

## **FINAL REFLECTION. THREE LIVES, ONE BOROUGH**

Sometimes major cities seem to be made up like giant jigsaws. Between two small pieces that fit together there can be significant similarities, like the continuation of a line, or vast differences in a limited space. These disparities, however small, are meaningful, since they give detail and sense to the larger picture, the one that is only made up of each and every one of these pieces put together. Mexico City fits this metaphor: as a place that is full of all the differences, nuances and contrasts that its scale and its history allow. Within this vast jigsaw, the Cuauhtémoc borough is a zone of many and very diverse pieces. Between the Condesa and the Roma neighborhoods there are connections and continuities that are more or less obvious, just as there are between the neighborhoods of Tepito and La Lagunilla. But are there any between Condesa and Tepito? This research suggests that there are, even despite the variation in crime figures between each zone (see Table 1) emphasizing how to identify them.

**Table 1**  
**Culpable homicide and robbery in the three study areas**

|                                 | Culpable homicide |       | Robbery       |       |                  |       |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------------|-------|
|                                 |                   |       | With violence |       | Without violence |       |
|                                 | Rate              | Total | Rate          | Total | Rate             | Total |
| Revolución Alameda (Tabacalera) | 40.9              | 14    | 376.6         | 129   | 55.5             | 19    |
| Roma (Condesa)                  | 11.4              | 8     | 237.1         | 167   | 28.4             | 20    |
| Morelos (Tepito)                | 78.5              | 28    | 260.8         | 93    | 8.4              | 3     |
| CDMX                            | 13.4              | 1180  | 75.7          | 6650  | 7.1              | 620   |

Source: Valle, D. (2016). Hoyo del Crimen. January 2018.

<https://hoyodecrimen.com>

The three stories told here all take place in Cuauhtémoc. In this regard, they show that these three apparently distinctive spaces have significantly similar features when seen from a sociological perspective of how the street in particular and public spaces in general function. In this context, the three stories set out the conflict that arises from the clash between the defense of rights by some and the privileges of others as the result of the use of a space that, in theory, is not private. Three analytical features tie together the thread between these three cases.

The first element is the need to shift between legality and illegality in the context of conflict over public space. Here, the role of the formal or legal authority is revelatory. It is not the case that police, judges and other forms of authority are absent; rather, they appear as agents of variable

rationality, and generally participate in the conflict, though they do not always act wholly legally or illegally. The authority does not appear as a primary resource to which an injured party may have recourse to defend their rights, but it is not wholly ignored either. In reality, it is just another actor that participates directly or indirectly in conflicts within the limited public space. In the cases analyzed, there is a constant need to act in complex combinations that oscillate between attitudes and practices of legality (sometimes) and illegality (other times). Their defense involves an aspect of resignation: having recourse to the authorities tends to be neither the best nor the first option to solve their problems or to perpetuate their privileges.

In the absence of the authority as first point of recourse, what is notable is that people's social capital is a viable option for constructing a defense or dealing with a conflict. This social capital is not always associated with democratic values or the rule of law. In the last instance, people know who they can rely on, which is not the same as who they are supposed to be able to rely on either legally or as citizens of a "democratic" society. Social capital as a resource triggers and orients the sense of conflict, as on this basis other types of economic, social, cultural and other resources are involve, which serve to activate or deactivate conflicts and violence.

Finally, the third element is the ambivalence in the perception of the public character of public space. It is true that its discourse is a more or less conscious element in the social imagination of the citizen. However, in the cases studied in Cuauhtémoc it is notable that, while there is a notion of the right to this space, there is also an acknowledgement that it is often in dispute, or has been taken over by someone else. In these cases defending the right to this space is a guarantee of conflict. If Cuauhtémoc is the heart of the city, the cases detailed here are three readings of its pulse, which represent a significant step in forming a cardiogram to provide clarity in this regard.