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## **Spatial regulation of homeless people who use drugs – a qualitative study of police officer perspectives in Tijuana, Mexico**

**Abstract:** Previous research on the enforcement of “quality-of-life” ordinances focused on the perspective of homeless people who use drugs (PWUD) in developed cities. Therefore, we sought to assess municipal police officers’ (MPOs) attitudes on spatial stigmatization and regulation in Tijuana, Mexico. Data collection included 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with active-duty MPOs trained on occupational safety, Mexican drug law reforms and harm-reduction strategies. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, translated, and analyzed using a hermeneutic grounded theory approach. Under pressure from community members to spatially regulate homeless-PWUD, MPOs enforced quality-of-life ordinances and portrayed homeless-PWUD as “mentally or physically ill individuals” linked to informal or illegal activities in need of monitoring, regulation or institutionalization. MPOs expressed frustration due to community complaints and homeless-PWUD’s limited alternatives. Advanced marginality and spatial stigmatization in resource-constrained cities reflect the regulation of homeless-PWUD and reclamation of public places through dispersion, banishment, and punishment of homeless-PWUD, and annihilation of their spaces.

**Key words:** People who use drugs; municipal police officers; advanced marginality; spatial stigmatization; spatial regulation; Tijuana.