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**DAY AND NIGHT. ACTIVITIES BY AND FOR THE CHILDREN
FROM EL REFUGIO IN ANCIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS
OF THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF PUEBLA**

Abstract

The purpose of the following investigation is to understand how children from the old historic district El Refugio (or Barrio del Refugio) of the city of Puebla (Mexico) live in public spaces and what their days and nights look like. It is extremely important to understand the reasons for their appropriation of various places in the city because it allows one to explore the conditions in which they manifest autonomous attitudes. This article is therefore not only about customs and culture, but also about everyday relationships with the environment. Children are also involved in the activities of the group Re Genera Espacio (RGE) and the team of Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) in the development of all kinds of educational, artistic, and social activities. Among the most important results obtained is the observation that safety conditions are created by children in independent groups which move to other neighbourhoods (“barrios”), such as San Antonio and Santa Anita. Children make the street their space because they have important knowledge of the area.

Keywords:

children, neighbourhood, day, urban night, historic centre, displacements, autonomy, Puebla



THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF PUEBLA: IN SEARCH OF PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS WITH RE GENERA ESPACIO

Socio-territorial inequality exists in the northwestern neighbourhoods (“barrios”) of the historic centre of the city of Puebla, which was founded in the sixteenth century, covers 6.9 square kilometres, and is recognized as site of cultural heritage by UNESCO. This inequality is the result of a lack of investment and speculation, due to the financial interests in the area.

Re Genera Espacio (RGE), a multidisciplinary group including architects, urban planners, anthropologists, and historians, has worked with the community since 2012. Ten years have passed since they started a new approach with different communities and groups, including adults and children, and began to recognize daily activities, problems, and traits that can only be understood through direct contact with the population.

Since 2013, once a rapport had been established with children and adolescents from these neighbourhoods, we started to notice that the way in which they use the public space – including the street, the roof, the park, and patios – during the day and at night, depends on their ethnic origin. There are children who, like their parents and grandparents, were born in the neighbourhood, but there is also a second group who are migrants from indigenous regions in Puebla and Oaxaca (some of whom descend from the Mazatec region), who try to integrate into the neighbourhood according to their economic and cultural conditions.

The objective of this work is to consider the appropriation of the public and collective spaces during the day and at night in an old neighbourhood (“barrio”) of the city of Puebla, El Refugio, by two groups of children, locals, and migrants, by registering their activities and trips within the neighbourhood and the city.

EL REFUGIO: A VULNERABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD (“BARRIO”) LOCATED IN THE NORTHWEST SIDE OF THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF PUEBLA

The neighbourhood El Refugio (or Barrio del Refugio) is known by its material and intangible heritage. Among its public spaces, two parks – the Ángela Peralta and El Refugio – stand out, in addition to a significant number of collective housings known as “vecindades” (neighbourhoods), properties that usually contain one or two patios, with several apartments or rounded houses that have survived, despite being subjected to years of neglect by their owners.

In its beginnings, the neighbourhood maintained the craft of the city limestone quarry, which led to the location of ovens along certain streets. Later on, in the twentieth century, textile factories were installed and provided jobs for

workers, which gave rise to the development of housing with particular characteristics (“vecindades”), primarily so that people could be close to their workplaces. These houses have very small rooms and are connected by patio-corridors. In this neighbourhood, damage and decay is present in the buildings and streets.

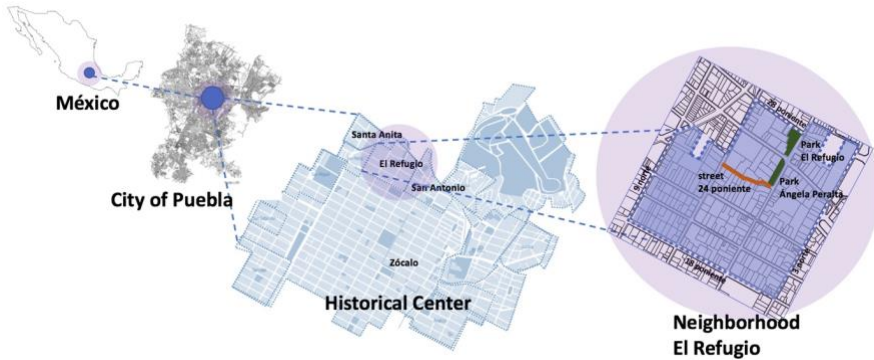


Fig. 1. Macro and micro location maps of Barrio del Refugio, historic centre of Puebla. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

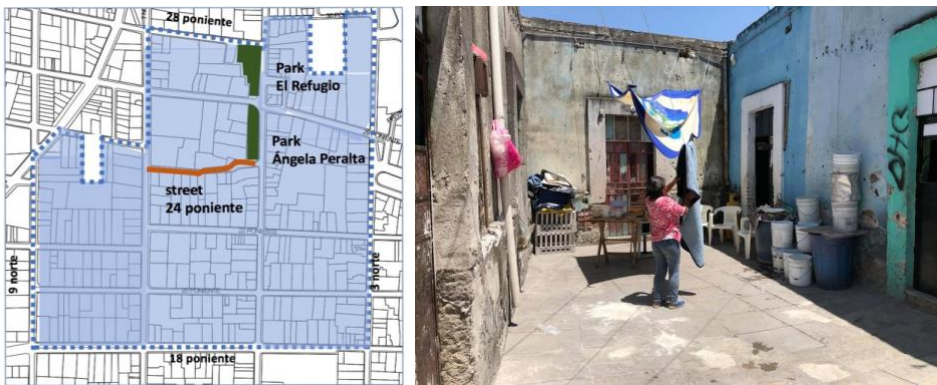


Fig. 2, 3. Map of Barrio del Refugio indicating the location of 24 Poniente Street, and second patio of Vecindad El Pocito. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

On festive days, a considerable number of graffiti artists arrive to paint the walls and make a series of drawings in different buildings, so today the neighbourhood is known for the appearance of national and international artists, who may or may not be accepted by the locals, depending on the views of each inhabitant. The neighbourhood has a high population density, with a significant number of children, and the appropriation of space is different from other places within the same polygon and other peripheral sectors of the city. The population density of the area is surprising, given the claims made by some administrations

that these are “empty” places. During the eighties, due to the population density, the neighbourhood was characterized by the violence of gangs (“bandas”), including in-fighting, and so the rest of the city took on a negative image which has prevailed over time.

On the other hand, there has been constant migration to the neighbourhood and some areas of the historic centre for eighty years. People come from other states to settle in El Refugio, San Antonio, and similar neighbourhoods to obtain better life opportunities, working as street vendors offering different products in the main streets of the first block of the city.



Fig. 4, 5. 24 Poniente Street, used as a soccer field, 2016. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio



Fig. 6. Altar to the Virgin of Refuge at 24 Poniente Street, 2016.
Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

All of the above conditions refer us to the term “aesthetics of the everyday”. Although the architectural, urban, and social conditions that exist in the neighbourhoods are considered by outsiders to be negative and undesirable, for the inhabitants – in this case for children and adults – they are special, and are conducive to the development of their activities at different times of day and night.

Notions of the beautiful and the not beautiful tell us something about an aesthetic that characterizes the streets and neighbourhoods of the northwestern neighbourhoods of the historic centre of Puebla. From the perspective of everyday aesthetics, authors such as Mandoki (2006) argue that aesthetics should not only deal with the beautiful but also with everyday imperfections, referring to the relationship that the subject establishes with the object:

Therefore, it is possible to follow the much more coherent direction of Dewey and affirm that beauty is not a quality of the objects in themselves, but an effect of the relationship that the subject establishes with the object from a social context of particular valuation or interpretation. It is sensitivity that discovers his objects and sees in them that she has placed, not according to her whim, but according to her biocultural, perceptual, and evaluative conditions (Mandoki, 2006, p. 20).

This relationship involves dealing with the fear of the undesirable (Romero, 2013) – aesthetics must also deal with what is disgusting:

The first fear that must be overcome is that of the undesirable. This consists of wanting to deal only with the good and beautiful things. For Mandoki, aesthetics must also deal with what is disgusting. In fact, this fear “prevents us from conceiving the inverse of Aristotelian catharsis, aesthetic poisoning, which is as relevant or more relevant than purification” (Romero, 2019, pp. 31–32).

Mandoki and Romero note that daily impurities are also incorporated into what we remember:

Another fear, closely related to this, is that of everyday impurities, with the character of being unpleasant and not worth remembering. However, Mandoki proposes that “we must incorporate not only the pleasant but also its opposite, the unpleasant, since far from diverting us from our objective, it will allow us to include all the bodily senses in the aesthetic dimension, not only sight and sound, but also all the attractive or repugnant categories that concern sensitivity” (Romero, 2019, p. 32).

The daily practices of children who live in old, un-touristy neighbourhoods, such as playing soccer in the street, going up and down rooftops, sitting on the sidewalk to pass the time, moving within and outside their neighbourhoods, can be studied from the perspective of the richness and complexity they bring to social life.

It is not only possible but essential to open aesthetic studies – which has traditionally been restricted to art and beauty – towards the richness and complexity of social life in its different manifestations. That is the prosaic: simply, everyday aesthetics. This survival of aesthetics is expressed in a thousand ways, from our way of living, in language and bearing, our way of dressing and eating, of worshipping deities or personalities, of legitimizing power, celebrating triumph or remembering the dead; but the fundamental role that aesthetics has in our daily lives is exercised in the construction and presentation of social identities (Mandoki, 2006, p. 9).

Romero (2019, p. 34) claims that this totalizing way of understanding everyday aesthetics can be systematized in the following terms:

1. Formal object: aesthetics, understood as a theory of sensitivity.
2. Material object: the everyday, understood as the space in which the aesthesis of the subject unfolds.
3. The objective is to study the aesthetic that is already present in the subject's daily behaviors and structures.
4. A normative purpose is not required in everyday experience because the former is already considered to be aesthetic.

THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN SOCIAL PROJECTS

According to Espinar (2003), the participation of children in social projects is important, not only to guarantee their growth and development, but also to incorporate a different perspective on reality, where they themselves can act and provide concrete solutions to the problems that affect them.

In 1997, Francesco Tonucci presented the concept of “the city of girls and boys”, which draws on parts of the Convention on the Rights of the Children and has as its main objective

to give children back the possibility of leaving home alone to live with their friends the fundamental experiences of exploration, adventure and play (2015, p. 10).

In 2017, stemming from Tonucci's proposal and various joint initiatives between teachers, educators, psychologists, architects, designers, and artists, the Ludantia association emerged in Spain. Among its other activities, this association held the First Biennial of Education in Architecture for Children and Adolescents (Ludantia, 2018). The proposals presented in the four categories of Ludantia were based on the premise that professionals, who may or may not be teachers, would work alongside children and adolescents to improve the social

and spatial conditions of their immediate environments, including the school environment, such the classroom or courtyard, and urban improvements at different scales, from the street or block, to the neighbourhood, city, or even landscape.

As a formal or non-formal educational process, child participation is seen as a knowledge construction process that can be viewed from two perspectives. The first is that of the researcher, who makes a contribution to his discipline; the second is that of the people who have interacted in the processes, and operates at an individual and social level, producing collective benefits.

One specialist, Santiago Atrio (2020), president of the Scientific Committee of Ludantia, notes that, with the relationship between architecture and childhood created through educational projects, “the important thing is not to talk about spaces, it is to talk about methodologies”.

The possibility of collective work between groups of volunteers and children in vulnerable environments, where public policies are lacking, can promote improvements in public spaces, providing opportunities for play and coexistence, while also presenting better expectations for the future, through non-formal education whose systemic orientation “reinforces openness to the environment” and implies “a strong demand for a relationship with the social context” (Vázquez, 1998, pp. 2, 9).

Unlike the various institutional initiatives of local authorities in European cities, which have defined budgets and work within government plans, Latin American neighbourhood initiatives begin with self-managed processes and limited economic resources. Without being part of the plans or programmes of government, they maintain their playful character and place a value on the free time and leisure of minors.

Even in recent years there has been discussion about whether “the magnitude of this inequity tells us about children who, more than ‘vulnerable’, are seriously violated in their right to develop all their human capacities” (Gaete, 2018). This is how Joaquín Gaete writes about the need for cultural change necessary in the current education and care of children:

Talking about “children with vulnerability” connects us with an emotionality of compassion, certainly, but the compassion that one feels towards the fragile, weak, needy subject. The poor thing. One who requires our beneficence (“benefits”). On the other hand, talking about children who must face adversity connects us with another type of compassion: the one that one feels with the hero who “has not had it easy.” That he has had to fight against a difficult situation. This new emotionality (real outrage) will be the most reliable sign that we have made the required cultural change: solidarity to eliminate the villain (Gaete, 2018).

The idea is that this process, child participation, also contributes to the recognition of the social diversity that characterizes places such as historic centres. Initiatives are proposed that advocate the arrival of idealized inhabitants, with economic solvency, that leave aside the original inhabitants and migrants who seek employment and education options for their children, but it is important to revalue the qualities that public and semi-public spaces provide to children and adolescents in their growth and life expectancy.

The historic center of the city is a place where children could live well, thanks to the pedestrian areas, thanks to the squares and small squares, the gardens and monuments, the fountains, and the urban structure itself, which lends itself perfectly to movement. and the game (Tonucci, 2015, p. 104)

Returning to authors such as Espinar (2003), the epistemological concept that “explains the nature of child participation” has made great advances, but continues to be developed, with the understanding that we can now speak of “several childhoods.” This understanding recognizes the diversity within childhood and the active role that minors should have, as subjects of law, and sees childhood outside of the limited perception of adult centrism, as more than simply a phase prior to obtaining legal citizenship. As Lucía Rabello de Castro argues:

Childhood, allegorically, represents the redemption of the present, to the extent that it reorders the world according to desire, establishing alliances not with what is given to it (by the adult), and in the way in which it is given, but according to an interior, internal order, given by the prior to voluntary memory. Thus, “she makes history from the residues of history.” In this way, childhood is becoming, not what is already known to be, or what was, repeating history, but “getting rid of it,” from its game that petrifies the possibilities of the present (2001, pp. 48–49).

In recent years, Dr. Angela Million, from the Technical University of Berlin, and a multidisciplinary team of researchers from various European countries have studied the relationship between educational institutions and what they define as “learning environments,” which are places beyond the classroom that influence the educational development of children. Among other conclusions, they highlight the value of what they define as “leisure-time learning environments,” where leisure, peers, and the means with which they communicate “complement and extend the learning experiences of the built environment of children and youth beyond family and institutionalized educational settings” (Million et al., 2019, p. 134).

THE CHILDREN AND RE GENERA ESPACIO (RGE)

The children within the neighbourhood (“barrio”) can be divided into two different groups. The first group of children were born in the city of Puebla, and are therefore native to the neighbourhood; their parents and grandparents have lived in El Refugio for many years, and they are the ones who carry the weight of everyday and festive practices, the material and intangible cultural heritage. The second group are those who have migrated to the neighbourhood in recent years (since 2016) and who usually have to help support their parents and large families; they must perform tasks at home from an early age and they enter the workplace through accompanying their parents.

The group RGE started to work actively in the neighbourhood in the summer of 2012. Some projects were initiated with adults and seniors in public spaces and neighbourhoods of the north-west side of the historic centre, such as Santa Anita and San Antonio, areas very close to each other but separated by the neighbourhood “El Refugio.” One year later, RGE began to work on projects with children. This had not been the primary objective but, just as we connected with adults in the other neighbourhoods, it became important to socialize with the children due to their enthusiasm for the proposed activities, and they soon began to make their own proposals too.

At the time, the first group of children (native to the neighbourhood) attracted attention by the way they appropriated the streets throughout the day. They did this in many different ways, but mainly through games: soccer, marbles, jumping rope, running games, sitting on sidewalks, climbing rooftops. Sometimes they were accompanied by adults, but the majority of them displayed unusual attitudes that made us focus even more on activities with them for a prolonged period (2013 to 2019). The children were engaged, creative, and incredibly open with the adults who visited their neighbourhood.



Fig. 7, 8. Children playing marbles and jumping rope, 2016. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio



Fig. 9. Children from El Refugio at FabLab Ibero, 2016. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio



Fig. 10. Children newly arrived to the neighbourhood El Refugio at Vecindad del Pocito, 2016. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

We engaged the children in play activities, and so this contact became enjoyable for them. We noticed that, from eleven or twelve in the morning, they moved to different places in the neighbourhood, some accompanied by siblings and others independently. While both groups of children spent a lot of time on their main street, only the first group of children (whom we had met in 2013) also visited a nearby field in San Antonio to play soccer (which is a site of barren land on 24 Poniente Street).

On the contrary, since 2016, the second group of children – who concentrated exclusively on the housing area – played more or less inside the courtyards, and it was difficult for them to move to other spaces. A difference

between the two groups stemmed from their origins: the first group was continually active and at times had negative attitudes towards the youngest and towards newcomers. Foreigners do not signal security for the inhabitants, so parents do not allow their children to play with them and somehow the children perceive a certain distrust.

At nightfall we began to realize that, as during the day, there was an intense activity of children and youth in the street known as 24 Poniente, but also in other spaces that are defined by their presence, such as 22 Poniente Street and some nearby parks like El Refugio and Ángela Peralta. However, activities also took place across other nearby spaces to the east, such as Cancha de San Antonio (a soccer field), and, to a lesser extent, to the neighbourhood of Santa Anita to the west.

WORKING METHODOLOGY

As has been commented, RGE is a team that consists mainly of architecture students from BUAP and volunteers from different disciplines who have developed initiatives since summer 2012 within three neighbourhoods (“barrios”) of the north-west historic centre (San Antonio, El Refugio and Santa Anita) and, since 2018, in a neighbourhood in the east, Analco. Various urban and architectural projects have been conducted with the participation of the local population.

Alongside the constant activity is the gradual connection with the community, who have allowed us to understand the area’s dynamics in terms of its daily life, religious festivities, events around the local saint festivals, the December festivities such as Christmas “posadas,” and masses to honour the virgin of Guadalupe. Since 2012, a narrative has been built, based on the residents’ stories, that has taught us about the problems of the neighbourhoods and helped us to plan strategies and joint activities with them. We have been allowed to learn the history of the neighbourhoods but also family and life stories. We must recognize that, for the RGE group, these participatory processes have generated empathy with the residents that goes beyond the bounds of academic work, and listening to personal stories has allowed us to better understand the problems of the place. As Ortiz and Millan (2019) point out, the role of storytelling helps to foster empathy, communicate the meaning of complex experiences, and inspire action.

Unlike the projects that arise from the things that specialists consider to be important, the dialogue with the residents and their storytelling has allowed diverse initiatives to be generated. Activities have been carried out with the local population in accordance with the requests of children and adults, and have been organized by volunteers through collaboration. These include marble tournaments, the promotion of games in the street and in patios, such as jumping rope,

dollhouse workshops, and even an urban garden at Vecindad del Pocito. Thus, initiatives have been generated that were not originally planned and that have been a joint learning experience for the RGE group and the residents. As Ortiz writes:

Nonetheless, the capacity of non-planners for storytelling, their imagination, and the role that non-discursive stories play is often overlooked. This shows the need to innovate on how to amplify the potential of storytelling and resonates with my own interest in using storytelling and urban narratives as a strategy of co-creation to seek cognitive justice and decolonise planning (2022, p. 406).

The neighbourhood of El Refugio has rarely been subject to any governmental intervention and has deteriorated over time. As an interdisciplinary group, carrying out urban-architectural and social projects in conjunction with the community is one of the primary objectives. These are vulnerable groups who live in heritage environments that are not very touristic, and so investments in the area are hard to come by. The college group could therefore make a contribution, improving some of the difficulties, with projects including “Bolsa de Color,” an urban furniture development with FAB LAB Ibero (a digital manufacturing laboratory of the Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla), the bailment of a vacant lot, and by improving children’s access to play, such as building swings in the Ángela Peralta Park.

URBAN MODELS AS TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

During 2014 and 2015, urban models were used as tools for understanding the occupation of public spaces by children in the neighbourhoods and blocks where they live, through a large format plan of the blocks in El Refugio with drawings of the façades in each block that served as a stage to place photographs taken by the children with disposable cameras, and with the help of college students and the RGE group, of those spaces used most frequently. There was a concentration of photographs taken near 24 Poniente Street, the parks, and the temple Nuestra Señora del Refugio, which tells us that the children frequent spaces near their homes.

Another urban model that was developed during a scientific summer programme in 2015 allowed us to know, through colouring-in, the activities that children perform in the public space – primarily, soccer for boys and playing with dolls for girls. Equally, it was revealed that the lack of cleanliness in the streets and the abandoned houses concern them, and they also mention playing volleyball, a game called “Tazos” (also known as “pogs” or “flippos” in other countries) and, to a lesser degree, helping their fathers to sell products.



Fig. 11, 12. Children working on urban models on the floor, 2019. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio



Fig. 13, 14. Children working on a model block, 2015. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio



Fig. 15. Drawing made for the “urban block” model by students of the scientific summer programme, 2015. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

Table 1. Activities conducted in the public spaces based on the “block” model, scientific summer programme 2015.

Selling things	Playing cards	Throwing garbage	Playing with my cousins
Playing marbles	Running in the street	Playing	I like my house
Playing soccer	They beat them up	Playing volleyball	Garbage
Spending time with my friends	I sing “Las Mañanitas”	Soccer	Playing “tazos”
Playing soccer	Burglars	Talking to my parents	Playing soccer
Seeing other kids play	They are cowards	Expensive	Garbage
Playing soccer	Playing	Graffiti	I play wrestling
Sweeping	Talking to my boyfriend	Playing with dolls	Soccer
Marbles and “tazos”	They are cowards	Dancing	Soccer
Throwing garbage	Spending time with my friends	Treats them badly	I hit the dogs
Soccer	Abandoned houses	I tell them curse words	Abandoned houses
Soccer	Playing marbles	Playing with dolls	I throw rocks to the teacher
Making parties	Playing	Playing soccer	Play, home, throw garbage
Boyfriend	Futbol	Visiting my friends Mayra and Fer	Selling
Day of “Señora del Refugio”	“Tazos”	Playing futbol	Playing soccer
Spending time with friends		Playing	Playing at my house
Going out to sell and throw garbage	Playing with dolls	It is dirty and ugly	Holes are made in the street in front of my house and people throw garbage
Playing soccer			

Source: authors' elaboration.

THE URBAN NIGHT AND CHILDREN IN NEIGHBOURHOODS ("BARRIOS")

The ability to understand how the space is occupied during the night first developed through the visits and gradual activities that allowed us to experience the historic centre of Puebla in different schedules and temporalities, and to gain a knowledge of quotidian life in the neighbourhood at different times between 2013 and 2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic, only a few sporadic visits were possible.

A second stage (2019) of the study of the night was conducted in a more formal manner through work with the institute of Geo Architecture of the Université de Bretagne Occidentale and Dr. Edna Hernández. We explored the public space in the historic centre and the nearby neighbourhoods of San Antonio, El Refugio, Santa Anita, and Analco, and used methodological tools such as questionnaires on mobility, exploratory night talks, mental charts, surveys and semi-structured interviews. Activities such as "La ciudad de Puebla de Noche, escenarios y prospectivos" (The city of Puebla at night, scenarios and prospects), "Observaciones en veranos científicos" (Observations from scientific summer programmes) and "La noche urbana con perspectiva de género" (The urban night with a gender perspective), among others, have allowed us to gradually develop our study, though we have yet to publish the results.

Among the main activities we developed as Re Genera Espacio was the projection of films, an activity called "Cine en tu barrio" which, with the use of a projector, a computer, and some seats, served to create a tiny movie theatre in a parish room. Later, during 2016, we moved to 24 Poniente Street and also to a housing courtyard. The films were projected on the walls, and this evening activity was well received by the children, who asked us to bring some of their favourite themes or films.



Fig. 16. Presentation of "Pablicha San Telmo" activity, 2019. Photo Source: Re Genera Espacio



Fig. 17, 18. “Cine en tu barrio” in 24 Poniente Street at the corner with Ángela Peralta Park, 2019. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

The population of the neighbourhood has allowed us to know their traditions regarding the festivities of “La Virgen del Refugio,” which takes place every 4th July. Children are present for the altar arrangements – although this is mainly done by adults, one or two children always appear to help. Other street ornaments are the colourful banners which highlight the street’s small religious altar (“el altarcito”).

The evening before the festival, at 11pm, it is normally children who carry the picture of the virgin from the street altar. People sing “Las mañanitas” accompanied by mariachi, if someone has sponsored the music. With the accompaniment of music, the procession walks to the church of “El Refugio,” located two streets ahead, in a night route that returns to the starting point. With the picture on the altar they start to serve “tamales” (a traditional Mexican corn-based dish), coffee, or the meal that each family decides they can contribute.



Fig. 19, 20. Festival of “Virgen del Refugio,” 2019. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio.

During the December festivals, the “posadas” that take place at night are most eagerly awaited by children. Here we contributed to the group celebration through providing “piñatas” full of toys and candies for the girls and boys occupying 24 Poniente Street and the main courtyard of the “vecindades”, at about 8 p.m.

Another phenomenon we have observed is that, in the nearby temples, such as San Antonio, Santa Anita, and the temple of El Refugio, the congregation of San Felipe Neri organizes the nine “posadas” that take place for nine days every year between 16th and 24th December, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. In these three neighbourhoods, at a certain time in the evening, children hurry to where “aguinaldos” (bags full of candies, cookies, and whistles) are being handed out, or in anticipation of the breaking of the “piñata.” It’s curious to see children with their mothers and fathers walking to these three temples, and they will not be in the neighbourhood at these times if you look for them. In the case of the children from the first group, those who were born in the neighbourhood, they always walk in groups from one place to another, worrying about the schedules. The children of 24 Poniente Street commonly move alone or in groups.



Fig. 21. “Posada” in 24 Poniente Street, 2017. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio



Fig. 22, 23. “Christmas posada” in the San Antonio temple (atrium), 2017.
Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

As mentioned, the children’s ages range between 6 and 12 years. Currently, in 2022, some of them have become teenagers and adolescents, while the youngest are still children.

Even so, the child population predominates in the study area. Some streets enjoy certain characteristics that make them peculiar, as is the case with 24 Poniente Street, a short street delimited by two others, so there is no continuous traffic, making it the exclusive space of its residents. Another characteristic of this street is that, unlike the rest of the historic centre, it is not straight, and its slight curvature makes us think that it is an old line that was respected when starting to erect the buildings.



Fig. 24. Night displacements during the Christmas “posadas” days, 16th to 24th December, 2018.
Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

These conditions mean that, at nightfall, the public space becomes a meeting point for children, who inhabit 24 Poniente Street in particular. Before the pandemic, it was a place full of life. When everyone thinks that the children should be sleeping, they organize something called “Bolsa del Diablo” in the street, moving between various parts of the city.

Night movement by bicycle to other parts of the historic centre takes place between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. From the age of 8 years old, some children move to the centre by themselves. Night trips are made on foot by young people and children to other sectors of the historic city between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. This depends on the seasons, such as Christmas and Day of the Dead, an immensely popular celebration in Mexico.

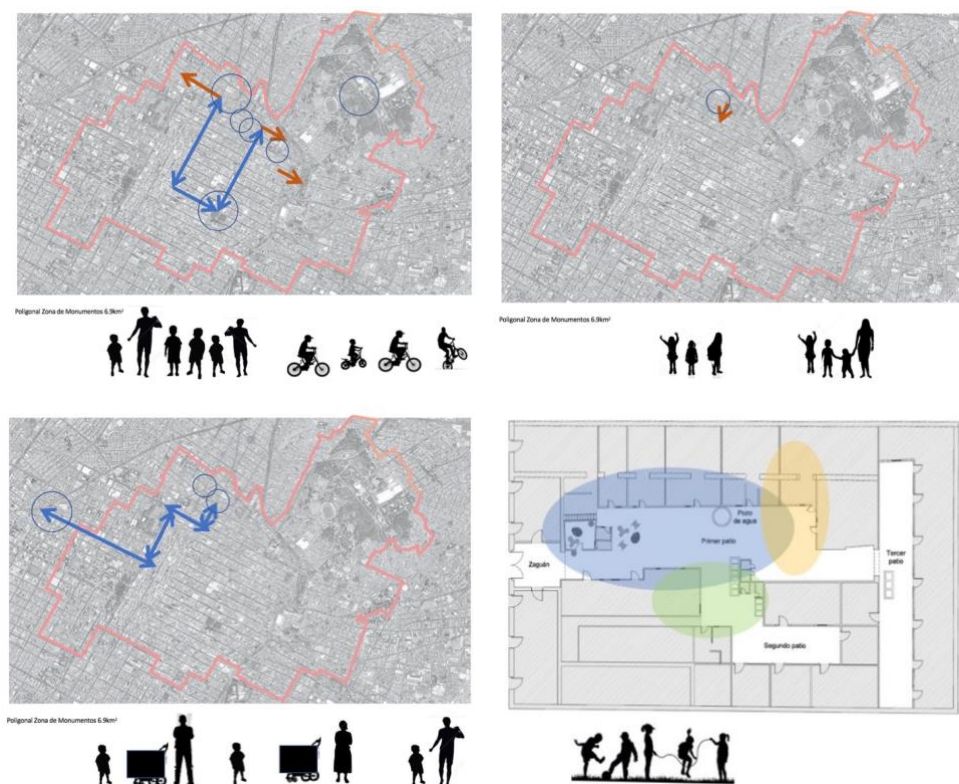


Fig. 25–28. Comparison of displacements between children born in El Refugio and children who have recently arrived to the place, 2019. Photo source: Re Genera Espacio

In the case of girls, the journeys are shorter, and they only go out at night with company. If it is necessary, they run to the nearest store. Other types of night walks observed are those performed by non-local children for the sale of “elotes” and “esquites,” two traditional dishes made from corn, which take place on foot as the children accompany their parents to work (the sale of corn occurs between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.).

Night trips to convenience stores like OXXO, a Mexican business like 7-Eleven, or the nearest store, depending on the distance, are made with adults accompanying. During the night, the patio becomes the play and workspace, because children can no longer go beyond the family shelter.

In the following table we can see how both groups of children perform certain activities, depending on whether it is day or night. For children who were born in the neighbourhood, their list of activities is much longer, ranging from playing in the streets to helping in housework with activities such as taking out the trash. In the case of children, who come from the Mazateca region, their movements through public spaces are restricted both during the day and at night

and they only go out to buy products at the nearest store or accompany their parents to work. For migrant children, the patio becomes the most important place for socialization – since it is busy during the day and at night, it is the safest space for them.

Table 2. Comparison chart about children’s activities during the day and night at Barrio El Refugio.

Children from Barrio El Refugio		Migrant children from Mazatec region	
During day at street	During night at street	During day at street	During night at street
Soccer games, marbles, races, fights, cards	Soccer games, marbles, racing	x	x
Children’s meetings	Children’s meetings	Going from school to home	x
Going to grocery stores and local market (“Mercado de la 18”)	Going to grocery stores and local market (“Mercado de la 18”)	Going to nearby grocery stores	Going to nearby grocery stores
Going to school	x	x	x
Displacement to other neighbourhoods	Displacement to other neighbourhoods	x	x
Displacement to the city centre	Displacement to the city centre	x	x
Playing with dolls	x	x	x
Entering abandoned houses	Entering abandoned houses	x	x
x	Littering	x	Littering
Participation in patronal religious festivals	Participation in patronal religious festivals	x	x
Fights with other children	Fights with other children	x	x
Talking to their parents	x	x	x
Dancing	Dancing	x	x
Socializing with friends	Socializing with friends	x	x
Mistreating the dogs	x	x	x
Eating	Having dinner	x	x
x	x	x	Going to work with parents
Selling products	Selling products	x	x
Graffiti	Graffiti	x	x

Sweeping the streets	x	x	x
During day at yard (patio)	During night at yard (patio)	During day at yard (patio)	During night at yard (patio)
Soccer games	Soccer games	Soccer games	Soccer games
Playing with dolls	Playing with dolls	Playing with dolls	Playing with dolls
Eating	Eating	Eating	Eating
During day at park	During night at park	During day at park	During night at park
Playing on the swings	x	Playing on the swings	x
Graffiti	Graffiti	x	x
Soccer games	Soccer games	x	x
Going to parties	Going to parties	x	x
x	Going to the “luchas” (wrestling)	x	x
During day at vacant lot	During night at vacant lot	During day at vacant lot	During night at vacant lot
Soccer games	Soccer games	x	x
Making cardboard houses	Making cardboard houses	x	x
Playing hide and seek	Playing hide and seek	x	x

Source: authors' elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

The first group of children have grown up in heritage environments where the deterioration of buildings and lack of attention to public space is conspicuous. Despite that, they have other advantages, such as the trust of neighbours, the proximity to neighbourhood infrastructure such as parks and fields, as well as knowledge of similar groups in nearby neighbourhoods such as San Antonio, and their autonomy is guaranteed.

Furthermore, they have a vital knowledge of the area where they live, which allows them to move about without any problems. This gives them confidence – the public space is like a big patio for them; their houses extend towards the street. This group of children is well known for both their good and bad activities so it benefits them that when they move around the area, they are easily identifiable.

The characteristics of 24 Poniente Street allow them to stay for several hours: it is a street without cars, almost pedestrian, where is possible to sit on the pavements. Everyone is known to one another, by name or nickname. A high

sense of belonging is evident. The fact that the street is narrow allows the children to be visible and also provides a quick connection to the public spaces of the other two neighbourhoods, which can also be advantageous.

Among the second group of children, those who arrived from other parts of Mexico, a perception of insecurity about the neighbourhood is evident, which leads to constraints regarding whether they leave home in the morning or at night.

The difference between night and day does not exist in the first group of children. With the second group, the difference is that at night they must work. The marked differences of these two groups during activities held by Re Genera Espacio can be overlooked, although some differences always become clear. It is therefore necessary to consider new initiatives for those children who live in the neighbourhoods who have grown to become adolescents.

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