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Urban culture from the inhabitant in the coastal zone of the Department of Córdoba-Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Coastal areas are natural spaces with a high economic and tourist potential due to their access to the sea; however, the municipalities of the Department of Córdoba located in these ecosystems have a low financial and administrative performance measurement, due to the difficulties they have in mobilizing their own resources and managing territorial planning. In this sense, the city-citizen relationship established in the urban construction processes in two coastal municipalities of the department is analyzed from the point of view of living as a diagnosis of the urban needs of these places. It was approached from a mixed approach with sequential explanatory design and the survey of urban imaginaries was applied with questions of subjective nature about the feeling-thinking of the population in their territory. The results allow affirming that the aesthetic niches in both municipalities are adequate for their inhabitants between what they like (beach-tourist potential) and what they dislike (deficit of infrastructure and public services). (lack of infrastructure and public services) of the place where their socio-cultural, economic and political practices are rooted. economic and political practices are rooted. Taking into account that the territorialization processes in this region have been slow, it is region have been slow, urban management is required to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants in their environment. the quality of life of the inhabitants in their environment.

Keywords: coastal zone. territory. urban culture. inhabiting. urban niche

1. Introduction

Currently, to speak of the urban is to refer to the socio-cultural, economic, political and territorial processes around the collectives that make use of cities, which are assumed as a space that acquires values, identities and imaginaries historically constructed through the way in which one inhabits

and tries to inhabit, so it constitutes a space permanently transformed and in constant socialization where disputes and tensions are settled for the definition of meanings, as it is a political space traversed by multiple discourses^[1].

In this sense, the urban is formed by a permanent conflict between the existential plane, the need for order of the social actors that inhabit

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the city and citizen participation; therefore, it is considered a cultural manifestation that is related to the historical, political and social dimension that is reflected in the daily practices shared socially. This view reveals the configuration of diverse cities that converge in the physical space, where not only the one delimited by urban planners and planners is found, but also those that produce and reveal the symbolic topology and imaginary territories constructed by those who make permanent use of the city^[2], from the acts of inhabiting that socially produce the space, that is, the territory.

However, this perspective fricts with the common denominator of the problems of cities that focuses on urban projections devised under policies with their own interests, which respond to a physical environment that needs to be transformed, almost always behind the back of the real needs of the citizen who not only lives in the city, but also produces it, enjoys it, suffers it, fights for it, and claims it in what he does on a daily basis^[3]. Seen in this way, we speak of cities configured from a subjective level through interactive psychological mechanisms between citizen collectivities that turn it into an imaginary effect of those who inhabit it and that mark their behaviors or reactions as citizens^[4] at the time of defining, ordering and controlling the inhabited space or territory.

This perspective orients a new urbanism based on the citizen imaginary, that is, a participatory urbanism as a form of urban management that projects immediate and important solutions for the individual who needs to be linked in the construction of the urban space in which he/she develops daily^[3], which far from being diaphanous is the product of the appropriation and symbolic and instrumental valuation assigned by human beings who idealize it according to their longings, survival strategies and the scope of their social possibilities of realization as people^[5,6].

In view of this, the department of Córdoba in the Colombian Caribbean region has been experiencing an accelerated urban demographic

growth that reflects a worldwide trend and has increased urbanization processes, which, in turn, have given rise to social, cultural and environmental problems due to the misappropriation of public space, in the framework of industrial development with an impact on sustainability and changes in the culture and/or imaginary of the city in the urban areas of the same department, generating frictions between the new spatial and symbolic order foreseen in the urban projects and the citizen practices instituted to access, use and adapt/represent (territorialize) the city based on their needs and interests as individuals.

These tensions are the product of globalization processes contextualized in the department's urban spaces which, instead of promoting urban integration and social inclusion in accordance with their strengths and territorial characteristics, accentuate the difficulty in the effective provision of public services, the increase in unemployment and economic informality, and the execution of investment projects, among others. According to the Local Governance in the Department of Córdoba report conducted by Tuirán et al.^[7], with the exception of the capital Montería considered as the main focus of urban development and gathering place for the different intermunicipal activities within a subsystem in the southwest of the Colombian Caribbean Region, most of the territorial entities are characterized by presenting a measurement of financial and administrative performance in the management of the municipal territory medium and low, projecting a lag in its urban part derived from the deficient mobilization and management of resources in most of the municipalities of Córdoba.

One of these areas is the Costanera subregion that is integrated by the municipalities of San Antero, San Bernardo del Viento, Moñitos, Puerto Escondido, Los Córdoba, which despite the high economic and tourism potential due to their privileged geographical location by having access to the sea, have a low municipal performance measurement product of the difficulties in the

component of resource mobilization and land use planning management, except for the municipality of San Antero who has shown in recent years a different behavior within its group^[8].

In this sense, it is interesting to analyze the city-citizen relationship established in the processes of urban construction in the municipalities of the Department of Córdoba, taking into account that these are in a dynamic process of social, cultural, economic and political transformation. Hence the importance of developing studies on the citizen's senti-thinking in their experiences inside the city from their socio-cultural convictions and the appropriations they make of the urban space, with the purpose of having the necessary elements for the identification of new conceptions in relation to the ways of living that can be used as a diagnosis of the needs of the city and the citizen, taking into account that they are the main beneficiaries or affected by the urbanization processes that transform, develop and generate new dynamics in the environment in which they develop.

2. Territory as social production of habitation

Coastal areas are natural spaces that are characterized by polyfunctionality for human life, which makes them susceptible to be urbanized producing specific forms of interaction between society and environment, that is, urban lifestyles that make coastlines a territorial warp of complex relationships between the mainland and bodies of water, every time that in the context of globalization poses challenges in terms of sustainable development that allow living and productive activities associated with the strategic, landscape and port/maritime use potential^[8,9].

Several studies point out that these spaces are currently undergoing profound processes of territorial transformation and urban growth due to tourism development, the implementation of real estate projects and the construction of productive centers for the extraction of maritime resources,

which have a negative impact on the way of life of the communities settled in coastal areas. For example, the work of Álvarez Abel & Ther Ríos^[13] highlights the disappearance of worldviews on practices associated with traditional systems of local administration applied by the coastal populations of the Inland Sea in Chiloé in Chile to access coastal spaces and provide themselves with food species typical of these places, which are in transformation due to the installation of private enterprise in their territories, causing food shortages, conflicts between humans and environmental problems that require the cultural enrichment of policies linked to the use and access of the coastal edge clearly defined.

However, for Hidalgo et al.^[10] some communities that inhabit the coastal edges have managed to resist the development of real estate projects that affect the communities of owners of these places, through permanent social organization reflected in neighborhood councils or citizen groups that have renounced violent intervention actions and through judicial means take advantage of the weakness of local territorial planning instruments that are distant from the needs of citizens, who are unwilling to modify the conditions that led them to settle in those places because of real estate actors.

For their part, Martínez et al.^[11] analyzed the spatial patterns of urban growth on the main coastal geofoms in a riverside place of the Biobío River in Chile, taking into account that anthropization by urbanization in these places constitutes one of the processes with the greatest impact on the natural system of the coastal plain of the area, which evidences a form of linear and fragmented growth based on real estate projects that project urban unsustainability by ignoring the historical processes related to coastal spaces, where territorial practices have reduced the distance between these settlements and the urban center of Concepción in the Biobío Region, through the phenomenon of conurbation.

The study by Martí-Ciriquián &

García-Mayo^[12] provide an analysis of urban renewal processes in Spanish coastal cities around seafront and riverfront regeneration projects, which has meant not only the physical transformation of the place, but a progressive change in the inhabitants' perception of their city, that is, in the way of living and visiting the city, generating a series of social frictions characterized by the obsolescence of the activities/uses that historically constituted their spaces and the disconnection with the adjoining urban fabrics. A similar work is that of Guerrero Valdebenito & Alarcón Rodríguez^[14], who explored the tensions underlying the relationship between small-scale artisanal fishing and port infrastructure projects and urban development in urbanized systems of coastal settlements in Chile known as Caletas, where traditional sociocultural, economic and habitability practices are threatened.

As a whole, the previous studies reflect differentiated forms of social production of space in this type of areas that are in constant tension between traditional habitability and urban transformation around tourism, the real estate sector and the port-maritime industry; defining modes of urban life that obey the existence of a space that is organic to the very act of inhabiting, so it is constituted, according to Lefebvre & Lore^[15], in the horizon where individuals are located, organized, relate and live. From this perspective, for Santos^[16] space is a container of systems of natural objects (landscape) and is the content of systems of social actions/practices/experiences that are produced in it through specific forms that may not be originally geographical, but end up acquiring a territorial expression (habitat as social space) that derives from inhabiting, that is, from the uses and perceptions in the inhabited space that configure subjective cities (see **Figure 1**).

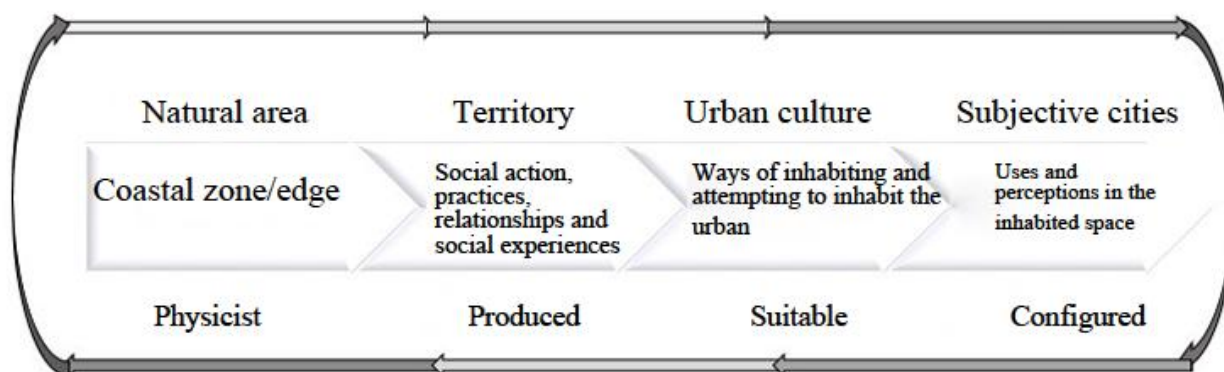


Figure 1 Dynamics of territory as social production of habitation.
Source: Own elaboration

Considering the above, the territory should not be assumed as something diaphanous, immutable and definitive since it is not possible to isolate the systems, objects and actions of the daily practices of the inhabitants, whose social relations are capable of producing/signifying said territory and this in turn shapes those relations, projecting specific ways of inhabiting as a spatial experience of daily life and its implication in the configuration of identities and collective heritage that generate attachments, feelings and emotions in people^[12,14].

Precisely, inhabiting constitutes a daily practice of meaning and significance to the fact

of being in the world (the experience of cohabitation), to the spatial/territorial nature of life (life is made in the inhabited space-territory) and to the dialectical relationship between what is made and what is made (friction between the instituted and the instituting when building territory)^[15]. In other words, it is the acts of inhabiting that allow an individual or group to appropriate space and turn it into territory through territorialization processes that condense a geo-eco-anthropic relationship in the practices of appropriation, organization and control of the territory by social actors who transform it and intervene in it, defining and

delimiting it as their context/scenario of life^[16], that is, their habitat.

This daily dynamic shapes an urban landscape that is constantly changing in terms of preferences in terms of the adequacy of its aesthetic niches, social interaction and privacy, citizen participation and the sense of community identity, which become necessary indicators for society to recognize in its territory landscape values and elements associated with the culture, needs and aspirations of those who are part of it.

In this sense, it can be said that the mixture of the above social attributes configures the urban cultural asset as a collective heritage of society. In this regard, the work of Macarrón^[17] states that today's society is characterized by having become aware of the value of cultural property as a collective heritage, universal in some cases, recognizing itself as heir but also as depositary and responsible, which leads to respecting its material, aesthetic, historical and documentary qualities in order to maintain the fullness of its authentic and original meanings. This entails respecting their material, aesthetic, historical and documentary qualities in order to maintain to the maximum the integrity of their authentic and original meanings, linked to the perceptions and uses of the inhabited space and the sense of belonging as an expression, according to Yory^[18], of the affective ties (positive feelings) that are built between people and the specific places they inhabit.

3. Methodological aspects

This study was approached through a mixed approach that involves the synergistic and complementary combination between qualitative and quantitative aspects in the collection and analysis of data from a broad and deep perspective of the phenomenon through a sequential explanatory design that allowed interpreting, explaining and deepening the findings in the data obtained from the application of the survey^[15] in the coastal municipalities of Moñitos and San Bernardo

del Viento in the north of the Department of Córdoba, Colombia (**Figure 2**).

For the identification of the physical, historical and socio-cultural particularities of the territory and the ways of denominating the urban world based on the qualities/qualifications/scenarios identified by the people who inhabit it, the survey of urban imaginaries by Silva^[4] was used, which functions as an interview whose questions are subjective in nature and explore the emotions of the citizens derived from the process of habitat consolidation mediated by the acts of inhabiting. This instrument consists of 82 questions distributed in four areas: identification, city, citizens and otherness (perception from other cities); however, for the development of this research only the category of city was taken into account in which the references to the place in its physical and historical sense were grouped with the purpose of revealing the identifying qualities of the coastal urban atmosphere of the Department of Córdoba.



Figure 2. Location of coastal municipalities in the north of the Department of Córdoba.
Source: Own elaboration.

The study population consisted of 16,151 people living in the urban area of both coastal municipalities, considering an intentional sample of 100 (50 people for each municipality). This selection was made taking into account the criteria of seniority of the inhabitants (preferably born in the place), age (16 years and older) and social stratum; in order to guarantee identity, relational and historical processes of the social actors within their habitat^[6] and deployed in the inhabiting that produces and transforms the space. The data obtained from the application of the survey were tabulated and diagrammed using the tools of

Microsoft Excel 2010.

3.1. Living in quiet and joyful places

Considering the results, both municipalities stand out as areas of urban contradictions, on the one hand, people define their municipalities as quiet places, full of joy and with a tourist vocation, whose conceptions are rooted in the coastal lifestyle in which they are anonymous citizens and protagonists of the socio-cultural processes intrinsic to the acts of living (**Figure 3**). On the other hand, the urbanistic needs of the municipalities are recognized, which makes their inhabitants yearn for progress to reach their municipalities and translate into their physical transformation in such a way as to allow the urban development of the area in the style of the large coastal cities, which is an extrinsic factor that depends fundamentally on the political will capable of managing and leading the necessary changes to achieve it (**Figure 4**).

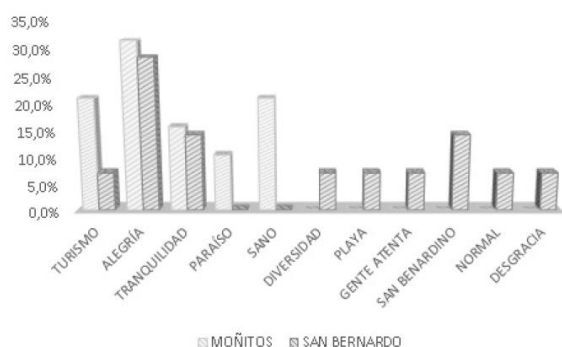


Figure 3. Image or word with which people identify Moñitos and San Bernardo del Viento. Source: Own elaboration (2019).

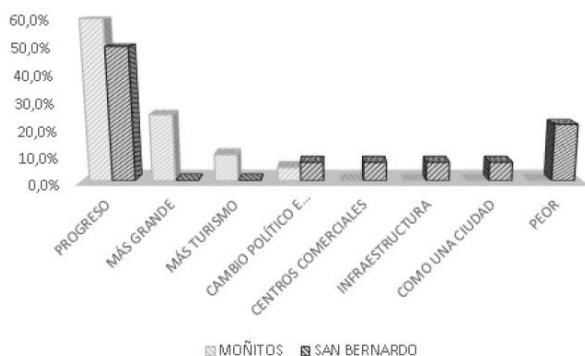


Figure 4. Visualization of the future of Moñitos and San Bernardo del Viento by its inhabitants. Source: Own elaboration (2019).

The appreciations exposed by the inhabitants

of both municipalities expose socio-cultural practices linked to a traditional habitability whose significant interaction networks project a dynamic of territorial appropriation linked to the existence of memories, images, symbols, discourses and socially shared practices that are manifested in the daily life of the inhabitants of the sector from their customs, longings and constant efforts to preserve their identity^[19]; and at the same time, improve their living conditions that are limited by the few sources of work offered by these municipalities, highlighting only agriculture, fishing, tourism and informal economic practices such as street vending and motorcycle taxis. It is precisely in the daily life, drifting between subsistence activities and the joy that living in these places generates, where the true value of their particularities is configured, which, in material terms, weave the socio-cultural structures that allow the constitution of a patrimonial legacy around the sea as a representative scenario in the imaginary of the people, which harmonizes with the joy embodied in the trades that derive from tourism and that amalgamate until they become their cultural heritage and the affective bond with their habitat.

3.2. Colors linked to the social production of the territory

Another quality associated with the people living in both municipalities is the identification of the colors blue and green (**Figure 5**) as characteristic features that define the natural environment where they carry out their daily practices. The first is related to the proximity that exists between human life and the sea at the rhythm of the tranquility that this type of scenery provides for activities such as fishing and tourism; However, this relationship with the sea is differentiated between the two municipalities despite the fact that blue is found in people's imagination as the predominant color, while the urban location of Moñitos is on the seashore, for San Bernardo del Viento the beaches are a tourist reference that is located a few kilometers from the urban area and around which activities such as

mototaxi (informal public transport) and street vending are developed. Green as a second option is a complement to the area associated with the natural coastal landscape and the tranquil panorama provided by the characteris.

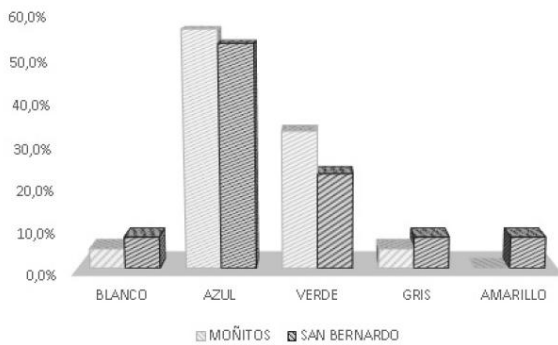


Figure 5 Colors linked to the social production of the territory in Moñitos and San Bernardo del Viento. Source: Own elaboration (2019).

From this perspective, the selection of colors is determined by the natural space where the social production of the same is carried out, characterized by being cheerful and calm^[19]. This allows us to see how the sublimation (adequacy) in these coastal municipalities harmonizes with the environment to the extent that the colors referenced by their inhabitants do not disregard the natural form of a space that is polyfunctional for human activities. This condition allows us to see how the urban and social interrelations in these places constitute a dwelling that maintains the landscape and its biodiversity and configures traditional habitability practices that fit the environment, these processes differ from other coastal areas in South America where economic activities such as mining and real estate industry have increased artificialization in the coastal nature and diversified social practices derived from the transformation of social space in constant conflict^[20].

3.3. “The oblivion that we are”

If there is one thing that the inhabitants of the coastal municipalities recognize, it is the socio-urban problems present in their habitat in terms of urban infrastructure deficit (internal and external), incomplete public services and high

levels of unemployment in the region (Figure 6). Based on these perceptions, two important informal economic activities are linked as a socio-political strategy of representation and appropriation of the territory: street vending and motorcycle taxis (informal transportation), which depend fundamentally on tourism on the beaches and are established as a mechanism for survival and development of the people in these places (Figure 7).

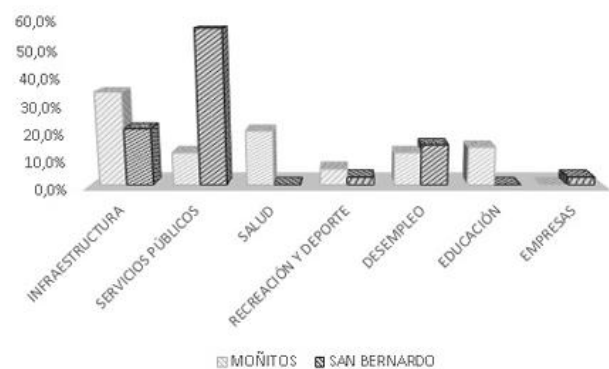


Figure 6. Socio-urban problems related to living in Moñitos and San Bernardo del Viento. Source: Own elaboration.



Figure 7. Street vending and motorcycle taxis as a socio-political strategy associated with living in coastal municipalities. Source: Own elaboration.

This situation coincides with Hidalgo et al.^[10] when stating that the sociourban problems in these settlements lie in the fragilities of urban planning that in many cases are timeless and distant from citizen demands; that is why, Barbera et al.^[22] aware that planning faces an uncertain, unstable and non-linear nature, should aim at sustainable development from the multidimensional valuation of space in use/use or territory. On the other hand, this sociourban reality highlights the state neglect to which these localities are subjected, which are at risk of vulnerability due to exclusion and inequality,

a product of uncontrolled growth and lack of urban planning^[23]. Hence, the aesthetic niches in both municipalities are adequate to what the environment offers them exposed in the sea as a strength and tourist engine of the area, from which they deploy their sociocultural, economic and political practices, despite the nonconformities in terms of the deficit of infrastructure and public services that these coastal municipalities present.

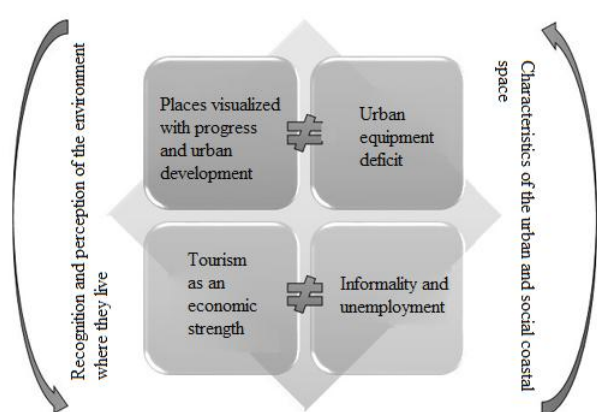


Figure 8. Social frictions in coastal municipalities.
Source: Own elaboration (2019).

3.4. Coastal social frictions

Since imaginaries constitute reality for people, two scenarios can be identified that generate frictions between what is perceived and the characteristics of the socio-urban space, linked to the urban backwardness of the coastal zone of the department of Córdoba. In the first place, it is possible to identify the tension between places visualized with progress and urban development versus urban equipment deficit (**Figure 8**)^[24]; for citizens, their urban culture revolves around processes of representation and territorial appropriation motivated by the desire to take advantage of the competitive advantage provided by the space in use/used as a function of tourism as the main economic engine that allows for urban growth and development through the mobility of resources and the management of infrastructure projects; however, this sentiment clashes with the urban

needs of these municipalities associated with the lack of investment in infrastructure and improvement of public services. For the inhabitants of both municipalities there is discomfort regarding the backwardness and neglect of their municipalities, even though they consider themselves to be a tourist power in the department; for this reason, the social collective demands administrative intervention at the municipal and regional level to improve the standard of living in these areas.

Secondly, another social friction is related to the tranquility that characterizes the places versus the economic informality and high unemployment rates. In the imaginary of the people it is present that their economic strength is tourism as an attraction of their self-described places as paradises, quiet and friendly; despite this, there is a recognition of the problems faced by their communities related to a characteristic of the regional and national reality, such as unemployment, reflected mainly in street vending and motorcycle taxis^[25-26]. This recognition is an indicator that people want their municipalities to progress and improve their conditions in terms of equipment and intermunicipal connection to promote the reactivation of the economy.

4. Conclusions

The territorialization processes in these coastal municipalities have been slow, the perception of the environment where they live and projected in the inhabiting by their inhabitants allows identifying a kind of urban fragmentation when considering that their municipalities are almost spatially and territorially isolated (deficit of urban equipment). This phenomenon according to Escolano-Utrilla et al.^[27] is related to the economic and cultural globalization that is expressed in multiple forms of social structuring, in the fractioning of the policy and governance of the cities and in the physical and functional segmentation of the built territory, which at the departmental level is evidenced in the isolation of its territories with respect to the capital

(Montería) and internally in the coastal municipalities it is recognized that they lack a political and urban organization capable of potentiating their tourist, cultural and natural vocation present in the ecosystems provided by the coastal edges.

These places may well serve as an example for urban diversity seen from inhabiting, that is, the diverse ways in which people live and try to inhabit the urban which, in the coastal case of the Department of Córdoba shows processes of hybridization between the natural environment and the social production of the territory in these ecosystems where forms of urbanization are revealed that require to be managed based on the needs reported by those who live in these places, related according to Costa et al.^[28] with access to urban services and the inability to generate resources and local reinvestment to improve the quality of life of the population that is not visible to policy makers.

Similarly, the results of this study serve as a reference to understand the urban dynamics of small cities that, despite their socio-urban problems, seek territorial integration and insertion into regional and national economies through various socio-political strategies of representation and territorial appropriation that are linked to the habitat and allow them to provide goods and services found in the ecosystem to which they are emotionally attached (philiation) as a society.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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