

# The privilege of the city: (dis)locations of socio-spatial dynamics of Airbnb in Mexico City

## *El privilegio de la ciudad: (dis)locaciones socioespaciales de Airbnb en la Ciudad de México*

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### **Abstract**

*The impact of digital platforms on the production and planning of cities is growing, so the aim of this research is to analyze the presence of Airbnb in Mexico City to outline its implications to produce space and urban subjectivities from a communicational perspective. To achieve this, a theoretical framework is constructed based on the Political Economy of Communication, in order to show the contradictions of this platform within the neoliberal city and how its business model commodifies and privatizes the right to the city, thereby promoting processes such as gentrification. Subsequently, a quantitative methodology of descriptive and spatial scope is used; based on the database on Airbnb accommodations in Mexico City, their location and their connection with transportation services and average rental cost are analyzed. The findings show that the distribution of the 26,582 active accommodations is arbitrary, as 26.44 % of these lodgings are concentrated in seven neighborhoods, which have mobility services and low urban marginalization. Thus, these results allow us to suggest that such platforms exploit the right to the city in favor of new residents and at the expense of permanent residents, meaning that public policies are needed to regulate and promote social justice.*

### **Keywords**

*Urban spaces, urban planning, digital platform, political economy, gentrification, human geography, social justice, development policy.*

## **Resumen**

El impacto de las plataformas digitales en la producción y planificación de las ciudades está en crecimiento. El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar la presencia de Airbnb en la Ciudad de México, con el fin de esbozar sus implicaciones en la producción del espacio y las subjetividades urbanas desde una perspectiva comunicacional. Para ello, se construye un marco teórico desde la Economía Política de la Comunicación, con el objetivo de mostrar las contradicciones de esta plataforma dentro de la ciudad neoliberal y cómo su modelo de negocio mercantiliza y privatiza el derecho a la ciudad, fomentando así procesos como la gentrificación. Posteriormente, se utiliza una metodología cuantitativa de alcance descriptivo y espacial; a partir de la base de datos sobre los alojamientos de Airbnb en la capital de México se analiza su ubicación y su articulación con los servicios de transporte y costo promedio de renta.

Los hallazgos muestran que la distribución de los 26 582 alojamientos activos es arbitraria pues el 26.44 % de estos hospedajes se concentra en siete colonias, las cuales gozan de servicios de movilidad y poseen baja marginación urbana. Así, estos resultados permiten plantear que este tipo de plataformas explotan el derecho a la ciudad en favor de nuevos residentes y a costa de los residentes permanentes, por lo que se requieren políticas públicas de regulación que fomenten la justicia social.

## **Palabras clave**

Espacio urbano, planificación urbana, plataforma digital, economía política, gentrificación, geografía humana, justicia social, política de desarrollo.

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## **Introduction**

Cities worldwide are in a permanent process of creation, design, transformation and destruction, product of the current logic of capitalism to dynamize their mode of production (Marshall, 2011; Lefebvre, 2013); but contrary to what is thought, these processes are not homogeneous, so their implications can have differentiated consequences depending on the way in which the right to the city is materialized in a certain space and time.

Since the first decade of the 21st century, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the Internet are part of these dynamics, motivating an interest in analyzing the consequences of this participation of the capitals housed in technological innovations regarding the way of producing and living the contemporary city. For the purposes of this work, the characteristics

of an analysis focused on Mexico City lies in two key points: the first is that due to its position in the current world-system, this city presents an unfavorable correlation of forces that manifests in the unequal way of producing/expanding/living the urban space; the second point lies in that the subnational processes to renew different points of the city, particularly its expanded historical center, have encouraged new processes of socio-spatial segregation such as gentrification (Zamorano Villarreal, 2019; Villar Calvo *et al.*, 2021; González Loyde, 2023).

This process has intensified by the unregulated functioning of applications such as Airbnb that, specifically, monetize hospitality and commodify the city and lifestyles to obtain a profit at the expense of the (in)direct displacement effects that it promotes in the spaces where it imposes its way of producing a city-commodity (Vollmer, 2019; Gainsforth, 2021; Olmedo-Neri, 2024; Romo, 2024).

Therefore, paying attention to the ways in which Airbnb and the city are articulated is key to understand their links and with it, (d) enunciate the potential challenges against the current and historical processes of struggle for the right to the city in contexts of the Global South (Harvey, 2013).

In this way, the objective of this work is to build a panorama on the presence of Airbnb in Mexico City to analyze its impacts on the way the city is produced and (re)produce in the urban subjectivities that emanate from it. To meet this objective, the work is structured in four main sections: in the first one a theoretical framework is built that seeks to problematize the relationship between ICT, Internet, the city and processes such as gentrification. In the second section, the materials used, and the type of methodology used are exposed. The third section presents the results obtained from this quantitative-descriptive analysis of the Airbnb landscape in Mexico City, particularly its distribution and its intersection with other variables such as public transport and urban marginalization/violence. Finally, in the fourth section the results are discussed.

## **Theoretical framework**

In Mexico, the growing intersection between city, gentrification and applications have encouraged the production of research that starts from different theoretical frameworks; some of them consider the tourist satisfaction offered by these hosting applications (Navarrete Escobedo, 2022; Ramos Ji-

ménez *et al.*, 2023), others consider the urban perspective to explain the re-configuration of the city and its demographic, commercial and spatial implications as results of land use change and urban renewal processes (Madriral Montes de Oca *et al.*, 2018; Zamorano Villarreal, 2019; Ettinger-McEnulty and Mercado-López, 2019; Jurado Montelongo and Moreno Zúñiga, 2023). However, few works have theoretically started from a communicative perspective, so it is essential to show its analytical richness through the way in which the transformation of cities of the 21st century is thought from a critical techno-communicative positioning (Olmedo-Neri, 2020). A line of thinking that can meet that goal is the Political Economy of Communication (EPC).

### *The EPC and Airbnb's (fake) sharing economy*

The EPC constitutes as a theoretical perspective that abbreviates the Marxist postulates around the systemic inequalities that capitalism (power, wealth, accumulation, ideology, and social relations of production) deploys in the field of media, information, communication, its structures, and dynamics (Mosco, 2006). According to this author, there are three major categories that the EPC uses for its analysis: *commodification*, as a process of conversion that subjects the value of use to the exchange value of both tangible and intangible products, the latter being the most relevant in recent years for the mediatization of the experience on which it is based; *spatialization*, as a process of geographical transcendence and de-territorialization for the production, distribution and consumption of media content; and, *structuring* as a process that allows creating social relations around systemic asymmetries that operate with other categories such as space, gender, social class and race.

In addition, the EPC explains how media ecosystems (including the Internet) intervene in the consolidation or erosion of democracy (McChesney, 2015). In this process, a strand analyzes the so-called platform capitalism and with it, the economic dynamics that drive not only technological development, but the effects of these techno-info-communicative innovations beyond the screens, particularly the hegemony of Silicon Valley and the startups that have gained popularity as new geopolitical forms of control (Vaidhyathan, 2018; Srnicek, 2018).

The business models they promote in platform capitalism are diverse; in the case of platforms such as Airbnb, there is an intense campaign to highlight the assumption of a “collaborative economy” as a functional and political logic of (re)distribution of profits; in reality, what operates behind it is a differential income model (Formenti, 2016; Wachsmuth and Weisler, 2018;

Olmedo-Neri, 2020). Therefore, the collaborative economy is an ideological resource that conceals this extractive gain through the discourse of ‘democratizing capitalism’ (Gainsforth, 2021). Different authors have explained that the collaborative economy is a mirage within capitalism and that it is actually a rhetorical resource that hides the dynamics of exploitation that lie behind the interface and the business models of the platforms (Radetich, 2022).

In fact, what is happening is an intense process of parasitization (of the market), co-optation (of guests – for various purposes, not only touristic –), coercion (of hosts – who can be owners or real estate companies –) and monopolistic extraction (of profit through the rent of spaces). In effect, this type of applications obtains a profit from the extraction of a percentage of the capital gain materialized in the rent stipulated by those hosts who use partially or totally their homes for short-term rental through such applications (Olmedo-Neri, 2020; Radetich, 2022). According to Srnicek (2018), Airbnb operates as an austere platform, i.e., it builds a specialized market in a service, but at the same time outsources its operation to the maximum until generating the false idea of not having fixed assets (Airbnb does not, so far, offer a hosting where the platform operates as a host). However, by hyper-outsourcing the entire service chain, the application minimizes its expenses, keeping the minimum related to the control and management of the interface, which is “the basic extractive minimum – the control of the platform that allows a monopoly income –” (Srnicek, 2018, p. 72).

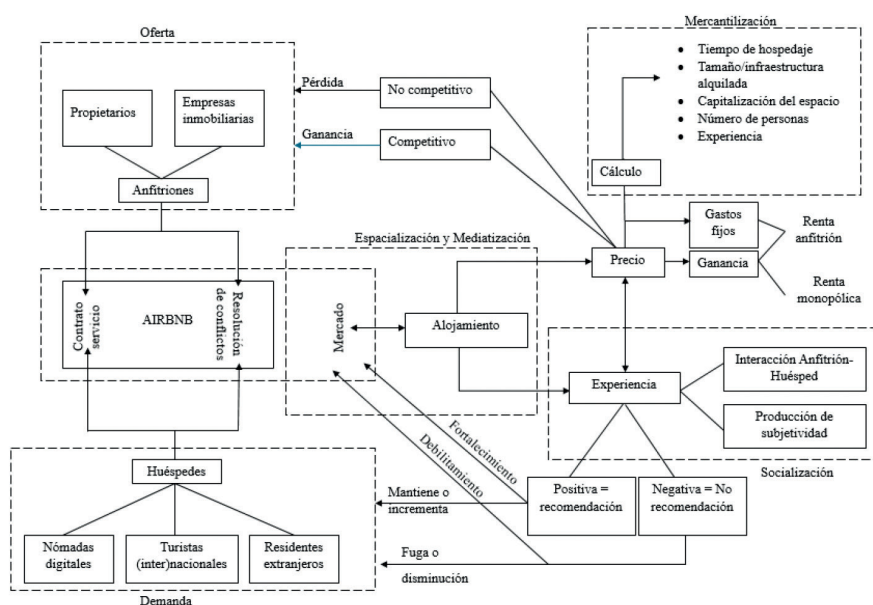
In other words, austere platforms like Airbnb operate under a deep intermediation, a product of control over the digital space where supply and demand meet by contracting spaces for short periods of time.

However, it is important to highlight two key elements for obtaining a profit in this model: the first is that the rental price varies, as does the percentage that the platform receives, extracting a ‘pure’ surplus (free of taxes and fixed expenses) that would correspond to the host (who must cover the maintenance and services costs derived from the use of the residence), but that this cedes as the right of floor required by said digital market created and co-opted by Airbnb. In addition, the variation of the rent derives from various elements, including the spatial features that each accommodation has (services, location, security, etc.), which allows us to argue that part of the profit of the host and Airbnb derives from the commodification not only of the residence but of the space in which it is located, of its cultural assets and of the public services that both the host and the platform highlight and

commodify as elements that determine the cost of rent and that intervene in the subjectivity created by the guests.

The second important element about this false collaborative economy rests on the reduction of occupancy time, which is in fact the result of the acceleration cycle of accumulation of income; by reducing the time of stay, the price not only increases, but the accumulation cycle accelerates, obtaining a profit similar or higher than that which any lessor would obtain under 'classic' and temporarily prolonged schemes (Olmedo-Neri, 2020). This acceleration and the economic cost involved becomes a mechanism that encourages the exclusion and displacement of those who cannot compete with the new demands of the urban real estate market (Robert, 2021). Figure 1 outlines the operational logic of Airbnb mentioned so far.

**Figure 1**  
*Airbnb operating logic from the EPC*



From these elements, it is possible to corroborate that the collaborative economy is a chimera that these austere platforms promote, in order to cover up their monopolistic dynamics and the extraction of a pure profit through

the rent of spaces (Olmedo-Neri, 2020). It is necessary to dimension its intervention in the production of space and urban subjectivities.

### *Mediatize space production and urban subjectivities*

To understand the dialectic between platforms and cities, it is necessary to recognize the growing participation of technological innovations in broader processes such as the production of both urban space and spatially determined subjectivities. Thus, we must analyze the ways in which platforms transcend screens to articulate with other phenomena relevant to cities of the 21st century.

In this regard, it is possible to insist that, contrary to the idea of the death of geography with the advent of ICT and the Internet, these techno-info-communicative innovations offer, provide and sustain much of their services/products in a systematic commercial exploitation of space (Buzai and Ruiz, 2012; Radetich, 2022). Thus, the coordinates of users and their habits largely condition both the information circuits that produce/manage/consume and the products and services that they can buy/contract, while transnational companies take advantage of this characteristic to increase their rate of profit through systemic inequalities that allow them to relocate their productive chains and administrative structures (Morley, 2008; Yúdice, 2008).

Therefore, this link shows that the way of living and building the contemporary city is intervened by the new mediatized ways of being in the world. An analytical alibi that allows us to think about these elements is through the notion of inhabiting urbanity, since its production and the subjectivity that emanates from it acquire strong technological features.

Thus, the concept of 'living' can be unfolded in two particular senses: the first form is as an ontological positioning of the subject *in* and *before* the world (social and natural). In this sense, the exercise of dwelling is an intrinsic action of the human being, since it is an inalienable act in his process of being in the world (Arendt, 2009; Lefebvre, 2013; Garcia, 2022). This positioning is sustained through the experience and subjectivity produced in that process of spatial and existential referentiality; thus, urban subjectivity, understood as the heterogeneous and contingent sociocultural and identity tessitura that constructs individually and collectively the urbanite to be (in), flow (with) and live (within) the city, its advantages and contradictions (Vázquez Rodríguez and García Garza, 2015), is (re)produced or dislocated to the extent that a person gains or loses control of that place as that part of the world that is common/own and from where the whole interpellates.

The second sense that can acquire the term dwelling is that which refers to a process that involves this spatial-subjective positioning. Thus, to inhabit is, therefore, a sample of the capacity of agency that the subject has over space and its (in)tangible components; when inhabiting a place, it is systematically impregnated by the senses of the person who inhabits it, i.e., it becomes part of the reference point within the world and from there habits are built and daily life materializes. Thus, the production of urban space is, above all, a transformation process of nature for the development of the social, its rules, its accesses, restrictions and inequalities; following Lefebvre (2013), “(social) space is not a thing between things, a product among the products: rather it surrounds the things produced and understands their relations in their coexistence and simultaneity” (p. 129).

Thus, the production of space never decants into final and immutable product, on the contrary, it is a permanent process that is determined by the acceptance, negotiation and resistance of the various senses that intend to impose themselves in that place, which shows the conflicting essence that becomes in every process of space production (Vergara and Fraire, 2018).

However, these processes of inhabiting the world, which always had a direct relationship between subject and space, have been drastically intervened by ICT, since these tools mediate most of the contemporary social relations (Gómez Cruz, 2022); this process of mediatization has disrupted the situated and historical forms of sociability, to generate new models that tune into the hegemonic mode of production, i.e., capitalism.

Since the first decade of the 21st century, applications that monetize the sense of hospitality and commodify homes have gained ground as a new model of accumulation that, as has already been indicated, is based discursively on a collaborative economy, but that is a form of intermediation that exploits the objective conditions of spaces, whether urban or rural, generating geographically differentiated impacts within the territories where they are installed and from where they impose their logic of exclusion and displacement that aims to establish itself as a new urban societal model (Ciaramelli, 2023).

Moreover, time in contemporary cities becomes a commodity, so on it operates a cycle of capitalist accumulation founded on the acceleration of all areas of daily life (Olmedo-Neri, 2020; Robert, 2021). Thus, in the current neoliberal project, cities become spaces under intense processes of efficiency and rationalization, turning them into a machine that, through the exploitation



of its components, generates a surplus value that is disputed by the capitals that circulate there (Garcia, 2022).

Under these ideas, it is possible to argue that Airbnb and its operational logic prevents subjects (both floating and permanent residents) from inhabiting the spaces offered in its mediatized inventory. On the one hand, by being stripped or displaced from their dwellings (own or rented), permanent residents see their agency capacity interrupted and limited by not being able to participate in the production of the city as they are forced to de-inhabit a place.

On the other hand, those who rent a space on this platform can not specify a spatiotemporal positioning because that place is theirs partially and temporarily, so they can not exercise total agency since the conditions of the contract limit their ability to be in the world, producing a logic of uninhabitability.

In this way, Airbnb's media coverage of the residences it offers on its interface frustrates any effective possibility of inhabiting these places, since those who are displaced lose that possibility, while those who move them cannot inhabit this space completely and authentically. This cancellation severely erodes the (re)production of space, as this business model drives at the mercy of the hosts and the capital, and at the same time it alters the production of urban subjectivities. Thus, Airbnb deploys policies of de-habitability and in-habitability covertly, which are gestated through the commodification of the city and its spaces of residence for benefiting the capital housed in this type of platforms and the real estate speculation already present in the cities.

Finally, the mediatization of spatial segregation phenomena such as gentrification is an articulated and exclusive process. Thus, in the neoliberal city there is an important reconversion in the production of both space and urban subjectivities; we no longer think of a city that adapts to the people who inhabit it, but now we seek the production of a subject that adapts to the new urban societal model (Garcia, 2022; Ciaramelli, 2023; Romo, 2024).

These elements will be crucial since the new urban project will undertake a process of (in)direct displacement on those who do not meet these new requirements from capitalism.

## **Materials and method**

This work is based on a quantitative methodology with a descriptive and spatial scope. The relevance of this methodological design is based on the

offer of analysis that cross the dimensions of power between technology and space, in this case the urban one, thus expanding the scale of analysis without losing sight of the dialectics that operate in its articulation.

Thus, the corpus of analysis lies in the Airbnb accommodation database in Mexico City, which is produced and published by Airbnb Inside (2024)<sup>1</sup>. This platform is part of a broader social project that seeks to make visible the impacts of this type of applications in cities, so this data activism based on *data scraping* allows to promote situated analyses that would be more difficult to perform due to the lack of transparency and willingness of the application itself to release the precise data of the accommodations it offers through its interface (Gainsforth, 2021).

The analysis focused on the capital of Mexico is that the studies on the integration of platforms such as Airbnb in the urban scenario have been concentrated at different analytical scales (at the colony,<sup>2</sup> mayor and state level) within this political-administrative territory (Montes de Oca *et al.*, 2018; Zamorano Villarreal, 2019; Olmedo-Neri, 2020; Villar Calvo *et al.*, 2021; González Loyde, 2023), so the contribution of this work falls on the construction of a panorama at the state and colony level that allows to demonstrate the processes linked to the mobility dimension and economic marginalization of this phenomenon.

The data obtained were subjected to a systematization and cleaning process in spreadsheets and dynamic tables that allowed homologating criteria of referentiality in the context of Mexico City. Afterwards, a georeferencing and analysis process was carried out from the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), particularly the ArcGIS software was used, since it allowed to spatially locate the accommodations and from this calculate their density at the colony and mayoral level. It was possible to explain the dynamics of urban fracturing and commodification generated by Airbnb through its business model.

Finally, various maps, graphs and tables were made that show the Airbnb panorama in Mexico City, highlighting its location and articulating its heterogeneous spatial distribution with other variables such as access to public

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1 The update of the data is given on a quarterly basis, so the data made correspond to September 2024.

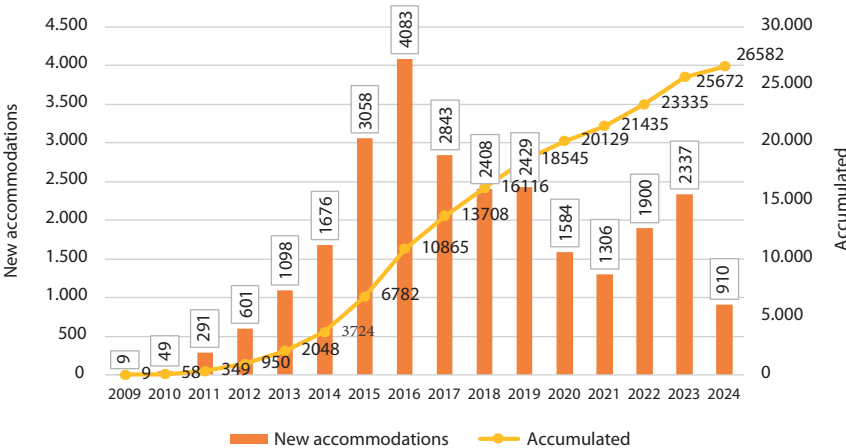
2 According to the Diccionario del Español de México (DEM, 2025), a colonia is defined as “each of the urban areas that forms around the center of a city”; in a definition closer to the urban perspective, it could be understood as a group of areas that obtain a name from an identity trait (for example, the Colonia Escandón, Colonia Centro or Colonia Doctores). The use of this term is very frequent in Mexico, however, it does not present substantial differences with those employed in other countries such as, for example, neighborhood. In this way, they could be considered synonyms.

mobility services that have been developed in the capital of the country and security levels within the capital colonies.

Results

The findings show that, for the third quarter of 2024, in Mexico City, there are 26,582 accommodations within the catalog of this austere platform. Figure 1 shows the growth of accommodations within the platform, showing that 2016 was the year with the highest number of registered spaces;<sup>3</sup> from there on, 2021 is the year with the lowest registration of new accommodations, so it can be an (in)direct effect of the pandemic.

Figure 1  
*New accommodation by year (2009-2024)*

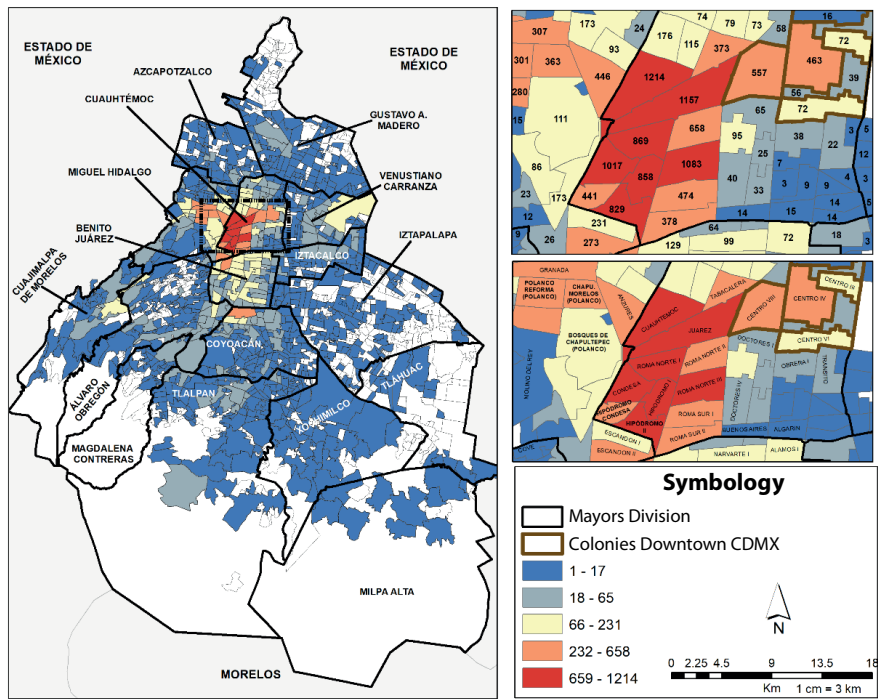


Note. Own elaboration from Airbnb Inside data (2024).

3 It is worth mentioning that the number of accommodations does not correspond to the number of hosts (4,092), because as part of real estate speculation and socioterritorial inequalities to obtain a home in the Mexican capital, there are records of landlords who have more than 100 spaces available for rent. These ‘exceptional’ cases exemplify the fracturing of sociality in Mexico City. Some of the profiles/hosts with the largest amount of accommodation in the Airbnb catalog are: Blueground (258 houses/apartments), Mr. W (243 houses/apartments) and HOMi (134 houses/apartments).

On a spatial level, these accommodations exhibit their arbitrariness, because as shown on map 1, there are seven colonies, all of them close to the Historic Center of Mexico City, which concentrate many accommodations available to be rented on Airbnb.

**Map 1**  
*Mexico City: distribution and number of Airbnb accommodations, according to the area (2024)*



*Note.* Own elaboration with data from Airbnb Inside (2024).

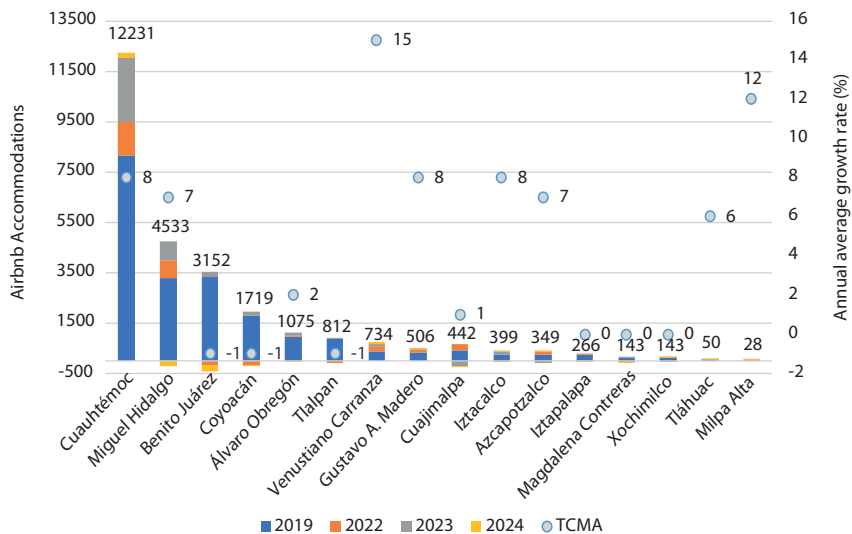
Thus, 26.44 % of Airbnb accommodations are concentrated in the following seven colonies: Cuauhtémoc (1214), Juárez (1157), Roma Norte II (1083), Condesa (1017), Roma Norte I (869), Hippodrome I (858) and Hippodrome II (829). These colonies, in parallel, have been analyzed by the intense gentrification processes that have been suffering since the various urban renewal policies implemented in the capital of the country (Madrigal

Montes de Oca *et al.*, 2018; Zamorano Villarreal, 2019; Villar Calvo *et al.*, 2021; Olmedo-Neri, 2024).

Thus, this arbitrary distribution allows to strengthen the idea of spatially differentiated effects. The fact that these accommodations are concentrated in certain areas responds more to dynamics of profitability than to effective possibilities of concretion. Figure 2 shows the growth or not of these spaces in each mayor's office, showing their Average Annual Growth Rate (TCMA) of recent years.

**Figure 2**

*Number of accommodations by Mayor (2019-2024)*<sup>4</sup>



*Note.* Own elaboration from Airbnb Inside data (2024).

As it is observed, Airbnb behaves differently according to the mayor's office, evidencing its arbitrariness in terms of its planning and territorial expansion. Regarding the TCMA, its behavior is heterogeneous, showing ma-

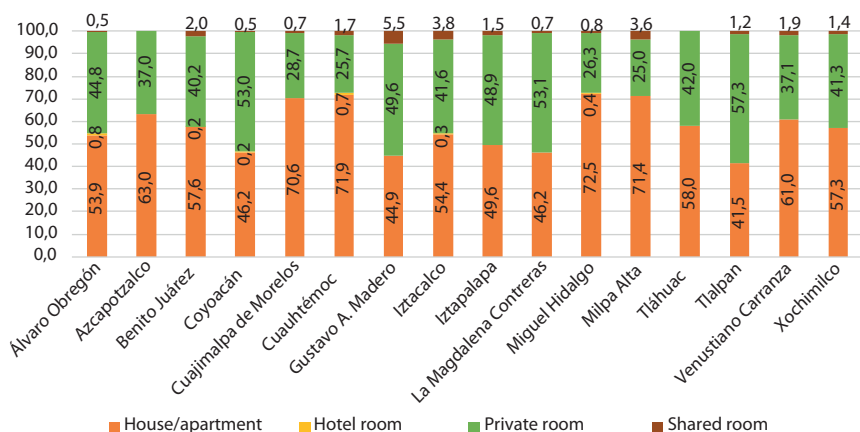
<sup>4</sup> Given the large amount of data, Airbnb Inside (2024) tends to reduce the availability of historical data, so it was not possible to rescue the 2020 and 2021 data for this analytical exercise.

mayoralties that are reaching a saturation point that has forced them to decrease, while others have had a higher growth than in those mayoralties where they have a pronounced presence.

However, a key element for this type of analysis lies not only in the location, but its articulation with the composition of the lodgings, i.e., what type of spaces are rented according to the mayor's office in which they are located. Figure 3 shows this distribution.

**Figure 3**

*Percentage distribution of Airbnb by type of accommodation, according to the Mayor's Office*



Note. Own elaboration from Airbnb Inside data (2024).

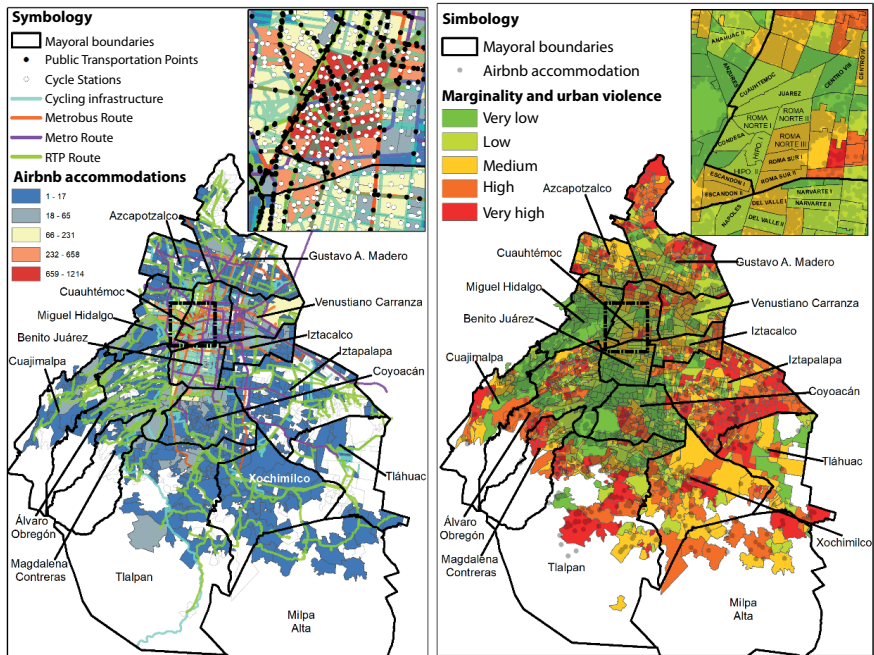
This scenario is crucial because it exhibits the dynamics of de/repopulation of these spaces and mayoralties as part of the profitability of their rent on Airbnb; while a private or shared room implies a partial rent within a residence, the total rent of these places—added to the type of owner with which it interacts—shows a coercive mechanism that deprives local residents of these spaces for the cost of their rent under this accelerated and rationalized form of the habitability of the city.

Once we know where these accommodations are concentrated, it is clear to observe the intersectionality that these colonies acquire in terms of ser-

vices, such as transport and urban marginalization/violence.<sup>5</sup> Thus, map 2 shows the intersection of these factors in Mexico City.

## Map 2

*Mexico City: Mobility and urban violence according to the Mayor's office*



*Note.* Own elaboration with data from Airbnb Inside (2024), CentroGeo (2022) and Government of Mexico City (2022).

These images offer two key elements: in terms of mobility; the colonies with the largest number of accommodations are well connected and with a wide and diverse offer of public transportation means. Of them, cycling stations stand out because they have become a favorite mechanism for new generations and especially those that bet on alternative forms of individual cut

<sup>5</sup> This information has an intersectional character that includes, among other things: access to public space, urban deterioration, panic buttons, income/poverty, security coverage, quality and housing spaces (CentroGeo, 2022).

for urban mobility; next to cycling stations follows the cycling infrastructure, which, as it is observed, also has an unequal distribution since the majority is concentrated in the Cuauhtémoc and Benito Juárez Mayor's Office; as it moves away from these spaces, the transport offer is drastically reduced as a result of the centralization of resources and services, typical of Latin American cities (Olmedo Neri, 2024).

With regard to marginality and urban violence, a similar trend is shown, since a good percentage of the accommodations are located in places where these indicators are low, intervening directly in the production of the urban subjectivities of the guests. To reaffirm this idea, Table 1 is presented.

**Table 1**  
*Airbnb accommodation by marginality level and urban violence*

Marginality and urban violence	Number of accommodations	Percentage (%)
No data	21	0.079
Very low	9101	34.23
Low	10.335	38.88
Average	5577	20.98
High	1219	4.58
Very high	329	1.24

It is possible to observe that 73.11 % of the accommodations are strategically located in colonies where marginality and urban violence are low or very low, evidencing that their location not only responds to places well located within the urban infrastructure, but at the same time these are spaces where violence does not operate in a structural way as in other colonies and mayoralties.

Finally, it is important to mention how these spatialities are reflected by economic dynamics; for this purpose, map 3 is presented, which shows the average ranges in which the rental price of Airbnb accommodation varies according to the colony.

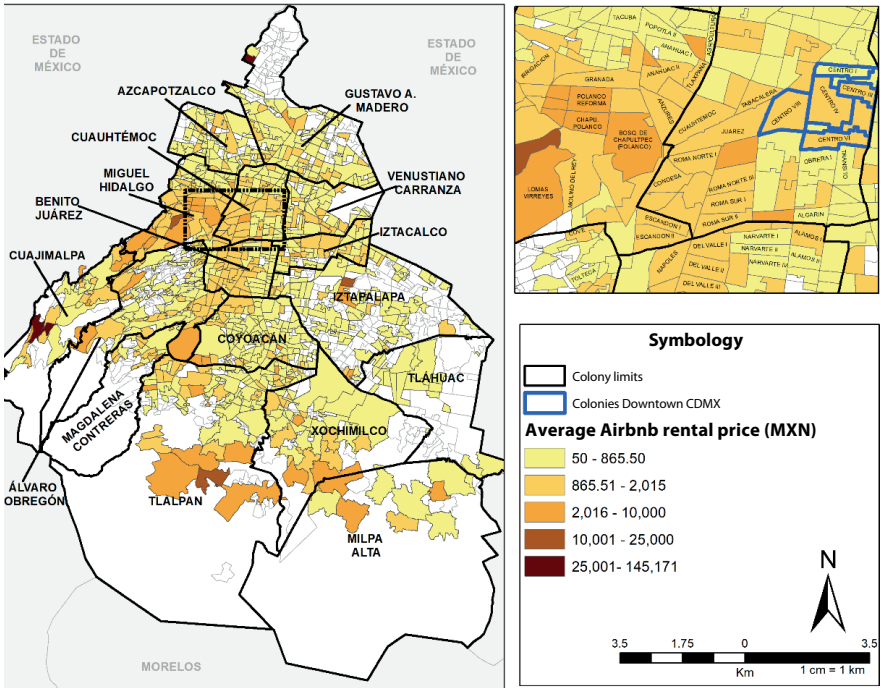
From this, the colonies begin to change their constitution because the price of space rent has an upward trend; this increase in income stimulates not only direct effects for the displacement of the resident population, but indi-



rectly creates transformations such as the change in commercial spaces and the progressive increase in the lifestyle (Olmedo-Neri, 2024) begin to occur.

These strategies show how Airbnb not only intervenes in the production of urban space, but adds challenges that intensify the possibility of remaining places for the middle classes or that, as in many of the contemporary cities, rent residences in the face of the spatial and temporal tyranny that supposes being/living/transiting from the periphery to the city.

**Map 3**  
*Mexico City: average rental per colony*



*Note.* Own elaboration with data from Airbnb Inside (2024).

These results provide an overview of Airbnb’s presence in Mexico City. In addition, the visualized elements invite us to reflect on the challenges that arise for a city like this at the dawn of the 21st century and under the afore-

mentioned economic forces that try to transform cities into commodities and strip them of all possibility of habitability.

## Conclusions and discussion

This work aimed to build a panorama on the deployment of Airbnb in Mexico City. It was possible to find results that strengthen the elements raised from the EPC through a descriptive quantitative analysis and its subsequent spatial visualization.

As a first relevant point is the fact that most Airbnb accommodations tend to be located in places near the historic center of Mexico City; this has consequences both in the colonies where the popular classes predominate and in those where there are already other processes of struggle for the right *to the city*. Especially, it is important to note that some of the colonies where there is a high concentration of Airbnb accommodation also have varying degrees of gentrification, reinforcing the approaches made in other research on the parallelism between gentrification and the presence of Airbnb (Zamorano Villarreal, 2019; Villar Calvo *et al.*, 2021; Olmedo-Neri, 2024).

The second element is that the location of these accommodations is arbitrary and extractive, so that those areas better connected, with greater availability of public transport and with low rates of marginality and urban violence become desirable and viable for commodification. For example, mobility in the city through public transport, due to its sociohistorical conditions of production, becomes a vital resource for the process of inhabiting a city, so its access/restriction has serious effects on the production of urban subjectivities since the ambivalent acceleration/slowdown of mobility is a constant feature of urban life, especially in Latin American cities (Olmedo-Neri, 2020).

Thus, a first explanation of this logic would lie in the neoliberal project that has been promoted for several years in the various cities of the region and the world, because by locating accommodations with these conditions not only guarantees the platform the ability to capture the interest of potential guests, but in this way public spaces, resources and services are co-opted, or as proposed by Radetich (2022) “appropriate”, to insert accumulation cycles sustained in the commodification of urban space and respective urban subjectivities.

Thus, offering well-connected, centrally located accommodation with low levels of violence/criminality not only guarantees a predetermined urban

subjectivity that increases the probability of the guest renting the place again, but also ensures the temporary consumption of the city, progressively canceling its ability to (re)produce itself as a living space and becoming a commodity available to those who can afford it (Vollmer, 2019; Gainsforth, 2021).

On the other hand, the approach that urbanized spaces display simultaneous mechanisms of de-habitability and non-habitability is reinforced, since permanent residents lose the ability to reproduce the city —by being displaced directly or indirectly— and their urban subjectivity is strongly disrupted and diminished by being excluded. At the same time, these residents are forced to displace others in order to mitigate the impact of their expulsion on their daily lives; this forges the domino effect of segregation phenomena such as gentrification (Olmedo-Neri, 2024), accentuating the marginalization of some social groups and further reducing their ability to exercise the right to the city. For their part, those who arrive to a city via Airbnb cannot inhabit the place since their interests are not of permanence, but of transit, so they are unable to participate in the production of social space and the subjectivities that the city produces them are determined by the capitalization of the infrastructure, (in)tangible resources and present/close services obtained by the permanent urbanites (Radetich, 2022). In this way, the local production of space loses legitimacy, which is exacerbated by the progressive displacement of those who disinhabit that place.

For these reasons, Airbnb and all those applications that monetize space, mobility and services disrupt and erode the practices, senses and knowledge produced intersubjectively in the neoliberal city. All this inevitably leads to the erosion of social ties, the fragmentation of urbanity and its transformation into a rationalized and accelerated place-machine in an economic way (Robert, 2021; Garcia, 2022). Therefore, both Airbnb and real estate speculation operating at a subnational level cancel out any ability to inhabit urban spaces. This means that, in the neoliberal city, the control of urban subjectivity and habitability occurs indirectly through the production of private and public spaces. In this way, size, structure, services, design and aesthetics condition the agency capacity of the subject on the rented residence, in turn shaping its subjectivity around the city and its public spaces-resources.

From these elements, it is crucial to discuss the positive or negative involvement of Airbnb in the refiguration of the right to the city. If, as Harvey (2013) states, the right to the city “is therefore much more than a right of individual or collective access to the resources that it stores and protects;

it is a right to change and reinvent the city according to our desires” (p. 20). From what was found, it is observed that the current operation of Airbnb is promoting a subtle change, but of great impact on the way of thinking about the cities, because with each new accommodation available to floating residents and social classes with high purchasing power, the right to the city is transmuted into the privilege to the city, i.e., the possibility not to inhabit the city, but to consume it temporarily and repeatedly as long as the subject has the economic capacity to do so. Only with the commodification of the city and the consequent privatization of the right to inhabit it is possible to expel those who cannot adapt to the new conditions demanded by the city itself as a capitalist societal mode.

In this way, this privilege to the city can be understood as an ideological, spatial and economic project by which the city operates no longer as a habitable place, but as a means of production by which capital exploits space to obtain a surplus value through its transformation into a commodity in permanent consumption. The privilege to the city is evidenced in the distribution dynamics of Airbnb accommodations, since most of the active accommodations in Mexico City are not only a guarantee of multiple points of public transport and proximity to spaces where Mexican city life is concentrated but are also located within colonies where marginalization and violence are low.

In other words, Airbnb’s business model contributes to urban metamorphosis in a negative way because it transforms the urban rights achieved gradually and historically by its inhabitants, into privileges accessible only to certain population sectors with high purchasing power. Thus, by operating in cities with high population density and social inequality, austere platforms like Airbnb intervene in the city’s production and contribute to the logics of social segregation and exclusion.

In addition to the above, there is the exploitation and deepening of the socio-territorial inequalities around the cities of the 21st century, since the concentration of houses, apartments and rooms by hosts goes hand in hand with the erosion of objective conditions so that the population of popular classes has the right to a property; on the contrary, the logic of commodification of the city forces to systematically increase the population that does not have the economic capacity to become a residence, forcing it to wander through the neoliberal city through renting as a new way of inhabiting the urban space (Gainsforth, 2021; Garcia, 2022; Ciaramelli, 2023).

In this way, the neoliberal city promotes a new societal project founded on the privilege of the city, where gentrification operates as a mechanism of expulsion and where hosting platforms such as Airbnb erode the habitability of the city under an instrumental and accelerating reason. Given this situation, it is necessary to observe in future research how dispossessed urbanites organize themselves to face advanced capital and how to recover/prefigure their right to the city in contexts marked by a growing and unfavorable correlation of forces.

One way to analyze this dimension lies in the complicity or commitment of governments to face or not this situation. In Mexico, in October 2024 an amendment was made to the Tourism Law of Mexico City, as well as the Housing Law and the Law for the Integral Reconstruction of the capital to, among other things, establish a maximum of six months of the total rental time of a property and prohibit the registration on Airbnb of homes of a popular or social character or that have been rebuilt by natural events such as earthquakes (Rodríguez Soto, 2024). These measures are similar to those that have been implemented in other countries such as the United States, Germany and Spain (Vollmer, 2019; Gainsforth, 2021), so it is necessary to continue evaluating this dimension hand in hand with a territorial order that seeks social justice. The spatial panorama presented is configured as a viable method that can be useful in the territorial planning of cities, offering elements to regulate, for example, the number of accommodations of this type of platforms according to the colony or neighborhood, as well as to allocate a part of the taxes charged to these platforms to improve other urban areas to reduce socio-territorial inequalities (security, mobility and rent price) within cities.

One element that would contribute positively to these processes of regulation and territorial planning would be the transparency of the data related to the location of these accommodations by Airbnb as necessary inputs for the development of public policies that allow to curb the socio-spatial dislocations parallel to the operation of the austere platforms.

These efforts show the beginning of the positioning of the Mexican State and governments in the face of the problems that affect its inhabitants in the face of new global dynamics of eventual human mobility and for various purposes. These processes of digital and territorial regulations are fundamental parts of the contemporary urban question. What is clear is that governments cannot deny the right to the city to their own citizens. In fact, from a social justice perspective, the right to the city in the 21st century may be an-

thing but negotiable, so the denunciation of its transformation into a privilege should be echoed in the near future.

Finally, it is important to insist that to think about the city of the 21st century it is necessary to recognize and integrate platforms and their business models as elements that intervene in the production and arrangement of contemporary cities.

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