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Will professionals 'return' to the centre of Latin America cities?

The residential aspirations of professional households in Puebla, Mexico

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of an investigation, via questionnaire, carried out among professional households in the city of Puebla (Mexico). Do their aspirations announce the emergence of a regeneration process in central neighbourhoods?

Many cities in developed countries have experienced or are experiencing the regeneration of their central neighbourhoods. The professional class which (re)appropriates these areas is also present in many Latin America cities, but the socioresidential regeneration process itself may not occur for several reasons.

The professional households do not appear to be interested in the old residential neighbourhoods because of the poor quality of housing and infrastructure, the social mix, the extremely high levels of pollution and (real or perceived) security problems. In Puebla, the professionals included in the survey did express an interest in 'living in the centre'. However, as is the case in other Latin American cities, they would rather choose to live in areas at the periphery of the old centre that are newer and in better condition.

Keywords: residential aspirations, central neighbourhood regeneration, Puebla (Mexico).

Resumen*

Este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación, vía la encuesta, llevada a cabo entre los hogares de profesionales en la ciudad de Puebla (México) ¿Anuncian sus aspiraciones la emergencia de un proceso de regeneración en los barrios centrales?

Muchas ciudades en los países desarrollados han experimentado o han estado experimentando la regeneración de sus barrios centrales. La clase profesional que se (re)apropia de estas áreas también está presente en muchas ciudades latinoamericanas pero el propio proceso de regeneración socioresidencial no puede ocurrir por varias razones.

Las familias de profesionales no parecen estar interesadas en los barrios residenciales viejos debido a la calidad pobre de vivienda e infraestructura, la mezcla social, los niveles sumamente altos de contaminación y los problemas de seguridad (reales o percibidos). En Puebla, los profesionales incluidos en la encuesta expresaron un interés de "vivir en el centro". Sin embargo como es el caso de otras ciudades latinoamericanas, ellos escogerían vivir en áreas de la periferia del centro viejo que son más nuevas y están en mejores condiciones.

Palabras clave: aspiraciones residenciales, regeneración del barrio central, Puebla (México)

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Introduction

In the middle of the 1950s, Rossi (1980) highlighted the importance of life cycle stages as stimuli for residential mobility. Fifteen years later, Brown and Moore (1970) added to these stimuli the transformations of the physical and social environment which, consequently, may no longer meet the needs, expectations and aspirations of households. Since these pioneering works, studies on residential mobility have put a greater emphasis on social and demographic changes (Podmore, 1998; Cheschire, 1995; Alonso, 1980), ethno-cultural differences (Filion, Bunting and Warriner 1999; Maclachlan, 1998; Stahl and Struyk, 1985 quoted by Strass man, 1990) and local conditions such as the economy (Rodriguez, 1999; Sands, 1990), the housing market (Gilbert and Varley, 1990; Deurloo, Clark and D'eleman, 1990; Hoogvliet, 1990), the credit market (Gilbert, 1993) and the role of government (Smith, 1996).

In this paper, I propose a model synthesizing these different stimuli. This model was used to interpret the results of a questionnaire-based investigation carried out among professional households in the city of Puebla, Mexico.

In the 1840s, the wealthiest Poblanos (residents of Puebla, Mexico), began to leave the central neighbourhoods for areas developed more recently. This residential movement, marginal until the 1940s, occurred along an axis extending from the centre (today's historic centre) towards the periphery. Small-scale industries remained as part of the urban fabric but later declined. During the 1990s, the state govern-

ment implemented an important revitalization project on the industrial wasteland located at the heart of the historic centre. This major intervention should have contributed to an increased interest of professional households in the central neighbourhoods and to the emergence of a process of regeneration. However, for many researchers (Jones and Varley, 1999; Ward, 1993; Monnet, 1994), residential regeneration is rare in Latin American cities because of their distinctive social and physical environment and because of specific local conditions. My study attempts to answer the following questions: what are the residential aspirations of Poblano professional households? Do these aspirations suggest the possible emergence of a regeneration process in central neighbourhoods?

The decision to move and regeneration of central neighbourhoods

The decision-making process regarding (voluntary) residential mobility is generally initiated by dissatisfaction with existing housing conditions and with the physical and social environment (Rossi 1980; Brown and Moore, 1970; Long, 1988), or by an increase in dissatisfaction (Clark and Onaka, 1983), or simply by the opportunity of being able to move to a better environment. The household has three options: moving; redefining its needs, expectations and aspirations about housing conditions or the environment; attempting to improve its surroundings. The decision will be primarily influenced by the current and anticipated household budget (Long, 1988). More than a simple factor of residential

consumption, as conceived by Rossi (1980), the available budget can actually help or hinder potential mobility. The stimuli that can influence the degree of satisfaction with existing residential location are divided into three categories: household characteristics, environment and specific local conditions (figure 1). We shall look at them and see how they can favour (or not) the regeneration of central neighbourhoods.

The stimuli
Household characteristics

There are four main household characteristics that act as stimuli. Many studies agree on the importance of life cycle or, more precisely, of

change through stages in the life cycle, as a primary stimulus of residential relocation (Rossi, 1980; Long, 1988; Bourne, 1981; Dieleman, 2001). Household formation, births, separations or loss of a spouse, constitute important stages because they influence the need for space and people's perception of their home's physical and social environment. The second defining aspect of a household is its socioprofessional characteristics, principally the number and category of professional workers in the household. A two-income household is less mobile because it has to minimize the potentially negative effects of a move, such as increased travel costs or making the workplace inaccessible for one of the spouses (Jarvis, 1999). The third household character
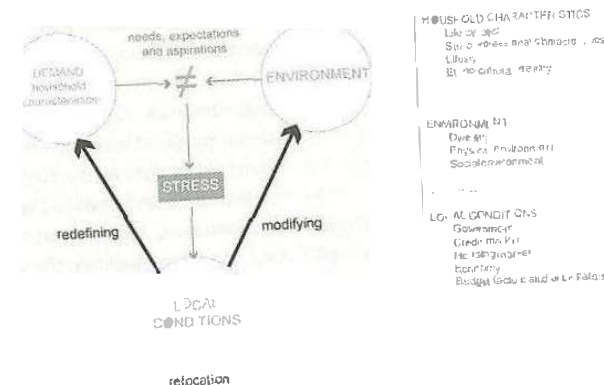

Figure 1. Stimuli for residential mobility.

istic is lifestyle. The ideal lifestyle of the North American middle class is often associated with 'a suburban house in the middle of a yard'. But for many households, lifestyle is more about work and leisure. Accessibility of workplaces and of cultural and entertainment facilities has to meet their needs, expectations and aspirations. Finally, there is an ethno-cultural character to the residential behaviour of households. They do not all respond in the same way to mobility stimuli (Stahl and Struyk, 1985 quoted by Strassman 1990). Values are linked to ethno-cultural identity and have an influence on individual choice (London and Palen, 1984; Rodriguez, 1999). The symbolic role of place is one such value and, for some researchers, so is the intergenerational cohabitation frequently observed in Mexico. Young people well into adulthood continue to live for a long period with their parents, thus delaying the creation of new households (Gilbert, 1993), and once they leave the family, they often set up house in close proximity to the parental home (MacLachlan, 1998).

The environment

The environment can alter and may no longer correspond to the needs, expectations and aspirations of a household (Brown and Moore, 1970). Dwellings deteriorate and technology becomes obsolete. The physical surroundings can be modified considerably by demolition or construction, by land-use changes or by the development of new transportation infrastructures (Brown and Moore, 1970; Dorn, 1991 quoted by Rodriguez, 1999; Savage, 1998 quoted by

Rodriguez, 1999). Equally, the arrival of a new population with different sociodemographic, socioeconomic and ethno-cultural characteristics transforms the social landscape. These transformations can trigger the relocation of households. For example, in the United States, racial tensions and increased crime rates in cities since the 1950s have had a marked impact on the real or perceived deterioration of the social environment of white middle class nuclear families who sought to relocate to the suburbs (Jackson, 1985).

Local particular conditions (distinctiveness)

As described in the introduction, local conditions include the particular conditions exogenous to the household and specific to a locality, such as the economy and housing and credit markets. The various stimuli presented so far do not have the same consequences everywhere. Local conditions alter the importance of various stimuli by directly or indirectly modifying the household budget or the fluidity of the housing market (Clark and Onaka, 1983; Deurloo, Clark and Dieleman, 1990; Strassman, 1990). Some local conditions facilitate the attainment of residential objectives; they can also motivate a household to review its needs, expectations and aspirations or to make adjustments within its surroundings.

Government involvement in the housing sector, through subsidised home ownership programs or through construction regulation, is one example of local conditions. In the United States,

federally sponsored programs favouring home-ownership of a single family dwelling have facilitated the exodus of the middle class to the suburbs (Jackson, 1985). The credit market is another example. Following the Mexican economic crisis of the 1980s, many middle class households had to accumulate more savings in order to afford property. With the decrease in accessibility[2] to and the high cost of credit, many households delayed or postponed relocation projects (Gilbert, 1993). Governments, financial institutions and private interests can influence volatility in the housing interests by affecting the number of new constructions started each year. In a tight market, many households will not relocate because they cannot find an adequate environment. In extreme cases of housing shortage, people will even postpone the creation of new households. Finally, the economy has an effect on the mobility rate, particularly for less fortunate households which, in periods of prosperity, have easier access to quality housing (Sands, 1990).

If there is a decision to move, the same stimuli that influenced the decision making process will also direct the household towards a new residential location. Only certain areas will be explored and considered, those known to respond to the needs, expectations and aspirations of the household in terms of housing characteristics as well as physical and social environments (Brown and Moore, 1970). How do those stimuli favour the regeneration of central neighbourhoods?

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2. Following the crisis, accessibility criteria to obtain mortgage credit or other types of credit were tightened.

The regeneration of central neighbourhoods

In the study of regenerated central neighbourhoods, many sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics emerge, such as smaller families, a higher than average level of education and employment in the quaternary sector. The latter includes activities in finance, real estate, research and development, professional consulting and other activities, as mentioned by Ley (1996), in government institutions, university education and health care. These characteristics reflect a demographic and economic evolution that has particularly affected a subgroup of the middle classes called the new middle class, or the new cultural class or the professional class, whose lifestyle is focused more on work and leisure than on family (Ley, 1996, Podmore, 1998).

The regeneration process affects mostly city centres where the economy is turned towards so-called quaternary activities (Smith, 1996; Smith and Defilippis, 1999; Alisch et al., 1990; Carpenter and Lees, 1995). The economic vitality of the Central Business District (CBD) is essential for the regeneration of nearby residential districts (often referred to as the inner city) that possess the most important architectural and urban qualities (Smith and Defilippis, 1999; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Dansereau and L'Écuyer, 1987). Soho in New York and Le Marais in Paris are well known examples. The presence of cultural, leisure and educational infrastructures in the centre also appears to be an important characteristic (Clay in Dansereau and L'Écuyer, 1987; Smith, 1996). These aspects of the physical envi-

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ronment meet the needs, expectations and aspirations of households that wish to 'be different' from the traditional suburban middle class (Podmore, 1998).

The process can be initiated by marginal investors, Rose's 'marginal gentrifiers', who, by their actions, stimulate successive waves of investment in central neighbourhoods (Rose, 1984; Smith, 1996). It can also result from new infill construction or redevelopment linked to rehabilitation or revitalization programs (Ley, 1996; Smith, 1996).

These descriptions of the characteristics of central neighbourhood regeneration are primarily based on studies carried out in Europe and North America.

What of Latin America?

For Jones and Varley (1999) and for Ward (1993), the regeneration process is uncommon in the old central residential districts of Latin American cities for several reasons: the poor quality of housing and infrastructure, the heterogeneous social environment, the extremely high levels of pollution and (real or perceived) security problems. These reasons explain, in part, the disinterest of professionals who tend to prefer areas outside the central core, areas which are newer and in better condition. But this is not specific to Latin American cities: not all households, despite their desire to live in central neighbourhoods, have an interest in heritage restoration or even in housing stock renovation.

Monnet (1994) added that most Latin American cities never witnessed a concentration of in-

dustrial manufacturing plants in the centre which, in North America and Europe, once decentralized, gave way to the development of the CBD. Instead, the CBD in Latin America developed along a line from the historic centre towards the outskirts. Also, on the one hand, very few public revitalization and housing rehabilitation policies seem to have enabled or encouraged socioresidential regeneration. On the other hand, the private sector shows little investment leadership in the historic core, the current owners often allow their buildings, and thus the city centre, to deteriorate. Finally, despite the importance of various service activities in a great number of cities, the majority of professionals are public service workers, which leads one to suppose that quaternary sector activities are less important and are not a characteristic of central areas (Ward, 1993).

Puebla (Mexico): An interesting case study

Puebla is a colonial city with an expanding service sector. This state capital, a regional centre located in the shadow of Mexico City, has 1.3 million inhabitants. Its architectural qualities led to its recognition as a World Heritage City by UNESCO in 1987. The 391 blocks of the historic centre cover an area of approximately 7 km² and include 2,691 16th to 19th century listed buildings, many of which were originally houses for the colonial Spanish aristocracy. After the departure of the wealthiest residents to the periphery from the 1940s onwards, many of these houses were converted into multi-family rental units (vecindades), one or two rooms' dwellings with a shared bathroom. The

business of vecindades is not particularly lucrative for the landlords, and they often let the buildings deteriorate (Gilbert and Varley 1990; Melé, 2003). Very few of these old residences were converted into condominiums because of difficulties in obtaining mortgage credit and constraints related to heritage protection (Gilbert and Varley, 1990; Jones and Varley, 1999).

During the 1960s and 1970s, land use changed on Juarez Avenue, an important artery running outward from the historic centre toward the high class La Paz neighbourhood. The old bourgeois homes took on new vocations, accomodating banks, professional services, restaurants and other activities. This phenomenon occurred also in the direction of the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, following the construction of the Plaza Dorada shopping centre in 1979 (figure 2). But despite being abandoned by the upper classes and some service activities, the colonial centre still preserves its symbolic role and concentrates numerous activities: the city hall, university pavilions, schools, a cathedral, theatres, art centre, museums, commercial and professional services, as shown in figure 2.

Puebla has had many revitalization plans since the 1980s but the most important one was led by the government of the provincial state with the purpose of making the city a national (and international) tourist destination. For the Paseo de San Francisco project, located on an industrial wasteland inside the historic centre, the State expropriated 27 blocks in 1993, which affected more than 4,500 people, principally from the lower classes (Téllez Morales, 1998). On six of these blocks, the State developed a multifunctional complex includ-

ing a convention centre with a park that can accommodate cultural events. The remaining blocks were sold to private interests. The Paseo de San Francisco project could have made a part of the historic centre attractive to a population of higher socioprofessional status.

My observations of Puebla during various periods of fieldwork over the last 7 years led me to suspect that central neighbourhoods were going through transformations which seem indicative of socioresidential regeneration. I tried to verify, in a previous work, if rise in socioprofessional status occurred, using the hierarchical cluster analysis classification method with 1990 and 2000 census data.

This method revealed a socioprofessional continuum divided into four types of spaces defined by the people living within them: the poor, the working class, the non-professional medium classes, and the professional. For example, the poor spaces are recognizable through their larger households with numerous young children, low level of education, employment in the secondary sector, and poorly equipped dwellings without running water. At the opposite end of the spectrum, professional spaces consist of smaller households with fewer young children, a higher level of education, employment in the service sectors, and well-equipped dwellings with running water. There was no apparent rise in socioprofessional status in the area close to the convention centre between 1990 and 2000, nor in the historic centre in general (figure 3). However, it is possible that the regeneration process had not begun in 2000 or was too marginal to be detected using census data.
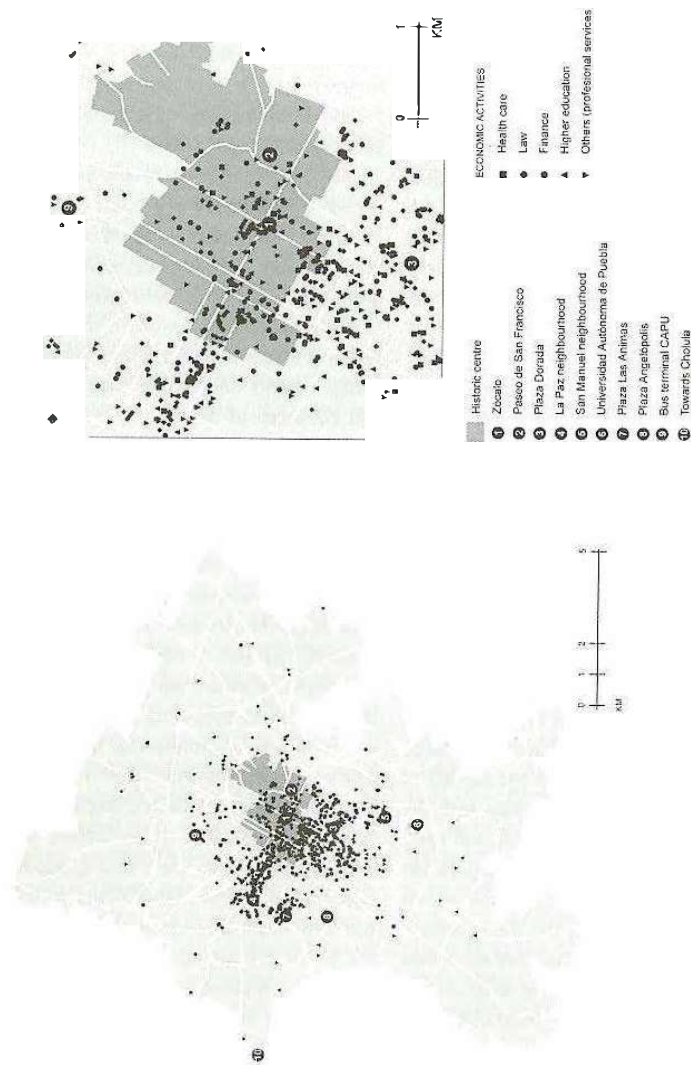
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Figure 2. Service activities in the city of Puebla (n 200)
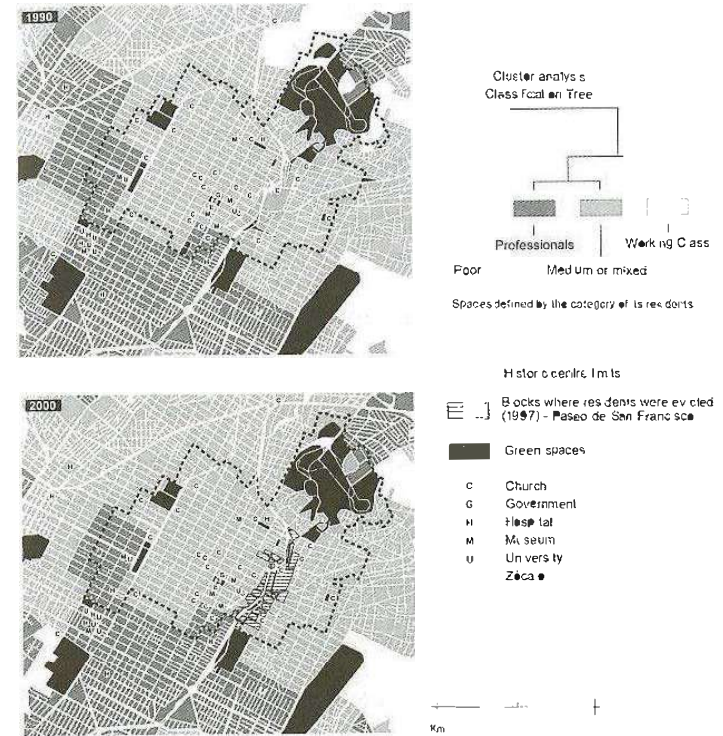
Figure 3. Socioresidential distribution of households

Many factors favouring the socioresidential regeneration of central neighbourhoods are present in Puebla. Its historic centre has undeniable architectural qualities. The historic centre is not a true CBD, but continues to draw activities in professional services and higher education. With the sociodemographic and socioeconomic changes that are occurring, a professional class should have developed similar to the one that (re)appropriated the central neighbourhoods of other cities in other countries.

Women are more and more present in the workforce. Their level of activity was 29.2% in 1987 and 37.8% in 2004 (INEGI, 2004). A higher level of feminine education and a higher participation rate in the workforce tend to reduce the birth rate. The Mexican total fertility rate was 5.7 in 1976 and 2.86 in 1999; in Puebla it was

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2.38 in 1999 (INEGI, 1999). The proportion of young children is decreasing; those less than 5 years old were 11.4% of the total population in 1990 and 9.3% in 2000 (limits of 1990, INEGI, 1990, 2000). Household size is decreasing; it was 4.9 persons in 1990 and 4.4 in 2000 (limits of 1990, INEGI, 1990, 2000). There has been an increase in service sector jobs. In 1980, 20% of the working population was employed in the service sector (excluding commercial activities) and in 1999 the proportion was 35.5% (INEGI, 1980, 1999). There was also an increase in the level of education: in 1990, 17.6% people 18 years or more had gone to university That proportion rose to 23.8% in 2000 (limits of 1990, INEGI, 1990, 2000). It is worth mentioning that there were 76,572 students at the start of the academic year 2000 in the 186 university institutions.[3] The three biggest ones, the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla and the Universidad Iberoamericana had respectively 30,000, 6,000 and 5,000 students.

For many local actors, the historic centre of Puebla will inevitably regenerate, even without any direct action on residential use to stimulate the process. The State Council for the Historical Centre of Puebla[4] (Consejo del Centro Histórico), considers that the Paseo de San Francisco project liberated space in the centre, which the

3. This number appears to be important for the size of the city In fact there are only three major universities in Puebla. The other institutions are, for the most part, private schools that give university level professional formation. For example, a school could give a formation in architecture recognized by the government, to 50 students.

elite will appropriate eventually for non residential activities. But for Altiko,[5] an important real-estate firm, there is also a demand for luxurious condominiums in the historic centre, although it is difficult to meet at present. The buildings are very old, damaged, and sometimes not connected to urban infrastructures. Rehabilitation is expensive, all the more so (for bureaucratic and corruption reasons) if a zoning change is required.

My hypothesis is that Puebla is at a crossroad in the process of socioresidential regeneration in central neighbourhoods. At this point, the observations made in the field are primarily based on the various attempts to revitalize physical aspects of the centre. These actions should have improved people's perception of central neighbourhoods and thus increased an interest in them as a living environment.

Methodology

Until now, social geographical studies of the city of Puebla have not uncovered any signs of socioresidential regeneration of central neighbourhoods. The process may be too marginal to be detected through census data and this limitation justifies carrying out research more specifically on the population who could favour the emergence of the regeneration process: the professional class.

In 2000, there were 36,476 professionals in Puebla, 37% of which were women (INEGI, 2000).

4 Interview with P. Duran Guzman, Sub director of Investigation, State Council for the Historical Centre of Puebla in 2001.
5. Interview with E. Bojalil Andrade General Director of Altiko real estate, in 2001.

Table 1. The sample

	Initial sample	Inaccuracy of contact information (-)	Final sample	Refusal to participate*	Responses	Responses /total sample
Architects	49	8	41		2049%	16.9%
Dental-surgeons	26	3	23	3	1461%	11.9%
Academics**	58	8	50	2	2754%	10.9%
Lawyers	58	17	41	5	1639%	13.6%
Civil engineers	41	15	26		1142%	9.3%
Economists**	71	4	67	4	2842%	23.7%
TOTAL	303	55	248	16	11847.6%	100%

* Includes those who repeatedly postponed meeting the interviewers.
** Eight professionals were economists and academics. They were classified regarding the association that provides their contact information.

In the absence of a general database on these workers, and lacking better data sources, various professional association directories were used to create a random sample of professionals to be included in a questionnaire survey in 2001. Fifteen professional associations were identified for the purpose. Membership of these associations was not known and making contact with them was difficult; indeed, not all are well-established and few granted me access to their membership directory Furthermore, when access was granted, it was often limited to the extraction, on site, of a sample of a maximum of 20% of the names. In total, six professional directories were used (architects, dental surgeons, economists, civil engineers, lawyers and academics)[6] from which 303

names were extracted, along with their contact information.[7] Four of the associations (architects, dental-surgeons, lawyers and civil engineers) have members among the 10 main professions registered in the 2000 census at municipality level (with administrative limits that include the city and some surrounding rural areas). The directories contained between 5 and 8%, and my sample between 1 and 1.7%, of the professionals registered. Because of inaccuracies and lack of current information in these directories, unavailability of some professionals and refusals to respond to the questionnaire, the interviewers administered a total of 118 questionnaires between August and November 2001 (table 1).

6. Academics are not always classified as professionals but they are in the Mexican census.

7. These professions include workers of Ley's (1996) new middle class such as social science workers, consultants, health care workers and education workers.

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The different response rates among professions are not easy to explain but contact information that identified only workplaces could be part of it. Some professionals work outside their office most of the time, making it harder to contact them. The survey lasted three months (extended from the initial one month) and ended when the lack of response decreased significantly (4 questionnaires administered within a two week period) and follow-up with associations did not succeed in making available new directories of professionals that could help construct a bigger sample.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections. The first section dealt with household characteristics. The second section concerned work, leisure, shopping and modes of transportation. The third section attempted to evaluate the level of satisfaction of the participant with respect to his/her dwelling and present surrounding environment (physical and social). The fourth section covered past residential mobility and the potential for future mobility. Finally, the fifth section concerned their perception of the historic centre and central neighbourhoods. I defined the central neighbourhoods of Puebla as those within 'walking distance' to the historic core: within a 2 km radius from the central square, called the Zócalo. Openended with limited or unlimited choices and multiple-choice questions were asked. I remain fully aware that the sample size and response rate are small. Using transcriptions of responses to open-ended questions will partly make up for this.

Results

Household characteristics were distributed as follows: young couples (less than 44 years old),

with or without children (nearly half the households studied, 52 respondents); older couples, with or without children (14 and 10 respondents, respectively); intergenerational (adult) households (28) where the respondent is in some case the parent (9), sometimes a child (19); and a few people living alone or with someone else, usually a relative (14). The households are relatively dispersed throughout the city, with the exception of the areas to the extreme north (i.e. north of the Mexico-Puebla Highway) and the extreme south (i.e. south of the inner ring), which were not represented. Previous studies indicate that these two areas concentrate the poorest populations (Germain and Polèse 1995). Thirteen respondents are living in central neighbourhoods: 2 are part of "empty nester" households, 6 of families with children, 3 are a son or daughter within an intergenerational family, 1 is living alone and the last one with a brother (figure 3).

Where they work, shop, and spend their leisure time

The historic centre concentrates an appreciable proportion of the jobs occupied by professionals in the sample (39 respondents). Other nuclei are also important: the area of the university hospital, south of the historic centre (20), the campus of the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (13), and the nucleus of the Ministry of Finance east of the historic centre (10).

For cultural and leisure activities, more than half the participants go to the historic centre, 20 to the San Manuel/University neighbourhood and 12 to the new Plaza Angelópolis. Finally, for shopping, the nucleus of San Manuel/Plaza Dora-
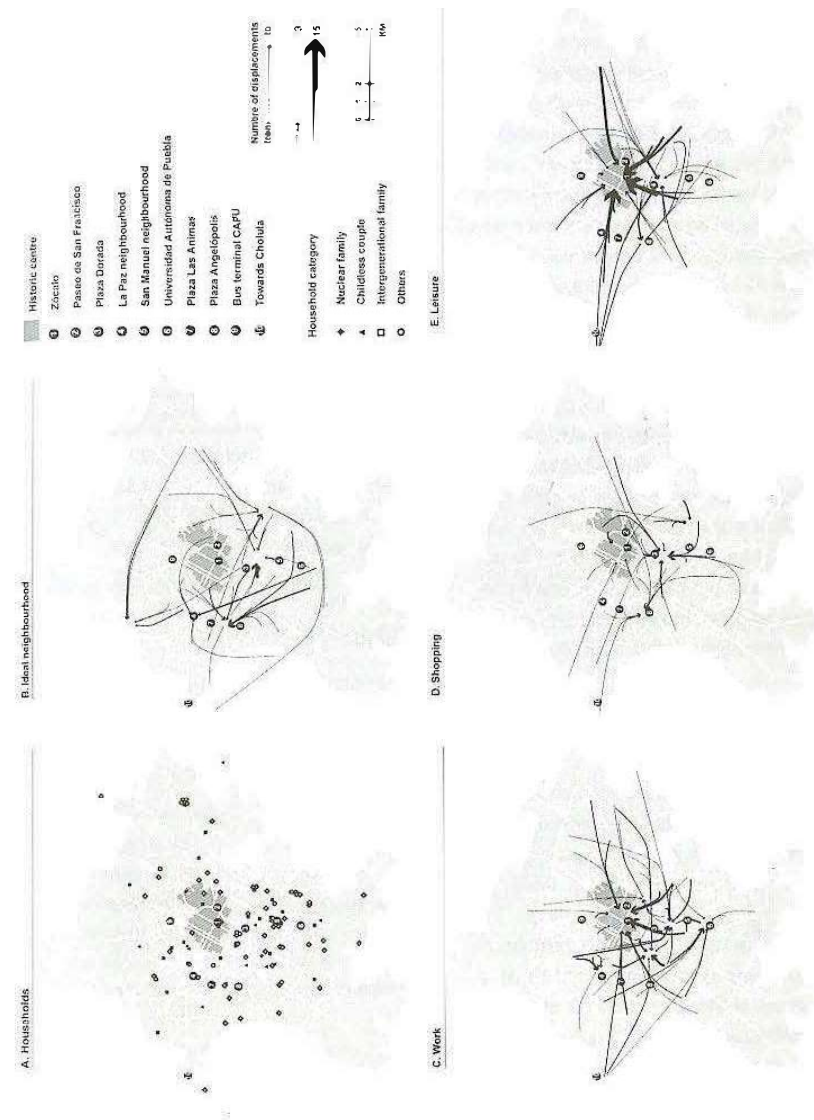
Figure 4. Households: where they live, work, shop and go for leisure

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da is favoured by many participants (26) followed at a great distance by the historic centre (8) and two other shopping centres: Las Margaritas (8) and the Plaza Angelópolis (6) (figure 4).

Some professionals have been commuting over great distances for many years to work, shop and enjoy leisure activities. Among them, only a few consider their living environment to be isolated from the main nuclei (retirada del centro), remote (lejanía de la casa, mala ubicación), or of difficult access (difícil de acceso en transporte). However, in some cases, commuting distances are considered to be a negative aspect, although when asked about their ideal neighbourhood, those particular respondents did not tend to choose an area closer to the centre but rather an area that corresponded more closely to other pre occupations. That is the case for an architect, and father of three children (CA158). For him, the distance is a constraint but security is his main concern. His ideal neighbourhood would be a gated one and not necessarily closer to his workplace.

The level of dissatisfaction with the surrounding environment

An open-ended question with limited choice was asked concerning the surrounding environment: 'What are the four most important qualities, and the four most important flaws of your dwelling? If possible, list them in order of importance'. The same question was asked about the neighbourhood. The interviewers were instructed to write everything down without insisting on obtaining exactly 4 qualities and 4 flaws. It appears in the answers that the respondents made little or no

distinction between the dwelling and its surrounding environment. That is why both questions were treated as one. Within the total of 510 answers (table 2) to these questions, more than half the responses (54%) identified concerns with the physical environment, infrastructures and city services in particular (26%), such as clean running drinking water, sewer systems, street-lighting and garbage collection. This was followed closely by concerns regarding social aspects of the environ-

Table 2. Levels of concern with the environment

	N	
Physical environment (total)	275	53.7
Infrastructures and urban services	133	26.0
Physical aspects	99	19.3
Transport infrastructure and traffic	39	7.6
Pollution	4	0.8
Social environment (total)	111	21.7
Security	44	8.6
Neighbours	39	7.6
Peace and quiet and privacy	14	2.7
Social	14	2.7
Dwelling (total)	66	13.0
Size	22	4.3
Other aspects	44	8.6
Costs	3	0.6
Accessibility	37	7.3
Other	20	3.9
Total	512	100.0

ment (21.7%), the most important being neighbours for women (13.1%) and security for men (8.9%). Concerns over the dwelling itself trailed far behind with 13% (table 2).

It is not surprising to find that city infrastructures appear to be more important than aspects such as size of dwelling. In Puebla, as in many Latin American cities, not all neighbourhoods have access to clean drinking water. In neighbourhoods with the service, water is often available only for a

few hours each day. In addition, each year during the rainy season, the population suffers problems with flooding as the sewers are incapable of handling the increased volume of water.

Responses to closed and to open-ended questions on specific aspects of the dwelling and the physical and social environments were consistent (table 3). For example, when asked whether they were very satisfied, satisfied, not very satisfied or not satisfied with infrastructure

Table 3. Levels of satisfaction with the physical and social environment

	Satisfied or very satisfied		Slightly or not satisfied		No opinion	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Dwelling						
Size	102	86.4	12	10.2	4	3.4
Indoor divisions	98	83.1	17	14.4	3	2.5
Kitchen	82	69.5	31	26.3	5	4.2
Bathroom	93	78.8	22	18.6	3	2.5
Light	105	89.0	10	8.5	3	2.5
Noise	77	65.3	38	32.2	3	2.5
General condition	97	82.2	17	14.4	4	3.4
Outside spaces	80	67.8	35	29.7	3	2.5
Physical environment						
Public transport	64	54.2	39	33.1	15	12.7
Infrastructures and urban services	65	55.1	50	42.4	3	2.5
Proximity of services	95	80.5	19	16.1	4	3.4
Green spaces	45	38.1	70	59.3	3	2.5
Social environment						
Security	71	60.2	44	37.3	3	2.5
Neighbours	76	64.4	34	28.8	8	6.8

and city services, more than 40% of participants (46.4% of men and 35.5% of women) said they were not very or not at all satisfied. As for other aspects of the physical environment, close to 60% of participants said they were not very or not at all satisfied with available green spaces. Many also registered discontent with the social environment. As to the dwelling itself, the size was not as important as noise level, outside spaces or more technical features such as the equipment or the layout of the kitchen.

Potential mobility and residential expectations

Gilbert (1993) notices that problems with property titles make the resale of houses difficult in Mexico. Moreover, rent control does little to support tenant mobility, as tenants risk losing certain privileges when they move. For MacLachlan (1998), the Mexican population is not very mobile and change in social status will not automatically bring on residential relocation. Nearly 60% of respondents had lived more than 10 years in the same dwelling, 20% between 5 and 9 years. The proportions are similar between tenants and homeowners. Only five participants had lived for less than one year in their current dwelling, a far cry from the numbers normally encountered in North American cities where the annual mobility rate is between 15% and 20% (US Census Bureau, 2002). However, 44% of participants were thinking of moving within the next five years. This number is close to the one obtained by Rossi in the U.S.A (1980), where 48% of participants mentioned a desire to move. Only a fraction of these American households even-

tually moved; we can assume that it will be the same for Poblano households.

Even if 44% of households are considering moving within the next five years, a home in the suburbs, so dear to many North Americans, does not appear to be unanimously targeted by Poblanos. In fact, 35% of the participants considered that the ideal neighbourhood is to be found within a 4 km radius of the Zócalo, a zone containing many wellestablished neighbourhoods of higher socioeconomic status such as La Paz, west of the historic centre, and El Mirador and San Manuel, south east of the historic centre (figure 2).

This is the case for a dental-surgeon, a spouse within a young couple (AD121) living in a central neighbourhood; for a lawyer, young father of one (PPA135), living in close proximity to the Mexico-Puebla Highway; and for an academic living alone (IU228) in a central neighbourhood; for them, the ideal neighbourhood:

[...] would be clean, secure, with commercial centres, and quiet (ideal neighbourhood: La Paz). [AD121]

[...] would be exclusively residential (ideal neighbourhood: El Mirador). [PPA1365]

[...] would have big gardens and houses, not buildings. People would be neighbourly and cooperate. Electrical cables would be underground and the street closed to cars on Sundays (ideal neighbourhood: Bella Vista). [IU228]

Only 17% of participants considered the neighbourhoods situated more than 5 km from the Zócalo as more desirable. Finally, participants rarely mentioned central neighbourhoods, even

those who actually lived there. If there is some interest in the centre as a residential location, it is still marginal.

Not surprisingly the respondents most open to moving are young professionals living in an intergenerational household. Twelve of the 18 respondents are thinking of moving in the next 5 years to set up their own household. Those professionals do not seem particularly attracted to central neighbourhoods. A few are attracted to well-established pericentral neighbourhoods; such is the case for an economist (CE071) who is now living in a neighbourhood at more than 5 km from the Zócalo.

The ideal neighbourhood would have all the urban services, would be quiet, secure and well located (ideal neighbourhood Las Ánimas) [CE071]

But several of them are more interested in new areas, and often in gated communities. For an engineer living in the well-established neighbourhood of El Mirador (CIC061) and for a dental-surgeon living in a new neighbourhood on the periphery (AD137), the ideal neighbourhood ...

[...] would be gated, with lots of green spaces, a playground for kids and streets made of stones (ideal neighbourhood : La Concepción). [CIC061]

[...] would be one gated, with a lot of privacy (ideal neighbourhood : Flor del Bosque). [AD137]

The Historic Centre and the central area

As shown by the results, the professionals surveyed do often go to the historic centre. We must em-

phasise that nearly half the participants confirmed that they go to the historic area for cultural activities, entertainment or simply for a walk. More than a third of respondents considered that access by car is a problem. This proportion increases to nearly 50% when it comes to complaining about public transport and nearly 60% of the respondents considered that parking is inadequate. The majority considered that the problem of pollution is important and an overwhelming majority said there were not enough green spaces (88%) or pedestrian-only streets (75%). On the other hand, for the majority, business activities are dynamic in the centre. A good proportion feels that security does not represent a problem (72%). Overall, 70% of respondents considered that the historic centre has improved in the last few years, especially in terms of rehabilitation and upkeep of buildings, cleanliness and urban image.

An open-ended (with limited choice) question was also asked in this context: 'What are the four most important qualities and the four most important flaws of the historic centre? If possible, list them in order of importance'. Respondents mentioned that the aspects they appreciated most about the centre were the aesthetics of its straight grid street pattern and its historic buildings (41% of 357 answers compiled). Particularly appreciated was the concentration of commercial establishments and services (14%)[a] and entertainment activities (13%). Particularly criticized were the physical condition of the area

a. 12.6% of the 270 answers compiled for men and 19.5% of the 87 answers compiled for women.

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Table 4. Principal qualities and flaws of the historic centre

	Qualities		Flaws	
	N	%	N	%
Physical environment	293	82.1	173	51.0
Architecture and heritage	45	40.6	3	0.9
Physical condition	25	7.0	84	24.8
Pollution	%	%	14	4.1
Commerce, service and economic activities	51	14.3	43	12.7
Cultural activities and tourism	45	12.6	14	4.1
Other	27	7.6	15	4 4
Social environment	25	7.0	34	10.0
Security	8	2.2	25	7.4
Other	17	4.8	9	2.7
Transport	17	4.8	113	33.3
Traffic	7	2.0	38	11.2
Parking	2	0.6	40	11.8
Other	8	2.7	35	10.3
Infrastructures and urban services	11	3.1	6	1.8
None		0.3		0.3
Other	10	2.8	12	3.5
TOTAL	357	100.0	339	100,0

Note: The same instruction was given to the interviewers about writing down everything without insisting on the quantity of answers mentioned in the question.

(25% of 339 answers compiled),[9] problems of accessibility (11%) and parking (12%) (table 4).

When asked: 'What are the reasons that explain why some people wish to live in the historic centre there are two principal reasons according to the respondents. The first one is the proximity and the concentration of commercial establishments and services (39% of 170 answers compiled) (table 5).

Maybe because it is central and you can find everything there because it is well located and you have everything at hand. [academic, father of two living 4 km from the Zócalo (IU160)]

9. 22.4% of the 250 answers compiled for men and 31.5% of the 89 answers compiled for women.

The second reason put forward is the interest in architecture and heritage (15%).

Only people who appreciate architecture want to live there. [lawyer head of a multigenerational household, living in the pericentre. (PPA103)]

For 9% of the respondents, the explanation had more to do with family tradition and customs

For the proximity of all services and because people were born in this place and because they like to live there. [scholar living alone in a central neighbourhood. (IU228)]

On the other hand, male respondents mentioned 22% of the time (of 165 answers compiled) and female ones 38% of the time (of 63 answers compiled) that some people would not want to live there because of the social environment (26% of 239 answers compiled), and lack of peace and quiet in particular. The characteristics of the dwellings (14%), problems related to transportation (17%) and lack of urban infrastructures and services (14%) were also given as reasons not to live in the centre.

Because there is no water (service). There is no rapid access without congestion. Houses do not function in a proper way for living. [architect, father of two, living at the periphery. (CA159)]

According to some participants (18.3% of 192 answers compiled), problems related to transport should be resolved first in order to make the historic centre more welcoming, followed by improved dwellings (14%) and urban infra-

structures (12%) and a better general condition of the area (12%) (table 5).

Nearly three out of four participants did not want to live in the historic centre, whereas this proportion is reversed when speaking of the neighbourhoods just outside this area and which have been developed more recently The principal reason given for avoiding the centre is the noise and traffic congestion (table 6). Among the 33 respondents who would like to live in the historic centre, we find 7 intergenerational households, 16 families, and 5 in the 'other' category of households. Five households are already living in central neighbourhoods, 14 are living in the pericentre (between 2 and 4 km from the Zócalo) and 11 are living at more than 4 km from the Zócalo. Reasons given to explain why they are not living in the centre vary and are not related either to their gender, profession, household profile or to their actual residential location.

Because conditions are difficult, there are no houses fit for living in, access is a problem and services are very expensive. [architect, father of two, living in the suburb. (CE234)]
Good question! I think it is because I am used to living in my actual home [dental surgeon, young professional living with his parents at the periphery (AD073)]
I didn't have an opportunity to do so. [economist, living alone in the pericentre (CE025)]
You need like 5 million pesos to buy a building and you need to invest a lot to make it habitable. [architect father of three, living in a central neighbourhood. (CA,070)]

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Table 5. Why people want or do not want to live in the historical centre and what improvements are required?

	Reasons for living in the centre		Reasons for not living in the centre		Required improvements	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical environment	109	64.1	88	36.8	83	43.5
Dwelling	4	2.4	33	13.8	26	13.6
Architecture and heritage	25	14.7	9	3.8	2	1.0
Physical condition	1	0.6	9	3.8	22	11.5
Pollution	1	0.6	17	7.1	3	1.6
Commerce, service and economical act.	67	39.4	10	4.1	17	8.9
Cultural activities and tourism	8	4.7		0.4	5	2.6
Other	3	1.8	9	3.8	8	4.2
Social environment	4	2.4	61	25.5	18	9.4
Peace and quiet			25	10.5	1	0.5
Security	2	1.2	19	7.9	14	7.3
Socioeconomic status	2	1.2			1	0.5
Other			17	7.1	2	1.0
Transport	14	8.2	40	16.7	34	17.8
Traffic			18	7.5	16	8.4
Parking			19	7.9	6	3.1
Other	14	8.2	3	1.3	12	6.3
Infrastructures and public services		0.6	33	13.8	24	12.6
Drinking water		0.6	16	6.7	8	4.2
Other			17	7.1	16	8.4
Costs	9	5.3	9	3.8	5	2.6
Opportunity (legacy)	5	2.9				
Tradition and customs	15	8.8				
None, not for living	6	3.5	2	0.8	17	8.9
Other	7	4.1	6	2.5	10	5.2
TOTAL	170	100.0	239	100.0	191	100.0

Note: Open-ended with unlimited choice questions were asked:
What are the characteristics of the historic centre that might explain why people would want to live there?
What are the characteristics of the historic centre that might explain why people do not want to live there?
What improvements are necessary in the historic centre to give people an interest in living there?

Table 6. Living in the historic centre

	Would you like to live in the historic centre?				Would you like to live close at a to the historic centre– 15 minutes walking distance?			
	Yes: why are you not living there?		No: why?		Yes: why?		No: why?	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical environment	14	31.1	38	30.9	47	45.2	9	25.0
Dwelling	8	17.8	7	5.7	1	1.0	2	5.6
Architecture and heritage		2.2	5	4.1	4	3.8		
Physical condition		2.2	6	4.9	1	1.0		2.8
Pollution		2.2	7	5.7	1	1.0		
Commerce, service and economic act.		2.2	5	4.1	13	12.5		2.8
Already living in the area	2	4.4			13	12.5	2	5.6
Prefer the pericentre			2	1.6			3	8.3
Other			6	4.9	14	13.5		
Social environment		2.2	40	32.5	7	6.7	12	33.3
Peace and quiet			27	22.0	3	2.9	7	19.4
Security			6	4.9	1	1.0	3	8.3
Other	1	2.2	7	5.7	3	2.9	2	5.6
Transport	5	11.1	17	13.8	37	35.6	7	19.4
Traffic	1	2.2	14	11.4	1	1.0	6	16.7
Parking	2	4.4	3	2.4	2	1.9		
Other	2	4.4			34	32.7		2.8
Infrastructures and urban services	4	8.9	11	8.9	5	4.8		2.8
Drinking water	3	6.7	4	3.3				0.0
Other	1	2.2	7	5.7	5	4.8	1	2.8
Costs	8	17.8	2	1.6		1.0	2	5.6
Opportunity (legacy)	11	24.4				1.0		
Tradition and customs	1	2.2	9	7.3				2.8
None, not for living			2	1.6	1	1.0		
Other	1	2.2	4	3.3	5	4.8	4	11.1
TOTAL	45	100.0	123	100.0	104	100.0	36	100.0

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The respondents who would like to live in the historic centre have not moved there because they have not found a residence adequate to their needs and because they evaluate the costs for obtaining a property in million pesos. A quick look at real estate websites shows that colonial properties are actually for sale at prices ranging between 320,000.00 and 590,000.00 USD. So, even if there is a demand for properties and luxurious condos in the historic centre, the cost of buying properties and of rehabilitating old buildings and the lack of leadership regarding housing rehabilitation must be added to the lack of infrastructure as deterrents for those who might otherwise wish to live in the centre.[10] In the absence of an exceptional opportunity, living in the historic centre seems less attractive at this point.

Finally, there are a few respondents who are neither interested in the historic centre nor in living close to it. Those 22 households prefer areas developed recently that are quieter and further from the historic centre.

Conclusion

In the literature we find three categories of stimuli that seem to influence the decision to move and choice of residential location: household characteristics, environment and local conditions. In the case of the city of Puebla, the main irritants of the present residential situations amongst professional Poblano households surveyed, are the physical environment (such as urban infrastruc-

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10. Interview with E. Bojalil Andrade, general director A liko, 2001.

tures and technology in the dwelling) and the social environment. Despite these irritants, and despite similar aspirations concerning potential mobility, professional households in Puebla seem less mobile than households with similar profile living in the USA or Canada. Only a small fraction (about 4%) had lived for less than one year in their present dwelling, far less than the 15% to 20% we normally see in North American cities.

In Puebla we found many factors favouring socioresidential regeneration in central neighbourhoods. But, the current demographic trans formation, the presence of numerous service activities and an exceptional architectural and urban environment seem insufficient at this point in time to foster the eme gence of the process. Our investigation is based on a small sample of 118 professionals. Among them: 52 young couples with or without children; 24 older couples with or without children; 29 intergene ational households and a few 'other type' of households (14). However it showed that almost all the professionals interviewed (97%) do often go to the historic centre and that the ma ority of them (70%) think it is improving in terms of rehabilitation, building conservation and urban image. Even so, three out of four of the professionals interviewed would choose to move to areas outside the heritage zone, developed mo e recently Having everything at hand, en oying the architectural features and family tradition are the main reasons they put forward to explain why some people want to live in the historic centre. But the lack of peace and quiet, the condition of most dwellings, the traffic, the lack of parking and lack of infrastructures represent half of the main reasons given by the professionals, to explain why people

do not wish to live in the historic centre. However it is the condition of the dwellings lack of opportunity and costs that explain that even if 25% of the respondents would like to live in the historic centre, only 2 respondents are actually living in the her tage zone and 11 are living in other central neighbourhoods.

Are the aspirations of professional households in the city of Puebla announcing the emergence of a regeneration process of central neighbourhoods? I can conclude by saying that there is some interest but that the actual aspirations of most households are, in fact, turned towards well-established pericentral neighbourhoods. The cost of dwellings, the difficulty of access and cost of mortgage credit and the costs of rehabilitation are sure y among the main obstacles to a socioresidential regeneration process in the old centre.

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