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# TRES CULTURAS SQUARE, TLATELOLCO: WITNESS OF SYNCRETIC TIME, RESISTANCE AND CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

VICTOR FERNANDO MEDINA-MARTÍNEZ <sup>1</sup>  
JOSÉ ANTONIO GARCÍA-AYALA <sup>2</sup>  
BLANCA MARGARITA GALLEGOS-NAVARRETE <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Student of the Professional Doctorate in Sciences in Architecture and Urbanism. Superior School of Engineering and Architecture, Tecamachalco-IPN. Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Teaching researcher. Superior School of Engineering and Architecture, Tecamachalco-IPN. Member of the National System of Researchers Level I. Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> Research Professor. Superior School of Engineering and Architecture, Tecamachalco-IPN. Mexico City, Mexico.

victorf.medinam19@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT

Tlatelolco, derived from the Nahuatl Xaltitloll (in the place of the pile of sand) is one of the historical cultural landscapes with the greatest syncretic values and architectural urban symbolism in the entire American continent. Its center being named -by local authorities- as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mexico City to be preserved for its value for historical memory, its main geosymbol, the "Tres Culturas Square" has witnessed the passing of centuries and national history from its privileged and strategic location within the capital of the Mexican Republic, since its foundation in 1337, constituting itself as a public space permeated by the sense of social struggle and progress over time. Its tricultural denomination connects to the pre-Hispanic era, of which it was a commercial enclave and the last redoubt of the Mexica resistance against the foreign siege; with New Spain era, for which it represented a center for academic development, knowledge and transcendent support for the evangelical cause; and with the contemporary era, for which it stands as a center of tourist interest and as one of the largest cultural and historical heritages at the national level. The objective is to understand, from a complex transdisciplinary approach, the syncretic heritage values of this historical cultural landscape that have resisted the passage of time, to constitute a sustainable process that transforms it into an example of preservation of knowledge, beliefs, practices and systems of representation that reconnects with the Mexican people for future generations.

**Keywords:** Tres Culturas Square, Historical Cultural Heritage, Syncretism.

## INTRODUCTION: SYNCRETISM IN HISTORICAL CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Structurally, contemporary human society is the product of its past, not only of the experiences and experiences that its own historical development represents, but also of the beliefs, worldviews and ritual practices that they used to represent as expressive-explanatory means before diverse phenomena that are part of their daily life. We could call these individual and collective practices *culture*, and its definition would not be far from that set forth by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2017, where culture is conceptualized as "everything that constitutes our being and configures our identity", therefore it is acceptable to interpret that the culture of the individual is shaped by the very relationships that he establishes with his environment, the material and immaterial elements that surround him and the way in which that structures his thought regarding the reality in which they develop.

Today practically, automatically, and without thinking about the nominal genesis of the term itself, the term culture is popularly used as a synonym to refer to a country or a specific region of the world, regardless of its temporal and historical situation, such as the Egyptian, Chinese, or Asian cultures. In general, this assertion is not about an erroneous vision; however, due to its epistemological depth, it is pertinent to interpret culture as a complex social phenomenon that characterizes "concrete worlds of beliefs and practices" (Giménez, 2007), through which a network of symbols is formed that goes beyond territorial delimitations and can be studied even from a temporal perspective in a single geographical point.



In the present work, a proposal supported by this thesis is presented, by taking as the focal object of study the Tres Culturas Square, a public space located in the historic center of Mexico City, whose relevance has led it to be considered a geosymbol. at a national level where, in an exceptional way, it is possible to admire the convergence of anthropo-architectural features of three different cultural stages that have guided Mexican society to today's hybrid culture. As the main objective of the writing, the complex transdisciplinary analysis of the site and the previously mentioned geosymbol is proposed as clear examples of national cultural heritage and its transition towards the construction of a culturally vast urban historical landscape that merits the social reconnection of the environment, approaching the sense of belonging and preservation of knowledge, beliefs, practices and representation systems that unite the Mexican people and promote the legacy of this vision for future generations.

As a brief, in this first section of the work, we will delimit at least two core concepts for understanding the object of study; later, in the second and third sections, the contexts on which the Tlatelolco area and the Tres Culturas Square have historically built their particularized vision will be described and analyzed as a singular example of the cultural convergence that stands on its perimeter. For the fourth section, the process of resistance that said space must have suffered with the intention of preserving its essence towards the cultural reconnection of heritage and architectural symbolism will be deepened. Finally, the fifth section concludes with the pertinent reflection on the meaning that this historical cultural heritage must consider in order to move towards the construction of a sustainable legacy that promotes the best local development and preservation towards the future, taking into consideration various dimensions. that move their perception away from the reductionist sense of tourist attraction and bring it closer to a space of original reconnection with the culture of Mexicanity.

With the intention of providing an adequate context for the rest of the writing, we will now proceed to analyze, from the Latin American perspective, some fundamental concepts for understanding what the complex system of interconnections on culture, heritage and architecture represents towards the sustainability of development goals focused on perspectives of preservation and regeneration of identity traits.

Derived from the term culture itself and with a purely anthropological genesis, different descriptive perspectives emanate about how it is that the development, growth or drastic change of ways of thinking or being that can occur in a community. With the intention of not hindering the main objective of this work, we will limit ourselves to taking into consideration three perspectives that, in a chronological and explanatory way, could seem consistent with each other.

In 1938, Melville J. Herskovits (American anthropologist) in his work "Acculturation. The study of culture contact", proposed the term *acculturation*, referring to the complex phenomenon of cultural contact between at least two peoples. This vision represents a sense biased towards unidirectionality, since it proposes a bivalent relationship of identity acquisition and loss by one or more of the peoples involved with respect to the one of greater relevance or strength (adaptation). According to Caballero (2013), the acculturation process is characterized by the fact that when it becomes more acute, the first feature of the less dominant culture that deteriorates until it is lost is that of the mother tongue, a characteristic that could be similar to what happens with the migration movements.

A couple of years later, Fernando Ortiz (Cuban anthropologist and law graduate), in the first edition of his work "Cuban counterpoint of tobacco and sugar", outlines the concept of *transculturation*. This concept is coined in response to the supposed semantic insufficiency that the term acculturation represents. For Ortiz (1940) the term transculturation eliminates the sense of unidirectionality mentioned above, since it better expresses the stages that a culture will have to go through towards the reorganization of itself (deculturation and neoculturation) since it does not consist only of acquiring or adapting to a new way of thinking proposed or imposed by a dominant people.

In a third perspective, this being the most accurate for the object of study presented here, the term syncretism is presented, which is mentioned for the first time in the texts of the ancient Greek philosopher *Plutarch* to refer to the cultural event by which two or more peoples put aside their differences in common agreement in favour of achieving a common goal or benefit. Historically, this amalgamation does not occur in completely polarized situations of peace or conflict, rather it emerges as a creative attempt towards the construction of an environment of harmony in which the cultures or peoples involved can coexist. This term takes on greater relevance in the anthropological, cultural and religious fields, however its implementation does not exclude other disciplines that could genetically adapt to its definition according to the real operational bases on which it is structured, the transdisciplinary approach being an ideal tool. to finish by strengthening its applicability in disciplines such as architecture and urban planning.

In the particular case of Tlatelolco and the Tres Culturas Square, it is possible to define its structure and design as a syncretic urban complex that easily denotes the converging cultural amalgamation of pre-Hispanic, New Hispanic and contemporary cultures. From the cultural approach, and from the multiple dimensions that it represents, the syncretism visible in this space extends from the synergy of its buildings and to its socio-cultural practices as elements of great heritage value that, on a macro scale, constitute the historical cultural landscape. that today represents the territory of Tlatelolco around the world.

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF TLATELOLCO

The origin of Tlatelolco is linked in principle to the founding of Mexico Tenochtitlan, since both were founded by the last Nahuatlaca tribe to arrive in the Valley of Mexico Basin, in the middle of Lake Texcoco. However, according to chronicles from the 16th century, they say that when the Mexicas left Aztlán, a character named Huitziton offered two bundles: in one of them there was a fine green stone and in the other, two sticks to light the fire. The first package was given to those who would later be the Tlatelolcas and the second one to the Mexicas. (Matos, 2008).

According to the chronicles, this favors the separation and rivalry between both groups, hence, once settled in Tenochtitlan, the Mexica-tlatelolca group decides to separate and migrate to an islet further north, called Xaltelolco, "place of the round mound of sand", where they founded the city of Tlatelolco, "round mound", in 1337 (Matos, 2008).

At first, like Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco was under the dominion of the lordship of Azcapotzalco; Hence, it is Tezozomoc who appoints Cuacuauhpitzáhuac as ruler for this new city, which marks the beginning of the Tlatelolca lineage.

Under Cuacuauhpitzáhuac's reign (1376-1417), the Tlatelolcas begin their development, under the control of Azcapotzalco, they conquer several towns and stand out as warriors. Also at this time, its market begins to stand out. At first, they only traded parrot feathers, however as time went by, it became the main exchange site, not only for local products, but also for products from other latitudes. Due to its strategic position, it became the richest and most important of the time.

Tlatelolco stood out for its commercial activities. This market was organized by sectors, in which numerous products such as ceramics, blankets, basketry, food and animals, among others, were traded. There were also judges in case of disputes arising in the exchange of products.

After the death of Cuacuauhpitzáhuac, his son Tlacatéotl (1418-1427) succeeds him. This ruler was interested in embellishing the buildings and had sculptures brought from Tula (a city that was no longer inhabited), (Barlow in Matos, 1987). He also changed the market from the place where it was originally and expanded the type of merchandise with cotton, jade and quetzal feathers. During his government, between Tenochcas and Tlatelolcas, they defeated the Tepanecas. His government was interrupted, since Maxtla, lord of Azcapotzalco, had him killed, as well as Chimalpopoca, lord of Tenochtitlan.

Tlacatéotl, is succeeded by his grandson Cuauhtlatoa (1428-1467), who is in charge of expanding the war campaigns, conquers Ahuizilapan (Orizaba, Veracruz), and fights, together with the Tenochcas, against Chalco. The next ruler was Moquihuix (1467-1473). It was with this ruler that the war between Tenochcas and Tlatelolcas took place, losing the latter against Axayácatl, therefore Tlatelolco lost its independence, remaining as a tributary of the Tenochcas and no longer had its own rulers.



Fig. 1. Front facade and main access to the Archaeological Zone of Tlatelolco through Eje Central Avenue, Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexico City (Photographed by Medina-Martínez Víctor Fernando, 2022).

Paradoxically, with the arrival of the Spaniards and the war of conquest, once the city of Tenochtitlan fell, Tlatelolco was the last stronghold of the Mexica resistance and while Tenochtitlan lost its name, Tlatelolco has kept it to this day.

Once the conquest was consummated, according to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, looting occurred as spoils of war and the destruction of the buildings, as they were considered the work of the devil. Later, with the arrival of the mendicant orders, the Church of Santiago was built in this place, reusing the stones resulting from the destruction of the indigenous temples, for that reason stones of pre-Hispanic carving can still be seen in this temple. Also, the



Colegio de la Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco was founded in this place. Important documents were generated there, such as the Florentine Codex, the map of Upsala and the first codex of medicinal herbalism, to name a few. An important character was Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, who together with other priests, Latinists and indigenous people was able to shape his "History of the things of New Spain".



Fig. 2. Front facade and main access to the Santiago Apóstol parish church inside the Tres Culturas Square in Tlatelolco, Mexico City (Photographed by Medina-Martínez Victor Fernando, 2022).

In this school, founded in 1536, it was established that the indigenous people, mainly the children of *tlaloque* (*many people*) could study grammar, Latin rhetoric, geography, history, literary precepts, logic and philosophy (Escalante, 2008). Although there was much enthusiasm in its formation by the Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza and Bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga, the school entered into a crisis in part due to lack of financial support, but also due to the abandonment of the Franciscans who refrained from directing it during twenty years (1546-1566), apparently because of the disappointment of seeing the little inclination of the indigenous people to celibacy, with which they lost hope of generating an indigenous clergy. However, those who studied there and returned to their places of origin were promoters of new forms of thought and expression, spreading the Christian tradition. Due to the above, it can be said that this school was "the main intellectual meeting point of miscegenation" (Guilliem, 2008).

From the beginning of the Mexican War of Independence in 1810 until the time of the Mexican Revolution, which ended in 1920, the facilities of the Colegio de la Santa Cruz were transformed into a prison. It was until 1931, that Manuel Toussaint fought for the recovery of Tlatelolco as an emblematic site of Pre-Hispanic Mexico. It is worth mentioning that since the 19th century there had been an interest in the archaeological investigation of this site. First, when Spain's interest in celebrating the fourth centenary of the discovery of America invited Mexico, among other countries, to participate in a major exhibition in 1892. For this, the Colombina Board was created in Mexico, originally headed by Don Joaquín García Icazbalceta and with the participation of Alfredo Chavero, José María Vigil, Francisco del Paso and Troncoso, among other characters. Said board ordered those excavations be carried out in the plaza of Tlatelolco and near the tecpan, works entrusted to Colonel Ticó, who carried out different coves that resulted in the discovery of a crypt, clay shawms, a clay mask and around 400 idols, among other objects. A year later and with the celebrations in Madrid over, objects such as obsidian and meorite ornaments continued to be found. (Matos, 2008).



Fig. 3. Lateral facade of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs, today the Tlatelolco University Cultural Center on Eje Central Avenue, Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexico City (Photographed by Medina-Martínez Víctor Fernando, 2022).

Fig. 4. Side facade of the "Chihuahua" building belonging to the Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex, Mexico City (Photographed by Medina-Martínez Víctor Fernando, 2022).

In 1944, a research project began in Tlatelolco headed by Don Pablo Martínez del Río, an exploration that lasted until 1948, the results of which were published in the Mexican Academy of History memoirs, with the title of *Tlatelolco a través del tiempo*. In the sixties, with the construction of the Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex, a project by Mario Pani Darqui, new discoveries and archaeological rescue were made by the INAH, of what had been the ceremonial center (Matos, 2008). In 1987, Eduardo Matos proposed an interdisciplinary project with the aim of comparing the twin cities of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco, which led to intensive and extensive excavations that ended in 1989 and resulted in, in addition to the recovery of various objects, the idea that this ceremonial complex represents an invocation of the Mexica people to Ehécatl, the patron god of the temple along with other deities of fertility, a fact that they associated with the famine derived from the drought of 1454. In 1992, the explorations that had to be suspended due to the earthquake of September 30, 1993 were resumed. In 1998 offering 6 of the Templo Mayor of Tlatelolco was excavated; in 2007 a new impetus was given to the investigation of the remains. In short, the Tlatelolco Project, started in 1987, has had multiple contributions, including in 1998, the Tlatelolco Archaeological Zone Management Plan (Guilliem, 2008).

#### FROM THE EMERGENCE OF THE TRES CULTURAS SQUARE TO THE PRESENT.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, there is an important process of modernization of the Mexican capital. Among the most important projects was the railway network. From this project, with the subdivision of the Hacienda Buenavista, businessman Antonio Escandón, promoted the location of the terminal station on this site, which was inaugurated in 1873, where the Cuauhtémoc Mayor's Office is now located and was the first connection between Mexico and Veracruz. Along with other terminals that came later, this set of buildings worked until the end of the 1950s.

By 1960, the old station was demolished and a new one was built (which received the name of Buenavista Station) about 500 meters north of the previous one and south of the then new Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex; same that was built on what were vacant lots of the Railroad Union and workshops of the company La Consolidada. There were also warehouses belonging to the station and irregular dwellings that made up what is usually called *the lost city*.

The urban complex was designed, with the urban characteristics of the *modern movement*, by the architect Mario Pani Darqui, who intended to regenerate what he called a "horseshoe of slums" peripheral to the city, relocating the marginalized. With the construction of this urban center, about a thousand homes that had settled on the land of Ferrocarriles Mexicanos were eliminated, which led to the displacement of more than 7,000 people, because, although it was contemplated that those affected could acquire an apartment at affordable prices and a credit program, the reality is that the sale prices exceeded the economic capacity of the displaced. In reality, the



houses were directed towards a middle class and only a group of 16 buildings were part of a social program reserved for ISSSTE personnel. Tlatelolco represented what Carlos Monsivais called "the utopia of Mexico without neighborhoods." This set included 11,916 apartments in 102 buildings, commercial premises, parking lots, 22 schools (from preschool to middle school), nurseries, 6 hospitals and clinics, 3 sports centers, 12 office buildings, a telephone exchange, four theaters and a cinema. The general complex was inaugurated in 1964 by then President Adolfo López Mateos. With the construction of this great urban complex, the ceremonial center of pre-Hispanic Tlatelolco remained as part of one of its *plazas*, forming, together with the church of Santiago, what received the name of Tres Culturas Square, since it combines what that was the pre-Hispanic culture: Mexica Tlatelolca, the novohispanic culture and finally the modern culture, considered today as contemporary and syncretic. At one of the ends of the complex, there is the tower of what was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and current Tlatelolco University Cultural Center, by the architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez; and at another of its ends, the Banobras tower, designed by Mario Pani Darqui as the emblem of this complex and in which there is a carillon donated in 1964 by the Belgian government at the top.

It should be clarified that it was the architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, who will play the role of the president of the Mexican Republic, Adolfo López Mateos, changing the original project of the urban complex, an office tower owned by Mario Pani Darqui, for the headquarters building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country, which needed to be rebuilt since the previous headquarters of the authorship of Carlos Obregón Sancilia had been demolished with the extension to the north of Mexico City, of Paseo de la Reforma avenue. It was raised by Ramírez Vázquez as Tlatelolco was a testimony of mestizaje and the synthesis of the pre-Hispanic and the colonial, the argument being raised by him to López Mateos as follows:

Representative personalities from other countries are received at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is, so to speak, "the living room of the house", where family memories, portraits of grandparents, tradition are kept. What could be better than locating the secretary in this place, where the testimony of our cultural being, of our miscegenation is? (Ramírez-Vázquez, 1989: 237)



Fig.5 Aerial view from the northwest corner of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs, today the Tlatelolco University Cultural Center along Eje Central Avenue, Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexico City (Photographed by García-Ayala José Antonio, 2022).

In this sense, the Tres Culturas Square is conceived by Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, as a place of tradition as it bears witness to the cultural essence of the miscegenation of the Mexican people, that is, its syncretism, and the geosymbol that amalgamates the entirety of the space that makes up the tricultural urban complex made up of the archaeological zone of Tlatelolco, the Parish of Santiago Apóstol and the building of the Secretary of Foreign Relations, which reflects in the words of this architect: "the cleanliness, the traditional rectitude of our international policy, always vertical and clear... the slenderness of the tower and the white marble finishes are features that were intentionally decided for this purpose" (Ramírez-Vázquez, 1989: 237).

According to the foregoing, it can be said that Tlatelolco has endured from its foundation in pre-Hispanic times to the present day and that its most representative site now called "Plaza de las Tres Culturas" (Tres Culturas Square) has been dressed in blood on several occasions: the first with the war between the Mexica Tenochcas and the Mexica Tlatelolcas, where Moquihuix died, defeated by Axayácatl, Lord of Tenochtitlan; the second, with the Spanish conquest, because that was where the battle of the last Mexica resistance was fought by

Cuauhtémoc; the third occurs four years after the construction of the urban complex, with the massacre of students in 1968, with which the square was dyed red again.

But not everything has been negative, Tlatelolco has also been the scene of other important events such as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which was celebrated in 1967, for the eradication of nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was signed by the representatives of the 33 countries in the area, in addition to the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China and some of the republics of the then Soviet Union. There is also the University Cultural Center of Tlatelolco, which replaced in 2006 what was the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, in whose tower, on the outside, the light installation of geometric figures with red and blue colors called "The Xipe Tótec lighthouse" was made. " whose author is Thomas Glassford, who was inspired by Mexica mythology. In the second section of the unit, there is a garden called "Doctors for Peace" whose walkways have motifs alluding to world peace and has an "agora" where various cultural and artistic events are held.

Unfortunately, the housing complex, which is a heritage of Mexico City, is in a state of deterioration. Having designed the buildings, under the functionalist premises of the modern movement, with free ground floors that allowed free circulation, they are now closed by bars, for the sake of security, which forms true labyrinths, contrary to the initial idea of Pani Darqui. Its squares, walkways (covered) show a lack of maintenance. The appearance of the buildings no longer responds to the premise of clean facades that marked horizontality, since many of them were restructured using an exoskeleton that gives them greater massiveness. This restructuring derives from another unfortunate event, such as the collapse of two thirds of the Nuevo León building, due to the earthquake of September 19, 1985.

#### RESISTANCE OF HISTORICAL CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TLATELOLCO AND THE TRES CULTURAS SQUARE.

The previous process forms a cultural historical landscape, which must be understood in the sense of the urban historical landscape defined by UNESCO (2011) as the urban area that surrounds the Tres Culturas Square, product of a historical stratification of values and attributes. cultural and natural, which come from the pre-Hispanic, colonial, to contemporary times.

An urban area that encompasses the urban and geographic context of the territory occupied by the Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Housing Unit, where its topography, geomorphology, hydrology and natural properties are integrated; its urbanized environment, both contemporary with geo-symbols such as the Torre Insignia, the Antonio Caso sports center, the Tlatelolco Artistic Linking Unit, the Tlatelolco University Cultural Center, the María Rojo Cultural Center for the Performing Arts and the Isabela Corona Theater, as well as the past represented by the Parish of Santiago Apóstol with its Temple and Convent of Santiago, the College of Santa Cruz Tlatelolco and the José María La Fragua Library; as well as the Archaeological Zone of Tlatelolco, where its temples stand out: Mayor, Calendar, Complexes of the Wind, of the Paintings and its Palace.

To which must be added its surface infrastructures such as Eje 2 Norte Manuel González and Paseo de la Reforma, Insurgentes Norte and Ricardo Flores Magón avenues, as well as underground infrastructures such as Line 3 of the Metro Collective Transport System and its Tlatelolco Station; its open spaces such as the Tres Culturas Square and gardens such as the gardens of Santiago, de la Pera and de la Paz, the layout of land uses, mainly housing, facilities and open spaces, and the rest of its components of its urban structure, as well as its spatial distribution, arranged by the architect Mario Pani Darqui when he designed the Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex in 1964, in conjunction with the conception of this square by the architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, based on the creation of the Foreign Relations building.

Without forgetting the perceptions and visual interrelationships of the urban area of Tlatelolco that made it possible for it to be declared Intangible Cultural Heritage in 1918 and an emblematic site of the historical memory of Mexico City, identifying it as a landscape of memory, which cannot be arbitrarily transformed, without the permission of the Council for the Safeguarding of the Urban Architectural Heritage of Mexico City.

In addition, it will be necessary to add the daily practices of its neighbors and residents, as well as tourists and other outsiders attracted mainly by its cultural and sports facilities, as well as its historical sites, which together with its cultural products and its own historical urban landscape hold sociocultural values, economic and ecological processes, as well as intangible aspects of heritage in its interrelation with the identity of a nation that is fundamentally distinguished by the syncretism of its indigenous and New Spain cultures, but that beyond these recognizes its diversity with the contributions of other cultures such as black and other latitudes of the world. Sociocultural values recognized as syncretic heritage of this historical cultural landscape that has resisted the passage of time and that refuse to die, as evidenced by the current existence of its archaeological zone and its viceroyalty buildings, which pre-existed the decision to raze clean slate all that remained of the Santiago Tlatelolco neighborhood, which had already been crossed by the Buenavista loading station and the railroad customs house, to build based on the conceptions of the typical man and the tool city and the principles of efficiency, efficiency, effectiveness, order, rationalization, systematization, classification, standardization and mechanization, typical of progressive urbanism and functionalist architecture, the Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex, to promote the modernization of the City of Mexico, which by the 20th century had already engulfed the former city of Mexico-Tlatelolco, twin a of the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and thus aspire to the progress, well-being, hygiene and health of the society that inhabited it.





Fig. 6. Commemorative tombstone that frames the syncretic process that the Mexican people have gone through from its historical dawn to the contemporary, located inside the Tres Culturas Square in Tlatelolco, Mexico City (Photographed by Medina-Martínez Victor Fernando, 2022).

A tenacity that is present even in the three memorials that refer to death and account for passages in its history such as the one that ended the pre-Hispanic era where it stopped hosting its most important market, to become the headquarters of the resistance and the last battle that marked the fall of the Aztec empire, during the Spanish conquest; like the one associated with the voices that have not been silenced since the student massacre of October 2, 1968 in the Tres Culturas Square, and that continue to cheer for the memory of democratic ideals and the fight for freedom of expression, before the authoritarian regimes that governed the United Mexican States, after the Mexican Revolution; and like the one that gives an account of the disaster that occurred in the Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex, a product of the 1985 earthquakes, and that tells us about the community support to rescue their loved ones from its ruins and that gave way to a foreground to citizenship, which had to be organized in the face of the ineffectiveness of the federal government.



Fig. 7. Panoramic perspective from the northwest corner of the Tres Culturas Square where the architectural amalgamation of the three emblematic works that represent triculturality inside the Tres Culturas Square in Tlatelolco, Mexico City (Photographed by Medina-Martínez Victor Fernando, 2022).

But, this perseverance is not only part of the traces of the past, but is also very present in the lives of the inhabitants of this urban area, especially in the work undertaken by the Tlatelolco University Cultural Center, located in the headquarters building of the former Secretary of Foreign Affairs, which was formed as a multidisciplinary complex dedicated to research, study, analysis and dissemination of issues interrelated with art, history and resistance processes, promoting the cultural formation of the immediate community, university students and the general public, conceived as agents of participatory interaction with the National Autonomous University of Mexico, according to Toscana-Aparicio and Villaseñor-Franco (2018:147).

For Toscana-Aparicio and Villaseñor-Franco (2018:150-151), the landscape of Tlatelolco allows us to account for the culture of different generations of Mexicans over time, which have influenced it, their desires, emotions, memories and of power relations, empirically perceiving how a palimpsest, where they make synergy component of past times preserved until today through its refunctionalization, and recent elements manifest the needs, expectations and functions of contemporary society.

According to the study by Toscana-Aparicio and Villaseñor-Franco (2018:138-144), in the Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex, pre-existing elements were rescued and integrated into the landscape, which combined with the modernity of the residential buildings, gave way to the unique Tres Culturas Square, which is the most distinctive of the Tlatelolco landscape and one of the tourist attractions of Mexico City, which preserved forms dating from pre-Hispanic and colonial times, and that have been integrated and refunctionalized in contemporary urban dynamics.

Consequently, the Tres Culturas Square has become a geo symbol of this syncretic historical urban landscape, but also of the resistance of the historical cultural heritage in Tlatelolco, by condensing, as if it were part of a hologram, all the historical facts linked to that integrity, but also of the entire urban context that surrounds it, at different levels and geographical and spatial scales.



Fig. 8 Aerial view from the northeast corner of the Tres Culturas Square in Tlatelolco, Mexico City (Photographed by García-Ayala José Antonio, 2022).

#### CONCLUSIONS: CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TRES CULTURAS SQUARE, TLATELOLCO

The urban area of Tlatelolco is a territory that forms a historical urban landscape with syncretic values that have resisted various multidimensional, spatial, political, economic, social, cultural, ecological, administrative and aesthetic processes, among others, on different geographical scales such as the metropolitan, national and international and temporary, ranging from those associated with daily life to those related to the historical periods of formation of Mexico City and the Mexican Republic, to name a few.

Multilevel, discontinuous processes, with stages of rapid transformation such as those that put an end to the pre-Hispanic city to give way to the New Spain in this urban area, and others of relative calm, which followed one another, and which, among other aspects, have shaped the administrative legal apparatus with which this urban area is currently managed as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mexico City, where instances of the capital government intervene, which interrelate with others at the national level such as the National Institute of Anthropology and History ( INAH), the body that administers the Archaeological Zone of Tlatelolco, moving towards those local organizations that administer the buildings of the Adolfo López Mateos Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex.

Derived from the situations described above, there are many boundary conditions typical of multidimensional, multiscalar and multilevel extralocal contexts that condition the future of this territory and its historical urban landscape, therefore, of the historical cultural heritage they hold, both objectified and updated and subjectified, because not everything in this urban area is structured and unstructured from local instances.

Thus, in order to constitute a sustainable process that transforms this historical cultural heritage into a sample of conservation of knowledge, beliefs, practices and systems of representation from different eras such as pre-Hispanic, colonial and contemporary times and from different cultures such as the Tlatelolca, the New Spain and the Mexican, where in turn different cultures are hybridized such as those originating from Mexico, the blacks, the Spanish, and which paradoxically uses a progressive and functionalist architectural urban design, with a desire for progress and modernization that tries to destroy all cultural and historical traces, an aspect that they do not fully achieve, because the architects who intervened in it did not completely detach themselves from its essence and had enough talent and vision to concentrate all this syncretism in the Tres Culturas Square.

For this, aside, it must be recognized that the reconnection of the Mexican people, in general, with this cultural historical heritage, and above all with its neighbors and residents, must be done based on the recognition that this sustainable process, beyond just considering the social, environmental and economic dimensions, must start from



a recognition of a greater multidimensionality of this historical cultural heritage and the syncretic values associated with them, in order to tend to a preservation of this pre-existing legacy for future generations, its active protection and sustainable management for its development.

A sustainable process that is the product of adequate management, conservation and safeguarding of this historic cultural heritage in order to pass it on to future generations for the benefit of the common good, and which in turn is the producer of this bearable, plausible and reasonable development, which they consider the complementarity between opposing elements such as natural and artificial, or from different eras.



Fig. 9 Historical photograph from the frontal perspective of the Tres Culturas Square in Tlatelolco, Mexico City (Photographed by Uribe-Francisco, 1966 in the collection of the architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez).

Thus, this material and immaterial historical cultural heritage must be considered as an indispensable legacy to improve the habitability conditions of this urban area of Tlatelolco, and promote its economic and human development, because it must be seen more than a tourist attraction, if not as an asset that serves as an epicenter to promote the cohesion of the social fabric in a postmodern, global, post-neoliberal and digital age immersed in an information society, where planning and management contain effective, effective and efficient management and safeguard plans, where training is privileged to achieve a sociocultural dynamic that aspires to a quality of life that preserves the economic, symbolic, cultural and social capitals for the generations of tomorrow.

It is essential to integrate, interrelate and articulate the conservation strategies of the historical cultural heritage of Tlatelolco with honesty, respect and responsibility with respect to the purposes promoted by planetary sustainability, based on public and private actions where a landscape selection approach is implemented, preservation, management and safeguarding of this urban area and especially of the Tres Culturas Square and its immediate surroundings, which contemplates the interrelation of all its components and their syncretic values.

Thus, the conservation and management of this historical cultural heritage must be based on a global and integrated approach to the determination and evaluation of its historical urban landscapes as part of a sustainable development plan to guarantee the quality of this inhabitable territory, with based on its productive and dynamic, diverse and functional use, synergizing heritage preservation and social and economic development, in balance between natural and artificial components, considering the interests of present and future generations, and respect for the legacy of the past.

With the acceleration of the changes that are currently being experienced, urban areas with historical cultural heritage such as Tlatelolco are vulnerable and threatened, putting it at risk of disaster not only because of the seismic phenomena that have hit it, but also because of the practices of neighbors, residents and outsiders who demand water and energy consumption, who demand models of urban life supported by public policies co-responsible between them, private and governmental initiative and actions that have consented to the conditions that need to be executed to aspire to its sustainability, the comfort and quality of life; considering this patrimonial legacy as a useful asset for it.

Therefore, all public and private actors that are interrelated with the sustainable development of this historical cultural heritage must consider in their strategies, management, conservation and safeguard actions with a deep understanding of the historical urban landscape and the syncretic heritage values of the territory of Tlatelolco, where citizen participation tools are applied that consider the wide diversity of actors, and most importantly, give them the ability to act on the fate of their syncretic values, a vision that reflects their diversity, and implement purposes and agreements to keep it current and motivate their sustainability, as part of the government dynamics that facilitate mediation, negotiation and intercultural dialogue to learn from the history, customs, values, needs and aspirations of the local community.

For this reason, knowledge and planning tools must preserve the integrity and authenticity of the properties of this historical cultural heritage, the diversity and symbolic importance that it holds, establishing adequate observation, evaluation and management mechanisms to guarantee its conservation and safeguarding, but also on the impacts that it can have on the city and the society that inhabits it and thus facilitate decision-making within the implementation of a program aimed at promoting a process of sustainable development.



Fig. 10 Panoramic aerial view from the west of the Nonoalco Tlatelolco Urban Complex in Mexico City. You can see the Tres Culturas Square and in the background the today Insignia Tower (formerly Torre de Banobras). (Photographed by García-Ayala José Antonio, 2022).

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**Victor Fernando Medina-Martínez <sup>1</sup>**  
**José Antonio García-Ayala <sup>2</sup>**  
**Blanca Margarita Gallegos-Navarrete <sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Student of the Professional Doctorate in Sciences in Architecture and Urbanism. Superior School of Engineering and Architecture, Tecamachalco-IPN. Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Teaching researcher. Superior School of Engineering and Architecture, Tecamachalco-IPN. Member of the National System of Researchers Level I. Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> Research Professor. Superior School of Engineering and Architecture, Tecamachalco-IPN. Mexico City, Mexico.

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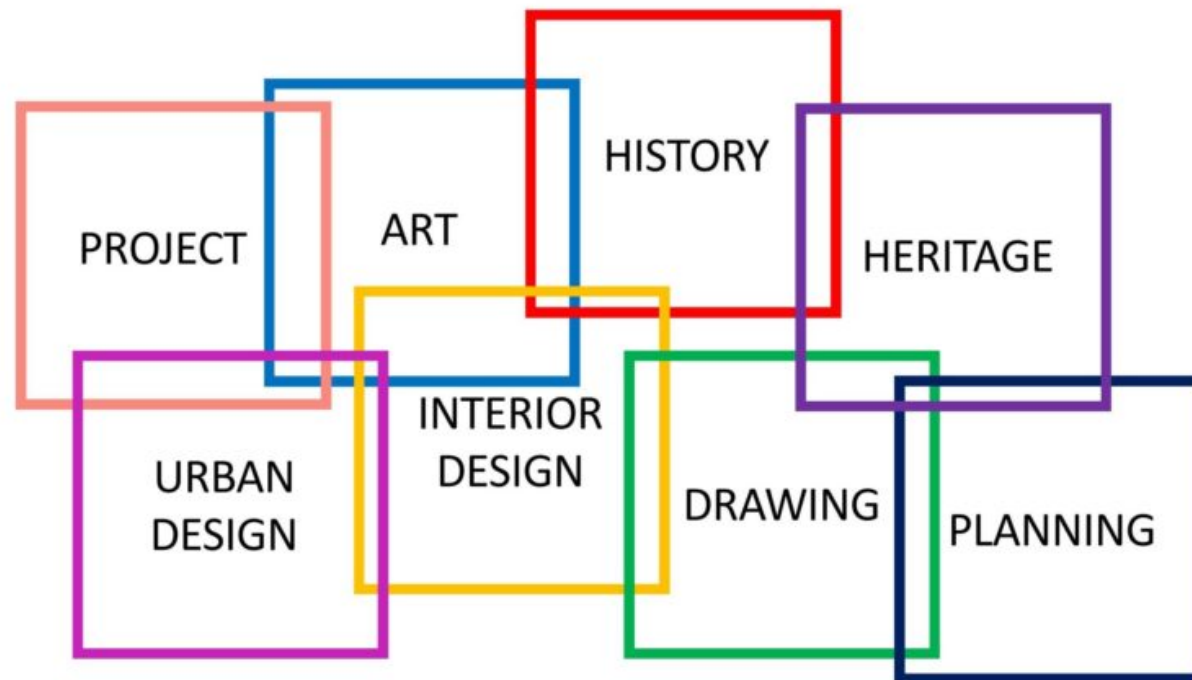
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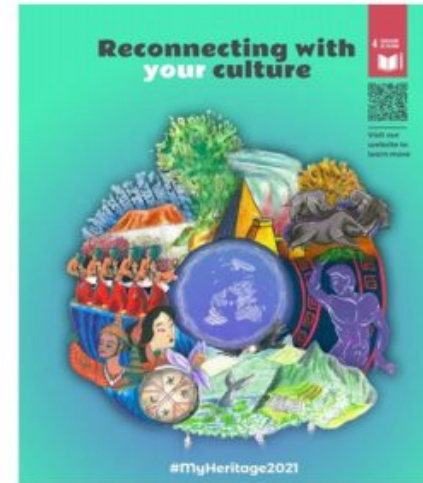


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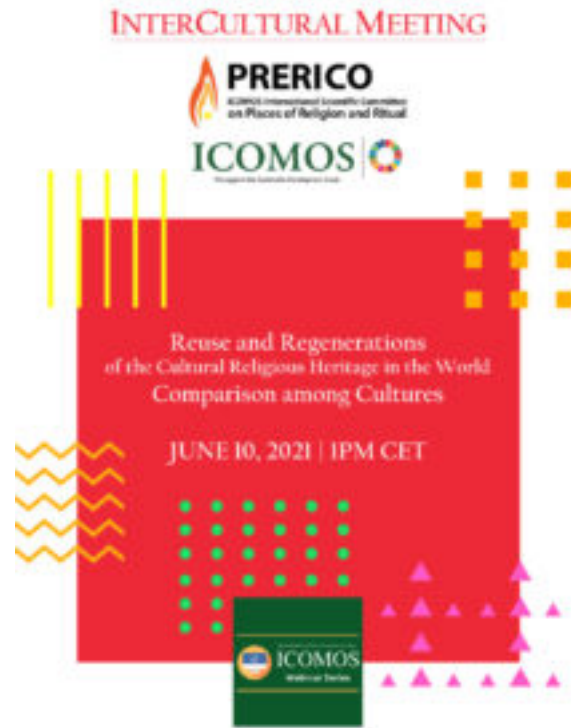


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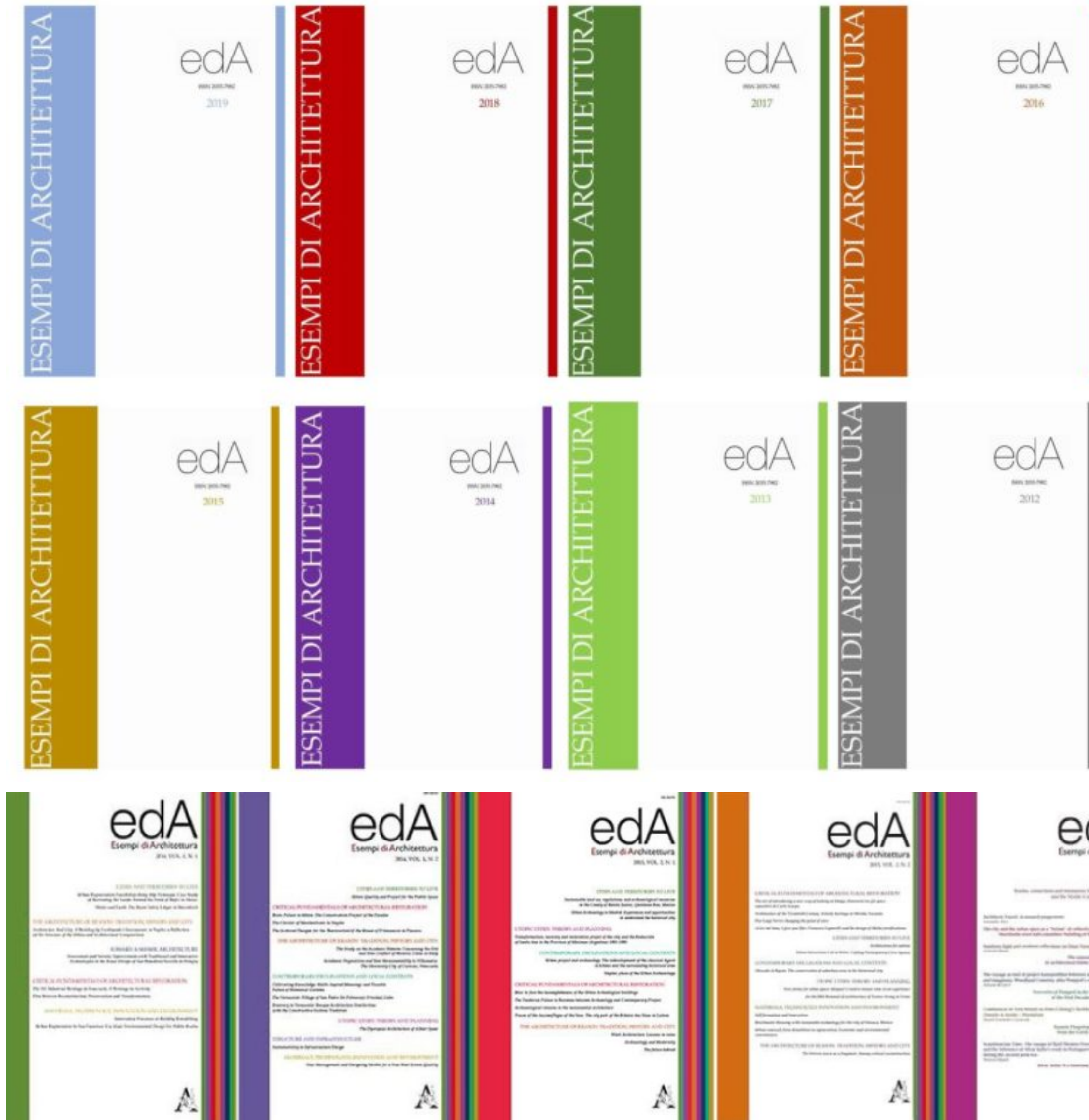


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