Urbanistas, ambulantes and mendigos:

the dispute for urban space in Mexico City, 1890-1930[1]

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Our views of Porfirian Mexico City are heavily influenced by the grandeur of the buildings and avenues and the elegance of *colonias* built during that period. It is easy to share the nostalgia for *los tiempos de don Porfirio*, when Mexican society seemed as peaceful and well-organized as the walkways under the shady trees of the Paseo de la Reforma and the Alameda. This essay, however, contends that such images of civilization were only the precarious result of a negotiation between the regime's projects of urban modernization and the everyday practices of the majority of the urban population. As the Porfirian and post-revolutionary elites tried to shape the city according to their desires and economic interests, they turned to the police to punish the lower-class public behaviors which did not mold to those projects. The urban poor, on the other hand, developed a sceptical view of justice and order. They used the city in different ways, walking accross the social boundaries between rich and marginal areas, challenging the authority of the police, and even subverting the "official" dictates about street nomenclature.

Turn-of-the century Mexico City embraced all the symbols of nationalism and many remarkable examples of colonial architecture. By the end of the first century of national life, the city was also the locus of progress and the capital of Porfirio Díaz' long-lasting regime. Railroads, tramways, paved and illuminated streets, broad avenues, parks, new residential areas and high buildings appeared as dist-

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1. This paper is part of my doctoral dissertation at the History Departmento of the University of Texas at Austin, "Criminals in Mexico City, 1900-1931: A Cultural History." I wish to thank the comments and corrections of Jonathan Brown, Ricardo Bracamonte, Fanny Cabrejo, Xóchitl Medina, Mauricio Tenorio, Pamela Voekel and Elliott Young.

tinctive signs of material advance. The end of the troubled nineteenth century meant important changes in the design and use of urban space. These changes were conceived on the understanding that the rich and poor were not to mingle, in order to separate the safe and beautiful areas of the modern city from the dangerous and unhealthy marginal zones. The state and the wealthy classes who lead modernization wanted to translate the physical changes of the city into a new culture among its inhabitants.

But the elites' idea of urban renewal faced the challenge of a growing and untamed population. The urban lower classes, so distant from the aspirations of wealth and comfort associated with progress, used the city in their own way, defying the class structured organization of the Porfirian capital. As tensions arose about the use of the streets and other public areas, the government and elites relied on the police and penal institutions to instill appropriate conduct among the people. Criminal behavior (whether a genuine transgression of social norms, or simply a break of the many laws and regulations generated during the period) acquires a different meaning in the context of this dispute over the uses of the city. Crime, however, was not the only way in which people defied the urban Utopia of Porfirian rulers. A host of practices in the streets (vending, begging, drinking or merely walking) also subverted the ideal social map.

The next pages will weave a counterpoint between the elite model of the city and its defiance by the urban poor. On one side, I will examine the projects and the urban policies aimed at building a modern capital for the benefit of a minority of its inhabitants. The first section will outline the ideal city designed by Porfirian rulers and its importance for the interpretation of modern Mexico. On the other side, I will analyze the unwanted consequences of late-nineteenth-century growth on the city's structure and, more importantly, on the everyday lives of the urban majorities. A second section will describe the demographic and technological changes that caused the model to fail and the city to grow at an unprecedented rhythm. Then, I will probe into everyday practices and living conditions in the marginal city—the one growing around and within the Porfirian ideal city. Those pages will emphasize the behaviors which authorities tried to reform because they deemed them to be a threat to progress. The final section will tackle the urban policies that sought to preserve the social geography of the city and the collective reactions to those policies.

In sum, I will look at the cultural articulation of demographic and spatial growth under an authoritarian regime. This description of a disputed city questions contemporary historiography in its contention that elite projects of urban renewal went unchallenged and succeeded. As the urban poor used the city in ways that contradicted those projects, the elite's perceptions of "dangerous" areas identified poverty with criminality. The consequence was, on the one hand, that officials increasingly relied on punishment to impose their social ideas while, on the other hand, the urban poor identified the police and judicial system with the interests of the wealthy. The ideal city failed to impose its strict divisions of urban space (particularly after the Revolution), and the connection between the appropriation of urban space and criminality remained a long-lasting feature of the capital.

The Ideal City

The changes that swept early twentieth-century Mexico had begun nearly forty years earlier, during Emperor Maximilian's attempt to turn Mexico into a modern European nation, and accelerated in the late Porfiriato. The ideal city of the 1910 centennial celebration of independence epitomized the unifying myths of progress and nationhood.[2] The colonial center of the city, around the Zócalo or Plaza Mayor, extended its elegant architecture toward the west on Avenida Juárez, reached the Alameda park and turned southwest onto the elegant Paseo de la Reforma (see diagram). The Alameda was part of the colonial design of the city but became an upper-class place of leisure during the nineteenth century. The Paseo de la Reforma linked Chapultepec Castle and the presidential residence with the Alameda. Its wide design and execution followed the aesthetic and urbanistic ideas that had transformed Paris and other European capitals since the 1850s. The projects of modernization of the city meant the displacement of the urban poor and Indian communities from valuable lands. For the beneficiaries of this displacement, it was part of the "civilizing process" by which the countryside and its uses would be transformed according to the needs of a cosmopolitan city. Of all the cycles of change that Mexico City had experienced after the Spanish conquest, the one which peaked during the late Porfiriato was perhaps the most disruptive because it combined population growth, land dispossession and heightened cultural conflict.[3]

The urban design that Porfirian planners introduced corresponded with a more or less conscious attempt to re-organize society within the city. Around the Paseo de la Reforma, private companies were licensed by city authorities to develop upper –and middle– class residential areas, such as the *colonias* Juárez, Cuauhtémoc, Roma and Condesa. The word *colonias* designated these new neighborhoods—as if they represented the colonization

2. Recent scholars have examined the outlines and objectives behind the layout of the Paseo de la Reforma, the monuments that structured a narrative of nation-building, and the public celebrations that appropriated those spaces and gave them a specific ideological meaning. See Mauricio Tenorio , "1910 Mexico City: Space and Nation in the City of the *Centenario*," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28 (1996): 75-104; Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Streetwise History: The Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876-1910," in William H. Beezley et al., eds., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 127-150 and in that same volume Tony Morgan, "Proletarians, Politicos, and Patriarchs: The Use and Abuse of Cultural Customs in Early Industrialization of Mexico City, 1880-1910," 151-171; John Robert Lear, "Workers, *Vecinos* and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City, 1909-1917" (Ph.D. diss. University of California at Berkeley, 1993), chaps. 2 and 3 and a condensed version of that work in Lear, "Mexico City: Space and Class in the Porfirian Capital, 1884-1910," *Journal of Urban History* 22:4 (May 1996): 444-492. A pioneering and still unmatched study of expansion is María Dolores Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México en el siglo XIX: el caso de los fraccionamientos" in Alejandra Moreno Toscano, ed., *Investigaciones sobre la historia de la ciudad de México* (Mexico City: INAH, 1974), 189-200. On the role of the city as an advertisement of the regime's progress, see Paolo Riguzzi, "México próspero: las dimensiones de la imagen nacional en el porfiriato," *Historias* 20 (April-September, 1988): 137-157. See also Mario Camarena, "El tranvía en época de cambio", *Historias* 27 (Oct-Mar. 1992):141-146; Estela Eguiarte Sakar, Los jardines en México y la idea de la ciudad decimonónica", *Historias* 27 (Oct-Mar. 1992): 129-138. For a useful work on the Porfirian project of urban development applied in a state capital see Allen Wells and Gilbert M. Joseph, "Modernizing Visions, *Chilango* Blueprints, and Provincial Growing Pains: Mérida at the Turn of the Century", *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 8:2, Summer 1992.

3. For a longer perspective on these conflicts, see Andrés Lira, *Comunidades indígenas frente a la ciudad de México: Tenochtitlan y Tlatelolco, sus pueblos y barrios, 1812-1919* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1995). According to Lira "In the 1880s Mexico City aquires the lands that it had previously bargained to obtain from barrios and communities inherited from the old corporative order... Since that time, we assist at the conclusion of the extinction of the Indian urban institutions enacted in law sixty years before, but postponed by political needs and instability". *Ibid.*, 262, 236, 238.

of the city's wild countryside.[4] The development of *colonias* in a civilized, controlled environment received special attention from city authorities, who often ordered the elimination of undeserving or ill-looking buildings.[5] The designers and builders of this city had a clear idea of the social meaning of modernization: the poor had to be displaced from the elegant quarters, while city services were to be concentrated only in the well-kept districts.

Private developers believed that separating customers according to their socioeconomic status would create a stronger real-estate market. This strategy meant a clear departure from the multi-class dwellings around downtown dating back to colonial times. Porfirian investors, often closely associated with city officials, bought and partitioned lands for the wealthiest classes in privileged areas, while reserving other zones for working-class homeowners. In many cases, land grants meant the dispossession of community properties or the eviction of poor settlers. Private interests and public policies worked together in seeking to preserve the spatial separation between classes.[6]

Hygiene and security, both symbolically achieved with the inauguration of great sewage works and the Penitentiary in 1900, were requisites for the stability of this civilized space. In order to protect the integrity of new upper-class neighborhoods, municipal and health authorities planned the growth of industries and working-class neighborhoods seperate from upper-class suburbs. The Consejo Superior de Salubridad (Public Health Council) defined a "zone which has the goal of maintaining certain types of industries at a distance from the only avenue of the capital," i.e., the Paseo de la Reforma.[7] The cosmopolitan city would expand from the axis Zócalo-Alameda-Reforma toward the west and southwest. The east was discarded, because of its proximity to Texcoco Lake and unfavorable ecological conditions. The designers of the new Penitentiary located it on the San Lázaro plains, to mark the eastern limit of the city and to send the prisoners' "miasma" away from the center.[8]

The development of modern residential areas was not the only change brought by modernization. On the margins of the central city, authorities and developers had to deal with the existence of popular residential areas: lower-class *colonias* and old *barrios*, as the popular neighborhoods were called. Although barrios had always existed close to downtown, their poverty had preserved what Andrés Lira properly calls a "social distance" from the

4. The name colonia derives from the nineteenth-century colonization legislation. Jorge H. Jiménez Muñoz, *La traza del Poder: Historia de la política y los negocios urbanos en el Distrito Federal desde sus orígenes a la desaparición del Ayuntamiento (1824-1928)* (Mexico City: Codex, 1993), 9.

5. For example, public baths and flimsy constructions had to be destroyed to embellish and improve the entrance to *colonia* Roma, Report by City Council member Luis E. Ruiz about the Eight District, 19 Jan. 1904 , AHA, Policía en general, 3644, 1691.

6. For the development of *colonias*, see Jiménez, *La traza del poder* and Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*. For the class implications of these changes see Lear, "Mexico City: Space and Class".

7. For the relationship between urban growth and social segregation among the inhabitants of the city, see María Dolores Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México (1858-1910)", in *Atlas de la ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Departamento del Distrito Federal-Colegio de México, 1987), 64. For the zone protected from industries see Governor of the Federal District to the City Council, 2 Feb. 1897, AHA, Policía en General, 3640, 1156. For the commercial interests and political influence that, rather than planning, guided the development of new *colonias*, see Jiménez Muñoz, *La traza del Poder*.

8. *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación: La Penitenciaría de México* 5:4 (1981-1982). For ecological conditions that made the east of the city a "zone... crossed by infected canals dragging all types of impurities" and bad smells, see Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México," 191.

modern city.[9] During the Porfirian period, however, these areas generated conflicts with the expected reorganization of urban society. Areas of lower-class housing, characterized by overcrowded tenements near downtown and squatters' shacks in the outskirts of the city, surrounded downtown in a crescent moon that wrapped the Zócalo and Alameda by its north, east and south sides, closer near the National Palace and further away at its extremes. The moon had its further points in the *colonia* Guerrero in the northwest, and Belén Jail in the southwest.[10] This territory included the *colonias* Morelos and la Bolsa, respectively located north and northeast of the old *barrio* Tepito, and the *colonia* Obrera, none of which received adequate infrastructural investment from developers. Urbanization in these areas did not mean access to sewage, electricity and pavement, as it did for more affluent *colonias*. Images of neglect and poverty here contrasted with the protected environment of the central area.[11]

Life in the wealthiest *colonias* followed the models of privacy and autonomy of the European bourgeois household. The plans drawn by the city planners and followed by developers shared the tacit premise that business, leisure and production should be clearly separated, and that men and women had unmistakably different roles in public and domestic environments. The new *colonias* organized the living accommodations of the upper classes in single-house lots afforded with all the amenities of modern life, including electricity, sewage, running water and telephones. These services implied that the inhabitants of the house did not have to rely on old-fashioned devices to satisfy their daily needs. They did not face the trouble of manually bringing water to the household or getting rid of human waste in the street.[12] The ideal of an autonomous and elegant residence pushed well-to-do families away from downtown, which had become increasingly oriented to bussiness use. This migration westward took several years to conclude. An enhanced, city-wide transportation system sought to facilitate the movement of people from the new residential areas to their work-places.[13]

9. Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*, 264.

10. See Lear, "Mexico City: Space and Class," 481-482. I will return to a description of these areas in the last section of this essay. For the emergence of *barrios* out of Indian communities, see Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*, 66.

11. On the irregular development of the colonia Obrera and its lack of sanitation, see "Informe general" by the Medical Inspector of the Fourth District, 31 Dec. 1924, ASSA, Fondo Salubridad Pública, Sección Salubridad del Distrito Federal, box 2, 28.

12. For the old uses, and the importance of water-sellers and fountains, see Antonio García Cubas, *El libro de mis recuerdos. Narraciones históricas, anecdóticas y de costumbres mexicanas anteriores al actual estado social, ilustradas con más de trescientos fotograbados*, (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1986. 1st. ed., Imprenta de Arturo García Cubas, 1904), 207-214. See the case of Rio de Janeiro, where running water meant not only better hygiene, but shielded upper-class families from contact with the street, Sandra Lauderdale-Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

13. Morales defined this process of segregation in "La expansión de la ciudad de México, " p. 64. By the early twentieth century, according to John Lear, elite families living in downtown would be seen "as conspicuous exceptions." Lear, "Workers, *Vecinos* and Citizens," 48. The move could take several decades, however, as with the Gómez family, see Larissa Adler Lomnitz and Marisol Pérez Lizaur, *Una familia de la élite mexicana. Parentesco, clase y cultura 1820-1980* (Mexico City: Alianza, 1993), 91, 105. Lear sees the process of specialization in the use of urban space as concomitant to the "segregation of wealth," which led to subsequent social instability and increased class consciousness, Lear, "Mexico City: Space and Class," 467, 486. I contend, as it will be clear later, that this segregation was not fully accomplished and the results of urban reform had multiple cultural and political meanings.

The separation of the public and private places and activities constituted the premise for the design of buildings and streets and was also the guiding principle for official action regarding people's demeanor. Private behavior in public spaces had always been a concern for authorities in Mexico City. *Policía y buen gobierno* defined the authorities' greater intervention since colonial times, encompassing not only police issues but also the upkeep of streets and the control of collective meetings. As had been done in the seventeenth century and in the Bourbon period, the Porfirian City Council ordered *pulquerías* (outlets of *pulque,* a fermented beverage) and *cantinas* to be concealed from the eye of pedestrians, and withdrew the authorization for restaurants to place chairs and tables on the sidewalks.[14] By the end of the century, the state adopted an interventionist stance on issues traditionally outside of liberal public policies. The authorities' civilizing drive included the clothes worn by the city's pederestrians. Indians (defined by their use of white trousers and shirts instead of dark suits) were forced by regulations to wear dark trousers. Repeated instances of the prohibition, in the 1890s and then during Francisco I. Madero's presidency, suggest the futility of the attempt.[15] The measure reflected the authorities' perceptions of "appropriate behavior" in the public space. Put simply, city authorities believed that indigenous people were not culturally prepared to use the city. The concern toward male Indian clothing is also meaningful because it was not accompanied by a similar policy toward women's *rebozos* (shawls). Since the women's role was supposed to be limited to the domestic sphere, the City Council did not worry about their clothes.[16]

All these divisions in the use of the city were far from perfect and the reality of urban life never accommodated itself to the Porfirian ideal. Instead of working as an autonomous, European suburban household (as their architects conceived them), upper-class mansions reproduced the dynamics of the *casco de hacienda*, where servants and workers were an extension of the patriarchal family. Masters and domestic workers formed an intimate order that was not easily opened to public authority. Isidro Esqueda, for example, escaped a violent and, in his view, unjustified attempt of arrest by a drunken policeman by going inside the home of his boss, Lic. José Raz Guzmán, who later arrested the policeman.[17] Wealthy residences needed the mediation of servants and sellers to obtain many basic products and services.

Even the functional divisions of urban space did not resist the erosion of everyday life because the design of the upper-class "civilized" city left outside, unplanned, the very factors of its survival. The elegant new *colonias* around the Paseo de la Reforma, as well as the older aristocratic homes downtown, needed labor and supplies, that often came from distant places. The Eighth District, for example, lacked a produce market in 1904.[18] Conversely, the urban lower and middle classes had to leave their homes to go to work and to satisfy other needs of everyday life. These factors and a distinctive conception of the city on the part of the popular classes impelled the urban poor to cross the artificial borders between a modern city (where public and private functions had to be clearly separated), and another city (in their eyes, the whole city) where elite models of behavior seemed less important. The need to drink, eat, socialize, or simply earn a living through petty commerce generated strains over the use of the streets. We cannot disregard the tension between the hierarchical and rigid map of the capital (imagined by the Porfirian elites) and the ambiguous, often not articulated, horizontal view of those who lived, worked and led their social lives on the streets. Before looking into that tension, however, I will examine the factors that prevented Mexico City from becoming the model capital that its rulers imagined.

Population, Transportation, and the Break of the Model

The reason for the failure of the Porfirian regime from consolidating its ideal capital city was twofold: a) the constant arrival of immigrants from the rest of the country, and b) the development of new means of transportation that had been expected to facilitate progress but instead weakened social divisions and undermined the control of the authorities over public spaces.

Population growth posed an unexpected problem to planners and administrators, even before it was clearly expressed by the census. Large numbers of immigrants reached the capital and established themselves in visible and sloven places and occupations. This growth had an impact on various aspects of urban affairs. Prison population expectations, for example, reveal the predicament of planners. In 1882, the authors of the project for Mexico City's penitentiary estimated the number of cells needed based on a scenario of decreasing crime. Expecting increasing levels of education, more jobs and better police work, they recommended that the penitentiary be built to house approximately seven hundred male inmates. Soon, it became evident that the building was insufficient for the increasing number of prisoners. By 1907, the Secretary of the Interior estimated that 272 new cells were necessary.[19]

14. AHA, Policía en General, 3640, 1143, 1 May 1896. For actions against kioskos, see AHA, Policía en General, 3640, 1147. For colonial and early national concerns regarding control of behaviors in public spaces, Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos?: Diversiones públicas y vida social en la ciudad de México durante el siglo de las luces* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987); Pamela Voekel, "Peeing on the Palace: Bodily Resistance to Bourbon Reforms", University of Texas at Austin, [1991]; Jorge Nacif Mina, "Policía y seguridad pública en la ciudad de México, 1770-1848", in Regina Hernández Franyuti, comp., *La ciudad de México en la primera mitad del siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 1994): 9-50; Anne Staples, "Policía y Buen Gobierno: Municipal Efforts to Regulate Public Behavior, 1821-1910" Beezley et al., eds., *Rituals of Rule*: 115-126.

15. *La Tribuna* (16 oct. 1912). For a similar campaign in 1893, see Lear, "Workers, Vecinos and Citizens", 51, 55.

16. The restriction of women's role to domestic spheres was by no means fulfilled. Among the middle-classes, women were restricted in their ability to represent the family in public settings, but they had greater influence through their involvement in the domestic economy. Several cases of theft show the participation of women in the active defense of the household's properties. Among the poorest members of the urban population, women were forced by economic needs to go out of the home and participate in economic activities (like commerce and industrial work) that elite notions deemed restricted to men. See Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 90. Women's ability to sue and act in civil and political matters was restricted by the Civil Code, and more so by the practices of the exclusively male legal profession. For the benign punishment of statutory rape based on women's "immature judgement," see Antonio Martínez de Castro, *Código Penal para el Distrito Federal y Territorio de la Baja California sobre delitos del fuero común y para toda la República Mexicana sobre delitos contra la Federación. Edición correcta, sacada de la oficial, precedida de la Exposición de motivos dirigida al Supremo Gobierno por el C. Lic. Presidente de la comisión encargada de formar el Código* (Veracruz and Puebla: La Ilustración, 1891), 62, 53.

17. AJ-RS, 453723. For an example of a paternalistic upper-class Mexican extended family's use of large houses in the Paseo de la Reforma, see Adler Lomnitz and Pérez Lizaur, *Una familia de la élite mexicana*, 82.

18. AHA, Policía en General, 3644, 1691.

19. "Sobre el número y clase de presos que debe alojar la Penitenciaría

Saturation also had affected other institutions, such as orphanages and asylums.[20]

Population counts reveal the unprecedented rate of this growth. Since 1895, date of the first national census, the population of Mexico City had not only grown at a faster pace than the national total, but also faster than in other cities in the country. While in 1895 Mexico City had 329,774 inhabitants, by 1910 it had grown to 615,327. Table 1.1 compares the growth of population nationwide, in state capitals and in Mexico City, between 1895 and 1930. Table 1.2 displays the growth relative to 1895. These figures suggest that the concentration of population in the capital took off during the late Porfiriato, and was not a feature of the post-revolutionary period.

Although the percentage of urban population did not surpass that of the rural population until 1960, most changes associated with urbanization were already present in Mexico City since the turn of the century. Internal migration was the main factor of urban growth, and was probably larger than census figures, due to the large number of people whose stay in the capital was only temporary. In 1900, 53 per cent of Mexico City's inhabitants were born in other states.[21] In 1910, 46.6 per cent of the Federal District's population had come from other states, 27.7 per cent of the total number of migrants in the entire country.[22]

Despite the rural origin of most migrants, Mexico City's population was not what we can call a conventional "traditional" society. Literacy figures, for example, suggest that the capital's population was more educated than the national average at the end of the Porfiriato, and continued to be so during the following decades. While in 1900 the nation's rate of literacy was 17.9 per cent, in the Federal District the percentage was 44.8. In 1930 the percentages were 38.5 and 75.1, respectively.[23] Although schooling was more accessible in the capital, many migrants came to the capital already educated. In 1895, the largest age group in Mexico City were those between 21 and 30 years old, making for 39.22 per cent of the city's total population. Meanwhile, the country's largest group was comprised of people 10 years old or less, accounting for 30.76 per cent.[24] People came to the capital searching for jobs, but they did not necessarily lack education and some degree of status.

Other areas of the country received immigrants during these years. Migration to Mexico City distinguished itself in that the sex ratio favored women. In 1895, men were 49.74 per cent of the national population, while in Mexico City they made for 46.32 per cent of the population.[25] In 1930, the disparity was even larger. In Mexico City, men were only 44.86 per cent of the population.[26] This contrasts with the profile of the rapidly developing northern regions of the country, where the tendency was the opposite. According to François-Xavier Guerra, the sex imbalance of certain regions during the Porfiriato partly explains revolutionary mobilization. Men, Guerra argues, outnumbered women by up to ten per cent in the mining areas of the north, and in some parts of the state of Morelos. Male predominance was a symptom, in Guerra's view, of modernization and social changes, generating tensions with traditional uses and, thus, political participation.[27] This view coincides with contemporary revolutionary interpretations of Mexico City as a territory of conservativism, decadence and lack of masculinity. In 1914, Heriberto Frías stated that:

> *"The Porfirian dictatorship, sanctioned and supported by the rich, the military and the clergy, systematically tried to abolish the virility of the middle class, particularly in the Federal District, where employees and professionals formed a corrupted court living in a state of serfdom caused by atavisms and the environment".*

The transformations in Mexico City's social structure, however, had begun before the Revolution. Therefore, the conventional revolutionaries' view of the capital as a "retrograde" and conservative city needs revision. Male and female workers played a much more significant role than what traditional accounts portray. Recent research has argued that women's participation in the Revolution was more important than traditionally acknowledged, and that Mexico City's lower-class women "provided the initiative and primary participation for a series of mobilizations" in 1915, when the civil war hit the capital in full force and scarcity and inflation triggered food riots.[28]

Mexico City offered the conditions for women to explore beyond their traditional gender roles. Census data for working women shows a sharp contrast between national figures and those of Mexico City: while in 1900 women were only 16.35 per cent of the national employed population, in Mexico City they were 47.48 per cent.[29] This did not mean, however, that women invaded traditional male areas of work. Certain jobs seemed to attract female labor more than others. According to the 1895 census, the trades favored by women were those of seamstress (5,505 women and no men listed by the census), cigar makers (1,709 women and no men), domestic workers (25,129 women and 8,883 men), laundrywomen (5,673 women and 112 men) and concierges (1,431 women and 994 men). Taken together, these categories made for 50.46 per cent of the employed female population.[30] For

de México", *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación: La Penitenciaría de México* 5:4 (1981-1982): 33, 36; Secretary of Gobernación to Secretary of Justice, 20 Nov. 1907, AGN, SJ, 645, 634.

20. On conditions in the orphanage in 1913, see AGN, GPR, 38, 60, f. 21-22. On the asylum see *Ibid.*, 38, 19, f. 1.

21. *Estadísticas sociales del porfiriato, 1877-1910* (Mexico City: Dirección General de Estadística, 1956), 73; Keith A. Davies, "Tendencias demográficas urbanas durante el siglo XIX en México", *Historia Mexicana* 5:4 (1972): 505. The growth of cities during the Porfirian period is discussed by Francisco Alba, "Evolución de la Población: Realizaciones y Retos" in José Joaquín Blanco and José Woldenberg, eds., *México a fines de siglo*, v. 1 (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 133.

22. François-Xavier Guerra, *México: Del Antiguo Régimen a la Revolución* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 1:338.

23. *Estadísticas históricas de México* (Mexico City: INEGI, 1984).

24. *Ibid.*; Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo General de la República Mexicana verificado el 20 de octubre de 1895* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Fomento, 1898).

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid*; Departamento de la Estadística Nacional, *Censo de población, 15 de mayo de 1930* (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1934).

27. Guerra, *México, del Antiguo Régimen*, 1:339, 342. Guerra identifies women with "traditional Mexico" (the influence of the Church, the sexual connotations of caciques' rule). Alan Knight holds a similar view in *The Mexican Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 2:207, 1:19. Guerra and Knight interpret women's lack of political participation both as the symptom and the cause of their lack of historical agency.

28. Lau and Ramos, "Estudio preliminar", in Lau and Ramos, eds., *Mujeres y Revolución, 1900-1917* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1993) 13, 50. Franco also stresses women's participation during the armed period, but emphasizes the reversal toward paternalism in the post-revolutionary period, Franco, *Plotting Women*, chap. 5. Lear, "Citizens, vecinos," 164.

29. *Estadísticas históricas de México*, 1:323.

30. *Censo General de la República Mexicana verificado el 20 de octubre de 1895.*

many of these women, living in the capital meant not only leaving behind their hometowns but also the domestic environment.

In sum, turn-of-the-century Mexico City was formed by young newcomers, more educated, new comers with a strong presence of women in certain areas of economic activity. Industrial jobs did not employ large numbers of people—only 1.23 per cent of employed men in the city in 1895, while 10.74 per cent were listed as *comerciantes* (employed in commerce) and 7.05 as domestic workers.[31] Moving into the capital did not necessarily translate into better living conditions, although it opened the possibility of access to better-paying jobs. Qualitative evidence suggests that the more educated and wealthier people lived in the capital, but there were also many people without education and with very low incomes. Migration meant not only geographical mobility for large groups, but also social and spatial mobility within the city.

Along with demographic growth, modernization brought about new means of transportation. The result was the increasing ability of travelers to reach the capital, of its inhabitants to move within it and thus challenge the functional specialization of urban space. The development of railroads increased the ability of travelers to reach the capital, as one-day trips from nearby towns became possible for artisans of modest income and poor migrants. Trains developed in a country-wide network whose lines converged in Mexico City. Compared to the traditional canoes and ox carts that by the 1880s still transported much of the foodstuff needed in the capital, trains brought more products faster and cheaper, from regions beyond the valley. Soon, railroads replaced canals and roads as the principal way of communication between the city and the surrounding towns.[32]

The sudden ease to reach the capital from the interior brought crowds who did not behave or dress according to "civilized" foreign models. Railroad stations brought outsiders into Mexico City in great numbers, particularly during festivities such as May 5th and September 16th. Visitors crowded the streets, creating a bonanza for merchants and a headache for the police. Observers stressed the rural demeanor of the masses of pilgrims coming for the December 12th celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The lithographs of José Guadalupe Posada capture the links between the celebration and the abuse of alcohol by peasant-looking visitors.[33]

Within the city, new means of transportation, particularly tramways, changed the way people moved. During the 1880s, private and rented coaches provided transportation for "many people, of medium and great wealth."[34] First pulled by animals, then by electricity, *tranvías* made commuting faster and affordable, and brought the center of the city closer to the suburbs.[35] By 1903, most tramways were pulled by mules, although there were electric units as well. In 1920, there were 345 kilometers of tramway lines with 370 passenger cars, owned by the Compañía de Tranvías de México. Tramways were cheap enough to be used by middle- and some working-class people on a daily basis, but could also occasionally be used by the poorest.[36] Tramways became an important element of the urban poor's everyday life. For the characters of Angel de Campo's novel *La Rumba*, the tramway was the daily means of transportation and much more. Remedios, a seamstress, went daily to work in the tramway, and made it the scenario of her romantic life.[37] Horse-driven cabs continued to be a common sight at the turn of the century, although drivers were usually described as "ruffians" who liked to go too fast.[38] Ox carts, mules and hand-pulled carts were also frequent in the streets. Starting in the 1910s, automobiles added to the intricacy of transportation, with greater speed and different rules governing their movement.[39]

The impact of these new means of transportation on the popular perception of the capital was twofold. First, tramways, trains and automobiles were commonly identified with the worst, more aggressive aspects of modernization. Walking in the middle of the street became a dangerous "rural" habit in this city. Accidents were common. Echoing public concern, the penny press called tramway drivers *mataristas*, instead of *motoristas*. Due to judicial corruption, drivers enjoyed a great margin of impunity in the case that they happened to run over a pedestrian.[40] The impunity of car and tramway drivers was a central consequence of urban progress from the point of view of lower-class pedestrians: a threatening environment, where the

31. *Ibid.*

32. ohn H. Coatsworth, "El Impacto económico de los ferrocarriles en una economía atrasada" in *Los orígenes del atraso. Nueve ensayos de historia económica de México en los siglos XVIII y XIX* (Mexico City: Alianza Editorial, 1990), 196-197. For example of a short trip and a theft committed in the meanwhile, AJ-RS, 705331. For railroads replacing canoes, see Salvador Diego-Fernández, *La ciudad de Méjico a fines del siglo XIX* (Mexico City: n.e., 1937), 5.

33. Diego-Fernández, *La ciudad de Méjico*, 31; *José Guadalupe Posada: Ilustrador de la vida mexicana* (Mexico City: Fondo Editorial de la Plástica Mexicana, 1963), 217

34. Diego-Fernández, *La ciudad de Méjico*, 12-13.

35. For the role of tramways and trains in the expansion and centralization of urban space in Mexico City, see Manuel Vidrio, "El transporte en la Ciudad de México en el siglo XIX" in *Atlas de la ciudad de México*, 68-71. The system expanded until the 1920's, Miguel Rodríguez, *Los tranviarios y el anarquismo en México (1920-1925)* (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 66. For a valuable treatment of the historical role of tramways in a Latin American city, see Anton Rosenthal, "The Arrival of the Electric Streetcar and the Conflict over Progress in Early Twentieth-Century Montevideo," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27 (1995): 319-341. For the role of public transportation in the transformation of Mérida, see Allen Wells and Gilbert M. Joseph, "Modernizing Visions, *Chilango* Blueprints".

36. *El Universal*, 1 Oct. 1920, p. 9. Evidence on the relative price of fares is inconclusive. In 1902, the usual expense in tramway fares for a worker was 24 cents and it probably included several trips, AHA, Policía en general, 3643, 1600; *El Imparcial*, 11 Aug. 1902, p. 1. In 1920, according to the Compañía de Tranvías de México, the average fare was 9.5 cents, not enough according to the company, to cover costs. *El Universal*, 1 Oct. 1920, p. 9. Prices increased during the late Porfiriato and the 1910s. See request of municipal employees for free tramway passes, Celadores Municipales del Ramo de Policía to the City Council, 23 Apr. 1901, AHA, Policía en general, 3642, 1353. According to Spanish writer Julio Sesto, daily wages in the late 1900s for journeymen seamstresses or cigar factory workers was one peso. Policemen made 1.75 a day, Julio Sesto, *El México de Porfirio Díaz (hombres y cosas) Estudios sobre el desenvolvimiento general de la República Mexicana. Observaciones hechas en el terreno oficial y en el particular* (2. ed., Valencia: Sempere y Compañía, 1910), 134-6. Lear stresses the importance of tramways and railroads in the "segregation of wealth" because of the cost of fares, see Lear, "Mexico City: Space and Class", 467.

37. Angel de Campo, *Ocios y apuntes y La rumba* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1976), 199.

38. Eaton Smith, *Flying Visits to the City of Mexico and the Pacific Coast* (Liverpool: Henry Young and sons, 1903), 30-34. The problem of traffic was already clear, although in a smaller scale, by the end of the colony, Nacif, "Policía y seguridad pública", 13.

39. AHA, Policía en general, 3644, 1689.

40. For a case of a driver who ran over a two-year-old kid and walked free after two hours, with the help of court employees, see H.J. Teufer to Porfirio Díaz, 8 Feb. 1911, APD, 36, 2216-7. See also Moisés González Navarro, *La pobreza en México* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1995), 123. See more complaints in *Gaceta de Policía*, 1:2, 19 Oct. 1905, p. 3; *ibid.*, 1:10, 24 Dec. 1905, p. 2.

victims were poor, and the guilty (protected by their companies or bosses) were never punished. The world around train stations and inside coaches also offered an image of movement both attractive and dangerous. Beggars placed themselves in train stations, boys peddled in tramways, theft was common in both sites, and some journalists even talked about a special kind of professional thief who targeted unaware travelers.[41]

Traffic was one of the preferred contexts of the struggle between "old" and "modern" behaviors. The use of the street for fast transportation competed with its use as a place for commerce and sociability. This created a contradiction between suburban car drivers and those who made their living in the streets. The City Council sought to teach coach drivers to keep to their right and pedestrians to move along, reminding them "that it is forbidden to stop in the middle of the street forming groups that obstruct the circulation of vehicles and animals." The prohibition was in this case a description: vendors set up their booths in the middle of the streets, blocking traffic despite the inspectors' threats.[42] Pedestrians stood in the middle of the sidewalks blocking circulation, particularly at corners and outside theaters, forming groups instead of lines.[43]

The second consequence of technological changes was a transformed understanding of the city among the majority of its inhabitants. Modern transportation widened the perception of the urban space. Tramway lines reached as far as San Angel, and made the Zócalo easily accessible. Different areas of the city were linked and it was now easier for residents to reach not only the Zócalo, Avenida Plateros, but also the gambling houses in Tacubaya and other allegedly "dangerous" parts of the city.[44] In 1882, poet Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera used the tramway as the vehicle of an imaginary exploration into passengers' lives. He already saw a different city than that of pre-tramway days:

> *"The wagon takes me to unknown worlds and virgin regions. No, Mexico City does not start at the National Palace, nor does it end at Reforma Avenue. I give you my word that the city is much bigger. It is a great turtle that extends its dislocated legs toward the four cardinal points. Those legs are dirty and hairy. The city council, with fatherly care, paints them with mud every month".*[45]

41. AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1092; Carlos Roumagnac, *Los criminales en México: Ensayo de psicología criminal. Seguido de dos casos de hermafrodismo observado por los señores doctores Ricardo Egea ... Ignacio Ocampo* (1904; reprint, Mexico City: Tipografía El Fénix, 1912), 11, 14; *Gaceta de Policía*, 1:9, 17 Dec. 1905, p. 9.

42. *Memoria del Ayuntamiento 1901* (Mexico City: La Europea, 1902, 2 vol.), 1:505. Governor of the Federal District to City Council, 22 Dec. 1898, AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1222.

43. Enrique Ignacio Castelló to the City Council, 2 Aug. 1904, AHA, Policía en general, 3644, 1689.

44. For a description of the "partidas" in Tacubaya, part of "los suburbios plagados de prostíbulos, de tabernas, de plazas de toros y de gallos y de casas de juego . . . uno de los estados sociales más desorganizados y más concupiscentes que hayan existido en el mundo," see José Juan Tablada, *La feria de la vida* (1937; reprint, México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1991).

45. Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, "La novela del tranvía" in *La novela del tranvía y otros cuentos* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1984), 159. "El vagón, además, me lleva a muchos mundos desconocidos y a regiones vírgenes. No, la ciudad de México no empieza en el Palacio Nacional, ni acaba en la Calzada de la Reforma. Yo doy a Uds. mi palabra de que la ciudad es mucho mayor. Es una gran tortuga que extiende hacia los cuatro puntos cardinales sus patas dislocadas. Esas patas son sucias y velludas. Los ayuntamientos, con paternal solicitud, cuidan de pintarlas con lodo, mensualmente".

As the city expanded, society became more complex and mobile. An educated observer, like Gutiérrez Nájera, could travel the long legs of the turtle to reach stories and places unknown. On the other hand, working persons became more mobile and were able to reach the rich city downtown. Access to the central city provided the dwellers of marginal neighborhoods with new ways to cope with the everyday problems caused by modernization. They engaged in multiple activities, such as peddling, drinking, begging and even stealing, not only at their neighborhoods but also inside the respectable areas, undermining the order of the Porfirian city. The impression of order and stability of a cosmopolitan city was broken by the daily movement of a variegated population.

Before looking closely into those activities, an additional external factor of the failure of the ideal city of the Porfiriato should be considered, namely the impact of the Revolution. Beginning in 1913, the civil war took its toil among the population of the capital, not only in terms of casualties of combat but also through scarcity, lawlessness and increased migration into the city. Insecurity in the countryside and the growth of the bureaucracy contributed to the city's demographic growth after 1910.[46] Many of the social problems existing at the turn of the century became very acute during the 1910s. Unruly characters arrived with the revolutionary armies, like Manuel González, soldier of a so called General Gil, who was sent to the Penitentiary in 1916 "for hunting doves with a bow and arrow" in the *colonia* Roma.[47] After the Revolution, the intrusion of foreigners did not have the picturesque traits of innocence portrayed by nineteenth-century chroniclers. This time, the neighbors of the *colonia* de la Bolsa feared the multitude of *extranjeros* going about their streets, sometimes leaving behind an unidentified corpse.[48]

Threatened by the initial radicalism of the revolutionary factions, the wealthiest members of the elite who had benefited from Porfirian modernization left the city and their luxurious homes for exile. They and the post-revolutionary political class slowly regained control over the city along the basic lines established during Díaz' regime. During the 1920s, the capital slowly began to improve its image again. In 1919, pavement had not expanded from the 830 streets that it had covered in 1910, and maintenance had been minimal, except for "the most important" streets.[49] Elegant *colonias* near Chapultepec park, such as Polanco and Anzures, became the residence of choice for the new politicians. Sanitation and expansion of new developments recovered their fast pace by the end of the decade. The area of the city tripled between 1920 and 1930. Cars came to dominate traffic, and by

46. Claude Bataillon, "México, ciudad mestiza" *Ciencias Políticas* 35:1 (1964): 161-184, esp. p. 167-8.

47. AHA, Policía Presos Penitenciaría, 3664, 3. For a first-hand and at times dramatic account of these years, see Francisco Ramírez Plancarte, *La ciudad de México durante la revolución constitucionalista* (Mexico City: Botas, 1941). For an evaluation of the situation of the capital's poor in these years, see Alberto J. Pani, *La higiene en México* (Mexico City: Ballescá, 1916).

48. *El Universal*, 9 Oct. 1920, p. 9.

49. Ayuntamiento Constitucional de Mexico, *Argumentos contra la iniciativa presidencial por eliminar el ayuntamiento de la ciudad de México. Envian presidente municipal L.L. Hernández y regidor encargado de la secretaría general J. Prieto Laurens* (Mexico City: Imprenta Francesa, 1919), 34.

1928 animal-pulled vehicles were prohibited.[50] The official confrontation against the practices of the urban poor resumed. In 1920, the City Council and the Department of Public Health set out to destroy, in the name of hygiene and security, all the public dormitories built around markets.[51] The development of the ideal city and new *colonias* continued along the same lines established at the turn of the century—based on the harmony of developers' interests and urban policies.[52] Despite the political changes brought about by the Revolution, the majority of the urban population still distrusted authority and challenged the social divides of the city.

The Impact of Modernization on Everyday Life

What did the Porfirian design of the city and its failure mean for the urban poor? This question is at the center of any attempt to explain the relationship between modernization and crime. I will now describe the living conditions of the urban poor and examine the ways in which they coped with overcrowding, displacement and the authoritarian policies of the regime. These ways were not always in accordance with upper-class "appropriate" norms of behavior, and often fell outside of the law. The urban poor, therefore, had to meet not only with difficult material conditions, but also with the disapproval of observers and authorities and the criminalization of many strategies of survival.

Denouncing the bad quality of lower class housing conditions, a 1902 report by *El Imparcial* stated a basic fact of everyday life in the city:

> *[...] a sizable part of the population, precisely that which does not have the best personal hygiene, live in the narrow rooms that the capital's buildings offer to the poorer classes. Those tenement houses... offer the most surprising spectacle of human overcrowding one could imagine. Only the Middle-Age "Ghettos", those typical neighborhoods in which the Jews were confined, could resemble the narrowness, slovenliness and dirtiness of these dwellings.*[53]

In the perspective of educated observers, overcrowding and other features of the urban poor's life made their geographical and even cultural isolation necessary. But the consequence of those conditions were an implicit challenge to elite notions of civility and the undermining of class and gender divides which were supposed to structure urban life. The urban poor had to leave those "narrow rooms" and look for a living in the streets.

In the old barrios near downtown and in many of the newly developed lower class *colonias*, people lived in *vecindades*—one or two-story tenements that lacked the clear spatial autonomy of the modern homes. Several families lived crammed into single- or double-room apartments facing a narrow hallway through a single door. Tenants shared sanitary services and the use of the hallway for cleaning or cooking. Owners did not care about the

50. Jean Meyer, "La ciudad de México, ex de los palacios", in Enrique Krauze, ed., *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana. Periodo 1924-1928*, vol. 10 *La reconstrucción económica* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1977), 273-9.

51. *El Universal*, 2 Oct. 1920, p. 3.

52. Jiménez, *La traza del poder*.

53. AHA, Policía en general, 3643, 1600, clipping from *El Imparcial*, 11 Aug. 1902, p. 1.

buildings' unhealthy conditions; their only concern was to collect the rents.[54] In the *colonia* de la Bolsa, for example, most tenants could not provide a warrantor. For them, rents were established on a short-term basis with relatively high rates. Landlords did not even enter *vecindades*, carrying out their deals verbally on the street.[55] According to the *Nueva Era*, policemen did not dare to enter either, because *vecindades* were not welcoming places: dogs were let loose and aggressive, clothes were hung in the middle of the hallway, and neighbors saw any representative of the government as an intruder. On the other hand *vendedores ambulantes* (peddlers) entered *vecindades* at will, contributing to frequent thefts in tenants' apartments.[56] Commentators saw the housing deficit as the cause of these problems. According to the 1902 *El Imparcial* report cited above, nothing decent could be leased for less than 50 pesos. Houses renting for less than 20 pesos a month were "true troglodyte dwellings." Only the wealthy classes had improved their living conditions after the building fever of recent years.[57] For the urban lower classes, however, *vecindades* were the only option for a decent dwelling.

Public dormitories or inns, called *mesones*, were an additional mode of cheap housing. They offered a roof for the night in exchange for a ticket that could be bought daily at a low cost. Thus, *mesones* suited better the economic conditions of those who lacked a stable income, like ambulantes or beggars. Although ostensibly designed for travelers, *mesones* became the permanent residence of many poor *capitalinos* who were ready to endure any inconvenience. Sleeping room on the floor (which men, women and children shared) could become the object of bloody disputes. For examplee, Felipe Toledo was arrested in 1907 because he stuck a pencil 4 cm. deep into Amador Rodríguez' chest, because Rodríguez had stepped on Toledo while looking for some room to sleep in at a *mesón* of the Plazuela de las Vizcaínas.[58] Conditions were less

54. Sesto, *El México de Porfirio Díaz*, 245; Ramírez Plancarte, *La ciudad de México durante la revolución constitucionalista*, 426-7. Within the area of older buildings near downtown, *vecindades* were the result of sub-dividing large upper-class homes, and during the nineteenth century housed tenants from different economic backgrounds. The construction of tenements for the express purpose of renting apartments was more common in newly developed areas or in demolished downtown lots. See Lear, "Mexico City: Space and Class", 476. For the multiple social strata among vecindad tenants in the early nineteenth century, see Jaime Rodríguez Piña, "Las vecindades en 1811: Tipología" in Alejandra Moreno Toscano *et. al.*, *Investigaciones sobre la historia de la ciudad de México* (II) (Mexico City: INAH, 1976): 68-82.

55. *El Imparcial*, 6 Jul. 1908, p. 4.

56. *Nueva Era*,9 Jul. 1912, p. 4.

57. AHA , Policía en general, 3643, 1600, clipping from El Imparcial, 11 Aug. 1902, p. 1. According to the Comisión Monetaria, in 1891 there were 8,883 houses in the city and by 1902 the number had increased to 11,024. José Lorenzo Cossío, "Algunas noticias sobre las colonias de esta capital," *Boletín de la Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística*, 47:1 (Sep. 1937): 11.

58. For conditions in mesones see Morales Martínez, "La expansión de la ciudad de México," 68; ASSA, Beneficencia Pública, Sección Asistencial, Serie Asilados y Mendigos, 8, 8, f. 2; ibid, 9, 21; Lear, "Mexico City: Space and Class," 478-479. See Gobernación 1847, Leg. 227, box 1 for the clientele of *mesones* in the mid-nineteenth century: mostly cart drivers coming from outside the city, staying a couple of days. The case of Toledo in AJ-RS, 84, 518303. See the case of a *mesón* whose owner was fined in 1906 because of the bad hygienic conditions of the place: lack of running water, exposed and clogged sewers, shared bathrooms, overcrowding of the twelve rooms, garbage that was not disposed of daily, holes in the roof and floors. ASSA, Salubridad Pública,Sección Salubridad del Distrito Federal, box. 1, 24. Many of the alleged beggars arrested in 1930 lived in *mesones*, ASSA, Beneficencia Pública, Sección Asistencial, Serie Asilados y Mendigos.

than hygienic. A public dormitory approved by the City Council offered 138 beds, showers "for those in good health" and stones to wash the laundry for "those [women] who request" to wash their clothes.[59] Dormitories received large numbers of the migrants during the Revolution. In an average day in 1920, 91 men, 19 women and 8 children used the public dormitory, and in 1918, the Beneficencia Pública dormitory received 54,750 people.[60]

Elite commentators saw *mesones* and *vecindades* as the cause of the urban poor's lack of morality. Porfirian writers explained the alleged tendency among the poor to appear naked or covered by rags, or to expose the most delicate moments of their family life, as a consequence of what they saw and endured in those places.[61] Observers were concerned by the mix-up of the inside and the outside, the public and the private, that was a common feature of popular life. While the allegations of sexual promiscuity might have been based on the imagination of observers, and are at least difficult to document, one clear outcome of overcrowding and lack of proper facilities was the poor's need to carry out many of the activities associated with the private realm (such as eating) in public places.

A widespread problem of popular housing, perhaps the main factor for its occupants' need to spend most of the day in the streets, was the absence of running water and sewage. Since the late colonial period, according to Marcela Dávalos, the absence of running water at home had thwarted the construction of "the modern family... organized by the feelings of intimacy, prudency and privacy" with the result that "the same things happened inside the house than in the street".[62] Authorities and neighbors were aware of the problems posed by the scarcity of the "precious" liquid. During the Porfiriato, water had to be brought to many areas by cumbersome means. Sanitary facilities were collective and unhealthy. Toilets in *vecindades* communicated to the sewage or to the street by open sewers running through the middle of hallways.[63]

The lack of water at home stimulated the development of *baños públicos* (public baths), an important institution in the lives of the inhabitants of the city and one that further mixed intimate needs and social life. At these facilities, men and women could take a shower and do laundry for a small fee. In the 1880s, *baños públicos* were the largest constructions of the Paseo de la Reforma, near the Alameda. Swimming pools were also crowded in hot days, specially on Saint John the Baptist's day. Attendance to these facilities was high: during April 1914, 5,434 men and 5,267 women used the Baños de la Lagunilla, administered by the Beneficencia Pública.[64]

59. *Memoria del ayuntamiento de 1901*, 2:275-6.

60. Blanca Ugarte to the City Council, 31 Aug. 1920, ASSA, Fondo Establecimientos Asistenciales, Dormitorios Públicos, 1, 5.

61. Miguel Macedo, *La criminalidad en México: Medios de combatirla* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Fomento, 1897), 14-15; Luis Lara y Pardo, *La prostitución en México* (Mexico City: Bouret, 1908), 120-1; Pani, *La higiene en México*, 111, 221. These descriptions were not always based on direct observation.

62. Marcela Dávalos, "La salud, el agua y los habitantes de la ciudad de México. Fines del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX" in Hernández Franyuti, comp., *La ciudad de México en la primera mitad del siglo XIX* 300, 281. See also Illán Semo, "La ciudad tentacular: notas sobre el centralismo en el siglo XX" in Isabel Tovar de Arechederra and Magdalena Mas, eds., *Macrópolis mexicana*, (Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana-Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes-DDF, 1994), 48.

63. For drainage systems, ASSA, Salubridad Pública,Sección Salubridad del Distrito Federal, box. 1, 33.

64. Diego-Fernández, *La ciudad de Méjico*, 4. For a description of *baños públicos* in Lagunilla and Juárez, see vice-president of the Junta Inspectora de la Beneficencia Pública to Secretary of Gobernación, 16 Aug. 1913, AGN, Fondo Gobernación Período Revolucionario, 115, 77, 1. See also ASSA, Fondo Establecimientos Asistenciales, Baños y Lavaderos Públicos, 1,15; for the regulations of the public baths of La Lagunilla, see *ibid.*, 2,11.

Other, less pleasing practices prompted by the lack of hygienic facilities further offended the sensibility of upper class observers. Urinating and defecating in the streets was a matter-of-fact practice for poor men and women. This problem had concerned authorities since the Bourbon period. Although public urinals were available in several sites of the city, arrests were still common in the late 1910s under the accusation of "having bowel movements on the public road."[65] It was only natural to provide more urinals in the city, declared well-known physician M. Río de la Loza in 1892, because "When those individuals whose occupations force them to stay outside their homes do not find places properly devised for that purpose, they have to avoid police vigilance, with prejudice of health and civilization." Establishing more toilets was all the more necessary since the only available alternative were *pulquerías*, where "there is the custom of having barrels or buckets used to contain the urine of any individual who wants to use them."[66] The problem became more evident in the recently paved streets nearby theaters and restaurants where, at night, people left "large pools of urine" and feces. For Mexican commentators, Mexico gave an undeserving image compared to other modern capitals, where urinals prevented these spectacles. The City Council, however, found it difficult to punish even its own employees:

> *"What can the policemen do, if they have to stay eight hours in their corner, or the coach drivers, who often spend the whole day in the street, or the street merchants or, in sum, anyone who walks the city and who is far from his home, when they face an urgent need [alguna necesidad]?".*[67]

Solutions targeted only men on the streets, and were unsatisfactory. Two entrepreneurs offered the City Council to build public urinals which did not require a door, being just a receptacle between two panels at a 90 degree angle.[68] Other, more discrete models were built, one of them in the Empedradillo street, east of the Cathedral. Still, respectable neighbors considered these sanitary facilities dangerous "foci of prostitution" and complained that health authorities did not give them sufficient maintenance. In the *colonia* Morelos, neighbors complained to the Public Health Council that the public urinals built by the City Council had become a health hazard and a threat "because they stay open during the night and are not covered by police vigilance."[69] In conclusion, for lower class men and particularly for women, neither their

65. In October 1917, AHA, Policía Presos Penitenciaría, 3664, 1. For Bourbon official concern about these issues, see Voekel, "Peeing on the Palace." For a good exam about the issue of water in early nineteenth century, see Dávalos, "La salud, el agua y los habitantes de la ciudad de México," 292.

66. M. Río de la Loza to the City Council, 27 Dec. 1892, AHA,, Policía en General, 3639, 1020.

67. Report of the Housing Committees to the City Council, 15 May. 1901, AHA,, Policía en general, 3642, 1354.

68. Vicente Moyano and José Genaro Alonso to City Council, 11 Oct. 1892, AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1019.

69. Contract between the City Council and Francisco J. Báez, 29 Aug. 1895, AHA,, Policía en General, 3639, 1056; Public Health Council to the City Council, 8 Apr. 1892, AHA,, Policía en General, 3639, 1016.

dwellings nor public facilities offered a "decent" solution to their daily bodily needs. Their only option was to ignore the dictates of urbanity and to endure the loss of shame and the repudiation of the better-off and the authorities.

Finally, the scarcity of drinking water in their homes drove people to the street in order to satiate their thirst. Men and women of all ages had to use public fountains, buy flavored water (aguas frescas) or patronize *pulquerías*. Many houses, as one in San Jeronimito street, lacked wells or were not even close to water pipes.[70] Drinking water was less of a concern for the colonias west of the center, where springs from Chapultepec provided abundant and good-quality water.[71] *Pulque* and thirst were commonly associated in descriptions of popular drinking. Pablo Severiano and Manuel González were so thirsty after having breakfast that they pawned a vest one of them was wearing in exchange for twenty-five cents worth of *pulque*. The vest turned out to be stolen but the employee of the *pulquería* alleged that they were so thirsty that he could not refuse the deal.[72]

Alcohol propelled large numbers of people to the streets, where alcoholic beverages were at the center of social life. Access to *pulquerías* and cantinas (and thus to the world of prostitution and gambling linked to alcohol) was a powerful attraction for rural migrants to move to Mexico City. It had been so since colonial times. According to Serge Gruzinski, Indians who had left their communities were attracted by the anonymity of the city and came to enjoy the de-regulated, secularized use of alcohol.[73] Alcohol and prostitution were still luring in the Porfiriato. As one prisoner told criminologist Carlos Roumagnac, he had come from his natal Texcoco because his parents mistreated him, but decided to stay when his income increased and he became an enthusiast of "prostitutes, whom he enjoyed greatly."[74] This loss of local mechanisms to limit the use of alcohol, coupled with the elite's concern about the appearance of the city's population, converted alcohol consumption into a central public issue during the Porfiriato.

Control of alcohol consumption in public places was not successful, as commercial outlets continued growing throughout the period. Up to 1871, the selling of *pulque* was officially restricted to the Calle del Aguila, two blocks north of the Alameda,[75] but by the end of the century *pulquerías* had surpassed any precedent in terms of quantity and extension. As the city expanded, new *pulquerías* emerged in the outskirts of the city, with new buildings and colorful mural paintings.[76] According to

70. Report of health inspector A. Romero to Public Health Council, 10 Jan. 1902, ASSA, SP, SDF, box 1, 22.

71. Report by council member Luis E. Ruiz on the Eight District, 19 Apr. 1904, AHA,, Policía en general, 3644, 1691.

72. AJ-RS, 705331. For the linking of thirst and alcohol consumption, see *El Imparcial*, 29 Jan. 1906, p. 1.

73. Serge Gruzinski, *La colonización de lo imaginario: Sociedades indígenas y occidentalización en el México español, siglos XVI-XVIII* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991), 272-275. See also Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos?*, 191 and passim.

74. Roumagnac, *Los criminales en México*, 282.

75. José María Marroqui, *La ciudad de México. Contiene: El origen de los nombres de muchas de sus calles y plazas, del de varios establecimientos públicos y privados, y no pocas noticias curiosas y entretenidas* (Mexico City: La Europea, 1900), 3:189-211. For early attempts to control pulque consumption, see Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos?* For the lack of control by authorities of the spaces of collective drinking in Mexico City, see Virginia Guedea, "México en 1812: Control político y bebidas prohibidas", *Estudios de historia moderna y contemporánea de México*, 8 (1980): 23-64.

76. García Cubas, *El libro de mis recuerdos*, 221-2.

official records, in 1902 there were 2,423 alcohol outlets in the capital, including cantinas, *pulquerías* and smaller establishments. The greatest concentration of these was in the blocks east of the Plaza Mayor (behind the Palacio Nacional), where the number of *pulquerías* and cantinas was so great that it became common for authorities to deny new licenses to sell alcohol. From the total of 924 *pulquerías* in the city, 170 existed inside an area around downtown where they were formally prohibited.[77]

Mexican drinkers bore no resemblance to the models of thrift, discipline and cleanliness cherished by elites. *Pulque* consumption had a particularly slow rhythm, but also other low-alcohol beverages like *rompope* (eggnog), *tepache* (fermented pineapple juice) and *infusiones* (teas with alcohol) allowed customers to spend hours in *pulquerías*, cantinas or cheap restaurants. Despite official regulation, a profuse decoration made the stay in these establishments more comfortable. Clients spent time fraternizing, eating, or simply moving from one outlet to another, starting sometimes in the morning and continuing throughout the day. José Dolores Méndez, accused of raping María Guadalupe Rodríguez, described how he invited her to several cantinas, beginning with lemonade and concluding with twelve glasses of *rompope*. They ended up in a hotel where—according to her accusation—he tried to force himself on her.[78]

The elites were concerned about the relationship between alcohol consumption and disorder. This made the control of popular drunkenness a matter of security for the city of wealth and power. Alcohol consumption became the object of a confrontation between public policies and everyday practices of the population. City authorities sought to prevent crime and disorder by limiting hours of *cantinas* and *pulquerías*, by prohibiting gambling and music at their premises, and by banning the selling of alcohol during festivities.[79] Alcohol became the rationale for further official control of people's movements. Since *pulque* had to pay a tax when entering the city, even pedestrians carrying as little as two liters were arrested by the police.[80] Policemen dragged dozens of sleeping drunkards (*borrachos tirados*) from the streets to police stations. They were summarily fined and released the next morning.[81] But Porfirian authorities never tried to fully suppress the consumption of alcohol across the city. After the Revolution, this concern was still alive. In 1916, Federal District officials suggested

77. City Council to José González Parres, 7 Dec. 1907, AHA, Bebidas embriagantes, 1337, 397. The 1902 Reglamento de Bebidas Embriagantes established an area of "first category" alcohol outlets around the center of the city, where *cantinas* had to follow stricter hygienic norms and were allowed to remain open longer than those in the rest of the city, the "second category" area, AHA, Bebidas embriagantes, 1332, 115.

78. AJ-RS, 159, 553759, 15. See Raúl Guerrero's description of modern *pulquerías*: "Las pulquerías se distinguían por sus clásicos adornos: el piso de cemento o de mosaico cubierto con serrín de colores; a una altura conveniente, cadenas de papel de china, de colores, y trozos del mismo material, recortado y picado artísticamente; en la pared, tras el mostrador, cuadros con paisajes mexicanos o europeos, escenas de toreo, de alguna obra teatral en las que se identificaban a Rigoleto o a Aída, y varios espejos con marcos dorados. En lugar preferente, la imagen religiosa objeto de la devoción del propietario, adornada con flores de papel o naturales, su veladora siempres encendida, y formándole dosel, una cadena de papel de china". Raúl Guerrero Guerrero, *El pulque* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1986), 158.

79. See examples of these restrictions in AHA,, Bebidas embriagantes, 1332, 115.

80. Andrea Coquis to City Council, 1 Apr. 1916, AHA, Policía en general, 3645, 1777; for seizures and arrests related to unauthorized selling of pulque, AHA, Gobernación, 1112, 120 bis y 121 bis.

81. AHA, Gobernación, 1118, 4.

that all *pulquerías* be eradicated from the downtown area of the city, because they gave the streets "an ugly look and... [were] a threat to public health and safety because their customers are dirty people who get drunk and get into scandals and fights."[82]

Finding a systematic solution to the problem of alcoholism proved to be difficult, in part because of the strong economic interests connected to the *pulque* business in Mexico City. The large demand for alcohol and the increasing state supervision created quarrels between *cantinas* and *pulquerías* that had to meet municipal licensing requirements, and the numerous informal outlets such as *tendajones* (small stores) and *puestos* (street booths) which sold cheap mixes of infusions and alcohol without a license, especially at night, when legal outlets were forced to close.[83] The regulations of retail alcohol prompted additional tensions between the owners of small *cantinas* and *pulquerías*, and authorities—whom the former accused of giving improper advantages to the monopolistic Compañía Expendedora de Pulques and the proprietors of elegant outlets downtown. The Compañía had indeed powerful partners who were also senior public officials, such as *científico* Pablo Macedo (brother of Miguel and high ranking official in Díaz' government and the City Council), and made investments in land property and railroads. The enforcement of regulations often meant the revocation of the licenses of the Compañía's smaller competitors. After Díaz' demise, many of the small sellers' grievances against the Compañía became public and the new governments were, at least in rhetoric, more willing to act upon the fears of alcoholism as a social problem.[84] Economic interests, benefiting the same elite that condemned popular alcohol consumption, undermined public policies against the problem.

The late Porfirian period can be characterized as one of intense and widespread alcohol consumption in public settings, despite the strong elite condemnation of the practice and city authorities' halfhearted measures to control consumption. Although the problem had deep roots in the capital's history, it was during this period when the contradiction between popular practices and upper-class attitudes became more open, yet appearing at the same time to reinforce each other. That was also the case of other practices that became distinctive features of the turn-of-the-century capital, such as street commerce.

Since most of the city's inhabitants spent their days and many nights in the streets, a great diversity of exchanges occurred in all areas of the city. Many enterprising citizens viewed in street commerce a ready, if risky, source of income. Gaining access to an abundant public was worth confronting the authorities' penchant for control of the streets. A multitude of services were offered on the streets. Scribes (*escribanos*, also called *evangelistas*), barbers, dentists, phonograph operators and musicians exercised

82. *El Universal*, 14 Dec. 1916, p. 3.

83. Letter signed by "comerciantes de abarrotes y cantina," 16 Jun. 1909, AHA, Bebidas Embriagantes, 1338, 511; also Gervasio Suárez to City Council, 24 Jul. 1911, AHA, Bebidas Embriagantes, 1341, 699. For the Porfirian literature about alcoholism, see Pablo Piccato, "'El Paso de Venus por el disco del Sol': Criminality and Alcoholism in the Late Porfiriato," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 11:2 (Summer 1995): 203-241.

84. Secretary of Gobernación to Governor of the Federal District, 7 Jun. 1913, AHA, 1781, 1130. For the industrial dimension of the pulque economy see Juan Felipe Leal and Mario Huacuja Rountree, *Economía y sistema de haciendas en México: La hacienda pulquera en el cambio: Siglos XVIII, XIX y XX* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1982).

their trades on the sidewalks, with or without official authorization.[85] Women cooked and sold food (chopping beef, making the tortillas, fixing *tacos*) in the middle of narrow streets, especially around markets like La Merced. Along with food, alcoholic beverages were sold on the streets, frequently without any kind of official supervision.[86]

What these activities lacked in stability they offered in flexibility and freedom of movement. Small vegetable or candy vendors would acquire their daily stock, walk the streets or take a place on a sidewalk, working until sunset or until their merchandise was gone. They would start again the next day, using their daily earnings to renew stock, with any left over to pay for lodging and other needs. This practice often involved walking from La Merced market or the *embarcaderos* (docks where canoes brought in produce from the countryside across Lake Texcoco), to central streets. Forty-five-year-old María Magdalena Gutiérrez walked everyday from the Jamaica market to the Fourth District to peddle vegetables. She used to live in Lerma, State of Mexico, where she made tortillas but, she informed a social worker in 1931, "after she saw that the selling of vegetables could be more profitable, she turned to such activity and moved to the capital" where she was able to earn approximately one peso a day. She spoke Nahuatl and some Spanish. Her neighbors informed the social worker about her daily routine: she woke up very early, bought the "lettuce, green peas, artichokes, etc.," sold them in the street, and returned home walking. She was arrested on the suspicion of being a beggar, more than two kilometers away from home.[87] Her arrest made rare everyday life information available for historians but, from her perspective, official harassment was not so uncommon.

Peddlers fought a daily battle against authorities to occupy those areas of the city where customers and money were accessible. These sellers were, since colonial times, mostly Indians who came to the capital to sell their own produce. In the perception of early-nineteenth century authorities, they already represented a serious source of disorder albeit a picturesque image.[88] By the end of the century, the confrontation became more acute and peddlers became no longer a "natural" element of the city's landscape, but the actors of social conflict expressed as the struggle for space against respectable neighbors and established merchants. The 1900 census classified only 334 persons as street peddlers, but many testimonies strongly suggest much larger numbers. In 1894 merchants of the Calle del Empedradillo, near the Cathedral, complained about the "plague" of ambulantes in that street. As the City Council conceded, municipal regulations could not be easily enforced due to the negligence of the police (subordinated to the Governor of the Federal District, not the City Council), who refused to take strong measures against ambulantes.[89] In 1903, the Governor of the Federal

85. Antonio Aura to the City Council, 4 Apr. 1899, AHA, Policía en general, 3641, 1240; for a license for a phonograph operator, AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1060; for one to sell food, AHA,, Policía en General, 3640, 1145.

86. *El Universal*, 16 Feb. 1917, p. 1. *El Universal*, 13 Jan. 1917, p. 6. See also AHA, Sección Bebidas Embriagantes.

87. ASSA, Beneficencia Pública, Sección Asistencial, Serie Asilados y Mendigos, f. 7.

88. Salvador Diego-Fernández, *La ciudad de Méjico*, 4; Marcela Dávalos, "La salud, el agua y los habitantes de la ciudad de México", 280.

89. Merchants of Empedradillo street to City Council, 23 Aug. 1894, AHA,, Policía en General, 3640, 1179. For the census figure, see Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo general de la Republica Mexicana verificado el 28 de octubre de 1900* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Fomento, 1901-1907).

District denounced to the City Council the increasing number of booths in the streets, even in the less convenient places. The Honduras Consul, noted the Governor, had to walk his horse under the colonnades of the Portal de Mercaderes, facing the Plaza Mayor, because he could not enter his house through the *puestos* established in the sidewalks.[90]

Disputes between "established merchants" and *ambulantes* were rife. Access to space was the key to these squabbles. Many sellers stationed themselves outside the markets, offering the same products available inside, which they had acquired early in the morning at lower prices.[91] The key element for economic success was to find the right spot. Food sellers outside La Merced market complained to the City Council that if they were displaced to a different zone with less circulation of customers—as city authorities intended—their way of living would be destroyed.[92] A similarly pessimistic view was shared by the sellers of used iron (*vendedores de fierros viejos)* outside the Plaza de San Juan, whom city authorities wanted to relocate in El Baratillo market.[93] Conflicts between the City Council, its representatives and street sellers became increasingly acute during the Porfiriato. Police agents and inspectors made peddlers' lives harder by demanding either the official permit (which most of them lacked) or a bribe.[94] The "illegality" of many street vendors became a source of additional income for the policemen who were in charge of to punishing it.

Thus, despite the pressure from established merchants, clearing the central streets of the capital from *ambulantes* was a never-ending task. Street vendors were a traditional feature of the urban landscape. The source of tension, it could be argued, was the group of affluent merchants and urban reformers who sought to establish control over downtown streets and turn them into a modern bussiness district. In 1901, for example, neighbors and merchants of the Plaza de Santo Domingo asked the City Council to remove the scribes from the colonnades of the plaza, arguing that they promoted vice and theft, and obstructed the view from the stores. The Comisión de Policía y Mercados of the City Council replied that the *escritorios* had been there for more than forty years, and there was enough room for everyone anyway.[95] Tradition had established *escritorios* at the Plaza de Santo Domingo, and peddlers would not move from that identifiable marker of their trade. Not everyone, however, could successfully appeal to old uses. In 1897, sellers of candy in the Zócalo asked the City Council to reconsider its denial to renew their permits. The vendors maintained that tradition had established that during the holidays people would buy candy and toys for their children in the *Plaza*

90. Governor of the Federal District to the President of the City Council, 11 May. 1903, AHA, Policía en general, 3644, 1643.

91. See the case of *vendedores ambulantes* outside the Martínez de la Torre market, removed by order of the authority in 1901, AHA,,Policía en general, 3642, 1371.

92. Tomasa Pérez and seven more women to the President of the City Council, 3 Jul. 1915, AHA, Policía en general, 3645, 1768.

93. Isabel Reza and twelve more to President of the City Council, 25 Jan. 1901, AHA, Policía en general, 3642, 1342.

94. For merchants' resistance to inspectors in the San Lucas market, see Comisión de Mercados to the City Council, 24 Feb. 1899, AHA,, Policía en general, 3641, 1266. For a complaint against a health inspector accused of helping out a company in the municipal slaughterhouse, see First District Chief of Police to Inspector General de Policía, 14 Jan. 1911, AHA, Gobierno del Distrito, Rastros, 1785, 4.

95. Neighbors and landlords of Santo Domingo to the City Council, 26 Jul. 1901, AHA, Policía en general, 3642, 1360.

Mayor. Banishing them from the Plaza, they argued, would push them to the brink of "misery, with all its horrors." In this case the government was less flexible, and extended the candy peddlers' licenses for only a year. After all, the Zócalo was one of the showpieces of the ideal city, while Santo Domingo, only three blocks to the north, already belonged to the margins.[96]

Other types of exchanges challenged the social divisions of urban geography. The immediate need of cash drove people downtown to pawn their possessions. Pawn shops loaned customers amounts below the value of the objects pawned. Customers kept a ticket until they could repay the loan plus interests and recover their possessions. The principal moneylender for the poor was the Monte de Piedad, a colonial institution supervised by the city government, whose building was located across the street from the Cathedral, in the northwest corner of the Zócalo. Interest rates on loans guaranteed by property were at least 8 per cent a month for amounts of less than one peso, and 6 per cent for greater amounts, plus a 5 per cent fee. Private pawn shops competed with the Monte de Piedad, although exacting higher interests. The City Council authorized pawn shops in other areas of the city in order to prevent the long lines and agglomerations formed around the Monte de Piedad building, but did not allow private entrepreneurs to offer lower rates than the Monte de Piedad.[97]

Theft was another reason for some people to enter the wealthy areas of the capital and subvert the boundaries that supposedly separated "decent" and "dangerous" territories. Testimonies of pickpockets in such places as the Cathedral and elegant stores inflamed concerns about crime in general and supported the alleged need of harsh treatment against petty thieves.[98] Tramways and trains were favorite targets for petty thieves, because they allowed close physical contact with watch-carrying gentlemen. Most thefts did not use violence but exploited the open spaces of streets and public buildings. In 1911, the City Council asked for special police protection for its own building, where bronze ornaments were frequently stolen.[99] It was a common practice to enter a large store, grab a piece of fine silk from the counter and try to outrun clerks and policemen, like Gumersindo Zamudio unsuccessfully attempted in El Centro Mercantil.[100]

Commerce of stolen goods crossed from the respectable areas of the city to neighborhoods outside of police control. Contemporaries perceived *colonia* de la Bolsa as an almost foreign zone of danger within the city. They linked the neighborhood to the trade of stolen goods and the absence of police intervention, and thus saw it as a place of violence, particularly dangerous for upper-class intruders.[101] The barrio of Tepito was feared as a thieves' lair. An American traveler was told that the "Thieves Mar-

96. Santos Cisneros and thirty three more to the City Council, 11 Nov. 1897, AHA, Policía en General, 3640, 1180. The conflict between authorities, "established" merchants and peddlers continued after the revolution. In 1917, *El Universal* triumphantly announced that the authorities were not going to extend any more licenses for peddlers on important avenues between the Plaza de la Constitución and the Alameda. *El Universal*, 10 Jan. 1917, p. 1.

97. *Memoria del ayuntamiento de 1901*, 2:39-41.

98. *La Voz de México*, 29 Jan. 1890, p. 2.

99. City Council to Governor of the Federal District, 17 Aug. 1911, AHA, Policía en general, 3644, 1699.

100. *El Imparcial*, 2 Jan. 1900, p. 3.

101. *Ibid*., 3 Jul. 1908, p. 1.

ket" (probably the Lagunilla Market, by Tepito) was the place where merchandise could be sold after three months from the robbery, without fear of prosecution. The visitor thought this an exaggeration, "at least nowadays under the strong hand of Díaz."[102] But theft was indeed a central issue of public concern, an uncomfortable feature of the Porfirian capital. Even though thieves were far fewer than *ambulantes*, they also participated in the disruption of the social geography of the capital.

Beggars were more visible than thieves in the invasion of respectable places. The fight against mendicity became a focus of upper-class struggles to "recover" public spaces. In 1897, influential hygienist Dr. Eduardo Liceaga proposed that beggars be sent to jail, instead of the overcrowded asylum. *El Imparcial* supported the idea, since it would prevent "those immoral scenes that contradict our culture."[103] Mendicants made the best from the impact of their presence near churches and around upper-class areas. In 1916, *El Universal* complained that mendicants were a serious nuisance to pedestrians, even in downtown streets. According to the newspaper, they were aggressive, for they showed "sickening sores, with reprehensible impudicity" and threatened to infect pedestrians. Their places were not the streets, but "the farthest corner of hospitals".[104] Observers accused beggars of exaggerating or faking their affliction in order to impress passersby. In 1917, Julio Anaya was arrested near La Merced and sent to the Penitentiary because he was begging "and to that effect [according to the police] he pierced the skin of his neck with a needle".[105]

This concern about the location of beggars was another official attempt to dictate the use of the city. Like vendors and thieves, beggars moved toward the central, more crowded areas of the capital. As police inspectors reported to the City Council in 1895, beggars came from outside neighborhoods or villages, particularly during religious celebrations. Their presence was rare in suburban districts, like the Seventh and Eighth, were they were quickly arrested by the police.[106] The fact that mendicants occupied places associated with modernization and progress made them even more troublesome. *El Imparcial* denounced beggars roaming "in downtown streets, under the shade of the trees of the most popular avenues, in the tramway stops, where they jump at travelers".[107] In 1930, *El Universal* published a map of the zone of "greater concentration of beggars" based on the census performed by the Beneficencia Pública. The area included from Las Cruces to Guerrero Streets, and from Arcos de Belén Avenue to República de Panamá Street. This overlapped with the central streets of the central city, the cosmopolitan territory around the Alameda and Zócalo.[108]

Peddling, stealing, begging or drinking were certainly not the only reasons for the urban poor to take over the spaces of the wealthy city, but they were the most visible. Most of those who walked or took the tramway downtown sought to earn a living through more legitimate and stable means, and none relished police harassment or the possibility of jail. Working in industries, upper-class houses, government offices, or in the stores, many more inhabitants of the marginal city moved daily into the central city, filling the streets with their presence. The city could not work without this movement across social boundaries. Yet, city authorities sought to control and channel the dynamics of urban life. They tried to teach the urban lower classes how to use their own city.

The Dispute for the City

For the elites, crime, alcoholism and beggary constituted the clearest examples of how the boundaries of the respectable city were violated. Thieves, drunkards and beggars became the target of several official campaigns to "clean up" the city, in which suspects were arrested and many sent to penal colonies after a cursory investigation. Perhaps the harshest campaigns took place in 1908-1910 under Porfirio Díaz' iron hand, and subsequently in 1917-1919, when Venustiano Carranza was seeking to consolidate revolutionary legitimacy through ancient régime ways.[109] These policies were the most aggressive example of official attitudes toward the urban lower classes. They emerged in the context of the dispute between different conceptions about the use and structure of the city. Most commonly, however, conflicts were played out through the city authorities' skewed distribution of resources between upper-class *colonias*, on the top of official priorities, and lower-class developments and old barrios. Issues of health, police, and street nomenclature exemplify the confrontations between elite projects and the urban poor's use of the city. Disputed perceptions of urban space, in which certain areas were perceived as the territory of crime, illustrate how the unintended consequences of modernization defeated the Porfirian model of a cosmopolitan capital.

The boundaries of Mexico City became particularly unstable during the Porfiriato. Since the early colonial period, ethnic stratification had defined an area of Spanish population around the political and religious center of the Plaza Mayor. The *traza* or outline of the central city displaced the indigenous inhabitants of Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan to the edges of the lake that surrounded the city. According to Andrés Lira, from those early moments on, the areas of Spanish and indigenous occupancy had no clear limits, but moved and overlapped constantly. Conflicts and readjustments became a feature of urban politics which reached its peak in the second half of the nineteenth century.[110]

102. Smith, *Flying Visits*, 72-3.

103. *El Imparcial*, 1 Apr. 1897 p. 2.

104. *El Universal*, 24 Dec. 1916, p. 3. For City Council member Carlos M. Patiño, beggars belonged in asylums and not in the streets, where the problem "da lugar a comentarios desfavorables al adelanto y cultura de nuestra metropoli," Carlos M. Patiño, 4 Jun. 1912, AHA, Policía en general, 3645, 1704; and reply by Comisión de Policía, ibid. A highly publicized campaign took place, under similar premises, in 1930. See Beneficencia Pública del Distrito Federal, *La mendicidad en México* (Mexico City: Departamento de Acción Educativa Eficiencia y Catastros Sociales, 1931).

105. AHA, Policía Presos Penitenciaría, 3664, 2. Elite observers perceived these deceptions and condemned them by advancing the idea that many beggars were in fact swindlers, skillful actors who exploited people's philanthropy without really needing it. Newspapers denounced "false beggars" who only came to the city to implore charity, despite being perfectly able to work, and then go back to their houses in other towns, where they enjoyed a comfortable life. Nueva Era, 3 Jul. 1912, p. 4.

106. Proposal of City Council member Algara to the City Council, 25 Feb. 1895, and reply from police inspectors, AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1092; Inspector of the Fifth District to the City Council, 7 Apr. 1895, *ibid*. See also the remarkable descriptions of social workers in 1930 in ASSA, Beneficencia Pública, Sección Asistencial, Serie Asilados y Mendigos.

107. *El Imparcial*, 18 Jul. 1912, p. 7.

108. *El Universal*, 3 Jul. 1930, p. 3a.

109. For some cases among many "campaigns" against rateros, see *El Imparcial*, 12 Oct. 1897; *Gaceta de Policía*, 24 Dec. 1905, p. 2; *El Universal*, 3 Jan. 19170, p. 5; AGN, Presidentes Obregón y Calles, 121-G-I-4.

110. Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*, 26-28, 236.

The external limits of the capital also lost their distinct character during the latter period, as the capital expanded its urbanized area almost fivefold.[111] Several gates (*garitas*) had been placed at the outskirts of the city to control the traffic of merchandise brought by carts. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, these gates were rapidly becoming obsolete. They still collected fees on *pulque* and other products, but had lost their value as markers of the city's outer limits and their fiscal importance had been reduced by increasing railroad traffic.[112] During colonial times and until the mid-nineteenth century, city authorities had sought to monitor the influx of travelers entering through the *garitas* or checking into *mesones*. Such vigilance was no longer possible during the Porfiriato.[113] The Revolution further demonstrated the loss of control over the external boundaries of the city. Messengers from the Zapatista insurgency in Morelos acquired weapons, money and information in the capital, and carried them through the southern hills of the valley with relative ease, although on a small scale. The entrance of the complete Zapatista army in November 1914 was the symbolic culmination of this silent invasion.[114]

Something similar happened to the internal separations that structured the urban space. Trains brought anonymous multitudes to the city. By the 1880s, the separation between recently arrived "outsiders" (*fuereños*) and city dwellers seemed clear to everyone because both groups had distinctive clothes and manners. As the city grew and its connections with the surrounding countryside intensified, *fuereños* were harder to discern. Capitalinos feared crime more because thieves were now skillful in hiding among the crowd.[115] For many capitalinos, the modernization of transportation meant a wider urban space, but also one plagued by anonymity and danger. Urban planning and development attempted to contain and control this expansion, only to become the field for further tension.

Upper-class *colonias* and lower-class developments and barrios existed in an uneasy proximity because the difference between rich and poor areas had a clear cultural dimension. In the poorer suburbs, traditional rural ways coexisted with the newest aspects of modernization. In the Seventh and Eight districts, unkempt open spaces challenged the goals of urbanization, prompting the City Council to order the fencing of empty lots near "inhabited zones".[116] Still open to the surrounding countryside, these areas showed the unfinished transition to urban life. Dogs, horses, donkeys, pigs,

111. Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México," 190-191, cited by Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*, 240. According to Morales, this expansion meant a decrease in population density, but the evidence examined above suggests the opposite, at least in lower-class areas close to downtown.

112. On the disappearance of the early-nineteenth century markers of the outer limits of the city see García Cubas, *El libro de mis recuerdos*, 231. On the pulque *garitas*, see Guerrero, *El pulque*, 118.

113. Nacif, "Policía y seguridad pública," 33. For the control of travelers coming into the city, see AGN, Fondo Secretaría de Gobernación, 1847, not catalogued. The wider area and the less precise limits of the city are clearly expressed by a comparison of maps of 1886 and 1906: Antonio García Cubas, *Plano topográfico de la ciudad de México formado por el ingeniero Antonio García Cubas con las nuevas calles abiertas hasta la fecha y los ferrocarriles (Mexico City: Antigua librería de M. Murguía, 1886) and Plano oficial de la Ciudad de México. Edición especial para el Consejo Superior de Gobierno del Distrito Federal, con motivo de la reunión del x Congreso Geológico Internacional* (N.e.: 1906).

114. *El Imparcial*, 16 Jul. 1912, p. 1; *La Nación*, 2 Sep. 1912, p. 1-2; *El Universal*, 21 Oct. 1916, p. 3.

115. Diego-Fernández, La ciudad de Méjico, 5; *Gaceta de Policía*, 24 Dec. 1905, p. 2; Macedo, *La criminalidad en México*, 14-16, 4-7.

116. Comisión de Obras Públicas to the City Council, 18 May. 1900, AHA, Policía en general, 3641, 1289.

cattle and chicken were pervasive and created sanitation problems: in December 1900, the bodies of 700 animals were picked up and incinerated.[117] In Mixcoac, a week-end residential area south of Chapultepec, well-to-do neighbors complained about a 43-room tenement house that they considered a focus of disease and crime, and an insult to nearby residences.[118]

The areas of older, lower-class housing near downtown presented different problems. Many of these communities had been established in pre-Hispanic times, but others were simply the result of greater population density.[119] According to El *Imparcial*, real-estate speculation, the centralization of services and commerce, and the price of tramway fares forced "our poor classes to cram like canned sardines into the small rooms available".[120] Since the nineteenth century, barrios and their inhabitants were perceived as an "ancient novelty" by the Westernized population, largely because they preserved pre-Hispanic habits and language.[121] While their customs were "ancient," the novelty resided in their proximity to the modern capital. Many run-down *vecindades*, *pulquerías* and dangerous streets were located just behind the National Palace. According to an American visitor in 1903 the proximity of the Zócalo to older barrios was verified by the fact that it "is rather the loungingplace for the lower classes, as the Alameda is for the upper." The "principal thoroughfare" was still San Francisco-Plateros, connecting the two parks, while Reforma "is the fashionable drive for Mexican society, and is altogether a fine if unfinished boulevard".[122] After the Revolution, the areas close to downtown remained as a different world of poverty and disease. In the early 1920s, sanitary authorities considered the area north of the Plaza de la Constitución as an "endemic" zone of typhus, whose inhabitants had to be "desinsectizados" to prevent new outbreaks of the disease.[123]

Therefore, the crescent moon of the marginal city meant a threat to the security of the central city. Certain barrios and lower-class *colonias* were identified by *gente decente* as places of criminality and disease. An 1895 guide for visitors, suggestively entitled *México y sus alrededores. Guía para los viajeros escrita por un Mexicano. Cuidado con los rateros*, warned that barrios such as La Merced "is famous because of the quantity of thieves who are there".[124] But La Merced market, southeast of the Zócalo, offered the best food prices and stock for lower- and middle-class customers. Also to the east,

117. *El Imparcial*, 6 Jan. 1900, p. 2. Animals used for transportation added to the problem, as in Montevideo. Rosenthal, "The Arrival of the Electric Streetcar", 323.

118. Neighbors also complained about "la enorme cantidad de perros vagabundos que además de dar mala nota de la población y causar grandes molestidas al vecindario, constituyen un serio peligro, especialmente para los niños en la estación calurosa", Mixcoac neighbors to Public Health Council, 31 Jan. 1907, ASSA, Fondo Salubridad Pública, Sección Salubridad del Distrito Federal, box 1, 36. Mixcoac belonged to an independent municipality until 1907, although it functioned as an upper- and middle-class suburb of Mexico City.

119. Cossío, "Algunas noticias sobre las colonias": 5-9; Agustín Avila Méndez, "Mapa serie barrios de la ciudad de México 1811 y 1882", in Alejandra Moreno Toscano *et. al.*, *Investigaciones sobre la historia de la ciudad de México (i)* (Mexico City: INAH, 1974): 155-181. For the complex history of the relationship between the Indian *barrios* of the capital and the central city, see Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*.

120. AHA, Policía en general, 3643, 1600, clipping of *El Imparcial*, 11 Aug. 1902, p. 1.

121. Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*, 66.

122. Smith, *Flying visits*, 28-9.

123. ASSA, SP, Epidemias., 32, 12.

124. *México y sus alrededores. Guía para los viajeros escrita por un Mexicano. Cuidado con los rateros* (Mexico City: Tip. Luis B. Casa, 1895), 15.

barrios San Lázaro, Santa Anita, La Soledad y La Palma were places of danger and disease.[125] American visitor Eaton Smith went to this "rather slummy part of the town, where the pavements were abominable, either by natural vice or from efforts to reform them, and so came to La Viga canal," in the southeastern limit of the Second District. This area connected the city with Texcoco lake, suffering the worst effects of dusty winds and flooding.[126]

Crime and alcoholism contributed to the bad image of these areas. In a survey ordered by the City Council in 1902, the Second District (whose limits went from the Northeastern corner of the Cathedral toward the east and south, and included La Merced) had the greatest number of alcohol outlets (534 of a total of 2,423 in the whole city). Together with the First District (north of the Second) and the Third District (neighbor to the First on the west), they had more than half the pulquerías of all the eight districts (484 of a total of 924).[127] The link of specific areas with higher crime incidence seems not so clear. To the southeast and south of the center, of the citymainly within the Second and Fourth Districts, the Belén Jail, La Merced market and Cuauhtemoctzin street (an area of prostitution), were the foci of danger. Evidence from published statistics and the judicial archives, exemplified in Table 1.3, show an even distribution of crime throughout the city. The data, however, refers to districts where the felony took place. Elite sense of the "dangerous" zones of the city derived from the perceived lack of security and police absence in many poor areas.

To the north, Tepito, la Bolsa and Guerrero were also crime territories. An *El Imparcial* reporter depicted *colonia* de la Bolsa as "the cradle of crime." He reached the *colonia* "as an explorer seeking the source of rivers by sailing against the stream, I followed the complex network of small streets that are the bridges sending evil from la Bolsa to invade the city." Once there "a crowd of horrible and strange figures... emerged before my scared eyes, beholding that dark world where people seem to come from generations of criminals"[128] El Chalequero, the famous prostitute-killer first arrested in 1888, lived and committed his crimes in the *colonias* Peralvillo and Santa Ana, isolated areas north of the city where prostitution was rife and nobody dared to turn him in to the police.[129] As with the southeastern neighborhoods of the Second and Fourth Districts, statistics do not show a clear difference between the crime rates of the northern areas of the city and those of the rest of the capital.

The popular *colonias* and barrios north, east and south of the central city reduced the economic viability of developments targeted at lower-class customers. New *colonias* south of downtown became housing options for working-class families as late as the 1920s, thanks to increased population growth and new investments.[130] The perception of social

125. The quote from *El Universal*, 16 Feb. 1917, p. 1. Antonio Padilla Arroyo, *Criminalidad, cárceles y sistema penitenciario en México, 1876-1910* (Ph.D. diss, El Colegio de México, 1995), 86-87.

126. Smith, *Flying visits*, 41-2, 26.

127. AHA, Bebidas embriagantes, 1331, 41, f. 1.

128. *El Imparcial*, 3 Jul. 1908, p. 1. Appealing the death sentence he received for an homicide in 1909, Antonio Rodríguez (alias "El Popo") confessed that he "pertenecía a alguna de las asociaciones que dicen existen en la Colonia de la Bolsa y de las cuales el único objeto que persiguen es el del delito," AGN, Fondo Secretaría de Justicia, vol. 893, exp. 4337.

129. Roumagnac, *Crímenes sexuales y pasionales: Estudios de psicología morbosa, vol. 1 Crímenes sexuales* (Mexico City: Librería de Bouret, 1906), 91.

130. Meyer, "La ciudad de México, ex de los palacios".

problems in the lower-class areas of the capital was reinforced by the authorities' biased use of resources in favor of the more affluent neighborhoods. Many of these administrative decisions triggered the reaction of the inhabitants of lower-class neighborhoods, who did not accept to be treated as second-class neighbors. Several cases of public confrontations prompted by urban growth illustrate the political side of the dispute over the uses of the city.[131]

The City Council was in charge of making urban expansion official. It had to "receive" a colonia before granting it the benefits of urbanization. *Colonias* such as Roma, Condesa, Juárez, San Rafael, Santa María, Escandón and Guerrero were the result of the development of lands that had formerly belonged to haciendas. The City Council approved the official transfer of property in these areas and ensured that their developers provided all the services offered to proprietors.[132] Other areas, meanwhile, seemed to be ignored.[133] In 1903, for example, neighbors of *colonia* de la Bolsa asked for pavement and street lighting, but the City Council denied their request on the grounds that the partitioning (or *fraccionamiento*) of the lands had not been officially approved. After a political struggle with the Governor of the Federal District, the City Council finally accepted the neighbors' petition, although paving was to take time. The inhabitants of the *colonia* Obrera were involved in a similar dispute.[134] Business had a great weight on these decisions, because the city council was usually elected from a group of influential citizens with economic interests at stake.[135]

The City Council's policies were the result of a pragmatic combination of top-down social reform, the needs of the capital and the interests of bussiness. In this context, council members' projects of social and urban reform had to be reconciled with the pragmatic needs of development. The consequences were limited policies that focused, for example, on embellishment of the city.[136] Street cleaning, hygiene and public order became the target of city government insofar as they could be addressed without great expense but with visible results, in downtown and upper-class areas. In the zones beyond a visitors' eyes, however, neglect was all the City Council had to offer. Police and administrative pressures, similar to those applied against *ambulantes*, were used to force lower-class neighbors to take care of their streets and façades. Ordinances concerning the exterior part of buildings exemplify this double standard. In 1901, the City Council forced neighbors to clean the façades of their buildings, in order to offer a better image to foreign visitors attending the Pan-American Congress. The measure was all the more urgent because many quarters "not far away from the downtown" gave an indecorous view of dust accumulated on the façades. The area of compulsive cleaning was

131. For the institucional history of these important years of urban development, Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada. El ayuntamiento de México: política y administración, 1876-1912* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1996). For the preference of city authorities toward the new areas of the city and the resources channeled away from old barrios, see Lira, *Comunidades indígenas*, 253; Jiménez, *La traza del poder*.

132. Diego-Fernández, *La ciudad de Méjico*, 4; Cossío, "Algunas noticias sobre las colonias," 26-9; Lear, "Workers, *Vecinos* and Citizens," 56-8.

133. See Jiménez, *La traza del poder*, 191-2.

134. Cossío, "Algunas noticias sobre las colonias," 23, 31.

135. Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada*; Jiménez, *La traza*, 19, 88n.

136. For a laundry list of Antonio García Cubas' goals as newly elected

gradually extended from Bucareli Avenue (west of the Alameda) to the doors of the "Palacio Nacional", and then to all the streets leading from that downtown area to the railroad stations, because they "are frequented by foreigners".[137] Cleanliness was not the only goal, although it was the most explicit. By also prohibiting paintings on the façades of buildings "that obviously defy good taste and are painted against all the rules of art," the City Council was confronting *pulquerías* that embellished their exteriors with colorful murals.[138]

Regarding street cleaning, the government's exclusive concern was only the elegant streets. In 1892, a commission of the City Council decided that a private proposal to establish a service of watering and cleaning the downtown area was not worth the investment, because that area was already cleaner than the rest.[139] By 1917, the class-biased attitude of authorities toward street cleaning had not changed: Governor César López de Lara ordered all neighbors living in stone-paved streets to sweep twice daily, in order to put an end to the accumulation of dust and garbage and "the untidiness of almost all paved streets of the capital." The order did not concern paved streets located in the downtown area because the city took care of them. Except for these, everyone else in the city had to take personal care of the cleaning, personally and fines were established for non-compliance.[140] The police were in charge of enforcing these rules, as they often were the only intermediaries between authorities and those inhabitants of the city who most suffered the lack of sanitation and urban services.

Social conflict over the uses and hierarchies of urban space also developed with regards to public health. The elites saw the invasion of their space as a threat to their health. Official reactions went between repression and neglect. In 1901, the Public Health Council indicated that a typhus epidemic had originated in the lower-class suburbs. According to the Council, these zones could not be sanitized unless enough police force was available to compel their inhabitants to clean up garbage and feces. Resources, concluded the Council, were insufficient to attend to both the city's suburbs and downtown.[141]

The poor, however, were aware both of danger and disease, and of the need to publicly challenge the authorities' use of resources. In 1901, neighbors of the First and Second Districts complained to the Council that neglect at the Plazuela of Mixcalco was the cause of increasing mortality among them:

member of the Council, and his subsequent need to negotiate with the Governor, see García Cubas, *El libro de mis recuerdos*, 146. For the 1903 reform and its consequences, see AHA, Policía en general, 3645, 1701. The City Council's authority was greatly reduced by legal reforms in 1903 and disappeared in 1929. The institution also had to negotiate many important decisions with the Governor of the Federal District, appointed by the President. See Rodríguez, *La experiencia olvidada*. As Rodríguez contends, the City Council has received inadequate historiographical attention.

137. AHA, Policía en general, 3642, 1427.

138. *Ibid.*, 3643, 1600.

139. Miguel Vega y Vera to the City Council, 24 Feb. 1892, AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1014. Several frustrated contracts up to 1889 show the reluctance of the City Council to take street cleaning under its direct responsibility, AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1028; ibid., 3639, 1071; ibid, 3640, 1193. In 1898, prisoners swept the streets of the city, although lacking enough tools, AHA, Policía en General, 3639, 1231.

140. *El Universal*, 4 Jan. 1917, p. 4. See also Ayuntamiento Constitucional Mexico, *Argumentos contra la iniciativa presidencial*, 19, 32-3.

141. Public Health Council to the City Council, 27 Sep. 1901, AHA, Policía en general, 3642, 1368.

> *"With all respect, we the subscribers inform you that we are suffering typhus, pneumonia and other many diseases whose exact name we ignore because we are ignorant of the science of medicine, . . . because of the harmful hygiene produced by the public dumpsite in which the plaza known as Mixcalco located in front of our homes has become; we are invaded by a serious catastrophe of illnesses that are killing us with the electric violence of lightning . . . we thus ask to you to take the necessary measures to save us of the plague that is threatening us".*[142]

Although the subscribers of the letters were only interested in street cleaning and sanitation, the city government saw the problem as one of collective behavior. Unable to direct enough municipal resources toward the sanitation of marginal areas of the city, health authorities focused their reform attempts at changing the habits of the lower classes. Doctors denounced and prohibited practices which they considered unhealthy, like spitting. In 1902, the Public Health Council requested the City Council to install spittoons in all public buildings, in order to prevent the spread of tuberculosis, which the previous year had killed 2,013 people.[143] Inhabitants of tenement houses were advised to defecate in "portable buckets," which would be provided and collected every night by authorities. However, in 1907 the service was still not reliable in areas such as Tacubaya.[144] Authorities noted that the lack of closed sewage, running water and garbage collection had caused poor health conditions among the inhabitants of a tenement house in the Second District. Despite several visits by inspectors between 1902 and 1906 prompted by reported cases of typhus, conditions only became worse, posing a threat to the lives of the approximately one hundred tenants.[145] *Vecindades*, however, could not be closed outright, nor remodeled with public money. For authorities and observers like Julio Sesto, it was easy to blame high mortality rates on the dissipation, untidiness and alcoholism of the Mexican urban poor.[146] Landlords were rarely mentioned as responsible of these situations. As with the problem of alcohol consumption, it was easier to dwell on cultural explanations than to invest public resources or to threaten private interests.

For city authorities, the police was the best weapon of social reform. From their perspective, penal sanctions and police pressure were the means to instill order and good behavior in the inhabitants of the city, without changing the material conditions of their life. A handwritten note, attached to the papers concerning the discussion of traffic regulations at the City Council in 1904, portrays this faith in the beneficial action of punishment. The author of the note, probably a council member, divided pedestrians between "cultivated persons" and "idem illiterate." The first group was to be taught about traffic rules through newspaper advertisements and signs, the second, by "insistent warnings, reprimands, constant admonishment by the police and penal sanction".[147]

Although Porfirian authorities devoted a large percentage of the city's budget to policing, it is not clear that the capital was safer by the end of the

142. Twenty seven signatures to Public Health Council, 13 Apr. 1901, AHA, Policía en general, 3642, 1420.

143. Public Health Council to City Council, 5 Jun. 1902, AHA, Policía en general, 3643, 1534.

144. ASSA, Salubridad Pública, Sección Salubridad del Distrito Federal, box. 1, 35.

145. *Ibid.*, box. 1, 23.

146. Sesto, *El México de Porfirio Díaz*, 231-4.

147. AHA, Policía en general, 3644, 1689.

Porfiriato.[148] It was clear, nevertheless, that *gendarmes* (as policemen had been called since the late 1870s) were the most noticeable representatives of authority in everyday life. Police forces numbered around 3,000 men and their presence was visible day and night in all intersections, where police lanterns placed on the corners formed long lines and marked the areas under vigilance. Gendarmes were the key to maintain official control of the city. They saw that *pulquerías* closed on time and that neighbors cleaned their streets. They were also in charge of maintaining (or trying to maintain) private practices out of public spaces. Among the duties of the gendarme was to prevent people from washing "clothes, dishes, buckets and other things at pipes and ditches, streets and public fountains," and to make sure that artisans did not perform their trade on the streets.[149] The police were also busy arresting couples "for having intercourse on the streets," and picking up sleeping drunkards.[150] Thus, while most working-class neighborhoods lacked enough police protection, the energy of *gendarmes* was directed at protecting the looks of elegant streets and enforcing official codes of urbanity. This use of the police for "civilizing" purposes generated among the urban poor a clear sense that the "crimes" prosecuted by authorities were different according to the social background of the suspect.

One final example shows the limits of official policies in shaping the way people used the city. The debate over the street nomenclature proved the reluctance of the majority of the inhabitants to passively accept elite projects about the organization of the city, and the need for authorities to negotiate a compromise concerning urban modernization. In 1888 the City Council decided to change all street names, establishing "a nomenclature that be in harmony with the advances of the population." It was argued that the existing style (that in most cases gave one name to each block) was "irrational . . . absurd" and provoked the hilarity of foreign visitors. Observers argued that some names, such as Tumbaburros, el Tomepate, la Tecomaraña, were "ridiculous".[151] The proposed system divided the city along two axes that crossed one block east of the Alameda, identifying the streets by a number and a cardinal point. But the project soon provoked the opposition of various groups. The axes, argued critics at the City Council, did not correspond with the middle of the city because of its asymmetrical growth and because, rather than a geometrical point, "in the mind of all inhabitants" the downtown of the city was "a certain zone that now extends from the Alameda to the Plaza de la Constitución".[152]

When the changes were enacted they provoked confusion. People used both nomenclatures simultaneously. In 1893, after protests, city authorities returned the signs with the old names back to their places, but did not eliminate the new names which remained as "official." The result was that streets had two names, in most cases the old one being used on a daily basis, the new one on official documents. The reaction to the reform varied: in recently established *Colonias* San Rafael, Santa María and Guerrero the new names stuck, albeit temporarily, because people started using them. In even newer *Colonias*, like del Paseo, neighbors resisted the numeral system, and preferred to use names of their own choosing. In *colonias* Condesa and Roma, the axis for the numbers was the Paseo de la Reforma, instead of that established in 1888. According to Roberto Gayol, defender of the new system, the 1888 reform did not succeed because it lacked political support and because, in a number of new *colonias*, neighbors had been granted the de facto right to name the streets as they pleased, with no apparent intervention from city authorities.[153]

People continued to use the old names because they made more sense and corresponded with their way of viewing the city: a group of *rumbos*, or "directions" associated with important buildings or other urban markers, rather than a diagram. According to councilman Alberto Best, people knew the city well enough to make the numerical system unnecessary: "each individual holds in his mind a number of streets that is enough for his business and occupations, and when he forgets or ignores one, it is easy to find it by only knowing the direction or proximity that it has with others that he still remembers." The geography of the city was learned from infancy. In 1904, the City Council recommended that the old system be reestablished, with the only reform being to unify the names of streets, instead of the traditional use whereby each block had a different name.[154]

City dwellers did not think of it as a centralized space, but as a group of *rumbos*. Thus, the exchanges and movements that from the elite's perspective constituted an "invasion" of respectable areas, from the perspective of the urban poor were simply moving from one *rumbo* to another. Such movement, in their view, responded to immediate subsistence and sociability factors, and was not charged with the threat of social disorder that elites saw in it.

By naming and walking the city in their own way, people undermined the model of rational order devised by Porfirian urbanists. Judicial narratives attest to the meandering walking that preceded the committal of crimes. Leopoldo Villar gave the police a detailed description of his movements the day he was arrested for theft: in the morning, he went from his home in Malaga street to the Hotel Regis, to wait for a person who did not show up. He found his friend Emilio Vera instead, and they went to the Cine San Rafael. After the movie, they walked by the Legislative Palace and, when Leopoldo was defecating near a construction site, Emilio found (he claimed) the wheel they were accused of stealing. They walked toward San Rafael Avenue, four blocks, and found some friends, with whom they went to Las Artes Street, and then Leopoldo went to Mr. Arellano's house, in the sixth block of Miguel María Contreras, where he was arrested and then taken, at 11:00 p.m., to the Eighth Police Inspection.[155] Leopoldo lacked a stable job, thus, he kept moving

148. That is the conclusion of Laurence John Rohlfes, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City, 1876-1911: A Study of Order and Progress in Porfirian Mexico" (Ph. diss., Tulane University, 1983). Published statistics of crime, however, suggest otherwise. For police budget, see Manuel González de Cosío, *Memoria que presenta al Congreso de la Unión el General... Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de Gobernación* (México, Imprenta del Gobierno Federal, 1900), appendix, 804-811.

149. "Reglamento de las obligaciones del gendarme," [1897], González de Cosío, *Memoria que presenta*, appendix, 767. The use of policemen for these purposes dates back to the role of "*celadores*" and "*vigilantes*" in the late colonial era, Nacif, "Policía y seguridad pública," 14.

150. AHA, Policía Presos Penitenciaría, 3664, 3 and 4.

151. *México y sus alrededores*, 5, 13-4.

152. *Documentos relativos a la nomenclatura de calles y numeración de casas de la ciudad de México* (Mexico City: La Europea, 1904), 35-6.

153. *Ibid.*, 28, 32, 38, 48-9.

154. *Ibid.*, 102-3, 25, 80-2.

155. AJ-RS, 1067901, 2.

across the city, hanging around with friends and looking for income. His disorderly use of the city made him a suspect.[156]

When forced to give an address, people used vague references to locate their place in the city. Nineteen percent of those arrested in the 1917-1918 campaign against "rateros" declared to have no address, while others simply referred to a *rumbo* (e.g., "la Ladrillera," for a brick making facility).[157] The lack of precision in the use of street names and addresses was also a way to evade the action of authorities. The case of Josefina Ayala illustrates this tactic. She was arrested for begging in October 1930. Social workers of the Departamento de Beneficencia had to evaluate her ability to live by herself or be sustained by her family, but she did not help them, perhaps fearing that she or other members of her family might be punished further. She advised her son, Luis Barrios, not to use her name when visiting her in jail, but to ask instead for Isabel Gómez (who was a friend of Josefina, who was also in prison), so he would not also be detained for questioning. The social workers who went to check the two addresses she had provided, found out that the first one did not exist and that in the second address nobody knew her. Looking for Barrios, social worker Concepción Caufield went to yet another address that he had provided when finally questioned, but that one did not exist either. Caufield asked for Josefina's son at the brewery "La Coronita," where he had said he work, but the owner told her that Barrios did not work there any more, because "he is usually lost [se ha vuelto muy perdido]; sometimes he comes by here and [the owner] gives him the messages from his mother but he does not pay attention to them".[158]

The case of Josefina illustrates the ambivalent effect of urban policies when applied on the poorer groups of Mexico City's society. Inspector Caufield tried to ascertain Josefina's place in the city. But Josefina and her son Luis kept on changing names and addresses. Josefina had probably undergone the same humiliating experience of Candelaria García, arrested in the same campaign: her clothes were burned, her head was shaved, she was sprayed with disinfectant, and was forced to wear an asylum uniform.[159] The purpose of the campaign was to identify those who were not able to sustain themselves through work, or whose families had deserted them, and place them under the protection of the state. The intention of social workers as Caufield might have been to help Josefina but the urban poor could only perceive this campaign (and other public policies toward the urban poor) as an ill-disguised aggression. Pressed by official harassment and by the economic hardship that forced Josefina to beg, the urban poor chose to use the city in their own way, crossing the boundaries that were supposed to organize society and avoiding any contact with authorities.

156. Michel de Certeau proposed that walking the streets was in itself a "speech act," an assertion of multiple alternative classifications and uses of the urban space that challenge "panoptic power." Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

157. AHA, Vagos y rateros, 4157 to 4160.

158. Josefina was finally released after four months in prison, ASSA, Fondo Beneficencia Pública, Sección Asistencia, 6, 3. For a similar case of an address that did not exist, ibid., 6, 29.

159. Candelaria García to Josefa Castro, 14 Oct. 1930, ASSA, Fondo Beneficencia Pública, Sección Asistencia, 7, 7.

Conclusions

Mexico City's particular brand of modernization was characterized by a permanent negotiation between the ideal city and the everyday city. Although most of the problems and policies described in this essay had old antecedents in Mexico City's history (and many remain still to be solved), the uniqueness of the late Porfiriato and early post-revolution resides in the clear confrontation between an authoritarian regime and a population which refused to accept the elite's divisions of the urban space and norms of public behavior. Governments developed extensive projects to re-shape urban geography and, as a consequence, the behavior of the subordinate groups. But such projects were undermined by demographic growth and technological changes. Several factors, such as the development of the tramway network, the emergence of marginal *colonias* and the increase of population density around the downtown area, modified the lower-classes' use of urban space. Besieged by unemployment, disease, and lacking water and appropriate housing, the urban poor invaded the respectable city, despite the fact that the police constantly reminded them about the social divisions of the capital.

Thus, the dispute about the use of the city became a matter of crime and punishment. Many everyday practices of the population became "criminal" in the eyes of the elites and public officials. Lower-class neighborhoods were identified as zones of danger and disease. City authorities placed the police in charge of punishing the behaviors that challenged their idea of urban modernization. Other official efforts, such as the extension of sanitation and the control of alcohol consumption, were limited by the restricted budgetary resources allotted to the marginal city and by the official willingness to respect private interests. The profits created by real estate development and the pulque industry overrode the goals of social reform. It was easier and cheaper to punish deviant behaviors and to restrict the urban poor to the socially marginal areas of the capital. For the urban poor, on the other hand, justice could not be expected from above. They had to silently and constantly disregard regulations in order to survive in the city.

Abbreviations

AGN, FIM: Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Presidente Francisco I. Madero, Mexico City.

AGN, GPR: Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Gobernación Periodo Revolucionario, Mexico City.

AGN, PG: Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Presidente Portes Gil, Mexico City.

AGN POC: Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Presidentes Obregón-Calles, Mexico City.

AGN, SJ: Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Secretaría de Justicia, Mexico City.

AHA: Archivo Histórico del Antiguo Ayuntamiento, Mexico City.

AJ,RS: Archivo del Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Distrito Federal, Reclusorio Sur.

APD: Archivo Porfirio Díaz, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City.

ASSA, SP: Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Salud, Fondo Salubridad Pública, Mexico City.

Table 1.1. **Population of Mexico City, Federal District, state capitals and Estados Unidos Mexicanos**

Year	Mexico City	Federal District	State capitals*	National population	Mexico City as % of total
1895	329,774	474,860	732,047	12,632,427	2.61%
1900	344,721	541,516	774,233	13,607,272	2.53%
1910	471,066	720,753	923,755	15,160,369	3.11%
1921	615,327	906,063	926,475	14,334,780	4.29%
1930	1,029,068	122,9576	1,159,224	16,552,722	6.22%
1940	1,802,679	1,757,530	1,431,007	19,652,552	9.17%

* Includes cities of Aguascalientes, Ciudad Victoria, Colima, Cuernavaca, Culiacán, Chihuahua, Chilpancingo, Durango, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Hermosillo, La Paz, Mérida, Monterrey, Morelia, Oaxaca, Pachuca, Puebla, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Tlaxcala, Toluca, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Veracruz, Villahermosa.

Source: *Estadísticas Históricas de México*, vol. 1 (México, INEGI 1994), based on figures of national census.

Table 1.2. **Index of the population growth of Mexico City, Federal District, state capitals and Mexico, 1895=100**

Year	Mexico City	Federal District	State capitals	National population
1895	100	100	100	100
1900	105	114	106	108
1910	143	152	126	120
1921	187	191	127	113
1930	312	259	158	131
1940	547	370	195	156

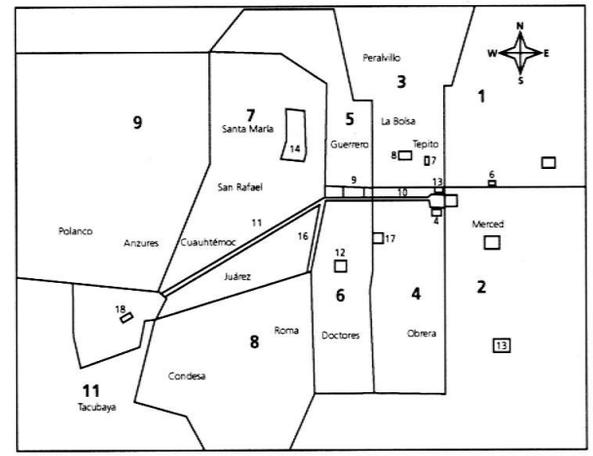
Source: Table 1.1

Table 1.3. **Arrests in 1900 by District of committal**

District	Arrests	Per 100,000 inhabitants
Total	**20,120**	**5,454.08**
No address	2,052	
I District	2,735	4,643.54
II District	3,917	5,541.88
III District	2,355	3,787.09
IV District	2,260	4,941.19
V District	2,337	4,965.47
VI District	2,813	6,977.03
VII District	871	3,357.88
VIII District	780	4,315.59

Source: *Cuadros estadísticos e informe del Procurador de Justicia*, 1900 (Mexico City: La Europea, 1903); *Censo General de la República Mexicana verificado el 28 de octubre de 1900* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Fomento, 1901-1907).

Mexico City



Colonias, Barrios, Police Districts and Sites Mentioned

References:

1. Zócalo
2. National Palace
3. Cathedral
4. City Council
5. La Merced Market
6. Plaza Mixcalco
7. Plaza Tepito
8. Lagunilla Market
9. Alameda
10. Juárez Avenue
11. Reforma Avenue
12. Belem Jail
13. Jamaica Market
14. Central Railroad Station
15. Penitentiary
16. Bucareli Avenue
17. Plaza de las Vizcaínas
18. Chapultepec Castle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