

Fifty percent of the interviewed users in Plaza de la Madre stated that they interacted with others in the plaza. It was less often people in Plaza de la Madre interacted with strangers possibly due to the perception of criminality in the surrounding sector. Women were more social and interactive in this plaza than men. An interview question confirmed that most women in Plaza de la Madre engaged with other women for social and security purposes. Women also visited the plaza in groups due to the perception of Plaza de la Madre as an unsafe place, especially during night hours. Sociability, therefore, could appear more as a security measure than a social issue. Thirty three percent of the interviewed participants mentioned that they did not socialize or that interaction only occurred sometimes (17%). People that socialized on some occasions stated that this happened if they were acquainted with others in the setting. If a person was not known but seen everyday while exercising or bringing their kids to the plaza, the person was only greeted but not approached for conversation. Therefore, sociability was more limiting in Plaza de la Madre than plaza de la República. It was also found that sociability in Plaza de la Madre occurred among neighbors that knew each other and among family and friends that visited the plaza in groups but not with strangers. In Plaza de la República, sociability occurred mostly among friends and classmates. Sociability occurred among people that visited the plaza in groups, among families that came together, and other users being other parents with their children and strangers. Therefore, sociability occurred in Plaza de la República within a higher variety of people and groups. Perhaps the most influential factor for this interaction to occur is security. Jon Lang has mentioned that after basic needs of survival and security are satisfied, affiliation needs and sociability take place, therefore this factor is considered a determinant in people's social interaction in this case.

Another important question regarding sociability was asking if any person made them feel threatened while visiting the plaza. The participants' answers were very similar for both plazas; most people did not feel threatened or menaced by others while visiting the plaza. This may have been because most people visited the plazas during peak hours when public spaces were crowded. Or it may have been because being accompanied by other people reduced the feeling of being threatened. Sometimes women in Plaza de la Madre avoided using the plaza when it was empty or when no masculine user who could provide assistance was in the plaza. In Plaza de la República, an environment with a lot of children and parents was a factor for not feeling uncomfortable by other users. A minority of women users that mentioned feeling threatened or uncomfortable at any time in both plazas stated that particularly insistent informal vendors that teased them to buy any item or undesirables and "malandros" made them uncomfortable.

In sum, Plaza de la República had more favorable conditions for encouraging social interaction than Plaza de la Madre. Perhaps the presence of more affordances in Plaza de la República determined this condition. In Plaza de la Madre, frequently social interaction and people engaged in groups to visit the plaza was a necessary fact to increase the sense of security in people, therefore, being accompanied

by a friend or family member was necessary in order to feel more secure in this space. On the other hand, the presence of an acoustic shell that allows events in Plaza de la República, the presence of amenities for children, for example, have drawn many groups of people to the plaza encouraging social interaction at peak hours.

## **16.5 User's Preferences and Needs**

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Participants were asked what attracted them in both Plazas. Particularly in Plaza de la Republica, most participants (35%) were attracted to the social environment. In Plaza de la Madre, the conditions that attracted participants the most were the renovation and new physical characteristics of the plaza, and particularly with the presence of wider space and views, new landscaping and greenery, and the maintenance given to it. In Plaza de la Madre, this new physical condition has positively influenced the image of the place and drawn more people to this public space. In this plaza, the opportunity to exercise (26%), and the existing social environment (21%) were also important factors in attracting people to the plaza. Secondary factors, such as the opportunity to exercise and the physical–aesthetic qualities and security, were other reasons that people were attracted to Plaza de la República. In Plaza de la Madre another important factor was the proximity to users' homes.

According to Plaza de la Madre users, people were most attracted by functional and physical issues in this plaza. On the other hand, social reasons were the most important factors for people in Plaza de la República. Cool temperatures and breezes in public spaces, which allow enjoyment of outdoor spaces is highly desirable for users. With regards to the microclimatic comfort, with a slightly difference between plazas, according to people's answers, Plaza de la República attracted more individuals than Plaza de la Madre. In sum, what attracted people to Plaza de la Madre was its new physical condition due to the recent renovation. In Plaza de la República, the social environment and the opportunity to socialize with friends and family was the most important issue attracting users to the plaza. Security was an important factor for people in Plaza de la Madre; people perceived a lack of natural and police surveillance. Also, climatic issues reduced the attractiveness of the plaza at certain hours of the day. Since no users were interviewed or observed during noon hours in Plaza de la Madre, it is clear there is no satisfaction during those hours. People expressed dissatisfaction with the plazas if they perceived a lack of security or if climatic conditions were uncomfortable; thus, climatical and security issues are important factors in user's satisfaction. These two important conditions are missing in Plaza de la Madre.

Participants were asked to indicate what could be changed (added and deleted) to improve the plazas. The interviewed participants in Plaza de la Madre felt that more surveillance and security and taller trees would improve the plaza. Again the most important changes suggested were related to better