

SUBURBANIA: Monterrey Urban/Suburban Dichotomies in Northeastern Mexico

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Fig. 1. The Monterrey Metropolitan Area & its Western Edge, *La Huasteca National Park*

INTRODUCTION

The growth and evolution of Monterrey over time has resulted in a gradual shift of edge conditions of the city's urban, suburban, and industrial zones. This urban process not only includes the movement of the edge, but also involves a distinct *blurring* of frontiers, resulting in a pronounced fragmentation of otherwise contiguous urban territories. Conventional arrangement of these areas into distinct zones, de-

finied by clear borders of separation, has given way to a hybridization of urban, suburban, and industrial areas throughout a fragmented Monterrey.

The motivations for this shift of edges are diverse and complex, reflecting various interwoven social, cultural, and economic forces. Influences share a general connectivity with similar urban and suburban processes in other North American cities, and include socio-economic change, economic migra-

tion, de-densification of the congested center, land speculation and development, the increasing role of the automobile, and changing perceptions of security. Based on our understanding of Monterrey's urban characteristics, we propose that shifts in edge conditions are not uni-directional, but rather the result of a push-and-pull tension between the center and periphery. Multi-directional tension between distinct zones competing for primacy has produced a physical record that illustrates the movement and blurring of urban, suburban, and industrial realms.

This paper shall discuss how Monterrey has shifted and blurred its edge conditions. The resulting fragmentation of the city's character allows new opportunities and flexible attitudes to urbanism to emerge.

OVERVIEW

Monterrey is a city coming to terms with itself.

Precariously positioned *between* two worlds, Monterrey exists as a hybrid of Mexico and the United States. The development of its industrial power, further conditioned by globalization, consumerism, and access to information has radically transformed the city in the last 20 years. Monterrey's highly developed relationship with the United States and Canada is an omnipresent factor of daily life, along with other forces that lie deeper within the collective psyche of this city and its complex social structures.

While Monterrey has historically prided itself on representing a prosperous island of calm in an otherwise chaotic context, more recently a darker side of urban life presents itself every day. Incomprehensible violence, fueled by advancing waves of drug and human trafficking, casts an unfamiliar sense of doubt on this confident city. Beneath a delicate surface of glittering shopping malls and upscale residential towers lies a more intricately woven reality. Who are the *Regios* and what type of 21st century city are they building? With its towering mountain landscapes and sense of an alternate take on the American Dream, Monterrey offers a new perspective on suburbanization in the Western Hemisphere. Divergent aspirations and habits including isolation, immigration, migration, innovation, and tradition seek to find their way in the present, while simultaneously forging a place within Monterrey's future.

Origins

As an isolated sixteenth century outpost of the Spanish colonial empire, people of limited means yet expansive resourcefulness established a settlement that continues to define itself today in relationship to what it is not. This "other American tradition" established organizational patterns based on the Iberian model. Urban forms, mandated by Spanish colonial authorities and the *Law of the Indies*, were adapted and transformed by geographic particularities, environmental catastrophes, local sensibilities, and economic needs--and then filtered by the lived existence of a people in transition. Destabilized repeatedly, most recently by Hurricane Alex in August 2010, Monterrey has optimistically rebuilt and rebuilt again.

A transformation is taking place in 21st century Monterrey as people of diverse social and economic means take a greater role in redefining their metropolis. By formally and informally appropriating sections of the urban fabric according to their own resources and desires, new shifting sub-urbanisms are continually emerging that challenge conventional architectural and urban norms. The design of these hybrid urban/suburban, Mexican/American spaces calls for an expanded approach to sub-urban precedent and its significance in forging contemporary urban identities within suburban enclaves. In this context, both seeing and listening must be filtered by the impact of an increasingly international identity and the bifurcated mental mappings of its citizenry. In doing so, the preferred lifestyles, self-perceptions, and values of contemporary *Regios* are revealed. This city, positioned within a blurred zone between two frontiers, expresses its place in the world through new urban forms.

EMERGENCE

Monterrey, known as the *Sultan of the North*, is the capital city of the northeastern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon. Its metropolitan region is the second largest in the country, while Monterrey itself is the third most populous city after Mexico City and Guadalajara. The region's independent identity reflects its geographic isolation, as well as significant cultural and ethnic differences from the rest of Mexico. Furthering the distinction of the region, European immigration and Anglo-American settlement impacted Monterrey's identity to a greater extent than elsewhere in Mexico.



Fig. 2. Sprawling below *La Silla*

Settlement of an arid and inhospitable region speaks to the determination of the city's founders. Prior to the European founding of the city, there was no permanent settlement in the valley. The recorded history of Monterrey begins in 1596 with Diego de Montemayor and twelve Spanish families forming the core of the New Kingdom of León.¹ Drought and flooding repeatedly plagued the city throughout the 17th and 19th centuries. It was not until 1777, and a papal decree authorizing the construction of the Obispado, that Monterrey gained prominence. Trade and industry, however, have been the most important factors in Monterrey's contemporary development. By the end of the 18th century, industries such as the Cuauhtémoc Brewery and Compañía Fundidora de Fierro y Acero (Foundary of Iron and Steel) began to play a central role in the city's growth. These key enterprises fueled expansion of various industries throughout the 20th century, placing Monterrey at the vanguard of industrialization in Mexico.

NOT SO TWIN CITIES

Over the course of four centuries, the people of Nuevo Leon have transformed metropolitan Monterrey into the most economically prosperous region of the country. Between 1950 and 2000, Monterrey ranked among the fastest growing metro-

politan areas in the Americas. With a population increasing from 375,040 in 1950 to 3,864,331 in 2005, this expansion was fueled mainly by migration from cities within Mexico and has placed an enormous social and economic strain on the urban core.² Outmigration from the center began to accelerate in the 1970s with the emergence of San Pedro Garza Garcia, a suburb, or more accurately a twin city, located south and west of Monterrey. Founded in 1596 as the Los Nogales Plantation and referred to as "San Pedro", the settlement was formally established as the town of Garza Garcia in 1882.³ The municipality's official name, "San Pedro Garza Garcia", was formalized in 1988.

An understanding of Monterrey today must acknowledge its relationship with neighboring San Pedro. The weathered urban core of Monterrey stands in stark contrast to the tidy, though generic, municipality of San Pedro Garza Garcia. Based loosely on North American suburban models, San Pedro is considered one of the most affluent communities in Latin America.

ZONING

In Monterrey, similar to elsewhere in Mexico, the fragmented relationships of urban, suburban, and industrial areas in the city have been further impacted by a malleable and weak framework of zoning laws. In contrast to other North American contexts, the zoning laws in Mexico are defined by flexibility and lack of enforcement, rendering them largely ineffective in creating comprehensive urban design. The relationship between zoning laws, political corruption, ambitious developers, and forgotten master planning is clearly illustrated by the recently proposed Bicentennial Tower (Torre Bicentenario) in Mexico City. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Rem Koolhaas, the 300-meter super-tall skyscraper proposal for historic Chapultepec Park highlights the flexibility and ineffectiveness of zoning regulations in Mexico. Despite a local neighborhood law limiting commercial structures to under five stories, the super-tall Bicentennial Tower attempted to circumvent zoning to allow a 70-story tower that would have been the tallest in Latin America. The close association of developers, politicians, and the municipal government of Mexico City have resulted in the ability to openly flaunt zoning laws or propose capricious modifications to regulations. Under pressure from

local neighborhood groups, preservationists, and public outrage, the tower was officially cancelled in 2007.

HOUSING & COURTYARDS

Housing: Origins

The Barrio Antiguo of Monterrey remains a living testament to the impact of cultural, social, and environmental factors on housing. Since the city's founding in 1596, housing typologies supported the development of complex social and commercial frameworks. From its origins, the townhouse formed the basic unit of residential organization in the city. Reflecting multi-generational patterns that persist today, Monterrey's housing stock developed into a dense fabric of independent though contiguous constructs. With the passing of time, Monterrey's residential architecture has generated a repetitive language, whereby consistent materials and processing techniques have proven their environmental efficiency. Reflecting a 400-year history of traditional vernaculars, the evolution of single-family ownership persists. One- and two-story inwardly-focused townhouses continue to blanket much of the core beyond the central business district.

Of Le Corbusier, Pani, & Cortes

Monterrey remains predominantly a city of single-family homes. Yet nodes of denser multi-family housing developed in the mid 20th century. In the 1960s, humanist concerns for improving the standard of living of the lower classes began to emerge throughout Latin America. Throughout the country, the Fondo de Operación y Financiamiento Bancario a la Vivienda (FOVI) was responsible for promoting housing reform and access. Mario Pani's seminal urban housing project in Mexico City, the Multi-Familiar Juarez (1952), provided an early Mexican model of high-density housing responding to this charge.

Monterrey saw rapid population growth, housing shortages, and the deterioration of the downtown. FOVI identified the need for denser housing in Monterrey and the concept for Condominios Constitución was born.⁴ The first of its kind in the metropolitan area of Monterrey, the complex was envisioned for land reclaimed from the Santa Cata-

rina River east of the Barrio Antiguo. The Condominios Constitución proposed the first solution for dense multi-family housing in Nuevo Leon, reflecting a diverse mix of lower middle class residents. The site, a former city dump, offered proximity to the workplace, access to transport, and adjacency to future green areas. Designed by architect and planner Guillermo Cortes, the 1000-unit project incorporated fifty 3- and 4-story towers arranged around two plazas following Corbusian tower-in-a-landscape principles. Each apartment offered modern plumbing and electricity, with an emphasis on natural light and good ventilation. One quarter of the site area was dedicated to building footprints, while the remaining space was given over to gardens, porticos, a pool, an elementary school, and service areas. The optimism of Condominios Constitución was reflected by the fact that the project was officially opened in 1964 by the President of Mexico, Adolfo Lopez Mateos.

Aimed at the lower middle class, the project was intended to solve the housing shortage and depopulation of downtown, yet the Condominios Constitución were considered a failure.⁵ Poor construction and crime plagued the project for many years. And although the complex has witnessed a modest renaissance, conventional wisdom suggests that it did more harm than good for the central core in its early years. Consequently, Monterrey's experiment with multi-family residential went into a 30-year hiatus.

Housing: Urbanized

Monterrey has undergone a significant shift in its perception of multi-family housing since the Condominios Constitución. The 1990s witnessed an acceptance of higher-density solutions among the middle- and upper-classes. This change in perception is linked to two primary considerations -- cost and security. High-rise residential buildings, with their gated entrances and secure lobbies, are considered safer and more defensible environments. Additionally, escalating land costs and urban sprawl have placed economic pressures on central neighborhoods. Commutes have increased with the rise of outlying areas, resulting in the rediscovery of central city districts as increasingly desirable. Luxurious amenities such as pool decks, sky lobbies, fitness centers, and upscale retail define the allure of these new projects.

This trend is manifested across the city in three distinctly different areas: the Centro, the Obispado, and Valle Poniente. These areas represent shifting perceptions of edge and core, as well as vastly different lifestyle choices. *Urbania* (2008), an example of re-programming outmoded office space for housing, was the first high-rise residential tower at the central core in the city's history. This 19-story project occupies the former Edificio Monterrey (1959) located at the intersection of Parás and Morelos. With a mix of professionals and students, the project targets an upwardly mobile resident with its rooftop amenities and contemporary finishes. Occupancy rates at *Urbania* are moderate since perceptions of downtown living remain largely unfavorable.

A compromise development, *Horizontes Obispado* (2010) offers an urban-suburban hybrid lifestyle. Located in the close-in, historic, and desirable district of Obispado, the project appeals to singles as well as families, while the apartment sizes and finish levels are higher than *Urbania*. The neighborhood itself attracts a broader spectrum of people and is perceived to be safe. The most dramatic example and deepest shift toward denser urbanism in the suburban periphery is *LOVFT* (2010). This 32-story tower, located at the very edge of the metropolitan area, offers a disastrous alternative urbanism for Monterrey. Positioned in a dramatically pristine landscape at the gateway to La Huasteca National Park, the tower detracts significantly from its surrounding natural environment. *LOVFT* represents the equivalent of planting a high-rise residential



Fig. 3. High-rises in a National Park: *LOVFT*

tower in front of Yosemite's Half Dome, the front range of the Grand Tetons, or the Grand Canyon.

COMMERCE & PUBLIC SPACE

Origins

The development of commercial space in Monterrey has been directly impacted by shifts and blurring of edge conditions of urban, suburban, and industrial realms. Similar to other contexts, commercial space has been strongly linked to the presence and provision of public space in the city. The relationship between commercial and public space in Monterrey is illustrated in competition for "focus" between center and periphery. The modification of edge conditions can be clearly evidenced in an analysis of commercial destinations in the metropolitan area.

Like many other North American cities, the original retail district in Monterrey was the downtown core of "El Centro." The establishment of central outdoor shopping promenades, as well as informal market spaces such as the old Mercado Colón, traces its roots to earlier periods of the city's history. Similar to other large cities in Mexico, outdoor commercial space was followed by the introduction of large-scale department stores in the Centro area in the mid 20th century. In Monterrey, this included a Sears Roebuck store, as well as the establishment of the local department store El Nuevo Mundo in 1933. Monterrey's retail core was the region's primary shopping destination for most of the 20th century. This was made economically viable by its accessibility by a diverse socio-economic population, including the traditionally wealthy residents of the historic Obispado area. The outdoor market space and department store models illustrate changes in the relationship between commercial and public spaces, expressing a transition from outdoor-to-indoor which has diminished accessibility. This notion of public space related to commercial space has engaged various architectural approaches, demonstrating how socio-economic stratification has led to stratified experiences and uses.

Shifts

During the latter part of the 20th century, the shift in population from the urban Centro and Obispado areas to the suburban periphery was paralleled

by changes in commercial space development in the metropolitan region. As power, wealth, and population began to evacuate downtown for the outlying suburbs, commercial space followed. The establishment of the Galerías Monterrey in 1983, the city's first modern shopping mall, geographically traces the changing relationship between center and periphery. Located at the western edge of the Obispado area in San Jerónimo, we propose that the location of the new mall was an attempt to mitigate the relationship between the gradually migrating wealth of the Obispado, to the growing residential areas of San Pedro Garza Garcia.

San Pedro, located southwest of the city limits of Monterrey, has become known as one of the wealthiest suburbs in Mexico and Latin America in general. The position of the Galerías Monterrey in San Jerónimo, between the Obispado and San Pedro, was an intermittent attempt to tap into the retail consumer potential of both the old-wealth urban Obispado, and the growing population and economic power of suburban San Pedro.

The tension and competition between the center and the periphery in Monterrey has been bi-directional and non-linear, with shifts of the edge condition over time in both directions. The inauguration of the Morelos Pedestrian Mall in December 1978 illustrates a deliberate attempt to revitalize downtown with a major commercial destination and public space. Located in the heart of downtown Monterrey, the development involved the closure of a major east-west street to pedestrian traffic, as well as the adaptive reuse of older structures to create indoor malls. This resulted in a primarily commercial and shopping-oriented human scale promenade amid higher densities of the Centro. Like similar downtown urban revitalization projects elsewhere in North America, such as the Nicollet Mall pedestrian and transit mall in downtown Minneapolis (1968), the Morelos Pedestrian Plaza attempted to recapture the faded importance of the Centro area as a commercial shopping destination and to resist the gradual shift from center-to-periphery. The Morelos project indicates a deliberate attempt to create a sense of egalitarian commercial space as a public gesture. Arguably motivated by political considerations, this public project along with other urban developments such as the Macroplaza, attempted to re-gravitate and re-populate the Centro.

Commerce & Public Space: Hybridized

Despite the continued presence of large-scale department stores, public markets, and developments such as the Morelos Pedestrian Mall, the gradual shift from urban-to-suburban and from center-to-periphery in the Monterrey metropolitan area did not abate. In recent years, the vast majority of new large-scale commercial spaces have been established at the suburban periphery. New shopping malls, a typology that includes suburban malls such as Plaza Fiesta San Agustín (1988) and Galerías Valle Oriente (2003), emerged throughout the metropolitan area. The opening of the upscale 27,000m² Paseo San Pedro (2006) in the suburb of San Pedro Garza Garcia is undeniable evidence of the paramount role of peripheral suburbia in Monterrey. This development, anchored by the exclusive Palacio de Hierro department store, is located in an upscale suburban area disconnected from the central downtown. It demonstrates the supremacy of the suburban shopping mall as the premier commercial destination in the city. With the newfound availability of major department stores outside of the Centro, the need to travel downtown to shop has been completely eliminated. Despite a presence of suburban shopping options, it is our view that the tension between center/periphery and urban/suburban continues in Monterrey. The resolution of this ongoing tension remains unresolved.

TOWERS & PLAZAS

Origins

Architectural expressions of urban life are deeply rooted in the traditions of Mexican cities. The first great plazas in the Americas were vast public spaces surrounded by towering pyramids and temples of pre-Columbian cultures.⁶ These spaces were defined by power and ceremony, bearing witness to the religious, cultural, and social life of great empires. As a monumental legacy of ancient material culture, tower-plaza examples include configurations at Palenque, Chichen Itza, and Acatitlan.

Under Spanish colonial rule, the public plaza held a very particular role. King Philip II of Spain established a series of royal ordinances requiring that all new towns in the Americas feature a central public space, or *Plaza de Armas*, around which social, cultural, commercial, and religious life would be fo-

cused.⁷ To guide and regularize the establishment of presidios, missions, and pueblos, this comprehensive decree of 148 ordinances aided colonists in siting, constructing, and populating settlements. Signed in 1573, the *Laws of the Indies* are considered to be first comprehensive guidelines for the design and development of communities. The laws codified the urban planning process and represented some of the first attempts at formalizing a master plan.

For over four hundred years, plazas have served as a ceremonial stage for lives lived in Mexican cities. Their role as social, cultural, and commercial mixers remains embedded in the collective memory and urban conscience of the nation. Since Monterrey's founding in 1596, such spaces defined the early settlement and continue to activate at the central core. These public zones, once the focus of urban commercial and social life, present a window on class and ethnic fragmentation in this city. Similarly, the original founding of Monterrey was confined to the Plaza de Armas, the southernmost portion of the Macroplaza. The Plaza de Armas became the core from which various cells multiplied to spawn the urban framework underlying the social, cultural, religious organization of the settlement.

Monterrey's center was once its commercial heart, where the very best retail, residential, and commercial space were found. In scales from intimate to grand--Plaza Hidalgo, Plaza La Purisima, Plaza Colegio Central, La Alameda, and the Macroplaza express various spatial influences including *Law of the Indies* rationalism, Beaux-Arts formalism, and Corbusian tower-in-a-landscape urbanism. Today, these traditional outdoor rooms present a socially undiverse narrative on shifts in the city from center-to-periphery.

Of Haussmann, Le Corbusier, & Costa

By the late 1970s, Monterrey's leaders remained unsuccessful in stemming the accelerating shift of residential wealth and commercial power to San Pedro Garza Garcia. In response to the decentralization crisis, the Municipality of Monterrey and State of Nuevo Leon governments envisioned a bold plan to refocus the metropolitan area on an expanded Gran Plaza. Like Harrison and Abramovitz's controversial Empire State Plaza (1965) urban renewal project in Albany, the Macroplaza Redevelopment

Plan (1983) was intended to reprogram the center of the state capital as the ceremonial and functional heart of Nuevo Leon. The city government believed that this new, monumental Macroplaza, a hybrid form of urban piazza and suburban office park, would provide an organizational solution that would at once raise the quality of life for the lower classes while drawing renewed interest in commercial, arts, and cultural facilities aimed at the middle- and upper-classes. The project called for a massive reorganization effort along Haussmannian principles conditioned by conventional suburban sensibilities. Following the Haussmannian precedent, 427 buildings, some of considerable historical value, were demolished to open up forty hectares of space for the plaza.⁸ The new Macroplaza was elevated above the traditional street grid, thanks to its massive subterranean parking super-block. The resulting above ground space reveals a simultaneously Haussmannian, Beaux-Arts, and Corbusian hybrid approach to urbanism. Similar to Le Corbusier's 1922 scheme for *La Ville Contemporaine*, or contemporary city for three million inhabitants, this new centerpiece grouped a series of high-rise office towers in a park-like setting. Like *La Ville Contemporaine*, the Macroplaza morphed into a huge transportation hub consisting of the Zaragoza metro station, street lanes for buses and cars, as well as below grade bypasses separating pedestrian movement from vehicular traffic. All in all, the plan glorified the use of the automobile as the primary means of transportation.

The Macroplaza collects car-dependent suburban commuters below-ground with direct access to office towers, essentially subtracting the suburban commuter's interaction with pedestrians at street-level. This class-dividing device sought to carve out pure space for the middle-and-upper class executives that were meant to populate the glass towers of the re-envisioned periphery. Similar to the social tenets espoused within Le Corbusier's bold yet controversial plans for urban reorganization in the 1920s, Monterrey's city officials hoped that their plan would lead the way to a brave new world that could reorganize *Regio* society. Heavy-handed in scale, the Macroplaza master plan failed to fully materialize. Instead of building their towers in central Monterrey, corporations chose San Pedro Garza Garcia's emerging new downtown for their glittering, post-Modern cathedrals of commerce. In consequence, the Macroplaza's empty

sites were reprogrammed as a governmental and cultural district.



Fig. 4. Macroplaza (1983), Condominios Constitucion (1964), & Urbania (2008).

While not fully realized, the Macroplaza may be considered one of the most ambitious urban renewal projects in Latin America. Yet the complex remains controversial today for a number of reasons including displacement of residents and businesses, cost overruns, and an inefficient use of space. Apart from its criticisms, the Macroplaza characteristically bends to suburban norms by ignoring the tenets of good urbanism. Like Lucio Costa's plan for Brasilia, traffic in Monterrey's core was reconfigured to emphasize traffic flow rather than street life. Thus, the elevated plaza empties

city streets, creates dark places, and increases crime. While these practical criticisms have largely dissipated, particularly since the plaza has become a significant tourist attraction and important public performance space in its own right, the Macroplaza remains condemned on aesthetic grounds. Stylistically, its architecture is outmoded and lacks finesse. Moreover, the formal symbolism of the urban gesture, and that of its individual structures, reveals a forcefulness that ironically reflects the corruption of powerful centralized governments.

Towers & Plazas: Suburbanized

New urbanisms have begun to emerge throughout metropolitan Monterrey that speak to the memory of a distant Spanish colonial formalism combined with contemporary automobile-oriented suburbanism. These alternative plug-in forms reveal two omnipresent and interconnected shifting forces at play: access and privilege.

In Latin America, family background and social connections are the primary means of determining success. These conditions are manifested through birthright, as well as by carefully orchestrated paths of movement over the span of a lifetime, and within the course of a day. Physically placing oneself as a body in carefully selected spaces, both urban and interior, creates socially acceptable occupancy bubbles across the city. Parallel to deeply ingrained social class distinctions, the present era registers a visible increase in income inequality, concentration of wealth in the top ten percent of the population, rapid expansion of micro-entrepreneurs, and stagnation of an increasingly large informal proletariat.⁹ Stagnation of formal sector labor and the rise of violent crime have led to a series of adaptive solutions by Monterrey's middle and lower classes, as well as an increasingly guarded response by the upper middle and upper classes. And while the roots of elitist disengagement with the larger city were sown in the 1960s, these divisions appear increasingly formalized as access and privilege generate a segregated yet woven urban fabric.

The word "privilegiada" in Spanish is frequently used in Mexico within various conversational contexts. In architectural or urban terms, reference to the privileged neighborhood or privileged site conveys two layers of meaning. *Privilege* initially evokes a sense of attractiveness and specialness,

but also the notion of restriction or entitlement to a select group. Access and privilege are common denominators in the contemporary urban development of Monterrey. The primary means of separating urban and suburban spaces between the haves and the have nots is the automobile. While Monterrey celebrates car culture, by no means is ownership universal. And although a family of four owning six cars is not unusual in high-income areas, equally typical is the carless household. Likewise, the proximity of districts with super-high and super-low income and lifestyle levels is often remarkably close. Privilege and class, access and transport—these pairings must be filtered through multiple levels of meaning. In Monterrey, an accepted mix of qualitative and quantitative measures such as image, exclusivity, and parking help to shape how built spaces are programmed, designed, and delivered. In turn, shifts in perception of *acceptable* shopping areas have emerged.

A new type of commercial shopping plaza that conveys connectivity with previous urban forms is the 'shopping piazza'. This form for sub-urbanism celebrates both car- and class- consciousnesses. As a typology, the shopping piazza merges an upmarket shopping plaza with the urban galleria into an outdoor stage of consumption. By turning the conventional mall inside-out, multi-tiered stores are engaged more easily in the experience of the 50 km-per-hour city. Shopping piazzas are identified by their risk-taking architecture, high-end finishes, upscale retailers, and signature restaurants. Most importantly, the ceremonial 'entry' sequence is experienced by drivers rather than on foot. At Calzada 401, for instance, cars descend down a central ramp located in the most prominent position on the site plan. Since there is no alternative way to simply 'slip-in' to Calzada 401, all entrants must make a 'formal', runway-like entrance. Every store and restaurant views the central parking field, which takes the place of the Spanish colonial public plaza.

Similar to Italian cities, where fashionable piazzas have become parking lots, the term 'shopping piazza' seems an appropriate moniker for this emerging building typology in Monterrey. More recent versions of the shopping piazza feature a high-rise commercial and/or residential anchor tower, evoking a 21st century formal reinterpretation of the pre-Columbian pyramid/plaza pairing. Vertical densities created by these new tower/plazas com-

plexes have begun to create nodes along suburban sprawl corridors throughout the metropolitan area. Examples include Habita and Paso Tec, 'shopping piazzas' paired with hotels; and Garza Sada 1892, a residential/shopping hybrid development.

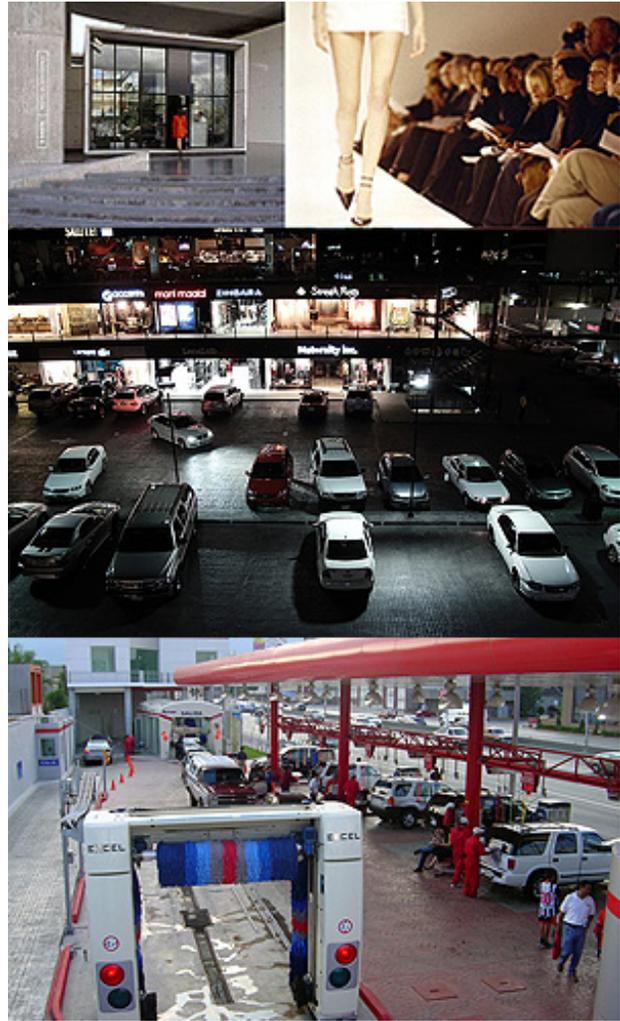


Fig. 1. Monterrey: *Where Cars are Treated Like Supermodels*

- 1.1: Hotel as Runway: Habita, Landa Arquitectos
- 1.2: City as Runway: Monterrey Fashion Week, 2008
- 1.3: Building as Runway: Calzada 401, San Pedro
- 1.4: CWE High-Tech Car Wash, Monterrey

INDUSTRY & EVOLUTION

Highly significant in scale, the shifting and blurring of urban and suburban edge conditions in Monterrey has directly impacted a third major condition: the industrial realm. The interplay of the industrial

realm within the urban and suburban contexts is an important indicator of the movement and blurring of the edge over time. Monterrey is a city whose history has been deeply intertwined with processes of industrialization. The architectural products of industry provide a geographic and temporal framework to better understand the larger urban processes of the city.

As one of the first cities in Mexico to industrialize, Monterrey's urban and architectural character has been significantly defined by industry. Industrial sites within the fabric of the city have been subjected to changing definitions and edges. These spaces have been redefined from their original industrial uses and incorporated into urban, and even suburban interventions. Throughout the growth of the city, large industrial areas that formerly occupied peripheral locations have been absorbed, redefined, and shifted again to a new peripheral frontier. The shift of operational industry from what is currently the inner city to the outlying suburbs, as well as the decommissioning of obsolete industries, has resulted in a fragmented dispersal of industrial sites in various conditions of use, reuse, and abandonment.

The former industrial site of the Fundidora (Foundry) Park in eastern Monterrey represents a shift of the edge from industrial to public urban space. This urban park, encompassing 142 hectares of former industrial activity, has been absorbed and redefined with great sensitivity to serve the public as recreational space. Developed in stages from 1988 to 2010, Fundidora Park provides various cultural venues including exhibition spaces and museums. The complex includes the award-winning Museo del Acero Horno³ (Museum of Steel) by British architect Nicholas Grimshaw (2007), which directly translates the steel blast furnace into an abandoned foundry into an urban amenity and popular museum of industry.

Industry in Monterrey remains an essential component of its character, and industrial zones are being created and expanded in outer areas such as Apodaca near the international airport--closer to the border with the United States. As industry has shifted from center-to-periphery, the establishment of new industrial areas outside the core has allowed unique opportunities for urban/suburban interventions that blend and blur the edge conditions of these territories.

CONCLUSION

Blurred Layers: Residential/Commercial/ Industrial

In this paper we have discussed how the urban evolution of Monterrey has involved a shifting and blurring of edge conditions. The city's fragmented character is intrinsically linked to shifting urban, suburban, and industrial uses that continually transition, transform, and renew the metropolitan area. We propose that a direct impact of this process has been the hybridization of three themes -- urban, suburban, and industrial that create valuable opportunities for new architectural forms to emerge. As illustrated by hybrid concepts such as Fundidora Park and the LOVFT development, alternative urban approaches in Monterrey have allowed the development of a blurred architecture that defies conventional understandings. In our view, the opportunities provided by such fluidity afford flexible, innovative, and uninhibited approaches to design to develop. In the case of Monterrey, sometimes new approaches work and sometimes they don't.

Design innovation generated from hybridization of the urban, suburban, and industrial realms is clearly evident in the massive Céntrica urban renewal project. Centrally located within the municipal boundaries of the city of Monterrey, Céntrica offers over 55 hectares and a projected population of over 6,000 residents. The development is the largest and most ambitious urban renewal project in the history of Latin America. Céntrica includes affordable housing as well as the 108,000m² Plaza Céntrica shopping center. The complex was designed by significant architectural firms, institutions, and thinkers including Legorreta + Legorreta, landscape architect and urban designer Mario Schjetnan's Grupo de Diseño Urbano, and Niall Kirkwood of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Céntrica represents a successful large-scale approach to urban, suburban, and industrial hybridization that fully encompasses the themes of housing, commercial space, mixed-use, and reclaimed industrial archaeology. With its marketing slogan of "La ciudad en la ciudad" (the city within the city), Céntrica can be considered an innovative microcosm of the shifting and blurring of Monterrey's edges at the macro-scale. The project represents the innovative spirit of the *Regios* in a thoroughly authentic architectural and urban representation of a shifting place in time.



Fig. 1. Industrial Follies: Two Ways

1.1: Suburbia dept. store & renovated structure

1.2: Horno-3, Fundidora Park

ENDNOTES

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2 Gobierno de Estado de Nuevo Leon, "Historia de Nuestros Barrios," Primera Edición, (Monterrey: Prensa GNL, 1995).

3 Alanis Barbosa and Hector Javier, "Recuerdos de Monterrey," (Monterrey: Ayuntamiento de Monterrey, 1993).

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