

Criminality, public security and tourism in the border area of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

Criminalidad, seguridad pública y turismo en la zona fronteriza de Ciudad Juárez, México

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Abstract

This paper analyses the dynamics present in the relations between tourism, security and criminality in a border area, observing how the criminal and inequality dynamics coincide territorially with the spaces destined for visitors. The article investigates the case of Ciudad Juárez, a Mexican economic border center that has a significant flow of displacements with the USA. The study was conducted through secondary data on marginalization (2010) and prevailing crime (2010-2015) in Ciudad Juárez. The maps show that the spaces destined for tourism are not found in the most dangerous areas of the city, which implies that the visitor runs very little real risk if they do not extrapolate the dynamics of the comfort zone of the tourist territories. In Juárez, focusing on tourism security, there are much more representations of insecurity than a real threat to tourists who will hardly leave the comfort zones of the city.

Keywords: tourism, public security, criminality, border, Ciudad Juárez.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la dinámica de las relaciones entre criminalidad, seguridad y turismo en la zona fronteriza de Ciudad Juárez, con el fin de observar cómo las dinámicas criminales y de desigualdades coinciden o no territorialmente con los espacios destinados a los visitantes. Se investiga el caso de Ciudad Juárez, centro económico fronterizo mexicano que tiene significativo flujo de desplazamientos hacia y desde los EE. UU. El estudio se realizó a través de datos secundarios sobre marginación (2010) y criminalidad homicida prevaiente (2010-2015). Los datos y mapas muestran que los espacios destinados al turismo no se encuentran en las zonas más peligrosas de la ciudad, lo que implica que el visitante en realidad corre muy poco riesgo al permanecer en zonas de bienestar que caracterizan los lugares turísticos. Se concluye

Received on November 4, 2019.

Accepted on March 26, 2020.

Published on April 2, 2020.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE LANGUAGE:
SPANISH.

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CITATION: Costa, J. H. & González, M. R. (2020). Criminalidad, seguridad pública y turismo en la zona fronteriza de Ciudad Juárez, México. [Criminality, public security and tourism in the border area of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico]. *Estudios Fronterizos*, 21, e046. <https://doi.org/10.21670/ref.2004046>

que en Ciudad Juárez hay más representaciones de inseguridad que amenaza real para los turistas, quienes se concentran en las zonas de mayor confort de la ciudad.

Palabras clave: turismo, seguridad pública, criminalidad, frontera. Ciudad Juárez.

Introduction¹

This article aims to analyze the dynamics that characterize the multiple and contradictory relationships among tourism, public safety and crime in the border area of Ciudad Juárez, between Mexico and the United States (USA). The study pays special attention to controversial issues such as *a*) the level of territorial development of tourism, especially spaces dedicated to this activity and related services; *b*) the prevailing rate of marginalization and homicidal violence in urban dynamics and its relation to the border environment; and *c*) finally, possible territorial overlaps between the criminal and sociospatial inequality dynamics regarding spaces for visitors. Such purposes seek to understand whether insecurity can affect the development of tourism demand and the image of this destination.

The study investigates the particular case of Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua), an important Mexican border economic center that maintains a significant travel flow to and from the USA, mainly through business and health tourism but also through the frequent movement of people who pass through and/or settle in the city to be closer to the border with the neighboring country. Despite this intense economic life and the dynamic degree of human mobility in this border area, an image of the area as a violent space has emerged and has positioned the representation of Ciudad Juárez as an extremely insecure city.

According to Monárrez Fragoso (2012), between 1993 and 2010, discussions of extreme violence in the global context invariably referred to the geographical space of Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua) and evoked the problems of femicide and murder by execution or “reckoning”. Monárrez Fragoso notes that in this city, death is not the only violent act. Kidnappings, extortion, violent car robberies, assaults on passers-by, home thefts, disappearances of women and sexual violence were on the agenda of this city in the context of extreme violence. Monárrez Fragoso (2012) adds that Ciudad Juárez was economically restructured approximately 40 years ago to become a manufacturing and export zone for the globalized world. At the same time, it has been immersed since the mid-1980s in a geographical war determined spatially by the production, sale and consumption of drugs. Velázquez Vargas (2011) notes that the severity of the homicides in Ciudad Juárez caused it to be considered the most violent city in the world, particularly between 2008 and 2010, when its homicide rates were between 139 and 229 per 100 000 inhabitants.

For this reason, the city has stood out in global media in recent decades due to its notoriety as a space whose rates of homicidal violence placed it high among the most violent cities in the world (224 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2010) (Limas Hernández

¹ The article is the result of postdoctoral research (2018-2019) conducted in the Tourism Program of the Department of Administrative Sciences of the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez (Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez- UACJ, Mexico), in cooperation with the Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN, Brazil).

& Limas Hernández, 2014a), with the presence of drug trafficking and territorial disputes (mainly between 2008 and 2011) (Muggah et al., 2016) as central factors in the explosion of the conflict. In addition, femicide cases (especially in the 1990s) also contributed to the negative image, creating a still more ambiguous condition in the territory of Juárez: on the one hand, especially after 2012, its economy stabilized and significant structural growth occurred, along with the modernization of material life and the creation of valuable spaces for speculative and real estate capital; on the other hand, the image of the city as a space controlled by drug trafficking and associated high homicide rates persisted and was amplified by the media.

In the context of this problem, tourism has developed—with ups and downs—as a result of the city's attractive geographic location along the northern border and has created and modified the space of Ciudad Juárez through hotels, casinos, exchange offices, bars and restaurants. In a very specific way, hospitals and medical clinics have focused their medical tourism offerings on the US market due to the advantages of US currency, and medical tourism has grown rapidly in the city. Therefore, it is interesting to study how this complex dynamic involving the visitor is intertwined with local problems of insecurity (real and created) and how the production of the tourist space in Ciudad Juárez has been affected by the prevailing levels of insecurity presented in the city.

This study, despite being exploratory, reflects on how insecurity and urban violence can affect the flow of visitors to receiving destinations. From a theoretical point of view, the specific literature on the problems (security, crime and tourism) in the Mexican reality was reviewed to understand the relationships (noncausal) between the observed phenomena. Empirically, the study was conducted using secondary data on marginalization (Consejo Nacional de Población [Conapo], 2011) and prevalent homicidal crime (2010-2015) in Ciudad Juárez (Secretaría de Gobernación [Segob] & Agencia de Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional, 2015). The mapped spatial marginalization data allowed us to understand the geography of poverty and social vulnerability in Ciudad Juárez, recognizing the city's most vulnerable and most ennobled areas from the spatial point of view. The marginalization data correspond to 2010, the latest data officially published by Conapo. The data on the homicide dynamics in the city were obtained through the Segob and the United States Agency for International Development (2015) in a temporal sequence between 2010 and 2015, which indicates the evolution of homicides in this period. Mapping of hotels and bars in the city was also performed (using data from 2014, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [Inegi]) and was overlapped with marginalization data (Inegi, 2016).

Given the lack of (reliable) data on crimes stratified by zones, this study could not determine a reliable statistical correlation between the areas in Ciudad Juárez with the highest incidence of crimes and the spatial flow of visitors. For this reason, it was decided to correlate the marginalization data (the official statistics of Conapo) with the crime statistics from the Segob, specifically highlighting homicides in the indicated period. This correlation presents limitations in terms of time and space since it loses temporal precision and does not address the particularities of given areas of the city. However, the mapping of bars and hotels (geolocation, as presented by Inegi) allows a more geographical reading of the existing inequalities in the city in the face of the evolution of homicides, although these variables do not correlate directly in spatial terms. Therefore, the results presented here are much more exploratory than conclusive.

The article is organized into three sections: the first presents and briefly discusses the tertiary dynamics of tourism in Ciudad Juárez and highlights its main attractive factors and the economic logic of this so-called “border tourism”. The second problematizes the relationship between tourism and insecurity in some specific cases in Mexico in addition to contextualizing the national reality regarding drug trafficking and the issues derived from this social problem. Finally, the third part analyzes some particularities of criminal dynamics in Ciudad Juárez (homicides) and maps its most marginalized areas, hotels and bars, with the aim of understanding the possible encounters and disagreements between insecurity and tourism-related activities.

Ciudad Juárez: Its Tourist Spaces and Services

Ciudad Juárez is one of the six most important cities in Mexico. It is located in the state of Chihuahua (see Figure 1 and Figure 2), which is in the central plateau of northern Mexico on the banks of the Rio Bravo, bordering the USA (Pequeño Rodríguez, 2015).

Gallegos and López (2004) affirm that Ciudad Juárez has been one of the most dynamic tourist spaces on the northern border of Mexico, as this activity is of great importance for the economy of the city. However, they emphasize that the dynamic nature of tourist activity in Ciudad Juárez is related more to the border economic context than to the historical and physical attractions in the territory. For the authors cited, in Juárez, such attractions are not traditionally explored tourist attractions, like those in other places on the planet (with sun, beach, museums, architecture, etc.) but are the specific economic and legal advantages that the city offers to foreign tourists.² In addition, Velázquez Vargas (2011) complements this approach by showing that the city has historically attracted migrant flows, some with the idea of moving to the USA and others who come specifically to work, directly or indirectly, in the maquiladora industry.

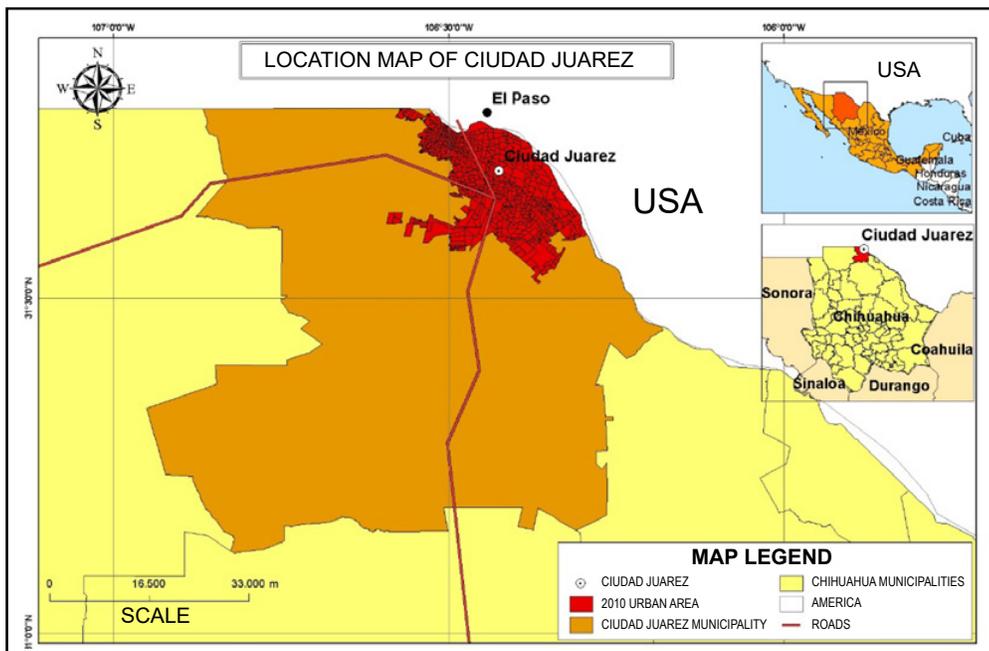
² Lower price of the Mexican peso against the us dollar, greater permissiveness in certain activities for minors than in the us, greater laxity of Mexican law for some companies, etc. (Gallegos & López, 2004).

Figure 1: State of Chihuahua, Mexico



Source: Prepared by João Paulo Bezerra Rodrigues (2019).

Figure 2: Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico



Source: Prepared by João Paulo Bezerra Rodrigues (2019).

It is worth noting that despite the negative perceptions and restrictions of the US government, the northern border remains one of the main regions for receiving visitors to Mexico. For example, in 2005, 81% of the total national percentage of visitors to Mexico entered there (Bringas Rábago & Verduzco Chávez, 2008). Similarly, it is appropriate to add that this city has rich historical heritage potential for tourist use as well as natural attractions of extraordinary value, such as Médanos de Samalayuca, sand dunes with conservation, esthetic and functional value that are part of the Natural Protected Area of Flora and Fauna of the same name and are located very close to the city.

According to Gallegos and López (2004), in Ciudad Juárez, two tourist areas are distinguished: the Historic Center and the National Border Program (Programa Nacional Fronterizo - Pronaf) area. Both are significant contributions to the local attractions. In more recent years, a third area known as the Golden Zone has been developed; it concentrates the most interesting tourist accommodations, restaurants, bars, meeting and event centers, hospitals, shopping centers and residential areas within proximity of the US Consulate in the city.

Statistical information on the hotel supply in the city is insufficient, dispersed and not very homogeneous. Nonetheless, more than 150 lodging establishments are reported, although of these, only 25 hotels are classified as tourist quality (3, 4 and 5 stars), and these are mainly concentrated in the Pronaf and Golden Zone areas, which contain approximately 90% of the accommodation offerings, including those with greater comfort and higher standards. The remaining hotels in the tourist category comprise just two hotels in the Central Zone of the city, which is characterized by a deteriorated tourist area of low standards and insufficient quality. The areas with bars and canteens are mainly relegated to commercial and tourist corridors in different sectors of the city.

In these tourist areas, the most important attractions are related to five types of shops and services: 1. Night clubs; 2. Restaurants; 3. Shopping centers that offer products sold in the USA, but at different prices; 4. Traditional public markets; 5. Medical offices, which have played a relevant role since many Americans seek them because treatments cost less there than in the USA (Gallegos & López, 2004).

In addition to these elements of supply, Gallegos and López (2004) note that as a result of trade relations with the USA, economic relations increasingly demand new meeting spaces for economic actors involved in the businesses of both countries; therefore, convention centers and hotel infrastructure have played a central role in this border area. Consequently, due to its border status, its maquiladora activity³ and its related industrial life, Ciudad Juárez has become a place for exhibitions, fairs and conventions (Gallegos & López, 2004).

³ A "maquiladora establishment" is considered:

that economic unit that performs a part of the production of an article, usually assembled, which is located in national territory and that through a contract is committed to a parent company, located abroad, to carry out an industrial process or of service destined to transform, elaborate or repair merchandise of foreign origin, for which it temporarily imports parts, pieces and components, which, once transformed, are exported (Pequeño Rodríguez, 2015, p. 24).

In this way, Ciudad Juárez can be framed in terms of what is known as border tourism, understood as the temporary displacement of people outside their usual place of residence to cities adjacent to the dividing line between two countries for reasons of leisure, fun, rest, health, business, visits to family or friends, religious practice, social events or shopping, among other activities; these stays that do not exceed one year but include spending at least one night in the visited place (Moral Cuadra et al., 2016).

Thus, the proximity of Ciudad Juárez to the USA has contributed to the economic relationship between the adjacent cities in the two countries (Juárez-El Paso-Sunland Park), making it very close (Limas Hernández & Limas Hernández, 2014a). For Enriquez Acosta et al. (2015), this border tourism⁴ practiced by Americans in northern Mexico has some basic characteristics, such as *a*) weekend tourism; *b*) medical tourism; and *c*) second-home tourism and sun and beach tourism (in the case of the coastal border). For these authors, what is common to border tourism in northern Mexico is its almost exclusive dedication to the US market, while national tourism has little relevance in terms of economic participation and the volume of travelers. This border tourism is distinguished by being practiced by Americans who have short stays in the border cities and spend money on activities related to entertainment, the purchase of handicrafts and medical services.

In the current economic (and geopolitical) context of the relationship between Mexico and the USA, it is clear that Ciudad Juárez is influenced by the socioeconomic structures of the USA, with the creation, maintenance and reproduction of unequal but functional relationships within its territory. This is the prevailing logic regarding the border between two economically different nations, which is why it is important to understand how this dynamic of human mobility is presented in Ciudad Juárez by examining the dynamic of criminal behavior within the urban fabric of the city. To this end, some pertinent empirical cases reflecting the Mexican reality are significant for a theoretical understanding that extends beyond the context of drug trafficking in the country and its impact on national economic life.

Tourism and Insecurity: Some Vicissitudes in the Debate

In this subsection, some reflections on the Mexican reality are presented with the aim of briefly discussing what crime and urban violence can mean and to what extent they can condition the loss of competitiveness in tourist destinations.

As a prelude, it is important to note that in Mexico, until the second half of the 1980s, the hegemony of the Sinaloa cartel ensured control of disputes between producer families, bosses and intermediaries in the numerous Mexican drug squares of the so-called Golden Triangle (Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Durango). An agreement with the highest political leaders of the country also quelled certain outbreaks of

⁴ It is worth noting that this border tourism began with the enactment of the dry law in the USA during the first three decades of the twentieth century; this favored the emergence of Tijuana, contiguous with California, and consolidated Ciudad Juárez, contiguous with Texas, which today are the most populated cities along the northern border (Enriquez Acosta et al., 2015).

violence against the authorities. However, this geography of criminal activity would change in 1985, the year when the “balance” among the groups dedicated to drug trafficking broke, a turning point that led to the appearance of the cartels in Mexico (De la Torre & Navarrete Escobedo, 2018).

The regulatory environment in which organized crime groups operate significantly determines the dynamics among them. The trends in violence are, at least in part, a reflection of Mexico’s anti-drug efforts in the last two decades. For example, in the 1980s, the arrest of one of the pioneers of cocaine trafficking in Mexico, Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, and his associates in the Guadalajara cartel contributed to the beginning of a new era of competition among the four main drug trafficking organizations: 1) the Juárez cartel, 2) the Tijuana cartel, 3) the Sinaloa cartel and 4) the Gulf cartel (Molzahn et al., 2012, p. 23). This scenario of competition among cartels has intensified territorial disputes over drug production and commercialization in which violence is the main recourse against rivals.

García Zamora and Márquez Covarrubias (2013) note that the situation worsened after 2006, beginning with the so-called war against drug trafficking by President Felipe Calderón. In addition, according to these authors, in the 1980s in Mexico, a neoliberal model was established that had multiple consequences, including a growing transnationalization of the economy and the political life of the country, since a security model was established that was subordinate to the economic and geostrategic interests of the USA. For García Zamora and Márquez Covarrubias (2013), among the observations made by many analysts, the absence of structural criticism of the economic model established in 1982, characterized by the privatization and “foreignization” of the country, is significant. The growth of human insecurity in terms of increased poverty, unemployment, precarious work and informal employment has resulted in the development of the crime industry in Mexico. For the authors, unemployment, marginalization, inequality, violence, crime, corruption and government complicity are the characteristics of the reality of the country, and they can crush the population and destroy its social fabric and trust in institutions.

Muggah et al. (2016) also highlight the situation in the country after the Calderón government’s actions. They claim that Mexico has experienced an impressive escalation of homicidal violence and victimization in the last decade. Since 2006, violence has claimed the lives of 120 000 people, with many of the intentional deaths concentrated in a small number of states and municipalities. The large and medium-sized cities of northern and western Mexico have witnessed rates of up to 150 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants. This increase is due to the mobilization of more than 60 000 soldiers by President Calderón in an intensification of the combat between cartels and anti-narcotics operations.

According to the referenced source, drug-related homicides accounted for 73% of the total for Mexico in 2011, the result of a steady annual increase from the rate of 55% in 2007. The increase in violent crime rates between 2007 and 2011 was limited to some areas. In 2011, approximately 70% of the drug-related homicides occurred in only eight of Mexico’s 32 states, and 24% occurred in only five cities. The most violent state was Chihuahua, with Ciudad Juárez leading the numbers. In 2008, the Sinaloa cartel declared war on its greatest rival, the Juárez cartel, in an attempt to gain total control over the area. In just one year, the total number

of homicides increased by more than 700%: from 192 in 2008 to 1 589 in 2009, finally reaching a maximum of 3 766 in 2010. Between 2009 and 2011, Ciudad Juárez was considered the most violent city in the world, with a homicide rate of 271 per 100 000 inhabitants. Few cities symbolized the crisis of citizen insecurity as seriously as Juárez (Muggah et al., 2016).

Thus, tourism as a social practice in the country has become overwhelmed by the criminal practices of organized crime. For the first time, Mexican tourism has become sensitive to this new reality; however, another important event also occurred during roughly the same period (1990-2006): Mexico was consolidated as a world tourism power (De la Torre & Navarrete Escobedo, 2018). This fact serves as an argument for the difficulty of determining the relationship among economic growth, tourism and crime.⁵

To reflect on and better understand part of this problem, the work of Lozano Cortes (2016) seeks to explain how tourism in Quintana Roo, the main sun and beach destination in Mexico, is affected by insecurity. According to Lozano Cortes, authorities, experts and tourism entrepreneurs recognize that there is a negative perception of security in Mexico that has spread through the media and has affected tourism. It was said in this study that, according to official data, Mexico has experienced an increase in crime, especially high-impact events related to organized crime, which has repercussions for the perception of insecurity. However, there are no statistics on tourist victims, and it certainly does not seem that crimes against tourists are often successful.

Lozano Cortes (2016) considers that some fears are produced, while others are real. In this regard, data related to crime show an increase in insecurity in the country, but the perception is far greater than the reality as a result of multiple factors, including the images created by media. This author, following a certain tradition in studies on crime and tourism, states that when choosing a destination, safety is the most important factor for tourists. According to him, crime affects tourism, especially organized crime, drug trafficking, kidnapping and arms trafficking. Tourists are afraid to spend the night in a destination where they are informed, mainly by the media, of the existence of violent acts.

In addition, for Lozano Cortes (2016), the perception of insecurity in a destination does not occur immediately after the occurrence of a serious offense since the construction of an “unsafe” destination is a complex process created by the dissemination of sensationalist images that can create social panic. Nonetheless, despite the increase in the number of crimes in Mexico, Lozano Cortes notes that there is a lack of statistical data that measures the impacts of insecurity on tourism activity.

In this situation, Lozano Cortes presents data from the city of Cancun, where 64% of the population says they feel insecure. The state of Quintana Roo, which is the main tourist destination in Mexico, has experienced an increase in serious crimes, which can generate a feeling of insecurity among visitors. Lozano Cortes (2016) concludes that despite the lack of accurate data, tourists choose to travel to safe and reliable destinations, and perceptions of insecurity or victimhood may affect visitors’ travel experience, causing them to not recommend the destination to others.

⁵ It is necessary to rethink the traditional view that violence and crime are caused by poverty. Contrary to this simplistic idea, there is a direct link between crime and economic growth (Romero Ortiz et al., 2013).

De la Torre and Navarrete Escobedo (2018), when establishing the relationship between tourism and drug trafficking in Mexico, provide a less causal reflection on the problem. They admit the serious impacts of drug trafficking on Mexican tourism, both from a real point of view and in terms of perceived insecurity. However, they do not promote a causal relationship in which *more violence equals less tourism*. For them, the nature of the relationship between tourism and drug trafficking surpasses such simple equations and requires a more complex approach.

De la Torre and Navarrete Escobedo (2018) note that it is unlikely that tourism in Mexico could disappear due to drug trafficking. Tourism will seek new interests or market niches that often join, paradoxically, with places where crimes against humanity are committed or with characters who have acted illegally through violence, as is the case today of narcoseries, the result of turning Mexican narcoculture into a product. In this sense, according to these authors, tourism will continue to develop, so it is necessary to identify two types of risks: real and perceived. The real risk of visiting a destination can be low even when the perceived risks are high. Consequently, there is no causal empirical correlation between these variables.

Ceron Monroy and Silva Urrutia (2017) affirm that the controversy over whether insecurity has a negative impact on tourism has not been resolved with solid methodological arguments. According to these authors, there are political interests and games that lead to wrong conclusions. Ceron Monroy and Silva Urrutia (2017) emphasize that the perception of insecurity is not necessarily quantifiable or subjective and may or may not be sustained by tourists, both national and international, but based on the recommendations of foreign governments⁶ regarding travel to Mexico, it can have an influence on tourists' decisions to come to the country. Thus, the results of research in the business sector indicate that interest in traveling to Mexico continues and that while insecurity has an effect on tourism, it is too slight to cause a drastic decrease in the total flow. It is therefore necessary to recognize, on the one hand, the existence of a period in which insecurity would not have an immediate effect on the arrival of visitors, and on the other, the resilience required to ensure that tourism can persist in the face of insecurity.

The study by Cervantes Aldana (2016) is even more emphatic. Its objective was to find evidence that would demonstrate what some analysts have often expressed, that is, that the bad image of Mexico causes the distancing of foreign investments and tourism. However, the aforementioned study provides contrary evidence. The study conducted an analysis of the image that foreigners had of Mexico in 2014 and 2015 through an online questionnaire. The results indicated that interest in traveling to Mexico decreased slightly from one year to the next, but this decrease was not enough to create a drastic drop in tourism. In contrast, the official figures of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) indicate that in terms of tourism demand, Mexico went from fifteenth place to tenth. Thus, it follows that although Mexico has experienced serious criminal events in recent years, they have not eliminated interest in investing or visiting the country.

⁶ The study by Sánchez Mendoza and Barbosa Jasso (2017) highlights this problem in relation to the USA. Travel warnings are issued by the US government to guide tourists to restrict their activities to the tourist areas, avoid travelling outside the toll roads and be cautious late at night and early in the morning.

Sánchez Mendoza and Aguilar Macías (2016) present the results of a field study conducted between January and July 2013 with 234 tourists of Mexican nationality during their vacations in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, with the aim of determining their perceptions of the image of this tourist destination in the context of insecurity. According to the authors, although violence and insecurity were constant from 2008 to 2012 and were exposed by the media, suggesting that the location was unsafe, this perception was not reflected by the empirical results of their study. The tourists who were interviewed perceived the city as safe (74%) and beautiful (97%). To the question of whether they experienced any act of insecurity, only 6% answered yes. Even so, 62% of the sample commented that the violence generated by drug trafficking has changed their perception of security in the destination. What is most relevant in the study by Sánchez Mendoza and Aguilar Macías (2016) is that 71% of the sample expressed being accustomed to acts of violence and insecurity in their place of origin. Therefore, it is understood that a significant proportion of tourists are already accustomed to the same types of insecurity in their places of origin, which implies that tourists who visited Mazatlán are aware of the acts of violence that could occur.

The same generic understanding is seen in the study by Peña (2017), in which, according to tourism experts, Acapulco remains an icon of traditional tourism despite the violence in the area. It has an extensive hotel and restaurant infrastructure, but it is obliged to generate policies that increase the tranquility of the destination. Despite the security crisis, investments in tourism projects remain in the millions of dollars (Peña, 2017).

Flores Gamboa et al. (2019) evaluate the effect of a travel alert on the flow of American and Canadian visitors to a Mexican tourist destination according to different tourism indicators and the number of homicides recorded between 2006 and 2016. The research shows that there is little empirical evidence regarding the impact of a travel alert on the traveler's final decision in relation to the insecurity of the destination. It was noted that it is possible to demonstrate the relationship of homicides with hotel occupancy and the percentage of occupation by national and foreign tourists in the tourist port of Mazatlán. Additionally, the statistical evidence establishes that this type of crime moderately influences the flow of international visitors to the destination but does not have a permanent effect. Thus, the study cites that in the USA, only 18% of respondents said that they would completely alter their travel plans in response to a travel warning related to safety.

Other studies, however, choose to attribute insecurity to a factor that better explains fluctuations in demand. Enriquez Acosta et al. (2015) give the example of Playas de Rosarito (Baja California), a border city with the USA located in the extreme northwest of Mexico, next to San Diego (USA). It is a coastal city where tourism from the neighboring country is dominant and has undergone several transformations. For the authors, Playas de Rosarito is integrated with the border reality dominated by the US economy; however, the tourist economy of the place was affected during the first decade of the 21st century, which plunged the city into a great crisis. The authors highlight the growing perception of insecurity and fear that Americans have when they come to Mexico due to the war against drug trafficking and the battle of the cartels for the Plaza de Tijuana. In addition, the security measures adopted by the USA after September 11, the economic crisis that began in the USA in 2008, and insecurity and

violence in Mexico contributed to creating a negative image of the northern border, which has consequently alienated tourists and reduced so-called second-home tourism in the city.

Considering the previous cases and, as a partial result of this question, it is perceived that the literature that addresses the problem is not consistent with the equation that “more violence equals less tourism”. There are many objective and perceptual issues that limit the ability of increased crime and insecurity alone to alienate tourists. When considering the systemic background, the following assumptions seem to be common among the consulted studies:

- a) Accurate data on the possible causal relationship between tourism demand and crime are lacking.
- b) Even with accurate data, it would be difficult to establish direct and less inaccurate relationships that explain the decrease in demand in the face of increased violence and crime.
- c) Although not highlighted here, activities such as natural disasters, terrorism and epidemiological problems seem to have a much greater effect on tourism demand and overcome the effects of as an immediate risk.
- d) Tourism seems to adapt quite well to adverse contexts of insecurity, overcoming limits that in other markets would be restrictive (preventive) variables.
- e) Insecurity (real or created) is an important factor in choosing a tourist destination; however, the tourist is not a “traveler without baggage” who will stop visiting certain destinations due to criminal activities that statistically do not seek tourists as a main target.

Given these premises, the following section seeks to understand how the spaces for tourism in Ciudad Juárez have (or may have) a direct (or indirect) relationship with the potentially “criminal” areas of the city. This spatial comparison is expected to infer, although speculatively, how insecurity can be a limiting element of sustainability and economic/tourist viability in Ciudad Juárez.

Criminal Dynamics in Ciudad Juárez: Possible Effects on Urban Sociospatial Dynamics and Probable Implications for Tourism

Despite the above premises, it is necessary to highlight that, for a tourist destination, border or not, to be competitive and sustainable, it must meet different requirements. Grünewald (2010) indicates that safety is one of the main high-value variables that determine the demand for and competitiveness of a destination, along with the originality of the tourism offerings, the quality and the price. The author understands tourism security as the protection of life and health and of the physical, psychological and economic integrity of visitors, service providers and members of the receiving communities (Grünewald, 2010). In this way, according to the author, the lack of security generates conflicts, clashes or struggles with values and rights.

In Ciudad Juárez, these conflicts have intensified sharply, especially since 2008. Ganzo Olivares et al. (2010) note that crime in urban areas of Mexico is a reality, and various data show that impotence due to insecurity is present in the country. It is a broader social issue that historically condemns the most vulnerable and increases the likelihood of entering the crime economy. These authors note that the risk, insecurity and dangerous situations that have affected Mexican tourism have increased. This is reflected in the low tourist and commercial stimulation since 2008 due to warnings issued by the USA as a result of the wave of insecurity on the northern border. Particularly in Ciudad Juárez, tourism is one of the tertiary activities of the urban economy that has been most heavily affected by the increase in insecurity in recent years (Moreno Murrieta & Maycotte Pansza, 2010).

For Limas Hernández and Limas Hernández (2014a), the low regard for Ciudad Juárez spread throughout the world in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries due to very unfavorable situations. The city was identified as an empire of impunity. In the first decade of the current century, Ciudad Juárez was recognized worldwide for its excessive increase in crime statistics for both men and women.

Therefore, considerations of tourism in Ciudad Juárez require much attention and methodological care to understand the structural conditions of social inequality, despite the economic dynamism experienced by the city on the border with the USA. The border logic, in the case of Ciudad Juárez, ends up imposing unequal and combined conditions of economic development in its territory, which conditions antagonistic relations within the space.

In the case of Acapulco, Peña (2017) states that poverty, exclusion and inequality dirtied the face of a city with a huge population and economic growth. Ciudad Juárez has not escaped this logic inherent to capitalism. On the one hand, there is functional dependence on the US side, especially in relation to maquiladoras⁷ and the flow of people and capital from the other side of the border. This functional dependence allows the modernization of some areas of the city (the Golden Zone and Pronaf) while maintaining past sociospatial inequalities, such as those present in the southern and western zones. On the other hand, the functional logic of dependence on El Paso (a US border city) is not enough to curb the deepest inequalities and asymmetries that exist in the territory of Juárez.

The homicidal violence between 2008 and 2011 broke records in Ciudad Juárez and marked the city as one of the most dangerous in the world. Despite the current "control" of this homicidal violence, the idea of the city as dangerous persists. The US government itself recommends not coming to Ciudad Juárez, which feeds the idea that the town is unattractive and very unsafe for visitors. According to Bringas Rabago and Verduzco Chávez (2008), the travel alert system is part of a comprehensive national security measure in the USA and has become a point of controversy with Mexico. The dominant perception in the USA is that the northern border of Mexico is characterized by excessive insecurity, and this has shaped the tone of its recommendations to avoid visiting border cities or to take precautions if they do.

⁷ It is worth noting the importance of the industrial sector in Ciudad Juárez since manufacturing industries are the most important sector in the state of Chihuahua (Inegi, 2016).

This perception of insecurity is not limited to foreign visitors. Among Juarenses themselves, there is a wide sense of insecurity. In a study conducted with students from the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez (Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez - UACJ), this perception of fear is confirmed: 95% of the sample does not consider the city safe, including 71% who perceive the insecurity as distributed throughout the city, without distinguishing among areas (Limas Hernández & Limas Hernández, 2014b).

It is worth noting that the homicide rate in Juárez in 2010 was 224 per 100 000 inhabitants, a very high and worrying level. In 2008, the rate was 118; in 2009, it was 178, and in 2011, it was 136 (Limas Hernández & Limas Hernández, 2014a). These rates, regardless of the year or source of data, are extremely high given both the acceptable level stipulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) (up to 10 per 100 000 inhabitants) and comparisons with other cities.

For Gallegos and López (2004), the socioeconomic inequalities between the central and peripheral spaces of the capitalist world are accentuated in the border area of northern Mexico because countries with extreme economic differences collide on this border (Gallegos & López, 2004). Thus, public safety is one of the most important problems of Ciudad Juárez. The problems range from crimes caused by the drug trafficking network that is woven into the city and the multiple murders of women from Juárez to the lack of police officers in the streets (Gallegos & López, 2004).

Schmidt Nedvedovich et al. (2017), when analyzing violence related to organized crime at the national level in an investigation covering the years 2011 to 2016, suggest that violence in Mexico has a defined spatial pattern that is focused on critical areas that form regions with a high incidence of violence, especially in the north, northeast and southwest of the country. These authors also suggest that there is empirical evidence demonstrating the spatial correlation between these territories of violence and drug production and trafficking zones. The authors argue that crime is focused on factors related to the production, transport and consumption of drugs and on the need to generate a territorial vacuum that allows certain interests to appropriate the spaces by specifically linking them to natural resources. The authors highlight the relevance of border points that play a central role in the distribution of drugs, since they are the destination and origin of an international route (i.e., traffic to the USA).

Thus, for Limas Hernández and Limas Hernández (2014a), Ciudad Juárez is a border space where economic activities related to the USA, such as smuggling, nightlife and the dynamics of international bridges, built the history of the city (Limas Hernández & Limas Hernández, 2014a). These authors note that it is particularly important study violence in the case of Juárez not only because it is imperative to record the social and gender violence that has occurred in this locality in various spheres but also because of the insecurity, violence and dangers that are present and multiply daily given the framework of illegality and impervious impunity that has existed since the late 2000s (Limas Hernández & Limas Hernández, 2014a).

Many socioeconomic inequalities are present in Juárez territory, although the marginalization index in Juárez is classified as “very low”⁸ according to Conapo estimates based on the 2010 Population and Housing Census (Conapo, 2011). However, there are areas with greater poverty and, therefore, greater vulnerability (i.e., in the south and west). In addition, it is evident that there is no cause-and-effect relationship between marginalization and crime, but the expansion of inequalities and asymmetries of power increase the levels of criminal activity, especially in countries in which what has been coined “narcoculture” is present (as in Mexico and Colombia, for example).

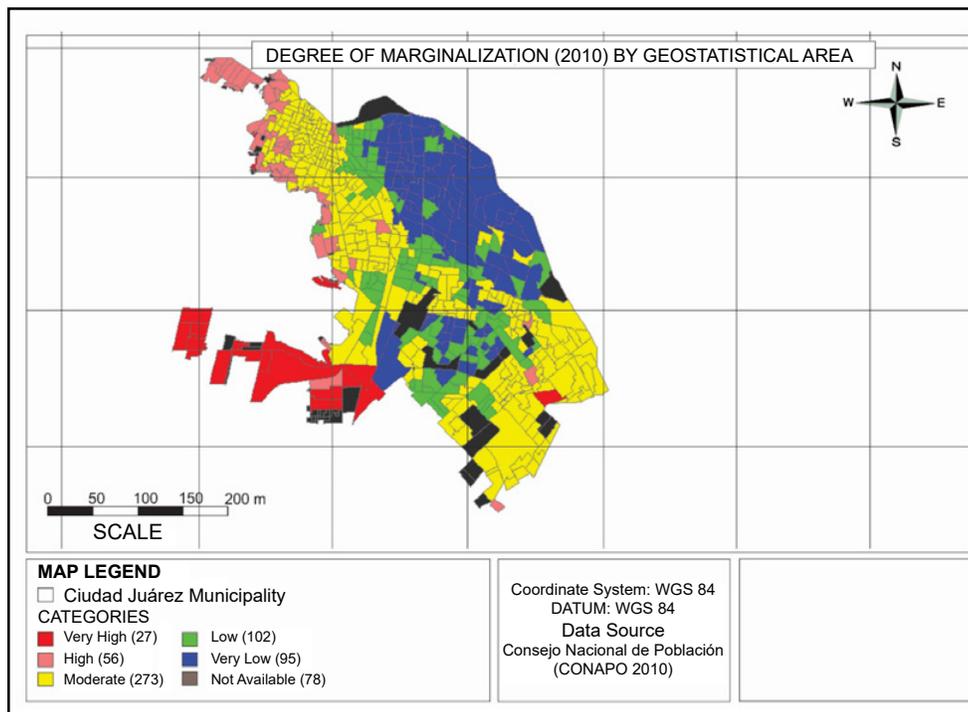
These socioeconomic inequalities can be visualized on a territorial level in the map of marginalization (see Figure 3). Although the latest data available are from 2010, the spatial asymmetries in the territory can be visually perceived. Variables such as education, housing conditions and income are unevenly distributed in the territory: the eastern and northern areas stand out as having the best conditions for human development, while the southern and western areas are those with the greatest poverty.

The methodology for estimating the marginalization index (2010) was constructed based on information provided by the 2010 Population and Housing Census. This index was estimated using the same forms of exclusion that were used to estimate the 1990, 2000 and 2005 indices; the sources for these indices were the 11th and 12th General Censuses of Population and Housing of 1990 and 2000, respectively, the second Population and Housing Count of 2005 and the National Survey of Occupation and Employment (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo - ENOE) of 2005. The methodology considers nine variables, including level of education, physical and health conditions of housing, urbanization and income (Conapo, 2011).

Figure 3 shows the marginalization of Ciudad Juárez, with reference to the year 2010. The areas with the highest vulnerability index (very high and high) are the southern and western zones. The following criminal data will show that there is no exact spatial relationship between crime and marginalization, since in Juárez, the criminal dynamic during the highlighted decade surpassed the territorial logic of poverty; nonetheless, the data suggest some correlation between marginalization and criminal statistics.

⁸ The index was 9 553 on a scale of 0 to 100 (Conapo estimates based on Inegi, Population and Housing Census 2010) (Conapo, 2011).

Figure 3: Degree of marginalization (2010) by geostatistical area

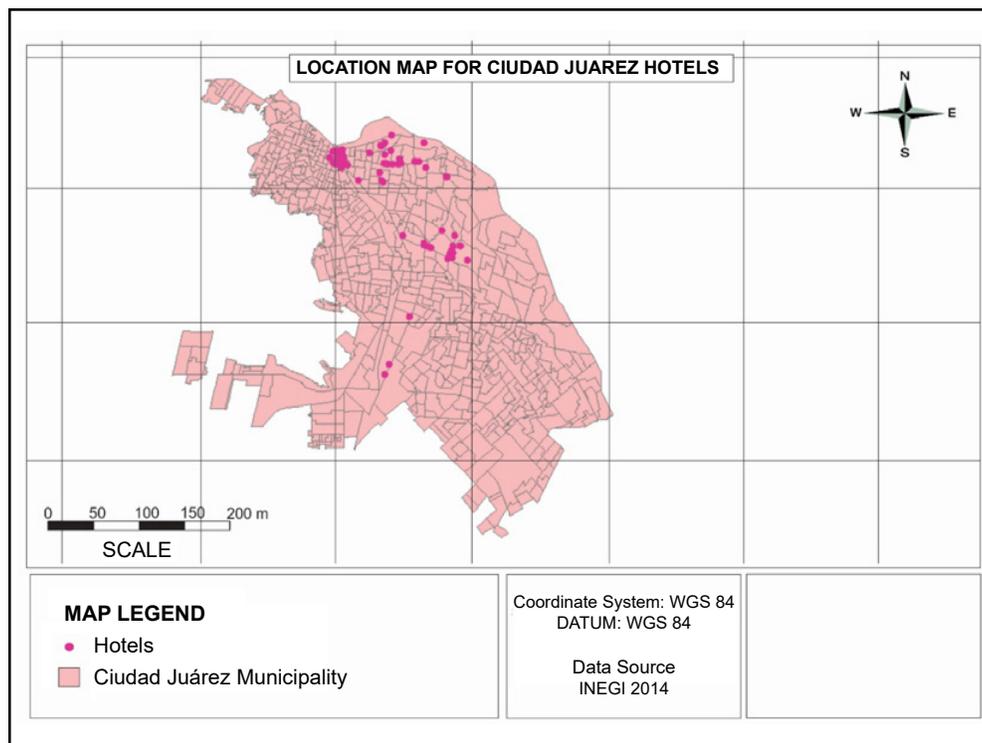


Source: Prepared by Javier Omar Campos Gonzalez and João Paulo Bezerra Rodrigues (2019).

In Ciudad Juárez, according to data from 2009, the majority of people affected by violent acts were men (9 out of 10) between 20 and 39 years old, and firearms were the main weapons used (Limas Hernández & Limas Hernández, 2014a). Similarly, the study of Acapulco conducted by Peña (2017) confirms this trend: young men kill and die due to conflicts related to criminal dynamics.

Regarding the spatial zoning of criminality in Ciudad Juárez, the western zone took the highest place (1 in 3 cases), followed by the southern zone (1 in 4 cases). The northern zone (15% of cases) was third, followed by the east, with less than 10% of cases (Limas Hernández & Limas Hernández, 2014a).

Regarding the spatially overlapping data on economic activity relevant to tourism and the most unsafe areas of the city and taking into account the spatial characteristics of the hotel offerings in Ciudad Juárez, Figure 4 verifies that the hotels are basically concentrated in the part of the city with the lowest marginalization index. The superposition of Figures 3 and 4 shows that the location of hotels in the city is characterized by a notable spatial concentration in an area with very low marginalization; consequently, the area with better human development indexes and lower incidence of homicides corresponds to the Pronaf and Golden Zones.

Figure 4: Mapping of hotels by area, Ciudad Juárez (2014)

Source: Prepared by Javier Omar Campos Gonzalez and João Paulo Bezerra Rodrigues (2019).

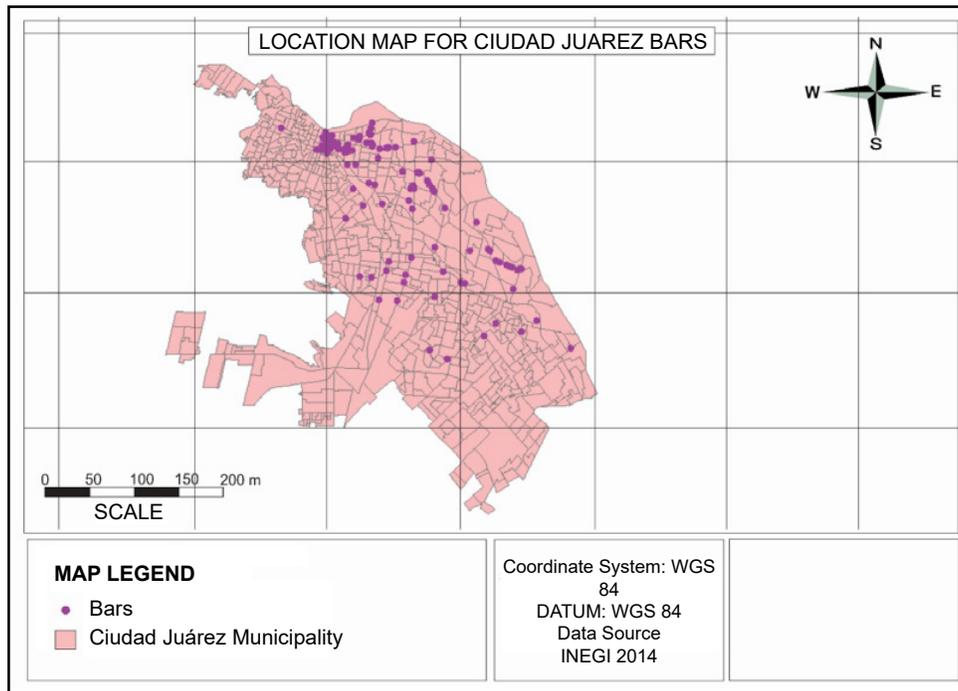
The same phenomenon occurs for the spatial distribution of bars in the city represented in Figure 5, which are concentrated predominantly in the areas that have the lowest marginalization index and therefore are more attractive to business and visitor investments.

The previous analysis verifies that the economic activities aimed at visitors are concentrated in the less unequal areas of the city, where marginalization and criminal statistics are less important in the rest of the city. Therefore, to paraphrase Hernández López (2018): “fear and violence are represented in areas outside the tourist area”.

The previous statement can be corroborated by an analysis of Figure 6. In this map, Figures 3, 4 and 5 are superimposed to show that hotels and bars are not operating in the most marginalized areas; that is, these businesses, especially tourist hotels, are rarely present areas of moderate marginalization.

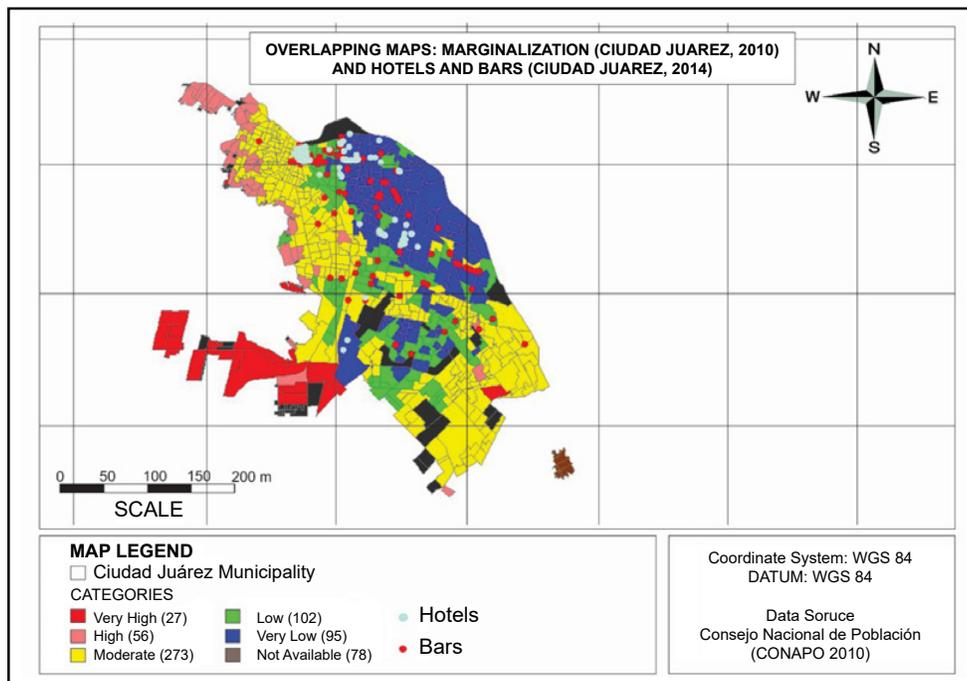
Hernández López (2018) analyzes what he calls “spatial stigmatization”, which results from familiarization with everyday myths and is associated with information disseminated by the media that designates areas as dangerous. In Ciudad Juárez, this spatial stigmatization is greatest for the most marginalized areas, that is, those far from the previously mentioned tourist areas.

Figure 5: Mapping of bars by area, Ciudad Juárez (2014)



Source: Prepared by Javier Omar Campos Gonzalez and João Paulo Bezerra Rodrigues (2019).

Figure 6: Overlapping maps: marginalization, hotels and bars (Ciudad Juárez)



Source: Prepared by Javier Omar Campos Gonzalez and João Paulo Bezerra Rodrigues (2019).

To delve into the geography of insecurity in the space under study, Moreno Murrieta and Maycotte Pansza (2010) highlight that Ciudad Juárez is characterized by feelings of insecurity and fear resulting from the constant waves of violence in the peripheral areas of the city, in parts of the center and the western side. The authors perceive the creation of three areas of urban and demographic growth:

- a) North: A richer, urban consolidated area where most of the education, health and social services of the city are concentrated and that is home to just under 20% of the population.
- b) West: Comprises just over 40% of the population and is characterized by marginalization with respect to the urban and social infrastructure of the municipality.
- c) South: Corresponds to the growth zone of the city; combines poor areas with shopping centers and residential subdivisions that correspond to other socio-economic strata (Moreno Murrieta & Maycotte Pansza, 2010).

In greater detail, the most affected areas, with high and moderate levels of marginalization, are southwest (very high and in the red area), northwest (high and moderate), west (high and moderate) and south and southeast (moderate); none of these zones or areas include significant numbers of hotels or food centers of tourist interest.

However, Morales Cárdenas et al. (2013) note that practically the entire city carries at least at a moderate threat of crime and violence. In addition, it is perceived that there is a greater concentration of crimes and violence in the central and northwestern areas, those closest to the international border; these areas constitute the only large continuous zone with a high threat level. There is also a subsequent strip with a moderate level of threat and then an external strip or belt that covers the south and southeast areas of the city, where some areas have begun to accumulate concentrations of crime and violence.

Regarding the areas that present low levels of threat, Morales Cárdenas et al. (2013) note that these are located towards the northeast portion of the city. This area, which coincides with the ecological integration zone, is the only continuous urban area of considerable size that has a low level of urban insecurity. This is where the majority of the medium- and high-occupancy subdivisions are located, which also coincide with the areas of higher population income and greater availability of urban services. The authors also affirm that the majority of poverty zones coincide with areas with a moderate and high level of security threats. In this way, they conclude that it is possible to affirm a correlation between the high level of vulnerability of the population and the high level of urban insecurity in Ciudad Juárez. Sumano Rodríguez (2018) agrees with these findings; according to this author, violence in Ciudad Juárez is concentrated in two extremes of the city: the northwest and the southeast. He adds that in the southeast, the accelerated urban growth in recent years has generated conditions conducive to violence.

Regarding services, the trend towards sectorization in Ciudad Juárez is related to the territorial structure of tourist services. This concentration of hotels and bars in the less unequal areas of the city is partly explained by the reality that Ciudad Juárez

has border dependence on El Paso and other neighboring cities in the USA, for which the border is an important fun space. Therefore, in the tourist areas of Juárez, it is unlikely that the criminal dynamics structurally affect economic life. In addition, according to Korstanje (2012), the safety of foreign visitors is a priority in places with high dependence on tourism.

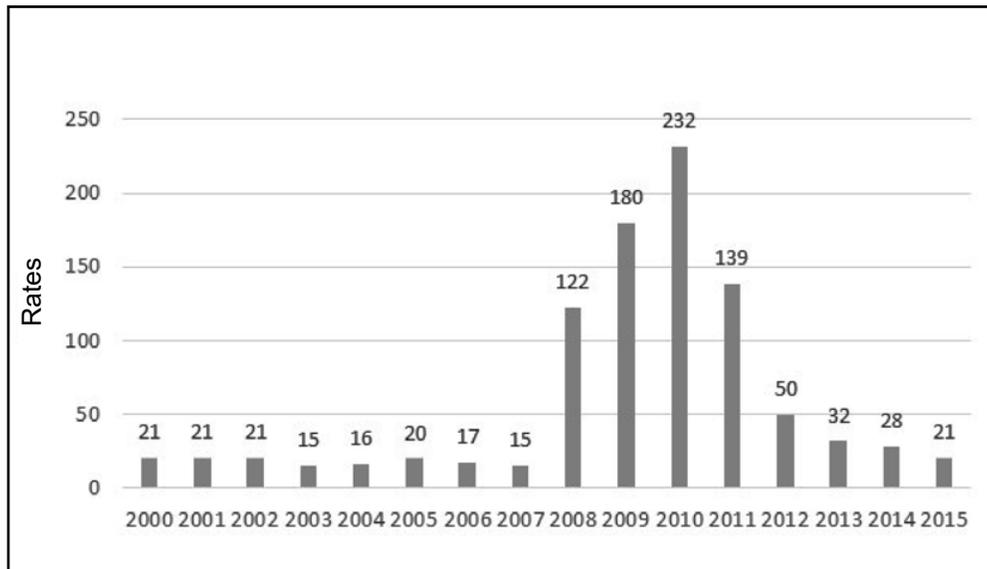
Llera Pacheco et al. (2012) state that entertainment and leisure activities aimed at attracting US visitors to the Mexican side have been fundamental for the economic development of border cities in northern Mexico since the early 1990s, which means that territorial borders have the potential to produce economic growth in local regions based on tourism and entertainment activities. In Ciudad Juárez, activities related to casinos, restaurants, nightclubs and horse and dog races are key to enriching the local economy. Therefore, the economic competitiveness of the border cities of northern Mexico is based on entertainment and tourism activities.

Thus, the region in which Ciudad Juárez/El Paso is located offers a true perspective on how tourism and leisure influence development. However, according to Velázquez Vargas (2011), this reality underwent changes, especially between 2007 and 2011. After many years of being considered a city with full employment, Juárez had to question the viability of the export model when it faced high rates unemployment and an unprecedented crisis of insecurity during that period. Velázquez Vargas notes that even before the economic recession of 2007, Ciudad Juárez had a strong migratory attraction and high levels of transnational capital investment through the maquiladora industry, and it met a strong demand from Americans for nightlife and medical services. With the crisis of insecurity in the city and the bankruptcy war on drugs, a portion of the tourists stopped visiting the city, foreign investments slowed down, and many businesses linked to nightlife and medicine have closed, causing high unemployment.

Today, especially since 2012, Ciudad Juárez has experienced a resumption of its economic growth and urban development. Homicides have progressively decreased, especially after the four-year period from 2008-2011. Figure 7 illustrates the drop in homicide rates per 100 000 inhabitants between 2010 and 2015.

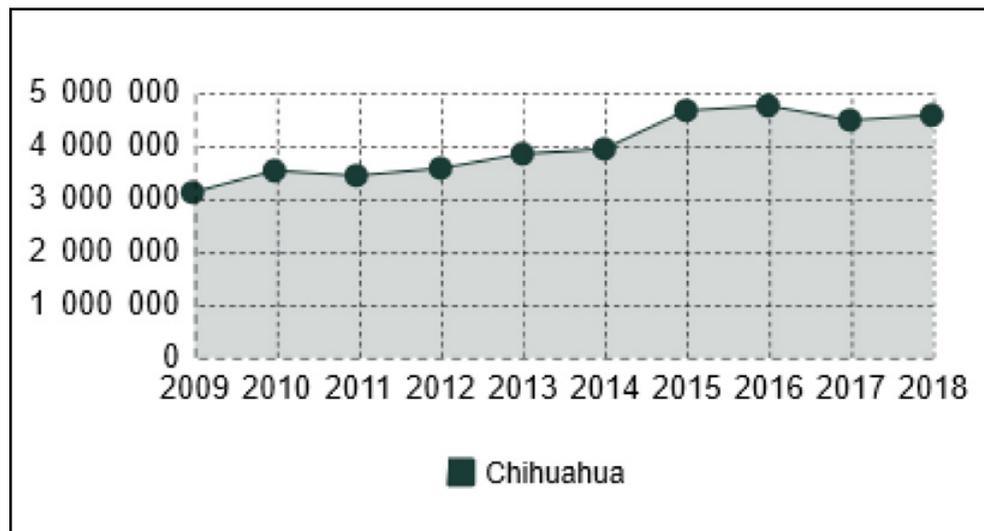
These observations verify that Ciudad Juárez has demonstrated strong urban resilience in response to its most urgent social problems. Despite urban violence (and homicidal violence) and economic recession, mainly in the years cited (2008-2011), Ciudad Juárez remains a prominent area in the economic life of the northern border. The data on the entry of tourists to the state of Chihuahua demonstrate this economic restructuring and urban resilience in the face of violence (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Homicide rates per 100 000 inhabitants (Ciudad Juárez, 2010-2015)



Source: Segob and United States Agency for International Development, (Secretaría de Gobernación & Agencia de Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional, 2015).

Figure 8: Total arrivals of tourists in the state of Chihuahua (2009-2018)



Source: https://www.datatur.sectur.gob.mx/ITxEF/ITxEF_CHIH.aspx

Therefore, as a result of this brief study, it is necessary to present some interesting premises:

- The city is not isolated from the us side, which implies very close economic relations.
- Crime has very specific effects on the flow of visitors, a phenomenon that does not allow strong inferences regarding the behavior of tourists in contexts of insecurity.
- In the city, marginalization areas and areas with a higher incidence of crime are noticeably differentiated; however, they do not overlap with the spaces offering services, accommodation and recreation for visitors.
- Many criminal activities must remain silent since drawing the attention of the state and certain organized sectors of civil society can mean a break with the order established by the criminal economy. The murder of a tourist is not strategic for many of the ties that are established in the political economy of crime.

In summary, it is important to note that tourism has demonstrated a very dynamic capacity for adaptation in areas of socioeconomic vulnerability, which implies that a destination's capacity for attractiveness is almost always greater than the human limits imposed on the territories.

Final Considerations

Ciudad Juárez has a unique strategic location due to its geographical border with the USA and an economic life strongly linked through this dynamic with the city of El Paso (Texas). The economic dependence on the us side is revealed in the very dynamics of the Juárez landscape: it is an industrial center of American maquiladoras, hospitals and medical clinics with a large American clientele, casinos, money exchange offices, etc., in addition to the vehicle traffic that cross the border every day.

The image of the city as a dangerous place was not created randomly. Statistical data and the historical evolution of homicides and femicides in Ciudad Juárez placed it in the rankings of the most violent cities in the world. The local drama has been portrayed in films such as *Bordertown* (2006) and *Sicario* (2015) and in the narco-series *El Chapo* (2017) and *Narcos: México* (2018), both on Netflix. The world has viewed Ciudad Juárez as the “Gaza Strip” of Latin America and, as a consequence, the city has been represented as a place of fear and violence.

There are cities where violent crimes are truly a danger for their residents but have no quantitative impact on visitors. How many tourists are killed worldwide? Very few. In these cities, the phenomenon of crime does not structurally affect local tourism. On the other hand, there are also cities where only a small change in the dynamics of local peace would allow some tourists to be excluded. Therefore, there is no cause-and-effect relationship between crime and tourism; it is known that public safety is a fundamental issue for the economic viability of tourism, but there is no way to determine how certain variables will behave if crime levels are increased or reduced.

Between 2008 and 2011, Ciudad Juárez had its most dramatic period in relation to drug trafficking and the mortality of its citizens at the hands of the criminal economy. Today, the city experiences “acceptable” homicide rates for Latin America, although these rates are much higher than those expected by the WHO.

The economic activity derived from the flow of visitors to the city has been restructured, especially since 2012, and today, Juárez has resumed its economic growth and urban restructuring. Nonetheless, its image as a dangerous city persists.

The maps presented in this article, despite the age of the data, show that the spaces intended for tourism are not in the poorest and most dangerous areas of the city, which implies that the visitor runs very little real risk if they remain within the safety zone of the tourist territories.

In addition, it is not strategic for drug traffickers to threaten the lives of foreigners, especially Americans. Similarly, the average tourist recognizes that the logic of urban crime is different from the logic of terrorism; the first requires silence and discretion to continue, while the second aims to strike terror and be at the center of attention. It may be a very speculative statement, but it seems true that terrorism, natural disasters and outbreaks of epidemics (the current COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates this claim) have a much more immediate effect on tourism demand than the daily criminal dynamics. In other words, the tourist is not the central objective of intentional lethal violence (homicide), but he or she is much more frequently a victim of the patrimonial dynamics of robberies and thefts.

It is appropriate to note again that, in Ciudad Juárez, the representations of fear and insecurity are much more prominent than the real threat to tourists, who, it is known, rarely leave the safety zone of the Pronaf, Golden Zone and some parts of the historic center.

Although this study does not have a prescriptive nature and is not intended to propose actions for tourism planning and management, it follows that a security policy for tourism should above all be a security policy for residents. In the case of Ciudad Juárez, large investments in police intelligence are needed, as well as investments in information technology for public safety; the creation of a database integrated with the police; the continuous study and mapping of all crimes committed in the territory of Juárez; the conduct of victimization investigations with the local population and with visitors; the creation of a Municipal Tourism Council that includes mechanisms for popular participation and is aimed at solving public security issues with the participation of police authorities; and, above all, an urban policy that minimizes the pre-existing inequalities in the city to allow education and culture to be instruments for the abandonment of (or nonentry into) criminal life.

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