

# BULLETIN 4 MEXICO CITY



## EDITORIAL

This bulletin reflects on the presentations and discussions that took place at the Urban Age Mexico City conference in February 2006. The Mexico City conference, which marked the start to the second year of the Urban Age project, succeeded more than previous conferences in forging a partnership between political, academic and private sector actors involved in city building. With the local support of Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation and the help of our host committee, we had the unique opportunity to discuss the city's future with the heads of government at all administrative levels. The participation of President Vicente Fox, Mayor Alejandro Encinas and Governor Enrique Peña Nieto was symbolic, not only for the project's engagement with political decision making, but even more so because of the collaboration across party lines and government levels required to tackle Mexico City's problems.

This bulletin contains four original pieces written as a reflection of the conference debates. In the interdisciplinary and international tradition of the Urban Age project, these essays represent voices from both local and visiting urbanists and bring together the perspectives of an architect, a transport planner and two scholars – one specialising in cultural studies and the other in the political economy of cities. In addition it includes a selection of quotes from the conference discussions. These intend to extend the debate to our readers and perhaps trigger a wider debate on the issues. The comments on the improvement plan for Chapultepec Park and the creation of the FARO cultural centre in the district of Iztapalapa should be informative of the current importance cities around the world give to the way that public amenities and cultural facilities can act as catalysts for physical revitalisation and social inclusion. The rapid transit initiative of the Metrobús indicates the wider international rediscovery of public transport and the challenges of integrating such interventions into a comprehensive urban project. Policies such as the Bando Dos illustrate the predicaments that cities face in their attempts to redensify and maximise the use of their existing infrastructure to become more sustainable, while also producing more urbane and liveable places.

Urban Age would like to thank its local partners including the Government of the Federal District, the Government of the State of Mexico, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, Iberoamericana University and the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation. It is our hope that the Mexico City conference represent the next stage of the Urban Age project, that will deepen the discussions started in New York, Shanghai and London, and further intensify the intellectual and practical exchanges in our expanding network of those concerned with the future of city-ness in a global era of urban change.

## MEXICO CITY'S SOCIO-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

**NÉSTOR GARCÍA CANCLINI**

Mexico City's socio-cultural development correlates to its economic development, although not linearly. For my reading on the relationship between society and culture, I set out from a rather common assertion that multiple cities exist within the megalopolis. This holds true for the Mexican capital and many other world capitals that contain – in their enormous territories – residential neighbourhoods and university quarters; administrative, commercial and industrial zones; new and old districts. Rather than looking at these heterogeneous uses of urban space in detail, my intention here is to analyse the structural processes which have created differences and inequalities between different parts of the city, considering how these processes interact with the representations and imaginaries of city residents.

### THE HISTORICAL AND TERRITORIAL CITY

A large number of buildings in Mexico City persist from pre-Columbian and colonial times. Founded in 1324 on a small island in a lake, the metropolis has accumulated throughout seven centuries built forms that are constitutive of its identity today: archaeological sites, colonial buildings turned museums, antiques and crafts shops, banks and public offices. The National Museum of Anthropology and the Templo Mayor Museum, the two most visited in the city, educate us on how the 200,000 original inhabitants were leading their lives at the time the Spaniards arrived, occupying 13 km<sup>2</sup> that then constituted the city.

The colonial period, begun in 1521, has left its imprints on buildings and on the square grid of the Historic Centre. This centuries old legacy has been compounded with other forms of construction and of organising the urban landscape brought in by migrants from other parts of the country. National museums and monuments in the capital have synthesised a reading of the nation.

In contemporary urban sights however, monuments mingle with publicity, the solemn aesthetics of heritage coexist with ephemeral commercial and political messages. The urban scene is often made up of chaotic landscapes disputed by the great national heroes from the past and the propaganda of today, rituals that glorify archaic traditions juxtaposed with the eloquence of modern and postmodern architecture.

### THE INDUSTRIAL CITY

The modern urban experience begins to consolidate in 1940 with an industrialisation process that concentrates in the capital, massive in-migrations from the rest of the country and the rapid expansion of the urbanised area. Population climbs from 1.64 million in 1940 to 18 million in the year 2000.

As a consequence of this accelerated population growth,

the Federal District's borders blur and the city begins to fuse with peripheral municipalities. Central districts show negative growth from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards at the same time that most of the population increases localise in outer rings and in the 29 municipalities from the states of Mexico and Morelos that are part of the conurbation.

What were the consequences in terms of social interactions and cultural development? I touch upon the following three transformations: the experience of 'incommensurability', the unevenness in the spatial distribution of cultural facilities, and the development of cultural industries favouring distantiated communications.

Through the term 'incommensurability', I refer to the difficulties experienced by residents in the megacity in constructing an idea of the whole that would include the heterogeneous set of zones, neighbourhoods, types of journeys and experiences that are enabled by this urban formation. Mexico City's urban footprint occupied 12,000 hectares in 1940 – the Metropolitan Zone has expanded to reach 170,000 hectares. Its population equates to that of half of the 32 states in Mexico and hovers slightly below the entire population of Central America, and includes as many diverse ethnic groups, lifestyles, and productive and consumption activities as are found in the five countries that constitute the subcontinent. This could be another way of referring to the megacity: city-continent. Its multicultural variety includes over 30 indigenous languages and some others from Europe. But this diversity cannot be understood simply as enriching – it also propitiates distorted stereotypes leading to the discrimination of the other, those who are different.

In a survey on urban perceptions we found that the mainstream does not empathise with structural explanations provided by the social sciences and rather tends to identify tangible culprits: an excessive number of migrants, political demonstrations, street vendors and police corruption can be blamed for urban violence, pollution or traffic jams. Most social movements also fall in localisms and are incapable of proposing an alternative metropolitan agenda to shift the direction of public policies. Precipitated population growth and disorderly urban expansion have resulted in a disjointed megalopolis, a city without communication.

### **THE COMMUNICATIONAL CITY**

From the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the creation of new cultural facilities was not apace with urban expansion and the localised cultural supply (cinemas, concert halls, bookstores) remained concentrated in a triangle extending from the Historic Centre to Chapultepec in the east and Ciudad Universitaria in the south. Throughout these decades the use of delocalised media such as radio, television and mobile phones expanded rapidly. The most up-to-date surveys on cultural consumption in Mexico City show that 97% of households have television and radio sets, 74% own a VCR, and mobile phones outnumber land lines. Whereas the spectacles that require a physical presence (cinemas, theatres) are highly concentrated, the messages of electronic media are distributed more evenly across urban space in its entirety.

The city then tends to be used as a workplace or as journey to the workplace. Participation in cultural and recreational activities in public places is reduced – most people prefer to retrench to their private homes and consume culture through electronic terminals. Radio and television provide an imaginary reinvention of social and cultural bondages to compensate for the disconnection between residents and the megacity caused by territorial dispersion.

What types of cultural consumptions have emerged in the industrial megacity? A somewhat deterritorialised consumption in which non-local relations predominate and electronic media supersede neighbourhood ties inscribed in a well-defined territory. Deficiencies in the educational system, both in the city and nationwide, also mean that the incidence of early school drop-out increases the impact of mass media and makes spectators less able to process complex information and entertainment with the gaze of 'critical citizens'.

How do the residents of Mexico City use their free time after work or studying and on weekends? The six most commonly mentioned activities take place at home: watch television, rest, read the newspaper, listen to music, spend time with family and take physical exercise. Except the latter, which sometimes entails jogging around the house or going to the gym, and family life, including strolls and outings, it would seem that people in the capital prefer to avoid contact with public life in the city when given a choice.

During weekdays, no more than 6% of the population engage in activities that require contact with the city – visiting friends, shopping, cinema- and theatre-going, attending parties and dancehalls, and eating out. On weekends, this figure climbs to 30%. Distantiated information and entertainment prevail over local engagement. Cultural representation and urban imaginaries are constructed, most of all, through the agendas promoted by radio and television.

### **THE CITY THAT IMPROVISES ITS GLOBALISATION**

The Mexican capital is endowed with a vast cultural supply that places it in an internationally competitive position. For instance, there are more museums in Mexico City (92) than in New York (88), Buenos Aires (55), Madrid (47) or São Paulo (32). The city also counts with communications systems, entertainment and versatile services providing international electronic connections.

Conditions of efficiency and security in the city are highly deficient, however. Entrepreneurs and people in government have expressed their concerns about the heightened insecurity and the slow pace of traffic (it now takes two hours a day per resident to make a trip that should take 30 minutes) which reduces productivity. It is estimated that 20 million person hours are lost daily due to the congestion generated by the more than 3 million vehicles circulating in the metropolitan area.

The rapid growth of Mexico City in the past 50 years, as in São Paulo, Caracas and Lima, is due to the millions of Mexicans from all over the country who moved to the capital expecting that industrialisation would bring benefits for all. With the external liberalisation of the Mexican economy, the

city enters a phase of deindustrialisation and the most dynamic growth sectors are expected to relate to transnational services. The Federal District and its metropolitan periphery have become one of the world's 20 urban megacentres with the highest linkage to global networks of management, innovation and commercialisation. A clear instantiation of this shift is found in the almost 800 hectares of Santa Fe that are dedicated to: the buildings of Hewlett Packard, Mercedes Benz, Chubb Insurance, Televisa and other corporations; commercial malls; and up-market housing complexes. The shift is also confirmed by: the revitalisation and architectural interventions in the Paseo de la Reforma, Polanco, Insurgentes and Periférico Sur; the mushrooming of 29 commercial mega-malls; the presence of new transnational hotels; the modernisation of telecommunications and satellite connections; and the diffusion of information services, cable and digital television.

The shrinking ability of the globalised city to benefit the vast marginal zones of exclusion has disappointed a large part of the population and turned Mexico City's metropolitan zone into the main region expelling Mexican migrants to the United States. Dualist frameworks of intervention for urban regeneration and urban expansion plans have benefited only limited enclaves such as the Historic Centre, Reforma-Polanco and Santa Fe, segregating the rest of the population and creating a fracture between the globalising 'utopia' and the historical city relegated to a deficient modernity.

Global service nodes attempt to isolate themselves from traditional sectors, from informal or marginal economic activities, from deficient urban services, from the frustrations of the unemployed and from the fears of insecurity. The duality between the global city and the insecure local city of the fringes, may become the main obstacle both for Mexico City to be imagined as an attractive location by those that bind global networks and for the city to reach a more balanced and sustainable internal development.

Some of the strategic tasks for cultural policy in this megalopolis include: articulating the historical heritage and local traditions with modern developments to improve the competitiveness of the megacity in the global economy; redistributing cultural resources in urban space so as to facilitate intercultural communication through media policies that consider the diverse socio-cultural needs of the population and are not limited to the expansion of media clientèles; and including the urban majorities in a coherent modernisation project.

In the meantime, insecurity affects all sectors of society. Air pollution concerns the entire city. Informal policies make their marks amidst the gestures of modernity. These and other signs indicate that urban duality fails. What predominates today is a conflictive intersection between the different cities of Mexico City.

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# A MEXICO REFLECTION

## ENRIQUE NORTEN

Three important events from the past 50 years define the present and future state of Mexico City. Firstly during the student mobilisation of October 1968, people spontaneously appropriated public spaces and claimed back streets and squares. The city had not witnessed such a democratic social movement in many years, perhaps since the Mexican Revolution. Anti-government demonstrations of civil society groups were repressed brutally and a sense of distrust spread among the population. A few days later – at the Olympic Games – the ‘orderly’ occupation of the same spaces was choreographed by repressive forces. In any case, the citizens of the metropolis were once again celebrating and occupying urban public space.

The earthquakes of 1985 caused an important rupture within the physical structure of the city, particularly in low lying central zones where ‘the bottom of the lake’ once stood. Population movement towards higher areas in the periphery was another consequence of this shock: the empty spaces and urban scars that the quakes left behind are still visible today. Subsequent rescue operations provided the city’s population with a new opportunity – under very different circumstances – of reappropriating its civic spaces and reinstating social bonds among citizens.

The economic crisis of 1994 – which coincides with the Zapatista insurgency in Chiapas – produced a significant social dismemberment in Mexico’s capital city. It opened new holes in the urban tissue and governmental vacuums in certain ‘transitional’ zones and ‘no man’s lands’. This opened opportunities for the most negative forces from our communities to fill these vacuums and cause social instability, violence and insecurity. As the wider population found itself displaced from such places the metropolis lost much of its public space.

Together with inadequate planning policies, these events have led the city in a direction that parallels that of other developing metropolises: areas with the highest potential for urbanity have stopped growing and the natural densification of the better serviced parts of the city and those with the best infrastructure has not occurred. At the same time there has been growth and expansion of a sub-urban outer ring where patches of poverty and wealth (a lot more on the poverty side!) stand side by side without meshing.

This peripheral or rather post-peripheral zone – now extending well beyond the unfinished Periférico ring road – is already challenging the geographic limits of the Valley of Mexico. It devours woods and other natural zones and has become a spongy ‘frontier’ absorbing both the centrifugal forces that lead people to leave the city centre and the centripetal forces of those who attempt to in-migrate to the city and never make it.

This zone that surrounds Mexico City – which includes some of the wealthiest and most popular zones of the metropolis – has attracted most of the private speculative investment at all levels. The public expenditures that the city was forced to incur have been able to provide only a tenuous

and minimal infrastructure given the enormous costs associated with the elevated and difficult topographies of these zones and the significant distances from traditional centres.

The city has been incapable, almost without exception, of keeping up with this accelerated horizontal sprawl and of providing urban infrastructure and services to these remote areas. At the same time, Mexico City has experienced a diversion of funds that could have strengthened under-utilised infrastructure in inter-peripheral zones. We have also witnessed the progressive erosion of the city’s polycentric character that had turned our city into one of the most vibrant modern metropolises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is worth mentioning that Mexico City was born modern, due to its peculiar geography and the vision of its Aztec founders who built diverse centres and an intense network of communication. These settlements flourished in a unique condition of simultaneous tension and interdependency. Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Coyoacán, Tlalpan, Xochimilco, Tlahuac and others provide the basis for the contemporary metropolis. The amalgamation and texture of our city is explained by the growth of these centres that eventually overlapped at their perimeters and produced new zones with increasing complexity and networked interrelationships.

The life of the contemporary city and its architecture takes place in these transitional zones. Looking at the city as a whole, space is defined by the complex vector relationships that emerge from its fragments and by the movements of people, goods and information. There is a coexistence of the most diverse patterns of social life, from highly orthodox to the most subversive and defiant. The contemporary city allows multiple readings, superimposed, of restless orders, happenstance, destabilisation, and change. Life in this city is as ephemeral, fragile, transitory and fragmentary as contemporary society and culture. Transitional zones offer a most important opportunity of achieving new possibilities for living with higher density and less congestion.

Two recent conditions have deepened this process of deurbanisation. The erosion of the quality of life and the urbanity of the city has been accelerated by: the rising oil prices that have resulted in a new, and even more unequal, prosperity for the country and therefore for Mexico City; an absent planning and growth policy with political interest of a marked populist tendency that at the same time shows conservative and reactionary elements.

These situations have led to a ‘strange’ alliance between the commercial interests of real estate developers and the political interests of those governing the city to invest in the peripheral belt with a completely sub-urban vision for newly developing zones. We have seen ‘bedroom cities’ mushroom and the American-style ‘malls’ that service them become the sole evidence of interaction and urban life in these new public-private spaces. In parallel the culture of public and democratic space in our city has been abandoned.

It is worth mentioning the few exceptions to this phenomenon. Some zones have experienced a renaissance, due to their richness and texture; the great quality of their public

spaces, and their important tradition of urbanity that extends over a century – several centuries in some cases. Polanco, la Condesa, la Roma, Coyoacán, San Ángel and other neighbourhoods have undergone a positive transformation thanks to the in-migration or return of some of the most daring groups from our creative communities who have decided to take certain risks and reclaim urban values. We are now also seeing a second generation of transitional neighbourhoods where a new urbanity is increasingly appreciated. The recent regeneration of Escandón, San Miguel Chapultepec, Santa María la Ribera and others gives us clear signs for optimism. They have exploited the city's opportunities. A number of interventions have been very successful and produced high quality architecture.

A new and important generation of artists, designers and architects from Mexico City has emerged in the post-1968, post-earthquake, post-devaluation context. They are reinventing the way their disciplines are practised, based on a global vision and a reflexive education. Transitional zones have become their favoured places of intervention and participation. Our city had not experienced such an interesting and stimulating moment since the post-war period when that generation of Mexican architects produced one of the best collections of modern architecture in the world including works such as the Ciudad Universitaria.

I felt privileged to take part in the Urban Age with some of these talented young professionals who have achieved this well deserved success through their work, and their important commitment to the city. They have been able to displace the previous generation – my generation too – and its exhausted discourse on urban issues. To me this is a great incentive and stimulus, a source of renewed hope.

Finally I would like to join this creative force of young voices in Mexico City and contribute with the following proposals for future discussion. We need to:

- Create a truly multidimensional city, a 'new-built topography' that will grow vertically on top of the urban layout and texture of the traditional, modern, inter-peripheral city;
- Reverse the out-migration from the centre and propose an alternative of multiple concentricities, taking advantage of the rich overlap of fabrics in the city;
- Recover the polycentric city and its diverse cores that have been submerged and surrounded by the peripheral belt;
- Redensify and occupy the volumes that can be built above the existing inter-peripheral city, strengthening the various traditional centres in the metropolis;
- Take advantage of the zones created by the overlap of various centres in the city that have the greatest potential for urban life. These neglected zones (Tepito, Bondoquito, Guerrero, Obrera, Doctores, and many others) supply some of the best opportunities for development and urbanity and constitute the 'lost' places of the city;
- Promote public investment in the most urban centres and their overlapping peripheries with the creation of specific projects that stimulate the development and recovery of urban spaces, infrastructure and basic services, to secure a

better quality of life in the multiple urban centres of Mexico City.

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# LINKAGES BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL PROCESSES

GEETAM TIWARI

Is 'informality' an imposed definition? Informality has been defined in many ways. It is outside what is official or legal or planned. It is certainly not a synonym for criminality which is both outside the law and illegal. Squatter settlements all over the world are called informal settlements because they are not part of the official plan. Robert Neuwirth has recently described the squatter as a new migrant to the city, who builds a shelter with his own hands on land that does not belong to him. Nearly 1 billion people who live in squatter settlements are people who came to the city in search of jobs, needed a place to live that they could afford, and, not being able to find it on the private market, built it for themselves on land that wasn't their own. These informal settlements create a huge hidden economy – an unofficial system of squatter landlords and squatter tenants, squatter merchants and squatter consumers, squatter builders and squatter labourers, squatter investors and squatter brokers. The builders of informal housing are the largest builders of housing in the world – and they are creating the cities of tomorrow. The conventional definition of informal – unofficial, illegal or unplanned – denies people jobs in their home areas and denies them homes in the areas where they have gone to get jobs. Another form of squatting is when the powerful section of society occupies land that does not belong to it and indulges in unlawful activities for accumulation of wealth. Clearly, distinctions must be made between activities that evolve for generation of economic resources, modalities for housing provision, 'unlawful' activities by powerful sections of the society for economic and other gains, and squatting by people who cannot survive otherwise.

Traditionally cities depended on the division of labour. Human scale settlements were planned for places where everything from small scale transactions to wholesale business activities could occur. Has the scale changed because of the speed of movement that is possible today? The shift in geographical scale has also brought about changes in the degree of heterogeneity in socio-economic conditions and in the needs of citizens. Cities are organic systems. People having varied skills – low level to highly qualified professionals – find opportunities in cities. It is a common sight outside shopping malls or commercial centres in Delhi, Mumbai, Mexico City or Bangkok to find vendors selling a range of products from food to small handicrafts to cell phone cards. Formal planning techniques are not adequate to respond to the dynamism that cities display. In fact, how well a city performs in terms of economic (GDP), social (crime rate) or quality-of-life indicators for all its citizens is dependent upon the heterogeneous employment opportunities available to all its citizens. Often the area planned as circulation space for pedestrians is occupied by the vendors since there is no space planned for such activities. Street vendors stand around bus stops and serve the waiting commuters. Since the road design does not include places for vendors they therefore occupy the area meant for either moving vehicles or pedestrians. In many Indian cities public land around planned residential areas or

commercial areas is occupied by people who cannot afford any planned housing. For these people, living near the employment opportunities where they can live in self-constructed housing is a necessity. The formal plans for commercial activities, transport services or residential areas do not consider the variety of needs that exist in cities. This is the reason that when hawkers appear around planned developments such as Santa Fe in Mexico City the police force has to be deployed to evict them. Similarly planners and city officials in many of these cities try to 'reclaim' public spaces by forcibly evicting the street vendors. If we as planners accept the heterogeneous labour market and hence the need for planning heterogeneous housing and public spaces and mobility solutions, the management of informal processes in our urban spaces may be better. The present understanding or definition of informality denies the existence of a symbiotic relationship in a differentiated labour market. The result of treating informal as problematic comes at a high social cost. People move to cities to improve quality of life. However, since the informal settlements are outside the plans and the law, citizens have limited access to education and other opportunities resulting in lower social mobility.

The benefits of recognising the contributions of informal housing and processes and integrating them with the official policies have been documented from all parts of the world. In Mexico City hundreds and thousands of houses built in outlying districts like Ciudad Neza were considered *asentamientos irregulares* or *asentamientos paracaídas*. However, since the official policies have supported them and investments in upgrading the infrastructure have been made, the settlement that started as traditional squatter has been transformed into a vibrant city of 1.5 million people. A large number of businesses have been setup within the settlement providing nearly 65% of their jobs to the residents.

Policy makers seem to be oblivious of the positive impact of street vendors on the social life of a city. The availability of work options on the street provides a positive outlet for employment and earning an honest livelihood to a large section of the population that is poor but with high entrepreneurial skills. Their presence makes streets relatively crime-free and safer for women, children and older people. Cities that have a large number of street vendors seem to be far safer than those that do not.

A detailed study by Irene Tinker of vendors selling food on the streets of eight cities in Asia and Africa documents the important role these vendors play in a city. It found that street foods are frequently cheaper than home-prepared foods, especially when time spent shopping and cooking is factored in. This is important as the lower income groups spend 50-80% of their household budget on food. As our cities become larger and more congested, people spend more time travelling and eat out more often. The street vendors make it possible for the poorer sections of society to obtain nutritious food at affordable prices. This study showed that cooked cheap meals served by vendors represented outstanding bargains; also that more expensive meals sold in restaurants were not proportionately more nutritional. A surprising finding from

Pune was that the cheapest street meals, cooked by the poorest vendors under the worst conditions, were equally or less contaminated with bacteria than samples taken from restaurants. The authors conclude that, 'It is creditable on the part of women street food vendors who sell food in such degraded environment... that the quality of the food they sell is less unsatisfactory than that sold in restaurants.' Permitting vending at logical places and planning spaces for it requires a careful understanding of the dynamics and requirements of street vendors.

Bicycles, pedestrians and bus traffic attract street vendors. Often the side roads and pedestrian paths are occupied by people selling food, drinks and other articles which are in demand by road users. Vendors often locate themselves at places which are natural markets for them. A careful analysis of the location of vendors, their numbers at each location and the type of services provided clearly shows that they are needed since they work under completely 'free market' principles. If their services were not required at those locations, they would have no incentive to be there. Road and city authorities, however, view their existence as illegal. Often, an argument is advanced that road capacity is reduced by the presence of street vendors and hawkers. If we apply the same principle that is used in the design of the road environment for motorised traffic, especially private cars, then vendors have a valid and legal place in the road environment. Highway design manuals recommend frequency and design of service areas for motorised vehicles. Street vendors and hawkers serve the same function for pedestrians, bicyclists and bus users. Pedestrians need cobblers on the road to have their footwear fixed, just as much as car owners need tyre repair shops. Bicyclists need repair shops to have their tyres, chains and pedals fixed. All commuters need cold drinks, snacks and other services on the roadside. These services have to exist at frequent intervals, otherwise walking or bicycling would become impossible, especially in summer. As long as our urban roads are used by these various sections, street vendors will remain inevitable.

Undoubtedly, the growth of future cities depends upon how well we are able to plan for the 'unplanned'. The generic theme evolving from Asia, Latin America and Africa is that as cities expand, the 'informal' sector grows faster than the 'formal' sector. This means that our plans will need paradigmatic change to deal with the heterogeneous housing and mobility needs of growing city populations. We will have to plan spaces for activities which cannot be always well-defined and predicted. It is better to plan for what is inevitable than to turn a blind eye to the future.

Neuwirth, Robert (2005), *Shadow Cities: a billion squatters, a new urban world*, Routledge, New York.

Tinker, I, (1997) *Street Foods: Urban Food and Employment in Developing Countries*, Oxford University Press, New York.

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# MEXICO CITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

**DIANE E DAVIS**

## **A GLOBAL CITY IN THE MAKING**

The Mexico City metropolitan area is undergoing a conversion of its built environment, produced by new initiatives to foster high-end development in under-utilised urban areas and to bring new investors and activities to the urban economy. These efforts are part and parcel of the larger objective of transforming Mexico City from an industrial and consumer goods production site into an internationally recognised global city, replete with the high tech, financial and corporate services that are associated with the world's leading capital cities. With Mexico's national economy struggling to compete against major industrial producers and low wage exporters such as China, investors and public officials alike are eager to turn away from the manufacturing and import substitution industrialisation that long dominated the urban economy. High on the list of priorities is support for export led industrial activities, and for the development of high tech, service, and financial activities associated with the global knowledge economy. Both strategies have affected land use and employment patterns in Mexico City.

National emphasis on export led industrialisation has motivated many of the city's older industrial firms to leave the city and relocate to coastal and border regions, closer to global markets. Many of the city's small and medium sized industrial firms have merely closed shop, unable to compete in the unprotected post-NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) environment and lacking the capital to retool or relocate. The resultant drop in formal sector employment has swelled the already burgeoning informal sector, and produced a smattering of vacant industrial sites across the metropolitan area. As this has happened, new investments in corporate and financial services, real estate development and related communications, and transportation infrastructure have filled some of the void, keeping the urban economy from total stagnation. The emergence of new urban construction projects gives the sense of a city on the move, standing at the crossroads of a major urban transformation.

Some of the largest investments and most visible changes in the built environment have come in the form of high-end commercial and residential construction projects in and around the city's Historic Centre, as well as in the periphery of the Federal District, bordering the State of Mexico. The logic of investment downtown derives from the historic infrastructure of the central city, and the longstanding political, cultural, and economic importance of the areas surrounding the Historic Centre. Downtown Mexico City hosts fantastic displays of architectural heritage, with a plethora of buildings and monuments tracing back through the centuries of Aztec, colonial, and most recently, revolutionary rule. Many of these buildings still command a public function, with key government offices standing in the midst of museums, libraries, and gold-encrusted cathedrals.

In historic downtown areas near the Alameda Park (which nestles up against the fabulous Beaux Artes Palacio de Bellas Artes), private investors have poured resources into hotel and

convention complexes and related services for tourists, who are drawn by the cultural riches of the Historic Centre. A smattering of new corporate buildings and multinational headquarters, the activities of which are well served by proximity to governing officials and the commercial élite, also dot the horizon. Adding to the changing character are a growing number of newly restored 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century luxury apartment buildings, many of artistic and decorative significance. These new properties are targeted toward young professionals and others unencumbered by families, who also seek the city's dynamic cultural atmosphere and its vibrant nightlife. Leading the way in all these transformations is Fundación del Centro Histórico. Under the guiding hand of Adrian Pandal, among others, the Fundación has supported major investments and property transactions in the Historic Centre, while also building stronger social and cultural capital among new and old residents living in this area through neighbourhood-based programmes of education and micro credit.

The changes in the built environment in downtown Mexico City are matched in visibility if not capital investment by an equally massive concentration of new construction in an area on the border of the Federal District and the State of Mexico, the new development of Santa Fe. This area stands as a key geographic node in the larger metropolitan area, which has been expanding northward and westward for several decades. In contrast to the city's longstanding eastward expansion, which occurred at the hands of low income squatters, the new developments to the north and west have drawn more affluent residents and employers. For this reason, most of the new residential highrises and corporate headquarters of Santa Fe host commercial and employment activities geared towards up-market clientèle. From Starbucks to IT-related boutiques, the services in this area are exclusive and cater to a very privileged economic élite. Access to Santa Fe is highly circumscribed and most residents of the metropolitan area have little motive for venturing into the area, unless employed or residing there.

## **URBAN CENTRALITIES, OLD AND NEW**

Both these projects have raised new questions about the built environment of the city and where its 'Centre' is or should be. Urban centralities are usually understood in terms of the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy, and the increasing integration of the Mexican economy into globalisation processes. From this vantage point, the Santa Fe development constitutes a new urban centre for the Mexico City Metropolitan Area. It promises to host many of the new financial and service activities necessary in a more globally connected city, and it sits in a key strategic location in the metropolitan area, close to the proposed site of a much contested new international airport which promoters argued would make Mexico City a central node in the global economy (heightened protest from peasants who would be displaced by the proposed airport project stalled the plan several years ago, but it is again up for discussion). Scholars like Dieter Läßle caution that the new economic centrality of cities should not

be driven merely by its exports or global connections. 'Cities also must be understood as the centre of contemporary knowledge and cultural production,' he cautions, 'and these economic activities have a completely different way of integrating the spheres of work and private life.' Therefore 'city nodes need to be integrated into thick and diverse social networks and built urban tissues.' Such a proposition raises questions about whether Santa Fe really should be considered a new urban centre for a globalising Mexico City, and if so, what is gained and lost in the definition of 'centrality'.

A similar idea has been advanced by leading Mexican urbanist René Coloumb Bosc. He reminds us that the so-called centralities of Mexico City, whether new or old, 'are part of the processes of polarisation and socio-spatial segregation of this metropolis.' These tendencies have deepened not only because the rise of the real estate sector is highly articulated to transnational corporations, developers and property managers, who use the isolation of space to appeal to up-market buyers. But they are also due to the fact that this segment of capital is tied to the construction industry and the commercialisation of new urbanisation projects geared toward elite classes integrated into world markets. These consumers constitute a social minority, and their buying power allows them to protect their minority status through specialised urbanisation projects that isolate them from the rest of the urban citizenry. For Coloumb, new urbanised development projects like Santa Fe produce 'false centralities', characterised by self-segregation and the privatisation of public spaces.

All this is manifest in the spatial, social, and economic composition of this so-called 'new centre,' and how it contrasts with the old Historic Centre of the city. In its built form, Santa Fe stands at the opposite urban spectrum to downtown Mexico City in both ambience and spatial form. Santa Fe's immense, high density, gated complexes are surrounded by pristine green spaces where pedestrian traffic is almost completely absent and where cars (some armoured, most with drivers) navigate the highly secure terrain. In many regards, it is as a 21<sup>st</sup> century space, looming on the horizon of a city where the rest of the built environment traces from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas Santa Fe stands aloof and disconnected from the messy urban world around it, downtown Mexico City hosts a vibrant but insecure street life defined by a class and culturally mixed public sphere where modern buildings are the alien intruders. Santa Fe's social, spatial, and architecture profile is so jarring to some experts in urbanism, that it has become the source of much tension and debate among urban critics, with more than a few leading voices, including that of the eminent Mexican architect Ricardo Legoretta, considering it a travesty. For many Santa Fe is a repudiation of all the physical and social elements that gave historic Mexico City its heart and soul and have made this important city the cultural patrimony of the nation.

#### **A CITY FOR WHAT (AND FOR WHOM)?**

Many still continue to see the city's 'needs' – or how it should define its purpose – as related to its role as a key engine of national growth. Those who take this position predicate their

assessment of built environmental transformations (and whether they are good or bad for the city and its residents) on an understanding of how well they sustain economic growth. Such is the view of Federal District's Secretary of Urban Development Jenny Saltiel Cohen, who lauds both the development of Santa Fe and the regeneration of the Historic Centre, because they equally serve as important economic poles for Mexico City that enhance the city's productive capacity and grease the wheels of its transition to world city status. Both have been touted as bringing local and citywide benefits by triggering the real estate market and creating employment. According to Saltiel, during the construction phase alone, 40,000 jobs were generated in the Historic Centre, and almost 50,000 in Santa Fe. She also contends that both projects had strong multiplier effects, with employment created in other industrial sectors as well as in services. Further contributing to her positive assessment is the fact that both projects counted on a public–private sector partnership for their development, they relied on similar mechanisms for financing of infrastructure, and both were able to overcome the constraints imposed by land use conflicts.

But the fact that these projects were embedded in land use conflicts, and that they were impossible without private sector involvement and the considerable access to large sources of bank credit and creative financing mechanisms which such partnerships enabled, raises questions about what was at stake in their promotion, and whether the outcomes really served the larger public good – as opposed to the interests of private developers. Clearly, an ideal development project is one where both public and private sector gain; and with careful craftsmanship, this is entirely possible, as evidenced by some of the projects supported by Amanda Burden, New York City's chief city planner, in earlier Urban Age conferences. But the question is what *is* the public good in a 'transitional' globalising city like Mexico City? Can projects that may combine public and private needs in an advanced urban economy like New York or London produce the same positive outcomes in a city like Mexico City? Can support for up-market residential, corporate, commercial, and financial development really be seen as the way forward for the city?

The first thing to know is whether the opportunities for work and servicing associated with these two major development projects have reinforced a synergy between employment and land use that is good for each area's residents, not to mention the city as a whole? Yes, there may be new jobs generated and new forms of value added in high-end employment related to forward and backward linkages among productive sectors, but are these the types of jobs and spillovers that can address basic employment needs in a declining industrial locale like Mexico City, where informal sector work is the lifeblood for most families and formal employment levels are down? Is it reasonable to expect that new jobs in Starbucks and software repair in Santa Fe, or up-market nightlife activities in the Historic Centre, will serve as a replacement for the lost manufacturing jobs in the city? Yes, the city's educated elite will have new places to live and work, and new high tech jobs and corporate services to develop. But

will these new activities offer anything to the city's large numbers of poor and uneducated? Will they be able to pull the already exploited and underpaid individuals away from the informal sector sufficiently to capture value added in other parts of the economy? Without new investments in job training or educational capital, it is unreasonable to expect that these new investments in the built environment will automatically translate into new forms of employment.

To be sure, Santa Fe will still need its cleaners and cooks and guards; and downtown Mexico City will still host its street vendors, modest restaurants, and panaderias. But by and large, these will not be new jobs, only old or relocated ones. And ironically, access to them could be on the decline, precisely because of their spatial location and the built environmental dynamics of these new property developments. To get to work in Santa Fe, poor citizens will not take the gleaming roadways for private cars that developers planned for the project. They will need public transport that allows them to come from all areas of the city. But did these commitments enter into the public–private agreements for the new urban projects? Not really. Likewise, to continue vending or working downtown, those poorer individuals long employed in the service and/or informal sector will now have to commute from ever further distances, as the new investments in hotels and up-market residential housing will inevitably drive up land values and thus displace local residents. So even if they have new jobs, generated by the new-found vibrancy and prosperity of the reinvigorated Historic Centre, they will spend more time and money commuting to work. In environmental, not to mention human terms, what then are the gains, and who are the beneficiaries?

With all the innovative new development projects and transformations in the built environment of Mexico City, urban planners and citizens must still continue to ask the same hard questions. What is the city for? Whose city will it be? Will there be dual cities, one for the poor and one for the rich, or only one; and can the latter be realised with more than one urban centre, be it old or new? Only then can the remarkable gains and creative energies unleashed by these new urban development projects be parlayed in a positive boost to the city as a whole. This conversation has already started, thanks to the Urban Age Conference, but there is still a lot more to accomplish.

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*Diane Davis is Associate Dean of the School of Architecture & Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

# QUOTES:

## URBAN AGE MEXICO CITY CONFERENCE

### FEBRUARY 2006

#### URBAN CENTRALITIES, OLD AND NEW: SANTA FE AND THE HISTORIC CENTRE

Both projects – the development of Santa Fe and the regeneration of the Historic Centre – have created important economic poles for Mexico City which enhance the city's productive capacity. They also present similarities in their planning and implementation: they show a convergence between public and private actors in how problems are solved, from the financing of infrastructure to the provision of services and the resolution of conflicts over land uses. They both brought about local and citywide benefits, triggering the real estate market and creating employment. During the construction phase alone, 40,000 jobs were generated in the Historic Centre and the figure for jobs in Santa Fe reaches 50,000. There is also the multiplier impact that this employment has on other industrial sectors. The new operations and services provided in both sites have increased employment in the city.

*Jenny Saltiel Cohen, Secretary, Secretariat of Economic Development, Government of the Federal District*

Urban centralities are usually understood in terms of the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy, and the increasing integration of the Mexican economy to globalisation processes. What I think also needs to be understood is that the new economic centrality of cities is not merely driven by exporters. Cities are the centre of contemporary knowledge and cultural production, and these economic activities have a completely different way of integrating the spheres of work and private life. Therefore, city nodes need to be integrated into thick and diverse social networks and built urban tissues. With the high concentration of national research institutions in Mexico City, the placing of Mexico in a competitive position in the global economy should be reconnected to the concept of urban centralities, and their capacities of knowledge, learning and research should be integrated into the planning process.

*Dieter Läßle, Professor of Regional & Urban Economics, HafenCity University Hamburg*

The separation, exclusion, and other precise 20<sup>th</sup> century qualities of Santa Fe fall behind the open-endedness, the richness of public spaces, the historical associations, in a word the culture of the Historic Centre. However, there is an important point here: charm is not enough. Buildings do not do anything on their own. There has to be an idea of what that charm is for in this highly competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century world and that needs to connect to economic survival and development through the generation of powerful world-beating ideas, which could happen here in Mexico as well as anywhere else. Therefore, the question for the Urban Age and for Mexico City is not just to copy outmoded 20<sup>th</sup> century models, nor to rely upon the lovely historical fabric of the old city, but to reinvent the idea of what a city is for.

*Frank Duffy, Principal, DEGW, London*

The centralities of Mexico City are part of the processes of polarisation and socio-spatial segregation of this metropolis.

On the one hand, we find the rise of the real estate sector that is highly articulated to transnational corporations, developers and property managers. This segment is tied up to the construction and commercialisation of new urbanisations of an élitist character for the social minorities that are integrated into world markets. Exhibit Number One: Santa Fe. These new urbanisations generate, as I see it, false centralities characterised by their self-segregation and the privatisation of public spaces. On the other hand, excluded majorities who do not have access to the benefits of the global economy – particularly access to secure and well paid employment – resort to the city's multiple historical centralities – paradigmatically the Historic Centre – to find spaces for their economic, cultural and political exchanges.

*René Coulomb Bosc, Co-ordinator, Masters Programme in Metropolitan Planning & Policy, Metropolitan Autonomous University, Mexico City*

#### ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE

When we think about densification we need to coordinate questions of density with questions of open space. Density in itself can be quite oppressive without a clear strategy for the development of open space. In New York we are fortunate to have, in places like Harlem, small – what we call pocket – parks which are no more than 30 or 40 feet wide, and which provide an opportunity for the public to be engaged with social capital and social cohesion and for a sense of community to be built. In the South Bronx we have the beautiful botanical gardens and public golf courses, things that are open and accessible to the public. There are also initiatives such as the reclamation of the Hudson River Waterfront. In Mexico City, you have Chapultepec Park which is an example of how vision and bold ideas can bring together the government, the private sectors and community residents to build something great. You also have examples such as FARO, which I think is a crown jewel, because it is about empowerment and asking questions about whether we can use good public space to lift up poor marginalised and excluded people and communities.

*Darren Walker, Director, Working Communities, Rockefeller Foundation*

We must differentiate between crime and the fear of crime which acts an excuse for not living together. Obviously crime exists – we know that, for example, the homicide rate here is extremely high and that there are well organised mafias and gangs. But the fear of crime in places like these – the Historic Centre for instance – often screams out loud: we do not want to live together; we do not want to share the same spaces; we do not want to go to the same events. I consider that security is a 'thick' public good and that if a megalopolis like this one wants to get along it must preserve this public good. Not with cameras, not with private guards (Mexico City is the third city in the world in terms of number of private guards and security agents) but with consent, trust in institutions including police and justice, and certainly more inclusion. Practical examples include actions like the multi-sectoral support given to Chapultepec Park and interventions such as the FARO in areas

that are disadvantaged, and have high crime rates, the very areas that inspire fear in the middle classes.

*Sophie Body-Gendrot, Professor of Political Science & American Studies and Director, Center for Urban Studies, Sorbonne, Paris*

From the beginning the goal of the FARO was to reconvert public space in a degraded part of the city. The experience was conceived along three strategic lines. Firstly, an architectural intervention. We recovered an abandoned public building. The multiple intrinsic metaphors of this wonderful structure – so reminiscent of a ship – inspired us. We began a journey, we sailed off to navigate into a new cultural project. Secondly, we decided to transform the FARO into a meeting point, a place where people can come together and discuss, enter and exit, an open space framed in the local context of neighbourhood and community. So the first people came on board and we began with arts workshops, creating a space where the *navegantes* could establish a dialogue about their problems and needs through art. The third and final step was to expand this dialogue to the rest of the city and the rest of the world. We started a gallery where several important artists have presented their work. We also began to organise open-air rock concerts. The street shifted from a battlefield and a place of insecurity to a place for celebration and a site for public parties.

*Benjamín González, Director, Fábrica de Artes y Oficinas de Oriente*

## HOUSING

To plan a sustainable future we need to think through the linkages between housing, open space, and transport infrastructure, otherwise you have people working in silos and isolated projects. Two examples from Mexico City: firstly the suburban train that is planned to run from the northern area of the Federal District into the State of Mexico is an opportunity to connect the city and the larger region. But is this being thought of as not just a transport policy but also a land use policy? Are we looking at where densification can occur all along the suburban train? At where open space can occur? Are master plans being done at each of the places where this is going to touch and relate to design and questions of architecture? Secondly the question of Bando Dos, the central city and high value areas: can we include affordable housing within the new developments? Can we take the high profits realised and reinvest them back into the urban core to encourage social immigration rather than polarisation?

*Andy Altman, Partner, LeftBank Development Company, New York*

In Mexico City, both the Federal District and the State of Mexico, we have a great tradition of self-help housing and also of popular mobilisation around housing issues. In the mid 1990s, of the 500 or so public protest acts that took place annually 70% related to housing. There was very intense social pressure because most policy programmes did not cater for the lower income groups. After the political decentralisation of the city and the election of Mr Cárdenas these expectations were reflected in housing policy in three areas. Firstly, the opening

up of consultation channels and the planning process; secondly, the democratisation of decision-making powers in the field of housing; and thirdly, the participation of multiple actors in the implementation and management of actual programmes.

*Elena Solís, Professor, Iberoamericana University and former General Director, Federal District's Housing Institute*

How can we build more housing and at the same time give the city a better shape? How can the amount of housing units be increased while expanding public space? How can we design housing so that new units improve quality of life in the city? Not just ours, but also for the next generations.... Not enough water, too much congestion? Our constraints are no excuse, really. We need to work together, architects with those of other disciplines. I believe that the real estate market holds an enormous potential if the city knows how to tap into it. The enormous resources invested in real estate can also be linked to the creation of open spaces and cultural facilities. Together, we can achieve forms of development that are sustainable.

*Javier Sánchez, Founding Partner, Higuera & Sánchez*

Housing improvement programmes in Mexico City are at the centre of three debates: discussions on how to overcome poverty; the debate on urban strategy; and issues about how to recognise people's self-help efforts in public policy. Since 1998, housing improvement programmes have become an essential part of the housing and social policies taken by the Federal District's government. As a result of these programmes, 100,000 units have been improved over nine years. This fact demonstrates that housing improvements are a viable option, within the current political and economic context, for families living in poor areas to improve their conditions. The programmes also fit the consolidation strategy that seeks the densification of the built-up area while restraining peripheral urban expansion.

*Arturo Mier y Terán, Co-ordinator of Architects for the Housing Improvement Programme, Colegio de Arquitectos de la Ciudad de México*

## TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY

My question regarding recent transport projects in Mexico City is: To what extent are these interventions in transport management able to become truly environmental solutions? What is needed for the transport sector to move beyond the discourse on sustainability and become a constitutive element of urban form? Three conditions are needed. Firstly, we need a vision for the future – explicit social, economic and cultural goals. Secondly, transport improvements must be consistent with other urban dynamics and interventions on the city. And thirdly, these improvements need to strengthen urban territories with a potential to become articulation elements. Do we meet these conditions in Mexico City? I believe that there are opportunities. However, we lack a vision for the future and the urban policy framework is limited in its capacity to link public transport to other urban interventions. A case in point is Metrobús, a financially and operatively

sustainable project that has also been able to reduce the emissions of pollutants. Oddly enough, this project has not been synergised as an architectural element regenerating the city or as a democratising element for the city.

*Clara Salazar Cruz, Professor, El Colegio de México*

The deep problem of transport in our metropolis is rooted in the predominance of low-capacity vehicles, both in individual and collective transport. Interestingly, in the latter we find 50,000 utility vehicles, mini-vans and mini-buses that constitute the majority of trips within the metropolitan area – some estimates reach between 55% and 60%. In addition to the 160,000 taxis in the agglomeration – Mexico City is one of the cities with the highest number of taxis per inhabitant – we must also count the close to half a million vehicles used for the transport of goods and messenger services. These units make an intensive use of road space and, given the fragmentary corporate organisation of the sector, they are also highly inefficient. Therefore, transport in Mexico City presents low productivity levels for passengers, for service providers and for the city in general. Individual transport accounts for only 19% of trips within the city while utilising 95% of the just over 4 million vehicles currently circulating in the metropolitan area.

*Bernardo Navarro Benitez, Professor, Metropolitan Autonomous University, Mexico City*

One of the problems with cars is what happens to people when they are driving. They get cut off from social networks; they feel threatened. Then danger and risk appear in the city. People begin to find excuses to use the car; public transport is too dirty, too risky. These dynamics also change the perceptions of experts and politicians. Diagrams for transport modes in Mexico City rarely show the share of pedestrians as a percentage of all trips. Therefore, to solve transport problems they keep building bigger and bigger structures; they destroy the city, turning it into sprawl: motorways, skyscrapers, shopping malls, and gated communities. Transport planning excels at producing projects, and I would like to ask: How much investment is dedicated to pedestrianisation? How much investment for cycling? How much for public transport? If we were to invest in terms of the real shares of these modes, we should be dedicating about 75% of the budget to pedestrians and cyclists.

*Hermann Knoflacher, Professor of Transport Planning & Traffic Engineering, Vienna University of Technology*

## **INFORMALITY**

There is a frequently occurring and erroneous belief that one-size-fits-all policies can be applied to the entire informal sector. Something similar happens when we talk about young people. ‘The youth’ do not exist, young people are the sum of very different groups which sometimes are contradictory. The same applies to the informal sector. For those keen on academic conceptualisations I propose three fundamental elements of research. Firstly, to search for the meaning of *intermediarismo* (that which is mediating) within each group and the articulation between groups. The second thing to look

for is leadership – what type of leadership and connections with political groupings are present in different parts of the city? Finally, the third element is the habits and customs, and the social practices that flow from them. These are the basic elements we need to look at in any informal group in the city, if we are to generate an analysis able to inform social policy.

*José Manuel Castillo Olea, Professor, Iberoamericana University, Mexico City*

The informal economy is not necessarily equivalent to the illegal or underground economy. But then why do these informal activities that could be included within regulatory frameworks fall outside it? Within my research I have identified two different dynamics. On the one hand, there is an old informal economy, particularly in the global south. But there is also a new informal economy, and my hypothesis is that the new informality is part of the most advanced forms of contemporary capitalism. It is present in New York, in Paris and Frankfurt, as it is in London. The old informal economy and its survival strategies, which we know so well in Latin America, may look similar to the new, but it is important that we make an analytical distinction between the two, even if the new informal economy also exists in the global south. It exists in Mexico City, in Mumbai and in Buenos Aires, in the intersections of temporalities between the high-powered professionals who inhabit the high tech buildings of corporate centres and the vendors who peddle their foods on the streets outside of these buildings.

*Saskia Sassen, Centennial Visiting Professor, LSE and Ralph Lewis Professor of Sociology, University of Chicago*

As an architect and an urbanist, I believe in recognising informality and not being afraid of it, so that it can really be part of our systems of knowledge and representation. But the institutions of architecture and urbanism have perennially forgotten these forms of spatial and economic organisation, and failed to think of the structures and infrastructures, and the special conditions that could support them. We must not look at informality only as chaotic, as the result of poverty, the unwanted and the unknown. But also recognise that below that façade of poverty there is in fact a very sophisticated political and social organisation which we need to learn from, open to the kind of unpredictability, ambiguity and creativity we have ignored. The Mexican diaspora for example continues to transform the very physical nature of the North American city – primarily in California – challenging the rigidity of its incriminatory zoning policies by engendering an interest in flexible, inclusive and temporal urbanism.

*Teddy Cruz, Professor, University of California San Diego*

## **METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE**

I am optimistic about the possibility of implementing policies for the Mexico Valley Metropolitan Zone as a whole because I believe we have at our command very valid precedents in the matter. Since the 1993 Human Settlements Law, the federal government has delegated to the Mexican states the responsibility of defining the extent of metropolitan zones. At

that point an important process of metropolitan coordination began, particularly in the Mexico Valley where some actions have already been taken (the joint control on air pollution for example) that will allow the future development of programmes with a holistic and long-term vision. We have been building the institutional framework so as to concretely define metropolitan problems, mechanisms and policy instruments: 11 joint metropolitan commissions address issues of environmental contamination, human settlements, civil protection, public security, transport and circulation. I think that the next step for us to take is to advance into more specific executive actions in the process of metropolitan coordination.

*Alejandro Encinas, Mayor, Federal District*

The State of Mexico and the Federal District are heading towards a new political relationship that favours the development of agreements. This incipient cooperation, I believe, will consolidate. Significant steps will need to be taken towards far-reaching reforms that will enable this relationship, currently dependent on the political will of both governments, to be required by law. The government of the State of Mexico has the best will to build a new legal framework that would improve our metropolitan zones, facilitating civic coexistence and a better quality of life for their residents.

*Enrique Peña Nieto, Governor State of Mexico*

My view is that the Executive Commission for Metropolitan Coordination is a very promising beginning towards regional governance in Mexico City. This body was created by the State of Mexico and the Federal District to enable them to coordinate and plan joint programmes and projects. It is presided over by the Governor of the State of Mexico and Mayor of the Federal District and works closely with the Federal Government. Given the fact that the metropolitan population is roughly equally divided between the Federal District and the State, having the Governor and the Mayor co-equal partners is a good form of organisation. It is also very important given the power of the national government over state and local matters. Historically and currently to have a mechanism that involves these three parties, implemented by their own governments, is the best way to address a range of metropolitan problems. No other city that I know of has such an institution capable of working on metropolitan issues.

*Gerald Frug, Louis D Brandeis Professor of Law, Harvard University*

*Edited by Miguel Kanai, Urban Age Project Researcher, LSE*

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