Chapter 1

Segregation Beyond Sorting: Non-Market Pathways to Homeownership and the Production of Emplaced Difference

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Abstract
In the standard account, residential segregation results from how individuals are sorted in the housing market along pre-existing axes of social difference. How does segregation arise in the absence of market-based housing allocation and sorting? Drawing on research that identifies homeownership pathways as a source of stratification and links property practices to identity formation, this article applies a constructivist understanding of identity to theorize a segregation-producing process that does not depend on sorting. Using historical, interview, and ethnographic data, I trace the emergence of contemporary segregation in southern Mexico City. I show how non-market allocation of property constituted new, emplaced categories of social difference by imbuing individuals with group identities because of their shared association with place. The subsequent expansion of market relations to these neighborhoods and the application of distinct market regulations further naturalized group difference, resulting in contemporary patterns of segregation. This article shows how segregation can emerge from the strategies pursued by marginalized groups to combat market-based exclusion and challenges the assumption that segregation can necessarily be remedied by redistributing people in space. More broadly, I show how identity can be the *product* of redistributive policy, market-making, and market regulation, not just a signal to which policy and markets respond.

Keywords
residential segregation, homeownership pathways, redistributive policy, social categories, housing markets

Introduction

Residential segregation—the separation of people in space along axes of social difference—is commonly understood as resulting from how individuals are sorted in the housing market along pre-existing axes of social difference. In the standard account, market-based sorting arises through the interaction of home seeker preferences, price-based constraints, and discriminatory constraints (Korver-Glenn 2021; Massey and Denton 1993; Taylor 2019; Wilson 1987). Even critiques of the standard model leave its core assumption untouched: that segregation is the product of social sorting (Crowder and Krysan 2017). The sorting model of segregation relies on an implicit assumption that identity and group membership exist prior to and independent of association with place: *first* individuals assert or are assigned an identity, and *then* they are sorted in the housing market according to those identities, which they carry with them as they move to different neighborhoods. Yet, neither identity categories nor identification practices are static

(Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Loveman and Muniz 2007; Omi and Winant 2015; Saperstein and Penner 2012; Wimmer 2008), and not all distributional outcomes in housing are dictated by the countervailing forces of choice and constraint in the market (Helderman and Mulder 2007; Poggio 2008).

How does residential segregation arise in the absence of market-based allocation and sorting? Using the case of segregation in southern Mexico City, I present an alternative account of the segregation-producing process that does not depend on sorting according to pre-existing identities. Drawing on archival materials, interviews, and ethnographic data, I trace the emergence of contemporary segregation between the *originarios* of the *pueblos* ("natives of the villages") and the *invasores* of the *pedregales* ("invaders of the rocky landscape") in the Mexico City borough of Coyoacán. I show how two waves of redistributive policy—first favoring agricultural producers, then urban squatters—opened distinct collective pathways to private ownership for the landless poor in the post-Revolutionary period and, in the process, imbued assemblages of individuals with emplaced group identities because of their shared association with place (Garrido 2021).

The creation of these new emplaced collective identities in the urban periphery—the *originarios* and the *invasores*—was achieved through the classification of the poor into new categories that the state used to redistribute land and housing. Rather than produce transitory or individual-level alterations to identification practices (Bailey 2008; Sweet 2018), these categories became the basis for durable collective identities because an individual's ability to secure property rights depended, both juridically and practically, on their association with other similarly categorized residents. On the one hand, redistributive policies required group petitioners. On the other hand, the slow and frustrated implementation of these policies forced residents to engage in prolonged collective action to secure benefits. As market relations were subsequently introduced to these neighborhoods in the 1980s, negotiation between residents and the state over regulatory protections from market-based dispossession further brightened and naturalized the boundaries defining and distinguishing these emplaced groups. The result is a pattern of segregation in which the most disadvantaged cluster of neighborhoods in the borough of Coyoacán is both socially and spatially bifurcated.

This article brings a constructivist understanding of identity to segregation research by showing how identity can be the *product* of housing allocation and market regulation, not just a signal to which policy and markets respond. Comparisons of market and non-market systems of housing allocation highlight how they differently shape the structure of stratification (Gerber, Zavisca and Wang 2022; Pfeffer and Waitkus 2021; Zavisca 2012), but fewer studies examine how housing allocation systems, ownership regimes, and property practices shape beliefs, behaviors, and identities (Longhofer 1993; Zavisca and Gerber 2016).

Redistributive state policies, including the non-market systems of housing allocation examined in this article, rely on categories for the purpose of redistribution and assign moral worth to those categories in the process (Levine and Russell 2023). State categories become the basis for group identities when members share material interests and grievances that they address through collective organizing (Polletta 1998). This article traces how state categories constructed for the purpose of housing distribution were transformed into meaningful group identities that have outlived the policies that produced them. Building on research that examines how market expansion naturalizes the attributes ascribed to social groups and the meanings attached to goods (Robinson 2020), I then show how those group identities were brightened and sedimented through the expansion of the market and the introduction of private property relations.

This constructivist account of the segregation-producing process destabilizes two assumptions embedded in the sorting model. First, while segregation is commonly understood as a strategy that powerful social groups use to hoard resources (Flippen 2004; Hanselman and Fiel 2017; Light and Thomas 2019) in concert with state disinvestment (Faber 2020), I show how segregation can emerge when redistributive policy and market protections for vulnerable groups constitute new social categories which are then brightened and naturalized as groups mobilize those categories to combat their own exclusions wrought by market expansion. The segregation I examine in this article arose from the strategies pursued by both state actors and residents to create what they deemed was a more just distribution of property rights than what an unconstrained market would have created. These findings support the conceptualization of segregation as a strategy for shaping the distribution of resources, but not necessarily one for concentrating resources in the hands of the already privileged.

Second, these findings undermine assumptions in segregation research that identities are portable and that segregation may be remedied by redistributing people in space (see Chetty, Hendren and Katz 2016; Logan, Stults and Farley 2004). In the case presented here, identity is spatially produced and also unmoored when those spatial arrangements are modified (Brown-Saracino 2015; Carney 2021; LaFleur 2020). Removing an individual from these coded spaces alters how that person identifies and is identified by others. Conversely, newly arrived residents assume spatially defined identities when they become associated with those places. Segregation is not so easily undone by the spatial redistribution of individuals because identity is both mutable and spatially embedded.

Residential Segregation, Social Sorting, and Systems of Housing Allocation

Residential segregation describes a spatial pattern in which individuals belonging to different social groups live geographically separate from each other. Broadly, segregation is theorized as the outcome of a sorting process: in the allocation of housing, households are distributed into different places and neighborhoods based on their relation to one or more axes of social difference. Most research identifies this sorting as a feature of market-based systems of housing allocation and as determined by the balance of two broad forces: the desires and preferences of home seekers, and the constraints that prevent households from realizing their preferences.

Preferences directly lead to segregation when households select into communities composed of households that share key characteristics, such as race, class, or religion. Importantly, preferences for neighborhood demographic characteristics may be asymmetrical, with powerfully positioned social groups having higher self-segregating tendencies than less resourced and less powerful groups (Farley et al. 1994; Harris 1999). Household preferences are themselves malleable and housing market intermediaries can reshape client preferences during the transaction process (Besbris 2016; Besbris 2020).

However, contemporary patterns of segregation are more fully explained by considering the differential barriers that prevent households from realizing their preferences in the housing market. These barriers are generally classified as either price-based constraints or discriminatory constraints (Crowder and Krysan 2017). Price-based constraints—when households are unable to fully realize their preferences because they do not possess the requisite financial resources—segregate households by income and wealth. However, price-based constraints generate additional forms of segregation when economic status is stratified by other axes of difference, as is the case of household wealth and race in the United States (Crowder, South and Chavez 2006). Furthermore, the economic value of property and neighborhoods is directly tied to the perceived value of the people with which they are associated. In the United States, racist valuation schemas and the conflation of creditworthiness with whiteness has systematically devalued Black property and Black neighborhoods (Besbris and Korver-Glenn 2022; Faber 2020; Howell and Korver-Glenn 2018; Howell and Korver-Glenn 2020; Korver-Glenn 2021; Perry 2020; Robinson 2020; Zaimi 2020). Since homebuyers often buy property at the upper limit of their financial capacity (Besbris 2020), price-based constraints often produce segregation along identity categories in addition to economic status.

Households are also limited in their residential choices by overt discrimination and violence. These discriminatory constraints can take many forms: when existing residents use violence to block the arrival of households belonging to unwanted groups; when market intermediaries steer buyers towards and away from specific neighborhood depending on buyer or tenant characteristics (Farley et al. 1994; Korver-Glenn 2018; Rosen, Garboden and Cossyleon 2021); and when communities mobilize local state power to protect or create price-based constraints, such as land-use policies that maintain high property values or prevent the construction of affordable or public housing (Lens 2022). Discursively, concerns about property value and crime are commonly used to mask racist and discriminatory ideologies (Caldeira 2000; Farley et al. 1994).

Under the standard choice-constraint model of segregation, households base their residential mobility decisions on a calculus that maximizes benefits given the price-based and discriminatory constraints they face. The model assumes full and equal information about choices and constraints, as well as stable interpretation of this information across groups. However, the segmenting effect of residential segregation means different social groups are exposed to largely distinct sets of information, construct distinct decision-making heuristic devices to guide their decision-making, and are therefore choosing from "radically distinct sets of neighborhoods" (Crowder and Krysan 2017). In this way, once set in motion, segregation reproduces itself by segmenting the housing market even when price-based and discriminatory barriers are reduced.

The choice-constraint model, which has emerged largely out of the study of ethno-racial segregation in the United States, is less useful in explaining segregation in societies where housing is largely distributed by non-market means (Arbaci 2019; Garrido 2021). State control over housing allocation may reduce segregation when state policy explicitly promotes social mixture, as is the case under political regimes that prioritize ideologies of economic equality and social homogeneity (Sin 2002a). While segregation is generally low under such conditions, non-market allocation systems may produce segregation according to occupation or rank within the ruling political party (Logan, Fang and Zhang 2010; Walder and He 2014), and segregation may occur at other geographical scales, such as by building rather than by neighborhood. Additionally, groups with higher levels of economic and social capital may be able to better navigate bureaucratic systems and intervene to reshape distributional outcomes to their advantage (Sin 2002b). In the transition from non-market to market-based systems of housing allocation, such as in post-Soviet counties, the intensification and maturation of the housing market is associated with increased segregation, especially as powerful and more well-resourced groups retreat into privatized enclaves (Kovács and Hegedűs 2014; Marcuse 1996).

However, non-market mechanisms of housing allocation can also generate segregation when enmeshed with inegalitarian socio-political systems. In the United States, public housing projects have contributed to racial segregation and poverty concentration.[1] The replacement of large-scale housing projects with individualized voucher programs as a way to deliver subsidized housing for the poor was motivated in part by a desire to deconcentrate poverty and reduce racial segregation (Rosen 2020). By harnessing the power of market-based residential choice and reducing economic constraints, housing voucher programs—it was believed—would *lessen* these spatial patterns. However, the transition to voucher programs has largely left patterns of segregation unchanged (Owens 2015; Sampson 2008). Voucher holders remain constrained by the same discriminatory forces—namely, the discretionary power of landlords to choose in which neighborhoods to accept and reject applicants with vouchers (Rosen 2020; Rosenblatt and Cossyleon 2018).

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[1] In 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Hills v. Gautreaux* that the Department of Housing and Urban Development had violated the Fifth Amendment and the Civil Rights act by concentrating public housing developments in disadvantaged neighborhoods of color, effectively amplifying patterns of segregation.

In many cities of the Global South, where informal settlements have long constituted a primary component of housing delivery, we also observe how sorting dynamics lead to segregation. The urban poor, excluded from participating in the formal housing market due to price constraints, seek out spaces where they can provide their own "self-help" housing on vacant land or insert themselves into established, informal housing markets (Azuela de la Cueva 1987; Davis 2007; Fischer, McCann and Auyero 2014; Gough 1998; Ward 1976). Segregation arises when the poor, by virtue of their exclusion from the formal market, are funneled into spaces of informality. This dynamic can create "rings of misery" (Holston 2008)—an inverse of the American suburban ring of affluence—or manifest in a "patchwork" effect, whereby affluent and poor are interspersed in small pockets throughout urban space (Garrido 2018; Garrido 2019), often partitioned by the use of walls and other security technologies (Caldeira 2000). However, the segregating effect of informal settlements may be temporally variable: the informal built environment's high degree of malleability may actually engender increasingly greater class heterogeneity as informal settlements consolidate (Duhau 2014).

These theories of segregation—both in market-based and non-market systems of housing allocation—share an assumption that identities exist prior to segregation and are stable throughout the segregating process. When housing is allocated, households are distributed in space according to those pre-existing identities, which they carry with them as they move, resulting in segregation. In this sense, the segregation literature has been slow to incorporate understandings of identity categories and identification practices as contextually contingent and mutable. In the following section, I outline an alternative theory of the segregation-producing process that incorporates a constructivist approach to identity by considering how redistributive state policy and market expansion are implicated in the production, emplacement, and naturalization of new group identities.

Theorizing Segregation Beyond Sorting

In this section, I outline an alternative model of the segregation-producing process that does not depend on essential or static notions of identity, nor on the mechanism of sorting. To build this model, I first discuss how redistributive state policy can *generate* emplaced group identities when new state categories become the basis for the redistribution of material benefits and when eligibility is determined by association with specific places. Next, I examine how the expansion of market relations to previously excluded spaces and populations can *naturalize* social difference. Together, these insights outline a segregation-producing process in which group identity is a product of—not the basis for—the distribution of housing and property rights.

Redistributive Policy, Categorical Alignment, and the Constitution of Groupness

The construction and imposition of categories is central to how states render legible their populations and consolidate their power (de Souza Leão 2022; Scott 1998). While state categories may reflect existing group identities, the mere existence of state categories does not necessarily imply the existence of underlying social groups (Brubaker 2002). As projects of simplification and legibilization, state categories rarely map onto the complexities of lived experience: individuals may fit into multiple categories, fall between categories, or be excluded from classification altogether (Menjívar 2023). Indeed, states also exert control when they *refuse* to recognize groups through official categorization (Maghbouleh 2017; Tehranian 2008), which can lead to grassroots demands to integrate previously unrecognized categories into the state lexicon (Loveman 2014; Mora 2014; Williams 2006). These "misalignments"—between categorically constructed ideal types and real subjectivities shaped by lived experience—render individuals juridically and materially vulnerable (Menjívar 2023). This article is concerned with how disjoint state categories and on-the-ground subjectivities are brought into alignment.

Subjects may "learn" how to conform to state categories through discursive or behavioral modifications and, in the process, alter their own understanding of themselves (Menjívar and Lakhani 2016; Sweet 2018). Yet individual identification with a category does not automatically construct a sense of "groupness," which requires internal identification among members and a sense of collective belonging (Bailey 2008; Brubaker 2002; Jenkins 1994). The extent to which state-created categories are taken up by subjects as the basis for new group identities depends—at least in part—on the purposes for which the categories are used. State categories used for *exclusion* are often effective at creating durable group identities because they function simultaneously "features of power and of resistance" (Mamdani 1998). Individuals categorized by the state for exclusion share a common experience of discrimination and violence, which can create a sense of shared belonging (Moon 2012; Polletta 1998) partly because of the networks of mutual support and survival that actors build. Additionally, shared grievances among the categorized can coalesce into movements of resistance, and participation in collective action generates feelings of groupness (Goldberg 2003; Polletta 1998).

When states create categories for the purposes of *inclusion*—for example, to define the beneficiaries of redistributive policy or for the basis of affirmative action—the mechanisms of group formation based on experiences of exclusion may not be present. Individual identification with state categories used for the distribution of services or benefits may be purely instrumental and transitory (Bailey 2008). To address group-based inequalities without reifying group distinctions, states often construct "replacement categories" by combining multiple "folk" categories into a new, umbrella category for the distribution of benefits (de Zwart 2005). Examples include the "Backwards Classes" as a new category to encompass low-caste or caste-less groups in India, the use of federal state-based quotas in lieu of ethnic quotas in Nigeria (de Zwart 2005), or the general project of "Africanization" in post-colonial Africa (Mamdani 1998). However, these "replacement categories" are often ineffective at creating durable group identities because they are internally stratified by pre-existing power inequalities among their component folk categories, which feel more real to members (de Zwart 2005).

Often, however, state projects of categorization have both exclusionary and inclusionary dimensions. When state categories are used to determine eligibility for access to resources and services, they mark certain individuals and places as deserving and others as undeserving (Levine and Russell 2023). In this sense, state categories are implicated in the construction of both material inequalities (those who receive or have and those who do not) and symbolic inequalities (those who deserve and those who do not). However, being the recipient of social benefits can also confer stigma or relegate beneficiaries to a second-class citizenship in which they are disqualified from holding certain rights (Collins and Mayer 2010; Fox 2012; Fox 2016; Massey 2007). While non-categorical difference also shapes unequal distributions of resources (Monk 2022), the material and symbolic inequalities produced through state categorization is perceived—at least to some extent—as legitimate.

Market Expansion and Social Identity

The creation, expansion, and regulation of markets are inherently political processes. In particular, market expansion—the extension of market participation to new places and populations—requires that states revise the rules governing property rights, exchange, competition, and cooperation (Fligstein 1996). In the process, the meanings attached to market commodities can shift (Norris 2021; Robinson 2020). For example, recent work has illuminated how the expansion of credit to finance the development of rental housing for low-income communities of color—"the problem of making markets for the marginalized"—

functioned as a project of “racecraft” that naturalized conflations of Blackness, worthlessness, and risk, while reaffirming the “constitutive whiteness of credit” (Robinson 2020).

Indeed, consumption and market participation are deeply entwined with subjectivity (Besbris 2016; Hirschman and Garbes 2021; Stillerman 2017). In particular, credit and debt are deeply linked to ideas of morality and worth (Prasad, Hoffman and Bezila 2016). This is particularly evident in relation to the financing and purchasing of a home, which often requires the use a mortgage. The failure for housing markets to take hold in certain post-Soviet societies reflects a moral aversion to mortgages as a kind of “debt bondage” (Stephens, Lux and Sunega 2015; Zavisca 2012). Proponents of property titling campaigns in the Global South argue that such efforts would not only generate billions of dollars in value overnight, but would infuse new property owners with an entrepreneurial spirit as full market participants (de Soto 2000).

However, when markets expand to permit participation by previously excluded groups of consumers, expansion also entails shifts in symbolic boundaries that changes the nature and operation of markets (Robinson 2020). This type of expansion often occurs in profoundly unequal ways: formerly excluded groups are not brought into the market as it was, but rather a fundamentally changed market in which the balance between benefit and risk is altered. Such predatory inclusion has occurred when racialized groups, and particularly Black consumers, have gained entry into mortgage markets, credit markets, and student loan markets (Seamster and Charron-Chénier 2017; Taylor 2019).

Participation in market exchange is commonly theorized as an individual experience. However, when housing markets expanded to include the residents of the neighborhoods under examination in this article, they became individual private property owners through collective pathways. This article is concerned with how the ebb and flow of markets reshape the social landscape and produce new social forms.

Methodology

Case Selection

Much of our understanding about the segregation-producing process emerges from studies of *racial* residential segregation in the United States. However, race is unlikely to be a salient axis of segregation in Mexico City because, while discrimination by skin color and stigmatization of indigenous Mexicans, afro-descendent Mexicans, and other minority groups has material consequences for patterns of inequality in Mexico, *racial categories* are not salient forms of social identification. After Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1810, Mexican intellectual elites promoted an ideology of racial mixture (*mestizaje*) and cultural homogeneity as the cornerstone for national development. Under this assimilationist ideology, indigenous cultural practices—such as language and dress—were discouraged and stigmatized as a hindrance to national progress (Loveman 2014). In a reflection of the dominance of the ideology of racial mixture, the Mexican census does not classify respondents into racial categories. The only exception was in the 1921 census, which coded respondents as white, Indian, mixed, or foreign (Pla Brugat 2005). Subsequent censuses track language ability as a marker of indigeneity but contain no explicit questions about race. Only since 2000—a period when a growing embrace of multiculturalism has challenged the longstanding ideology of racial and cultural homogeneity—has the census added questions about indigenous identification beyond language and, since 2015, about Mexicans of African descent (Loveman 2014). Still, however, there is no overarching question that classifies all respondents into racial categories and indigeneity is identified through cultural and linguistic cues (Villarreal 2014).[2]

Like many cities in the Global South, most of contemporary Mexico City was urbanized in the past 60 years, including the neighborhoods examined in this article. I focus on four adjacent neighborhoods located in the borough of Coyoacán (see Figure 1). The neighborhoods of Santo Domingo and Ajusco were formed as squatter settlements in the 1960s and 1970s and, along with several other neighborhoods, constitute an area commonly referred to as the *pedregales* ("rocky landscape"). As will be discussed, this name began as a reference to the physical nature of the terrain prior to urbanization but has since acquired a social meaning. The neighborhoods of Los Reyes and La Candelaria trace their existence to the period prior to urbanization as agricultural villages. Today, they are two of a growing number of neighborhoods officially designated as *pueblos originarios* ("original villages") by the Mexico City government. The remainder of this article traces how these places—the *pedregales* and the *pueblos*—were constituted and differentiated from each other.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The relatively recent urbanization of this area allows for a thorough reconstruction of the origins of its contemporary socio-spatial arrangements. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the area was rural, sparsely inhabited, and largely disconnected from Mexico City's systems of urban infrastructure. Today the densely populated neighborhoods occupy a highly valued location due to its relative proximity to the city's centers of cultural, commercial, and financial power, and its integration into Mexico City's main public transportation system (see Figure 2). Despite their prime location in the city, the neighborhoods under study have generally resisted wholesale gentrification, remaining largely working class and retaining many of the longtime residents that have inhabited them since their establishment and incorporation into the city.

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[2] Indigenous identification in Mexico contrasts sharply with the United States, for example, where indigeneity is defined through political membership, which itself is based on blood quantum rules.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

When this region of Coyoacán was first incorporated into Mexico City during the second half of the twentieth century, both the long-time residents and recently arrived migrants were largely homogenous in terms of traditional markers of social difference, such as class and ethnicity. They were poor, came from subsistence agricultural backgrounds, were monolingual Spanish speakers, and formed part of the country's *mestizo* majority.

Today, the four neighborhoods under study continue to be similarly situated in terms of class, especially with respect to the rest of the neighborhoods in Coyoacán, which are considerably more affluent. Figure 3 shows the Social Development Index[3] by neighborhood[4] in Coyoacán and indicates the neighborhoods that constitute the *pedregales* and those officially designated as *pueblos originarios* by the city government.[5] As presented in Table 1, the neighborhoods of both the *pedregales* and the *pueblos* have lower levels of educational attainment and higher illiteracy rates than the rest of Coyoacán. A similar proportion of residents speak indigenous languages or identify as indigenous (or live in a household where a member identifies as indigenous), though the proportion is slightly higher in the *pedregales*. This finding is striking given that, as we shall see, residents of the *pueblos* are increasingly drawing on indigenous rights frameworks in their claims to urban property. Finally, the *pedregales* stand out for their sheer population size—just four neighborhoods comprise nearly a third of the total population of Coyoacán. The seven pueblos, on the other hand, make up only around 11 percent of Coyoacán's total population.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

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[3] The Social Development Index is a metric developed by the Mexico City government to indicate the degree to which the basic needs of households in a geographic area are being met. The index uses a variety of indicators such as housing characteristics, education level, poverty rates, and access to information technology.

[4] These neighborhoods are the official, city-recognized neighborhood boundaries. There is a high degree of correspondence between official boundaries and social meaningful neighborhood boundaries, which is likely related to the Mexico City government's practice of including neighborhood names on the street signs found at intersections. In other words, in Mexico City it is readily apparent *where* you are—in terms of neighborhood—at any given moment. The clarity and general agreement surrounding neighborhood boundaries is, at least in part, the result of these urban governance practices.

[5] I use the list of official *pueblos originarios* as published in the 2019 annual report from the Secretaría de Pueblos y Barrios Originarios y Comunidades Indígenas Residentes (SEPI) [Secretary of *Pueblos* and *Barrios Originarios* and Resident Indigenous Communities]. This list includes 142 *pueblos originarios.*

Data and Analysis

The data analyzed in this article are drawn from an ongoing, longitudinal study of urbanization and property relations in Mexico City. I use historical, interview, and ethnographic data to trace the history of property relations in the region and uncover the processes that produced contemporary patterns of segregation. I collected and reviewed documents from both state- and community-managed archives in Mexico City (see Appendix 1). These documents include newspaper articles, maps, photographs, petitions and notes from neighborhood groups, correspondence between residents and government officials, government reports, and internal government memos. The bulk of the documents were produced during the period from roughly 1930 to 1980, although some records come from the period prior to Mexico's independence from Spain. Among the archive collections consulted are previously un-reviewed documents and photographs held by a community center in one of the neighborhoods. This collection includes close to 100 written testimonies from founding residents of the Santo Domingo neighborhood, which were collected in the late 1980s by a neighborhood organization to preserve the neighborhood's history. Additionally, I reviewed urban planning documents retrieved from government websites and newspaper articles collected from online newspaper repositories.

I also draw on data collected from over 21 cumulative months of participant observation in the neighborhoods between 2010 and 2022. Observational data allows me to understand how contemporary segregation organizes social relations in these neighborhoods and manifests in the daily life of residents. During my time in the field, I observed the everyday social life of the neighborhoods by participating in cultural events, attending community workshops, observing neighborhood assembly meetings, shopping at local markets, and consuming in local establishments. Additionally, I attended activities and events that were explicitly organized as responses to urban development, such as protest encampments, demonstrations, canvassing trips by neighborhood organizers, internal organizing meetings, and meetings between resident groups and local government officials. I took both written and audio notes of what I observed in the field.

To complement the historical and ethnographic data, I conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with 51 residents of Santo Domingo, La Candelaria, and Los Reyes between 2016 and 2022. All participants had lived in the neighborhoods for most or all of their adult lives. I recruited participants for interviews at community events and community centers and then utilized snowball sampling methods to recruit additional participants. In the interviews, I prompted residents to recount the history of their neighborhood in their own words, how they came to live there, and how they had become property owners. As narratives, these interviews provide insight into how residents understand and choose to represent their neighborhood's history and their place in that history. These narratives, as well as the narratives drawn from archive records and documents, are inseparable from the narrator's own point of view or agenda.

Background

Land Dispossession, Revolution, and Property Rights in Mexico

After Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1810, large amounts of land were concentrated in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1813, the Church owned 47 percent of property (by value) in newly independent Mexico City and much of the rest was owned by only a handful of private owners—99 percent of the population did not own property. Much of the population rented, often from the Church (about half of the Church's property generated income from rents) (Morales Martínez 2011). In the mid-nineteenth century, liberal reform laws targeting ecclesiastical tenure sought to foment the market exchange of land and promote small-scale private land ownership under a market-driven ideology of modernity and progress. The reform law gave the tenants of Church-owned land the opportunity to buy the property they had rented. If the tenant was unable or interested, the property was offered at public auction. The effect was that many poor tenants went from having the Church as landlord to a private owner and there was a wave of displacement, including of many rural and indigenous communities that had lived collectively on Church-owned land. By 1864, after the liberal reforms had been enacted, the Church owned less than one percent of property in Mexico City (by value), with virtually all remaining property (99 percent, by value) owned privately. Across the country, the rapid expansion of a real estate market across the country led to the widespread dispossession among Mexico's peasantry during the autocratic rule of Porfirio Díaz (1877-1911). In response to worsening inequities during this period and dissatisfaction with Diaz's authoritarian regime, several rebellions coalesced into a Revolution that lasted roughly a decade from 1910 to 1920. One of the Revolution's rallying cries—"Land for those who work it"[6]"— reflects the centrality of unequal land distribution among the sources of popular discontent (Womack 1968).

The constitution that resulted from the Revolution—which remains in effect today—established a tripartite system of land tenure: private, public, and social. Social tenure was designed to remedy the country's highly unequal land distribution and to reestablish traditional community social relations that had been shattered by the Liberal Reforms of the nineteenth century, the brutalities of the Porfirian era, and the violence of the Revolution. While the architects of post-Revolutionary agrarian reform policy imagined theirs as a project of *restoration* of a prior state of social harmony rooted in communal landholding, this image of a communitarian and egalitarian *pueblo* was largely a historical fantasy (Kourí 2020). Scholars have documented how the ideals embodied in the project of post-Revolutionary social tenure clashed with on-the-ground realities of diverse landholding traditions. Against the widely held popular belief that communal landholding constituted the linchpin of social cohesion in rural Mexico and that land privatization led to social dissolution, an emerging body of research documents how transformations in social relations during an era of rapid economic change destabilized communal landholding. In other words, communal tenure was undone both "from above" and "from below" by *pueblo* residents themselves in the decades before the Revolution (Kourí 2004). This article argues that the conferral of communal land tenure rights in the post-Revolutionary period planted the seeds for new social structures and sets of moral claims that have become integral to the narratives that contemporary residents of Mexico City's *pueblos originarios* use in constructing their collective identities and in organizing collective action.

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[6] The phrase is attributed to the revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata, who outlined demands for the redistribution of the nation's land and resources in the Plan de Ayala in 1911.

Two varieties of social tenure—the *ejido* and communal land—were established following the Revolution to grant collective property rights to groups of landless agricultural producers. The principal distinguishing characteristic between *ejido* and communal land is that petitioners of communal land must demonstrate a historical collective use of the land being petitioned, while grants of *ejido* land require no such evidence and can be located in an entirely different state from the residence of the petitioners (Azuela de la Cueva 1995). Until a 1992 constitutional reform, both varieties were intended exclusively for agricultural production and effectively excluded from market exchange because they could not be subdivided, sold, mortgaged, or used as collateral to secure other types of loans. The explicit protection of social tenure from market forces reflects a desire to avoid the same wave of market-based dispossession that followed the mass land privatization of the nineteenth century. In the pre-1992 formulation, social tenure rights could only be alienated by state-approved in-kind exchange (*permuta*) or through expropriation by the state for the greater public good.

The state's ability to expropriate all varieties of real property—both for the public good, generally, and to establish social tenure, specifically—was the cornerstones of post-Revolutionary land reform. At the end of the Revolution, the new government took power with a mandate to initiate a program of land redistribution to remedy the highly concentrated and unequal structure of land ownership. Indeed, shortly after the new constitution was established in 1917, the government set about the task of breaking-up large estates and redistributing those lands to the landless masses as *ejidos* and communal lands (Azuela de la Cueva 1995). However, this project was more difficult than officials anticipated and progressed much more slowly than originally imagined. A decade after the close of the Revolution, agrarian reform was largely seen as having failed.

Slumping agrarian reform was renewed in the 1930s under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, who campaigned on a platform to finally deliver the social reforms and programs that had been demanded by the Revolution yet left unmet by previous administrations. Key among these reforms was to overhaul the institutions and laws governing agrarian reform and land redistribution. At the same time, the National Revolutionary Party (PNR, which would later become the PRI and hold power until 2000) was at work consolidating its power as the *de facto* ruling party. To achieve the "perfect dictatorship"—a veneer of democracy and the consent of the public to increasingly autocratic rule—the PRI leaned heavily on images and ideals of the Revolution to buttress its moral authority. Chief among these Revolutionary motifs were agrarian reform and land redistribution.

Urbanization and Informal Settlements in Mexico City

Beginning in the 1940s, a mass movement of people from the countryside to urban areas transformed Mexico from a majority rural country to a majority urban one (Lomnitz 1977). Families were driven from their villages by the poverty and hunger that resulted from plummeting real wages and lack of supports for those who had become *ejido* land owners following the Revolution (Niblo 1999). Rural-urban migration concentrated in Mexico City, which was home to 46.9% of the country's total population by 1960 (Lomnitz 1977). As the city's population swelled, the urban middle- and upper-classes watched with unease as the image of a well-managed urban center dissolved. Catering to the desires of the established urban class, the local government of Mexico City sought to limit the growth of the city by refusing to expand services beyond the existing urban limits or develop additional housing in the periphery. Both the local and federal governments were aligned in their anti-growth stances through the mid-1960s (Davis 1994).

Given anti-growth policies, arriving migrants generally located in central tenements or rented in lower-class neighborhoods and villages on the urban periphery (Ward 1990). However, newly arrived migrant families were unaccustomed to renting and found the experience unpleasant. Residents I interviewed who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s recall resenting having to designate a substantial portion of their meager income to rent, disliking the crowded conditions and lack of privacy, and missing the security that came with having "a little piece of land of their own" as they were accustomed to in their villages. As conditions deteriorated, overcrowding worsened, and rents rose, these families began to search for other options.

For most, the only alternative to renting was participating in what became a wave of *invasiones de terrenos* ("land invasions"), in which residents—often in organized groups—occupied parcels of undeveloped land. Participants in these land invasions were labelled *paracaidistas* ("parachuters") in the press, a term that describes how they arrived suddenly, often overnight, apparently having dropped from the sky. By 1970, an estimated 35-40% of Mexico City residents lived in these informal settlements (Ward 1976), sometimes referred to as *colonias proletarias* ("proletariat neighborhoods"), *ciudades perdidas* ("lost cities"), or *ciudades de miseria* ("cities of misery"). These settlements passed through stages, often beginning with provisional structures to shelter squatters from the elements as they collected building materials to construct more permanent houses (Duhau 2014). Scholars use the term "autoconstruction" to describe how family homes in these types of settlements, as well as community infrastructure (e.g., streets, lighting, electricity, water, sewage), are largely built, supplied, or secured through the collective efforts of residents themselves (Caldeira 2016; Holston 2008; Ortega Alcázar 2016).

The proliferation of housing informality in many Latin American cities during this period was diagnosed by economists at the time as a problem of "overurbanization"—of population growth outstripping labor demand, a sort of market failure driven by urban migrants' collective refusal to respond "appropriately" to labor market cues (Gibbs and Martin 1962; Hoselitz 1955; Prebisch 1970).[7] The people living in informal settlements were correspondingly seen by many as "marginal" and disconnected from the urban economy (Lomnitz 1977; Quijano 1971). However, ethnographic researchers studying the lived experience of people in these so-called "marginal" communities argued for the need to distinguish between "marginal"—unarticulated with mainstream economic, political, and social systems—and "marginalized"—actively excluded from the economic, political, and social benefits derived from the urban system in which they participated (Perlman 2004; Vélez-Ibañez 1991 [1983]). In reality, the urban poor were anything but marginal to the urban economic system, functioning as a downward pressure on wages and providing low-cost informal goods and services to consumers (Cockcroft 1983). In addition to these central economic functions, I argue that the informal urban poor in Mexico City also served as agents of real estate market expansion. When the proliferation of peripheral squatter settlements—many of which occurred on land held in social tenure (*ejidos* or communal land) at the urban-rural interface—became a political problem for the PRI, the solution was expropriation through eminent domain (Varley 1985). Ultimately, these expropriations of social land had two functions: addressing the "problem" of informality and releasing land back into the market.

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[7] For discussion and critique of the concept of "overurbanization", see Smith, David A. 1987. "Overurbanization reconceptualized: A political economy of the world-system approach." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 23(2):270-94. See also Davis, Mike. 2007. *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso.

The shift in settlement pattern from overcrowded tenement to peripheral shantytown coincided with a shift in state orientation towards urban growth. With the election of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz in 1964, federal urban policy became more pro-growth at a time when rural-urban migration to Mexico City was nearing its peak. For example, Díaz Ordaz broke with his predecessors by supporting the construction of a metro system in Mexico City, which the long-serving Mexico City mayor, Ernesto Uruchurtu, staunchly opposed. The urban policy mismatch between anti-growth Uruchurtu and pro-growth Díaz Ordaz caused considerable friction (Davis 1994).

Mayor Uruchurtu, who had been appointed to his position by a previous president in 1952, was known as the "mayor of steel" for his heavy-handed approach to law-and-order governance. Until a 1997 reform, the mayor of Mexico City and local government officials were appointed by the President, not elected. Uruchurtu sought to modernize and beautify Mexico City by widening its boulevards, facilitating automobile transportation for the middle and upper classes, tightly controlling land use, cracking down on prostitution, and even closing dance halls, which he saw as centers of vice. He viewed peripheral squatter settlements as a moral blight that needed to be eliminated in order to protect his modern city. In all of these efforts, he was widely perceived as catering to the wealthy residents of the city at the expense of the poor (Jordan 2013; Villarreal 2008).[8]

Given resistance by the local government to expand the city's urban reach, large areas of land only a few miles from downtown Mexico City were left undeveloped, even by the end of the 1960s. This was the case of a large area of sparsely vegetated rocky terrain in the south-central borough of Coyoacán, known as the *pedregales* ("rocky landscape"), which was formed by an ancient lava flow. The hard and irregular nature of the landscape, which contained large crevices and caves, would have also been physically demanding and expensive to excavate for development. Thus, the area remained untouched by developers.

Situated at the northeast limit of the *pedregales* were a series of agricultural villages that had been—to varying degrees of success—formally petitioning for social tenure rights to the area since the end of the Revolution. Among these villages were Los Reyes, which had been unsuccessful in its petitions for communal land in the *pedregales*, and La Candelaria, which had been granted a plot of *ejido* land not far to the north but had other unrecognized claims to communal lands in the *pedregales*. Beginning in the 1950s, migrant families began to arrive in the *pedregales* to live, despite the lack of services and the dangers posed by the landscape itself. The first squatter community formed slowly over the course of the 1950s and 1960s in the area that is today the Ajusco neighborhood. Later, in 1971, more migrant families arrived in a massive land invasion to informally construct the neighborhood that is today known as Santo Domingo.

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[8] In the 1958 song "No es justu" ("It's not fair", spelled in a way to rhyme with Uruchurtu's last name) by musician and cultural critic Chava Flores, Uruchurtu is portrayed sarcastically as the great modernizer of Mexico City who, in his quest for order and progress, made life more difficult for the city's poor.

Contemporary Segregation in Coyoacán

In 2015, a large luxury condominium complex was approved for construction near the point where the boundaries of the four neighborhoods meet. Shortly after groundbreaking, residents living adjacent to the construction site noticed that it began filling with water, presumably from a breached shallow aquifer or underground river. Water is a scarce commodity in Mexico City and these neighborhoods have long suffered from water shortages and prolonged shutoffs. Given this experience, residents were alarmed when they caught the construction company clandestinely pumping the accumulating water down storm drains in the middle of the night in an effort to hide the growing urban lake.

News of these events spread quickly through the neighborhoods. Outraged residents of all four neighborhoods organized a community group with the goal of halting the construction of the condominium complex, converting the site into a public park, and using the new water source to supply the surrounding neighborhoods. Residents named the community group "The General Assembly of the *Pueblos*, *Barrios*, *Colonias*, and *Pedregales* of Coyoacán" (henceforth the General Assembly). That residents included each type of urban space—*Pueblos*, *Barrios*, *Colonias*, and *Pedregales*[9]—in the group's name reflects both the deep social fragmentation in this corner of Mexico City and the sincere desire of participants to build a unified movement that would bridge the socio-spatial divisions that fragment the area.

Despite the intentions reflected in the organization's name, however, the unified movement devolved into separate, parallel efforts by residents of the *pueblos* and residents of the *pedregales* within a few months. Residents of Santo Domingo recounted a decisive moment when, during one of the weekly meetings of the General Assembly before its disintegration, tensions between the two groups boiled over. Frustrated that their suggestions were not being adequately considered, residents of the *pueblos* stood up and shouted at the rest of the attendees, calling them "invaders" and abruptly leaving the meeting. After this point, the General Assembly—while still preserving its full name—became a movement almost entirely composed of residents from Santo Domingo and Ajusco, two neighborhoods of the *pedregales*. During fieldwork in the summers of 2015 and 2016, I met only two individuals from the *pueblos* who continued to participate in the General Assembly. Rather, residents of the *pueblos*—particularly of Los Reyes, who were more directly affected by the construction than La Candelaria—continued to organize and meet with government officials regarding the condominium construction, but on their own.

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[9] *Pueblos* refers to the *pueblos originarios*; *barrios* refers to another type of pre-colonial neighborhood form similar to the *pueblos originarios*; *colonia* is the generic term for "neighborhood" in Mexico City; and *pedregales* ("rocky landscape") refers to the four former squatter settlements formed in the 1960s and 1970s.

At one point, however, the two efforts converged in a moment of extreme tension. Both movements had independently been in talks with the city's water authority, which had decided to take water samples from the flooded construction site as well as nearby wells and water pumping stations. Residents hoped to identify the source of the water through chemical analysis and to ascertain whether it could be treated and used as a potable water source. Members of the General Assembly—which, by this point, was comprised almost entirely of residents from the *pedregales*, who are generally distrustful of and oppositional towards government officials—had negotiated with the developer and the water authority to allow two community members into the construction site as observers to ensure that the water samples were correctly drawn. The General Assembly had decided that it made sense to allow one representative from the *pueblos* and one representative from the General Assembly (at this point, a de facto representative of the *pedregales*).

On the day that the water samples were to be collected, workers from the city water authority arrived at the construction site with a group of residents from Los Reyes. A contingent of roughly 50 members from the General Assembly was already assembled at the entrance to the construction site. As the water authority workers readied to enter, two representatives from Los Reyes appeared poised to accompany them. It turned out that the group from Los Reyes had told the water authority that both community observers would be residents of their *pueblo*. This, of course, was not the understanding held by the General Assembly members. As the two factions—members of the General Assembly and residents of Los Reyes—began arguing, the exasperated water authority workers waited, uninterested in the disputes between neighborhood residents. The tension mounted until a brief altercation broke out. Once the parties had been separated and tempers calmed, the water authority workers convinced the developer to allow three community observers into the construction site. In the end, two representatives from Los Reyes and one representative of the General Assembly—a resident from Santo Domingo—entered the site and observed the collection of water samples.

The categories of *originario* ("native") versus *invasor* ("invader") and of *pueblo* versus *pedregal* carry a great social weight that permeates interactions between residents. For example, one afternoon an *originario* of La Candelaria, Fernando, invited me and a Mexican researcher colleague—who was born and raised in Santo Domingo—to his uncle's house where a group of residents of La Candelaria were going to meet. Fernando's uncle, Dionisio, was a community leader in La Candelaria and the group that would be meeting at his house had been trying to obtain government recognition of their ancestral territorial claim for over two decades. Once the group had assembled, they told my colleague and I about the research they had conducted in Mexico's national archive to prove that they were the rightful owners of a large area of Coyoacán that included the entirety of Santo Domingo and Ajusco. They showed us copies they had obtained of numerous colonial-era maps and documents. As they talked, they repeatedly referred to the "people from Santo Domingo," "*invasores,*" and interlopers who had only an instrumental and fleeting relationship with the land. They referred to themselves, on the other hand, as "*naturales*" of La Candelaria, stating that their relationship to the land was generational and almost biologically engrained.

Towards the end of the meeting, they asked my colleague where he was from. With a nervous chuckle, he responded that he was from Santo Domingo and that his parents had arrived in the neighborhood in 1971 as part of the "invasion." Given the negative tenor with which they had been discussing "the people of Santo Domingo," he felt obliged to reassure them that he took no offense and "understood what they meant." Additionally, he mentioned that he had not lived in Santo Domingo for over a decade—suggesting that maybe he was no longer really counted as one of the "people from Santo Domingo."

Throughout my interviews with both residents of the *pueblos* and the *pedregales,* I asked residents about relations between the neighborhoods. The most common responses were: "we generally leave each other alone" or "we don't really have much interaction." Residents admitted that, while relations were not openly hostile, they were not exactly friendly either. Despite the social distance maintained by both groups, the neighborhood's identities and histories are deeply intertwined. In narrating the history of their neighborhoods, residents of the *pedregales* talk about how these lands "supposedly" belonged to the people of the *pueblos*, often qualifying this statement by adding a comment like: "but they didn't even use them—they were abandoned!" A common history narrated by residents of the *pedregales* is that, in the first weeks and months of the invasion, they had to defend their plots of land against both residents of the *pueblos* and the federal police, who both sought to drive them off the land. Residents of the *pueblos* begin their narrations by describing their territory—understood as the domain of social reproduction of the *pueblos*—which includes the area of the *pedregales*.

In many ways, the categories *originario* and *invasor* have taken on a life of their own. On the surface, these terms have discrete definitions: an *originario* is someone who can trace their familial lineage as a resident of the *pueblos* to the period before urbanization and an *invasor* is someone who arrived as a squatter or informal buyer in the 1960s and 1970s. However, in practice, the terms are applied more broadly to residents of these neighborhoods, regardless of their individual life history. For example, someone who lives in the *pueblos*, participates in key community institutions, and identifies with local traditions can be endowed with the privileges associated with being an *originario*, such as serving on the committee that plans the annual religious festivals (*mayordomías*) or being buried in the *pueblo*'s community cemetery. To this point, I did not become aware that one leader of the La Candelaria was not technically an *originario* until after several interactions and halfway through a formal interview. Residents of the *pueblos* recounted other cases of individuals who, while not technically *originarios*, had participated in key traditions, held appointed leadership positions, supported community institutions financially, and were ultimately given permission to be buried in the *pueblo* cemetery.[10]

Likewise, residents of the *pedregales* acquire the character of *invasor*—especially in the eyes of the residents of the *pueblos*—when they socially integrated in the neighborhood, even if they arrived in the *pedregales* recently or are the children or grandchildren of founding residents. When Dionisio and his colleagues referred to the "people of Santo Domingo" as *invasores*, they referred to all residents of Santo Domingo, not just to the shrinking subset of people who arrived during the invasions of five decades prior. As in the *pueblos*, community leaders in the *pedregales* are actively engaged in efforts to perserve the memory of the invasion and the subsequent years of struggle, passing the stories and sense of self-determination to new generations and new residents. Every September, around the anniversary of Santo Domingo's founding, a community center called La Escuelita Emiliano Zapata[11] holds a week-long celebration with plays, musical performance, poetry slams, and talks recounting the story of *la invasión* and honoring the sacrifices made the original *invasores*. The founder and director of the La Escuelita—a student activist at the time of the invasion who has remained in the neighborhood since its founding—has published two books that weave together testimonies from founding residents, photographs from the neighborhood's first months and years, and drawings by children in the neighborhood (Díaz Enciso 2002; Díaz Enciso 2009). Murals depicting emblematic images of the invasion adorn the walls of homes and businesses throughout the neighborhood. These efforts—to cultivate collective pride and curate consensus around a neighborhood origin story that can be easily passed to new generations—are part of identity formation.

Segregation between the *originarios* of the *pueblos* and the *invasores* of the *pedgrales* defies the traditional model of segregation because identity and place do not operate independently. Segregation is not the product of identity-based sorting: the identities of *originarios* and *invasores* did not exist at the time of these neighborhoods' settlement. And neither will a re-sorting of people reverse existing segregation: becoming associated and socially integrated with one of these defined social spaces—the *pueblos* or the *pedregales*—imbues individuals with that place's spatially inscribed identity (Garrido 2021). If not through sorting, how did socio-spatial alignment of neighborhood and identity come to be?

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[10] Previous research on the *pueblo originario* neighborhoods in Mexico City makes no mention of the transferability of group membership.

[11] Named after the Revolutionary hero to whom is attributed the phrase "Land for those who work it."

Making Groups: Redistributive Policy and Nonmarket Pathways to Ownership

This section shows how redistributive land and housing policy in the post-Revolutionary period constituted new social categories and imposed them on collections of individuals and places, giving rise to new forms of place-specific collective identification for segments of the urban poor. Two waves of policy, which responded to shifting understandings of the dominant threat to political stability and socio-economic progress, established distinct collective, non-market pathways to land and housing ownership in Coyoacán. The first wave of redistributive policy, beginning in the 1920s, sought to directly address one of the core grievances of the Revolution—the concentration of land ownership among the country's elite—by redistributing land back to rural communities. Through this channel, the *pueblos* of Los Reyes and La Candelaria petitioned, with varying success, for the formal recognition of their claims to land in Coyoacán. The second wave of redistributive policy began in the 1960s and sought to address the "problem" of urban informality by regularizing tenure in squatter settlements and illegal subdivisions in Mexico City and other urban centers. During this second wave of policies, the state dismantled the social tenure of Los Reyes and La Candelaria and passed the land first to public tenure with the intention of creating public housing for squatters, and then, conceding to pressure from organized groups of squatters, directly into the possession of individuals as private property.

I argue that the social categories and subjectivities that these policies generated were taken up by residents as the basis for new group identities because they assigned a moral right to material goods and because they required collective mobilization to procure. Moreover, these non-market pathways to ownership linked the new group identities to places (neighborhoods) because their status as policy subjects derived from their location in specific spaces. However, rather than understand the emergence of these group identities as a unidirectional exertion of the state's power to classify and categorize people, I show the active role that residents of these neighborhoods played in constructing these new identities.

The Pueblos: Post-Revolutionary Land Reform and the Dispossessed Peasant

By the 1920s, as the tumult of the Revolution calmed, the country was poised to profoundly reconfigure the nature of its property relations, most directly through the dismantling of large property holdings and their redistribution to common Mexicans. At this time, Mexico was still a predominantly rural country with most of the population engaged in small-scale or subsistence agriculture. Mexico City was home to a little over half a million people, about two-thirds of whom lived in the city center (the area that coincides with the four central boroughs of the city today). The remaining 200,000 people were distributed across the area that, today, comprises the other 14 peripheral boroughs. The northwest corner of the borough of Coyoacán contained an old colonial center as well as the Del Carmen neighborhood, which was built during the final decades of the Porfirio Diaz's rule as a suburban enclave for the city's wealthy (Brosseau 2020). Beyond that, the rest of Coyoacán was rural, undeveloped countryside dotted by a handful of small villages.

At the end of the Revolution, much of the land in the area legally belonged to the hacienda of San Antonio Coapa. As agrarian reform began in the 1920s, residents of the agricultural villages in Coyoacán—including Los Reyes and La Candelaria—started petitioning the state for land ownership rights under the new system of social tenure. In September 1922, residents of La Candelaria requested that the federal government grant them communal rights to land to satisfy their agricultural needs. Despite attempts by the San Antonio Coapa hacienda owners to protect their landholdings by subdividing them into smaller parcels, the petition by La Candelaria was approved in a series of resolutions and expropriation decrees between 1924 and 1929.[12] The original 1924 presidential resolution, which recommended the expropriation and transfer of 506 acres to La Candelaria, was executed in 1928. However, the affected landholders filed a legal petition to block the expropriation on the grounds that they were protected against expropriation as small landholders. Indeed, owners of properties under 370 acres were protected against expropriation for the creation of *ejidos* and communal lands. Between 1915 and 1922, the owners of the San Antonio Coapa hacienda had strategically subdivided and sold off parcels of the land to distinct private owners, placing much of the ownership in this protected category.

The case was taken to the Supreme Court where the 1928 expropriation decree was ultimately nullified. The Court argued that the subdivision of lands was not an attempt to circumvent agrarian reform laws since it had been carried out prior to the petition filed by the residents of La Candelaria. After the 1928 expropriation decree was voided, a second expropriation decree was issued in 1929 that transferred 247 acres to La Candelaria as *ejido*. The new decree excluded parcels that had been under 370 acres in 1928 as well as those parcels that had been eligible in 1928 but were now too small since their area had already been reduced through expropriation and transfer to other villages in the area. This decision marked the beginning of the villages' experience of redistributive land policy as both a validation of their territorial claims and a tool of gradual dispossession.

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[12] A presidential resolution directing the Secretary of Agriculture to execute the expropriation was published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* on April 5, 1924, p. 1239. Two expropriation decrees were published by the Secretary of Agriculture in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* on January 20, 1928, p. 3 and March 11, 1929, p. 1.

In the mid-1930s, a flurry of activity by residents of La Candelaria and Los Reyes further confirmed this experience. First, following a 1931 reform that confirmed the inalienable nature of social tenure, residents of La Candelaria filed a petition for restitution. They argued that the 1928 Supreme Court decision, which nullified the first expropriation and transfer of 506 acres, had been unconstitutional and requested the return of the 259 acres that they considered rightfully theirs. While the Federal District's Agrarian Commission initially approved their petition, a subsequent resolution by the Department of the Federal District overturned the decision, arguing that the 1924 resolution was only a recommendation not a transfer of title, so La Candelaria had never been in legal possession of the full 506 acres and restitution could therefore not be executed.[13] The petition for restitution was denied.

Within a month of the petition filed by La Candelaria, residents of Los Reyes filed a request to be granted communal land, asserting their right given the village's existence "since the Colonial era."[14] While the petitioners were deemed eligible for land under the system of social tenure, the government concluded that there was no remaining land eligible for expropriation near the village.[15] The remaining parcels of the ex-hacienda were too small for expropriation largely because significant amounts of land had already been expropriated and transferred as social property to other nearby villages. Other parcels were ruled ineligible for expropriation because their location in the rocky *pedregales* made them unsuitable for agricultural production.[16] Instead, the 106 eligible residents of Los Reyes were offered the option of relocating to an area where there was available land for the creation of an *ejido*, which they appear not to have taken.

Residents of Los Reyes made a final attempt to obtain communal property rights in 1948. Interestingly, they petitioned for restitution of a parcel of land located in the *pedregal* known as Santo Domingo.[17] By requesting restitution, they implied that the land at one time belonged to them, although they provided no evidence to support this claim. In a denial of their petition, the government again confirmed their eligibility for land under social tenure law and named each of the 806 eligible individuals.[18]

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[13] Resolution by the Department of the Federal District published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, May 21, 1935, p. 349.
[14] Petition by residents of Los Reyes published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, March 1, 1935, p. 4.
[15] Resolution by the Department of the Federal District published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, August 24, 1937, p. 10.
[16] Resolution by the Agrarian Department published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, August 15, 1939, p. 13.
[17] Petition by residents of Los Reyes published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, January 30, 1950, p. 11.
[18] Resolution by the Department of the Federal District published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, April 3, 1951, p. 19.

However, the denial also confirmed the absence of legally eligible lands for expropriation since formal title belonged to a handful of private owners in parcels too small for expropriation.[19] While the moral claim of the petitioners was validated, they were unable to translate it into the material goods they sought.

This last attempt by Los Reyes was made at a time when the area was coming under acute urbanization pressures. As the region urbanized, social relations within the villages also shifted. Between 1952 and 1958, residents of La Candelaria petitioned the government seven times to request that the state revoke the *ejido* property rights of certain individuals—often following accusations that they had abandoned production in their plots—and transfer them to new members. In 1959, La Candelaria accepted an offer from *Excelsior*—one of the main newspapers in the country—to exchange (*permutar*) their *ejido* lands for two tracts of land in other states, agricultural machinery, and substantial monetary payments to each *ejidatario* and the *ejido*'s common fund.[20] *Excelsior*'s leadership, which planned to use the land to create a campus for the newspaper and housing for its employees, saw La Candelaria's *ejido* lands as desirable given their proximity to the newly inaugurated UNAM campus (Burkholder 2016). Despite its approval, residents of La Candelaria maintain that they never received what was promised to them and spent the next two decades petitioning and protesting.

The Pedregales: Land Regularization and the Urban Squatter

In the 1960s, urban development in the area further intensified in anticipation of the 1968 Olympic Games. Recently arrived migrant families began informally purchasing plots of land in the *pedregales* near La Candelaria, leading to the settlement of what today comprises the Ajusco neighborhood. Today, residents of La Candelaria characterize Ajusco residents as squatters, while residents of Ajusco reject this description. Residents of Ajusco describe buying plots of land from supposed owners—perhaps residents of La Candelaria, or perhaps outsiders posing as property owners—in good faith. Regardless, by the mid-1960s a community of residents was well-established on the land. However, in 1966, anti-growth Mexico City mayor Ernesto Uruchurtu oversaw the violent eviction of residents in the settlement. Two days later, after widespread public indignation at the raw display of violence, President Diaz Ordaz forced Uruchurtu to resign (Pozas Horcasitas 2016). His resignation paved the way for a united pro-growth coalition between the Federal and local government (Davis 1994).

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[19] Resolution by the Agrarian Department published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, July 2, 1951, p. 14.

[20] While *ejido* lands are ineligible for sale, an exchange of lands may be permitted under agrarian law if approved by the president. Resolution by the Department of Agrarian Matters and Population, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, April 24, 1959, p. 6.

Despite this episode, settlement of Ajusco continued. In July 1970, the city government expropriated the entire area of Ajusco, citing the need to install basic infrastructure and provide residents with legal security in their property.[21] Lending credence to the insistence of Ajusco residents that they had "bought" the land, the decree denounced the unauthorized "developers" (*fraccionadores*) who had subdivided and sold the land. Importantly, the expropriated parties in this decree were the residents of Ajusco themselves—those who had informally bought plots of land from "developers"—not the residents of La Candelaria who considered this area part of their territory. The land was ordered subdivided, titled, and returned to the expropriated residents.

A year later, in September 1971, several thousand men, women, and children informally settled in the area of the *pedregales* over the course of only a few days. This area would later become the Santo Domingo neighborhood. A little less than two months after the "invasion" began, the federal government issued a surprising resolution. The resolution confirmed the communal title long sought by (and denied to) residents of Los Reyes, formally declaring that the lands belonged collectively to the residents of Los Reyes as communal land under Mexico's system of social tenure.[22] In doing so, the state reversed its decades-long refusal to recognize the territorial claims of the residents of Los Reyes. The decision drew a new border around the section of the *pedregales* that would become Santo Domingo and named 1,048 residents of Los Reyes as its historical, moral, and legal heirs.

One week later the state issued an expropriation decree that dispossessed Los Reyes of their newly constituted communal land in the *pedregales* of Santo Domingo.[23] As compensation for the expropriation, the state promised each of the 1,048 named residents of Los Reyes two plots in the expropriated area and a monetary indemnification. While the state's promise of monetary compensation to residents of Los Reyes lent legitimacy to their moral claim over the area, residents of Los Reyes claim that the state never fully delivered on these conditions.

Title of the expropriated area was initially transferred to Mexico City's social housing authority (INDECO), which was ordered to build housing for the squatters and install basic infrastructure. INDECO built a handful of prototype homes in the neighborhood, but by May 1972—about eight months after the "invasion" began—squatters had organized an opposition to INDECO.[24] Residents organized protests and blockaded the streets to block construction material and machinery from entering into the neighborhood. Their protests for "land, not houses" was ultimately successful and INDECO was forced to abandon its project in Santo Domingo. Residents recall that they and their fellow squatters regarded INDECO's houses as undignified and small: "why would we go through the suffering and struggle of the invasion just to end up in the same cramped conditions we fled?"

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[21] Resolution by the Department of Federal District, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, July 4, 1970, p. 54.
[22] Resolution by the Department of the Federal District, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, November 27, 1971 (272.2/1820 L-5 P-110-116, AGA).
[23] Resolution by the Department of the Federal District, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, December 4, 1971.
[24] "Paracaidistas contra obras de INDECO," Avance, May 9, 1972 (HDNM); "Como ganar una vida mejor," Mañana Distrito

After INDECO's failure, title to the land was passed to several different government agencies that tried, to varying degrees of success, to regularize tenure in the neighborhood. Over the course of the next several years, residents consistently rejected plans to provide them with socialized housing. Instead, residents demanded full title to the land so that they could continue the construction of their homes and neighborhood as they saw fit. Residents are quick to clarify that they did not expect handouts from the government and were eager to invest their own labor and capital in constructing a place to call their own, but they believed they had a *right* to make their own place in the city.

Most of the families who participated in the "invasion" of Santo Domingo were migrants from rural and economically depressed areas of the country who rented in nearby neighborhoods or central tenements. Word of the invasion had spread quickly through kinship networks. Almost immediately after settling, residents began the work of constructing dwellings and organizing the neighborhood. Residents of both Ajusco and Santo Domingo recall the extreme difficulty of daily life in the first years after their arrival. They had no access to basic services like electricity, sewage, or running water. The lack of roads made accessing food, water, and other vital goods extremely difficult. In particular, women recall overwhelming feelings of despair, fear, and loneliness when they first arrived. In many cases, men left during the day to work elsewhere in the city, leaving the women alone, struggling to make homes and care for their children in adverse conditions. The residents of the informal settlements also lived under the constant threat of eviction by authorities.[25] Confrontations between squatters and residents of Los Reyes and La Candelaria resulted in injuries and even several deaths.

The actual labor and capital required for the area's development was furnished largely by residents themselves. Residents of both neighborhoods recall buying materials to build their houses from nearby neighborhoods, carting them over the rough landscape in wheelbarrows or by donkey. Long before they had even begun the process of obtaining titles, residents began converting their initial makeshift dwellings

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Federal, April 29, 1972 (HDNM); "Parará obras INDECO por los paracaidistas," Avance, May 10, 1972 (HDNM).

[25] Report by the Dirección Federal de Seguridad, document EXP/939071 L/1 H25 (October 8, 1971), in the collection Dirección Federal de Seguridad, Archivo General de la Nación.

into more permanent homes. On the weekends, residents organized community work parties (which they called *faenas*), using picks and shovels to manually break-up boulders and level the ground, carting in sand and concrete to pave the streets. They pirated electricity by buying and stringing electrical wire from nearby neighborhoods. Residents recall negotiating with authorities to get subsidized materials—telephone poles, drainage pipes—and "donating" their labor to install these systems.

Constituting Emplaced Groups: Spatial and Symbolic Alignments

The allocation of land and property rights in the second half of the twentieth generated a social and spatial distinction between the *pedregales* and the *pueblos*. One older resident of the La Candelaria recalled this period by lamenting how "then came the question of everyone seeking what belonged to them"—a reflection of how the allocation process divided a landscape between *pueblos* and *pedregales* and imposed individual property rights. In addition to drawing physical boundaries that distinguish these places from each other, redistributive policy also constituted emplaced groups by drawing symbolic boundaries around assemblages of individuals and associating them with those newly delimited places.

In the *pueblos*, the alignment of symbolic and spatial boundaries was accomplished when the state designated individual residents and families as "native" or "natural" residents. In Los Reyes, for example, the 1971 resolution that formally designated the area as their communal lands and named 1,048 individuals as legal, collective owners. According to this document, the residents of Los Reyes had "proved to have been in clear possession of these lands since time immemorial" in their 1948 petition.[26] Despite the fact that those 1,048 individuals were only legal owners of the *pedregales* for five days (they were subsequently expropriated of their land only five days later on December 4, 1971), the document linked those individuals to each other as a group and also associated that group with a defined space. Similar pronouncements naming individuals constituted an emplaced group identity La Candelaria. In the interviews that I conducted with residents in both villages, residents make frequent mention of these documents when discussing their claim to the area.

The PRI, which governed Mexico through one-party rule from the end of the Revolution through 2000, functioned as a corporatist political system. The hegemonic power that it exercised for seven decades was largely accomplished through its organization of the population into formal groups within the party's political system. This was true in the administration of urban services and in urban planning as well. In fact,

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[26] Resolution by the Department of the Federal District, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, November 27, 1971 (272.2/1820 L-5 P-110-116, AGA).

Mexico’s urban planning laws channeled communication between the state and irregular settlements through formal neighborhood associations that were meant to serve as representatives of the interests of the residents. In this way, the law mandated the proliferation of neighborhood civil associations (Azuela de la Cueva 1987; Azuela de la Cueva 1993; Azuela de la Cueva 1995).

In Ajusco, residents were represented by a legal civil association called *Pedregal del Ajusco* and in Santo Domingo, residents formed the *Asociación de Colonos* (“Association of Neighborhood Residents”). These neighborhood associations were central to the regularization processes in both neighborhoods: communicating with government officials, calling neighborhood meetings, producing and distributing newsletters with updates to the regularization process, organizing protests and demonstrations, creating registries of the property claims of residents, organizing the layout of streets, and reaccommodating residents whose land parcels were needed for the construction of streets and schools. The strong social organization of these neighborhoods was, in an important way, the result of the requirements of urban planning law which mandated neighborhood associations to function as neighborhood representatives (see also Levine 2016).

Yet, rather than disappear once the titling process concluded and the neighborhood associations ceased to play such a central role in neighborhood life, these group identities persist. What accounts for not only the persistence, but strengthening of these group identities in the decades after the titling process ended? In the next section, I argue that residents have used the categories that emerged from redistributive policy as they seek protection from the dispossessive forces of a consolidating real estate market. Legitimized and enshrined in contemporary planning and urban political organization, these categories have been seeded with a natural character, constituting these groups as innately different from each other.

Naturalizing Difference: Seeking Protections from Market Dispossession

From the 1980s onwards, a fragile and contested regime of individual private property rights settled over the neighborhoods of the *pueblos* and the *pedregales*. However, title insecurity and extralegal tenure still permeate these spaces, rendering residents unsure and vulnerable in the new realm of market relations. Private property relations also sit uneasily with deeply felt community solidarity and collective responsibilities that were forged through decades of struggle over property rights. By replacing collective rights with individual ones, the transition to a market-based property regime after the culmination of the titling process has opened the communities to new vulnerabilities presented by selling-off of property to outsiders and to developers. The injection of market value into the landscape through the tilting process means that capital intensive development looms large as an imminent threat to community stability.

In response to this destabilizing threat, residents have mobilized the categories generated by redistributive policy to petition for the creation of policies to protect them from these dispossessive market forces. In the *pueblos*, this manifested in the creation of a new city-wide *Pueblo Originario* identity which was eventually recognized by the state and imbued with a new set of "natural" special rights.

When the state drew new socio-spatial boundaries around the *pueblos* and their residents, validating their "primordial" character, it constructed a conceptual and spatial "inside" and "outside" to the category (Abbott 1995) and laid the groundwork for the consolidation of a new, city-wide identity. As the Los Reyes and La Candelaria waged a losing battle in the 1970s and 1980s to regain collective rights to their expropriated land, they united with other *pueblos* around their shared experience of dispossession. Tin Coyoacán, they also united around a shared adversary: the *invasores* who settled in the neighborhoods of the *pedregales*, to whom they had lost their position as the most deserving subjects of post-Revolutionary Mexico. Beginning with administration of President Echeverría, the urban poor squatters were be prioritized for land over the claims of the *pueblos*.

In the 1990s, the *pueblos* of Coyoacán and other regions of the city began organizing city-wide assemblies to collectively lobby for their interests. They began identifying themselves, collectively, as "*pueblos originarios"* ("original villages"). The term was carefully chosen to both emphasize their "primordial" character and distance them from the undesirable category of "indigenous" (Medina Hernández 2007a). Collective identification with this new category coincided with a period of political opening as the PRI's grip on power was rapidly weaking. Political reforms in 1997 gave Mexico City residents the opportunity to vote for their representatives for the first time—until this point, the head of government was appointed by the President. The first elections for local-level representatives in the city's boroughs were held in 2000. These political changes and the weaking of the PRI allowed for real competition between parties in local political districts, opening an opportunity for *pueblos originarios* to support candidates sympathetic to their particular concerns (Medina Hernández 2007b; Portal 2013). Chief among these were concerns of property rights and urban development.

The category of *pueblo* became a distinct form of urban space from all other neighborhoods, which were designated simply as *colonias*, the generic term for "neighborhood". The 1997 urban planning master plan for Coyoacán amplifies the difference between *pueblos* and the rest of the city.[27] The *pueblos* are referred to as their own category of urban space deserving of a distinct planning regime. The document notes that recent urban development in the *pueblos*—including La Candelaria and Los Reyes—threatens the character of the *pueblos* and their historical patrimony. As such, the document notes the need to develop new criteria to govern the aesthetic quality, height, and land use zoning of property in the *pueblos* in order to "preserve" the cultural patrimony of Coyoacán. "These places contain enormous cultural patrimony that, today, is preserved by the very residents, constituting their distinctive character from the rest of [Coyoacán]."

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[27] Programa Delegacional de Desarrollo Urbano de Coyoacán. *Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal*, April 10, 1997.

By 2007, the Mexico City government had established the Council of *Pueblos Originarios* in Mexico City, which officially recognized and guaranteed special rights for the city's *pueblos originarios*. In 2010, further modification to the city's electoral law created elected "Citizen Committees" in each conventional neighborhood (*colonia*) and "Village Councils" in each *pueblo originario.* During my fieldwork in the summer of 2017, Mexico City was in the midst of a major political reorganization. A new political reform law had been adopted in 2015 that aimed to transform the Federal District into a political entity resembling the country's 31 states and increasing its political autonomy from the Federal Government. As part of this reform, the Federal District was renamed "Mexico City" and the city's legislative assembly was replaced with a state congress. A Constituent Assembly was established in 2016 and tasked with writing a constitution for Mexico City, which was approved in January 2017 and entered into force in September 2018. The constitution converts Mexico City's 16 boroughs into "mayorships" (*alcaldías*) with democratically elected mayors and councils. As of 2019, the most recent year for which I could find a complete and official list, there were 142 *pueblos originarios* in Mexico City (see Figure 4).[28]

[INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

At one point I accompanied several residents of Los Reyes to a meeting with local government officials about proposed changes to the city's political districting that they feared would limit the political power of the *pueblos*. They planned to discuss the possibility of drawing district borders in a way that would unite the six *pueblos* of Coyoacán into a single district, separate from the neighborhoods of the *pedregales*. The city's proposed districts at the time combined Los Reyes with Santo Domingo, and La Candelaria with Ajusco. The problem, the residents of Los Reyes explained, was that since the neighborhoods of the *pedregales* are far more populous than the *pueblos*, the residents of the *pedregales* would always be able to outvote the *pueblos*. Implied in this fear, of course, is that the *pueblos* and the *pedregales* have fundamentally different—and opposed—interests.

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[28] Secretaría de Pueblos y Barrios Originarios y Comunidades Indígenas Residentes (SEPI), *Primer Informe de Gobierno, Diciembre 2018-Septiembre 2019*. Available at https://www.sepi.cdmx.gob.mx/storage/app/uploads/public/5dc/5c7/0aa/5dc5c70aa1b72263642188.pdf.

In the taxi to the meeting, as they discussed their strategy, one young *pueblo* leader turned to the other two *pueblo* residents and exclaimed excitedly: “Indigenous blood runs in our veins, dammit!” He slapped the inside of his forearm and laughed. He continued more seriously, insisting that their indigeneity—contained in their blood—meant that government officials would have no choice but to listen to them. He cited “international laws.” The others nodded their heads. In this sense, the orientation of the *pueblos* towards the concept of indigeneity appears to be changing. Residents I spoke with seemed to be grappling with how to incorporate indigenous identity into their *pueblo* identity and bring indigeneity to their political demands.

In line with a larger, national shift away from the ideology of *mestisaje* (“racial mixing”) as the cornerstone of Mexican national identity (Flores, Vignau Loría and Casas 2023; Loveman 2014), Mexico City’s new constitution establishes its diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic character. Section 1 of Article 2 declares:

> Mexico City is multicultural, having a multi-linguistic, muti-ethnic, and multi-cultural composition formed by its inhabitants, by its *pueblos* and *barrios originarios* historically situated in its territory, and by its resident indigenous communities. [Mexico City] is defined by the diversity of its traditions and its social and cultural expressions.[29] (emphasis added)

Along with this recognition of the *pueblos originarios* in the constitution, Mexico City’s mayor created the Secretary of the *Pueblos* and *Barrios Originarios* and Resident Indigenous Communities (SEPI) in 2018 to protect the social, political, and cultural rights of these groups. Mexico City’s constitution as well as SEPI distinguish between the *pueblos originarios* and “resident indigenous communities.” This latter term refers to indigenous communities—defined linguistically, as typical in Mexico—who reside in Mexico City but may or may not be indigenous to Mexico City territory. The grouping of *pueblos originarios* with traditionally defined indigenous groups in a way that also highlights their distinction shows the ambiguous and inchoate relationship between *pueblos originarios* and indigeneity.

Beginning in the 1960s, as squatting in the pedregales intensified, references to the “*zona de los pedregales”* (“the zone of the *pedregales*”) first began appearing in government documents as a spatial idea synonymous with irregularity and legal ambiguity. Recent examples of how this spatial concept is employed include Coyoacán’s 1997 urban planning master plan:

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[29] Constitución Política de la Ciudad de Mexico, published February 5, 2017, in the Gaceta Oficial de la Ciudad de Mexico.

> In the 1960s and 1970s, the formation of the neighborhoods of the *Pedregales* (Santo Domingo, Ajusco, and Santa Úrsula) began. Starting in that decade, the population growth in [Coyoacán] concentrated in that sector, which developed in an anarchic manner with a tendency towards the concentration of residents. The principal problem in this zone was the difficulty of introducing services and infrastructure and the lack of adequate spaces for the dispersal of the population. Today, the great majority of residents in the *Pedregales* have not been able to completely reverse the lack of infrastructure and services. […] At first, the growth of [Coyoacán] happened in an orderly manner, later giving way to the anarchic growth of the *zona de los Pedregales*. (emphasis added)

Interestingly, the repeated reference to the “*zona de los pedregales*” (23 times in the document) never includes the several wealthy neighborhoods to the north of Santo Domingo whose official names include the word “*pedregal*”. The problem of irregular tenancy, the document notes, is concentrated in the “*zona de los pedregales*.”

Conclusion

According to most research, real estate markets are implicated in the production of segregation through their role in sorting individuals into different neighborhoods based on their membership in pre-existing social categories. This sorting is theorized as the result of multiple forces of choice and constraint, including the preferences of homebuyers and limitations on homebuyers’ ability to act on their preferences due to price constraints and discrimination. This article examined how real estate markets can produce segregation beyond their role as a motor of social sorting. I have argued that another way that real estate markets produce segregation is by creating, emplacing, and naturalizing new categories of social difference. Through the creation and alignment of physical and symbolic boundaries, redistributive policy in land and housing can imbue collections of individuals with a group character and link them to specific places. Group difference is then further naturalized as markets expand and groups mobilize those categories in seeking protection from the raw power of market forces. Such was the process that created contemporary patterns of segregation between the *pedregales* and the *pueblos* in southern Mexico City.

The politics surrounding property rights in Mexico City made housing policy particularly well-positioned to generate and naturalize group identity. In the long shadow of the Revolution, the distribution and regulation of property has continued to serve as a key channel through which residents and the state interact. Questions about who ought to have right to land ownership, on what basis, and through what means were central questions of public debate in the decades following the end of the Revolution. As these society-wide debates played out, individuals and groups participated by making their own claims before governmental authority.

In presenting an alternative account of the segregation-producing process, I in no way seek to undermine the validity of the social sorting model. An overwhelming body of evidence supports the idea that, in most cases, segregation arises and is maintained by social sorting according to pre-existing identities and axes of group difference. This article opens the possibility for other ways of thinking about how segregated landscapes come to be and raises questions about the universality the assumptions that undergird the social sorting model. Specifically, the account presented here undermines two assumptions in the existing literature on segregation: the *resource hoarding assumption* and the *portable identity assumption*. In the remainder of this conclusion, I will briefly consider how we may need to rethink the universality of these assumptions.

Segregation and Resource Hoarding

When segregation emerges through a process of sorting—especially given the importance of price-based and discriminatory constraints on choice—the motivations are often linked with desires to manipulate the distribution of resources, whether in the form of property value, taxes, employment opportunities, school quality, and so on. Commonly, research has focused on segregation as an outcome of the strategies pursued by powerful social groups, who can more easily shape policies in their favor (Logan and Molotch 1987), to consolidate resources in their own hands. In other words, segregation is a mechanism to facilitate resource hoarding and is therefore instrumental for the creation, maintenance, or deepening of resource inequalities.

However, the segregation examined in this article emerged from the strategies pursued by both state and community actors to create what they deemed was a more just distribution of property rights than what an unconstrained market would have created. Subsequently, as these vulnerable groups clung to the policies that made their entrance into property ownership possible, the identity categories to which these polices responded were made brighter. In other words, the maintenance of segregation itself became part of residents' strategy to retain protections against market distributions that threatened to disenfranchise them from their hard-won property rights. Segregation is not a strategy pursued by powerful groups to maintain or amplify patterns of unequal access to resources, but rather results from residents' efforts to combat their own exclusion from the market-based distribution of resources. The account presented in this article supports the idea that segregation can emerge from efforts to shape the distribution of resources, but expands our conception of segregation beyond only a strategy used by privileged groups to hoard resources.

Segregation and the Portability of Identity

Secondly, these findings undermine a common assumption in the research on segregation: that identities are portable and that segregation may be remedied by redistributing people in space. In the dominant theory of segregation, identity precedes sorting and is stable throughout the processes that make and potentially unmake segregation. In the model presented here, identities are the result of peoples' experiences of property relations. And because identity is spatially produced, it is also unmoored when those spatial arrangements are modified. Removing an individual from these coded spaces also modifies how that person identifies and is identified by others. Conversely, new residents can take on these spatially defined identities when they become associated with those spaces, regardless of whether they held those identities previously. In other words, segregation is not so easily undone by the spatial redistribution of individuals because identity is both mutable and sticky.

Figures and Tables

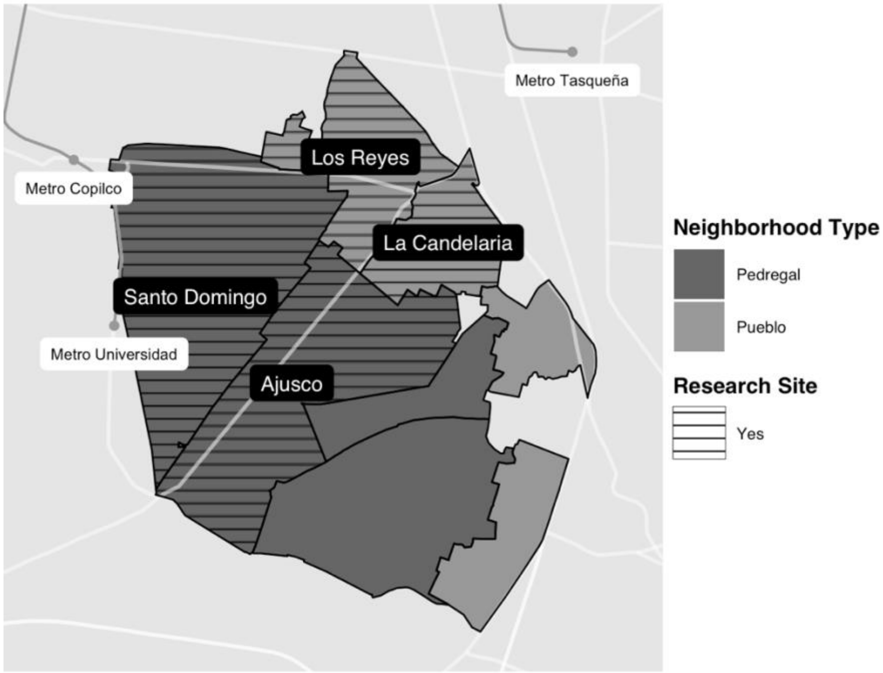
Metro Tasqueña
Los Reyes
Metro Copilco
La Candelaria
Santo Domingo
Metro Universidad
Ajusco
Neighborhood Type
Pedregal
Pueblo
Research Site
Yes

Figure 1. Map of research site neighborhoods, showing the metro system and principal streets.

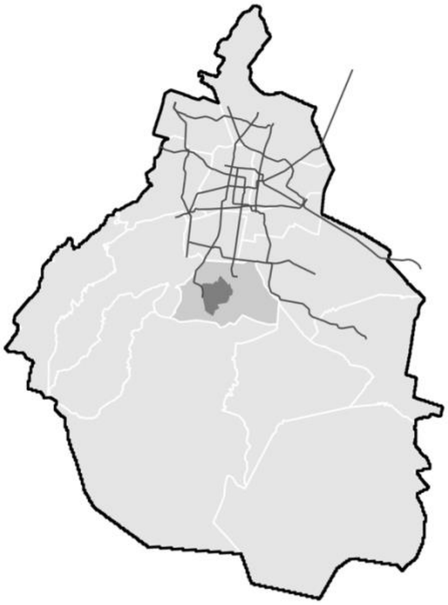

Figure 2. Location of research site within the borough of Coyoacán and Mexico City in relation to the metro system

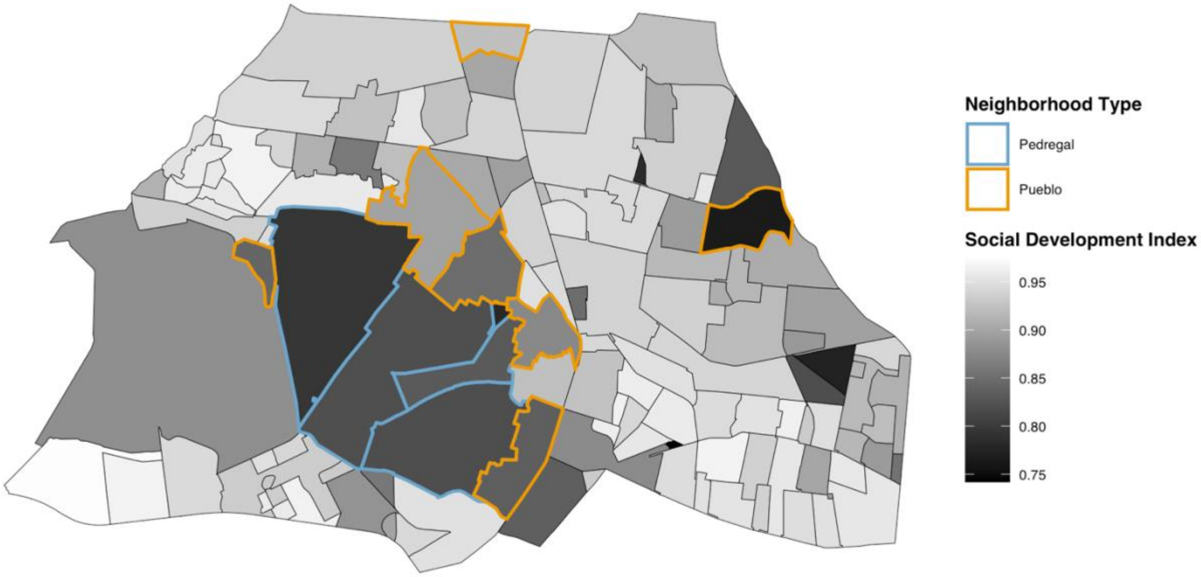
Neighborhood Type
Pedregal
Pueblo
Social Development Index
0.95
0.90
0.85
0.80
0.75

Figure 3. Map of the neighborhoods in Coyoacán showing the Social Development Index. The *pueblos originarios* and the neighborhoods of the *pedregales* are marked. A higher score on the Social Development Index indicates a higher level of social development.

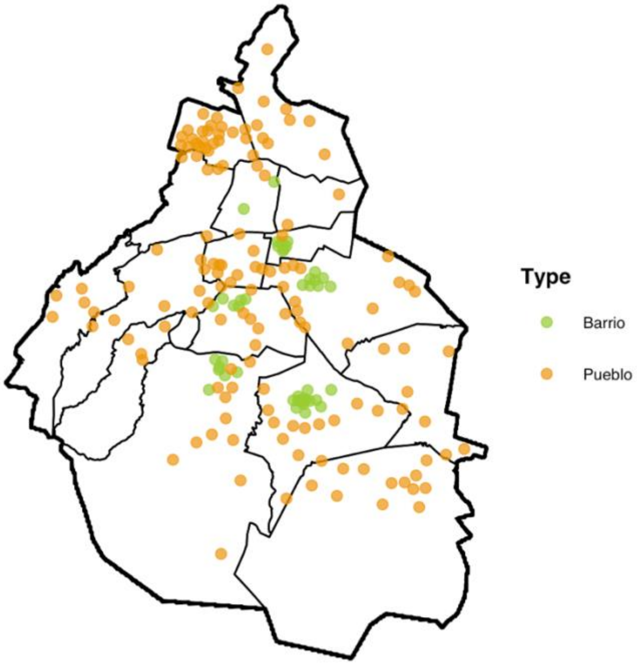
Type
Barrio
Pueblo

Figure 4. Map of the *Pueblos Originarios* and *Barrios* officially recognized by the Mexico City government, 2019.

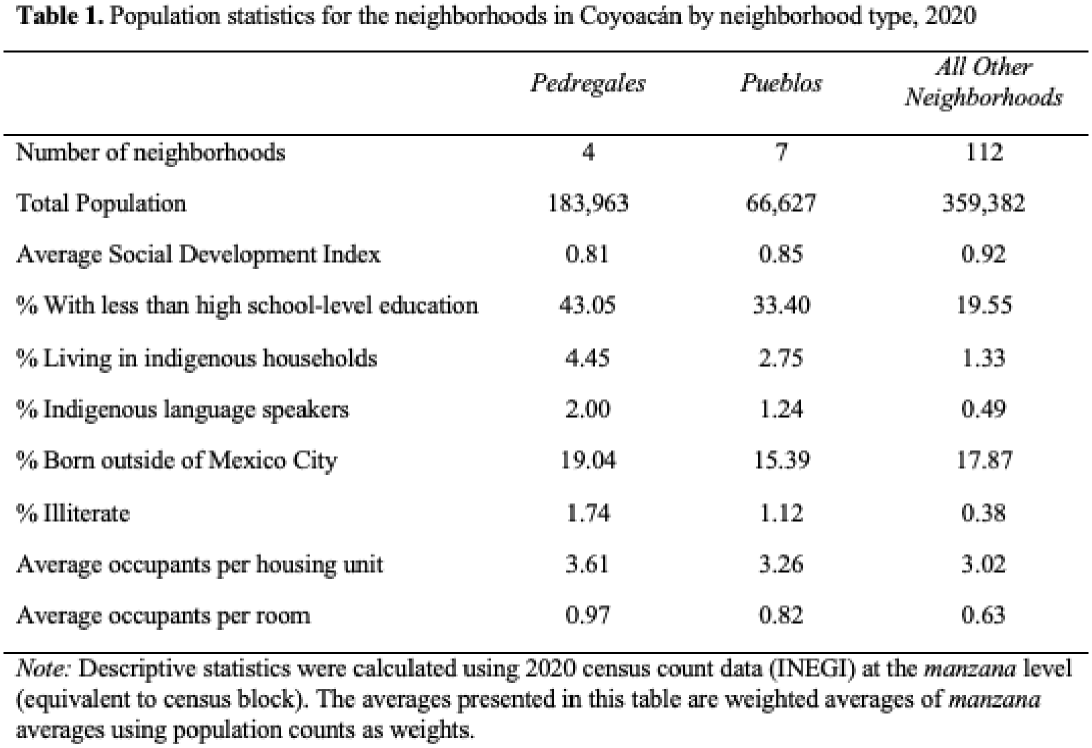

Table 1. Population statistics for the neighborhoods in Coyoacán by neighborhood type, 2020

	Pedregales	*Pueblos*	*All Other Neighborhoods*
Number of neighborhoods	4	7	112
Total Population	183,963	66,627	359,382
Average Social Development Index	0.81	0.85	0.92
% With less than high school-level education	43.05	33.40	19.55
% Living in indigenous households	4.45	2.75	1.33
% Indigenous language speakers	2.00	1.24	0.49
% Born outside of Mexico City	19.04	15.39	17.87
% Illiterate	1.74	1.12	0.38
Average occupants per housing unit	3.61	3.26	3.02
Average occupants per room	0.97	0.82	0.63

Note: Descriptive statistics were calculated using 2020 census count data (INEGI) at the *manzana* level (equivalent to census block). The averages presented in this table are weighted averages of *manzana* averages using population counts as weights.

Appendix A. Abbreviations for archives and archive collections consulted

AEEZ	Archivo Escuelita Emiliano Zapata
AGA	Archivo General Agrario
HN	Hemeroteca Nacional
MAF	Museo del Archivo Fotográfico

Archivo General de la Nación:

IPS	Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Instituciones Siglo XX
DFS	Dirección Federal de Seguridad, Instituciones Siglo XX
Tierras	Tierras, Instituciones Coloniales
HDJ	Hospital de Jesús, Instituciones Coloniales

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