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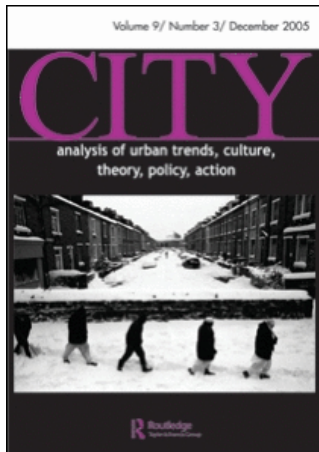
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# Megaprojects

## Beneath the pavement, excess

Gareth A. Jones and Maria Moreno-Carranco

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*Mexico is experiencing a series of debates about the shape of its cities. Most observers draw deeply pessimistic observations, noting a growing commodification of the urban landscape, high levels of crime and violence, social and spatial polarisation, state withdrawal and a general lack of innovative architectural design. Globalisation is widely held to be a root cause of these problems. Pressure to attract global capital and to cater for globalisation's 'winners' have provoked government support for a series of megaprojects that seem to offer diluted representations of national or regional identities, anodyne design and architectural motifs. This paper looks at two of the largest megaprojects in Latin America, Santa Fe in Mexico City and Angelópolis in Puebla. We argue that, seen through everyday practice, these global spaces are highly differentiated and present forms of spatial appropriation and possibilities of transformation and subversion. Everyday contestation reveals 'the local production of the global'.*

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### 'Excess'

*noun*—an amount that is more than necessary, permitted, or desirable; lack of moderation, especially in eating or drinking; (excesses) outrageous or immoderate behaviour.

*adjective*—exceeding a prescribed or desirable amount; required as extra payment. (*Compact Oxford English Dictionary*)

### Introduction

In a recent interchange of ideas with Deyan Sudjic, Charles Jencks takes up Sudjic's observation that we have reached the 'end of the iconic age' to offer a fascinating diagnosis of architecture and design shortcomings heavy with *fin de siècle* pathos and new millennial uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> Expressing some sympathy for Sudjic's observation, Jencks notes that the exhibitionism of architects as 'celebrity chefs' has

achieved little more than 'self-cancelling gestures that not only upstage each other but also destroy urban coherence ... [with] absurdly expensive and maladroit one-liners'.<sup>2</sup> Jencks suspects that icons are not yet dead but he offers a concern that in a world of 'weak belief' and growing pluralism we may have 'icons without a socially sanctioned iconography'. He contends that cities are increasingly forwarding megaprojects in the hope of drawing down the 'Bilbao' or 'Guggenheim' effect and 'turn around the fortunes of their rustbelt modernism and reinvent themselves as postmodern centres of creativity'. The ruins of earlier modern urban forms, the brown-field sites, hollowed out downtowns or raised public housing are now slated for 'regeneration' through 'smart' corporate headquarters, high-technology office parks, cultural centres, refurbished heritage districts and affluent residential enclaves (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Swyngedouw *et al.*, 2002; Olds, 2003). Co-terminus is the

effort to (re)imagine the city's unique selling points from other global places, supporting capital through an urban cultural 'renaissance' stressing creativity, leisure and high-spend consumption (Florida, 2004). Ironically, while these megaprojects attempt to represent cities, or discreet spaces within them, as centres of innovative and cutting edge design, full of intelligent buildings and lifestyle distinction, they seem to look and maybe even feel increasingly the same. As Sudjic notes, global capital dictates that projects must be instantly grasped by businessmen unable to pick up the complexities of urbanism, with the result that they 'have the same relationship to an authentic multilayered city as Starbucks does to a family-run Milanese espresso bar'. This concern for the distancing of object meaning and representation in architecture under globalisation is widely held; 'winning' access to global capital may come at the price of 'losing' national and regional identities through the homogeneity of design. It is a sense that may be especially acute in developing countries (King, 2004; Herzog, 2006).

Although Jencks does see some buildings as offering the metaphors that lift the spirit, few offer meanings on multiple levels and are socially sanctioned. Sudjic mostly agrees with Jencks, observing that one can

'hire one of the 30 architects who are building high-profile architecture in so many places. And most of them can succeed in producing an instantly recognizable icon that is going to end up as the backdrop for car commercials.'

But, Sudjic's primary interest is how the meanings of iconic buildings relate to the authoritarian manner in which they are commissioned, from undemocratic governments of the past (mostly) to the local politicians today who indulge in an 'edifice effect'. As noted by Sum (2003) and Swynedouw *et al.* (2002) megaprojects frequently require strategic planning authorities and public-private partnerships to shape and discipline

the built environment through exceptions to regulatory practice. Indeed, in contrast to the withdrawn state suggested by neo-liberalism, globalisation has required the state to (dis)embed certain agents and roles through the special dispensations afforded to the megaprojects (Sites, 2000). As we shall explore later in relation to Mexico, it is the state that becomes the exception, acting at the margins and sometimes outside the rule of its own regulations.

Finally, Sudjic argues the icon's days may be over because the overblown publicity of the image that sustained the cult in architectural celebrity makes today's big thing into an almost instant has-been. The urban landscape is subject to a quickening process of 'creative destruction' in the service of capital, with many buildings designed to have an optimum life of no more than 20 years, obliging the creation of an increasingly temporary urbanism, and hence reliance on a projection of instant meaning through spectacle (Soja, 1996; Baudrillard, 2004). But while spectacle supplants the icons, it is notable how few designs possess a colloquial 'wow factor' or what Walter Benjamin would term an 'aura', the ability of an object to look (or metaphorically speak) back to the observer, and few of us can be so shocked or overloaded by visual stimuli that our sensory experience needs protection (Buck-Morss, 1992). Quality is not expressed in the lightness of architectural touch and subtle meaning. Rather, globalisation has made it necessary to express form through neutrality, rather than homogeneity, that negates the desire of architects to reflect normative meaning in the built environment (Ibelings, 1998). Consequently, it may not be the produced superficiality of spectacle that kills the icon but blandness and lack of 'feel'. As Marc Augé (1995) observed, cities increasingly consist of 'non-places' that not only resemble airports but in which the airport might be the most characteristic, sought after and debated city space (also Koolhaas, 1995b).<sup>3</sup>

Megaprojects, therefore, not only and quite deliberately reject normative appeals

and offer few points of engagement with social sanction, they appear to substitute neutrality and conformity for icon. Their contribution to the contemporary urban condition, however, extends far beyond such concerns with architecture and meaning. In order to draw down global capital and 'add value' the poorer parts of the city need to be removed or hidden, kept at a distance through carefully designed highways and open spaces, security apparatus and infrastructure networks that unbind the project from the remainder of the city but rebind projects to each other and other global spaces (Soja, 1996; Graham and Marvin, 2001). Punctuated by megaprojects cities appear to be increasingly fragmented, disintegrated or fractal such that it is difficult to speak about the modern city 'which sometimes is ceasing to be modern and to be a city?' (Garcia Canclini, 2001, p. 3; see also Koolhaas, 1995b, 1995c). Moreover, in the view of some authors, navigating these broken up spaces appear to be cohorts of anomic, lonely individuals, no longer enjoying (if they ever did) the playfulness of postmodernism but suffering anxiety, uncertainty, fear, misanthropy and panic (Vidler, 1994; Simeoforidis, 2001; Carter, 2002; Thrift, 2005).

While the extent and depth of these conditions may be questioned, some consider them necessary or positive responses to city life. As Koolhaas remarks, if the blankness of design and architecture is intentional and works against identity formation based on attachments to the past, that are like 'a mousetrap in which more and more mice have to share the original bait and which ... may have been empty for centuries', then all representational images are smashed to pieces and what he terms the generic city displays the absence of inhibition (1995b, p. 1248). With reference to the megaproject, Koolhaas (1995a) sees a potential for new freedoms from existing ways of doing and imagining the city, producing new cultural forms. While Koolhaas desists from outlining the specifics, the idea opens up a moot point in the discussions of contemporary urbanism;

namely, that the more generic the city, the more vital it becomes for inhabitants to struggle to reinscribe meaning, however fleetingly, through everyday life practices that might subvert the intended uses. The inscription of meaning follows Lefebvre's (1974) conceptualisation of space as being actively produced, sometimes in the form of overt resistance, at others through small everyday behaviours that may be provoked by the projects that seem intent on their control (de Certeau, 1988; Soja, 1996). As Koolhaas has remarked, while many of us deride the suburbs and pastiche downtowns as spaces of limited meaning, they do mean something to the people who work, shop and live in them (1995c).

The confusion of the contemporary urban condition, therefore, is how people invest or extract meaning from cities where distinctive spaces become over-written by megaprojects that no longer need the city or may even compete with it (Koolhaas, 1995a, p. 515). One space that is immediately suggestive of this reinscription of meaning amidst deliberate conformity, blandness and control is the shopping mall, seemingly an ever-present feature of megaproject design. Writing in 1963, Victor Gruen, the guru of early mall design, describes his 'recipe' for the mall as stylised and manipulative:

'Take 100 acres of ideally shaped flat land. Surround same by 500,000 consumers who have no access whatever to any other shopping facilities. Prepare the land and cover the central portion with 1,000,000 square feet of buildings. Fill with first rate merchandisers who will sell superior wares at alluring prices. Trim the whole on the outside with 10,000 parking spaces and be sure to make same accessible over first-rate under-used highways from all directions. Finish up by decorating with some potted plants, miscellaneous flower beds, a little sculpture, and serve sizzling hot to the consumer.' (Cited in *The Harvard City Project*, 2001, p. 162)

Yet numerous ethnographies have revealed how the mall affords opportunities for status

and distinction through signalling one's integration into (global) 'culture' and thus serving as a primordial site for the construction of identity (Shields, 1992; Goss, 1993). Garcia Canclini goes so far as to argue that consumption has become the site for working out the new politics of citizenship, taking over from the 'abstract rules of democracy or collective participation in public spaces' (2001, p. 15). Although others disagree, expressing concern that the unworldly artificial nature of the mall cannot be a substitute for public space as a site for the working out of democracy (Ortiz, 2004; Staeheli and Mitchell, 2006), unless we are consumer dupes and cultural automatons, malls might be considered enigmatic in so much as they are spaces for small acts of defiance and representational contrast. As Warren (1996) has shown in analysing Disneyland, shop-lifting, pick-pocketing, drug and alcohol consumption, sex among employees and clients, and violence from and against employees can be read as minor acts of subversion. These minor acts give the lie to the fantasies and illusions of 'designing out' undesirable presences and the ever more carceral practices of surveillance.

Exposing these 'rough edges' to the shiny new megaproject reveals the instability of a contemporary urbanism seen to be dictated by an all-powerful globalisation. But, how might we understand the creation of meaning through everyday practice? Is it enough to suggest that the everyday is a contribution from the 'local', vernacular or informal? Can we be comfortable with the idea that particular ways of doing things have virtue from being local? How do we square this global-local relation with the concerns that what it means to 'be local' is threatened by globalisation and how might we guard against the dangers of cultural exceptionalism? Similarly, we are reluctant to consider these practices as indicative of a hybrid remaking of space, place and culture, not least because the architecture and social templates of megaprojects have no original from which the hybrid can emerge (pace Garcia Canclini, 1995). We

propose that practices are about engagement and networking across places, some more global than others, in which boundaries are crossed, redrawn and influences mingle (Amin, 2002; King, 2004). Rather than pitch local heterogeneous sets of practices full of meaning against bland, generic, empty global styles promoted by neo-liberalism, we want to trace the points of interaction and map the fleeting contacts and contradictions.

In so doing, we suggest that we can problematise the relation between people, urbanism and the specifics of the megaproject through thinking about the notion of 'excess'. According to Marc Augé, 'excess' captures an essential quality of contemporary human condition in which:

'What is new is not that the world lacks meaning, or has little meaning, or less than it used to have; it is that we seem to feel an explicit and intense daily need to give it meaning: to give meaning to the world, not just some village or lineage. This need to give a meaning to the present, if not the past, is the price we pay for the overabundance of events corresponding to a situation we could call "supermodern" to express its essential quality: excess.' (1995, p. 29)

As an analytical lens to understand megaprojects, the idea of 'excess' raised by Augé suggests to us a double move. First, the corporate headquarters, malls and manicured business parks are built on an excess of capital, cheap credit and disposable income that never quite matches the desires of designers, bosses or consumers. Second, is the excess represented by the abandoned projects, frozen as costs escalate, the projects deemed too difficult to develop due to land contamination, property disputes or topography, or the parking lots, spaces around electricity pylons, the mounds of debris leftover from construction work. To Nielsen, the 'back-sides of the city are used and reappropriated as alternative public spaces, accommodating the rituals and meetings of people', thus denying the disappearance of heterogeneity (2002, p. 53). This is 'excess' of a different



sort, the spaces of agents apparently superfluous to the neat, glossy, representations of architects, politicians and corporations. These are the alter-ego spaces of the megaproject ego, demonstrating, we argue, a relation rather than opposition between control, consumption and capital, and 'excess' spaces and people. Before identifying these relations, we need to map out a little more of the specific context and to introduce our case study sites.

### Mexico: megaprojects and the threat to public space

Mexico offers a useful laboratory to problematise the megaproject for three immediate reasons. First, megaprojects have an increasing presence on the Mexican urban landscape. In just the past few years, proposals for megaprojects have been announced in almost all major Mexican cities. Notable examples include a tourist and commercial corridor in Tijuana, the Dos Laredos commercial, manufacturing and administrative project in Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, the San Carlos Bay tourist and residential development in Baja California, the Istmo de Tehuantepec tourist and manufacturing zone linked to the Plan Puebla-Panama, and the Riviera Maya in Yucatan. Some megaprojects such as the relocation of Mexico City airport to the salt beds of Texcoco and a counter-proposal to construct an ecologically sustainable residential and leisure complex have been put on hold. But the construction of a mall including a Wal-Mart superstore near the pyramids of Teotihuacan got the go-ahead despite considerable opposition and a 110 hectare commercial-sporting, hospital and park complex known as The Bicentenary Gardens located on the rubbish dumps of Nezahualcóyotl, Mexico City, seems likely to get approval. In Zapopan, Guadalajara, the JVC project claims to have attracted Zaha Hadid, Daniel Liebeskind and Jean Nouvel to enter designs for buildings on a 240 hectare site that will include a university campus,

convention centre and museums, and also in Guadalajara a Guggenheim museum is slated for completion in 2010.

Second, these megaprojects are often constituted through representations of a global-local nexus, of Mexico facing up to its role (or responsibility) as a member of NAFTA or ALCA (*Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas*). Although there has been little work on the architecture and spatial consequences of globalisation in Mexican cities, the sense is of the 'loss' of national integrity and cultural meaning (Murphy Erfani, 1999; Nivón Bolán, 2000; Herzog, 2006). In place of a degree of social mixing characteristic of markets and open plazas (*tianguis*), the commercial centres cater to elites able to indulge their taste for imported fashion labels and furniture, Hollywood and art house cinema, and dine at aspirational high-end restaurants serving sushi or other 'world cuisine' (Cornejo and Bellon, 2001). In order to facilitate this consumption megaprojects have extended a discursive and physical loss of 'excess' uses and users; from street traders, low-income housing, rubbish dumps, popular bars and family-run shops. In sharp contrast to the aspirations of 1950s and 1960s high modernism, with its imagery of the nation and with ample quantities of public space, politicians and planners today are more circumspect about projecting a sense of inclusivity and few seem prepared to make their reputations through mass construction of public housing, hospitals or schools (see Burian, 1997).

Taken together the two points highlight a concern in Mexico that public space is being lost or at least is changing in unsettling ways. Historic 'colonial' centres are being renovated as part of megaprojects through public-private trusts (*fideicomisos*) with an emphasis on tourism and middle-class consumption, and reliance upon private security measures (Jones and Varley, 1999; Davis, 2008). In Mexico City the idea has been extended furthest with a private company, the Empresa del Centro Histórico, owned by Carlos Slim Helú and Laura Diez Barroso

Azcárraga two of Latin America's richest people, overseeing regeneration through 'reclaiming' buildings, squares and streets. Events such as the Feria de la Ciudad and the Festival del Centro Histórico, annual and highly staged combinations of music and theatre, with prominent commercial sponsorship, have been mobilised as part of this endeavour. Well-known artists such as Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Francis Alÿs whose performative installations draw on uses of public space have been criticised for getting too close to these corporate interests and letting playfulness overtake social content (see Lozano-Hemmer, 2000; Alÿs, 2004).

An interesting example of the relation between art, public space and megaprojects was the arrival in Mexico City during 2005 of The Cow Parade. Beginning in Zurich in 1998, the fibreglass Cows have 'grazed' in 32 cities around the world, and from Mexico City went to Tijuana, Guadalajara, Florence and Buenos Aires, symbolising an engagement with global networks. In Mexico City, 200 cows designed by Mexican artists with styles appropriate to their location were placed across the central and western neighbourhoods of the city, around the newly renovated museums in Chapultepec Park and the Reforma Boulevard, in the commercial centres of Perisur and Santa Fe, and in the downtown (Figure 1). Although three successive left-of-centre mayors have professed a desire to see art create public space for all citizens the cows never made it to the poorer east and north of the city.

Rather the eastern borough of Ixtapalapa, with a population of almost 2 million, has only one community and art centre, a converted abandoned government office building El FARO de Oriente that provides instruction in performance theatre, graffiti, music and a small library (Pérez Mora, 2006).<sup>4</sup> In the poorer boroughs, as elsewhere in Mexico, local governments have instead introduced measures to crack down on 'anti-social' behaviour, meaning the criminalisation of graffiti, loud music, clubs and raves (Cruz Salazar, 2004; Debroise, 2005).<sup>5</sup> The counterculture of

graffiti, however, is a good example of how everyday practice contests and reveals spaces as differentiated and subverted from intended use, and how spaces considered 'excess' from the ideal image are appropriated, reused and made liminal. Graffiti also invokes the local as global, with artists and taggers drawing from a range of imagery through music, cartoons and scripts, including US and Japanese spray styles with 'Mexican' subjects, many of which are repeated by Chicano artists in the USA (Figure 2).

Third, the excesses of capital, consumption and control that underpin megaprojects, and their occasional subversions by other uses and users, and attempts to construct meanings through them, challenge the singular representations of modernity. This observation has particular resonance in the case of Mexico where concerns with modernity have produced a large body of writing. As Garcia Canclini (1995) has observed, state/elite drives for a conformity born of modernity have left a series of unfinished projects out-of-place on the landscape; the elites discovering the discomfort of the modern cultural forms and lower classes striving to emancipate themselves from modernity. Differently, Claudio Lomnitz-Adler (1996) argues that Mexicans have long tormented themselves with recurring modernising fantasies only to produce 'dismodernity' as a mixture of modern and postmodern disutopia, becoming in the process what he calls 'unreliable moderns'. Looking at social processes, Lomnitz-Adler sees the results as 'naco', a term originally used as a descriptor of rural Indians (*totonacos*) deemed out of place in the city but now applied to all Mexicans 'out of place' in the present modernity. Lomnitz-Adler takes as an example the class aspirations of the household that buys a sofa only to cover it in transparent plastic and reserve it for guests. We note, however, that naco is used by poorer youth to describe richer, whiter, young Mexicans, who seem visibly uncomfortable outside the elite suburbs. Fittingly, in everyday speech naco is occasionally corrupted as 'Nike'.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 1** A 'modern art' cow in Chapultepec Park, Mexico City.

### Megaproject make-overs: Santa Fe and Angelópolis

Let us consider two examples. The first is the Santa Fe urban megaproject located on the western fringe of Mexico City. In order to acquire the land, an area of 946 hectares, politicians, planners and developers presented an image of a desolate landscape with deep and arid ravines, sparsely populated by people living in shacks, surrounded by mountains of garbage and by a fetid smell from the combination of rotten fruits, dead animals, hospital refuse and human and animal excrement. The location of sand mines and the city's western garbage dump, providing a livelihood for at least 2000 pickers who had been there for decades (Castillo Berthier, 1984), Santa Fe was described by the city government as 'populated by a small group of people', underutilised and as such an ideal place to

develop a megaproject. The original users were displaced; the vision of a shiny megaproject was, to quote Georgina Velásquez a social worker who worked with the garbage pickers for more than 10 years, 'built on misery'.

Of course, the new Santa Fe paid little consequence to this past. The original project designed by the signature Mexican architects Ricardo Legorreta, Abraham Zabludovsky and Teodoro González de León set out to attract transnational company headquarters, high-end commerce, gated communities and apartment buildings. The 'success' of the new Santa Fe was predicated on spatial segregation and privatisation of space, with the ravines and cliffs that had once secluded the mines, dump and squatter settlements from lower and middle-income settlements nearby now serving as barriers to ensure the exclusivity of the new Santa Fe. The





**Figure 2** Graffiti claims liminal spaces, using culturally iconic images in new and political ways.

installation of new or modified road networks that linked the megaproject to elite residential, office and commercial areas elsewhere in the city, while having few links to the adjacent communities including the old pueblo of Santa Fe added to the sense of exclusivity. Governance was also controlled with a Public–Private Partnership called *Servicios Metropolitanos* (SERVIMET) set up in 1977 to bring together the city government, at that time an unelected body with a mayor appointed by the President, and a changing assortment of private sector partners. SERVIMET's modus operandi was to commercialise the land holdings in Santa Fe, which had been acquired by the government at US\$3 cents per m<sup>2</sup>, selling land to developers at upwards of US\$2000 per m<sup>2</sup>, using the profits to install infrastructure and cross-subsidise high profile schemes elsewhere in the city such as remodelling the Zoo, the National Auditorium, and the construction

of the Children's Museum.<sup>7</sup> Despite a substantial budget, SERVIMET failed to deliver state-of-the-art infrastructure and urban services, prompting the Neighbours Association to take up these responsibilities, including rubbish collection and policing, acting as the only 'authority' in Santa Fe in a model that they call 'a tropicalized Business Improvement District'.

Today, Santa Fe is host to corporate offices of Daimler Chrysler, Hewlett Packard, Erickson, Citibank-Banamex, General Electric, IBM, ABN Amro, Philip Morris, Kraft, Coca-Cola, Sony and Telefonica, together with Mexican transnationals like Televisa, José Cuervo and Bimbo. Two major private universities have their campus in the area, as does Mexico's premier private hospital, and the Centro Comercial Santa Fe, opened in 1995 as the largest and most luxurious mall in Latin America with 108,000 m<sup>2</sup> occupied by around 300 stores, 14 movie theatres, a golf

range, a sports centre and a kids entertainment area (Cornejo and Bellon, 2001). There are also dozens of high-end apartment buildings with many more under construction, plus Bosques de Santa Fe one of the most exclusive gated communities in the city which is accessed only through a tunnel. Urban developments in the area are advertised with strap lines such as 'CITY Santa Fe: Welcome to Civilization. Exclusivity in the best location' or given names such as El Refugio (litt. The Refuge). Data on the population of Santa Fe vary widely, but a reasonable estimate is that around 10,000 live there and approximately 100,000 workers, students and visitors commute to the area during weekdays.

The second example is *Megaproyecto Programa de Desarrollo Regional Angelópolis*, located in Mexico's fourth largest city, Puebla, and initiated in July 1993 when then President Carlos Salinas promised a US\$1 billion investment programme as part of the gubernatorial campaign of Manuel Bartlett.<sup>8</sup> The megaproject aimed to 'recover the grandeur' of a city that had suffered as foreign direct investment went to the border or smaller cities, and now appeared on measurements of poverty and social deprivation alongside the 'Southern' states of Oaxaca and Chiapas. Under the auspices of a government trust, the Fideicomiso Angelópolis, a package of large-scale interventions were envisaged including an extension of the airport and the addition of an export zone, the construction of a rubbish treatment plant and the creation of a cultural, tourist and business district over 27 blocks in the downtown.<sup>9</sup> The largest project, however, was the development of 1082 hectares previously expropriated by the state for less than US\$1 per m<sup>2</sup> from four 'agrarian' communities on the city's periphery (Jones, 1998).<sup>10</sup> As with Santa Fe, this expropriation also ignored the livelihoods of populations *in situ*, including the presence of low-income settlements some of which were forcibly removed and buildings demolished. Nevertheless, early intimations that the government intended to construct almost 35,000 low- and middle-

income houses on the expropriated area subsided, and the megaproject's elite orientation soon became apparent when a private hospital and private university were announced, quickly followed by two large malls and the La Vista Country Club.

From 1994 to 2000 the Angelópolis area was subject to three zoning adjustments, reducing the areas devoted to public facilities. Today, the project includes three large malls, Angelópolis, Millennium and Palmas, a food court mall (La Isla Plaza Gastronomica) that includes nightclubs and bars, two private universities and a private hospital, a number of five-star hotels, a government office complex (Ciudad Judicial) and business parks for, among others, Banamex, Deloitte and SunAlliance. A cultural centre, the Complejo Cultural Puebla Siglo XXI designed by Pedro Ramírez Vazquez, was completed but the 34 hectare Parque del Arte all but disappeared as land was sold to the developer of Condominios del Arte and a mall (Quintero Cedeno, 2005). Unlike Santa Fe which has a few buildings by well-known Mexican architects such as Legorreta and Agustin Hernandez, Angelópolis has no offering from a 'celebrity chef' apart from Ramírez Vazquez, an avoidance very much in line with the city's attitude to contemporary architecture as something to be treated with suspicion.<sup>11</sup> Interspersed among these developments are middle and higher end gated residential developments, with Bosques de Angelópolis the first followed by El Cortijo and Residencial Palmas consisting of three 16 floor high-rise condominiums that come complete with designer furniture and gyms. The most recent, Lomas de Angelópolis, is a cluster of 11 gated communities with 1931 residences plus leisure, health and educational facilities within the walls. As with Santa Fe, at numerous points Angelópolis is cut off from the poorer parts of the city, including a few original settlements that resisted removal or, such as Concepción la Cruz, are adjacent to the megaproject where the new roads end abruptly.

### Global spaces and everyday practices

The shopping malls which anchor both Santa Fe and Angelópolis have become fundamental to everyday life and the establishment of global engagement and status. Observations recorded in a field diary for the Angelópolis mall in 2005 note top line fashion niches at prices above those in the USA and UK, despite the possibility that many of the items will have been made in Mexico or in Central America.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the Americana of Nautica and Ralph Lauren, shop names have a distinctly European slant, with indication of branches in Paris, London or Milan displayed prominently. Stores with names such as 'Salon Ingles' offering a tweed and business suit look, The Noble House, Neck and Neck [child designer wear], Zurich [Little Big Store—designer gifts and luggage], Mont Blanc, and three Hugo Boss stores, Prada and Cartier. The diary notes the 'excess' of jewellers, challenged for numerical superiority only by the designer shoe stores, but apparently no bookstore. With the exception of a mid-range furniture store (mid-range for US or UK wallets) there is a large designer kitchen shop, the 'Cocinas Quetzal', which promises 'The Ultimate Kitchen' (in English) and then indicates that it sells PoggenPohl, a high-end German manufacturer. There is also a designer bathroom shop called 'Euro Toilette' and in the Las Palmas mall stores include B's Corner (lingerie), Nikki's Suntan, Aesthetic Dentistry and Ciao Cucina (Italian and French designer kitchenware). Back to Angelópolis mall, up and down the main concourse, there are nine cars on display, from Audi, Mercedes, Acura to Land Cruisers, and there is a showroom to Saab and Hummer. The sign of the anniversary lottery proclaims a RAV4 as first prize and on a subsequent visit a lottery for the Tecnológico de Monterrey, Puebla's most expensive university, was charging US\$70 for tickets with an \$8.8 million house as first prize, a Porsche and cash package. Walking down the concourse becomes a slalom to negotiate the stands advertising real estate, mobile phones and credit cards.

The demand for status extends to food. Cookery courses are available from the Swiss Culinary Institute and the food court stocks wines from Europe, Italian pasta, oils and condiments, but items from Mexico are missing. There seems to be no honey, unless adulterated with *cacahuante* (peanuts) or citrus pieces, there is no *cajeta* and the only chilles come in fancy glass jars, and the diary observes that there is no point in asking for *aguamiel* (a popular alcohol drink) given that the tequilas are located with the burgundy and champagne.<sup>13</sup> Although the food court is not for the mass weekly shop, the other food providers are full, from Tony Roma's for ribs, pizza from Italianni's, the ubiquitous Italian Coffee Company (akin to Starbucks). But, it is the use of the food spaces that is striking. Although the wooden chairs make sitting more than 20 minutes a hardship, the young people seem to make a coffee or panini last an eternity. This is fast food eaten slowly. The young are mostly in [same] gendered groups, smoking heavily, texting furiously and drinking Frappuccinos. While ethnicity and class is difficult to discern, there is little mistaking that the 'auxiliary' staff who clean the tables, guard the stores or tend to the toilets are shorter and darker than the clientele. By contrast, the servers in the restaurants and stores are mostly as white and as tall as the clientele, especially in the boutiques, much less so in the department stores and, interestingly, McDonald's, where staff and clientele are dark(er) skinned and the Muzak seems louder.

Obviously the malls are sites for consumption, but they also serve for display and performance (Shields, 1992). The main Angelópolis and Santa Fe malls serve as virtual catwalks and playgrounds to the rich kids. In Angelópolis, the *fresas* (rich kids) come out from late afternoon—the girls dressed up in designer wear, heels and make-up, the boys looking more 'beach' and a few appearing to be mimicking US 'crew style' (trousers rolled up to one knee, swagger and loose fit), taking mobile phone pictures of friends. Couples patrol up and down but

congregate at the cinema or what are called the '*playas*' (litt. beaches) around the fake palm trees and seating areas. Some carouse around but there is little of the 'making out' that follows later among a few. Observing these groups, one notices that at the edges, but not stopping to sit or to mingle, are what look to be poorer couples, the girls often still in school uniform and not jangling car keys or 'Blackberries'. One group drive home in their Corvettes and VW Jettas, the other take the few collective buses that make impromptu stops on the slip roads to the highways.

It hardly needs us to affirm that the malls and other areas of the megaprojects are not accessible to all. The extremely high prices make it impossible for most Mexicans to buy anything, to enter the clubs and bars, or even park their car if they have one. Thirteen year old Oscar whose one bedroom house in an irregular settlement has panoramic views of Santa Fe, recounts that one day he and his family decided to go to the cinema but discovered they didn't have enough money to enter. They visited the Mexican chain store and coffee shop Sanborns, but once again everything was too expensive. At the other extreme, 'Kid's City' (La Ciudad de los Niños) provides children between 9 months and 16 years with the opportunity to 'live like adults' in a scaled down city where children are given 'little pesos' or a credit card with which to shop, eat at a restaurant, open a bank account or go dancing. All the scaled down businesses that exist in the 'City' are real brands such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola. A group of 200 people are in charge of controlling the kids. The managing director explains that 'Kid's City' franchise will be exported from Mexico to Japan in 2006 and contracts have been signed for 'cities' in Italy and Dubai (*Reforma*, 12 September 2006). While the kids play, the parents can watch videos of global music and dance shows or access the Internet at no extra cost; making people feel part of the 'world community' is integral to the 'City' experience.

At first sight the local appears to be erased by the global, order and aspiration is everywhere in evidence. But we can also see glimpses that spontaneous, diverse, encounters take place in the megaprojects that challenge or subvert their designed use, and that the 'excess' of consumption and display is not the only way that we can use excess as an analytical lens. On a visit to the food court area of Angelópolis two shop workers were noticed sitting at a table. They were well dressed but shorter, darker, than almost everyone around and unlike about two-thirds of the women in the vicinity they were not (bottle) blondes. The two shop workers had bought a vegetable shake and an iced coffee to legitimate their presence but with bags as a shield from mall managers or shoppers they proceed to eat lunch from Tupperware containers. Similarly, the poor kids strolling on the periphery of the richer kids at the *playa* has particular resonance and this form of appropriation was commented upon by 19-year-old Alan while he worked at a traffic light in Santa Fe handing out fliers advertising the 'Curves' women's gym. He earns less than US\$200 a month but claimed that simply visiting the mall makes him feel like 'having money'. He and his friends go to see the *güeritas* (blonde girls), and a few of the *niñas fresa* (rich girls) will talk to them and even invite them to raves, but they have no money to go. They also look at the clothing and music stores to see what is fashionable. After getting some ideas Alan and his friends go to *Tepito*—the largest market of pirated products in Mexico City—and they buy almost identical items at prices they can afford.<sup>14</sup>

Leaving the immediate confines of the malls and business parks, one is immediately struck by the absence of pavements and crossing points for the highways, of benches, shade trees or garbage cans. Yet, we can also witness the improvised walkways between points where mini-bus passengers endure rapid drop-off and pick-ups on the side of the freeways, and the back entrance to stores, plazas and offices. Here too we can

see football pitches, some with proper posts, or elsewhere games going on with stones or cans as goals (Figure 3). In Angelópolis, one freeway central reservation has metal goalposts set up. And other spaces are occupied. While the intention in both Santa Fe and Angelópolis is for grassed areas to extend the image of the developments with dense planting and the occasional fountain, these excess spaces are, for short periods, full of construction workers, cleaners, porters, security guards and others catching a nap, eating or talking. Railings, fences and walls around these meeting grounds, and along the edges of the car parks and building sites, become bulletin boards for jobs, consumer goods and houses for sale, and offers of services (Figure 4). Vacant plots fill with garbage, some of which is recycled by small-scale operators coming in with lorries, and building hard-core and soil from construction sites for sale. At certain times, some plots are used for drinking, drug-taking, sex, fights and many are covered with graffiti.

On the sides of junction interchanges, along central reservations and vacant plots are street traders. At lunch time in both Santa Fe and Angelópolis office and store workers walk to cars with open trunks that sell all kinds of hot food. The cars are parked illegally—the only legal parking areas are inside private buildings. Office workers eat on the street or go back to their offices with a



**Figure 4** Ad hoc advertising space—security fencing to sell land, a house and rent bouncy castles.

brown bag containing their lunch, which they consume in eating areas that most corporate offices provide. In Santa Fe the vendors in the cars answer cellular phones, give out food menus written on small pieces of paper and charge for the lunch bags. This is the *new* modality of street food stands: using cars that are 'less damaging' to the image of this supposedly pristine and well-organised global space, and cellular phones to inform the clients about the menu of the day and take orders. There is more going on here than vendors serving executives; the vendors are adapting the flexibility and market demands of the global era, creating strategies to fit with a new social and urban context (Figures 5 and 6).



**Figure 3** Vacant plots, central reservations and streets become impromptu meeting places for lunch and football.



**Figure 5** 'Street' vendors in Santa Fe.





**Figure 6** 'Street' vendors in Angelópolis.

One of the most interesting vendors in Santa Fe is 'Jenny', always dressed in jeans and a baseball cap, who claims to have been an administrative assistant in one of the top law firms that moved its offices to one of the first corporate buildings in the area. Like her co-workers she experienced the lack of suppliers of goods and services for the mid- and low-level employees. She saw this as a business opportunity and decided to quit her formal sector work and become a street vendor. More than 10 years ago she started selling products from the trunk of her old car. Today, she owns a van from which she sells an incredible variety of goods such as candy, cigarettes, soft drinks, homemade sandwiches and over-the-counter medicines. She parks in front of the building where she used to work, and sells her products from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., making five times more money as a 'street' vendor than she used to

make working in the law firm. Jenny's business grows as Santa Fe grows. She is already big enough for delivery vehicles of transnational food and beverage companies to serve her car as if it were a formal store and Jenny operates a delivery service to people's cars or workplaces.

Of course, Jenny is not the only one who has thought of selling products in Santa Fe streets, but most of the street vendors have been removed or relocated by the Neighbours Association which acts as the 'authority' in the area. The primary concern expressed by this Association is the 'dirty' and 'bad' image of the street vendors. They have tried to remove Jenny several times, but Jenny has found ways to remain in business. She refuses to move, claiming a right to earn an income good enough to send her two kids to school, and the right to use the city space in order to do so, even if, as she

believes, it belongs to the buildings' owners. Jenny says that she is giving a service to the community, that she is 'needed'. She has collected support from companies and claims to possess a letter holding the Neighbours Association accountable if anything bad happens to her. According to executives of the Association, when the police have tried to displace her, she resists by going under her car and when pulled out she claims sexual harassment.

A similar subversion tactic is employed by Carlos who sells and installs glass for the corporate buildings, but who found it hard to make a living with his formal sector job and decided to become a street vendor. He realised the potential of having a business on the side and together with his wife started making croissants and sandwiches and selling them in their car. Now Carlos combines two businesses, the sale of glass and the sale of food. He does business with people working for the same companies, at different levels of course, who call him to the same cellular phone at his 'office', that is his car parked in a prohibited parking bay. In Puebla, Doña Amalia sells *chalupas* and *tamales* near the drive-thru pay booth of the Electricity Commission. She was formerly a street trader in the town of Cholula but lived closer to Angelópolis and realised that there was more money to be made here. She chose her position carefully. On the pavement, her little stall has a vacant plot behind it so no property owner disturbs her for the time being and she is opposite a newspaper stand, situated on the central reservation, where cars stop frequently. Most of her clients, she says, are construction and maintenance workers, students and people stopping to pay their electricity bills.

Unlike Jenny, Doña Amalia has had few problems with the authorities, much less the police who she counts among her best customers. Occasionally, however, on both sites, food stands are removed by the police, but they keep reappearing in different spots. It is a continuous struggle between the sellers and the authorities. In Santa Fe several

billboards read, 'Do not promote the street vending, it affects us all. It is illegal, generates insecurity, garbage, pollutes the area and damages the development's image' signed by the Santa Fe Neighbours Association. But the billboards are largely ignored, not least as in Mexico people from all social strata eat street food. Luxurious cars stop at the food stands and well-dressed executives enjoy a taco next to a taxi driver, car park attendant or construction workers. Although few words are exchanged among strangers, an accommodation of difference and equality are made possible for a few moments in streets designed to promote segregation.

Casting around, other subversions come to one's attention. As anywhere else in the cities, *frenaleros* as they are known in Mexico City (after the red cloth they waive to attract drivers' attention) or *viene-viene* in Puebla ('come-come', the command to reverse), informal workers who assist with parking cars are in evidence. While a useful service in the tight streets of downtown in the ample bays of the malls, plazas and offices the attendants' role seems superfluous. But, their presence is demanded despite early attempts by mall and business park managers to regulate and/or remove them. Among the attendants are car washers with little trolleys carrying water, cloths and soap. The washers have uniforms and every appearance of formality, given that other traders trying to enter the car parks would be removed by the security or police patrols. But the mall does not employ the washers, nor do they receive a wage or benefits, although they have to rent their equipment from a franchise firm. Their living is made from the fees and tips of car washing, in exactly the same way as anywhere else in the city. When Angelópolis opened, however, the car parking fees were high with signs advertising the levels of security, frequency of patrols and insurance that came with having a ticket. At such prices, however, many customers desisted from having their cars washed on site and washers lost income. But, as people saw the car washing as an everyday practice that occurs while shopping, eating or

at the gym, complaints were made and the price of parking was reduced (Figure 7).

A particular headache in both megaprojects is traffic. Designed for the car and with only limited public transport both sites suffer gridlock at key intersections. These problems are partly caused, definitely exacerbated, by the regulation of other transport users. Taxis that are only allowed to enter the mall parking zone for dropping off but not to circulate form impromptu queues outside the perimeter fence, obstructing incoming traffic. Once on the highways, the inadequacy of site planning becomes obvious. In Angelópolis there was for many years no left turn from one of the main roads (*circuito interior*) onto the principal boulevard, leaving some drivers to make improvised turns, others to U-turn at a petrol station. Once on the boulevard there are limited opportunities to cross over or return, which become imperative as the toll booth to the nearby city of Atlixco approaches. At numerous points the concrete partitions between the carriageways have been removed or turned around to allow cars to cross over. On one occasion, at night, one of us witnessed a tractor shunting a concrete block to create a gap across the highway so that residents of a gated community could avoid a 3 kilometre round trip to turn into their main entrance.

Subversion is evident in other ways. In Angelópolis reminders of the area's previous agricultural role is still evident for the sharp

eyed and knowledgeable. Small paths can still be seen appearing to meander through chain link fences, and a few empty concrete houses belonging to previous occupiers can be seen. Within and at the edges of the project are small hold-out colonias, omitted from the expropriation or having resisted removal, some of the boundary walls adorned with graffiti. In both projects, small settlements of workers' shacks are visible, reminiscent of the housing preceding the megaprojects but now functional to the construction workers and security guards who service the corporate headquarters and high-end condominiums (Figure 8). In Santa Fe the past of the rubbish dump can also still be seen (and sometimes smelt). The compacted rubbish grassed over to form a park, the Alameda Poniente, is fenced off from the public and guarded by a police car to prevent people using a site deemed too dangerous because of the gas emissions. Elsewhere gas vents can be seen sticking out of the ground. Perhaps the most remarkable sight however is of the 'dog lady', a former garbage dump dweller who occupies a small shack of wood and cardboard accompanied by her many dogs. The dwelling is close to the wall marking off Bosques de Santa Fe, the area smells of excrement and rotting food, the dogs attack whosoever approaches (as we discovered) and attempts at removing her have come to nothing. Wealthy residents of the area bring



**Figure 7** Car washer in Santa Fe; note the insufficient parking and vendor.



**Figure 8** Behind the corporate headquarters, construction worker housing sits on 'waste' ground.



**Figure 9** The dog lady of Santa Fe.

food on a regular basis and no one has complained about her presence (Figure 9).

There are more covert indications that the megaproject shine is an illusion and that informality is embedded in daily practices. Around Santa Fe and Angelópolis one can be struck by the presence of trucks (*pipas*) delivering water to corporate offices as the mainframe infrastructure is either non-existent or insufficient to the task. Critical of the 'street' traders for flouting regulations in Santa Fe, the Neighbours Association occupies offices in a residential apartment building in violation of land use codes. At the Las Palmas mall in Puebla, many of the boutique owners are refusing to pay rent and service charges, and some have threatened legal action against the administration which has changed hands five times in 6 years, claiming that promised services have not been installed, that an anchor store never materialised and a five-star hotel that would have given the mall a pedestrian flow was scrapped. With monthly rents for a small boutique space running at US\$1800, the stakes are high and moods are not helped when the 'quality' comes unstuck: in Las Palmas the internal canopies have proven insufficient to withstand heavy rains and fallen in on a couple of occasions. All is not perfect, and if the developments are intended to be permanent, a sense of their transience is created by the constant maintenance to keep the paint fresh, the marble polished, the

damp out: completed buildings seem like construction sites.

The megaprojects are predicated on a climate of fear with hoardings and adverts claiming the security of the developments, and signs advertising self-defence classes. Daily practice is more complex. A patron of Santa Fe mall whom we'll call Juan might be considered typical. Professional, upper middle class and a father to 6- and 7-year-old boys, he takes them to the shopping centre at the weekends rather than the park, commenting that 'parks do not exist any longer, it is impossible to visit them with the current insecurity'. Paradoxically, kidnappings and car thefts at the parking lots of shopping malls have become common in the past few years, questioning whether the perception of security is well founded. Now, just as crime has become commonplace, the security discourse and the physical presence of police has been downgraded. The Santa Fe mall is now one of the least policed areas in Mexico City with 15 guards in the interior and four police cars in the car park.

In Angelópolis too the representation of security is ambiguous. The numerous security guards seem to be highly armed, but many have pistols without bullets, some have bullet belts but empty holsters. The security guards in the car parks on their Quad bikes are unarmed. The absence of policing also has a political dimension. Angelópolis exists largely at the behest of the state government and municipality of Puebla but is located in what most people 'believe' to be the municipalities of San Pedro Cholula and San Andres Cholula. Commercial licences and service provision, including police, have been provided by the Cholulas, and both San Andres Cholula and Puebla have charged taxes simultaneously to the malls, business parks and upwards of 30 residential developments in the megaproject. As the city has grown, the municipality of Puebla has petitioned regularly to subsume the Cholulas into its jurisdiction and in 1962 a decree apportioned part of San Andres Cholula to Puebla. Application of the decree, which covers an

area of 8.5 kilometres of mostly present-day Angelópolis, has been strongly resisted by San Pedro Cholula. As the competition between Puebla and the Cholulas has rolled on, deciding to police the megaproject has become a tactic in a wider conflict. For much of 2005 and 2006 the police forces from the two Cholulas refused to respond to calls in the megaproject. In July 2006 the Supreme Court declared jurisdiction over Angelópolis to Puebla but in practice the dispute continues.<sup>15</sup>

We can also consider subversion and excess through the medium of corruption. It is an open secret in both Santa Fe and Angelópolis that much of the capital supporting both megaprojects is from drugs or other illicit activities. Easier to substantiate however has been the relationship between the projects and politician enrichment. According to a former government official we interviewed, monies from SERVIMET functioned as President Salinas's 'petty cash' for his favoured projects. In Puebla, there are accusations surrounding the granting of development permission for Lomas de Angelópolis to a Lebanese company, Grupo Proyecto, which also manages the Las Palmas mall and the Torres D'Argent. These developments took shape after the third change of land use in 2000 when the former university rector and soon to be mayor of Puebla became actively involved in a number of the projects. The mayor owns Las Palmas mall which recently benefited from a bridge connecting it to other developments in the megaprojects and adjoins the Torres D'Argent. Across Angelópolis, zoning allocations to green space have been reduced from 15 per cent in the mid-1990s to less than 10 per cent by early 2003, with areas destined as an ecological zone sold instead to a private university and an amusement park. In one development 34 parcels that had been donated to the municipality for parks and public facilities were subsequently sold to developers, including the head of public works, the funds allegedly used to cover the Christmas bonuses of local officials. As one informant expressed it, mass corruption usually accompanies the last year of an

administration (known colloquially as the Año de Hidalgo) but with Angelópolis it was a feature of the project from day one.

## Conclusion

At one level, it is difficult to interpret today's megaprojects, from Canary Wharf, Potsdamer Platz, Battery Park City, Pudong, to Santa Fe and Angelópolis, as able to 'lift the spirit' or provide levels of social meaning that Charles Jencks has argued are the qualities of iconic architecture and design. Architects and planners appear to be failing to create obviously meaningful buildings in preference for landscapes that as Walter Benjamin might remark are 'primeval lands of consumption and excess'. In this sense, as the corruption of The Situationist slogan employed in our title suggests, beneath the pavements of the megaproject there is only excess.<sup>16</sup> But there is more to these seemingly anodyne spaces than their reading through an excess of capital and consumption can convey. People are investing these landscapes with meanings, converting the spaces of material excess and the spaces deemed superfluous to the megaproject, the excess spaces, into the useful. The megaprojects are cut across with small interjections of everyday life beyond the intention of administrators or architects. Our concern, then, is that the debate about contemporary landscape meaning as seen through the space of the megaproject cannot be limited to the world of architectural critique. Before we decry spaces as bland, generic or shallow, we must consider the possibilities for heterogeneity. Similarly, we suggest that the megaprojects' claims to order and control, possibly achieved at the expense of democratic practice more generally, overlook the infractions and subversions that appropriate the rules and conformity as a resource for business, whether in the form of selling *tacos* or hidden graft. The megaprojects serve as new arenas of negotiation and conflict, creating new forms of exclusion particularly for the urban poor, but which are challenged in



small ways at the edges. Although Santa Fe and Angelópolis are private, they are briefly and without strategy, public in ways that are not exuberant, colourful or rhythmic, but quiet, respectful, hard-working and effective.

The examples of Santa Fe and Angelópolis also induce us to think about the complex interplay between urban megaprojects and globalisation. The megaprojects fragment the city, disembedding spaces from a wider urbanism, detached from the immediate area, engaged with financial, consumer and aesthetic flows established elsewhere. But, just as importantly, the megaprojects satisfy a search for new identities that require points of interaction between public, poor, outside, local and the private, rich, inside and global. The projects, notably the malls, offer a tangling of these categories (Amin, 2002). The rich seek to copy the lifestyles of Miami, Milan or London just as people like Alan acquire the pirate versions. The shopping mall has become a place for encounters where a desire for inclusion and similitude through consumption can be played out. The claimed 'global' spaces of Santa Fe and Angelópolis have imposed upon them, largely through daily informal practices that produce particularly local versions of the global, imaginatively appropriating from the global rather than simply being created by it. The purveyors of lunches, the car washers and impromptu mechanics, the loosely regulated security personnel, are constitutive of near-far relations in the liminal city.

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### Notes

- 1 The exchange is a series of letters starting with 'Can we Still Believe in Iconic Buildings?' published in *Prospect*, 19 May, 18 April, 25 April, 27 April and 4 May, all 2005.
- 2 Equating urbanism with the artistry of food preparation echoes Baudelaire while also suggesting the contemporary fascination with food risk (see Smart, 1994).
- 3 It is perhaps not incidental that so many architects, including Santiago Calatrava, Norman Foster and Richard Rogers, endorsed their reputations through the construction of airports. Rogers won the 2006 Stirling Prize for the new Barajas terminal in Madrid.
- 4 The FARO serves a larger area including the other poor boroughs of Iztacalco, and the adjacent municipalities of Nezahualcóytl, La Paz and Valle de Chalco, with a total population of around 6 million.
- 5 As one might tell from this brief account, the role of art in Mexican urbanism is highly contested. While it is undoubtedly the case that artists such as Guillermo Gomez-Peña (1996) have challenged the parameters of art itself and the concept of Mexican identities, the purpose of other installations is more ambiguous. Away from Mexico City, perhaps it is not incidental that the centre of gravity to innovative art has shifted to the Mexico–USA border (see Berelowitz, 2003; González, 2004).
- 6 We note that all three points have a grounding in historical processes. Although motives may have differed, Mexico has long employed 'megaprojects' to attract global capital and recognition. The period of the Belle Époque, associated with the government of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910), transformed many Mexican cities through the audacious creation of new urban spaces such as boulevards and parks, the building of 'consumption palaces' from department stores, opera houses and arcades, and adoption of 'French' and 'Italian' architectural motif. These measures were reinforced by the exclusion of indigenous and poor groups, 'immoral' professions and certain trades, through regulations, notably on sanitation and health, policing or razing of neighbourhoods, and the promotion of cultural practices through entertainment, sport and the media (see Tenenbaum, 1994; Bliss, 2001; Beezley, 2004; Jiménez, 2006). As these authors note, social and cultural transformations, supported by modifications to urban form, were predicated

on particular discursive notions of the city and progress, and resisted as such, most notably by street traders.

- 7 In 2002 Mexico City's then-mayor Andres Manuel López Obrador decided to tackle the unaccountability of SERVIMET and to virtually eliminate it.
- 8 The megaproject went through a number of name and content changes before Angelópolis was adopted as the general term. An earlier version was known as Puebla Plus.
- 9 The downtown Paseo San Francisco project was designed by McKinsey and Company and refined by HKS-Sasaki of Dallas to open the buried San Francisco River as a river-walk between two artificial lakes and install a cable car system. Also subject to resistance, the private houses, small factories and mom-and-pop stores, many dating from the 17th century, were replaced by a largely empty museum, a Legorreta designed convention centre, a shopping mall and international hotel (Churchill, 1999).
- 10 In 2006 the rent for a 1909 m<sup>2</sup> plot without services was US\$11,450 per month.
- 11 Unlike many smaller cities, Puebla seems to have no building by leading architects such as Teodoro González de León, Agustín Hernández or Enrique Norten. Despite an abundance of talent in Mexico, Grupo JV contracted the architect of the Haitong Securities Building in Shanghai to design slightly shorter copies for a set of mixed use towers in Angelópolis.
- 12 Field research for this paper consisted of interviews with government officials, developers, former residents (now evicted), mall customers and office employees, and (informal) traders. In most instances interviews were recorded or extensively noted; the exceptions being where discussions with former agricultural rightholders were undertaken at a time when evictions were taking place (see Jones, 1998) and in shorter discussions with traders. In both cities the authors conducted extensive observation work, including at night and weekends over a 2-year period, recorded in field diaries and supported with use of a photographic record.
- 13 Cacahuatate is the Mexican term for peanuts (from nahuatl), cajeta is a toffee syrup derived from goat's milk and aguamiel is the sap from the maguey that is refined into an alcoholic drink commonly consumed in the countryside.
- 14 The interplay of connectivity and distance is the basis of the film *Amarte Duele* that is set in Santa Fe and portrays two teenagers' search for love and freedom amidst class divides, prejudice, peer pressure and urban violence.
- 15 The shooting of a valet parking attendant at a nightclub in Angelópolis by the Director of Transport Security added extra spice to the policing

issue. The Director was in possession of a government registered gun, even though as a transit bureaucrat he had no right to possess one, leading to investigations about how many government weapons were in private hands. The nightclub was also well known for drug dealing and the suspicion was levelled that the accused was high on cocaine. Although an investigation by the Judicial police (PGJ) was ongoing, the valet's widow was offered a house, free medical care (she was 8 months pregnant), free tuition for her children and a job with the government ... in exchange, one might assume, for her silence (*La Jornada de Oriente*, 12 July 2006).

- 16 The original slogan was *Sous les pavés, la plage!* (beneath the pavement, the beach).

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