

les ateliers International Workshop on Urban Project maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine Management

León, Mexico – 22nd November - 16th December 2013

Call for applications prior to the selection of 21 participants from across the world who will attend a workshop, where they will work together on strategies for and projects in urban development.

The Metropolitan Area of León – How To Share Land and Landscape

How can fallow land, derelict urban areas and residual spaces contribute to the restructuring of the city and of the conurbation?



The recent development of the Metropolitan Area of León has created a hybrid space which we can read as a mosaic of different elements with varied uses, identities and sizes; installed as autonomous elements rather than having been planned on a bigger scale as part of a whole; a dynamic of individual initiatives based on the market forces and on the availability of spaces.

This politics of growth, where a disjointed puzzle has piece after piece added to it, creates a porous matrix, full of gaps and absences. From this point of view, one possible strategic way of seeing the city will be to rethink the Metropolitan Area of León through looking at its empty spaces, so as to reinforce its cohesion and to give a structure to its complex web; on the scale of the urban framework of León and the other urban centres of Silao, Purísima y San Francisco del Rincón, and on the wider scale of the whole conurbation.

Given the current dynamic and the trends observed, it is essential to tackle the question of coherence within the conurbation and to understand a landscape, and a shared urban environment, as a common good which transcends the limits of administrative management.



INTRODUCTION

The Metropolitan Area of León (MAL) is a region with a dynamic economy, a region which is important for the state of Guanajuato and for Mexico alike. It is situated by the Motorway 45 and the (freight) railway line, which goes from the 'FD' to the United States of America (FD stands for Federal District, and is used to designate Mexico City). In a radius of 400km is concentrated 80% of the national market, 70% of the industrial activities and 60% of the total population of the country. The Metropolitan Area of León is also a point of connection between the two oceans of the Atlantic and the Pacific.

In the state of Guanajuato, it is part of a road network which runs from north to south, and which links it to the towns of Salamanca, Calaya and Irapuato.

According to the tendencies observed and the official planning documents, an important growth in population is predicted. The natural tendency of development will see the new arrivals being concentrated in the MAL and in the town of León in particular. By 2030, it is predicted that 43.9% of the population of the state (5,270,383 inhabitants) will be concentrated in the MAL (the current population of the MAL is 1.7 million inhabitants). In the same way, it is predicted that 82.65% (1,914,461 inhabitants) of the population of the MAL will choose to live in the municipality of León. There is the possible fear that this uncontrolled growth will bring about an increase in inequalities and increase in travel and travel-time across the city.

The good transport links of this territory (thanks to the railway lines and the road connections and, since the 1980s, the International Airport of Guanajuato) have increased the demand for land and the influence of the population in the area. The presence of numerous industrial areas and of dynamic economic activities (symbolised by the inland port in the municipality of Silao) are representative of this dynamic.

From a globalised point of view, the current model of development does not take into account the historic and traditional values of Mexican society and leaves little space for public initiative. The current property speculation reinforces the fragmentation of the territory, both socially and spatially. Informal urbanisation relegates a part of the population to new peripheral areas, creating a sort of concentric zone model, which results in rings of poverty.

It is not possible to imagine a restructuring of the MAL without considering the new stakes and the new circumstances which exist on different economic, environmental and social levels, as well as in terms of the question of identity.

This document, which uses as its basis the report which came out of the exploratory research trip conducted by Les Ateliers between 20th and 24th May 2013, attempts to propose a way of looking at the situation which takes into account these questions.

In co-operation with the French Embassy in Mexico, the team of Les Ateliers met with government authorities, key players in civil society, communities and organisations, IPLANEG (Institute for Town Planning in the State of Guanajuato), IMPLAN (Municipal Institute for Town Planning – in León) and numerous other people.

Before revealing the specific angle the workshop will take, we want to share a first look at and first analysis of the MAL, through its economic and residential characteristics, the basic structures and layout of the town and the projects currently underway. We will then explain our first reflexions on the topic which will be explored.

Three axes, three key aspects of the situation will be outlined in particular.

The first concerns the area which connects León and Silao: the agricultural plain between the two towns, which is permeated by transport routes, areas of industrial and agricultural activities as well as residential areas. The second is interested in reflecting on the urban framework of each one of the four municipalities. Finally, the third is that of the space between the city of León and the towns of Purísima and San Francisco del Rincón – an area of much potential.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document presents the topic of the workshop. It is sent to our partners and to the whole of the international network of Les Ateliers, with the aim of encouraging applications from people within the profession.

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Based on the conversations and interviews which took place during the exploratory research trip in May 2013 with:

We thank first of all those whom we visited, in particular:

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With the advice of the members of the Scientific Committee of Les Ateliers.

This document exists in a French and a Spanish version, and can be downloaded for free from www.ateliers.org

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GENERAL CONTEXT

A DESTINY DETERMINED BY GEOGRAPHY

THE STATE OF GUANAJUATO : A CENTRAL POSITION

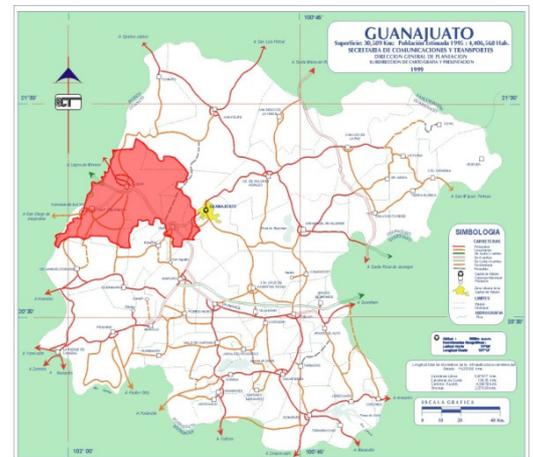
The state of Guanajuato is positioned on the Central Mexican Plateau. Between two main mountain ranges, the Sierra Madre Occidentale and the la Sierra Madre Orientale, this vast space reaches a height of 1100 m in the north and 2000m in the south. It stretches from the border with the United States to the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt. It is also made up of many valleys, some of which are the location for important cities, like Mexico City and Guadalajara.



The state of Guanajuato lies equidistant between the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans.

The state has 5.5 million inhabitants (2010), spread out across 30,608 km² (an area equivalent Belgium or Galicia) and 46 municipalities.

The city of Guanajuato is the capital of the state (170,000 inhabitants), León is the city with the largest population, with 1.4 million inhabitants.



The metropolitan areas are: León, Penjamo la piedad, MoroLeón, Laja-Bajío, Irapuato Salamanca.

THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF LEÓN : THE HEART OF THE STATE

The Metropolitan Area of León (MAL) is the city with the seventh largest population in Mexico, with nearly 1.7 million inhabitants.

Due to its population, its infrastructure and transport links (train lines, roads and motorways) and its significant economic role, the MAL is the veritable heart of the state.

The conurbation is brings together 4 autonomous municipalities: León, Silao, San Francisco del Rincón, Purísima del Rincón.



Both united and yet fragmented, the idea and possibilities of this conurbation are the principal reason behind this workshop.

The city of Guanajuato, the capital of the state, creates an administrative and touristic polarity which is very important. Officially, the city is not a part of the MAL. Yet it is very close, almost already integrated, and will possibly become encompassed within the image of the overall conurbation

HILLS, PLATEAUS AND PLAINS: BETWEEN THE ALTIPLANO AND THE BAJÍO

The topography of the state is split between a high part in the north (the Mexican plateau, the altiplano) and a low part in the south. The heart of the Mexican “Bajío” is situated in the state of Guanajuato.

The predominant climate in the Altiplano area is semi-arid, with a temperate climate for the middling to high parts of the mountainous regions. The Bajío region is so called because of its geographical situation, as it lies below the other regions which define its area. The Bajío region is a region known for its agriculture and livestock farming.

The geography of the state can be seen as a sloping basin, a semi-arid region criss-crossed with seasonal waterways (mountain streams) which irrigate the more humid region situated in the south.

Water has indeed defined the territory (through the historic settlement and building of towns in certain locations, and through the principal role of the region being agricultural). Moreover, this resource is often scarce and, worryingly, the region is marked by drought (Certain plots of land used for agriculture have been abandoned due to lack of irrigation, and the water supply can be cut off from time to time).

These aspects of the geography of the state are very apparent when we turn our attention to the Metropolitan Area of León. The hills and the high plateaus are the north-western and north-eastern boundaries of the conurbation.

The Bajío opens out at the southern boundary of León and Silao. The hills hold reserves of water which are important for managing the potential rise in water levels (due to storms and torrential streams during the humid season). The existence of mountain streams running from the north to the south led to the creation of the towns of León and Silao.

Bajío is a humid region, with an important agricultural role. It is above all an important region for industry.

Located in a strategic position, at the centre of the country (in the industrial triangle of the three largest cities in Mexico: Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey) the area has, across a radius of 400km, more than 70% of the country's industry, trade and exportation for about 60% of the country's population.

A CONTINENTAL CROSSROADS

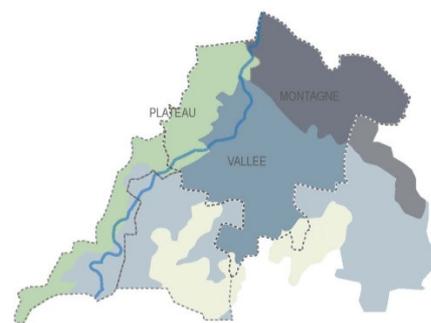
The economic importance of the state of Guanajuato is real and well-known.

The state of Guanajuato is the most dynamic area for car-manufacturing in Mexico. Currently (2011), one in ten vehicles manufactured in Mexico has been manufactured within the state and 60% of shoes manufactured in Mexico are manufactured in León. There is also an important chemical industry, an industry in leather, in transport networks and also in plastic.

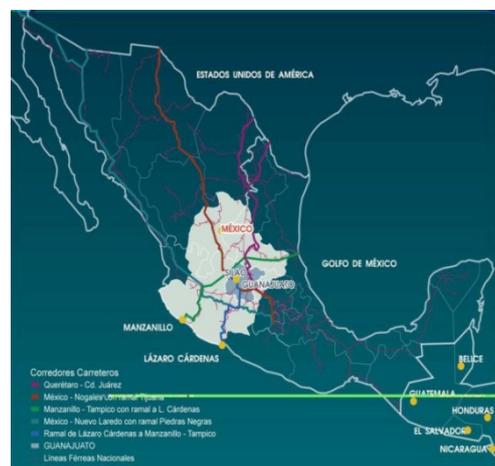
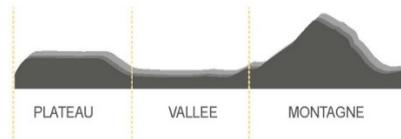
This economic role is reinforced by the region's integration with the rest of the continent. The state is indeed at the crossroads of the main motorways from north to south (Mexico City/ Nuevo León - Ciudad Juárez / United States) and from east to west (Manzanillo / Guadalajara / León / San Luis Potosí / Tampico).

A freight railway line also runs along this north-south passageway.

The state is keenly aware that this location is one of its key assets. The Inland Port project (the port was built in 2006), as well as the project which concerns the development of an intercity train network, are both designed to take advantage of this position.



Altitude maximale: 2900 m
Altitude minimum: 1000 m



The existence of León airport (in the Silao municipality) further reinforces this strong integration with the rest of the continent.

HISTORY, ECONOMY AND URBAN EVOLUTION

The history of the MAL can be understood, in the more distant as well as recent past, according to the rhythm of its economic development.

At each one these successive steps a dominant **enterprise or industry** is linked to a specific **scale of influence**:

- The mining of **precious metals** and a **global** role (with several periods of decline)
- **Small scale development** structured around agriculture and small industry on a **regional** level
- The progressive increase of **industrial activity** and the transportation of the products of this industry by road and railway to a **national** market
- Finally, the recent arrival of multinational companies and mass production, which follows a **global** course

In a more complex history of the MAL, we see that these activities and these scales of influence, rather than replacing each other, added to each other and became superimposed the one on the other.

THE TOWN OF GUANAJUATO AND ITS MINING

The first discoveries of gold in the area of the town of Guanajuato, in 1540, predate by a little the construction of a first fort.

Several periods of mining followed subsequently. Firstly, the mining of gold in the 16th Century, then that of silver in the 18th Century. The town even became the first world centre of silver mining. A very rich industrial town, Guanajuato possesses an important baroque heritage and the remains of mines which still structure the town ('underground' roads installed in the former mining tunnels and the 'Boca del Infierno', a mine shaft, 600m deep). Guanajuato was also witness to events which determined the history of the country.

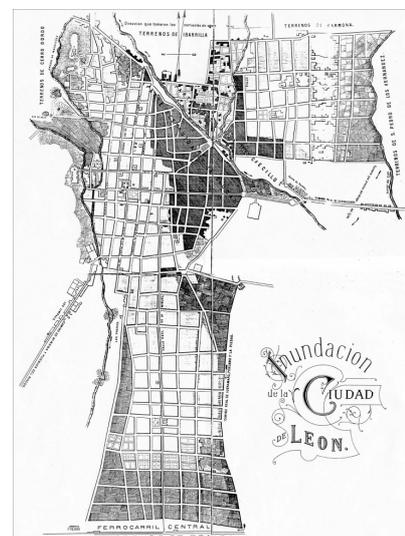
Today, the city is the capital of the state, even if its economy (in which industry still plays a role, while the town is also a centre of academia and education) seems to be overshadowed in comparison with other parts of the conurbation. It is also an important tourist destination.

LEON, ITS AGRICULTURAL ROLE AND ITS FIRST INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

If the founding of León dates from 1576, its official city status goes back to 1830. The original structure of the town resembled a cluster of villages (San Francisco del Rincón or Purísima del Rincón, for example) separated from each other by large farming estates (haciendas). The mountain streams which cross the region from north to south created the first urban framework.

At the moment when the mines in Guanajuato fell into disuse, many of the workers set up home in León. Farming was the main activity until the 18th Century. The importance of livestock farming, and the quantity of skins which this enterprise produced, is obviously linked to the development of this industry in particular.

Agriculture is still an important part of the region, despite the lack of water and urban development.



THE TOWN AND TRANSPORT; ACHIEVING A BALANCE

The development of the leather industry was able to occur because of the introduction of a railway and of modern industrial machinery; the manufacture of shoes greatly developed and the region started to export its products. Since then, the many workshops which have developed in León are a very active part of the industry of the city and influence its identity. León proudly claims the title of 'Capital of Leather and of Shoes'.

The MAL at the start of the 20th Century had the appearance of a conurbation which was generally well-balanced. Different agricultural techniques and the start of an industrial dimension to the city, although it was not concentrated in any one location, were integrated into the urban framework. This complex economic fabric became influential on a national level.

In 1921, a first aerodrome was opened in the municipality of Silao.



The federal motorway 45, as seen within the municipality of León

URBAN EXPANSION

The substantial demographic growth which Mexico has seen since 1940 (20 million inhabitants in 1940, 50 in 1970 and 115 today; across the same period the population of a country like France has only doubled) has been accompanied by a significant movement of urbanisation, which is the consequence of the rural exodus (today, the urbanisation rate of Mexico is 75%). Mexican towns have seen significant growth (Mexico City was even presented at the start of the 80s as the largest city in the world) which has been accompanied by an explosion in the surface area of cities. Each time the population doubled, the amount of space which was part of a city was multiplied by a factor between 6 and 10.

This national movement of sprawling was above all concentrated in the MAL around the town of León. Reaching and then surpassing the rate of a million inhabitants from 1995 onwards, the town progressively reached its natural boundaries: the hills and the plateaus to the north-east and north-west.

The phenomenon of urban sprawl in Mexico was here, as it was elsewhere, characterised by two movements which brought about profound imbalances and inequalities. Whilst the richest members of the city population moved further out so as to benefit from more agreeable living environments, according to the same model as has been identified in American urban sprawl, many of the less wealthy members of society also contributed to this sprawling, as they came to set up home on the peripheries of areas which had already been urbanised. Most often, they resorted to a very primitive style of urbanisation. The growth of unstable housing was thus established according to a concentric zone model, from the centre towards the extremities (rings of poverty). In contrast to this, affluent housing grew up in areas chosen because of their natural surroundings which increased their value, and sometimes took the form of groups of buildings which were shut off from the rest of the town (fraccionamientos).

The consequences of this form of development have been a relative decline in the historic centre and an increase in journeys across the city and journey times.

THE MAL, THE PLAYGROUND OF GLOBALISATION?

On 1st January 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA; in French, l'Accord de libre-échange nord-américain, ALÉNA; and in Spanish, Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte, TLCAN) came into effect, and created an area of free trade between the United States, Canada and Mexico. That same year, a huge factory owned by the business General Motors was opened in the municipality of Silao.

The installation of this factory brought a new dimension to the MAL, turning it in reality into a conurbation corresponding to a modern economic sphere, and forming part of the economic movement of the continent.

Not far from the new International Airport of Bajío (which replaced the former airport of León and was opened on 22nd February 1991) a new major piece of infrastructure was opened in 2006. Situated in the centre of Mexico, Guanajuato Inland Port (or GTO Inland Port) is a dry port. It provides companies with a space in which they can install factories or which they can use for sorting out the logistical aspects of their operations. It has connections to different industrial parks, Santa Fe 1 and 2. The last ten years, different foreign and local businesses have established themselves in Santa Fe industrial park, where there are businesses like Toyota, Volkswagen, Pirelli, as well as the key Mexican producers of leather like Flexy or Emyco.

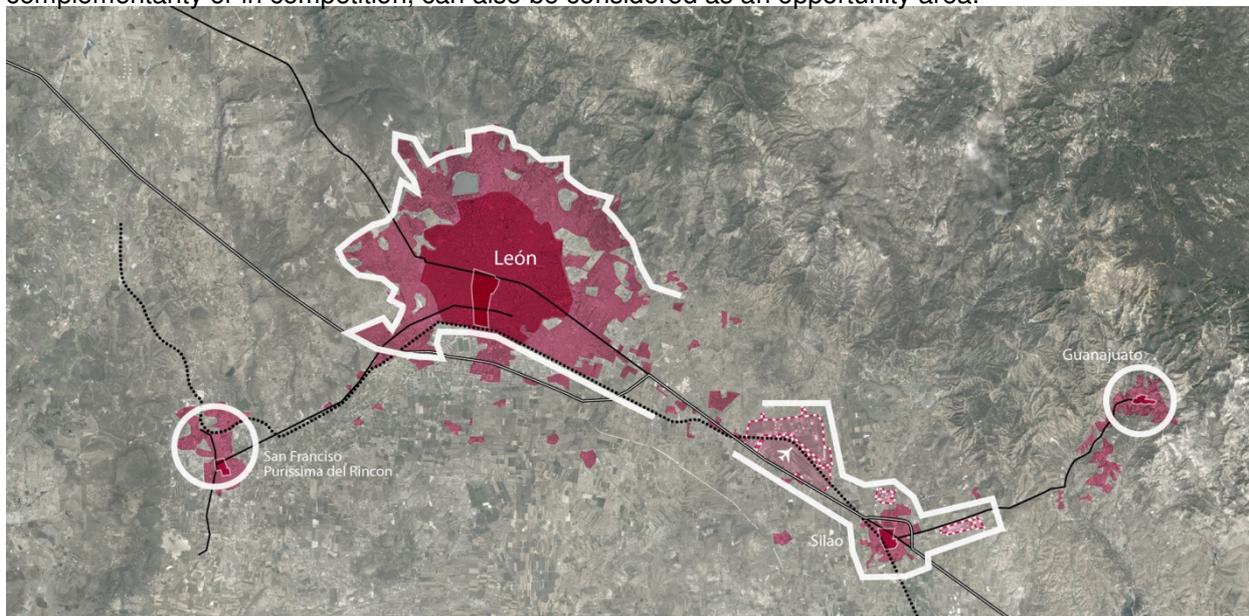
With advantageous fiscal regulations (the Free Trade Zone), shared facilities to deal with logistics, various available services (crèche, conference rooms, shops and restaurants, medical centres, and recreational activities...) this piece of infrastructure – which is extensive and closed off from the outside world – is a desirable model. With poor links to the rest of the city, shut off and at a distance, this space is only accessible by private bus lines or shuttles made available by the employers.

THE METROPOLIS : AN AREA OF OPPORTUNITIES?

Final element to date in the evolution of this area, these unifunctional, themed sectors are the global side of the MAL. Installed largely in the municipality of Silao (like the airport) this major new economic development has created a lack of balance in the conurbation.

The metropolis is not here defined as a central city, where major functions of the city (political, economic, and cultural) are concentrated and which has an inter-dependence with peripheral areas, but rather as an archipelago of contrasting places and sectors, complementary but also sometimes in competition with each other.

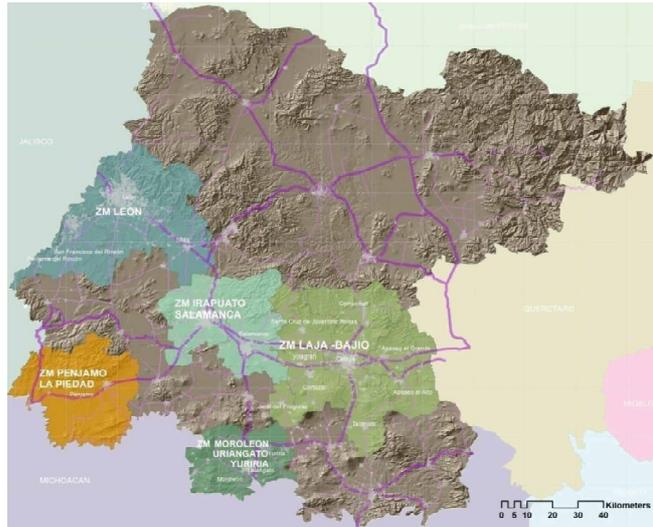
The existing metropolis could be considered as “imbalanced”. Yet, this specialization of the polarities, in complementarity or in competition, can also be considered as an opportunity area.



GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

THE ECHELONS OF POWER IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF MEXICO

The Federal Republic of the United States of Mexico is made up of 31 states, and one Federal District. The authorities which control the planning and provision of resources to cities and conurbations are thus distributed across three echelons of power: federal (infrastructure in terms of roads, electricity, pipelines, specific programmes like the DUIS), state (transport, drinking water) and municipal (bypasses, public spaces, planning permission).



The 5 metropolitan areas of the state of Guanajuato

A WAY OF GOVERNING WHICH ALLOWS LONG TERM URBAN PLANNING?

The federal governments and the states are elected for a non-renewable term of six years, the municipal governments for three years (elected members cannot be re-elected but a member of the same party can succeed). This democratic originality sometimes causes a lack of coherence and a lack of continuity in public policies concerning urban planning on the long term. The issue is not so much that of the length of the mandate but rather that of the lack of existence of institutions or tools which could exist independent of the time of a mandate and create long term policies concerning the planning of the area. What tools are necessary to allow long-term urban planning?

GOVERNING CITIES: LACK OF UNITY IN MANAGEMENT BETWEEN COMMUNITIES OR WITHIN THE CITY

In Mexico there are 56 metropolitan areas, defined on a federal level since 2004. The state of Guanajuato is composed of 48 municipalities, and brings together 5 of these metropolitan areas: the MA León; MA Moroleón - Uriangato - Yuriria; MA La Piedad - Pénjamo; MA Laja - Bajío; MA Irapuato Salamanca. The Metropolitan Area of León – in which León is the main city – is made up of 1.8 million inhabitants (2010) and of 4 municipalities León, Purísima del Rincón, San Francisco del Rincón, and Silao.

There are no specific institutions which bridge the gaps between the different communities in the Metropolitan areas, and which would be able to take charge of the planning on a metropolitan scale. As a result, nowadays the federal fund for cities (which is the only concrete means which is in place) does not create projects which would unite the different administrative elements of the metropolitan areas, but is simply shared out between the different municipalities it supports, without any shared project. Paradoxically, the amount provided by this fund, provided by the federation, depends upon the municipalities' capability to propose shared projects (despite the absence of any specific institution for this purpose). It is for this reason that certain municipalities within the same Metropolitan Zone are looking to work together.

In the case of the MAL, there is thus a strong desire of the different municipalities to collaborate and to embark on projects together, but there is a lack of tools to help them think about connections between communities. The planning institutes of different municipalities (IMPLAN in León, IMPLUS in Silao, the urban development offices in San Francisco and in Purísima del Rincón, as well as IPLANEG on a state level) are trying to face this question of the conurbation and to imagine shared projects, but find themselves faced with a lack of legitimacy, in the absence of an intermediary institution on a city-wide scale.

Housing policies : framework at the national and municipal levels

Mass horizontal social housing construction was supported during the two past presidential governments (2000-2006 et 2006-2012) in order to reduce the structural deficit of housing in Mexico. The federal government initiated an incentive system of loans and subsidies that gave its national “tone” to this development. Although the National Development Plan of the last six years clearly focuses on objectives of densification strategies, compact and vertical city organized around public spaces, the local interventions are not made according to this model.

In order to try to clarify this sensitive issue and give to the participants some references about the housing production phenomenon in Mexico and about the specific cases of the “fraccionamientos”, specific data have been added at the end of this document.

KEY ISSUES

1. THE HUMAN FACTOR IN THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONURBATION

When considering the current manner in which the MAL is developing, it is possible to see a break between the proposed model for the city and the ways in which its inhabitants live.

The first issue to be considered in the workshop will be how to allow the inhabitants a more substantial appropriation of their territory so they can live in a fairer way, in accordance with their values, their historic or symbolic identities: promoting a development orientated towards a development of the 'human factor'.

The deterritorialised *fraccionamientos* are signs of the break mentioned above. These spaces which are made uniform and standardised are at the origin of a social segregation which is contrary to the cohesion necessary for the wellbeing of inhabitants.

In the same way, different urban functions (transport, economic activities, housing...) which are disconnected from each other are the fruit of responses to specific, isolated problems, which ignore the place of the inhabitant in his or her environment.

By way of consequence, we can identify importance structural failures in the composition of the urban framework: isolated parts of the city, which become caught up in an unplanned development which creates residential areas without the public facilities or open spaces necessary for a good quality of life and for the wellbeing of the inhabitants.



The mass production of housing is organised around low-cost models which fail to take into account the human dimension and the social conditions of the inhabitants. These great residential complexes are isolated and not integrated into a wider urban system.

Often in the areas of the *fraccionamientos*, housing is daily abandoned by people and families who are forced into making long daily journeys because of the separation of different functions in the city space. In León, self constructed and informal neighbourhoods are sometimes aggregated around those places. Those "polygons of poverty", spread on the fringe of the urban area, are identified as opportunity places.

In placing the inhabitant back at the heart of the planning of the town, it is possible to create a new model for the city, by considering both the wider picture and the detail, and through an all-encompassing vision, which looks towards the long term.

2. THE CITY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The current metropolitan system, just like the current urban developments, does not always fit with the area which surrounds the MAL, its surroundings or its specific landscape. The values of the conurbation as regards the environment or the landscape are important to examine.

Different urban situations are present in the MAL:

- San Francisco del Rincón and Purísima del Rincón, a conurbation formed by two municipalities, preserve a sense of local character and a relationship with the area and the environment. Open spaces are valued and special care has allowed the towns to continue their farming enterprises (which has yet not restricted other economic activities).
- The town of Silao, comparable thirty years ago to San Francisco and Purísima, has recently seen a very different evolution. Many developments and infrastructures have successively been created and added to each other on the local level, with a rapid growth in economic activity within the global environment. The areas where development has occurred and the industrial parks create a break with the area's natural landscape and environment.
- León is nowadays experiencing a development which reduces and even erases its relationship to the space around it.

In certain mountainous areas, the urban structures seem to scale the topography, transform the territory and upset certain balances: the vegetation, the runoff streams from the mountain, or even the nature of the ground.

To the east, the connection with Silao is being constructed through a chain-like series of large, closed-off housing complexes (*fraccionamientos*) which fail to take into account the values of the location and its environmental qualities. In a region where water is scarce, a horizontal model of urban growth has nonetheless been privileged.

It is essential for the improvement and the planning of the MAL that it concentrates on potential developments which take into account the nature of the locations, the availability of resources and the ecological balance.

In a sustainable model of development, the process of urban development should understand and integrate the conditions of the area's ecological system as well as preserve the values related to the area's culture and landscape which define the location and its inhabitants.



Spaces which evoke the central elements of the urban centres of the MAL. Parks and humid areas; public and outdoor spaces, water networks with their specific vegetation.

3. RELATIONSHIP TO SPACE, USE OF THE LAND

The phenomenon of sprawling and imbalance which has dominated the last few years has been accompanied by a massive and uncontrolled occupation of the land. The relationship to space and to the earth has only been considered according to a commercial dimension; as if space were a limitless resource. Former customs have been replaced by a single value: that of trade.

This mercantile attitude, which is linked to a system of excessive consumption, has led to a significant waste of space. Urban sprawl has created a fragmented space, a mosaic, where developments are spaced out from each other, and has led to the existence of fallow land and derelict areas in the gaps between developments.

From the perspective of sustainable development, the space cannot be considered only in terms of mercantile value. It is important to consider its characteristics as a limited resource with its own social, ecological, cultural, manufacturing and economic values. The value of space cannot be reduced to its price, but is rather associated to the special qualities of the space and the uses to which it is put.

Any given space is a part of its area (in terms of its geography, ecology, cityscape, topography, and connections to other spaces) and has its own characteristics, its advantages and disadvantages. We cannot simply adapt any place to make it fit whatever we want it to.

We must consider each place in terms of what makes it different, special, so we can create a sense of coherence in space, in time, and within the wider area. As opposed to the « fraccionamientos » model, we could instead speak of its opposite: of un-fractionising. In other words, each space (whether agricultural, natural, built upon or not) participates in the balance and the coherence of the area (both natural and urbanised).

These balances are also part of a dynamic which concerns the future. For example, is a space fallow land in which we should invest? Or natural space which should be reconquered?

The current waste in real estate in the MAL has multiplied spaces which have little built upon them, and has privileged a 'porous' development, made up of gaps. This fallow land, these gaps, these spaces which were formerly occupied, constitutes a strategic issue for the future: a wealth of real estate and the unique opportunity to re-orientate the matrix of development so as to encourage new links between areas.

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

We think that the workshop should allow us to take a new look at how the earth is being used. So that this vision can be shared, it is important to use a shared vocabulary when speaking about fallow land in cities.

Depending on its location, fallow land can be intraurban or peri-urban (metropolitan), built upon or not built upon. On all scales, fallow land serves as a sort of boundary or interspace. We can depend upon the following definitions:

Brownfield Land: An area on which there are abandoned industrial or commercial facilities, properties or buildings which are not used, ruins without any use.

Taking responsibility for a brownfields site necessitates some sort of change to be made to the site, and particular attention to be paid to the possible pollution which may have deteriorated the site.



Example of a brownfield site

Greenfield Land: Ground which has not been built upon in a city or on the edge of a city. A Greenfield site can as well be farming land as just a part of the natural landscape. It can also be used for an agricultural estate which is not in use, or open space which has never been built upon.

These areas may have been identified as spaces which may be used for future urban development. This 'green fallow' can also thus consist in plots of land which can be developed. It may also constitute properties which are closed off, with access to them controlled, protected by governments or by private owners.



A greenfield site in the MAL

Greyfield Land: Land which is used for economically obsolete activities. The term is often used to describe retail sites which were formerly viable (shopping centres, for example) which suffer from a lack of maintenance and investments and find themselves outclassed by new competition. These spaces have strong potential when it comes to converting or transforming them (they generally have large surface areas which include parking spaces, and sometimes have a central position) and they can prompt urban development and change on a wider scale.

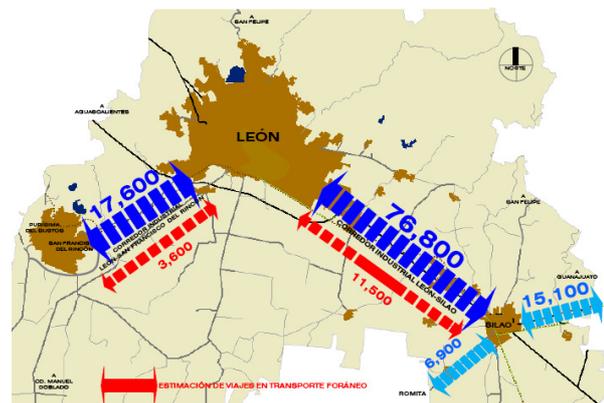
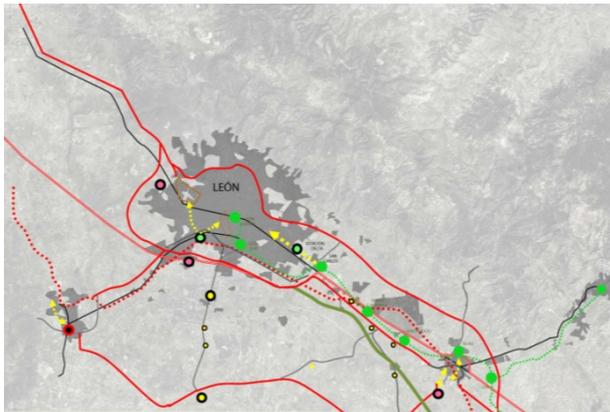
4. LEÓN, THE HOME OF CAR MANUFACTURING

The car industry is particularly important within the panorama of economic activities in the MAL, in particular in the municipality of Silao. General Motors, Pirelli and Volkswagen, to name but a few, have factories there. The identity of the region is inseparable from the car industry, as the industry defines the region through the way it creates jobs, through the processes of urban development initiated by it and through the creation of an urban culture closely linked to the use of cars.

The city of León has, in the past, shown itself capable of developing a pioneering model of a transport network through its system of public transport in the urban areas, with its articulated buses (Optibus) and the Integrated Transport System (SIT) which complements it, through its servicing operations and network of transfer stations. Notably, there is also a network of cycle lanes which has developed in line with the population's growing interest in cycling.

However, the scope of these initiatives is limited when we consider the impact that the use of the car has on urban development – as cars discourage the pedestrian (through the existence of busy avenues, highways, parking areas). It can also be seen that various other issues associated with the current mechanisms of urban development are also linked to the issue of transport and mobility (narrow pavements, roads which are impractical, paths which peter out, the diversion of the Motorway 45 etc).

Has the public transport project, based on new developments and innovations, already been undermined?



Plans taken from the Study of the Transport System around the industrial axis of the federal Motorway 45 in the state of Guanajuato.

The plans included here sketch some of the infrastructure projects developed in the MAL, which could be debated over the course of the workshop (around the theme of mobility and transport).

How is it best to respond to the issue of road congestion in the town of León? Is it desirable to construct a new ring road on the agricultural plain between Silao and San Francisco and Purísima, when there is already a first ring road around the urban area of León (a road which is still unfinished)?

Mobility and transport is a major structuring dimension of the area and taking it into account could help to change the urban model.

This issue must be considered on different levels:

- *The connection between León and Silao*
- *The reaffirmation and improvement of infrastructure in central parts of the urban spaces*
- *Improving the space destined for pedestrians, and increasing its size*
- *The connection between the urban framework and infrastructure*
- *Organisation and urban planning, new areas for development etc*

Systems and networks which can be installed cheaply and would provide a significant added value should perhaps be given extra attention.

5. THE METROPOLITAN PROJECT

The conurbation provides the cross-disciplinary aspect of this workshop. It gives us the sphere in which we can reflect upon the issues and a possible matrix in which we can interpret the urban phenomena present in the area. The objective is, through looking at different themes, to discover the conditions necessary for a future comprehensive and shared development in the area.

In this way, the current tendencies in the way development is occurring in different areas must be well understood. Different forces are at work which both bring the areas closer together and distance them from each other. It is only by understanding the forces and acting upon them that an authentic and inclusive metropolitan project becomes possible.

THE CURRENT TENDENCIES IN DEVELOPMENT

León – filled space or 'porous' city?

The city of León has reached its natural limits: to the north, hills which are too precarious to build on, and/or which are protected and to the south, major infrastructure (motorway and railway).

This accelerated sprawling has created a great demand for travel. The basic structure of the town (boulevards which cut across each other and the ring road) partially facilitates this coming and going. Outside of the centre, urban spaces conceived with the car as the means of transport are the most common.

The development of the city has occurred according to a philosophy of division, where many areas are little inhabited. This division seems to prevent social integration and the integration of different functions of the city.

This development which occurs without overall planning has created numerous empty spaces within the urban area of León. These spaces without any building or investment can serve however as a strategic reserve of space: areas which can be built upon in the future, or not, as required.

The city has an important heritage of buildings and constructions (whether qualitative or not) and the question of urban regeneration is raised: should more of the city be built on top of what already exists, so as to allow a town to evolve where the housing spaces are integrated with the small and medium sized industrial sites which are part of the city?

The city of León is known for its innovation in the sphere of transport (BRT) – what redevelopment is possible to match and maintain this high level of ambition?



León from the footbridge which extends from la Calzada de Los Héroes

Silao - change on a dramatic level

The small town of Silao, in the construction one after the other of the international airport, the XXL factories and a series of parks for international businesses, has seen a dramatic change of scale. The new developments hold no relation to the original town. If we look at figures, the development is impressive, but on the ground, it's the sense of fragmentation and of a break or gap which dominates. This issue can thus in part be seen simply by looking at the town of Silao.



Silao, General Motors' factory, as seen from the motorway, in the direction of the town of Guanajuato.

The industrial corridor: development already underway

At the same time, it is clear that this international industrial heartland is a key part of the MAT. The question of its integration with the conurbation and the geographical (and political) tension between the towns of León and Silao is raised.

This integration and the possibility of the towns working together and complementing each other has been envisaged through the idea of the 'Industrial corridor of the Bajío'. In this strategic vision, an economic development which relies on infrastructure and is realised at the level of the MAL and the state of Guanajuato is envisaged. This vision is already a tangible reality and there are already real projects underway: new industrial parks, the project of an urban framework and connection between León and Silao, the project of a new 'boulevard' or even an inter-urban train linking the two towns and allowing access to Mexico City and Guadalajara too.

These projects will not be realised in the short term but the question of the reinforcement of this economic motor has already been raised.

San Francisco/Purísima del Rincón : development and the landscape

The two towns of San Francisco del Rincón and Purísima del Rincón are located on the Bajío plain. Their recent development has transformed them a single urban area. They share the same centre but their respective peripheral areas develop in different directions. The question of their integration is raised.



Farming land in San Francisco / Purísima del Rincón

Medium-sized and having maintained a co-existence with the surrounding natural landscape, these towns provide a real quality of life.

The continual growth of their peripheral areas, the pollution of the ground and the drying up of the region imperils this balance. What development is possible so as to preserve and yet at the same time reinvent the defining features of this area and this co-existence with the landscape? How can we make this double town into 'a capital of the plain'?

Other polarities outside the MAL

The city of Guanajuato, with a rich history, an ancient heritage and international fame is a 'gem' at the heart of the state. Its political and cultural role sets it apart.



Public, pedestrianised space in Guanajuato

If its mountain geography seems to distance it from the world of the plains and the gentle slopes of the MAL. However the question of its possible integration could be raised. What is its relationship with the MAL? What can be shared, what projects involving both cities can be envisaged?

THE METROPOLIS AS AN AREA OF OPPORTUNITIES

The MAL is permeated by urban forces which orientate it towards an ever greater politics of division which pulls at the heterogeneity of the fabrics which make it up.

The strong differences that exist between adjacent sectors can sometimes exacerbate social rivalries. The question of security, very delicate in Mexico (at the levels of mentalities, needs of inhabitants, elected members) can also be connected to the urban matrix and to objective elements of the urban development: nature and conception of the urban elements, models, public spaces, diversity, etc.

The ways in which building occurs privilege a low density of buildings, the distancing of them from each other, and a spacing out of the different functions of the town. A division which is too systematic, the politics of self-segregation, and the accelerated waste of real estate: there is the real possibility that we will see the town lose its natural advantages.

The different areas of the MAL are separate entities, spaces which complement each other, yet sometimes rival each other. The metropolis has become embedded in a schema which is characterised by inequality and a lack of balance, which problematises notions of its coherence and its relevance.

The actual situation of the metropolis can be considered according to two strategic dimensions for the future.

- an inner imbalance between weak and strong areas, but which could be a development engine if we link the characteristics of the different areas and we work on the coherence between them.
- an important opportunity area and possible projects that could support the coherence of the metropolis.



A 'porous' conurbation

THE CONURBATION OF LEON : CONCEPT OR PROJECT?

The urban areas of different towns in the MAL are disparate and the logic behind their layout cannot be understood intuitively. The history of the arrangement of these spaces is a mix of different dynamics, different rhythms, and different scales.

As a consequence, the area of the MAL is highly heterogeneous and the question of the coherence of the conurbation is one of the starting points of the upcoming workshop.

If the urban space of León is clearly a residential area, the question of its true nature as a city is still raised.

Traditionally, a conurbation defines a territory which is organised around a central point which has an organisation role as regards the rest of the surrounding region, most of the time according to the classical model of the relationship between the centre and its peripheries.

In the MAL, the administrative, cultural and economic functions are disassociated from each other. The most important town demographically does not occupy a simple central position. Economic pre-eminence is thus shared with the city of Silao. This lack of focus generates an internal imbalance in the MAL which exacerbates certain rivalries. This difficulty in truly comprehending where the power lies in the area means that certain stakeholders are inclined to claim that the conurbation of León is perhaps a **concept** without a material reality.

What this workshop could perhaps bring about is the reintroduction of the notion of a shared project. The MAL could thus be a test-case conurbation where the feeling of belonging is based on the principle of **sharing** – sharing of one same desire or vision or of the management of a **common good**.

WHAT SHARED PROJECTS?

Transport, economy, landscape, habitat, environment – the things which are shared are numerous.

Across the course of the workshop, one of the issues at stake will perhaps be to commit to these notions and these ideas so as to rethink identities and imagine a situation where things are shared.



A shared landscape?

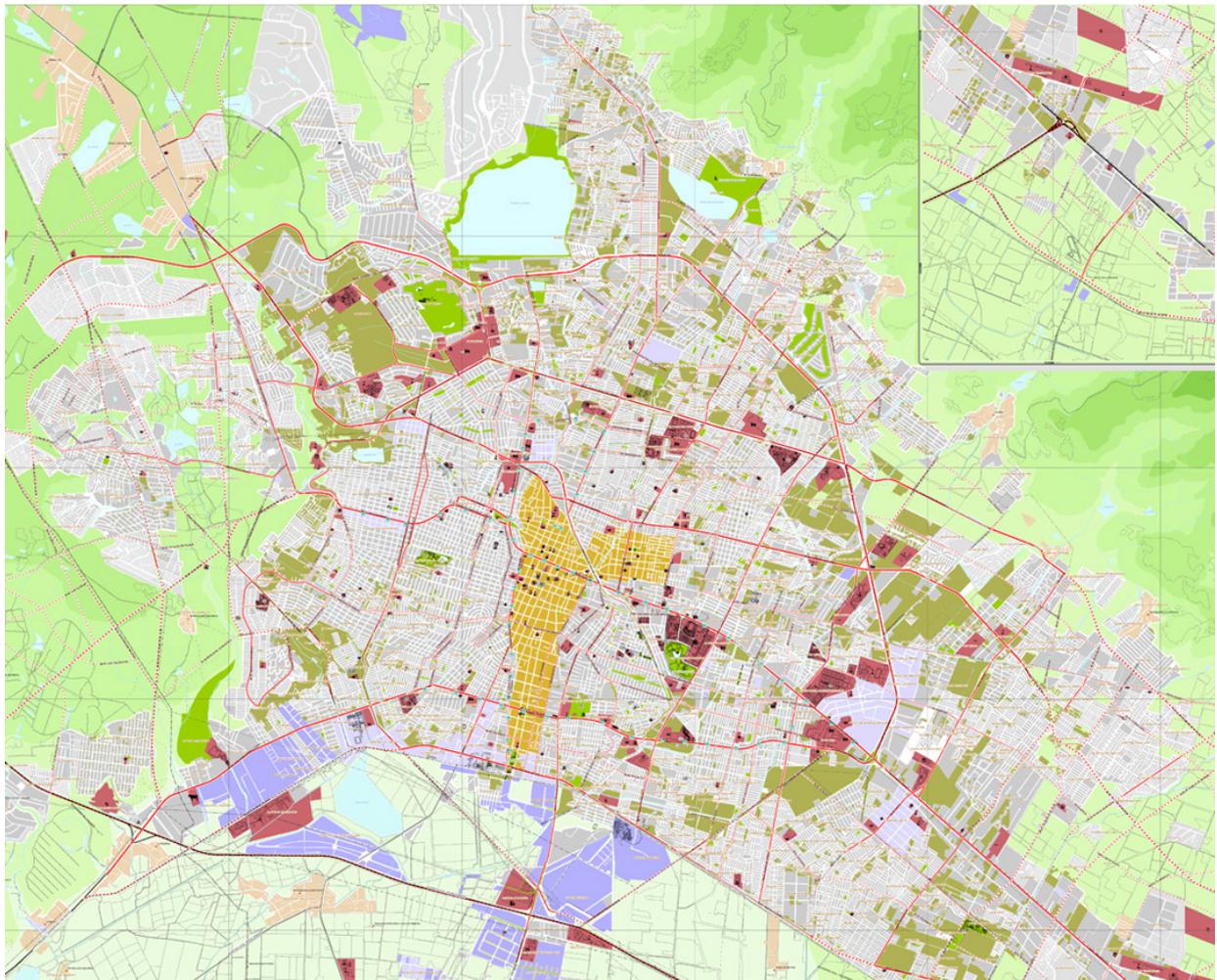
THE AIMS OF THE WORKSHOP

The aim of the workshop, to continue what has been said thus far, is to rethink certain aspects of the construction of the conurbation. It will be a case of understanding the different dynamics which are present and the relationships between the different towns which form a sort of urban constellation, so as to be able to realise the proposals and projects which might be the first step to the MAL being able to identify what it shares.

The desire for a vision and a shared set of ideas (about a common good) requires an ensemble vision, an interpretation and response which, bird-like in its freedom, will allow for the emergence of a new perception of the area and a new approach.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

So as to achieve this, the idea is to work on ideas for the fallow land and the residual and intermediary spaces (between the pieces of the jigsaw or the functionalist mosaic which constitute the urban areas of the MAL). As has been mentioned before (as the third key issue) this as much includes the areas which formerly played a commercial role or had some sort of use (with or without traces of buildings, and spaces which are not currently being used or are in a process of transformation) as it does farming lands or simple open fallow land which has remained unused in the middle of an environment which in contrast has developed. In all cases, it is a question of spaces which have a great potential to be transformed. Beyond potential uses or projects, it will be important to imagine the mobilisation of these spaces so as to propose new connections and new relationships which could rejuvenate the conurbation: the whole through the parts.



Map of the municipality of León, dating from January 2012, in which the areas which are fallow land appear in dark green – the surface area of these spaces is an estimated 2.376ha.

The term *terrain vague* is useful. It constituted one of the four thematic axes of the congress organised by the International Union of Architects (UIA) in 1996.

The *terrain vague* refers to absence within a contemporary metropolis. Nowadays, changes made to the existing city, in its residual spaces, in its gaps, do not bring satisfying and effective solutions, in line with the model of the enlightened tradition of the modern movement.

How can the architect work in a *terrain vague* without architecture becoming an aggressive instrument of power and abstraction? Doubtless, through paying attention to continuity: not the continuity of the planned city, efficient and legitimate, but the city of movement, of different energies, of rhythms established by time as it unfolds and the loss of boundaries... We should tackle the question of the residual spaces in the contemporary metropolis with a contradictory complicity which should not override the elements which maintain its continuity in time and space.

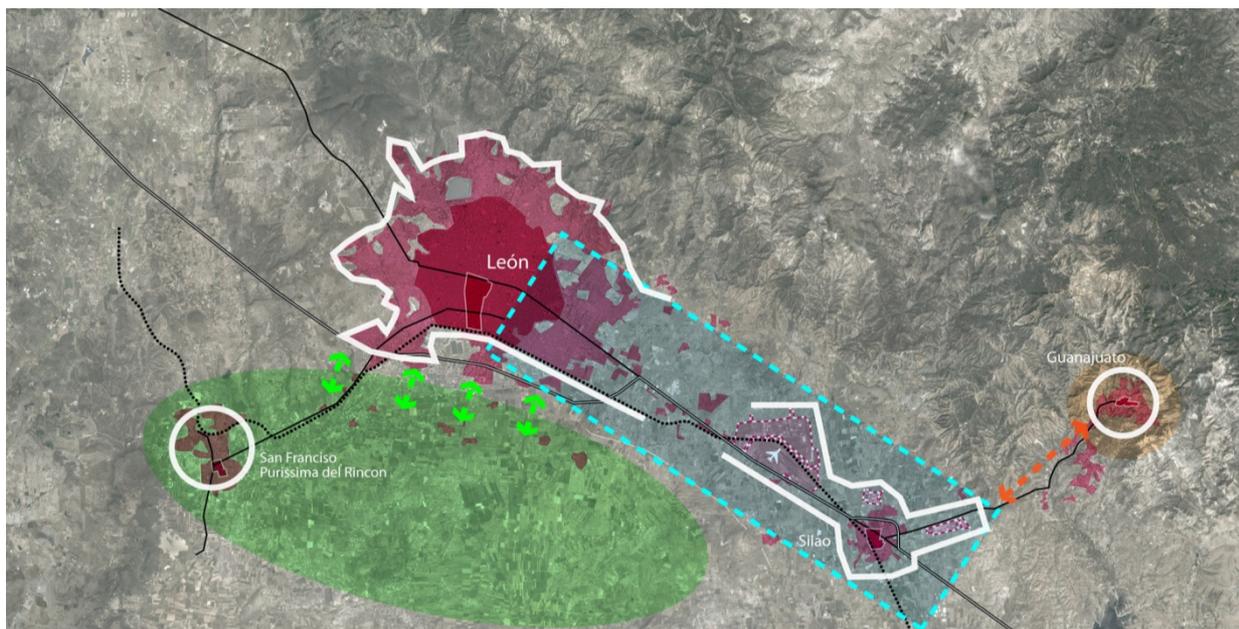
Beyond a purely structuralist approach which identifies the city and its functions in the most classical manner (roads, green spaces, buildings etc), and beyond a simple analysis of public spaces and indeed beyond simply identifying the spaces to which fallow land could be linked, it is here a question of taking advantage of this workshop so as to identify concrete proposals for how transformation can happen.

The urban project can thus be located in a perspective which is both more strategic and more concrete, through interventions which would work like acupuncture, restructuring and reconstructing on a large scale the urban body.

We can here make a comparison with football, by citing a famous town-planner who says that a good football player should consider two dimensions at the same time: firstly, he must clearly know his position on the pitch, and secondly, and most importantly, he must know how to manage in the short term and within a short distance. The short term aspect must at the same time take into account the long term.

IDEAS AND APPROACHES

As a form of preparation, we have identified three situations or three areas to think about which relate to the general theme of urban fallow land and urban derelict areas identified in the MAL.



Plan representing the three areas to think about

The urban framework and central points

Simply within the León area itself there are 55,000 spaces intended for housing which are vacant, and a little more than 2400 ha of ground are fallow land (a total which could contain urban development for the next ten years).

León, like Silao (and San Francisco and Purísima to a lesser extent) has experienced during the last ten years a process of (in some cases, informal) development which has consumed space particularly rapidly and which has led to an insufficient number of green spaces, of facilities, and in certain cases, of basic services (roads, infrastructure, networks).

Finally, the car continues to occupy a hegemonic position in terms of urban mobility.

New mechanisms must be proposed – mechanisms which would allow the improvement of the existing town and will bring a new way of looking at urban development, and new possibilities within this sphere.

The León – Silao passageway

It is towards the east of the urban area of León that the town has experienced the most important development, amorphous and without any order, which contrasts with the development which has taken place on the slopes of the mountains. As opposed to the structure of the fragmented plots of land and of the runoff water, here is a boundary which is scattered and open, as is illustrated by certain road axes (with the closing of the Alonso Torres bypass, or with the road which extends the Boulevard de La Luz right up to Duarte). A growth which is orientated in the direction of Silao.

A few kilometers away, in the municipality of Silao, we encounter an urban structure on another scale entirely, with its own characteristics, its own economic and social structure, its own logic. An urban mosaic which is constantly in a process of transformation and evolution, in which the unpredictable position of the different pieces leaves room for residual spaces. There are situations which are radically different from each other. The Inland Port, as we have seen, is subdivided into large polygon shapes, and takes advantage of its strategic location between the railway line and the international airport of Guajuato. This can be contrasted with the example of the aquatic park 'Splash', with its scattered structure and lack of focus, built, as it is, on both sides of the Motorway 45. Two different situations, two realities which exist however side by side (connected by the Motorway 45) at the same time co-habiting and seeming to ignore each other. We thus have at the same time land which is abandoned, a strong market for real estate, and a rapid process of development which tends to transform the relationships between local and global and a process which is composed of different forms of development, often disconnected from each other, without the underlying support of an overall plan which could help to take advantage of this area which lies between León et Silao.

In this peripheral area, the town's outer area, places seem to dissolve. The image which this area gives off is not only that of an empty space, waiting for something, but above of that of a chaotic space which lacks organisation, which is composed of a string of elements which form a sort of agglomeration but which lack cohesion. It is not the definition of the individual pieces which must here be taken into account but rather the relationship between these different pieces.

Symbiosis between Purísima / San Francisco del Rincón et León

The team of the research trip highlighted the contrast between León's urban framework (in particular the industrial area dominated by leather and shoe manufacture at Torres Landa junction of the motorway, and further off, to the south-east) and that of San Francisco and Purísima (via the industrial developments which are present all along the road, in particular the Central Chemical Factory of Mexico).

In the case of San Francisco and Purísima, we can discover central urban spaces which exist on a more human scale and integration with the natural environment. The place has a more local character, a smaller scale but one which is anchored within its location, and in particular its agricultural land.

The northern area of León which forms the connection between the city of León and San Francisco – Purísima, even if it seems to have all the characteristics of a quiet residential town, still functions on metropolitan scale and is linked with the rest of the MAL, in particular if we consider the large agricultural plain to the south which already constitutes a shared asset for the conurbation. These connections on this metropolitan scale are also clearly visible with the proliferation of economic activities along the road (and the railway) which links San Francisco – Purísima to the city of León (without forgetting the role of the train itself and of goods transport via the railway which brings the area into play on a national scale). The way of thinking which the workshop hopes to bring about looks at all of these connections and relationships.

Projects involving these areas in the periphery could combine the key conditions of autonomy and efficacy, by seeing empty spaces as potentially interesting areas for development, because of how conspicuous they are (they could thus be pilot-projects) and because of their ecological characteristics and their role within the landscape.

QUESTIONS OPEN TO PARTICIPANTS

- How is it best to construct a conurbation? What types of projects should be employed? What common goods are there?
- How can we bring about the birth of the vision of a city as a shared space? (In terms of landscape, environment, resources etc)
- What should transport be like, on a large scale? What central urban spaces should there be?
- The economy of the MAL: How can sustainable economic development be brought about? (Relationships between different economic spheres, the importance of all scales of economic activities, of symbioses, of the diversity of functions)
- How can changes be brought to the existing area? How can the new social housing complexes which are on the peripheries of the town and which have been abandoned or are in the process of being abandoned be transformed? How can we intervene so as to improve and integrate the areas of housing which are often unstable, temporary, which tend to be on the periphery?
- How to involve the inhabitants into the transformation of the city ?
- Urban culture and development: What should be the model for development? What should be the way of life? How can we create an environment which encourages local urban culture to emerge, which is well integrated with its location and the surrounding area, and is not simply based upon imported models?
- What should be done with derelict spaces, residual spaces? How can fallow land be reclaimed, how can the gaps within the city's framework be used – spaces which are currently only spaces in-between other things, and not spaces in their own right? Could these places be a tool employed for the restructuring of the area and a way of creating coherence within the area on a metropolitan scale?
- What new relationships between different spaces, both urban and non-urban, are being established? What continuities and discontinuities will there be?
- What morphological system will these create? What typological models can be invented and applied?

BASIC INFORMATION

IMPLAN AND IPLANEG: THE ORGANS OF MANAGEMENT

DECENTRALISED PLANNING ORGANISATIONS

IMPLAN in León (Municipal Institute for Town Planning), as well as IPLANEG (Institute for Town Planning in the State of Guanajuato) are decentralised organisations of town planning, the management of which does thus not depend on the time scale of political mandates. These organisations have been put in place with the aim of thinking about the planning of the area in the long term, and of responding to the issue of the time limit which controls political mandates and thus the ability of politicians to take responsibility for planning.

IMPLAN in León, with Graciela Amaro Hernández as managing director, was created in 1994 and is known in Mexico for having been the very first municipal institute for town planning, and the pioneer for a long series of IMPLANES been created across the country. As a consequence of its long experience (the institute has existed for almost 20 years) IMPLAN has at its disposition numerous studies, analyses and projects.

IPLANEG, which has Horacio Guerrero García as its managing director, and was created in 2007, is the first and only state planning institution in Mexico. In the absence of management organisations which would plan on the level of the city, it is nowadays IPLANEG which has the most legitimacy to suggest projects for the urban areas of the state of Guanajuato.

PLANS AND STUDIES

A GREAT WEALTH OF STUDIES AND PROJECTS

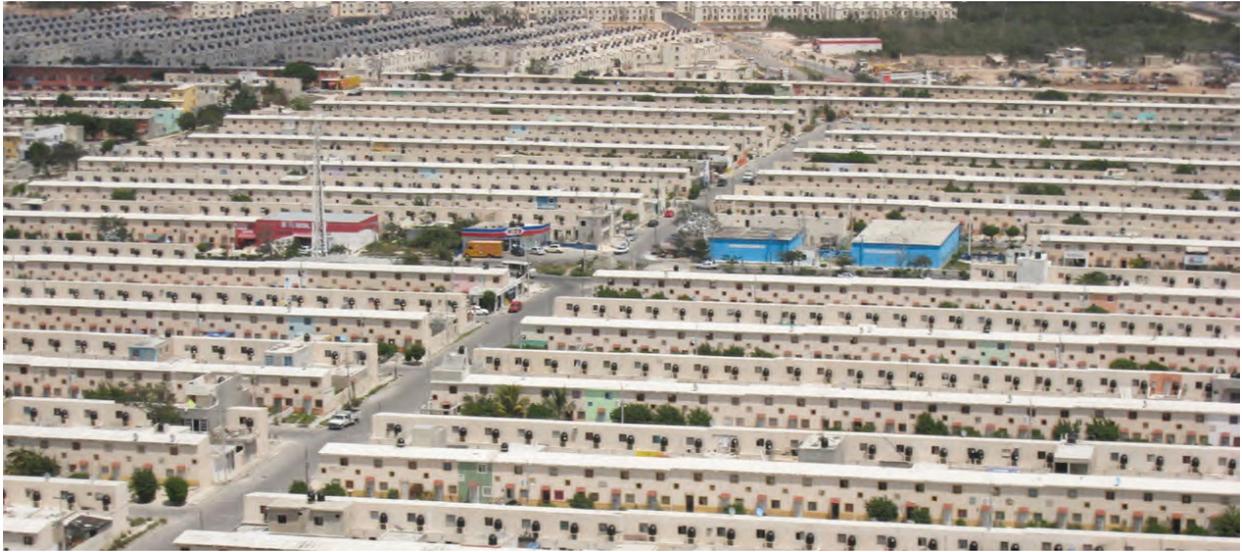
IMPLAN, just like IPLANEG, has conducted a great number of studies and has proposed many projects, within many different aspects of town planning, and which include many different means of intervention. IMPLAN has a 'cartera de proyectos' or portfolio of projects, which gathers together all the projects which have already been realised and which is passed on to each new municipal government. The quantity of projects is enormous, and centres around different issues: transport and mobility (a master-plan of transport, of pedestrianized areas, of the network of cycle lanes); housing (a sector-specific map of housing, interventions in the rings of poverty, partial plans for rural communities); sustainable development (different types of parks, water treatment); economic development (industrial areas, the Adolfo Lopez Mateos corridor, the leather-manufacturing area, the diversifying of local industry, the reinforcement of manufacturing and agricultural commercialisation, any impetus which prompts small and middling businesses); infrastructure and facilities (bypasses, sports facilities, health facilities, community centres).

IPLANEG, in a much shorter time frame, has also developed numerous projects: Plan 2035, a transport plan, ideas for a comprehensive system of community centres, for reinforcing competition in the tourism sector, the agricultural sector, specifically the growth of sweet-corn and cereals, an agro-technology park in Guanajuato, a comprehensive system for the treatment of urban rubbish, the construction of purifying stations, an interurban train and multimodal transport for Guanajuato.

PROJECTS ON PAPER WITHOUT MEANS OF REALISATION

What is very surprising is the gap between the quantity of projects which exist in theory and the state of the places within the metropolitan area of León. These decentralised institutions (IMPLAN and IPLANEG) propose a long term plan and a large number of innovative projects, but find themselves devoid of real decision-making power, and these projects are in general not realised, and remain only ideas on paper. How can these projects be put into practice and thus allow the application of a long term planning strategy?

FRACCIONAMIENTOS



Mass construction of social housing which is invading the peripheral areas of Mexican towns
Source : "Estado de ciudades de México", UN report on living standards, 2011.

DEFINITION

The term 'fraccionamientos' originally designated the division or the 'fragmentation' of large real estate properties. More commonly nowadays, it refers to large, closed off residential complexes, also called 'fraccionamientos cerrados', the access to which is controlled, and which can be seen as the equivalent of 'gated communities'.

The creation of these large residential complexes is the dominant means of creating accommodation and housing in large Mexican cities, both for social housing and for accommodation for the wealthiest classes of society.

THE DOMINANCE OF THE PRIVATE AND THE INEFFICACY OF PLANNING TOOLS

The creation of housing on the peripheries of towns, according to the model of fraccionamientos follows a commercial sort of logic: an increase in the cost of real estate in town centres and the availability of large areas of real estate in the peripheries, which are already controlled by large constructing businesses which, together, have an almost complete monopoly. The construction sector of the economy in Mexico is dynamic and the private sector is powerful, and exerts a strong pressure on public authorities.

The mass-production of social housing, which is one of the key contributory factors of urban sprawl, is encouraged by federal government, because of the financial support of the INFONAVIT (Institution for the National Fund for Housing for Workers - *Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores*) given to construction businesses, and which is dependent on very few regulations, and does not attempt to stop urban sprawl (neither does it include any restrictions specific to each project, depending on the local area where the construction will take place – something which would be necessary in order to fit the project to the area). The municipalities themselves sometimes seem powerless at controlling the phenomenon and at restricting the construction businesses, and give planning *permission*. The lack of dialogues within the different levels in charge of urban planning partly explains some of those contradictions.

URBAN SPRAWL AND LACK OF COHERENCE IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Since the 2000s, Mexico has pushed forward with a social housing policy (through INFONAVIT) which privileges the development of these giant residential complexes, because it wishes to respond to the strong demand for housing on the one hand, and, on the other, to control the urban sprawl of peripheries in areas where housing is often constructed by individuals and is often unstable or temporary. As a result, there has instead been an increase in urban sprawl brought about by mass-construction, with models which are particularly bad at eating up space: private, detached houses, low densities of building within these constructions, and, above all, the localisation of these sites on the peripheries. And this phenomenon is sizable: in the twelve years between 2000 and 2012, there have been 800,000 new units of social housing constructed with the financing of INFONAVIT and by private builders.

The consequences of these developments and of the urban sprawl in general are serious, and we can see major problems occurring: an over-consumption of natural and agricultural spaces and a disruption of the environmental balance; a fragmentation of space and the absence of coherence within a specific area (with isolated areas, and spaces in between different areas which have no apparent role); the excessive distance between business areas and residential areas; the difficulty in responding to the demands for transport; an isolation and segregation of certain zones, which lack facilities, management of public spaces and which are far away from urban services.

Today, it is possible to see clearly the inefficacy of this model through looking at a very concrete phenomenon: the fact that such housing is often uninhabited, abandoned and sometimes never lived it at all.

How can Mexico go about imagining other models for housing and social housing? How can it control the expansion of the urban periphery? How can it integrate and rehabilitate uninhabited housing complexes? How can it learn to privilege the development of residential areas inside the town, and not on the periphery?

A MOSAIC OF IDENTITIES

These ways of using space create an urban and social segregation, with strong contrasts between different areas.

First of all, there is the contrast between formal and informal housing; the two main ways of construction within the town: individuals building their own housing on the one hand, and the construction of *fraccionamientos* (of all sorts) of the other. Even if the social housing policy pursued in the 2000s has allowed the construction of a huge amount of housing, it is still the case that people building their own houses is still a massive phenomenon in urban development, as 40% of the working population are not in formal employment and do not have access to the credit provided by INFONAVIT.

The model of urbanisation of the peripheries creates enclaves, areas closed in on themselves, which have no link (unless a road, and there is only generally only one place from which it can be accessed) with their immediate environment. Rather, they shut themselves off and protect themselves from their context. We thus encounter a situation where there are urban enclaves, with spaces in between which have no clear purpose, and isolated places which divide the space socially: *fraccionamientos* for the wealthy, as well as for the middle-classes, and as a form of social (or 'very social') housing.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANIZATION, LES ATELIERS

A non-profit organisation created in 1982 by town-planners from the New Town Cergy-Pontoise, Les Ateliers is an international network of professionals, academics and policy-makers within the field of town planning.

Focussed upon urban project management, the association organises workshops which are envisaged as a place of working together and group creativity. In France or in other countries, these workshops give project managers an international outlook and provide suggestions which taken into account local policy and strategy and urban development projects. The workshops are also, because of the way they bring together people of different expertise and from different cultures, a place which brings about, on a significant level, a re-assessment of the learning process and of the process of exchange.

In France or other countries, each workshop offers local authorities new and innovative urban development proposals, international experiences and innovative ideas about urban planning problems. At the beginning, les ateliers focused on planning issues for the Paris Ile-de-France region. Then, they developed a very high knowledge in Asia (Tokyo, Doi Tung, Canton, Shanghai, Ho Chi Minh, An Giang, Can Gio, Phnom Penh, Bangkok) and recently diversified their fruitful work combining workshops along the mediterranean Sea (Casablanca, Marseille, Alexandria) and in Africa (Benin, Senegal) and South America (Brasil, Mexico).



The research trip to León, conducted by Les Ateliers

STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop will be organised according to the original method of Les Ateliers, which consists in bringing together, over the course of two weeks, 21 professionals from different countries and jobs, who are divided into three teams of seven participants each, with, in each team, two local professionals, one of whom will be from the state's technical services or in the municipalities of the MAL.

During the first few days, the participants meet each other and visit the town. During the opening ceremony, the local authorities have the opportunity to express directly to participants their concerns about the area and their particular expectations. Afterwards, the team running the workshop announces the three teams, who start to work in a group, without computers. At the end of three days, a forum takes place – an essential moment in the workshop during which the teams present their analyses and their first ideas on projects to the teams and to a local committee which freely reacts to the presentations. The second week, the teams finalise their work, this time using computers, to create a written document and a final presentation to an international jury. The jury at the workshop plays the part of the 'fourth team' and is made up of local representatives, those responsible for urban development, from IPLANEG, IMPLAN, the French Embassy in Mexico, the MAL's partners, and international experts from the network of Les Ateliers. This jury does not have the role of ranking the teams, but rather of responding to the suggestions made by the three teams and of identifying at the heart of each team's work, the aspects of the analyses and of the projects which are the most pertinent for the area and which could be put into practice by local authorities. The workshop is therefore not a competition, since there is neither a prize, nor a market to win. What matters is the ability to create – by working together, first within the team and then with the jury – analyses, news ways of looking at things and potential actions which could readily work within the context of the development of the MAL.

THE WORKSHOP'S SCHEDULE

This schedule is provisional. It may be adapted according to the local schedule and calendar.

Friday 22 st November	Foreign participants arrive in León
Saturday 23 rd November	More participants arrive in León. Visit to the centre and welcome dinner.
Sunday 24 rd November	Introductory Conference and visit of the town.
Monday 25 th November	Themed conferences. Welcome ceremony.
Tuesday 26 th – Thursday 28 th November	Themed conferences, then the teams are announced. Teams work together (without computers)
Friday 29 th November	Forum with local experts and policy-makers
Saturday 30 th November	Free day, with a possible excursion
From Sunday 1 th - Tuesday 3 th December	Further work within teams
Wednesday 4 th December	Written documents are handed in (8 A4 pages + map on A1). <i>The members of the jury arrive. Welcome dinner.</i>
Thursday 5 th December	Final day of work on the projects, with time to practice the oral presentations <i>Jury: visit to the town and conference. Meeting with the committee made up of the workshop organisers and partners</i>
Friday 6 th December	International jury. The teams present, there is a debate, then the jury privately discusses what it has heard. Final evening with the results announced and the prizes awarded.
Saturday 7 th December	Possibility of themed group work in the morning, with professionals from the town, the jury and the participants. Everyone leaves that evening or the following day.

TAKING PART: 22ND NOVEMBER – 6TH DECEMBER

This workshop is aimed at professionals of any age or nationality, who work in or have experience within the field of town planning. People from all disciplines are welcome: architects, sociologists, geographers, landscapers, engineers, economists, artists. It is absolutely necessary to have a mastery of at least two of the following languages: French, Spanish, English. We must also here underline to young professionals and recent graduates that it is unusual to give a place to a candidate who has less than three years of professional experience.

Participants stay in León and will work in the premises provided. A document which presents the context and the existing projects is currently being developed, as is an archive of further documents and maps. Participants receive no remuneration, but the following costs are taken care off: transport costs (within a reasonable scope), accommodation in single rooms, food, interpreters, visits, and the necessary materials for the workshop.

The selection of the 21 participants is conducted by the team organising the workshop, on the basis on the candidates' professional capabilities, their experience on similar topics, their approach to the subject of the workshops, their communication skills (both in terms of language and in terms of their skill at using graphics) and their interest and enthusiasm!

To apply, please send an email by **Sunday 1st September 2013 at the latest** to leon@ateliers.org, with **one single** PDF document (file name: SURNAME_first name) containing the following elements:

- Completed Application form (which can be downloaded from www.ateliers.org)
- CV (1 or 2 pages long)
- One or two pages in which you explain the nature of your interest in participating in the workshop, the skills/ experiences which you can build on, and above all your initial ideas on the topic (either in text form and/or using graphics).

The results of the selection will be announced between two and three weeks later.

For more information: leon@ateliers.org

Pilots: Rémi Ferrand, architect-engineer and Oriol Monfort, architect- town-planner

Assistant Pilots: Thomas Casanova, architect- town-planner, Marion Joly, architect

Supervising the project, from Les Ateliers : Claire Vigé Hélié and Léa Morfousse

www.ateliers.org