

Universiteit Utrecht



MASTER THESIS

## PUBLIC SPACES AND CRIME IN THE CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA



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## 1. Introduction

Even though some decades ago Costa Rica had a reputation of being the world's most peaceful country for its abolishment of the army, nowadays it seems that many things have changed. Residents told me every year the country turns less safe. To cite one of the local residents of San José: 'Costa Rica used to be one of the safest Latin American countries, with people known to have been among the happiest in the world. Lately, we only hear reports about crimes happening around us: pregnant women shot in San Carlos, two men found burnt in volcano Irazú, etc. I am seriously thinking of moving out of the country. In terms of insecurity, it is becoming closer and closer to Honduras.' Receiving this type of opinions from local people, and having been interested in urban issues, I decided to use my chance of writing a master thesis to delve deeper into these kinds of issues.

In Latin America, social inequality can be visible on every corner. Only privileged groups of society have access to the benefits of modern consumption society, while other social groups are left behind. In urban areas, exposure to the developed world's consumptive lifestyles is noticeable through a presence of multinational companies (Portes, Roberts, 2005). Especially urban areas have become polygons of violence and a hub of informal economic activities, where poverty and inequality both persist (Glebbeek, Koonings, 2015).

The constant fear of violence is part of a daily routine in most of the Latin American metropolitan areas (Angotti, 2013). State security forces are often incapable of providing enough safety to the urban population, due to corruption and limited financial resources. Therefore, middle and upper class citizens often hire private security to protect themselves (Glebbeek, Koonings, 2015).

The fear of crime and crime incidents are tightly related to public spaces in the cities. Public space, as explained by Tonnelat (2010), includes all places in the city, managed by public authorities and accessible to all the people. These places are relevant for the research since most of the city residents use them daily, meaning they spend at least part of their day there for various reasons such as shopping, transport, work and other. Consequently, public space is closely related to the quality of city residents (Vergara et al., 2015).

Even though Latin American metropolises, such as Bogotá and others, are worldwide known, almost 40 % of the Latin American population lives in medium sized cities with less than half million of inhabitants. The medium size gives these cities a chance for more balanced relations with their surrounding settlements, so they are the ones holding a biggest potential for sustainable growth in the future. However, their intermediate size does not assure them a balanced future development by itself. Therefore, the research on them is of a high value for Latin America (Klaufus, 2010).

On the level of the Latin American continent, this research is meant to fill some knowledge gaps in the field of urban development, especially the relation between public spaces and urban crime and the implications of changes in public space use at the core of the research. Therefore, this research is relevant because it contributes to a better understanding of future urban trends in Latin American middle-sized cities and their (un)sustainable urban development. Cities of the future that will increase in size will indispensably need more public spaces for their residents. If there is better understanding of the effects of prevalent crime issues in Latin America on the public space use, future planning of public spaces might benefit and would be designed and maintained in a way that may reduce crime, and attract more population to public spaces. That might contribute to a higher quality of urban life, and improve the social atmosphere in the cities.

There is a new form of public spaces gaining popularity in Latin America, and also elsewhere in the world. Shopping malls with their fancy appearance, various floors and infinite offer of different shops, attract more and more visitors. This research includes shopping malls as they are one of the most visible new urban elements, affecting traditional public spaces. Knowledge on the relation between shopping malls and traditional public spaces is of a high value and this research uncovers parts of it.

The research focuses on middle-class residents. A definition of Latin American middle-class includes a social group with an income of 10 to 50 American dollars per day. A research opts for middle-class as in Latin America middle-class is on a significant rise at the moment (The World Bank, 2016). The argument is also valid for Costa Rica. According to the study by United Nations Development Programme, in 1992 middle-class represented 18 % of Costa Rican population. In 2009, the share of middle class increased to 40 % of the population. This poses Costa Rica to a fourth place regarding a share of middle-class population among all Latin

American countries (González Sandoval, 2014). Therefore, it is relevant to focus on this social group, as it is expanding in Costa Rica. There is another argument for choosing middle-class as a researched group. According to the study of La Nación from 2008, a highest percentage of the people that think that insecurity is a main concern in the country, belong to a middle-class group of society. 17 % of middle-class population reported insecurity as a major concern, while in high-class the share was 15 % and in low-class 14 % (La Nación, 2014). Lastly, shopping malls are included in this research, and due to high prices in shopping malls, there might be more people from middle and high-class visiting them. Therefore, the focus should be on middle-class in order to be able to compare the results with the participants from the park.

To narrow the focus to a specific case of Costa Rica, it can be said that more than 60% of the Costa Rican population live in urban areas. In the capital city of San José, growing perceptions of insecurity and a lack of effective urban planning have both contributed to the creation of a fragmented city, resulting in a diminishing quality of life. Spatial transformations have produced a new city form, for which there are no adequate models of perception and representation yet (van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, 2013). San José falls into category of medium-sized Latin American cities that might shape the urban future of Latin America (Portes, Roberts, 2005).

The recent crime reports state that the area with highest crime rates is the central canton of San José, where many of the frequently used public spaces are located (Memoria Estadística, 2013).

Van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada (2015) describe the links between fragmentation of the city space, inequality and increasing crime rates in San José in their recent research. The initial point of view in their research derives from a social injustice, produced by capitalism. The planned research aims to complement it with more detailed study on the empirical data on security perceptions and experiences in public spaces. The research aims to find out how people actually feel when visiting public spaces, what kind of experience they have regarding crimes, and what could be the points of improvement towards safer future. These could be translated into actual actions, in terms of improved policies or more security resources available.

The overall aim of the research is to investigate the link between the development of public space in the last decades, and the occurrence, perceptions and rise of crime. The main research question aims to investigate the interrelation between the development (urban planning, maintenance,

space configuration) of public spaces and the occurrence, perceptions and experience of crime in the city of San José.

Upon completion, the planned research aims to produce knowledge, which could potentially be used by city authorities, urban planners, police or researchers on a local level of San José. With clearer understanding of the linkages between the development of public space in the centre of San José, especially in terms of the rise of crime, some recommendations can be created. These can be used in future policies concerning public spaces in San José and comparable cities worldwide.

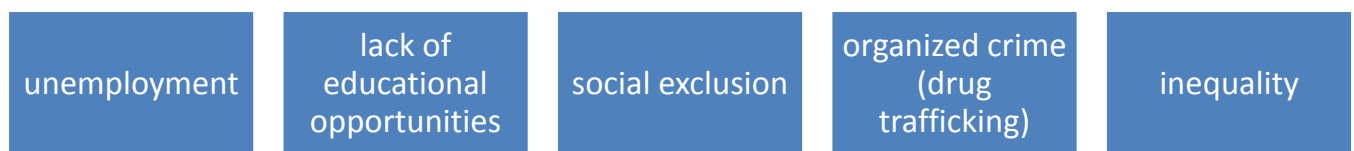
## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Crime issues and public spaces: literature review

It is a challenging task to determine all the causes of violence in Latin America. There are many overlapping ones and confusion in terminology. The ones that seem to include most others in one or another way have been extracted from the literature in order to simplify the complex issue. The elements included in the table 1, all affect each other. Inequality has been visible through social exclusion and in an unequal access to educational opportunities, which often leads to unemployment. Organized crime is a result of Central American position between South and North America and exacerbates crime issues.

The results are below.

**Figure 1: Main causes of crime in Latin America**



**Source: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholar, 2010.**

Many Latin American cities bear a long history of social inequality and exclusion. Excluding different, usually lower income groups of people, has become part of everyday life, and is no longer only a domain of elites, but also of middle class citizens. Jaffe (2005) poses the examples of two capital cities Willemstad (Curacao) and Kingston (Jamaica).

Social exclusion, where some social groups have privileges above others, and rising inequality, both lead to city fragmentation. Spatially, they are noted as the occurrence of gated communities. Coy (2006) did the research in Brazil, where he states that gated communities have become a predominant way of urban development of higher income social classes. In the meantime, Borsdorf, Hidalgo and Sánchez (2007) add that gated communities are no longer visible only among higher income social classes, but also among middle-class residents. There is another element that has influenced city structure. Shopping malls have changed the urban social context as they replaced traditional public spaces with semi-public spaces, owned by developers. The described trends are relevant on a world scale, not only in Latin America as Voyce (2006) explained in his research on shopping malls in Sydney, Australia. There is a controversial debate on whether shopping malls actually fall under a term 'public space'. They are semi-public, should be accessible to all people, but owned by private entities.

With the occurrence of gated communities and shopping malls, cities are becoming more and more fragmented in terms of structure. Rodgers (2010) described this phenomenon on the example of Nicaraguan capital city Managua. The city is transforming into a place of extreme inequality, where some parts, mostly gated individual houses, are completely separated, secured by private security systems, and connected through an exclusive infrastructural network, while other parts of the city are mostly unpleasant places with extremely high crime rates and persistent poverty. Jaffe (2005) mentioned similar phenomenon in the cities of Willemstad and Kingston, where some neighbourhoods became completely separated from other parts of the city, and others marginalized, as a result of both cities being strongly fragmented by variables such as ethnicity, skin colour and income levels. There is an interesting consequence of city fragmentation observed by Jaffe (2005). People think and act only in terms of their neighbourhoods, on a local level. This might challenge the implementation of consistent urban planning policies on a level of whole cities because when aiming to achieve a collective action in the direction of improving

urban life quality, connections and links between residents of different neighbourhoods would be of a great help.

Landman & Schönteich (2002) mentioned the interrelation between spatial fragmentation and crime issues. Gated communities and shopping malls tend to weaken social bonds connecting society. This results in crime more likely to appear. Their research was based on Brazilian and also South African context, and is therefore relevant beyond Latin America.

Many authors detach described trends to a neoliberal model of development. It appeared in Latin America from 1980's on as an answer to the failures of former development models. Its main features were the devaluation of currencies, liberalization and deregulation of trade markets, privatization of many state owned institutions and radical saving measures (Rapley, 2007).

The literature describes urban development of Latin America in the last decades under the influence of neoliberal policies. Some articles focus more on the development of gated communities, whilst others elicit the linkages between crime experiences, perceptions and urban development. Privatisation became an intrinsic part of urban development, what can be seen in the rise of gated communities and shopping malls. Inequality and crime rates increased in most of the cities and people are more and more afraid of becoming a crime victim.

Roberts (2010) resumes the consequences of neoliberal policies in the research of Guatemala City neighbourhoods two times with around 40 years in between. His main findings are that nowadays, low income social groups deal with a city of much higher complexity than ever before, more violence and insecurity, which became more of a problem than poverty, and more issues with housing opportunities than they did in the 1960's.

Borsdorf, Hidalgo and Sánchez (2007) elaborated on the link between violence and neoliberal development in their research on two Chilean metropolitan areas (Valparaíso and Santiago de Chile). The processes of globalisation and deregulation with a diminished role of the state-led urban planning, have led to increasing crime rates and more negative perceptions of crime by city residents through weakened security provision forces. Jaffe (2005) made a remark in her research that higher incidence of crime lead to a general mind-set of fear in the cities of Willemstad and Curacao. Coy (2006) agrees that urban violence has increased in the last decades.



Additionally, city fragmentation as a result of social inequality and the occurrence of violence are caught in a vicious interrelated circle, meaning that fragmentation is partly a consequence of higher levels of crime through gated communities, but in the meantime higher levels of crime result in even higher levels of city fragmentation, affecting urban structure and life.

In Latin America, some extreme examples of violence in public places can be found. In some countries (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador), street gangs have become so powerful due to the weak state and corruptive police forces, that some public spaces have literally vanished and gangs created their own neighborhoods, where there is no freedom and they pose their own rules (Glebbeck, Koonings, 2015). In other countries, the situation is not so extreme. However, after Dammert and Malone (2003), people are victims of crime on a daily basis and they have fear of visiting public spaces. According to the analysis of different opinion surveys made by Felbab-Brown (2011), city residents in Latin America select 'crime' as their main matter of concern in most of the cases.

An extensive study in public spaces in Bolivian Santa Cruz by Wright Wendel, Zarger & Mihelcic (2012) has been conducted. It showed many interesting findings, tightly related to the findings of this thesis. It was found out that if public spaces are perceived to be unsafe, it results in a decline in use, or even in complete avoidance of public space. In their study, they also found out that men use public spaces slightly more frequent than women. They have collected the perceived benefits of public spaces which are at the same time points of improvement in order to make public spaces more attractive. People reported that they cherish public space more if there are options to relax in the natural environment, to socialize with others, including different organized activities, if there are amenities available for their children to play, if there is enough greenery, trees and consequently shadow as a protection from the sun. Middle-income groups of participants mentioned more frequently that they use public spaces for their children to play in compared to high-income public space users. Participants were also interviewed on what prevents them from using public spaces. Insecurity was the most frequently stated reason limiting public space use. Other reasons were a small size of public space, lack of amenities, inadequate maintenance, and lack of greenery. Public spaces were perceived relatively safe during the day and dangerous during the night due to drug dealers, drug addicts, gangs and possibility of assaults. The proposed improvements by the study authors rejected the idea of putting more police officers to all public spaces due to financial limitations. Instead, proposals were made to

create public spaces greater in size, with mixed land use already incorporated in the planning process. The proposals have been made to diversify available facilities in public space, to improve general visual attractiveness of public spaces and to improve illumination.

There is one theory that might be applied in public spaces in San José and also broader in Latin America. It connects the maintenance, planning and development of urban environment with the theories of crime occurrence. 'Broken window theory' is a theory that was proposed in 1982. The main point of the theory is that disorganized city spaces contribute to higher crime rates in urban environment. The theory resulted in aggressive policies in the direction of order-maintenance practices in the cities. The most famous application of the theory was in New York (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016).

To narrow topic down to Costa Rican case, as seen from the recent literature all the described phenomena are taking place in San José as well. Fragmented city space, feelings of insecurity on the streets, gated communities and shopping malls are all the elements of San José urban development.

Privatization has been encouraged on every corner in San José. A relocation of economic functions from the city centre to urban peripheral areas has resulted in the abandonment of traditional public spaces and to the loss of their sociocultural functions. Besides of losing their functions, traditional public spaces in the centre face some other issues. Spaces such as playgrounds, recreational areas, parks, and other, are in many cases not maintained enough. There is a lack of interest to invest in them by the side of government. Another issue is the physical appearance of public spaces in San José. There is a lot of garbage in the parks and on the streets, and there are not enough elements, such as benches, which would make public places more attractive. Another problem is the inaccessibility of the public spaces for walkers as the roads leading to them are in many cases not paved (Van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada, 2015). In general, chaotic transport system and infrastructure are a big problem in San José (interviewee 9, Police Department). This might together with privatization contribute to increasing fragmentation of urban space.

With relocation of meeting places for residents of San José, a pressure on the environment increases as well. People, living in the city centre, have to reach the exclusive places in periphery.

They use either car or bus, which increases motorization rate and worsens air quality. (Van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada, 2015). As a researcher for this thesis was living in the city centre, it can be confirmed there are traffic jams on a daily basis and the air quality is really low.

Public spaces in San José are getting converted into private spaces at a fast pace. In this way, exclusive places, such as shopping malls, have been created, thus not in the centre but in the suburban periphery, taking away the function of public spaces in the centre as meeting places for people. Exclusive places got much more attractive to the residents of San José, as they offer more feelings of security comparing to classic public spaces in the centre, many of which now bear high crime rates (Van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada, 2015).

In the last years, local authorities in San José have been trying to mitigate the effects of socio-spatial segregation and consequent fragmentation of the city space. They try to do this with promoting projects aimed to increase a quality of public spaces in San José. The two most visible measures are the better illumination of public space and the construction of new infrastructure such as children playgrounds, parks and pedestrian boulevards (Van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada, 2015). These measurements might turn out to be helpful but they started taking place a bit too late, which might result in their lower effectiveness and more effort needed.

There is a link between abandonment of public spaces and citizen insecurity, directly addressing the research question of planned research. Many people are avoiding public spaces in San José. This even exacerbates the current state of public spaces and reinforces the rate of abandonment (Van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada, 2015).

## 2.2. Conceptual framework

**Urban planning:** the Spanish term ‘planificación urbana’ is not as broad as the English one. At the department of urban management in San José they explained that it consists of four phases. The first phase is the collection of information, the second one is planning, the third one is implementation and the fourth one is monitoring. The last phase includes verification and improvement of what has been changed. All four phases form a circular process. Because in English, the term ‘urban planning’ has a wider meaning, similar to a Spanish term ‘gestión urbana’, I have decided to use it in my thesis, where it is defined as a political and technical

process, taking into account people's progress, land-use management, urban environment construction, and last but not least the management and conservation of natural environment (School of Urban Planning, 2015).

**Public space:** in the field of urban planning, a term public space denotes all open-air places in the city that are owned and controlled by public domain, such as streets, squares, shopping malls, recreational spaces, parks and other (Tonnelat, 2010). Most of the city residents are involved in a public space in one way or another. In the thesis report, the focus has been on four types of public spaces; parks, streets, public gardens, and shopping malls. There has been a discussion on whether shopping malls are actually public spaces. In this research, they are grouped under category of those in order to compare the results of surveys with traditional public spaces.

**Urban crime:** a term 'crime' means 'an action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable by law' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). Latin America is one of the places with highest crime rates on a global scale, especially in urban areas (Glebbeck, Koonings, 2015). There are many types of existent crime, but this research focused on three types that affect public space users the most: assault, theft and robbery. Theft means taking something that does not belong to you without the owner's consent. Robbery means taking something from a person that is also present, usually with a use of force, violence or threat (NOLO, 2016). In contrary, assault means a violent physical or verbal attack to a victim (The Free Dictionary, 2016).

**Sustainable urban development:** the development, which aims for a balanced growth of the city, taking social, environmental and economic aspects into account. That can be done to some extent by implementing appropriate policies (Button, Pearce, 1989). As seeing from the examples of some European cities, sustainability can be achieved through local policies and initiatives (Portney, Berry, 2014).

**Spatial exclusion:** spatial exclusion is a term, referring to a broad array of measures which bear a common purpose of preserving a high social status of specific urban areas, including a restriction of access for the social groups, perceived as unwanted or inappropriate. The most common way of practicing spatial exclusion is to maintain a high price of the property, which makes it inaccessible to many members of society. Another way of spatial exclusion is realised by

property agents, which in many cases sell properties only to specific members of society. In this way, gated communities have been created (Rebernik, 2008).

**Socio-spatial fragmentation:** a very broad term, which can better be explained by splitting it into two components. Social fragmentation is a term, denoting limited relations between different subgroups in the society, such as for example groups formed by the same language, income, religion, or race. In Latin America, social fragmentation is most visible through the creation of gated communities, where high income social groups have limited connections with other social groups. Spatial fragmentation in urban geography is a term, denoting conflicts between land use and physical features of city space. It results in the division of urban space into many fragments, areas of a small size, where each fragment presents a specific land use (Kuethe, 2012).

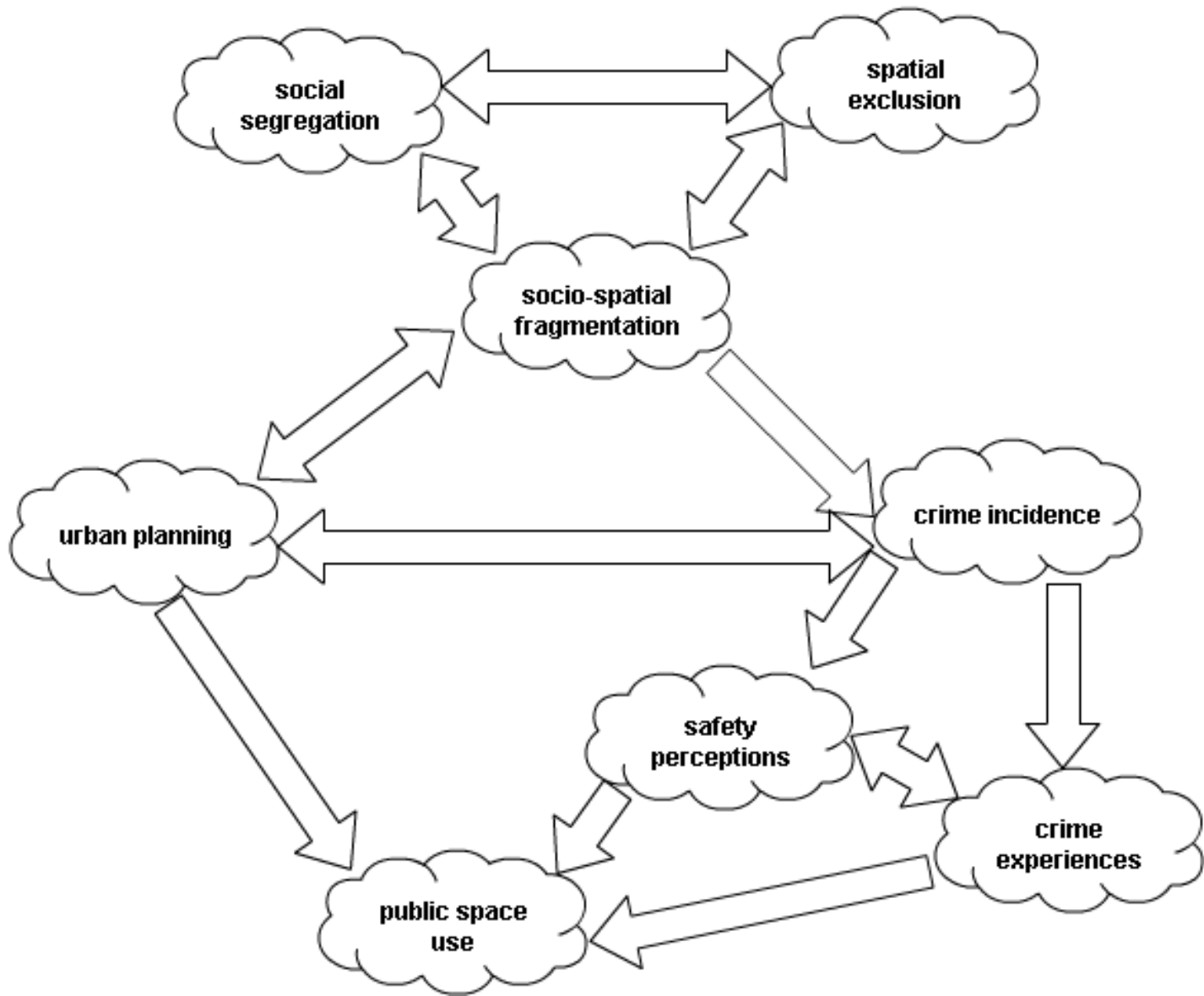
**Social segregation:** the social segregation of urban space, also named as residential segregation, is a complex term, related to social inequality. It means an agglomeration of social groups with the same levels of income in the same part of the city. Segregation is mostly reflected in 3 dimensions in urban areas: the extent to which a specific social group is concentrated in a specific part of the city, homogeneity of the society in different city areas, and the reputation of different areas of the city (Sabatini, 2006).

Linkages between upper concepts are of a complex nature, based on the literature review. The most important is to understand the influence of neoliberal policies on urban planning, which is a broad term that among other includes the development of public space. Both concepts have been heavily influenced by neoliberal policies in the last decades in Latin America, taking into account that deregulation and transfer of power to private spheres of economy resulted in housing opportunities being determined by real estate companies. The concept of spatial exclusion is tightly bound to the concept of urban planning and planning of public spaces. With implementation of gated communities, shopping malls and restricted public spaces as a part of urban planning, socio-spatial exclusion and social segregation are on the increase. As more and more people get socially excluded, crime rates increase as well. At the same time, many cities try to focus on sustainable urban development. This was a simplified explanation of interconnections between these concepts. In reality, the picture is more complicated with many additional factors.

General linkages between the concepts can be applied specifically to the case of San José. Social segregation, spatial exclusion and increasing inequality in Costa Rican society are interrelated to spatial fragmentation. Other consequences of previously described processes are the atrophy of social cohesion, individualization of local cultural values, and increasing feelings of fear among the residents of San José. Due to this fear of crime, people search for their own ways of protecting themselves, and start abandoning public spaces. Van Lidth de Jeude et al. (2015) name the described process as ‘the vicious circle of spatial fragmentation and social segregation in the Grand Metropolitan Area of San José’.

Figure 2 illustrates the relations between the concepts used in the research. Processes of social segregation, spatial exclusion and socio-spatial fragmentation in the Grand Metropolitan Area of Costa Rica are caught in an interrelated circle. This circle has an effect on urban planning and on crime incidence. At the main core of the research were the interrelations between urban planning in the central canton of San José and crime incidence. Urban planning affects public space use. Crime incidence affects both safety perceptions and crime experiences, which also interrelate to each other. Both safety perceptions and experiences have an effect on public space use. The concept of sustainable urban development, also described in the conceptual framework, was not included in the scheme as it is a general concept which city should aim for. Neoliberal policies, especially the effects of privatization, have also not been explicitly included in a model as they indirectly affect all other concepts but they are explained in a literature review instead.

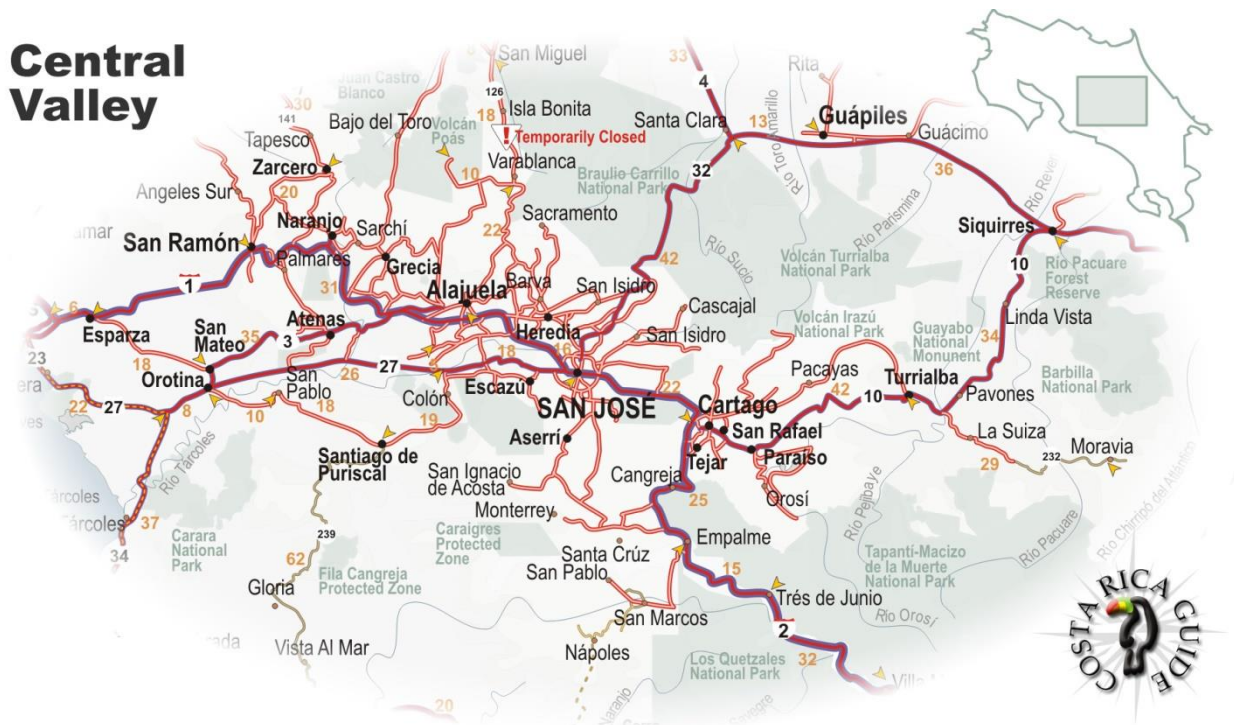
Figure 2: Scheme of the research concepts



### 2.3. Regional/Contextual framework

Costa Rica hosts one of the biggest conurbations in Central America. It is named Grand Metropolitan Area and lies in the Central Valley. There are various reasons for such high population density in the Central Valley. The most important ones are its location in the middle of the country, mild climate and fertile volcanic soils (VivaCostaRica, 2003).

**Figure 3: Map of Central Valley (original Spanish name ‘Valle Central’)**



**Source: Costa Rican Guide, 2016.**

There are four urban settlements noticeable in size in Central Valley: Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia and San José. San José has the highest number of inhabitants and is the capital city of Costa Rica.

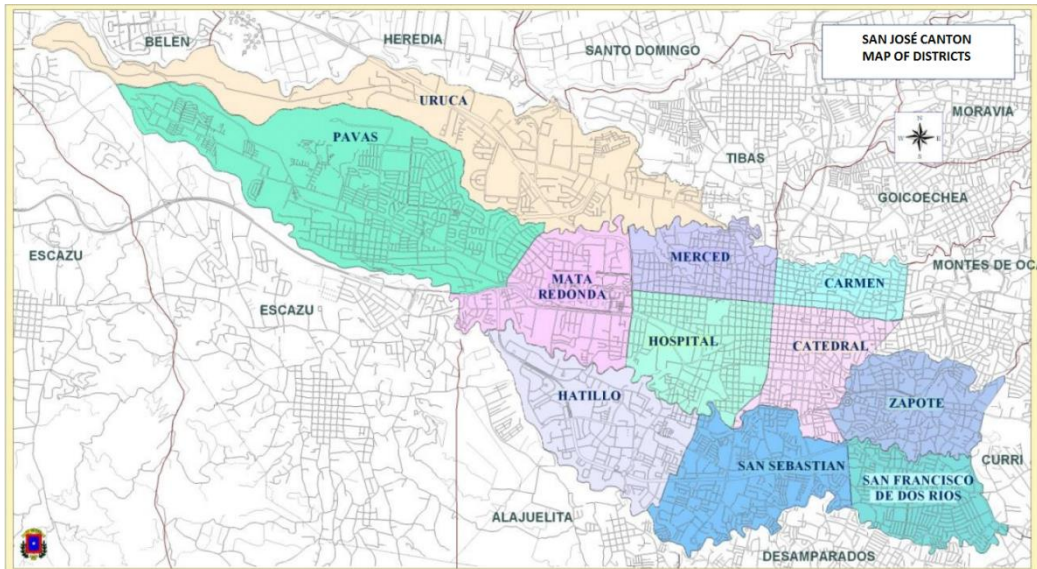
Costa Rica is divided by provinces, cantons and districts. The central canton of San José city, which forms the central part of San José city without its suburbs, has been chosen for the purpose of this research. It has been chosen since it hosts some of the districts with the highest crime rates



in the country and is at the same time the place where main Costa Rican state and business institutions are located, which means a high concentration of people in public spaces.

The central canton of San José had 288 054 inhabitants by the latest National Census in 2011 (INEC, 2011). It is divided by 11 districts, which we can see on the map below.

**Figure 4: Map of San José canton**



**Source: MSJ, 2011.**

A table with socio-economic characteristics of the San José canton can be found in the Appendix 2.

The data on income households were not available for the canton itself, only for all urban areas of Costa Rica together. The average income per household in Costa Rican urban areas was 976 707 Costa Rican collones per month (coincides with the answer ‘3-4 minimum salaries’, to the question in the used survey: ‘What is the monthly average income in your household?’).

The information, included in the following subchapters, has been collected with longer, open-ended interviews and complemented with literature on the topic. A complete list of participants with their profession can be found in Appendix 1.

### 2.3.1. Past, present and future urban development of the central canton of San José

Historically, the city of San José had developed in a spontaneous manner. The structure of the city (avenues and streets) corresponds to colonial times. There were not many comprehensive plans regarding city development until 1990's, and the city as well as the other parts of the Central Valley, expanded uncontrollably.

From a social perspective, the central canton of San José was considered as a living place for the higher social classes during its earlier development in the first part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and got therefore equipped with museums, theatre, parks, recreational spaces and other commodities suitable for higher social classes. Architecture was designed in European style. Parks were designed in a similar way to European ones, with a kiosk in the middle, which is a place for musical and other cultural activities. However, nobody counted with the contraction of the state and budget cuts as a result of neoliberalist policies from the last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century on, resulting in social inversion in the city. These trends resulted in people of higher income starting to migrate out of central canton of San José to the external parts of the city such as Santa Ana, Coronado, Escazú. This uninhabited the central canton and converted it into a commercial part of the city, but with the infrastructure of colonial, European style, which was left from previous development stages and got frozen in time, without taking into account the increase of motorization in the city and related collapse of the infrastructure.

The first metropolitan plan meant for San José dates back to 1949. It was created in association with San José municipality and Organization of American States. Some proposals have been made for urban planning of the city of San José and also for the satellite cities around such as Desamparados, San Pedro, Tibás. In 1968, the first urban planning law was passed, and it resembled the Spanish law from 1956. This law included the obligation of city public developers to dedicate between 5 and 20 % of the city space to the green and communal areas. After that, various regulations had been put into place, such as Reglamento de urbanización hacia fraccionamientos (Urban regulation on spatial division) from 1982, which divided green areas into parks and communal areas including kindergartens, common spaces for the community and Red Cross units. The municipality of San José created its first comprehensive regulatory plan, called Plan de Teritorio Urbano, between 1992 and 1994, and it was approved in 1995. Among

other, it included chapters on land use, heritage management, road environment, and there was also a whole chapter on green areas and parks, which mainly proposed renovation of the parks in the central area of the city. The proposal was to connect them by boulevards and to renovate them. The renovation began with Morazan Park, where it had previously been a big roundabout and lots of cars. The proposal was to eliminate it and to expand the park. The opposition was strong, from the public and from the Ministry of Transport, because the center was perceived to be dead anyway. It was believed that it is better to invest this money in the periphery where there are more poor people and needs. So the municipality had to lodge an appeal to the constitutional court, and won. Comparing to the situation now, 25 years later, nobody says the center is dead. There are kilometers of boulevards, which connect several parks (interviewees 7 and 8, Department of Urban Management of San José).

There were two main suggestions provided during the interviews as to why the central canton of San José lacks adequate financial resources for its proper maintenance.

Sociologist, working in San José in the past, offered the following explanation. The urban issues of the central canton of San José have been mostly seen as a local government responsibility, even though the central canton contributes a lot to the tax budget of the state due to its commercial nature. Due to the system of social handouts and social paternalism for the poor population, infrastructural projects for the poor population have been taking place in the peripheral areas of the city, led by the state. However, the interviewee emphasized the factor of corruption which tends to be prevalent in Costa Rican state. It might be the main reason as to why the taxes and other financial resources, meant for these projects in the periphery and in general state budget, many times do not return to the whole central canton, but only to the main touristic transit parts of it. Consequently, the municipal government does not have adequate financial resources to improve urban issues of the central canton, and the responsibility is perceived to lie on them (interviewee 4, professor/sociologist). The explanation has to be taken with a bit of criticism as there might be institutional affiliation involved. Nevertheless, it provides a good discussion material, as corruption is a well-known reality in Latin America.

The Police Department of San José offered the second explanation and mentioned the fact that has in their opinion always been an obstacle in the development of the central canton of San José. San José as the capital has a central location among 4 main cities in the Central Valley. As a

consequence, in order for people to travel from one city to another, and to use various institutions and services located in all cities, more than 2 million of people fluctuate into and out of San José daily. The main transport routes due to an obsolete transport system lead directly through the city center. Consequently, the central canton doesn't have means to support itself. The costs of city maintenance, which is being used by more than 2 million people daily, are financed only by less than 300 000 inhabitants of the city itself. This results in deterioration of many urban services such as garbage recollection, or the infrastructure maintenance (interviewee 9, Police Department).

It seems that neoliberal development in the last decades has influenced public spaces more indirectly through other mechanisms rather than through direct privatization. There were 3 elements of neoliberalist development from the 1980's on that have transformed urban development. Those are the proliferation of car use (motorization), the proliferation of horizontal condominiums (gated communities), and the occurrence of massive shopping malls. With these 3 elements new forms of development in San José peripheral areas emerged, as people became more mobile. As a result, these newly occurred elements, especially shopping malls, slowly took over the role of other public spaces in the central canton of San José. This trend has separated the users of public spaces, and reduced the social heterogeneity in public spaces in the central canton of San José (interviewee 6, professor/architect). The literature agrees that shopping malls in the peripheral areas of the city replaced the classical idea of urban public spaces. Before the occurrence of shopping malls, urban public life was taking place in various traditional public spaces in the city center, but shopping malls started to attract city residents due to their offer of all types of fun in one place and after all, due to security (van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada, 2015).

This new model of urban development brought many horizontal condominiums into San José. Most of the condominiums in San José at the moment are the horizontal ones. The problem is that they demand a lot of space, and result in even more fragmented city structure with lower population densities.

In the period of 2013-2030, a lot of effort by the authorities of San José is meant to be put into a new model of urban development which would concentrate higher densities of population. It aims to revitalize the city center and attract new inhabitants to the central canton with the

implementation of vertical condominiums of medium height. The idea is that people would live in vertical condominiums of medium height in central canton, with the prices accessible to the middle-class. They would usually contain 4 floors and around 100 apartments. In this way the central canton of San José would become repopulated (interviewee 6, professor/architect).

Central canton of San José already has few vertical condominiums but those are mostly skyscrapers. The housing prices in them are not affordable for a middle-class population. The concept is clear but in practice the private sector develops quickly and the public sector develops slower. Therefore the projects move further at a very slow pace (interviewee 6, professor/architect).

### **2.3.2. The development of Okayama Park and Maria Auxiliadora Park**

In this section, the development of parks included in the research is explained. The term development in this case includes urban planning, maintenance, and measures aimed to improve overall appearance of the parks.

Urban planning and maintenance of public spaces are in principle done on a cantonal level (interviewee 8, Department of Urban Management).

In figure 5, Maria Auxiliadora Park can be seen, where the first 50 surveys were conducted. It is one of the parks in San José which are the legacy of Laws of the Indies. Laws of the Indies were the laws imposed by the Spanish crown in colonial times, regulating various areas, among other city planning. The park contains reticular homogeneous crosslinks, and has an orthogonal shape. The park is basically the subtraction of the space that would otherwise be used for housing, dedicated to orthogonal public space, in this case park. There are many parks in Latin America that were planned in this way (interviewee 6, professor/architect).

**Figure 5: Maria Auxiliadora Park**



**Source: Panoramio, 2009.**

There were changes and improvements made in the park recently. In 2007, a pilot project started specifically in Maria Auxiliadora Park and spread out to other parts of the city. The project is called ‘Floresta Urbana’ from Instituto de Arquitectura Tropical, and aims to reforest San José with planting different plant species in parks, streets and other public spaces in order to raise the quality of urban life. The funds for the projects are contributed jointly by municipality of San José, ICE (Costa Rican electricity institute) and by a private enterprise (Nacion, 2007). Between 2007 and 2008, 27 800 new plant species were seeded in San José (Instituto de Arquitectura Tropical, 2016).

There were also improvements in illumination of Maria Auxiliadora Park made. The national company for power and light (Compañía Nacional de Fuerza y Luz) changed poles and wiring in the park. 33 new poles with new lights have been installed replacing older illumination (Crhoy, 2013).

In figure 6, Okayama Park in San Francisco de Dos Ríos, where the second 50 surveys were conducted, can be seen. It was established relatively recently, in 2002. It was designed by the architect Mayela Fallas and established as a memory of the celebration of the 30 years of



brotherhood between Japanese city Okayama and San José. The park has a modern design with some elements that resemble Asian culture such as planted bamboo trees (Porconocer, 2015).

**Figure 6: Okayama Park**



**Source: QCostarica, 2014.**

The Okayama prefecture from Japan donated part of the funds for the establishment of the park. At the municipality of San José they reported that there are many land use conflicts next to the park. On one side of the park there is a primarily residential zone and on the other side there is a main street with many commercial activities, and this is a source of conflicts. People that live in a residential zone are complaining about being molested by many activities held in a commercial zone (interviewees 7 and 8, Department of Urban Management of San José).

At the municipality, they told that there is a need for more comprehensive plan of public spaces development. Many public spaces in San José are under the municipal administration. In their opinion public spaces in San José are strongly affected by the change of mayor every 4 years, which always shifts forms of financing and brings new forms of management (interviewee 8, Department of Urban Management of San José).

### 2.3.3. Crime issues in Costa Rica

In order to better understand the crime situation in the central canton of San José, it is essential to get a picture of overall crime situation in Costa Rica. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Costa Rican population was predominantly rural. The population density was small, and when there was a delinquent, everyone knew him/her. This is called an effective social control of crime. Later on, with the modernization processes (television, media, social networks etc.) and with the increase in population, things changed, and anonymity became easier (interviewee 3, criminologist). In the years between 1980 and 1990, Costa Rica went through a heavy economic crisis, and during this time, gangs of young delinquents started to form, and were in everyday language named ‘chapolines’ (English: grasshoppers). This was the first time people started being afraid to walk the streets of the city because of the possibility of getting approached and robbed.

The increase in crime intensity has been noticed in Costa Rica. The main reason for that is the increase in drug trafficking (interviewees 1 and 2, professor and lawyer). The United States is the biggest consumer of drugs in the world. Drug cartels which are smuggling drugs from Colombia, Peru and other countries of production, are in most of the cases destined to the US. They smuggle drugs through the whole Central America to get them to the US. Costa Rica serves as a resting point for smugglers. The experienced criminologist labeled the drug trafficking as a mother of all crimes. It results in homicides, robberies, thefts, inter-familiar violence, and suicides (interviewee 3, criminologist). The stated facts can be confirmed with other sources as well. BBC reported in 2015 that the incidence of the most violent of all crimes, homicide, in 2015 reached the frequency of more than 11 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants in Costa Rica. By United Nations criteria, every frequency with more than 10 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants is considered as ‘epidemic violence’. Costa Rican authorities relate the increase directly to a drug trafficking. They exposed three cantons, where the members of three main organizations dedicated to drug dealing, are concentrated. Those three cantons are the canton central of San José, which is part of this research, the canton of Desamparados and the canton of Alajuela. In all three cantons, the number of homicides duplicated in only one year from 2014 to 2015 (BBC Mundo, 2015).

The interviewees, working on crime issues in Costa Rica, expressed some opinions on the future crime development.



The main reason for the crime increase in the future might be the penetration of drug cartels into the society with their highly violent behavior. In the opinion of professor and lawyer interviewed, Costa Rican society does not put enough attention to this kind of issues because of the general thinking of being a protected, magical society, where nothing really bad could ever happen. They emphasize there is an immediate call for the discussion on this topic needed. They emphasized that the social phenomena of unemployment can partly explain the proliferation of violence in San José and Costa Rica in general, but cannot explain new patterns of it that started occurring lately, including cruel violence. This can only be explained by the increase in drug trafficking and with its penetration into the society (interviewees 1 and 2, professor and lawyer).

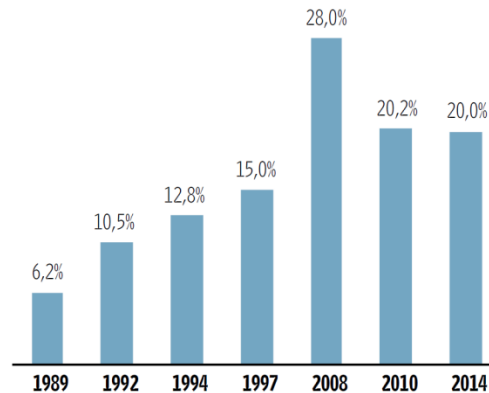
Crime levels might increase also due to the fact that the general population number is expected to increase. With weak laws, and with the enforcement of drug trafficking, the levels of violence might get much higher (interviewee 3, criminologist).

Inequality in the society might increase due to a high fiscal deficit country is facing at the moment, and with the proliferation of gated communities, and it may lead to more crime (interviewee 10, economist).

At the police department, they expressed more positive notes on the issues of crime. They reported that they have been working on enforcing the power of the state institutions, the programs of national prevention of delinquency, and the power of local police departments. They are trying to get involved in educational system, to spread out more sport infrastructure, and to expand green areas in the city (interviewee 9, Police Department).

Increase in crime incidence in Costa Rica is reflected in the numbers by Estado de la Nación (2015), which informs that between 1989 and 2008, the percentage of persons in households that reported being a victim of any type of crime, had been constantly increasing. In 2008, it reached its peak, and then slightly decreased. The figure has a pitfall that might affect reliability of it. There is a big gap between 1997 and 2008 with no data.

**Figure 7: Temporal trend of the percentage of Costa Rican households where at least one member declared to be a victim of crime in a specific year**



**Source: Estado de la Nacion, 2015.**

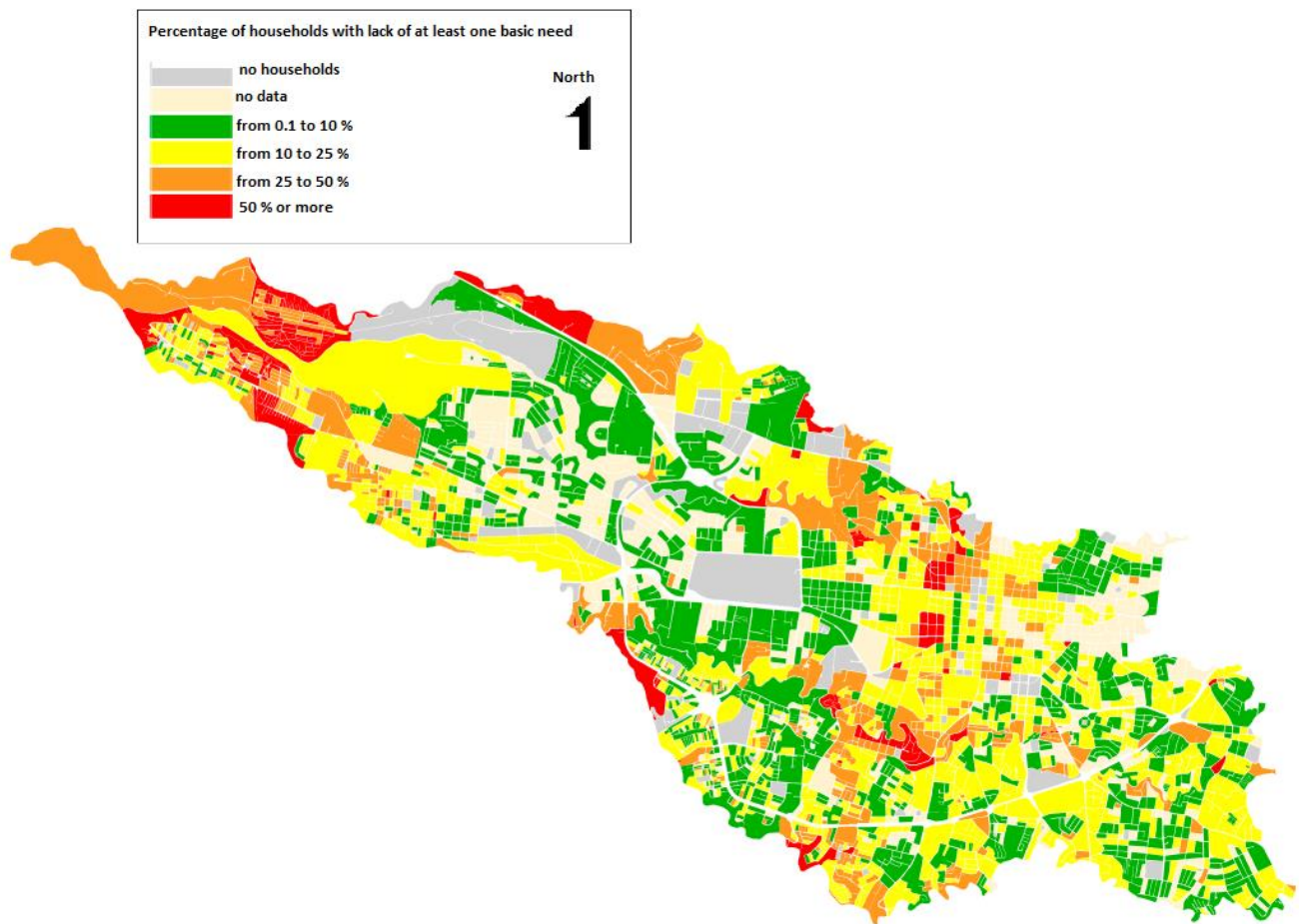
Opinions on the future development of crime in Costa Rica are diverse. From one hand, we have opinions that emphasize drug traffic reinforcement, and approach Costa Rica to other Central American countries that are suffering extremely high levels of violence. There are available data which show that violent crime is on the rise in Costa Rica and in other parts of Central America. If we join this data with the fact that the country suffers a fiscal deficit and that the levels of inequality in terms of space and in terms of society are increasing, the future does not seem particularly bright. However, crime levels seem to have stabilized a bit after 2008, where we might notice the efforts of public security institutions investing in crime issues. It is challenging to say how the future of crime in Costa Rica will really look like, and only time will show its real picture.

#### **2.3.4. Crime issues in the central canton of San José**

Below, there is a map of the central canton of San José, created by the method of Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN). This method is one of the basic methods in development studies to measure poverty in developing countries and is determined as ‘the absolute minimum resources necessary for long-term physical well-being usually in terms of consumption of goods’ (Dicen, 2016).

In figure 8 it can be seen that the highest percentage of households with unsatisfied basic needs is in the districts of Pavas and La Uruca. Even though there are some places with much worse socio-economic indicators than Hospital District, the incidence of crime is still higher or the same in Hospital. In Hospital, we can see that there is no noticeable relation between low socio-economic indicators and crime, as is the case in for example Pavas district, where crime and low socio-economic indicators go hand by hand. Therefore, there must be are other factors playing a role in Hospital District.

**Figure 8: Percentage of households with lack of at least one basic need**



**Source: Estado de la Nación, 2011.**

In figure 9 there is a spatial distribution of assaults in the central canton of San José. It is obvious that some districts of the canton host higher incidence of assaults than surrounding areas. Especially the central districts of the canton (Merced, Hospital and Catedral districts), show the

high incidence of assaults. Hospital district is the one with the highest incidence of robberies and assaults. It may be related to the nature of the district. It is a business district, where many people walk the streets during the day, there are a lot of traffic jams, and there is a high concentration of homeless people, many of which tend to be drug addicts. During the night, streets are lonely, and it makes it easier to rob a victim with little or no eyewitnesses. Catedral district is another one where the incidence of robberies is very high (interviewees 1 and 2, professor and lawyer). The official police statistics says that in 2015 Hospital hosted 586 and Catedral 479 denounced assaults, which are the highest numbers in the country (Teletica, 2016).

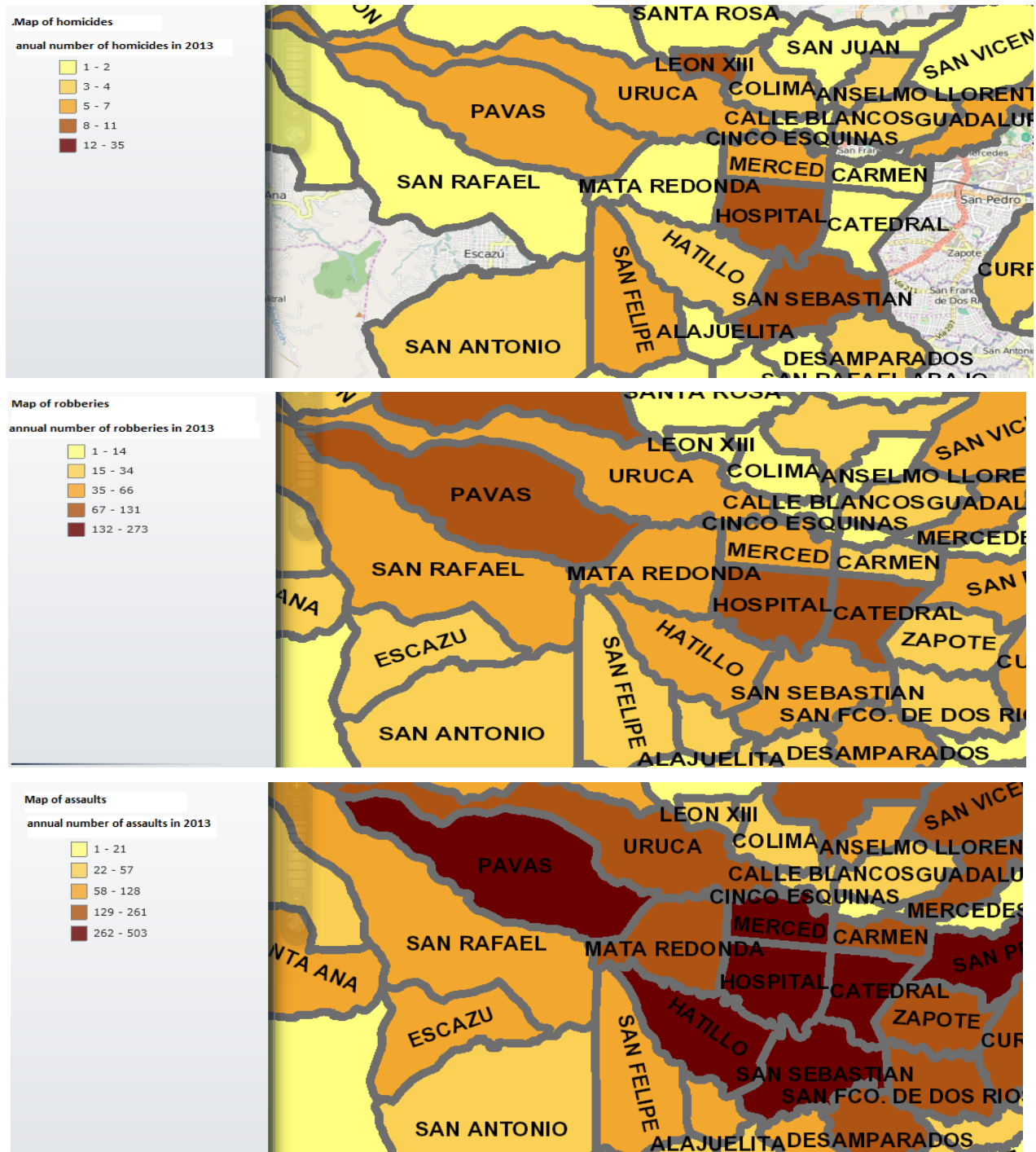
The most common type of crimes in canton central of San José is the street theft of personal pertinence. That includes the crimes where delinquent approaches the victim, with violence in case of resistance, and demands their things, or takes them secretly when the victim is not even aware of it. It can be wallet, phone, watch, necklace or other personal belongings (interviewee 9, Police Department). Because of a direct contact victim-delinquent, this type of crimes generates insecurity and directly results in fear of using public spaces.

The majority of perpetrated crimes in San José canton are drug related. Drugs are a serious problem in San José canton and affect every aspect of urban life. Some of the drugs destined to the US, stay in Costa Rica which results in higher rates of drug addiction. There is a high density of drug addicts on the streets of San José which need money to buy drugs. In more than 90 % they are addicted to the cheapest street drug which produces a strong addiction - crack. Therefore, they realize small robs, thefts, assaults on the streets. There is also a certain share of thieves on the streets that are not addicted to drugs, but they sooner or later start to interfere with drug trafficking. The first group of crime in San José is therefore strictly related to drug addiction and smuggling (interviewee 9, Police Department).

There is another group of crimes common in San José. It had appeared with modernization and with occurrence of television. Young men from ‘cinturones de miseria’, parts of San José with lower incomes decide to join drug trafficking. They do not usually do it for the subsistence, they could still find another option to work and provide money to their households. They join because they want to earn bigger amount of money in an easy way. They want to have a decent living status, they want to have good cars, they want to have clothes of good brands, and all this results in young men from poor neighborhoods joining drug trafficking (interviewee 3, criminologist).

There are 3 typical sites in the San José canton where crime concentrates. The first ones are the sites in the vicinity of markets. Especially the very central part of the city is full of markets. There are always a lot of people and therefore it makes it handier for delinquents to rob. Other critical sites are the ones close to the city hospitals. There are a lot of people from rural areas, that are not acquainted well with the city and they are easy targets of petty crimes. There are other public spaces where crime is more frequent as well. Those are narrow sidewalks on the streets, and bus stations, which are in many cases magnet for delinquents (interviewee 9, Police Department).

**Figure 9: Annual number of assaults, robberies and homicides in San José canton (2013)**



Source and adjusted by: OIJ, 2016.

### 2.3.5. The interrelation between urban development and crime issues in San José

To link the urban development of San José to crime issues, the police department of San José expressed the opinion that the main problem of the canton of San José which generates insecurity is the public transport. They think that the public transport does not respond adequately to the necessities of the residents. Everyday a high quantity of buses enters and leaves the city, with many different destinations to all around the country. The city doesn't have a main central station but many smaller stations in various parts of the city as the bus companies are more or less private, which is somehow related to the neoliberal development and privatization. Groups of people are obliged to wait in a row for the bus on narrow pavements, which is the mayor determinant of insecurity in the city, as it is then easier for delinquents to rob. In their opinion, the bus companies should construct larger bus terminals with many routes departing from one station, where one could wait in a safe space for a bus. However, they expose the fact that in Costa Rica, it is very difficult to implement new changes as the high quantity of institutions that enabled democracy in the past, nowadays produce the conditions in which it takes a lot of time to accept any type of decision and implement it. In the opinion of Municipal Police Department of San José, the urban planning does not affect the crimes as much as the economic distribution of investments. These should be put into the improvement of traffic signalization, the renovation of buildings, the improvement of road infrastructure, the improvement and expansion of green areas in the city, and the improvement of touristic sites (interviewee 9, Police Department).

The police department also explained the relation between the conditions of the streets and the crime incidence. San José has narrow streets and narrow sidewalks, which is a colonial legacy. There is a series of distractive elements for the pedestrian such as sidewalks, roads in a bad condition, waste on the streets, tubes, etc. All these result in a higher incidence of thefts and petty crimes on the streets (interviewee 9, Police Department).

In the opinion of the professor of architecture, there is a relation between urban planning and crime development in San José. He explained: 'Urban development plan has taken long to be made, and the first part of that plan included metropolitan areas. However, the plan was not in accordance with what had been done in the local planning on the municipal level. Few

municipalities have a comprehensive municipal regulatory plan at the moment, most of them only have it partially completed. A regional planning model established an urban model and a model of regional public transport, protected areas, and green areas. However land uses are a local, municipal responsibility. In the absence of updated and comprehensive plans urban dysfunctionality starts taking place. For example the migration of residents to other areas, and this is basically what happened in the canton of San José. In the four central districts of San José, the land use is very mono-functional; most of the land is dedicated to commercial services. Therefore, people started leaving the area and searched for the living place outside of the city where the land was cheaper, and the municipalities with no comprehensive regulatory plans are usually the recipients of this migrating population.’ The professor emphasized that the municipality that only has partially developed regulatory plans, will after time only keep low income population, which then leads to the fact that the area gets more susceptible to crimes and other social anomalies (interviewee 6, professor/architect).

There is a relation between the park design and crime explained by the architecture student. Public spaces without any plan of configuration are automatically more vulnerable for crimes. Public spaces need to be open to the main streets, need to have elements of visibility, good illumination and not so many elements where delinquents could hide and attack from the incognito position (interviewee 5, architecture student).

The professors from the jurisdictional field expressed a thought that there is a relation between the configuration of the city and crime. When a public space design includes good illumination, is secured and has many activities to offer, it is also less susceptible to delinquency. They mentioned ‘the broken window theory’, where the city that is pleasant to the eye also bears lower crime rates. They shared their opinion: ‘If public space is spacious, with many trees, well-maintained, with trash bins, people will feel better and also behave in accordance to this. They reported that public spaces in San José do not have many trash bins available, there is a lot of traffic, and people just throw waste on the streets and behave disrespectful. Sociologically, people are more susceptible to commit crimes than they would be in a clean, well-maintained and pleasant-to-eye public space’ (interviewees 1 and 2, professor and lawyer). In San José, more order and maintenance would not directly lower crime rates, but it would definitely improve the image of the city in the eyes of its own residents, which might make them spend more time in



public spaces. Had they spent more time in public spaces, these would have gotten revitalized and it would have been more challenging for delinquents to rob with more crowds in public spaces.

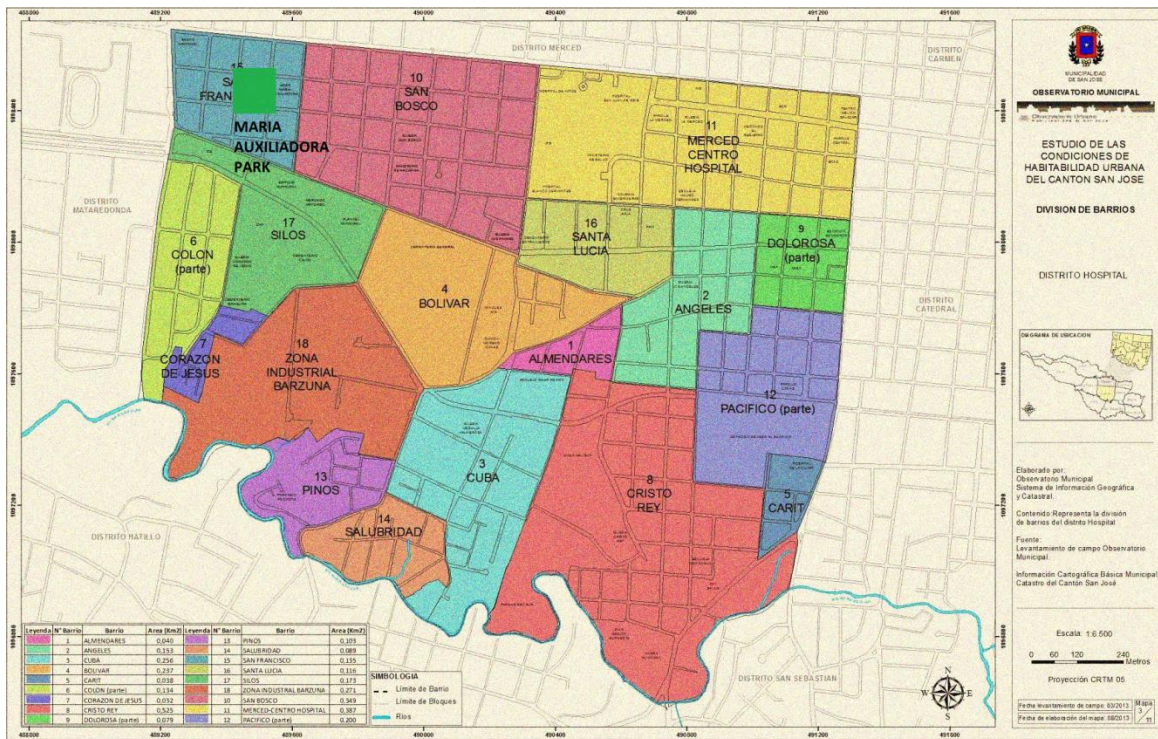
There are many factors influencing urban crime, which is a structural problem influenced by many social phenomena. It seems that there is a relation between urban planning, maintenance, configuration and crime. In San José specifically, there are unique conditions, where a chaotic public transport contributes to insecurity. Furthermore, pavements are narrow and handy for delinquents to rob as a legacy of colonial period, what has been proved right during the informal observation. The comprehensive urban management plans had been developed relatively late, which contributed to a mono-functional land use and the predominance of commercial activities. That together with social inversion resulted in a migration out of the central canton and the deterioration of socio-economic structure of the canton of San José. Where there are less people and more commercial activities, it is easier to conduct crimes and get a person alone on the street. From informal observations it can be concluded that the parks are relatively well maintained. During the conductance of the surveys, many maintenance workers have been noticed in the parks, taking care of the plants, paves, and other elements in public spaces. What is a big disadvantage of public spaces in San José is definitely the absence of trash bins, as garbage can be noticed everywhere on the floor. This gives an image of an ugly, disorganized city, which might psychologically contribute to more crime. Many semi-private, semi-public buildings in the central canton are in a bad condition, which does not help as well. All described factors, definitely have an influence on crime rates in the central canton of San José.

The next sections (2.3.6., 2.3.7., and 2.3.8.), give an overview of the general socio-economic characteristics of the districts and shopping malls included in this research. This information will later serve for comparison with the actual data collected on the field.

### 2.3.6. Hospital District

We can see the map of Hospital District in figure 10 with the location of the Maria Auxiliadora Park, where surveys were conducted, in green colour.

**Figure 10: Map of Hospital District**



**Source and adjusted by: Municipalidad de San José (MSJ), 2013.**

The district consists of 18 neighbourhoods and is encircled by the districts of Hatillo and San Sebastián to the South, Mata Redonda to the West, Catedral to the East, and Merced to the North. It is located in the middle of the San José canton and is one of the four districts (Carmen, Merced, Catedral, Hospital) forming the historical city structure from colonial times. It is the most populated of these four districts (MSJ, 2013).

A table with socio-economic characteristics of the population in Hospital District can be found in the Appendix 2.

The percentage of households with at least one basic need unsatisfied is somewhat around cantonal average. Share of the households in a bad condition is way lower than the cantonal

average. One of the reasons for that might be a high concentration of commercial buildings and institutions which are maintained by public entities. The share of people employed in primary, secondary and tertiary economic sector puts the district exactly in the average of canton. The high percentage of people employed in tertiary sector resembles the employment structure of the cities in developed world, with a predomination of commercial and technology services. The employment rate is lower than the cantonal average, which is interesting due to the fact that the district is extremely business oriented. The percentage of population aged 17 or more with higher education is lower than cantonal average (30 %), but still higher than in rural areas of Costa Rica.

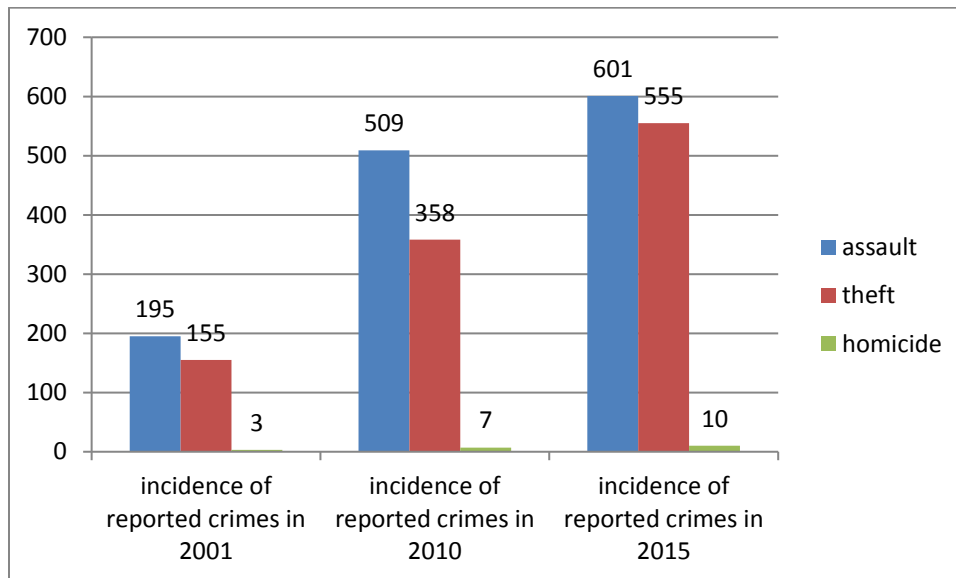
Hospital District is a seat of various important Costa Rican institutions. It hosts 4 national Costa Rican hospitals, the headquarter building of San José municipality, the railway station, the central building of the board of social protection, the main offices of Banco Central de Costa Rica (Costa Rican Central Bank), and the two biggest urban cemeteries. The district also includes quite some green areas and parks (MSJ, 2013).

Official crime statistics for Hospital District have been taken from the website of ‘Organismo de Investigación Judicial’(Judicial investigation of Costa Rica).

The crime statistics data are displayed for the years 2010 and 2015 in order to investigate whether the crime rate has increased/decreased. The crimes observed were assaults, thefts and homicides. The first two were chosen because they are the most common types of crime in public spaces, and the homicide is chosen to observe the real trends of increase in violence in Costa Rica.

Below there is a figure showing the incidence of crimes in Hospital District.

**Figure 11: Incidence of reported crimes in Hospital District in 2010 and 2015**



**Source and adjusted by: OIJ, Poder Judicial, 2016.**

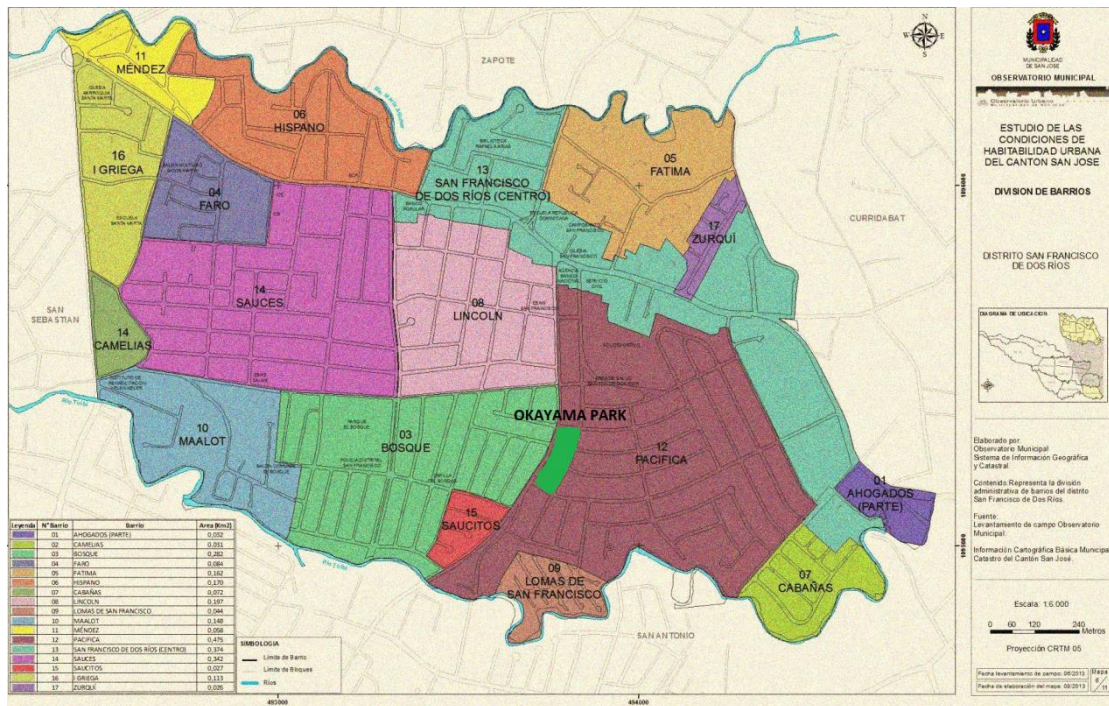
By the estimations of Rosero Bixby, the number of population in the district diminished by 17 % in a given time period (from 24 916 in 2001 to 20 644 inhabitants in 2015). Despite of the fact that the number of population diminished, the incidence of all observed types of crimes substantially increased. This trend is really a matter of concern. Normally, when the number of population increases, crime rates also increase. But in this case, the number of population decreased, and the crime rates substantially increased, which points to the fact that Hospital District really has a crime problem.

### **2.3.7. San Francisco de Dos Ríos District**

In figure 12 there is San Francisco de Dos Ríos District with the location of Okayama Park, where surveys were conducted, in green colour.



**Figure 12: Map of San Francisco de Dos Ríos District**



**Source: Municipalidad de San José (MSJ), 2013.**

San Francisco de Dos Ríos District is located in the south-eastern part of the central canton of San José. It borders Zapote District to the North, Río Tiribí and the canton of Desamparados to the South, the canton of Curridabat to the East and San Sebastián District to the West (MSJ, 2013).

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, only 700 inhabitants lived in this area, dedicated to a coffee, vegetables and grain cultivation. In the 1950s, the population number started to grow rapidly, mainly members of a middle-class, and it has been growing up until today. Together with Mata Redonda and Carmen Districts, San Francisco de Dos Ríos forms an alliance of three district of the San José canton with the highest socio-economic indicators (MSJ, 2013).

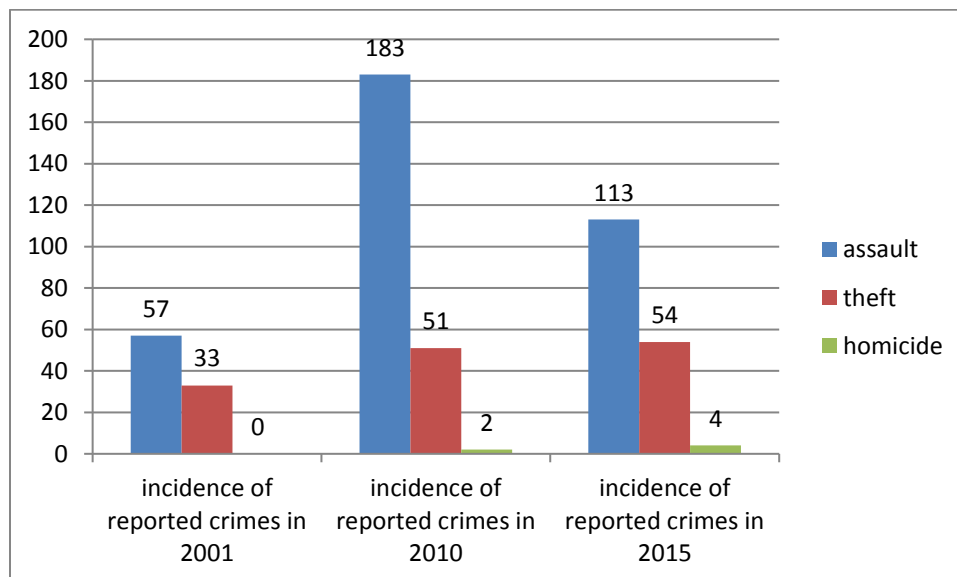
The district has a predominantly residential function. On the second place, there are commercial activities and services, and there is a small industrial zone in the eastern part of it (MSJ, 2013). Urban planning of the area corresponds to the residential function of the district as it is home to quite some green recreational areas, including parks named Polideportivo San Francisco, Parque del Bosque, Parque de Los Sauces, Parque Méndez, Parque Okayama and other (MSJ, 2013).

A table with socio-economic characteristics of the population in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District can be found in the Appendix 2.

A high percentage of the population is aged 15-64 years, which means a lot of potentially available working force. The district is relatively nationally homogeneous since only a smaller share of the population of the district was born outside of Costa Rica, which is below the average for the canton. A smaller portion of the population unsatisfied in at least one basic need and small percentage of the households in a bad condition, compared to the cantonal average, make it one of the districts with the best living conditions. The district hosts more people working in tertiary economic sector than the cantonal average. The employment rate (the percentage of the employed labour force) is close to cantonal average. A high share of the population older than 17 years has a higher education which is way more than the cantonal average. More highly educated people and the higher percentage of employment in the tertiary sector point to a lively development of the district.

Statistics on crime were adopted by OIJ official statistics. They can be seen in the figure below.

**Figure 13: Incidence of reported crimes in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District in 2010 and 2015**



**Source and adjusted by: OIJ, Poder Judicial, 2016.**

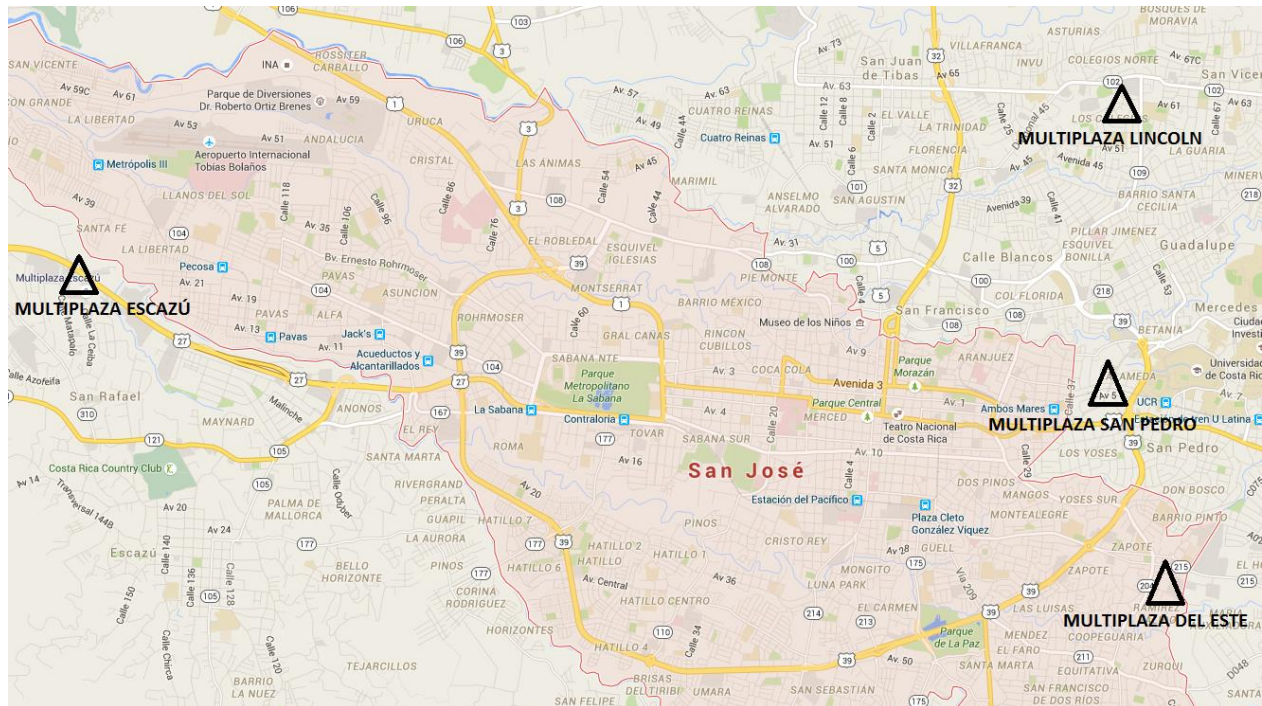
It can be seen from the figure that the incidence of assaults substantially increased from 2001 to 2010, and then diminished in 2015. The incidence of thefts and homicides both increased. However, the number of crimes is significantly lower than in Hospital District in all years. In the meantime, the number of population slightly increased (from 22 328 in 2001 to 22 563 in 2015). In San Francisco only some types of crime increased, but the number of population increased as well. Meanwhile, in Hospital, basically all types of crime increased but the number of population decreased.

We can see the unequal development and social inequality of the districts, reflected in their socio-economic characteristics. After UBN Method, Hospital hosts substantially higher amount of households with at least one basic need unsatisfied. A share of households in a bad condition is also much higher in Hospital. The employment rate is similar, but more people from San Francisco de Dos Ríos work in tertiary sector, which might be also related to the fact, that the percentage of people with university education is much higher than in Hospital. The comparison between two districts is especially interesting, as the crime rates in Hospital are much higher, and are increasing, even though the population number in both districts is approximately the same. It is intriguing that Hospital has even slightly less population what normally means crime rates should be lower; however, the trend is the reverse. Hospital bears lot more crime rates than San Francisco de Dos Ríos. We can see the connection between worse socio-economic characteristics and higher crime rates in Hospital District. In the meantime, San Francisco de Dos Ríos hosts better socio-economic characteristics and lower crime rates.

### **2.3.8. Shopping malls**

There were 4 main shopping centres of the city of San José included in the research. We can see their location relative to the borders of the canton San José in the figure below.

**Figure 14: Location of shopping malls included in the research**



**Source and adjusted by: Google Maps, 2016.**

Shopping malls of a large dimensions appeared in the 1990's in Costa Rica. The first one, followed by all the others, was Multiplaza Escazú, which opened its door for visitors in 1993. It brought new tendencies in the Grand Metropolitan Area of Costa Rica, including multi-functionality of space uses and services. In 1995 followed Mall San Pedro as the second shopping mall of big dimensions. Especially after 2000, new shopping malls started being implemented on a large scale. Multiplaza Del Este (2003), Terramall (2003), Paseo de las Flores (2004) and Plaza Lincoln (2012) all opened in this period. All these big shopping malls have accompanied general trends of territorial expansion in the Grand Metropolitan Area after 1990 on. A process that was simultaneously taking place was the abandonment of the central canton of San José, in terms of population and in terms of moving various important institutions to Alajuela, Cartago and Heredia. In this way, the central canton of San José started to lose its importance (Estado De La Nación, 2015).

It was nearly impossible to find any recent studies on socio-economic characteristics of the shopping malls users. An extensive study has been done in 1997 on the sample of 809 700 inhabitants of the Grand Metropolitan Area. Even though the data is old, it can still serve as a



comparison with other public spaces, as we can assume that socio-economic characteristics did not change, at least not dramatically.

The participants were 47 % male and 53 % female. Age distribution was quite equal for all age groups, and the average age was 37. 27 % of participants had primary school education, 45 % secondary school, 16 % incomplete university and 12 % complete university. 27 % of the participants were independent workers, 9 % students, 9 % retired, 3 % unemployed and the rest mostly employed in tertiary sector. 43 % participants was from a family with less than 100 000 colones per month, 35 % from a family with 100 000 to 200 000 colones per month, and 22 % was from a family with more than 200 000 colones per month of household income (La Nacion, 1997).

To make a quick comparison with the districts Hospital and San Francisco de Dos Ríos, the age structure is similar in all three. In shopping malls, there are less unemployment people than in the districts. That might be related to the fact that unemployed people usually do not have money to spend in shopping malls. It is interesting that a share of people with completed university education is much higher in San Francisco de Dos Ríos and also higher in Hospital, compared to shopping malls.

There are not many security issues in shopping malls. There were some incidents of robberies in some shops, but very rare. Even though, the owners of shopping malls fear that the incidence of robberies might get higher and are strengthening their security regulations. Multiplaza Escazú for example, has more than 240 surveillance cameras, 100 security guards employed, a silent wireless warning system, identification systems in the parking entrance and exit, and even provides annual training for security officers (El Financiero, 2016). Had all these financial resources from private entities been invested into other public spaces in the city, the central canton of San José would probably have appeared much more attractive, with more visitors and activities offered, resulting in tighter social bonds and speculatively, maybe even less crime.

### 3. Methodology

The research was mainly guided by the conceptual framework. Links between the different concepts were operationalized by surveys. 150 surveys with users of public space have been conducted in two parks in the canton of San José and in various shopping malls in and around the canton of San José. After that, 9 in-depth qualitative interviews have been held with experts on various field related to urbanism and crime.

In the beginning, around 5 informal open interviews/talks with users of public space were conducted in the parks chosen for research (Maria Auxiliadora and Okayama) to get an idea on the survey content. After that, two types of survey were created. The first type of survey was meant for public spaces in the city, and the second type was meant for the main shopping malls in the city. Both types of survey can be found in Appendix. The first part of the survey includes short questions about the personal characteristics of the interviewee, such as gender, age, nationality, living place, education and employment status, number of people in household and household income. The second part of the survey consists of specific semi-closed and opened questions inquiring about the habits of public space users in terms of usage frequency. Third part of the survey consists of some specific semi-closed and some opened questions about the perceptions and experiences regarding insecurity in different types of public spaces. Semi-closed questions in the survey served as a tool for comparison for statistical analysis, and open-ending questions served as a tool for interpretation of statistical analysis. Statistical analysis has been done with Chi-square and Cramer's V Tests and some ordinal variables also with bivariate analysis.

For inquiries about urban planning and the development of crime in San José, 9 in-depth one to two hour long qualitative interviews were held in order to get more detailed information and explanations in various places in the city (universities, police department, municipality etc.). These interviews were planned with people professionally working in different fields related to the topic. A complete list of interviewees with their profession can be found in the Appendix 1. Actual names have not been included due to respect for their privacy. All interviews have been transcribed. Information, needed to answer the research questions, has been filtered, extracted

and analyzed by an open-coding method mostly by hand, then clustered and illustrated comprehensively in figures.

The information collected was later critically analyzed with a help of scientific literature on the topic and different statistical websites, mostly in Spanish. Existing statistics on crime incidence from previous years was used as a cross check to the new findings.

In addition, some structured field observation by the author was realized in public spaces to get a better feeling of the actual situation. Informal observation has been done at different times of the day and at different days of the week in the parks.

2 neighborhoods and shopping malls have been chosen as research places. One of the chosen neighborhoods is located in the city center, and another one in the suburbs, in order to get a sample of participants from both parts of the city. Shopping malls have been chosen in order to diversify the sample of participants as it was assumed that shopping malls are visited by people from all over the city. Another reason as to why choose malls was that in this way it was possible to compare a behavior of public space users in shopping malls with the ones from the parks.

A middle-class neighborhood in the city center of San José which lies next to the main business and transport hub, and the busiest street of the city called Paseo Colón, has been chosen for the research. It is called the Hospital district and holds 601 reported assaults in 2015 by the official statistics, which makes it one of the areas with highest crime rates in Costa Rica, as is explained more in detail in a contextual framework. Literature denotes that this neighborhood is mostly populated by young professionals, students and middle-class people that like to live in a busy city environment (San José local neighborhoods, 2016). A middle-class neighborhood with lower crime rates called San Francisco de Dos Ríos, 113 reported assaults in 2015, has been another researched neighborhood. It is a primarily residential middle-class neighborhood but also including commercial and service facilities and therefore very appropriate for the planned research (Distrito San Francisco de dos Ríos, 2014).

In the district Hospital, a park called Maria Auxiliadora was chosen for the research (50 surveys conducted). It was chosen due to its location, lying in the heart of Hospital District, close to municipality and other important institutions, where there is a high concentration of people on the streets during the day. In the district San Francisco de Dos Ríos there was a park called Okayama

chosen for the research (50 surveys conducted). The park was chosen due to its central location in San Francisco District and because residents reported it is one of the most visited ones. The third type of city space researched were the most popular city malls in the city of San José; Multiplaza Escazú, Multiplaza Del Este, San Pedro shopping mall and Plaza Lincoln (50 surveys conducted). Shopping malls, located outside of central San José canton, are located very close to it so they are frequently used by the residents of San José canton, and therefore appropriate for the research. Another reason as to why shopping malls were appropriate for the research is that they are frequently visited by middle or high class people. Consequently, the sample of respondents can be considered comparable to the ones from the parks in terms of social structure. A total number of short surveys sums to 150. Target group for short surveys were the people, using public spaces. A random sampling method has been used in the research. People were approached in specific public spaces included in the research and asked whether they would wish to participate.

There are some limitations of the research which affect reliability and validity of it. The fact is that many crimes that people reported during surveys might not happen in the observed public space but in other parts of the city so information is not always specifically focused on the central canton of San José which is the researched area. It was challenging to find some statistical data on crime from the past, especially before 2010, so a lot of web research was needed. There is a bias deriving from the fact that surveys are meant for the residents of San José that use public spaces in the center on a daily basis. The residents that do not use public spaces or are present there at other parts of the day/week than the researcher will automatically be excluded. That means, for example, people, which work from Monday until Friday, will come to some public spaces only on weekends. It can partly be overcome with choosing the busiest part of the day for conducting the surveys and with conducting survey both during the week and weekends, which has been realized to some extent. There were some limitations when choosing people. Some of them were not accessible, not willing to participate, occupied with watching over children or just in a hurry. Women were in general more willing to participate, and it reflects in the research sample, where in total there was lot more female than male participants. There was also a bias deriving from the fact that the researcher could not collect surveys in the evenings, otherwise his personal safety could be issued. In the evenings, many parks convert into meeting points for drug dealers and drug users and it might be dangerous for the researcher to be there. The researcher was warned about it also by public space users. There was a bias deriving from people's

opinions, which in some cases were probably not honest for various reasons, either fear, hurry, or other factors. Lastly, there was a bias deriving from the fact that different type of surveys was used in shopping malls than in the parks so not all the answers were comparable.

### **3.1. Research question and sub-questions**

Main research question has been designed to serve as a research guideline. The development of public spaces in San José includes urban planning by the municipality/private entities, and the maintenance of public spaces.

How does the development of public space interrelate with the occurrence, perceptions and experience of crime in the canton of San José?

To include different aspects in the research, specific sub-questions have been designed as follows:

SQ1: How did urban planning of public space in the canton of San José evolve in the last decades?

SQ2: How can current crime in San José be characterized and interpreted, also in terms of its development over the past decades?

SQ3: What are the social characteristics of people who use public space in the chosen neighborhoods and shopping malls of San José canton, and what is the frequency of public space use?

SQ4: What are the perceptions and experiences of safety in public spaces in the chosen neighborhoods and shopping malls of the canton of San José?

SQ5: How do perceptions and experiences of safety differ in high-crime and low-crime chosen neighborhoods and in shopping malls of the canton of San José?

The focus of the research was on the people from middle class: workers, residents and shoppers, in order to compare the same social group of public space users. For the SQ1 and SQ2 an available literature on the issue and the interviews with an array of experts working on the field in San José were combined to clarify the issues. For the SQ3, SQ4 and SQ5, fieldwork with users of

public spaces in San José was conducted, complemented and critically analysed with a help of people working on urban issues in San José.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Social characteristics of public space users

Main part of the research formed the short surveys conducted in 3 types of public spaces. 50 interviews have been conducted in Maria Auxiliadora Park in Hospital District, 50 in Okayama Park in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District and 50 in shopping malls in and around San José canton. Shopping malls were also considered as a public space, even though as a new form of it, since it turned out during the research they are replacing the function of traditional public spaces.

The tables with socio-economic characteristics of the participants in all research sites can be found in Appendix 2.

With the information on public space users, and the frequency of public space use, the relation between public spaces and crime in San José can be better understood and explained. Another important relevance of the research is that it helped clearing out the extent to which shopping malls have been replacing traditional public spaces in the central canton of San José.

After extensive analysis of the responses of participants answers to the following research sub-question can be provided:

What are the social characteristics of people who use public space in the chosen neighborhoods of San José, and what is the frequency of public space use?

As compared to the general characteristics of the population from Hospital District, the share of male and female residents is almost equal. As compared to the general characteristics of the Hospital District population, in the surveys, there were more women than men. In many cases it was due to the fact that women were more willing to respond. The average age of the respondents was higher than the average age of the district resident (41 years – 34 years among general district population). Among the respondents, 13 % were foreigners, and among the whole

population of Hospital District, 20 % of the population was not born in Costa Rica. The described characteristics differ, but not to a great extent.

The obvious difference which is also the main reason for differing characteristics is that among the participants of the research, 60 % do not live in the canton of San José, and only 14 % of the participants actually live in the Hospital district. This information can be explained by more factors. The four central districts of the San José canton - Catedral, Merced, Hospital, Carmen - used to be more populated in the past, and have lost a great amount of their inhabitants after 1970, and more intensively after 1980. The Hospital district had 36 993 inhabitants in 1970 (Rosero-Bixby, 2002), and 19 270 inhabitants in 2011 (INEC, 2012). This trend was influenced to a great extent by the development of horizontal condominiums in other parts of the Costa Rican Central Valley, such as Santa Ana, Escazú, and Tres Ríos. These condominiums for high income social classes have risen as a consequence of neoliberal development and have contributed to the transformation of the function of the San José canton. As already explained in the contextual framework, the four districts of the central canton now mostly serve as a transportation hub and for commercial services. There are also other reasons as to why the population of the Hospital and other three central districts diminished over the past decades, such as an unpleasant look of many city buildings, heavy traffic on a daily basis creating polluted air and time delays for passengers, and insecurity in public spaces.

78 % of the participants are either employed in companies or independent workers, what points to the business and commercial nature of the district. Only 2 % of the participants are unemployed. Majority of the participants come from households with 2-4 minimum monthly salaries, which means they mostly come from the middle-class and coincide with the Costa Rican urban average (3-4 minimal salaries). Only smaller percent of participants has very low or very high monthly income. The average completed rate of education of the participants is relatively high, since 48 % of the participants finished their university degree.

In the meantime, more than half (52 %) of randomly chosen participants live in the district of San Francisco de Dos Ríos where Okayama park is located. San Francisco de Dos Ríos has a primarily residential function, and is a densely populated district. It is not part of the four central districts of San José canton and lies on the border between the central districts and the suburbs of

San José. Along with the residential buildings, mostly individual houses for families or students, there are some shops, restaurants and bars. The demographic trend is exactly reverse than the one of the district Hospital. San Francisco de Dos Ríos had only 8 915 inhabitants in 1970 (Rosero-Bixby, 2002), but in 2011 it had 20 209 inhabitants (INEC, 2012), meaning the number of residents has more than doubled in the period between 1970 and 2011. One of the reasons might also be that some of the people, that have left the four central districts (including district Hospital) due to more insecurity, heavy traffic and unattractive look of the city center, moved to this part of the city. After completing the observation on the site itself, it can be stated that San Francisco de Dos Ríos bears much more attractive look and gives much higher feeling of security than the 4 most central districts of San José canton. Even though the district has a different function of the Hospital one, it is relevant as it bears much lower crime rates and it is interesting to explore how that affects public space use. It is not comparable to Hospital District in terms of function, but in terms of the social structure of the participants, which are also mostly workers from the middle class and to a smaller extent also retired people.

There are a high percentage of the employees for salaries, or independent workers among the participants from San Francisco de Dos Ríos. 10 % of the participants were retired, and many of them stated in the survey that they use the park on a daily basis. Average monthly incomes of the participants were slightly lower than the average for Costa Rican urban areas (3-4 minimal salaries Costa Rican average, 60 % of the participants' from households with 1-3 minimal salaries). However, most participants belong to middle-class.

In San Francisco de Dos Ríos District, the share of female and male population is almost equal. Among the participants, the percentage of women was much higher. The average age between the participants and the actual average age in the district is almost the same (37 – 41 years). Among the participants, more than half lives in the district itself, so the picture is more representative of the district itself than in the case of Hospital. This confirms the fact that Hospital District is much less populated so the parks have been used by people from other parts of the city as they need to be in the district due to their working obligations.

As the research has been conducted in four different shopping malls, the living places of participants vary greatly. 46 % of the participants live in the San José canton and the random sampling research covered the participants from almost every single district of the San José



canton. It can be mentioned as a limitation of the research, but in fact it can also be looked at as a complement to the information from districts, as the people interviewed were from all parts of the canton. It means that shopping malls in San José are used by a wide variety of people from every part of the city. A sample of participants from shopping malls is comparable to the ones from districts regarding socio-economic characteristics. Most of the participants were middle-class workers.

The education level of the participants is higher than in Okayama and Maria Auxiliadora Park. The same goes for average income per household, even though 20 % of the participants did not feel like sharing information on their incomes. Prices in shopping malls are generally higher than in the shops inside of the city; therefore there is a possibility that the visitors might earn more than average Costa Rican income. Still, most of the participants fall into a category of middle-class.

#### **4.2. The frequency and changes in public space use**

In the table 5, where two variables from survey (Frequency of a specific public space use for Maria Auxiliadora park and Employment status of the respondents) are compared, we can see that 80 % of the respondents that use Maria Auxiliadora park frequently (1 or more times per week), are also employed for salaries or independent workers in the area and many of them answered that they use the park as a place to relax during their work break.

**Table 1: Crosstab analysis of the variables Employment status and Frequency of a specific public space use**

		Frequency of a specific public space use			Total
		1 or more times per week	1 or more times per month	less than 1 time per month	
Employment status	employed for salaries	14	0	7	21
	independent worker	14	1	3	18
	unemployed, searching for job	1	0	0	1
	Home worker	3	0	0	3
	Student	1	0	0	1
	Retired	2	1	3	6
Total		35	2	13	50

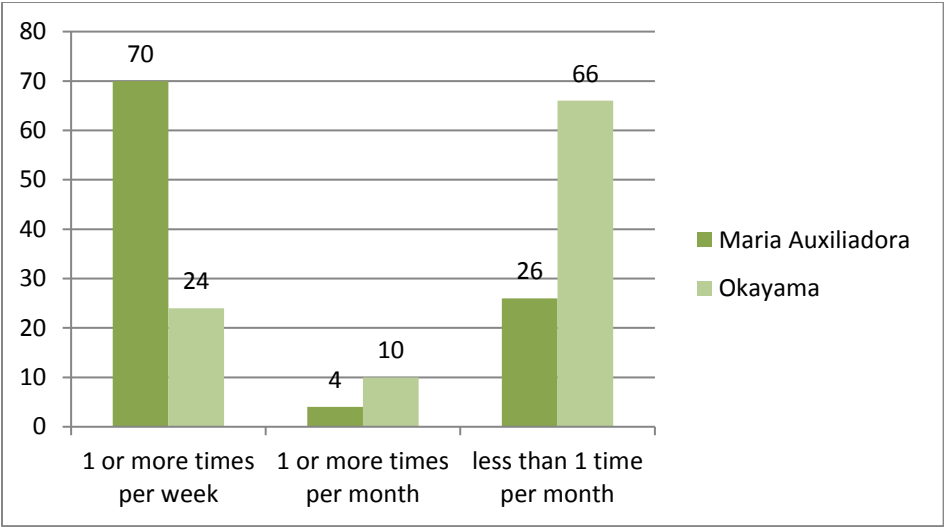
Participants in Okayama and Maria Auxiliadora parks were asked how often they use a specific park. In the figure 15, it can be seen that 70 % of the participants use the park Maria Auxiliadora at least one time per week or more. 4 % of them use the park 1 or more times per month and 26 % of them use the park less than 1 time per month. 66 % of the participants use the park Okayama one or more times per week, 10 % use it one or more times per month and 24 % use it less than one time per month.

Maria Auxiliadora receives most of the visitors during the week days between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. (standard working schedule hours) and serves as a place for employees to relax a bit, eat lunch or read to disconnect their brain from work. After 4 p.m. and especially after 6 p.m. when it gets dark, the situation changes and the park receives a very small amount of visitors. The participants reported that they do not feel safe staying in the park after dark, as the drug dealers and drug addicts appear. However, they do not come in a massive manner so the park looks completely desolated in the night. The main reason for this desolation stated by the participants tends to be insecurity.

During the week, Okayama park is more or less empty during the morning hours, and until around 2-3 p.m. The first reason due to participants is that it is usually unbearably hot during the day in the park, as there are very few trees that would provide some shadow. The other reason is that people work during this part of the day and therefore cannot come to the park. After 2-3 p.m., when the sun becomes less strong, the park gets alive and usually full of people. It is especially popular amongst the families, as there is a playground for children with many different possibilities to spend some quality time there. Parents usually sit next to the playground and socialize with each other, which creates a pleasant atmosphere. There are also many retired people, sitting on the benches around the park and enjoying afternoon sun, and there is also a place to skate in the park where young people usually meet and socialize. There are many people in the park from 3 p.m. until around 6-7 p.m. After 6-7 p.m., the park gets almost empty. The respondents report that after sunset, they do not feel safe to walk in the park as drug dealers and drug addicts appear, posing the threat of getting robbed to the other visitors of the park. During the weekend, the park gets more visitors also in the morning hours, and even more families come for their weekend relaxation.

People mostly use the park Okayama to relax after work, students use it for studying, and retired people use it for walks and relaxation, especially in the afternoons when the temperatures drop and it is not unbearably hot anymore in the park.

**Figure 15: Frequency of a specific public space use (in % of participants, N in every park = 50)**



The research in shopping malls differs from the ones in parks and includes more inquiries.

The participants in shopping malls have been asked what kind of activities they usually conduct in shopping malls. Each participant stated various activities, but most frequently mentioned were going to shopping malls to visit the shops (94 %), cinema (44 %), to drink coffee or eat in the restaurants (37 %), or just to relax their mind a bit when walking around and observing the shops (20 %).

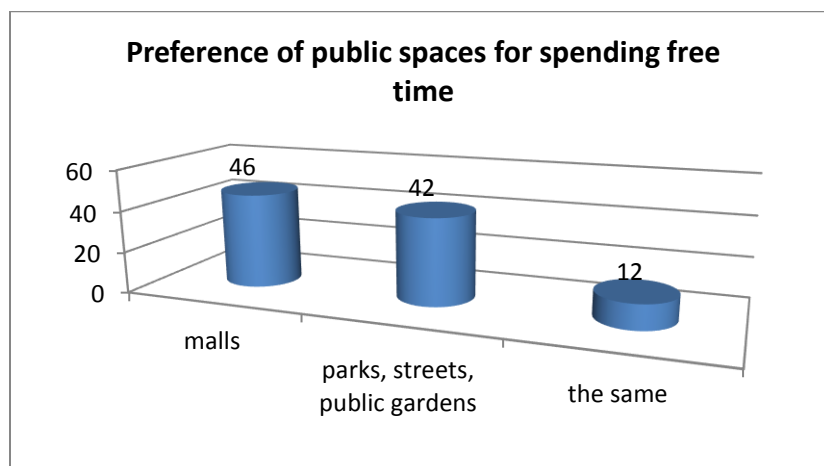
The participants were asked which type of public space they would rather choose to spend their free time in. 46 % of people chose shopping malls, 42 % chose parks, streets, public gardens and 12 % would not see the difference and choose any of them.

The ones in favor of shopping malls stated various reasons, but one of them stands out immediately. 70 % of the people that prefer shopping malls answered that they prefer them over other public spaces because they feel safer in them. Some of them reported that they are afraid in other public spaces, but in shopping malls they can relax and walk without feeling unsafe. Other reasons for the preference of shopping malls were that shopping malls are much cleaner than other public spaces, that they are better taken care of, that there are more activities for children, wider variety of things to do, and air conditioning.

People in favor of shopping malls were also asked what could be changed in other public spaces so that they personally would be attracted to spend more of their free time there. The answers that were stated by more than 50 % of the participants were more security, more police vigilance, more public events and festivals, concerts, cultural, sport activities, police officers guarding public spaces at all times, to make public spaces cleaner, stricter laws for the delinquents, more vegetation and consequently more shadow, more illumination in the night hours, and more maintenance.

The participants in favor of parks, streets and public gardens also stated various reasons. They really enjoy the nature, fresh air, open spaces. Some of them (45 %) reported that they rather take children into the nature than in the closed outer space of shopping malls and that in the parks there are more options for children to pass their free time in a quality ways. Some (15 %) said that people in the parks socialize more, and that there are fewer crowds so you can socialize with friends in a peaceful way. Some participants (10 %) reported they feel freer than in shopping malls. Some (7 %) reported it is more economic spending free time in parks and public gardens as they spend less or no money there. They also mentioned there is no option for sports in shopping malls.

**Figure 16: Preference of public spaces for spending free time (in %, N=50)**

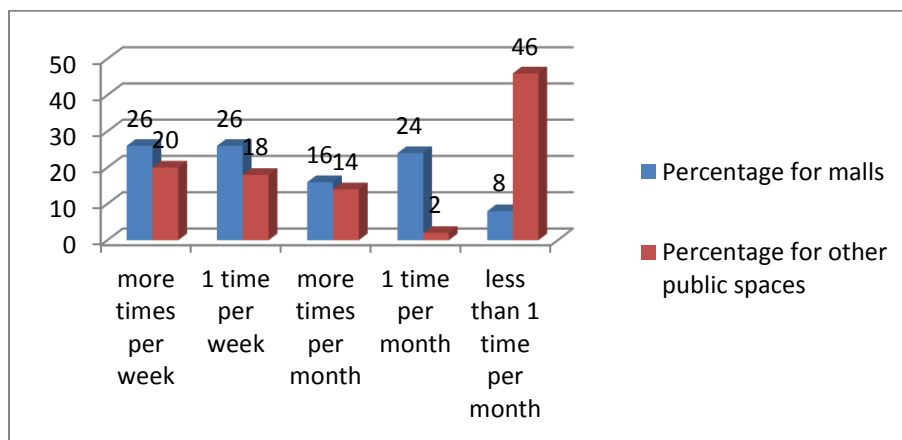


The participants use shopping malls more frequently than other public spaces in San José in their free time. 26 % of the participants use shopping malls very frequently (more times per week) while 20 % of the participants use other public spaces very frequently. Almost half (46 %) of the

participants use other public spaces very rarely (less than 1 time per month) while only 8 % of the participants use shopping malls very rarely.

Even though 46 % of the participants expressed preference for malls, and almost the same share, 42 % of the participants, expressed preference for other public spaces, frequency of use shows a different picture. People actually use shopping malls more frequent than other public spaces. Which reasons could possibly stand behind that? Many people in the surveys reported that the main reason preventing them from using parks, streets and public gardens more is the fear of crime. What could be this fear related to, taking into account that some people that have fear personally never had any experience with crime? The question was posed to a sociologist, working on social issues in San José for many years. Media are bombing the public with news about criminal acts in all public spaces, parks, buses, streets, to the point that many people in San José do not even dare to leave the house anymore if it is not necessary. And shopping malls are the only public space that seems to be secure. In her opinion, the described situation is one of the strategies of modern capitalism, to effectively scare people and therefore make them using shopping malls more. When they use shopping malls more frequent, the shops in malls that are mostly in hands of bigger corporations gain more profit. But in the meantime, other public spaces get less visitors, attention and maintenance, and therefore deteriorate (interviewee 4, sociologist).

**Figure 17: Frequency of malls and other public spaces use in San José canton (in %, N=50)**

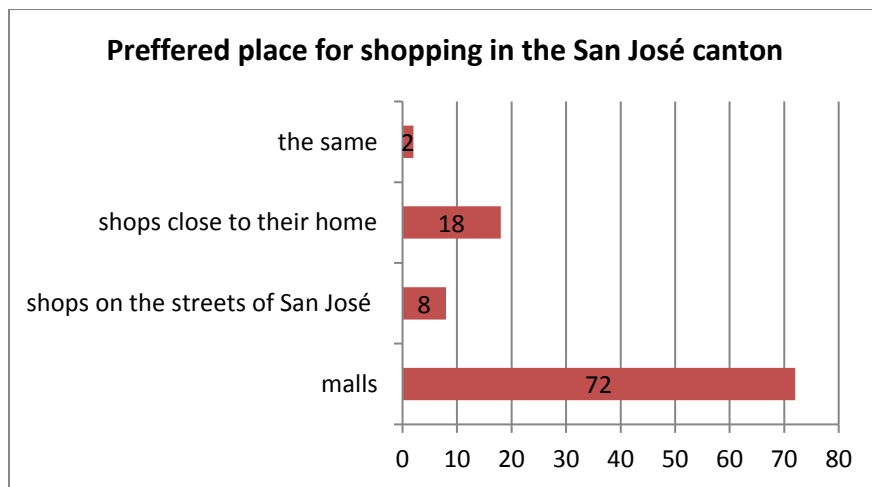


There are many shops in San José that are owned by small retailers, not part of bigger corporations. After some informal observations in the city center, especially in the main street of San José called Avenida Central, it can be said that some shops have good variety of offers and

affordable prices. The participants were asked whether they prefer to buy everyday commodities in shopping malls, in the shops on the streets of San José, or in the shops near their living place. The results are visible in the figure 18. 72 % of the people rather use malls than other types of shops outside of malls for shopping even though the prices are generally higher in malls, resulting in shops included in malls gaining more and more profit.

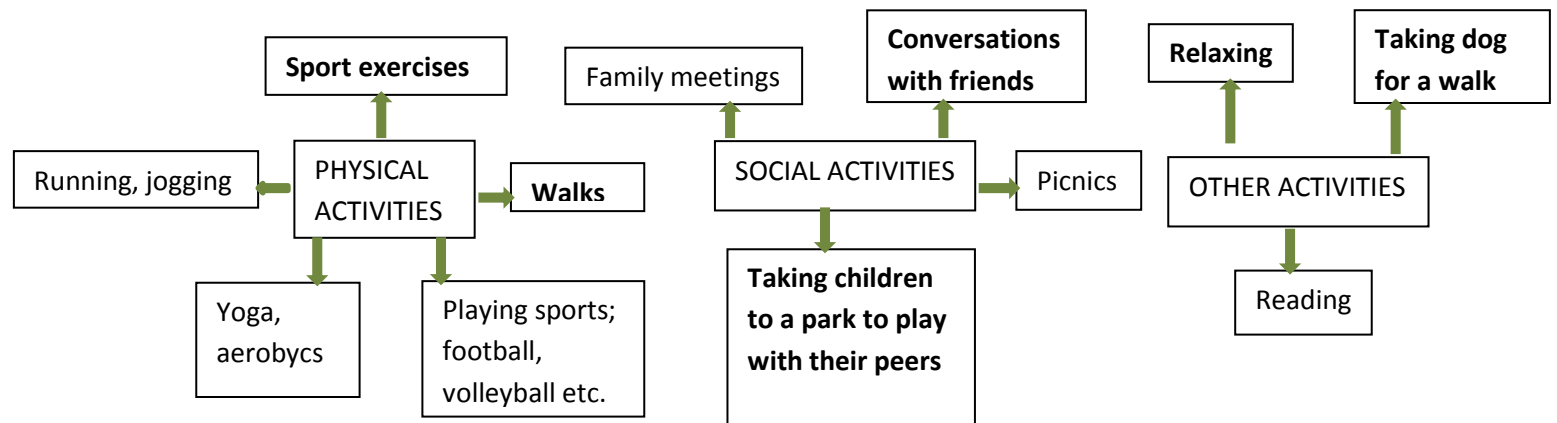
As mentioned before, media is exposing much negative news. However, it is difficult to assess whether it is only due to the explanation posed by sociologist above or are there other reasons for that as well. It might most likely be the combination of more factors, as crimes in San José are actually getting more violent with time, and since people are not used to this level of violence in Costa Rica, it has a strong effect on the people's opinions and choices for public spaces.

**Figure 18: Preferred place for shopping in the San José canton (in %, N=50)**



Among different types of public spaces (parks, streets, public gardens, squares), the participants from Okayama and Maria Auxiliadora parks chose the ones that they use the most in their free time. All of them chose parks as their preferred public space for spending free time. Below, there is a figure showing the most common activities participants conduct in the parks due to their answers. The answers in bold are more frequent as those were mentioned by more than 10 % of the participants.

**Figure 19: Activities of participants, conducted in parks in San José**



The participants in Maria Auxiliadora and Okayama parks were asked about how often they use other public spaces (parks, squares, public gardens and streets) in the San José canton in their free time, excluding working activities.

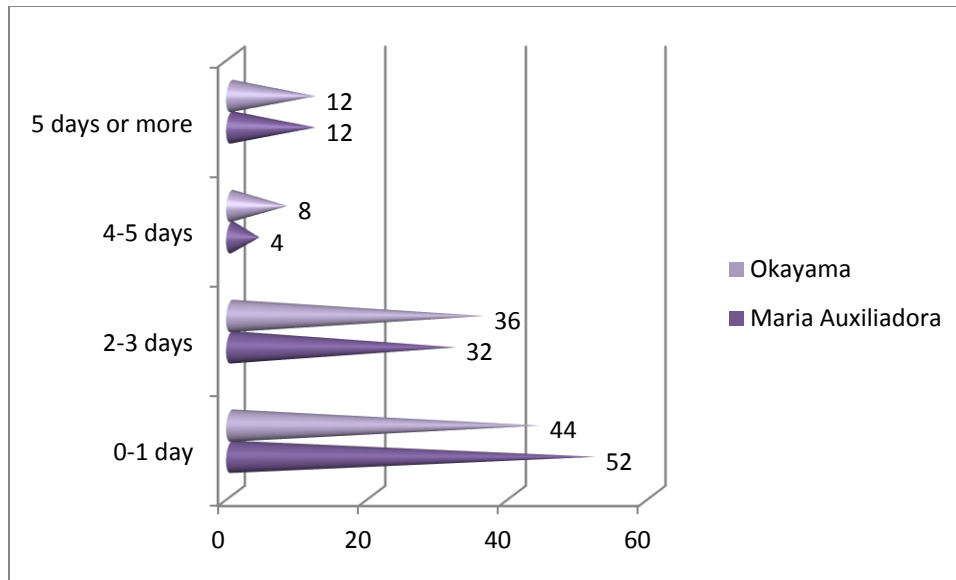
It can be seen in the figure 20 that more than half of the participants from Maria Auxiliadora use public spaces rarely, only 0-1 day per week, and 32 % use them 2-3 times per week.

In Okayama Park, the participants reported that 44 % of the participants use public spaces in San José rarely (0-1 day per week), 36 % use them 2-3 days per week, 8 % use them 4-5 days per week and 12 % use them 5 days or more per week. There is a discrepancy between using Okayama Park and other public spaces in San José. People use Okayama Park more often than other public spaces in San José. Many respondents reported that they like Okayama Park, because it is relatively safe, is in a good condition and offers various activities, also for children, which is very important for families. Respondents also mentioned that the maintenance of the park is very well organized and effective. They said the park is constantly being taken care of.

It is difficult to claim why is Okayama Park cleaner and better maintained than Maria Auxiliadora Park, as the maintenance of public spaces is on principal done on a cantonal level. A possible interpretation would be that the local government puts more attention to Okayama than to Maria Auxiliadora, as Okayama is located in a more residential district and they suppose there are more visitors. There is also a fact that Okayama is a new park compared to Maria Auxiliadora, was established with a help of Japanese funds, and therefore receives more public attention.



**Figure 20: Frequency of using public spaces in San José canton in the participants' free time (in %, in each park N=50)**



The participants in Maria Auxiliadora and Okayama parks have been asked whether they use public spaces in San José during the last 5 years more or less than before. Their answers are seen in figure 21.

The difference between the participants using public space more/same/less than before was very small in Maria Auxiliadora. It might be due to the fact that they are using them only during work breaks and therefore, the frequency of use has not changed significantly.

The most common answer as to why they use public spaces less than in the past (36 %) is insecurity. Most of the participants explained that they do not feel safe when being in public spaces, especially after dark. Other reasons stated were lack of time because of studies and work, living place outside of San José canton, two respondents explicitly stated that they do not like San José city because of insecurity and unattractiveness, and one respondent stated that she does not know the city and does not feel comfortable there.

34 % of the participants have answered that they use public spaces with the same frequency than before. One participant explained why he is not using public spaces more even though he has some free time which he could spend there. He said that there is no visible improvement in public

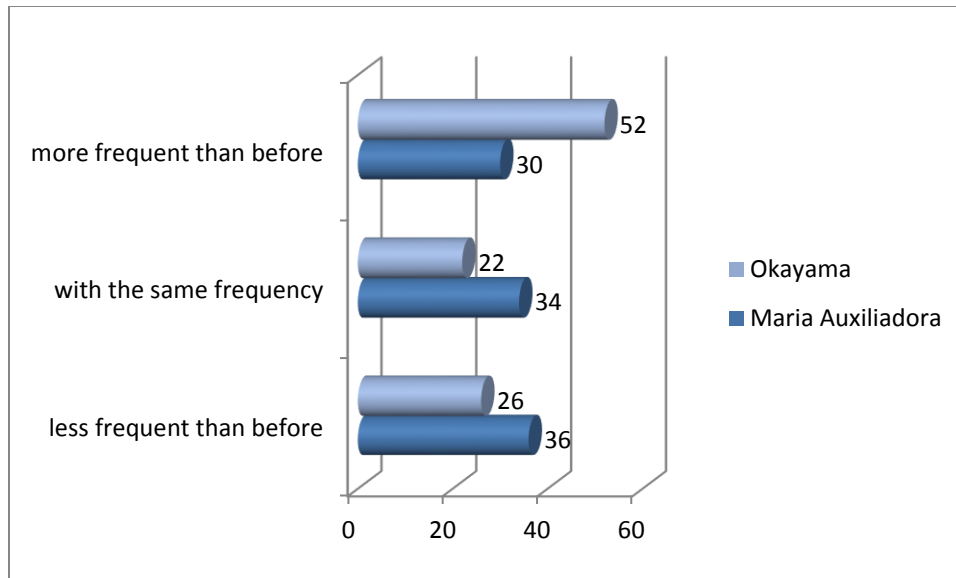
spaces in terms of appearance, and he thinks that is because government does not invest in them enough.

However, 30 % of the participants have answered that they use public spaces more often than before. Most of them stated the reasons related to their job. They told that they work in San José now and it is practical for them to use public spaces during their daily job break, and sometimes after work to relax and forget about the work related stress. Two participants agreed that there is more security, more illumination and the parks are cleaner than they used to be. To relate it to the literature, Maria Auxiliadora park has felt some improvements lately (new lightning, more plants), however it is not a general trend for all parks in San José canton.

In Okayama Park, the highest (52 %) share of the people claimed that they use public spaces in San José more often than before. The most common answers for that are related to a personal situation or a change in personal situation enabling them more free time to spend in the parks than before. 5 participants agreed on the improvement of the conditions in some parks in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District. They claimed that there are more organized activities available in the parks, especially for children, that some parks look better now, that the infrastructure has improved a bit, that some of the parks are cleaner and safer than they used to be, and that in some parks there are more options for recreation, more playgrounds for children and more chances for recreational activities.

22 % use parks with the same frequency and 26 % use public spaces less than before. Majority of the participants that claimed using public spaces less than before, when asked for the reasons answered that they feel insecure. They mentioned illegal behavior of some people in public spaces, such as drug dealing, pickpocketing and robberies. The rest uses less public spaces due to personal reasons, less free time, or because they perceive public spaces as not sufficiently maintained.

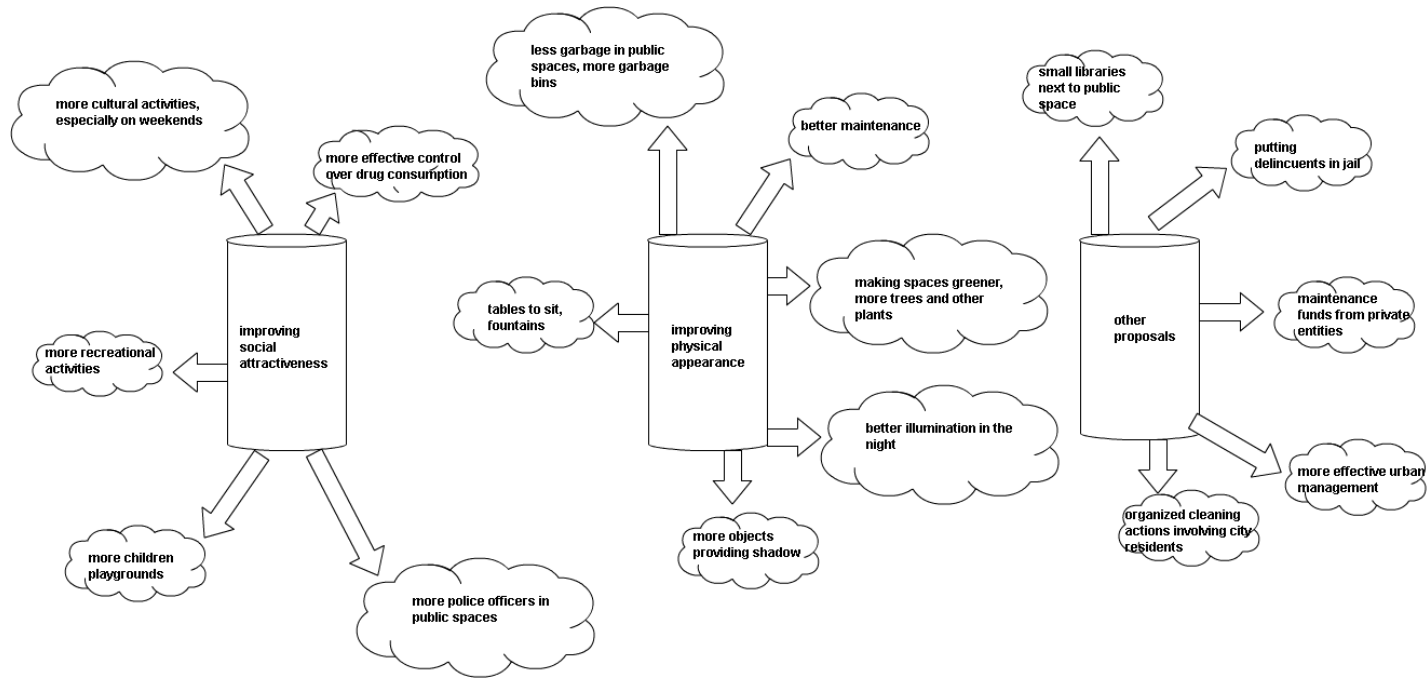
**Figure 21: Changes in public space use in the last 5 years (in %, N in each public space = 50)**



The participants in all research sites (Okayama, Maria Auxiliadora and shopping malls) were asked about what they could propose to make public spaces in the canton of San José more attractive for the people so that they would spend more of their free time in them.

All proposals by the participants are collected in the figure below. The ones that appear bigger are the ones that were mentioned by more participants. We can see that the most frequently mentioned proposals were related to implementation of cultural activities, especially on weekends when people have more time to collaborate, more police vigilance in public spaces, improving illumination so that public spaces are more visible and safer, to make public spaces greener with more plants, and participants also emphasized that they wish to have a cleaner environment with less garbage. They emphasized that garbage bins are lacking in all public spaces, and people therefore throw trash on the streets.

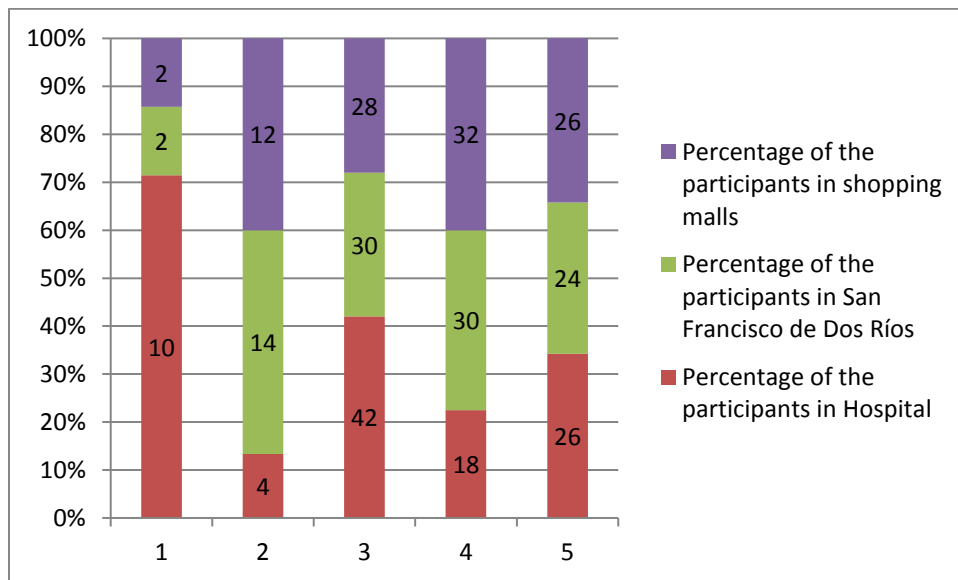
**Figure 22: Proposals to make public spaces more attractive for visitors according to participants**



#### 4.3. How bad is the crime according to people? Perceptions of crime in the chosen districts and malls of San José

The participants have been asked to assess their feeling of personal safety when being in public spaces in San José. They could choose between 1 ('I feel very safe') up to 5 ('I feel very unsafe'). The results from 150 participants from all research sites are presented in figure 23.

**Figure 23: Perceptions of safety by the participants about public spaces in San José, asked in 3 different research sites**



**Table 2: Mean value indicators of safety perceptions**

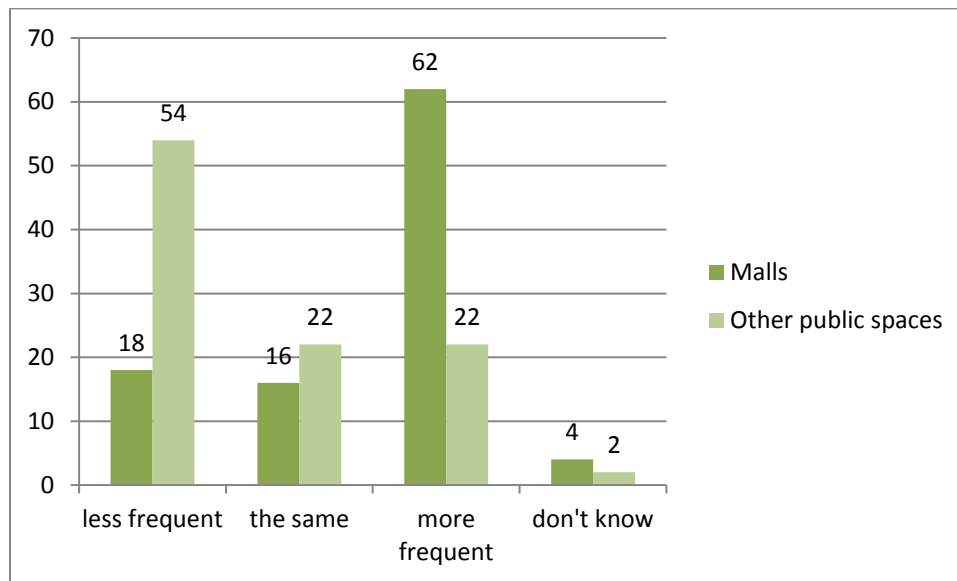
Type of research site	Mean	Median	Mode
Hospital	3.46	3	3
San Francisco de Dos Ríos	3.60	4	3
Shopping malls	3.68	4	4

The safety perception about other public spaces in shopping malls is the worst (3.68 inclines more to 5 – ‘I feel very insecure’ than the assessments asked for in the parks). Then follows San Francisco and the best (more inclined to 1 – ‘I feel very secure’) safety perceptions were in Hospital.

The participants in shopping malls have been asked whether in the last 5 years they use shopping malls and other public spaces in San José more frequent, with the same frequency or less frequent than before.

There are the results in the figure below. It can be seen that more than half of the participants use shopping malls in the last 5 years more often than before, and that more than half of the participants use other public spaces less often than before.

**Figure 24: The frequency of public space use in the last 5 years (in %), N=50**



To see the relation between the use of different types of public spaces, the crosstab analysis has been held between the variables ‘Usage of malls in the last 5 years’ and ‘Usage of other public spaces in the last 5 years’. Answers are relatively dispersed but the highest percentage of the participants (18 of 50 = 36 %) said that in the last 5 years they use malls more often and other public spaces less often than before. Therefore, it is interesting to explore what could be the reasons for this trend.

17 out of 18 participants that use shopping malls more than before and other public spaces less than before explained that they prefer shopping malls as they are more secure, and that they try to avoid other public spaces as they do not feel safe there. That can also be confirmed by the fact that the safety perceptions measured among the participants have been the worst among the participants in shopping malls.

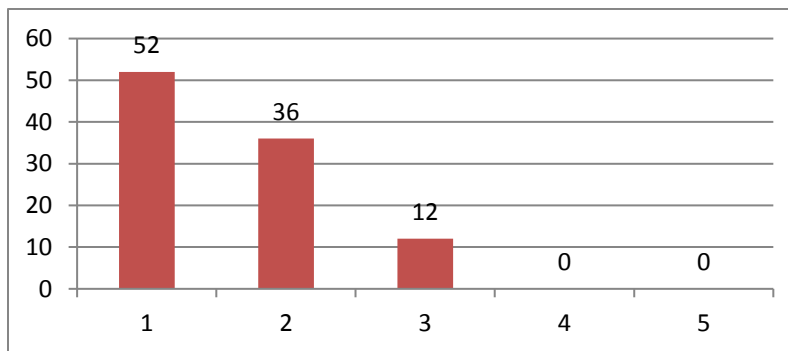
However, the research sample is small and the percentage (36 %) not sufficient to determine any finding. Therefore, the assumption has to be taken with caution.

**Table 3: Usage of malls in the last 5 years \* Usage of other public spaces in the last 5 years  
Crosstabulation**

		Usage of other public spaces in the last 5 years				Total
		less frequent	the same	more frequent	don't know	
Usage of malls in the last 5 years	less frequent	5	2	2	0	9
	the same	4	3	1	0	8
	more frequent	<b>18</b>	6	7	0	31
	I don't know	0	0	1	1	2
Total		27	11	11	1	50

The participants in shopping malls have been also asked about how safe they feel in shopping malls themselves to compare values with the ones in other public spaces. The results are in the figure below. The scale was from 1 to 5 (1-‘I feel very safe’, 5 – ‘I feel very unsafe’). None of the participants felt unsafe or very unsafe inside of shopping malls. The average was 1.6 which is much lower than the safety perceptions about other public spaces in San José. People feel much safer in shopping malls and that is one of the main reasons why they in general use them more than other public spaces.

**Figure 25: Safety perceptions inside of shopping malls**



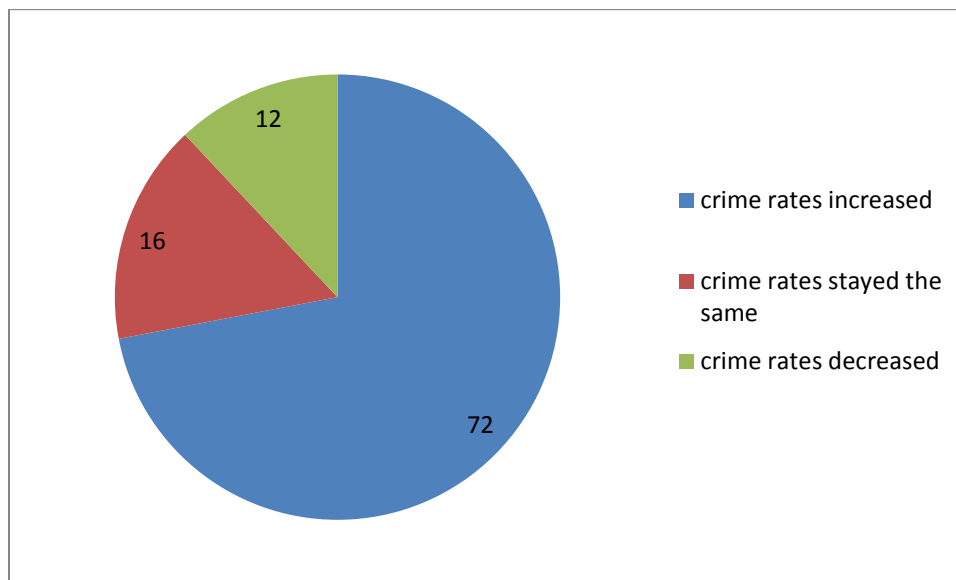
It is interesting that crime perceptions do not fit the actual crime rate of the districts. The participants from Hospital district which after the official statistics bears the highest rate of robberies, expressed the lower feelings of insecurity in public spaces than the ones in San Francisco de Dos Ríos and shopping malls. This is the most obvious limitation of the research, as

interviewed participants in many cases do not come from the actual district where they were interviewed. Crime rates in public spaces close to their homes might be lower/higher, but this information goes beyond this research, which could be the matter of further research.

There was a question posed in all research sites, investigating people's opinion on whether the crime rates in San José are on the increase, stay steady or have diminished in the last decade. This question is important for the research as it gives us a picture of what is the real opinion of people on temporal trends of crime intensity in San José. Participants were also asked for the reasons behind their answer. The answers were analyzed together for all research sites, as separate analysis would not add new conclusions.

The results are seen in the figure below. 72 % of all the participants think that crime rates in San José canton are increasing in the last decade. This is a surprisingly high share of participants sharing the same impression.

**Figure 26: Perceptions on crime rate changes in the last 5 years (in %, N=150)**



What led such a high percentage of participants having this opinion? The answers, presented in the figure 27, were classified into three main topics after analysis. The first group of reasons is related to societal phenomena, the second to economic phenomena and the third group is related to the participants' assessment of institutional efficiency in Costa Rica. Participants have been asked in an open way and therefore, the classification was a bit challenging.



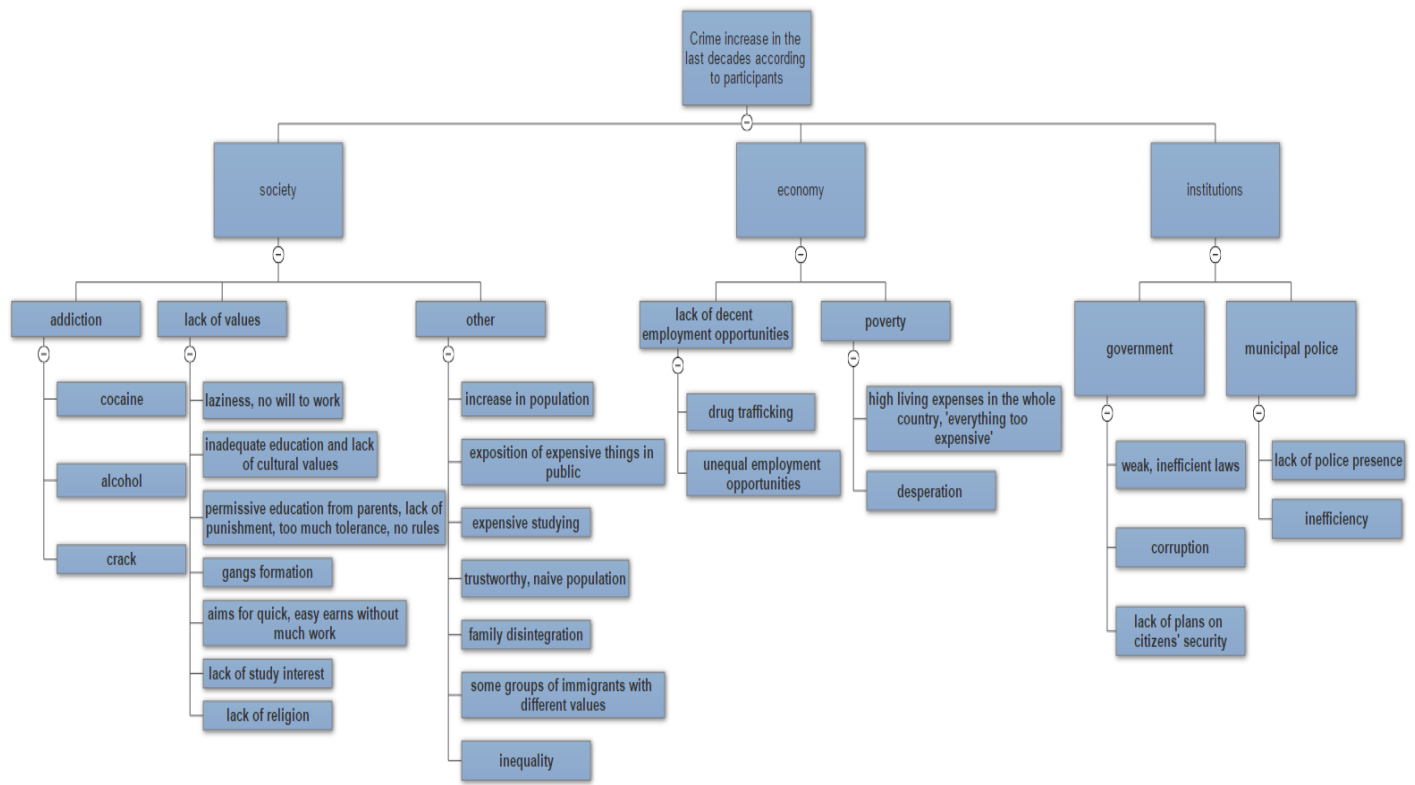
Even though participants expressed lots of different thoughts, there were some patterns that could be observed in the answers. The lack of decent employment opportunities had been mentioned in many different ways and context, all in all meaning that people do not have means to achieve minimum living standards and therefore start to dedicate themselves to criminal acts. Many participants also mentioned poverty, which is of course a relative term. Some of them were asked to explain what they mean by that. In the end some of them found out that what they actually meant was inequality in terms of unequal possibilities for studying, and on the job market. Others interpreted poverty as not having decent housing conditions, or enough money for food.

Many participants strongly emphasized that in their opinion the main reason for crime increase is the inefficiency of legal/justice system. Around half of the participants explained it in a way that laws are not strict enough. Delinquents do not really bear any consequences, they are soon released from the prison or not even accused, and therefore they repeat criminal acts. People mentioned that many delinquents are robbing on a constant basis, without any consequences. Others reported that many times being in prison is more comfortable for the delinquent than living on the streets.

Participants were also critical about the police efficiency in San José. Many of them reported that there are not enough uniformed police officers on the streets which would help crime prevention. Others said that the police is mostly present on the main touristic streets (for example Avenida Central), but they lack in other parts of the city, especially in parks. Some people also mentioned that in some public spaces the police are present just at some parts of the day and at other parts of the day the delinquents are free to do whatever they want. However, some of people commented that the country has low financial possibilities at the moment, meaning less money is available for the expansion of the police working force.

Many participants also emphasized the reasons for crime increase, rooted in the society itself. The most frequently mentioned one was the drug addiction. Participants reported that the situation regarding drug addiction is exacerbating with time in San José. More and more drug addicts are walking the streets and searching for opportunities to get money for their next shot of drug they use. Some of participants also mentioned a similar problem just on a higher level – drug trafficking.

**Figure 27: Crime increase in the last decades according to participants, San José canton**



Participants explained reasons for crime increase in a direct, straight-forward way. Anyway, some critical analysis of their answers is needed as there might be some deeper causes for the crime increase. The issue of inefficient legal system and laws mentioned frequently among the participants is an often discussed issue in Latin America as well as in other parts of the world. For example, in Mexico, it has been emphasized that the laws are far away from social reality and therefore do not contribute to the solutions of crime issues (Universidad de Guadalajara, 2016). However, for now there are no alternatives of the current system. The issue may in many cases also be related to corruptive states, where justice system is not an exception. The inadequate police presence on the streets mentioned as a frequent cause is a questionable issue. Police can provide more police officers to the streets and temporarily stop the wave of crime. However, plenty of financial resources would be needed for that. Furthermore, that would only solve the problem on a short run, but on a long run, the reasons for the crime increase should be battled within the society itself (education, values, and more employment opportunities). Police forces can be an immediate protection, but on a long run action in the civil society would be needed to stop increasing crime.

Safety perceptions and perceptions on changes in crime rates analyzed in the paragraphs above depend on more factors.

There have been studies by University of Costa Rica made on the safety perceptions among Costa Rican population. The general conclusions were that the safety perceptions are generally worse among the female participants, participants older than 50 years and the ones with higher incomes (UCR, 2016). In the section of statistical analysis of the thesis these conclusions have been checked also for the actual research sample.

There is a specific social atmosphere in Costa Rica that calls for explanation and might affect safety perceptions. Costa Rican professors with criminal justice and law background shared their opinion about it. Costa Rica does not have the army. Historically, there was no civil war in Costa Rica contrary to their neighboring Central American countries, where civil wars did a lot of damage in physical as well as in psychological sense. Twenty years ago, a strong hurricane caused a lot of damage and deaths in neighboring countries but not in Costa Rica. Therefore, mentality of the people is not adjusted to any unusual, catastrophic event, either in natural or social sense. There is a strong element of religion present as well. Many people think that God provides Costa Rica a special protection. Therefore, people cannot really believe that the social issues, such as drug traffic related violence, very common in other Central American countries, started to affect Costa Rica as well. But the professors assured that it is a fact that drug trafficking started to affect Costa Rica seriously, and with high magnitude. But in their opinion, the problem is that because of what they named 'collective perception as being the magical society' people do not want to see it, also some people on higher positions that are leading the country. Therefore, the reactions to the violence related to drug trafficking are, in their opinion, too slow (interviewees 1 and 2, professor and lawyer).

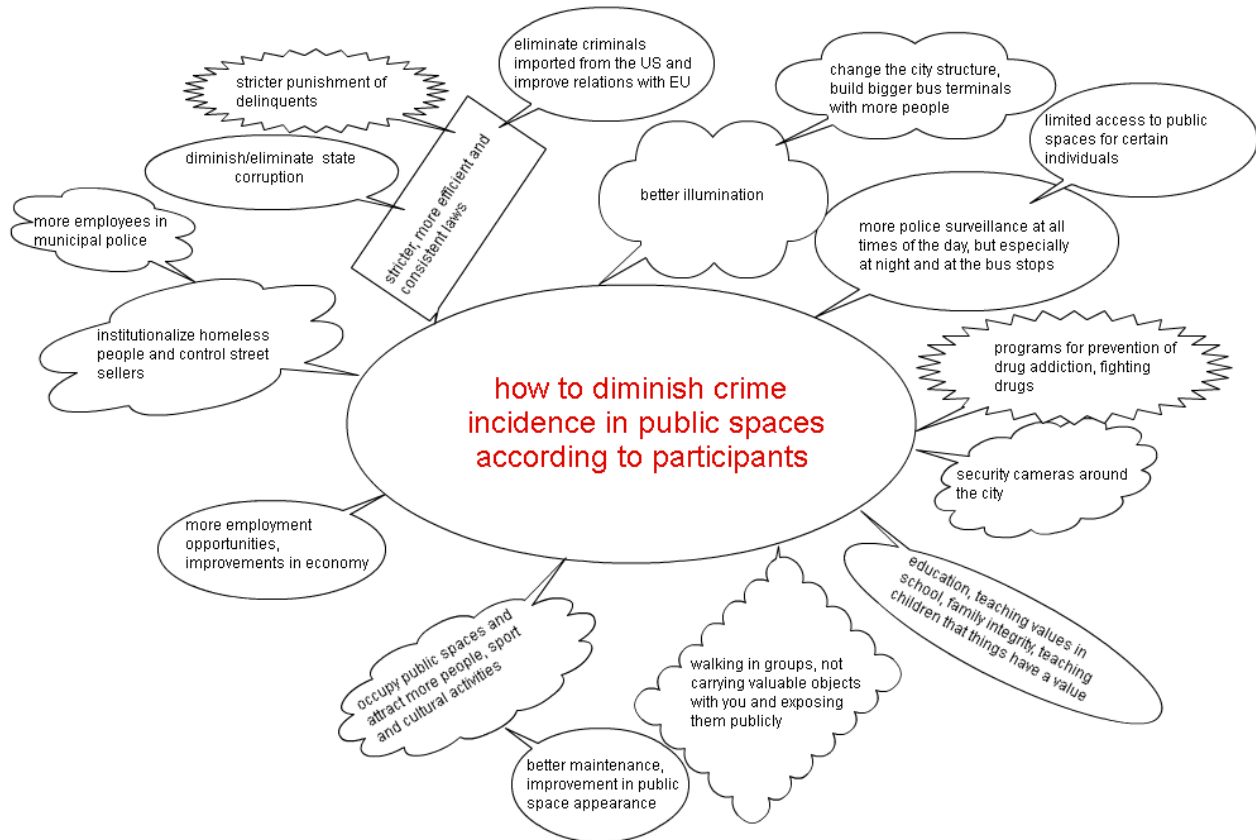
At the municipal police department of San José they explained some factors that influence the safety perceptions of the people. In their opinion, media has the main influence on safety perceptions. Costa Rican people have been used to live in peace without any serious perturbations. Nowadays, people can see more and more news about violent crimes related to drug trafficking. In combination with the perception from the past of being a peaceful, protected society, with no previous experience related to violent crime, a national alert came into place, which results in citizens becoming more and more frightened. From the point of view of the

police, the media are only exposing negative news. With the expansion of new forms of social media such as facebook in the last decades, people can identify with the victims of crimes ever more than before, even if they do not know them personally. That was never possible before and it entails people being more frightened. There is another influence on the safety perception that the police mentioned. It is the deterioration of urban environment of San José. Buildings in a bad condition and unpainted, parks with lots of trash, and social phenomena such as homeless people on the streets and informal street sellers, all together contribute to higher feelings of insecurity (interviewee 9, Police Department).

The participants in all research sites were also asked about how to diminish the incidence of the delinquency in public spaces of San José. In figure 28, there is a collection of answers, classified according to their meaning. The answer, that appeared most frequently, was that the city would need more police surveillance, and that the local police should reinforce in order to better deal with increasing crime rates in the canton.

There were some interesting and unexpected answers provided. One of respondents mentioned that the criminals that were deported from the US to Central America, should be returned back to the US. There is a known fact that US deported many of the criminals and establishers of the criminal gangs to Central America with the purpose of improving their own security situation (interviewee 3, criminologist). In Costa Rica, the consequences of the mentioned deportation are not highly visible, but in other parts of Central America they are (example Honduras, Guatemala).

**Figure 28: Proposals to diminish crime rates in public spaces according to participants, San José canton**



#### 4.4. Experiences of crime in the chosen districts and shopping malls of San José

The participants in all three research sites were asked about their own experiences with crime in public spaces in San José.

The question was whether every participant personally had any experience related to any type of crime/violence in public spaces in San José.

In figure 29 there are results for each public space separately. The results are pretty much in accordance with an official crime statistics. The highest percentage of the participants who reported being a victim of any type of crime is from Maria Auxiliadora Park in Hospital district.

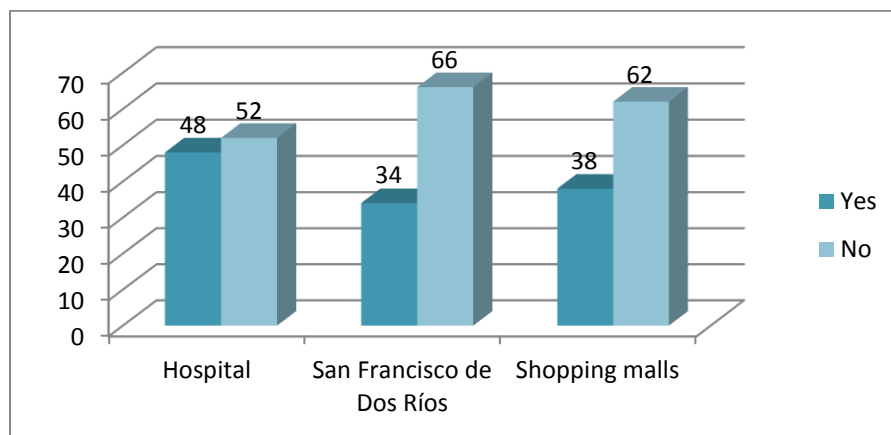
Almost half of the people (48 %) reported being a victim. Hospital District had the highest rate of reported assaults in Costa Rica in 2015 (586) (CRhoy, 2016).

The participants from Okayama Park mostly reported using parks outside of the four central districts of the San José canton, and they told that those public spaces are much safer. 34 % of the people have been victims of any type of crime. Many participants assessed Okayama Park as being completely safe during the day, but a bit more dangerous during the night.

In shopping malls, 38 % of the participants reported to be a victim of crime. None of them reported being a victim in shopping malls, but in other public spaces in San José.

The reported experiences from all types of researched public spaces have been classified into more categories regarding the information on when they happened, where they happened and what kind of crime was taking place.

**Figure 29: Personal experiences of ever being a crime victim in San José canton (in %, N=150)**

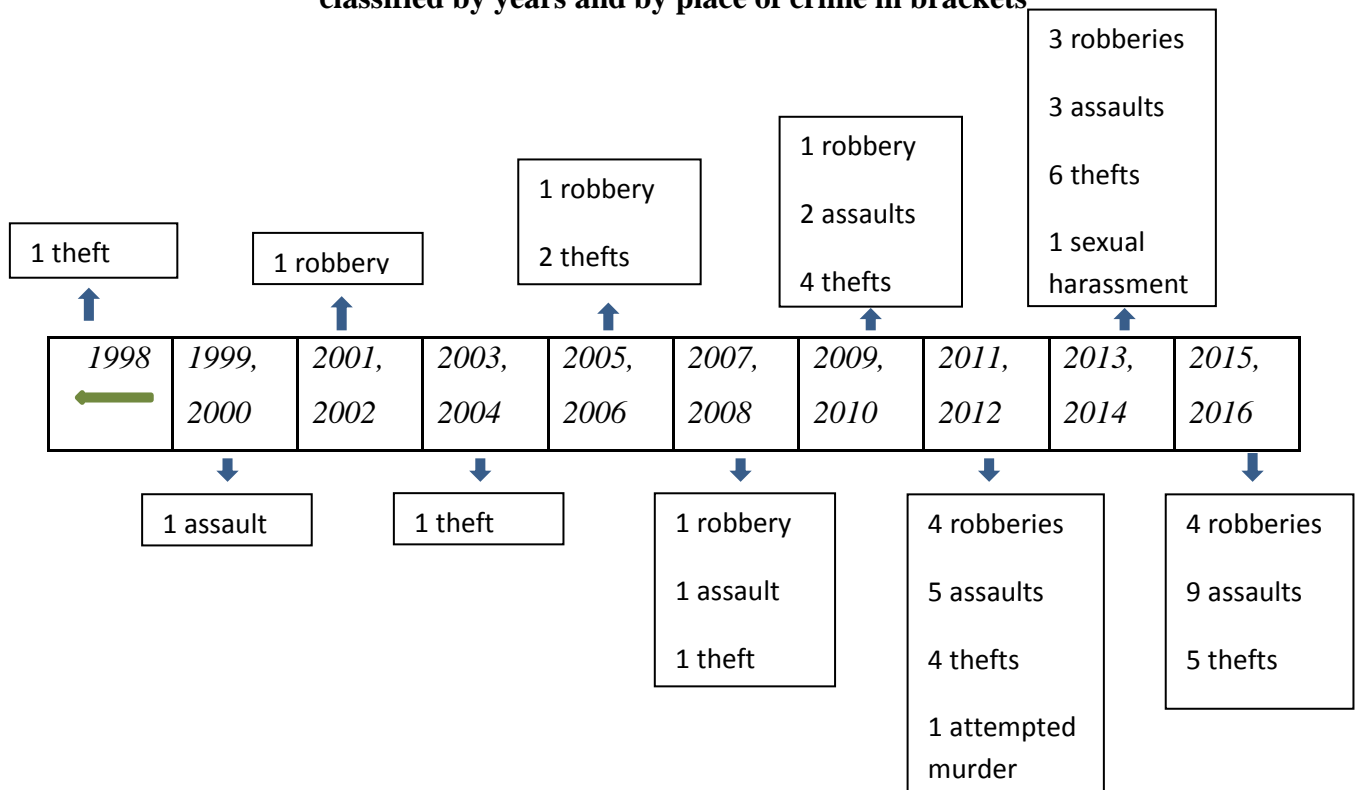


In the figure 30 we can see all the crime incidents reported by participants, where they were personally involved as victims. Crime incidents vary greatly in their intensity. Participants reported many less serious crimes such as theft of the wallet, bag or phone, latter especially frequent. Some of them reported theft of all their personal belongings with armies on the streets. Assaults were very frequently reported, also some armed ones. Violent crimes such as attempted murder or other types of physical violence resulting in death or physical harm were reported only by 2 participants.

To sum up, small crimes (petty theft of all types of personal belongings) and assaults on the streets of San José are the most common crimes in the central canton of San José. Violent crime is rare, however armies (guns, knives) are used often due to the reports by participants to scare people and to force them to hand in what delinquents want from them.

It can be seen from the timeline that the frequency of crimes is on the increase in the last years. That has been confirmed by some participants that expressed some deep concerns about the crime during their survey. In the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> Century (from 2000 to 2010) the participants reported 11 crime incidents. After 2009, only in 6 years, they reported 50 incidents, which is almost 5 times more than before. Small crimes on the increase in the last 6 years are normally (if the person doesn't resist) not harmful to the life of city residents, but are definitely deteriorating the experience of urban life in San José. However, there is a limitation of this research. People normally tend to remember crimes that happened in a recent past. Therefore, memory bias plays a role here to some extent, even though the interviewer warned the participants to try to remember all the crime incidents.

**Figure 30: Personal crime incidents reported by the participants in San José canton, classified by years and by place of crime in brackets**





#### 4.5. Summary and interpretation of the survey results

When comparing the districts to each other regarding the respondents' answers, the confirmed fact is that Hospital district serves as a commercial and business part of the city. The density of commercial and business activities is much higher than in the district San Francisco de Dos Ríos. The employment status structure is more diversified in San Francisco de Dos Ríos. There were more home workers, students and retired among the participants. In the meantime, in Hospital district majority of the participants were employees for salaries or independent workers. San Francisco de Dos Ríos is a primarily residential district. More than half of the participants were actually living in the district. In Hospital, only smaller percent of the participants actually lived in the district itself, what confirms once more the function of the district as a commercial and business hub. In shopping malls, people lived in various districts and outside of San José canton as well.

The education rate of the participants was pretty much similar in both parks, but slightly higher in Maria Auxiliadora Park. The highest educational rate was noted in shopping malls. The average income per household of the participants was pretty much similar in both parks, even though in Okayama there were more participants who did not want to share the information on incomes. Incomes in shopping malls were similar to the ones in parks just with a slightly higher share of participants with high incomes (5 or more monthly wages per household).

Hospital Districts holds much higher crime rates than San Francisco de Dos Ríos. After the official statistics from the chapter Contextual Framework, there were 601 assaults and 555 thefts reported in 2015 in the district. In the meantime, there were 113 assaults and 54 thefts reported in 2015 in San Francisco de Dos Ríos. As being told by the professionals, Hospital District hosts large agglomerations of people during the day and the streets are lonelier during the night, what makes it easier for delinquents to commit crimes. On contrary, safety perceptions about safety in public spaces were in general worse in San Francisco de Dos Ríos, meaning people feel less secure about public spaces in San José and the same goes for the respondents from shopping malls. We can infer from this trend that the safety perceptions are not always rooted in the actual crime situation. They depend on more factors, as explained by the professionals working in crime

related fields. Media and social networks, national history of catastrophic events and of violent crimes, the deterioration of urban environment, bad image of the city, waste everywhere on the streets, were the most common answers. Safety perceptions about other public spaces were the worst in shopping malls, but when asked about the safety in shopping malls themselves, everyone felt very safe there.

In Hospital District, the incidence of basically all types of crime has increased significantly. In San Francisco de Dos Ríos District, the incidence of thefts, vehicle thefts and homicides has increased, but the incidence of assaults, vehicle damage and robberies has decreased. According to the participants of the research, crime incidence in the canton of San José canton substantially increased in the last years. The respondents reported much more crime experiences in the last 5 years in the survey than before. However, this trend might not be completely taken for granted as there could be some influence by the fact that people usually report crimes that happen recently as they might already forget about the ones that happened in the far past.

There is one single answer among the respondents that either use public spaces less than before, prefer shopping malls, having been crime victims in the past. They all stated insecurity as the most common reason. Even though perceptions might be influenced by many factors, and are therefore not always coinciding with reality, the fact is that San José is insecure and it has a crime problem. San Francisco de Dos Ríos stands out here a bit, as the crime incidence is lower than in other parts of the canton of San José, however, there have been some examples of violent crimes there as well in the recent past.

#### **4.6. The correlations between different phenomena regarding crime in public spaces**

The statistical analysis of the participants' answers has been done. For this purpose, the data of all three research sites have been put together to create a larger sample (150 participants) that would be more appropriate for statistical analysis. In this way, we could find correlations that might lead to some conclusions on public space use, crime rates, perceptions and experiences. There were 13 variables common to both types of survey. The nominal variables used in the analysis were Sex, Nationality, Living place, Employment, Crime experiences and Crime rates

(whether they increased, stayed the same or increased). Ordinal variables were Education, Income, PS use (Frequency of specific public space use), PS use 1 (whether they use public spaces in San José less, the same or more than before), Safety perceptions in public spaces. Scale variables were Age, expressed in exact numbers, and The number of people in household, expressed in exact numbers.

**Variables: Safety perceptions and Crime experiences**

It seems that being personally a victim of crime affects the perception of safety in public spaces among the participants. None of the ones that were victims of crime in the past, expressed feeling very safe or safe in public spaces, while among the ones that never had any experience with being a victim of crime, 24 % chose they feel very safe or safe in San José public spaces. During the surveys, the ones who were victims of crime, often expressed their experience very precisely, and 95 % reported they do not use this specific public space where crime happened, anymore.

**Table 4: Crosstabulation Safety perceptions\*Crime experiences**

		personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton		Total
		yes	no	
Safety perceptions in public spaces (streets, parks)	1	0	7	7
	2	0	15	15
	3	22	28	50
	4	21	19	40
	5	17	21	38
Total		60	90	150

**Table 5: Chi-Square Tests Safety perceptions\*Crime experiences**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17,959 <sup>a</sup>	4	,001
Likelihood Ratio	25,701	4	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	9,152	1	,002
N of Valid Cases	150		

p (asymptotic significance) < 0.05  
 Association between Crime experiences and Safety perceptions shows a statistical significance.

**Table 6: Symmetric Measures Safety perceptions\*Crime experience**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,346	,001
	Cramer's V	,346	,001
N of Valid Cases		150	

Phi and Cramer's V values are 0.346, which means the strength of association is moderate.

**Variables: Crime experiences and PS use 1 (whether the participants use public spaces in San José less, the same or more than before in the last 5 years)**

There is a mild statistically significant association between PS use 1 and Crime experiences. 43 % of the respondents having had crime experiences use public spaces less than before in the last 5 years. However, the direction of association depends on when the crime experience took place. Therefore, the participants having had experiences with crime and using public spaces less have been checked on the date of crimes. 54 % reported that crimes happened more than 5 years ago. That means the association goes more in the direction of people having had experience with crime, are also using public spaces less often than before. It can also be supported by the fact that 95 % of the respondents being victim of crime in the past do not use a public space where crime happened anymore.

**Table 7: Crosstabulation Crime experiences\*PS use 1**

		personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton		Total
		yes	no	
Usage of other public spaces in the last 5 years	less frequent	26	32	58
	the same	21	18	39
	more frequent	13	39	52
	don't know	0	1	1
Total		60	90	150

**Table 8: Chi-Square Tests Crime experiences\*PS use 1**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9,220 <sup>a</sup>	3	,027
Likelihood Ratio	9,803	3	,020
Linear-by-Linear Association	4,723	1	,030
N of Valid Cases	150		

**Table 9: Symmetric Measures Crime experiences\*PS  
use 1**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,248	,027
	Cramer's V	,248	,027
N of Valid Cases		150	

**Variables: Safety perceptions and Gender**

There is a weak, but statistically significant association between gender and perceptions of safety in public spaces. It seems women feel slightly more endangered in public spaces. There are more possible interpretations to this. It might be that men sometimes do not share sincere opinions on their actual safety feelings in public spaces or that woman actually are more endangered in public spaces. Therefore, the crosstab analysis between 3 variables (Gender, Safety perceptions and Crime experiences) has been done. 38 % of interviewed women have been a victim of crime and 45 % of men have been a victim of crime. Therefore, the first interpretation about men not always sharing honest opinion might be the more probable one.

**Table 10: Crosstabulation Safety perceptions\*Gender**

		Safety perceptions in public spaces (streets, parks)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
Gender	male	2	5	21	16	5	49
	female	5	10	29	24	33	101
Total		7	15	50	40	38	150

**Table 11: Chi-Square Tests Safety perceptions\*Gender**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9,590 <sup>a</sup>	4	,048
Likelihood Ratio	10,604	4	,031
Linear-by-Linear Association	3,192	1	,074
N of Valid Cases	150		

**Table 12: Symmetric Measures Safety perceptions\*Gender**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,253	,048
	Cramer's V	,253	,048
N of Valid Cases		150	

**Table 13: Crosstabulation Safety perceptions\*Gender\*Crime experiences**

Gender			Safety perceptions in public spaces (streets, parks)					Total
			1	2	3	4	5	
male	personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton	Yes	0	0	9	10	3	22
		No	2	5	12	6	2	27
	Total		2	5	21	16	5	49
female	personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton	Yes	0	0	13	11	14	38
		No	5	10	16	13	19	63
	Total		5	10	29	24	33	101
Total	personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton	Yes	0	0	22	21	17	60
		No	7	15	28	19	21	90
	Total		7	15	50	40	38	150

**Variables Safety Perceptions and Crime rates**

There seems to be a relatively strong and statistically significant association between the participants' perceptions on whether crime rates have increased/decreased/stayed the same in the last 5 years and between safety perceptions in public spaces. The direction of association can be inferred from the cross-tabulation table. 62 % of the respondents that expressed the opinion of increasing crime rates also expressed that they feel unsafe or very unsafe in public spaces, meaning that the people feeling unsafe in public spaces often have a perception of increasing crime rates, which exacerbates their feelings about safety.

**Table 14: Crosstabulation Safety perceptions\*Perceptions about crime rates in public spaces**

		Safety perceptions in public spaces (streets, parks)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
perceptions about crime rates in public spaces	crime increased	3	8	30	33	34	108
	the same	1	3	13	5	2	24
	crime decreased	3	4	7	2	2	18
Total		7	15	50	40	38	150

**Table 15: Chi-Square Tests Safety perceptions\*Perceptions about crime rates in public spaces**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22,588 <sup>a</sup>	8	,004
Likelihood Ratio	21,111	8	,007
Linear-by-Linear Association	16,882	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	150		

**Table 16: Symmetric Measures Safety perceptions\*Perceptions on crime rate in public spaces**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,388	,004
	Cramer's V	,274	,004
N of Valid Cases		150	

**Variables on socio-economic characteristics and safety perceptions in public spaces**

It is interesting that a group with the highest percentage of people expressed the safety perceptions 4 (unsafe) or 5 (very unsafe), were not the ones with the highest incomes but the ones with 3-4 minimal salaries (upper-middle class). Other associations between socio-economic characteristics and safety perceptions of all 150 respondents did not show any interesting findings.



**Table 17: Crosstabulation Average income per household\*Safety perceptions in public spaces**

		Safety perceptions in public spaces (streets, parks)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
Average income per household	1 minimal salary	1	3	8	6	4	22
	2-3 minimum salaries	5	2	23	17	19	66
	3-4 minimum salaries	0	2	4	9	5	20
	5 or more minimum salaries	0	6	10	6	3	25
	don't know	1	2	5	2	7	17
Total		7	15	50	40	38	150

**Table 18: Crosstabulation Average income per household\*Crime experiences**

	Average income per household					Total	
	1 minimal salary	2-3 minimum salaries	3-4 minimum salaries	5 or more minimum salaries	don't know		
personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton	yes	10	29	9	7	5	60
	no	12	37	11	18	12	90
Total		22	66	20	25	17	150

There was no association or trends found between the income per household of respondents and crime experience. Other socio-economic variables also did not show any associations or interesting findings in relation to crime experiences. That means crimes in public spaces are in general committed against all the population, and do not target specific victims. This makes urban life more challenging as everyone can be a victim. In contrary, more violent crimes related to drug trafficking, are usually committed against specifically targeted person.

**Perceptions of safety in public spaces and Crime experiences in all three research sites**

The highest share of the respondents that have personally been victims of crime and are feeling unsafe or very unsafe (4 or 5) in public spaces, were in shopping malls. That might not be very surprising as the people who have experienced crime on their own skin, in many cases rather spend their free time in malls to avoid new possible crime incidents. However, it is intriguing that

the high share of respondents from Hospital, who had experienced crime, chose the safety feeling of neutral 3 (not safe, not unsafe).

**Table 19: Crosstabulation Safety perceptions\*Crime experiences in all research sites**

		perceptions of their own safety in public spaces					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Hospital District</b>							
personal experiences of	yes	0	0	12	6	6	24
being a crime victim in public	no	5	2	9	3	7	26
spaces in San José canton							
Total		5	2	21	9	13	50
<b>San Francisco de Dos Ríos District</b>							
		perceptions of their own safety in public spaces					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
personal experiences of	yes	0	0	5	8	4	17
being a crime victim in public	no	1	7	10	7	8	33
spaces in San José canton							
Total		1	7	15	15	12	50
<b>Shopping malls</b>							
		perceptions of their own safety in public spaces					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
personal experiences of	yes	0	0	5	7	7	19
being a crime victim in public	no	1	6	9	9	6	31
spaces in San José canton							
Total		1	6	14	16	13	50

**Perceptions of safety and PS Use in all researched sites**

Association between the frequency of public space use and the safety perceptions in public spaces seems to be the strongest among the respondents in shopping malls, where the highest percentage of people expressed safety perceptions 4 (unsafe) of 5 (very unsafe) and also use public spaces with a very low frequency (less than 1 time per month). From the open answers can be added that they in many cases compensate visiting traditional public spaces with visiting shopping malls. It is interesting that many participants from Hospital visit public spaces very often (more times per week) and their safety perception are also in many cases neutral (assessed with 3), even though Hospital bears the highest crime rates. That might be partly due to a fact that many participants live outside of Hospital District. In San Francisco, there was an interesting

trend of many people that expressed feeling unsafe or very unsafe (4, 5) visiting public spaces very often (more times per week). The respondents explained that they especially like visiting parks in San Francisco due to their safety and good maintenance, while they feel very unsafe in other parks in the city.

**Table 20: Crosstabulation Safety perceptions\*Frequency of public space use in all research sites**

		Safety perceptions in public spaces (streets, parks)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Shopping malls</b>							
Frequency of other public spaces usage	1 or more times per week	0	2	7	5	5	19
	1 or more times per month	1	1	2	3	1	8
	Less than 1 time per month	0	3	5	8	7	23
Total		1	6	14	16	13	50

		perceptions of their own safety in public spaces					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<b>San Francisco de Dos Ríos</b>							
Frequency of using a specific public space	1 or more times per week	1	5	10	8	9	33
	1 or more times per month	0	0	2	2	1	5
	less than 1 time per month	0	2	3	5	2	12
Total		1	7	15	15	12	50

		perceptions of their own safety in public spaces					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Hospital</b>							
Frequency of a specific public space use	1 or more times per week	3	2	15	7	8	35
	1 or more times per month	0	0	2	0	0	2
	less than 1 time per month	2	0	4	2	5	13
Total		5	2	21	9	13	50

**The frequency of use of Maria Auxiliadora and Okayama parks and Personal experiences of crime**

It can be seen from the tables above that the majority of people that had experiences with being a crime victim, use specific parks Maria Auxiliadora and Okayama on a frequent basis (1 or more times per week). Even though there was an association between crime experiences and decrease in public spaces use, for specific researched parks we cannot say the same. That might be interpreted by the fact that participants reported frequently that Okayama Park is in their opinion the safest and most maintained one in the city. In Maria Auxiliadora it might have to do with the fact that workers use the park only during work break and are therefore forced to go there, but are not using it in their free time outside of their working schedule.

**Table 21: Crosstabulation Crime experiences\*Frequency of public space use in Maria Auxiliadora and Okayama**

		personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton		Total
		yes	no	
<b>Maria Auxiliadora</b>				
Frequency of a specific public space use	1 or more times per week	19	16	35
	1 or more times per month	1	1	2
	less than 1 time per month	4	9	13
Total		24	26	50

		personal experiences of being a crime victim in public spaces in San José canton		Total
		yes	no	
<b>Okayama</b>				
Frequency of using a specific public space	1 or more times per week	11	22	33
	1 or more times per month	3	2	5
	less than 1 time per month	3	9	12
Total		17	33	50

**Variables Safety perception and Living place of the participants**

Among the participants surveyed in Hospital District, the living place of the highest percent of participants, that expressed the worst (4, unsafe and 5, very unsafe) safety perceptions about public spaces, was actually Hospital District. This is not surprising as Hospital hosts the highest rates of assaults in public spaces what was already mentioned before.

Among the participants surveyed in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District, the living places of the highest percent of participants, that expressed the worst safety perceptions, were outside of San José canton. The ones with living place in San Francisco de Dos Ríos and chose 4 or 5 in section safety perception, mostly explained that they refer to other public spaces more in the central part of the city but not in San Francisco.

Among the participants in shopping malls, the worst safety perceptions about public spaces were expressed by the participants living in Zapote and, surprisingly, San Francisco de Dos Ríos.

**Table 22: Crosstabulation Safety perceptions\*Living place in all research sites**

		Safety perceptions in public spaces (streets, parks)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Shopping malls</b>							
Living place	Carmen	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Hospital	0	0	1	1	0	2
	Catedral	0	2	0	1	0	3
	Zapote	0	0	1	2	5	8
	San Francisco de Dos Ríos	0	0	0	2	1	3
	Mata Redonda	0	0	1	1	1	3
	Hatillo	0	0	1	1	0	2
	San Sebastián	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Not in the canton of San José	1	4	9	8	5	27
<b>Total</b>		1	6	14	16	13	50

		perceptions of their own safety in public spaces					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<b>San Francisco de Dos Ríos</b>							
Living place	Zapote	0	1	0	0	0	1
	San Francisco de Dos Ríos	0	4	10	5	7	26
	La Uruca	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Not in the canton of San José	1	2	5	10	4	22
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>50</b>

		perceptions of their own safety in public spaces					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Hospital</b>							
Living place	Merced	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Hospital	0	0	2	3	2	7
	Catedral	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Zapote	1	0	2	0	0	3
	La Uruca	0	0	1	0	1	2
	Pavas	0	0	3	0	1	4
	Hatillo	0	0	1	0	1	2
	Not in the canton of San José	4	2	11	5	8	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>

Parts 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 provided the answers to the following research sub-question:

How do perceptions and experiences of safety differ in high-crime and low-crime chosen neighborhoods of the city center of San José?

The highest percentage of the participants that expressed safety perceptions 4 ('I feel unsafe') or 5 ('I feel very unsafe') in San José public spaces, was among the participants in shopping malls. 58 % of the respondents in shopping malls reported they feel unsafe or very unsafe in public spaces. That leads to higher attendance of shopping malls, since many respondents reported they feel much safer there. This trend can also be linked to the fact that none of the participants expressed that they feel unsafe or very unsafe inside or in front of shopping malls.

In San Francisco de Dos Ríos District, the percentage of respondents that expressed feeling unsafe or very unsafe in public spaces was almost the same as in shopping malls (54 %). However, there is an important remark as respondents emphasized that they feel very safe only in some specific parks in San Francisco de Dos Ríos, especially in Okayama Park. They explicitly claimed that they feel much more unsafe in other public spaces in the city. That coincides with the fact that Okayama Park is better maintained than many other public spaces in San José and that it is located in the district with relatively low crime rates. Nevertheless, it is still not popular to stay in the park at night, as people mentioned they feel very unsafe as drug dealers and other illegal activities start taking place there.

In Hospital District, there is an interesting trend of 56 % of the respondents expressing that they feel very safe, safe or neutral in public spaces. However, majority of the respondents in Hospital only visit public spaces during the day as most of them only work, not live in the district. The ones that actually live in the district, all expressed they feel unsafe or very unsafe in public spaces, again emphasizing that especially during the night, they do not dare to stay anywhere in the park and on the street otherwise than if necessary.

The actual crime experiences that people had showed a different picture. The highest percentage of respondents having had crime experiences in the past (48 %) was among the respondents in Hospital District. Among the respondents in shopping malls the share of people with crime experiences was 38 % and in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District 34 %. When including all 150 respondents in analysis, there was a mild association found between crime perceptions and experiences, however the direction is not easy to determine. In general it is safe to say that the people once having been victim of crimes, in many cases use public spaces less after, especially a specific public space where crime happened.

A discrepancy between safety perceptions and actual crime experiences can be explained by a variety of factors. The professionals working in crime prevention field provided some explanations. The most influence on safety perceptions comes from the side of media, and social networks, where people see all the crimes and can identify with victims to an extent that was never possible before. This discrepancy entails the fact that many people rather decide to go to shopping malls than traditional public spaces in the city, which are then losing their traditional function and are getting abandoned.

Socio-economic characteristics of the participants did not show any significant influence on crime rates or safety perceptions. Implication of that would be that everyone can be a victim of crime in public spaces, no matter incomes, social class, education, living place, sex or other.

There is a notable association found between safety perceptions and opinions on trends in crime rates. Statistically significant share of people that have worse safety perceptions also think that crime rates have increased in the last 5 years in San José.

## 5. Discussion

When the inquiries on the frequency of a specific public space's use were made in the two parks included in the research, it became obvious that most of the differences in public space use are due to the location of the parks and consequently different types of users that the parks attract. For example, in the Hospital District, most of the participants were workers having their lunch break in the park. They reported using the Maria Auxiliadora Park almost every day due to the proximity of the park to their place of employment. Therefore choosing it as a resting point during break seems to be a logical choice. In Okayama Park in the San Francisco District, the majority of participants also reported that they use the park several times per week, again due to its proximity, and therefore using it as a place for spending their free time in the afternoon. There was a trend observed that might tell more than differences in public space use. Respondents in Okayama reported that it is their personal choice to use the park in their free time for leisure outside of work hours, while in Maria Auxiliadora respondents use the park mostly during their working schedule and choose it only for its proximity to their working place. This tells us that Okayama Park is more user-friendly and people actually choose it as a place where they are willing to spend their free time. People expressed positive reviews on the park's maintenance, safety and tranquility. That was not the case with Maria Auxiliadora where people reported that they choose to spend their free time there due to the fact that it is conveniently located and many times the only choice to spend their lunch break outside of their place of employment.

What tells us more was another question asked both in parks and shopping malls, where the participants were asked about how often they use other public spaces in the city (parks, streets, public gardens) aside from the specific park/shopping mall where the survey was conducted. In



parks, approximately half of the participants reported they use other public spaces one day per week or not at all. In shopping malls, the scale was different as the survey was created later. However, it can be comparable as when we adjust the scale to the one used in parks, we can see that among the respondents in shopping malls 62% reported that they use other public spaces less than once per week. This information by itself might be biased by the small sample of participants, but the information from the professionals working in the municipality and at universities can help with interpretation. Combining the answers from both public space users and experts on the topic, it can be concluded that public spaces in the canton of San José are actually underutilized, and some of them are even abandoned. That said, more should be done to attract people to public spaces.

This information coincides with the findings from the research of Van Lidth de Jeude, Schütte, Quesada (2015) in San José, where they state: ‘There is a constant privatization of public spaces or formerly public functions that are transferred to privately owned and thus exclusive spaces, such as shopping malls or commercial centers in the suburban periphery that have substituted the classical idea of public space as a destination to meet and share.’ Their findings can also partly be confirmed with the next question where participants in shopping malls were asked which type of public space they usually choose to spend their free time in. 46% of them chose shopping malls, which makes us believe that traditional public spaces are actually replaced by shopping malls and other exclusive spaces. However, caution is needed here before making any conclusions, as 42% of participants in the same question still chose traditional public spaces as their preferred space to spend free time in. Therefore the rate of the replacement of traditional public spaces is not clear. It is difficult to say whether this was due to a small research sample or other factors. What we can learn from this is that far more research is needed on this issue, with an increased sample size (at least 300-400 or more), both in shopping malls and traditional public spaces, which would reveal the actual rate of the replacement of traditional public spaces by exclusive places.

What was unexpected is that the perceptions of safety were better among participants from a neighborhood with the highest crime rates (Hospital). It would be expected that people would have worse safety perceptions in public spaces in a neighborhood with more crime. To complement the assumption of Jaffe (2005), who claimed in her research that higher incidence of crime results in general fear of crime on the case of Willemstad and Curacao, it might be useful

to delve deeper into this issue and to try to explore a general trends. For this purpose, safety perceptions and crime experiences were statistically correlated. The participants from all research sites were included in the analysis. It turns out that there is a statistically significant correlation between safety perceptions and experiences, meaning people who had a personal experience with being a victim of crime, generally expressed worse safety perceptions. However, it did not correlate with the crime rates of the neighborhood where surveys were conducted. The main reason for that might be the fact that many respondents, especially in Hospital, did not actually live in the researched neighborhood.

There was a special mindset regarding city atmosphere observed while conducting the surveys. Most of the participants that were actually living in the San José canton, made a distinct separation between their own district and other parts of the city. It became especially obvious that they perceive a strict city center of San José as a separate part of the city, with mostly negative connotation. To cite one of the participants, a 42 year old mother of three: ‘We always use parks here in San Francisco, especially Okayama, when we are free. It is peaceful here and the neighborhood is a nice place to live. I can’t even imagine living in the center of San José, and I don’t even think of taking my family to parks there. My oldest son got robbed two times there.’ This mindset not only contributes to a more fragmented city, but also results in less people living in the center of the city. This is in accordance with the observation of Jaffe (2005) from her research in Willemstad, where she claimed that people think and act only on their neighborhood level.

Special caution is warranted when observing and making conclusions on the relation between public space use, safety perceptions and crime experiences. In shopping malls, the association between people having poor safety perceptions and usage of public spaces was notable. But this trend is undermined by the results from both parks, where people, despite having bad safety perceptions, in many cases use public spaces regularly. There are more possible explanations for this trend. It may be that people visit only specific public spaces that they perceive as safe as was often the case in San Francisco de Dos Ríos. Some people explained that they only use specific public spaces in the suburbs and that there are some public spaces in the city center that they would never use due to safety concerns. That is one of the limitation of this research as the question was posed to inquire about public spaces in general and there was no space left for people to claim that they only use specific public spaces and not others. There is also another

possible explanation – a decrease of insecurity. Some participants reported that there are more police officers on the streets now than in the past and it could lead to an increased feeling of safety among the population, but for now we can see from official statistics that crime rates, for example incidence of assaults and thefts, in some city areas substantially increased. There might also be a bias stemming from the research topic explanation. When people were approached, they were told that the research topic is about crime in public spaces so that might to some extent influence their answers. Another limitation of the research which also confused some participants was that the questions about safety perceptions did not include a time frame. That means, many participants feel much safer in public spaces during the day than at night. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to explore safety perceptions at different parts of the day, which is a proposal for further research.

Felbab-Brown (2011) claimed in his/her research that urban populations in Latin America in most of the cases chose ‘crime’ as their main concern. In his research, Angotti (2013) noted that the constant fear of violence is a part of daily life in urban Latin America. This research explores these safety perceptions in more detail and can complement previous statements from the literature on the observation that safety perceptions do not always correlate with the actual crime situation in a city. Having said this, there are also many other influences affecting safety perceptions, and this research points out that more research on other factors is needed. Actual crime rates, as it turns out in this research, in many cases fail to explain safety perceptions of people.

However, this does not mean that San José doesn’t have a crime problem. In for example Western Europe, people in most cities rarely even consider getting robbed on the street. In San José and other Latin American urban areas the situation is different. People are faced with this fear of crime every day. Glebeek and Koonings (2015) are very clear in their research paper that, while levels of violent crime have decreased in the rest of the world, Latin America is an exception where rates of violent crime persist and are even increasing in many places. The research in this thesis confirms their findings, as the information, received both from public space users and professionals in the crime related issues, clearly shows that levels of violent crime are also on the rise in Costa Rica, mostly related to drug trafficking. These findings are also confirmed by the official crime statistics on crime rates in researched areas by OIJ.

Glebbeck and Koonings (2015) state in their research that some public spaces in Latin America got completely under control of local drug trafficking gangs. When questioned about that, the chief of the San José Police Department answered that he can assure there is not a single place in San José that is controlled by gangs and where police do not have access. In this sense, the situation is much better in Costa Rica compared to some other Central American countries. However, other professionals warned that drug trafficking related crimes are increasing, and that more attention should be invested in it to avoid a similar situation as in other Central American countries.

A study on public spaces was conducted by Wright, Wendel, Zarger and Mihelcic (2012) on the city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. There are many similarities between their research and the research described in this thesis. However, their research was less extensive as the number of participants was 108. Research in both places produced some similar findings. Public spaces were underutilized in both cases, which points to a possible general trend in Latin American cities. Insecurity was in both cases the main limitation preventing people from using public spaces more. Another common point was that public spaces mostly become abandoned during the night due to insecurity produced by illegal drug sales and use. This is especially important as it can be seen how drug trafficking is a serious problem throughout Latin America. It produces the same issues in two places so distant from each other – Bolivia and Costa Rica. In both cases, the participants wished for more infrastructure enabling different free time activities, more maintenance of the parks, more security, more illumination at night and more trees and other greenery. In all these aspects, the research conducted for this thesis expands this knowledge to a new area – San José. There were also some differences in approach noted between this research and the research in Bolivia. They have also focused on accessibility, distance of public space to participants' living place, and have included a higher number of parks in their research. In their research, they found that insecurity in public spaces is a limitation for public space use, especially for women. In this research, it has been concluded that there seem to be no notable differences in safety perceptions and experiences in gender. It is also more likely that men do not share honest opinions on crime perceptions, unlike women who are more commonly victims of crimes. There might be some differences in research participants as well. The research for this thesis focused on the middle-class population, and the research from Bolivia did not specifically focus on the middle-class so the results may not be completely comparable. However, the research for this

thesis also investigated public space use in shopping malls and with this entered another research area.

There was a recent study (finished in 2016) similar to the one for this thesis, conducted in Santiago de Chile. It was, however, more practically oriented and was conducted in a more extensive manner. Specific public spaces were chosen for a recovery process, which lasted for a couple of years. After, the comparative study to the years before the recovery process has been done. It showed that more greenery and more maintenance contributed to a 55% increase in public space use by children. The perceived probability of assaults showed a decrease of 6%, and security perceptions about using parks in the evening and at night improved by 10% (Martínez Gaete, 2016). Research for this thesis, together with the study from Santiago de Chile, highlights the importance of public space planning, maintenance and appearance for urban life, and also for improvements in the safety situation.

## **6. Conclusion**

The topics on the implications of neoliberal policies, proliferation of gated communities, and the rise of inequality in Latin America have been widely researched.

However, the research undertaken brings some fresh findings on the recent crime situation in San José, and brings a new approach in terms of relating crime issues to urban planning issues. The research aims to explore middle-class residents, as it is a rising class in Costa Rican society.

What was emphasized by some of the experts in the field of urbanism during the open interviews is that there is not much literature and up-to-date research available on the relation between crime issues and the development of urban space. The approach focuses on public spaces in the city of San José, which bears a great importance for the city residents. There is an extensive study available by Van Lidth de Jeude et al. (2015) exploring the relation between socio-spatial segregation and city fragmentation in the Grand Metropolitan Area of San José, also including San José public spaces. The research undertaken complements the mentioned study with specific interrelations between the frequency of public space use, crime experiences, safety perceptions and the general maintenance and planning of public spaces, based on the research in various public spaces in San José.

There is one single fact that most of the professionals from in-depth interviews emphasized. Crimes in Costa Rica in general are getting more and more violent with time, and they agree that the main reason for this trend is the proliferation of drug trafficking. The rates of homicides, even though they are still low relative to other parts of Central America, by the official statistics have increased, in the canton of San José and in Costa Rica in general. It of course affects the canton of San José as well. As a matter of fact, the most common crimes in the canton of San José are the crimes of little intensity such as petty theft and assault. However, the research showed that those small crimes are exacerbating the urban life quality as it is very often a case that residents decide not to use public spaces in San José due to insecurity reasons. Instead, they rather choose to use shopping malls, which are more convenient in terms of security, but are artificial objects where people lose their connection with nature, which was, according to some respondents, very important element of urban life.

It can be inferred from both the answers of the surveys and from the in-depth interviews, that there is a connection between the development of public space in terms of planning and maintenance, and the incidence of crimes. Respondents in survey mentioned many times that they do not like so much waste on the streets, the absence of trash bins, and the configuration of some public spaces. The in-depth interviewees complemented these answers with more things, such as narrow pavements as a result of colonial past, a detrimental effect of chaotic public transportation system, the late establishment and accomplishment of the urban management plans, and the appearance of the city itself with no visual improvement on the buildings. All these things interrelate in a vicious circle of San José having an image of unattractive capital for the residents as well as for the tourists visiting the country. This vicious circle also results in the diminished quality of urban life, which is definitely not in accordance with the aimed sustainable future of the cities.

The research can contribute to a better understanding and to a stronger focus on public spaces in the city. Therefore it is not relevant only for San José, but also for other cities in Latin America, and also on a world scale. The relevance even reinforces when we think about the fact that more and more people will live in urban areas in the future. World urban population is expected to increase by 72 % until 2050. 6.3 billion of people is expected to live in cities in 2050. The urban growth will be especially intensive in developing countries, where urban population is expected to increase to 5.1 billion in 2050 (Lecture by Dr. Femke Van Noorloos, data from UN DESA

Report, 2015). While conducting the surveys with users of public space, it quickly became obvious that public places, especially parks, hold a strong importance for the city residents. Especially parks are the only places in the city that resemble natural environment and are therefore cherished by the residents. Especially with a busy lifestyle, which is very common in the cities, people really need a place to relax and enjoy some open space. When public spaces are not pleasant to stay in, for various reasons, let it be crime issues, maintenance issues, no activities possible, or other, residents are not satisfied and search for other options. What happens there is that they divert to shopping malls, which are not even close to an open, natural space with fresh air and trees.

There are some points to focus on in San José and in other Latin American cities as well proposed. The improvement of security in public spaces is extremely important. As the research showed, the levels of insecurity reached the point where it diverts many residents from using traditional public spaces. On a short run, it can be done by more police surveillance, which is professionally called immediate crime prevention. On a long run, investments of time, money and effort should go for education against crime, not only for kids, but only for parents which can then pass the values to their kids. The decrease of unemployment would be a great step as well. The problem of drug addiction is a salient one, and the issues of drug trafficking should receive more attention. In San José, also the problems of chaotic urban transport deserve more attention. In the meantime, it might be helpful to revitalize public spaces, to launch more cultural, and sports activities, which could attract more visitors and return people's trust in public spaces, which has been ruined in the last decades. Green public spaces are also a goal which might be worth to follow. Respondents reported they really miss more plants and trees in public spaces. Better illumination is also an important factor in public spaces, especially in the night hours. Unfortunately, in practice, all these things are challenging to implement, not only in Costa Rica but worldwide. The main obstacles are the inadequate financial resources available, and the unequal distribution of the resources involving corruption.

Some additional research topics can be proposed based on the knowledge collected during the research. The effects of public transport on urban development and in San José and the options for its improvements, the effects of drug addiction on the urban society, the actual financial analysis of the funds collected in central canton of San José, the assessment of drug traffic influence on the city, are some of the possible proposals. The specific research conducted could

be improved with increasing substantially a number of participants, expanding it to all the districts of San José canton, and expand the time frame of the research, which was, due to the fact that only one person was conducting the research in a limited time frame, not possible for now.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: List of interviewees (open-ending interviews)

Interviewee	Profession
1	University professor, law
2	Lawyer, psychologist
3	Criminologist
4	University professor, sociologist
5	Student of architecture
6	University professor, architect
7	Department of Urban Management of San José Municipality, Architect
8	Department of Urban Management of San José Municipality, Architect, Principal
9	Department of Municipal Police of San José, Principal
10	economist

### Appendix 2: Socio-economic characteristics of participants

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the canton of San José**

Total number of population	288 054
% of well-maintained households	63.4
% of population employed in each economic sector	Primary: 0.6 Secondary: 18.9 Tertiary: 80.4
Literacy rate (in % of population)	98.8
Education rate (in % of population)	Without any: 2.1 Incomplete primary school: 9 Complete primary school: 19.4 Incomplete secondary school: 21.8 Complete secondary school: 17.6 University: 30
% of population born outside of Costa Rica	16.3
Employment rate (in % of population capable of working)	56.7

Source: Estado de la Nación, 2011.

**Table 2: Socio-economic characteristics of the population in Hospital District**

% of female-male population	51 - 49
% of cantonal population living in the district	6.7
% of population aged 15-64 years	68
Average age	34
% of population born outside of Costa Rica	20
% of households unsatisfied in at least one basic need (after UBN Method)	28.2
% of households in a bad condition	12.4
% of people employed in each economic sector	Primary: 0.4 Secondary: 18.7 Tertiary: 80.9
Employment rate (%)	53.9
% of young (5-15 years old) population attending general basic education	85.8
% of population older than 17 with higher education	20.8

Source and adjusted by: MSJ (latest National Census 2011), 2013.

**Table 3: Socio-economic characteristics of the population in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District**

% of female-male population	47 – 53
% of cantonal population living in the district	7
% of population aged 15-64 years	71.4
Average age	37
% of population born outside of Costa Rica	10.4
% of households unsatisfied in at least one basic need (after UBN Method)	10.6
% of households in a bad condition	2.4

% of people employed in each economic sector	Primary: 0.5 Secondary: 13 Tertiary: 86.5
Employment rate (%)	56.1
% of young (5-15 years old) population attending general basic education	86
% of population older than 17 with higher education	51.3

**Source and adjusted by: MSJ (latest National Census 2011), 2013.**

**Table 4: Social characteristics of participants (Hospital District)**

<b>Nationality of the participants</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Costa Rican	84
Nicaraguan	10
Other	6
<b>Living district of the participants</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Merced	2
Hospital	14
Catedral	2
Zapote	6
La Uruca	4
Pavas	8
Hatillo	4
Outside of the canton central	60
<b>Achieved level of education</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Primary school	4
Secondary school	48

University	48
<b>Average income per household</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
1 minimal salary	10
2-3 minimal salaries	58
3-4 minimal salaries	12
5 or more minimal salaries	18
Don't know	2
<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Employed for salaries	42
Independent worker	36
Unemployed, searching for job	2
Unemployed, not searching for job	0
Home worker	6
Student	2
Retired	12

**Table 5: Social characteristics of participants in San Francisco de Dos Ríos District**

<b>Nationality of the participants</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Costa Rican	88
Nicaraguan	8
Other	4
<b>Living district of the participants</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Zapote	2
La Uruca	2
San Francisco de Dos Ríos	52



Outside of the canton central	44
<b>Achieved level of education</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Primary school	16
Secondary school	42
University	42
<b>Average income per household</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
1 minimal salary	24
2-3 minimal salaries	36
3-4 minimal salaries	10
5 or more minimal salaries	18
Don't know	12
<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Employed for salaries	26
Independent worker	32
Unemployed, searching for job	4
Unemployed, not searching for job	2
Home worker	10
Student	8
Retired	18

**Table 6: Social characteristics of participants in shopping malls**

<b>Nationality of the participants</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Costa Rican	86
Nicaraguan	6
Other	8

<b>Living district of the participants</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Carmen	2
Hospital	4
Catedral	6
San Sebastián	2
Zapote	16
Hatillo	4
San Francisco de Dos Ríos	6
Outside of the canton central	54
<b>Achieved level of education</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Primary school	4
Secondary school	42
University	52
<b>Average income per household</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
1 minimal salary	10
2-3 minimal salaries	38
3-4 minimal salaries	18
5 or more minimal salaries	14
Don't know	20
<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Percentage of the participants</b>
Employed for salaries	52
Independent worker	18
Unemployed, searching for job	4
Home worker	4
Student	8

Retired	14
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# Appendix 4: Survey about the insecurity in public spaces in the canton of San José

## CUESTIONARIO SOBRE INSEGURIDAD EN LOS ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS EN EL CANTON DE SAN JOSÉ (COSTA RICA)



Utrecht University

Universidad de Utrecht, Holanda

<p>1. Género: M      F</p>	<p>5. ¿Vive usted en el canton de San José?          5A. Sí. Vivo en el canton de San José hace _____ años. Vivo en distrito (subraya por favor):          Carmen, Merced, Hospital, Catedral, Zapote, San Francisco de Dos Ríos, La Uruca, Mata Redonda, Pavas, Hatillo, San Sebastián.</p>		<p>7. ¿Cuál es su status de empleo? Puede escoger mas opciones.          7A. Empleado(a) por salarios.          7B. Trabajador(a) independiente.          7C. Desempleado(a), en busca de trabajo.          7D. Desempleado(a), no en busca de trabajo.          7E. Trabajador(a) a domicilio.          7F. Estudiante.          7G. Pensionado(a).          7H. Imposibilidad por discapacidad.</p>	<p>9. ¿Sumando todos los ingresos, cuál es el ingreso mensual aproximado en su hogar?          9A. 1 salario mínimo.          9B. 2-3 salarios mínimos.          9C. 3-4 salarios mínimos.          9D. 5 o más salarios mínimos.          9E. No sé.</p>
<p>2. ¿Qué edad tiene usted? _____</p>	<p>6. ¿Cuál es su último año de estudios que usted aprobó?          6A. La escuela primaria.          6B. Educación secundaria (colegio).          6C. Educación universitaria.          6D. Otro: _____</p>		<p>8. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar?          _____</p>	
<p>3. ¿Cuál es su nacionalidad?          3A. Costarricense.          3B. Otro: _____</p>				
<p>4. ¿Vive usted en Costa Rica permanente (más de 3 meses por año)?          4A. Sí.          4B. No. En este caso, muchas gracias por su ayuda y le deseo un buen día.</p>				
<p>10. ¿Qué tan frecuente (al mes o a la semana) va usted a los centros comerciales ('malls') que pertenecen a la ciudad de San José en su tiempo libre?          _____</p>		<p>12. ¿Qué tan frecuente (al mes o a la semana) usa usted los espacios públicos (los parques, las calles, los jardines públicos) que pertenecen a la ciudad de San José en su tiempo libre?          _____</p>		
<p>11. ¿Puede decir usted cuáles actividades realiza comúnmente en su tiempo libre en los centros comerciales ('malls')?          _____          _____          _____          Qué le gusta de los centros comerciales en San José?</p>		<p>13. ¿Cuáles tipos de espacios públicos le gustan mas a usted para relajarse y gastar su tiempo libre en San José?          13A. Los centros comerciales ('malls')          13B. Los parques, las calles, los jardines públicos.          13C. Igual.          13.1. Podría decir usted las razones de su respuesta?          _____          _____          13.2. Esta pregunta es para las personas que respondieron en la pregunta 13 con la respuesta 13A. ¿Qué podría cambiar el gobierno o la municipalidad en los parques y en las calles en San José para hacerlos mas atractivos, en los cuales a usted le gustaría gastar mas de su tiempo libre en ellos?          _____          _____          _____</p>		
<p>14. ¿Cuáles tipos de espacios públicos le gustan mas a usted para hacer las compras en San José?          14A. Los centros comerciales ('malls')          14B. Las tiendas en las calles de San José          14C. Las tiendas cerca de su vivienda.          14D. Igual.</p>				

15. ¿Piensa usted que en los últimos 5 años está usando los centros comerciales (‘malls’) que pertenecen a San José:

15A. Menos frecuente que antes.

15B. Permanece igual que antes.

15C. Mas frecuente que antes.

15D. No sé.

15.1. ¿En caso de la respuesta 15C, cuáles podrían ser las razones para que usted use los centros comerciales mas que antes?

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16. ¿Piensa usted que en los últimos 5 años está usando los espacios publicos (los parques, las calles) que pertenecen a San José:

16A. Menos frecuente que antes.

16B. Permanece igual que antes.

16C. Mas frecuente que antes.

16D. No sé.

16.1. ¿En caso de la respuesta 16A, cuáles podrían ser las razones para que usted use los espacios públicos menos que antes?

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17. ¿Piensa usted que en los últimos años los actos de delincuencia (robos, asaltos, violencia) en los parques y las calles en San José:

17A. Se han incrementado.

17B. Se han mantenido igual.

17C. Han disminuido.

17.1. ¿Cuáles podrían ser las razones para que los actos de delincuencia se hayan incrementado/ mantenido igual/ disminuido?

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18. ¿Estando en los espacios públicos en San José, cómo se siente usted ante la posibilidad de ser víctima de un asalto, agresión, robo u otro tipo de delito?

Me siento muy seguro. 1 2 3 4 5 Me siento muy inseguro.

19. ¿Estando adentro o afuera cerca (por ejemplo en los parqueos) de los centros comerciales en San José, cómo se siente usted ante la posibilidad de ser víctima de un asalto, agresión, robo u otro tipo de delito?

Me siento muy seguro. 1 2 3 4 5 Me siento muy

20. ¿Ha tenido usted alguna experiencia donde haya sido víctima de un asalto, robo, violencia u otro tipo de delito en los espacios públicos, incluyendo ‘malls’, en San José?

20A. Sí.

20B. No.

20.1. Esta pregunta es para las personas que respondieron en la pregunta 9 con la respuesta 18A.

¿Puede usted decir los tipos de delitos, cuando y donde pasaron?

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20.2. ¿Usa usted el espacio público donde pasó el delito menos que antes?

A. Si.

B. No.

21. ¿Qué propuestas podría brindar usted para disminuir la incidencia de delitos en los espacios públicos en San José?

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Entrevistador: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Lugar público: \_\_\_\_\_

# CUESTIONARIO SOBRE INSEGURIDAD EN LOS ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS EN EL CANTON DE SAN JOSÉ (COSTA RICA)

1. Género: M      F

2. ¿Qué edad tiene usted? \_\_\_\_\_

3. ¿Cuál es su nacionalidad?  
3A. Costarricense.  
3B. Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

4. ¿Vive usted en Costa Rica permanente (más de 3 meses por año)?  
4A. Sí.  
4B. No. En este caso, muchas gracias por su ayuda y le deseo un buen día.

5. ¿Vive usted en el canton de San José?  
5A. Sí. Vivo en el canton de San José hace \_\_\_\_\_ años. Vivo en distrito (subraya por favor): Carmen, Merced, Hospital, Catedral, Zapote, San Francisco de Dos Ríos, La Uruca, Mata Redonda, Pavas, Hatillo, San Sebastián.  
5B. No.

6. ¿Cuál es su último año de estudios que usted aprobó?  
6A. La escuela primaria.  
6B. Educación secundaria (colegio).  
6C. Educación universitaria.  
6D. Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

7. ¿Cuál es su status de empleo? Puede escoger mas opciones.  
7A. Empleado por salarios.  
7B. Trabajador independiente.  
7C. Desempleado, en busca de trabajo.  
7D. Desempleado, no en busca de trabajo.  
7E. Trabajador(a) a domicilio.  
7F. Estudiante.  
7G. Retirado.  
7H. Imposibilidad por discapacidad.  
7I. Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

8. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar?  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. ¿Sumando todos los ingresos, cuál es el ingreso mensual aproximado en su hogar?  
9A. 1 salario mínimo.  
9B. 2-3 salarios mínimos.  
9C. 3-4 salarios mínimos.  
9D. 5 o más salarios mínimos.  
9E. No sé.

10. ¿Cuántos días a la semana va usted a los centros comerciales ('malls') que pertenecen a la ciudad de San José en su tiempo libre?  
10A. 0-1 día.  
10B. 2-3 días.  
10C. 4-5 días.  
10D. 5 días o mas.

11. ¿Puede decir usted cuáles actividades realiza comúnmente en su tiempo libre en los centros comerciales ('malls')?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. ¿Cuantos días a la semana usa usted los espacios públicos (los parques, las calles, los jardines públicos) que pertenecen a la ciudad de San José en su tiempo libre?  
10A. 0-1 día.  
10B. 2-3 días.  
10C. 4-5 días.  
10D. 5 días o mas.

13. ¿Cuáles tipos de espacios públicos le gusta mas a usted para visitar en su tiempo libre?  
13A. Los centros comerciales ('malls')  
13B. Los parques, las calles, los jardines públicos.  
13.1. Podría decir usted las razones de su respuesta?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. ¿Qué propuestas podría brindar usted para hacer los espacios públicos mas atractivos por la gente?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. ¿Piensa usted que en los últimos 5 años la gente en general está usando los centros comerciales ('malls') que pertenecen a San José:  
15A. Mas frecuente que antes.  
15B. Permanece igual que antes.  
15C. Menos frecuente que antes.  
15D. No sé.  
  
15.2. ¿Cuáles podrían ser las razones para que los centros comerciales se estén usando mas/menos/igual que antes?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. ¿Piensa usted que en los últimos 5 años la gente en general está usando los espacios publicos (los parques, las calles, los jardines públicos) que pertenecen a San José:  
16A. Mas frecuente que antes.  
16B. Permanece igual que antes.  
16C. Menos frecuente que antes.  
16D. No sé.  
  
16.2. ¿Cuáles podrían ser las razones para que los espacios públicos se estén usando mas/menos/igual que antes?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



17. ¿Piensa usted que en los últimos años los actos de delincuencia (robos, asaltos, violencia) en los espacios públicos en San José:

17A. Se han incrementado.

17B. Se han mantenido igual.

17C. Han disminuido.

17.2. ¿Cuáles podrían ser las razones para que los actos de delincuencia en los espacios públicos se hayan incrementado/ mantenido igual/ disminuido?

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18. ¿Estando en los espacios públicos en San José, cómo se siente usted ante la posibilidad de ser víctima de un asalto, agresión, robo u otro tipo de delito?

Me siento muy seguro. 1 2 3 4 5 Me siento muy inseguro.

19. ¿Ha tenido usted alguna experiencia donde haya sido víctima de un asalto, robo, violencia u otro tipo de delito en los espacios públicos en el canton de San José?

19A. Sí.

19B. No.

19.1. Esta pregunta es para las personas que respondieron en la pregunta 9 con la respuesta 18A.

¿Puede usted decir los tipos de delitos y cuando pasaron?

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19.2. ¿Usa usted el espacio público donde pasó el delito menos que antes?

C. Si.

D. No.

20. ¿Qué propuestas podría brindar usted para disminuir la incidencia de delitos en los espacios públicos en San José?

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Muchas gracias por su ayuda y le deseo un día agradable.

Entrevistador: \_\_\_\_\_ Espacio público:

\_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_