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## Participative management model for humanizing public spaces. Analco neighborhood, Puebla, Mexico<sup>1</sup>

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## Participative management model for humanizing public spaces. Analco neighborhood, Puebla, Mexico<sup>1</sup>

Modelo de gestión participativa para humanizar espacios públicos. El barrio de Analco, Puebla, México

Modèle de gestion participative pour l'humanisation des espaces publics. Quartier d'Analco, centre historique de Puebla, Mexique

Modelo de gestão participativa para humanizar espaços públicos. Bairro Analco, Puebla, México

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**Abstract:** The public spaces in Analco neighborhood in the historic center of Puebla show a lack of appropriation on the part of its users, are invaded by the informal commerce and the streets, gardens and pedestrian zones are in inadequate conditions, all of which contributes to their deterioration and insecurity. This article presents a proposal of a participatory management model that contributes to achieve the appropriation and humanization of public spaces and the historical, cultural and landscape heritage of the neighborhood. Understanding the logic of territorial problems implies an epistemological thought that, through a methodology based on action research, promotes the qualitative evaluation of the problem using successive approaches. By doing so, will be able to promote complex thinking and systemic approaches for the construction of knowledge and to understand the process of the neighborhood's evolution where different interests and needs converge for the common well-being.

**Keywords:** appropriation, public space, participatory management, historical heritage.

**Resumen:** Los espacios públicos en el barrio Analco en el centro histórico de Puebla muestran una falta de apropiación por parte de sus usuarios y están invadidos por el comercio informal, mientras que las calles, los jardines y las zonas peatonales presentan condiciones inadecuadas, lo cual contribuye a su deterioro e inseguridad. Este artículo presenta una propuesta de un modelo de gestión participativa que contribuye a lograr la apropiación y humanización de los espacios públicos y el patrimonio histórico, cultural y paisajístico del barrio. Comprender la lógica de los problemas territoriales implica un pensamiento epistemológico que, a través de una metodología basada en la investigación-acción, promueve la evaluación cualitativa de los mismos utilizando enfoques sucesivos.

Al hacerlo, propendemos por el pensamiento complejo y los enfoques sistémicos para la construcción del conocimiento, y la comprensión del proceso de evolución del vecindario, donde los diferentes intereses y necesidades convergen para el bienestar común.

**Palabras clave:** apropiación, espacio público, gestión participativa, patrimonio histórico.

**Resumo:** Os espaços públicos no bairro Analco, no centro histórico de Puebla, mostram falta de apropriação por seus usuários; eles são invadidos pelo comércio informal e as ruas, jardins e zonas de pedestres estão em condições inadequadas, o que contribui para sua deterioração e insegurança. Este artigo mostra os resultados da pesquisa por meio da proposta de um modelo de gestão participativa que contribui para a apropriação e humanização dos espaços públicos e do patrimônio histórico, cultural e paisagístico do bairro. Entender a lógica dos problemas territoriais implica um pensamento epistemológico que, por meio de uma metodologia baseada em pesquisa-ação, promove a avaliação qualitativa do problema por meio de abordagens sucessivas. Ao Fazer Isso, podemos promover o pensamento complexo e abordagens sistêmicas para a construção do conhecimento e compreender o processo de evolução do bairro, onde diferentes interesses e necessidades convergem para o bem comum.

**Palavras-chave:** apropriação, espaço público, gestão participativa, patrimônio histórico.

**Résumé:** Les espaces publics du quartier Analco dans le centre historique de Puebla montrent un manque d'appropriation de la part de leurs utilisateurs, ils sont envahis par le commerce informel, tandis que les rues, les jardins et les zones piétonnes présentent des conditions inadéquates qui contribuent à leur détérioration et insécurité. Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude analysant la mise en œuvre d'un modèle de gestion participatif visant à contribuer à l'appropriation et à l'humanisation des espaces publics et du patrimoine historique, culturel et paysager du quartier. Comprendre la logique des problèmes territoriaux implique une pensée épistémologique selon laquelle une méthodologie basée sur la recherche-action favorise l'évaluation qualitative du problème en utilisant des approches successives. Ce faisant, nous pouvons promouvoir une réflexion complexe et des approches systémiques de la construction du savoir et comprendre le processus d'évolution des quartiers, où différents intérêts et besoins convergent pour le bien commun. L'objectif de cette proposition est de promouvoir des activités socioculturelles et économiques qui garantissent la préservation de ces espaces et en accroissent la valeur, tout en contribuant à préserver la vocation traditionnelle de leurs métiers.

**Mots clés:** appropriation, espace public, gestion participative, humanisation et patrimoine historique.

## Introduction

The historical center of the city of Puebla comprises 6,99 square kilometers, integrating Spanish vestiges and indigenous neighborhoods; this is what favored its declaration as a Monumental Zone in 1977 and, in 1987, the inscription of Puebla within the list of heritage cities of humanity (Milián and Guenet, 2003).

The origin of the neighborhood Analco dates to the 16th century, when the priests ordered the Indians to live around the Spanish trace, granting them a place to build their homes (Terán Bonilla, 1996), and was recognized in 1560. The name Analco means "I come from the other side of the river" in the language Nahuatl and his parish is called Santo Angel Custodio (Blanc, Lessard and Negrón, 2003). The neighborhoods of the city of Puebla preserve their history and identity, they keep stories about what life was like many years ago. However, most of them

show abandonment and deterioration, as in the case of Analco, which presents the consequences of the current transformation of the city. Such deterioration and abandonment put the neighborhood's identity at risk, mainly in their public spaces where community social life developed.

Therefore, this research will analyze the causes that influence the current state which defines the path to achieve the objectives oriented to the design of a participatory management model. This model begins with the conceptual delimitation that includes urban revitalization, appropriation and humanization of public spaces, as well as the social management of the territory. In this way, strategies based on reality can be established to solve the dehumanization of public spaces in the neighborhood. Thus, the model is based on three areas: economic, sociocultural and urban-environmental, and it analyzes their relationships and impacts regarding the historic center.

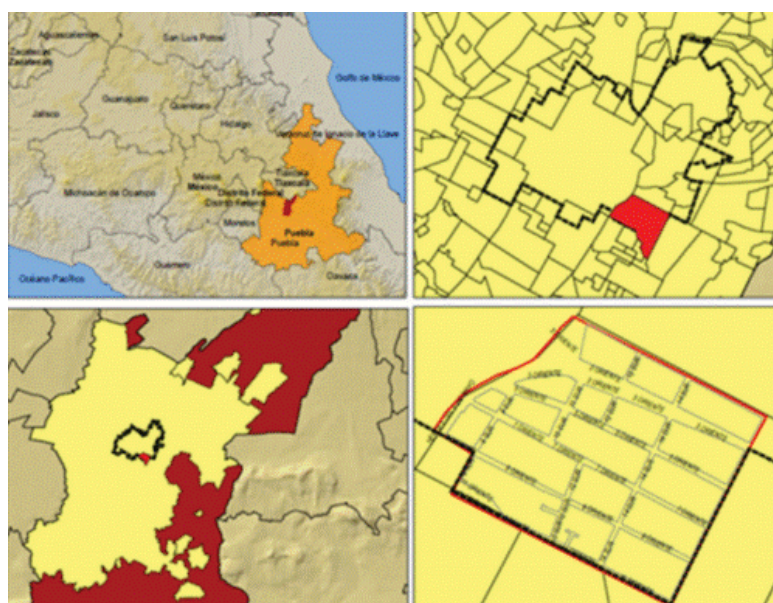


Figure 1. Analco neighborhood localization

Source: Arana and Ramírez (2016).

## Methodology of the investigation

The methodology of the investigation deals with a complex system (Duval, cited in Ramírez, 2014). This methodology refers to a construction of reality where diverse actors in the community are selected to understand their relationships and the special functions that contribute to the system. For that reason, it is not possible to construct the given reality without a process of action research. Building a system based on relationships of the different areas that involve the elements of the system, it is possible to identify reality and design a process of transformation.

The study raises the hypothesis that citizen participation, understood as the process by which there is an incidence of the inhabitants in decision making, contributes to improve the construction of the social fabric and the living conditions of the inhabitants for their participation in the

economic development. The essential characteristic of this participation mechanism as mentioned by Montesinos (2006) must be carried out through endogenous and local processes, mainly by the initiative of an actor within a specific area. The methodological strategy proposed by Durston and López (2006) is to achieve an associativity where the group actions are oriented to obtain a web of social relations that function as a mechanism of transformation of the space, where the individual actions have a significant impact in the study area.

In this way, this action research methodology implies the need to gather the necessary information from significant sources that allows the knowledge of the characteristics of the place. In addition, it is necessary to identify and establish a map of key actors to determine the various synergistic relationships that can be used to achieve a transformation of the space for the coexistence, according to the needs and contributions of the inhabitants.

### **Theoretical reflection: improvement of coexistence spaces for local development**

One of the elements that distinguish the quality of an open public space is coexistence; Cruz Muñoz and Isunza (2017). This public space which serves as a meeting point, contributes to the construction of unity. Spaces by their social characteristics can generate appropriation and identity, but it is difficult to build a quality space without coexistence. For there to be a participative construction of spaces of coexistence, it is necessary to mark the roles that each actor involved in the process has and to define the scope and limitations of participation. In this sense, participation is defined as a series of organized processes for decision-making by people whose objective is to directly or indirectly influence decision-making to achieve a transformation (Font and Blanco, 2006). On the other hand, participation aimed at the rescue and improvement of spaces is a form of political participation through which there is a demand for certain spaces, equipment and services, as well as their administration, execution and maintenance. According to the evidence shown by Orduña-Gañán and Del Caz Enjuto (2013), neighborhoods intervened in a participatory manner have improved their identity, social cohesion, quality of life, environmental and spatial quality, all these factors acquire an added value that not only is reflected in the neighborhood but in the whole city.

#### *Problems within Analco neighborhood*

More than three decades ago, the itinerant trade invaded the pedestrian and vehicular zones in the neighborhood causing substantial reductions to the public space and problems of mobility to passer-by inhabitants, environmental pollution and lack of adequate health services. In addition, this type of trade within the neighborhood does not promote traditional trades and does not favor the local economy even though there is a



tianguis (traditional market) aimed at tourism. This tianguis contain vendors who live outside the neighborhood, thus not representing a source of income for its inhabitants.

It is notable that the government's actions have not managed to preserve the public spaces of the neighborhood for its population. The tianguis generates the influx of tourists during the weekend, when it is installed in the garden in front of the church; the rest of the week it turns into a tourist bus parking. Therefore, the lack of promotion and recognition of the neighborhood causes a misguided tourist activity, contributing to its deterioration. The lack of appropriation is due to the neglect of the government not considering the participation of the common citizen. In this way, the design and function of streets, gardens and pedestrian areas are a consequence of the contrasting interests of different actors, causing inappropriate conditions that affect accessibility and displacement difficulties.

## **Methodology for the participatory management model**

The management process was developed through the methodology proposed by Pérez (2014) which consists of six stages that are established through a participation mechanism to obtain a socioeconomic benefit that uses cultural values so that it can exist sustainable development in the neighborhood. In the first place, it is necessary to collect cultural information that is related to some social and economic aspects. The first phase begins when there is an interaction between the inhabitants in a specific territory with the environment, which then allows us to have a certain positive or negative perception of the place, as well as identifying the problems that affect the public space in Analco.

It is important to mention that participatory management is a process that requires patience, skill and commitment by all involved to achieve local growth and social cohesion. It is a slow and changing process, which requires constant improvements and adjustments, therefore, you must have full knowledge of the resources and local potential to address and solve the problems and needs of the community.

In the case of Analco, the process to generate a management model began with the characterization of a social problem located in public spaces, which was identified as total or partially abandoned, directly affecting the inhabitants. To do this part of methodology previous studies are required, which consist of gathering the specific and relevant information of the place, this has helped us understand the social problems identified in the neighborhood.

Secondly, within the management model in the process, the key actors (society, government, community, organizations and institutions) must be identified. That, in addition to playing a role within the community, can provide necessary roles for the design and evaluation of the project, which will help to achieve the recovery and humanization of public spaces that benefit the local population. It is very important to identify these informants, since they are determinant in the scope and capacity to

achieve the success of the proposed objectives. These actors will be key decision makers in the design of strategies and lines of action.

Third, there must be a process of bilateral communication by the main actors, as well as the agents in charge of the project. This call may vary depending on the type of project and the purposes sought, however, it is necessary to have the basic characteristics such as the definition of the process, that is, the approach of the activities based on the time available, the establishment of deadlines according to the tasks to be carried out. In addition, as mentioned earlier, in this stage it is possible to define participation roles according to the profile of actors and agents.

The fourth stage must do with a pre-configuration of the strategies to achieve the objectives. In the case of participatory management, this diagnosis is based on a constructive dialogue between the different actors. In the same way, as in the previous points, this stage can have variations, but it is necessary that it has the general characteristics to increase the probability of operation.

First, it is necessary to carry out an inventory of the available cultural and heritage resources, which can be tangible or intangible, to make an evaluation of the population demands and to make an analysis, a preliminary synthesis of the problem and the different ways to follow to reach the objective. This diagnosis must contain information about the location and the history of the place. Once all the documents have been reviewed, an analysis will be made to prepare a brief report that synthesizes the findings. This document can serve as part of the diagnosis of the locality and for future projects. Once the diagnosis is complete, a participatory plan should be drawn up to group and analyze the information collected. Afterwards, we must work actively and start with the elaboration of strategies and actions that will be carried out within an operational plan. In this moment of the methodology it is required to already have the defined roles and responsibilities of each of the actors. Finally, with the proposal derived from the general objective, the information is disseminated for the approval and validation of the strategies with the community.

The last step is the execution of planning, monitoring, evaluation and projection. This stage consists of prioritizing the activities identifying the projects that are going to be carried out and the way of managing the resources and sources of financing for the execution. The project, being of a community nature, requires constant evaluation and feedback on the part of the actors involved under the principle of self-management through which it is possible to define the rules of operation, as well as the mechanisms of citizen participation.

That is why the need to create a management model that involves the economic, socio-cultural and urban environmental spheres, which can be replicated in other territories to revitalize public spaces that are abandoned, is justified. The purpose of creating a participatory management model is to work jointly with permanent instances of collective work, local bodies and representatives of all sectors, so that progress and achievements can be monitored with the implementation

of actions with deadlines and goals previously established with the work groups.

## Methods and techniques of investigation

In this research, different methods are used to obtain qualitative and quantitative data in the economic, sociocultural and urban-environmental spheres. We have reviewed archives and current historical cartography, observation guides were made of the study area, determining the main problems in the public spaces of the neighborhood and evaluating security, urban image, mobility and accessibility. The design of research instruments, such as surveys and interviews applied to informants from all the sectors involved, was a fundamental part for creating the model.

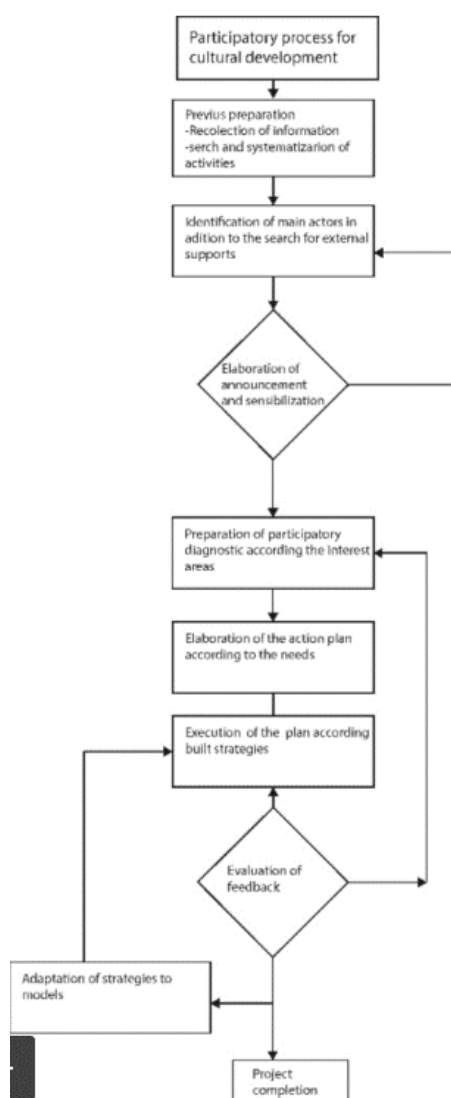


Figure 2. Diagram of process

Source: own elaboration.



## **Proposal: participatory management model**

Participation consists on the organization that actively involves several people in all the decision-making processes and defines the course of the place where they live. It takes teamwork between the government and society so that the process of improvement and appropriation of a space (a space in which the citizen feels familiar, a space that ensures the feeling of belonging to him (Guillen, et al., 2009) is legitimate.

Citizen participation is the key to transforming the local space into a public space and helping to create conditions to consolidate a democratic government (Guillen, et al., 2009). This refers to the fact that the participation of citizens allows the inhabitants to interfere in public activities where there is greater proximity between the authorities and the citizens. Among the citizen participation activities carried out for this research is the assistance to the fourth workshop of UNESCO, to learn the perspective and opinions of the experts on the theme of the historic center and itinerant trade organizations, including Analco. On the other hand, a citizen forum was organized for the elaboration of the Plan de Manejo del Centro Histórico de Puebla (Gobierno Municipal, 2015), where groups of experts, representatives, collegiate bodies, inhabitants and students participated.

In this way, territorial management should be understood as an integration of processes aimed at the territory, with the objective of improving the quality of life of the inhabitant, an articulation of human, financial, political and organizational resources to achieve the operation, maintenance and production of the territory (Flores, 2012). Considering the previous statement, participatory tools will be applied to obtain results and to propose urban revitalization strategies for public spaces within the Analco neighborhood. To achieve this, it is necessary to clearly identify the responsibility and obligations of each institution for decision making to improve the conditions of the public space, influencing the improvement of the neighborhood. The dependencies and organizations directly related to the historic center are shown in the Figure 3.

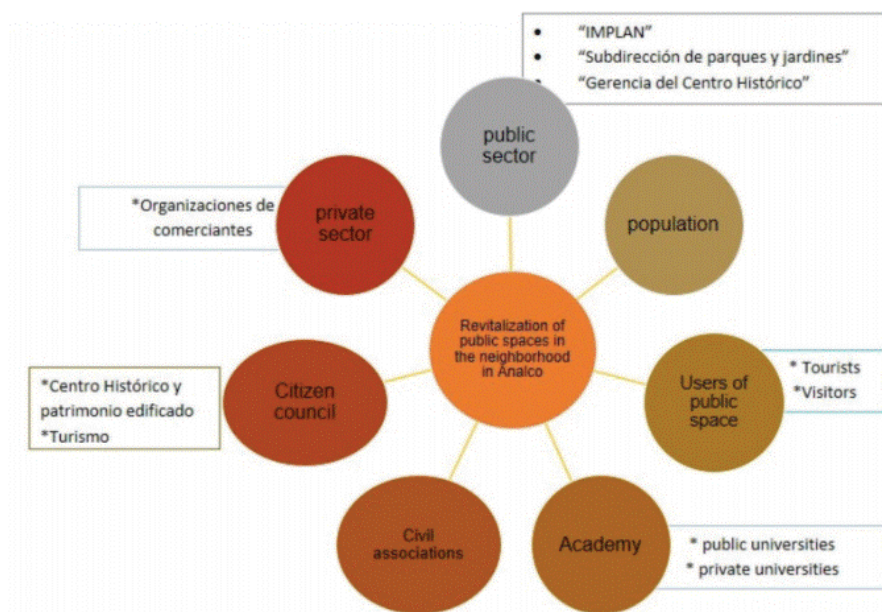


Figure 3. Participation scheme

Source: Arana and Ramírez (2016).

The Programa Parcial de Desarrollo Urbano Sustentable del Centro Histórico del Municipio de Puebla was created in 2015 by the municipal government. It is important to mention that the public sector works as a consultative body for the solving of issues, through citizens addressing problems and necessities by channeling requests to other agents and institutions involved. The Undersecretary of parks and gardens is divided into three areas and there is no coordination with other dependencies, its function is only operative: maintaining the gardens of the historic center. The interventions in parks are carried out by other institutions and the reforestation oversees the Secretariat of Sustainability, but it is not related to the Undersecretary of Parks and Gardens. Therefore, being an isolated unit with limited personnel and resources, it is necessary to work in coordination with others. There are several tips related to the historic center, which are civil security, public safety, mobility, roads and transportation, culture, sports, disability, tourism and ecology. They have specialists and different universities of architects and engineers. Among its commissions is the knowledge about projects of municipal authorities, they receive demands from the citizens and the commission in charge verifies the permits, either from INAH or from the municipal government to make a technical opinion about the interventions made by the competent authority.

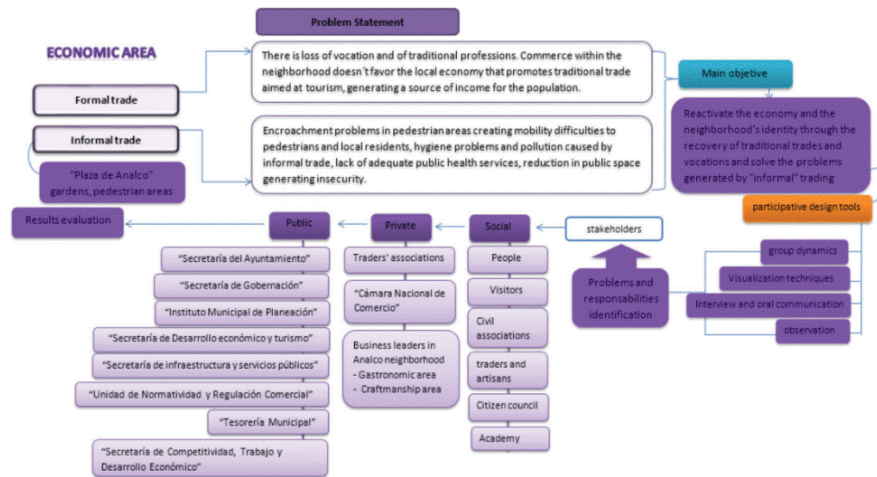


Figure 4. Participative management model by study ambit economic  
Source: Arana and Ramírez (2016).

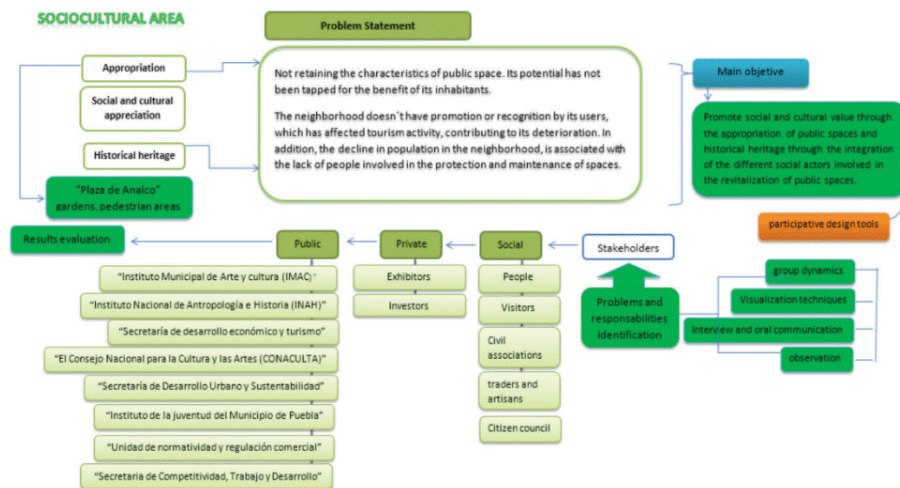


Figure 5. Participative management model by study ambit sociocultural  
Source: Arana and Ramírez (2016).

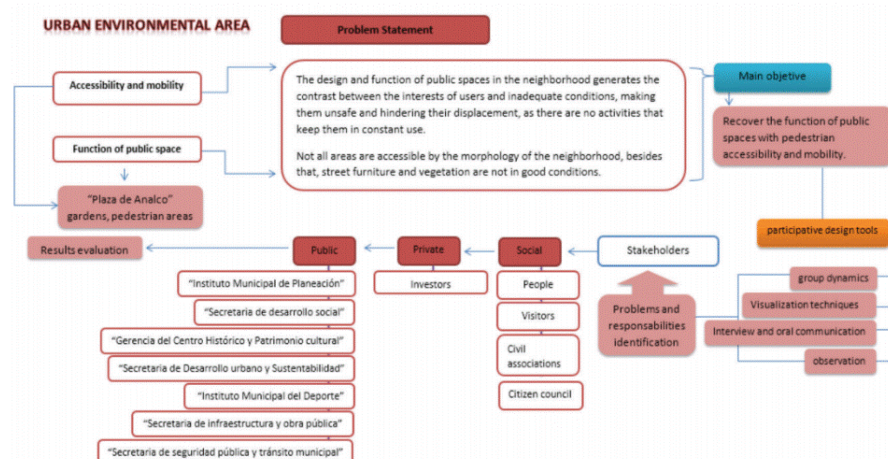


Figure 6. Participative management model by study ambit urban environmental  
Source: Arana and Ramírez (2016).

## Perspective of the informants through interviews

Citizen participation is fundamental to make any decision; all actions must consider the different actors for the improvement and implementation of strategies with the objective of knowing the point of view of the population. Through a map they could identify mobility and security problems, considering their contributions in the elaboration of the strategies. The sample was applied to 60 people in 7 places of the neighborhood with the objective of knowing their perception and opinion to improve public spaces: 20% in the atrium of Santo Ángel Custodio Parish; 28% in the Plaza de Analco; 20% in the landscaped area; 9% in the park of Jerusalem; 10% on the Ovando bridge; and 13% on 3rd Avenue. The objective is to know what is appealing and what kind of activities people do in these places, with what impact and if the space is suitable for the activity they are doing.

With respect to the survey 15% applied to older adults, 62% adults and 23% young people who showed great collaboration. Only 15% are inhabitants of the neighborhood, the other 85% come from other places. Attendance at public spaces in the neighborhood on weekends is 67%, on working days 13% and 20% is indistinct. Among the activities carried out are in the following order of importance: recreation, rest, business, religious activities, sports and work. 46% of the respondents carry out more than one activity and most consider that the conditions of the place are satisfactory. The population suggested maintenance and cleaning, increase green areas, improve public lighting and sidewalks, more benches and trash cans, more safety and places to do sports, as well as the promotion of cultural activities and revitalized parks. The 72% of the respondents agree with the trade in the neighborhood because it is a tourist attraction, 28% think that they need to improve their organization and appearance. Regarding the trade established in the garden of Analco, 75% consider it pleasant, while 25% consider that it does not promote local crafts; 62% said it is an opportunity to sell handicrafts. On the other hand, 75% are in favor of the gastronomic trade, mainly typical food that attract people to the neighborhood. Finally, 52% think that there is contamination in most of the neighborhood. In terms of security, 56% consider the neighborhood unsafe, because they have been victims of some criminal act. But since 85% of the respondents do not live in the neighborhood, they do not have enough knowledge about the daily problems. The majority agree that surveillance is necessary in parks and gardens. Regarding the organization, there are no neighborhood groups due to the lack of interest to participate in the improvement of the neighborhood. That is why there is no community participation organized in Analco.

The traditional tianguis that has been in the garden of Analco for 25 years, has approximately 600 merchants, but only 10 are from the neighborhood. It belongs to the Mexican Federation of Microindustry and promotes the economy of the citizen due to the sale of products in their homes and the loan of services of bathrooms and warehouses to



the merchants. Its function is to provide real traders with the conditions to sell their products and guarantee procedures and permits with the Municipal government that conditions the sale of typical traditional products, especially from Puebla.

Among the causes considered of the deterioration of the neighborhood are the loss of population and vitality in public spaces caused by the change in land use, property deterioration and insecurity. Among the actions implemented by the government in the historic center the neighborhood is often seen only as a concentration of monumental buildings without considering human and social aspects, intangible heritage, habits, traditions and customs. Because of this, recent touristic projects have contributed to the deterioration of Analco and the way of life of its inhabitants. The objective is the recovery of public spaces and the protection of historical heritage through citizen participation that allows the generation of proposals based on the needs and demands of the group, building an analysis and initiatives carried out by the inhabitants and other actors, such as civil associations and universities.

## Conclusions

As a result of this investigation we can confirm that no interaction existed between departments of government whom are responsible for the up keep of public spaces in the centro histórico. This is a problem of urban management in the city where there is no consideration of real problems and the citizens priorities through citizen participation. For this reason, these actions and public politics that are created only favor the touristic and real estate market. In this way the tourism sector is favored by diverse organizations of government involved with the centro histórico and its neighborhood. One of the main problems is that urban projects have no real impact on the local people. There are no existing agreements of collaboration nor adequate documentation for later planning. These only function as operative instances to conserve and maintain a minimum amount of public space in Analco. Likewise, the government and the citizens have not been able to collaborate together for the greater good of improving el centro histórico, specifically the Analco neighborhood. This situation results in the common citizen losing interest in becoming involved in any process for the better of one's urban environment. On the other hand, this faulty coordination and communication amongst all members of Analco, makes difficult the creation of agreements in their benefit. They must find a way to achieve an equal balance to be able to contrast the problems that still affect Analco and promote the integration of its inhabitants with relation to these public spaces.

We face the absence of actual integration and cooperation amongst the departments of the government, the leaders and the merchants of Analco, which complicates the plans that could potentially improve the quality of life of these inhabitants. Lastly, it is absolutely necessary that some type of adequate social participation exists to prevent the deterioration of the neighborhood through the elaboration of economic, social and urban

strategizing. As a result, these strategies of urban revitalization will be able to promote the humanization and social integration in these public spaces, reducing danger through a process of adequate management.

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## Notes

- 1    Cómo citar este artículo: RAMIREZ ROSETE, N.L., ARANA SOMUHAN, N.P., y GUEVARA ROMERO, M.L. (2019). "Participative management model for humanizing public spaces. Analco neighborhood, Puebla, Mexico". *Bitácora Urbano Territorial*, 29 (1): - 52  
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- 2    Arquitecta, Mtra. en Ordenamiento del Territorio por la Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla BUAP, Doctora en Geografía, Urbanismo y Ordenación del Territorio por la Universidad de Valladolid, España. Profesor Investigador Tiempo Completo en la Licenciatura en Urbanismo, Maestría en Ordenamiento del Territorio y Doctorado en Procesos Territoriales. Miembro del Sistema Nacional de Investigadores NIVEL 1 y del Padrón de Investigadores de la BUAP, PERFIL PRODEP. Coordinadora del Plan de Manejo del Programa Parcial de Desarrollo Centro Histórico Puebla, Año 2015. Investigador Asociado en los proyectos Fomix, "Puesta en Valor de la Parroquia de San José y su Conjunto Histórico" y "Observatorio de Competitividad" INAH/Municipio de Puebla/BUAP 2018.
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