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Alejandro Ochoa-Vega
Doctor en Historia del Arte, Profesor Investigador, titular C. Departamento de Métodos y Sistemas División de Ciencias y Artes para el Diseño, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco
Ciudad de México, México
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9267-8809
alejandro8avega@yahoo.com.mx

TWO MEXICAN METROPOLITAN-SCALE PROJECTS AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY - PLAZA TAPATÍA IN GUADALAJARA AND MACRO PLAZA IN MONTERREY

DOS PROYECTOS DE ESCALA METROPOLITANA DE FIN DE SIGLO XX EN MÉXICO: LA PLAZA TAPATÍA EN GUADALAJARA Y LA MACRO PLAZA EN MONTERREY

DOIS PROJETOS À ESCALA METROPOLITANA DO FINAL DO SÉCULO XX NO MÉXICO: A PLAZA TAPATÍA EM GUADALAJARA E A MACRO PLAZA EM MONTERREY

Figura 0. Plaza Tapatia, with the rear façade of Degollado Theater in the background. Source: Photograph by Alejandro Ochoa Vega (2008).

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RESUMEN

El texto siguiente analiza las experiencias de dos proyectos de gran impacto urbano de la década de los 80 del siglo XX en dos ciudades mexicanas, Guadalajara y Monterrey. En ambos casos se refieren los antecedentes en cuanto a la planeación urbana y los distintos proyectos para regenerar los centros históricos de dichas ciudades. También se exponen las consideraciones de las autoridades locales respecto a la imagen desgastada y deteriorada de los cascos antiguos, a la hora de plantear intervenciones a gran escala que implicaron la demolición de edificios y espacios de origen colonial y del siglo XIX. Los resultados son contradictorios: se ganó un gran espacio público, pero a la vez se sufrió la pérdida de la huella de las trazas originales de las ciudades y no pocos edificios de valor patrimonial. Ambos proyectos fueron resultado de decisiones políticas autoritarias, sin ninguna consulta a los habitantes de Guadalajara y Monterrey, simplemente mediante decreto de sus gobernantes.

Palabras clave: planeación urbana, arquitectura, centros históricos, modernidad.

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the experiences of two projects which had a major urban impact in the 1980s on two Mexican cities, Guadalajara and Monterrey. In both cases, the background behind urban planning and the different projects to regenerate the historic city centers are discussed. The considerations of the local authorities regarding the tired and deteriorated image of the old downtown area are also presented, outlining the large-scale interventions that involved the demolition of colonial and 19th-century buildings and spaces. The results are contradictory: on one hand, a large public space was gained, but at the same time, the original city layout and many heritage buildings were lost. Both projects were the result of authoritarian political decisions, by governor decrees, without any consultation with the inhabitants of Guadalajara and Monterrey.

Keywords: Urban planning, Architecture, historic centers, Modernity.

RESUMO

O texto analisa as experiências de dois projetos de grande impacto urbano nos anos de 1980 em duas cidades mexicanas, Guadalajara e Monterrey. Em ambos os casos, referem-se aos antecedentes do planeamento urbano e aos diferentes projetos de regeneração dos centros históricos destas cidades. Mostra também as considerações das autoridades locais com relação à imagem desgastada e deteriorada dos cascos antigos, que propuseram intervenções em grande escala que envolveram a demolição de edifícios e espaços de origem colonial e do século XIX. Os resultados são contraditórios: por um lado, ganhou-se um grande espaço público, mas ao mesmo tempo, perdeu-se a disposição original das cidades e muitos edifícios de valor patrimonial. Ambos os projetos são o resultado de decisões políticas autoritárias sem qualquer consulta com os habitantes de Guadalajara e Monterrey, simplesmente por meio de decretos de seus governantes.

Palavras-chave: planejamento urbano, arquitetura, centros históricos, modernidade.

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INTRODUCTION

Usually, public spaces, such as squares, parks, or gardens, are linked to a political decision of a city's authorities, in other words, a decree. With this in mind, this article looks to draw attention to how, due to decisions of politicians and authorities, cities and their urban space, often see their physiognomy affected and altered. Historically, the city has been the key space for a ruling class to reflect its power and influence over a territory. Its government, commercial, and religious buildings stand out in the landscape and are linked by public streets and squares. Thus, it is understood that public space is a cultural product, linked to political, economic, and ideological power, and that, at a given time, it is a possibility for collective benefit and enjoyment. Cities and towns have grown around an open space or square, which over time has become the place of collective meeting par excellence, home to official ceremonies, political protests, religious rituals, or centers for trade.

In the Western world, from the industrial revolution and the emergence of political and economic liberalism, urban spaces have become more democratic[1] and, given the growth of the population and the development of cities, the central or foundational squares have lost prominence as sub-centers were created in the peripheries (Zambrano, 2003). This was the case in Mexico, with the arrival of the twentieth century, especially the second half, where urban sprawl caused serious imbalances that have lost, among other things, public space, due to land speculation, a lack of political decision, and economic shortages. Consequently, in the twenty-first century, cities such as Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey, the largest in the country, have become complex metropolises, where their historical centers face conservation issues related to their heritage architecture and roots, insecurity, abandonment by the fixed population, and tensions between established and itinerant trade, to mention the most important issues. In turn, all told, and with the weight of urban planning since the 1930s, these three cities have grown disjointedly, with most of the population excluded from basic urban services.

For this article, the analysis focuses on Guadalajara and Monterrey, which in the 1980s developed projects that had a great impact on their urban centers, Plaza Tapatía (Tapatía Square), and Macro Plaza, respectively. Projects that involved the demolition of several blocks and altering the original layout to "regenerate" tired unsafe sectors and create, in their stead, new squares and buildings with green areas, gardens, road systems, and underground parking lots. With different nuances, both caused great controversy at the time. However, they were completed according to plan, and forty years after their inauguration, they are part of the contemporary imaginary of both cities. An evaluation of both projects, through this work, from an urban-architectural reading, aims to answer whether, all told and with the political motivations that the instigators had, Guadalajara and Monterrey gained new public spaces for their inhabitants in their old historical centers.

1 Until the end of the eighteenth century, squares were almost exclusively used for trade and the respective guilds, while gardens were for royalty (Zambrano, 2003, pp. 36-37).

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METHODOLOGY

Projects such as Plaza Tapatia in Guadalajara and Macroplaza in Monterrey are tangible references to plans designed from an initial interest to create modern public spaces in the existing urban centers of both cities. Based on the historical analysis of both projects, this article summarizes the planned scopes and the setting their construction took place within.

The result of this type of intervention depends largely on the initial master plan and its relationship with the city setting. This architectural relationship makes each project a particular case study about which common conjectures can be made when compared with similar cases. Here, qualitative research with multiple case studies**2** is presented, proposing an exploratory analysis (Creswell, 2007.) As these are cases built under common conditions, the final reflections, by way of architectural criticism, take up the most salient points about the repercussions of these projects on an urban scale.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The transition between the six-year periods of José López Portillo and Miguel de la Madrid, namely, from 1977 to 1984, the period when the two mega projects were developed, involves a series of important political and economic changes to highlight. López Portillo brings to an end, the period of the so-called "Mexican miracle", which started in the forties with the stabilizing development model, based on import substitution, that had proposed raising import tariffs to benefit domestic production and position exports of national products as the basis of the industrialized economy. However, the Student Movement of '68 and the irresponsible populism of the Luis Echeverría regime greatly affected the political and economic stability of the country. The "Lópezportillista" six-year term would try, from the oil boom, to "manage the abundance" and invest in multiple infrastructure works, among other items of the national economy. However,

> The ambitious investment state plan during the López Portillo government brought wastefulness and inflation with it that devoured the currency and its finances. Private banking turned its search for safe returns to speculation and the aggressive dollarization of its operations. The disjointed domestic industry grew sharply, but at the cost of an unsustainable flow of imports and an increasingly weak foreign position. (Aguilar & Meyer, 2008, p. 46)

The benefits of the oil boom came to an end in mid-1981, when oil prices fell dramatically, but it was not until February the following year when, faced with the huge deficit in the balance of payments, foreign exchange speculation, the costs of huge external debt, and an oil market that was not rebounding, the government of Mexico was forced, belatedly, to devalue its currency by 70% (Aguilar & Meyer, 2008, pp. 252- 253). To conclude the debacle of the six-year term, the President unilaterally announced in his last government report, the nationalization of banking,

2 Creswell (2007), defines that a case study is an exploration of a system linked to one or multiple cases over time, through the collection of detailed, in-depth data, which involves multiple sources of information (e.g., 46).

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with the apparent idea of stopping "the looting of the country." A traumatic decision of supposed nationalism that took years to overcome. Aguilar and Meyer (2008) describe this panorama:

> The outlook of the new government (that of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado) was one of recession, financial limitations, closure of the international monetary and commercial markets, unemployment with wage devaluation, a fall in public spending, and an economic decline, which for 1983 was already expected to be between zero and minus five percent ... The Mexico that the new government imagined was no longer a centralized country but decentralized, not populist and corporate but liberal and democratic, not patrimonial and corrupt but morally renewed; not inefficient and disjointed but rational and planned nationally. And not the big, lax, subsidizing, feudalized state that had administered the historic pact of the 1910-1917 revolution up to that time, but a small, streamlined state, clearly limited in its interventionist powers, economically realistic, not deficit-based and administratively modern. (pp. 259- 261)

It would be with Miguel de la Madrid that Mexican neoliberalism began, and the accelerated privatization processes of many state-owned enterprises. The economy was stabilized, despite some ups and downs, through social pacts and financial agreements with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. However, neither the intended moral renewal that would limit corruption nor political democratization would be achieved in those six years, much less a reduction of poverty. On the contrary, this would grow more than ever.

PLAZA TAPATÍA, GUADALAJARA, JALISCO

Background

Guadalajara has been a city of dramatic changes in its urban physiognomy, from the mid-twentieth century when the 16 de Septiembre (north-south) and Juárez (east-west) avenues were widened to cross the historic center**3**, to the 1970s, when, with the opening of Federalismo Avenue, the eastern section was "shaved off". In 1949, Ignacio Díaz Morales (Guadalajara, 1905-1992) began work on a project that would mark the Jalisco capital, the Cruz de Plazas, which sought to leave four large open spaces around the Cathedral and involved the demolition of a couple of blocks to the east (Kasis, 2004, pp. 54-63). Plaza de la Liberación would emerge in this space. The first part would be inaugurated in 1953 and, suddenly, the Degollado Theater could be appreciated with an unprecedented perspective. Now, far from just wanting to "beautify" the city, what Díaz Morales always sought in his urban projects was for people to have more places to walk, sit, and see the fountains, walking protected by vegetation, namely, enjoyment of the public space for a much wider audience.

In 1940, Díaz Morales imagined a promenade that would unite the two "Guadalajaras", the one in the east with the one in the west, the poor with the rich, the "ugly " with the "pretty ". This is how his Paseo del Hospicio came about, which ran from behind Degollado Theater to

3 See Díaz-Berrio (1970) who refers to the need to revitalize the area around Cabañas Hospice: "With this point, we must clarify that "planning", "regeneration", or "revaluation" do not imply the destruction of the existing urban fabric [...] nor "widening", nor gardens, nor the search for "monumental perspectives" - erroneous, expensive, and useless in most cases ..., a situation that finally happened with the Plaza Tapatía project" (p. 32).

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Cabañas Hospice, close to Libertad Market (popularly known as San Juan de Dios) and the old "El Progreso"**4** bullring. At the time, the project was mothballed and resurfaced in the 1970s when the Government of Jalisco decided to implement it. It should be noted that, although the architect was consulted and took part in the first commission of the project, he would withdraw when he saw that there were other interests. Its romantic and humanistic spirit was surpassed by commercial goals and the search for urban profitability (Kasis, 2004, pp. 59-60).

Historical conditions and features of the project

Guadalajara, for many years, maintained a certain prestige of being a planned city that grew without major surprises. Although this idea can be viewed as more a myth than reality, historical conditions explain some of the urban layout, from the creation in 1943 of the Municipal Collaboration Council (CCM), the municipal regulation of subdivisions in 1944, and the planning commission in 1947. Then, in the six-year period of Jesús González Gallo (1947-1953), the "crucifixion" works of the city center would be carried out, and Guadalajara would begin to be linked as a metropolitan area with the surrounding municipalities: Zapopan, Tlaquepaque, Tonalá, Tlajomulco, and Chápala (Vázquez, 1989). The CCM disappeared in 1959, becoming the General Planning and Urbanization Board of the State of Jalisco (JGPUEJ), and, finally, it became a Department in 1977. Up until this date, this body had been relatively effective by having representation, both of public sector technicians, and the chambers of commerce, the industry of transformation, urban property, construction, bankers, colleges of engineers and architects, and the main workers' organizations (Vázquez, 1989). However, as a Department, it ended up as just another office for state government, without the weight given to it by social representations, and this is how it finally faced the great project of the Metropolitan Center, later renamed Plaza Tapatia (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

In 1961, the JGPUEJS outlined the Regulatory Plan for the city of Guadalajara, which would serve as the basis for many other plans in the state of Jalisco (Vázquez, 1989). By the seventies, there were already legal frameworks that would make the historic center of Guadalajara's macro intervention project possible: the *Human Settlements Law of the State of Jalisco*, the one related to the *National Urban Development Plan,* and the *State Urban Development, Regional Urban* and *Partial Urbanization and Building Control* plans. More specifically, in the DGPUEJS, with the architect Juan Gil Elizondo at the lead, the *Partial Urbanization and Regeneration Plan of the Guadalajara Metropolitan Center.* As guidelines or objectives, what the architect himself, Head of the Planning and Urbanization Department of the State of Jalisco, pointed out, were considered. To prevent this metropolitan area from "collapsing" in the short term and also to promote redensification, a multifaceted and integrated program was created with an infrastructure, urban functions, and renovation of roads and collective transportation for the city center, seeking to turn Tapatios' eyes toward this place (Elizondo, 1979). This program was one of the few that was attempted in the country. It included an area of 70,000 square meters, between Cabañas Hospice and Degollado Theater, with the old part, the heart

4 Built in 1854, it ended up being demolished for the construction of Tapatía Square (Hernández Larrañaga, 2001). It is worth adding that, its conservation was discarded from Díaz Morales' proposal on.

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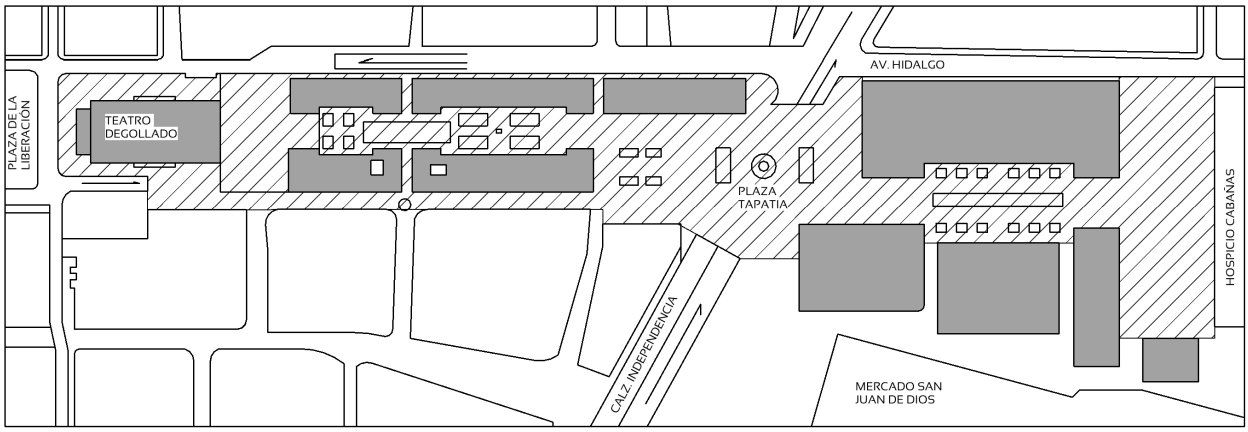

Figure 1. Plaza Tapatía: layout. Source: Drawing by Adler Valeriano (2022).

Figure 2. Plaza Tapatia. Source: Photograph by Alejandro Ochoa Vega (2008).

of the city, occupied by second and third-category commercial buildings and tenements. Nine blocks were demolished in which, it should be clarified, there were no buildings of heritage value (Elizondo, 1979). These, located in the area, were not only preserved but enhanced.

Regarding the program, the following was defined:

- Construction of 1,000 parking spaces distributed over 30,000 square meters.
- Habilitation of 40,000 square meters of public spaces, destined to plant more than 1,500 trees, build 50 water features (fountains), and receive about 4,000 people seated, simultaneously.
- Construction of private buildings to house shops, offices, administrative

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services, hotels, restaurants, tourist services, entertainment and recreation halls, and apartments, excluding single-family ones (there are more than 70 private projects).

- Road and collective transport program.

The main difference with the project of the architect, Ignacio Díaz Morales, was that outside the square there was no construction of any building, so the space and perspective were more open. However, for the project that ultimately came to fruition, a series of buildings were built that formed the square, and to make its delimitation and morphology homogeneous, heights, typologies, and materials were established beforehand. José Pliego, the project's coordinating architect, studied other cases of squares at an international level and concluded that it was necessary to make a scale design of the historic center of Guadalajara. For this reason, among other aspects, the use of double-height entrances with semicircular arches along all the buildings around the new urban space, windows in vertical proportion to recover the traditional ones of the center's old buildings, and stone as cladding, also associated with the historical sector, was defined. The new central urban space was defined with these elements, as well as with the use of benches, fountains, monuments (the coat of arms of Guadalajara on Morelos Street), and sculptures (Pliego, 2006).

González Romero (1987), talking about the construction of the Plaza Tapatia, expresses:

> On concluding the site's transformation, with a length of 600 meters, the area had 70 buildings, some unfinished, equivalent to 150,000 square meters of construction on a surface area of 30,000 square meters for commercial use - which increased its value fivefold in a short time-; another 40,000 square meters had been conditioned as open spaces. Several sets of sculptures were installed to "enrich" the ensemble, spread over two squares and three walkways. The first, 3m high and 21 m long on the back wall of Degollado Theater, alluding to the foundation of Guadalajara; the second was formed by a 6 m high bronze tree and two 2.30 m rampant lions representing the elements of the city's coat of arms; the third formed by five bronze pieces, one 22 m high and weighing 15 tons, representing eternal fire, "The immolation of Quetzalcoatl", in the middle of a fountain on the central square that covers Independencia sidewalk which has a surface area of 5,600 square meters, laid out on two 20 m wide clearings. The placement of the sculpture was decided at the last minute on the recommendation of a high-ranking official linked to President López Portillo, and its placement had to be carefully handled by the director of the DPUEJS, requiring a special installation with a cost of several million pesos and completed a few hours before its inauguration. On the southwest side of Independencia, false arches of more than 50 m in length and approximately 10 in height were installed on two levels, as a scenographic part of the ensemble. On this side, 35 fountains, an antique clock, and a few dozen more minor sculptures, benches, trees, and varied qualities of flooring were installed.

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> The work was complemented by the Integrated Road Project which included the construction of a 768 m-long vehicular tunnel, on Hidalgo Street. A two-level parking lot was built under Liberation Square, and another two were built under Plaza Tapatia, with a combined capacity for more than 1,500 vehicles. (pp. 45-46)

Plaza Tapatia (Figure 5) was inaugurated on February 5, 1982.

MACROPLAZA, MONTERREY, NUEVO LEÓN

Background

Although Monterrey was founded like Guadalajara in the sixteenth century and its colonial, republican, and Porfirian heritage is not negligible, it does not have traditions that prevent it from evolving into the modern city that it is today. Its industrial vocation, which began at the end of the nineteenth century, gave it an image and spirit of constant change, which has motivated profound physical transformations in the last 100 years. From 1914, when the ex-convent of San Francisco was demolished to widen Zaragoza Street to the Santa Catarina River, until 1981, when 40 blocks of the center of Monterrey were erased to make The Gran Plaza, later known as Macroplaza (Figure 3 and Figure 4), the Regiomontanus capital has not ceased in its increasing urban development (Martínez, 1999).

Features of the project

By 1980, the image of Monterrey seemed to not meet the expectations of being the second city in the country in terms of economic development and the third in population. Even the governor of that time, Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, called it "squalid, dirty, and ugly" because 80% of the buildings in the downtown area were one-story and 16.5%, were vacant lots. During those years, it was established in the National Urban Development Plan (1978) that the Monterrey metropolitan area was considered as one of planning and consolidation and that, by presidential decree of December 11, 1978, it was defined as the center of the northeast region in the Regional Urban Services Integration Program.

Taking into account the main objectives set out in the aforementioned plan, based on the Urban Development Law of the state of Nuevo León, the State Urban Development Plan of Nuevo León, and the Municipal Plan of Monterrey (1980) were developed. It was mentioned there that the city center was deteriorating, threatening commercial development and tourist services. Hence, it was proposed to start a regeneration program, starting with the area between the State Government Palace and the Municipal Palace.

Thus, the state government decided to rehabilitate the center, creating the Urban Development Promoter (Prourbe) led by the engineer Ángela Alessio Robles, an advisor to the governor on urban issues, and established the following objectives of the program:

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Figure 3. Macroplaza. The image on the cover of the official opening brochure (1984), with the Municipal Palace in the foreground. Source: : *Una nueva cara de Monterrey, LA GRAN PLAZA* (official brochure w/d).

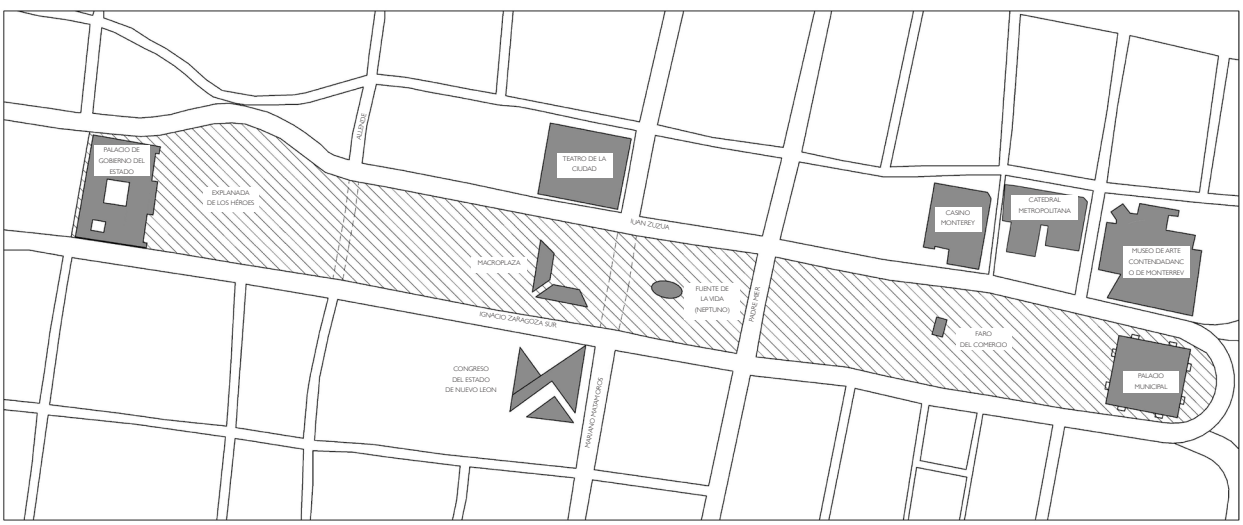

Figure 4. Macroplaza, layout. Source: Drawing by Adler Valeriano (2022).

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- Establishing green areas in the heart of the metropolis.
- Creating areas of coexistence for the population.
- Giving preference to the pedestrian.
- Imprinting fluidity for circulation in the first block.
- Meeting the demand for parking lots.
- Improving city structure and installing new urban furniture.
- Making the project the trigger for the transformation and modernization of Monterrey.
- Implementing a totally self-financing project. (Portada, p.20)

Such an undertaking involved intervening a 40-hectare area in the heart of the city, creating a monumental north-south road, with a large open space between the Government and Municipal Palaces, two rows of blocks parallel to this road, where buildings such as the Cathedral, the Monterrey Casino, or the Acero Condominium were already located, and where little by little other facilities, such as libraries, archives, museums, and administrative buildings, among others, would be built, almost all on a monumental scale. Far from wanting to weigh some reference elements of the historical architecture of the city, the architect Oscar Bulnes, the main coordinator of the Macroplaza project, rather asserts that its sources came from European and, mainly, American examples, such as the city of Houston, where rupture intervention lines were marked, in terms of scale and urban morphologies (Bulnes, 2006). That was especially visible towards the east of the complex, where the now-named Old Quarter remained - the only tangible urban reference of old Monterrey-, because on the west side, there were already samples of the modern city, through high-rise buildings built from the 40s to the 70s, and where the most intense commercial sector of the city center is located.

The Gran Plaza covered an area of 40 hectares, located in the heart of Monterrey, between Washington street, to the north; Constitution Avenue, to the south; Doctor Coss to the east, and Escobedo to the west, in the area where the city had its origins dating back to 1596. The surface was divided into three zones, following the existing land use, the geographical location of the buildings that for varied reasons were preserved, and the particular topography of its one-kilometer-long road.

The first two were destined to make The Gran Plaza the political, cultural, religious, and civic center of the capital of Nuevo León, and the central space that forms the third zone is designed so that the population had conditions conducive for the recreation of the body and spirit. It is bounded by the streets of Juan Ignacio Ramón, Zuazua, Washington, and Zaragoza.

Buildings such as the current Municipal Palace, High Court of Justice, Cathedral, Mutual Mercantile Circle, Monterrey Casino, Acero Condominium, Monterrey Hotel, Mercantile Bank, and the Latino Building, traditional and of great beauty, were conserved and restored to preserve history and memory. The old Plaza Zaragoza was integrated into the square maintaining part of its design, and here, already planned, on Padre Mier Street, was the area for

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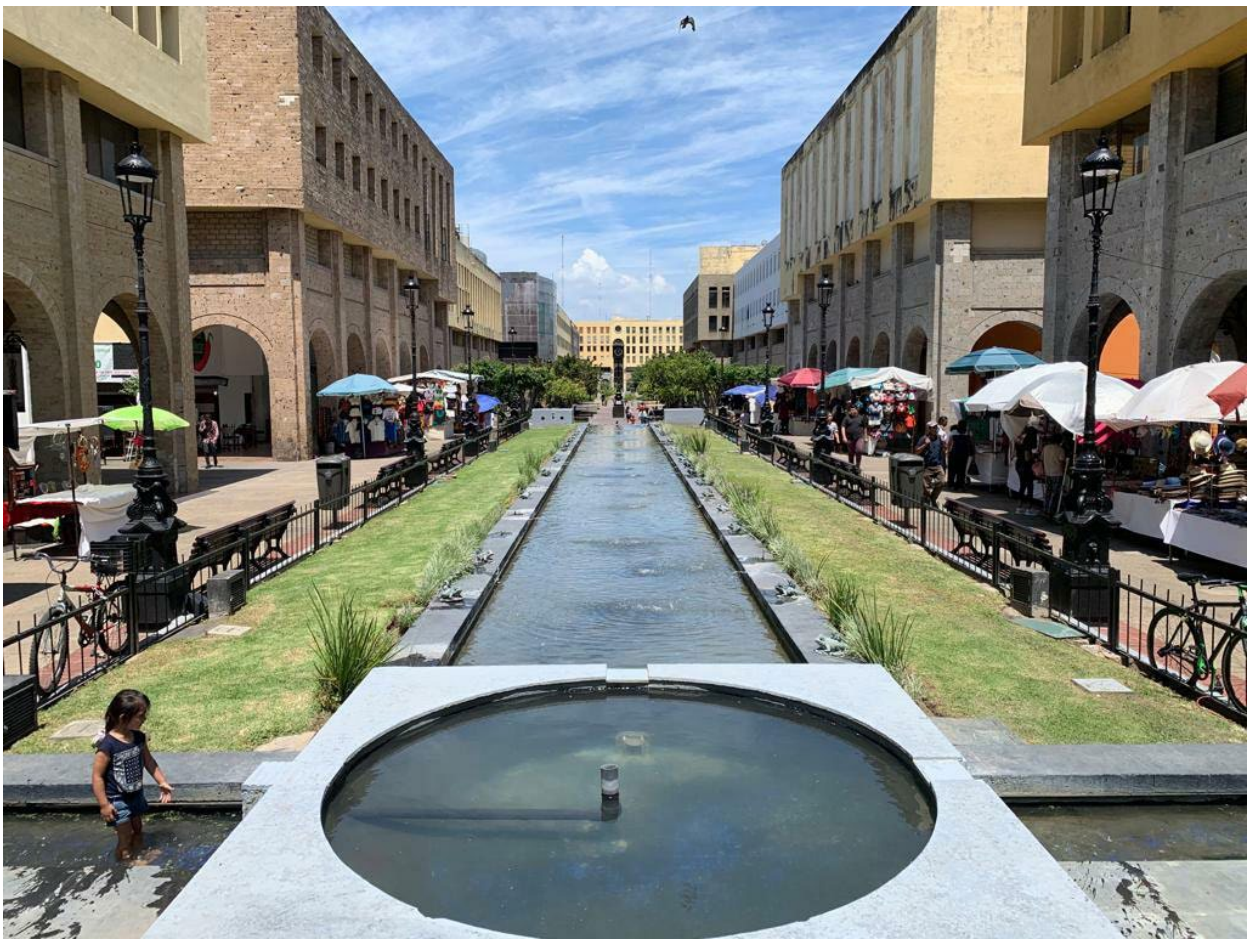

Figure 5. Plaza Tapatía, with the screen building in the background. Source: Photograph by Alejandro Ochoa Vega (2008).

a future underground station of the "Metro" system, which Monterrey would have in the short term (Bulnes, 2006).

The Fountain of Life (Figure 6), the majestic Theater of the City, the Art Garden, two open-air theaters, the Administrative Tower, the State Congress building, the Central Library, the new buildings of the State Archive and the Secretariat of Education and Culture were built, as well as the Faro del Comercio, the new Monterrey Fountain, the Sunken Garden waterfall, parking lots, and other fountains.

It should be added that several services and installations for the fountains and other supply networks were located under Gran Plaza, in addition to a shopping center and parking lots with a capacity for 900 cars. The gardens, parks, and area for walking covered an area of 120,000 square meters.

The Gran Plaza or Macroplaza was inaugurated on December 7, 1984.

FINAL REFLECTIONS, PROBLEMS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Plaza Tapatia and Macroplaza share, according to the initial statement of this article, being the product of a political will of the respective governors,

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Figura 6. Macroplaza: the fountain of Life sculptural ensemble, the work of the Artist Luis Sanguiano. Source: Taken from *Una nueva cara de Monterrey, LA GRAN PLAZA,* (official brochure w/d).

Flavio Romero de Velasco in Jalisco, and Alfonso Martínez Domínguez in Nuevo León, who in a megalomaniacal and authoritarian attitude made these projects possible, in the midst of the country's financial crisis. In the mere PRI style, of worship for personality, and from simulated social consensus, through uncritical and servile technicians and corrupt social organizations, projects such as Plaza Tapatia and Macroplaza were feasible, ramrodding the foundational traces and forcibly evicting inhabitants. A vision about the downtrodden abandoned historical centers, where the only option was demolition to favor the political and economic interests of a few, with the banner of "regenerating" and "revitalizing" areas of urban decay.

Both projects ruled out repopulation as a mechanism for revitalizing their sectors through the permanence of housing use, privileging commercial and administrative use. This has caused those public spaces to die after office hours and/ or at the closing of shops, even though there are some bars and restaurants in Plaza Tapatía that try to retain nightlife. In such a way, after a certain time, they become desolate and unsafe areas, just as happened, in those same places, before the creation of this pair of mega projects. What to say about the impact on the

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historical and cultural heritage of both historical centers, which, even with their variants, saw the foundational traces distorted, lost at least 20 buildings of historical and artistic value, and especially the urban morphology of historical cities, understood, as a contribution more as a whole than of isolated buildings**5**.

Regarding the urban-architectural and landscape proposal, the variant is that in Guadalajara it is a contained square, based on the construction of new buildings and, in Monterrey, an open one because, although enveloping buildings were also generated, the scale is much larger and the perspective expands. In the Jalisco capital, formal repertoires of tradition were recovered, such as semicircular arches, the entrance, and vertical windows, among others, in addition to the fact that the prevailing height in the historical center was not exceeded. On the other hand, in the Regia capital, high-rise buildings were a constant, hand in hand with a contemporary architectural proposal. As for the design of open spaces, fountains, sculptures, and urban furniture, in both cases, it tended more to the traditional than to a risky and modern approach. Plaza Tapatía (Figure7) created several games and water mirrors in its fountains and followed axes of symmetrical composition; the sculptures, somewhere between figurative and abstract, reveal that the snake of Quetzalcoatl was the base theme. The furniture was between conventional and traditional, with benches, lamps, and clocks. In the Macroplaza, the modern context under construction contrasted with the design of paths, gardens, fountains, and furniture, ranging from the modern *kitschy* in the Fountain of Life to minimalism in the Faro del Comercio, of Barragán and Ferrara.

In terms of the architectural proposal, Guadalajara opted for poor, monotonous, and scenographic contextualism, with references to Aldo Rossi. The buildings, homogeneous in heights, materials, colors, rhythms of openings, and rocks, together with the inevitable entrance, framed both spectacular finials (for example, the Cabañas Hospice), and others where the façade was fake, because it did not contain anything inside. In contrast, in Monterrey, the architecture of the equipment throughout the Macroplaza, demonstrates a search for end-of-century modernity, between late and postmodern with unequal qualities.

As a historiographical detail to highlight, it is noteworthy that, according to the scope of this article, from the sources consulted for the pair of examples studied, only the journal *Obras* gave an account of them with reports and interviews of both cases, and that, although the mega projects caused controversy at the time, only Plaza Tapatia was motive for a couple of critical analyses: that of the Guadalajara architect, Daniel González Romero (1986), and that of the Puebla architect, Carlos Montero Pantoja (2002). The former highlights his forceful opinion saying:

> The scenographic exhibitionism of postmodernism implanted in Plaza Tapatía can also be explained by the "uninhibited" use of

5 In the case of Guadalajara, two buildings, one of colonial origin and the other Porfirian on Morelos Street, managed to be preserved, although the new buildings of the plaza were violently attached to them. As for Monterrey, the then regional delegate of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, Héctor Jaime Treviño Villarreal, recognized that ten catalogued historical buildings had been lost, the Elizondo cinema, of endearing memory for the regiomontanos and the Juárez Bridge that was on 15 de Mayo and Zaragoza.

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Figure 7. Plaza Tapatia, with the rear façade of Degollado Theater in the background. Source: Photograph by Alejandro Ochoa Vega (2008).

> historical traces to build a supposed new line of "creativity", which at the same time exhibits positions where "values" and alienation are combined. Those who practice this kind of 'revival' under the spectrum of already identified interests, make indiscriminate use of the architectural essence of the past immersing it in a projective fiction where professional practice is not committed to the social totality. (González Romero, 1986, p. 55)

As an answer to the question raised in the introduction, whether with these two projects, Guadalajara and Monterrey gained a public space for their inhabitants, the answer is obvious: yes, but with a varying cost for both cities. The two squares, in the morning and daytime hours (in the case of Monterrey more in the latter) and, above all, on weekends, have regular and even intense social use. They work as a promenade to walk, sit on the benches, lie down on the grass, watch some show, or buy from some temporary stall. However, their relationship with nearby buildings is limited, either due to the commercial failure of Plaza Tapatía or due to the bureaucratic and impermeable use of equipment in Macroplaza (Figure 8). In addition to this, since there is no housing in both central areas, the user is floating.

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Figura 8. Macroplaza: social life. Source: Taken from*nueva cara de Monterrey, LA GRAN PLAZA,* official brochure w/d.

It should be noted that the upkeep in both squares is more than acceptable, the gardens are well maintained, fountains and lights work and, even, more attraction elements have been added, such as modules with benches to rest protected from the rain, terraces, cafeterias, kiosks for tourist information, and a new lighting design in Plaza Tapatia, and more cultural facilities in Macroplaza. In the latter, it is important to note that its integration into Fundidora Park, through the Santa Lucía Promenade inaugurated in 2007, would provide a greater influx.

In the end, a question about these public spaces created by decree or political will, rather than by social demand, is whether they have significantly become positive triggers in both cities. From the perspective presented here, it is considered that, in Guadalajara, beyond the price that was paid through the loss of heritage, it partially succeeded in linking those two Guadalajara mentioned above; the Cabañas Hospice setting could be improved and, with its new cultural use, attract more visitors, but, Plaza Tapatía has not triggered anything significant for the city. The situation is different in Macroplaza, although it has not represented a qualitative replacement for urban planning and design, architecture, and landscape, the enormous investment, and impact on the city have motivated improving the image of Monterrey,

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through multiple works, many o with social resonance and not just focused on profitability. Both configure complex, contradictory projects, of undeniable impact, which are unlikely to ever be repeated.

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