

# **Making Urban Space: Patch Walks through the Pedregal**

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**UURB 3031  
City Studio  
Spring 2019**



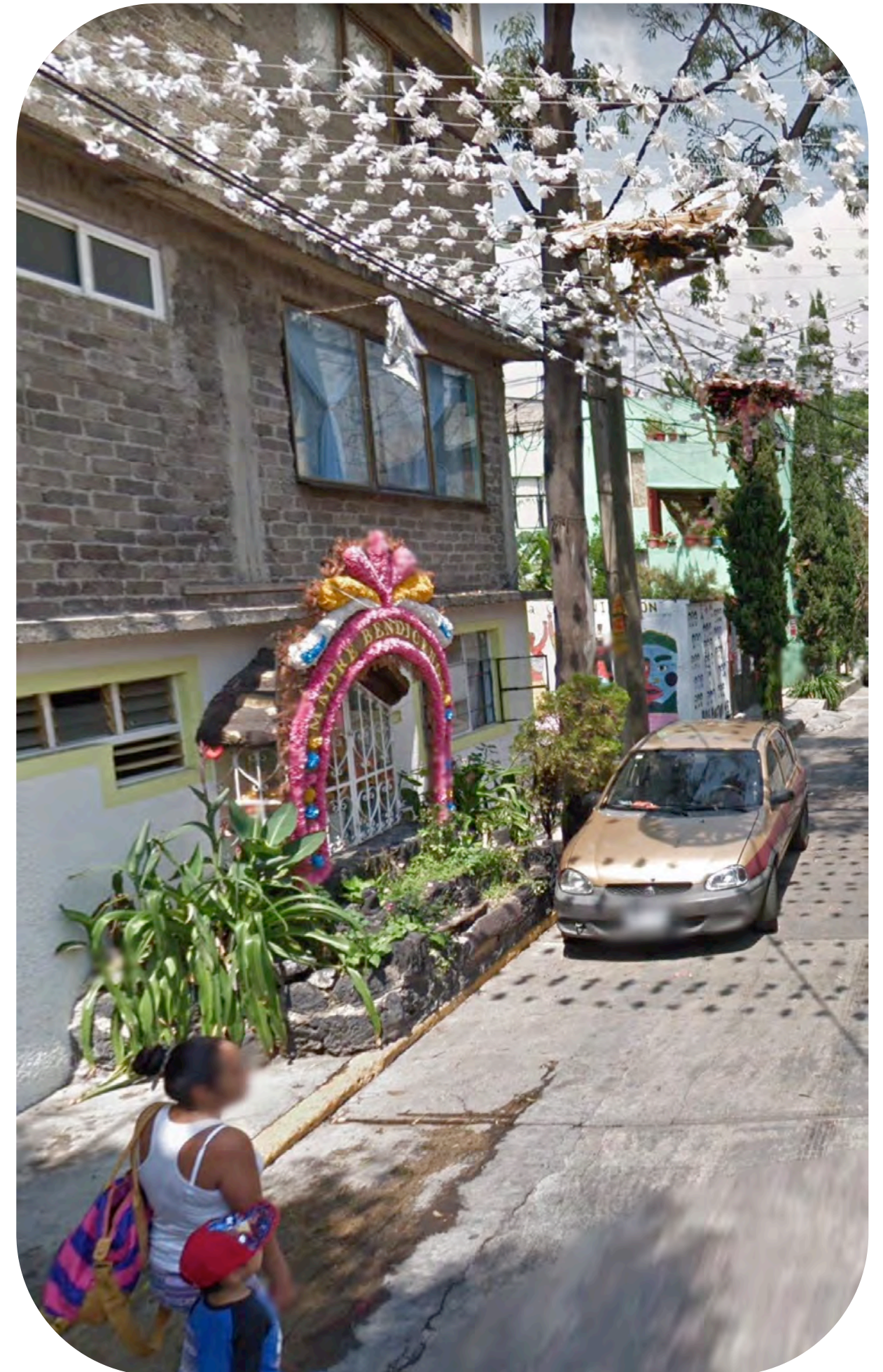
## Making Urban Space: Patch Walks through the Pedregal

This portfolio is the product of successive walks through the Pedregal de Santo Domingo, a neighborhood of Mexico City. Students in the City Studio undertook these walks as part of a larger project on Spatial Affordances, which examines the many ways that people make room for themselves and others in the everyday life of one of the world's largest cities. Based on fieldwork and visual data mining, the project locates active and creative practices of making room that, taken together, constitute a form of 'spatial affordance.' Spatial affordance is the production and reshaping of urban space to suit particular needs of comfort, conviviality, safety, desire, and belief. As urban design by other means, spatial affordance comprises routine adaptations that afford incremental improvement in life and circumstance.

The Spatial Affordances project centers on a method developed in the City Studio called "patch walking." We divided up the neighborhood into 18 "patches," and each student took responsibility for one of them. Students then "walked" their patch using Google Street View (mindful of the limitations and problems of the medium), recording spatial data as they encountered it. The data collected prioritized relatively simple, low-cost, informal adaptations at the very small scale of the street that nevertheless multiply in patterns across many precincts of the metropolis. Such practices include erecting sidewalk shrines, marking off parking spaces, using colorful canopies to assert a place for selling goods. Each adaptive practice constitutes a specific spatial affordance, but also connects materially to other practices: using potted plants to mark off a property line, for example, connects to histories of land disputes as well as traditions of gardening and greening in the concrete landscape. Sidewalk shrines connect to histories of religious devotion that have also produced grand cathedrals, and reflect in their construction a suite of craft and care traditions.

In the end, these small, incremental practices exert a cumulative, if often unnoticed, impact on the shaping and adapting of the city. Architects, planners, urban designers, policy makers, and municipal officials have much to learn from these spatial affordances. They constitute modes of urban problem-solving, space-claiming, and aesthetic intervention. They materially alter the landscape, modulate human interactions with the urban fabric, mediate social relations, and channel the experience of everyday life in Mexico City.

The following pages present observations drawn by students from walking their patches. While related to the process of data collection that lies at the heart of the project, in this portfolio students take the opportunity to reflect on a wide range of phenomenon that they encountered. Taken together, these various spatial practices reveal an always unfinished city, an urban world continually in the making.







Located on the south side of Mexico City in the Delegación of Coyoacán, just east of UNAM, the colonia Pedregal de Santo Domingo is a working-class community of 100,000 people. It is a large, triangle-shaped neighborhood established on top of a lava field, first settled by squatters in the early 1970s and slowly built up over the years. The colonia is very densely built up, comprised mostly of two- and three-story residences and commercial buildings. North-south streets are predominantly residential, with shops and businesses concentrated on the east-west streets. The irregular form of the blocks resulted from rapid building along unpaved streets, which created 'wobble' and variation in the street lines and set-backs. The residential typology shows a mix of courtyard houses, townhouses, and apartment buildings. The courtyard house type is prevalent throughout Mexico, but in Mexico City the court is typically diminished in size due to high land values. Parcels are narrow and densely covered, while small passageways wind through block interiors to provide access to off-street housing.



**Primary School with Graffiti**  
Kemberlyn Arevalo

Many cities around the world are covered in street tags, murals, and graffiti. Mexico City is no exception, and you will typically find street tags throughout the metropolis, each one creating a different sense of community and identity. This graffiti can range from street tags, as shown in the picture on the left, to large scale murals that comment on current issues in the country, like drug violence and social problems.

Both of these Google Street View images show a specific corner of a primary school located at 33 Coyamel in the neighborhood Pedregal de Santo Domingo. The image on the left is from 2015, it shows the school's name with graffiti written over it while the image on the right is from 2017 and shows that the walls of the fence were painted white in an attempt to stop others from marking the walls .

Neighborhoods such as the Pedregal have their own distinct character and urban quality, as shown in the various street corners. The photographs reveal the city's complexity and the constant evolving nature of urban spaces.



Google Maps, annotated. Captured 22 February 2019.

Google Street View photograph, Left: April 2015, Right: September 2017.  
Lat 19.3354448, Long -99.1714145



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## ***Giant Squid Mural***

Chelsea Barile

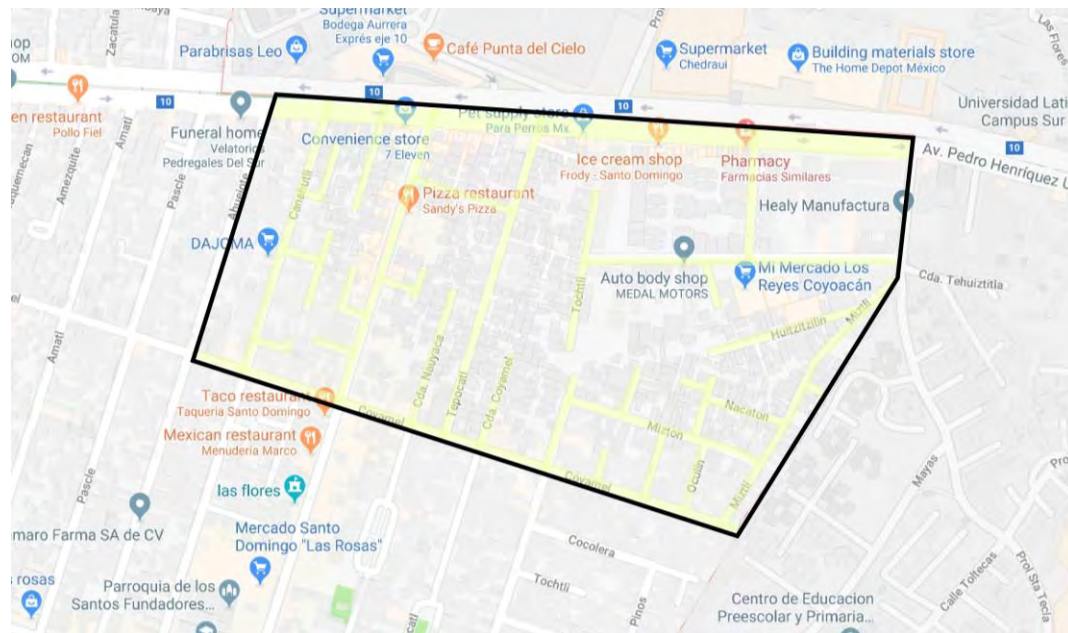
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Through exploration of my designated patch of the Pedregal de Santo Domingo, I came across a beautiful mural painted on the side of an industrial building. The warehouse is situated on the Northwest corner of Coyamel and Tepocatl.

The mural is of a giant squid, painted a shade of magenta, attacking what seems to be a ship. The mint green wreckage is interlaced between the squid's tentacles. The remainder of the mural is a bright blue ocean that expands across the entire façade of the building, including over garage doors and windows.

While I do not know the artist who painted this mural, or the exact meaning behind it, there are a few things I have discovered through my own research.

The first is that squids symbolize an ancient form of life and remind us of distant origins. Second, funding for a series of murals throughout the Pedregal de Santo Domingo came from an arts program run by students and their parents.



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Google Maps, annotated. Captured 22 February 2019.

Google Street View photograph, Sept 2017. Captured 22 Feb 2019.  
Lat 19.3323385, Long ,-99.16104.

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# Volkswagen Beetle

Cohaul Chen

While walking my patch, I have seen many Volkswagen Beatle cars in the neighborhood.

The Volkswagen Beetle was introduced to Mexico in March 1954, inside the exhibition "Alemania y su Industria" (Germany and its Industry). Four different Volkswagen vehicles were brought to Mexico through Veracruz port for the first time. Those vehicles were: two Sedans 113 in "Export" trim, a convertible, and a VW Bus in luxury trim. Officially, the Bug/Beetle was named "Type I sedan" and the Bus was named "Type II station wagon", though variants included single and double cab pickups.

At that time, the Mexican car market was mostly saturated by American makes and models with large sizes and large engines, which made a huge contrast with the new German entrant. An exhibition was held in the Ciudad Universitaria in Mexico City; during this event, the vehicles were widely admired by the public. The Volkswagen Beetles displayed there were the model with the "oval window". Former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas made a trip from Michoacán, just to see this peculiar vehicle. The local press immediately published the news into eight columns under the title "The People's Man" with the "People's Car".



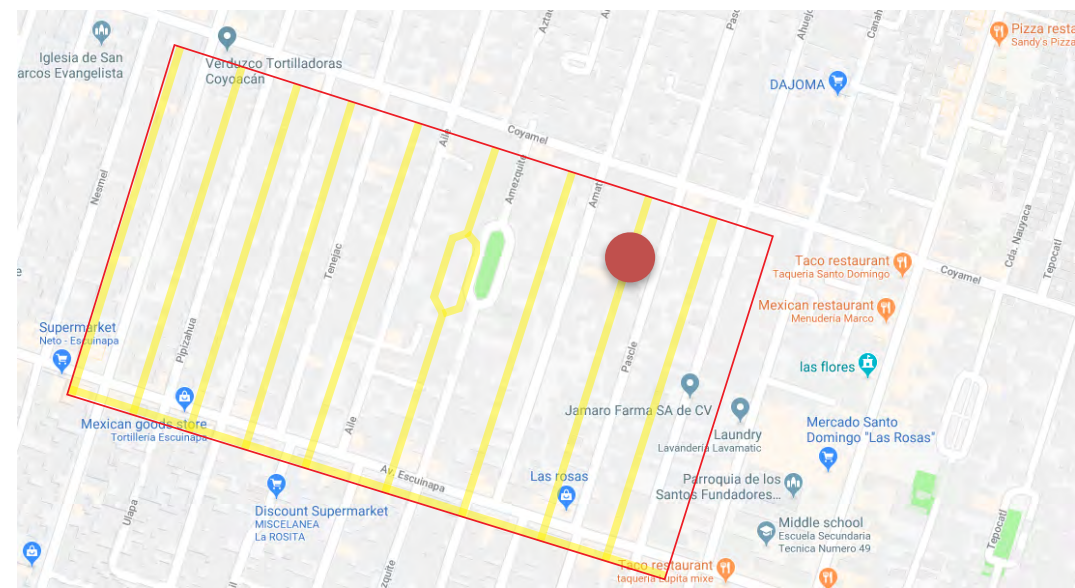


**Road Worker**  
Oliver Dillon

The many roads of Mexico City form a complex geometry of angles, corners, and parallel lines, developing a rich network which imbues its centuries-old development. The single road worker at 63 Pascale seen here in this image depicts the never-ending toil, to maintain and improve the system. With the burden of high vehicle usage and foot traffic, keeping the streets up to standard is a necessity. The roads also serve geographic importance, in understanding the formation of the district through time and the people that live there. This laborer is part of a much greater machine that keeps traffic moving in the city, no matter the scale.

In the rolling topography of the Pedregal de Santo Domingo, each crest frames a unique view of the community and functions of Mexico City. In this view, a concrete saw cuts through the street blowing dust and debris into the air, which when caught by the gray light of the day forms an ethereal moment. A figure walking in the distance appears as a momentary specter moving between the pastels of stucco that clad the almost geological conglomeration of homes that border the street.

This moment is breathtaking and almost cinematic in its perfection, a reflection of the tensions that have formed this community. From the plastic volcanism of the terrain to the seemingly biologic way that the urbane constructions of the community extend forever onward. The sun illuminated behind the clouds infers the presence of greater powers which seek to lay their own impression on their society. A society made up of a hard-working entrepreneurial class, who wish for the continuation of their stability and way of life.



Google Maps, annotated. Captured Feb 2018.

Google Street View photograph, Sep 2015. Captured Feb 2018.  
Lat 19.3322586, Long -99.1642374.





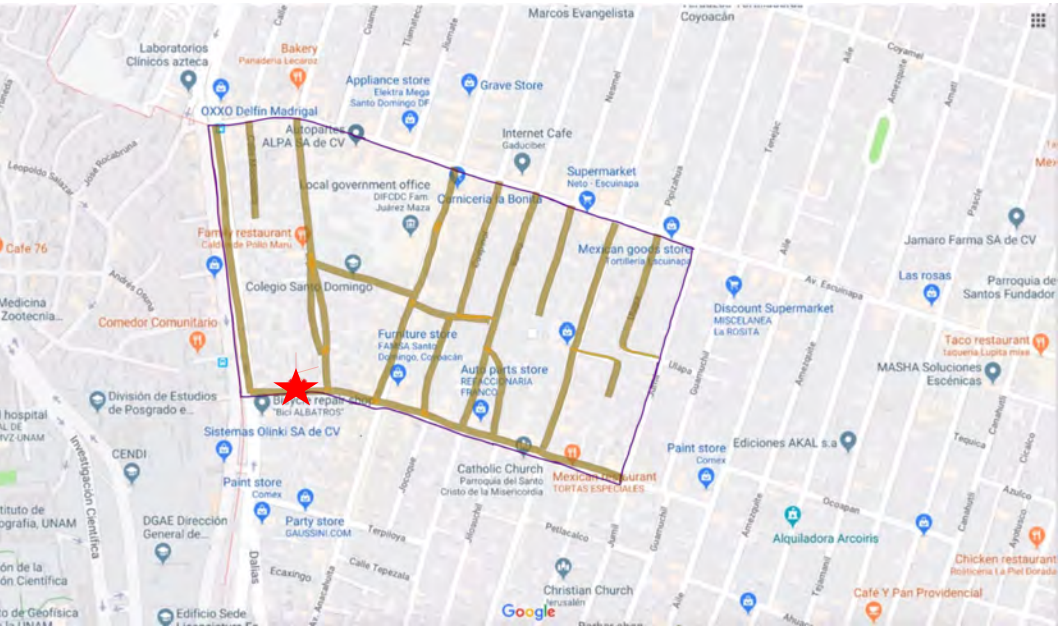


**Street Art: Mexican Muralism/ Ancient Murals**  
Yudelka Gomez Espinal

Part of the wonder and adventure of experiencing life in Mexico is the incredible diversity of colors and murals. In Pedregal de Santo Domingo murals/graffiti/commercial art are everywhere, promoting new products, providing information about a business, or simply using street art as a way to speak out against injustice.

Mexican culture has a long tradition of mural painting. After the revolution, most of the nation’s population was illiterate and the government needed another way to deliver its messages about post revolution ideals because of this many murals were designed around the country. Most murals today depict the Mexican national identity and this mural is no exception.

In this Google Street View image taken at 34 Jilotzingo, we can see a colorful mural with an Indigenous tribe theme. This mural in many ways shows how Mexicans are proud and don’t forget their ancestors, and cultural promotes itself. The photograph shows how even in this dense urban landscape, people make room for street art, where every street is awash with many colors.



Google Maps, annotated. Captured 01 Sept 2017.

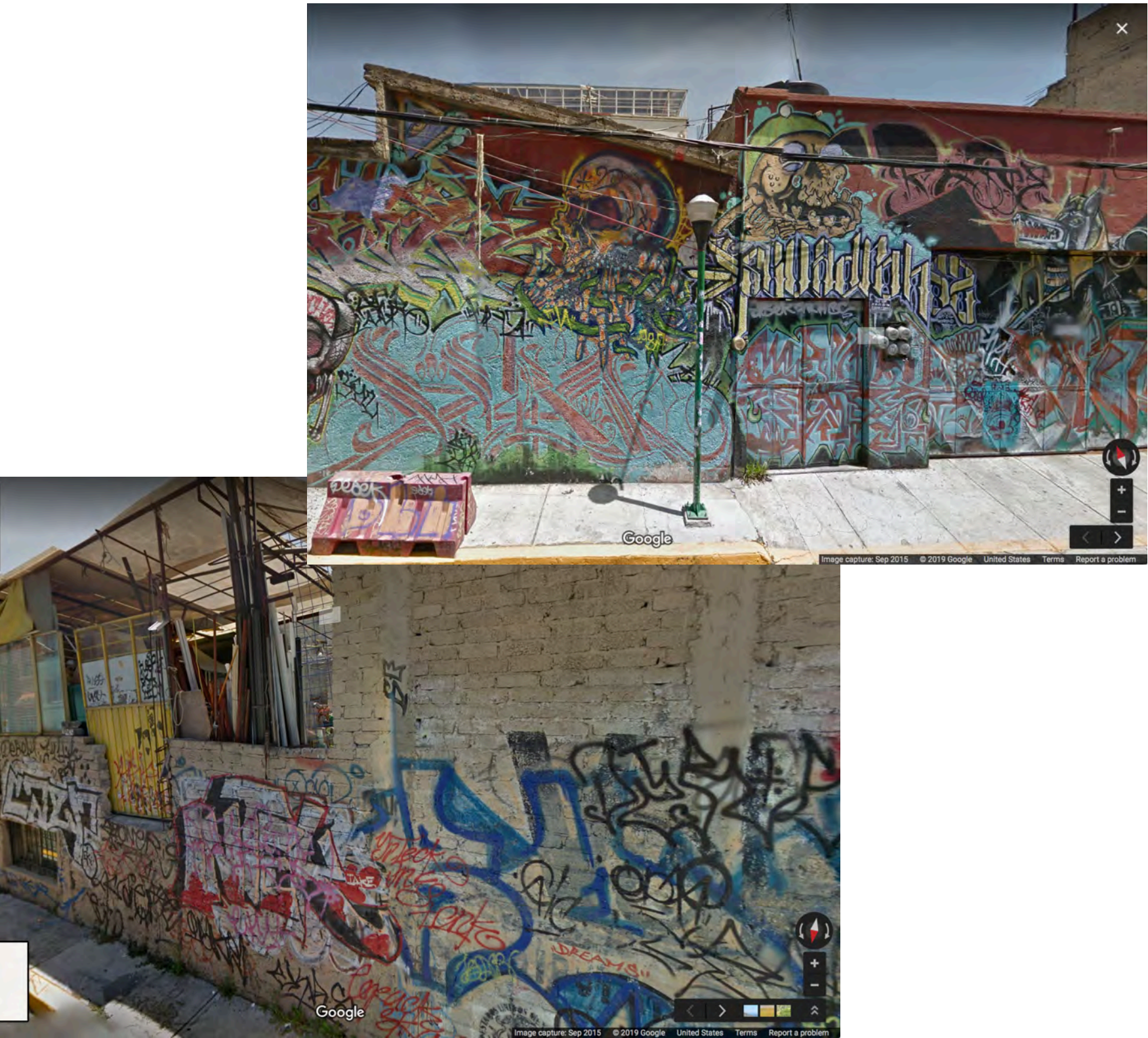
Google Street View photograph, Sep 2017. Captured 01 Sept 2017.  
Lat 19.3296409, Long -99.1727734.



**Street Art: Wildstyle Graffiti**  
Zo Fielder

One of the more interesting things that I found while mapping out my block are the different examples of non commercial street art/graffiti. One example on Ulapa especially caught my eye. The mural was one both sides, but this example was much more interesting than the other. Other examples consisted of simple writing on the walls, such as graffiti tags, but there were some really elaborate and eye-catching examples done in Wildstyle. Unfortunately, this specific location did not have a posted street address, nor could I go further down this block via Google Street View.

Because of the different examples of street art, this makes me question whether any of it can be classified as 'graffiti' since it seems to be an important form of social practice and public art (both commercial and non commercial).



Google Maps, annotated. Captured 01 Sept 2017.

Ulapa, Pedregal de Santo Domingo, 19.3299229, -99.1681252, Residential: Mural- Non Commercial



**Made For Shade**  
Roman Halpern



The average temperature of Mexico City is 76° F, but in a highly dense area like Pedregal De Santo Domingo with little green space it is safe to assume that this number is higher. The narrow streets of my patch have been highly developed and only a handful of trees above the building line still remain. There is very little naturally occurring shade and I observed many different human made techniques for creating shade.

There are many examples throughout the neighborhood of people up-cycling different materials as a method of creative problem solving. This photo captured at 358 Totolin offers a side by side examples of the two main type of shaded structures that I observed in my patch. On the left we have a more traditional but less common awning made from new materials and secured into place with beams. Further back on the right we have the largest awning in the area made from a recycled billboard.

Using billboards, tarps, or fabrics to create tents and awnings is a common practice in the area but this awning is the only one that covers both sides of the street. This awning also stood out because it showed up on Google Maps as a building in the middle of a street. The satellite view revealed that the large awning is made from a recycled automobile billboard and is most likely made of vinyl.

Google Maps, annotated. Captured 22 Feb 2019.

Google Street View photograph, Aug 2011. Captured 22 Feb 2019.  
Lat 19.3292245, Long -99.161131.



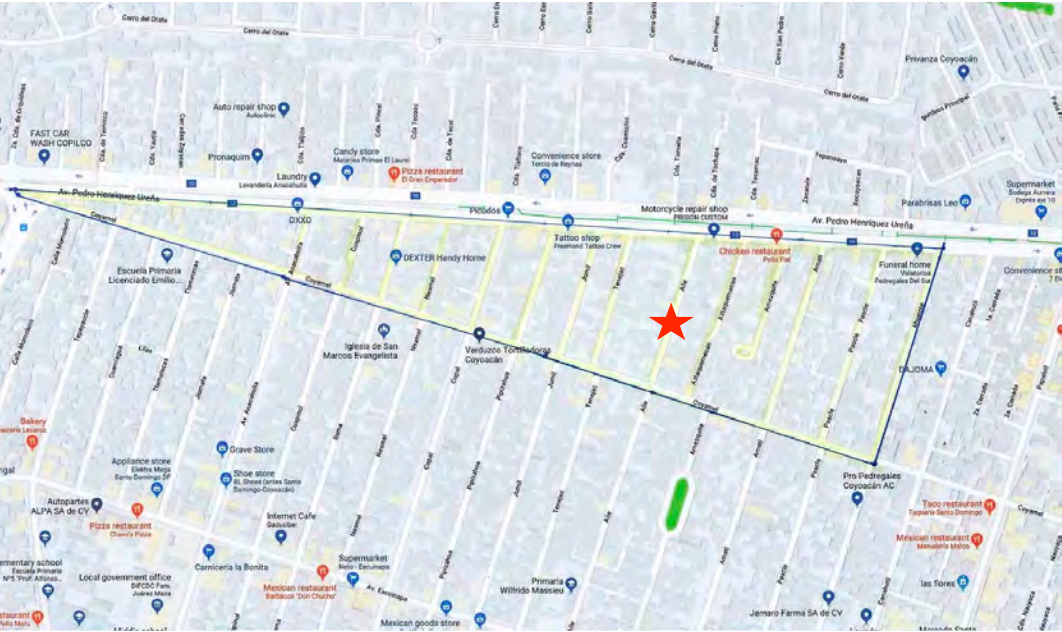
**Dog on roof**  
Joseph Heathcott

A common practice throughout Mexico is the keeping of dogs as pets and gaurdians. In rural areas, families typically keep dogs at the ground level in their compounds. However, in the context of Mexico City, with its high population density and tightly constrained properties, land is at a premium, and is devoted primarily to living space for the family, often with small courtyards used for cars or for household production.

Despite these constraints, families in Mexico City continue to live with dogs, but often maintain the rural practice of keeping them outdoors. Therefore, the principal place to keep them is on the rooftops.

In this Google Street View image taken at 10 Cerrada Chinancalco in the Pedregal de Santo Domingo, a dog can be seen lounging on the roof of a one-story carport to the right. He or she does not seem particularly bothered by the approaching stranger in the Google car, and indeed the subsequent image shows the dog continuing to lounge quietly on the roof perch.

The photograph shows how even in this dense urban landscape, people make room for companion species, and adapt older rural traditions to suite new metropolitan circumstances.



Google Maps, annotated. Captured 15 Feb 2018.



Google Street View photograph, Nov 2014. Captured 16 Feb 2018.  
Lat 19.3322829, Long -99.1624523.

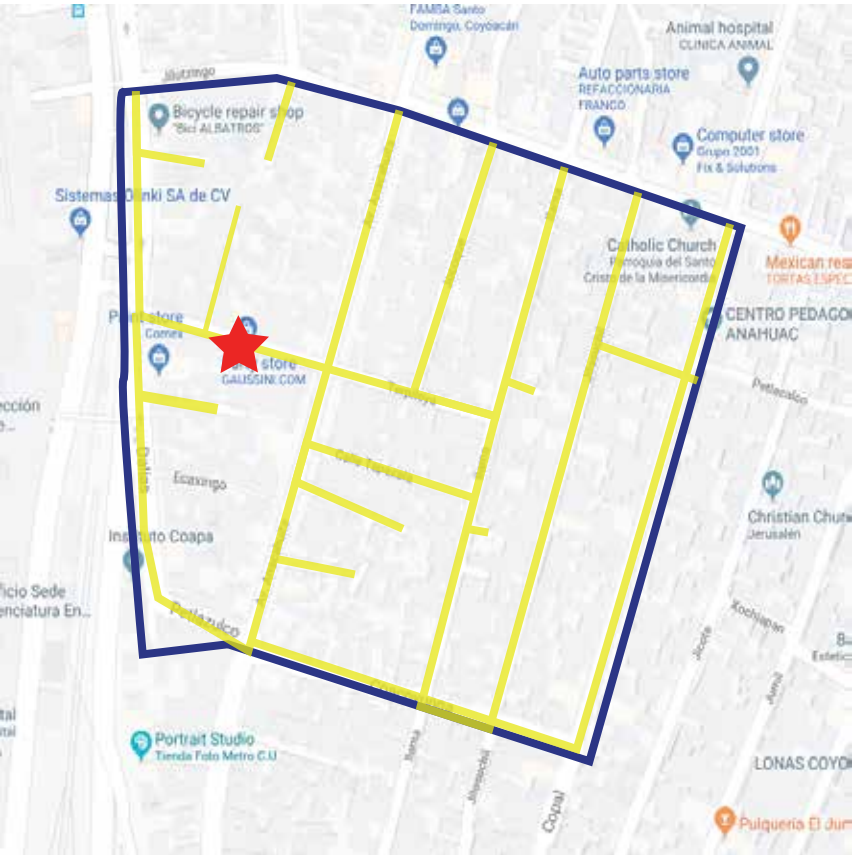


**Plan Modification**  
By Jervey Inglesby

The Pedregal de Santo Domingo neighborhood in Mexico city is renowned for its ever-changing nature, with residents continually building additional floors on their homes, and re-purposing spaces to fit their current needs.

In this picture we see a ground floor of a residential building converted into a roadside vendor. A woman stands behind a window selling a variety of goods, including produce, potted plants, stuffed-animal toys, and clothing. To the right, in a common space/alleyway, there is an entrance to a carpenter, upholstery, and general repair shop, advertised with large red fonts and a roadside flag, mounted to a work-truck. Two workers stand in the shop's driveway, which has been converted into an open-air workspace with large equipment. To the left of the vendor, almost hidden by a large planted tree on the sidewalk, there is a shrine built into the sidewalk and buildings made of glass, bricks, and tiling.

On top of the green building to the left there is a large water tank, and on all of its ledges and balconies there are rows of potted plants, as is traditional in the area. To the right of the repair shop, even more modification is taking place in the form of a third floor, which is halfway constructed, ad appears to have been left that way for some time.





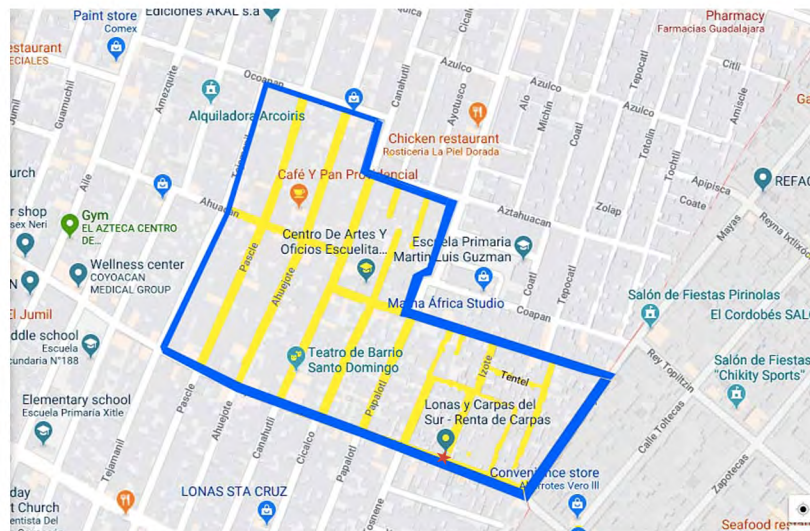
## Ephemera Of Google Street View

Olivia Koreman, Google Maps

On the corner of Xochiapan and Izote, as you move through street view, one frame shows two cars in front of a residential building, and the next frame of the same building shows a food vendor on the sidewalk in front of the house. These two shots expose the ephemeral nature of the city corner which was adapted by the vendor one of the days the Google car happened to drive through.

Street view pieces together shots taken from times, so that even as you walk through a few blocks, some of the streets were photographed in 2015, and the next corner or street was updated in 2017.

The first shots of this corner were taken in September of 2017, and the second part of the street capturing the vendor were taken in August 2017. Google blurs a sense of time in order to create a virtual sense of the street, and this blurred distinction creates another form of ephemerality in street view. The street will never exactly look like how Google captured it again, but it also never looked like how it is represented through street view because the photos are merged from different days and years to virtually recreate the street.



Google Maps, Annotated. Captured 21 Feb 2019



Google Street View Photograph, Aug 2017 and Sept 2017.  
Lat 19.3242085, Long -99.1639751.



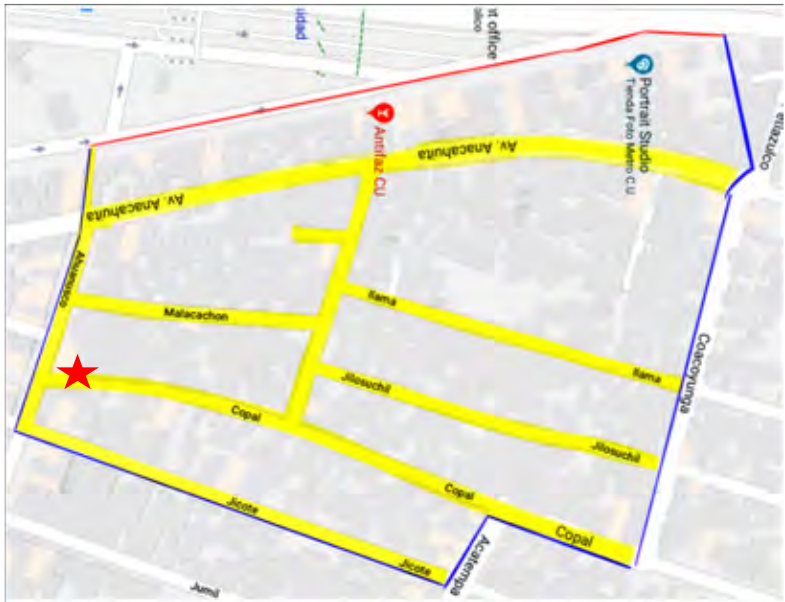
**Change in Seasons**  
Nat Moselle

By taking no more than ten virtual “steps” in Google Street view, we are able to see a dramatic change in the seasons. Both images are capturing the northeastern corner of Jicote and Ahuanusco, however at different moments.

The first image (top) was taken in the dry season of winter. There is a vendor sign and a commercial vendor extension with many multicolored poster boards on the façade. The trees seen down the block look to be in need of water, and there is no cage or other containment, although there is a small amount of concrete that looks like it was poured after the tree had matured.

The second image (bottom) was taken toward the end of summer in September. The vendor cart is gone, and both that and the commercial extension with colorful posters have been replaced by two new commercial extensions with significantly more commercially-produced signage. The tree is in a much greener state.

I just found this interesting because although there are many seams that seem to be tied together well, this one stood out because it shows how temporary the commerce can be and it just emphasizes that google street view is a large project that cannot be completed in a season, as indicated by the vegetation.



Google Maps, annotated. Captured 21 Feb 2018.

Google Street View photographs. Top: Jan 2017, Lat 9.3229815, Long -99.1713811.  
Bottom: Sept 2015, Lat 19.3229815, Long -99.1713811.

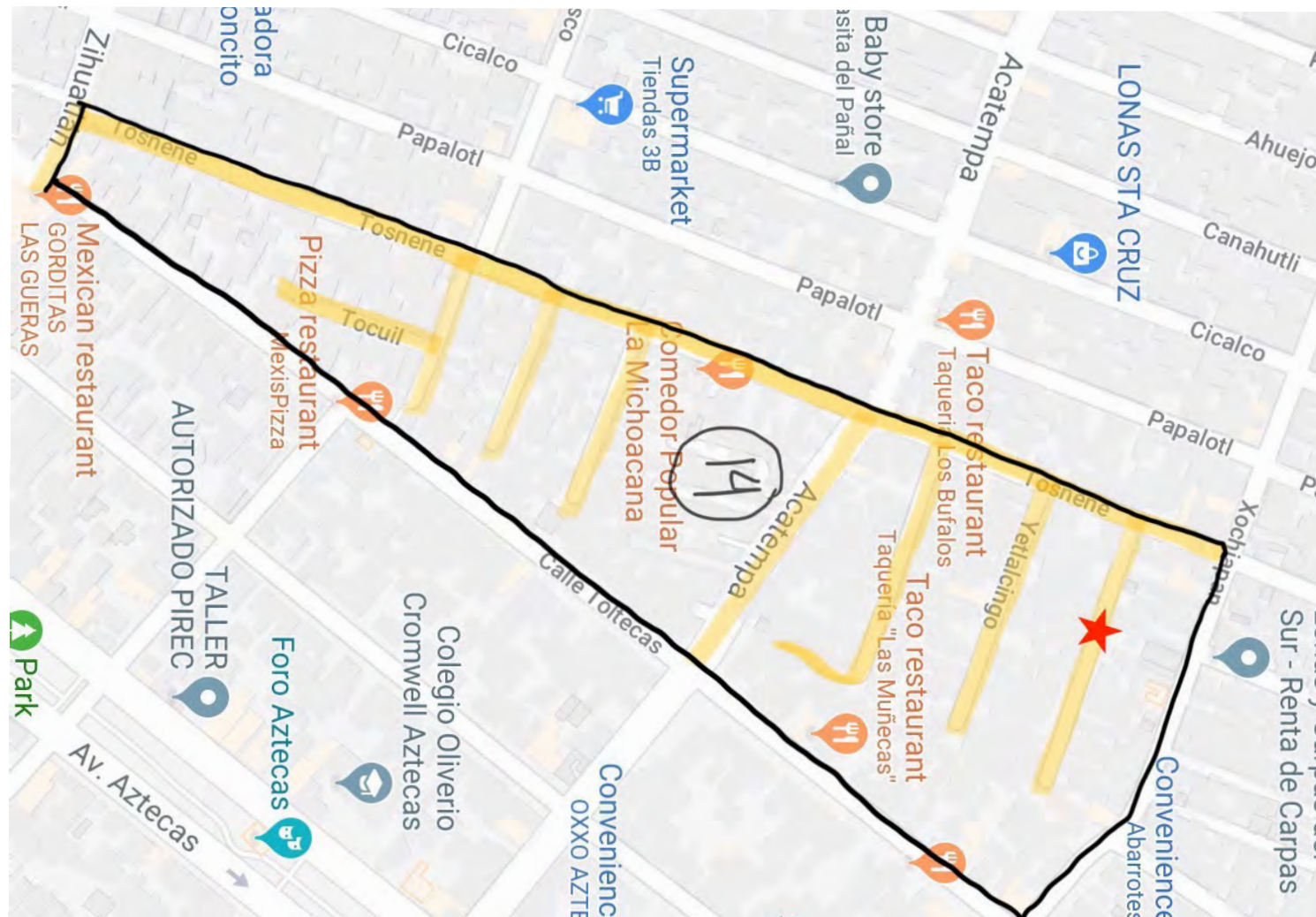


## Auto Shop Dashae Roberts

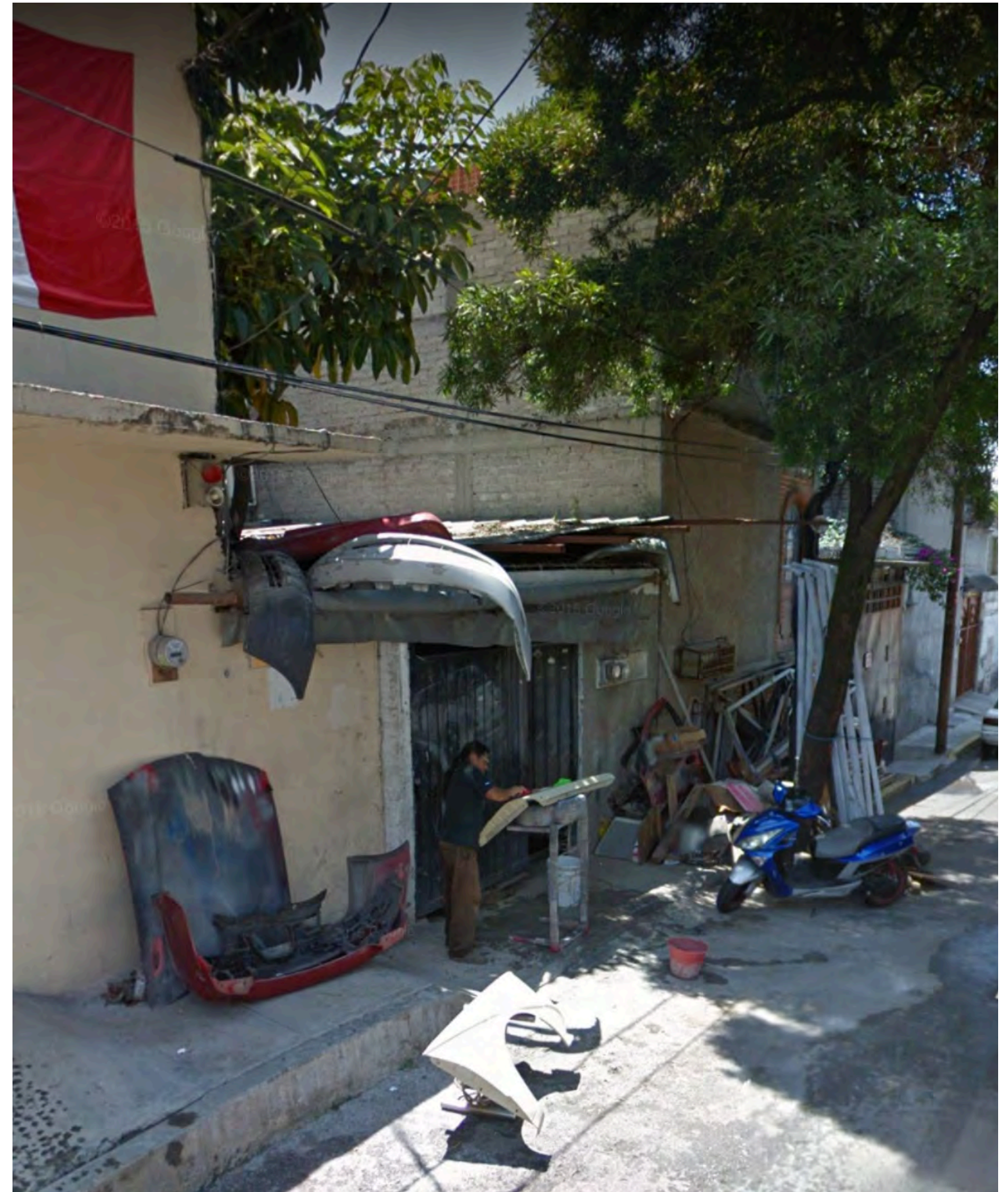
In this Google Street View image taken at 26 Primera Privada Tlaquilca in the Pedregal De Santo Domingo, a man can be seen working outside his auto shop in between residential homes. There are a bunch of long pipes off to the side that takes up a large amount of the street. When looking back at the same location in 2008 the metal pipes were there back then. If the pipes lasted all this time it can be inferred that the people here don't mind it and have likely embraced it as if it was meant to be there and they have become apart of the infrastructure.

I also thought it was interesting how the tree was used as a form of storage for supplies such as wood, paint, metal scraps. All of these supplies were surrounding the base of the tree and the long metal scraps were even tied to the tree with a rope. Car parts can also be found in the street and even the roof of the shop.

The photographer shows how residents here take advantage of all the space possible even if that means using a tree or the roof of a building. It also shows how even if something looks like messy it might really have a purpose.



Google Maps, Anotated. Captured Feburary 24, 2015



Google Street View Photograph, September 2015  
Lat. 19.3236837, Long -99.1639585.



## Local Mechanics

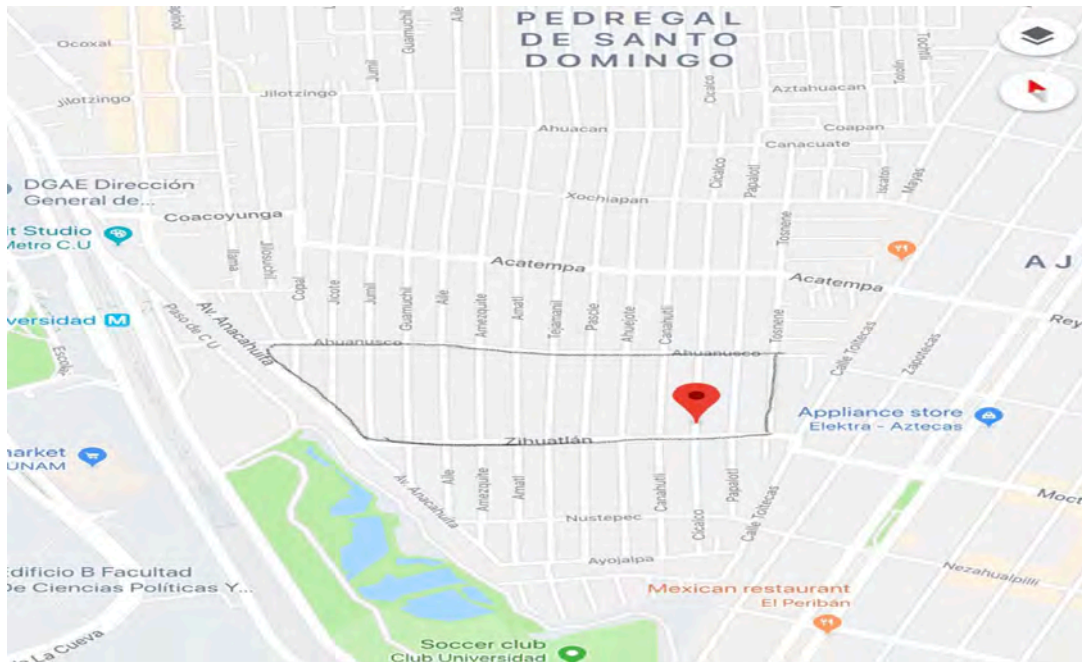
Elliot Schloss

The automobile industry in Mexico is one of the largest in the world. Upon visiting San Pedregal, one will clearly see this in full force, in fact this city littered with vehicles at every perimeter of the road.

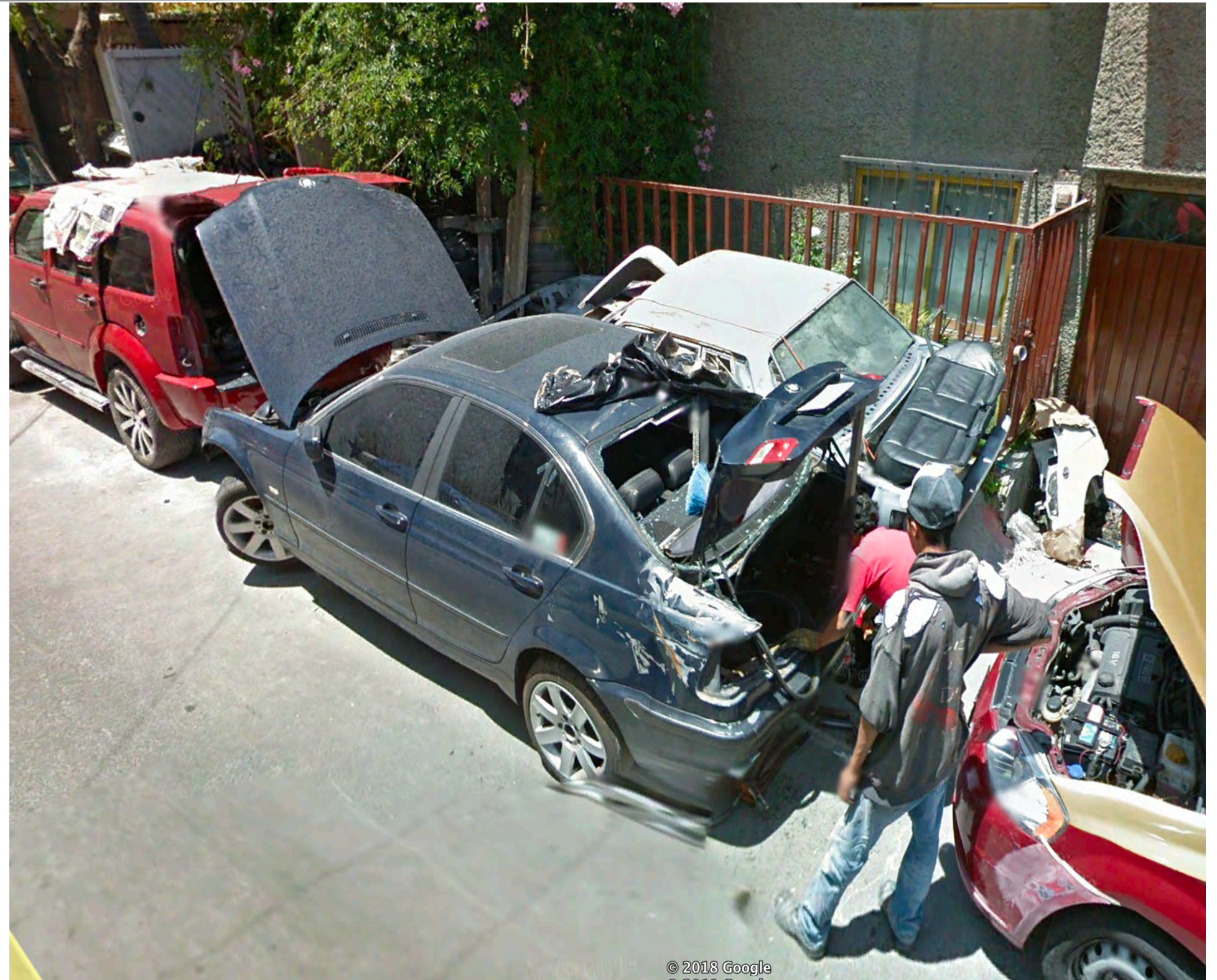
In a city fenced by cars, it is likely to assume the roll of someone like a local mechanic may be one of the most important. With the combination of out dated vehicles and populated and narrow streets, it is assumable that fixing vehicles is almost as close to a necessity as owning a car itself.

In this screen capture located at 299 Cicalco, local mechanics can be seen hard at work. This crew consists of both younger and older men, who appear to be either using pieces of these cars, or attempting to fix a pretty ruined car. Car parts liter the men's work station, which is the long strip of road off of Cicalco and Zihuatlán.

This photograph demonstrates the city's high demand for occupations that associate with the necessities of people living there. The photo also shows how demanding and extensive this type of work is in these dense conditions.



Google Maps, annotated. Captured 25 Feb 2019.



Google Street View photograph Sept 2015. Captured 25 Feb 2019  
Lat 19.191217, Long -99.100252.



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## ***Piñata***

Katie Tzivanis

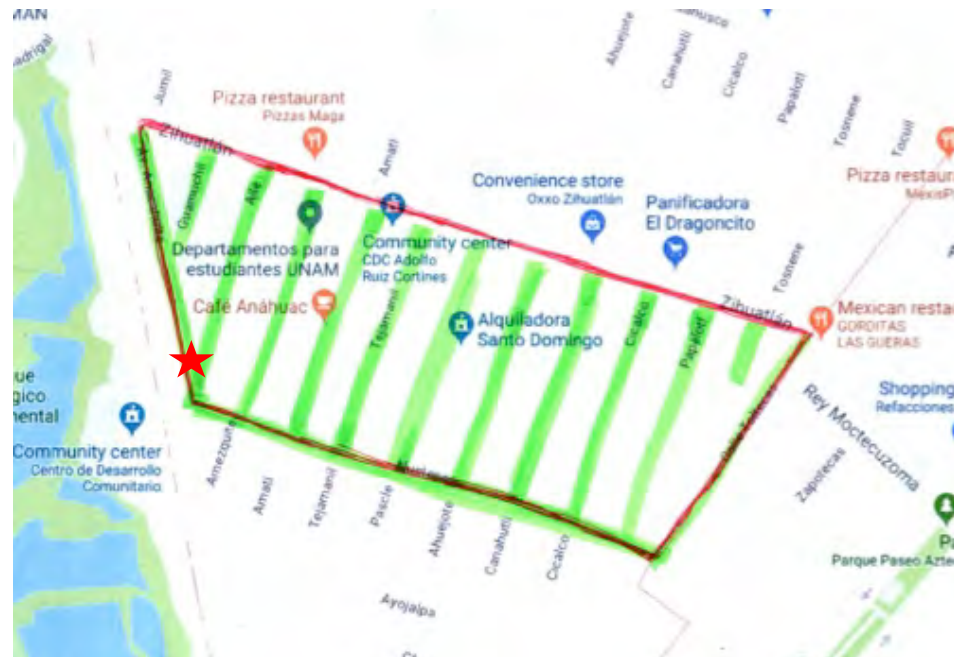
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The piñata industry plays a fundamental role in Mexican society. Now a days, the use of piñatas are less a religious practice and more a cultural celebration.

The Aztecs first began the tradition by decorating clay pots with feathers and filling them with ornaments to honor the birth of the God of War: Huitzilopochtli. The Spanish Missionaries then adopted this tradition with renewed religious significance. More traditional piñatas are shaped like 7 coned star, representing the seven deadly sins. Locals consider the piñata to be the symbol of Satan and the flashy colors as a way to lure someone to misguiding evils. The blind-folded individual that hits the piñata represents faith in God and the stick used to break it represents love. It is the force of faith and love that abolish the evils of this world.

In this Google Street View image taken at 543 Av. Anacahuita in the Pedregal de Santo Domingo, a piñata can be seen hanging from wires in the middle of the street for all to see. The piñata is quite tattered towards the bottom but the exuberant face is in good shape.

This quite unusual use of a piñata is fascinating as it is not typically used as street art, especially hung in such a manner. Was the purpose of this piñata to beautify the neighborhood or were there alternative intentions?



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Google Maps, annotated. Captured Feb 2018.

Google Street View photograph, April 2015. Captured 22 Feb 2018.  
Lat 19.3173965, Long -99.168307.

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## ***Spiral Staircase on Sidewalk***

Emma Van Wickler

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Pictured to the right is a photo of Chaucingo 64-66 in Pedregal de Santo Domingo, 04369 Ciudad de México, CDMX, Mexico. There is a spiral staircase obstructing the sidewalk. The spiral staircase leads to a second floor gated doorway of what appears to be a contracting company. I found this interesting not only because of the spiral staircase but also because architecturally a second floor front-door is rather peculiar.

I could not find any other examples of second floor front entrances with attached stairs. This leads me to believe that this was a modification done by the company in order to keep the bottom story a private residence and to avoid clients walking through their home.

If you look closely, there is also signage posted outside the building that lists the services available and their hours.



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Google Maps, annotated. Captured 22 Feb 2019.

Google Street View photograph, Nov 2014. Captured 22 Feb 2019.  
Lat 19.31658, Long -99.1708973

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