

Chapter 8 Public space and its heritage value, building the concept of place through collective memories in San Pedro Lagunillas, Nayarit

Capítulo 8 El espacio público y su valor patrimonial, construyendo el concepto de lugar a través de las memorias colectivas en San Pedro Lagunillas, Nayarit

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DOI: 10.35429/H.2022.7.112.122

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A. Marroquín, A. Álvarez, M. Morado and P. Gómez (Coord) Social Sciences and Humanities. Handbooks-©ECORFAN-México, Querétaro, 2022.

Abstract

In the public space, a significant number of manifestations of the Intangible Cultural Heritage are experienced, which is why the present investigation is carried out with the purpose of relating the sense of place that is denoted in public spaces from the Intangible Cultural Heritage practice, the above through the documentation of collective memories; which are transmitted by generations and remain in force through time. Such is the case of the town of San Pedro Lagunillas, Nayarit, where the collective memories protected by the community refer to the sense of place that is given to public space. For this, ethnographic techniques were used, applying various semi-structured interviews to the elderly residents; in addition, participant research was carried out. Managing to document manifestations of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that have remained in force in the collective imagination for generations.

Public space, Collective memories, Place, Heritage

Resumen

En el espacio público se viven un importante número de manifestaciones del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial (PCI), es por ello que, se realiza la presente investigación con el propósito de relacionar el sentido de lugar que se denota en los espacios públicos a partir de la práctica del PCI, lo anterior por medio de la documentación de memorias colectivas; las cuales se transmiten por generaciones y permanecen vigentes a través del tiempo. Tal es el caso de la localidad de San Pedro Lagunillas, Nayarit, en donde las memorias colectivas resguardadas por la comunidad remiten al sentido de lugar que se otorga al espacio público. Para ello se utilizaron técnicas etnográficas, aplicando diversas entrevistas semiestructuradas a los pobladores; además se realizó investigación participante. Logrando documentar manifestaciones del PCI que han permanecido vigentes en el imaginario colectivo por generaciones.

Espacio público, Memorias colectivas, Lugar, Patrimonio

Introduction

The study of space from the perspective of the users, of the inhabitants, as they live and perceive it, requires a hermeneutic analysis, in which, with the theoretical support of anthropology and the ethnographic method, work is done directly with the carriers. Public space from a socio-anthropological perspective is considered as a context of encounter, lived experiences and democratic expression. Therefore, its use and enjoyment cannot be limited to a few, but everyone, equally, will have access to it. In this sense, the manifestations of culture, mainly what refers to the immaterial, are present in these spaces, also generating a link between it and the users, from this, they generate the sense of place, that is to say, belonging and identity towards the public space; these premises are taken to the context of one of the 20 municipalities of the State of Nayarit: San Pedro Lagunillas, which is located in the southern part of the entity; It stands out, in addition to being one of the smallest territorial extension, as well as the smallest population, it is a municipality that is characterized by having an educated population, interested in cultural and artistic issues. Due to the above, in a community manner, they organize various activities that are considered as their Intangible Cultural Heritage, which are carried out during the year making use of the public spaces of the locality. This link between the residents and their public spaces, in addition to manifesting itself in their Intangible Cultural Heritage, is present in the collective memory, which were documented through semi-structured interviews; whose narratives present the results of this research. These provide the basis for the analysis of the notion of place generated by the settlers from two important traditions: the Judea and the Topaderas. Two festivities that stand out for the roots they have in the population and for the use of public space for their realization, highlighting in addition to the streets, the Plaza de los Terebintos and the Plaza de los Mártires; Both spaces are present in collective memories through myths, legends and stories that remain current in the collective imagination.

Public space, its appropriation and the notion of place

What do we mean when we talk about public space? Is it just the space between the buildings, or is it the area that allows mobility between private points? Beyond the urban morphology of the territory, there are other positions regarding public space, which define it from a vision oriented towards its function and socio-anthropological value. However, these various positions provide elements for the analysis and understanding of public space.

From urbanism there are three currents, mainly, the first oriented from operational urbanism and real estate speculation, defining public space as "what remains after building a private space, where its central functions are to link private spaces and create spaces for the recreation, exchange, information and production of historical landmarks". (Robles, 2008). While from the philosophical point of view, public space is defined as that space in which individuality is lost due to the generation of a collective situation.

Also from the urban perspective, government institutions define it. In Mexico, the Secretary of Social Development (SEDESOL) defines it as:

"the meeting place where any person has the right to circulate and is characterized by being an area open to and for the exercise of life in society. It represents the ideal place for the development of sports, recreational, artistic - cultural, leisure activities, and in general for the use and enjoyment of the community 24 hours a day" (SEDESOL, 2010).

At an international level, the definition offered by the Ministry of Urban Housing and Urbanism of Chile was identified, for whom, basically, public spaces are:

Urban squares and significant places, the streets, the urban parks and the buildings of the context; and its elements are: urban furniture, trees, pavements, water sources, vehicular circulation, public art, advertising and urban landscape, urban signs, children's games, stages, recreational and sports elements, the closures, cycle paths, infrastructure networks and pedestrian circulation. (Robles, 2008)

Beyond just the urban issue, public space from a sociological perspective represents a framework in which the inhabitants converge for the development of various activities through which they exercise rights and promote values and ideologies, such as civility, democracy, coexistence, in addition to questions of leisure and free time. In addition "It is where collective memory is built and multiple identities and fusions in process are manifested" (Borja, 2011 p 39)

"A public space is any place of public property or public use accessible and usable by all for free, or without profit. Public spaces are a key element of individual and social well-being, places of individual life and community expression of the diversity of their common cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity". (Garau et al, 2015)

The previous definitions maintain a common axis in the sense that mention is made of the social relations that are generated around these spaces. Because it is considered that users of public space are a fundamental element when carrying out research or intervention projects. In this sense, other areas of knowledge offer their vision regarding this concept; such is the case of the social sciences, which through particular approaches. In this sense, Fernando Carrión (2005) identifies four fundamental conditions that define public space: "symbolic, symbiotic, exchange and civility".

These spaces are appropriated by the users, and from this they are considered as a place, this sense of place understood as the subjective attachment that one has with it; same that is generated through a linguistic code, the denomination, the toponymy, the adjectives "the place is defined by nouns by the qualities of things and elements, by symbolic and historical values, it is environmental and is phenomenologically related to the human body" (Sola-Morales et al, 2000 p101). In this same sense, Paul Claval mentions "a discoverer wants to preserve the memory of the lands he discovered and make them known to all; to talk about places and environments, there is no other way than to proceed to the baptism of the earth and develop a vocabulary of its own to qualify the different aspects of space" (Claval, 2003 p121).

The recovery of the idea of place has also constituted a criticism of the way in which the contemporary city has been created, and the revaluation of the idea of place would be closely related to the beginning of the recovery of history and memory, values that the international style space rejected... (Montaner, 1997, pp. 36-37)

According to the above, it is concluded that each society lives its public space in such a way that it generates a relationship with it, based on the practice of its traditions and the presence of its memories, thus generating a sense of place.

Collective memories

The fundamental basis for this research are the collective memories that are present in the inhabitants of the locality. According to Lara (2007)

“memory is a door to the network of feelings, emotions, traditions and the culture of a society in which there is no written evidence. In their texts, the authors recreate the past through the memories of the interviewed characters, without qualifying whether what people say is true or not; In other words, oral testimonies offer the researcher a first-hand source of what the past was and how it is meant. (Idem, 2007, p. 11).

Collective memories are a fundamental element in social dynamics, they are a bridge between the past, present and future, they are a cohesive and identity element for communities. For their historiographic handling, the memories must be treated as a source, which requires that they be constructed from various elements that delineate their historical character: time, context, meaning, space, even myth; to the latter, understood as collective truths of a social group (Lara, 2007, p. 17). Thus, Hallwachs (1968) makes a difference between historical memory and collective memory:

“Historical memory: supposes the reconstruction of the data provided by the present of social life and projected on the reinvented past.

Collective memory: it is the one that magically recomposes the past, and whose memories refer to the experience that a community or a group can bequeath to an individual or groups of individuals”.

Within that magical recomposition of the past, the myth, memories and experiences lived and perceived by the members of a community are integrated. These, through oral tradition, transmit and perpetuate these memories, being a key piece for the knowledge and reconstruction of recent history.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Regarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, its institutional definition proposed by UNESCO based on its Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage:

“the uses, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques - together with the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces that are inherent to them - that communities, groups and in some cases individuals recognize as an integral part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, which is passed down from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups based on their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, instilling in them a sense of identity and continuity and thus helping to promote respect of cultural diversity and human creativity” (UNESCO, 2003).

Although this definition is widely disseminated through the ratification that the Member States make of the Convention, it is important to consider that the notion of cultural heritage is still unfinished and susceptible to constant analysis and reflection, mainly due to the ideological and cultural component that encompasses; Therefore, the definition of cultural heritage is "always open, negotiable, dialogical, transformative and reflective" (Santamarina, 2005, p. 48 in Fontal and Martínez, 2017). Considering also, the look of anthropology for the analysis of the concept of culture itself allows taking the concept towards a new orientation, in which two visions are presented, the one developed from the institutional, power, and the one engendered within culture itself. society, based on various social movements that have originated new identity values attributable to other types of cultural assets focused on the expressions and manifestations of a community, originating as a result of adaptation and interaction with the environment; mainly in the dimension of the immaterial, which flows from the social significance itself. Considering the contributions of Bordieu (2000)

“Symbols are the instruments par excellence of “social integration”: as instruments of knowledge and communication (cf. the Durkeimnian analysis of the festivity), they make consensus possible about the meaning of the social world, which fundamentally contributes to the reproduction of the social order: “logical” integration is the condition of moral integration”

For this reason, the definition of cultural heritage is "always open, negotiable, dialogical, transformative and reflective" (Idem, 2005, p. 48 in Fontal and Martínez 2017), in which different social operators participate, mainly with regard to the immaterial question, in which the bearers are the ones who replicate, inherit, even transform the manifestations that they develop as part of their daily lives. Therefore, it is necessary to recover the collective memories, because from them it is possible to identify what for the inhabitants represents their heritage since they are the bearers, who give it life and keep it current; but, above all, those who inherit it to the new generations.

Methodology

In accordance with the characteristics of the research, a non-experimental, cross-sectional research design was carried out, with a qualitative approach, with a hermeneutic-interpretative position, in coincidence with the principles of urban anthropology, based on the ethnographic method.

It is considered non-experimental since the already existing reality is observed, variables or situations are not constructed or manipulated; That is, the subjects are observed in their natural environment, in their reality.

It is transversal because the application of the instruments and the collection of data is done in a single moment; given that the field survey is carried out during the celebration of the traditional festivities of the Judea and the Topaderas, both carried out in the public spaces of San Pedro Lagunillas. The qualitative perspective is considered as the most appropriate for the implementation of the research, since it seeks to identify and document the appropriation that users make of the public space of San Pedro, since, from their perspective, and based on their experience, generating the meaning and use of spaces.

The objectives of qualitative research can be divided into five general groups; adopt an open attitude to learning, detect the procedures required at each moment, present a detailed vision, focus on the individual and understand the circumstances of the environment. Understanding and accepting these goals of qualitative research will enable the researcher to effectively use qualitative methods to explore natural social phenomena without losing sight of the context in which they occur. (Alvarez-Gayou et. al, 2014)

As far as the interpretive hermeneutic paradigm is concerned, it focuses on studying the meanings of human actions and social life. "It encompasses a set of interpretive humanistic currents, whose fundamental interest is directed to the meaning of human actions and social life." (Barrero et al, 2011). This does not seek generalizations, but rather focuses on the description and understanding of the unique and particular issues of the subject.

The research is developed based on the ethnographic method, since, through this, it is possible to study the social aspects from the approach to human reality; in these studies description and understanding are privileged. "The ethnographic method is based on two fundamental pillars: participant observation and directed interview, both combined and carried out on the ground in which the events to be studied take place" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 in Ramajo, 2011)

Based on the above, to collect the memories of the residents of San Pedro, semi-structured interviews and participant observation were carried out, with registration in the field diary. For this, the key informants were identified, among them, the town chronicler, the members of the Neighborhood Council and the members of the group calling themselves "the dreamers"; who are residents of the town, of adult age, with great interest and experience in the cultural field, who, from their youth, develop activities in favor of local traditions and culture.

San Pedro Lagunillas

The state of Nayarit, located in western Mexico, is administratively divided into twenty municipalities, one of which is San Pedro Lagunillas, located in the south of the state. It is located 1,300 meters above sea level. Its surface is 524.8 square kilometers, which is equivalent to 1.9% of the state area. The total population of San Pedro Lagunillas was 7,683 inhabitants, being 49% women and 51% men. (INEGI, 2020). Its municipal capital, with the same name as the municipality, is located 53 kilometers from the capital of Nayarit. Its climate ranges from semi-warm humid, warm sub-humid and dry steppe, with a rainy regime during the months of June to August. Regarding its hydrography, the Ameca River that borders the municipality stands out, as well as its two lagoons: San Pedro and Tepetitlic. Regarding its orography, the foothills of the Volcanic Axis determine the existence of the uneven ground.

The municipality has a long history of which pre-Hispanic vestiges stand out, evidenced through the *Tumbas de Tiro* tradition, in addition to the chiefdom of Ximochoque, governed by Masmayo at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards. Also, from 1592 to 1604, the friar Bernardo de Balbuena was in charge of the religious administration of the mines of the Holy Spirit and San Pedro Lagunillas (Meyer, 1997); This character stands out since, according to the collective memory of the people of San Pedro, the origin of the traditional Judea celebration is attributed to him.

The Judea of San Pedro Lagunillas

It is one of the most deeply rooted traditions in San Pedro, it is a living expression of popular culture. This manifestation is attributed an origin of more than 200 years, when at the beginning of the 17th century Fray Bernardo de Balbuena, due to his religious vocation, took biblical texts as a basis to write the first script for its staging. However, it was not until the year 1776 that the settlers recovered the manuscript and decided to execute it.

According to the people of San Pedro, 241 stagings have been carried out uninterruptedly. This celebration takes place during Holy Week. On Palm Sunday in the morning the people of San Pedro represent the act of the Samaritan woman, in the afternoon of the same day there is mass and the branches are blessed. On Holy Thursday they represent the sacred dinner in the Plaza de los Mártires; Good Friday is the representation of the three falls of Jesus and then the crucifixion.

Figure 1 Judean scene



Source: Own Authorship, 2019

Whoever represents Jesus Christ takes a physical and mental preparation for two months to be able to bear the weight of the cross and the difficult journey through the streets of the town. The clothes of the people who participate in this act are made by the seamstresses of the town. The participation of children and young people who voluntarily join to personify the town stands out in this representation, and over the years, some of them come to represent the main characters.

The Topaderas

It consists of a popular celebration, organized by the residents of San Pedro, it takes place on September 17, 18 and 19, after the national holidays. It consists of parading through the streets of the town, while flour and eggs are thrown. The activities of each of the days are organized by a neighborhood; the community is divided into three neighborhoods: *barrio arriba*, *barrio abajo*, *barrio en medio*; it is a social division that the inhabitants themselves recognize and whose origin is mainly based on socioeconomic issues. The group of organizers is made up of inhabitants of the neighborhood to which it belongs. This festivity is the most important for the community, as it brings families together, social integration is promoted and during these days, migrants return to live with the family and the community.

Figure 2 The Topaderas



Source: Own Authorship, 2019

Each parade is accompanied by the inhabitants of the neighborhood, who present their *mojigangas*, their queen and share their traditional “rat tail” it is a drink that is prepared in advance. The parade runs through the streets of the town until it reaches the toril, where a great dance is performed. This party is held with the purpose of having fun and uniting each neighborhood; which reinforces the neighborhood identity. The collective memories of the town narrate that the *mojigangas* tradition begins as a kind of competition to see which neighborhood made the best *mojigangas*. The same happens with the drink called "rat tail"; each neighborhood strives to prepare the best. Previously, the neighborhoods used to sing "papakis" a series of verses that made reference to some event or character in the town, they sang them when they ran into someone from another neighborhood, hence the name Topaderas, when referring to the encounter. These celebrations are accompanied with music, each parade is accompanied by a wind band, who interpret *sones* and *cumbias*, mainly, so the residents parade while they dance. The parade ends at a point in the neighborhood, where the population congregates to continue with the festivities. Food, drinks are offered and the music continues until it is time to go to the toril where a *jaripeo* is held and the party continues. Once the *jaripeo* is over, the community gets ready to go to the dance that is organized in the square, where important musical groups from the region participate; This dance continues until dawn the next day.

The terebinth trees

The so-called terebinth tree is a species native to the Mediterranean Sea region; scientifically it is classified as *pistacia terebinthus*; According to the specialist Serafín Sánchez Ochoa (2005), these long-lived terebinths represent a botanical curiosity because, due to their age, they no longer have the capacity to reproduce. Its extremely hard wood is valued for marquetry work and its resin is used to make an oil, its bark has a pleasant smell, so incense is made with it.

Mr. Pedro Ávalos Ibarría, chronicler of San Pedro Lagunillas, spent more than 20 years investigating the origin of these trees, documenting the following: he was Don Bernardo de Balbuena, father of the Spanish poet of the same name and author of “Grandeza Mexicana”, and one of the founders of the city of Compostela, Nayarit, who brought to San Pedro Lagunillas the first terebinth transported from Spain in 1564, when Tepic was the capital of the kingdom of Nueva Galicia. Avalos Ibarría assures that the original terebinth was cared for by several generations of residents of the El Tigre neighborhood in the town of San Pedro Lagunillas. (Soriano, 2005).

Figure 3 Los Terebintos Square



Source: Own Authorship, 2019

Ávalos assures that this tree is unique in Mexico and America, refusing to reproduce in other parts of the world despite the efforts of distinguished botanists from many countries. During the cristero war the tree was neglected and its stem was losing vigor threatening to dry out, for which Mr. Joaquín Ibarra Anguiano took out four cubits, planted two in the corral of his house and one he gave to the Alba Llanos family. This land was later sold and is now the property of Mr. Doroteo Ramírez. The other elbow was donated to the Ibarra Aguirre family. (Gente de Nayarit, 2017). Mr. Ibarra died in 1935, while he was municipal president, and trees grew in his house. His son, Professor Rogelio Ibarra Ruiz, worried that too many people would come to see the tree and not be able to enter the property because of his work as a teacher in Milpillas Bajas, decided to layer and donate them to be planted in a small triangular garden that it is currently located a few meters from the municipal presidency. (Salas, 2009)

Results

Stories that refer to the appropriation of space were located in the collective imagination, they have been transmitted through time orally, generation after generation and are part of the collective memories of the people of San Pedro. Such is the case of the close link that gives a sense of place to the Plaza de los Terebintos, which is a space with a triangular floor plan located at the intersection of Zaragoza, Nicolás Bravo and José María Mercado streets. According to the stories referring to this space, it is mentioned as an outstanding element for all those who profess the Catholic religion, since the terebinth trees (*pistacia terebinthus*) are located in the square, a species from which the wood is said to have been carved with which the cross that Jesus carried on his back during his pilgrimage and on which he was crucified was made. The idea that these trees arrived in the town at the end of the year 1600, when Mr. Francisco de Balbuena Estrada, father of Fray Bernardo de Balbuena, brought them to San Pedro Lagunillas from Jerusalem, is rooted in the collective memory of the town.

Figure 4 Plaza Los Terebintos during the Judea



Source: Own Authorship, 2019

This public space, in addition to the strong symbolic load it represents for the community, is also a point of reference and concentration of the residents since it serves as a bus stop, which from the point of view of Kevin Lynch (2008) represents a node. But, in addition, it is the scene of some of the representations of the traditional Judea, for example the representation of the orchard of the olive trees, likewise, it is the point of concentration of the population to see the Topaderas parade; and, during the rest of the year, it is a meeting place for the community, who come to this square for leisure and free time. It highlights the idea that over generations has taken root regarding these trees, of which it is said that, although they have tried to reproduce in other parts of the world, this has only been done in San Pedro Lagunillas; therefore, they only grow in Jerusalem and here; this gives identity and cohesion to the community.

Another of the public spaces in which the notion of place is identified, based on the analysis of documented collective memories, is the Plaza de los Mártires; it is located in front of the temple of San Pedro Apóstol. It is called in this way as a commemoration of the people who died during the attack carried out by Manuel Lozada "El tigre de Álica", in the center of the square there is a column that remembers such an event. In addition, the elders of the town still narrate that this space used to be a cemetery; Also, elderly people keep in their memory a character called the *pepítillo*, whose legend has spread, they say that, during the Cristero war, this character had arrangements with both the government and the Cristeros. One day, he arrived determined to burn the town, but when he found out the criteria ambushed him, so he had to flee and hide in a house that was in a vacant lot together with his companion, a gunman who covered his back.

The abandoned house was connected to the river, where he tried to flee, however, when the gunman ran towards the river, the Cristeros riddled him, causing his death. The *pepítillo* took the body of the gunman to use it as a shield and try to get out, but he was wounded in the leg. The Cristeros launched a bomb, which went out, so they launched a second one with a longer fuse; the *pepítillo* covered it with his hands trying to put it out, however, he did not succeed, the bomb exploded and he died. The elders recount that when the body was transferred to the cemetery, it suddenly stood up for a few minutes and moved furiously. This spawned the idea of being possessed by the devil.

During the celebration of the Judea, the Plaza de los Martires is the place where various activities take place. Here a large stage is placed on which the acts of Holy Thursday and Holy Friday are presented; The representation of the passion of Christ takes place among the public that with great expectation seems to relive those moments. Both the San Pedro community and visitors to the region meet here, and of course return migrants, who take advantage of the vacation period to return to their land and enjoy their traditions. Once the acts in this square are concluded, the tour through the streets begins, that is, the traditional way of the cross takes place; until reaching a hill that is in front of the Laguna de San Pedro, there the last act is carried out, the crucifixion and the race of San Cornelio.

Conclusions

The present investigation was carried out with the purpose of relating the sense of place that is denoted in the public spaces of San Pedro Lagunillas from the different practices of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that are practiced in the municipal seat, the above through the documentation of collective memories; the use of the ethnographic method allowed carrying out participant observation, as well as the application of semi-structured interviews.

As a result of the investigation, two manifestations were documented: the Judea and the Topaderas, both of which take place in the public space of the locality, and are deeply rooted, generating among the inhabitants a sense of identity, which has been transmitted through generations. In the case of Judea, although it is a manifestation of a religious nature, its staging is not the responsibility of the Church, but rather, in the case of the town of San Pedro, those who carry out the organization are the inhabitants themselves, led by Doctor Rafael Saucedo who is part of the group of dreamers, which is made up of residents of San Pedro who since their youth have encouraged the strengthening of local traditions and culture.

As for the Topaderas, it is the residents of each of the three neighborhoods into which the town is socially divided, who carry out the organization of this event and participate by generating a healthy competition between them, to be the neighborhood that organized the best top. In both cases, part of the documentation consisted of collecting the testimonies of the bearers, who for generations have transmitted, with their practice and through their memories, these traditions. In this way, the sense of belonging to the public spaces of the locality is identified, which, in addition to being an important part of their daily life, also represent places, that is, that space with which a close relationship is generated, from the use and exploitation of it, but above all, from the meaning that they give to each one of them, either for reasons of faith, as is the case of the Plaza de los Terebintos or for reasons of a historical nature, as identified in the Plaza de los Mártires.

With this research, it is possible to establish a work methodology that will allow the study of other contexts, in order to identify and analyze the roots towards public spaces; these analyzes provide an overview of the roots that the population has towards its public spaces; This analysis makes it possible to influence the projects of intervention and preservation of these spaces, so that when considering their intervention, it is not carried out only from the point of view of the elites or power, but rather the inhabitants, who are bearers of the heritage and they maintain a close link with space, generating a sense of place.

Thanks

To the H.XLI Ayuntamiento de San Pedro Lagunillas, Nayarit. for the facilities provided to develop the research. To the members of the Junta Vecinal and to Dr. Rafael Saucedo and his family.

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