

# The uses and functions of heritage in postcolonial communities

Laura Revilla

**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims to explore distinct notions of heritage and security from a bottom-up and decolonial line of action and contributes to the production of knowledge within anthropology by pointing to a conceptual and empirical connection between heritage and security. This study examines this intersection by using the methodological approach of comparative ethnography. This intersection offers an insight into a decolonial approach, critical perspective, and constructivist paradigm from the proposed framework.



**KEYWORDS:** Bottom-up heritage. Decolonial approach. Anthropology. Security. Mexico

## Os usos e funções do patrimônio em comunidade pós-coloniais

**RESUMO:** Este artigo pretende explorar noções distintas de patrimônio e segurança a partir de uma linha de ação ascendente e descolonial, e contribuir para a produção de conhecimento no âmbito da antropologia, ao apontar para uma conexão conceitual e empírica entre patrimônio e segurança. Esta pesquisa examina essa interseção por meio da abordagem metodológica da etnografia comparada. Os métodos escolhidos oferecem uma visão sobre uma abordagem decolonial, perspectiva crítica e paradigma construtivista a partir da interseção proposta.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Patrimônio de baixo para cima. Abordagem descolonial. Antropologia. Segurança. México

---

Laura Revilla

PhD Candidate in Heritage Studies, Brandenburg University of Technology.  
Email: revillau@b-tu.de

---

RECEBIDO: 23/12/2022

APROVADO: 09/02/2023

## **1 Introduction to a Decolonial Research**

Heritage has several dimensions that require in-depth exploration. This paper explores diverse forms of heritage and security from local perspective in postcolonial Mexican communities. There is an assumption that World Heritage Sites (WHS) tend to be safer due to protection and formal forms of surveillance (HAN et al., 2020), yet this notion can be contested with local practices and experiences. Mexico is filled with a mixture of cultural ties and practices that require further analysis in order to understand the potential layers that heritage may arise for social benefits, such as security in Comonfort, San Miguel de Allende, and Celaya in Guanajuato.

In the following sections, I examine distinct notions of heritage and security from a bottom-up and decolonial line of action and contribute to the production of knowledge within anthropology by pointing to a conceptual and empirical connection between the fields of heritage and security. Latin America requires in-depth study and analysis. According to Aldana and Ramírez (2012), this area has the highest number of homicides in the world; therefore, more focus is relevant to the diverse social aspects. Looking at cultural aspects is very much needed as Graham and Howard (2008) suggest, turning a look to the continent will, in addition, achieve a to turn our attention to other spaces and localities, “shifting the geography of reason” (MIGNOLO, 2009, p.15). For this particular research it is important to consider an adequate methodology to explore the context through a decolonial lens and open up diverse meanings and understandings from local perspectives.

The chosen methods aim to reveal notes, ideas, meanings, and shades of experiences within a locality and build upon conceptualisations, layers, and uses behind heritage and security, expanding the set framework, becoming a people centred study following Filippucci (2009). Furthermore, Hönke and Müller (2012) and Bigo (2016) suggest that for critical studies, an ethnography allows to have deep and reflexive and reach understandings of local meanings through observation and participation and interpreting experiences, which is essential to grasp socio-cultural forms engaging in complexity and not dismissing it (BARTH, 2000; SEWELL JR,

2005). This leads to unfolding a dialogue with between disciplines by acknowledging the limits of a field, building collaboration with others (ANG, 2006) and linking academy with society (NEWELL, 2007). As Miller (2017) asserts, through ethnography, one can be open to the world and provide meaningful understanding.

The paper is divided into sections that clarify notions of heritage and security, and explain the conceptual and empirical link between them in relation to postcolonial settings. This framework was explored in a set of case studies in the Mexican region of Guanajuato. The intersection aims to understand how the pragmatic link between heritage and security has been unexplored; in particular, a connection to citizen culture and citizen security, which broads the relationship between identity and security.

## **2 Heritage in Postcolonial Settings**

This paper looks at the localities of San Miguel de Allende, Comonfort, and Celaya located in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. These setting share cultural ties and both colonial and postcolonial trajectories; however, they have diverse backgrounds and historical development especially during the colonial phase (FERRO VIDAL, 2019).

San Miguel de Allende was occupied by wealthy Spanish families and workers and had prestigious growth during the colony and afterwards. The setting produced many crafts and artworks for decoration and luxury. During the twentieth century, many art institutions were founded, which were subsidized by partnerships from the United Sated. This led to a high number of immigrants, mostly retired veteran soldiers. The city was nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008 which led to a touristic destination with gentrification problems (PACHECO; VALLEJO, 2016).

Comonfort faced another development narrative since during the colony, it was accounted as a town for indigenous, where the Spanish settlers face many difficulties in conquest and domination. This town has mostly mixed indigenous practices with Spanish traditions. This is seen mostly in religious activities with Catholic and preHispanic forms in diverse quarters (RÍOS et al., 2021).

Celaya can be referred to as a town with paths or roads. In other words, its location allowed for important actions from south to north of the country (ARGÜELLO, 2016). The growth of this space is mostly related to infrastructure and later on to industry from the nineteenth century onwards and with societal problems that such developments may provoke (SOTO, 2008).

These spaces share colonial effects in terms of social and cultural practices which can be exemplified in their heritage. Heritage in Latin America and Mexico is a complex concept that is, to some extent, newly constructed. As colonial settings, the need to build an identity occurred in the nineteenth century just after the independence from mainline Spain. Moreover, it was of great importance for the elite government to assemble a set of legitimising factors to assimilate the new state. Therefore, this interpretation of cultural identity became a linear thought based on the pre-Columbian assets. Along this line, heritage was thought and shared with European values based on colonial politics. On this basis, the indigenous past was commemorated as a prestigious and unifying aspect. However, this led to the assumption of cultural heritage as a homogenous and passive folkloric scenario and, in some ways, artificial (GÓMEZ, 2008). Similarly, the growing heritage industry is entwined with queries of coloniality through which postcolonial societies accessed the heritage effect and discourse, yet this was a Western view (RAUSSERT; KALTMEIER, 2017). Mainly, heritage in the region has been presented as a theatre and as a way to form part of the global discourse reflecting national identity, a classical past, and a museum-like display of a collection of traditions (CANCLINI, 2012).

Diversity is key in many spaces and should be acknowledged as a valuable element in cultural heritage. Mexico has a complex history that is given by its diversity and both colonial and postcolonial frameworks. Moreover, there is a grave amount of inequality in Mexico due to two main factors: economic reasons and educational contemplation; therefore, it is not possible to acknowledge heritage as a unique form. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the official institutions designated certain monuments, as thought of, as national heritage assuming that everyone

would feel a connection and build a significance to a Prehispanic past and overlooking the Spanish attributes. In this sense, the approved agencies lack of reflection and an updated form of thinking about heritage that takes into consideration various cultural groups (ROSAS MANTECÓN, 2005).

As a postcolonial country, Mexico faces many challenges related to understanding heritage as a changing and moving concept. The impacts of coloniality have been permeated into the national cultural institutions having a “top-down” managing of heritage with one possible historical discourse going back to the Independence period. This has an effect on “othering” communities that have a different relation with heritage that does not fit into the national scheme. These communities are even though to be timeless or living in the past, constructing an “exotic alterity” (KALTMEIER; RUFER, 2017); yet the effects of globalisation have induced in conceiving heritage in diverse modes (SHLOSSBERG, 2018).

There is a need to establish a new discourse of multi-culturism within Mexico, since the nation is composed of various subcultures and not one focus, as illustrated by Kaltmeir and Rufer. Moreover, after several years, a reflection on heritage must be carried out, as Gómez (2008) argued. Following Shlossberg a “study-up” implementation of heritage studies could be the groundwork for the understanding of Mexican heritage from another perspective being induced by some academics. Heritage in Latin America is still missing the understanding of the social uses it can have; until today it is just a matter for those experts specialized in the past, focusing on cultural practices in the sense of performances that represent social actions including everyday behaviours (CANCLINI, 2012).

### **3 Security in Postcolonial Settings**

Postcolonialism considers the conceptualisation of security outside the western states, viewing the notion of security in the “Third World”, considering issues like social welfare, the effects of colonialism, and the necessity to “catch up” to the rest of the world. This subfield has been linked to anthropology. It

prelimits no universal concept of security and suggests undertaking ethnographic fieldwork to identify local constructions of security to understand and deepen the notion rather than assuming a Western implication. This points to taking into consideration the diverse organization of societies with its key areas in governance, violence, and legitimacy. Security analysis considers local constructions, which have their own implications, epistemology, and methodology (BUZAN; HANSEN, 2009). Critical security studies consider exploring non-Western societies and postcolonial conditions opening to alternative forms of knowledge (COLLECTIVE, 2006) in a world where the colonial conditions still seem to govern (BOOTH, 2007). On the same lines, security studies would have more outreach by focusing on the everyday practices (BUEGER; MIREANU, 2014).

Thus, the security concept cannot be generalized. Security has different meanings in different societies and in the same society at different times. Thorough research is required to comprehend the link between social structures and practices in diverse societies to avoid generalizations and focus on context and practical knowledge (KRAUSE, 1998). This notion is shared by Booth (2007) who argues that it is relevant to look deeper into the politics of the meaning of security, and that a way for this is to understand what people understand as security by looking at insecurity as a subjective concept. Furthermore, when a security marker is added to a particular security issue the problem becomes relevant for a group. The author highlights that security is a state of being and feeling safe. However, there may be false perceptions of security in two ways. First, feeling safe and not sense the threats, and feeling unsafe despite the lack of threats. In that sense, it is relevant to choose a particular referent to study depending on the issue being analysed, exploring theories and practices of security that also acknowledge individuals and civil society groups in the know-how.

Security concerns in San Miguel de Allende, Comonfort, and Celaya are considered diverse in terms of the various functions of this term and the power-knowledge relations (FOUCAULT, 2013). In addition, San Miguel de Allende at first glimpse is considered a secure space due to surveillance and protection (CARRANZA,

2022), as opposed to Celaya, which is considered a highly insecure place (MÉXICO..., 2021). Moreover, Comonfort will be placed in the middle of these two cities in terms of security (*Semáforo Delictivo*, 2022). Controversially, the information presented in the media is one narrative that presents information which is a municipal Report of Incidents from the State. In this document, San Miguel de Allende is listed as the second city with more criminal activity with regard to high-impact crimes, as the three settings are less than 30 km away from each other; however, they present a difference in security levels (ENVIPE, 2020, [n.d.]).

#### **4 Postcolonial Theory: A Common Field between Heritage and Security**

Once colonized territories have the tedious task of forming a national identity as a result of a post-colony. Conversely, his mission has, resulted in the repression of alternative and diverse views with different perceptions of heritage and identity, which may interfere with national objectives that put aside complex realities and aims for a single line to facilitate the concept of heritage. However, heritage offers an interrelation between people and a place to form a sense of community from and starting at a local level, which can be combined with religious or spiritual beliefs that materialize its idea of affiancing with heritage rather than from an outsource, which can be related to impose national values. This is linked to Western and global discourses of heritage conservation with a nineteenth-century vision of territories. On these lines, there is a challenge in postcolonial spaces to reconsider heritage as a process filled with multiple narratives forms that social efficiencies that are of the local levels (HARRISON; HUGHES, 2010). Moreover, forms of identity change in a postcolonial context in which indigenous people and altern groups have struggled to control their own heritage and those cultural aspects that help define them, in addition, to the way they are perceived by the world (SMITH, 2006). Also, Smith (2006) points out the matter of control over heritage is a political brawl over power since heritage acquires both political means and holds various interest such as statements of identity

and control of the past. The author mentions that heritage as a process is based on experience of place and practices of remembering that offers meaning and identity is in itself a process of heritage that a community undertakes; however, in absence of such control, a community faces the possibility to be imposed with viewpoints that can interfere with their identity; thus, heritage also serves as a tool to understand the present making it an “active” sustenance instead of the passive voice of other settlements.

In many societies, heritage should be understood as a practice. Ashworth et al. (2007), capture the idea of core plus model societies where there are diverse cultural groups that add to the main one. This model can be found in postcolonial societies that went through the process of identity formation. This implies that there is a central identity that may be partly composed of other additions, that are perceived as valid, but just complement, and do not achieve a key role. In other words, these add-on fragments are seen in the periphery or sub-categories, added cautiously, and may be seen as exotic and decorative. This type of model is presented in official heritage policies is upheld on a thin line because it does not consider the continuous change presented in societies.

The postcolonial theory can contribute to security studies by establishing the limits and multiplicity of the field. In other words, Hönke and Müller (2012) propose to decolonise security studies by decolonising research by approaching non-official and bottom-up analysis that considers everyday forms of security rather than institutionalised and top down forms such as surveillance and risk management that follow a specific discourse. This line would allow a plural and heterogenous understandings of knowledge and practices that contributes to the set categories. For this to be implemented, it is relevant to look at specific cases and ways in which security knowledge and practices are used; therefore, ethnographic methods are suggested, which allows both local comprehension as a strong basis for useful overviews for the implementation of models. In particular, following Bueger and Mireanu (2014), participant observation can be a very useful method to gain deeper insights and extend the study of security towards a practical base



field that aims at problem solving, critical reflection, and uncovering diverse layers and security discourses.

Violence and insecurity are strongly connected. Drawing on Müller (2018), new violence is primarily criminal within the Latin American context, which is the most violent region in the world. Violence is generally viewed as a problem linked to weak actions and corruption. Mainly, to understand crime and violence it is relevant to approach and analyse the informal; that is to say, go beyond the simplicity of security forces such as police to a multifaceted comprehension. This analysis includes power struggles, methods, and thoughts; particularly, the forms of governance where criminal regulation can indeed offer security creating a complex situation of crime and violence governance. Thus, Müller points towards the need for a new research schema to study crime and violence in the region.

For a better understanding of security in Latin America it is important to consider the role that culture can play. As Mockus et al. (2012) point out, culture can lead to the regulation and justification of certain attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs in relation to ways of coexistence. Subsequently, referring to cultural aspect can lead to broader mechanisms for approaching violence in the region. Since violence or its absence cannot be fully explained with only one factor, it must reflect on a multilayer analysis that looks at the citizen culture that requires creativity and co-responsibility to build adequate policies. This gives rise to citizen security that is based on measures directed towards identifying beliefs, habits and motivations that tend to guide people to behave in a certain way that can be harmful to others. Therefore, this approach is a profound assessment for necessary interventions.

## **5 Conceptual and Empirical Intersections between Heritage and Security**

In many disciplines culture has been a theme with many understandings of it. Ashworth et al. (2007) takes Sewell's notion of culture to explain the concept of heritage as a set of practices and often as interchangeable. Heritage may have many meanings in this

regard. Heritage can be perceived as knowledge, a cultural product, and an economic resource, and it can determine socio-cultural values, give a sense of belonging, and prompt emotions of solidarity through diverse experiences and achieving social cohesion, and have a political use. This suggests, following Schofield (2015) that has heritage diverse meanings for different people. Smith (2006) draws on the fact that heritage is a form of knowledge and engagement, and a social practice that enhance emotions, sense of self, memories, and is linked to experience. Smith (2006) argued that the materiality of heritage becomes relevant because of the activities set around giving meaning. Harrison (2010) also shares this notion by capturing that heritage can be seen as a social action that relates to the identity making and becomes part of everyday culture. He also offers the terms top-down or bottom-up heritage. The first is related to the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). The second with community-based practice.

Heritage and coloniality with decolonisation have rooted connections. Smith (2006) and Harrison (2013) consider this a matter of control over heritage, which becomes a power-knowledge struggle with political means. In addition, this is related to statements of identity and control of the past that had until recently one single viewpoint within a diversity of communities. Moreover, a community encounters the possibility of being imposed with viewpoints that can interfere with its identity. Ashworth et al. (2007), capture the idea of core plus model societies, within in postcolonial contexts, where there are diverse cultural groups that add to the main one, which are perceived as valid, but just complement, and not achieving a key role relating to official heritage policies. This can be illustrated by Giblin (2015) who determines that colonial matters of contemporary authorised heritage enforced control over alternative unofficial practices. This calls for the need of a bottom-up approach that can even influence political movements, artistic projects such as the case of museums that would allow reflection upon discourses and critically analyse cases and their long colonial effects, as Kerner (2016) captures and opens to diverse decolonial options and projects, as Mignolo (2013) captures.

With this, it is crucial to turn to Mockus et al. (2012) who refer to the cultural aspect that can to reflect and reach multilayer analysis that looks at the citizen culture as the form that motivates that tends to guide people to behave in a certain way that could be harmful to others. This is then directed towards citizen security, which is based on measures directed towards identifying those beliefs, habits, and norms that have a negative impact on a community based on a deep assessment of necessary interventions for change. This too is harnessed by Ceballos and Martin (2004) in determining an approach to break old costumes by means of directing new messages and symbols that guided to new imaginaries and representations of citizenship by means of increasing participation and rekindling moral values producing a place of coexistence; therefore, citizen culture becomes the core of the action plan for citizen security.

Moriconi Bezerra (2011) explains the concept of citizen security, which is particularly concerned with violence and crime. Citizen security has more outreach in understanding sociocultural forms and contemplates the function of morals, values, or virtues as customs that negatively or positively guide a locality and yield preventative measures, such as social projects that have the objective of modifying some sort of social disorder in Latin America.

Another connections worth noting is the space for community engagement. Sánchez (2012) and Ceballos & Martin (2004) call attention to a deeper cultural connection and actions of coexistence that lead to the acknowledgement of the rights and duties of each citizen for the common objective of dealing with conflicts based on the framework of a shared image in a public space. This common image can be seen in projects that consider aspects of participation and recreation, which leads to autoregulation by individuals on a long-term basis. It is also relevant to point out that this model requires a strong community with rooted instructions to withstand violence. This suggests that Comaroff & Comaroff (2004) note that criminal acts can result from a brittle society without communal cultural bonds. In his later comments, Mockus (2012) highlighted the term citizenship culture as a measure of peace building on the basis of mutual interaction and communication through art

and culture. In other words, culture becomes a channel for social cohesion given by the sense of ownership of each member of a community.

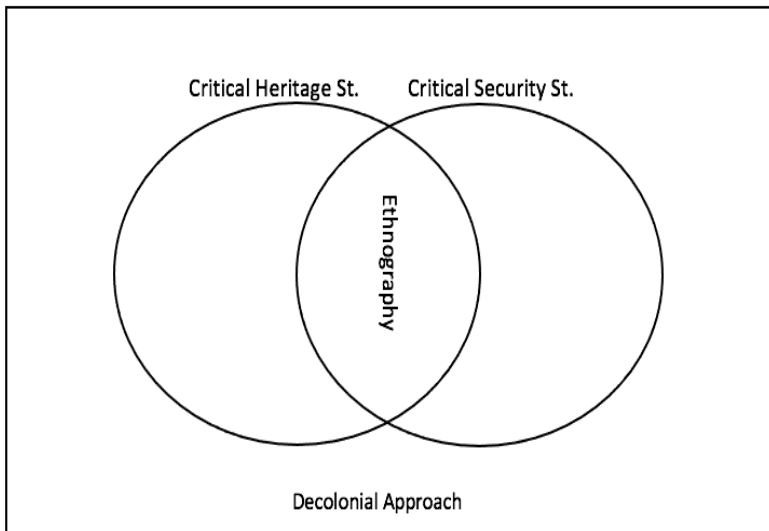
Social connections may intersect with heritage and security. Foultier (2019) hints that heritage enhances connections by socio-cultural activities, participation resulting in social control by citizens, and building solidarity with the common objective for improvement. Social connections and space are linked to heritage and security. Sánchez Torres et al. (2003) mention that the maintenance of buildings and streets is an important factor to consider as the first step to build social links between the citizens that would then extend to citizen empowerment of the space in addition to building social links that culminates in fortifying social cohesion given both by space and shared activities. The idea of space relates to Wilson and Kelling (1982) notes on Broken Windows Theory in the sense that setting becomes relevant when fighting insecurity since it has a direct effect of the people's behaviour. A clean and organised space has become a strategy for reducing criminal actions. However, this idea had to have deeper strategies, as illustrated by Winfield Reyes (2001), in the need for collective measures by enhancing social activities and creating a collective form of living. Mouly and Giménez (2017) suggest that by implementing cultural events, diverse sectors of the community may be involved, making these events a result of social integration.

Heritage is related to the concept of identity with regard to the political sphere. In addition, it has also acquired social use by creating an identity within a community, offering a sense of belonging, integration, visualizing history, prompting emotions and solidarity, and social cohesion. Heritage has become a very complex study since it deals with deeper themes and topics related to social and political implications as well as power struggle relations. Following Adams (2005) and Filippucci (2009) the field of anthropology and ethnographic approaches could allow a deeper exploration and understanding of heritage since it related directly to the community notion, experiences, and everyday practices.

This research follows the idea that it is through citizen culture that communities in the Mexican context can increase citizen

security. Heritage can be considered as an ingredient of citizen culture that leads to citizen security; hence, the relevance of exploring everyday practices and experiences and expanding on plurality of knowledge that contributes to reflecting on the uses of heritage and what functions these may arise in regard to community benefits as an outreach to security strategies. These lines require ethnographic methods to explore the intersection by looking at specific local knowledge, practices, and experiences to articulate the intersection from a bottom-up and decolonial opportunity.

**Figure 1 - Intersection Critical Heritage Studies and Critical Security Studies**



Source: By the author.

## 6 Methodological Approaches to a Decolonial Research

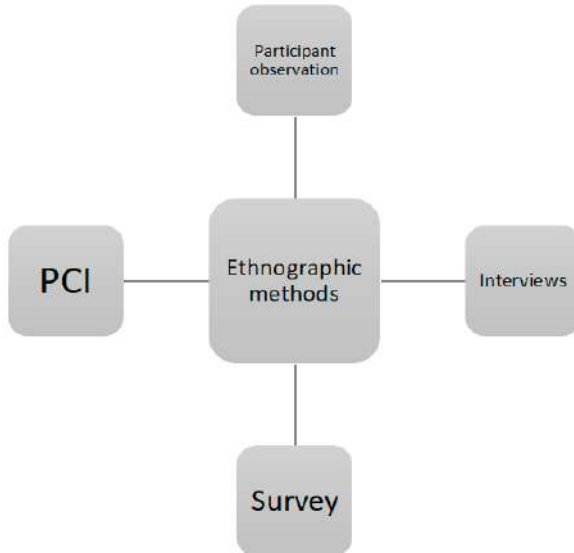
The research method for heritage is, as suggested by Andrews (2009), ethnography, which allows reflection, proposes approaches that reveal heritage as the production of meaning, identity, social value, and experiences. With this exploratory method, one can find a deep understanding to generate and extend theories by exploring phenomena and diverse knowledge (FLICK, 2014). It is a subjective method, yet it is analytical. It allows us to go deep into understanding heritage in an everyday context and from bottom-up research by focusing on everyday circumstances and heritage at a personal level for a group of people. Following Geismar (2015), critical anthropology allows for the understanding and construction of many forms of heritage from the community. In addition, the use of ethnographic strategies us to encounter findings during the investigation that look towards meaning making and interpretations of the participant influence within the research (GABRIELIAN, 1997), where knowledge is formed in an interchange with participants (FLICK, 2014).

This research considered several methods for data collection to make stronger connections during the analysis. I implemented what Flick (2014) referred to as triangulation to strengthen my qualitative research based on ethnography and grounded theory. This benefits this study because it focuses on several comparative layers and perspectives. I realised the methods in parallel, anticipating that participants would be open to several methods such as questionnaires or surveys, informal interviews, and problem-centered interviews (WITZEL, 2000); therefore, I established relationships with participants and repetead observations as part of the fieldwork with community members and experts.

For heritage, I looked at bottom-up and top-down heritage notions. The first considered cultural practices led by the community as part of a personal and group experience. Heritage can have diverse connotations and meanings for different people. I followed Smith's (2006) approach by employing open-ended questions to capture heritage for diverse people based on experiences. The case for citizen security, I looked at the Citizen Culture Survey provided by *Cosmo-Visionarios* with a pre-set number of focus

areas. However, I only considered those questions and elements that directly related to the established framework. In other words, these sections are linked to notions of culture, identity, community, and heritage.

**Figure 2 – Ethnographic Methods**



Source: By the author.

## **7 Heritage in San Miguel de Allende, Comonfort, and Celaya**

San Miguel de Allende is a town with diverse cultural expressions mostly presented in architecture in the city centre. The interviews pointed to the Parish and the facades of buildings as the main heritage notions, followed by brass crafts, art galleries, and *Fiesta de los Locos* as a final expression. In this case, heritage has a strong tendency towards the material features and the colonial aspects presented in the edifices and churches portraying a neocolonial effect following Kaltmeier (2011) in a space filled with colonial nostalgia for elite groups. More on this, the city centre is mostly composed of hotels, restaurants, and shops with the purpose of becoming a tourism attraction based on consumption as a heritage experience (HARRISON, 2013).

The empirical research led to the finding that, first, dissonant heritage is considered, as stated by Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996), where local artisans are being displaced by gallery artists. Second, the idea that the stone matters more than local community events, which are being lost due to lack of ownership of a community space. In addition, the identity of the people in San Miguel de Allende is related to the notion of multiculturalism given by diverse foreign communities and colonial richness. Nevertheless, gentrification and tourism policies are threatening the local cultural composition and, as a consequence, the loss of tradition, where festivities are maintained for tourism purposes (PACHECO; VALLEJO, 2016). This coincides with Navarrete (2021), who stated that inequality in the city is a main consequence of a city dedicated to enhancing tourism.

**Figure 3 - Tourists in San Miguel de Allende**



Source: By the author.



The data collected in Comonfort pointed to an understanding of heritage related to local feasts, dances, ceramics, and food. In addition, some forms of heritage describe aspects, such as *El Cerro de los Remedios*, and diverse fruits and vegetables grown in the region such as avocados, grapefruit, and limes. It is worth mentioning that there was a homogenous discourse within the notions of heritage presented by diverse members of the community. However, this was not the case with the expert discourses, who expressed their notion of heritage related to religious architecture such as the Parish and the Archaeological site, which was not mentioned by the community as their heritage. This would suggest, as pointed out by Smith (2006), that the Authorized Heritage Discourse reproduced by professionals is related with materiality and the idea of tangible heritage. Comonfort has elements of dissonant heritage (TUNBRIDGE; ASHWORTH, 1996), where *molcajeteros* or ceramic artisans are displaced from *El Cerro de los Remedios* due to the fact that the archaeological site lays there.

Comonfort presents many cultural expressions from the community, which are valued more than the imposed notions of heritage. Moreover, the community has control and ownership of two core spaces in the town: the main garden and the courtyard on the *Templo del los Remedios*, which are part of everyday life practices and experiences. The identity in Comonfort is linked to nature and the ancestral indigenous past based on the Prehispanic settlements of *Chichimecas* (RÍOS et al., 2021). This identity is affected by immigration and the negative effects of tourism.

**Figure 4 – Community Dance in Comonfort**



Source: By the author.

The case of Celaya can be considered a space of *mestizaje* allowing to see the expression of mixed Spanish and indigenous *Otomí* traditions, as pointed by (SOTO, 2008). On the one hand, Celaya presents a vast notion of heritage in religious buildings, which is reflected by Mézquita et al. (2020). On the other hand, it the community acknowledged heritage expression in historical memory in two ways following Assmann and Czaplicka (1995). With the idea of collective memory from historical narratives from Independence, along with the industrial development of the twentieth century. The second is related to local communication and memory, which is presented as the theme of *cajeta*, a sweet made from goat's milk, and the remembrance of savouring this syrup from a young age given by grandparents and parents to children.

These local and collective notions are shown in community spaces such as the main garden or square and in diverse crafts fairs that take place in the main square of the city centre. The identity in Celaya is very much related to industry development and the idea of *mexicanidad* by (LÓPEZ CABALLERO, 2009). This city presents many forms of heritage which can be presented in festivities

such as *las luminarias*, yet the organised crime has a negative effect in the cultural identity of the community having an impact in decreasing participation in cultural events especially during the late afternoon.

**Figure 4 – Cajeta and Sweets in Celaya**



Source: By the author.

## **8 Citizen Culture and Citizen Security in San Miguel de Allende, Comonfort, and Celaya**

The information in Table 1 was obtained from surveys administered during the fieldwork to 90 people, 30 in each city, and additional interviews with community members and experts. The questions considered the importance of cultural events and the participation of members of the community, and the level of cultural expressions encountered in order to obtain data to explain elements of citizen culture. The second part of the examination and analysis involved issues of citizen security, such as security perception, criminality in the means of the number of victims, and the perception of security in regard to the last year, meaning 2021.

**Table 1 – Citizen Culture and Citizen Security**

Units of Analysis	San Miguel de Allende	Comonfort	Celaya
Importance of Events	Low	High	Medium
Space for community	Not defined	Main garden and Temple space	Main Square
Number of cultural expressions	Low	High	Medium
Security perception	Good	Regular	Bad
Criminality	7	5	5
Perception of insecurity	15	9	20

Source: By the author.

San Miguel de Allende presented the lowest level of importance of organizing and participating in community events, as well as a number of diverse cultural expressions, and had no defined place for the community. In contrast, Comonfort presents the highest level of participation of community members at events and has diverse forms of heritage expressions, in addition to having a set community space in the garden and temple area. This is followed by Celaya as having a medium level of organizing and participation in events and the number of cultural expressions; additionally, it has a defined community space in the main garden or square.

In regard to citizen security, even though, San Miguel de Allende was presented as a having “good” perception of security, the number of criminal deeds was higher, being the case that seven out of thirty were victims of a crime in compared to five in both Comonfort and Celaya. The perception of insecurity was higher in Celaya due to the ongoing conflict of organized crime, followed by San Miguel de Allende, with half of the people referring to an increase in insecurity from the previous year. The case of Comonfort where there is a high level of community events and participation, in addition, to ownership and control of heritage from the community and having a physical space for cultural events presented in numerous cultural expressions displayed lower numbers of crime indicators.

## 9 Final Considerations

This framework focused on establishing ways to understand the link between critical heritage studies and critical security studies by focusing on communities' perspectives rather than imposing generalisations. The main point of attention is local contexts and practical knowledge from everyday life experiences. This leads to a multiplicity of narratives and layers broadening the two fields lens. This points to a decolonial opportunity where ethnography can be considered an adequate method to examine socio-cultural contexts, since it allows us to grasp communal implications and provide alternative forms of knowledge claims. Heritage and security can be classified as non-official and bottom-up, related to everyday practices being plural, heterogeneous, knowledge-practice based, versus top-down, where security is homogenous and purely institutionalized. This brings to the topics of coloniality and decolonization that share ideas of top-down versus bottom-up products of knowledge. Decolonization relates to liberate the strings of production of knowledge and acknowledge an heterogeneous society.

The intersection of heritage and security can be acknowledged in two ways. First, formal security based on surveillance or physical security forces in World Heritage Sites (WHS) provides a superficial sense of security. Second, social connections in the form of community integration that gives connection raises solidarity, a common objective for improvement, and positive social behaviours. This form requires a space that should be clean and neat, which has a direct effect on behaviour, yet requires deeper strategies for the empowerment of space. This can be achieved through sociocultural activities and practices as part of a collective form of living that enhances social cohesion. This research prompts the expansion of the field of heritage by showing that decolonial heritage can have an important social function; therefore, showing the relevance of culture in everyday life and dealing with social challenges, such as decolonial security in postcolonial settings.

## REFERENCES

- ADAMS, K. M. Public interest anthropology in heritage sites: Writing culture and righting wrongs. **International Journal of Heritage Studies**, v. 11, i. 5, p. 433–439, 2005.
- ALDANA, S.; RAMÍREZ, G. Seguridad ciudadana: Viejos problemas, nuevas miradas. **Desafíos de Cultura Ciudadana Para La Crisis de (in) Seguridad En América Latina**, [s.v.], p. 87–114, 2012.
- ANDREWS, C. Heritage ethnography as a specialised craft: Grasping maritime heritage in Bermuda. In: \_\_\_\_\_. **Heritage Studies**. New York: Routledge, 2009. p. 158–181.
- ANG, I. From cultural studies to cultural research: Engaged scholarship in the twenty-first century. **Cultural Studies Review**, v. 12, i. 2, p. 183–197, 2006.
- ARGÜELLO, C. E. S. Desde Toluca a Atlacomulco, hacia Celaya ya Valladolid. **Historia 2.0: Conocimiento Histórico En Clave Digital**, i. 11, p. 128–139, 2016.
- ASHWORTH, G. J.; GRAHAM, B.; TUNBRIDGE, J. E. **Pluralising Pasts: Heritage**. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- ASSMANN, J.; CZAPLICKA, J. Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. **New German Critique**, i. 65, p. 125–133, 1995.
- BARTH, F. Boundaries and connections. In: COHEN, A. P. **Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values**. New York: Psychology Press, 2000. p. 42 - 61.
- BIGO, D. Rethinking security at the crossroad of international relations and criminology. **British Journal of Criminology**, v. 56, i. 6, p. 1068–1086, 2016.
- BOOTH, K. **Theory of world security**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- BUEGER, C.; MIREANU, M. Proximity. In: ARADAEU, C. et al. (eds.). **Critical Security Methods**. New York: Routledge, 2014. p. 134–157.
- BUZAN, B.; HANSEN, L. **The Evolution of International Security Studies**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- CANCLINI, N. G. **Culturas híbridas**. Buenos Aires: Debolsillo, 2012.
- CARRANZA, A. San Miguel de Allende, la ciudad más segura de Guanajuato. **Líder Empresarial**, [online], 2022, November 17. Available at: <https://www.liderempresarial.com/san-miguel-de-allende-la-ciudad-mas-segura-de-guanajuato/>. Access on: 17 November 2022.

- CEBALLOS, M.; MARTIN, G. **Bogotá, Anatomía de una transformación: Políticas de seguridad ciudadana 1995-2003**. Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2004.
- COLLECTIVE, C. Critical approaches to security in Europe: A networked manifesto. **Security Dialogue**, v. 37, i. 4, p. 443-487, 2006.
- COMAROFF, J.; COMAROFF, J. L. **Criminal Obsessions, after Foucault: Postcoloniality, Policing, and the Metaphysics of Disorder**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- ENVIPE. **Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública 2020**. [s.l.]: [s.n.], [n.d.]. Available at: <https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/envipe/2020/> Access on 17 November 2022.
- FERRO VIDAL, L. E. **El acontecer indígena en Guanajuato**. Ciudad de México: UNAM, 2019.
- FILIPPUCCI, P. Heritage and methodology. In: SORENSEN, M. L. S.; CARMAN, J. (eds.). **Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches**. New York: Routledge, 2009. p. 319.
- FLICK, U. **An introduction to qualitative research**. New York: Sage, 2014.
- FOUCAULT, M. **Archaeology of knowledge**. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- FOULTIER, C. Community involvement in times of social insecurity. In: OEVERMANN, H.; GANTNER, E. (eds.). **Securing Urban Heritage: Agents, Access and Securitization**. New York: Routledge, 2019. p. 13-30.
- GABRIELIAN, V. Qualitative research methods: An overview. In: MILLER, G. J.; YANG, K. (eds.). **Handbook of Research Methods in Public Administration**. New York: CRC Press, 1997. p. 167-205.
- GEISMAR, H. Anthropology and heritage regimes. **Annual Review of Anthropology**, i. 44, p. 71-85, 2015.
- GIBLIN, J. Critical approaches to post-colonial (post-conflict) heritage. In: WATERTON, E.; WATSON, S. (eds.). **The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research**. New York: Springer, 2015. p. 313-328.
- GÓMEZ, M. S. El patrimonio cultural como narrativa totalizadora y técnica de gubernamentalidad. **Centro-h**, i. 1, p. 13-25, 2008.
- GRAHAM, B. J.; HOWARD, P. **The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity**. New York: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.
- HAN, W. et al. Impacts of the World Heritage List inscription: A case study of Kaiping Diaolou and Villages in China. **International Journal of Strategic Property Management**, v. 24, i. 1, p. 51-69, 2020.

HARRISON, R. **Understanding the politics of heritage**. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Heritage: Critical approaches**. New York: Routledge, 2013.

HARRISON, R.; HUGHES, L. Heritage, colonialism and postcolonialism. **Understanding the Politics of Heritage**, v. 3, i. 22, p. 234–269, 2010.

HÖNKE, J.; MÜLLER, M. Governing (in) security in a postcolonial world: Transnational entanglements and the worldliness of 'local'practice. **Security Dialogue**, v. 43, i. 5, p. 383–401, 2012.

KALTMEIER, O. Identity Politics: The Case of the San Luis Shopping Center in Quito. In: \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.). **Selling Ethnicity: Urban Cultural Politics in the Americas**, London: Routledge, 2011. p. 95.

KALTMEIER, O.; RUFER, M. The uses of heritage and the postcolonial condition in Latin America. In: \_\_\_\_\_. (eds.). **Entangled Heritages: Postcolonial Perspectives on the Uses of the Past in Latin America**. New York: Routledge, 2017. p. 56–68.

KERNER, I. La teoría postcolonial como teoría crítica global. **Devenires**, i. 34, p. 157–185, 2016.

KRAUSE, K. Critical Theory and Security Studies: The Research Programme of Critical Security Studies'. **Cooperation and Conflict**, v. 33, i. 3, p. 298–333, 1998.

LÓPEZ CABALLERO, P. The effect of othering: The historical dialectic of local and national identity among the originarios, 1950–2000. **Anthropological Theory**, v. 9, i. 2, p. 171–187, 2009.

MÉXICO, con el top 6 en el ranking de ciudades más violentas del mundo: Informe. **El Universal**, [online], 2021, April 20. Nación. Available at:

<https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/mexico-con-el-top-6-en-el-ranking-de-ciudades-mas-violentas-del-mundo-informe>. Access on: 17 November 2022.

MÉZQUITA, E. C. Z. et al. Análisis del turismo religioso para establecer una estrategia de mercadotecnia turística en Celaya, Guanajuato. **Cimexus**, v. 14, i. 2, p. 67–86, 2020.

MIGNOLO, W. D. Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and decolonial freedom. **Theory, Culture & Society**, v. 26, i. 7–8, p. 159–181, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_. Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. In: MIGNOLO, W. D.; ESCOBAR, A. (eds.). **Globalization and the Decolonial Option**. New York: Routledge, 2013. p. 303–368.



MILLER, D. Anthropology is the Discipline but the Goal is Ethnography. **HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory**, v. 7, i. 1, p. 27–31, 2017.

MOCKUS, A. Building “citizenship culture” in Bogotá. **Journal of International Affairs**, [s.n.], p. 143–146, 2012.

MOCKUS, A. et al. **Antípodas de La Violencia**: Desafíos de Cultura Ciudadana Para La Crisis de Inseguridad En América Latina. Washington: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2012.

MORICONI BEZERRA, M. Desmitificar la violencia: Crítica al discurso (técnico) de la seguridad ciudadana. **Revista Mexicana de Sociología**, v. 73, i. 4, p. 617–643, 2011.

MOULY, C.; GIMÉNEZ, J. Oportunidades y desafíos del uso del patrimonio cultural inmaterial en la construcción de paz en el posconflicto. Implicaciones para Colombia. **Estudios Políticos**, i. 50, p. 281–302, 2017.

MÜLLER, M. M. Governing crime and violence in Latin America. **Global Crime**, v. 19, i. 3–4, p. 171–191, 2018.

NAVARRETE, D. Políticas urbanísticas y culturales en las desigualdades de los centros Patrimonio de la Humanidad. El caso de San Miguel de Allende, México. **Desacatos**: Revista de Ciencias Sociales, i. 67, p. 66–81, 2021.

NEWELL, W. H. Decision Making in Interdisciplinary Studies. In: MORCOL, G. **Handbook of Decision Making**. New York: Routledge, 2007. p. 15–22.

PACHECO, M. I. F.; VALLEJO, M. P. G. Entre lo local y lo foráneo: Gentrificación y discriminación en San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato. **Revista Legislativa de Estudios Sociales y de Opinión Pública**, v. 9, i. 18, p. 183–206, 2016.

RAUSSERT, W.; KALTMEIER, O. Heritage-Boom: On Culture and Nature in the Americas. In: KALTMEIER, O.; RUFER, M. (eds.). **Entangled Heritages**: Postcolonial Perspectives on the Uses of the Past in Latin America. New York: Routledge, 2017. p. 170–191.

RÍOS, R. E. et al. Análisis De La Cultura Turística Y Sus Beneficios Para El Turismo En El Pueblo Mágico De Comonfort, Guanajuato, México. **Journal of Tourism and Heritage Research**, v. 4, i. 1, p. 49–68, 2021.

ROSAS MANTECÓN, A. Usos y desusos del patrimonio cultural: Retos para la inclusión social en la ciudad de México. **Anais Do Museu Paulista**: História e Cultura Material, i. 13, p. 235–256, 2005.

SÁNCHEZ, E. Bogotá: De la vigilancia y el control a la resolución pacífica de conflictos. In: MOCKUS, A. et al. (eds.). **Antípodas de La Violencia**. Desafíos de La Cultura Ciudadana Para La Crisis de (in) Seguridad En América Latina. Washington: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2012. p. 1–22.

SÁNCHEZ TORRES, F. J. et al. ¿**Garrote o zanahoria?** Factores asociados a la disminución de la violencia homicida y el crimen en Bogotá, 1993-2002. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2003.

SCHOFIELD, J. 'Thinkers and Feelers': A Psychological Perspective on Heritage and Society. In: WATERTON, E.; WATSON, S. (eds.). **The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research**, Sydney: Springer, 2015. p. 417-425.

SEMAFORO Delictivo, 2022. Available at: <http://guanajuato.semaforo.com.mx/>. Access on: 2022, November 25.

SEWELL JR, W. H. The concept(s) of culture. In: SPIEGEL, G. M. (eds.). **Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn**. New York: Psychology Press, 2005. p. 76-95.

SHLOSSBERG, P. Heritage practices, indigenismo, and coloniality: Studying-up into racism in contemporary Mexico. **Cultural Studies**, v. 32, i. 3, 414-437, 2018.

SMITH, L. **Uses of heritage**. New York: Routledge, 2006.

SOTO, R. C. **De los relatos que sorprenden a los hechos que indignan**. Acercamiento a la historia cultural demológica de Celaya. [s.l.]: EUMED, 2008.

TUNBRIDGE, J. E.; ASHWORTH, G. J. **Dissonant heritage**. The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict. New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 1996

WILSON, J. Q.; KELLING, G. L. Broken windows. **Atlantic Monthly**, v. 249, i. 3, p. 29-38, 1982.

WINFIELD REYES, F. N. Violencia y espacio público. **Esencia Espacio**, i. 12, p. 1-16, 2001.

WITZEL, A. The Problem-centered Interview. **Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung**, v. 1, i. 1, p. 01-16, 2000.