FIRST WE TOOK the STREETS

URBAN STORYTELLING FOR ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

Andrea Alejandra Esquivel Velázquez
Master’s Thesis
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To Geer
Cities in the Global South have been undergoing stressful processes of rapid urbanization. In Latin America, urban development has followed global neoliberal, capitalistic, economic and political interests together with idealized western models of urbanization which led to misunderstanding and underestimating its own processes, challenges and urban dynamics. Specially in fast-growing cities in Mexico sprawl has become the urban dynamic. The city of Queretaro grew 17.6 times its size in the past 47 years. The urban dynamic of its urban sprawl was urban fragmentation and intensive privatization of urban spaces which have left 79.9% of its urban areas with no access to public spaces.

One side effects of this unequal social process are the urban borders — ambiguous spaces between existing and new urban development. Urban borders exhibit a strong social agency as people redefine their function by appropriating the space through informal practices. As cities continue to expand, former urban borders become contested spaces where several interests meet. Most importantly, empowered by their unique stories and urban narratives, urban borders have the capacity of becoming socially resilient spaces and withstand the pressure of privatization and gated communities.

This thesis looks at urban borders as sites with a potential to develop social resilience, a capacity to maintain the social life of a space regardless of external forces. It approaches the topic through two case studies in Queretaro, Mexico, to understand how social production of space happens through non-official stories and shared narratives. It also looks at stories as a way to uncover the hidden political, economic and historical motives that affect the development of urban borders. This interplay between social production and social construction of space is analyzed in the work using Lefebvre’s spatial triad.

The study demonstrates that for urban borders in growing cities, stories can become catalysts of change. In both of the case studies, non-official stories helped create social resilience, improve place attachment and crystalize spatial identity. Urban storytelling presented bring forward a richer understanding of the social and physical conception of borderline spaces appropriated through informal practices. While the first case study (San Pablo) shows a negative effect of discarding local narratives on new development, the second case (Hercules) highlights that it’s possible to harness the power of social resilience by building on the shared stories and imaginaries.

Key words: alternative futures, storytelling, social resilience, urban borders, space appropriation
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¡Gracias a todos! // Thank you everyone! // Kiitos kaikille!
Subversive historiography connects oppositional practices from the past and forms of resistance in the present, thus, creating spaces of possibility where the future can be imagined differently – imagined in such a way that we can witness ourselves dreaming, moving forward and beyond the limits of confines of fixed locations.


Preface

I have lived in the city of Queretaro for 28 years of my life. I was born, raised and educated in its streets, neighborhoods and historic city center. I felt proud of its history, its peacefulness and colonial beauty. However, soon I realized its exponential growth, and how more and more exclusive areas were built all around me, affecting and erasing natural areas and vulnerable communities with no power to fight back. Year after year I perceived a more closed and intolerant city, dividing and surrounding elite areas with exclusivity and aspirational walls. After working years as an architect, I realized how my professional projects and actions were helping to build such city I do not want.

I don’t want a city where urban space is privatized; where only 20% of the urban area has access to public spaces. I don’t want a city where economic profit guides its development before social wellbeing; where public spaces are only for people with money. I don’t want a city where the elites pay more to protect themselves from strangers; where I walk between walls of indifference. I don’t want a city where memories are erased; where our spaces and places become private properties to make richer the 5% of the already rich population. I don’t want a city without limits, growing and sprawling into the horizon; where public transport is not efficient and not having a private car is an incapacity. I don’t want to live in a city where walking or riding a bicycle is dangerous; where my mom wonders every time I ride my bike if a car will run over me. I don’t want a city where I am afraid to go out alone at night, where I fear for my life only for being a woman; where living with fear is the normal. I don’t want a city where I cannot visit certain neighborhoods even on broad daylight; where I am observed immediately as a suspect for dressing, looking or talking differently. I don’t want a city where my profession contributes to all of the above, acting as spatial police, regulating bodies in space; where urban planning considers people the problem before considering the plan the problem.

I want an open city full of memories, stories and inclusivity; a city with no fear. I want a city that is run differently than an accounting firm; where planners “plan” by negotiation desires and fears, mediating memories and hopes, facilitating change and transformation.

Text inspired by Leonie Sandercock’s introduction to her essay Dreaming a Sustainable City in Eckstein & Throgmorton (2003, p. 143–166)
In the complex city there are no clear rules of engagement (Sassen, 2013). Especially in fast-growing cities which are often hosts of invisible urban spaces, apparently not owned by anyone, forgotten, inhabited, impartial, neutral, residual spaces where nothing happens apparently. Such spaces are filled with potential, yet they do not exist until they are hijacked by the people.

Cities in Latin America, in this thesis Mexico, create the conditions for appropriation of spaces to happen as they are continuous hosts of new urban social construction of space which is only possible by the ambiguity of their urban spaces. In the urban layout, the neoliberal forces, privatization of space, class segregation, the weakness of the urban legislation, lack or weak public urban planning together with uncertainty of land use and the underlying ambiguous regulations on space, enforce the existence of urban voids. Such conditions contribute greatly towards endless possibilities for urban appropriations by its citizens in several ways specially in its current and former urban limits.
The city of Querétaro (add small location map, Qro, in MX), located just 250 km from Mexico City, has grown 17.6 times its size in the past 47 years (IMPLAN Queretaro, et al., 2018), transforming itself from a small town into an on-growing metropolis. Throughout its fast-growing process and intensive urban sprawl, the former city borders are now central spaces in its core and part of its urban fabric. Yet, at the same time these newly engulfed urban borders are not becoming elements of assimilation (bonds) but of defense (barriers) (Iossifova, 2013). The same conditions that have allowed their spatial appropriation are now used as tools to signify them as informal. Inconsistently, its informality is used to justify politically the creation of physical borders within the city to keep -the others- in their side of the urban frontier while they are stigmatized. Such actions have turned the potential of urban appropriation into an issue of social borders (Müller & Segura, 2017).

As border spaces are urbanized under the conception of physical or imaginary limits, and different urban and social conditions than the ones of the formal city, they tend to be developed in an edge-like invisible urban atmosphere of marginal circumstantiality, precariousness, and instability. But it is through their high social agency and social appropriation, meaning their informal everyday socio-spatial relation, that they become strong resilient communities to themselves. While becoming appropriated slowly by the people and claiming the physical space, they are creating themselves as highly social resilient micro-territories. It is through the polarization of ideas, social classes, location, processes of gentrification and privatization, and continuous urban sprawl, that appropriated inner urban border areas become strategic spaces now embedded in the city with a symbolic power in themselves, as they signify spaces of opportunity for some and vulnerability for others (Mandipour, 2017; Müller & Segura, 2017). Thus, becoming disputed areas in the metropolitan growth by real estate developers, politicians and neighbor formal residents which undertake strategies of social distinction while turning them into disputed territories (Müller & Segura, 2017).

Appropriated spaces in Mexico, especially the ones embedded in the inner borders of the cities, show a high sense of community as the places become a reality through micro-agreements, self-management and strong social capital. Still, they never lose their intrinsic characteristic and symbolic charge of shaped borders. Therefore, the appropriated areas develop their own boundaries facing the “neoliberal production of space in the formal city where the capitalist-accumulative economic paradigm through sets of policies that favor the resource and service privatization” (Venkatesh, 2014, p. 5). This potent facing of beliefs often develops borderlines which are non-interactive with the urban surroundings, socially broken, and convoluted (Müller & Segura, 2017; Low, 2017). The contrast of urban forms located side by side in appropriated spaces and its borderlines, has led to social and urban homogeneity. Conflicts over space by pressure from the economic, political and societal sector, pushes to oblivion and disappearance of appropriated spaces into gated communities, new shopping malls or the formalization of privatized lots. When the social resilience of a community is so strong, authorities and urban projections tend to ignore appropriated spaces until they become of interest to other parties, turning them into contested spaces.

Research Questions, Objectives and Relevance

Cities are not bounded spaces, they are complex systems in continuous change influenced by external forces like globalization, neoliberal ideas, economic growth, capitalism, privatization systems, among others, together with internal processes. These forces are reflected in the built environment, the urban patterns and dynamics, influencing and being influenced by societal practices within the city and its intrinsic culture. Such cross-boundary processes are part of the urban condition. Dominant external forces are creating physical borders embedded in cities, which by internal social and cultural manners are turning them into social ones.
In this path, identity and place are marked as non-important by the real estate companies for its renewal or even the urban planning office as the plot is more valuable over the stigmatized community in it, tearing down the heart of what urban community is. By understanding broader social transformations which are under way today, it is possible to act in and recover the importance of social space and its community building possibilities.

Searching the common grounds towards the future development of appropriated spaces embedded in the cities, which rely on physical borders turned into social borders, is imperative. Studying and characterizing them understanding the social production of space can explain not only how space or place comes into existence, but also open up questions about the political, economic and historical motives of its development. It emphasizes the material and social aspects of space while uncovering the manifest latent ideologies (Low, 2017).

The organization of the physical space reflects the power structures conveyed in it. Sites can signify values, stories, and imaginaries embedded in the social life which are important to link to its social characteristics. The primary objective of this work is to study what happens when former urban borders, are appropriated though informal practices. Especially, this work seeks to understand the role of urban narratives in the process now that such borders are embedded in the urban fabric and such spaces are being contested. Moreover, this work aims to study alternative approaches to urban planning through exploring community’s stories, spatially and historically, and elucidate the possibilities they raise and its importance for place and community making. Furthermore, to understand the role urban narratives could have for a more socially sustainable urban development.

Linking as one, physical characteristics of the space and socially imagined characteristics, it is viable to bring together the social and the physical space, smoothing away the raising social borders. By grasping the social nature of the place embedded in non-official stories of appropriated spaces, as well as its perception and imaginaries, there is the possibility to bring a wider panorama about their current social, spatial, and urban characteristics; therefore, together with the community, create alternative futures.

Historically, borders, boundaries and borderlands have always existed, whether in the spaces and the societies, voluntary or involuntary, borderlands have remained and have shaped our environments. However, this universality of borders has had different significance across time, space and scale (Iossifova, 2013). Globalization and other technological processes have let us think that we are now closer to a borderless world, while in fact those borders have moved inside our cities and our societies. Especially in Latin America, within fast-growing cities in Mexico, are living processes of social polarization consequence of urban space privatization and its physical borders. By re-examining and re-thinking the way borders shape the built environment and the communities embedded in such spaces it is possible to understand better how to integrate what now has diverged.

The main relevance of this work relies in the real need for implementing new social frameworks in the development of cities. With a wider social framework to understand the built environment in can be possible to bring closer the external and internal forces acting on appropriated spaces and boost their inner social resilient capacities. Furthermore, the inherent capacity to transform embedded in border spaces socially produced can bring forward socially sustainable ways to develop appropriated spaces in a more sustainable way. In the sight of this, by bringing to light the non-official stories lived by the people of the place remarking the creation of it, the challenges faced and their social solutions, their dispute process, it can be possible to explore the creation of the social border in them through spatial and social perceptions. Through this process the intention is to reshape the future of such inner urban border spaces.

A social framework to urban planning, based on stories and urban narratives will bring forward the natural capacity of border spaces to cope, adapt and transform. Especially in fast-growing cities, such as Queretaro but usual and common in the so-called Global South, this framework can help
to cope with informal practices. Appropriated spaces can be seen beyond a problematic but as an opportunity to use the social capital embedded in them for alternative futures in conflictive areas, beyond urban renewal and gentrification processes, that only tend to relocate communities in further and further urban borders. Urban storytelling can be a door to link a new set of social issues connected to space, its appreciation and the value of its history and heritage. Furthermore, this knowledge can contribute to the field of architecture in two ways. First, it shows the hidden potential of borderline spaces in urban centers. Second, it outlines an approach to collecting and analyzing urban stories and narratives to transform hard and opaque urban borders into socially resilient spaces.

**Methods**

This thesis is a theoretical work which I seek to understand how border-like urban spaces are appropriated through informal practices and the relation of urban storytelling in such process. Furthermore, I pursue to present in which way socio-spatial narratives in urban storytelling can bring forward social characteristics and conflicts existing in the space. The social conditions, community feeling and place-intrinsic relations should not be overlooked in the redevelopment or resignification process for inner urban areas. In this way, urban storytelling can unveil unthought social characteristics of a place towards more socially sustainable futures of appropriated spaces in fast-growing cities.

Focusing on these objectives, the thesis works opens with a wide theoretical scope, which sets the methods of this work on literature review and contextual framework presented in the first two parts. Firstly, I present an interdisciplinary literature review focusing on current urban processes in a global scale. In it, I present how the neoliberal and capitalistic way of urban creation and development have overtaken the social space, especially in Latin America and of course, Mexico. Moreover, the contextual framework presents the importance of appropriated spaces and their informal practices over space shared through storytelling. The concepts presented here focus on fast-growing cities, informal and appropriated spaces, which can englobe other cities in the Global South, enriching the relevance of this work and its possible applicability in urban development and planning strategies.

The main content of this work is reflected in the analysis of two case studies located in my home city: the city of Queretaro in Mexico.

Two case studies were selected and analyzed during a field trip through qualitative methods. The main method followed is autoethnography, in which I used myself as main subject, sharing my anecdotes, experiences, observations and analysis of the space (Adams, et al., 2015). I visited the places and realized a spatial analysis through observation of social behavior, drawings of details, photographs of the space and social life, and studies of public life. To complement the perception of the space, unstructured interviews were performed with the help of Un Lugar Civil Association. Interviews focused on storytelling about the contested spaces, social perceptions of the space by residents and outsiders of each area and grasping the social capital and intangible characteristics of the space.

The intensive study and analysis of the space in the two case studies, identified them as former borders of the city with physical barriers now embedded in the urban fabric. This is the reason I firstly seek to comprehend its current situation as contested spaces and possible social borders towards the surrounding city. The case studies’ analysis, autoethnographic exploration, and especially the urban storytelling, I was able to recognize the social capital and relations within the space, reflecting their social resilience, its social actor’s capacity to cope, overcome, adapt and transform their built environment (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Urban photography, and some drawings complement the explorations of the spaces in order to make them more tangible to the reader. More details on the methods in the case studies are presented in part three of this thesis work.
Structure of the thesis

The presentation of this work is divided into five parts. While the first two present the global and contextual framework of the thesis, part three presents two punctual study cases. Part four presents the main findings from the cases and the discussion between the results and the framework. Finally, part five closes the thesis work with conclusions and steps further.

Part one sets a global perspective on the global dynamics of urbanization and how this process, although seemed distant, reflects in the built environment and the creation of diverse borderlands in cities, especially in Latin American context. This part begins to focus on Mexico and the border-like characteristics visible in the built environment.

Part two presents the contextual framework linking the physical space to the social one, conceptualizing from Lefebvre’s spatial triad and contextualizing through Low’s spatializing culture. A more sustainable city can be imagined with this theoretical framework, together with concepts of appropriation and informality to highlight the potential of such spaces as urban catalysts as a result of its intrinsic social capital.

Part three describes and analyzes two study cases located in former urban borders in the city of Queretaro, Mexico through their official (newspapers and official statements) and non-official stories (urban narratives from residents). Through these two cases, the intention is to understand the settings and perceptions embedded in the space lying behind its creation through social processes, understand their dichotomy between formality and informality, and interpret alternative ways forward.

Part four summarizes the findings of the study cases, focusing on the urban narratives and spatial perception of the spaces, considered now social borders either towards the city or themselves. This section also discusses and relates the framework to the cases, giving special attention to the social agency and capital of the cases, its residents place attachment and spatial identity in appropriated borders. Furthermore, it presents the social key role that social narratives have in developing social resilience and transformation power towards alternative futures.

Part five presents the concluding remarks, acknowledges the limits of the study and states steps further on topic.
The contemporary city is shifting “in a world where the global is urbanizing and the urban is globalizing” (Gaffikin & Perry, 2012, p. 703) as the urban experience is changing into new urban typologies patterns and dynamics, therefore redefining the social urban experience. Nowadays, Sassen (2007) urges to rethink and understand urban spaces as complex structures filled with a variety of cross-boundary processes, economic and political processes that unsettle existing arrangements such as spatial practices of social inequality and marginality, in order to change the human condition of cities. Global processes, although perceived as abstract and distant, they are embedded in the urban scape, creating physical urban borders within contemporary cities. This section sets a perspective on global processes’ influence in the urban dynamics of Latin American and Mexican cities. Also presenting the effects over the of social urban aspects, visible social polarization in the built environment generating border-like characteristics.
Global cities

Economic and political forces have been shaping the cities for centuries, generating different processes reflected on their specific social and cultural life. In today’s urbanized world, cities have evolved into global items as they have become interdependent from global institutions, such as the World Trade Organizations, global financial markets, certain forms of politics, even imaginaries and global marketed life goals (Sassen, 1991; Sassen, 2007). Such globalized institutions and processes are transcending territories, nations and cultures, becoming embedded inside contemporary urban territories, affecting acutely urban processes and dynamics by influencing even deep social aspirations reflected thereafter in the built environment (Sassen, 2007). Nowadays, the urban landscapes have become more a-geographic –detached from location– as cities are becoming less unique and more homogenized in their new developments. This is the urban scene of late capitalism and neoliberal systems being implemented in a globalized world (Rutheiser, 1999).

The proliferation of neoliberal spaces, like elitist gated communities and shopping malls substituting public spaces; have been affecting the local urban perception by strongly marking their socio-spatial relations with and within the city. Moreover, it has translocated the local and the global urban hermeneutics by creating new urban typologies of segregation, urban fragmented patterns, and specific urban dynamics of privatization and surveillance. (Venkatesh, 2014).

The impact of global forces on Latin American cities is evident. Recently, studies have discussed the emergent new types of urban forms present in cities across the continent. Latin American megacities, such as Mexico City, Buenos Aires in Argentina, and São Paolo in Brazil, and other fast-growing cities, like Querétaro in Mexico, have been experiencing uncontrolled growth under new types of urban schemas influenced by global epistemologies (Venkatesh, 2014; Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015; Caldeira, 1999). Such new socio-spatial urban patterns are visibly
intertwined with the political, social, economic and global pressures especially set upon fast-growing cities (Caldeira, 1999; Sassen, 2007). For small and secondary cities, the current urban development is blurring the lines between urban and rural, as con-urbanization and peri-urbanization processes are shaping the urban regions. The Latin American context has been widely affected by global epistemologies, neoliberal patterns of urban development and late-capitalism processes reacting and transforming urban spaces. Such processes, together with the exponential population growth and urban sprawl have established a hot topic of study and debate that has being going on for decades (Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015).

Privatization urban patterns, empty spaces and urban segregation

Globalization processes have various consequences for the urban environment, shifting the city’s spatial-function structure. This tendency has different processes and outcomes reflected in the built environment. Especially in Latin America, neoliberal market economy, centralization of finances, commerce, productive activities, and specialized services have stressed patterns of urban segregation through privatization of the public space, affecting Latin American societies through patterns of spatial segregation and advancing fragmentation of the public space (Caldeira, 1999; Mierzejewska, 2011).

The privatization of public space has the underlaying meaning that private property has more value than public space, becoming a bias in contemporary cities. This shift is modeling urban typologies in Latin America, Mexico included, where new urban dynamics are almost eradicating public space. Therefore, causing the fragmentation of urban space creating a set of loosely connected fragments that hardly relate with the idea of city (Rutheiser, 1999). As a result, the city is no longer the product of its social relations and practices in a crumbled space, but a fragmented experience in constant expansion (Mierzejewska, 2011).

The transformation of public space into quasi-public or privatized space has many significances in the built environment. The usurpation of public spaces is justified by the need of urban development and private investment, presented hand in hand with the displacement of services, commerce and living areas from the urban area to its periphery as an opportunity. This urban dynamic really means a functional privatization presenting itself as a service needed by the community for its further development and citizens safety (Caldeira, 1999). The modification of the spatial structure of the city can be seen from the constant creation of spaces dedicated to commercial activities, such as hypermarkets and shopping centers, bigger malls, warehouse-markets and supermarkets; to the creation of new housing areas in form of fortified enclaves and gated communities. The locations of these type of urban facilities and services is mainly located on the exterior borders of cities, contributing to the continuous urban sprawl and sustaining social segregation in the city space (Mierzejewska, 2011).

The constant and growing “‘fear of violence’ has developed in the creation of fortified enclaves embodied in the increase of gated communities in the urban landscape, changing completely the urban dynamics (Caldeira, 1999). Among the most common fortified enclaves

1 Peri-urbanization refers to semi-urban areas located in the vicinity of growing urban cores, setting pressure and influence upon them. The denominated semi-urban defines such areas are in-between the urban and the countryside but cannot be defined as neither due to their configurations, functions, relation to the urban, and other characteristics. Urban borders are characterized by the strong pressure for growth, becoming dynamic and ever changing. According to Hite (1998) presented in Meeus & Gulinck (2008) the dynamism of borderlands is the ever-continuing expression of global and local impacts upon urbanization. Meanwhile, conurbation is a result of intensive urban growth and sprawl surpassing its geographical limits and merging to the surrounding semi-urban areas, creating a larger city region. Conurbed areas create an undifferentiated network of spaces containing residential areas, retail, services industries, leisure and parks, linked with transport and service infrastructures (Meeus & Gulinck, 2008).
are the continuous construction of commercial areas in the urban periphery in fast-growing cities in Mexico, which are encouraging the unceasing urban sprawl. Such spaces are dedicated to global brands inside immense shopping malls, built on isolated areas along the urban borders. The fact that commercial areas are placed in the exterior of the urban borders greatly determines new patterns in the city. The functional and spatial urban structure is altered not only the urban terms of social rationality, but also transforming the character of public life and conception of public space. Furthermore, the fragmentation of urban space and urban voids provoked by these commercial areas clearly damage the urban experience and the cultural importance of local commerce in the city, an important part of the urban life in Latin America (Caldeira, 1999; Mierzejewska, 2011).

“Fortified enclaves are privatized, enclosed, and monitored spaces for residence, consumption, leisure, and work” (Caldeira, 1999, p. 83). They are the justified consequence of spatial segregation processes and the ‘fear of violence’ perceived from social inequality in Latin America. Fortified enclaves are commonly created in the urban borders aiming at physically separating social classes, the rich from the poor, while enhancing the mistrust, alienation, and triggering various forms of social polarization (Iossifova, 2013). Occupying such spaces has become a way of emphasizing social status through several underlying statements embedded in its nature. Gated communities, shopping malls, working communities, even parks and leisure spaces are built in the urban borders “changing the city’s landscape, patterns of residence and circulation, everyday trajectories habits, and gestures related to the use of treats and public transportation” (Caldeira, 1999, p. 87). These spaces have different characteristics for public segregation. The principal element is the physical urban isolation through spatial barriers like walls surrounding them. Secondly, the spatial arrangement facing inwards rather that to the street signifying a neglection of the outside. Thirdly, is the restriction of public access design for social isolation. Lastly, it is the legal constitution of private property for collective use (restricted community), with control and security systems enforcing social exclusion of the non-members. These anti-urban features prioritize an individual perspective of the city rather than a social one, neglecting citizen’s urban involvement as they reject the decadent city outside (Mierzejewska, 2011; Caldeira, 1999).

Gated communities behave as fortified enclaves continuing the pattern of urban social segregation. These exclusive communities have been studied as socially and spatially harmful, yet they keep fragmenting the urban space in Latin American cities since the 1970’s (Mierzejewska, 2011). They became particularly popular in the 1990’s and their popularity has increased even more nowadays. Specially in Mexico, this pattern cannot be separated from other factors, such as the increase in violence, insecurity, and fear, simultaneously with increased social inequality and aspirational social distinction. Nowadays, they have become a common feature in cities and even a social request. Often, arguments based on safety, social status, freedom are stated in advertisement slogans of high-end gated communities. Real estate developers present such enclosed areas through slogans such as “a new concept of residence”, “a total way of life”, and “new lifestyle concept”. Through this statements, they reject the actual city, considered dysfunctional and decadent, by sell the idea of urban independent areas with own services of surveillance and security, with public areas and parks simulating “first world living”, making them aspirational for high-income population, exponentiating social inequality (Caldeira, 1999; Müller & Segura, 2017).

Similarly, and deeply rooted in the setting of privatization is the creation of quasi-public spaces in the urban periphery. These spaces comprise from urban parks, urban amenities, spaces of leisure, educational facilities, big university campuses, and other city services such as specialized public hospital and medical units developed with private investment. As restricted territories, these spaces are walled or fenced and include private security monitoring them, often there
According to The World Bank (2008), Latin America is the most unequal region in the world, together with Sub-Saharan Africa. This is visible in this image, where the high-income area of Santa Fe, in the periphery of Mexico City, meets its surroundings.

Parque La Mexicana is an example of a fortified enclave located in Santa Fe, Mexico City. Perceived as a public park, it is a semi-private space of leisure for high-income residents in Santa Fe.
Figure 4. The image reads “Own the experience”. The gated community El Campanario in Queretaro, Mexico promotes the slogan “We integrate first world services with the safety you need.”

Figure 5. The image reads “Building planned spaces to live well”. Image from a Real Estate developer of gated communities. Their gated communities follow the model of fortified enclaves enclosed in a bigger excluded urban space. A case of double even triple security filters are promoted.

Figure 6. The image reads “A new life, a new beginning”. The gated community Arven is inside the gated community Zibatá in Queretaro, Mexico. Arven promotes itself with the slogan “More than a residential development, an exclusive community.”
is a fee of entrance, they have restricted access, and specific opening hours. Along with gated communities, commercial centers, leisure environments, medical services, and major universities linked by fast motorways, these spaces only endorse the development of a multi centered region. Inserted in the peripheral urbanization and effecting in the fragmentation of urban space, fortified enclaves are undeniably promoters of incessant urban sprawl and socio-spatial segregation through physical distance and urban empty spaces in the ever shifting former urban borders (Caldeira, 1999).

In Latin American cities social discrimination has been historically displayed in the built environment since the European colonization as a product of racial and social classifications. In Mexico the distinction between Spanish and indigenous neighborhoods was clearly visible, from characteristics in the urban fabric to its location within the city. During years, the socio-urban patterns remained clear, upper class was located in the city center as the periphery and hinterlands was for the poor, excluded, indigenous, and others. During the past 30 years, through global processes, the social-urban pattern has radically inverted these locations, shifting the urban patterns, the way they relate to each other, shaping the urban space, and consequently, hardening social borders symbolized in physical ones (Caldeira, 1999; Venkatesh, 2014).

Fortified enclaves, gated communities, commercial centers, and other privatized spaces have increased socio-spatial polarization by creating new urban aesthetics of security and social status display. As cities continue to grow, and the social gap continues to drift apart, the role of reconstructing class frontiers feels protected in the peripheral urbanization, secured by distance and urban voids created by privatization. (Caldeira, 1999; Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015; Müller & Segura, 2017). Such contemporary urban characteristics, are certainly a tangible consequence of neoliberal, late-capitalist processes that have transformed not only the urban space, fragmenting it, but have shaped societies inside them (Venkatesh, 2014; Sassen, 2013). The constant

![Figure 7. Model of structure and development of the Latin American city.](image)
space fragmentation occurs mainly with the uprising urban pattern of extending the urban borders, strengthening current urban dynamics (Mierzejewska, 2011). The city grows in its borders by the creation of self-contained enclaves and new periphery spaces, producing a series of physical borders which are hard to inhabit, transit, or identify.

**Urban borders, social polarization and the socio-spatial experience**

Urban borders go beyond geography and the built environment as they combine not only global, but also economic, political, historic, anthropologic, social processes. In order to understand their complexity, Brunet-Jailly (2005) suggests that urban borders should be seen from four different lenses: market forces and trade flows, policy activities and multiple levels of government, particular political clout of borderland communities, and the specific culture of borderland communities. In the urban scape, these lenses interact in smaller areas in a more intrinsic manner and could be seen as five pulling forces shaping them: economic, policies, government and urban planning, political stand, and culture.

Although there is an alleged reduction on poverty in Latin American population, social inequality has not decreased. Moreover, socio-spatial polarization in Latin American cities is more obvious today than ever in the built-environment and has rooted in society (Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015). As a result, Mexican, Brazilian, and other Latin American cities are becoming capitals of walls and islands of exclusivity. Privatized environments are increasing control of urban developments, abandoning urban social space by focusing on the vision that security from crime is exclusive. The obsession of physical securities in these enclaves fail in recognizing the meanings of urban environments and the importance of heterogeneity in societies, by criminalizing the different, the poor, the others (Caldeira, 1999). In addition, the anti-urban character of these developments is emphasized by the evasive relationship established with the rest of the city denying the urban experience of public life.

The fragmentation of urban space goes hand in hand with new urban typologies, patterns, and urban dynamics which are deeply intertwined with the social segregation in the cityscape visible beyond the built environment and urban borders. The urban form reproduces the social inequality, explicitly in constant growing in Latin American cities, transforming the character of public life (Caldeira, 1999). The rate and new dynamics of social life are increasing the trend to use the cities rather than inhabiting them, losing sense of community and identity. Furthermore, recent processes related to services, commerce, and living areas from the inner city to its periphery, being now created in isolated areas of the old and new urban borders (Caldeira, 1999; Mierzejewska, 2011).

In fast-growing cities, especially in the center of Mexico, the city continues its expansion replicating the patterns and creating not only new self-contained urban enclaves, but also its secondary products such as empty spaces, urban voids, abandoned areas, and forgotten spaces in between. Such urban growth dynamic constantly creates borders, urban frontiers whose only function is to separate people. What happens with these borders as the city continues to grow, when the periphery stops being in the outside, when the voids start to get filled? These urban borders end up being located deep inside large cities, where such complex spaces find conflict as a precondition (Sassen, 2013). Furthermore, the residual space between the autonomous enclaves ends up being neglected, filled with the tensions of social segregation and at the same time propense for different types of appropriation altogether with social divergence (Iossifova, 2013).
While the empty space ruptures the urbanized space, urban patterns of social segregation are reinforced. Such patterns build the urban space with opposite values, shaping and affecting the lives of millions of people with social wounding results, as the study cases presented in this thesis (Caldeira, 1999). The fragmentation of urban space through fortified enclaves is a manifestation of social inequality, which is said has far more serious harmful outcomes than income inequality. However, together, both factors in the urban space align for creating local tensions, fracturing social and political forms of engagement (Iossifova, 2013).

Urban borders can be characterized by conflict and contradiction, material and ideation. They reproduce practices of segregation forcing territorial identities in what becomes “geopolitical spaces of contentions where asymmetrical economic, social, and political forces take place for private agendas” (Iossifova, 2013). Implanted in the dynamic, borders define interactions and intersection between polarized societal agencies, creating social hinterlands around them, spaces of exclusion. This is why in several cities in Latin America, certain neighborhoods look like they could be in Houston, while many others just around the corner could look like the degraded periphery of Pakistan (Villoro, 2017).

Borderlands are defined by the nature of the border in it, as it can be “mediating and contextual, open and permeable, or closed and rigid” (Iossifova, 2013). Fortified enclaves tend to create closed and rigid borders, creating a borderland of exclusion, alienation and informality; furthermore, they tend to create not only urban sprawl, but a fragmented imaginary of the city (Iossifova, 2013; Müller & Segura, 2017). Borderlands exist in every city as they are inevitable areas of contact between the different urban areas, voluntarily or involuntarily. In fragmented cities with complex socio-spatial borders and hard physical edges, borderlands navigate among this description, being a physical, symbolic, cultural, and social border determinant on culture and societal perception. It is notable to understand that borderlands are not in between spaces of transition, but spaces of exclusion from spatial, social, temporal, or cultural. Borders can also combine the distinction between urban and social characteristics as old and new, modern and traditional, rich and poor, planned or organic, formal and informal, permanent and temporary, local and migrant (Iossifova, 2013). To understand further the conditions and influences that shape the contemporary city in a more social and comprehensive way, borders need to be studied holistically and from the inside. The multifaceted nature of borders creates a complex situation, making it difficult to actually measure the impact they convey in urban development. On the one hand, they can imply social segregation depending on who has power over the space, greatly linked with their creation process. On the other hand, their material and immaterial characteristics can help to comprehend better their nature and their role in the fragmentation of urban space.

Sassen (2013) mentions in a similar tone that in today’s large and complex cities, “actors of different worlds meet, but there are no clear rules of engagement”. The discussion opens from the thoroughly studied fortified enclaves, to the urban spaces in-between them, together with the social processes inscribed in them. In large and fast-growing cities, the built environment spreads through several transformations constantly redefining its borders, its social space and even the social identity of the space. As it develops, borderlands become places not of transition, but of exclusion (Iossifova, 2013). Moreover, the incapacity to navigate the urban spaces anymore, as megalopolis and growing cities, alter the conception of space from its inhabitants. The fragmentation of the space makes impossible to have a whole imaginary of the city or to experience the city in all its complexity as there are always blind spots, whether they are the fortified enclaves or the public areas, depending on the social class you belong to (Villoro, 2017).
Figure 8. The area La Malinche shows the social inequality in leisure areas, from a dirt misshapen football pitch and the sports fields from the wealthy neighbors.

Figure 9. Hard walled border dividing Santa Fe from the slums surrounding it, in Mexico City.
These facts can affect the social space in three major ways. Firstly, affected, but least noticeable, are the social aspects. Due to physical borders isolating urban areas, the space for urban experiences gets constrained, the social tensions get tighter and more fragile. While the privatized city layout discourages public life, pedestrian activity, and community engagement generating neutralized space, lacking place attachment and community (Iossifova, 2013). Secondly, in forgotten urban voids, cultural manifestation of subcultures often takes over space, acidizing or facilitating the social interaction. And thirdly, it generates an ill-perception and criminalization of the others. Criminal activities and aggressiveness are used as an excuse to continue privatization as a capitalist activity over the city. All three contribute in reinforcing created patterns of social segregation embedded in the uncontrollable expansion of the built-up area by determining the city’s functional-spatial structure (Mierzejewska, 2011; Caldeira, 1999).

In Latin America, the reinforcing structure of social segregation is embedded in everyday life through recurring discussion on the news and social media of crime and violence, high rating of poverty, high numbers of informality and low-edge jobs forces the othering of classes. On the other hand, the proliferation of privatized services and exclusive places, high-end commodities, aspirational spatialization, and luxurious distinctions lingers towards class distinction. Such daily discussions increase the fear of crime, criminalization and social class distinction, especially creating a rigid symbolic difference between social groups. This contributes greatly to the inflexibility of the urban boundaries which are reflected and enforce division and ungiving boundaries in the built environment (Caldeira, 1999).

Power and politics over urban spaces

New urban typologies, patterns, and urban dynamics are being created in cities worldwide. In Latin America, a series of commonalities are being observed over the years regarding urban development. In Mexico, new urban dynamics are developing patterns of segregation intertwined with complex social processes unfolding serious consequences in the built environment, sense of community and urban experience (Caldeira, 1999). These factors have been leading the processes of power relations about urban space, its development, its use, and by whom.

In central Mexico, cities have experienced fast-growing processes due to inner country migration, industrial investment, job opportunities, and lately, safety. Many have suggested that certain central cities are working as safe enclaves free of the generalized violence in the country. These factors, along with capitalism and global trends, have involved relations of power and politics over the urban environment, especially in social segregation and the use of urban space. Privatization of space and withdraw from public space is not only a display of social status and elite, but of power, where through privatization systems is stated ‘if you want safety, you buy it’ (Mierzejewska, 2011). This polarizes society even further, as the privatization of cities and urban space “is not just an aesthetic problem; it is a social catastrophe and a political crime” (Mierzejewska, 2011, p. 162–163). Since the global and capitalist system, the urban order is dealt between public affairs and private interests. These underlying facts imply economic and political power, open the possibilities for urban dwellers to use the urban space in a more satisfactory way.

Urban public life in the cities is conditioned by the investments applied to its urban spaces. Nowadays, Latin American cities are being shaped by people with economic and political power and interests. In such scheme, fortified urban enclaves holding private investment, and
political personalities using the space, lead the urban development. After fortified urban enclaves, the second most developed areas are the ones with more attention from local government due to the political and economic power of its occupants, regarding safety and quality of space. In both, politics play an important being as governmental administrators, architects, and planners, associate the physical space with political achievements; where a social bond is developed directly with power. Lastly, the areas less considered are the ones where less empowered people inhabit, the poor, the others, spaces which along with urban voids and forgotten peripheral areas, are not being considered in politically in urban agendas (Abrahão, 2016).

Power is grounded in space, yet it condenses social values in it simultaneously. Territory, land, planning, division and subdivisions of plots, appropriation, and even use demonstrate power relations over space occupation. Moreover, power over space utilization is directly linked with social segregation, from access to space, nature of the space, location, and surroundings can either empower or disempower certain users. These conditions define who inhabits, who uses it, or who appropriates the space, and therefore its valuation socially, and economically in the urban realm (Pellow, 1999).

In current urban patterns, empty spaces and urban voids as a by-product of privatization, have become strategic spaces for those who lack power: disadvantage outsiders, or discriminated minorities, powerless majorities. Such spaces represent a possibility of new types of politics through informality and appropriation (these concepts will be reviewed further in part two of this thesis) presenting an opportunity where the powerless can make history through alternative and informal politics in the urban space (Sassen, 2013). In such a way, the cities are in need of installing “political public spaces as a way for the part of the population who hasn’t represent power, to make decisions on urban issues, or as a form of distributing political power across the cities” (Abrahão, 2016).

Urban challenges

According to The World Bank (2008), Latin America is considered the most urbanized region of the world with almost 80% of its population living in urbanized areas. At the same time, it is considered the most unequal region of the world, together with Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, cities in Latin American are facing complex problems in their development of urbanities principally as a consequence of globalized processes. Moreover, the very fast rates of growth with an average expansion of 20 sqm per minute represent between two and three times the increase of its population (Inostroza, 2017). Deep social inequality and segregation are worsening by the creation of malls, new residential areas, gated communities, industrial zones, which isolate marginalized people in informal settlements. With such expansion and fragmentation processes, cities are dispersing in the territory while reducing its demographic density (Nasution, 2015). This urban sprawl is leading the generation of limitless cities typified by a discontinuous urban structure bordered by walls, the main characteristic of Latin American cities with strong contrast between the urban tissue and the hinterland. With such rates of expansion and continuous spreading, great challenges towards urban sustainability and management are set in the need of innovative planning frameworks (United Nations, 2012; Inostroza, 2017; Gaffikin & Perry, 2012).

The city is a heuristic space for the exploration of social processes, capable of producing knowledge by studying such processes embedded in it through a socio-cultural perspective, while being able to see the city beyond its urban characteristics, but for its called urbanity. By analyzing the social processes, it is possible to see its reflection in the urban development dynamics and the built environment, as the city is one of the spaces where social trends materialize (Sassen, 2007; Venkatesh, 2014). Is through the physical space, spatial discourses, where the ideologies of a place can steer the wheel of social action in
certain circumstances. In a way, the promotion of these patterns in such uncontrolled urbanization and urban sprawl have been promoted historically by the local elite and high classes. Continuous mechanisms of marginalization precede the social spatialization of segregation, polarization, isolation, and homogenization. Social stereotypes kept in place have historically confronted different social actors and continue to do so (Müller & Segura, 2017; Cooper, 1999). With such panorama, new methods and conceptual frameworks are needed, including empirical and ethnographic research towards a more inclusive city of all its citizens and urban agents (Sassen, 2007).

Image on the right:
Figure 10. A part (Naucalpan) of the Limitless City of Mexico City.
The physical location along with the cultural and social processes, the political and economic factors and the intrinsic images, symbols and imaginaries embedded in the space have a deep relation with the complexity of social and appropriated spaces. The relation between such aspects shapes the space within the urban environment which can be theorized through the conceptualization by sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s (Lefebvre, 1974/2013; 1991/2014) spatial triad, social production and social construction of space. Appropriated spaces are defined by the culture and social context in which they develop. In Mexico, appropriated spaces are a function of the spatial fragmentation, social inequality and urban imaginaries. Furthermore, this section presents the potential in such spaces to become social and urban catalyzers with social capital towards more social resilient cities by reintegrating the right to the city as the right to urban life, transformed and renovated.
Spatializing culture

During the past decades, the transformations on global economics –globalization, restructuring, productivity, and neoliberalism– have been shaping the spatial structures of the cities worldwide. Contemporary world problems are deeply intertwined with aspects of space and place, not only in a material way, but also in social, symbolic and ideological aspects. The underlying socioeconomic relations, together with a process of metropolization, have been defining the urban spatial production of cities in the Global South (Low, 2017; Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015; Huacuz Elías & Vázquez Cruz, 2018; Gilbert & Jong, 2015; Sassen, 1991).

According to Lefebvre (1974/2013), space and spatial arrangements are never transparent. As cities are becoming more complex, so are their social processes and structures. The systems of socio-spatial exclusion which contemporary cities are dealing nowadays, are permeating into the contemporary neoliberal society. Existing characteristics in urban spaces are a result of cultural, political, economic, and social relations present historically over time in urban spaces. Its prevailing condition, portrays them as natural and simple, not reflecting the multifaceted processes rooted in the built environment. A multidisciplinary approach with culturally specific focus on socio-spatial relations, can bring forward unanalyzed aspects, opening the possibility with place specific solutions (Low, 2014; Baringo Ezquerra, 2013).

The interconnectedness of power over space with urban imaginaries has played a dominant role in the urban metamorphosis of Latin American cities. On one hand, there is the authoritative power of government controlling the current principal means of urban production. Strategies such as urban gentrification, privatization of public space, profit-driven planning by real estate market, and redevelopment, instated through a neoliberal urban restructure based on global capitalism. Furthermore, these strategies have been transforming the socio-spatial relations among social classes, regions, states and neighborhoods. On the other hand, the social, economic, and spatial relations undergoing in the metropolitan urban space, characterized by a constant increase in urban densification, have been defining a social crisis of unemployment, high rates of poverty, social vulnerability, and violence (Low, 2017; Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015).

Such complex socio-spatial interactions can be seen throughout Mexican cities, especially in metropolitan areas and fast-growing cities like Querétaro (Villafranco, 2015). The outcomes of such processes are visible in the built environment, embodying urban spaces through imaginaries of fear and instability (Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015; Huacuz Elías & Vázquez Cruz, 2018). Consequently, the study of space and place in a cultural context is critical to understand urban and social disruptions generated by globalization, uneven development and social inequality (Low, 2017).

The multidimensional term spatializing culture comprehends such bounding relations between culture and space. Embedded in the term spatialize, there are the means to “produce and locate, physically, historically, affectively and discursively the social relations, institutions and practices in space” (Low, 2017, p. 7). Contextually, culture refers to “the multiple and contingent forms of knowledge, power and symbolism comprising human and non-human interactions, including thoughts, beliefs, imaginings and perception” (Low, 2017, p. 7). Therefore, spatializing culture refers to more than just a framework, it is a concept that focuses on the social, political and economic forces that produce space. Moreover, in itself, it is a tool for uncovering social injustice and exclusion through the linking dialogue of the social production of space and development of the built environment together with the social construction of space and place meanings (Low, 2017).
Embedded in the space resides the “linkage of culture and space through material, metaphorical, and social conceptualizations grounded in the field” (Low, 2014, p. xxii). The sociocultural facets of space – psychological, social, physical, and cultural – can unveil the everyday realities rooted in space. Such focus requires a common theoretical framework able to provide a socially and environmentally perspective embracing anthropological, architectural and planning points of view. In order to study contested urban spaces with the capacity to produce rich and nuanced socio-spatial knowledge for their development. It is inherent to create a holistic understanding of contemporary urban space to develop methods and skills needed by architects and planners to open to alternative urban planning systems, especially in contemporary contested urban spaces (Low, 2014; Madrazo, 2019).

**Social construction, production and reproduction of space**

Castells (1983) cited on Low (2014) states that “space is not, contrary to what others may say, a reflection of society but one of society’s fundamental material dimensions” (p. 41). Although space is certainly the society’s fundamental material dimension, it does not reflect society as a whole, nor its culture, as it responds not only to its society but to globalized processes which entail multiple realities within a city (Low, 2014). Though space is indeed created by society, meaning human action and social practices, it reflects only the interests of the segment of society that has power over its creation, especially in the specific mode of production that best suits their interests (Madrazo, 2019). These power relations over space always underline its production and construction, firstly by limiting its access to territory and resources. Moreover, the relation space–power surrender insights of unknown biases, social prejudices and inequalities quite forcefully through race, social class, and gender inequality when analyzed (Low, 2017).

The production of space takes place through both, social practices and material conditions which are shaped by global and different macro-scale processes as well as everyday routines, where social patterns and relationships can influence and be influence by cultural values and economic processes. (Gieseking, et al., 2014). As Lefebvre declared “(social) space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre, 1991/2014, p. 289). Such small statement brings forward the idea that space is socially produced, stating that spatial experience can or will change over time by alterations in social circumstances, setting the space as an everchanging product. Even more social space and time are linked and defined by economic, administrative, social, political, and cultural systemic conventions which perpetuate and reproduce social space as a product of this factors.

The process of space production and the product as the social produced space, are presented as an indivisible element. Lefebvre (1974/2013) proposes a dialectic on the triad of space, where he intends to unify the physical, the mental and the social space as a way to decode and understand space. To understand such statement, he offers a scheme, a tripartite production of space coexisting in tension: the perceived space, the conceived space and the lived space. The perceived space describes the cohesive patterns and places of social activity, integrating the social relations of production and reproduction embedded in the everyday spatial practices, such as buying, playing, parking the car, in everyday spaces like home, office, school, and street life. The conceived space is the dominant space in any society, and refers to how space is conceptualized by specialists, planners, urbanists, architects, sociologists, geographers, and so on; it refers to the different representations of space, through a system of signs and symbols that organizes space and its relations represented in plans, maps, drawings, etc. The lived space is the space that is dwelled, inhabited, directly experimented by its residents who form associated images and symbols. The lived space can surpass the physical state by people’s imagination who seek to change and appropriate the space through socially created significations. This
space embraces representational spaces which are usually dominated by other modes of spatial production, sometimes through clandestine, underground, or out of the law processes creating alternative spaces (Lefebvre, 1991/2014; Lefebvre, 1974/2013; Gieseking, et al., 2014; Baringo Ezquerra, 2013; Low, 2014).

The perceived-conceived-lived triad needs to go beyond theory realm completely interconnected to help clear up the social patterns that neo-capitalism has produced as abstract space. Lefebvre conceptualized the abstract space as “the quintessential space of capitalism” (Baringo Ezquerra, 2013, p. 127) as it works in a highly complex way as a result of a spatial economy relation, it characterizes the global capitalist city dominated by representations of space but poorly appropriated by representational spaces and spatial practices. However, the differential space Lefebvre outline, is the opposite to the abstract space; therefore it is able to break the homogenization of conceived spaces proliferating the Latin American late-capitalist cities and help dissolving contested spaces through the impregnation of social processes with heterogeneous relations accentuating the integration of the social body (Lefebvre, 1991/2014; 1974/2013; Gieseking, et al., 2014; Baringo Ezquerra, 2013; Low, 2014).

The built environment as a whole is entirely the outcome of complex global processes embedded in the spatial triad of social production, where the manifestation of culture can be an integral to social life. On that note, the conceived, perceived, and lived space is the result of intricated relations, social needs, society’s ideas, economic and social organization, together with the distribution of resources and power, activities and beliefs prevailing through time. Therefore, studying the social history of space can bring forward a basic understanding of the space’s social production and place evolution revealing its ideological, political and economic keystones. Additionally, examining social and power inequality over space production, it is possible to illuminate social struggles over space as inevitable but concealable (Lefebvre, 1974/2013;
In order to reach a broader spatial perspective of the built environment, there is the need to understand the social production of space beyond the triad of space, through political, economic and historical approaches. According to Low (2017) the conceptual frame of social production of a space beyond social actions can connect far-reaching relations in such complex processes to a specific site and physical location by analyzing how a place became to exist. Furthermore, Low remarks that embedded in the space genesis and its social development, lays the opportunity to elucidate a widened perception of the sociopolitical processes embedded in culture and space itself. Therefore, focusing on understanding such forces producing space and its impact onto a space’s present form. Moreover, social production can be a powerful method for linking macro and micro-social processes, which ideologically, can highlight and confront capitalist uneven development and in this recognize the way borders are contesting privatization of space.

The spatial triad is helpful to understand events occurring, as well as to formulate ways of thinking an approaching spatial phenomena and processes (Harvey, 2004). Embedded in the social production process, are also considered social movements and political mobilization represented as social reproduction. Social reproduction in this context is defined as “how everyday activities, beliefs and practices, as well as social and spatial structures transmit social inequality to the next generation” (Low, 2017, p. 40). Linked altogether, are the conditions necessary to reproduce social and spatial arrangements, structures and activities; opening the link to social construction of space as a way to understand space through individual meanings, intentions, thoughts and dreams (Low, 2017).

The social construction of space also brings forward the transformations of space by assuming space and place are abstractions created by the shared social understanding and social structures of difference and exclusion, for instance race, class and gender. Therefore, and according to Low (2017) spatial construction refers to “the transformation of space through language, social interactions, memory, representation, behavior and use into scenes and actions that convey meaning” (p. 69). However, the double nature of space in the modern city, where the physical environment also influences the social space, modifies altogether its spatial perception. Since physical and social realms are inseparably linked, space can be socially and physically contested through its sense of inclusion and its ability for appropriation by passive interventions, structures and activities; basically, through people’s actions throughout space (Madrazo, 2019; Low, 2017).

Social production and social construction of space can expose the political, economic, cultural and social ruptures rooted in spatial relations in contested areas of Latin American cities. Through certain approaches such as ethnography, they can conceptualize how space and places communicate and express social meaning, revealing through urban imaginaries and social borders. Furthermore, studying the social construction and production of space can aid to analyze contested spaces with different access to power and resources by looking into informal spaces and urban appropriation (Low, 2017). The dialogic correlation of social production and social construction of space helps to clarify how spaces are understood through “its spatial vocabulary and also points the way that sites can be physically changed, spatially reconfigured and reinterpreted to create a new social and racial (class) meanings” (Low, 2017, p. 92).

As David Harvey states, referred in Low (2017), the common studies of urban form often focus on “unequal distribution of capital accumulation, especially in terms of the reproduction of class relations through space allocations determined by urban planning” (p. 38) missing the spatial relation to society, social resistance, and the spatial
consequences over social conflicts. Lefebvre (1974/2013) argues, that the capitalist and globalized mode of spatial production has become utterly successful as it is, not only by having the economic means to produce and occupy space, but by controlling society and reproducing capitalist property relations in it. Through this format of reproduction of space, the capitalist neoliberal city bursts, culminating with the spatial production in the peripheral city, in segregated territories, colonized plots; all embedded in the conceived space which is measured, calculated and sold in expanding limitless cities, such as Latin American ones (Lefebvre, 1974/2013).

Understanding the production and reproduction of space in the late-capitalist urban realm is key to think of socially sustainable alternatives to the production of space bearing in mind that space is a social product, result of social action, practices, relations, and experiences; but paradoxically at the same time, space is its supportive field of action of capitalist activity and neoliberal processes (Lefebvre, 1974/2013; Gaffikin & Perry, 2012). Each appropriated space is inevitably related to the human body (spatial practice) and the persons imaginaries (representational spaces) being able to generate differential spaces within the abstract. Contrary to what Lefebvre states about lived space, the market values of space are commodifying it by creating gated communities and other spaces for dwelling which are sold as unified experiences. As such, space is considered a consumable product (Lefebvre, 1974/2013; Baringo Ezquerra, 2013; Gaffikin & Perry, 2012).

Informality and appropriation of spaces

In capitalism, the space production is embedded in itself, ignoring social and cultural processes while creating urban spaces as a homogenic and measurable product, a sole merchandise. Lefebvre denominated this process as abstract space. In front of the abstract space, which tends towards homogenization and uniformization, emerges the differential space, seeking to open the gate to develop variances and create reassociation functions, elements and moments of social practice that were torn apart. In this way, differential space defines itself as a space of resistance and contestation (Baringo Ezquerra, 2013; Lefebvre, 1974/2013). In the European urban planning process, cities are outlined by their abstract spaces, clearly defined in ownership and use. Consequently, clear and well-defined spaces englobe the spatial triad. Such formalistic perception fails to englobe alternative production of spaces recurrent in Latin America, missing to include informality (Nasution, 2015).

Saskia Sassen defines informality as “something built outside of the regulatory framework of a state” (Nasution, 2015, p. 6), perceiving informality as something out of the abstract space, out of the planning system. For government officials, urban service providers, and economist, informality is considered a parasitic system that does not contribute with taxes to the formal economy (Nasution, 2015). Other authors have defined informality, limiting its description to the abstract space through meanings of legality, ownership, designated use of space. In Latin American context, as other cultural contexts from the Global South, authors define informality more openly, but yet, abstractly. Inostroza (2017) defines informality by being been characterized as outside the law and in conflict with the standards and criteria by civil and urban legislations, specifically through informal developments with two different interconnected meanings. The first refers to legality over space, same as Sassen, limited to illegal occupation of a territory. The second refers to the physical features of components in such development, characterized as poor living conditions, like UN Habitat has assessed. Such strict definitions have stigmatized informality and its dwellers as marginalized from the urban set.

However, informality is more widely understood beyond its
legal meaning. Unveiling more open significations, Gilbert (2015) writes that “informality (in Mexico City) should be understood as a dialectical urbanization logically shaped by the entanglements of in/formal processes in governance practices, land privatization and regularization, due to poor urban infrastructure and service deficits” (p. 1), looking at informality process over the outcome of unlawfulness. Furthermore, Laguerre (1994) understands and defines informality in a more processual way, as a structure of action. This short definition implies an understanding beyond lawful ownership, abstract space, and strict planning frameworks. Such structure of action embraces informality as a social construction, as a matter of conviction, stating that informality is “a pattern of behavior that the formal system defines as being somewhat different from its own ways” (Laguerre, 1994, p. 11).

Laguerre’s and Gilbert’s definition bring forward the understanding that informality emerges from the superimposition of the capitalist mode of spatial production by going beyond the formal system itself, just as the differential space emerges from the sterilization of abstract space. Therefore, informality does not have a fixed structure and therefore does not have a precise definition, but its spans vary according to the formal system’s power to define its own boundaries. In this way, informality is not detached from the formal, but is deeply intertwined and shaped by it. What is more, it brings forward the implication that informality must be interpreted and analyzed for a further understanding of the social urban process, and culture spatialization (Laguerre, 1994; Gilbert & Jong, 2015).

In another way, theorized by Shakland presented in Nasution (2015) informality can be then described “as a glue that unifies different parts of a formal system” (p. 6), and as a structure of social action requiring four components presented by Laguerre (1994). The first one is space, more definitive a place where action is carried out, whether it is home, a street, a plaza, a field, a plot or a neighborhood. A space to be informalized or appropriated. The second component are actors, which through their action can formalize or informalize through social construction space into place. The third component is a formal system that informalizes the informal system by setting limits and boundaries to itself. Lastly, the fourth compound is a specific common goal, which can be as varied and versatile as the actors are. This fourth compound is commonly perceived as a contestation to the formal system, or as a complementation to fulfill spatial needs of actors or communities, which feel the need and right to appropriate formal spaces in a sense (Nasution, 2015; Laguerre, 1994).

This formal-informal tension equally applies to the inner-urban borders, internal areas of the expanding metropolis where a complex informal urban exists. The urban dweller is constantly crossing between harmonious action, adaptation, and contradictory, resistance, relationships with formal space, searching for fields of action for best positioning the self in society, through appropriation (Laguerre, 1994). Appropriation is very different from informal settlements. Appropriation is merely an act to informalize public and private spaces housing built by corrupted companies sponsored by the state. Among all of them, the new urban hinterland is created of formalized decay and spatial and social segregation. Such is the case of many Mexican cities, like Queretaro. However, the peripheralization of the city becomes part of the production of the metropolis, which is constantly creating new peripheries as it continues its urban expansion, producing a diffuse and limitless city, creating inner-urban borders embedded in the city (Gilbert & Jong, 2015; Huacuz Elías & Vázquez Cruz, 2018).
The streets of Mexico are lived social spaces, becoming people’s cultural and emotive symbols embedded in the space. In the streets celebrations take place, traditional cultural events are displayed, even shows are performed. On the right page:

*Figure 12.* The streets often are decorated for traditional celebrations, through different colors and paperwork they set specific moods depending on what is celebrated. In the photo the Tepoztlan streets are decorated for the carnival.

*Figure 13.* The *lucha libre* is a deeply rooted show in Mexican culture. The barrio San Miguelito is home for many wrestlers. Once a year they perform for free on the streets.

*Figure 14.* Sincretic religious celebrations happen inside the churches and outside of them, engaging people. In this photo the *concheros* dance their way through the streets of Querétaro towards the church.
The informal-formal tension is often appreciated in the perceived space and the everydaylife practices. Informal commerce is a clear example of this tension, as it informalizes space while at the same time boosts small-house economies.

*Figure 15.* Every space holds potential for a business. In the photo a street vendor exhibits his merchandise in the streets of Mexico City.

*Figure 16.* Street food is part of the informal spectrum, as well an important role of everyday life. In spots of informal food, social relations are created and experiences are shared.

*Figure 17.* In lower income areas, *tianguis*, informal markets, are part of the daily life. *Tianguis* take the street as their retail space, adding a new social dimension to it.
In sprawling socially unequal cities, public space is not available in low income areas. Appropriation of space often are socially created to generate such spaces by themselves through a combination of formal and informal ways.

*Figure 18.* Small structures and painting in unoccupied spaces bring identity of the space to its inhabitants, making it theirs. In the photo, a gathering in Bolaños, Querétaro is happening in an appropriated border space.

*Figure 19.* Open unoccupied spaces are truly versatile, hosting from football matches to birthday parties, which are celebrated together with the whole community, tightening their social capital. In the photo, they gather to celebrate the 16th birthday of a young girl in the Ejido Mexico Libre.

*Figure 20.* Public spaces in highly dense low income areas are scarce. Closing the streets to create children parks becomes a necessity. Peatoniños in Iztapalapa, in Mexico City is an example of combined initiatives of governance in the urban space.
to accommodate informal spaces, exchanges, social transactions, or simply daily activity (Nasution, 2015). Through appropriation, an individual might understand it as a way of life, whereas in a collective, it responds to the shared desire to provide what is missing in their space, compensating what is unprovided by formal apparatus (Laguerre, 1994). Appropriation, therefore, can be understood as part of informality, embedded subtly in the formal system becoming part of an everyday socio-spatial contract (Inostroza, 2017).

Yet, whether is peripheral informality or inner-urban appropriation, in a segmented class society, urban typologies are clearly differentiated. Informality is instrumentalized as an interactive strategy of segregation and state power extension. By determining formality as positive privileged areas of modernity, globality and even luxury; and informality becomes negatively less developed, marginal, residual, and poor. In such way, informality is being separated as it is a result of state urban actions, global processes, social segregation and unequal urban development. Hence, instead of continuing the antagonistic dichotomy, informality, and therefore appropriation, can better understood “as a negotiated mode of urbanization located not only in the informal settlements, but deployed in most urban forms and processes of the city as appropriation, present in many aspects of urban and social development through ambiguities and contradictions” (Gilbert & Jong, 2015, p. 520).

The genealogy of social action and space production in appropriated spaces, is often a mix of formality and informality. Today’s urban scape is a mix contribution of informality, whereas it has been formalized by the formal urban discourse, or not. By understanding the interconnected association between formal and informal, consensual and contested, lawful and unlawful, differential or abstract in the urban process, even designated and appropriated spaces; relies the possibility to untangle and create a genuine engagement among informality, governability and human settlement. Moreover, by understanding informality as a logic of production of space in late-capitalist urbanization, and by going beyond normative boundaries between planned and lawful ownership, it can be valued as a response for everchanging situations between territorality and powerlessness (Gieseking, et al., 2014; Gilbert & Jong, 2015; Laguerre, 1994).

Social capital, resilience and resistance

Cities are more complex than only the relation of formal and informal, many other processes are always linked in the continuous changing urban scape. Still, by understanding of shared mental spaces embedded in smaller manageable areas such as neighborhoods, these processes are clearer and dialogical relations can be seen. Evident traces of everyday production of space are more evident to understand the spatial intelligence and social capital on everyday basis. In the end, one of the main resources of informality are space and mental space (Nasution, 2015). By studying both, space and mental space embedded through social capital and spatial intelligence in space appropriation, there is the opportunity to analyze the social tools to excavate the traces in the informal city, while identifying the potentials in the segregated population to produce and reproduce space as well as to re-configure existing spaces in a socially resilient way (Nasution, 2015). Furthermore, the continues link of social capital, community, formal-informal spaces, can hold for cultural hybridization, creating bridges between segregated spaces towards a more inclusive city. On the other hand, the same combination of elements, can create and perpetuate the social conflict cities are going through, like fragmentation, segregation and social inequality (Gaffikin & Perry, 2012).

The continuous reinterpretation of space is embedded in the dualism between formal and informal. Spatial unpowered urban residents are constantly pressed and constrained to reinvent their understanding of space outside the formal and abstract. In such contestation,
appropriation brings forward spatial intelligence, which emerges through a collective process where resiliency and creativity develop in every bit of available space, whereas is public or private. Space intelligence and social construction are characterized by negotiation, flexibility and adaptability, collaboration, and collectivity (Nasution, 2015). The appropriation processes, if explored beyond its informality, are generating new economic activities and therefore, creating an impact to the unempowered urban population. Embedded in the process, the social agency latent in spatial appropriation, fill with meanings, motives, values and aspirations the socially constructed spaces (Madrazo, 2019).

Given the limitations and facing the challenges, these communities become resilient, using any potential and capital available, specially their own social capital, to organize, reinvent and reproduce space. With more social capital, the community lean to be more resilient. Thus, social capital becomes an important resource to create space through communication and negotiation, creating community alongside the process of production (Nasution, 2015). In appropriated spaces every possible square meter of available space becomes socially constructed. Resiliency and creativity emerge through negotiation, spatial abilities and collaboration, thus collectivity contributing to the construction of mental spaces and spatial history around the specific place. Appropriated spaces survive not only because its social construction of space, or its collectivity, or through the authority’s nonattention to the obliterated spaces; rather such spaces endure due to the social capital intertwined in its genesis process. The diverse meanings of informality fulfill diverse roles and constitutes a system of signification whereas is consciously or unconsciously (Nasution, 2015; Laguerre, 1994).

Yet, as the globe is going under the metropolitan century, the increment phenomenon on urban dwellers will continue to rise. The urbanization phenomenon opened possibilities in the transition between rural to urban dwellers. In 2017, around 43% of the world population lived in informal ways. Informal settlements in the hinterlands are widely common in the Global South. In Latin America they have different names according to their location: slums in English, barriadas in Perú, villas miseria in Argentina, campamentos in Chile, favelas in Brazil, and colonias populares/asentamientos irregulares in Mexico. Under such pressure stressing the urbanizations, social resilient solutions to couple need to be re-thinked (Inostroza, 2017).

Urban spaces are being created in a capitalistic neoliberal way, overlooking marginalized and vulnerable parts of society, putting them in greater risk due to power relations over space. However, appropriated and informal settlements are being crafted by their creativity, social resilience and social capital potential to occupy, create, maintain and produce social spaces. Social resiliency term definition has been crafted after environmental resilience, however, such conceptualization constraints the power of social resilience. Embedded in social resilience are underlying principles that go beyond cope and adapt. Social resilience entails beyond adaptability capacities to absorb change and disturbance to re-organize and keep stability. Literature review presented by Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) shows the evolutive idea of resilience, and finally defining social resilience as the capacity to respond, re-act, adapt, be proactive and transform, acknowledging the roles played by power, politics and participation in an increasing urban socio-spatial context, fostering societal relations and network structures. The transformative capacities in social resilience respond to visualize risk and act before the events, with a long-term temporal scope and a high degree of change with an enhancement of present and future well-being. In social resilience, social capital plays a key role in informal social interactions, which are considered best resources to build social resilience and foster a creative direction. This most recent reorientation towards transformative social resilience was created to address the transformation of society in the face of global change (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013).
and marginalized” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 14) Informal urban development and appropriated spaces are an enduring phenomenon in Latin America, rooted in the cultural conception of space itself. Nowadays, informalization and appropriation processes are growing exponentially together with the unstoppable urban expansion. The urban surface of Latin American cities has increased on average 73% in the past 20 years. In such growing scale, most cities are losing density, denoting further the contrasts between the urban space and the hinterland with empty spaces prone for appropriation (Inostroza, 2017). With the constant threat of informality growing in urban spaces, spatial authorities are constantly redesigning the conceived space through processes of regularization, gentrification, urban renewal and urban redevelopment. In such processes, urban appropriation, social organization and transformative social resilience are the only way to preserve people’s space.

Urban imaginaries and social borders

Urban spaces interweave social processes into its conception of urban space, especially embedded in Lefebvre’s perceived and lived space. Through the spatial triad, Lefebvre affirms that each society has in itself its peculiar cultural ways of producing its own space, making it intrinsically a social product consequence of determinant relations in specific times, as well as historic, political and economic processes, materialized in a specific territory. By intertwining characteristics directly related to spatial practices, symbolic representations are produced around a specific space, generating a social imaginary pinned to a location (Lefebvre, 1991/2014).

However, the general perception that Latin American cities are filled with threats perpetuated by specific actors such as immigrants, informal or marginalized, impacts the presented built environment. Fragmented urban space emerges from the perception that urban dwellers need to protect themselves from the imminent danger the city is, becoming a hidden menace in the everyday life. Such fear is becoming a normalized sensation, constantly present in urban dwellers creating a generalized imaginary of fear. Even though the imaginary of fear is a mixture of real violence with societal subjective perception, it has become a leading perception in the creation and the way of inhabiting Latin American cities (Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015).

To comprehend better the imaginaries of fear, there is the need to contextualize further. In the year 2001, the 48% of Latin American cities had areas considered inaccessible or dangerous to the police to enter, as well for non-residents of the area (Nanda, 2019). Such statement declares how the imaginary of fear is deeply involved in the current urban and social transformations that Latin American countries have been undergoing since the 1980’s. In Mexico, the increase of urban violence linked with unemployment, drug dealing cartels, organized crime, social segregation, and even state repression through violence, have been forging in the Mexican cities in an imaginary of fear. This perception has been potentialized inside the country, and abroad, through media and state-supported real estate markets (Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015). For both, the extension of such imaginary is profitable. Such imaginaries of fear are implemented in the built environment with urban and architectonic elements of invisibilization, obliteration and segregation through fortified enclaves, gated communities, directed marketing, and other forms of social exclusion like protective architecture and new aesthetics of security. Such actions promote the reproduction of segregationally conceived space embedded in new urban patterns, new residential concepts, and new codes of urban planning based on isolation, homogenization and protection through elements that denote social status (Caldeira, 1999; Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015).
Essentially, urban imaginaries are shaped by urban social relations into fragmented social groups, as this fear is not only to violence, but also reflects fear to relate to others, a neglect of heterogeneity, diversity and sociability, provoking patterns of social isolation through urban and architectonic segregation, which are making Latin American cities highly socially unsustainable (Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015). In the urban planning and reproduction of segregated spaces in cities, the social and class discrimination has been reinforced, feeding the urban imaginaries of perceived fear and violence to certain urban actors. Perceived urban actors as responsible for social deterioration and urban chaos are most commonly the poor, the marginalized, the ones with low income, and those who do not have formal power over urban space. In this way, as they create informal and appropriated spaces, they are being stigmatized as useless in formal economy, ignorant, lazy, and therefore, dangerous (Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015).

For stigmatized actors, informality and spatial appropriation is not considered as reflective of their marginal state, but rather as a valid mode of urbanism. As the government has not been able to respond to demand, but yet has set in place policies and regulations of exclusion and abandonments, those with land necessities have embraced a mixed formal-informal system. From this perspective, they are reclaiming spaces, contesting the production space and demanding their right to the city by taking an active part in the production of urban spaces where they are accepted and can claim those places as theirs and yet, have been criminalized and penalized. In this way, the perceived and lived spaces are considered a pro-action and reproduction of a community in a specific location (Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015; Nasution, 2015; Álvarez de Andrés, et al., 2019). In this way, each class has created the illusion of living in separated worlds. Nowadays, the city is becoming a group of homogenized islands to live and to consume in (García Canclini, 2019).

Through urban imaginaries, the city encompasses diversity and conflict, creating especially social borders. Social borders are borders that cannot be crossed, and to be able to be crossed, the instruments are less accessible as they do not represent anything physical or material, but rather intangible such as social status and community belonging (Sassen, 2013). When the formal production of space is an extensive consumerism of space, individualization and segregation tend to isolate people without power or access to urban space, even marginalizing them, turning them to a formal-informal system of inhabiting the city, where, through social capital and a genesis story, a tight community is created in spaces prone for appropriation, such as new and former urban borders immerse in the urban tissue. As a result, inner-urban borders are becoming social ones by means of imaginaries of fear, creating segregation and phobia to re-heterogenized and diversify, characteristics that used to be intrinsic to the urban complex (Nasution, 2015; Gómez Dávila & de Aguiar Arantes, 2015).
This section will present two case studies that seek to present spatial and social perception embedded in border appropriated spaces. The chosen areas are located in what was known 40 years ago as the former borders of the city of Queretaro. As the city has been growing, they have been absorbed into the city center area. The cases are presented through their official and non-official stories, together with residents’ stories and perceptions narrating their unique evolving process of social production into their current spatial conception and resilience. Nowadays, both areas have evolved into spaces of social borders, dealing with strong infrastructure physical borders. This section pursues to recognize the process of such contested spaces through storytelling. In this way, urban narratives and stories can support the understanding of social production beyond its physical environment and further into identifying social interactions in it, manifested dreams and desires, as well as the creation and rejection of certain social interrelations.
Brief history of the city of Querétaro

The city of Querétaro was founded in the year 1531. The legend says that the Spanish and some indigenous tribes made a pacific arrangement, yet some indigenous were discontent and decided to fight against the Spanish in a bloody battle. The story says that the Spanish were losing the battle, when miraculously the catholic apostle Santiago turned the skies black and appeared riding a horse over a cross in the middle of the battlefield. The impressed indigenous decided to surrender and accepted evangelization (INAFED, 1997). From this event, the official name of the city became Santiago de Querétaro, mixing the catholic identity, Santiago as the apostle, with the indigenous one, k'erenda rhu, which means place of rocks. As a result, the cultural mix is reflected in the urban trace and the colonial architecture enriching the scape of the city center declared UNESCO World Heritage Site on 1996 (UNESCO, 1996). In 2031, the city will be 500 years old, and initiatives like the Q500 (IMPLAN Queretaro, et al., 2018) seek to bring the city forward by enhancing its own characteristics into an inclusive urban plan. This thesis seeks to bring forward the city understanding by its residents, their stories and social behavior.
Figure 23. Panoramic view of Querétaro at sunset. The low-rise buildings that characterize Querétaro are visible with the city’s industrial nature.
City of Querétaro

Latin American countries convey dualism intrinsic to its culture result of its historic processes. In Mexico, traced evidence of past cultures is visible everywhere. Being a country formed by syncretism of ancient indigenous heritage with Spanish culture, all aspects of its culture, daily life, and built environment convey an innate dualism. Examples of this is the beautiful yet chaotic capital of Mexico City built over ruins, its tasty yet spicy unique food with exotic ingredients from insects to chocolate, its rich traditions mixing catholic religion and indigenous rites, its barrios of indigenous settlements side by side with Spanish neighborhood, and even, its beautiful beaches shaped for foreigners visitors and investors. Socially, Mexico is a warm welcoming country, only the second happiest of Latin America, and 23rd worldwide in 2019 according to the World Happiness Report (Helliwell, et al., 2019); in spite of that, Mexico is also well known for the insecurity, violence, drugs, migration and social inequality in its cities. Such dualisms are part of Mexican life and are reflected in the urban spaces, especially across formal and informal practices and spaces.

Querétaro has been one of the fastest-growing cities in Mexico for the past couple of decades. Principally, it is due because of its important economic growth related to its location between the buoyant economic area known as Mexican Bajío (Becerril, 2018; Gabinete de Inovacion Europa, 2011) and the ever-growing Mexico Valley Metropolitan Area, known as ZMVM – Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México in Spanish (IMPLAN Queretaro, 2009). Within these two areas, is allocated major national economic activities, such as 80% of the Mexican market, 70% industrial activity, 70% international commerce, and 70% exports, moreover, within the area resides the 60% of the country’s population (Gabinete de Inovacion Europa, 2011). As the city of Querétaro belongs to both areas, it has become a bridge between them, becoming an important regional node over the past decades. In fast-growing cities in
continuous expansion, urban borders are redefined constantly, absorbing and contesting spaces while becoming embedded in the urban tissue. Furthermore, the volatility of the urban environment and the local way of life between formality and informality, actively transforms the spaces into ambiguous ones.

The intensive economic activities in Mexico’s central area, have pressured towards the intensive urban growth of Querétaro, which has developed its territorial urban planning and management in favor of economic aspects. The result is that between 1970 and 2017, the city of Queretaro has multiplicated its urban territory 17.6 times, while its population has only increased 4.3 times (IMPLAN Queretaro, 2018). With such intensive territorial extension, Querétaro has surpassed its municipality, blurring its limits over four municipalities and recently surpassing the state limit with Guanajuato. The sprawling conurbation conforms the Queretaro Metropolitan Area, ZMQ – Zona Metropolitana de Querétaro (IMPLAN Queretaro, 2009; IMPLAN Queretaro, et al., 2018).

Queretaro’s intertwined urban process of economic, political and real estate endeavors have steered the city towards today’s low-density, fragmented, discontinuous and segregated urban area. Queretaro’s urban pattern reflects its spatial inequality in the society, where 79.9% of the urban area does not have access to public spaces (IMPLAN Queretaro, 2018). Furthermore, the city has visibly developed a high social inequality with an unbalanced access to urban areas and services, privatizing 14.9% of its urban space into gated and enclosed communities (IMPLAN Queretaro, 2018). Such exclusive and dispersive territorialization has determined urban infrastructure prioritizing private car for urban mobility, segregating and marginalizing its population even further while promoting urban sprawl and consuming natural areas. The striving territorial expansion has been undertaking over more than 284 important natural areas, not only loosing green and open spaces but also the capacity for water retention, jeopardizing
the city’s future water supply in its semi-desertic location (IMPLAN Queretaro, et al., 2018).

Consequently, the city of Queretaro is constantly re-drawing its frontiers with a narrow social perspective, absorbing former peripheral spaces rapidly into its urban tissue, encapsulating them over the pass of the years, and turning them later into valuable economic areas attractive for renewal and re-development. The urban dynamic of segregation is a cycle mainly controlled by private real estate companies, who constantly create exclusive spaces separated by long distances from the urban core. In the in-between spaces socially appropriated spaces are being produce. Considered a threat, the exclusive high class moves outwards, becoming a viciously cyclic process where social spaces are constantly contested and in disadvantage. (IMPLAN Queretaro, et al., 2018).

Queretaro’s complex dynamics, organization, function and morphology has been triggered by a western idolized lifestyle urban models, neoliberalists perspectives of thriving economy, real estate pressure and cold number and market analysis, without valorizing it social aspects, history, stories, traditions and myths embedded in the territory. The urban dynamic of segregation is a cycle mainly controlled by private real estate companies who constantly create exclusive spaces pushing towards the outskirts of the city. Naturally, the urban sprawl tends to develop towards those enclaves by filling the long distances in-between spaces and engulfing socially created spaces on its way. The following case studies are a consequence of such processes, becoming engulfed and contested.
Figure 27. Skyline of Queretaro, looking towards the south. It is noticeable the new gated communities being built on what was the Natural Reserve area of El Cimatario.

Figure 28. Gated Communities mapped year 2018
Gated communities began as exclusive high-income class spaces to live, offering social distinction as well as the services the city fails to provide. The privatization of such spaces enlarges the social gap existing in Queretaro’s urban context.

Figure 29. El Campestre was the first gated community in Queretaro during 1970’s. It became a real exclusive area for wealthy people of Queretaro who did not wanted to mingle with the rest of the society. The fortified enclave develops around a private golf club.

Figure 30. El Campanario became the second gated community, offering exclusivity as well as great green areas and artificial ponds to its residents. It also adopted the model of a private golf club in its interior.

Figure 31. Gated communities were also developed for medium-high income class. The idea of homogenization of the houses and private amenities like the pool, bring an aspirational idea of luxury and exclusivity resembling high-income class spaces.
Social inequality and segregation are visible in everyday life and context. Insecurity in the country has led to an aspirational lifestyle, which has popularized gated communities also in low and medium-low income areas as well.

Figure 32. The low-income area of San Pedro Peñuelas is an open neighborhood on the north-east border of the city. Despite the gates in each house, the street is still a lived space.

Figure 33. New housing areas are following the model of gated communities. Walls and barriers have become aspirational even in low-income areas, privatizing gated cul-de-sac streets schema. In the photo, the new neighborhood Valle de Santiago is conformed of several privatized streets, like this one named Framboyan.

Figure 34. Gated communities are turning streets into paths of walls, increasing the insecurity to pedestrians, and supressing all possibilities of lived space on the streets, while reducing the urban experience.
About the selection of the case studies

For choosing the cases, I took into consideration the three spatial, urban and personal criteria over every location. Firstly, I looked into existent appropriated spaces in the city where the duality between formality and informality was visible and even historical. Secondly, I considered the social construction of the spaces, prioritizing the stories in them. Thirdly, the final decision was based on the possibility to access the space and of course, safe access to space.

I drafted a list of spaces and sorted them by location and follow the next socio-spatial considerations. First, the cases should represent a former physical border of the city which ended up being enclosed by urban growth becoming part of the urban tissue. San Pablo and Hercules qualified as peripheral spaces during the 1970’s urban area, while now they are considered to be part of the central core. Second, as the were former borders, the space should be bordered by large pieces of physical urban infrastructure constituting a determinant in the space itself. San Pablo is delimited by main avenues and highways that are part of the first ring road around the city; Hercules is determined by the aqueduct, the river and the train tracks which give to it its long characteristic. Third, the constitution of the space should be a consequence of its social construction through a combination of formal and informal processes. San Pablo’s sports unit is a consequence of a previous social use of space, and Hercules’ alley is a result of the ambiguity of space use and ownership in the aqueduct, same as the football field. Fourth, the social construction of the space should be a result of social agency through stories. Even more, storytelling should be a way in which locals have brought forward spatial and social value inside the now contested spaces. San Pablo’s and Hercules’ stories over their spaces and social agency is known in all Queretaro, even if as mere gossip, their stories have resonated. Finally, the fifth element I considered is the actual opportunity to work with such spaces inside the time frame and in a safe manner. Reviewing the spaces there was a concern on choosing safer spaces especially as I am a woman and I would be visiting the spaces alone. For this, I took into consideration people’s warning over certain spaces.

Methods

First of all, it is important to mention that I used to live in the city of Querétaro for over 25 years. For most of my adult life there, I developed an interest in socially appropriated spaces because of the stories I heard, the news I read, the discussions over media, and my own personal experiences. Because of this, and through the text of Chang (2008) I became interested in autoethnography as a way to explore the case studies as pieces of my own culture, city and society. I use autoethnography as a method for using my own experience together with ethnographic methods and urban storytelling to analyze and interpret spaces that were physically so close to me yet so distant.

I divided the data collection in two main phases. I did the first phase during a two-week field trip to Mexico from February 3rd to 17th, 2019. During that time, I made four visits in total in both areas, visiting the spaces two times on weekdays and other two on weekends. Because of safety issues, I visited the spaces only between noon and 16 hours. I dedicated the first week to spatial recognition of the place, the space, the neighborhood and its surroundings. I used autoethnographic methods to connect my experience in the space and the culture with spatial aspects and the stories of the spaces. My methods in the space for data collection include walking the area, observing spatial characteristics and social behavior, drawing the main characteristics of the space, and photographing the places and their social use. During this week, I made
autoethnographic notes, for example, about how the locals welcomed me in their neighborhood and how I sensed them judging me as an outsider. With this perception, I decided that the perception over the space had to be viewed from the point of view of insiders and outsiders.

During the second week the fieldwork I felt more secure in the spaces as I focused on social interaction, informal discussions, open-ended interviews and listening to stories of the place and its people. It was during week two that I met and interviewed the key informants of each space. It is important to note that the feeling of being an outsider was over after talking to key informants. Due to time limitations on the field, I meet with social organizations who could possibly become collaborators. The Civil Association of Un Lugar volunteered to carry the next part of the field work.

The phase two reflects a more classic ethnographic approach. Phase two happened back in Finland and is divided in field work by Un Lugar and my analysis of the spaces. For the analysis part I gathered the information of phase one and started the analysis process. I noted that an important part of resident’s information was the perception of the space towards the city marked by actions not concerning them as residents, but as ‘official stories’ being told in the media and the general perception in urban imaginaries. Another important discovery were the insights and contrasts of stories with official media, which helped me to clearly define the study areas. These observations informed the design of script for the open-ended interviews.

I wrote and send to Un Lugar the leading questions for the open-ended interviews. Later on, people from Un Lugar visited the spaces and applied the designed interview to residents of the place and outsiders visiting. Between myself and Un Lugar, a total of 42 interviews were carried, 21 in each space. The primary intention was to interview 10 residents of the area, 10 outsiders and one key informant. However, the nature and social use of the spaces divided the interviews in the following way. In San Pablo, 5 interviewees were inhabitants of San Pablo (including the key informant), and 6 others were outsiders visiting the place. In Hercules, 8 interviewees were residents while only three were outsiders. This observation demonstrates from the beginning who are the main users of the spaces. The second field work also included the observations and analysis of the place. For this, official documentation, like land use and the actual use of space, was analyzed in order to understand their informal ways of space appropriation.

The method’s goal is to re-discover the space by unveiling non-official stories embedded in the social and spatial memory. Also, to create a better understanding of the space and place with a people and community-oriented perspective. The social aspects weaved into the stories told by residents and their perspectives are valuable knowledge in understanding the creation process of contested spaces between the duality of formality and informality and as social borders in the city. The stories bring forward the past, present and planned futures of the spaces by including renewal actions and planned actions towards the social space. The newspapers stories represent the ‘official stories’ of the space. These journalistic stories are spread throughout the city and the country, affecting the perception of the space and defining urban imaginaries over them. Finally, the analysis of the case studies was carried with different methods in order to observe its material and spatial characteristics and configuration connecting it with its social nuanced perspectives.
Figure 35. Map of the borough Centro Histórico. In pink, the Protected Monument Area by UNESCO.
[Case Study 1] Unidad Deportiva ‘Ejido San Pablo’

The Unidad Deportiva ‘Ejido San Pablo’ –UDESP– is a Sports Unit located in the San Pablo neighborhood, in the edge of the city’s first quadrant, denominated the Historic Center area. The Historic Center is an area of great inequality, especially as it is the one with more governmental investment covering only the maintenance of the UNESCO site area, leaving its original *barrios*, traditional neighborhoods, quite forgotten and often ignored: San Francisquito, San Roque, El Tepetate, El Cerrito, San Pablo, San Sebastian, and Hercules (Zavala, 2010). This is the case of San Pablo, although it is part of the History Center area, placed roughly 4.5 km away from the UNESCO Historic Monument Area, its physical, spatial, and social urban characteristics are quite different.
San Pablo is one of the oldest neighborhoods of the city, embedded in the outskirts of the city center, where most of the land was for agricultural use, constituting its own Ejido. The nature of ejidal territories come from the ideals of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) (Warman, n.d.). Afterwards, the Agrarian Reform (1911–1992) took over 100 million hectares of land, equivalent to over half of the national territory, expropriating them from the oligarchy and wealthy landlords and returned them to the Mexican peasant farmers, establishing over 30 000 ejidos (Warman, n.d.). An ejido refers to village communal holdings, a social organization that holds legally recognized land that is owned by a community who have the right to live, to work and to use the land with solidarity. From the legal point of view, an ejido is a common good belonging to all community members, ejidatarios, therefore, it cannot be sold or exploited by its individuals. The ejidal territory is divided in lands for human settlement (owned by the State), lands of communal use, and parcel lands. The reform failed to translate such ideals into well-being, leaving its people living nowadays in poverty (Knowlton, 1998; SEDATU, et al., 2017; Warman, n.d.). In San Pablo, most of the individual property, such as houses, belong to parcelled lands, as they are used by individuals. These properties can be inherited but cannot be sold, making them family heritage, and as a continuity of the ejidal scheme. The UDESP territory was one the only open space left in the area, conceived as a land of communal use in the ejido. With the natural urban growth, ejidal land started being demanded by the government to be transferred into urban plots. Arrangements between ejidos and government all over the country have become common, as more ejidal lands are being absorbed by the urban expansion. Until today, such dynamic continues.

The Ejido San Pablo is an organization still existent, although most of its territory has been expropriated and is now part of the urban tissue. Nowadays, the ejidal lands of Ejido San Pablo are difficult to trace as less ejidatarios dedicate themselves to agriculture, and agricultural lands are pushed to the outskirts by the urban growth. It is presumed that

Ejido San Pablo main territory has been moved towards the northern periphery of the city to continue its agricultural use in designated land. The previous area has been left as the barrio San Pablo, which has remained a low-income neighborhood delineated by main roads, and among private clustered big areas.

Located in the very north edge of the barrio, is the Sports Unit UDESP. The land where UDESP stands, used to be part of ejidal lands of Ejido San Pablo, presumably as communal area. For decades, those lands were unbuilt. San Pablo residents used it as sports fields, space for events and community gatherings; it was used for over 30 years as soccer games in the evenings, shortcut between different neighborhoods and bus stops, venue for traditional celebrations and community dances, though its main use was as baseball field. The space most valuable characteristic for the residents was its emptiness and its size, over three hectares. During the weekends, baseball internal and regional tournaments, as well as football matches, were held in one of the few
Figure 38. Dirt fields of San Pablo around 2014.

Figure 39. Aerial view over the dirt fields of San Pablo around 2014.

Figure 40. Sports Unit 'Ejido San Pablo' around 2018 from viad distributor third floor.

Figure 41. Aerial view over the Sports Unit 'Ejido San Pablo' around 2018.
open fields in the city. During holidays, special traditional festivities were organized on the space. The space was not properly equipped for any of its uses; however, it was a beloved space frequently used by people of San Pablo.

The baseball field was simply a dirt field located on a residual space between motorized infrastructure adjoined to two main highways, Bernardo Quintana Avenue and the 5th of February Avenue, which together create the first road ring. With the urban growth, its location has turned the space into a contested space with challenges due to the major physical barriers that surround it; while on the other hand, making it a strategic and valuable land because of its tactical location and connectivity. Among other reasons, the space where the UDESP stands today, had been contested for over 40 years.

During the visits to the space, after a brief contact with some neighbors asking about the space in the Adolfo López Mateos Street, they all referred to a lady in the end of the street. She had her business selling cloths in a tent at the tianguis, informal street market, her name is Imelda. When interviewed, Imelda had a hard time telling a painful story to her related to the space. The following lines narrates her story intertwined with resident’s comments and the few newspapers that kept the note, representing the official story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official story</th>
<th>Non-official story</th>
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<tr>
<td>The space belonged to the Ejido San Pablo as communal lands. For years, it had been used as baseball fields, football fields, events venue and community meetings.</td>
<td>Informants mention that the governor’s Ignacio Loyola Vera term was about to end, so he was forcing the process to turn the space into a business sponsored by his investment but under his brother’s name. Informants living in San Pablo believe that he felt pressured of finishing his term without taking the plot from the ejido, losing his opportunity to allocate his family business.</td>
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<td>Local newspapers mention that the space became disputed between the ejido together with the residents of the area, and a transportation company, which wanted to convert the space in the bus station ‘Paradero Queretano del Norte. Meetings between ejidal leaders and government representatives were taking place, however an agreement was not being reached (Chávez, 2003).</td>
<td>2002–2003</td>
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<td>The newspaper La Jornada reports that one morning of September, the space found itself full of construction machinery, with fences around it, and enclosed. There were no declarations from official media, and workers on the field did not spoke to anyone.</td>
<td>Imelda mentions that there was not an agreement yet, so people from San Pablo and nearby areas were surprised, disappointed and angry. They started to organize themselves to save their space from what they considered, a government steal of land.</td>
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At 14 hours, 500 anti-riot police agents arrived at the scene, together with municipal policemen, and state policemen. The commander of the forces declared he was there to establish dialogue. However, he offered 15 minutes to clear the area.

Immediately after the police arrived, they gassed the people and started hitting everyone, regardless if they were just passer-by, even moms picking up kids from school. The say there were even helicopters in the scene throwing gas at them.

In front of such events, people went to the streets in protest blocking the intersection of the main avenues Av. Bernardo Quintana and Av. 5th of February. For two hours, the enraged protesters threatened to set on fire the construction machinery, if the authority would not start a dialogue over the plot recently bought by the transport company.

That morning, Imelda's dad went to buy embroidery threads for Imelda and her sisters. On his way back, he found angry neighbors protesting peacefully outside the dirt-field and from the pedestrian bridge. He stood there with other curious people. All together were around 100 persons.

The ejidatarios were knocking door to door, sportsmen organized their team's members, and neighbors went to the street to protest and make evident the abuse of power by the authority.

During the riots, the policemen apprehended 31 persons. After such events, the rioters were gone.

During the following days, the machinery remained on site, as the authority was claiming the space as if a selling contract had been signed. The ejidatario’s demands were ignored, the story broke into the media, becoming a political scandal.

Later, more that 70 persons were protesting outside the municipality office, demanding the freedom of their peers and respect over their space.

Police would not tell the families where the detained have been taken. Everyone was very worried, and police response made it almost impossible for families to find their relatives. Imelda remembers vividly the anguish of those days.

Due to the menace of the residents, the police had to use the force to evacuate them, as they represented a danger to society.

Imelda's father was among the apprehended. After the police was gone, neighbors walked out looking for their loved ones. Imelda's father did not return home and was nowhere to be found.

During the following days, the machinery remained on site, as the authority was claiming the space as if a selling contract had been signed. The ejidatario’s demands were ignored, the story broke into the media, becoming a political scandal.

Police would not tell the families where the detained have been taken. Everyone was very worried, and police response made it almost impossible for families to find their relatives. Imelda remembers vividly the anguish of those days.
On the following days, official declarations by the municipal presidency were done. In them, the authority declared that the space had always the agreements of remaining as a sports field. Also declaring that the apprehended persons were legally detained as they attacked public transport and main avenues, as well as endangering the internal safety of the State.

After four days, Imelda’s dad returned home. He had been seriously beaten and no doctor had given any attention to him. On the same day, his condition worsened. Imelda remembers his stomach was all purple and his face swollen, and he could not move; he had to be hospitalized. After a couple of days, he died. Doctors said his death was caused by internal bleeding due to the beating he took.

The next day of his dead, approximately a week after the riots, the machinery was taken off the field. That day was the last day of the governor’s term.

The fields remained in bad shape without any regular maintenance. However, the weekday afternoons and weekends it was very busy, with trainings and tournaments.

At nighttime the fields were empty, bad lightened and dangerous, were burglaries, drug use and women molesting happening.

During the pass of the years, the conflict with the government was forgotten. The brother of the ex-governor Ignacio Loyola Vera, Roberto Loyola Vera, became mayor and he retook dialogues with San Pablo’s ejidatarios. Dialogues were possible by the help of Pablo González Loyola, State leader of the Civil Unit ‘Felipe Carrillo Puerto’.

The field was now fenced, and a plate with Imelda’s father name was hung naming the fields. However, Imelda remembers that after the events and her father’s dead, no one visited her family.

Moreover, the events left sour feelings among the population, and the feeling of distrust towards the authority among the residents of San Pablo grew, especially since it was not the first time the authority had wanted to take control over the space.
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<th>Official story</th>
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<td>An agreement between the ejido and the authority was reached. The plot was ceded to the government under the conditions that it will always remain an open field for sports where the baseball and soccer fields remain. It was also accorded that a children playground should be added as well as business premises, constituted as parcel land of the ejido, one per each ejidatario. Finally, it should be named in memory of Imelda’s dad, José de Jesús Ruiz, who died in the riots (Ruiz, 2014).</td>
<td>After the agreement was made, Imelda remembers that the neither government agents nor architects consulted the people for the sports unit. Imelda says as they reached the agreement with the ejido, they were only speaking to them and not the neighbors or anyone else for that matter.</td>
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2003–2014

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<th>Official story</th>
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<td>On May 2014, the media made the official announcement through different newspapers. The construction of a new sport unit on the plot would have investment of 39 million pesos (roughly 1 million 750 thousand euros) and would benefit 25,000 people according to official numbers (El Universal [a], 2014; El Universal [c], 2014).</td>
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May 2014

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<th>Official story</th>
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<td>On December 2014, the Sports Unit was inaugurated, with a baseball field, a soccer field, a children playground, a skate park, a civic square, and basic services as toilets. For the opening, a big event with public sports figures as guests, such as the trainer of the national soccer team Miguel ‘El Piojo’ Herrera and the ex-professional baseball player Ismael ‘Rocket’ Valdés, was displayed by the government (El Universal [b], 2014; El Universal [c], 2014).</td>
<td>Although the official name was supposed to be Sports Unit ‘José de Jesús Ruiz’ as agreed; the media and official events never mentioned it. By such act, the authority was not recognizing Imelda’s father as an important symbol to the community, neglecting it happened and helping the memory of such events disappear from the collective memory. Finally, the official name was officialized as Sports Unit ‘Ejido San Pablo’, as it stands until today.</td>
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Dec 2014

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<th>Official story</th>
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<td>The space was renovated, with an investment of 530 thousand pesos (roughly 24 thousand 700 hundred euros) (Municipio de Queretaro, 2017).</td>
<td>Today the space serves more people from outside of San Pablo, we do not feel attached to it anymore. Before, it belonged to the community, other events were realized there. Nowadays I no longer visit, declares Imelda.</td>
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2017–Today
Ethnographic Studies

San Pablo’s perceptions as a barrio

San Pablo is one of the firsts barrios in the city of Querétaro, located inside the first loop of urbanization. The neighborhood is embedded in the City Center area, which was declared Protected Monument Area by UNESCO back in 1994 (Zavala, 2010). However, even though it belongs to the city center, residents of San Pablo, and the neighborhood in general, do not feel part of such district. The efforts and resources allocated to maintain the monument area are certainly superior than the ones destined to San Pablo. Such differences are reflected in San Pablo’s urban spaces as Imelda pointed out “Now that we are part of the so-called City Center, we need to pay higher taxes for land ownership, but we never see the benefits”.

The barrio of San Pablo is enclosed between hectic spaces, between main avenues and industrial areas, causing a rupture in the fluidity of the urban fabric resulting in the disconnection of San Pablo from nearby areas. However, dwellers disregard these conditions, especially by not interiorizing or not realizing such lack of physical connection to other neighborhoods close by. Residents from nearby areas also disregard such physical borders, looking at them as naturally intrinsic to the space. Jorge declares “San Pablo is integrated to the city; you cannot feel a division from the highways.” However, outsiders do acknowledge the presence of the avenues constraining San Pablo, which allows them to avoid stepping on the space and interiorize in it accidentally. Comments reflected the unawareness of outsiders on how to access San Pablo, “I see often the space (the UDESP) form my car driving in the highway, but I do not know how to get there”.

Figure 42. Drawing of Sports Unit ‘Ejido San Pablo’
The very first impression of the space was through outsiders. When discussed the intentions to visit the space for a thesis work, a lot of comments arose. The first comments were actually serious recommendations of personal safety, general suggestions, and small safety tips, including recommendations implying the possibility of robbery and how to act in such cases. People comments were, among others, “can’t you change your space towards a safer one, San Pablo is a red district of violence and robbery”, “you should not go alone there, it is not safe, especially for women”, “Never go there after 18 hours!”, “if you really want to go, you should try to look unattractive, dress badly, and do not use makeup or gold jewelry” and “leave your mobile at home, if you get mugged do not resist, and take some cash with so you have something to give to them, and keep an eye on your car at all times possible”. These advices were given by middle- and high-income sector of the population. As most of them have never been to San Pablo or the UDESP, their comments and suggestions were based on what is perceived through the news, media, gossips and formed imaginaries.

During the first visit, all previous recommendations felt right on spot. The general impression was that the neighborhood in general felt unsafe as residents scrutinize outsiders with distrust, following their every movement. The action of taking photos, making notations and drawings felt off and raised even more suspicious gazes. Even some drunk and/or drugged men harassment took place, with no one really caring. Trying to establish verbal contact with neighbors was certainly difficult, as no one wanted to talk, hiding behind elusive answers and avoiding eye contact. On subsequent visits, the familiarity grew, some neighbors asked questions inquiring with dislike if the notes and interviews were for the government. Other asked the same with high hopes, expecting the bad conditions of the streets would be repaired. After asking information, a neighbor referred to Imelda, a lady selling in her tianguis spot. He mentioned with no further explanation “I know the story, but I won’t tell it, it should be her the one telling it; she knows but she might not want to talk about it”.

Figure 43. Sports Unit ‘Ejido San Pablo’ from vial distributor third floor

Figure 44. A street in San Pablo
On the third visit, the emotional interview with Imelda took place on her tianguis spot on plain street. There, Imelda told the story of her father. During the two-hour interview, she was constantly checked upon by acquaintances, asking how she was feeling, if it was “OK” that someone was disturbing her, every time she kindly assured everything was fine. After Imelda’s interview, the change of the neighbors’ attitude was remarkable. The suspicious looks faded away, smiles were displayed, and talkative residents appeared. Such event is a reflection of social border.

Comments of San Pablo being a ‘red urban area’ of drug, robbery and prostitution, placed an interesting departure point for the study of the place. The safety perception is also bordering the space socially. On one side, residents of San Pablo perceive the area as quiet and peaceful, remarking how comfortable they feel in the neighborhood. An example of such perception is the declaration of a man named Jorge who has been living in San Pablo since his childhood. He declares that “the space is really quiet and calm, although the young usually attack the passers-by”. Furthermore, the social border is clearly reflected in Francisco’s declaration, “San Pablo is quiet and safe only when you live or visit regularly, like on my case, because people already know me... and sometimes not even like that”. Both comments match and support the autoethnographic experience of insecurity as outsiders on site as a reflection of social border.

Embedded in San Pablo’s residents’ comments it is perceptible the assured perception of tranquility and security existing in the barrio. Controversial comments such as “San Pablo is safe even though they mug”, state how residents perceive safety on a daily basis. As Jonathan affirms “San Pablo is not unsafe, maybe towards the pedestrian bridge on the 5th of February Avenue” adding later in a stoic manner “Well... I grew up here, so I am used to all this”. Such declaration presents a perception of San Pablo from a resigned and proud point of view, praising his adaptability together with the resignation of having the power to change things.
UDESP’s perceptions as a space

The UDESP is the only open space in a radius of 2.5 km, however, it is hardly visited on daily basis. It is surrounded mainly by automobile infrastructure, while on one side there are the highways, on the inner barrio side are small streets. In essence, the space is plain, shadeless and defined by fences. Such characteristics does not offer an understanding of the space at first glance, nor attractiveness to visit. Furthermore, it leaves other potential areas unused creating distrust and making the space feel unsafe. The access to the UDESP becomes alive only during the weekends. Outsider informants noted that during daytime, the area is not well equipped with spaces for meeting and gathering, denoting loos of connection and attachment to the people. As José Luis declared, “I only come on the weekends, every 15 days on Sunday if there is a match where I play”.

Residents of San Pablo share the feeling. The UDESP and the rest of the area, is void of activity except for the lively corner of the Adolfo Lopez Mateos Street and 5th of February Avenue. The shaded area holds a busy bus stop and a pedestrian bridge landing. Here, plenty of local people gather while waiting for the bus. It functions as a lobby towards the tianguis, where different activities such as playing cards, and listening to radio happen during weekdays and weekends. The UDESP and its surroundings’ combination of land use does not favor any other social interactions that could result in the conception of the space as a place for public life and community development. Moreover, for the community, the space is not perceived as public neither does incites public life, nor community activities as it is monofunctional and offers no spaces for usual social reunion. Jennifer declares “I never meet my friends here, we always go to Plaza Sendero or over there, not here”.

According with the people interviewed, those who use the sports facilities are in its majority, external people who do not belong to
San Pablo. Furthermore, the fact that the UDESP is fenced and with a schedule from 8–20h, is perceived as it stands only for itself as an independent entity, closing direct connections with its surroundings. During nighttime this becomes a problem in connectivity, safety and urban image. Interviews declared that “the lack of public lightning in the area makes it dangerous by night” and “By night you need to walk on the edges of San Pablo, over the main avenues … the inner neighborhood is dangerous”. However, according to informants, the edges towards the main avenues is where the prostitution occurs, and the drug selling occurs inside the neighborhood. The perception of unsafety prevails in the population as declared to a local newspaper Código Querétaro, “It is an unsafe area. They might have the sports unit, but the least they do is go there; it is an area with thugs living on it, there’s a lot of drug addiction and a lot of prostitutes. Definitively San Pablo is dangerous” (Código Qro, 2018).

The interviews revealed a loss of sense of belonging and pride over the UDESP space, visible through an increase of illicit activities even during daytime. It is important to note that the commercial premises built for the ejidatarios, interviews revealed that those spaces are abandoned due to frequent robberies, and as they are not able to sell them because of the ejido legal structure, they are permanently closed. The insecurity on this phenomena is present in the comments of Gloria during the interview “There are many thefts, repeatedly the venues are robbed including the personnel and the people, that is why they closed them, because they were constantly mugged, and the police does not enter here, they never come…”. Gloria’s declaration does not only state the fact of the closed venues, but the perception of safety and struggle towards burglaries.

Insights from Imelda present how obliterated the story of the place is to other residents of San Pablo, who vaguely remember it. Among the interviewees there were a few who have heard about the protests, a few mentioned the government wanted to take it from the ejido, only a couple remembered a man died in the riots, and none remembered his name. José Luis declared “The UDESP is now managed by the municipality,
but before it was the ejido. There were some fights and even one dead, we named the fields after him. Then the government changed it, I don’t remember his name now. I think those disputes are already healed; it was like 12 years ago”.

However, everyone remembered when the dirt fields were open, such memories bring forward an extinct sense of belonging and even of pride. The majority remembered it with joy, their gatherings in the space with friends for a match even if it was only to watch, for dancing, for beers, or just crossing it daily towards somewhere else. The comment by Emma held how the space before was part of the neighborhood, part of the daily lives of people and heart of the community. She stated “I do not know the story of the place. But I do remember when the fields were dirt, a lot of people gathered here, beer was sold, it was full of people. It was always like a party. Now, almost no one comes.” Other residents remember stories of the place being used for more other than sports. Gloria remembers “When the space was dirt fields, there were dances on it. I used to go with my family when I was a small girl. Nowadays nothing like that is organized”.

With such a harsh project like the UDESP intervening the space, whipped a handful of possibilities towards creating community sense and feeling of permanence through place attachment, which went to oblivion. As well, the fight over the space created an antagonism towards the government which can relate towards less use of the space and loss of sense of belonging. Some people declared, “There are people who don’t forgive the government, they distrusted and hate them”.

Furthermore, when residents of San Pablo were questioned if they liked the space better now the majority replied “yes, but I don’t visit”, making it surprising to notice that people form San Pablo, even though they belief the space is better now, do not visit and have not taken attachment to the space. Nonetheless, for external people form San Pablo, who do not know the story, and use the space once a week or every two weeks for short periods of time, the UDESP is a highly recommendable space, if it was not because of its location in San Pablo.

This might be a reflection over the community having a feeling of not belonging to the new space, which does not emit the same feeling of ownership as when it was open dirt fields and belonged to the ejido. So, what does this space represent today for San Pablo’s residents? May be an extension of the social border already surrounding them in their own space.

![Figure 51. Former entrance to the dirt fields holding the name of 'José de Jesús Ruíz Escobedo' in honor of Imelda’s father ca. 2014](image-url)
Figure 56. View of the sports unit while crossing the pedestrian bridge

Figure 57. View towards the pedestrian bridge from tribune

Figure 58. Three layers of fence surrounding the UDESP towards Bernardo Quintana Avenue
Figure 59. Path inside the UDESP

Figure 60. Football field inside the UDESP

Figure 61. Baseball field inside the UDESP
Figure 62. Kids area inside UDESP. It is noticeable the lack of shade.

Figure 63. Man looking at the football match on a Sunday.

Figure 64. Pitching area of baseball field. It is possible to read “We are San Pablo, we are athletes.”
Hercules, just like San Pablo, is one of the traditional barrios of Querétaro, with a rich history dating back to pre-Hispanic era and the foundation of the city (Robledo, 2015). Around 1531, the indigenous otomi leader, Khoni or Conín, settled his residence, along with his family tribe. During that time, the area was important to the region due to its important commercial activity and its proximity and strategic location between La Cañada and Queretaro. During the colonization, Conín guided the indigenous tribes into an agreement with the Spanish, who baptized him as Fernando de Tapia, founder and first ruler of the city of Queretaro (Biondi & Sarmiento, 2010).
By half of the XVII century Querétaro had become the third most important city in the New Spain, visible in the richness of its colonial architecture and monuments now part of the City Center UNESCO protected area (UNESCO, 1996). Until around 1730’s Querétaro’s water supply was through the Queretaro River. However, running water was needed in the city center, so a monumental aqueduct was built between 1733–1738. The aqueduct, with 1.2 km long and formed by 74 arches of 23 meters high, would bring water to Querétaro’s City Center public and private fountains, becoming soon a landmark of the city (CEA Queretaro, n.d.).

The Queretaro River starting north upstate, would power an old wheat mill known as ‘Molino Colorado’, located only 4 km from the city center of Queretaro and built towards the end of the XVI century by Diego de Tapia, son of Fernando de Tapia. The mill was bought on 1838 by Don Cayetano Rubio, a Spanish from Cádiz. Don Cayetano renovated the mill and built over it a textile factory with over 100,000 sqm. To power its engines, he built a secondary aqueduct with 257 arches, 2 km long with arches of 3.5 meter tall, known today as Hercules’ aqueduct, which later continues as an open drain of water supply for 2 more kilometers downstream, passing through ‘La Purísima’ until the ‘San Antonio’ mill, today known as Universidad Marista (Biondi & Sarmiento, 2010; Garrido del Toral, 2019; Suárez Cortez, 1998). Other transportation infrastructure was built to connect Hercules to the Gulf of Mexico for imports and exports, and the road ‘Camino Real’ today Avenida Hercules, connecting with Queretaro City Center. Finally, on 1846 the constructions were finished. The factory opened under the name of ‘Fábrica de Hilados y Tejidos ‘El Hércules’ (Biondi & Sarmiento, 2010). The factory was second of its class and capacity in Mexico, became very important to the area, giving work to over 10% of Querétaro’s population at the time. Today, the factory is still working although only at 35% of its capacity (Daville Landero, 2000; Biondi & Sarmiento, 2010; Robledo, 2015).
Alongside the Camino Real, Don Cayetano built a church, administrative buildings, offices, houses for the workers, small business, and two other textile factories ‘La Purísima’ and ‘San Antonio’. He provided basic services for his workers, including a clinic, a fire station, an electric plant, fountains for drinkable water, bridges to cross the river, a market, a theater and even prisons cells inside the factory and vigilant personnel to keep the order in his town. Don Cayetano’s investment also installed street lightning, public transport and then, a train station; all in service of the factory and its people (Soto González, 2003). This compound became an industrial workers’ village of the 19th century around the factory. The factory gave identity and life to the village, which at some point took the name of ‘Hercules’. All constructions and services were respectful not only of the architectonic styles, but followed the spatial patterns of the area, complementing the industrial typology with others, and creating an urban unit significant to the life, economy and surroundings of Queretaro until today. Furthermore, Don Cayetano’s industrial settlements have guided Queretaro’s economic development until today, becoming an industrial city (Biondi & Sarmiento, 2010; Daville Landero, 2000; Suárez Cortez, 1998).

In today’s context, the barrio Hercules is located in the district named Cayetano Rubio after its founder, on the east of Queretaro’s municipality. Separated by only 4.5km from the city center, and due to Hercules architectonic and historic value, it has become embedded into Queretaro’s City Center imaginary and perception. Furthermore, while Queretaro urbanized rapidly, Hercules intrinsic characteristics remained untouched until urban sprawl claimed it and pressured for modernization. However, Hercules entrenched community and social characteristics have remained throughout the years. Today, the sense of community, belonging and pride lives in Hercules population. Oral storytelling has perpetrated local stories, festivities, traditions and even social ties, giving Hercules a characteristic social community and spatial perception.
Today, several projects are incentivizing the modernization of Hercules by pressuring as the area. Among the plans is the governmental program called magic barrios (barrios mágicos in Spanish), as an initiative with the objective to highlight Querétaro’s traditional barrios by renewing their spaces and urban image. Other incentives are through gentrification services provided in the empty areas of the factory, such as the Brewery Hercules and Cine Tonalá, and Co-Working spaces, which offer expensive services that attract mainly outsiders with a different economical level. These initiatives, together with the magic barrios program seeks to attract local, national and even international tourism to the area, pressuring for its modernization and gentrification (Contreras, 2019; Márquez, 2019). Embedded in this program, is contemplated the investment of 27.6 million pesos (around 1 million 250 thousand euros) which will be invested in urban renewal of Avenida Hercules, nearby areas and the Campo Libertad (Márquez, 2019).
**Official story**

Don Enrique Henry y Thomas Byron were preoccupied that the factory was having problems due to the absence of workers every Monday. Most of them suffered an addiction to the alcohol. Henry and Byron decided to organized football teams and matches to reduce the alcohol dependence in the workers.

They succeeded, and everyday were trainings and matches in the fields near by the factory. At the time they cleaned a field now occupied by a secondary school. Soon after, workers organized themselves to play in a field nearby the factory La Purisima, as well. However, the land was never bought, as there was no deeds and no owner to buy it from.

La Purisima became the first community football field in Hercules, he shows a photo and even mentions the people’s names on it.

**Non-official story**

Don Toño remembers going to watch his brother playing football in La Purisima Field. He remembers that the space was filled with weeds, even in the field.

The Football Club Libertadores is conformed officially, with an approximate of 50 members.

On the peak of the football attraction in Hercules, the Club Libertadores was created. They used to play in other fields but were seeking their own.

At the time, football teams who would play in tournaments only in Hercules. They would carry the names of the street, playing in friendly matches watched by all residents of Hercules, becoming an amenity and a tradition.

The water capacity diminished, and the water stopped passing through the aqueduct.

When the water was still running, neighbors remember the Callejon Libertad and the area of the aqueduct as a paradise, as all was filled of orchards with fruit trees, open and green spaces. They remember the river with clean running water, where they would swim.
The field of La Purisima belonged to the factory, but Manuel Pesquera bought the textile factory and turned it into a soap factory. However, he respected the football field, and gave it to the people.

Officially the Sports Center of Hercules, Centro Deportivo de Hercules, was officially created by five men, Pedro Castro, Cándido Rosas, José Centeno, J. Asensión Solis, and Francisco Rodríguez López. The Centro Deportivo was dependent of the workers union.

Official story

Non-official story

The river started to carry less water, being heavy in flow during the rainy seasons, and almost dry during the dry season.

Some neighbors mention that the water was still flowing intermittently inside the aqueduct. However, it fell in disuse, the aqueduct is now a landmark of Hercules.

Campo Libertad was bought by the Club Libertadores members initially. However, some members are not paying. With a list full of compromised workers, Don Toño with the position he held in the workers union, he got a loan for the 17,000 pesos missing to pay. With the money, the club Libertadores was finally able to pay the field.

Together with the field La Purisima, they were some of the first football fields in Queretaro area.

The urban growth started to peak in Queretaro

The water stopped running through the canals, the orchards withered, and the fields started to be sold as private property. People started to inhabit there. During such plot division, the arches from the aqueduct were either included in the deeds. During the occupations, the aqueduct would become embedded in the constructions.

Different projects have been created to preserve the aqueduct.

Neighbors mention that around 1980’s, the houses would go continues, having...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official story</th>
<th>Non-official story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1980</strong></td>
<td>The factory closes for a period of time, due to an economic crisis, reopening afterwards with less capacity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2008</strong></td>
<td>The Brewery Hercules opened, occupied a rental space in the factory. Besides producing the beer, a pub, an underground bar called ‘Jardín de cerveza Hércules’, opened. It increased the factory’s popularity giving the opportunity for people to know the interior of the factory and familiarize with Hercules.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2013</strong></td>
<td>Don Toño’s grandchildren work there, informing that the factory is still in use, working at 35% of its capacity with some areas closed or rented for redevelopment.</td>
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**Non-official story**

- From the 1960, passing through 1972, 1987, 1994 and 1997, different governments have been invested in the field La Purísima, giving money to build lockers, dressing rooms, a tribune and seats. These investments meant recognition from the government that the field was the barrio. However, in 2007 and 2013, lawsuits from different companies have claimed the space as theirs, disputing it from the people (Hercules Vive, 2018).

- People from La Cuesta, who did not payed anything for the Campo Libertad, is claiming it as theirs in order to sell it to develop it, gossip says, as a gated community.

- The rest do not want to sell it, they want to keep it as a football field. On the other hand, the government claims they haven’t paid any taxes for the land, claiming it as well.

- At the same time, the field of La Purísima belongs to the people, but there are
<table>
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<th>Official story</th>
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<td>private interests to build a shopping mall. Recently they fenced it and hired someone to watch it overnight.</td>
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<td>The Cine Tonalá opened inside the Brewery area, offering alternative movie projections (Castañeda de la Cruz, 2018).</td>
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<td>The governmental project ‘barrios mágicos’ is planning to do major changes in the current spatial configuration of the Callejon de Santiago by declaring the aqueduct as a monument, and solving the legal dispute over the Campo Libertad to create a sports unit (Cruz, 2019).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interbarrios and La Divina Pastora tournaments are being played in different fields in Queretaro, being the main ones Campo Libertad and field La Purisima.</td>
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<td>The final match of the football tournament ‘La Divina Pastora’ was played in the field La Purisima. Hercules resulted champion.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Official story</th>
<th>Non-official story</th>
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<tr>
<td>One morning with no right, claim or notice, machinery started to demolish locker rooms in the football field La Purisima. People complained and managed to stop the machinery, declaring the space as theirs. On a Facebook live video streamed in the Facebook page of Hercules Vive, Salomé, 75 years old declared “Hercules is not asleep, we will not be as San Pablo. If they dare to come with machinery and try to take our spaces, there will be more than one dead. We will die defending our space” (Hercules Vive, Facebook Live Streaming Video 9:42h, 11:28h, 11:39h, 11:51h)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>On social media on statements, the Campo Libertad declared that those are fake news, which seek to spread a bad image of the field so it would be taken away from them, as they are trying with the field La Purisima.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A dispute with machetes in a football match in Campo Libertad leaves two wounded persons (Quintana, 2019).</td>
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Hercules’ perceptions as a barrio

Visiting Hercules is easy, the Queretaro’s main aqueduct Street is linked with the Hercules Avenue. By following it, is easy to find the heart of Hercules, the factory. On the side of it is the main plaza with the colonial disposition, with the church and the administrative building in a space creating a plaza. Hercules is quite famous among residents of Queretaro because of its traditional ice cream, and recently by its new brewery ‘Hercules’. For this reason, Hercules is perceived as a familiar area to most urban dwellers. However, the Callejon de Santiago, the Campo Libertad are difficult spaces to find. Furthermore, the spaces in Hercules have an entrenched history blending the owners, the community, and the factory.

Hercules tight community is visible in the social relations among their residents, contrasting with the dubious gazes and stiff relation to outsiders, which can be spotted easily. Whilst the interviews were carried, it was noticeable the pride felt by the people born in Hercules whom have been lived there for their entire lives, and past generations. This was very visible throughout the interviews. Gustavo, 65 years old, declared “I was born and raised here in Hercules, and have lived my whole life here. I feel a profound sense of pride about being from Hercules, about everything I saw, and I lived here. I would never move out; I will die here.”

Linked with their sense of pride is their spatial perception that the neighborhood, they have a profound understanding of the social space, social cohesion and social creation of space as stories have been told and retold by their parents and their parents’ parents, carrying on a sense of belonging and pride. However, as they lose their spaces, this social tightness is being tested, as Gustavo also declares, “Ten years ago we knew each other very well, we knew about the families and everything. Now, little by little
is getting lost because we are losing the spaces, and every time they are taking more”.

Memories also go around the social activities of the area, and the communal cohesion existing between residents. “before there used to be a street festival, people from other areas would come and enjoy, in the theater they would choose the queen of the year. All the town was there. I certainly miss that. Today we still have the traditional party of El Gallo, and some others tough, where the people of the main avenue prepare food to serve all guests by their own will”. Nowadays, the social connection still exists, and people help each other, although sometimes not for the legal reasons. José Rangel declares that “we get along fine; we are in constant communication in this area… we take care of each other”. However, Luz declares that “we all know each other, and that is why we know if is dealing drugs, and no one reports to the police because he is the son of someone known, and if they get caught, all the others save the money and bail him out, that is not good”. Such solidarity embraces several aspects of the social spectrum, from organization of events, to gangs perpetuating illegal actions, representing the duality in Mexican culture way of life.

Hercules development has been determined by the topography of the land, which creates a creek and where in the bottom runs the Queretaro River. Due to this particular topography, Hercules is intrinsically determined by the river, following it and developing horizontally alongside it, as it cannot grow into the ladders. On the top of the creek left side is one of the most exclusive gated communities of the city called El Campanario, and on the right hand is a high-end living area called Milenio. Such exclusive communities cause problems in the lower lands as Gustavo, 65 years old, mentions, “when it rains, all the water comes down here with rocks. Even when they build their houses, they through their debris here. Almost everything is caused by El Campanario and Milenio, they even send their sewage here!” This indicates a physical barrier, not only the creek, the river, or the railroad, but also of income differences among neighborhoods surrounding Hercules.
Figure 76. Hercule’s heart. Landmarks like the factory, the theater and the church are visible.

Figure 77. Hercules is located in a creek, on top of the mountains are located gated communities.

Figure 78. Hercules is characterized by its low-rise landscape and small town-line houses.

Figure 79 and 80. House dogs are visible in terraces and rooftops.
Figure 81. Street art in Hercules is poetic, political and an act of appropriation.

Figure 82. The streets of Hercules are characterized by their street art.

Figure 83. Hercules runs along the train tracks, trains nowadays in Mexico only move cargo.

Figure 84. The streets of Hercules are characterized by their street art.
Callejon de Santiago’s perceptions as a space

The aqueduct became a symbol for Hercules’ residents who would walk by it on daily basis as a connection path towards the factory from the east side of Hercules. Alongside the aqueduct, workers’ houses were built on the south side, while on the north side there were orchards and fruit trees. Don Toño, 92 years old, remembers the area near the arches, where the Callejon is now as a paradise, “the water was crystal clear, people would swim in the river. The canal parallel to the aqueduct would water all the orchards alongside the aqueduct, there were sapote, sapodilla, peaches, guavas, and citric trees on the orchards. The water would continue down, crossing houses nowadays and delimiting La Purisima football field”. He mentions that after the water stopped running and the river diminished its flow, people started to inhabit the orchards, extending their plots until the arches of the aqueduct and even embedding them in their constructions. Jose Rangel remembers, “the arches have always been here since I was a kid… it would also water the orchards. But now that is gone, for the past 40 years there is no more water”. Gustavo also declared, “The river was so beautiful, there were plenty of trees. During my childhood this was a paradise, there was water, fruits, I used to come in the afternoons to swim. It is a shame it is lost”. The memories of the orchards lost have a deep impact in the residents, young or old as the storytelling is told generation to generation.

After people started living in the Callejon de Santiago, the path was small and unpaved, there was no public lights, no phone line and no address. Don Toño remembers, “it was Bernardo who managed to install public lighting there, together with el Mayo. Also, they named it as Callejon de Santiago, to have a proper address”. Monica lives in the Callejon, and she recalls the stories of her mother, “before the whole arches were inside the houses, but the houses were divided in order to clear the arches, then sidewalk was built and then the streets. I didn’t live this, but my mom tells me”. The appropriation of the arches has given today’s spatial characteristics to the space. Residents argue that their property titles specifically indicate that their property ends in the arches, making them in correct lawful possession of land.
Victor, one of the residents in these situations says, “**my public deed clearly indicates that. Even, when I bought the land 30 years ago, the previous owner told me that I could break the arches if I wanted to. I am not invading**” (El Universal (d), 2012)

However, the access to the Callejon de Santiago, and therefore the aqueduct, is hidden on plain sight. As they run parallel to Hercules Avenue, the access is through three narrow paths. The closest access to the factory is through a depressed lobby area mediating between the Callejon on the right side and the basketball courts on the left. This space is informally known as ‘El hoyo’ or ‘El agujero’ which means ‘The hole’, and has walls covered with graffiti and street art murals. El hoyo as a whole is an uninviting space where vulnerability is felt. The crack in the wall which leads to the Callejon, is even more uninviting, as the walls are about four stories high and the crack is narrow, about two meters wide, giving an uneasy feeling. It is important to denote that residents from Hercules recommended to avoid the hole, as they recognize it as a place where drugs are distributed and consumed, making it a difficult and insecure space, especially after 17 hours.

Towards the inside, there is an uneasy feeling of insecurity and fear due to its narrowness and poor visibility. Inside the ally, the walls are painted in pink, dirty. Furthermore, there are no permeable surfaces looking towards the alley. The few windows there are, are small, have bars on them, and curtains closed. The few doors are made from laminated steel, totally blind. The general image is of insecurity and dirtiness as there are stains and graffiti on the walls. Such perception is shared among residents of the area, as Monica, with 28 years old and whose house is on the alley informed, “I walk daily through the alley, I avoid the hole I am scared of it, and the whole alley is scary, but once it is over (the pedestrian narrow path) everything is ok”. It is noticeable that, where there is not visual permeability, there exist abandonment, insecurity, drug consumption and fear.
The Callejon can be divided into two areas, the alley and the street. The alley section is about 150 meters long, very narrow and mostly feared by the residents. Testimonies by neighbors declare that, as it is the area connecting to the hole basketball courts, where youngsters buy, sell, and use drugs, it is not well perceived. Viridiana tells, “in the alley and in ‘the hole’ they get high… they have never done anything to me, but it feels unsafe”. The rest of the Callejon is a street-like path with 1.2 km until the intersection with Emiliano Zapata Street and Avenida Hercules. In this section, the arches are better appreciated as they are liberated from constructions in larger areas from both sides. Gustavo, who lives in the alley, declares, “When they were building everything, it is a luck the alley is here. I like this alley, only not by night, it is hard”.

For residents of the area, the main problem seems to be drugs. Drugged people denote insecurity, although most of the times they are pacific and doing their own things. However, the drug problems appear to be important as declarations of people selling drugs, people buying drugs, or kids around 14 years old buying and doing drugs was one of the main concerns during the interviews. José Rangel shares the perception as well, declaring “on the arches there are young people getting drugged, no one can see them, that’s why they go there”. Gustavo says the drug problem is changing the social life of Hercules, “there are people selling everywhere, and the young ones are buying. Nowadays, by ten o’clock in the night, people are not walking on the streets because they are there, in the main avenue, in the alleys. Before, there was street life at nighttime too.” Even during the ethnographic studies, it was possible to observe three young boys walking in the alley, two waiting and one buying drugs.

Nowadays, the perception of the arches is of abandonment kept in an alley, suffocated by the urban growth, without green areas or public spaces which could attract visitors. Surrounded by private houses, where the neighbors look with distrust outsiders, the space feels insecure. Most houses in the path of the aqueduct have some piece of it in its interior,
as part of its foundation, its walls or even as in Callejon de Santiago, as doors, parking spaces, interior decorative walls, etc. Its condition is not optimal, as the ones free are used as parking spaces, trash bins, or spaces for drug intaking. Overall, they have graffiti on them, deteriorating them. Manuel Naredo, government authority in monuments (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, INAH) declares, “we acknowledge the aqueduct as a monument, but cannot intervene as it is private property. It belongs to the factory, which does not wish to sell, so we haven’t reached an agreement” (Valdez, 2019).

Figure 89. Passages under the arches

Figure 90. Connection between street and alley

Figure 91. The callejón opens alongside the aqueduct

Figure 92. Although the arches are marked as ‘protected monument’ they are not respected nor taken care of
Figure 93 to 100. Compilation of different types of appropriation of the aqueduct arches.
Campo Libertad’s perceptions as a space

Upriver from the alley, the ‘football field’ Campo Libertad, stands. The entrance to the football field looks is through one of the arches painted in white with the legend ‘Club Libertad’, the logo of the club and an advertisement of the paint sponsor. The access seems improvised, and there is a need to watch where to step. Inside, on the tribune on the left side, are the only trees in the space. On the left side there is a house, with some toilet services which are always closed. The walls surrounding the field are all painted with legends ‘Club Libertad’. In general, the space does not feel unsafe as there are some people crossing it and some other sitting in the shaded benches.

The field has always been open to all groups and activities, besides football, becoming a core in the community. During the interviews, memories of past events taking place on site were brought upon. Gustavo, 65 years old, remembers “There were a lot of matches going on, from morning until the afternoon, and people would come just to watch, to enjoy the game (...) also the church used to come here and do events, a lot of people came”. Although there are football games on weekly bases, the field is used daily by different groups of people, from running groups, by neighbors who go to walk in the mornings, and community meetings; making the field a multifunctional space. Moreover, Alejandro, 15 years old, declared that for him the field represents Hercules together with the arches and the Callejon de Santiago, “I visit the fields at least 3 times a week, I really like the space”.

The field is not that accessible to outsiders, it remains as an untested safe area in a way. Interviews showed the Hercules Avenue and Main Plaza as the most dangerous areas, especially as they are the most visited by outsiders. Declarations by the residents recall that “over the avenue there are many robberies towards the cars that are not from here”. Luz, an informant who sells street food on Campo Libertad and on the Main
Plaza, declared that her clients were complaining about muggings in the main plaza, but that did not seem to happen in Campo Libertad. Even though the Campo Libertad is not as old and not as important as La Purísima, informants remember the Campo Libertad as full of people. It is used for not only for football matches, but also for dances, religious retreats, among others. The field is still used on daily basis as Gustavo declares “a lot of people came to the field, all the time, to watch the activities. Every morning I come and walk around it as my work out”.

The public spaces and fields are being sold, as Marcelino Soto mentions in an interview with the newspaper El Diario de Queretaro, “It is difficult to keep the football as a tradition and activity, as all the fields have been sold over the years. Now they are talking about selling the Campo Libertad, the one of La Purísima has already been sold and they don’t let us play there anymore. It is complicated to keep this tradition of we keep losing spaces to play” (Martínez, 2017). Furthermore, he mentions that because they are the poor league, they don’t receive support as the rich league, feeling constrained. His claims are well grounded, as several open spaces have been disappearing since 1970, when the urban growth started to peak (IMPLAN Queretaro, 2018). Among them, the football fields 21 de Marzo which were in what is now Plaza de las Américas (a shopping mall), the fields of El Pasito Progreso near Avenida Circunvalación, the fields of Comisión Federal de Electricidad, the fields in El Marqués, among others are now only memories of the football traditions (Martínez, 2017). Even Hercules had more football fields, like the Cijara field, which was property of Don Toño and a community of 17 people, who would play, train and participate in the tournaments of Hercules.
Figure 103. Kids practice during the weekdays

Figure 104. Kids practice during the weekdays

Figure 105. First basketball court, with the arches in the background

Figure 106. Second basketball court
The first case in San Pablo can be divided into two different spaces in different time frames, the before (dirt fields) and the after (the sports unit) was built. Before, as the space was appropriated by the people and became the dirt fields, it represented a place for San Pablo’s residents. The place had a strong identity, especially it was known and visited by everyone. It contained the history of the ejido and of the barrio as well, when it held Imelda’s father name, the identity of the place represented it as a place with personal history to the community. The dirt fields presented intrinsic social practices not only because of the sports events taking place, but also homed other community events, such as the dances and celebrations mentioned in the interviews. Through such actions, it presented traces of memory from the residents who experienced events such as the dances, visiting the place for the matches, attending communal meetings there, or even crossing it as a shortcut. After the riots, the place identity became stronger, as such intense events fortified the social relations to the space.
With the pass of time and due to different political and cultural reasons, the story of the place started to be forgotten. The construction of the sports unit erased from the collective memory those moments, the place identity and the social practices the place once held.

In San Pablo the feeling of belonging went lost when the plot was taken from the ejido into the power of the government. The process of designing the project and building the UDESP without involving the community, even changing of name by the people in power, potentialized the feeling of powerless and alienation towards a place that used to be theirs. When built, the UDESP became a niched space in a physical and socially bordered San Pablo. Based on Caldeira (1999) in part one of this thesis, it can be that the privatization of the dirt fields into the UDESP changed the neighborhood landscape, patterns of circulation and everyday trajectories, habits and gestures intrinsic to San Pablo's social nature as the new sports unit was formed by elements of exclusion. For example, its perimetral fence, the access located in an unvisited side, the restrictive opening hours; constituting the space as the new gated space where residents do not go to. With this, the borders of the neighborhood shrunk and the main avenues were replaced by the fenced sports unit. The perception that the physical borders were moving inwards and reducing its actual community space also diminished the sense of belonging of San Pablo residents.

Nowadays, the sports unit lays in people’s perceptions and experiences as unrelated and distant, experimenting what is presented in the literature review, a context full of social segregation and inequality on the rising, where walls, physical or of indifference, are being built on daily basis (Iossifova, 2013). The UDESP in San Pablo is perceived as indifferent and segregated, due to the reaction from its residents. In addition, San Pablo is perceived as unsafe and unattractive, due to its relation towards the space and the attitudes towards outsiders. Now the space in itself stands as a segregated space, with no further connection towards its residents, who not only lost the attachment to the space embedded in the stories, the heroes, and in themselves, but also lost the space itself as it has converted from a place back into just a space.

Sites represent imaginaries un the urban mind, and it is through social perceptions that the social context relates to the surroundings and to the city beyond its physical location. San Pablo represents a social border itself, perceptible through diverse responses from different urban dwellers towards the neighborhood. As presented in part two of this text from Gómez Dávila & Aguiar Arantes (2015), responses of segregation and conceptualizations of imaginaries of fear and stability are visible from disinterest towards the space and its history to social rejection towards a stereotyped San Pablo's population related to insecurity, confining an important role on urban perception of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the urban transformation of San Pablo, specially of the dirt fields into the sports unit UDESP, represent a new infrastructure with no roots to the neighborhood and no link to its residents. Although the sports unit stayed with an improved infrastructure, the meaning given by the neighbors has been stripped away from the space. The UDESP, instead of working as a social catalyzer, has fragmented the space even further, socially and physically.

The case of San Pablo is a retroactive analysis of the phenomenon, offering an insight to the future of other spaces such as the Campo Libertad and Callejon de Santiago in Hercules. In Hercules exists a perceptible palette full of living social patterns due to its origin and continuing social community. The social, historic and traditional precedents are easily recognized through the monuments present in the area, adopted and appropriated by its people, who represent and depict them in stories they tell with pride. However, although spaces of plurality are still present in Hercules, they are at risk of disappearing, such as San Pablo’s space did.
The historic nature of the second case in Hercules shows how unoccupied spaces started to be occupied by the people, who started to socially produce their spaces therefore creating their built environment while tightening the social resilience of the community. Spaces in Hercules, such as the Callejon de Santiago, which have a story embedded for over 150 years, the Campo Libertad, with a shorter story of 50 years, and the field La Purisima, with 80 years of stories in the place. These spaces are very important to the people, not only for the service they provide, historic and leisure, but due to the stories sustaining the space and the people’s attachment to the places.

However, as mentioned by Gómez Dávila & Aguiar Arantes (2015), neoliberal and capitalist processes of gentrification, privatization of public space, and romantic redevelopment are transforming the socio-spatial relations among the urban residents. Examples are varied, from the brewery Hercules located in the factory, gated communities surrounding Hercules like El Campanario and Milenio, and commercial companies who want to build large commercial chains in Hercules. Different stakeholders such as the authority, private stakeholders and the people are disputing the last open public spaces in Hercules. Their plans will not only modify the physical space but will jeopardizing the sense of belonging to the place, risking the social cohesion of the area existent for decades.

Negotiations over spaces belonging emotionally to the people, are often done under local authorities’ control, erasing the need of dialogue and preventing any contestation over the public space, and therefore, its social appropriation. Such was the case of San Pablo, when machinery took the space and the riots took place, even more when the project UDESP was built with no consultation towards San Pablo’s residents. Such same case in now happening in La Purisima, when machinery entering into the space and destroying it, and the neighbors raising the voice through media to expose such acts. Under this same fear are living Campo Libertad and Callejon de Santiago.

The Campo Libertad is a socially produced space, serving as a public open space for the east part of Hercules and as a main location for barrio football tournaments. However, its access through Callejon de Santiago, and both places link with the aqueduct, have become social borders. While the Callejon is avoided due to its spatial conditions, as it is considered an unpleasant place rather than a dangerous one. On the other hand, the aqueduct has become embedded in such space, upheld by the people. This causes that the Callejon and therefore the aqueduct, to be avoided to be walked through, losing its importance as a historic monument and its residents’ imaginaries, making the socially bordered conflicted spaces appropriated by dirtiness, neglect, loose of pride, and feelings of insecurity.

Nowadays, as Hercules is being pressured by the growing city, the last two open spaces of Hercules are at risk. There are rumors that the Campo Libertad will be sold, to be turned into a market, a gated community or who knows what. Optimists and newspapers mention that it might become a sports unit (Ruiz, 2018). However, even some mention it doesn’t matter what people want, because the space has been legally contested for over five years between the people of Hercules, the group of 50 people who bought the place, and the tax office, as the plot has not paid taxes in over 50 years.

Place attachment and place identity in appropriated urban borders

As space becomes uncertain in a city structure that commodifies and regulates space, it becomes more prone to appropriation processes, where people are forced to reinvent their understanding of space,
reshape it, refine it and incorporate it to their everyday life and everyday needs (Nasution, 2015). Through the process of appropriation and social construction the space actually became a place. A place refers to a space that has an embedded meaning attached by society, rather an individual, a group, or cultural meaning. Places are charged with emotional experiences, particular preferences and perceptions that relate to community social cohesion, organized participation, and community development, creating emotional bonds between people and places, called place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992; Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

The intensive growth of the city of Queretaro has pushed plans and actions for redevelopment of former appropriated borderlands, often guided by economic and political dynamics, leaving the complex social dynamics of appropriated spaces, last of priorities. Urban borders require a planning process grounded in community and place meaning, one that brings forward the history and community activities intrinsic to the place. Following Lefebvre’s spatial triad and its people’s right to the city (King, 2019) on how the urban space is perceived and lived goes beyond the economic value of community’s place attachment and spatial identity. Moreover, as the presented ethnographic studies portrayed that place attachment and community identity present in socially produced spaces has a larger significance rarely captured in the market values or the assessment of planners and consultants (King, 2019; Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

Place significance is deeply embedded in urban borders appropriated through informal practices as they are socially produced from undifferentiated border spaces evolved by socio-spatial processes into places with value for their community and deep meaning through social lived experience. Place attachment in appropriated spaces is considered a dynamic and dialectic process by Manzo & Perkins (2006), as it carries the notion of home, social community through everyday experiences, individual or community identity and values. Thus, defining appropriated spaces’ place identity, by pulling together a pattern of resident’s self-beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, and goals into the place physical environment.

The performed autoethnographic and ethnographic studies on the two cases, made it possible to visualize community’s place attachment as well as place identity in the place. Urban narratives of the studied places let to dig deeper into the rooted realities of the space, looking at the psychological, social, physical and cultural characteristics of the space, unveiling previous and actual feelings of community and people’s reasons to bond to those spaces. Resident’s and outsider’s insights opened the door towards the social facet of space, while autoethnography and people’s opinions revealed the spatial aspect of the places. Finally, the personal stories from the key informants Imelda and Don Toño, opened wider the perspective towards the psychological component of the space in the unique culture where they evolved.

The presentation of these two cases in different stages of evolution, represent a key to socio-spatial knowledge of each place development. It is observable the place attachment clearly existed in the dirt fields where the UDESP stands now, with a unique emotional bond of people to the place narrated in storytelling of activities. Even further, place identity after the riots determined the bond of the community towards the place, guiding action into maintaining it as their own. However, when years later the space was redeveloped by the authority, it stopped being socially produced and it lost its social characteristics, losing the social connection of the people of San Pablo to the place as the people did not consider the sports unit as a place of theirselves. According to Manzo & Perkins (2006) place meaning to San Pablo’s community members made the redevelopment projects perceived as a threat to place attachment and their community. This links clearly with people’s apparent denial of San Pablo’s socio-spatial problems, because they think future development projects will change the physical fabric of the neighborhood even more,
regardless the potential value they might bring. In a contrasting manner, Hercules affective bond with their places is strong, as the spaces were created by them through social appropriation and are being managed and used by them.

Furthermore, place attachment by the people in Hercules, or San Pablo, goes beyond individual experiences in it, it can englobe the whole community memories in space. Likewise, as Low and Altman (1992) explain how place attachment provide people and groups with a sense of unique cultural identity, continuing to the formation, maintenance and preservation of the identity and therefore, the place holding them, meaning place attachment is place oriented recognition, including its environmental and sociocultural constructions. However, in today’s spatial planning, history of the place tends to be left outside, towards economic and development goals. Putting up front generalized goals of record-setting, unique, dynamic and compact, and localize those adjectives into areas and people, places and stories, will not maintain the place attachment existing in them (Leino & Laine, August 15th, 2019). To understand and address border appropriated spaces in a social sustainable way, urban narratives are the gate to uncover latent place attachments without disturbing the sense of community.

**Urban narratives for social resilience**

Spaces become places through people significance, attachment and emotional bonds rooted inside them, converting into meaningful locations for its community. In such process, together with lived experiences relies storytelling. Storytelling of a space can go from traditional activities, significance and importance of the place among residents, turning them into a keystone in their growth and maintenance. Stories told by residents vary from gossips, anecdotes, historical facts, and community’s cornerstones directly linked with the place identity (Sandercock, 2003a). Such stories become a core in the community processes of participation, integration and social resilience.

Places are mainly constituted by location, sense of place, experiences, community attachment, and the stories that maintain them together (Sandercock, 2003b). With the ethnographic studies carried in San Pablo and Hercules, it was possible to present the important role that the stories represent in appropriated urban border spaces. By telling and re-telling urban narratives of a place, personal anecdotes, and the non-official story of the place is possible to interpret heroes and antiheroes, victims and other characters found in the community, which are not visible through official stories (Sandercock, 2003a). This study seeks to go beyond the official stories in order to get to know the places through the non-official stories, people’s anecdotes, important community keystones that have determined its physical environment they hold now.

Through the cases analysis, it is observable a difference not only in the social cohesion of the community towards the neighborhood related to its urban socio-spatial transformation, but in its actual relation to space. San Pablo’s distrusts towards the authority can be linked to stories told after the riots, including the death of Imelda’s father. However, is also visible the oblivion such relevant story to the community after the space renovation. Now, after the sports unit was built, the people no longer feel an emotional attachment to the space, while this new space was not created by them and does not responds to their memories of it. On the other hand, Hercules spaces such as Campo Libertad, La Purísima and Callejon Libertad still hold people’s ownership and memories, visible in the lively memory narrated through storytelling among the residents of Hercules, reflected in their spatial configuration and ownership.

Both cases presented themselves as meaningful places to their communities. By preserving urban narratives, communities concretize their capacity to share and preserve the social characteristics of the space, its essence and what how it is part of the community. It
involves incorporating notions of learning and adaptation to begin transformation of such spaces, by acknowledging the importance of those spaces in the social tissue. Above all, resiliency is considered as an ability to withstand through external shocks, although it is important to note that changes can come from the interior as well, making urban narratives the capacity not only to cope to new situations, but to adapt and transform the interior social relations and network structures, as well as power structures. Furthermore, place and urban narratives can be considering playing an important role in gathering social capital and therefore maintaining social resilience (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

However, the romanticized notions of ownership through storytelling can also reach a limit, creating territorialization conflicts over a place within the same community and towards outsiders, becoming social borders. An example of this can be Callejon Libertad, as according to comments, has been territorialized by drug dealing acts, making it no longer perceived as safe place. Even though stories and narratives about the aqueduct are still being told, representing a strong attachment and sense of pride to Hercules’ residents, it is avoided nowadays.

Stories become an important role in the social cohesion of the socially produced spaces, encompassing participative capacities over the community. Furthermore, urban borders appropriated foster societal strength by means of its social practices, agency over the space, and its social relations. These characteristics are visible in Hercules and San Pablo, which are communities who offer mutual support in conserving their spaces, even creating different power relations with the authority. Urban narratives hold social capital and social relations, which play a key role in creating and maintaining social resilience, even more if they are informal social interactions which have proven to be the best resource for social resilience and creative a collective direction (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

Relying on the premise “Everything changes, nothing remains” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 9), social resilience sets its importance into how societies and communities are organized facing the unknown. In the Mexican culture of instability, change, and uncertainty, alternative ways forward through storytelling that bring up the socio-cultural and community aspects of appropriated borders is indispensable. In Querétaro, it has become a difficult task in the neoliberal capitalist scheme in which the city has been planned especially due to its conditions of social and spatial inequality together with the constant loss of public spaces. By studying the social history of the place, it is possible to bring forward the understanding of its social production, place evolution and its keystones. Furthermore, embedded in social production of space by appropriation of urban spaces, is the coping capacities and adaptative capacities dimensions of social resilience. Even more, urban narratives rooted in the spaces can comprise its transformative capacity in the surrounding built environment (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

**Urban storytelling for alternatives futures**

Although social capital and social interactions in appropriated spaces are important to social resilience, they have a dual nature in them. Social networks created can enable social resilience, but sometimes can become constraining and exclusionary, becoming social borders (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Storytelling can be a tool, an artifact combined with urban imaginaries for future development and urban integration, evidencing that place and its symbolic meaning are constantly changing along with society (Wallin, et.al., 2018). Establishing storytelling into action by developing localized spaces, such as San Pablo and Hercules, throughout their intrinsic stories, contributing to the conservation of identity and social agency.

Beauregard argues that “storytelling is central to discursive
democracy, and discursive democracy, distinct from representative and participatory democracies, is necessary to produce sustainable cities” (Eckstein & Throgmorton, 2003, p. 4). However, elite and empowered communities tell counter stories about appropriated spaces, undermining their social capital just like the case in San Pablo and Hercules, where these counter stories have transformed and alienated the community. These events have discouraged Hercules’ San Pablo’s collective ability to imagine their spaces as integrated to the urban landscape, creating greater contrast and exclusion towards and from them (Eckstein & Throgmorton, 2003). When facing changes, counter stories also tend to appear from locals when the redevelopment vision does not cope with their lived experiences, such is the case of San Pablo. The stories that represent lived experiences, memories and social capital are not reflected in the authorities’ abstract plans materialized in the conceived space of the sports unit imposed over them (Wallin, et. al., 2018).

The social identity of a space is constructed through storytelling. Local people recognize the symbolic elements of a place and make that visible and socially resilient through stories (Wallin, et. al., 2018). Urban storytelling conceptualize the space and its social capital, expressing social meaning. It is also the storytelling of urban narratives that it is possible to reconfigure and reinterpret the spatial meaning (of social borders) in a different way (Low, 2017). By means of telling insurgent stories, it is possible to challenge the definition of urban borders and appropriated urban spaces. In them, there is the acknowledge of the non-official story behind the space, which can empower social capital by revealing the underlaying political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics implicit in them (Sandercock, 1998).

In Mexico and in Queretaro, planning is equated with the European modernistic idea of progress, were story of the place is not relevant to the place redevelopment. In this conceptualization of planning, planners disregard the importance of place, the stories and the symbols embedded in it (Wallin, et.al., 2018). Furthermore, in redeveloping informal and appropriated spaces, the social capital of the space and its story is overlooked, not concealing those spaces as solutions created by a collective to provide what is missing in their space (Laguerre, 1994). With social capital present in appropriated spaces, it is possible to embrace non-official stories for alternative futures. As the phrase “Stories have power and bestow power” (Sandercock, 1998, p. 1), stories of appropriated spaces can generate a change in perception by the authorities, who can understand the space further before planting projects in socially tight spaces. By presenting the social power in the spaces, is to present an alternative future of the space through social capital, imagining alternative futures.

Stories are inspiration and agents of change and can be used to facilitate revitalization processes (Sandercock, 2003a). By bringing forward place attachment through storytelling it is important to denote power in them to make critical contributions to the future development of places such as Hercules contested spaces. Storytelling brings forward place identity and place attachment at the same time it calls for community collective action for alternative futures (Sandercock, 2003a). The significant role in neighborhood of place attachment, place identity and the sense of community towards alternative ways for urban development of appropriated spaces presented in this thesis aims to shift the current paradigm of urban planning from top-down to a more inclusive dialogic, participatory and discursive forms planning; bringing forward stories, narratives and storytelling with the purpose and goal of social sustainability in now contested border spaces (Ameel, 2016). People’s identity and values are intrinsically linked to their socially produced spaces, becoming significant bonds between the people and appropriated places, therefore, narratives for revitalization will impact their engagement in such places, whether it is to cope, adapt or transform them (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).
Appropriated spaces and inner urban borders are spaces constantly facing pressure over renewal or redevelopment. In these situations, the importance of stories become evident, especially as the power relation in place will shift from informal to formal (Wallin, et.al., 2018). In these cases, urban narratives can be curated towards socio-urban development and inclusion, becoming storytelling for future alternatives. Storytelling counts with four aspects to catalyze change. First, storytelling gives the possibility to power creativity to imagine communities. Second, Story and imagined communities always have a spatial dimension, making a geographical claim in appropriated spaces. Third, storytelling is a constitutive part of democratic practices, and democratic practice is constitutive for sustainability. Fourth, the ability to listed to official and non-official stories with an ear tuned for surprise, by it is through surprises that an impacting storytelling is. Through this fundamental aspects of storytelling relies the possibility to be used as an anchoring artifact, a coordinated tool for action, catalysts of change (Eckstein & Throgmorton, 2003; Sandercock, 1998). Moreover, together with urban imaginaries, experience and place, storytelling is therefore conceptually a flexible tool that can be embedded to strategic spatial planning towards a more equitable, collective and participatory process of urbanization.
During the past 50 years, the city of Queretaro has been developed by fragmenting the urban space into homogeneous, isolated, self-contained spaces, where the privatization and profit are the main interests. Such perspective has led today’s urban evolution to be characterized by its spatial segregation, where roughly eight out of ten persons does not have access to public spaces in their area. In such context, where the private is taking away from the public, groups of people have been appropriating unoccupied spaces, turning them into their own. It was observed that such social appropriation is usually created in unoccupied open fields in the urban border, in between secluded areas or near strong physical borders, as those spaces often represent low market value, making them prone for appropriation. However, nowadays such borders have been immersed into the city being engulfed by new urbanization, locating now deep inside the urban fabric.
In this thesis work, two appropriated urban spaces located in former borders of the city of Queretaro were studied. Such spaces were socially produced in former urban borders of the city through high social agency with a community benefit vision according to people’s stories. Through social capital, appropriated spaces became public multifunctional spaces that would function as football or baseball fields, meeting space, religious retreats venue, community hall, and even public ballroom for traditional festivities. The intrinsic flexibility of those spaces, together with the spatial connection and sense of belonging from the community towards the space, turned them into key places important to the community who created them and its surroundings. Furthermore, the memories and stories embedded in them by the community living the space made them resilient.

Nowadays, these two cases are in different stages of evolution, facing an ever-growing city. The first one, San Pablo, after being contested and passed through a socially painful process, has already been retaken by the authority formalizing it, creating a sports unit UDESP in it. However, in the formalization process, memories and stories of the place were disregarded, ignored and finally forgotten. Together with the stories and memories, the place attachment was lost and so was the community. Today, although the space is better, it is not visited by residents of San Pablo, as it has become a barrier in itself to the barrio. On the other hand, the second case in Hercules, the spaces are in threat of being taken away and suffer similar or other fates far from societal wellbeing and more towards economic profits as they are being contested between different stakeholders such as the authority, private stakeholders and the people. Today, although these spaces are embedded in the city, they are resilient towards the pressure through their social agency. In Queretaro, currently there are other socially produced spaces being contested as they have become valuable spaces in today’s complicated mix of urban growth, market forces, society and social dynamics.

The thesis shows how Lefebvre’s spatial triad becomes a spatial dyad, as appropriated spaces lack of the formal conception as they are hijacked and conceptualized by the people. However, in appropriated spaces are perceived spaces, defined by the social patterns and everchanging activity which follows the social practices. One day the space can be a concert hall, while the next it becomes a football stadium by social activity. Moreover, appropriated spaces are lived spaces, defined by its socially production and the images, symbols, significations, memories and stories embedded in them by the community experiences. Even more, they are representational spaces appropriated through informal ways, becoming formalized or contested by outside forces. Such spaces can be fragile if the social cohesion of its members or its symbolic significance is lost, as shown with the UDESP case. On the other hand, such spaces are more resilient based on the stronger the community is, its place attachment, and their lived and perceived space in the community, like the one in Hercules analyzed in this thesis. spaces.

Furthermore, appropriated spaces carry a high sense of belonging since they are created in a collective way through social means, providing what is missing in their space, often through informal practices. Through these means, the community creates a unique bond between people and places, one that is brought forwards though urban narratives. AND, as Milan Kundera says in The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, “The struggle of people against power is a struggle of memory against forgetting”, we must not let the stories go to oblivion.

This thesis studied the process and evolution of cases of appropriation and its social production, bringing forward a new understanding their social agency and social relevance through their urban narratives. However, this study has a limited scope, as it only analyzed two spaces in the Mexican context, and more specifically in the city of Queretaro. Although the aim is not based in the number of cases, but in the power of storytelling, however, this study and its methodology, aims to emphasize a starting point to other studies and researchers who seek
social sustainability, spatial attachment and community building.

This study acknowledges the short time of the field trip as well, being of two weeks of autoethnography and key informant interviews, however, it is complemented by the ethnographic part carried out in collaboration of Un Lugar, who helped to cover 40 interviews more, 20 in each space. These interviews with residents of the area and outsiders, even though were not carried out personally by the author were based on the designed questions, being revised through audio recordings in Finland.

It is true that the time allocated for the field trip was short, nonetheless the two intensive weeks of autoethnography and key informant interviews opened the social perspective of the case studies. Especially, the complementary ethnographic study in collaboration of Un Lugar really helped to widen the perspective from insiders and outsiders, by covering 40 more interviews, 20 in each space. These interviews with residents of the area and outsiders, even though were not carried out personally by the author were based on the designed questions, being revised through audio recordings in Finland. Other limitations to recognize is the residents and outsiders’ interviews. Although the methodology expected 20 persons per site, 10 residents and 10 visitors, was difficult to maintain. While on the UDESP the majority of the people was visitor, and finding a resident to talk was challenging, the opposite happened in Hercules. In Hercules it was complicated to find outsiders to interview, as the majority of the people in the urban spaces were residents. However, the fact that the expected interview distribution was not covered strictly, the mere causes became revealing in the case exploration. It revealed the social borders in the spaces towards the city, contrasting it with the social community residing in it.

Further steps

The Global South has to face complex challenges as urbanization and population growth grows faster, threatening not only the environmental and economic sustainability, but impacting highly the social sustainability as well. Rapid urbanization in Latin America, together with a complicated mixture of economic and market forces, society’s imaginaries, social movements like migration, and a high privatization of urban spaces are contributing towards fragmented cities, characterized for its social segregation.

In fragmented fast-growing cities all around the Global South, appropriation of urban spaces through informal practices is present as cities are not able to provide open and public spaces, especially in low income areas located in the urban borders. Social elements are reflected in the built environment; however, the social sustainability entails how future spaces will be lived, perceived and conceived. This work is an approximation to search for common grounds towards the development of appropriated spaces now embedded in the cities. It presents a way to see at the complexity of appropriated spaces; it presents ideas as well that entail only a part of the challenges towards social sustainability and equality of cities, seeking to unite them by their stories. Ultimately, it arises more questions to study further and it calls for hands to action including authorities to act with policies and governability towards appropriated and informal spaces. Furthermore, it calls to urban planners and designers to include social studies in their works, seeking how to create inclusive spaces in an increasing complex urban context, or how to approach urban stories to bring back social characteristics to the space towards the community. Furthermore, how to make those stories visible in place to create positive social consequences for contemporary urban life.
Studying and understanding insurgent space creation, such as urban border appropriations, it is possible to challenge the conceived urban space conception, designed and planned, and broaden it, informal, appropriated, and other forms of social construction of urban space; by being appreciative to the social meaning these spaces entail to society. Furthermore, to recuperate the unofficial stories behind insurgent spaces, together with recently formalized, contested and conflictive spaces, can bring forward the underlaying dynamics, and power relations over contextualized space by linking the physical characteristics of the space to the socially imagined, building a bridge to bring them together the social and physical space. With this contextual background of understanding on a space, it is possible to present different ways of understanding the past, and alternative ways of imagining the future beyond the capitalist neoliberal modernistic planning paradigm. Hopefully, by engaging storytelling into the development of appropriated spaces and contested spaces, it will be possible to create socially resilient spaces in fast-growing cities like Queretaro, opening more public spaces meaningful for the people.

I dream of a city where people have the right over their surroundings, where they can participate in imagining and shaping their neighborhoods, where they can take decisions over their built spaces. I dream of a city where 100% of its people have access to open and public spaces, where public space is not a luxury but a civil right; a city where social justice exists. I want a city driven by its people and not by real estate companies’ investments, where there is no need to guard and wall our inequalities but learn and create with them; a city where social inequality is no guiding line for urban development. I dream of a city where a community is caring and sharing for their physical condition of their living environments; where people build their places after pleasure and caring, and not because they have no other choice. I want a city where I am not scared to cross through a neighborhood, specially a city where my neighborhood is not stigmatized; a city where urban imaginaries are of community stories and not of violence. I want a city in which I can contribute to all of the above, where residents take new spaces full of possibilities and immerse themselves respecting neighbors and collective monuments while forging their new spaces.

Text inspired by Leonie Sandercock’s introduction to her essay Dreaming a Sustainable City in Eckstein & Throgmorton (2003, p. 143–166)
Interviews

Interviews in San Pablo

Residents

Jorge, 30 years old
Gloria, 22 years old
Dulce, 80 years old
Jonathan, 18 years ago

Outsiders

Emma, 58 years old
Emmanuel and Juan, 18 and 16 years old
Jennifer, 18 years old
Francisco, 34 years old
Manuel, 49 years old
José Luis, 48 years old

Key informant:
Imelda, 38 years old

Interviews in San Pablo

Residents

Alejandro, 15 years old
Carlos, 51 years old
Gustavo, 65 years old
José, 82 years old
Luz, 48 years old
Mónica, 28 years old
Viridiana, 21 years old

Outsiders

Eusebio, 33 years old
Karla and friend, 25 years old
Nancy and Edgar, 39 years old

Key informant:
Don Toño, 91 years old

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Appendices

Interviews were recorded with explicit consentment of the participants. The audios are available on request by email to andrea_esquivel@hotmail.com.

Guiding questions for an unstructured interview

Name and age optional
Where do you live? For how long have you lived there?
How do you feel and perceive the neighborhood? Tell me more
What is your opinion of the neighborhood in relation to the city? Tell me more
In the neighborhood, what is that you like the most? What might be missing?
Do you consider there are qualities that might diminish its perception? Tell me more
Where do you meet friends and family the most? Somewhere in the neighborhood? Tell me more
Are there social events in the neighborhood? traditional parties, or so? Tell me more
With which frequency do you visit the open spaces in the area?
How do you feel about living here? Would you move somewhere else? Tell me more
Is there a specific place in the neighborhood that brings you memories?
Which place do you think represents better the neighborhood?
Do you identify El Hoyo/ the UDESP / Callejón de Santiago/ Campo Libertad/ the aqueduct arches?
What do you know about that space? Do you visit it? Do you walk by it?
Describe the space
Do you know the story of that place?
What does the space or the neighborhood mean to you?

Interviews summaries in San Pablo

Emma
58 years old
She has lived in San José el Alto (7.2km north crossing Bernardo Quintana) for 20 years now. She visits the sports unit on Sundays when there is a baseball game, every 15 days or so. She perceives it as a quiet, beautiful, safe place for healthy conviviality. The only negative spot is the lack of cleanliness of the place. She considers easy to arrive to the UDESP because she takes the public transport, and the bus stop is right in the pedestrian bridge. It takes her around 15 minutes and crossing the bridge to get there (Due to the distance and location of San José el Alto, it feels unlikely this time frame). She thinks the sports units is lacking life, referring to people visiting, and cleanliness, she remarks. She remembers that when the fields were of dirt, many people went, it seemed like a party and they even sold beer. It seems to her that it is very good the modifications to the space, still she thinks not so many people visit now. She would recommend the sports unit to someone else.

Emmanuel and Juan (brothers)
18 and 16 years old
They live in Las Américas (neighboring neighborhood, 1km north crossing Bernardo Quintana), they were born there and have lived there ever since. They visit the sport unit on weekends. Nowadays the sports unit is about 4 years, and before it was only dirt fields. They perceive it as beautiful, and they think it was good that they modified it, since now is better and has more activities. They find it safe and quiet even at night, as well as clean. They say that from Las Américas, there are many people visiting the UDESP to play football soccer. They mention that there are some gang fights between San Pablo and Las Américas, but those happen in other areas, not in the UDESP. In spite of this, the conviviality among people is good and friendly, is what they like best.

For them, the sports unit is well integrated to the city, maybe because it was one of the first barrios of the city. They do not perceive the highways as barriers because for them it is easy to get to the space.

As general perceptions of the surroundings if the sports unit they see many stray dogs, bad state of the streets, plenty of graffiti and litter on the floor. On rainy days, the surroundings get flood. They do perceive the UDESP as the only open green space in the area.

They think the neighborhood needs more security, maybe patrols could be performed. At night, it is better to walk near by the highways, because inside assaults occur. They know drug and prostitution happen on the north part of San Pablo. They emphasize that during the day the barrio is calm, but at
night it is dangerous. They know about neighborhood association in charge of organizing the festivities (Celebration of Saint Judas Tadeo), but only that. They are proud to live in Las Américas, but would move to another area if they had the opportunity.

Jennifer
16 years old
She lives in Los Sauces (crossing 5th of February, 3.5 km to the west). She has been working every weekend in the Cooperative of the UDESP for a year. She arrives by public transport, and she doesn’t think it is difficult. She does not perceive San Pablo as beautiful, but she thinks it is calm and clean. She feels safe in the space, but she only stays until 2 pm while there are activities inside. It seems to her that the neighborhood conviviality is good. In fact, what she likes best is the people. She believes the barrio needs more security, as well as inside the sports unit, since anyone can enter and do whatever they want. She perceives San Pablo with regular streets, normal floods, little litter, plenty of graffiti, drugs and prostitution, mainly in 5th of February Avenue. She does not know the history behind the space, but she does remember them as dirt fields. Now as UDESP she thinks it is in good condition, good appearance and she thinks it is open for long time spans. She would recommend the space to people.

Jorge
30 years old
He lives in San Pablo, in the northern part. He perceives a calm atmosphere in the barrio, and he attributes it to the UDESP, as young people can so sports. If he could add something to the space, he would add a running track. He thinks the neighborhood conviviality is good, except for some teenagers’ gangs which have conflicts. His general perception of San Pablo is that it is clean, with streets in good state although there are still some unpaved streets. In his knowledge, there are no drugs or prostitution in San Pablo, only over the 5th of February Avenue. The connectivity of San Pablo with the rest of the city is good. On the downside, there are many stray dogs, litter, and graffiti, there are no open green spaces. I would build a cultural center in the area. What he likes most of the neighborhood is the tranquility, and the sports unit that serves the whole barrio. He acknowledges that on December, traditional posadas are organized by a neighbor’s association. The posadas represent San Pablo, because it generates union and fellowship among residents. He visits the sports unit every 15 days, on weekends only. He would recommend the UDESP to someone else. He arrives by car, not because it is difficult to get there, but because it is comfortable. when he was small, he used to visit the dirt fields. He is happy to live in San Pablo, but not precisely proud, he would move to another place if he could. He thinks the barrio is calm, clean and hygienic.?

Gloria
22 years old
She lives in San Pablo, where she has a beauty salon in the premises adjacent to the sports unit. She does not perceive the neighborhood as beautiful nor calm, however she is happy to live there but there is no sense of pride. In her opinion, people in San Pablo get along well. She would not modify anything in San Pablo (quite contrasting with her last statements enlisting San Pablo’s problems), and what she likes best is that her whole family lives there. She thinks San Pablo is very well located, and she can easily move to other places. In general, she thinks San Pablo has had bad smells because of the drainage, there are a lot of stray dogs, mad state of the streets, a lot of graffiti, drug problems and prostitution. With her family she meets at home or in the city center, but not in the neighborhood areas. She mentions the main reason are the assaults, as a reference she points to the commerce venues near by the UDESP, which get mugged constantly and had decided to close. She would move and go to a more centric area. She does not visit the UDESP, but her young nephew does. Overall, she likes it since more people visit her business on weekends due to the games. She does not know the history of the place but remembers the dirt fields. She remembers visiting the dirt fields in her childhood, when dances were organized, and she attended with her family. Those dances were organized at least once a year, but not anymore since the sports unit was built.

Dulce
80 years old
She has lived in San Pablo for 35 years now. She has an informal sales spot on the UDESP. Her perception of San Pablo is that it is not clean nor calm, there are many drug addicts and thieves. She says everything changed after the Mexico City earthquake, when a lot of chilangos (name for people from Mexico City) moved to the city. She likes the people of San Pablo because they are respectful and kind (contradicting herself calling them addicts and thieves). She has met people from other States visiting the UDESP. She would improve the streets that are in bad shape, sidewalks, and drainage, especially because it gets flood every time it rains. There is a lot of stray dogs, garbage and graffiti around. She recon the sports unit is the only open space in the area. She feels happy of living in San Pablo, and she would not move elsewhere.
Francisco
34 years old
He lives in El Marqués and visits San Pablo because he works in an electronics store in the premises adjacent to the UDESP. In his opinion, the neighborhood is not beautiful nor clean, there are bad smells, graffiti, stray dogs, streets in bad shape or worst, drugs and prostitution. Even more it floods during the rainy season. He feels safe in the area, but because he visits every day and people already recognize him. In the 7 months he has had that job he has seen 4 street fights, but not from neighbors but from outsiders. He thinks San Pablo is quite centric and well connected, and he has seen events being organized, but he doesn’t know who organizes them. He has been to the sports unit only 8 time to watch some games, he does not know the story but remembers the dirt fields. He would characterize the neighborhood as harsh, folkloric and coexistence.

José Luis
49 years old
He lives in Loma 9. He has an esoteric shop nearby the sports unit. He perceives the neighborhood as beautiful and clean, but not calm because of the vandals. Still, he doesn’t believe San Pablo lacks anything. The neighbor’s conviviality is good, the problem in his opinion are vandals and thieves from the outside. There are stray dogs on the streets and a lot of graffiti. As well there exist drug sell points and prostitution, especially in the 5th of February Avenue. About insecurity, he says the business are robbed a lot, especially those near by the entrance of the UDESP, in fact most of them are empty because of this. There are some events organized, but only during the holiday season. He doesn’t know the history of the place, and he only visits the sports unit to use the toilet because he doesn’t have one at the store.

Jonathan
18 years old
He has lived in San Pablo for the last 12 years. He has a tattoo and piercing store with his dad in the Adolfo López Mateos Street, nearby the sports unit. He perceives the neighborhood as beautiful, somehow calm and not as insecure as others might say. He tells the most unsafe spaces are nearby the 5th of February Avenue, by the pedestrian bridge. He comments that occasionally there are quarrels between gangs of San Pablo.
He perceives San Pablo as being well connected to the city. It has streets in bad shape, no stray dogs, easily flooded, with a lot of graffiti and prostitution in 5th of February Avenue. He likes the neighborhood because he grew up in it and he is used to lived there. He says the neighborhood is clean, however his father hears and contradicts that answer, saying sometimes trash recollection misses to pick up the garbage.

He visits the sports unit and in fact meets his friends there every weekend or so to do some skating. He complains the skate ramps are too small and uncomfortable, but he stills uses them. He is happy to live in San Pablo and would not move. He remembers the dirt fields as a memorable place which doesn’t exist anymore, but believes the sports unit is good. He knows a bit about the history, how it was a dirt field and they wanted to build a private business for buses, but people protested against it. He thinks San Pablo in general is problematic, a place of trust and pretty.

José Luis
48 years old
He is a baseball player and part of the local team of the barrio. He lives in Carrillo for 29 years (in front of San Pablo crossing 5th of February Avenue). He perceives the neighborhood as calm at least on Sundays, when he crosses the bridge to play, but he mentions the place is not safe, as they assault people day and night. The conviviality among neighborhoods Is good and everyone gets along. The neighborhood is quite well connected and integrated with the city. For him there is no problem of it being surrounded by highways, but he recognizes it is easier for people with car to move around, but that is in the whole city.
The neighborhood lacks security, although no one really trusts the police. He likes the sports unit for the good conviviality and because he plays there. In his opinion there are no stray dogs and the streets condition is good considering they are old. The area floods few times a year. He visits the sports unit every 15 days when his team plays at home. He mentions that the space is run by the municipality, but before it was part of the ejido. He recalls there were some riots over the space between the ejido and the government 12 years ago, causing the death of a person on hands of the police. He even says that during a time the fields were named after him, but the government changed it. Nowadays he doesn’t remember his name. Even of these, those problems are solved and healed by now, forgotten most of all.

Interviews summaries in Hercules

Alejandro
15 years old
He has lived all his life in Hercules, he was born there. He perceives it as beautiful, calm, not so clean and more or less safe. The neighbor’s conviviality is quite good, more in the upper side. Sometimes there are quarrels among small gangs, but that does not make it feel insecure. Still, his parents ask him to be at home before 20h. In his opinion, Hercules is well integrated to the city by public transport, sometimes he takes taxi. If there was more public
lightning Hercules, it would feel better at night. He would also improve the
football field. He mentions that there are stray dogs, the streets are in regular
shape, a few flooding, some garbage on the floor, a lot of graffiti, drugs but not
prostitution.
He visits the main square called “Plaza de la Delegación” with his friends. He
goes there 5 times a week and visit the Campo Libertad three times a week at
least. He is proud and happy of being from Hercules and doesn’t want to move
to another neighborhood.
He remembers the Fiesta del Gallo, which takes place on December 8th. He
explains that large roosters are made with paper and reed, walking through
Hercules. He has good memories of when people went to the Campo Libertad
to watch the matches, in fact the Campo Libertad represents him in Hercules.
He does not recognize el hoyo, but he remembers the aqueduct and he does
not feel unsafe walking there. In three words, he describes Hercules as passion,
happiness and humility.

Carlos
51 years old
He has lived in Hercules his whole life although he was born in La Laguna.
He has a grocery store on Avenida Hércules. He perceives the neighborhood
as beautiful, quiet, calm, clean but not so safe. He says insecurity has always
existed but now it has been growing more and more. He considers the condition
of the cobblestone streets as bad, but the pavement is in good shape. He says
the neighbor’s conviviality is normal, and some neighbors are more reserved.
He says there are no stray dogs, but there is a garbage problem in the streets
causing flooding during the rainy season. He sees graffiti and drugs but does
not know if there is prostitution. He knows there is a group organizing the
festivities, and he attends to the celebrations but does not participate in their
organizing. He does not visit the public spaces in Hercules, it seems to him that
the Plaza de la Delegación is the best one, but the rest are in poor condition.
Above everything, he really likes Hércules, he is proud of living there although
he would change to live elsewhere, but he doesn’t know where. In his opinion,
the arches of the aqueduct represent Hércules, as well as the theater and the
main plaza.

Eusebio
33 years old
He does not live in Hércules. He has run a shoe repair shoe in front of El
Hoyo for 18 years. He arrives in public transport, which stops just in front of
his shop. In his opinion, the inhabitants of Hércules will always defend their
neighborhood, not accepting the levels of insecurity it really has, but he as an
outsider notices many aspects that are wrong. On the Hercules Avenue there
has been a raise in robberies and vandalism towards parked cars, mainly those
of external people. He has never come down to El Hoy, and for him it only
represents high music and screams. He says in the afternoon youngsters meet
there to consume drugs and alcohol. On Friday and weekends there is a lot of
traffic generated by people visiting the new brewery, causing public transport
to be diverted to the road (Los Arcos and La Cañada).
People form Hercules know who from them is selling drugs or doing illegal
activities, but because they are “the son of such, or which” they do not report
them. Everyone lives in a state of comfort, helping each other, for better or
worse. Even if someone is arrested, they collect the money and bail him out.

Gustavo
65 years old
He has lived in Hercules all his life. He considers the neighborhood as one
of the most beautiful of Queretaro, however he thinks several people from
other places have settled in and have change some social structures. Also,
time has changed the place, before there were orchards, lots of vegetation, a
full clean river, but all has been lost. He thinks young people are also more
relentless than before, but in general the neighborhood is calm and quiet. He
thinks the spaces are clean, as each neighbor takes care of the space in front
of their house, especially in the aqueduct. He mentions that 10 years ago, all
the neighbors know each other well, but now there is a lot of new people. He
says that they don’t know each other especially because they are taking away
the few open spaces they have to meet, centralizing everything in Plaza de la
Delegación, where the authority and administrative buildings are.
About the Campo Libertad controversy, he says that the plot was bought
among many and a cooperative was created, but now some of them want to sell
and make a small gated community; others want to give it to the government
to build a sports unit, but they cannot agree. When the Campo Libertad was
recently built, the field was full of people, and many games were organized.
He thinks the neighborhood is lacking activities, like kermes, and other
events for example inside the theater, the coronation of the queen, etc. These
activities have been lost but they kept the community together and integrated.
He says the delegation is trying to do some things, but they lack the effort.
The Plaza is the most visited, but there should be surveillance because there
are many robberies. On the contrary, in the Campo Libertad nothing like that
happens. He visits the Campo Libertad every 15 days or so, to see the games
and to rest. Some morning he goes there for a morning walk. He often walks
the Callejon de Santiago along the arches to get to the field or somewhere else;
he does not feel insecure, but he does not visit at night because It is unsafe.
He remembers when he was a kid, and the campo was orchards with fruit trees
of all kinds, the water of the river was clean and fresh, people would swim in
it. Now the water is contaminated from drainage and all the orchards are gone
with the water.
In general, he thinks there are stray dogs, the general state of the streets is regular, and there are some holes in the pavement. There are some floods because of the water that comes down from El Campanario and Milenio. He knows there is graffiti and drug selling, but the young are the main consumers. He meets friends and family in his house and not in the public spaces. He feels proud and satisfied to live in Hercules. He would not want to change elsewhere, and he wants to live there until he dies. He has heard rumors that the factory wants to sell the basketball courts of El Hoyo and the football field La Purisima.

José
82 years old
He has lived in Hercules all his life. His house is between Av. Hercules and the Callejón de Santiago (the arches). He has a grocery store he operates with his wife looking towards the alley. He perceives Hercules as a beautiful neighborhood, although not so calm. He mentions that in the alley, young boys meet in the arches until late at night; they arrive from 17h in the afternoon and stay until 2 or 3 in the morning. For the same reason, he says that he and his wife don’t go out at night. It appears to him that the neighborhood in general is clean, although the garbage collection point is close to his house, so the bags of the whole area are gathered and sometimes he does perceive it as dirty. The neighborhood conviviality is good, they get along well and take care of each other. He would improve in the neighborhood the security through more vigilance. What he likes most about Hercules is that he knows all the people. Especially he likes the avenue where the cinema and the theater are and that there are different things to do at night. He says that at some point it was mentioned that the Campo Libertad was going to be turned into a market, which he would have liked since Hercules does not have one, but the cooperative that manages the field did not agree and did not allow the government to do so. In his opinion the field is no longer used to play anyway. His perception is that there are few stray dogs and many more walk with their dogs. The state of the street in Av. Hercules is very good, but it has many cars parked, so to cross as a pedestrian is risky. He also mentions that it would be good if only the street would be one way only. He mentions that when it rains, the water gets into the houses because the drain is clogged, and the water is not filtered properly. He feels that there are many people using drugs in Hercules, especially young women and men, this is why the government should be more concerned and offer places for rehabilitation. He visits the Campo Libertad for his morning walks. He mentions that he doesn’t see more people using it at that time. Related to the arches, he says that since he was born, they already existed. The function they had was to bring water to the Hercules Factory, and then finally to the river to irrigate the crop fields. He says the water stopped passing about 40 years ago. Now the arches are used so that the young people get on drugs to get high without anyone seeing them. When asked if he would prefer the arches removed, he answered no, since they are an important part of the history of Hercules.

Karla and friend
25 years old
Karla lives in Tejeda. She was in Hercules because she went to buy some tacos. She doesn’t know the neighborhood very well. She does not perceive it beautiful, calm, clean or safe. It seems to her that the connection with the city is good and it is easy to reach Hercules, but there is a road chaos generated by the two-way avenue. In her perception there are no stray dogs, the condition of the streets is bad, there are no bad smells and she has not seen drugs. She emphasizes that she likes street art murals and that there is quite a lot of graffiti. She has visited the Hercules brewery 3 times now. She doesn’t know El Hoyo, but her friend does. He mentions that he has visited it at least 10 times, since his school team played basketball there. He lives in Jardines de la Hacienda. Karla knows the Campo Libertad, but only for the tacos sold there, she has never got in.

Luz
48 years old
She has lived all her life in Hercules. She has a selling stand from Monday to Saturday at the Plaza, and on Sundays in the Campo Libertad. In her opinion, the neighborhood was beautiful 20 years ago, because of the vegetation and because there was no crime. She mentions that drugs sales are growing in the neighborhood, and although they denounce and detain them, they are released easily from prison. She states that drug addiction is very common, in fact children from 13 or 14 are already users. She perceives that almost everyone in Hercules sells drugs, and that if they were all imprisoned, the colony would empty. She also mentions that lately there have been many robberies in the Plaza, but she declares those have been carried out by outsiders. In her opinion, the neighborhood does not seem clean because changes in the government has messed garbage collection. She thinks the conviviality is not the same, as you cannot trust everyone anymore, just the people who have lived in Hercules longer. She has a bad perception of the government and how with each change of administration, the support has been modified. She says that the delegate does not know the real needs of the area and that they do not receive government support at all. She mentions that the people of Hercules are very creative and that could be exploited so that young people had something to do and thus not get involved in illegal activities.
About the Campo Libertad, she remembers that before many people gathered to watch the games, whether or not they had a link with someone who was playing, but now only a few people go, and a lot of neighborhood conviviality has been lost.

**Mónica**  
28 years old  
She has lived in Hercules all her life. Her house borders with the alley of Santiago, in the area of the arches. She perceives the Callejón as beautiful, but not quiet because there are many young people using drugs. She thinks the space is only safe for those who live there and are known by others.

The connection with the rest of the city is easy. She mentions that what she likes most is how calm it is, contradicting his previous response. She also mentions that there are no stray dogs, they actually have an owner, but they walk alone on the street. The state of the streets is not good, there are floods, and there is only one green area (children's games that are perpendicular to the alley of Santiago, but it is very small and in very bad condition), there are bad smells, graffiti, drugs and she doesn’t know if there is prostitution. She meets with her family and friends outside her house, right in the arches. She says she would not change to live in another place as she is very happy to live in Hercules.

The callejón brings her memories of her childhood, she even mentions that they are what most represent Hercules. About El Hoyo, she says she goes there every day, but he doesn’t enter the fields. She also walks the alley every day, and thinks is scary, but after passing it everything is ok.

Her mother said that when she was young, the water passed through the arches into the factory, but she was not born yet. Her mom tells her that before the arches were embedded in the houses, they opened and created the alley. In fact, she says her property had arches inside as it started from Av. Hercules, passed through the arches and ended at the next avenue, but they opened it and created the alley. She thinks the neighborhood can improve the cleanliness, specifically the area of the arches. She says that when the arches were opened, they made one side street and the other sidewalk, but they did not fix it well, promoting that people take out their garbage or things that do not serve them and leave them there. Personally, she would not recommend el Hoyo and arches to anyone else.

**Nancy and Edgar**  
38 years old  
Both of them live in Los Fresnos. They are visiting the field because they took their daughter to play soccer. They visit the field once a year when their daughter has to play there. They perceive Hercules as beautiful, quiet, clean and safe. It seems to them that the colony is well connected to the city, although they think it needs to have wider streets. They have not seen stray dogs, the state of the streets is fine, there is no garbage, dirt or bad smells. They do notice there is graffiti, but also throughout the city. They do not perceive drugs.

Edgar remembers that he came to Hercules as a child, to the main plaza and to play soccer in the Campo Libertad (25 years ago). Nothing has changed physically in these years, only before every 8 days there were football matches all day and now there is only one game and then the field is empty. He would like that boom to return and that there was more movement during the week and on weekends.

**Viridiana**  
21 years old  
He lives in Hercules, from all his life. She perceives Hercules as a beautiful, calm and safe neighborhood.

She thinks the conviviality is regular, because sometimes there are quarrels.

She would improve the infrastructure, especially of the streets because they are in poor condition. What she likes the most about Hercules is the nature, since there are many trees. Yes, there are stray dogs, yes, there are floods, garbage, bad smells, graffiti, drugs and prostitution. With her friends she does not meet in Hercules, but in places around her university. She does visit the public spaces of Hercules at least three times a week. She is happy and proud to live there and would not move to another place.

She likes the Fiesta del Gallo (Patron Saint of the Purísima Concepción), especially because the neighbors invite everyone to eat food. She explains it consists of pilgrimage by people carrying giant paper roosters made of reed and paper. People play music with a band and dance among them. Her favorite place in Hercules is the library (Gildardo Rangel Andrade, on Emeterio González), she has been going there since she was a child, still she goes there.

The three words that characterize Hercules in her opinion are traditional, picturesque and quiet. She does not feel insecure at night, because he knows the dynamics and the people.

On the Campo Libertad, she perceives that it is not taken care of. About El Hoyo and the Callejón, she mentions that she likes it but that she feels insecure because sometimes there are people taking drugs there, although nothing has ever happened to her. She tells that the aqueduct still belongs to the owners of the Hercules Factory, which were built to bring water from El Capulín in La Cañada, to supply the factory and are even older than Los Arcos de Querétaro (this is not true). Because they are private, nothing can be done to them, he mentions that on one occasion there was a UNESCO project to improve them, but the Factory did not give the permission. In addition, she says there is a legal quarrel that it has with some neighbors for having taken over certain arches.

She would like to give more recognition to Hercules, not only commercially as it is doing with the Factory, but in terms of traditions, culture and history, since Hercules was where the urban spot of Querétaro began.
Key informants interview summaries

Imelda
39 years old
The conversation took place in her tianguis stand. She was contacted by other inhabitants who pointed as her as the person to talk to, especially as the one with the right to talk about the history of the UDESP.
In the beginning she does not want to talk about the subject. I ask her about the neighborhood, the people in it, and make some small chat. She said she does not like the sports unit because of what it represents to her. She said she will tell me somethings, and finally she declares she trusts me, and she will tell me. She apologizes if she cries in the middle as the story is too painful for her. She tells the story of a dreadful day. His father went to the neighboring neighborhood over the bridge to buy some strings and threats for her and her sisters’ embroideries. On his way back he saw a bunch of people gathered around the dirt fields. He stood on the pedestrian bridge looking at the machinery and the people protesting. Even though he was not affiliated with the ejido nor with the baseball players he stood there and watched. When the police arrived, he could not leave, and the policemen got him and beat him pretty hard. When they heard about the riots, Imelda’s family went outside seeking for his father but did not found him. They asked the police, but they were not saying where they had them imprisoned. For days they were fighting the bureaucracy and still no signs of him. After some days, her family heard he was in a hospital and went looking for him. That afternoon he was sent home. In the hospital they met some journalists, and they told the story of her father, how difficult it was to find him and how seriously beaten he was. Once at home, the next day he started to feel really bad, with a purple stomach and he was taken to emergencies. That day, he passed away. Imelda said with tears in her eyes that he died for the dirt fields, by a misunderstanding and to spoil her and her sisters with the embroidery. She felt worse that he spent less than a day at home with her, barely speaking before he was taken away back to the hospital. She felt guilty and angry. The journalist followed up the case and published his death. She remembers the next day, when the note was published, all the machinery and policemen left San Pablo. After that, the people named the fields after her father, causing her grief every time she walked down the street. After a while, they changed the name. Little by little, and thanks to the government oppression, people started to forget the story, giving her the feeling that he had died for nothing. It is important to note, that her eyes were watering most of the time, which caught the attention of her friends and other people in the area, who would check upon her, taking care of her. After the story, I apologized for making her revive these memories, but she said it is by stories that her dad is still alive, so I shouldn’t mind. She showed me photos of her dad on her phone, the next Monday would have been his birthday.

Don Toño
92 years old
I get to meet Don Toño thanks to his grandson, who said his grandfather had a privileged memory and had been consulted by historians and chroniclers. Seating in his dining room in Hercules, Don Toño appears with a bunch of books, all of them of Hercules, prepared for the interview. Although he is 92 years old, he speaks and acts as at least 70 years old, with a young spirit.
The discussion started with his perception of Hercules. He says he was born somewhere else out of pure bad luck, because the factory was on strike around those years and his father and uncles, all workers of the factory, moved to Guanajuato while the strike settled. He lived in Guanajuato less than a year, when the family returned to their jobs in the factory in Hercules. He remembers the aqueduct full of live, orchards and fruit trees. He even discusses and organizes the space in his memory depending on the trees there were and the family name of the inhabitants. When he was a worker of the factory as well, he was part of the union. Through that position, he helped others to create football fields and to buy the plots. That was the case of the Campo Libertad, for which it took a loan for. He says the Campo Libertad is not as old as someone would think, and most of their problems are because the same people who bought it, cannot reach an agreement, and did not do the deeds properly. He remembers when he was young and the passion for football there was in the area. There were many fields to play, and matches were organized among players of each street who could make one team. He even had his own football field bought with others, the Cijara. He recalls La Purisima as the first field in Hercules, full of history and now also being contested. He says that if the Campo Libertad and La Purisima are closed, then there would not be any more fields or other spaces in the area. He also remembers walking the aqueduct, which was full of orchards. He does not think they were opened to create the alley, as he does not remember any of that. However, he does remember how it became a path and how it got the name, by some of his acquaintances. Still today, he says he knows most of the people in Hercules, at least by last name and he can identify them.