

## CONTROLLED AND UNCONTROLLED URBANIZATION IN PRODUCTIVE AREAS. THE HUEXOTITLA AND SAN MATEO FLOURMILLS IN PUEBLA, MEXICO, AND THEIR WHEAT FIELDS.

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### Plenary Session B. PRODUCTIVE AREAS AND INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES.

We present two cases of wheat mills located in the region east-central of Mexico, (1,2,) where the urbanization of former adjacent cultivation areas shows opposed results in spite of several common elements to their long existence.

Our cases of study are the mill of Huexotitla, near the city of Puebla, (3) and San Mateo adjacent to the city Atlixco, (4)

These two magnificent mill buildings present several similarities in their long existence:

1. both properties are of vice regal origin. Huexotitla exists from 1537 as floury mill. Up to 1970 it was known as the oldest mill functioning in the American continent.<sup>1</sup> From San Mateo there are evidence of their existence as wheat producer from 1592, however, their foundation should be previous to this date. This means that the wheat cultivations in the two areas began in the middle of XVI century.<sup>2</sup>

2. Both mills moved initially with hydraulics power and at the end of their existence with electric motors.

3. The water served like motive force. In the mill of Huexotitla from the XVI century was used for the hydraulic wheel, and at the end of the XIX century it was good to move turbines. The mill of San Mateo also began works from 1867 with wheel hydraulics that was changed by turbine toward 1890. In both cases the water was used later in the watering of the cultivated areas. The readiness of water for lands watering in a country like Mexico is always a privilege.

4. It is clear that, these establishments had very long existences of several centuries, starting from the XVI century. They were product highly of the European colonization of the country.

5. Obviously, both mills went by successive stages of modernization. The Mill of San Mateo maintained tip technology being always equipped with the processes currently used in France, Switzerland and Germany. It was the first one in introducing in Mexico the system of vertical silos and automatic transport of wheat.<sup>3</sup>

6. These mills and their productive areas were located near urban areas. Huexotitla to the south of the city of Puebla, and San Mateo to the west of the city of Atlixco, both in the State of Puebla in the east-central of Mexico.

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<sup>1</sup> MARIN TAMAYO, Fausto.(1959) Huexotitla. La propiedad privada del molino activo más antiguo de América. Puebla, Centro de Estudios Históricos de Puebla, 51 p.

<sup>2</sup> TORRES BAUTISTA, Mariano. (2001) "Una explotación agrícola en larga duración: La hacienda de San Mateo en el valle de Atlixco." En CERVANTES BELLO, F rancisco.(Coord.) Las dimensiones sociales del espacio en la historia de Puebla. (XVI-XIX) Puebla, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. P241-259.

<sup>3</sup> TORRES BAUTISTA, Mariano. (1994) La familia Maurer de Atlixco, Puebla. Entre el Porfiriato y la Revolución. México, CONACULTA, 253 p.

7. For their growing production levels, the markets and areas of wheat supply ended up being territories at long distance. At the start of the XX century, San Mateo began the wheat purchase to mill coming from Argentina and Canada. This matter prevails that the wheat arrived in ship to the port of Vera Cruz and for railroad until Atlixco.

8. The end of its industrial activities went very later to the loss of the agricultural areas. In spite of the urbanization of their agricultural properties, Huexotitla continued in operations up to 1970 while San Mateo agricultural areas was totally invaded between 1920 and 1940, continued operating up to 1999.

9. The closing of activities was given all of a sudden. The mill of Huexotitla for loss due to decreasing profitability and growing costs. Among other problems, it didn't have railroad to reach the wheat and their transport only had made by trucks, of course, a half much more expensive one. The Mill of San Mateo closed because its building suffered fractures during the earthquake of June of 1999 that took him in bad financial position.

10. The urbanization that occupied the cultivated areas, in both cases was propelled by the same phenomenon: the forced agrarian allotment derived from the armed revolution of 1910-1920.

This last it means that, after the fall of the General Porfirio Díaz government's that maintained for more than thirty years (1876-1880, 1884-1911), the armed bands occupied the agricultural properties of better quality. Any authority was in order to make respect the rights of property.

In this context, the change of use of the areas of cultivation of our cases of study produced two opposed results.

The territorial property of the mill of San Mateo was invaded in an aggressive way, violating rights of property and the current legislation. This invasion type was propitiated therefore by weak authorities that fought to achieve its own legitimating, unable to contain to the armed groups. More than that, the expectations of legalization of the busy territories were good to create political clientele that supported the consolidation from these governments later to the years of armed conflict.

The urbanization processes associated to these practices produced diametrically opposed results between Huexotitla and San Mateo.

The central phenomenon of our analyses is the change in the regime of property in the context of the State-society relationship. That is to say that, the challenge take place among a social group with a managerial tradition, against a neophyte political staff, without administrative training that oscillated between ideological expectations and demands of social groups without more political representation that charismatic and demagogic leaderships.<sup>4</sup>

In a big as complex country like Mexico, the different levels of political personnel's and the relationships with the local elites marked the course of the changing processes in the property status and the urbanization between 1920 and 1960.

The characteristics of those processes influenced in a decisive way in the infrastructure development and urban landscapes.

The old "Hacienda" and mill of San Mateo began to be divided by expropriations without compensation from 1920. (5) Establishments semi-urban called "colonies" whose names remember the recent events and their quick mystification. First of all emerged the colony called "Flores Magón", name of hyper radicals ideologists' of the armed fight. Between

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<sup>4</sup> MEYER, Jean.(2004) La Revolución Mexicana. México, Tusquets editores, 339 p.

1925 and 1930 was formed the colony "Alvaro Obregón, name of the military one who had rule the country in the four previous years. Finally was founded the colony "Revolution" and the rest of the property was divided on the average in small agricultural exploitations of 4 hectares. (6)

The mill of Huexotitla began to be urbanized in 1940, after escaping to the wave of expropriations under the government of General Lázaro Cárdenas: 1934-1940. Their Landlord, Emilio Benítez Reyes, divided in lots the adjacent lands to the city of Puebla between 1940 and 1955. From 1955 and up to 1960 another third of the property was urbanized by the successor, Enrique Benítez, brother of Emilio. (7) The rest of the cultivation area was sold after San Francisco's river was tube in 1960 that had served as supplier of motive force during centuries and like supply of watering until that year. (8) The necessary investments for the urban equipment depended on the certainty in the regimens of property. However, they were also important that the social levels of occupants' groups in San Mateo and buyers in Huexotitla.

In our cases of study the differences are perceived in levels of life and available urban equipment.

The occupation of San Mateo produced constructions without planning where the poverty and inequality is still perceived. (9) When being sudden occupations, lacking of all equipment, self construction housings arose without regulations neither urban service.

In the other hand, the occupation of lots in Huexotitla was given in a gradual way, for sales, and in an area with equipped streets. A fraction was donated to a noted religious institution to build an enormous school. This was constituted in a factor that attracted as buyers of lots to families interested in having a school in the very near for the formation of their children. In the same way, land was donated to build in 1967 a modernist church that was also constituted in symbol of prestige for the inhabitants of the area.<sup>5</sup> These intelligent donations created an area of middle and high class housing. (10)

## CONCLUSION

The contrasting result of the urbanization processes was product of the changing structures of the property determined by the discretionary application of laws interpreted by the governments in shift. The authorities during these years was far from completing approved laws. They reacts always under the pressure of groups that they acted continued by occasional leaderships. The geographical position of the two studied properties, determined the protection grade with which they could count in front of the invader bands. Huexotitla, nearer to one of the biggest cities in the country it could avoid that type of invasions. The opposite happened for the case of the mill and country property of San Mateo, located beside a small city that was characterized by the ferocious armed confrontations, first of rural groups and after workers' unions. These last ones were famous in the history of the country and the most important in their gender of the whole period of the revolution.<sup>6</sup> Under these conditions he never had opportunity to defend the

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<sup>5</sup> Información proporcionada por el actual propietario del existente edificio del molino de Huexotitla, Enrique Pérez Benítez el 22 de noviembre de 2005.

<sup>6</sup> BORTZ, Jeffrey.(1997) "Génesis del sistema mexicano de relaciones laborales: Política Federal de trabajo e industria textil (1925 y 1940)" en Anuario Estudios Sociales 96. Puebla, Claves Latinoamericanas- El Colegio de Puebla, pp 9-38.

agricultural properties that legally could have maintained, experiencing an urbanization process without regulation or equipment some.

