Creating the Middle-class Suburban Dream in Mexico City

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to understand a particular form of urban culture, related to the development of Mexico City's suburbs during the late fifties. How the American urban experience influenced the arising suburban culture? What kind of urban imaginary was associated with the new way of life proposed by promoters of modern suburbs? We will try to answer these questions by analyzing the urbanistic ideas made fashionable by those architects who had a forceful influence on the development of the city in the fifties. Secondly, we will review the marketing discourse preferred by promoters of residential developments built in the same period in Mexico City.

Keywords: 1. suburbs, 2. social imaginary,
3. urban marketing, 4. Mexico City.

Resumen. En este artículo tratamos el desarrollo de los suburbios de la Ciudad de México a finales de los cincuenta. ¿De qué manera la experiencia urbana norteamericana influyó en el surgimiento de una cultura suburbana? ¿Qué tipo de imaginario social se encuentra asociado con la nueva forma de vida propuesta por los promotores de los suburbios modernistas? Trataremos de responder a estas preguntas con el análisis de las ideas urbanísticas de moda propagadas por los arquitectos de mayor influencia en la capital mexicana de los cincuenta. En segundo lugar, revisaremos el discurso publicitario de los promotores de los desarrollos residenciales construidos en la zona metropolitana de aquella época.

Palabras clave: 1. suburbios, 2. imaginario social,
3. publicidad inmobiliaria, 4. Ciudad de México.

The influence of the American city model seems to be an undeniable fact. There are those who state, for example, that "the future of the cities of the world is partly based on the American urban experience. Naturally, this is because, as such, it is very important but, above all, it is because it is observed attentively and copied with greater or lesser resolve and critical detachment," (Staszak, 2001, our translation). This experience reaches other countries previously filtered by the representations of those who transfer and disseminate it, being social actors with larger or smaller influence: the media, businessmen, architects, tourists, immigrants, etc. It is not the actual American city that "travels" from the United States to the rest of the planet, but rather an imaginary based on it.[1] Its model is reinterpreted in other social, political and economic contexts, blending with a group of images belonging to the local culture that cause a "shift of meaning", in which the symbols of the model are clothed anew with other meanings in addition to their real meanings (following Castoriadis, 1975). In the case of the suburban imaginary, one is dealing with symbols such as nature, owning one's own house, the car, that are projected in socio-cultural universes and urban systems that are considerably distanced from the original, thus undergoing a process of "remodelling". By analysing the discourse of certain actors, architects, urbanists, manufacturers, property developers, it is possible to observe how … it gives rise to these "cross-cultural" processes and the "shift of meaning" of a suburban context characterized by certain " anti-urbanism ", such as the American model, to another,[2] characterized by strong social contrasts, as in the case of Latin American suburbs. We will try to exemplify this process through the study of two

[1] Our work, in this sense, is along the same lines as Lindón's research (2005, 2006), and that of Hiernaux and Lindón (2004).

[2] However, one might wonder if it is correct to characterize the whole American suburban tradition as "anti-urban". In France, this idea has been defended by Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin (2002) in a case study of Los Angeles, which is actually paradigmatic. In recent years, this has been very influential in France on the theory, and perhaps even more on the imaginary, of the American city.

types of discourse, analysing them using Castoriadis' theory of the imaginary. In the first place, we will tackle the urbanistic ideas made fashionable by those architects who had a forceful influence on the development of the city in the fifties. Secondly, we will review the marketing discourse preferred by promoters of residential developments built in the same period in Mexico City. But before undertaking this specific example, we would like to go into greater depth on the so-called Americanization of the suburbs in this city at this time.

Dissemination of the "American" imaginary

In Mexico, until the sixties, the concept of the suburb referred to a neighbourhood located outside the city where poor people lived. During the sixties, it underwent a process by which it "became more bourgeois", being applied more specifically to upper and middle-class neighbourhoods, distanced from the city centre and associated with modernization (Zamorano, 2007). This process coincided with a proliferation of residential developments, nicely exemplified by the case of Ciudad Satélite. The migration of the middle-classes towards the suburbs poses several questions: why would numerous families, originating in Mexico City and other Mexican cities, agree to migrate to these suburbs, that were distant from their places of origin where they very often had social networks and family relationships?

In turn, this suburb seems to undergo a process of "Americanization", in the sense of an influence on the production of the city, the modes of consumption etc. What happened to make "cities within cities", such as Ciudad Satélite or Jardines de Pedregal, neither of which were particularly inspired by the "American model", come to embody suburban American ways of life and a suburban American imaginary?

While it is common to talk about an Americanization of society and the city after the Second World War, it is worth asking how

and to what extent was middle-class suburbanization the product of an "Americanization" of the city. "Americanization" refers, both in the past and today, to a discursive complex that is frequently presented as overwhelming, profoundly homogenising, composed of ideas, practices and ways of forming the city whose elements are well-known: the suburb with its individual houses, the use of the car, the shopping centre, and more recently, the gated community.

The urban imaginary used in property marketing, while having a heavy utopian payload, is not detached from reality, but rather reflects it and transforms it (Alba & Capron, 2007). For this interpretation, we are relying on the distinction made by Castoriadis (1975) between the creative imaginary and the radical imaginary. The former refers to a socially instituted symbolic system, while the latter refers to the original and creative imagination, institutive of novelty and change.

If we take this distinction between the dominant instituted imaginary (dominance of the institution relative to society) and the radical creative imaginary (that brings about the creation of something completely new), one could say that the urbanistic utopia might correspond with the order of the radical imaginary, to the extent that it proposes radically novel ideas; while the marketing image would be located in the instituted imaginary. The latter transforms the publicity image into true stereotyped prescriptions of what good living is, based on the morals of the family and class aspirations. In this way, the property market becomes the field in which social and urban models are propagated, whose function is, like all publicity, "to define for the subject both reality and desire for it" (Castoriadis, 1975).

It seems clear then that to understand how this urban imaginary takes root, it is necessary to know which social actors drive it and which favour the circulation of ideas, as well as the construction of discourses that are potent instruments of reality transformation. The insertion of the American residential imaginary in a society that is culturally distant from the United States (albeit

geographically close) became possible through the implementation of diverse discursive strategies of which we will explore only a few in this text, in particular urbanistic and marketing ones. To understand this process, it will be necessary to refer to the emergence of modern residential neighbourhoods, and ask ourselves how much they are inspired by the American Way of Life and its models.

In the forties and at the end of the fifties, the Jardines del Pedregal de San Ángel and Ciudad Satélite developments, located respectively in the south of Mexico City and in the northwest of the budding metropolitan area, played a key role in the production of ways of life and the residential and urban imaginary, with differentiated social identities.

Urban utopias in urbanistic discourse and in practice in Mexico City

The reinterpretation of international architecture in Mexico in the forties and fifties

Modernist urbanistic and functionalist discourse, linked with the International Movement, with a heavy utopian payload, constitutes the first paradoxical link in the construction of the imaginary of the suburb. It was a dominant discourse as it exercised a relative dominance in academic production and in architectural and official urbanistic projects. However, in practice, this discourse was overcome by the social and political context into which it was inserted.

Various channels made worldwide circulation of architectural and urbanistic concepts of modernism possible, starting in the twenties. For Mexico, it would be necessary to draw up a map of the exchanges of ideas that came about thanks to travel, visits, publications in the press, conferences, in short, all the means of dissemination of ideas. As examples, one might mention the work

of Herrey (a German who emigrated to the United States) on the revolving traffic system that inspired Mario Pani and Domingo García Ramos for the design of Mexico's Ciudad Universitaria and Ciudad Satélite (Krieger, 2004); articles on Jardines del Pedregal published in several American and European magazines (Krieger, 2004; Eggener, 2001; de Garay, 2000; etc.). We are a long way from suggesting that this is a mere "imitation" of what was done in the United States or in Europe, since urbanistic forms can rarely be simply projected and transplanted. Even the developers of shopping centres understood that their products need a minimum of adaptation to local societies. As regards urban planning, authors such as Ward or Cody (quoted by Freestone, 2004), preferred to speak of "cross-national learning" and [...] of "points of contact between the urban planning repertories of different countries", rather than "imitation" or "adaptation". Freestone (2004:4), reflecting on the influence of the American model in the Australian context, ended up by reversing the title of his article, "The Americanization of Australian Planning" with a provocative proposal on the "Australization of American Planning", suggesting thereby a re-making of the model, a kind of "culturalizing" appropriation, by being applied in another context.

In the case of Mexico, we could say that rather than a mere transplant or diffusion of American models, there was a triangulation of ideas between Europe, Latin America and the United States, as the works of urbanists such as Barragán and Pani show. It is undeniable that the ideas of Le Corbusier's (the Radiant City, Plan Voisin) and Frank Lloyd Wright (Broadacre), among other architects and urbanists, played an important role in their works. The modernist utopia exalted in both Europe and the United States, was enriched and applied on a large scale in Latin America. The most obvious example of this is perhaps Brasilia although, in Mexico, it can be clearly seen in projects such as those by Pani or Barragán: the multifamily developments, Ciudad Satélite, Jardines de Pedregal, and a great variety of internatio-

nally well-known architectural works.[3] Graciela de Garay (1994) and Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (2001) mention a kind of Mexicanization process of international architecture through its reinterpretation in a Mexican context where "the technical, material and financial resources" were different (a "Mexican synthesis", according to G. de Garay, 1994:103).

The Ciudad Satélite and Jardines de Pedregal projects (Pani, 1958; Eggener, 2001) were initially a reinterpretation and hybridization of the modernist and functionalist ideas applied in the context of Mexico City in the mid-twentieth century. Only a few of the concepts of internationalist modernism that were introduced in such projects need to be mentioned, for example the very notion of a "satellite city", the super-block, the purification of architectural forms, their functionalism, the integration of architecture on rocky ground and Lloyd Wright's organic architecture. Such ideas were hybridized when faced by the necessity of carrying out proposals to control the powerful expansion of the city, or by the desire to promote local architecture. The scale on which progressive urbanistic ideas were applied in Latin America stands out. Note the case of Brasilia, but also Ciudad Satélite, planned for around 30,000 inhabitants, or Lomas Verdes, also in the municipality of Naucalpan, a project by Luis Barragán and Juan Sordo Madaleno, which was based on similar plans, but never built.

From the satellite city to the suburb

Such urbanistic and architectural projects emerge in a city characterized by accelerated urban expansion, robust industrial development, deep-seated nationalism and presidential centralism. These characteristics, and in particular the latter, gave rise to a close association of interests among industrialists, property deve-

[3] Here, we should like to thank Graciela de Garay for the conversation we had with her, as well as Louise Noelle who advised us on appropriate texts.

lopers, politicians, architects and urbanists during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas; they were described as "urbanization-led industrial development" by Diane Davis (1994) during the presidency of Ávila Camacho; and finally, during Miguel Alemán's presidency, mentioned as "pro-business presidential administration" by Eggener (2001). The conjunction of economic, political and urban interests that favour the modernization of the city is a matter that has already been sufficiently documented, particularly when referring to the presidency of Miguel Alemán (Ballent, 1996; Cisneros, 1993). It is well-known that Miguel Alemán was the owner of the land where Ciudad Satélite was built, and this project would possibly have been unimaginable without his initiative. For their part, Mario Pani and Luis Barragán were involved in the promotion of both of these developments, Barragán being the main partner of the investors and property developers, the Bustamante brothers (Eggener, 2001).

However, the modern and functionalist utopia tends to be diluted when the attempt to bring it about is made in a context similar to the Mexico City of that time. This is not only due to a hybridization or "shift of meaning" from the original model, but also to the conditions in which it is intended to be brought about. More generally, if we step away from the Mexican context, we can question the association between the radical imaginary and the urbanistic utopia: as Françoise Choay recalls, the progressive urbanistic and modernist model proposes "ideal orders [...] that are instead the rationalized projections of collective and individual imaginaries," (Choay, 1965:75; our translation) with a technological-ideological and prescriptive character that is not necessarily disentangled from economic and political interests. Through the ideas of efficiency and productivity, the industrialization of the production of the city is contained in Le Corbusier's idea of urbanism. According to Françoise Choay, it is "the progressive model that inspires the new development of the suburbs and the remodelling of the majority of big cities within American capitalism". She also adds that "it is a truncated and

degenerate system that motivated and continues to inspire the majority of large French developments, such as the unfortunately well-known Sarcelles" (1965:62-63, our translation).

It is not unsurprising that both Barragán and Pani, years after the curtailed execution of their works, declared that they were disappointed.[4] Their projects had been transformed: the concepts of the "satellite city", of "a city within the city", had generated huge developments and gigantic middle-class suburbs[5] that were little like the original projects. In Pedregal, little by little, the gigantic lots that had initially been planned began to be split up. In Ciudad Satélite, the lots sold also became smaller and smaller, as did the houses, and the urban scheme that Pani had initially proposed was never respected, in particular the construction of multifamily blocks at the heart of the "superblocks". The mechanisms of land valuation, subject to severe speculation, as well as the mixture of political and economic interests, put an end to the utopian dreams of these urbanists: a socially heterogeneous satellite city on the one hand, and an exclusive landscaped city on the other. Gradually, Ciudad Satélite's green belt was absorbed by property speculation. At the same time that Ciudad Satélite was being built under previously modified concepts, the so-called "NZT" area (Naucalpan-Atizapán de Zaragoza-Tlalnepantla) was being urbanized at high speed. Faced by the limits for subdividing plots for constructing developments imposed by Mayor Uruchurtu on Mexico City in 1954, property companies turned towards the neighbouring territory in the State of Mexico, with the support of that State's government. As Pani himself says ironically, the urban landscape rising from the land became "Tinacolandia" in a few decades (Garay, 2000). "Tinacolandia" is the Mexican version of Levittown in United States or Sarcelles in France. The name refers to the typically

[4] In the early sixties, Mario Pani distanced himself from the business (de Garay). In 1976, Barragán declared himself disappointed by Pedregal, however he left the "business" from 1953 (Eggener, 2001).

[5] Upper middle-class in Naucalpan, upper class in Atizapán (Arboledas) and Jardines del Pedregal, lower middle-class in Tlalnepantla.

Latin American landscape of "tinacos", ("tinacos" are the water tanks on the roofs of houses).

The recovery of functionalism (in particular zonification) by economic agents and the State played an important role in the industrialization of the means of production of the city at its edges: of this encounter the suburb was born. While the urban plan of Ciudad Satélite, Jardines del Pedregal or Arboledas[6] was curvilinear, the projects derived from these returned to the grid, which is a more economic urban form. Developers such as Austroplan, in Ciudad Satélite, and Bustamante, sold houses in catalogues. Most of the houses or plots were aimed at median sectors and sold on credit after putting down an initial deposit.

We think that it is important to question commonly accepted suppositions about the American mould for the middle-class suburb. Ciudad Satélite is seen, in general and by its own inhabitants, as an American suburb with American ways of life. It is clear that the initial urban models were not suburban, nor were they solely "American". The arrival of this imaginary in Mexico started with the hybridization of progressive urbanism as it came into contact with a society whose political context was different.

The residential imaginary in publicity as a reflection and a model

When creating an urban imaginary around life projects that are to be carried out in a dream location, the advertisement provides an important source of information on the urban models underlying residential projects that not only promote, but also lay down rules. Publicity is conceived as the reflection of individuals' aspirations, anchored in a "habitus" and social values, while simultaneously establishing models that should be followed that reinforce previously existing models, not only economic ones but also normative ones (preferences). Property advertising

[6] Another of Barragán's unfinished projects.

sells "new" products, "new" styles and ways of life,[7] sensitizes consumers so that they adopt "new" patterns of consumption, it exploits latent aspirations of homes and families. The advertisement doesn't refer directly to a concrete reality, but rather creates imaginary and mythical realities that correspond with desires, dreams and fantasies that seek to awaken pleasant emotions in the consuming public. Luis Barragán, a skilled businessman, turned to the services of a famous photographer, Armando Salas Portugal, to dramatize the projects and houses that he built. These highly stylized pictures often served as supporting images for the promotional materials for Jardines de Pedregal and Arboledas (Eggener, 2001). A study of the language used in publicity in Mexico points out that, "Publicity lives on assumptions and myths that help to forge happiness, progress, youth, abundance. It is a powerful instrument for psychological standardization that stipulates the promotion of a common ideal and generally accepted human stereotypes" (Pécassou, 1973, quoted in Bataillon and Panabière, 1988:175). In the case of Pedregal, the photographs were clearly directed at a political and economic elite, both Mexican and foreign. In the case of Ciudad Satélite, the first receptors of these new tastes and patterns of consumption were the upper middle-classes.

We present below results of an analysis of the content of advertisements for residential developments published between 1957 and 1967[8] in *Excélsior,* one of the most important Mexican newspapers of the time. Although the advertisements are not limited to Ciudad Satélite and Jardines de Pedregal, we specifically focused on these advertisements because of the role that these

[7] The ways of life promoted by residential publicity in the suburbs were not completely new, since other urbanistic projects, such as the highly elitist development of Lomas de Chapultepec, designed by José Luis Cuevas in the thirties, were based on similar concepts, (the edge of the city, the garden city, use of the car, the curvilinear design that broke up the traditional plan, etc.).

[8] The analysis of property advertisements is from 1957, the date when publicity for Jardines del Pedregal de San Ángel and Ciudad Satélite started. It finishes 10 years later, in 1967, when the advertising related with these developments started to taper off.

two developments played in the social and urban imaginary of the time. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that publicity for Jardines del Pedregal began in 1943 and that Luis Barragán, one of the three partners, retired from the business in 1953. Furthermore, we will refer to other developments that were the result of later suburban expansion, in particular in the northwest of the Valley of Mexico.

The dream of having your own house

Judging by the type of housing that is admired in property advertisements of the late fifties and the sixties, it would seem that modern Mexican families aspired to abandon the collective life that had been proposed by the city's architecture in previous decades (with their internal or collective patios that increased coexistence when leaving a room or flat), to not only gain greater autonomy with regard to life in the neighbourhood, but to life in the family. The individual house, separated, with a garden (or patio), was not a completely new product for the middle and upper classes of the forties and fifties. The French-style house of the late 19th and early 20th century on a single floor with a patio, in the more elitist versions, or those aimed at the emerging middle-class of bureaucrats and merchants, had already been promoted in the new neighbourhoods and developments that arose in the extension of the traditional city centre. As mentioned in the footnote to page 6, the development of large mansions in a modernist style had also been taken place in Lomas de Chapultepec in the nineteen thirties. However, it was in the forties when the process of vigorous internal migration began and started to outline the need for the development of urban centres far from the city centre and adjacent neighbourhoods. In part, the material and economic conditions were already established: on the one hand, technological innovations such as the car, made it possible; on the other, the creation of new employment away from the city

centre would be the keystone of the residential displacement of workers towards the new industrial estates created in the plains of the north of the Valley of Mexico. But how would it be possible to convince thousands of families to settle in "empty" spaces, hitherto mainly agricultural, for many a long way from their friends and family who still lived in central areas or in the new neighbourhoods built in the continuity of the city sprawl?

Property publicity transformed what the house symbolised. The suburban house became a true myth, a status symbol, taking on new interrelated meanings: an investment that strengthened the family's economic and social peace of mind, favouring the autonomy of each member, as well as increasing contact with the nature.

"That's why the house comes first! Indeed, the whole family will be happier if you own your house. Don't think it's a dream to make this longing a reality: buy a house. With the rent you currently pay, you can become a fortunate homeowner!" (Advertisement for Ciudad Satélite, *Excélsior,* 15/01/61). The advertisement plays on the double meaning of fortunate: both lucky and having a fortune.

Residential advertisements carry a heavy semantic and iconic load which mixes urban imaginaries that go beyond the functional dimension of the house. Although their primary meaning is mercantile and utilitarian, an attempt is made to exploit an imaginary of the house as a "home", as the intimate space that provides personal and emotional security, closely linked with representations of the family. It was a symbol of "the good life", associated with going up the social ladder which is what it meant to leave to go and to live in these new suburbs. "The good life", as Arizaga (2005), pointed out, had a strongly prescriptive sense as regards daily habits and rules of consumption, but also as regards the space produced. In particular, the publicity for Jardines de Pedregal emphasized that it was the "ideal place to live".

Although the texts refer mainly to the nuclear family, on the one hand, they reflect the composition of the Mexican family,

whether middle or upper class: the grandmother still lives in her children's house. For the middle-classes in particular, the family is not only a social value, it is also a resource. On the other hand, they reflect the developing processes of individualization in Mexican society and, in turn, the powerful sexual and economic division of activities. The following dialogue, published in 1958, indicates these social processes shifting the meaning of the symbol "house" towards that of "your own house":

> Father: As the family's Santa Claus, I should buy them a lot in Ciudad Satélite – it's better to invest than to buy.
>
> Mother: What I'd like is a shopping centre near the house, where everything is handy. Ah! And a school.
>
> Daughter: What I'd like is big gardens and lots of grass where I can play with my friends and my dog.
>
> Male children: For us, it's parks with games where we can get up to no good without being told off...
>
> Baby: I'd like to be able to calmly fall asleep without cars hooting.
>
> Grandmother: For me peace, pure air, streets without traffic. Ah! And a church.

These social changes have consequences as regards the functional organization of the house and its nearby extensions: they separate functions, sometimes with extreme detail, to allow in turn each member of the family to acquire greater autonomy and the valuation of the status symbols (particularly at the most luxurious property developments): kitchen, individual bedrooms, hall, dining room, swimming pool, billiard room, etc. The clear separation of functions and relationships within the family is presented as a comfort factor in the lifestyles offered by modern functionalist houses. Independence, intimacy, individuality and regulated sociability, these will be their underlying values – values bound to modernist universalism, but clearly adapted to the Mexican family. It is worth asking whether they are exported American social values or if they are in fact characteristic of a middle-class bound to a type of consumption in the early stages of "globalization".

The maid's room is another of Mexican society's adaptations, integrated into the new suburban ways of life and architecture. It occupies an important place in the functionalist style house, and even in multifamily blocks designed according to modernist principles (Tlatelolco, for example). These are rooms with bathroom attached, annexed to the main house, though with a certain margin of separation, and near the spaces for domestic work: an independent entrance, near the spaces for laundry and ironing, storage of domestic utensils, or the private car space. In advertisements , the maid's room is presented as indispensable, a status symbol, in a "normal" middle-class family's way of life and functioning. It indicates that middle-class families (even in multifamily blocks) had the resources for domestic help. Was this linked to the abundant rural immigration that generated a very ample workforce? Is it a status symbol integrated into a widespread class aspiration among median sectors and which property advertisements helped to transmit? The new housing, both individual houses and flats in the multifamily blocks, will they not also create this need among the middle-classes, profoundly linked to the socio-economic context that characterised Latin American cities? These questions, generated by the residential advertisements of the late fifties, require special treatment that lead us away from the main topic of this text. Nonetheless, it is important to note the way in which social strata are evidenced – even at the domestic level – in the modern city of the fifties.

The desire for nature

Another powerful element in the American urban imaginary and which is central to advertisements for housing developments in Mexico City is nature and the values associated with it, such as peace and the family. The suggested message is that nature responds to family needs: the baby sleeps in silence, the children can play healthily in green areas, that one enjoys one's garden

and looking after it. The exploitation of a bucolic imaginary as an advertising strategy to promote residential developments, aimed at being principal residences, invites us once again to wonder how the ordinary city-dweller of the fifties and sixties was induced to take the green road to the promised meadowlands the new developments apparently enclosed.

The names of the new developments stand out for the intense way they refer to nature, country life and the pastoral world: Echegaray Woods, River Hill, San Miguel Farms, Hilltop Nurseries, Gardens of the Pedregal of San Ángel, the Groves, The Park, Hacienda Golf Club, Ranch of this, Canyons of that, etc. The images in the advertisements invariably present profuse vegetation around the sketched houses, and the texts promise a life of peace and tranquillity, in pure air, amid groves and broad gardens. "The Guadalupe Lake residential country development is situated in a genuine wood...", states the headline of one advertisement. Inspired by the works of Ferdinand Bac, a landscaper and writer whose inspiration was Mediterraneanism and Mudejar art, and the "naturalistic" urbanist Frank Lloyd Wright, Barragán's projects put nature (volcanic stone, for example) and landscaping at the centre of their architectural and urbanistic proposals (Eggener, 2001). In his designs for residences in Jardines de Pedregal, he clearly expressed the desire to encourage private gardens that protected the intimacy (of wealthy families), in complete contrast to the "open yards" of the American bungalows, whose influence can still be seen in some houses in Ciudad Satélite. However, these gardens evidently didn't fulfil the same role as they did in American suburbs and, for different reasons, were gradually enclosed. Once again, it can be seen that the American pattern, in the form of an urban utopia, quickly changes when faced by the force of necessity or the customs of the culture where it is implanted. The houses surrounded by open gardens that were advertised in the NZT area, ended up as the residences enclosed by fences and walls that we know today. The mansions of Jardines del Pedregal, with their thousands of square

meters of private gardens, underwent radical modifications as time went by, to the extent that there are currently only 60 of the almost 800 originally built *(La Jornada,* 2006).

One of the strategies used to convince young families to leave and go to live to these unknown, remote areas of open country, (at least at first) was to circulate an urban imaginary of the city monster. Since the fifties, this imaginary has emphasised all the possible evils of a highly and densely populated city, with its attendant problems of stress, danger, noise, traffic, transport and services (see Monnet, 1993, and de Alba, 2006). Then, the modern urban and functionalist utopia, won back through family and Mexican cultural values, emerges as the alternative to the threatening spectre that the rapid growth of Mexico City represented and all its associated problems. In advertisements for developments in the outlying areas, images of the city accentuate its problems to able to offer precisely the opposite: the tranquillity of a rural and provincial life, "reinvented" and "reinterpreted".

Mexico is oversaturated. Demographic expansion in Mexico's great capital has reached saturation point. There is no room for more people! The simplest things have become problems. Remember if you live in peace, you live longer!…Only a few steps from your place of work, without haste, without delays, without dangers, without interruptions, without "extra" expenses… In the peace and quiet of the country and, even so, only a few minutes from Mexico's Great Capital, with all its attractions. Remember if you live in peace, you live longer... And your loved ones need you. Make the best deal of your whole life.

It is critical to note the ambivalent attitude to the "Mexico's Great Capital". On one hand, its dangers and discomforts are exacerbated, and on the other, there remains the offer of access to all its attractions because the development is said to be located "only a few minutes" from the city. That is to say that the rustic dream offered to the city dweller in advertisements is not a promise of a total conversion to country life, but only to an approximation of it, enough to include the benefits of "the peace and the quiet of the

county", though without renouncing city life nor the advantages of the great city. As Urbain suggests (2000), the return of the city dweller to the country, which has been observed for several decades, does not correspond with a genuine desire for true rural life, but rather with a redefinition of the meaning of the country as a place for recreation and relaxation, where one does not give up the city dweller's amenities, nor the comforts of modern life. The meaning of the "rural" or of the "provincial" shifts towards other symbols: in particular the "green" (but not the "agricultural") associated with tranquillity. Nor does the re-encounter of the city dweller with nature mean that he or she is inserted into it, but rather that the city is transported into the rural, urbanizing it by inhabiting it, establishing a relationship of dominance of the urban over a rural world that is disappearing, confronted by the desire of property developers and political actors (see Cruz and Moreno, 2007). This ideal reflects how deep-seated urban values are in the inhabitants of Latin American cities: they do not abandon the virtues of urban ways of life and do value the "new" world rebuilt on the foundation of invented values such as the "green", with promises of quick and easy access to this urban world thanks to the car, at a time when the car industry was in the middle of a boom, because of Mexican State support. The dream seems easily accessible, not only because of easy payments, but also because of the proximity of the central city on new fast roads.

The maps in the advertisements showing location and access to the developments can be considered as imaginary cartographies, in the same sense as mental maps, to the extent that they reflect the social aspirations of the moment: being simultaneously near to and distant from the big city. In these maps, distances shorten surprisingly to give an impression of proximity between the new development and the central city. This trickery of perception is completed by exaggerating the size of the urban reference icons of the Mexico City of the fifties: the famous "Caballito" (equestrian statue), the Independence Column, the Latin American Tower, the Reforma and Insurgentes avenues, the monument to

"la Raza", the Bull Ring, the Oil Industry Fountain, the Race Track, the Ciudad Satélite Towers etc. The city's new fast roads look like motorways that will indeed allow you to get to the development being advertised in 5 or 10 minutes. The maps also show the contrasts between the densely overpopulated city and the broad empty spaces where the new residential development is located. The city seems to be simultaneously near and distant, showing the ambivalence between the attraction and rejection that has characterized the urban imaginary of modern large cities until today. It can be either a marvellous landscape if there is a panoramic view from the development, as can be seen in the advertisement for Vista del Valle ("View of the Valley"), promising the Mexico City at your feet or from your window, or as a source of problems, tensions and noise, as has already been seen in other advertisements.

United States: a current reference point for property publicity?

The influence of international urbanistic models, mainly American, is quite clear in some advertisements: "Today, for the first time in Mexico, ... House and land for only $74,500 (3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 200 m^2 plot)... Built using the most modern American designs..." Other developers "...it gives us great pleasure to congratulate the prestigious constructor of the houses, CALIFORNIA HOMES de México S. A., ... for having selected the developments at Santa Mónica and Lomas de Atizapán... to carry out an attractive house construction plan, with the modern American technical practices." However, many become very discreet regarding United States. Evidently, this is no reference to Jardines de Pedregal.

As several authors mention (García Canclini, 1995; Lindón, 2007), from the forties onwards, the media played an important role in the transmission of images and messages, whether via

radio, cinema or television. Property publicity was present in all these media. There was publicity for Jardines de Pedregal on television in the fifties (Eggener, 2001); a television advertisement for Ciudad Satélite in the early sixties showed some Martians discovering a "beautiful city" "in sight" from their flying saucers. As Lindón (op. cit.) points out, the "creation of narratives" in the media, in particular in cinema, was one of the strategies used to publicise and secure the suburban imaginary outside the United States, without mentioning that country explicitly in the messages: "By diluting the direct voice of the originator of the message, transforms it into a sort of universalized message." It is interesting to note that in the sixties, an auto cinema (perhaps the first and only one) was established in Naucalpan, an area that came to be strongly associated with the supposed "Americanization" of the city. It is as if the urban imaginary of the area reinforced the introduction of those symbols that in turn reinforce the image, such as the shopping centre and the auto cinema.

Short dialogues, like the one quoted above (the father, the mother, the baby, the grandmother...), contributed to this "creation of narratives". Publicity in the newspapers does not use mobile images that favour a narrated story, but uses other, no less efficient, literary resources, such as dialogues. The imaginary type of buyer and family become the central characters who interact with an implicit speaker (the property promoter) who gives himself the airs of an expert and the ability to recommend the best way of life and where it may be achieved. Each individual becomes the actor of the new scenario being drawn on the edges of the city.

"You will be able to make your life's dream come true, a calm and happy home for you and yours" (advertisement for Valle de Ceylán), "Madam, ... it's your turn to speak. Have you already visited Ciudad Satélite? Satélite has been built thinking about you and your family's happiness!" *(Excélsior,* October of 1958) "if you are... a sensible person who wants the most prestigious location for your family, the most exclusive atmosphere, the healthiest air, the greatest comforts, and the best value for your

investment, you should live in the Jardines del Pedregal de San Ángel" *(Excelsior,* 27/07/58).

These texts sometimes appear to be veiled orders, judging by the use of the imperative in the sentence construction, ("Come and convince yourself that you have to live here" ... "Make a good investment"...), giving the message a highly prescriptive value. And, at the same time, via certain subtleties in the use of the language, this creates in the receptor-buyer the illusion of being the actor of his own destiny, turning the object sold into the object of desire. It is well-known that a whole science of persuasion exists to achieve this purpose.

It is by using these and other tricks of the symbolic world that the utopian residential imaginary proposed by modernism and functionalism, sifted through the ideas of Mexican urbanists, becomes an effective imaginary, more concrete, that lays down fashions and ways of life for Mexican society. The ideal of the home becomes the functionalist style house or the bungalow in a garden city. The ideal of the city will become a space that is rationally compartmented by functions. The ideal for displacement will be the car and fast roads.

These urban imaginaries, dominant in several senses, find the way of becoming real or of objectifying themselves in an urban, political and economic context, greedy for new ideas to implement urban growth in accordance with their time.

Conclusion

It is a remarkable fact that, even when urban practices changed and these areas of the city were functionally integrated into the central city, this imaginary is still alive, creator of social and territorial identities. There can be no doubt that it would be necessary to question the differences in the evolution of developments such as Ciudad Satélite and El Pedregal: the former continues to have a profoundly ingrained suburban imaginary, which doesn't

seem to be the case of the latter. It is striking that Travesías DF (a magazine published in Mexico City) published an issue entitled "We are all Ciudad Satélite suburbanites" dealing with this type of suburbanization. While their competitor, the magazine Chilango, gave space to the topic in an issue a few months later. In the articles in both magazines, it is possible to note the existence of territorial identity whose main reference point is Ciudad Satélite: "We are all Ciudad Satélite suburbanites". The cultural counterpart of this identity is, as is to be expected, the "American Way of Life". Are these stereotyped representations of the area shared by the inhabitants themselves? To what extent did the residents of these areas adopt the lifestyles that the dominant discourses in the publicity proposed? How did the American suburban imaginary filter the practices of the city? These questions about the experiences of the subjects requires a different analysis from the one undertaken here, however, they provide guidelines for continuing deliberations on the "Americanization" of Mexico City.

Will house buyers be the mere receptors of this advertising discourse? The very paradigmatic case of Ciudad Satélite seems to suggest that the "pioneers" who began the residents' association, took these discourses and the suburban identities thus created and made them instrumental in their pursuit of certain political autonomy, even when faced by the property company itself, being both the vendor of the land and administrator of the development (see Tarres, 1986). It is striking that Mario Pani's plan, in spite of the transformation of the original ideas, continues to be the reference point for the territorial imaginary of the Ciudad Satélite residents' association, just when it disapeared from the architects' and planners' memory.

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