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Nabor Carrillo Lake inside the Texcoco Lake Ecological Park

# THE LANDSCAPE OF THE TEXCOCO LAKE ECOLOGICAL PARK: WATER HERITAGE AND THE RECIPROCITY BETWEEN CULTURE AND NATURE

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## Abstract

In 2024, the Texcoco Lake Ecological Park was inaugurated on the site where the New Mexico City International Airport was originally planned, a project that would have destroyed the last remaining portion of Texcoco Lake. Since Pre-Hispanic times, this lake had been fundamental to the development of the region's economy and culture. The body of water was vital not only for fishing and agriculture, but also for the urbanisation of its interior and exterior perimeters, which required the construction of various hydraulic works. Nahua wisdom ensured that these interventions were carried out in harmony with nature, as the lake was considered a sacred space associated with the gods. This belief was rooted in the lake's connection to the founding myth of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and to various legends, as well as in the view of water as a manifestation of the divine. Today, the Texcoco Lake Ecological Park constitutes a landscape that integrates recreational, educational, athletic, and agricultural activities with archaeological remains, living infrastructure, soft engineering, and both traditional and contemporary architecture. It is located within a national protected area that, in 2025, was designated by UNESCO as a demonstration site for ecohydrology. This space is dedicated to the conservation of both culture and biodiversity. Accordingly, this paper explores how the landscape of this aquatic heritage site reflects, through its aesthetics and meaning, the reciprocity and harmony between culture and nature rooted in Nahua knowledge, thereby promoting the construction of a sustainable environment from a multi-dimensional and multi-scale perspective.

Keywords: Texcoco Lake Ecological Park; culture-nature reciprocity; water heritage; Nahua wisdom; demonstration site for ecohydrology.

## INTRODUCTION: THE LANDSCAPE AND HYDROLOGICAL HERITAGE OF TEXCOCO LAKE ECOLOGICAL PARK

The Texcoco Lake Ecological Park is one of the mega-projects promoted by Mexico's federal public administration during the 2018-2024 six-year term, situated in the eastern zone of the State of Mexico, spanning the municipalities of Texcoco, Atenco, Chimalhuacán, Ecatepec de Morelos, and Nezahualcóyotl. Together with the Magdalena Mixiuhca Sports City and the San Juan de Aragón Forest - located in the political demarcations of Venustiano Carranza, Iztacalco, and Gustavo A. Madero in the nation's capital - these are identified as the most important public recreational spaces in the Valley of Mexico. According to statistics from 'Creciendo con Nuestro México' (2024), the Texcoco Lake Ecological Park accounts for 5 per cent of the Valley's total surface area. To better grasp this territorial extent, it is appropriate to note that this space is equivalent to a little over 17 times the Chapultepec Forest (770.70 hectares), 19 times the University City of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (730 hectares), and almost 15 times the total surface of Mexico City's Historic Centre (Perimeters A and B). In the words of Iñaki Echeverría (2024), the project's general coordinator, the specially reappropriated area is larger than