

## HISTORICAL, ETHIC AND URBANISTIC BACKGROUND

### AT MONTERREY, MEXICO

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#### Monterrey

The city of Monterrey, capital of the state of Nuevo León, is the third largest city in Mexico, 540 meters above sea level located in the north east of Mexico 900 km. from Mexico City, 150 km. from the border of Texas.

Monterrey is called the city of the mountains due to its location on the eastern Sierra Madre Mountains. The rest of the city- plateau lies as a huge rug- like collage of different structures interlaced in a way that appears like a haphazard game of Lego spread over 57, 241 HAS.

The metropolitan area of Monterrey consists of 9 independent municipalities: Monterrey, Guadalupe, San Nicolás, San Pedro Garza García, Santa Catarina, Escobedo, Apodaca, García y Juárez.

With the industrial revolution Monterrey started to grow into a formal town. The urban typology changed from the farm typology to a denser and mixed industrial structure. This provides a new skyline to Monterrey, and a new era of wealth, work and goods for the whole region.

Contemporary Monterrey is a multifunctional and multicultural society balanced between two societies: the industrial and the informational.

The city is still developing and is in many ways incomplete, it lacks a traditional urban structure such as the grand boulevards of Paris, the quality of an outdoor life like those of Mediterranean cities, leisure structure like those of the USA or the charm of the colonial cities in other parts of Mexico.

Currently, the urban discussion is about exploring the cityscape and using all parts in a flexible and schematic way, in order to exploit the advantages of new technology in the expanded city.

Space is becoming more flexible due to the use of the World Wide Web and technical changes in society, cities are

rapidly changing their way of living, the use of infrastructure and the way cultural life takes place.

The city has grown so fast that older and original parts have been left behind, as the outer suburban area grows; the central part of the city is becoming a dark hole of urban blight. Over the last 30 to 40 years the city has undergone a massive population growth from 1950 of 389, 629 to 3, 243, 466 inhabitants in the year 2000.

#### The Center of Monterrey

The center of the city is undergoing a brutal change of land use and population. At the beginning of 1990 there were still about 100.000 inhabitants in the metropolitan center but this number has fallen to less than 10. 000, due to the search for more automobile- oriented living facilities. In large part the living areas in the center have been left vacant and are now being used for other purposes small offices, stores restaurants and bars proliferate with little to no investment in regenerating the urban space or the building structure.

The problem shows clearly at night: as there is no natural surveillance from neighbors, the zone becomes prone to a brutal invasion of bars, prostitution and similarly related activities, changing the cultural heart of the center.

Just as a black hole in space sucks in vital energy and everything in its path like in Detroit the necessity for regeneration becomes absolutely imperative. Unless a strategic plan involving all sectors of the city start to work together defining the future relationship of the center with the rest of the metropolitan area and define and find specific uses for this zone. It will be optimal to promote higher density vertical construction and use the center to initiate a blend of uses with a strong emphasis on flexible living units based on the contemporary social structure of the population.

There are two major issues that the city needs to address in the future: redefine the use of the central parts of the city and a strong redesign of public space in order to provide a

more competitive urban development, likewise it will be important to design a solution to the following subjects:

1. Regenerate the central parts of the city through a strategy of development of detonation point.
2. Regenerate the interior fringe.
3. Exploit vacant lots and reconnect them to the urban context.
4. Motivate a program of construction of mixed- used buildings with a middle- high density.
5. Design public space with focus on the pedestrian needs.
6. Design a transportation system which will be strong enough to provide service to the entire city and social classes.

Despite the problems the city center of Monterrey (CCM) has urban qualities worth conservating as part of the future context of the city and the region. It is necessary to look for rehabilitation a strategy which allows developing a model of urban regeneration on a limited budget, creating a new urban dynamic which suits the city and the area.

This project is developed in two parts. The first part deals with the analysis of the current situation, the problems and opportunities. The second part is a design of a series of strategies projecting an ongoing rehabilitation of the center.

The project area is situated between Churubusco Avenue, Constitución Avenue, Colón Avenue, Venustiano Carranza Street.

### **Conservation and Preservation Strategies**

The central part of the city of Monterrey lodge districts with historical and cultural identity and places with character, which are parts of the image of the city. Yet, these qualities have not always been appreciated. Up to 1960 these central areas were considered out of date and candidates to demolition. During the 70's values changed and the citizens began to protect and to preserve the central places of the cities and the historical areas were reevaluated.

To first attempt of protection of zones of historical interest was called Historical Preservation; attempting to protect individual buildings, ecclesiastical buildings or those bound to historical moment.

Later preoccupation was focused on preventing unsuitable development near historical areas and started a second attempt of protection, called Historical Conservation. This strategy was not only focused on protection of individual buildings but took into account building- groups, image or character of places and spaces between buildings. The result

of this strategy became the conservation of a greater amount of buildings with minor historical value and the conservation passed from being an architectural matter to be part of the urban planning and economy of the cities.

Due to the change of life- styles and to the growth of Monterrey, other elements were united to conservation strategy: present and future ground uses, change of transport systems socioeconomic changes and population increase. The result of these changes turned into the elaboration of a third strategy growth management; a strategy focused on generating investments and economic development to finance the maintenance of historical sector. In these cases the rehabilitation of historical areas becomes a challenge balancing economic interests with the respect for the identity of the place.

### **Brief history of the city of Monterrey**

In the times of the colony Monterrey belonged to 'Nuevo Reino de León', territory that had a great distance in respect to the main Spanish colonial centers, which were located to the center and the west on the Viceroyalty of the New Spain. On the site that is now occupied by the city, two previous settling were made prior to its definitive foundation. The first site was called Valle de Santa Lucía and was founded in 1577 by Alberto del Canto a Portuguese priest, around the Santa Lucía Springs, an important source of water. The second was called San Luis Rey de Francia (Saint Louise King of France) and was founded in 1582 by Luis Carvajal y de la Cueva, first colonizer of the Nuevo Reino de León. But the definitive foundation occurred in September 20, 1596 by Don Diego de Montemayor, who put the name Ciudad Metropolitana de Nuestra Señora de Monterrey (Metropolitan city of our Lady of Monterrey) in honor to Don Gaspar de Zúñiga y Acevedo, count of Monterrey in Galice, Spain, that in that moment was Viceroy of the New Spain.

The city of Monterrey suffered in its first times of storms, flooding that wrecked their constructions due to the rising of rivers and streams that crossed the city, that forced the population to move towards the higher locations to the south, where the Cathedral, the first Municipal Palace, the Obispado, Pedro del Barrio's house (what is now the house of the peasant), and other important constructions, therefore consolidating the settlement of this area by the end of the eighteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, Monterrey started to become an important city in Mexico as consequence to the events occurring at national level like the Independence, the anarchy, the war with the United States, The Reform War, the French Intervention, events that provoked the Mexican

population to search for places that were not too immersed in the continuous wars and rebellions. Once Independent Mexico was initiated and the Constituted Congress was installed, the State of Nuevo Leon was created as part of the Mexican federation and the first constitution was elaborated (1824 and 1825). A little later, the change of border finalizing the war with the United States brought economic profits by maintaining a commercial relationship with Texas in the United States, which favored the development of Monterrey as an industrial city. The concentration of capital and the industrial outbreak made of the city the second metropolis of importance in the national context. In the urban and architectonic aspects, during the period of 1850-1930, the city began to slowly grow parting from the old urban plaza of arms, following a reticular, somewhat irregular colonial path inherited of the colony and austere architecture with some important European influenced constructions during the Porfirian years. At the end of the 1930's, the city presented a dizzy unplanned urban expansion, with a somewhat disordered growth, determined by the location of great industries over the axes of railroads and highways.

### **Traditional Architecture**

Traditionally Monterrey- architecture has had a great North American influence due to its geographic location near the border of the United States of America. The oldest buildings are part of an architecture simple and sober called Architecture of the Northeast. New buildings, covered of crystal, remind of Texan cities like Houston and Dallas.

Among constructions of historical value and architectonic, located in the sector are among others:

Century XIX

Old Town Hall, Old Railway station el Golfo

Principles of Century XX

The Palace of the State Government, the Juárez Square, building Mercantile Bank of Monterrey, the Ancira Hotel

Modernismo

Building National 1935, Hotel Monterrey 1936, the Purisima Church 1946, Hospital No. 21 of IMSS 1956

### **Previous Attempts for Revitalization of the Center**

This is not the first attempt to design a project for revitalization the CCM, there has been made several attempts for revitalization of the center over the past 30

years trying to turn around the degeneration of the CMM. Even though these projects might not have been fully completed, is important to include them as part of the contemporary revitalization plan in order to assure the best use of technical and economical resources.

**Macroplaza:** In the beginning of the 80's, a project of urban regeneration in the center drew a square connecting the Municipal Palace with the Federal Palace, called the Macroplaza, probably the largest plaza in Latin-America especially interesting due to the car-related design.

**Alameda Park:** This Park was originally planned to be the double size. Nowadays it is an important leisure space for the population.

**The Old District:** This sector holds the first conservation project turning a former residential zone into an area filled with new activities like restaurants, bars, galleries of art, offices, among others.

**Fundidora Park:** A project for the revitalization of an obsolete industrial zone by means of the construction of a convention center (Cintermex), hotels, a cineteca, a park for concerts and sport events.

**Santa Lucia:** This project contemplates the opening of the point of the foundation of the city by the Santa Lucia River, with the construction of commercial and residential buildings along the stream.

**Meson Market:** In this zone, including several city- blocs, there has been made different approaches in order to turn this sector into a more formal grocery- market.

### **Neighborhoods**

El Metropolitan Center can be divided in 7 different neighborhoods, according to predominating use.

1.- Alameda and Mediterraneo District: this area has managed to conserve its residential character with a light mixture of offices and small factories.

2.- Main District: In this area the ground use is mixed commercial, services governmental, tourist and cultural with very few living areas left. This is in some sense the very center of the city and includes the Macro Plaza.

3.- Purisima District: little by little this area has been transformed into an educational zone lodging a large amount of educative Institutions of all levels from basic education to universities.

4.- Old District: thanks to a conservation project, the Old District, has undergone a strong revitalization process

introducing new uses such as bars, restaurants, offices and galleries of art.

5.- Quintanilla, Alvaro Obregón and part of Alameda Districts: This area is perhaps most damaged when talking about transformation of ground uses; it has been saturated by small factories, bars and offices with little residential use.

6.- Commercial Strip Cuahutémoc-Juárez: The commercial strip Cuahutémoc has been extended until the Juárez street forming a wider commercial area which connects Columbus Avenue with the center.

7.- Obrera District: This neighborhood near the Fundidora park and Cintermex, was greatly influenced by the closing of the Fundidora Melting Company. Its predominant use is residential although great warehouses in certain places can be seen. In this area we can see multi- familiar departments with good result.

### **Infrastructure**

One of the attractive matters in the CCM is that it has a complete basic infrastructure so densification would in many ways be little complicated. The population of young people in the center has diminished and the schools of basic education have lost pupils and the buildings are being used to develop other activities. On the other hand old houses of zones like the Purisima District are being used to lodge universities and technical schools. The metropolitan center is a regional medical center important not only the city of Monterrey but to the Northeast part of Mexico. While talking about parks and plazas the most important green areas of Center Metropolitan are Macroplaza and the Alameda park; there are also some nice plazas which has an attractive size perfect for neighborhood meeting- point. Altogether the study area counts on 23.06 hectares green area.

### **Roads and Transport**

Due to the relation between the street system and the topographic nature of the city the center will continue being central part of the city. The Metro system initiated its operations in 1991 with the Line 1 of the elevated type, the Expo - Guadalupe to San Bernabé, with a length of 17.5 kilometers and Line 2, of the General Anaya Station to the Station Zaragoza in Macroplaza, of the underground type with 6.7 km. The huge number of busses crossing the center is one of the important problems due to pollution and noise problems.

### **The Project: Development Tendencies and a short Description of the future Zoning proposal**

1.- Alameda District: This zone has maintained its characteristic as a residential area, reason why it should stay like a predominant family- housing area. At the same time, it is important to revitalize the lots surrounding to the park of La Alameda perhaps retaking the use of cinemas and theaters.

2.- Central District: this area continues being a commercial and tourist zone. The Macroplaza has a great potential, maybe no longer as a financial center like someday planning but as cultural and tourist gathering place.

3.- Purisima District: the area has all potential to become district of knowledge, offering support to schools and universities situated in the area.

4.- Old District: this zone has a great potential to be consolidated as the main recreation and entertainment area for the young people, especially if the development is combined with day-like activities like student- housing or cultural activities such as artist studios, art- galleries, etc. The development of Santa Lucia will have a positive influence this neighborhood.

5.- Quintanilla and Barrio Alvaro Obregón Districts: After most of it's inhabitants left for the suburbs, this area has been invaded of factories, small offices and bars which is destroying and contaminating this part of the city. It is a good place to locate apartment buildings mixed with offices and shops. The three plazas located in this neighborhood are noble project detonators.

6.- Obrera District: this area is another good place to locate mixed- use buildings due to the location near Fundidora Park and to the Center the International of Businesses (Cintermex).

7.- Commercial Strip Cuahutemoc-Juárez: the area continues being a commercial zone combined with a program of designing and construction of small green areas or introducing pleasant open spaces.

### **Detonation Points**

The design-methodology employed for this revitalization project is through the development of detonation points. As a result of analysis of the urban environment seven strategically important spots were identified, which in combination with the districts and existing projects could to work like detonators for development and revitalization of the complete zone.

Chorro Plaza: Around the plaza there are building- lots which are interesting from a developer's point of view; this place has potential as part of a revitalization of the neighborhood.

Los Enamorados Plaza: As the Chorro Plaza, the surroundings of the plaza has a great potential to develop into an attractive mixed residential area.

The block delimited by streets Heroes of the 47, Arramberri, Félix U. Gómez Avenue and Washington: this block is the intersection of the Modesto Arreola street and the Santa Lucia development and should therefore be regenerated into a dominant landmark.

Mirador District: This neighborhood is a beautiful area where the architecture is just right for a development of galleries and restaurants.

The factory La Malinche: These buildings are leftover from a proud tradition of furniture production, at this moment the abandoned buildings could be turned into an interesting rehabilitation project.

The intersection of Macroplaza and Modesto Arreola Street: This point is an ideal place to develop an urban icon.

### **Urban Regulations**

A pleasant urban image is not obtained by chance, it is necessary to create urban regulations which allow a high quality development to take place:

Densification: In order to obtain a better quality of urban environment is necessary to densify the area and to introduce mixed housing and business to the center.

Mixed- use Buildings: In order to provide better security in the neighborhoods it is necessary that people use the cityscape 24 hours a day. It is important to allow mixed ground use with a high percentage on living facilities but likewise it is important to create working facilities and leisure zones.

Open Spaces: In order to balance and to compensate the densification is necessary to create more opened spaces of high quality.

Parking: A problem that has to be solved is the lack of parking- spaces in order to facilitate that the community has access to commerce and services within the sector.

Sidewalks: The sidewalks of many streets are so narrow that it is almost impossible to walk by them, it is necessary to make a study of how to widen streets and make them more pedestrian friendly. A possible solution would be to eliminate vehicular track to extend and implement a tree-planting program the sidewalks.

Tree- Planting Program: In order to promote more life to streets and plazas the city will have design a three planting program in order to create shaded urban spaces.

Street life: In order to deal properly with this program it is important to create a proper hierarchy of public transportation and streets. It is necessary to provide streets with special design for some types of traffic; streets designed for pedestrian use and street spaces for public transport. It is important to promote designs helping this public space to be easy to read, use and understand. Implementing tree planting programs, organizing the sidewalk, parking and other uses are strategies that will be important parts of creating a new and more interesting urban image of the center of the city of Monterrey.

### **Ethical implications of Urban Interventions**

The architecture and the city are an important part of the language that makes the cultural memory of the town. The analysis of the professionals: urbanists, architects, sociologists, economists, etc. that plan the city must include a preoccupation towards the ethical problems posed on the ecological dilemmas, of the social relationships and the preservation of the cultural patrimony of a city.

David Harvey (1989) in *The Creative Destruction* assumes that for the creation of a new world, the destruction of what preceded it was to be necessarily destroyed, giving as result a new reconstruction of a different unit, theory that sustains the destruction of a city center and the construction of a new one, provoking in some cases the depredation of the urban patrimony as a price of progress. This has a strong ethical implication, for any intervention in the city's ambit has an impact in the human activities.

It has been said that the great cities are sick<sup>1</sup> as centers of human activities, and show their sickness in the complexity of the problem with the depopulation of the cities, implying the study of the consequences in the way of the common living of the habitants, their way of communication, socialization, territorial necessities, the fight for the conservation of their individuality versus the homogenizing necessity of the governments.

The urban ethic is necessary for the coexistence of diversity in the city, an interdependent ethic that regulates

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<sup>1</sup> Term used by Dr. José Ignacio López Soria

<http://urbanistas.tripod.com> about the anthology of philosophical texts on the city, *Pensewr la ville* (Ansay, Pierre et Schoonbrodt, René, 1989 Bruxelles, ARAU p 15-109)

the relations between the people in the common life, having in account the social relation, cultural and the belonging of each of the individual necessities.

## **Conclusiones**

The Fact that this Project has not been constructed is symptomatic to what is happening in many cities: the civic power of the cities has been diminished due to the globalization strategies applied as urban management programs. Many cities take in account the interest of the investor more than the interests of the majority of the urban population.

For many cities worldwide this type of project will be vital in the near future because it includes all actors of the city. In order to prevent insecurity and urban degeneration there has to be a culture of participation of all groups.

We all have to be committed to constant evolution and regeneration of the city, if not especially in counties with a weak democratic and legal systems the image and planning of the cityscape will undergo an urban development little attractive for its inhabitants.

### Abstract

### References

**ABSTRACT:** This paper is dealing with the regeneration of the urban centers as an integrated subject between tree disciplines history, ethics and urbanism. We will discuss the urban development and its consequences in the center of Monterrey. The paper is part of a ongoing discussion in the city of how to deal with the old part of the city in a city which grows with more than 5% per year.

The city of Monterrey in the state of Nuevo León, is the third largest city in Mexico, 540 meters above sea level located in the north east of Mexico 900 km. from Mexico City, 150 km. from the border of Texas.

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