, or to warn others when they have been victims.

As previously mentioned in CHAPTER 4, CHAPTER 6, and CHAPTER 8, gender-based violence in public spaces is rampant, however, bringing it up as a systemic problem comes at the risk of being ignored, ostracized, mocked, or labelled "one of those crazies". Women are also careful of not criticizing men as a group, even though they are mostly been the victims of men. If they do, they are mindful to apologize profusely before even emitting an opinion, saying how much they respect and love the men in their lives. A thought-terminating cliché constantly repeated by both men and women on the rare occasions that a conversation starts about gender-based violence is *esto no es de hombres contra mujeres: es de buenos contra malos* –"this is not about men against women: it is about goodies vs baddies", thus refusing to analyze gender inequality and ultimately attributing violence against women to the "bad men" who come from the outside of the *colonia*.

The group as a whole recognizes that women are in danger when going out. However, it is the individuals' responsibility of choosing the right practices to stay safe. Conversely, the crimes and recommendations for everyday practices are presented (by group leaders and police) as gender-neutral and as a general rule of thumb. However, when discussing examples, they evoke situations involving women but not always explicitly. For example, they recommend to be careful of belongings, such as handbags. They recommend not to wear jewelry and they point at jewelry usually worn by women. They recommend everyone should carry a whistle, and then say: "women not to lose it at the bottom of the purse" (field notes, February, 2019). They tell drivers to not get distracted on the road or on parking lots "by taking time to put on makeup"

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[120] Mi hija [en sus cuarentas] es muy confiada. Siempre le digo que ponga atención a su bolsa, y a las niñas [nietas adolescentes] les digo que no hablen con extraños. Yo le he dicho a niñas que veo en la calle solitas que tengan cuidado. Un compañero de la secundaria de mi nieta la más chica la manoseó. Le hablé a FC y patrullaron el área de la escuela unos días. Una amiga mía es dueña de una estética en Avenida Zempoala. Unos ladrones la encerraron a punta de pistola para robarla. Todavía trabaja ahí porque es dueña, pero tiene miedo.
A mí nada me ha pasado porque tengo cuidado. Por ejemplo, con los taxis; antes los usaba mucho para repartir despensas del DIF [una institución pública para asistencia social y bienestar de las familias]. Me daba pendiente que el taxista se pelara con la cajuela llena de comida. Entonces le sacaba plática. Si el chofer se pone a platicar, es confiable, también si es alguien mayor. Pero una vez me siguió un carro desconocido, me cambié la bolsa de lado y cuando llegué a la casa cerré las puertas con llave. Otra vez un carro me siguió y se estacionó enfrente de la casa. Tenía un silbato y me puse a hacer escándalo para alertar a los vecinos. Aunque no hubiera nadie, se espantó y se fue. No salí de la casa por una semana.

(field notes, February, 2019). Recommendations from the group leaders and the police often painted a caricature of women and teenagers as unaware of their surroundings, and careless of their handbags and backpacks. At the same time, they put the blame of robberies on women for wearing jewelry and on teenagers for having their noses stuck in their phones. Women tend to advocate for the concerns regarding their household or family members, particularly their teen or preteen children, and particularly female children, but as long as they fit into the group's priorities.

Youths as potential criminals and victims

The subject of how to keep young members of the community safe arises recurrently, yet younger people are, for the most part, absent. Residents agree that the younger populations were most at risk, and members talk about their teenage children being victims of robberies. The most mentioned incident was being robbed from their belongings, particularly cell phones, bags, and money. On the one hand, parents and authorities expressed their concern for teenagers mostly in regards to the issue of technology and "stranger danger". When it comes to teenagers, the discourse often focuses on the dangers of technology. They say that teens spend too much time online and "you never know who they are talking to"[121] (field notes – block meeting, May 14, 2018). There are few children on the meetings who come along with their mothers. Teenagers and adults younger than 45 are notoriously absent. When asking Joel and Alberto about this, as well as other neighbors, they say that these populations think they are invincible and that they are unaware of their own vulnerability.

On the other hand, one of their security concerns is the presence of young troublemakers - especially referring to the neighboring *colonias*- that start fights on the streets or vandalize public property. Young people are seen as both possible victims of crime and potential perpetrators, and they are often absent from talks on prevention among the neighborhood watch, due to a lack of interest and lack of activities focused on teenagers. However, based on observations, when there is an interaction with youths, it takes place within a framework of authority where they are taught, scolded, and penalized. Joel mentions that "it is very positive to have the police being part of the groups [WhatsApp], but unfortunately, they are lacking in tact to deal with youths, especially"[122]. This was made clear when, during a meeting at the Unidad Modelo polyvalent park, a group of teens were playing in one of the courts and accidentally kicked a ball which landed near the group. An FC officer confiscated the ball and told them they would get it back at the end of the meeting if they stopped bothering them. Everyday practices to prevent crimes proposed by adults and police are built around fears or situations that are imagined to be the main problem of youths. They often focus on specific risk situations where technology plays an important role, such as interaction with strangers online or challenges shared through social networks. Do these fears and recommendations accurately address teenagers' everyday issues of insecurity in the public space? What exactly do they fear?

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[121] Nunca sabes con quién estarán hablando.
[122] Es muy positivo que tengamos la participación de la policía en los grupos [WhatsApp] pero desafortunadamente les falta tacto para tratar con los jóvenes.

While this risk exists, the diagnostic workshop did not show that it is a major danger for young people.

The results of a workshop with youths from a local school showed that the fears and experiences that the young people shared differ from what the adults stated in previous observations. Girls expressed fear of street harassment by males their age and older - inappropriate comments, touching, being followed by a stranger on foot or in a car, having their picture taken - robberies and kidnappings; boys fear being mugged or attacked by other men of the same age or older or by gangs. Another concern of boys is that gangs will try to recruit them. Both groups are careful about clothing when they go out for different reasons. Girls avoid "provocative" clothing (they make it clear that even if they wear trousers or a school uniform they have been harassed). Boys avoid looking *fresa* (preppy, well-off) so they won't be mugged; they avoid outfits that could make them look like gang members. Girls on the other hand express their concern over being photographed by strangers on the street, being followed, and being sexually harassed by men of all ages. They say that it really does not matter what they wear, but that they are more likely to be harassed if they are wearing skirts, shorts or their school uniforms. Girls are not allowed by their parents or guardians to go out in a group or alone unless accompanied by an adult or ideally an older male relative. Boys report that if they are alone, they can be perceived as an easy target, but if they go in a group they can be mistaken for gangs and become involved in a fight. However, the strategies they use if they are attacked are different. While girls say that they would ask a stranger, a police officer or a guard for help in case of danger or take refuge in a shop and call a family member, the boys' strategies are to comply to the aggressor's demands or escape running. Boys mention that, because of violence in the streets, they prefer to be inside their homes playing video games. Girls identified violence as an everyday element they learn to deal with.

The opinions expressed by the young participants contrast dramatically with the beliefs about youths expressed at a city and neighborhood levels on previous observations. The young participants live in LLP and the neighboring *colonias* identified as dangerous by MVV. Most of the young participants were born only a few years before the peak of violence of 2009, and talked about gunshots and violence as part of their early childhoods and something relatively common in their *colonias*. Unlike adults, they do not express a nostalgia for an idyllic and calm past. They talked about gunshots while laughing, while also expressing that it is "a bit scary, and everything happens very fast"[123] (field notes, September, 2019).

Unlike the adults, both groups identified the school and immediate streets as safe. The girls' experience in this exercise showed the streets they walk to school and to their homes as spaces of risk, while the men indicated as dangerous spaces much more distant from the route. Girls see greater risk in transportation and in the street, while boys locate it in "*el monte*" (vacant lots on the slopes that surround their neighborhoods). However, during the discussion about the exercise, both groups identify the latter space as the places "where women are found in garbage bags". Likewise, when talking about generalities of violence and crimes in public spaces, both groups mentioned feminicides and sexual harassment as a problem for girls and

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[123] Da un poco de miedo, y todo pasa muy rápido.

women. Unlike the adults, girls and boys use a more precise vocabulary to refer to violence against women in public space: harassment, rape, murder. Both groups are aware of violence against women. In general, the signs of social disorder they identified are mostly the same as those perceived by adults in the LLP: trash, lights, abandoned buildings. But they are more sensitive to the deteriorated state of buildings and streets.

While technology and online harassment was mentioned it did not feature as a main concern for the youngsters that participated in the workshop and their everyday lives in public space. The main concern of girls is sexual harassment on the street, while the main concern of boys is gang violence. All of them reported having experienced victimization in public space. Youths related victimization to the way they look, but they say it is not because they are ostentatious, distracted, or wearing expensive jewelry. Boys walk a fine line of not looking like they could belong to a gang while also not looking so presentable that others may think they are *fresa*. Walking alone makes them easy preys, but walking in groups may get them in trouble with gangs who may think they are looking for trouble. They say that since they still look like children -small, fragile- they are targeted by bigger and older looking men and boys.

Conclusions

More and more these groups emerge in middle and upper class *colonias* that feel threatened by their less wealthy neighbors. Citizen-led actions such as an organized group of neighbors are often depicted as a net good. However, based on the results from the observation of MVV, I argue that they can also perpetuate discourses of security that are exclusionary and discriminatory, acting on concerns that align with those of dominant groups, even within the group of neighbors. As stated by Fuentes-Díaz (2018) participating in neighbor-led initiatives against insecurity indicates the need to fill in the gap of the state's incapacity to protect citizens and the mistrust of authorities. On a positive note, involvement in a neighbor-led group can help generate trust among members and generate a sense of belonging and support, but it can also generate peer pressure to adhere to the group's expectations, and incentivize mistrust of those who are not part of the group. Also, as we have seen in this chapter, they are heavily concentrated on crime, other types of violence are not necessarily attended to by the neighborhood watch.

Social class, gender, and age emerged as important differentiators at this level of observation. The group is made of mostly lower-middle class neighbors, most of which have had experiences being robbed, at times violently. Neighbors see themselves surrounded by *colonias populares*, which for them is the source of criminals. Stereotypes play an important role in identifying threats: while they are highly vigilant of any suspicious activity, poorly dressed dark skinned individuals walking down the street or using the public parks are reported the most as potential dangers or confronted directly. The unsuspecting pedestrians "suspiciously" walking down the street are easy targets. Going after them gives the group a sense of control over security.

Observing the MVV group, there is a disconnection between discourses of insecurity and violence, practices, and what residents consider dangerous. This is especially evident when observing women and youths. Men and women perceive public space as dangerous in different ways. According to Bromley & Stacey (2012, p. 433) gender differences in studies of feelings of insecurity are well established in work with adults and confirmed in research with children by authors such as Mathews (2003) and Pain (2006). Among the many differences is the way in which violence and public space are discussed. Most of the members of MVV are adult women, but their opinions are constantly pushed aside. They advocate for the security of their families, at times at the expense of not mentioning their own problems because they do not want to be criticized or ostracized. In doing so, they seek to make their problems of insecurity be heard, but they are forbidden from calling them by their name, as they would be challenging the male perspective that dominates the scene. It is not that women have been frequently victimized by men in public space: the problem is that women are distracted and wear too much jewelry. Likewise, discourses on fears about children in public space continue to be dominated by the safety concerns of parents (Bromley & Stacey, 2012; Pain, 2003; Valentine & Holloway, 2001). And as observations revealed, there is a concerning gap between what parents imagine as dangerous on the street and what youths identify. Recommendations are emitted, and youths must abide by them even if they do not make sense to them.

Results from the analysis of discourses of MVV reveal that even in a collective initiative that aims for participation, there is a strong reliance on individual responsibility. Urban violence is not a social problem: it is only that people are not careful. The subject of urban violence is both depoliticized and genderless. In that sense, actions the group can carry to improve personal security are limited, as they can only continue emitting recommendations for practices to stay safe. Residents feel abandoned to their own means and direct experiences of victimization or anecdotes of such incidents coming from people they know make them wary of police presence, furthering the reliance on individual measures. There is a constant tension between mistrusting the police and demanding they act in the LLP. Additionally, residents feel frustrated that they have to constantly communicate to the police what the problem of security is. MVV has helped to ease the relationship between residents and the police, by providing a space in which they can communicate directly.

The group lacks the means to organize a more horizontal participation. Combined with the lack of culture of collective action that predominates in Monterrey, this leads to a frustrating situation, where it is simpler for leaders to dictate what is right or wrong. Group members tend to maintain their distance from the problems they signal. They will point out to the group that something is happening, hoping that someone else can intervene. At times, when they are themselves victims of a crime, they will tell the group not in the hopes of repairing the damage but more in the spirit of finding moral support or validation. Consistent with other research, such as that carried by Hope (1995) about community crime prevention, most participants in this group have had experiences of victimization. This is often mentioned by leaders and members as a moral failing: they should have joined the group sooner. For them, acting only when one has already been the victim of a crime denotes lack of preventive thinking. Participation is presented not as a useful tool, but as a moral virtue, even if it is ineffective and lacks sense: the good people participate, follow the rules, and do not criticize unless they have

a better solution. Belonging to the group gives members a sense of control and makes them feel safer. This perception however is challenged when they are victims of a crime and do not receive the help they expected. Facing this, some members resort to managing their expectations: the group can prevent robberies to houses, but on the street, individuals are on their own. With these expectations, the group can continue their activity, providing members with a sense of security.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

"The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed."

William Gibson

It is now time to look back in order to synthetize and reflect upon the most important elements of this text. What can we reap from this 10-chapter document? To answer this question, I shall now look back at the beginning, as it is customary when reaching the final point of almost any process. I chose the case of Monterrey for both personal and scientific reasons. It is a city I am highly familiar with. Monterrey may appear to be simultaneously an extraordinary case, while also being representative of situations that are increasingly common across cities in Latin America. The city has also been a laboratory of solutions to urban violence. However, the contributions of the present study are not limited to this physical and social context. Observing the case of Monterrey allowed me to call into question established theories and methodologies -both in terms of how to conduct research and how urban violence is tackled through urban solutions. The case of Monterrey was for this thesis a jumping off point to interrogate the effectiveness of supposedly universal solutions in varying and contrasting cities around the world: where are they valid? Where do they break? As I wrote this thesis, I dug out documents that I had not seen in a long time, among them, the early propositions for this research project. The main ideas were there but I fell into common trappings such as confounding feelings of insecurity with fear of crime, an overreliance on quantitative data, and an almost exclusive focus on the physical environment. The research process -based on literature review and fieldwork- challenged not only my initial assumptions but also results reported on other similar works. I hereby present the main results of the thesis, the first of which relates to the findings obtained from literature review -further confirmed by fieldwork. This is followed by the results

of the work carried out in Monterrey and how do they relate to the more general body of knowledge in matters of researching feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public spaces. Finally, several questions emerged along the process of research, but this document had to end sometime. For this reason, I present and discuss some perspectives of research and final notes on this subject.

Main results

First, I showed that feelings of insecurity -as opposed to fear of crime- is a more robust and comprehensive way of assessing the perception of violence. A more or less acute feeling of insecurity depends on many factors that stray away from traditional crime statistics, such as characteristics of the individual, position within a social structure, their experiences, and the social and physical environment. Not all crime is violent, and not all violence is a crime, yet these experiences have an important impact on how public spaces are perceived and used by city dwellers.

Frequently discussions of security in cities start by lamenting how cities are a source of fear and danger rather than togetherness or cooperation, while others may contest this perspective by claiming that violence in cities is blown out of proportion to keep a population complacent and afraid. Throughout this work I sustain that these kinds of assessments obscure the particularities of feelings of insecurity for different groups: who is afraid, who is in danger, from what? And most importantly: whose voices are the ones that are heard by policy makers? A group may point out that public spaces in a certain city have turned into hellscapes that completely transformed their way of life, while another group may hardly see an impact. And as seen throughout this research, it is not necessarily that the latter group is unaware of danger, but rather that socio-spatial inequalities make it difficult for them to remove themselves from public spaces. The manifestation of feelings of insecurity as a paralyzing fear and avoidance are often unaffordable for the more vulnerable populations. It is especially relevant to observe the daily experiences, as this gives us information about the diversity of registers of feelings of insecurity, more so in contexts where violence is a part of regular life to the point that it is normalized. These observations are pertinent not only in the case of Monterrey, but also for other attempts at analyzing feelings of insecurity and public spaces in other contexts.

The focus on feelings of insecurity presents its own set of challenges. Scientific literature shows that violence as an everyday experience beyond crime requires to be assessed through qualitative and participatory methods that facilitate dialogue. Citizens have empiric knowledge and experience of their environment that frequently does not make it to the statistical data of criminal incidence. As shown in the theoretical framework in PART 1, participatory approaches have regained importance with regards to urban violence as an effective way bridge the divide between action and research. Participatory approaches are presented as effective to diagnose the problem and transform public spaces to solve it. Evidence shows that effective initiatives are those where citizens are heard, empowered, and perceive that their participation matters. However, turning citizens' insight into actionable solutions is not direct nor automatic. Professional sensitivity is required to translate these issues is necessary, as well as awareness

of the power -or lack thereof- that groups of people have to participate and voice their opinions. It is also necessary to work with smaller units, to shift from a macro perspective (city level) towards meso and micro level assessments. I sustained throughout this project that working at a neighborhood level is advantageous to articulate the representations of violence and public spaces between the individual and the larger urban contexts. In territories with high social inequality, perceptions of insecurity can change radically between two adjacent neighborhoods, but these differences disappear in the aggregate when observing at the city level. Neighborhoods are an important factor of how individuals perceive their risk of victimization, and they also permit to work with a community. Qualitative methods, participatory research, neighborhoods and small groups: these points marked the actions to be conducted on the field. This however is easier said than done in contexts of chronic violence and inequality (where these kinds of co-production of research and solutions are needed the most).

Second, my empirical work on the city of Monterrey provided evidence of the many obstacles of participatory and qualitative research methods to analyze feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public spaces in a context of chronic violence. Residents are unwilling to participate, on the one hand, because they see data collection being done without any real impact on their wellbeing -even prior to the crisis of violence. All they see is yet another person asking the same questions and they are tired of answering them, even if it is for different initiatives: they give information but there is no real change. And on the other hand, residents perceive that they are putting themselves at risk when answering questions about victimization or related to property or routines. In the face of these circumstances, the question emerged of how ordinary or extraordinary are the profiles of those willing to share their experiences with a researcher (especially when observing the specific case study of LLP and its surroundings). In the case at hand, those who were willing to sustain a prolonged interaction with regards to violence were not representative of the population, either because of their community engagement -an oddity in the locality- or their educational background. For this reason, it was important to sample diverse sectors of the population of Monterrey. This is an important factor for researchers to take into account: it is necessary to contextualize the profile of an interlocutor and answers given to avoid general statements that may only apply to a very specific segment.

Obstacles such as lack of participation were not unique to this research project -as revealed through interviews with other practitioners in the locality-, however the need to produce results at all costs makes it difficult to discuss these silences. It presents the challenge of rethinking fieldwork methods and approaches to better reach out to city dwellers. The present thesis contributes to the body of knowledge that discusses the need of a diverse array of qualitative methods for the assessment of feelings of insecurity and for the interaction with city dwellers in sensitive contexts. It contributes as well to the discussions on how social media can be used for digital ethnography. Furthermore, fieldwork carried out for this thesis provided with an opportunity to test methods that are frequently recommended to assess feelings of insecurity, and to comment on how effective and viable these are in a context of chronic violence, hypervigilance, and mistrust.

Third, this thesis provided a critical analysis of spatial transformations of public space that aim to mitigate violence and feelings of insecurity. With regards to urban violence, the

configuration of cities and public spaces take a special meaning. As discussed in the theoretical framework presented in PART 1, and later observed in the case of Monterrey in PART 2, the contemporary city can simultaneously be a product and a producer of urban violence, a source of information, and lastly the subject of transformations to mitigate violence. The modernist city, while shifting to an industrial and capitalist economy, fostered divisions between the formal and the informal, the legal and the illegal. I articulated a history of public spaces in the locality, and I questioned the narrative of the overnight change (Monterrey becoming a violent territory) by showing how inequality has been an issue left unaddressed for decades prior to the explosion of violence. Homicides and abductions were the ultimate manifestations of direct violence amidst decades of structural violence and inequality, a phenomenon which -as evidence shows- will hardly be eradicated through *mano dura* policies. It is then that public space transformations enter the arena as means to achieve peace.

Public space has become the subject of discussion and transformation to reduce violence, either through fortification, and more recently, through aperture. City makers and practitioners have been more than eager to implement CPTED, Design-out crime or Crime Prevention through urban design and planning (CP-UDP) to prevent violence -or rather, to prevent crime, which often leads to the fortification of spaces. Some of these strategies have shifted towards the inclusion of participatory strategies to foster social cohesion, repair the social tissue, and empower city dwellers in these projects -for example, the Medellín model and CPTED, which have been reproduced in Monterrey and other cities in Latin America.

The observations carried out in this thesis allowed me to analyze the "dark" side of participatory projects in public space with the goal of mitigating violence and to question their validity. They are frequently depicted in as unquestionably positive in the Global North, and practitioners in the Global South reproduce these models -without accounting for contextual adaptation. Simultaneously, projects in the Global South are used as evidence in the Global North of the power of the community to improve quality of life with small, creative, and visually appealing DIY projects, even in the face of intense violence and precariousness. Such is the case of projects like the ones carried out in Monterrey. However, there are various aspects that are left out of the picture, which I analyzed in detail in this thesis: these initiatives presented as coming from citizens are in reality done by the private sector, the involved citizens are often from the upper social strata of the population, the involvement of the target population is meager, the implementation often results in fractured communities and expulsion, and results are altered to present a positive image.

CPTED posits that the aspect of the built environment plays an important role in feelings of insecurity and that improvement makes users feel safer. Likewise, it also states that city dwellers will spontaneously choose greenery, spaces for pedestrians, and open spaces in the face of violence. Findings of this thesis contradict these statements. Residents of impoverished *colonias* may avoid using spaces that have been drastically improved. They believe they are going to be chased out, charged an expensive fee to use them or asked for something in return. In contexts where neglect is the norm, spatial improvements are seen as alienating: the message is that they have no right to high-quality public spaces. Similarly, digital ethnography and direct observations of LLP showed that when residents talk about the built environment, is mostly in

utilitarian terms: streetlamps to make streets safer at night, garbage collection, drainage, and well-kept streets for cars. People using a park or walking are suspicious. Evidence from the case of Monterrey allows us to question the alleged success and effectiveness of CPTED, social urbanism, and *naif urbanism* (tactical urbanism, placemaking, etc.) in various contexts. As seen in the case of the CPTED activity in Monterrey, data used for decision making is fabricated due to lack of participation. This is usually not reported.

Like the *mano dura* approach*,* public space transformations cannot solve deep-rooted structural violence. These discussions are pertinent not only for cases involving Latin American cities facing high rates of urban violence; similar situations of lack of participation related to inequality can be found in vulnerable communities in cities around the world. Yet they have remained unaddressed by practitioners, often focusing in the production of results and the positive depiction and universality of these tools. Ultimately, as the case of Monterrey shows, security through supposed aperture has the same limitations as security through fortification: spatial transformations are not available for all. Inclusive, long-lasting solutions do not lend themselves to spectacle. However, it is the spectacle of public spaces that attracts the attention. All the while, those outside of the boundaries of the new secure spaces rely on immaterial strategies to stay safe.

Fourth, based on evidence of the case study, I sustained that socio-spatial inequality, social class, and gender mediate feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public spaces. Portrayals of violence are often centered around the most drastic manifestations of direct forms. As shown by evidence from fieldwork, residents of Monterrey are aware of the most violent and visible incidents such as murder, torture, rape, and abductions. They are highly commented on, they are used as a way to measure how dangerous the city is in general, but at a personal level, they are not a daily concern for all social groups. Moreover, social class determines the degree of contact individuals have with public space. Social class and territory are intertwined. They define representations of public space and violence, and how residents are perceived and treated by authorities and other city dwellers. The lower classes depend much more on public spaces for their livelihood. While the upper classes who can afford to fortify or avoid public spaces along with changes in daily practices, security for the lower classes and for those in constant contact with public space means adapting and being alert. However, a constant state of high alert is unsustainable. Gender also emerged as an important differentiation in feelings of insecurity and daily practices in public space intersecting with social class. Incidents such as rape or abduction are identified as abstract concerns by male city dwellers, but they are concrete fears for female city dwellers. Additionally, when female city dwellers discuss insecurity, they often advocate for their families, youths or the elderly -and at times, they avoid mentioning problems facing women because they do not want to be singled out as irrational. Conversely, male city dwellers are less likely to advocate for groups to which they do not belong. Regardless of these nuances, the dominating discourse of personal security is constructed around male and middle-upper class perspectives. Mistrust in authorities, high probability of victimization, constant criminalization due to social class, ethnicity, *colonia* of residence -these factors contribute to a normalization of violence and an overreliance on individual strategies. The case study of the LLP allowed to observe how individual strategies and the dominating discourses of security fit within the dynamics of a group of neighbors.

Perspectives for future research and final notes

This thesis is by no means the last word on feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public space; quite the contrary. This work presents several threads to pull and deepen the current knowledge. With this work, I seek to contribute to the way in which feelings of insecurity are assessed and later how they can be taken into account for policy making. Regarding Monterrey, I have contributed to the analysis of how individuals and communities transform their environments and everyday practices to stay safe. As social inequality becomes even more evident through walls, simulated public spaces, and vertical suburbs, these kinds of analysis will become more pertinent. Further research may provide more information about how these practices evolve. Each level of analysis and each social group presented in this document could merit an in-depth study on its own. For research and for decision making of urban affairs related to security, further examination and experimentation are required to understand how users of public space perceive security, how to devise new ways that foster this communication, and how to interpret it.

This thesis has been guided by the particular circumstances of a neighborhood, a population, and a city. However, several aspects are not unique to the case of Monterrey: they are present in Mexican and Latin American cities. Additionally, there are various situations that can be similarly present even in contexts that are not facing the same levels of generalized violence. Having lived through the rise of dramatic violence in Monterrey, where conversations about shootouts and homicides became as normal as talking about the weather, the reactions from European colleagues with regards to violence were surprising and contradictory.

In a world where sustainability becomes an increasingly important topic in city making, what is the place of security? Is it, as many European interviewees affirmed, a distraction or is it, as many Latin American interviewees said, a fundamental issue? Violence hinders efforts to make cities sustainable. Oftentimes, city managers lack resources to tackle simultaneously the various issues of urban life, and matters that require attention need to be prioritized, at the cost of social and environmental justice. At an individual level, city dwellers in unsafe environments tend to prioritize their personal wellbeing.

This subject of research -the link between feelings of insecurity, daily practices, and public space- came from my professional experience. Like many freshly minted architects and urbanists in Monterrey, I was keen on matters of preservation of historic architecture and sustainability. Working for public agencies of urban development, I presented ideas for initiatives on spaces for pedestrians or cycling. Looking back, those projects lacked maturity, and my gender and age made it difficult to be taken seriously. But more than that, the answer was always "no" and the reason was often insecurity. Shootouts were a daily occurrence, we all knew someone who had been robbed or abducted, and for many, the mere contact with public spaces was synonymous to danger. City dwellers would not give cycling or walking a chance if they feel safer using cars. Why would city dwellers care about pollution if they perceive that their integrity is at risk when walking or using public transportation?

Sustainability comes second when security is not guaranteed. With the results of this work, I wanted to show the ways in which violence becomes a matter of everyday life, and ultimately impacts the way public spaces are used, perceived, and transformed. If we seek to make cities more sustainable, we must first aim to make them safe for everyone, especially for the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

"People feel unsafe in cities", "people are worried about security" are some phrases often uttered in forums and conferences with experts. However, a question that is often left out is: *who are those "people"*? Who gets to express this fear of living in cities? Whose voices are heard the most? In my experience, discussing security and violence in France is a delicate matter, particularly when security is equated to police repression and criminalization of marginalized groups. I have found resistance inside and outside of academia to discuss it not as a philosophical conundrum, but rather as the lived experiences of individuals. Interviewees often argued that it is because insecurity does not exist, and that it is all in the imagination of paranoid conservatives. Recently, in a European conference about security, a colleague mentioned that feelings of insecurity generate violence, referring to conservative voices manifesting their anxiety over immigrants or racialized individuals, and therefore, that we should stop talking about them. However, feelings of insecurity are not exclusive to dominant groups. They have a variety of manifestations. This interpretation denies the assessment of insecurity as an issue of everyday life from the perspective of marginalized and vulnerable populations -even in relatively peaceful high-income countries-: women, racialized individuals, the poor, etc. They are often hit first and most by structural and direct violence. Their experience of violence is not limited to crime nor to the realm of abstractions, political positions, debate exercises or anxieties stoked by the media. Individuals in privileged positions state that it is impossible to go out calmly, while yet others in more vulnerable positions say that they have had unfortunate experiences, but that violence is not a big deal if you know your way around and that stigmatization is more of a problem than violence. These statements coming from light conversation with researchers and laymen from various social groups in France and Europe sound surprisingly familiar. This thesis proposes a nuanced approach to the assessment of feelings of insecurity in everyday life and, while it focused on a very specific population in somewhat extreme circumstances, it will be worthwhile to conduct a similar research in a less violent environment.

A common question asked is how this highly specific topic can be applicable to other places outside of Latin America. Interestingly, one of the most common reactions that I have observed when I have shared experiences of violence in Mexico is "it is the same here in France". Both inside and outside of academia, residents of France -a country on the 55th place in the Global Peace Index 2021 ranking- from all over the political spectrum affirm that France is a country just as dangerous and violent as Mexico -placed 140 in the same ranking, comparable to Palestine and Colombia. No data or retelling of experiences with robberies, abductions, rape or corruption could persuade them otherwise: France is just as bad. Those who have visited Mexico claim they feel safer there (unaware that they may have benefited from a privileged treatment) because "there is no terrorism". From a personal perspective, I found this reaction frustrating and at times even offensive. But from a researcher's perspective, it would be a fascinating challenge to understand the reasons behind the insistence in this comparison.

Contextualization is a factor that emerged in this process of research that requires in-depth studies and special consideration by researchers, particularly when it comes to transnational studies and the reproduction of models. European practitioners turn their eyes to Latin America in hopes of finding alternative city making solutions through participation and human-scale interventions. Some go a step further and seek to carry out humanitarian/urbanist work by going to Latin America, frequently unaware of how they may be perceived in these contexts. The practitioner believes they are just one more average citizen, when in reality, they are frequently perceived as superior or as having the right answers, and locals may try to hide unappealing situations from them. This unawareness results in inaccurate generalizations and conclusions that romanticize situations of precariousness and inequality. Similarly, *naif urbanism* in Europe is depicted as being carried out by an average conscious citizen. Practitioners are also unaware that Mexican placemakers are not the average citizen (what passes for average in France, in Mexico it is a privileged profile). This begs the question: who are these city makers? These initiatives are presented worldwide as stemming from citizens. The question of who these engaged citizens are and how representative they are of their contexts merits further research.

Throughout this research process, I was confronted with an obstinate silence and refusal from city dwellers. On the one hand, this could have biased results -as previously stated- due to the fact that individuals who would be more likely to participate in prolonged interviews were extraordinary to an extent. And on the other hand, as interviews with researchers and practitioners revealed, silence or refusal are not taken into account when the goal is to produce results. Furthermore, vulnerable and marginalized populations -who are affected the most by crisis- are not necessarily those who are most vocal nor those whose perspectives impact public policy. I sustain that silence as presented in this case study is not a lack of answer: it is an answer in and of itself that deserves a deeper analysis to understand the motivations behind it.

Lastly, this research project should be also an invitation to continue bridging the divide between research and action. A focus on the production of results at all costs has left out the possibility of questioning why participatory processes of city making fail. CPTED, social urbanism, placemaking, tactical urbanism…these strategies and their participatory dimensions are often presented as an undoubtedly good process to empower citizens and create safe environments, particularly by reactionary city makers. The evidence found in Monterrey invites further critical studies on how (supposedly) citizen-driven and participatory initiatives (from spatial transformations to neighborhood watches) are carried out and their consequences -both positive and negative. Are there similar results in other violence-prone contexts? How does this manifest in Europe or North America? Practitioners continue to apply toolkits and manuals that promise results, and they are ill-equipped to deal with potential hurdles such as a lack of participation in violence-prone environments or with vulnerable populations -who are the ones most in need of solutions.

ANNEX SECTION

ANNEX 1 -   Answer from Fuerza Civil to information request

Debo destacar, que el riesgo de perjuicio significativo al interés público, que supondría la divulgación de la información, que supera el interés público general de que se difunda, en el caso particular se encuentra acreditado ya que al proporcionar la información de cada uno de los conceptos solicitados, se podría utilizar para cuantificar la efectividad en la toma de decisiones a fin de proteger la integridad física de la población y los elementos que integran esta Corporación Policial, es por ello que no obstante deben considerarse los factores externos que influyen en la planeación del objetivo señalado, por lo que el suscrito estima que en el caso particular debe restringirse el acceso a esa información, en virtud de que no existe la certeza de que la información solicitada al hacerse pública, no sea utilizada en perjuicio de esta Institución Policial por parte de personas que tengan como objetivo impedir los fines que persigue esta Institución Policial.

Por otra parte el suscrito considera que en el caso concreto, limitar el acceso al público de la información peticionada, se adecua al principio de proporcionalidad y representa el medio menos restrictivo disponible para evitar el perjuicio, ya que en opinión del suscrito, es de dominio público, el hecho de que la integridad física de los elementos policiales adscritos a esta Corporación, se encuentra altamente comprometida en las acciones que cotidianamente desempeñan con motivo de los servicios que se les asignan al desempeñarse como servidores públicos y en la actualidad no existe un sistema y/o filtro (por ello la certeza plena), de que los solicitantes de la información se tratan o no, de personas ajenas al crimen organizado y/o personas que tengan como objetivo impedir los mismos fines que persigue esta Institución Policial.

Sin otro particular, le reitero las seguridades de mi distinguida consideración y respeto.

RESPETUOSAMENTE
TITULAR DE LA SECCIÓN V JURÍDICA DEL ESTADO MAYOR
DE LA INSTITUCIÓN POLICIAL ESTATAL FUERZA CIVIL

LIC. JESÚS GASPAR CRUZ TREVIÑO.

PARA SUPERIOR CONOCIMIENTO:
I. C. P. C. LIC. NORMA LETICIA PLAYAS GÓMEZ, COMISARIA GENERAL DE LA INSTITUCIÓN POLICIAL ESTATAL FUERZA CIVIL, DE LA SECRETARÍA DE SEGURIDAD PÚBLICA. ———————————————————————————— PRESENTE

Fuerza Civil. Campo policial No. 1
Carretera a Laredo Km 13.5
Escobedo, N.L.
Tel 20 33 18 26
JMRL/BRM/yom

ANNEX 2 - Questionnaire for Macro Plaza and Alameda Public Space Probe

CIUDAD DEL MIEDO

USPC — Université Sorbonne Paris Cité

PARIS DIDEROT

CESSMA

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Género: ☐ F ☐ M   Edad:

Escolaridad: ☐prim   ☐sec   ☐prepa   ☐uni   ☐otro

Colonia: Ciudad: Tiempo de residencia:

Medio de transporte que usas principalmente:

☐a pie   ☐taxi   ☐camión   ☐metro   ☐coche   ☐ otro:

¿**Cómo** te ha afectado la inseguridad?

¿**Quiénes** producen la inseguridad?

¿Cómo te informas sobre la inseguridad?

¿Qué recomendaciones de seguridad le darías a **alguien**?

¿Qué **lugar/zona** consideras inseguro en Monterrey y Área Metropolitana?

ANNEX 3 -   Survey distributed in LLP

Esta encuesta tiene como objetivo conocer la percepción que existe sobre la inseguridad en el espacio público de los habitantes de la zona norponiente de la ciudad de Monterrey. Tus respuestas nos ayudarán a identificar las necesidades que existen en términos de seguridad. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Toma tu tiempo para responder honestamente basado en tu experiencia y opinión.

Esta encuesta es para un análisis académico auspiciado por la Université Sorbonne Paris Cité – Paris Diderot sin fines partidistas ni de mercadotecnia, no está vinculada a ninguna iniciativa gubernamental ni el INEGI y es completamente anónima: la información individual que proporciones no permitirá identificarte de manera personal ni será accesible al público.

Puedes **fotocopiar** esta encuesta para que la contesten otros miembros de tu familia, amigos, vecinos, etc. Esto nos ayudará a tener más información.

Si tienes dudas o comentarios contáctanos en city.of.fear.project@gmail.com o al 81 1799 3315.

INFORMACIÓN GENERAL

1. Edad: Género ♂ ♀   Ocupación:

2. Ultimo grado de estudios (completo, incompleto o en curso):

3. Colonia en la que vives:

4. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo vives ahí?

5. Estado civil: ☐soltero(a) ☐casado(a) ☐viudo(a) ☐divorciado(a) ☐unión libre ☐otro: _____
6. ¿Tienes hijos? ☐SI   ☐NO
7. ¿Tienes computadora personal? ☐SI   ☐NO
8. ¿Tienes WiFi en tu casa? ☐SI   ☐NO
9. ¿Tienes smartphone? ☐SI   ☐NO   Es de ☐plan de datos   ☐recarga de saldo   ☐otro: _____
10. ¿Ocupas ayuda para manipular una computadora/smartphone? ☐Siempre ☐A veces ☐Nunca
11. Menciona las 5 aplicaciones (apps) que más usas.
    1. _____   4. _____
    2. _____   5. _____
    3. _____

EXPERIENCIAS DE INSEGURIDAD

12. En la tabla se presentan diferentes preguntas sobre experiencias de inseguridad en el espacio público en los últimos 5 años. Para cada pregunta, llena la casilla correspondiente según tu experiencia.

	☀Si (de día)	☾Si (de noche)	No	¿Cómo pasó? (puedes usar el reverso de la página para contestar)	No aplica
¿Te ha seguido un desconocido?					
¿Te han asaltado / intentado asaltar?					
¿Te han arrebatado/intentado arrebatar la bolsa/mochila?					
¿Te han robado contenido de tu bolsa/mochila sin que te des cuenta?					
¿Se ha metido/se ha intentado meter alguien a robar a tu casa?					
¿Se han robado objetos del frente de tu casa (macetas, carros, mobiliario, etc.)?					
¿Te han agredido físicamente?					
¿Te han dicho insultos, piropos, comentarios inapropiados?					
¿Te ha tocado alguien / intentado tocar de manera inapropiada?					
¿Te han intentado privar/te han privado de la libertad temporalmente (levantón, secuestro express, que no te permitan salir de un vehículo, etc.)?					

13. ¿Hay algún evento no enlistado que te haya sucedido? ☐SI   ☐NO ¿Qué sucedió?

14. ¿Conoces a alguien cercano que haya sido víctima de un delito en los últimos 5 años? ☐SI   ☐NO ¿Qué sucedió?

435

SI NECESITAS MÁS ESPACIO PARA CONTESTAR, PUEDES USAR ESTA PÁGINA

ENTORNOS Y ESPACIOS

15. En la tabla se presentan diferentes afirmaciones. Para cada pregunta, llena la casilla correspondiente.

	Completamente de acuerdo ☺☺	Parcialmente de acuerdo ☺	Indiferente/ no sé	Parcialmente en desacuerdo ☹	Completamente en desacuerdo☹☹
Me preocupa la inseguridad en mi colonia					
Me preocupa la inseguridad en Monterrey					
Me da pendiente salir solo/sola de noche					
Me siento seguro/segura en mi casa					
Las colonias privadas son seguras					
Las paradas de metro son seguras					
Las paradas de camión son seguras					
Me parece sospechoso si una persona toma fotografías cerca de mi casa.					
Me parece sospechoso si un vehículo se estaciona frente a mi casa.					
Los parques de mi colonia son seguros.					
Puedo sentarme tranquilamente afuera frente a mi casa.					
Puedo caminar tranquilamente de día en mi colonia.					
Puedo caminar tranquilamente de noche en mi colonia.					
Me preocupa que le pase algo a alguien cercano cuando sale a la calle.					
(en caso de ser padre o tutor de niños o jóvenes) Prefiero que no salgan a la calle.					

16. ¿Quiénes son más vulnerables en la calle?
☐Niños ☐Niñas ☐Hombres adolescentes ☐Mujeres adolescentes ☐Hombres adultos ☐Mujeres adultas
☐Mujeres con niños ☐Hombres con niños ☐Ancianos ☐Ancianas Otro: _____

17. ¿Qué zonas/espacios consideras seguros?
EN TU COLONIA:

FUERA DE TU COLONIA:

¿Pasas por esos espacios con frecuencia? ☐SI ☐NO

18. ¿En qué zonas/espacios te sientes inseguro(a)?
EN TU COLONIA:

FUERA DE TU COLONIA:

¿Pasas por esos espacios con frecuencia? ☐SI ☐NO

MEDIOS DE TRANSPORTE

19. Medio de transporte que más usas para ir a de tu casa a tu trabajo/escuela:
☐A pie ☐Metro ☐Camión ☐Taxi ☐Uber/Didi/Cabify ☐Bicicleta ☐Coche particular ☐Motocicleta ☐Otro: _____

20. Medio de transporte que más usas para ir a hacer compras:
☐A pie ☐Metro ☐Camión ☐Taxi ☐Uber/Didi/Cabify ☐Bicicleta ☐Coche particular ☐Motocicleta ☐Otro: _____

21. ¿Qué medio de transporte consideras más <u>seguro</u>? ¿Por qué?

22. ¿Qué medio de transporte consideras más <u>peligroso</u>? ¿Por qué?

23. ¿Quiénes son más vulnerables en el transporte público?
☐Niños ☐Niñas ☐Hombres adolescentes ☐Mujeres adolescentes ☐Hombres adultos ☐Mujeres adultas
☐Mujeres con niños ☐Hombres con niños ☐Ancianos ☐Ancianas Otro: _____

3 |CONTINÚA AL REVERSO ⇨

MEDIDAS DE PRECAUCIÓN

24. Evalúa las siguientes medidas de precaución. A tu juicio, ¿qué tanto sirven para estar seguro en el espacio público y en el transporte? Marca con una X la casilla correspondiente, incluyendo las medidas que no apliques.

	¿Lo aplico?	Muy útil ♂♂	Útil ♂	Indiferente /No sé	Poco útil♀	Nada útil ♀♀
Enviarle mensajes a alguien cercano diciéndole dónde estoy	☐SI ☐NO					
Pedirle a alguien que me recoja al llegar a la parada de camión/metro	☐SI ☐NO					
Pedir ayuda a un desconocido	☐SI ☐NO					
Evitar contacto visual	☐SI ☐NO					
Ignorar a quien me hable	☐SI ☐NO					
Guardar el celular	☐SI ☐NO					
Usar audífonos	☐SI ☐NO					
Formar grupos de vecinos para cuidar las calles	☐SI ☐NO					
Gritar / hacer ruido	☐SI ☐NO					
Llamar a la policía	☐SI ☐NO					
Llevar un objeto para defensa personal (navajas, gas pimienta, etc.)	☐SI ☐NO					
Desplazarse por calles con poca gente	☐SI ☐NO					
Desplazarse por calles llenas de gente	☐SI ☐NO					
Desplazarme por zonas iluminadas	☐SI ☐NO					
Desplazarme acompañado de alguien	☐SI ☐NO					
Planear mis rutas con anticipación	☐SI ☐NO					
Adecuar mi vestimenta dependiendo del transporte que uso	☐SI ☐NO					
Observar a mi alrededor antes de subirme o bajarme de un vehículo	☐SI ☐NO					
Evitar dejar pertenencias a la vista dentro de un vehículo	☐SI ☐NO					
Evitar comprar cosas en los semáforos	☐SI ☐NO					
Anotar las placas de los taxis/ubers/carros a los que me subo	☐SI ☐NO					
Agarrar fuertemente mi bolsa/mochila	☐SI ☐NO					
Instalar rejas o muros alrededor de la colonia	☐SI ☐NO					
Instalar cámaras de seguridad frente a mi casa	☐SI ☐NO					
Instalar protectores en puertas y ventanas	☐SI ☐NO					
Mantener limpia la banqueta y/o cochera (hojas, publicidad, basura)	☐SI ☐NO					

PERCEPCIÓN Y RIESGO

A tu juicio, ¿qué tan probable es que te suceda alguno de los siguientes eventos en el espacio público? Marca la casilla correspondiente.

	Muy probable♂♂	Algo probable♂	No sé	Poco probable♀	Nada probable♀♀	No aplica
Que me siga un desconocido.						
Que me asalten.						
Que me arrebaten mi bolsa o mochila.						
Que me roben contenido de mi bolsa/mochila sin que me de cuenta.						
Que se metan a robar a mi casa.						
Que se roben objetos del frente de mi casa (macetas, carros, mobiliario, etc.)						
Que me agredan físicamente.						
Que me digan insultos, piropos, comentarios inapropiados.						
Que me toquen de manera inapropiada?						
Que me priven de la libertad (levantón, secuestro express, que no te permitan salir de un vehículo, etc.)						

25. Describe a la policía en 4 palabras.

1. _____   2. _____   3. _____   4. _____

26. ¿Alguna vez has ocupado ayuda de la policía? ☐SI ☐NO

27. ¿Alguna vez has tenido algún problema con la policía? ☐SI ☐NO ¿Qué sucedió?

Contesta las siguientes preguntas. Si eliges más de un medio, enumera del 1 (más usado) al 3 (menos usado).
28. ¿Cómo te enteras de los eventos relacionados con la inseguridad en tu colonia?
☐Periódicos ☐Revistas ☐Conversaciones con amigos, vecinos y/o familiares ☐Whatsapp ☐Facebook ☐Twitter ☐Instagram ☐Radio ☐TV ☐Ninguno ☐Otro: _____

29. ¿Cómo te enteras de los eventos relacionados con la inseguridad en Monterrey?
☐Periódicos ☐Revistas ☐Conversaciones con amigos, vecinos y/o familiares ☐Whatsapp ☐Facebook ☐Twitter ☐Instagram ☐Radio ☐TV ☐Ninguno ☐Otro: _____

30. ¿Cómo te enteras de estrategias para estar seguro/segura en la calle o en el transporte público?
☐Periódicos ☐Revistas ☐Conversaciones con amigos, vecinos y/o familiares ☐Whatsapp ☐Facebook ☐Twitter ☐Instagram ☐Radio ☐TV ☐Ninguno ☐Otro: _____

31. A tu juicio, ¿cuál medio consideras más confiable?
☐Periódicos ☐Revistas ☐Conversaciones con amigos, vecinos y/o familiares ☐Whatsapp ☐Facebook ☐Twitter ☐Instagram ☐Radio ☐TV ☐Ninguno ☐Otro: _____

32. ¿Eres parte de algún grupo de redes sociales sobre eventos de tu colonia/barrio/zona? ☐SI   ☐NO ¿Por qué?

33. ¿Algún comentario o anécdota qué agregar?

¡Gracias por contestar! :) Tu respuesta será muy útil.

Deposita tu encuesta en el buzón más cercano (ver lista) antes del **lunes 29 de abril de 2019**

¿Se te pasó la fecha? ¿El buzón te queda muy lejos de tu casa? Puedes enviarla al correo city.of.fear.project@gmail.com o preguntar al 81 1799 3315 o tu tiendita más cercana.

Buzones en tienditas locales

Unidad Modelo	Ubicación aproximada
Frutería Rosy	Zempoala
La Burbuja	Coyoacán 602
Depósito La Unidad	Coyoacán 402
Abarrotes Unidad Modelo	Coyoacán 411 entre Olmeca y Huasteca
La Michoacana	Huasteca y Tenochtitlán.
La Esquina de la Nieve	Olmeca y Chichen Itza frente a la Plaza
Tiendita de abarrotes	Zapoteca y Chichen Itza a un costado de la iglesia
Loma Linda	**Ubicación aproximada**
Tienda de Lolita	Mar Egeo y Mar de las Antillas
Carnes Treca	Mar Arábigo y Mar Índico
La Cabañita	Mar Índico y Mar de las Antillas
Abarrotes Coquis	Mar Adriático 84
El Tirol	Mar Atlántico y Azob

ANNEX 4 - Structure of workshop with pupils in secondary school in LLP

Momentos	Descripción	Materiales
Presentación	El facilitador se presentará a si mismo, así como al taller, preguntando por expectativas que los participantes puedan tener del mismo	Ninguno
Encuadre	El facilitador sentará las bases que guiaran el taller, estableciendo como principios el respeto, tolerancia y la escucha activa, mientras al mismo tiempo crea una atmósfera de confianza. De igual manera se explicará que para este taller se trabajará de manera colaborativa, pero trabajando sólo con equipos de hombres y mujeres.	-Rotafolio -Pizarrón Móvil -Marcadores
Inicio 1.1 Actividad Diagnóstica/ Grupal	Se empezará a abordar la problemática de la inseguridad solicitando a los distintos equipos que definan con conceptos y de ser posible representaciones gráficas de lo que para ellos es la inseguridad, posteriormente compartirán sus ideas con los demás.	-Cartulinas -Marcadores
Inicio 1.2 Actividad Teórica-Reflexiva	Se contrastarán los conceptos compartidos en las cartulinas con las definiciones actuales que engloban instituciones gubernamentales e internacionales. Se les pedirá a los grupos que compartan sus opiniones sobre estas definiciones.	-Rotafolio -Pizarrón Móvil
Desarrollo 1.1 Actividad Teorica-Reflexiva	Se focalizará la atención de los grupos hacia elementos locales, se les presentará el Semáforo Delictivo que mensualmente publica la Fiscalía General de Justicia Del Estado, explicándoles cómo funciona y que representa, así como los alcances que estos pueden tener, se les pedirá que ellos contrasten los datos con la realidad que ellos observan, si están de acuerdo, en desacuerdo, si ellos han vivido o presenciado otro tipo de experiencias, etc.	-Rotafolios -Pizarrón Móvil -Notas adhesivas
Desarrollo 1.2 Actividad Grupal/Recopilatoria	Realizar actividad: Identificando factores de riesgo. Se le solicitará por grupos que identifiquen que elementos ambientales, urbanísticos, personales u otro tipo de elemento que puedan mencionar los vuelven más susceptibles o los ponen en mayor rieso de ser vícimas de la inseguridad. Identificarán estos factores haciendo uso de cartulinas y colores.	-Cartulinas -Marcadores -Notas adhesivas
Desarrollo 1.3 Actividad Individual/Recopilatoria	Realizar actividad: Identificando lugares de riesgo Haciendo uso de un mapa se les pedirá que ellos identifiquen las zonas que consideran como más riesgosas en su barrio, de igual manera se les pedirá que compartan que ruta siguen para llegar a su escuela y el medio de transporte elegido.	-Mapas -Lápices -Calcomanías
Desarrollo 1.4 Actividad Teórica-Reflexiva	Actividad: Identificando perfiles de quien provoca la inseguridad y cuál es el papel de la autoridad alrededor de ellos. En grupos tratarán de plasmar cómo son las personas que provocan la inseguridad y cómo actúa la autoridad con ellos.	-Rotafolio -Pizarrón Móvil -Notas adhesivas

Desarrollo 1.5 Actividad Grupal	Actividad: ¿Cómo podemos prevenir ser víctimas la inseguridad? Se le solicitará al grupo que en una cartulina expongan sus ideas sobre cómo se puede prevenir la inseguridad o que estrategias tienen ellos para evitarla. Al final compartirán sus aportes con los demás.	-Cartulinas -Marcadores -Notas adhesivas
Cierre	El facilitador hará una breve recapitulación de lo trabajado durante el taller y hará observaciones sobre lo compartido por parte de los participantes. Pedirá retroalimentación y comentarios por parte de los participantes sobre el taller y finalmente agradecerá y dará por concluido el taller.	Ninguno

ANNEX 5 -   Information card for pupils

Edad: _____ años   **Núm. clave:** _____

Colonia donde vives: _____

Medio de transporte que más usas:
_____

¿Tienes smartphone? □Sí   □No
Es de □ plan de datos □ recarga de saldo

¿Tienes computadora personal? □SI □NO
¿Tienes WiFi en tu casa? □ SI   □NO
Menciona las 5 apps que más usas.

1.   _____

2.   _____

3.   _____

4.   _____

5.   _____

Male and female users mock the measure of implementing a metro car exclusive for women.

ANNEX 8 - "Sretuorf" case - Sexual assaults against women in public transportation, coordinated through Facebook Groups.

8.1 – Questionnaire to fill in before being admitted to the group.

8.1 – Posts of users sharing their experiences, recommended times to attack, and reactions of group members (originally named "Sretuorf metro MTY")

Yessi Lopez cambió el nombre del grupo de "Sretuorf metro MTY" a "Sretuorf".
5 feb. 2020 a las 14:36

👍 3

_____z Fermin
Jan 7 at 11:07 PM · 🖼

Mañana regresan a clases la UANL 🐵😂👏

6 Comments

👍 Like   💬 Comment

Alfredo _____
4 feb. 2020 a las 05:55

Hoy me tocó una buena nalguita, la trabaje desde antes de llegar el metro.
El gusto me duró 1 estación, un puñetas que vio que a la chava le gustaba, me metió mano braveado y la chava se movió de lugar.

👍😂😡 5

José _____
Pasa las fotos

2 h   Me gusta   Responder   😂 2

Raziel _____
😊😊

1 h   Me gusta   Responder

Dante _____
Y las fotos? 👀

1 h   Me gusta   Responder   😂 2

Edy _____
Alguna dama para mañana en la estacion san bernabe

46 min   Me gusta   Responder

Javier _____
Pasa la foto

46 min   Me gusta   Responder

Igor _____
Rola las fotos

15 min   Me gusta   Responder

445

rapido,para tambien darle placer asi estuve dos horas mis hermanos coje y coje hasta que me harte ,ya cuando se me paso la calentura ,cai en la situacion y ahora necesitaba planear la huida asi que le quite el dinero que traia solo le deje 20 pesos para que agarrara su puto camion ,asli la verdad a paso veloz y me subi en el primer taxi que paso devolada hasta el centro a echarme unas guamas en el TARRO ,bien cojido,por cierto ve corri varias veces adentro de ella ,asi que si sale panzona espero mis felicitaciones jajajaj esta fue mi experiencia colegas ,les mando un saludo y recuerden no dejemos morir este movimiento,asi pongan vagon rosa,policias guardias etc ,busquemos la manera de seguir en esto,un consejo compas SI VEN A UN COLEGA HACIENDO MISION Y VEN QUE YA VIENE CAZANDO A LA PRESA DESDE HACE RATO,NO SE METAN ,ESPEREN OTRA,HAY MUCHAS NO LE ECHEN A PERDER EL TRABAJO A ALGUIEN QUE YA VIENE MENTALIZADO,SE LOS DIGO PORQUE DURANTE TODA ESTA HISTORIA HUBO MINIMO CUATRO CABRONES QUE ME LA QUISIERON GANAR Y LSO TUVE QUE EMPUJAR A LA TOSCA PARA QUE ME DEJARAN MANIOBRAR ,le tome fotos a la india bastarda esta por si gustan se las paso ,SOBRES !!!SALUDS!!!

#ELCAZACHIRUGUITAS

Leag Wero Menonas
Dec 8, 2019 at 10:10 PM

Si a alguno de ustedes los llegan a detener los guardias del metro o la fuerza civil ,tirenme a mi yo conozco al torre de la fc y el vato tira paro machín

Leag Wero Menonas
Dec 8, 2019 at 10:09 PM

Cómo dato en los puesteros de colegio civil también hay buenos tiros ya que hay mucha gente comprando cosas de navidad ,también en hemsa y en del sol

8.2 Group Admin alerts users that the group has been reported and that they are making a backup group.

Yessi Lopez
Administrador · 26 ene. a las 7:35 p. m.

Tengan mucho cuidado amicsess cuando hagan sus misiones ya que hay mucho héroe y mucho metiche grabando y subiendo a face ,también supe que ya andaban reportando el gpo ,hablaré con el administrador para hacer un respaldo ,que tengan bonito domingo
TIA YESSI
Yessi Lopez

8.3 A Facebook group of security demands action from authorities (while also joking about violence against women in other posts).

Alerta Nuevo León
7 mins · 🌐

HACEN VIRAL A SUPUESTO ACOSADOR Y GRUPO DE FACEBOOK DE VIOLADORES AQUÎ EN NUEVO LEÓN Nuestro portal esta en contra de difundir contenidos que ataquen la buenas costumbres de la sociedad, pero esta ocasión hacemos de su conocimiento un grupo de Facebook de supuestos VIOLADORES y acosadores que relatan sus historias como si se tratara de algo sobresaliente.

Y es que en redes sociales circula un relato de un joven que da a detalles de cómo violo a una señorita en la estación del metro.

Estas capturas corresponden a un grupo de facebook denominado # SRETOURTF

Quienes pudieron acceder comentan que asi como estte hay muchos más relatos.

Por lo pronto ya investigan la procedencia de este supuesto perfil que hoy se exhibe así como el grupo que expone estos casos.

HACEMOS UN ATENTO Y URGENTE LLAMADO A LAS AUTORIDADES PARA DAR CON EL PARADERO Y CUIDAR DE LA INTEGRIDAD DE LAS MUJERES

ANNEX 9 - Posts by the FGJNL in relation to rumors and testimonies of attempted abductions of women in public space

ANNEX 10 - Table of interviews

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS		
Interviewee(s)	**Date**	**Summary**
Clara, female, French teacher at university level, 29 years old	01/07/2016	Resident of Monterrey in Torres Uhdei, working in ITESM. Topic(s): Everyday life in a high-rise residential building embedded in a *colonia*, near the Penal Topo Chico.
Diana, female, housemaker, 63 years old.	12/03/2018	Resident of Guadalupe. Topic(s): violence in public space and women.
Edmundo, male, security consultant, 60 years old	26/09/2018	Living in San Nicolas, working in Santa Catarina and Monterrey. Topic(s): Experience work for the private sector on strategies to gather information about crime between 2006-2018.
EG, C5 outreach	04/05/2018	Topic(s): functioning of C5, visit to the premises, use of data for decision-making, issues on implementation.
EE, female, head of urban development agency	30/04/2018	Topic(s): policing, citizen-based security practices, CPTED, PROXPOL, outreach, and poverty in northwest sector and issues with Loma Linda.
Irma, female, architect, 32 years old	20/04/2018	Living in Escobedo, working in San Nicolás. Topic(s): Living in a fraccionamiento cerrado, commuting, and life with a handicapped child.
Jaime, male, principal of public secondary school in LLP, 55 years old	15/08/2019	Topic(s): profile of the pupils of the school, issues of violence facing pupils, relationship with parents.
José, male, data analyst, 35 years old	13/03/2019	Living in Guadalupe, working in Monterrey. Topic(s): Experiences and memories of living in MMA between 2008-2015 and the differences before and after.
Jorge, male, accountant, 32 years old	09/09/2018	Living in San Nicolás, working in Monterrey and San Nicolás.

		Topic(s): being kidnapped in 2010 and PTSD.
Marta, female, university professor, 35 years old	03/03/2018	Living in Santa Catarina, working in San Nicolás. Topic(s): information on social media to navigate the city in 2010.
Norma, female, professor of architecture, 55 years old.	01/15/2021	Living in Monterrey, working in San Nicolás. Topic(s): photography in Monterrey, public space and trends in education.
Lourdes, female, retired, 68 years old	18/02/2019	Living in Unidad Modelo. Topic(s): crime and violence in LLP, engagement with neighbors and police, experiences of insecurity in her family.
Salvador, male, architect, 33 years old	19/02/2019	Living in Burócratas Moctezuma (colonia in Monterrey, southeast side of LLP). Topic(s): everyday violence in Burócratas Moctezuma, perception of the police.
Saul, male, owner of a snack stand, 60 years old	30/03/2019	Living and working in Unidad Modelo. Topic(s): surveys and refusal to answer, experiences of violence, relationship with police.
SG, female, director	16/08/2019	Topic(s): functioning of Dirección de Control y Supervisión a Empresas y Servicios de Seguridad Privada

Interviewee(s)	Date	Summary
Armando, male, English teacher, 25 years old Cristina, female, English teacher, 25 years old Flora, female, saleswoman, 26 years old	17/02/2019	Living and working in Valle de Santa Lucía (northwest sector, near LLP). Topic(s): Activism in Valle de Santa Lucía, discrimination, violence against women and lower-class inhabitants, conflicts with authorities and police.
Carmen, female, counselor, 51 years old. Gerardo, male, Carmen's colleague in the association, 49 years old.	17/04/2018	Working in an association for the reinsertion of ex-convicts and support for their families and residents of high-risk *colonias*, The association's HQ is located in Mitras. Topic(s): experiences working with convicts in the Penal del Topo Chico and

		their families, violence and cartel networks inside prisons, marginalization and stigmatization of individuals of *colonias populares*, everyday violence in *colonias populares* in 2018.
Joel, male, MVV coordinator Alberto, male, MVV coordinator	23/02/2019	Residents of LLP and creators and coordinators of the MVV neighborhood watch. Topic(s): functioning of MVV online and offline, experiences of violence, relationship with police, relationships between neighbors, difficulties of MVV.
Officer A, male. Officer C, male. Officer J, female.	13/02/2019	Visit with MVV to FC headquarters. Topic(s): crime statistics, 911 calls, crime prevention, relationship with the police.
Guillermo, male, architect Roberto, male, engineer Joaquín, male, architect	9/08/2019	Employees of a public agency for urban development. Topic(s): experience during the CPTED training exercises.
Mateo, Omar, and Pablo. Immigrants from Puebla, Tamaulipas, and Oaxaca.	9/10/2018	Immigrants visiting a soup kitchen in Centro. Topic(s): feelings of insecurity, perception of police, experiences of victimization as immigrants in Monterrey.
Nancy, female, social worker, 29 years old Fernando, male, police officer, 40 years old	07/05/2018	Working in the municipality of San Pedro on the department of social prevention. Topic(s): poverty in Santa Elena and Los Pinos, drug dependency in San Pedro 400, social work, reconstruction projects, aids from the public sector, gang activity.
Participants between 25 and 55 years old, 6 female and 6 male participants. Female, professor of architecture Male, working in construction company Female, working in construction company Female, historian	09/04/2021	Topic(s): experiences of violence when taking photographs in Monterrey.

Male, professor Female, accountant Male, jogger Male, architect Female, photographer Male, doctor Female, researcher Enrique, economist	453	

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Résumé substantiel en français

Le sentiment d'insécurité dans les villes est un sujet qui a pris de l'importance en raison de la présence d'attaques terroristes, de la criminalité et de la violence dans le monde. Dans le cas de l'Amérique Latine, la violence urbaine a augmenté de façon exponentielle depuis les années 1990 et a donné lieu à des recherches sur la manière de mieux la comprendre et de la combattre. Des voix viennent de tous les fronts, suggérant que la meilleure solution est la tolérance zéro, l'action militaire, les programmes sociaux, l'intervention étrangère, la consolidation de la paix ou tout cela simultanément. Le problème de la violence urbaine s'embrouille davantage dans une société très inégalitaire. Les expérimentations, les solutions et surtout la demande de sécurité grandit et la recherche scientifique peine à faire face à un problème qui mute selon le contexte. Dans ce contexte, l'espace public a également été l'objet de dispute, le scénario de confrontation, le point d'observation et d'analyse, et le laboratoire de solutions potentielles. Les solutions au niveau des villes deviennent plus pertinentes, car la violence urbaine dans la région n'est pas un sujet politique abstrait, mais plutôt un problème qui touche et transforme profondément la vie quotidienne. C'est le cas de la ville de Monterrey, au Mexique. La guerre contre la drogue qui a débuté au Mexique en 2006 a déclenché plusieurs événements violents dans les territoires disputés par les cartels de la drogue. Les agressions directes allant du vol à l'homicide sont devenues des questions de vie quotidienne, touchant en premier lieu les secteurs vulnérables de la société. Alors que le récit commun est que la ville a changé du jour au lendemain, la violence structurelle -telle que les inégalités socio-spatiales- est restée sans réponse pendant des décennies et a constitué le terrain fertile pour des formes plus directes de violence. Ce n'est que lorsque cette violence a touché des espaces autres que les quartiers marginalisés qu'elle a été considérée comme une véritable crise. En 2013, certains niveaux dramatiques de violence ont reculé et muté, tandis que d'autres formes de violence ont émergé avec des acteurs et des niveaux d'intensité différents. Pendant ce temps, les citadins se sont appuyés sur des solutions individualistes face à une action publique inefficace.

Dans ce contexte, l'espace public a également été l'objet de disputes, le scénario de la confrontation, le point d'observation et d'analyse, et le laboratoire de solutions potentielles. Les espaces publics ont d'abord été évités, puis transformés par des stratégies de fortification ou d'ouverture. Cependant, dans une société fortement inégalitaire, le pouvoir de faire entendre sa voix, de se distancier de l'espace public ou de le transformer n'est pas homogène pour tous les secteurs de la population. Ces solutions spatiales, bien que séduisantes, ont une portée limitée et peuvent même parfois favoriser les inégalités. Cette capacité inégale à influencer les politiques publiques et à accéder à des espaces publics sécurisés, ainsi que l'absence d'action publique efficace pour tous les groupes sociaux, conduisent à un recours excessif aux pratiques individuelles et à la normalisation de la violence, notamment dans les secteurs les plus vulnérables.

Dans un tel environnement, le sentiment d'insécurité et la vie quotidienne ont souvent été négligés, car il existe des problèmes plus importants et plus « réels » auxquels il faut prêter attention. Néanmoins, ces éléments apparemment banals ont un impact. Cela nous amène à la question de recherche centrale de ce projet : Quel est le lien entre le sentiment d'insécurité, les espaces publics et les pratiques quotidiennes dans un contexte de violence chronique ? À la croisée de la géographie, de l'urbanisme et de la sociologie, cette thèse présente une analyse multi-niveau du sentiment d'insécurité, des espaces publics et des pratiques quotidiennes dans un contexte de violence chronique. Cette recherche observe comment les incidents extraordinaires et ordinaires s'intègrent à la vie normale à Monterrey, quelles stratégies matérielles et immatérielles sont mises en place, et comment les inégalités socio-spatiales y jouent un rôle.

Ce projet comportait trois phases. La première a permis de comprendre les représentations de la violence, des sentiments d'insécurité, de l'espace public et des pratiques quotidiennes à l'échelle de la ville et de définir une étude de cas à l'échelle du quartier : le Loma Linda Polygon (LLP). La deuxième phase était une analyse du cas sélectionné. Cette phase a consisté à observer les caractéristiques physiques et sociales du LLP, ainsi que ses stratégies individuelles et collectives de sécurité. Enfin, la troisième phase s'est concentrée sur l'analyse des sentiments d'insécurité et des pratiques quotidiennes dans les espaces publics des populations qui ont été exclues de la conversation dominante sur l'insécurité dans la localité. Il y a eu un va-et-vient continu entre les niveaux macro et micro pour situer le cas sélectionné dans le contexte plus large, observer comment les phénomènes au niveau de la ville se reflètent sur les individus et où les perspectives d'insécurité de certains groupes s'intègrent dans les représentations plus larges de l'insécurité et d'autres groupes définis par le sexe et la classe sociale.

L'insécurité est perçue par les habitants de MMA (Monterrey et sa métropole) comme un sujet surdiagnostiqué et sous-traité : ils voient de nombreuses collectes de données réalisées par les autorités, les universités et autres institutions de recherche mais ils ne voient pas de solutions efficaces qui améliorent leur quotidien. Même avant la crise sécuritaire, la méfiance provenait de ce que les habitants perçoivent comme une réponse inefficace ou inexistante aux problèmes publics généraux de la part des autorités. Les habitants ont peu confiance dans les projets à long terme ou sans résultats à court terme. Et concernant l'insécurité et la violence, il y a une peur de participer à ce genre de recherche quand les habitants n'y voient pas un bénéfice immédiat, et ils peuvent même croire qu'ils se mettent en danger en y participant. La violence est un sujet très sensible qui touche leur quotidien, les gens se sentent vulnérables lorsqu'ils en parlent.

On pourrait penser que plus on fait face à des événements violents, plus on est susceptible d'exprimer la peur sous des formes bien connues telles que l'évitement. Cela s'est produit au début, mais c'était insoutenable, en particulier pour ceux qui ne pouvaient pas se permettre de s'isoler et d'éviter les espaces publics, généralement les classes inférieures et les pauvres. Au fur et à mesure que la violence allait et venait, puis revenait sous différentes formes et dans différents lieux, les gens du MMA sont passés de la peur à la colère et enfin à la fatigue d'avoir peur, ce qui s'est transformé en une normalisation et une banalisation de la violence. Cette peur, cette fatigue et cette colère se manifestent par un silence et la résignation. Dans de telles

situations, le degré de responsabilité personnelle pour rester en sécurité est élevé. La violence a été acceptée et normalisée, et les sentiments d'insécurité font partie de la vie quotidienne en MMA de différentes manières. Cependant, tous les types de violence dans l'espace public ne sont pas traités de la même manière. Il existe des types de violence qu'il est acceptable de signaler et d'évoquer, tandis que d'autres sont réduits au silence, minimisés ou ignorés. Le récit dominant se concentre sur le crime comme la seule source de sentiments d'insécurité et établit que la victimisation est la même d'un groupe à l'autre. Ce récit occulte la violence quotidienne à laquelle sont confrontées les populations vulnérables ou marginalisées dans les espaces publics.

D'abord, le cas de Monterrey a permis d'observer l'impact des expérimentations dans les espaces publics pour mitiger la violence. Ces actions ont pris un élan important suite à l'expérience de Medellín, Colombia. Les transformations de l'espace public ne peuvent pas résoudre la violence structurelle profondément enracinée. Ces discussions sont pertinentes non seulement pour les cas impliquant des villes d'Amérique latine confrontées à des taux élevés de violence urbaine ; des situations similaires de manque de participation liées à l'inégalité peuvent être trouvées dans les communautés vulnérables dans les villes du monde entier. Pourtant, ils sont restés non abordés par les praticiens, se concentrant souvent sur la production de résultats et la représentation positive et l'universalité de ces outils. En définitive, comme le montre le cas de Monterrey, la sécurité par ouverture supposée a les mêmes limites que la sécurité par fortification : les transformations spatiales ne sont pas disponibles pour tous. Les solutions inclusives et durables ne se prêtent pas au spectacle. Cependant, c'est le spectacle des espaces publics qui attire l'attention. Pendant ce temps, ceux qui se trouvent en dehors des limites des nouveaux espaces sécurisés s'appuient sur des stratégies immatérielles pour rester en sécurité. Méfiance envers les autorités, forte probabilité de victimisation, criminalisation constante en raison de la classe sociale, de l'ethnicité, de la *colonia* de résidence - ces facteurs contribuent à une normalisation de la violence et à une dépendance excessive aux stratégies individuelles. L'analyse de LLP a été l'occasion d'observer comment une communauté de voisins est affectée par l'insécurité et la violence dans leur vie quotidienne, et comment ils articulent des pratiques quotidiennes pour minimiser les risques et la victimisation. Les observations au niveau micro contrastent fortement avec les données agrégées résultant des études au niveau macro. Les expériences d'insécurité au niveau du quartier sont mieux définies, plus personnelles et plus claires pour les usagers.

Comme les habitants perçoivent qu'il y a peu à faire en dehors de leur portée personnelle, l'accent est mis sur la responsabilité des individus de rester en sécurité dans l'espace public. À son tour, cet accent façonne les représentations collectives de la violence urbaine. Les réactions préventives étaient chaotiques. Les habitants ont cherché à se tenir informés, à se protéger et à protéger leurs proches. Des communautés se sont formées spontanément à cet effet. La recherche et la pratique ont établi l'importance de l'action collective et de la participation citoyenne au niveau du quartier en tant qu'éléments clés pour lutter contre la violence. Cependant, dans le cas du MMA, il existe un manque historique de participation et de classisme, ainsi qu'une grande valeur accordée à l'action individuelle comme solution ultime. Cela s'ajoute aux problèmes découlant de l'insécurité produite par la violence, et les quelques initiatives collectives qui existent - et qui ne sont pas parrainées par le secteur privé - sont

confrontées à des problèmes de méfiance, d'apathie, de manque de ressources, de désespoir et d'instabilité. La littérature place la participation citoyenne à la base des pratiques de co-conception pour prévenir la criminalité et la violence. Cependant, les activités à Monterrey révèlent que cette participation est souvent performative -sous forme de *tokenism*, en particulier lorsque le but est de résoudre toutes les formes de violence par des interventions spatiales. Et ainsi, alors qu'il y a de la valeur dans les actions sociales, elles sont toujours un accessoire des transformations matérielles et ont des lacunes importantes, qui sont manquées lorsque la participation est considérée comme intrinsèquement positive.

Les observations conduites aux niveaux territoriaux divers montrent que l'inégalité socio-spatiale, la classe sociale et le genre ont un impact considérable sur les sentiments d'insécurité et les pratiques quotidiennes dans les espaces publics. Les représentations de la violence sont souvent centrées sur les manifestations les plus drastiques des formes directes. Les habitants de Monterrey sont au courant des incidents les plus violents et les plus visibles tels que le meurtre, la torture, le viol et les enlèvements. Ils sont très commentés, ils servent à mesurer la dangerosité de la ville en général, mais sur le plan personnel, ils ne sont pas une préoccupation quotidienne pour tous les groupes sociaux. De plus, la classe sociale détermine le degré de contact des individus avec l'espace public. Classe sociale et territoire sont intimement liés. Ils définissent les représentations de l'espace public et de la violence, et comment les habitants sont perçus et traités par les autorités et les autres citadins. Les classes inférieures dépendent beaucoup plus des espaces publics pour leur subsistance. Alors que les classes supérieures qui peuvent se permettre de fortifier ou d'éviter les espaces publics avec des changements dans les pratiques quotidiennes, la sécurité pour les classes inférieures et pour ceux qui sont en contact permanent avec l'espace public passe par l'adaptation et l'alerte. Cependant, un état constant d'alerte élevée n'est pas durable. Le genre est également apparu comme une différenciation importante dans les sentiments d'insécurité et les pratiques quotidiennes dans l'espace public recoupant la classe sociale. Les incidents tels que le viol ou l'enlèvement sont identifiés comme des préoccupations abstraites par les hommes citadins, mais ce sont des craintes concrètes pour les femmes citadines. De plus, lorsque les citadines discutent de l'insécurité, elles défendent souvent leurs familles, leurs jeunes ou les personnes âgées - et parfois, elles évitent de mentionner les problèmes auxquels les femmes sont confrontées car elles ne veulent pas être considérées comme irrationnelles. À l'inverse, les hommes citadins sont moins susceptibles de défendre des groupes auxquels ils n'appartiennent pas. Indépendamment de ces nuances, le discours dominant de la sécurité personnelle est construit autour des perspectives des hommes et de la classe moyenne supérieure.