

Socio-Ethnographic experiences: Dwelling and imaginaries in Ciudad Juárez

Experiencias socio etnográficas: el habitar y los imaginarios en Ciudad Juárez

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Abstract

Dwelling and living along Mexico's northern border encompasses a wide range of experiences and life trajectories that residents adopt upon arriving or remaining in the area. These conditions are reflected in their everyday lives, where feelings, emotions, and ways of perceiving their neighborhood or residential complex correspond to the social, cultural, and urban worlds constructed in every corner of city life.

History, society, territory, and the physical environment are among the elements that intertwine when analyzing the act of dwelling and its relationship to imaginaries, architecture, and social relations. These connections make it possible to link residents' experiences not only with living in the city, but also with the ways in which they conceptualize it. Other factors such as population, age groups, length of residence, and housing are also considered in studying the social and ethnographic experiences that take place in a border locality like Ciudad Juárez.

In this context, the everyday perspectives of this northern Chihuahua city's residents shed light on their frameworks of action and the spaces where those actions unfold. The place itself acquires symbolic and emblematic value, representing the transfer of thought patterns and specific tasks that emerge from both the act of dwelling and the imaginaries tied to the daily lives of its inhabitants.

The methodological strategy of this study is based on a phenomenological approach that considers residents as actors who live in, occupy, and think about the territory they inhabit. This approach aims to recognize how they visualize their immediate surroundings, representing them through interviews, indirect observation during field visits, spatial mapping (cartography), and visual portrayals of their environment (photography). These methods allow us to describe, explain, and interpret the main social, ethnographic, and urban elements associated with the imaginaries of place.

Keywords: Border, ethnography, society, dwelling, imaginaries

JEL Codes: R, R5, R50

Resumen

Habitar y vivir en la frontera norte de México, representa todo un cúmulo de experiencias y trayectorias que los residentes asumen al llegar o permanecer en ella, condiciones que de alguna manera se retoman en su cotidianidad, donde los sentimientos, emociones, formas de ver su colonia o fraccionamiento corresponde a los mundos sociales, culturales y urbanos que se construyen en cada rincón de la vida ciudadana.

Historia, sociedad, territorio, medio físico son algunos de los elementos que se entrelazan cuando se analiza el habitar, y su relación con los



imaginarios, arquitectura, relaciones sociales, los cuales permiten vincular sus experiencias no solo de vivir en la ciudad, sino aquellas que se relacionan con los mecanismos de pensarla, población, grupos de edad, permanencia, vivienda son otros factores que se consideran en el estudio de las experiencias sociales y etnográficas que ocurren en una localidad fronteriza como lo representa Ciudad Juárez.

En este contexto, las visiones que se tienen en la cotidianas de los residentes de esta ciudad del norte de Chihuahua, permiten ver los marcos de acción y el espacio donde se realiza la misma, el lugar adquiere un elemento de simbolismo y emblemático representativo en el traslado de formas de pensamiento y tareas específicas que se derivan dentro de su habitar y el imaginario que se desprende en las tareas cotidianas de sus pobladores.

La estrategia metodológica que se utiliza en este estudio parte de un enfoque fenomenológico de considerar al residente como un actor que vive, ocupa y piensa el territorio donde se asienta para reconocer sus principales formas de visualizar su entorno inmediato y próximo, para poder representarlo por medio de sus conversaciones vía entrevista, así como la observación no directa por medio de recorridos de campo, la ubicación de su espacio (cartografía) y el retrato del lugar donde se desarrolla (fotografía) los cual nos permite describir, explicar e interpretar los principales hechos de carácter social, etnográfico y urbanístico relacionados con el imaginario del lugar.

Palabras claves: Frontera, etnografía, sociedad, habitar, imaginarios.

Código JEL: R, R5, R50

Introduction

Dwelling, living, occupying, and thinking the city leads us to understand the processes that take place within it, where residents assume a range of situations that manifest in different moments of their interaction with the urban territory expressing ideas, thoughts, interactions, and diverse ways of narrating their life trajectories in the place they chose to settle.

Faced with these dynamics, the urban territory

becomes a medium through which its inhabitants navigate various times and processes mechanisms of adaptation and socialization developed as part of inhabiting the city they selected, whether temporarily or permanently.

Perspectives on growth, integration, and adaptation are largely shaped by the intentions and objectives individuals had when choosing a particular urban area. The physical and social environment they expected to find has revealed different visions of the place they selected, individually or collectively, molded according to their needs.

The city as a geographic space that shapes actions and ways of being offers residents a mosaic of possibilities to pursue their goals, to interact (or not) with neighbors, and to form both subjective and objective ideas. These are some of the elements that drive the interest in exploring the experiences of city dwellers: children, adults, youth, men, and women, whose individual and collective stories reveal diverse perspectives on urban life. These stories also highlight the opportunities or lack thereof for defining, living in, or occupying the city, in light of economic, social, urban, ideological, political, and legal conditions, all of which contribute to shaping the cultural environment where they reside.

Thus, understanding the processes of adaptation and integration into the environment where people settle opens up possibilities for exploring the trajectories and experiences involved in inhabiting a neighborhood, community, or housing development, and for identifying people, places, and mechanisms that allow for the construction of various personal or collective definitions of the places they choose to live in. These conditions are deeply shaped by the physical and social elements that are built through daily life. From this standpoint, exploring the city's corners, interactions, and narratives allows us to examine the boundaries between individuals' actions and their thoughts each symbol, meaning, or testimony becomes part of the structure that emerges in the places where subjects live, experience life, and build meaning in relation to the urban space where they sleep and dwell each day.

Everyday urban life is a key element in this study. It serves to describe the relationships forged within the urban territory, where elements of architecture, urban planning, and society play central roles in understanding mechanisms of interaction

with neighbors, with "the other," and with the intersubjective boundaries that arise through human action.

These reflections on the city, space, and the relationships that residents establish daily guide us toward a theoretical connection between urban territory and ethnography, helping us describe the significant events that emerge in the corners of urban life. These may be neighborhoods established by long-term residents or housing developments occupied by groups with varying economic, ideological, and urban backgrounds, and most importantly, by the unique ways they live their experiences.

The narratives collected through interviews at different moments transport us into the situations residents live and interpret daily across their personal, family, or social timelines. In those places they have settled, they shape their own discourses another key component of this study, which stems from exploring and walking the city, encountering its elements, and uncovering the experiences of those who were born, raised, or have grown within it.

An essential element of this research is the exploration of a border city adjacent to the United States. This allows for an understanding of not only social and cultural realities and dynamics but also spatial, urban, and architectural aspects, among other dimensions. The concept of the border becomes a dynamic force in this study, drawing on a range of contributions and discussions developed over time to define a region whose geographic conditions allow for the emergence of unique, adaptive experiences.

Ciudad Juárez has been chosen, in the northern state of Chihuahua, because it is a city currently being lived in, and one in which we can identify various processes not only economic in nature, but also spatial, social, architectural, and urban which reflect the particularities of inhabiting this Mexican borderland. These processes allow us to observe how imaginaries are constructed and how specific experiences take shape among its residents.

The main objective of this paper is to explain the socio-ethnographic experiences in this Mexican border city, which help identify specific meanings and symbols at the socio-spatial level. These reveal a dynamic and ever-changing reality, as well as

the city's constants and territorial expressions, describing the everyday realities of this Chihuahuan locality, where contrasting moments have shaped its urban history.

The methodological strategy is based on a mixed perspective, primarily phenomenological in nature, drawing on the narratives of 26 young and adult residents of Ciudad Juárez to identify their experiences of dwelling in, occupying, and imagining the city. The methodology combines testimonies collected through field visits in neighborhoods and housing developments. Participant selection followed a non-conventional sampling approach, where randomness was a key criterion for choosing the individuals who would represent the focus of this study. A brief questionnaire was applied to these residents to explore variables such as their place of residence, their definition of the city as a lived space, and the symbolic elements that shape their imaginaries. In addition, photography and cartography were used as foundational tools to enrich the urban ethnographic account.

This study is organized around two analytical levels. The first is a theoretical stance, and the second explores the symbolic scenarios of Ciudad Juárez as central elements in the interpretation of its urban ethnography.

First level of analysis: territory, dwelling and imaginaries.

Starting from the notion that the city is a geographic space where its inhabitants carry out various activities concentrated in a specific territory, this section explores modes of mobility, interaction, and coexistence, as well as the trajectories traced by the city's residents. These concepts bring us closer to the everyday realities constructed by individuals, where the connections become dynamic through individual or collective processes that give meaning to their actions.

According to Rossi (2004:70), "the architecture of the city can be understood in two ways: in the first, the city resembles a great manufacture a work of engineering and architecture, more or less large and more or less complex, that evolves over time; in the second, we refer to more limited parts of the city, to urban facts characterized by their own architecture and therefore, their own form." Based on this reflection, the city can be approached both in terms of its urban expansion and through



concrete spaces that characterize it such as everyday life in a neighborhood or residential development. Rossi's remarks help us focus our study on dwelling, imaginaries, and urban ethnography, particularly in a locality of the northern border.

Urban borders become dynamic precisely when residents begin to understand their own environment. As Lezama (2002:380) puts it, "the structuring of everyday life through a pattern of regionalized relationships enables systemic integration, which, in its simplest form, consists of establishing relationships not directly between individuals, but between groups or systems of relationships that intersect across society." From this perspective, analyzing urban phenomena allows us to observe actions not only at the individual level, but also as group dynamics, where experiences of inhabiting the city are systematically woven into the urban environment.

At this basic level of understanding urban dynamics, we find the interplay between residents' stories, testimonies, and trajectories how they live in and occupy the city. This is the domain of imaginaries, dwelling, and ethnography the portraits that bring us closer to what Rossi and Lezama described, the territorial fields where the urban resident acts.

In this context, Prieto (2011:80) contributes to linking the discourse on the city with the authors mentioned above, stating: "space is granted by places; it is a gift that arises from a kind of creative generosity. Places not only provide a reference they also 'radiate' meanings that unfold in relations between things that can be measured." This view highlights the need to distinguish between those who dwell and occupy the city and those who imagine and define their experience of it.

To this, we add Narváez's (2011:23) observation: "ethnography holds that knowledge depends on real conditions and on the human being as a transforming agent of the world: it assumes that knowledge is not only contingent on the object being known, but also on the subject who knows a subject with a history, education, and embedded in a specific time and place. In short, a cultural subject who not only knows, but acts upon reality and upon themselves."

This perspective is crucial in analyzing the experiences of urban residents, as they are the ones who create and assign meaning, symbols, and

socio-spatial expressions. These, in turn, allow us to identify significant aspects of their daily practices. The lived space becomes vital as it reflects the act of dwelling, already defined and elaborated by the authors cited. Its importance lies in observing and visualizing the trajectories through which urban realities are constructed realities that may seem fleeting, but are quite the opposite: dynamic, enveloping, and nurturing of the human being who dwells in and imagines the city. This brings us to the imaginary that which first takes shape in the mind of the person who dwells in and thinks about the city. This is the frontier we must cross to understand the social, urban, and spatial context in which the urban subject is embedded, as it is ultimately this subject who creates their own mechanisms for perceiving their immediate and near reality.

Silva (2014:49) asserts: "The relationship between the imaginary and the symbolic in the city is a fundamental principle of its perception: the imaginary uses the symbolic to manifest itself, and when urban fantasy materializes in concrete symbols through rumors, jokes, the names of objects, or the branding of a place as a territorial site then urban citizenship expresses itself as an image of a way of being." These contexts prompt us to think of dwelling as the foundational action performed daily in urban spaces spaces inhabited by individuals and groups—where social action emerges and forms part of the broader connection among the urban processes unfolding in a given locality. Within these processes, urban reality asserts itself across the different scenarios that shape it.

Thus, the relationship between dwelling, imaginaries, and ethnography stems from the connection with place the area inhabited, and the perceptions constructed around the environment where residents settle. In this regard, it is worth highlighting Moreno's assertion (2015:258): "Dwelling is a process developed by individuals in the places where they live: home, city, workplace. Different interactions, positions, and practices (habitus) intertwine to channel each subject's mechanisms in the urban settlement they inhabit and in the group that surrounds them."

A significant part of this study aims to understand the processes that emerge in a border locality in the state of Chihuahua, northern Mexico, known as Ciudad Juárez. This aligns with Peña's statement (2015:241): "Identifying trends in urban development

within a border society also involves understanding the lifestyle and identity elements of a population influenced by the parameters of U.S. cities.”

The guiding research question emerging from these theoretical reflections is:

What are the spatial conditions that enable the connection between dwelling, imaginaries, and ethnography in Ciudad Juárez?

Second level of analysis: ethnography, dwelling and imaginaries in Ciudad Juárez

The history, demographic evolution, and urban growth of Ciudad Juárez have gone through various stages that make the city unique in how its human settlements have been constructed. These processes have fostered social and cultural dynamics that offer clear indicators for understanding its urban ethnography phenomena directly related to the concept of dwelling and, as Silva (2014) suggests, to imaginaries. These are shaped by perceptions of the environment, or as Méndez (2014:14) puts it: “Cities condense the traces of time, layering mark upon mark. Within them, place becomes a niche of distinct traces, different from other places. Then, the narrator recounts their experience of those places experiences that, once mentally and verbally processed, are reconstituted through imaginaries.”

Ciudad Juárez falls within this line of reflection, where imaginaries are directly tied to the construction of urban space, which has been continuously reshaped across the territory it occupies. For example, Peña (2016:162) states that “the processes of modernity in this city were set in motion with the arrival of the railway in the late 19th century, which influenced its layout, as expressed in its buildings and access to consumer goods. Between 1885 and 1888, the border customs office was built, and in 1909, a modern building was remodeled to host the meeting between Presidents Porfirio Díaz of Mexico and William H. Taft of the United States.” This reference highlights key aspects of how Ciudad Juárez’s urban space has been formed, featuring emblematic symbols that have evolved through the uses and practices embedded in the city’s foundational zones.

Moreno (2016:194) adds that “Dwelling is an expression of what humans do and think about their immediate environment. It allows us to visualize the relationships established with space and to understand the interactions generated in the urban setting where one lives interactions that give rise to basic meanings and interpretations of everyday life.” These two reflections help situate

Ciudad Juárez as a northern Mexican border locality, marked by decades of challenges and shaped by diverse physical, social, and urban conditions. Its territory, embedded within a landscape of natural and geographical contrasts, forms part of the mosaic and scenery that has been built up over time. Figure 1 presents two photographs that capture both the most recent edge of the city’s expansion and its starting point as seen from land-based approaches. These images portray a city located in the desert of the state of Chihuahua, whose earliest settlers established themselves in the northern part of what was originally known as Paso del Norte.

The society inhabiting Ciudad Juárez has asserted itself upon a rugged landscape flat in some areas, arid in others. The desert, along with the territorial meanings reflected in photos A and B of Figure 1, poses an ongoing challenge for its residents.

Figure 1. Physical space in Ciudad Juárez: where ethnography begins to reveal its element



Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2016) Aerial photographs in Fieldwork Archives.

The city’s borders are also felt internally in the composition of its territory. In Juárez, the physical conditions of the environment have imposed new ways of making the city. Housing developments are located both on flatlands and on hillsides, giving the city a landscape reminiscent of others in the north or south of the country. However, the physical and territorial nature of this Chihuahuan locality is distinct: its climatic conditions define the indicators through which dwelling becomes visible in the different types of housing constructed within it.

“Nature is wise,” goes a popular saying one that Ciudad Juárez might seem to contradict. Yet the physical elements of its geography have shaped particular lifestyles, as Peña (2015) has noted, and an identity that, together with the imaginaries

narrated by residents of these territories, reveals the conditions the city expresses to those born, raised, or newly arrived there. In this, Méndez (2014) and Moreno (2016) concur: place exerts influence, and territory organizes itself according to the events that unfold within it. Ciudad Juárez is no exception, as is evident in its urban images, presented in Figure 2. In Photo A, the territory imposes clear conditions on its residents, while in Photo B, the city's dispersion, expansion, and growth take on various geographical dimensions.

Figure 2 is part of an effort to observe the ongoing transformations in the city. The territory reflects demographic changes that have unfolded over time and through which the city has undergone substantive transformation. In each of its population centers, one can identify specific social, urban, economic, cultural, and architectural features, all shaped by lived experience. Recognizing and identifying these elements in Photos A and B reveals diverse and heterogeneous geographic mosaics, where the actions of the city's inhabitants generate distinctions that are expressed in the various ways of making the city in this border locality.

Figure 2. Territory and physical space in Ciudad Juárez



Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2016). Aerial Photographs in Fieldwork Archives.

Housing is another essential element of urban life in Ciudad Juárez. Its typology is expressed in varied forms, reflecting distinct lifestyles for the social groups that inhabit them. These range from self-built homes found in certain sectors of the population to residential developments whose architecture is immediately recognizable. The typologies are illustrated in Photos A, B, C, and D of Figure 3, which presents four types of housing associated with different social groups. In Photo A of this figure, we see working-class neighborhoods located in the northern part of the city, inhabited by low-income populations. Photo B shows housing for the working and middle class, consisting of multi-unit buildings duplexes or triplexes in some cases which resulted from government housing policies implemented during specific periods of urban growth, primarily in the 1970s and 1980s.

Photo C depicts a newer housing market intended for employees in the industrial sector, particularly those working in the maquiladora export industry. These are the so-called "social interest" homes included in federal programs offering credit to this type of workforce. Such housing developments were built in the southern, eastern, southeastern, and southwestern parts of the city. Photo D of Figure 3 highlights the spatial and social division among middle- and upper-income groups. It shows gated communities, which have contributed to the spatial and urban fragmentation of Ciudad Juárez since the 1970s.

As seen in Figure 3, housing is a key element for distinguishing the social groups and sectors of the population that have settled in Ciudad Juárez over time and across space. The modes of housing production are closely tied to the city's overall growth, with different population sectors establishing themselves throughout its territory. This has led to the construction of a social environment across this border locality, shaping the ways in which long-time residents and newcomers alike define various scenarios. In these, the perceptions, definitions, experiences, and meanings of inhabiting the city become significant.

To complement this concise overview of the ethnographic experiences of Ciudad Juárez's residents whose daily lives have been shaped by social, cultural, and economic events Figure 4 has been included. It represents emblematic aspects of life in various areas of the city, where factors

Figure 3. Urbanizable housing typology, spatial and social division

Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2016). Photographs from Field Visits.

such as violence, insecurity, and economic need reflect the constructed environment. These factors also shape opportunities for residents to generate additional income, particularly through informal markets or *segundas*, as they are commonly known in this border city. This activity has been growing in several neighborhoods and housing developments. The appropriation of nearby streets, parks, or plazas becomes part of the urban emblem of daily life and, therefore, of the imaginaries that emerge from these practices.

Figure 4 includes four photographs taken during various field visits in Ciudad Juárez between 2010 and 2016. From these, four images were selected for this study, each representing events situated within the symbolic and imaginary fields of the city.

For example, in this figure, Photo A depicts a figure from the Mexican Revolution: Francisco Villa, integrated into a mural alongside a border resident a young man from the *cholo* groups that

remained active during the 1970s and 1980s. The social dynamics established in the city during those decades allowed for such combinations in the neighborhoods, particularly in the area referenced in the image, Villas de Salvácar, where various social and urban conflicts have left a mark on the urban history of Ciudad Juárez. Photos B and C relate to events connected to violence and insecurity in the southern and eastern parts of the city, where urban spaces were significantly transformed. First, in relation to the messages derived from these acts (Photo B), and second, regarding the memory of the leaders or figures who guided these youth groups in the daily life of the Ciudad Juárez border region (Photo C).

Photo D presents a different but equally important aspect of urban ethnographic life: the informal market activity. In this case, public spaces are used by residents to meet economic needs, increase their income, and improve their living conditions. In this

Figure 4. Representative Expressions of the Urban Imaginary in Ciudad Juárez



Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2016). Photographs from Field Visits.

image, the street, plaza, or sometimes the park serve as emblematic elements that help contextualize the everyday imaginary of inhabiting the city. This imaginary acquires different connotations when considering the subjective or objective representations of Ciudad Juárez residents.

Regarding this theme of the urban imaginary, field visits, interviews, and direct observation of everyday life in Ciudad Juárez have allowed us to identify five important zones. These were defined based on visits conducted at different times to neighborhoods and housing developments that characterize this border locality, incorporating narratives from residents primarily young people, adults, homemakers, and students of both genders. The result was a social, spatial, and urban organization of the city's territory into these five zones, which were defined according to the urban growth of the city.

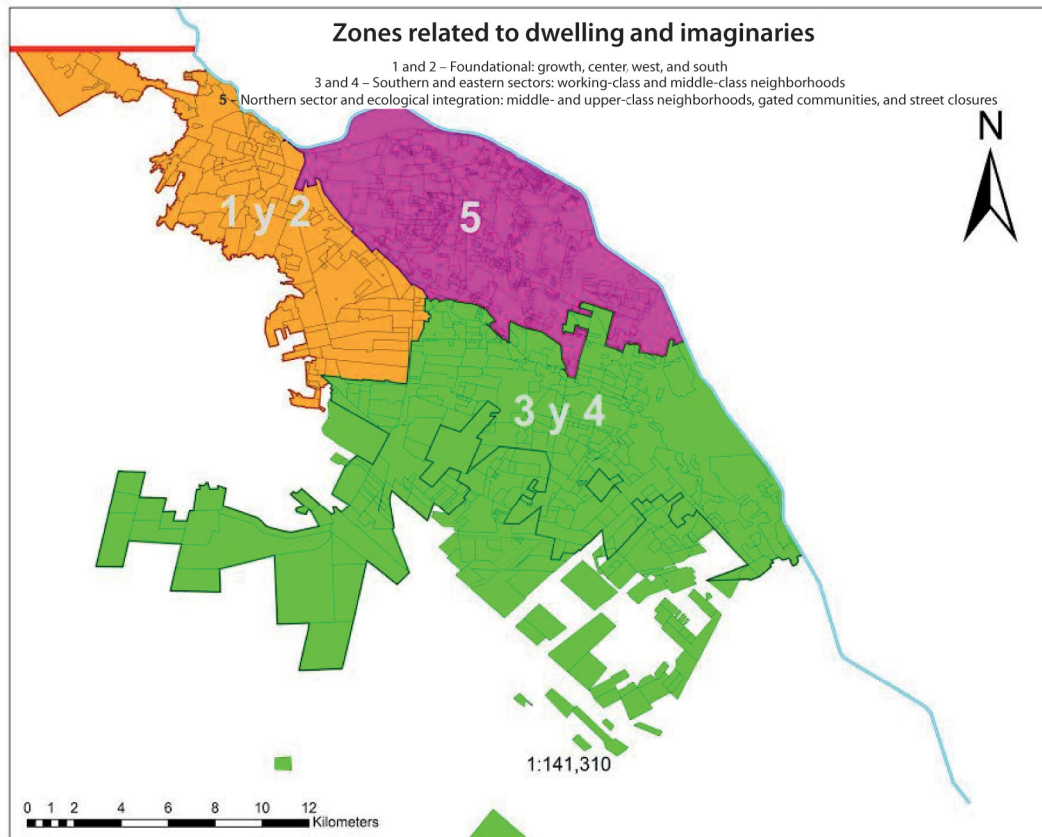
Zones 1 and 2 correspond to the foundational stage and are marked as numbers 1 and 2 on Map 1. Geographically, they cover areas of the city center, west, and part of the south, where the earliest

economic, urban, and architectural processes reflect the city's initial life. Zones 3 and 4 represent urban imaginaries and representations related to lower- and middle-income sectors in the southern and eastern parts of the city. Zone 5 corresponds to the northern part of the city, where economic groups are middle- and upper-class, with gated communities and a phenomenon resulting from the violence experienced between 2008 and 2012: the appropriation by residents of their neighborhoods through street closures.

Who are our interview participants?

After analyzing and interpreting the material collected during field visits, including aerial and ground photography, the next section of this study focuses on identifying the participants with whom we spoke and from whom we gathered experiences of inhabiting the city and the imaginaries of living in this border locality. Table 1 presents their demographic characteristics. Regarding gender, 12 are female and 14 are male. Most participants are aged between 18 and 22, followed by the 23 to 27 age group. These categories indicate a tendency toward

Map 1. Dwelling and imaginaries in Ciudad Juárez



Source: Design and preparation by Jonathan Olguín and Manuel Iván Casillas based on Ramón L. Moreno M. (2015). Field Visits

Table 1. Demographic Composition of Interviewed Residents

Gender	Frequency	Age	Frequency	Education	Frequency
F	12	18-22	11	Technical (degree)	1
M	14	23-27	6	High school	5
	26	28-32	4	Bachelor's degree	20
		33-37	2	Graduate degree (postgraduate)	0
		38-42	1		26
		43-47	2		
			26		

Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2015-2016). Field Work Archives.

young adults and adults in the early stages of life, with 4 participants in the 33 to 37 and 43 to 47 age groups. This diversity allowed us to understand their lived experiences and perceptions of inhabiting and occupying Ciudad Juárez an element that, as noted by Méndez (2014), Moreno (2016), and Peña (2016), reflects a diversified population in Ciudad Juárez while also positioning these individuals as urban narrators. Their definitions and discourses reveal what living in Ciudad Juárez means to these age groups.

Regarding education, most participants are currently pursuing or have completed university-level professional studies, which is an important factor in the construction of imaginaries and ethnographic representations. According to some participants, their discourse tends to favor the place where they live.

Table 2 shows two basic demographic variables: place of birth and intra-urban mobility generated

within these population groups. In the first case, 14 participants reported being non-native that is, not born in the city while the other 12 were born in Ciudad Juárez. This finding is important because it allows us to visualize two substantive ethnographic elements when understanding dwelling and the imaginaries derived from these qualitative variables. There is a similarity between natives and non-natives, which permits us to interpret that for those born in Juárez, their narratives are significant as they become natural observers of what happens in their city. Meanwhile, for non-natives, their discourse becomes attractive because it is their experience that guides the explanation and categorization of their own meanings.

The second variable included in Table 2 is intra-urban mobility, that is, the decision to change residence, neighborhood, or housing development. Of the 26 interviewees, 14 responded “Yes” to the question of whether they have lived in other areas of the city, while 12 responded “No.” This somewhat balances the residential changes the interviewees have experienced in Ciudad Juárez, as at least 14 affirmative responses contain narratives

defining particular areas of the city such as the city center, neighborhoods like Campestre, or gated communities, which some identified as their priority for intra-urban mobility.

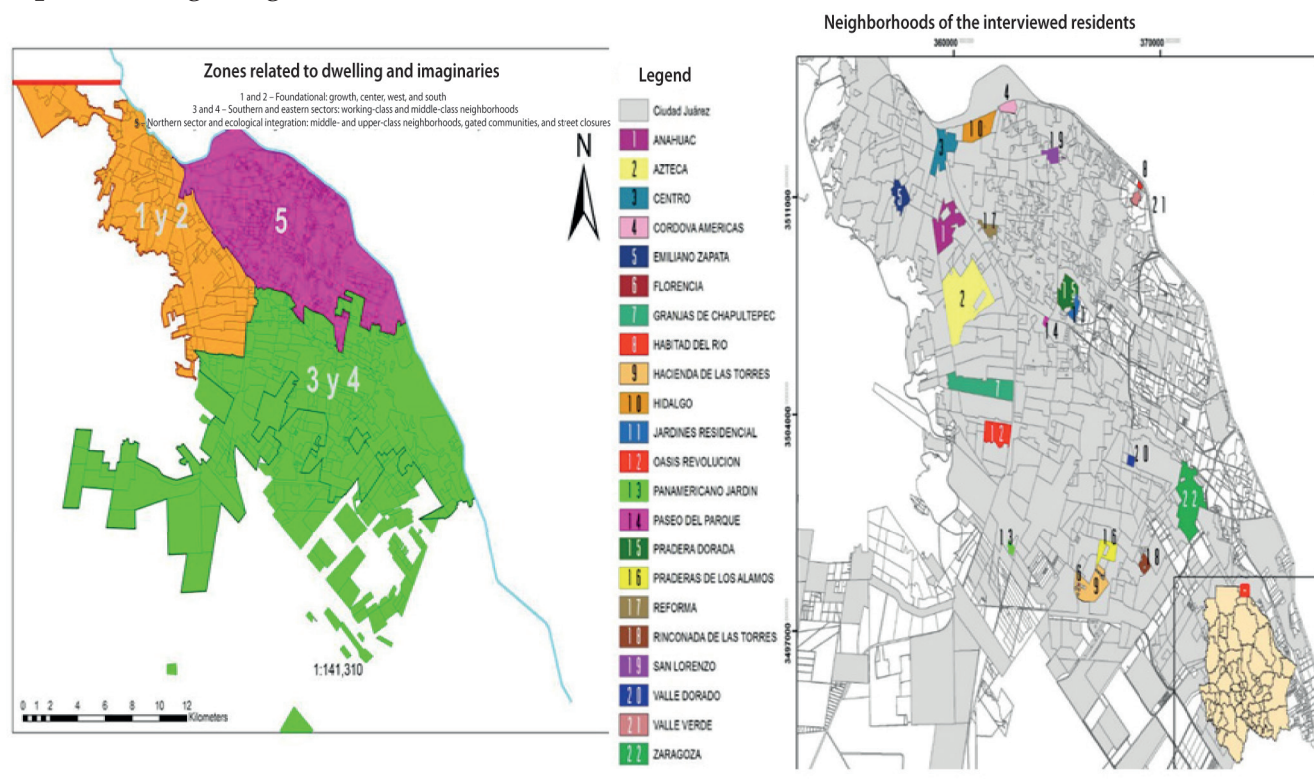
Table 2. Place of birth and intra-urban mobility

Place of birth	Frequency
Natives	12
Non-natives	14
	26
Intra-urban mobility	
Yes	14
No	12
	26

Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2015-2016). Field Work Archives.

The environment of our interviewees is important in describing dwelling and the imaginaries generated by living in Ciudad Juárez. This includes the narrative of occupying a place within their neighborhood or housing development and, additionally, the particular ability to connect this with the imaginary. Map 2 relates the places

Map 2. Dwelling, Imaginaries, and Place of Residence of Interviewees



Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2015-2016) Field Work Archives.

where the interviewees live with the classification of Ciudad Juárez as an imagined site, or as Silva (2014:29) states, “imaginaries as a public space rely on the construction of symbols shared through a social commonality and are thus a regulating force of collective life by assuming adherence to a system of values that, in turn, motivate actions.” For example, the description of the place where one lives is part of the existing relationship between dwelling and imaginaries. For the interviewees, this is an essential element in their daily life, as highlighted in their main narratives. Alternatively, as Méndez (2014:15) explains, “architecture is refigured when inhabited from the moment the act of dwelling is based on the reading of the building, which must respond to the occupant’s needs and expectations.”

Thus, environment and dwelling create meanings and process attitudes insofar as the resident explains the importance of the place where their daily life unfolds.

In the case of Map 2, the structure is evident given that the interviewees reside in 22 neighborhoods and housing developments in Ciudad Juárez. Of the 26 participants, 3 live in the same area Haciendas de las Torres (marked as number 9) which corresponds to zones 3 and 4 on the map of imaginaries and dwellings, zones with diverse land uses and territorial characteristics of Juárez.

Table 3 presents the statements gathered from the 26 interviewees, as well as the development of the corresponding categories related to place, dwelling,

Table 3. Speeches related to living, place and imaginaries

Interview	Narratives: Opinion about the place where they live	Categories related to dwelling, place and imaginaries.
1	It's a quiet place, but insecurity is hitting hard	Place
2	It seems a quiet place, not very unsafe, but the neighbors are not friendly	Place and dwelling
3	Me parece un lugar tranquilo, cómodo y seguro, cubre las necesidades	Place and imaginaries
4	It's quiet and pleasant place at the same time	Place and dwelling
5	It's a quiet neighborhood with people who've lived there a long time	Dwelling and place
6	Very quiet	Place
7	It's a quiet neighborhood but far from study centers	Place and dwelling
8	It's a place where you can do many activities	Place and dwelling
9	I like it	Imaginaries
10	Good place to live, I feel it could be better, there's tranquility	Imaginaries and place
11	It's a quiet area in terms of security, there's a police station	Dwelling and place
12	I like it a lot, one of the quietest places in the city	Place and dwelling
13	It's a very complete well-planned area, not very dense	Place and dwelling
14	Lacks social infrastructure	Place
15	Very quiet place	Place
16	It's a good place to live	Place
17	I consider it a quiet place, you can do desired activities	Place and dwelling
18	It's very pleasant, socially no issues, I don't interact with my neighbors	Place, dwelling and imaginaries
19	I don't like it, it's unsafe but that's where I live	Imaginaries and dwelling
20	I like the place because is not in a gated community	Place and imaginaries
21	It's fine, I like it	Imaginaries
22	I like it a lot	Imaginaries
23	Lacks more vegetation, pacing, space for bicycles	Dwelling and imaginaries
24	It's very livable, you can live well	Dwelling
25	It's a safe place	Dwelling and place
26	Needs more vegetation	Dwelling

Source: Ramón L. Moreno M. (2015-2016) Field Work Archives



and imaginaries.

Final reflections

Imaginaries are a substantial part that helps in understanding the experiences that the residents of Juárez have of their environment. The construction of meanings is part of those moments that aid in comprehending their relationship with the urban space, where daily actions unfold. The space is part of that intersection with inhabiting, where interactions are woven with neighbors, coworkers, friends, and other actors.

The urban ethnography described in this study allows us to visualize the conditions in which residents express their main ideas of city-making, how they inhabit it, and how they construct images and discourses shaped by the realities imposed upon them in the territory they settle in. The social construction they establish with the city consists of living and dynamic elements shaped by their neighborhood or residential area places where interactions take place. Therefore, the environment gains relevance in their immediate reality, where definitions, perceptions, and visions of the place are formed as part of those urban narratives produced both inside and outside of Ciudad Juárez.

Inhabiting is part of this framework of urban narratives. The discourses are grounded in a nearby reality in which a variety of elements are combined, mainly related to experiences and definitions of coexisting with neighbors, relatives, or friends. The environment envelops them in this magical way of crafting social and cultural actions and interactions. The meanings emerge as part of the expression of adaptation to the environment, in which individual and collective mechanisms are integrated.

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