

**URBAN REFORM, REBELDISMO, AND MEXICO'S
UNIVERSITY CITY, 1945–1958**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contrasts the discursive formations of Mexico City's University City during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s with the lived, social experience of its space by the university students. The University City was a utopian project, designed in an inverse relationship to the unplanned and chaotically expanding Mexico City; it was also intended to contain and isolate student dissent (*rebeldismo*), perceived as a threat to social order and political stability. Planners, architects, muralists, and government and university sponsors attempted to create a new cultural community, the *comunidad universitaria*, by projecting the social uses of the physical spaces and buildings of the modernist campus within the newly implemented legal framework of the Organic Law (1944). This thesis contributes to a growing multi-disciplinary literature concerned with how human behaviour and subjectivities are influenced by the urban milieu and, conversely, how these paradigms, in turn, give shape to the urban environments.

Keywords: student culture; urban space; architecture; cultural policy; nationalism

Subject Terms: Youth movement – Mexico – Mexico City – History – 20th Century; Politics and Culture; Nationalism – Mexico – History – 20th Century; Mexico – Politics and Government – 1946-1970

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INTRODUCTION

This is a story of a forgotten utopia built on the outskirts of Mexico City during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. In the post-war years, as the national economy expanded and floods of rural migrants overwhelmed the capital, urban planners and politicians were engrossed in finding solutions to the mounting problems of urban governability. This thesis focuses on the collaborative effort of modernist architects, artists, and planners, the state, and the Administration of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) to rationalize the city by constructing a massive state-of-the-art University City, or Ciudad Universitaria (CU), to centralize the fragmented, old downtown campus and segregate a wild and growing student population from the city centre.

Although Mexican scholars are increasingly concerned with urban popular culture, the city as an entity is rarely seen as an outcome of complex negotiations between social actors and the built environment. This thesis contributes to the latter by examining how the CU was imagined by modernist planners as an oasis away from the chaotic city centre, sponsored by the state and the university as a project of behavioural transformation in middle class youth and, in turn, contested by student rebellion. All of these actors were impacted by and acted upon their urban milieu, and subsequently contributed to its physical evolution. This study presents a snapshot of historical processes that took place in a clearly delineated time and place. Its scope is not so broad as to be representative of all

of Mexico, but it does provide a glimpse into the mechanics of power and resistance in Mexico City during the middle of the 20th century.

Public Spaces and the PRI's Cultural Hegemonic Projects

The year 1940 tends to be considered a turning point in Mexican history. It marks the beginning of Mexico's modernizing "miracle," which lasted throughout the 1960s, as well as the moment that the Mexican Revolution (1910–17), as one architectural historian put it, "began fading from lived memory and realpolitik."¹ Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Mexico was a politically stable nation that experienced few major social upheavals – a welcome rest from the reformatory zeal of the Lázaro Cárdenas regime (1934–40) and a period of calm in comparison to the 1960s when student activism concluded with the government-initiated slaughter of 300 student protestors in downtown Mexico City.

But, how did Mexicans in the 1940s and 1950s cope with the dramatic change caused by the strains of rapid urbanization, industrialization and rural migration without ever seriously threatening social and political stability? The prevailing climate of social peace was attributed in part to economic prosperity, which saw the growth of the middle classes and their entry into the governing apparatus.² It can also be explained as a conscious political strategy of non-

¹ Keith Eggener, "Setting for History and Oblivion in Modern Mexico, 1942-1958: The City as Imagined by Juan O'Gorman, Luis Barragán, Matthias Goeritz, and Mario Pani," in *Cruelty and Utopia: Cities and Landscapes of Latin America* (The International Center for Urbanism, Architecture and Landscape. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003), p. 225.

² Under Aléman, the middle classes became one of the important bases of political and economic support for the official party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), acquiring their own political arm, the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP).

interference in matters that did not directly threaten the stability of the state, thus permitting the official governing party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), to absorb criticism by enabling spaces for dissent. The UNAM was one of these places, and student protest often took on a ritualized form. Mexico was not a police state, and it was not until 1968 that the government resorted to the kind of brutal repression that occurred in many other Latin American countries.

This was not to say that people did not challenge the official image of the state. There were, in fact, precedents for what happened in 1968. The state made it clear in 1958 and 1959 that it would not tolerate independent unionism when it declared a general union strike illegal, and arrested thousands of protestors. There were also many less-visible instances of resistance to authority. In the post-1940 era, state-sponsored revolutionary nationalism, import-substitution industrialization policies, and closer economic integration with the United States led to the emergence of a common national language that undergirded a new and burgeoning consumer culture. This new consumer community helped integrate a socially disparate population, but it also produced ideological clashes, or

"contact zones," among official revolutionary culture, international capitalism, and a large conservative public.³

Public spaces and public behaviour became a serious matter for dispute in post-war Mexico City. Student dissent had a long tradition at the conservative UNAM, but during the 1950s youth rebelliousness was attributed to the social changes brought on by modernizing influences as the Mexican economy rapidly industrialized. In contrast to the wealthy UNAM students of the 1920s and 1930s, the majority of students in the post-war years came from the growing ranks of the middle classes. Youth *rebeldismo* began to be associated in the public eye as a product of a consumer-driven and materialistic society, and triggered fears about the disappearance of an "authentic" Mexican culture.⁴

Why were residents of Mexico City so concerned with a loss of culture during the 1940s and 1950s? Did Mexico even have a national culture? If so, what was it and to whom did it belong? These questions have occupied a central place in the Mexican political and academic landscape for most of the 20th century. Some historians have argued that political stability in the post-

³ Following Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, a "contact frame," or zone, is a "relational context in which national identity production occurs." These discursive spaces emerged in all sorts of arenas of popular culture from print journalism to comic books and tourism. See Lomnitz, "Nationalism's Dirty Linen: 'Contact Zones' and the Topography of National Identity," in Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp.125-144. For a good overview of the existing scholarship on Mexican politics and popular culture during the post-1940 era, see Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov, ed. *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). See also Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, ed. *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) for comparable studies prior to 1940.

⁴ Following Eric Zolov, youth *rebeldismo* is the contestation of authority, which can mean dissent, delinquency, or rebelliousness. For Zolov, *rebeldismo* represented a direct challenge to *buenas costumbres*, roughly translated as "middle class values" or, as Zolov elaborates, a "class- and gender-laden notion implying 'proper upbringing.'" Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 5.

revolutionary era depended on the construction of a strong unifying nationalism.⁵ From the 1920s onward, Mexican leaders actively tried to shape a national culture through state sponsorship of everything from the arts and mass media to urban planning, hygiene, tourism, and cuisine.

The degree to which a cultural hegemony defined by the national party existed, however, is by no means straightforward. Anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, for example, observes that Mexico's size, the social and ethnic heterogeneity of its population, its lack of economic integration, and the attractiveness of its resources to foreigners "conspired to make nationality a desired achievement rather than a well-established fact." Moreover, mechanisms of governmentality, the ways in which the state administers and describes its population through censuses, the creation of measures of progress, and other forms of "state ethnography" could not be sustained in a country without the means to employ them. This knowledge, Lomnitz argues, explains why the state was so committed to its cultural hegemonic projects.⁶ In other words, its image was compensatory.

A number of recent studies demonstrate that the Mexican state's hegemonic projects were unstable, incomplete, and fragile. A volume compiling a number of essays that explore the relationship between popular culture and state processes, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent and entitled *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, has made an important contribution to the study of hegemony. Its

⁵ Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, p. 3.

⁶ Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, pp. xiv, 204-207.

contributors, developing their arguments on the insights of James Scott as well as Derek Sayer and Philip Corrigan, examine the ways that popular movements have acted upon the state by negotiating its outcome, while the state is understood to be "a cultural process with manifest consequences in the material world."⁷ A central tenet in this volume is that the state and its hegemonic projects cannot be presupposed by extension of the presence of regulatory discourses, but must be empirically proven to exist. As James Scott asks, even if politicians and intellectuals are fabricating hegemonic discourses, how binding are they in practice?⁸ Besides, who is the audience for this performance? Derek Sayer incisively, "even if the state never stops talking, we cannot be sure that anyone is listening."⁹

The Ciudad Universitaria: The Utopia that Never Was

Chapter two of this thesis examines the urban and political context leading up to the construction of the CU. Student protest downtown exacerbated the mounting challenges of urban governability as the capital expanded at a dizzying rate during the post-war years, finally convincing the administration of Miguel Alemán to fund the expensive CU project. This chapter illustrates how the CU

⁷ Following Matthew C. Gutmann (who paraphrases Antonio Gramsci), hegemony refers to "the dominant ideas and practices that are so pervasive as to constitute common sense for members of society, and through which elites gain the popular consent necessary for their continued rule." However, he adds that "at various levels of society, power is contested by dominating and dominated groups and not just by individuals." The latter qualification is important as it challenges Gramsci's notion of "ideological consent," instead emphasizing that hegemony is a combination of ongoing processes through which power relations are affirmed, legitimated, and challenged. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 19.

⁸ James C. Scott, Forward to *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), xi.

⁹ Derek Sayer, "Everyday Forms of State Formation: Some Dissident Remarks on "Hegemony," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, p. 370.

project was part of a larger strategy to discipline and rationalize the university by restructuring its system of governance and making the UNAM a decentralized agency of the state. Throughout this period, the media represented students as youthful delinquents, effectively de-politicizing their collective acts of dissent, and further justifying the state's revocation of the UNAM's autonomy with the new Organic Law (1944).

Chapter three examines the discursive formations of the CU during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. Planners, architects, muralists, and government and university sponsors attempted to create a new cultural community, the *comunidad universitaria* (university community), through the physical spaces and modernist design of the campus, and by projecting the social uses of space, within the legal framework of the newly implemented Organic Law. Another thread of this chapter will examine how the CU was designed to represent national identity and thus also model desired modes of youth behaviour. The murals that adorned the CU's walls are the most obvious example of this as they were both figurative and didactic, parroting state-sponsored nationalism.

The CU was a modernist utopian project, designed to accommodate and precipitate social change. Its principal architects, Mario Pani and Enrique del Moral, were followers of Le Corbusier and believed that the key to improving

society lay in new social experiments made possible by engineering and science.¹⁰ Michel Foucault describes utopias as places that "present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces."¹¹ The CU was one of these "nowheres"; its simplified, abstract geometric composition was the inverse representation of the messy, undisciplined, and unplanned metropolitan centre.

The CU was thus imagined as a strategy to rationalize urban space, as well as moralize and discipline a privileged group of Mexican youth by regulating their movements – all in the name of nation and progress. The emphasis on the UNAM's material and spiritual "regeneration" stressed continuity, reflecting that middle class youth delinquency was seen in terms of rupture and eventual reconciliation. The imagining of a university community was therefore devised as a vehicle to incorporate students into the nation-building project.

Chapter three, however, demonstrates that the CU never became this utopia. By this, I do not mean that it is a case of "failed" modernism, as James Scott argues occurred with Lucio Costa's design for Brasilia, but rather that a variety of factors – lack of financial means, population expansion, political motivations, bureaucratic red tape, urban growth and student resistance – meant that the CU that was conceived in planning documents never stood a chance. Between its hasty 1952 inauguration and its actual completion in 1958, the

¹⁰ For the purpose of clarity, I will distinguish my usage of the terms "modernism" and "modernity." "Modern" is generally understood as the assiduous belief in progress, scientific and technological development, instrumental rationality, and the belief in history-as-linear-progress. "Modernism," by contrast, is an architectural theory and period based on construction techniques and materials that emerged with industrialization.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, "Of other spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986), p. 24.

original functional and centralized master plan was well along the process of becoming fragmented, in large part because the student population was rapidly outstripping the campus' capacity.

In his wide-ranging study, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, James Scott takes Brasilia as an example of what he sees as the inadequacies of modernist, scientific, "simplifying" approaches to complex, real-life situations; an ideology that he calls "authoritarian high-modernism." Brasilia has met intense criticism not only for draining Brazil's economy, but also because it did not do what its planners projected (it actually became five cities in one, four of them unplanned). Scott's quarrel with Brasilia is also for its allegedly dehumanizing features (in Scott's words, life in the city is like "life in a sensory deprivation tank"). He argues that people will resist having their lives planned out for them and that, more often than not, homogenizing, one-size-fits-all solutions are neither the most efficient nor inexpensive. In a sense, this thesis continues Scott's argument in positing that the CU's architects did not succeed in regulating the campus' uses because students actively participated in redefining the functions of its spaces and buildings. The CU, however, also departs from Scott's high-modernist model in one important respect: it existed in rhetoric only.

Chapter three will also trace the history of student protest between 1945 and 1958, concluding that the two most incendiary issues of this period were the introduction of the Organic Law and the National University's relocation to the CU. Violent protest was only the most extreme manifestation of students'

dissatisfaction with their geographic (and social) position. The question of their physical isolation was also a practical one, given that most students lived and worked in the city, and was therefore related to the overall poverty of infrastructure linking the campus with the metropolis. The chapter concludes in 1958 when students, protesting over a proposal to increase bus fares, participated in a massive demonstration of union strikers. I argue that this was a pivotal moment in the history of the relationship between UNAM students and the state, as it indicated that the ritualized practices of dissent by a relatively small group of young elites had been undermined by a larger, more heterogeneous, and therefore less predictable, body of students.

This thesis does not propose to study the CU on aesthetic grounds. Until now, research on the CU has either been monopolized by art and architectural histories that generally attempt to measure the success of the architectonic project against the intentions of planners, architects, and muralists, or else is referenced to in-house institutional histories as a marker of the university's progressive achievements.¹² This thesis instead situates itself within a broad trend that looks at how spaces are socially produced, sometimes referred to as the

¹² For general information about the CU, Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, *La Ciudad Universitaria de México, Reseña Histórica, 1929-1955* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1979); Elisa García Barragán, *La Ciudad Universitaria de México, Reseña Histórica, 1956-1979* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1979); Rosa María Seco, ed. *La Universidad en el espejo*, (Mexico City: UNAM, 1994); Pedro Rojas, *La Ciudad Universitaria a la época de su construcción* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1979); José Rogelio Álvarez Noguera, ed. *La arquitectura de la Ciudad Universitaria* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1994); Antonio Rodríguez, *La Ciudad Universitaria* (Mexico City: Espartaco, 1960); Jorge Alberto Manrique, "El futuro radiante: la Ciudad Universitaria," in Fernando González Gortazar, ed. *La Arquitectura Mexicana del Siglo XX* (Mexico City: Dirección General de Publicaciones del CNCA, 1994), pp. 125-148.

"spatial turn," a concept that has become increasingly influential in recent decades in the social sciences and humanities.¹³

Over the course of the 1950s, student resistance, I argue, was largely rooted in their peripheralization away from the city centre. Because space is social and situational, students associated their geographic location with their social and political marginalization. As Michel Foucault observes in his classic essay, "Of other spaces," in the present era "the site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements."¹⁴ Interviewees who contributed to this thesis warmly reminisced about their earlier lives as students in an exciting and culturally vibrant city centre, and were dumbfounded when I asked them if they could elaborate on the capital's sinister side as it was described in the press during the 1950s. Understood in this context, the 1958 bus fare conflict was also shaped by the students' diminished capacity to access important cultural and social spaces for sociability, leisure and consumption.

Analyzing architecture and public spaces involves considering subjects as diverse as construction methods, aesthetics, the politics and economics that inform production and patronage, the personality and point of view of the architects or urban planners, as well as land policy and the experience of city

¹³ This approach is particularly well suited to Mexico where public spaces are highly contested, and have historically held important cultural, social and political roles. Mexico City's central plaza, the Zócalo, for example, has been the centre of religious and civic institutions since the pre-Columbian era. Even today, it remains the city's commercial and recreational nodal point, and the principal theatre for national commemoration and public events. As a symbol of political authority, the Zócalo has also been the object of countless protests and demonstrations by students, workers, *campesinos*, and other "popular" sectors of society. To "modernize" this space and suppress its vernacular character, the government stripped the Zócalo of all trees, flowers and benches during the 1950s, leaving a massive square that, as Lawrence Herzog writes, is reminiscent of its "colonial condition [as] a military parade ground and arena for large public gatherings." Herzog, *Return to the Center: Culture, Public Space, and City Building in a Global Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), p. 166.

¹⁴ Foucault, "Of other spaces," p. 23.

dwellers.¹⁵ Because architecture responds to both practical and aesthetic considerations, it can pose difficult methodological problems for historians. Many architectural historians continue to examine the form and design of buildings as a "sign system," or a code that is analogous to language, therefore focusing almost entirely on the creator's intentions.¹⁶ This approach now seems inadequate, especially as we know that spaces are constantly redefined over time, and scholars become more interested with reception studies. According to urban sociologist Manuel Castells, "Space is not a 'reflection of society,' it *is* society."¹⁷ In other words, space not only expresses but also implements power relations as it makes certain forms of social experience possible.

I am not proposing that urban space history is an approach that will reveal something that has not yet been discovered about people and society, but it encourages historians to consider time synchronically, what geographer Edward W. Soja calls a "triple dialectic of space, time, and social being."¹⁸ It can also help scholars be less reliant on linguistic (and elite-produced) discourses. Finally, the study of space offers a wealth of under-exploited sources such as photographs, travel guides, architecture, art, maps, and building documents, which is particularly important in countries like Mexico where informal and coercive measures of censorship were common practice.

¹⁵ Iain Borden, "Cities, Cultural Theory, Architecture," in *Architecture and the Sites of Memory: Interpretations of Buildings and Cities*, ed. Iain Borden and David Dunster (Oxford: Butterworth, 1995), p. 387.

¹⁶ William Whyte, "How do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture," *History and Theory* 45 (May 2006), p. 153.

¹⁷ Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grass Roots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 4.

¹⁸ Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: A Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), p. 12.

YOUTH AND THE CITY

The construction of the Ciudad Universitaria several miles from downtown Mexico City was devised as a strategy to isolate and contain student dissent. The perception of widespread student *rebeldismo* challenged political stability, and created great unease in the professional middle classes, contributing the perception of social disorder caused by a ballooning urban underclass, rapid urbanization, and the beginning of the "Americanization" of Mexico City after the Second World War. The student population was transforming dramatically over these years. As higher education expanded, students increasingly came from the lower middle classes, and many were recent immigrants to the capital. In the 1950s, the press continued to describe student rebellion as it had during the 1920s and 1930s – the defiance of a small group of bored and over-indulged elite youth – but this depiction was slowly replaced by that of a "lost" generation of youth. The notion that youth were displaced from the "traditional" bonds of family and community and, therefore, susceptible to the corruptive influences of the metropolis thus corresponded with the popular anxieties generated by the modernizing process.¹⁹

¹⁹ Modernization here refers to the technological, social, organizational and cultural innovations linked to industrialization.

The Unpatriotic Generation, the CU, and the Organic Law

Although nominally founded in 1910, the modern UNAM was created in 1929 after it was granted its autonomy by interim president Emilio Portes Gil. The president's decision to allow the institution self-government was a political manoeuvre designed to marginalize university politics from the national sphere of the capital. This came after a relatively minor clash between law students and the university Administration developed into a general strike with more than 12,000 students parading through the streets toward the National Palace. With this new autonomy, students and professors were granted the right to vote in Council, although the president retained control over the National University's funding and the nominations for rectorships and directorships. This power-sharing arrangement, however, failed to stop student protest from spilling over into the national political sphere and, throughout the 1930s UNAM students intermittently plagued the city with protests, demonstrations, and the vandalism of public and private property.²⁰

Although the roots of student grievances were generally related to academic or procedural rules at the National University, their demonstrations were almost instantly implicated in national politics because the UNAM campus was dispersed throughout the capital region. Students protested within blocks and sometimes metres of important public institutions such as the National Palace. The city's governability was made yet more difficult for the state because

²⁰ Donald Mabry suggests that autonomy institutionalized inherent tensions between the state and the university, creating a situation wherein a rector, in order to remain in power, needed presidential support or would be pushed out of office by student protest. Donald Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State: Student Conflicts, 1910-1971* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1982).

the UNAM was essentially a conservative institution that trained students to assume elite positions; their seeming blatant disregard for those who lived and worked in the city irritated class tensions. Elena Poniatowska, one of Mexico's leading cultural critics, observed that many workers perceived "...the students' casual misbehaviour [as] their undoing; they felt real and profound anger toward young people who acted up in the buses, their disorderliness, their shouting, their long hair, their vanity."²¹

While long hair would not become a sign of social difference and privilege until *jipiteca* (hippy) culture arrived to Mexico, *rebeldismo* during the 1920s and 1930s had the same effect of exacerbating social cleavages between a predominantly upper-class youth group and the capital's working classes. The anti-populist stance of the National University further contextualizes these class tensions. The UNAM was considered the most prestigious university in the country and, since its foundation in 1910, its conservative curriculum had changed very little, except for the addition of the school of economics and political science, and the incorporation of some traditionally non-university programs such as commerce.²² During the 1930s, the National University was at the centre of an anti-socialist education campaign, which the university Administration fought for ardently by promoting its intellectual autonomy as a sacred principle that guaranteed academic objectivity and independence from petty political objectives.²³ Moreover, the UNAM took no action to improve

²¹ Elena Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968," ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson *The Mexico City Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 566.

²² Mabry, *The Mexican University*, p. 96.

²³ During the 1930s, the UNAM was mired in conflicts between right- and left-leaning political groups,

public relations during the economic depression; it did little to alleviate national hardships through public outreach programs and did not try to adapt its curriculum to provide better professional training in the fields of science, technology and engineering. The university's critics retaliated by accusing the UNAM of being a bastion of anti-revolutionary, bourgeois "parasites," and for leaching off the federal budget for the benefit of a small self-seeking professional cadre.²⁴

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, political corruption and the decadent lifestyles of Mexico City's upper class were associated in the public eye with juvenile delinquency. The press portrayed youthful criminals as bored and overindulged children, and claimed that society could not permit their scandals to take place on public streets.²⁵ According to *Excelsior*, society felt defrauded by these spectacles of defiance, and *El Día* intoned that the National University could have its autonomy but should not expect to receive "a single penny" from the state.²⁶ Eric Zolov demonstrated in his study about the impact of rock 'n' roll music on youth counterculture that this stereotype was still acceptable in the 1950s; acts of rebellion, he noted, allowed young Mexican elites to "brandish their insolence with impunity because of political connections and class status."²⁷ This feeling was echoed by contemporary novelist Parménes García Saldaña who wrote: "The rebellion of the admirer of James Dean (his violations of law and

reaching a climax in the years following President Lázaro Cardénas' amendment of constitutional Article 3 for socialist content in education in 1934.

²⁴ *Gráfico*, December 12, 1938.

²⁵ *El Nacional*, July 22, 1934.

²⁶ *Excelsior*, August 15, 1944; *El Día*, September 15, 1935.

²⁷ Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, p. 38.

order) served to demonstrate to the rest that Papa was an important and influential person in Mexico City."²⁸

Rebeldismo not only caused the Mexican establishment to fear heightening class tensions, but raised concerns that student unrest would spread to other "popular" elements of society. *Excelsior*, quoting former rector Chico Guerne, commented that youth in politics were like the "neural motors of popular agitation."²⁹ In general, however, public commentators tried to avoid making direct connections to youth and politics. Instead, the press emphasized the trivial nature of students' "stupid jokes," the occasional inconveniences, or the property that they damaged.³⁰ While no doubt accurate in observing that the working classes sometimes felt scandalized by the rebellious youth, on occasion the newspapers would voice their concern that student agitation could spread to these "curious" spectators on the streets.³¹ In 1929, for example, the students were heartily cheered on by the public, largely because of the brutality of police response to their actions. In 1944, *El Universal* suggested that every time police attempted to contain student uprisings, the protesting youth claimed that they had been mistreated by police, and attempted to "invoke solidarity" with the public by alleging that they were "the poor victims of authoritarian violence."³²

Generally, however, the press continued to throughout the 1950s to portray rebellious students as an alienated and defiant upper class youth group,

²⁸ Parménes García Saldaña, *En la ruta de La Onda* (Mexico City: Diógenes, 1972): p. 55, quoted in Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, p. 39.

²⁹ *Excelsior*, April 8, 1931.

³⁰ *El Universal*, March 22, 1944.

³¹ *El Nacional*, February 28, 1946.

³² *Ibid.*

although this image no longer accurately corresponded to the socio-economic backgrounds of the UNAM student body, which due to the post-war expansion of higher education and a growing economy had become overwhelmingly middle class. This depiction responded to the way the public continued to interpret *rebeldismo*, clearly seen in the above comments by Zolov and García Saldaña, and reflected the need to continue to narrate youth misbehaviour in a de-politicized tone. Moreover, this portrayal allowed the state to justify its intervention in UNAM affairs by depicting rebels as anti-revolutionaries (thus anti-government) and relics of a defeated aristocratic political order. *El Nacional* remarked that the university needed "the moral assistance of the Government" to make the UNAM an organ of the state and an institution that would serve the interests of the nation, rather than the private interests of a small minority. The article continued:

[The UNAM] has neither reason to exist, nor any other reasonable goal except to valorously accept its part in serious work, sustained and directed, in the integration and strengthening of our nationality; and, to leave its fantasies behind, and accept this honourable and patriotic task with clarity, and rise to the summit of veneration and gratitude from the spirit of our *pueblo*.³³

By the 1940s public opinion of the National University was low enough that in 1944, the state was able to pass legislation, the new Organic Law, and in 1945, a series of general statutes that made the UNAM a decentralized agency of the state without facing much criticism. The new law was particularly well received by university administrators whose ability to govern was becoming increasingly difficult as students held influential political posts. The media,

³³ *El Nacional*, August 9, 1944.

meanwhile, cheered on in the background, declaring that the UNAM should not only be producing economic specialists, but patriots who would put their skills to use for the entire nation. *El Universal* declared that the time had come when not even youth could skirt their responsibilities: "Just like the *campesino*, the worker and everyone else who contributes to the efforts to accelerate production, the student must work."³⁴

The state's mediation was justified on the basis of ensuring that the university would produce graduates with the professional skills required by a modernizing nation during a period of economic growth, an economic upturn that had been triggered by rapid industrialization and the closure of European markets during the Second World War. The most significant reform of the Organic Law was the creation of an indirect system of election in which students and professors lost their vote in the Council, the governing body that decided on academic and procedural reforms.³⁵ Student societies, federations, and alumni associations lost their seats in Council, while the student and professorial federations lost their right to speak. A newly created Junta de Gobierno (Governing Board) now appointed its members internally, accepting only the nominations of the Council. The Junta itself was staffed by a group of well established university alumni, considered to be detached from university politics,

³⁴ *El Universal*, March 18, 1944. A *campesino* is a Mexican peasant-farmer.

³⁵ Mabry, *The Mexican University*, p. 189.

but still familiar enough with the institution.³⁶ This legislation returned the UNAM to its pre-1929 status. The fact that President Ávila Camacho acted illegally when he formed a group of six former rectors to appoint a cooperative, pro-government interim rector concerned few in the wake of the student turbulence of the previous decade.

The City and the Ciudad Universitaria

A major reason the Organic Law escaped scrutiny was the announcement of plans to build a new modern University City several miles south of the city centre. The Ciudad Universitaria (CU) was to consolidate and centralize the UNAM's numerous administrative buildings, libraries, archives, faculties, schools and institutes, which were previously diffused throughout Mexico City's downtown inner core in, for the most part, 18th-century colonial buildings.³⁷ The new campus was not only designed to make student protest more difficult, but also reflected the desire of the Mexican institution to segregate students from the working classes. As the capital grew overpopulated with waves of migrants from the countryside seeking urban industrial wages, the discourses that revolved around the CU's construction began attributing youth *rebeldismo* to degraded

³⁶ The rules regarding Council staffing were complicated. For example, professors with a minimum of three years service chose an elector who had to have had four years of prior service. These electors, in turn, chose sixteen councillors, all of whom had to have had at least six years of service, and were to be Mexican by birth, were not to be administrators, and were not to have had a disciplinary record. They served four-year terms. Students followed similar guidelines, although their representatives served just two-year terms, and were required to be senior students with high academic records and clean records of conduct. See Mabry, *The Mexican University*, for details, pp. 189-91.

³⁷ For example, the School of Medicine was located in the old Inquisition building, built between 1732 and 1734, and the Hemeroteca Nacional (newspaper archive) was housed by the Templo de San Pedro y San Pablo, which dates as far back as 1572. Despite common complaints that these buildings were isolated from one another, most of them were no more than blocks away from each other. For more information about the old UNAM campus, see Juan B. Artigas, *UNAM México: guía de sitios y espacios* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006).

living and poor working conditions in the city centre. As one contemporary wrote, the dispersion of buildings, the lack of recreational spaces and crowded classrooms pushed youth into "disquietude and rowdiness," and the inherent tensions between students and local residents often resulted in violent clashes³⁸

Throughout the 1940s, the media depicted students as a troubled youth with no place to vent their juvenile energies and natural exuberance other than in public places. Carlos Lazo, Director-General of Construction at the CU, claimed that the University City would solve the problem of insufficient space by prioritizing areas for sports and leisure activities in the plan for the new campus. According to Lazo, "one of the basic problems of the [old] University [was] the lack of space where *muchachos* after class can spread out and play," concluding that "many of the disturbances, strikes, crises at the National University, were in large part provoked by the lack of areas where [students could] play and move around..."³⁹ *El Universal* explained that students' "meddl[ing] in current politics" was linked to their "fragile student psyche and neurotic temperament," which made them easily susceptible to distraction and prone to playing pranks.⁴⁰ *El Nacional* echoed these concerns, while taking a less condescending view of students:

The disseminated schools, separated by the cold borders of crowded city streets, lost in the racket of cars and streetcars, nestled in the heart of the public, where the cries of newspaper vendors mixes

³⁸ Antonio Acevedo Escobedo, "Los edificios de la antigua Universidad antes de la construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria," in Mario Pani and Enrique del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria del Pedregal* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1979), p. 31.

³⁹ Carlos Lazo, "Plática sostenida en la Escuela de Minería," speech given August 22, 1952, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino de la Ciudad Universitaria de México*, 3rd. ed. (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1983), p. 184.

⁴⁰ *El Universal*, August 18, 1954.

with the theorem of Pythagoras, the murmurs of neighbourhoods with Aristotelian philosophy, and the voices of the market with the analyses of text books.⁴¹

The city was increasingly imagined as a hub of moral corruption where youths were apparently defenceless to resist its lures and opportunities for base excitement. (This was because of their fragile and neurotic temperament, evidently.) In 1945, *Excelsior* intoned that the city draws youth who see only "a center of eternal disturbances, vacations and idleness...."⁴² Even decades later, one UNAM architectural historian reaffirmed that the CU was built because the proliferation of cantinas and other "centers of vice" downtown caused students to misbehave.⁴³ The CU was therefore considered a solution and strategy to ease youth restlessness. According to *El Universal*, without being too far away from the capital, the CU was not too close either, giving students the "immense advantage of distancing themselves from urban influences" so that they could concentrate wholly on their studies in an environment of absolute tranquility.⁴⁴

Postwar Prosperity, Population Management, and the "Cultural Crisis"

Between 1940 and 1960, Mexico City's landscape changed drastically as a result of massive population growth, economic growth, and rapid industrialization. Over this period, the capital more than doubled in size.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *El Nacional*, June 15, 1943.

⁴² *Excelsior*, January 2, 1945.

⁴³ Francisco J. González Cárdenas, "Antecedentes de la Ciudad Universitaria," in *La arquitectura de la Ciudad Universitaria*, ed. José Rogelio Álvarez Nogueira (Mexico City: UNAM, 1994), pp. 27-28.

⁴⁴ *El Universal*, September 28, 1946.

⁴⁵ The population primacy of Mexico City since the 1940s has been astounding. In 1940, the population of the metropolitan area was equivalent to the combined population of the next 14 largest urban centres; in 1950, it was equivalent to next nineteen; in 1960, it was equivalent to the next twenty-two; in 1970, it

There were also major investments made in infrastructure: irrigation and electricity projects, the construction of highways, airports, railways, dams, and telecommunications systems. "The capital," as Diane Davis notes, "came to be synonymous with seemingly unlimited employment opportunities, wealth and urban and economic development."⁴⁶ The Mexican modernizing "miracle," as it became known, was largely made possible by U.S.-sponsored loans that combined low inflation rates with stable rates of exchange.⁴⁷ Mexico City loomed over the national economy, concentrating its manufacturing and consumption in its urban sprawl. The following passage by Elena Poniatowska captures how the desire for progress swept over post-war Mexico City.

It spread out to cover an area of 1,499 square kilometres; it stretched upward...it swelled...The single-storey houses disappeared overnight, and multifamily houses and condominiums sprang up like mushrooms; viaducts and beltways, with many uneven stretches, were enlarged; self-service stores and residential communities sprouted....It was delirious. For years, Mexico City was nothing more than a city of pickaxes and potholes, detours and bottlenecks: "Work in progress, pardon the inconvenience," and so on. Everything was construction, progress, wellbeing. "Buy now, pay later." There were systems of generalized credit, magic little cards that included even the waiter's tip, the chance to own one's own car, one's own home,..."There is a Ford in Your Future," "Malena and her Volkswagen," furniture on instalments, bank loans, the ISSSTE, Social Security, theatres, grand movie houses, good and cheap, public parks, sports fields in the suburban

equalled the next twenty-four. Jorge E. Hardoy, "Ancient Capital Cities and New Capital Cities of Latin America," in *Capital Cities: International Perspectives*, ed. John Taylor et al. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), p. 111.

⁴⁶ Diane E. Davis, *Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), p. 2.

⁴⁷ During the presidency of Manuel Avila Camacho (1940-46) foreign loans were just below seven million U.S. dollars and by Miguel Alemán's term (1946-52), loans reached 43 million, before nearly tripling under Adolfo Ruíz Cortines (1952-58) with 125 million. Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968," p. 577.

neighbourhoods, Chapultepec Park for the poor, the Happy World.⁴⁸

Although it was the labour sector and the peasantry that sustained such an astounding growth rate, these sectors actually witnessed a decline in real income between 1940 and 1970.⁴⁹ By prioritizing industrial development, the government increasingly neglected the agricultural sector and thus caused an exodus from the countryside as rural peasants moved into Mexico City in search of employment. This massive influx of migrants caused the capital's population to skyrocket from 1.5 million inhabitants in 1940 to 8.5 million in 1970.⁵⁰

As Mexico's economy grew more dependent on its northern neighbour, national politics became increasingly intertwined with Cold War diplomacy. The United States was the almost exclusive market for Mexican goods and, in turn, provided manufactured products and machinery. A pressing concern for government leaders after 1940 became the question of how to convince people that the Revolution was successful when it was unable to provide material satisfaction to all Mexicans. In fact, government expenditures were increasingly re-routed from social programs to business subsidies and priority was given to industrialization schemes and export-led agriculture. The Revolution was declared institutionalized as civilian leaders replaced military leaders and industrialists became new revolutionary heroes.⁵¹ The fact that Aléman was an

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 558-59.

⁴⁹ Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Kandell, *La Capital: The Biography of Mexico City* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 485.

⁵¹ The concept of the Mexican Revolution (1910-17) was always ambiguous, which enabled successive politicians to recast its meaning according to the state's changing agendas. Ideologically, it was anti-clerical, ultra-nationalist with respect to foreign investment, prioritized land distribution, sympathetic to labour issues and concerned with broadening educational opportunities.

UNAM graduate was promoted to signal the shifting values of the regime. According to *Revista de Revistas*, "Generals in Power build military cities, but university graduates in Power build university cities."⁵²

For Mexico City's middle classes, the government's promises of abundance were coming true, but the material conditions of the indigent majority exposed the cracks in the campaign to achieve "national unity."⁵³ Amid the visible prosperity, urban slums and shantytowns proliferated, revealing deep social disparities that significantly frustrated the city's governability. The state faced what Mary Kay Vaughan calls a "population management crisis" as it tried to mobilize an emerging mass society with real social grievances and political demands.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, as the demand for U.S. consumer products grew, conservative elements of the public feared the disappearance of "traditional" values as a result of Mexico's impending Americanization. This context helped shape public perceptions of student *rebeldismo*, which over the course of the 1950s was increasingly linked to a "cultural crisis," perceived to be pandemic among urban youth.

In the press, the image of a crazed and consumer-driven young person replaced earlier portraits of the arrogant and pseudo-aristocratic student. *El*

⁵² "Nace una ciudad," *Revista de Revistas*, September 7, 1952.

⁵³ John Mraz argues that Aléman made "national unity" synonymous with nationalism, which allowed him to neutralize the socialist references that had been implicit in the state idea. John Mraz, *Nacho López, Mexican Photographer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 23.

⁵⁴ Mary Kay Vaughan, "Modernizing Patriarchy: State Policies, Rural Households, and Women in Mexico, 1930–1940," *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000): p. 196, quoted in Tace Hedrick, *Mestizo Modernism: Race, Nation, and Identity in Latin American Culture, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 180.

Universal linked the themes of chaotic urban expansion, political corruption, conspicuous consumption and youth in the following passage:

What does the student see going on around him? Businessmen and industrialists who, without scruples of any kind, rapidly enrich themselves, never tiring of amassing enormous fortunes...monopolies and union leaders obsessed with the same morbid pleasures and ambitions [as well as] the attractions of movie theatres, lucha libre, and cabarets...The metropolis seeks fortunes, vain exhibitionism and the perpetual pursuit of amusement and illicit pleasures at the large price of moral values, and sober and tranquil virtues.⁵⁵

The perception of *rebeldismo* as a threat to social order was therefore subsumed by an uneasy mixture of anxieties caused by increasing cultural and economic ties to the U.S., an emerging consumer culture, and the unequal distribution of wealth in mid-century Mexico City. "Mexican youth," sounded *El Nacional*, "are facing a crisis of values that results from the global crisis and affects all of life's orders." The report goes on to declare that the world has never confronted such a "genuine sociological chaos," which has unsettled fundamental ideas about human existence, history, science, philosophy and social customs.⁵⁶

The UNAM: Soul of the Nation

*The National University has one mission: civilizing.*⁵⁷

The notion of chaos – social, mental, physical – reflects the ambivalent attitude of the middle and professional classes toward modernity and modernization. While denouncing the material excesses and social

⁵⁵ *El Universal*, March 19, 1957.

⁵⁶ *El Nacional*, November 16, 1959.

⁵⁷ *El Universal*, March 16, 1952.

irresponsibility of free-market capitalism, they sought out "modern" solutions in science, engineering, technology and urban planning. The unpredictability of rapid "progress" was perceived as a challenge to traditional social hierarchies. The contestation of authority by youth thus had worrisome implications for other top-down relationships such employer and worker, teacher and student, police and citizen, and parent and child.⁵⁸ Speaking of the UNAM, *El Universal* cautioned: "The worst thing that can happen in any organization is the crisis of authority, the consequence of which is anarchy."⁵⁹ A few months later, in 1946, *El Nacional* reported that the "moral crisis" in which students have become "vulgar street delinquents" required the most earnest attention of the university, the state and parents.⁶⁰

In 1957, the UNAM's Department of Psychology released the findings of a study into the nature of youth delinquency. After surveying thousands of students, they found a direct relationship between student resistance and the breakdown of "traditional" family values. According to the report:

The university student frequently demonstrates a frank opposition to studying, to a sustained and systematic intellectual effort, which conditions their paradoxical attitude toward the school: they want to be a student who does not study. On the one hand, this can be attributed to a deficient system of education and, on the other, the abnormal relationships that they have with their parents, which psychologically deform them. This is a grave situation because if the solution is to modify pedagogical routines, it will be met with student resistance... [and] the task of improving familial

⁵⁸ Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, p. 52.

⁵⁹ *El Universal*, February 28, 1946.

⁶⁰ *El Nacional*, May 16, 1946.

relationships between students and their parents is almost impossible.⁶¹

This "moral crisis" was to be addressed by both the CU and the Organic Law, conceived to be complementary strategies to facilitate the university's spiritual and material rejuvenation. In addition to conveniently segregating students from the city, the CU's architects and planners believed that because bad behaviour was linked to degraded forms of urban space, good habits could be instilled in youth by providing a healthy living and working environment. As one newspaper commented, "the isolation [of the university] outside the perimeter of the Capital will be congenial to focus, research, study, and especially...discipline."⁶² Meanwhile, the Organic Law provided the legal framework to enforce "spiritual" reforms, ultimately aimed at transforming the UNAM into a more useful and cooperative state agency, part of the "national unity" project. It was not a coincidence that Lazo was also placed in charge of directing the commission responsible for the preliminary draft of the Organic Law.

Lazo aspired to transform the UNAM into a modern university that would not be concerned with merely producing specialists, but would also be dedicated to creating professionals committed to national progress. This sentiment was echoed by Salvador Zubirán, the UNAM's rector in 1947, when he said: "We recognize that the University is intimately connected to national issues and problems and that we cannot ignore the needs of our people...*only then can we*

⁶¹ *El Universal*, March 7, 1957.

⁶² *Ibid.*, February 22, 1947.

boast ourselves to be the soul of the nation, the spirit of the people [author's emphasis]."⁶³ According to Zubirán, the spiritual and material regeneration of the National University was aimed not only at improving efficiency, but also aimed at "conserving its strong traditional foundation" rooted in the national character and "the peculiarities of our Latin spirit." "In a word," he stated, "we conceive of ourselves as an authentically Mexican University."⁶⁴

Although most of the Organic Law's specific pedagogical reforms were concerned with improving the standards of education of the sciences, engineering and technology programs as opposed to those of philosophy and humanities, public commentators insisted that the new and improved UNAM would not just become a "factory of professionals" but a "creator of citizens."⁶⁵ The media gave moral credibility to the Organic Law by framing it as a safeguard for "popular" interests; the UNAM would now take an active role in the nation-building project not only by furthering economic development, but also by transmitting culture to the masses and becoming "the spiritual guides of the country."⁶⁶

The promotion of an "authentic" university that was rooted in Mexican customs and concerned with national issues reflected the belief that "culture" was needed to preserve traditional social order and counter the "sociological chaos" brought on by modernizing influences. Lazo contended that "never before has the average man lacked as much culture as today...this situation calls for greater

⁶³ Salvador Zubirán, "Informe del Doctor Salvador Zubirán ante la Junta del Gobierno en 1947," in Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 244.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁶⁵ *Excelsior*, March 20, 1946.

⁶⁶ *Novedades*, August 18, 1944.

reflection because the basis of all social agitation is caused by the phenomenon of the absence of culture."⁶⁷ The CU and the Organic Law were thus seen as collaborators in the civilizing mission to discipline and rationalize the UNAM students, the final goal being the recruitment of young elites in the state's nationalizing project. This imaginary justified Carlos Novoa, the president of the umbrella company contracted to build the CU, when he said that the UNAM had been reborn and that for the first time in its history, it would be "the authentic, the real, the one and only Mexican University."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Carlos Lazo, "Presencia, misión y destino de la Ciudad Universitaria de México," speech given August 29, 1950, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, pp. 27-28.

⁶⁸ Carlos Novoa, "Dedicación de la Ciudad Universitaria," speech given November 20, 1952, in Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 262.

IMAGININGS OF THE COMUNIDAD UNIVERSITARIA, 1945–1952

In the way of the ancient Romans, who can all refer to the day of the founding of their metropolis, we can also say that, beginning today: ab urbe condita; because at this University City, a new life begins and has catalyzed a new Mexican cultural calendar that, without a doubt, will have universal implications.⁶⁹

A Showcase for Mexican Modernity

On the symbolic day of November 20, 1952, President Aléman inaugurated the new Ciudad Universitaria of Mexico. This day was significant not only for its historical importance as the anniversary of the Mexican Revolution, but also for its timing, as it was just days before the president finished his term in office. The CU was a large-scale modernist project that was literally a city unto itself which, during its construction in the late 1940s and 1950s, amalgamated all the accoutrements of modernity. It was built by a collaborative team of nearly 150 architects and engineers, 100 building contractors, and 10,000 building workers who kept construction going around the clock. Covering an area of 7 ½ square kilometres, it comprised nearly 60 buildings that fused avant-garde architectonic forms and the most advanced engineering concepts with pre-Hispanic forms, techniques, and materials. According to its principal architects, Mario Pani and

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 261.

Enrique del Moral, the CU was one of the most important architectural works in 20th-century Mexico, "a profound synthesis of tradition and the avant-garde."⁷⁰

The idea of building a campus in the form of a city became fashionable elsewhere in Latin America during the 1930s, but Mexico was determined to raise the bar and reap international prestige with the construction of the new CU. Ostensibly, the university needed more living space, and the endless spectacles of student protests in the streets of the city centre plainly attested to this fact. Equally important, the UNAM's material renovation provided a convenient pretext to commence its "spiritual renovation," which was to be facilitated in large part by the newly devised Organic Law.

The CU was imagined to be an active ingredient in the university's spiritual renovation, giving rise to a new "university community," or *comunidad universitaria*. This phrase, *comunidad universitaria*, was repeatedly invoked in various forms and contexts by the press, state sponsors, university administrators, as well as by the architects and artists who cooperated on the CU project. The *comunidad universitaria* became the dominant metaphor for forging a well-disciplined, hierarchically organized, and economically productive institution whose many graduates would soon be conscripted to the greater vision, a nation-building project. The campus' design, its buildings, spaces, and general layout physically reflected this idea of community, while mirroring many of the reforms proposed in the 1945 Organic Law.

⁷⁰ Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, pp. 215, 72.

This chapter will examine how the CU was framed and mediated by the intertwining discursive categories of modernity, modernization, nation and youth. The first section analyzes the values and codes of conduct that were imagined for students through the lens of the *comunidad universitaria*, considers the CU's physical manifestations, and finally examines how these buildings and spaces were intended to be viewed and used by students. This first section, therefore, views the creation of the CU as just one element of a comprehensive plan to reorganize the university along academic, administrative and political lines; its physicality was meant to reflect and enable this restructuring.

The second half of the chapter proposes to interrogate the central discursive themes, including the spatial and aesthetic ones that surrounded the CU's construction. Concepts of "authenticity" and "tradition" are fundamental to these discourses as they were deeply attached to the modern self-conception of Mexico's social elites, and tied to indigenist discourses. The particular ways that these elites attempted to reconcile what they saw as a disparity between their self-perception as modern and the vast "un-modern" majority, reveals an interesting discursive space that opened up at the CU. I also hope to demonstrate that these concepts (modern, traditional, authentic) were made ambiguous deliberately, in part because they could then be adapted to different contexts and audiences, but also because they depended on one another, and their meanings overlapped.

The UNAM's Spritual and Material Regeneration

*The University City will be fully constructed and equipped in a few years, but over time we must construct the students, professors, researchers and alumni.*⁷¹

The University City was designed to fulfill a double mandate: the material and the spiritual renovation of the National University. In 1947, Zubirán confidently declared before the Junta del Gobierno, "Before planning the buildings, we had to reconceptualize the institution to fit a modern structure."⁷² Under the aegis of the Organic Law, university reformers then busied themselves with outlining proposals to elevate the "moral" standards of students, aided by the sense of urgency afforded to administrators during the construction phase of the University City. With Aléman as the UNAM's new benefactor after 1947, there was also a very real fiscal incentive to uphold and strive for discipline within the university before the end of his *sexenio* (six-year presidential term). Like many other newspapers, *El Universal* reported in 1952 that the construction of the campus must correspond to a "spiritual modification" or else face the disastrous consequences of having an "ancient spirit" dwell in modern buildings.⁷³ Carlos Lazo elaborated with characteristic effect:

There will be no true National University if we do not create an authentic university existence, faithful to the idea of universality, and that radiates its influence across this progressive country with a sense of impatience for the future of our Mexico.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Lazo, ""Platica sostenida en la Escuela de Minería," speech given August 22, 1952, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 190.

⁷² Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 243.

⁷³ *El Universal*, September 10.

⁷⁴ Lazo, "Universo y Universidad," speech given April 30, 1951, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 21.

Lazo was in charge of forming and directing a commission responsible for sketching out the preliminary legal and academic reforms under the Organic Law, nearly all of which were incorporated into its final formulation. In the opening paragraph of the final report, it stated that the "university problem," defined as the "visible decadence of superior education," must be resolved before moving to the University City.⁷⁵ The document was riddled with references to the need to spiritually renovate the university, its degradation largely attributed to the institution's slack disciplinary and academic standards. The proposals set forth by the committee were incorporated in the revision of the university's disciplinary structure, but were couched and justified by the rhetoric of forging an "authentic" university community, a *comunidad universitaria*.

The formulation of the university as a close-knit community of scholars dedicated to studying and finding solutions for national problems was often invoked by public commentators, and formed the dominant discursive framework of the University City during this reform period, lasting well into the 1950s. In Mexico, this need to produce intellectuals who would probe and represent a popular will had been historically important in a country where, to reiterate Lomnitz, the instruments of governmentality were underdeveloped.⁷⁶ The *comunidad universitaria* was thus formulated to re-orient the university from its anti-Revolutionary, "selfish" past toward becoming a nationally valuable

⁷⁵ Lazo, "Lineamientos para la redacción de una nueva Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México," in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 75.

⁷⁶ See Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, "Interpreting the Sentiments of the Nation: Intellectuals and Governmentality in Mexico" in *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp.197-211.

institution committed to society's common good.⁷⁷ Zubirán, for example, described the "university spirit" as a collective ethos of social responsibility to society and the UNAM's alma mater, interests that he called "more powerful than selfish ones that seek only personal gain."⁷⁸

The Social and Political Hierarchies of the Comunidad Universitaria

The community metaphor was used and defined with ambiguity, once narrowly described as homogenous and exclusive, as in the *comunidad universitaria*, but also sometimes in terms of a more incorporative national community. For example, at the inauguration ceremony of the new campus, Carlos Novoa, the president of the umbrella company founded to finance the construction of the CU, commented that "the new University should constitute an absolute unity within [its] diversity."⁷⁹ The idea of community was also useful to delineate the terms of the relationship between national, local and university communities. The framers of the Organic Law imagined the National University to be central in the nation's "civilizing mission," highlighting the importance of its so-called cultural diffusion projects. The original proposal for the Organic Law stated:

⁷⁷ "Selfishness" and "egoism" usually meant reactionary, anti-socialist, and anti-revolutionary. However, in the post-war era, a critic of international capitalism could equally be considered "selfish" if this position were seen to be at odds with the governing philosophy of the day. See Alan Knight, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo, c. 1930–c. 1946," in *Mexico Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 264, for a comparable discussion about the metamorphosis of the term "socialism," which was interpreted in 33 different ways.

⁷⁸ Salvador Zubirán, "Informe del Rector Zubirán ante la Junta del Gobierno en 1947," in Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria* p. 244.

⁷⁹ Novoa, "Dedicación de la Ciudad Universitaria," speech given November 20, 1952, in Pani and del Moral *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 263.

The school should incorporate the systematic socialization of its students, while integrating them into their community. Education for the community, by the community. It is an old truism that the school is a social emanation. Educator and educated are members of a community that they have a powerful influence upon.⁸⁰

Bringing youth into the fold of the *comunidad universitaria* was therefore perceived as an effective way of recruiting another generation to the nation-building project. Indeed, the proposal listed the university's five most important objectives, all of which would serve to create productive and disciplined members of an imagined national community: (1) impart a correct conception of the world and the modern man, (2) instil an awareness of national problems, creating in time a commitment among students to public service, (3) conserve and faithfully transmit authentic national culture and knowledge, (4) professional preparation, and (5) scientific research and the cultivation of future researchers.⁸¹ This codification of social and political goals in the *comunidad universitaria* as a well-defined social and political hierarchy was considered a practical solution to the threat of social alienation for a student population that was becoming increasingly fragmented as the demand for higher education expanded. Lazo knew that the modernization of the campus was not sufficient to mould students' "good habits," but required the force of law.⁸²

The restructuring of the university governance was also devised to implement a conservative and hierarchical vision of community. At the top of the

⁸⁰ Lazo, "Lineamientos para la redacción de una nueva Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México," in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 119.

⁸¹ The final version of the law retained this exact wording. See Article 2 of the Organic Law in Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, pp. 82, 141.

⁸² Lazo, "Exposición de motivos del proyecto de Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México," in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 137.

social and political ladder was the position of rector, followed by the faculty and institute directors. With respect to the main governing bodies, the list began with the Supreme Council, consisting of rector and directors, then the Elected Council and, finally, the Governing Council. Obviously the Organic Law, as revealed in the new governing structure, attempted to legalize the social and political marginalization of students, the multitude of young people at the bottom of this hierarchy.

The idea that the UNAM students were incapable of governing themselves was frequently commented upon in the media as justification for stripping away their political privileges. In 1944, for example, *Excelsior* said that as far as the educated public was concerned, "students, because of their age, [were] incapable of discerning what is best for them," and that their opinions in matters of UNAM governance "will always be inclined toward the path of least resistance – abundant vacations, easy exams... [etc.]"⁸³

The specific pedagogical reforms embodied in the Organic Law reflect a perception that students were often juvenile and lacking in judgment, thereby validating their diminished political role in the administration of the *comunidad universitaria*. Lazo's committee concluded that many of the administrative errors in the past were due to a poor understanding of the psychological and cognitive stages of human development. In response, the committee proposed to classify young people into two groups: "adolescents," aged 13 to 18, and "youth," aged 18 to 24. After the age of 18, Lazo's committee claimed that youths were

⁸³ *Excelsior*, August 14, 1944.

psychologically comparable to adults, but adolescence was an age marked by the confusion of being neither child nor adult and their education required a special sensitivity to that fact.⁸⁴

In addition to the more mundane recommendations to elevate academic standards— such as augmenting university entrance requirements, hiring more full time professors and revising the duties of secondary school teachers – adolescents and youth faced slightly more oblique strategies to improve disciplinary standards. The implementation of organized sports, for example, was central to the recommendations for both groups of students. Lazo's preliminary report emphasized the benefits inherent to the collaborative structure of sports which, it claimed, forged a "sense of solidarity" between students. This strategy to create group identity, common in all military structures, was undoubtedly the main objective of the collaborators of the first draft of the law who made explicit reference to the fact that sports encourage athletes to learn a sense of restraint and self-control, while "making each individual responsible to the entire team."⁸⁵ In fact, the social benefits viewed as inherent to organized sports were alluring enough to make its enforcement mandatory under the umbrella of "hygienic education" in Article 17 of the Organic Law, which established the General Department of Physical and Hygienic Education to be responsible for "mental and physical hygiene."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ The introduction of a new preparatory school system, the Colegio de Bachilleres, for adolescents would give material form to this classification.

⁸⁵ Lazo, "Lineamientos para la redacción de una nueva Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México," in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, pp. 107-108.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, "Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,"

Prior to this time, "adolescent" and "youth" categories were easily identified by level of education, but there was a great deal of social fluidity between these two groups owing, to some extent, to the physical proximity of the schools in the old downtown campus. The academic reforms proposed isolating them from one another, and defining their social position according to their collective roles based on cognitive abilities, emotional development and behavioural patterns. By describing students in these specific ways, using the language of scientific detachment, the committee thereby defined how the university Administration, and society at large, was to treat them. That "youth" were described as adults in this law is significant as it sanctioned tougher disciplinary responses to minor offences against the state and university. The "new" university, they wrote, would respond to *rebeldismo* with a heavier hand. The report states, "At 18 years old, youth who do not study, work, where they face the same expectations as adult workers," adding, "at least in terms of moral conduct."⁸⁷

For an organization that put such weight on psychological and cognitive growth theories to define students, there was an obvious inconsistency in the treatment of youth. Although "youths" were defined as having met the minimum psychological and cognitive requirements to comprehend the possible consequences of their actions, the quality of their adulthood was best measured by how society and the university related to them. They were treated as being still

Pensamiento y destino, pp. 146-147. Mental hygienic education was ambiguously defined as the general knowledge related the maintenance and improvement of individual and community health.

⁸⁷ Ibid., "Lineamientos para la redacción de una nueva Ley Orgánica de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México," in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 95.

far from maturity, expected to respect authority blindly, and accept direction until they were sufficiently mature to be incorporated into society as full citizens.

According to Lazo,

Authority and power, initiative and creation emanate from the teacher. The young person passively receives the lesson taught by a teacher or in a textbook. Enclosed in the laboratory, the student will observe and repeat the experiment. The school is an auditorium in which discipline renders the silence of its pupils.⁸⁸

However, the responsibilities and expectations for adolescent behaviour were different, as teenagers were seen to occupy a different social position within the *comunidad universitaria*. Secondary students were known to join the fray of university student protests, despite their questionable commitment to the original causes. According to the report, "little by little the bright and open character of the child" was replaced by periodic "rebelliousness and defiance."⁸⁹ Adolescent dissidence was therefore attributed to hormonal changes. Although adolescents occasionally wound up in trouble, they were considered as having difficulty "differentiating ideals from reality."⁹⁰ In brief, the committee's diagnosis: nothing more than a little bit of "teenage angst."

The assessment of student conduct and the delineation of their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis society and the university Administration within the general idiom of modern psychology provided, to a large extent, a non-political explanation for *rebeldismo*. In spite of the committee's emphasis on the psychological and physiological differences of the two groups of "young people,"

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

the recommendations to improve the disciplinary standards of both systems were similar, suggesting that perhaps the causes and consequences of their "disobedience" were not in practice viewed as being so different from each other.

Planning a Utopia: the Social Production of the Ciudad Universitaria

Here everything is functional and has a precise and concrete objective. Laboratories and auditoriums, libraries and sports fields represent the desire to work and find happiness. But, the most important function of these buildings and stadiums consists of keeping the spirit of curiosity and an enthusiasm for teaching and learning alive, and inspiring a love and appreciation for these walls of concrete and volcanic rock, not only for what they physically are, but for what they mean to each and every member of the University.⁹¹

Functions and Forms of the Comunidad Universitaria

The Ciudad Universitaria was planned not only to peripheralize the students and their politics of protest, but also to rationalize the university, and both express and produce the *comunidad universitaria*. Carlos Novoa declared that the architectural project must not only find a solution for the isolation of buildings, but also resolve the problem of the "isolation of spirits."⁹² The CU's master plan gave shape to the university community in several ways. According to Pani and del Moral, the CU was not merely a mechanical arrangement that consisted of independent parts, but that it was itself an organic whole. Each building was carefully sited within a tightly controlled master plan and zoned according to rational, functional principles. Each zone reflected its function: academic, administrative, residential or recreational. The academic zone, located

⁹¹ Novoa, "Dedicación de la Ciudad Universitaria," speech given November 20, 1952, in Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 264.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

in the nucleus of the campus, housed the Central Library, the Rectory Tower, the Faculties of Science and the Humanities, as well as the Schools of Law, Engineering and Medicine. Together these formed the perimetre of a great plaza-garden. Pani and del Moral believed that this centralized scheme could increase efficiency and lower costs by pooling resources and improving communications and knowledge-sharing among the schools, faculties and research Centres. The pedestrianization of the inner core was possible because of a system of traffic circulation that looped around the interior campus, a design that was expected to increase human contact and improve social relationships.⁹³

The very physicality of the new campus – its form and design – embodied the *comunidad universitaria* by centralizing common activities and forecasting their social uses. Not only the buildings, but also the surrounding spaces – squares, courts, garden, loggias, courts, lawns, underpasses, and forecourts – were a crucial component of the master plan. Never before had the scale and proportion of buildings and spaces been so carefully studied in Mexico. The sports zone, replete with tennis courts, volleyball courts, frontones,⁹⁴ a swimming pool, baseball diamonds, and a gymnasium, reflected the Organic Law's emphasis on physical and hygienic education. Other buildings and spaces planned to materialize the *comunidad universitaria* included the Olympic Stadium with a capacity of 100,000 spectators, a Central Club with a restaurant for students and professors, the Aula Magna (Central Auditorium), art museum, residential and

⁹³ Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 245.

⁹⁴ A *fronton* is a court for a handball game that originated in the pre-Hispanic period.

commercial areas, and dozens of smaller auditoriums scattered around the entire campus.⁹⁵

A "Pure and Luminous" Environment

The CU, like modernist architecture, was a utopian projection. Modernists saw the architect as both the professional technician and the social reformer. Its Mexican proponents, some of them radical communists, sought to transform the collective behaviour and values of society by implementing a technological rationalism.⁹⁶ It is obvious why the CU was a desirable project for its planners as it was a large and important public institution, and offered an exciting venue to demonstrate to the world how sophisticated Mexican modernism had become by the 1950s. The campus' prioritization of spaces that suggest collective activities, as opposed to the individualistic spaces of private property, reflected the architects' populist stance. Mexican architects were drawn to functional architecture after the Revolution because they believed that it would further social equality. "It was the idea that you could strip everything down to its minimum parts to give more to all."⁹⁷ Or, in the words of one of the CU's

⁹⁵ The Central Club, Aula Magna, and residential areas were never completed. For more on the primary goals of the CU's General Program in 1952, see Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, pp. 54-56.

⁹⁶ Modern architecture and planning drew many ideas from the principles of scientific management. Henry Ford and Frederick Winslow Taylor, for example, had an important impact on Le Corbusier's theories about building with maximum technical, social, and economic efficiency with an emphasis method, standardization and planning. See Mauro F. Guillén, "Modernism without Modernity: Mexico, Brazil, Argentina," in *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 91-107.

⁹⁷ Edward R. Burian, "Mexico, Modernity, and Architecture: An Interview with Alberto Pérez-Gómez," in Edward R. Burian, ed. *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1997) p. 28.

collaborating architects, Juan O'Gorman, it meant "maximum efficiency and minimum effort."

Although modernism's machine aesthetic was made possible by technologies that owed their existence to industrialization, Mexican modernists were principally concerned with finding solutions to new problems largely brought about by this very industrialization, such as Mexico City's amorphous and chaotic urban growth, the coarse living and working conditions of the capital's indigent majority, and social alienation. Garrido observed that for all the debates on modern pedagogy, one of the simplest ways to improve it was by providing a peaceful learning environment surrounded with beautiful things.⁹⁸

According to *El Universal*, the CU was located in a "pure and luminous ambience," far from the city's tumult; it was a place where professors could work efficiently and students could concentrate the whole day through.⁹⁹ Public commentators, directly and implicitly, contrasted the "exquisite atmosphere" of the University City to the pollution, noise and congestion of Mexico City. The campus, enfolded by mountains, trees, and "clean and transparent air," and warmed by the blazing sun, would be a place where students and teachers could find inspiration and tranquility. The architectonic project stressed clean, streamlined shapes, the generous use of windows, ample green spaces, and a predominance of low-lying, horizontal buildings within a largely pedestrianized area in order to limit the imposition of man-made structures on the natural

⁹⁸ Luis Garrido, "La nueva Universidad," speech given November 20, 1952, in Luis Garrido, *Palabras universitarias: 1951-1953* (Mexico City: Juan Pablos, 1954), pp. 112-113.

⁹⁹ The article also linked student distraction with the "daily solicitations of [downtown] vagrants." *El Universal*, September 28, 1946.

landscape. *El Nacional* described the essence of the CU project with just two words: light and hygiene.¹⁰⁰

Searching for Authenticity in Mexican Antiquity

The choice of location for the CU provided the architects, muralists, government and university sponsors with symbolic cultural-capital. The rocky landscape called El Pedregal (literally, the place of stones) had been attracting the attention of artists and poets for some time. It formed from the eruptions of Xitle, Cuatzontle, Olaica and the Magdalena volcanoes, leaving behind layers of rock that descended in some places down to 50 metres below the surface. For centuries the lava rocks had provided building material for the city and local villages and, from time to time, mines would turn up the archaeological remains of the ancient Olmeca and Nahuas civilizations. Contemporary literature described the land as barren and uninhabitable, largely ignoring the fact that it was home to several small villages of *ejidatarios*.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, its natural distinctiveness and associations with Mexican antiquity captured the imaginations of contemporaries, which Helen Thomas notes "...added considerably to the importance of El Pedregal in the reinvention of Mexico's history...represent[ing] the rural wilderness with which urban Mexico hoped to

¹⁰⁰ *El Nacional*, June 15, 1943.

¹⁰¹ *Ejido* is a land plot usually commonly cultivated by a village. Clause 27 of the 1917 Constitution gave *ejidatarios* the right to lease the land from the state. For details on the expropriation of the lands to build the Ciudad Universitaria, see "Decreto de expropiación de los terrenos destinados a la Ciudad Universitaria," in Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, pp. 233-39.

engage...."¹⁰² Lazo exploited these emotional connections in a ceremony for the laying of the first stone of the CU:

Mexico has been built stone by stone...And this [CU] is one of them. This is a moment for Mexico. In the same valley where the Nahuas and the Olmecas met in the Valley of Mexico, in the pyramid of Cuicuilco, the most ancient culture of the continent appeared from the contemplation of this land and this sky. We are building a University in its most ample sense, integrating the thought, the hope and the labour of all, through culture. We are not laying the first stone of the first building of Ciudad Universitaria, we are laying one more stone in the fervent construction of our Mexico. ¹⁰³

El Pedregal's association with the pre-Hispanic era also reflected the importance of defining Mexican identity through sources that were historically independent of Europe during the mid-20th century. This search for cultural autonomy was implicated in and coincided with the state's nationalizing project, which since the 1920s had attempted to define modern Mexico as an ethnically, socially, and culturally united nation. Artists, poets, writers, intellectuals and social reformers alike had begun to describe and experience Mexican modernity as being unique from Europe and the rest of North America. Mexican modernity was often equated to the nation-building project and described as an act of self-awakening. This fit into a popular view that the Revolution was, as Paz comments, "on the one hand...a resurrection: the Mexican past, Indian civilization, popular art, the buried spiritual reality of a people; on the other, it

¹⁰² Helen Thomas, "Colonising the Land: *Heimat* and the Constructed Landscapes of Mexico's Ciudad Universitaria (1943–1953)," in *Transculturation, Cities, Space and Architecture in Latin America*, ed. Felipe Hernandez. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), p. 115.

¹⁰³ Lazo, "Piedra sobre piedra," speech given June 5, 1950, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 5.

was a renovation, or more exactly, a novation, in the juridical sense and in the figurative one of a thoroughgoing beginning."¹⁰⁴

Mexico's historic concern over race and race-mixing were a keystone of how contemporaries understood their modernity. *Mestizaje*, or race-mixing, became the symbol of national unification as well as a strategy to unite an ethnically and culturally variegated nation. As Tace Hedrick discusses at length, *mestizaje* was a problematic concept in Mexico. By insisting that through race-mixing the indigenous cultures would eventually die out to leave behind a "fuller" modernity, the modernists faced "the basic conceptual problem [of] how to illustrate the conviction that folk and indigenous traditions existed in a world which was temporally separate from, yet parallel and contemporaneous with the world of modernity."¹⁰⁵ By implication, indigenous traditions were seen to be static, "stuck in an ever-present moment— whereas modernity was ever-changing."¹⁰⁶ In effect, while the Mexican modernists saw history as the linear timeframe connecting the pre-modern and modern, they had to live side-by-side with autochthonous peoples who were culturally, socially and temporally separate from them.

This distinction, the sense of inhabiting a period of uneven development and the belief in co-existing temporalities, convinced Mexican modernists— a predominantly urban elite, it should be said —of their own unique experience and

¹⁰⁴ Octavio Paz, *Essays on Mexican Art* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1987), p. 145.

¹⁰⁵ Hedrick, *Mestizo Modernism*, p. 199.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

interpretation of modernity.¹⁰⁷ In architecture, this was expressed by the so-called national school, which adapted functional architecture to incorporate pre-Columbian "images": building shapes and scales as well as ideas about procession and spatial sequencing, materials, an emphasis on public spaces and the integration of visual arts, or "plastic integration."

The Mexican School attempted to trace its origins, wherever possible, to "tradition"; indeed, there is scarcely a single textbook on Mexican modernism that does not begin with pre-Columbian forms. The CU was widely considered the finest example of Mexican modernism; it mixed "pure" functional styles with indigenist motifs, such as the use of terracing, the scales of plazas, and the materiality of volcanic stone. A few of the structures also made reference to Mexican antiquity: the volcano-like Olympic Stadium and, more notably, the *fronton* courts, which echoed the forms of the surrounding hills of Sierra de las Calderas. The layout was also said to be reminiscent of some Mexican pre-Hispanic cities. The central axis resembled the Calzada de los Muertos (Way of the Dead) at Teotihuacán and the great plaza-garden has been compared to the Monte Alban mountain-top plaza.¹⁰⁸ These indigenist elements allowed Pani and

¹⁰⁷ This definition borrows from Hedrick who explains this interpretation of modernity as a product of uneven, national economic development, in which "the values and the technologies of mechanical and capitalist progress did not take hold everywhere and at once." Hedrick, *Mestizo Modernism*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁸ For discussions about the CU's pre-Hispanic influences, see Celia Ester Arredondo Zambrano, "Modernity in Mexico: The Case of the Ciudad Universitaria," in *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico*, ed. Edward R. Burian (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), pp. 91-106, and Keith Eggener, *Luis Barragán's Gardens of el Pedregal* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), pp. 103-106.

del Moral to call the CU "a profound synthesis of tradition and the avant-garde."¹⁰⁹

Tradition and Modernity

According to Pani and del Moral, the language of functionalism enabled a synthesis of individual projects to evolve into a well-coordinated master plan by reducing the risk of "an overflow of exaggerated personal expression."¹¹⁰ Despite this claim, references to antiquity tempered what many of the public saw in functional architecture as "austere" or, worse yet, "foreign." As noted earlier, Mexican modernism significantly deviated from the European mainstream model, particularly with respect to prioritizing aesthetics over utility.¹¹¹ Plastic integration, that is the incorporation of painting, sculpture and architecture into composite unity, made functionalism more palpable to Mexicans by giving architecture iconographic and didactic functions.¹¹² This collaborative concept was adopted by other modernist movements, such as seen in the Bauhaus principle of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, that allowed the Mexican School to freely promote its nativist character at home while maintaining its respectability according to the standards of the international modernist community.

Although already engaged in a delicate game of compromises for the Mexican School, the CU architects had no choice but to face the apparent contradiction of what Pani and del Moral described as breaking their cardinal

¹⁰⁹ Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 72.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹¹¹ Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical*, p. 97.

¹¹² Burian, "Mexico, Modernity, and Architecture," p.13.

rule: prodigality at the expense of monumentality. By the mid-1930s, monumentality was beginning to be reintroduced into the modernist canon, but in Mexico, a country whose single greatest resource was its rapidly growing labour force, modern construction techniques and materials were often prohibitively expensive or not widely available. Modernist architecture in Mexico therefore often used "modern" construction materials – reinforced concrete, steel, glass, and breeze block – as mere formalistic devices, as opposed to having emerged in direct relationship with the dominant mode of production.¹¹³ The Central Library, for example, used machine technology as an expressive device, while it was produced by cheap manual labour. The CU, on the whole, made generous use of expensive (often imported) construction materials, which were frequently employed as expressive accents to help define or emphasize the forms, volumes, or functions of structures. Moreover, in some cases, such as that of the main library, these formal additions were carried out using traditional craftsmanship, leading even its principal architects to call the result “a not so authentic modernity.”¹¹⁴

The Mexican School's use of machine technology as a formal device is either criticized or defended by scholars in recent years. Some see it as paradoxical and contradictory, while others see it as innovative and reflective of national cultural and economic conditions.¹¹⁵ Both lines of argument, however,

¹¹³ Alan Colquhoun, "From Le Corbusier to Megastructures: Urban Visions 1930–65," in *Modern Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 212. Even today, about 60 percent of all dwellings are erected by their occupants, and no more than 10 percent are designed by architects. Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical*, p. 92.

¹¹⁴ Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 215.

¹¹⁵ For a few examples, see Valerie Fraser, *Building the New World: Studies in the Modern Architecture of*

remain caught up in a discursive tradition that continues to justify the intellectual value of terms such as "authenticity" and "tradition-versus-modernity." To the makers of the CU, the pairing of industrial age technology with manual labour was viewed as being no more paradoxical as working side-by-side with Indians who represented traditions that had not yet disappeared and a modernity not quite completed.¹¹⁶

Mexicanizing Murals

The plastic integration of the murals was probably the most important technique used to "mexicanize" the architectonic project of the CU. For their part, the muralists were preoccupied with synthesizing modernist and indigenist discourses at such a high-profile venue. The most prominent muralists who painted the campus walls were Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Juan O'Gorman, the architect-turned-artist. The guiding theories of the Mexican Muralist Movement were more radical than their modernist counterparts in architecture, if only at the level of rhetoric. Their art was figurative and didactic, spinning neat, official mythologies about the Revolution and the creation of modern Mexico, advocating *mestizaje* as the "cosmic race,"¹¹⁷ and glorifying

Latin America, 1930-1960 (London: Verso, 2000), Mauro F. Guillén, "Modernism without Modernity: The Rise of Modernist Architecture in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, 1890-1940," *Latin American Research Review*, 39, no. 2 (2004), pp. 6-34, and Celia Ester Arredondo Zambrano, "Modernity in Mexico: The Case of the Ciudad Universitaria," in *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico*, ed. Edward R. Burian (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), pp. 91-106.

¹¹⁶ It is difficult not to see an element of cruel irony, however, in the fact that the peasant-farmers who were so admired by the muralists were the same *ejidatarios* whose lands were expropriated to make way for the campus' construction.

¹¹⁷ José Vasconcelos, Minister of Education (1920-1924), popularized the term "cosmic race" to mean the ethnic and cultural hybridization of Spanish, *mestizo* and Amero-Indian cultures to define the Mexican people. Incidentally, he was also the principal patron of the muralist movement. See José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

Mexico's autochthonous cultures as the nation's "deepest" and hence most "authentic" cultural and artistic inheritance.¹¹⁸ Indigenous culture, viewed by the muralists as simultaneously ancient and vernacular, became very chic among Mexico City's urban artistic elite who sought to politicize even their lifestyles by incorporating "traditional" clothing and customs with their otherwise modern manners.

The murals were considered a social art because of their public accessibility (as opposed to easel art that was destined for private galleries), their formal qualities (they were both literal and figurative, designed to reach a large illiterate population) and the artists' claim to represent "the people." The muralists banded together with the stonecutters, glaziers, cement pourers, carpenters, and plasterers, describing themselves as "plastic workers" to show their solidarity with the proletariat. Commenting on his alto-relief on the eastern façade of the Olympic Stadium, entitled *The University, the Family and Sports in Mexico*, Rivera said that it was,

...undoubtedly the most important work of my career as a plastic worker...because it is not the work of one man, but of seventy other esteemed construction workers who are as much the artists of this work as the twelve artists and architects who collaborated on this project with me....¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ The murals themselves, although first inspired by Italian fresco painters, were later championed as a revival of a "lost" Aztec art form.

¹¹⁹ Diego Rivera, quoted in Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 96.

He concluded his commentary by surmising that no individual's creation could ever be as worthy as the work of the collectivity who were committed to the realization of one task – "to honour and praise our Patria."¹²⁰

Of course, the UNAM was hardly an institution for the subaltern – its principal audience was literate, predominantly middle class and *mestizo*, and a significant number of its members were right-wing conservatives. The murals at the UNAM therefore emphasized conventional themes that were most relevant to the university, particularly social propaganda related to technical rationalism, the ongoing "industrial phase" of the Revolution, and other non-problematic, sometimes innocuous, motifs like Rivera's representation of ancient and modern Mexico united through time by family, peace and sport.

One of the campus' most visible sculpted murals was Siqueiros' *From the People to the University – From the University to the People: toward a New Humanist National Culture of Universal Profundity*. The high-relief panel on the southern side of the Rectory Tower was designed for the spectator in motion by foot or car, along the Avenida Insurgentes, the main artery that connected the campus with the city's centre. It represented Mexico's future scientists and technicians as a reminder to passersby of the university's role in developing the nation with its democratized education. It complemented *The Right to Learning*, Siqueiros' second mural on the Rectory Tower's north side. Others made similar

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 97.

references to humankind's technological achievements, locating Mexico's progress and evolution within the universal narrative of science and discovery.¹²¹

O'Gorman's massive mosaic was probably the University City's most famous; it was certainly the most iconic. Covering the four walls of the Central Library and located just north of the Rectory Tower, it was one of the largest murals in the world, covering 4,000 square metres. *The Historical Representation of Culture* was a complex narrative illustrating the creation of modern Mexico as a series of popular struggles from the Conquest to the Revolution in a teleology that equated the present era with the nation's final delivery from its servile and exploited colonial past. Each wall represented a different theme and time period: the northern wall represented Mexico's pre-Hispanic and indigenous history; the southern illustrated Mexico's colonial history; the western and eastern facades, the contemporary period after the Revolution. In O'Gorman's iconography, pre-Hispanic cosmology blended with a European intellectual heritage understood as a universal knowledge-system, and the usual tradition/modernity and rural/urban dichotomies are peppered throughout the scheme. Finally, at the apex of this composition depicting Mexico's history-as-linear-progress, the university evolved into the metaphor for modernity and national salvation.¹²²

¹²¹ For examples Francisco Eppen Huelguera's *The Conquest of Energy* at the School of Science and Life, *Death, Mestizaje and the Four Elements* at the Faculty of Medicine.

¹²² For a detailed study of the CU murals, see Institución de Investigaciones Estéticas, *Guía de murales de la Ciudad Universitaria* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2004).

Mexico at a Crossroads: Lazo's Dream for the UNAM

For Lazo, the newly rationalized *comunidad universitaria* in its modern dwellings would show the world that in Mexico, modernity was more than just a dream; it was an accomplished reality. Despite the importance given to displaying the "traditional" at the CU, many of these features were portrayed as selectively-used decorative elements to an otherwise ultra-modern building conception and plan. The modernists were unabashedly in love with the machine, the factory, the airplane, and the skyscraper, finding their inspiration less "in nature but in the rationalized or Taylorized world of machine production."¹²³

The scale and speedy construction of the University City was also meant to characterize Mexico's modernizing potential. Most of the project was completed in just 28 months and, by the time of its inauguration in 1952, nearly 160 million pesos had been spent on its construction.¹²⁴ Everything was intended to be the biggest, the tallest, or the widest. The Faculty of Humanities was transformed into the longest building in Mexico, longer even than the National Palace, and the Science Tower was to be the highest concrete structure in the country. In September 1951, *Novedades* marvelled at the performance of construction on the massive Olympic Stadium:

What a beautiful spectacle, the construction of the enormous Stadium, where every man appears to be reduced to the proportions of an ant. Outside, the excavators clear roads and make ramps,

¹²³ Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical*, p. 32.

¹²⁴ \$1, 300,000 of which was spent of Latin America's first-ever atom disintegrator, the Van der Graaf. Lazo, "Presencia, misión y destino de la Ciudad Universitaria de México," speech given August 29, 1950, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 34.

snoring and bellowing the whole day, filling the earth's belly, then emptying it where necessary....inside, cement mixers, a myriad of machines, operated by thousands of men...Here is the image of a future *patria* saved by science and the vital enthusiasm of its young technicians.¹²⁵

Although Lazo was attempting to style the CU as a showpiece for Mexico's modernity, his great endeavour also illustrated his personal vision for the future of his nation on the global stage. Lazo was, perhaps above everything else, an Americanist. He believed that Mexico had a historical and spiritual mission to bridge the "indo-Latino" and the "anglo-American" by combining the humanism of Latin culture with the scientific know-how of the United States. Their example, he said, would be a beacon to the world.¹²⁶ After centuries of social, cultural and religious hybridization, he believed Mexico had acquired a spiritual resilience that could be an anchor for world social and economic developments, providing a road map to temper laissez-faire economics with a collective national sensibility that derived from its "authentic" balance of tradition and modernity.

Lazo and his followers believed that the key to Mexico's cultural and economic progress lay in modernist planning. "Mexico," he said, "recognizes the need to plan, but not for the interest of monopolies, or imperialisms, or with reference to the economic man, but we feel the need to plan in service of the social man."¹²⁷ His concept of planning went beyond traffic circulation and housing complexes to include production, consumption, industrialization, social

¹²⁵ *Novedades*, September 16, 1951.

¹²⁶ Lazo, untitled speech given at the inauguration ceremony of the VIII Pan-American Congress of Architects, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 207.

¹²⁷ Lazo, "El hombre social y la era atómica," speech given December 5, 1949, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 62.

problems, and all other human physical, social, economic, political and administrative activities.¹²⁸

Within Lazo's vision, the UNAM played a central role. As the country's most prestigious university, it needed to provide the nation with the badly needed scientists and technicians to further economic progress, while its graduates would learn to brandish the torch of the "cosmic race." In a speech given on April 30, 1951, before a congress of Latin American universities, Lazo remarked, "From the Ciudad Universitaria...men will emerge who will tomorrow govern the country from the State, its institutions, [and] industries...."¹²⁹ Having internalized the values of the *comunidad universitaria*, Lazo's future elites would use industrial technologies for the good of national collectivity, committing themselves to planning for the *patria*. "We hope that the Ciudad Universitaria will accept the Glory of [joining the nation] in its first step toward the final march toward the grandeur of Mexico."¹³⁰

Achieving this delicate balance was a source of concern to the interested population. In 1945, *Novedades* editorialized about the limitations inherent in overly "technical" educations: "...we speak much about the functions of the National University... [but] we must remember that technology is a means, not an end."¹³¹ In 1954 *Excelsior* intoned that the only thing that could combat the "barbarism of economic specialization" was the spiritual formation of the

¹²⁸ *Excelsior*, April 21, 1957.

¹²⁹ Lazo, "Universo y Universidad," speech given April 30, 1951, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 20.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, "Presencia, mision y destino de la Ciudad Universitaria de México," speech given August 29, 1950, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 35.

¹³¹ *Novedades*, January 11, 1945.

university student.¹³² Zubirán also worried what would happen if the university were to "coldly" train students in their specialties, rather than teaching them about "authentic culture."¹³³ *El Universal* was more to the point: universities should not let students develop "a neutral attitude before life's most fundamental problems: pain, love, death, the State, the Nation, History, and man's destiny."¹³⁴

Modernizing and Mexicanizing the Comunidad Universitaria

The construction of the CU marked a crossroads at which various interest groups with distinct agendas intersected: modernization, nationalization, socialization, and student discipline. However, for a brief period between the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, their goals converged in one of the state's hegemonizing projects. By focusing on the spiritual and material regeneration of the National University primarily through the language of the *comunidad universitaria*, state and university sponsors attempted to depoliticize and diffuse student *rebeldismo*. In parallel, the Organic Law reflected a more formal, codified vision of a disciplined student body located safely at the bottom of the social and political hierarchy of UNAM's governing apparatus. Finally, the very materiality of the campus conspired to enable these reforms.

The CU was an attempt to reconstitute the UNAM as both a modern and modernizing institution, but it was also an important venue for defining and displaying "authentic" *mexicanidad*. The alleged paradoxes in the combination

¹³² *Excelsior*, April 20.

¹³³ Zubirán, "Informe del Doctor Salvador Zubirán ante la Junta del Gobierno en 1947," in Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p 244.

¹³⁴ *El Universal*, March 16, 1952.

of "traditional" and "modern" in the design and overall plan of the new campus were crucial elements in sustaining the modernist discourses about national identity and the role for elite youth in Mexico's future. The incorporation of pre-Hispanic references (such as the use of volcanic stone, the *fronton* courts, the volcano-inspired Olympic Stadium and the layout reminiscent of Teotihuacán and Monté Alban) and murals that popularized a particular narrativization of Mexican post-revolutionary history were designed to give the CU and the *comunidad universitaria* an "authentic" historical foundation that could be fused with Lazo's technological ethos and thus recruited for the project of modernity.

This search for "authentic" Mexican culture at the CU reflected the desire of Mexico City's urban elites to temper the effects of the modernization process. This discourse benefited from its own ambiguity, enabling public commentators to emphasize one side or the other according to their audience. The particular ways that these discourses related to the "youth problem" revealed the social conservatism of its interlocutors, betraying the anxieties unhinged by the modernization process and the attempt to escape to an older, more stable cultural order. These circumstances justified the press' habitual language about the "spiritual renovation" of the university, implying that the university students only needed to awaken themselves to values that already existed.

LIFE ON CAMPUS: POWER AND PROTEST AT THE CIUDAD UNIVERSITARIA

When El Pedregal was chosen in 1943 as the location for the University City, the region was located well beyond the city limits, past the affluent villages of San Ángel and Coyoacán that defined Mexico's south-western edge. In 1947, *El Universal* confidently asserted: "The CU will be an exemplar urban planning project" that will alleviate pressures on the condensed and overcrowded urban centre, and "establish a precedent for what a harmonious, well-integrated planned city should be...."¹³⁵ As the capital continued to grow, *El Universal* urged: "The University must not follow [the path] of the city. It is the city, the *polis clasica* that must follow the University to save itself."¹³⁶

The University City was imagined as the anti-city; viewed as everything that the capital was not: planned, orderly, rational, systematically organized, and surrounded by clean, fresh air and large open green spaces. During the 1950s the CU grounds became a retreat for tourists and family weekend picnickers seeking to briefly escape the hustle and bustle of the city.¹³⁷ When he drafted the region's first residential urban plan in 1945, Diego Rivera claimed that El Pedregal was to

¹³⁵ *El Universal*, April 11, 1947.

¹³⁶¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, April 18, 1954.

¹³⁷ Thomas, "Colonizing the Land," p. 119.

become "a sanctuary from the modern world with space for meditation and the cultivation of spiritual values."¹³⁸

Today, Mexico City is one of the largest metropolises in the world with a population of approximately 30 million. It has completely overwhelmed the University City. The campus, which once straddled the edge of a wilderness, is now situated in one of the Federal District's southern neighbourhoods. The original clean, geometric composition of the CU dramatically transformed some time ago as the student population quickly outgrew the campus' capacity: new buildings have been erected over gardens and plazas, entire faculties have been relocated, and parking lots have been superimposed on sports fields. The decentralization of the CU is not a recent phenomenon, but in fact began before construction stopped. The explanations for this are varied; some are political, but most are because CU planners and architects grossly underestimated the expansion of the student body, which more than doubled during the 1950s.¹³⁹

This chapter will present a counter-argument to the supposed hegemonic projects at work that were described in the previous chapter. The creation of the Ciudad Universitaria and the UNAM's legal restructuring did little to change the behaviour or the attitudes of its occupants, and the dream of creating a *comunidad universitaria* soon faded away. This was because the CU was never the oppressive Corbusian straightjacket that was likened to James Scott's "high-

¹³⁸ Felipe Leal, ed. *Morada de Lava: Armando Salas Portugal* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006), p. 15.

¹³⁹ *El Nacional*, February 12, 1958. The campus was intended to hold no more than 25,000 students when the university counted approximately 15,000 university students. By 1958, this number reached 42,000. In 2005, the university census counted 250,000 and nearly 30,000 faculty members. Juan Villoro, "The Metro," in *The Mexico City Reader*, ed. Rubén Gallo, trans. Lorna Scott Fox and Rubén Gallo (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 123.

modernist" Brasilia. A number of extraneous factors can explain this difference: urban expansion, population growth, political motivations, bureaucratic red tape, the lack of financial capital, and student protests. Moreover, students reappropriated the campus space in Mexico by using it in ways that were either unplanned or unintended by its creators. The CU thus provided students with new ammunition and new ways of skirting and contesting authority. The single most volatile issue at the UNAM during the 1950s, for example, was the widespread feeling of social and physical marginality caused by the university's severance from the city centre. This resentment manifested itself in several ways, from acts of vandalism to boycotts and violent protests, and culminated in 1958 when students, protesting an increase in bus fares, joined the notorious strikes initiated by the workers' unions.' Planners also miscalculated the effects of the campus' centralizing scheme. The consolidation of faculties, schools, and institutes in one space – essential to the creation of the *comunidad universitaria* – had the unfortunate consequence of enabling agitation to spread with greater ease.

This chapter does not propose to tie together loose ends from previous chapters; rather, it attempts to further unravel the threads by looking to see what happened in practice to the homogenizing discourses. The experience of the campus during the 1950s can be considered a point of entry through which we can view and reflect on the limits of the state's supposed hegemonic projects. Beneath the surface of these discourses was a labyrinth of inconsistencies, insincerities, errors and unintended consequences. This chapter will also analyze student activism in a way that is neither overly romantic, nor unfairly critical.

Student protest was not concerned with uprooting the institutions and structures of power, but actually legitimized and sustained it. Nevertheless, as the demand for higher education grew in post-war Mexico, the politics of consensus and accommodation between the state and UNAM students changed considerably and, by 1958, the state learned that it could no longer count on containing dissent within the CU's new walls.

Nation-building: a Collaborative Project

Mexico's national self-articulation was a collaborative project shared by artists, intellectuals, education reformers, industrialists and politicians. The state, for its part, encouraged and subsidized cultural enterprises that would help incorporate Mexico's variegated population into an "imagined community," the ideological counterpart to post-war "National Unity." Since the 1920s the state had invested in architecture, archaeology, public education, and the plastic arts and, by the 1940s, patronage had expanded to radio, cinema, comic books, tourism and television. In the decade following the end of the Revolution, Mexican leaders sought to explicitly define *mexicanidad*, a task energetically taken up by a new middle class who were trying – literally – to build a new nation and differentiate themselves from their porfirian predecessors. According to the Nobel prize-winner Octavio Paz, "It was an immense task and everything had to be improvised..."

The poets studied economics; the jurists, sociology; the novelists, international law or pedagogy or agronomy...all the intelligentsia was enlisted for specific and immediate ends: legal projects, governmental plans, confidential missions, educational work, the founding of schools and agrarian banks, etc. The diplomatic service,

foreign trade, public administration, all opened their doors to an intelligentsia that came from the middle class.¹⁴⁰

The Vasconcelos generation presented revolutionary nationalism as an act of "self-awakening," an idea that continued to be popularized throughout the century by important Mexican novelists such as Paz. The nation-state at this time became the principal discursive site for describing nationalism in all its artistic and aesthetic guises, and the project of modernity was equated to the nation-building project itself.

Scholars generally agree that the state's generous sponsorship of the arts – perhaps epitomized by the muralists – was used as a means to propagandize the official nationalizing project and gain a popular character without extending democracy to its citizens. Rhetoric was extremely popular with the government precisely because that is what it was – talk – so nothing changed structurally. Zolov observes that by monopolizing the production of discourses generated around cultural conflicts, the PRI was able to absorb counter-discourses and thereby strengthen its popular image.¹⁴¹ Finally, for better or worse, Mexico's intelligentsia played their part in this cultural hegemonic project by styling themselves as interlocutors of "the people" precisely because, as Lomnitz notes, large sectors of society were excluded from the public sphere.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico*, trans. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 157-8.

¹⁴¹ Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, p. 53.

¹⁴² Following Lomnitz, I define the public sphere as a national discursive space wherein "the inhabitants are communicated in such a way that they can concert opinions that give direction to government." Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, p. 287.

Problematizing State Hegemonic Projects

*Futures not achieved are only branches of the past: dead branches.*¹⁴³

– Italo Calvino

The interests of the Mexican state and the multiple contributors to the CU project combined during the late 1940s and early 1950s, but how solid can we consider this alliance to have been? To what degree were these actors ideologically like-minded? The previous chapter suggests the existence of a remarkably unified and homogenizing discourse, but how coherent actually was this hegemonic project? The PRI, after all, was virtually the sole patron of the muralists and modernist architects, and controlled the UNAM's all-important subsidy. It is therefore reasonable to assume that, to a greater or lesser extent, the modernists adopted a pro-establishment stance for practical and immediate ends.

The "mexicanization" (and growing dogmatism) of modern architecture during this time frame overlapped with a period when architects and engineers were assuming a kind of political ascendancy. Lazo, upon completing the CU, for instance, became the Secretary of Communications and Public Works under the Ruíz Cortines administration. The muralists were the "official" artists of the Revolution, and jealously guarded this title to safeguard their monopoly on government contracts, thereby blocking a future generation of potential interlopers. The Mexican School muralists created virtual billboards for state-sponsored nationalism – pride in Mexico's folkloric culture, political and ethnic

¹⁴³ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (London: Vintage Books, 2002), p. 28.

unity through racial miscegenation, and the re-writing of the history of the Revolution, further proof of their commitment to their sponsors.¹⁴⁴

It might be easy, therefore, to conclude that they were less altruistically inspired than they were concerned with lining their own pockets. After all, how did the muralists, who espoused a socialist art, stay on the government payroll throughout an era of Cold War politics? Rivera, for example, survived the twists and turns of PRI-politics with absolute mastery; by the end of his career, his murals would cover two-and-a-half miles of wall space.¹⁴⁵ And, did the modernist architects who faced an entrenched Beaux-Arts elite, those who controlled the country's most prestigious institutions, act out of charity and the desire to democratize "good" design, or professional self-interest?

To be fair, there is a less cynical interpretation of their aspirations to assume leadership roles in the nation's modernization process. Many Mexican modernists must have genuinely seen their roles with a sense of profound social and national responsibility, especially as they perceived themselves to be rebuilding the country after long and divisive colonial, imperial history. Moreover, the muralists had developed their ideological beliefs and didacticism prior to attracting the blessings of the state coffer. Nor were their anti-clerical and communism-inspired views always popular with the so-called "people." Indeed, Rivera and Siqueiros often had to protect their murals from common vandalism by erecting screens and barricades. In addition, they believed it was their duty to resist foreign cultural forces, even while using the international language of

¹⁴⁴ Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ Kandell, *La Capital*, p. 461.

"progress" and "modernity." They saw the state as a patron of higher moral standing than a private art collector, a belief in keeping with their populist objectives. In Rivera's words: "The artist who does not feel attuned to the aspirations of the masses – this man does not produce a work of permanent worth...Art cut off from its practical aims is not art."¹⁴⁶

The architects also shared important aspects of this populism, yet they were altogether a different breed from the muralists. More than a period or style, architectural modernism in Mexico was a social movement. It arose out of a very specific constellation of economic, social, and political circumstances: national reconstruction as a country struggling to re-define itself; a new government trying to legitimize itself through massive public works; the professionalization of architecture and engineering; and the shift from elite- to mass-based politics, as choreographed as they could be. Despite these regional tendencies, like their counterparts in Europe and North America, the Mexican modernists were technocrats above everything else. The Industrial Revolution had created new patrons and new problems, paving the way for new social experiments based on the notion that science and engineering could force progressive social change and political reform by confronting industrial, social and architectural problems. "The incredible victories that intelligence has won over Nature have created a climate for better social organization," echoed former rector Nabor Carillo Flores (1953-61) in 1956 at the inauguration of the classes for the Faculty of Medicine.¹⁴⁷ Inspired by scientific management theories, they held that "the best way to solve

¹⁴⁶ Rivera quoted in Kandell, *La Capital*, p. 450.

¹⁴⁷ *Excelsior*, March 3, 1956.

social and economic problems was to give power to a class of impartial experts."¹⁴⁸

But, as Guillén asks, "How does one reconcile the modernists' technocratic ethos with the fact that they aspired to democratize architecture to make good design available to everyone?" Not only were they populists but, somewhat ironically, they were also elitists.¹⁴⁹ The architects saw themselves as legitimate social reformers precisely because of their claim to expert knowledge and cultural sophistication. In effect, they showed contempt for the masses' capacity to make good use of time and space by attempting to impose their vision from above. However, this attitude, rather than being paradoxical, was in keeping with modernism's prioritization of the technical over the purely humanistic. O'Gorman, who, not coincidentally, founded the Union of Architects in the Fight for Socialism (1937-41), claimed:

The difference between a technical architect and an academic or artistic architect will be made perfectly clear...The technician is useful to the majority and the academic useful to the minority...An architecture which serves humanity, or an architecture which serves money.¹⁵⁰

A long discussion could be continued about the range of motivations of the modernist architects and muralists. Their art and architecture was designed to "mediate [and set the terms of debate] between the *vox populi* and cultura oficial,"¹⁵¹ construct a national culture and identity, and enhance the regime's

¹⁴⁸ Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical*, p. 138.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Juan O'Gorman, quoted in Fraser, *Building the New World*, p. 52.

¹⁵¹ Mary Katherine Coffey, "The State of Culture: Institutional Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary Mexico," (doctoral thesis, University of Illinois, 1999), p. 6.

domestic legitimacy and international stature. In doing so, they were undoubtedly complicit in the state's hegemonic project. From a closer vantage point, however, the unanimity of voice heard in chapter three disintegrates into a cacophony of goals and dissonant interests, and the financial incentives associated with state patronage casts a serious shadow on the idea of ideological coherence. So, then, to what degree might it be said that there was a state hegemonic project at work in mid-century Mexico City at all? To repeat Derek Sayer's question, how do we know that "we [are not] just dealing with stories that elites told themselves?"¹⁵²

Another important consideration is whether these "talking elites" doubted their own sincerity. Sayer cites an interesting example of a greengrocer in Prague who hung a sign in his window that read: "Workers of the World Unite." Needless to say, the man had no interest in a shared class-consciousness with the international proletariat; "he was merely participating in a ritual."¹⁵³ In a related example, Mario Pani and Enrique del Moral questioned – if not at the time, then at least in retrospect – their complicity in the state's nationalizing project. In a curious little introductory paragraph in a book that commemorates the 50-year anniversary of the CU, the authors virtually "excuse" their work by emphasizing that the campus was an expression of that particular historical moment, which was broadly characterized by a sense of revolutionary nationalism. Following this qualification they reflect that the economic development "of questionable character" during the 1940s, which was confronted in the work of the next

¹⁵² Sayer, "Everyday Forms of State Formation: Some Dissident Remarks on "Hegemony," p. 369.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 373-74.

generation of Mexican architects, was only possible because these younger architects built on a stronger sense of their national identity. In other words, the optimism that was expressed in the CU project when Pani and del Moral were at the height of their careers was justified because it was commonplace at the time, even if it later seemed misplaced.¹⁵⁴

It is impossible to tell whether the architects believed in what they doing and saying at the time, or whether they were just paying lip service to "high" revolutionary culture, which is what it had become by mid-century. However, 50 some years later, it becomes more important to ask, How much does this matter? Architectural modernism, after all, has come under terrible scrutiny over past decades, variously criticized for being inhuman, elitist, controlling, and even authoritarian. O'Gorman declared, "a house...will be a tool, just as the automobile is becoming a tool."¹⁵⁵ This kind of over-rational, dispassionate, approach to architecture denies spontaneity and, at times, neglects to consider how designs evolve with the users of the space. In fact, it has led whole generations of urban theorists, planners, and architects to focus on modernism's failures, the consequences of which may have sometimes been exaggerated.¹⁵⁶ Even if conventional wisdom maintains that modernism's effects have been largely negative in aesthetic and moral terms, it is important to prove –

¹⁵⁴ Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ O'Gorman quoted in Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical*, p. 127.

¹⁵⁶ Some scholars have even blamed modernism for the 1968 student Tlatelolco massacre. For example, according to Rubén Gallo, the massacre was "made possible to a great extent" by Mario Pani's Corbusian-inspired Nonoalco-Tlatelolco housing complex. I am not arguing that Pani's design did not make this atrocity easier to take place; indeed, the buildings that surrounded the Tlatelolco plaza were used to blockade protestors. Instead, I believe that such events have contributed to a mythology about modernism that equates its practitioners' *pretensions* with the actual social consequences of its design. Rubén Gallo, Introduction to *The Mexico City Reader*, p. 27.

empirically, and on a case-by-case basis – how restrictive it was to its occupants and users.

Hegemony put to Practice at the Ciudad Universitaria

Speaking to Kublai Khan, "I have thought of a model city from which to deduce all others," Marco said." It is a city made only of exceptions, exclusions, incongruities, contradictions.¹⁵⁷

– Italo Calvino

The initial intentions of the CU's architects, artists, university administrators and state sponsors, however, may be largely beside the point. At the University City, a variety of factors, such as population growth, urban sprawl, financial restraints, bureaucratic hold-ups, and student resistance, conspired to undermine the original vision for the new campus, leaving in their wake a powerful counter-discourse to the modernizing universalist discourses of Lazo and his colleagues. The CU's "master plan" was not nearly powerful enough to dictate the terms of life for the campus, just as 20th-century Mexican modernism was not quite as despotic as some of its critics have accused it of being.

What happened to the Comunidad Universitaria?

Rather than being an "exemplar urban planning project"¹⁵⁸ that would raise the bar for urban planning, as the media projected, an unplanned life took over the campus and, with remarkable speed, it changed the project outcome. In addition to facing intermittent delays, as resources were less secure after Aléman

¹⁵⁷ Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, p. 112.

¹⁵⁸ *El Universal*, April 11, 1947.

left office,¹⁵⁹ the project's single greatest modification was caused by the massive rise in the UNAM's student population. When the campus construction began, its architects estimated that the student body would grow from 15,000 (excluding the national preparatory schools) to 25,000, a 70% increase for which they calculated a 250% increase in area.¹⁶⁰ By 1958, however, the university was already having trouble accommodating students at the CU; that year, 48,000 students were counted between the university and preparatory schools.¹⁶¹ Ten years later, there were 100,000 students registered at the university alone. By 1952, the campus stretched over an area of 84,450 square metres. This number rose by a factor of 3.6 in 1954, and was nearly eight times larger by 1973.¹⁶²

"The alteration of the binomial – unity and quota – destroyed the guiding concept of the project: overall unity [of composition]"¹⁶³ wrote Pani and del Moral in 1979. The miscalculation was enormous. In 1949, the size of the campus had been significantly reduced from its original 1947 design in order to ensure "human" proportions for "visual and psychological reasons."¹⁶⁴ A decade later, the UNAM's administrators declared that the CU's "excessive centralization" required immediate action!¹⁶⁵ The enlargement of the campus undermined a number of important elements of the earlier designs. The hierarchy of buildings, with one building preponderant among a group of related buildings, made alterations difficult. As a result, many buildings were

¹⁵⁹ Classes did not commence at the CU until 1954, and the project was not completed until the late 1950s.

¹⁶⁰ Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 216.

¹⁶¹ *El Nacional*, February 12, 1958.

¹⁶² Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 14.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁶⁵ *Novedades*, January 28, 1957.

haphazardly erected, entire faculties were moved, and a number of gardens and sports fields, cornerstones of the "light and hygiene" project, vanished.¹⁶⁶ Traffic also became a problem as the number of cars increased to such an extent that the main artery, Avenida Insurgentes, was constantly clogged. These and other modifications irrevocably fragmented the campus, effectively destroying the prospect of constructing a spatially-integrated *comunidad universitaria*.

Additions and Omissions to the CU's Master Plan

Other adaptations to the 1947 master plan that were made deliberately to change the social uses of buildings and areas illustrate that the long-cherished idea of setting up a *comunidad universitaria* had begun to disintegrate even as construction was underway. The building destined for the Aula Magna, for example, was given new function, and the plan for the Central Club was scrapped. That these two projects were abandoned is significant for two reasons: the central importance attributed to them in the original planning, and the fact that they had major centralizing purposes, integral to the concept of the university community. The Central Club was envisioned as a locale where professors and students could gather, thereby improving relationships with one another in a relaxed, social setting. It was to include a restaurant that could accommodate 300 people, as well as an auditorium, outdoor terraces, and a soda bar. That is was meant to occupy a central position close to the Rectory Tower, just west of the Science Block attests to the importance it was given by architects in the original plan.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ The entire Science complex eventually had to move from the academic zone to its own designated area.

¹⁶⁷ Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 120.

The explanations by the architects for abandoning these projects were, not surprisingly, rather nebulous. Writing much later, Pani and del Moral admitted that the Central Club, like other buildings with similar functions such as the cafeteria in the Faculty of Humanities, were discarded when their purposes, charmingly defined as "fomenting conviviality," were subverted. Apparently, the unpredicted swell of students "perver[ted] the necessary basis for collective sociability."¹⁶⁸

Perhaps one of the most important features of the campus omitted from construction was its residential component. The lack of conveniently-located student housing downtown was often described by the media and other public commentators as a critical situation, and one of the main contributors to student dissatisfaction. Up until the mid-1950s, the CU was going to contain a residential complex for some 4,000 students and an undetermined number of professors.¹⁶⁹ However, in 1956 plans for student dormitories were quashed when the army entered the residences of the Polytechnical School which, by this time, had evolved into a node of student activism. Ironically, the CU's modernist architects learned – albeit, slowly – that the "isolation of souls" was preferable to the concentration of students in a confined area where agitation could easily spread. As it turned out, in the end, the planners did have the ability to stimulate the creation of a *comunidad universitaria*, just the wrong type.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁶⁹ Lazo, "Presencia, mision y destino de la Ciudad Universitaria de México," speech given August 29, 1950, in Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*, p. 32.

The Marginalization of the University Community

A very important reason that the university community never came into being was because many of the campus' new dwellers were deeply unhappy with their peripheralization. Until the late 1950s, the whole region of El Pedregal was massively underdeveloped, with poor transportation increasing the CU's isolation from the city. In a personal interview, one former student remembered that taxi drivers sometimes refused to bring customers to the University City because the drivers easily became lost and felt they could earn more money on shorter commutes. There was no commercial area, few places to eat, and the bus system was unreliable. At 14 years old, César Villaluz accepted a small job classifying and making an inventory of photographs of Baroque churches for an art history professor between November and December of 1954. His job description also involved taking food orders and making runs to the small taco vendor, 200 metres away from the Humanities building, the only place where one could buy food on campus, he recalled.

The buildings on campus were also so spread out that even walking between them could be an inconvenience. Because of the CU creators' emphasis on creating a traffic-free campus, an idea inspired by Le Corbusier and dubbed by architects as "the reconquest of space by the pedestrian," relatively few cars regularly entered and left the university campus. Few students had cars, reported Villaluz, who later entered the Faculty of Science; living only three miles away from campus, he at least was able to hitchhike to school each day with university employees and avoid the bus congestion or walking time.

It would take me three hitch-hikes to get to campus, with wait periods of about five minutes for each car to come along. In total, it took me between 15 and 45 minutes to get there; 45 minutes, if I needed to cross campus.¹⁷⁰

Some students did resist being cut off from the hustle and bustle of the city centre. Law school students, in fact, even attempted to boycott the campus entirely, claiming that it was too far away, lacked communications, and was not yet ready for use.¹⁷¹ Carlos Vela, a young professor and UNAM graduate, recalled moving into a half-empty residence for professors. When asked if he thought that students and professors felt isolated at the CU, he said:

Many people did not want to move here. People were used to living in the centre. It was far away and there weren't many people around. This area was very underdeveloped. Can you imagine it? Even the teachers didn't want to move! There were no trees, just lava rock and new buildings....It was far from the city and from the old faculties, like the Palacio de Minería or the Faculty of Medicine in Santo Domingo. Did we feel isolated? Yes. There was nothing here: no businesses, no cultural activities. Well, now there are lots of things to do here. There are concert halls, restaurants, theatres, and the cinema but in 1950 there was nothing around here. Where could we go to eat? Where could we go to the movies or to buy a new pair of pants?....We were used to only having to walk a few blocks to get whatever we wanted, a good cup of coffee, or a nice restaurant...there was the museum of Bellas Artes, libraries and bookstores....[The CU] was far away from the real world.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Me tomaría tres aventones para llegar a la universidad, con una espera de aproximadamente 5 minutos para que llegue cada coche. En total, me tomó entre 15 y 45 minutos para llegarme allí; 45 minutos, si tuve que cruzar la universidad.

¹⁷¹ Mabry, *The Mexican University*, p. 207.

¹⁷² Muchas personas no quisieron cambiarse aquí. La gente estaba acostumbrada a vivir en el centro. Quedaba lejos y no había muchas personas en los vecindades. Este área no estaba muy desarrollada. ¿Puede usted imaginárselo? ¡Aun los profesores no quisieron trasladarse! No había ningún árbol, solamente la roca de lava y los nuevos edificios. Estaba lejos de la ciudad y de las viejas facultades, como el Palacio de Minería o la Facultad de Medicina en Santo Domingo. ¿Si nos sentimos aislados?. Sí. No había nada: ningunos negocios, ningunas actividades culturales. Bien, ahora este lugar ha cambiado mucho. Hay salas de concierto, restaurantes, teatros, y el cine, pero en 1950 no había nada alrededor. ¿Dónde podíamos nosotros ir a comer? ¿Dónde podíamos

El Centro, the Barrio Universitario and the Spirit of Extra-Territoriality

Despite the recurrent complaints about the fragmented, overpopulated, and run-down old campus, most students who took classes there believed that their education benefited from the centre's lively, eclectic, and culturally vibrant atmosphere. For example, when asked what student life was like at the old campus, Carlos Vela unhesitatingly replied, "It was great. It was downtown," seemingly to equate "great" and "downtown." Our exchange about the "barrio universitaria" continued:

ER: What were the facilities like?

CV: I spent my first years as an undergrad in the Palacio de Minería. It was a beautiful, old building, although evidently [the UNAM] needed more space. It housed the Faculty of Science, including the institutes of mathematics and physics, and the Faculty of Engineering. The School of Science was very small at the time, so they had room for us. I studied there for four years. Well, I enjoyed it, of course, because the area had lots of things to see and do and everything was very close.

ER: But what about the buildings? Were they in good shape?

CV: Yes, they were in good condition. Well, they were created for different users with different needs, but you could work in them and they were very comfortable. There was, for example, a cafeteria where you could meet lots of students from engineering and other institutes. You couldn't meet students from other disciplines, like medicine and philosophy, but we weren't very far away either.

nosotros ir a ver las películas o a comprar nuevos pantalones?... Estábamos acostumbrados a sólo andar unas cuantas cuerdas para encontrar todo lo que necesitábamos: una taza buen café, o un restaurante... el Museo de Bellas Artes, las bibliotecas y las librerías. La Ciudad Universitaria estaba lejos del mundo real.

ER: Can you think of any negative influences downtown for students?

CV: I didn't notice any! ...well...there were cantinas and, at night, it was an area that had prostitutes walking around, but I never felt like there were bad influences...No, no !! There were a lot of interesting activities around there, used bookstores, galleries...we were nearby the Palacio Nacional. There were lots of cultural activities, conferences, exhibitions – many by very distinguished artists like Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. The Palacio de Bellas Artes was less than a block away and the Palacio de Minería also had its own exhibitions and concerts. So, there were many, many more good influences downtown.¹⁷³

Despite the overcrowding, the students obviously enjoyed the vibrancy and opportunities the downtown area offered, when accommodations were available to them.

Contrary to contemporary press reportage, the students also engaged positively with their urban milieu, transforming its collective identity to the extent that a significant portion of the city centre simply became known as the "barrio universitario," or the university neighbourhood. The School of Medicine

¹⁷³ ER: ¿Cómo eran las instalaciones? CV: Pasé mis primeros años terminando la licencia en el Palacio de Minería. Era un edificio hermoso, antiguo, aunque claramente [el UNAM] necesitaba más espacio. Ahí se albergó la Facultad de Ciencias, incluyendo los institutos de matemáticas y de física, y la Facultad de Ingeniería. La Escuela de Ciencia era muy pequeña entonces, y tenían espacio para nosotros. Estudié allí durante cuatro años. Y lo disfruté, desde luego, porque el área tenía muchas cosas a ver y a hacer y todo era muy cercano. ER: ¿Y los edificios? ¿Estaban ellos en buen estado? CV: Sí, estaban en buen estado. Bien, ellos fueron creados para diferentes usuarios con necesidades diferentes, pero podrías trabajar en ellos y eran muy cómodos. Por ejemplo, había una cafetería donde usted podría encontrar a muchos estudiantes de ingeniería y de otros institutos. Usted no podía encontrar a estudiantes de otras disciplinas, como la de medicina o filosofía, pero nosotros no estábamos muy lejos tampoco. ER: ¿Puede usted pensar en algún centro de origen de influencias negativas para los estudiantes? CV: ¡No noté ninguno!!...pues...había cantinas y, de noche, era una zona frecuentado por prostitutas, pero nunca sentí que hubiera malas influencias...No, no!! Había muchas actividades interesantes alrededor de allí, las librerías de segunda mano, galerías... estábamos cerca del Palacio Nacional. Había muchas actividades culturales, conferencias, exposiciones - muchas de ellas de artistas muy distinguidos como Diego Rivera y José Clemente Orozco. Bellas Artes estaba a menos de una cuadra y el Palacio de Minería también tenía sus propias exposiciones y conciertos. De hecho había mucha, mucha influencia más buena que mala en el centro.

benefited from its proximity to the hospitals, as did the Law School to the law courts and the History Institute to the National Archives and National Library, for example. In addition, the students also brought money to the downtown. Indicative of the reciprocal benefits of having a greater student presence downtown is the present-day lobbying effort to move some of the university's institutes and schools back to the centre, a movement led by, perhaps ironically, one of the CU's architects, Teodoro de González de León.¹⁷⁴

Much later, the CU's principal architects admitted that rather than creating the *comunidad universitaria* that they had hoped for, they had provoked a strong sense of isolation among the academic community, fostering what they described vaguely as a "spirit of extra-territoriality." This was compounded by the design's failure to make adequate allowance for future growth, resulting in a campus that was simply too extended to facilitate the social interactions envisioned by Lazo and others.¹⁷⁵ Had its planners elected to construct a less "iconic" University City, especially by way of mitigating some of the monumentality of its buildings, they would have built a complex that could have adapted better over time. In consequence, the University City began to decentralize buildings and functions long before completion. This centrifugal process (which one might call "counter-functionalism" or even "de-rationalization") continues into the present day, and has fuelled one critic to say

¹⁷⁴ See Teodoro de González de León, "La Academia de San Carlos, viva," *Vuelta* 16, no. 5 (August 1990), pp. 24-27.

¹⁷⁵ According to the architects, this outcome stemmed (not from poor planning), but from the "insular traditions" of each school and their "primitive" interpretations of autonomy. Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 218.

that it was "as if the old schools scattered in the centre of Mexico City were only relocated to this new campus."¹⁷⁶

What Effect did the CU have on Students?

The students, for their part, continued in much the same way as students in the past. In other words, neither the campus nor the changes to the university's governance system under the Organic Law managed to change the nature of political activism within the UNAM during the late 1940s and 1950s. Over the course of this period, students launched protests in the streets, demonstrated before the National Palace, attempted to boycott the new campus, occupied university buildings and the Rectory Tower, kidnapped a rector, stole buses, competed with students from the Institución Politécnico Nacional,¹⁷⁷ and confronted police with violence – and all this during a period that Donald Mabry describes as relatively peaceful.¹⁷⁸ That the new campus meant a 10-mile trip by bus to reach the centre did little to calm down the students; in fact, rather than slowing their protests, it seemed to fuel their fire. And it also enabled them to barricade the entire campus, a novel possibility they had never had before.

Resisting the Organic Law

The origins of student grievances can be hard to pin down, as the conflict's final outcome frequently had little to do with its original pretexts. However,

¹⁷⁶ Interview by author, quoted in Celia Ester Arredondo Zambrano, "Modernity in Mexico: the Case of the Ciudad Universitaria," *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. 96.

¹⁷⁷ The government-controlled Institución Politécnico Nacional (IPN) was founded in the 1930s to rival the UNAM's monopoly on higher education.

¹⁷⁸ See Mabry, "The Long Peace, 1945-1961," *The Mexican University*, pp. 189-213.

between 1945 and 1948 students managed to expel one rector after another from office while protesting about their political marginalization under the Organic Law. Resistance to the new law gave a common cause to unite the oft-competing left- and right- wing student organizations. The circuitous way in which the students challenged the authority of the law demonstrated their sophisticated comprehension of their relationship to university and national politics.

The first group to threaten the new governing rules was the Comité de Estudios de Jurisprudencia, a group of 10 law students claiming to speak on behalf of their entire school, in 1946. Their demands were uninteresting in and of themselves – technical changes in curriculum and academic procedures, the creation of an agrarian law seminar, language requirement changes, different hours for seminars, and a softening of exam attendance requirements – but by appealing directly to the rector and Council, the students sought to undermine the law by refusing to use the new channels prescribed to them. Moreover, by issuing their petition as an ultimatum, and giving the Council 10 days to respond, the committee was making their intention obvious.¹⁷⁹ All of their demands were granted by the Council, save one: the easing of examination requirements. It seems likely that this last request was included precisely because they knew it would be rejected, as the following events suggest. In retaliation for not having all their demands met, they declared a strike. Two hundred students marched to the Medical School where they were joined by the preparatory school students. Next, they captured the rectory building, ransacked it, and forced the rector, Salvador Zubirán, to resign. As the momentum of the movement quickened,

¹⁷⁹ Donald Mabry narrates the following sequence of events in *The Mexican University*, pp. 195-202.

students closed down Dental, Medical and Engineering schools, denounced Zubirán, and declared their intentions to form a directory to reorganize the UNAM.

Violence erupted between police and strikers, by then led by two students, Francisco Lopez Portillo and Helio Carlos Mendoza, around the same time that the leaders of the technical schools, representing another 16,000 students, promised to join the fray. On April 21, Aléman told the strikers to calm down, resume their classes, and to use the proper channels of the law to address their complaints. Then, behind closed doors, Aléman pressured Zubirán to officially resign. Rather than appeasing protestors, however, this victory gave the students greater confidence to increase their demands; subsequently, they demanded the resignation of all directors, sub-directors and secretaries of schools and institutes, in addition to urging for equal representation for students in Council. Shortly after, the strike gained more supporters; students from three of the capital's secondary schools, as well as university students from San Potosi and Puebla, joined in support of what might have seemed like a winning battle.

Unfortunately, the students split ranks over the question of rectorship candidates. The clerical right supported the old revolutionary-turned-conservative Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama to be rector, but the left vociferously criticized this decision. Ultimately, Luis Garrido (1948-53), the former lawyer and sociologist, managed to emerge victorious through a combination of political savvy, his close connection with Aléman, and the fact that Díaz Soto y Gama

discredited himself with poorly-received religious tirades that were publicized by the media.

Although this particular student movement fell short of achieving all its political demands as it began disintegrating internally, the student activists demonstrated their will and capacity to disrupt university operations. They were the leading force behind expelling the rector, disrupted the construction of the CU, forged broad-based alliances, and mounted a destructive attack on the Administration. The students ultimately sent a message to the state and university administrators that their needs were to be recognized in the future and that, minimally, they had to give tacit consent over academic and procedural reforms in order for these changes to be successful, even if there was a legal framework operating that excluded them from full participation in university governance system.

The Isolation Issue

A much more serious crisis emerged on August 13, 1958 after a privately-owned bus company proposed to increase bus fares in 11 days. Because fare increases required government approval, student demands to freeze fees immediately became a national-capital issue. This time, student organizations closed ranks and quickly began to mobilize. They seized a bus terminal, stole 60 buses and then proceeded to burn the terminal down. At first, the police did nothing until the night when the Mexico City regent, Ernesto Uruchurto, met with students and promised to grant them special fares. Violence broke out between police and students, however, when police attempted to recover some of

the buses; the situation grew more intense as soldiers surrounded the University City. Meanwhile, rumours of student mistreatment at the hands of police circulated. These rumours – of student "disappearances," kidnappings, and murders – were certainly not uncommon, and the use of university-paid thugs called *porras* to intimidate students was widely known and even reported in the press. The tension continued to heighten.

Although police managed to retrieve a few buses, the students soon controlled the whole campus and held the buses as ransom. The students asked for lower bus fares and the release of arrested fellow students, declaring that they would hold their positions until the annual September 1 presidential State of Union address. Meanwhile, soldiers garrisoned outside the CU had to break up street fighting between bus drivers and students. Students accused the drivers of using *porras* against them, while the drivers threatened to strike if they were not protected from student harassment.¹⁸⁰

This sporadic violence escalated into a large-scale strike by August 24 when Demetrio Vallejo, the new Secretary General of the Railway Workers' Union, along with students from the preparatory and technical schools, pledged their support to the UNAM strikers. A day earlier, on August 23, strikers had driven the detained buses to the Zócalo, the city's main plaza, in preparation for the large demonstration that occurred three days later. On August 26, the demonstration began. The students, however, began to fear reprisals as the

¹⁸⁰ The sources on this strike include, *Excelsior*, August 23, 1958; Donald Mabry, "The Long Peace, 1945-1961," in *The Mexican University*, pp. 189-213; Philip B. Taylor Jr., "The Mexican Elections of 1958: Affirmation of Authoritarianism?," *The Western Political Quarterly*, 3 no. 13 (Sept 1960), pp. 722-744.

demonstration grew. Represented by the Gran Comisión Estudiantil, they hastily requested presidential mediation, perhaps fearing army intervention as new interest groups began mobilizing and joining the demonstration outside the National Palace with their own serious grievances. On August 27, the president responded to the students, proposing to temporarily suspend bus fare increases, improve student services, and set up a transportation committee that would give students representation.

By August 29, the demonstration had grown considerably. It included industrial workers, railroad workers, petroleum workers, telegraph workers, teachers, and other "popular" elements. When the protest climaxed the next day with 40,000 demonstrators in the Zócalo, the Gran Comisión Estudiantil met and decided to accept the presidential offer with a few amendments: workers were to be represented on the transportation committee, bus drivers were to be unionized, workers' wages were to be increased, a study of city ownership of the bus system was to be implemented, new elections were to be organized for petroleum workers, amnesty was to be guaranteed for those arrested, soldiers were to be removed from the vicinity, and a guarantee of no reprisals was to be made. The Comisión declared a truce, promised to return the buses, and began singing praises to President Ruíz Cortines, an obvious attempt at "damage control." Although the majority of students dispersed right away, some stayed and destroyed the buses, a final act of defiance by the few.

Who controls the UNAM?

Just as they had in 1946, the 1958 student and union conflicts revealed the limitations of the new Organic Law to maintain order in the face of student uprisings, especially when the source of agitation came from outside the National University, as was the case with the transportation crisis. As Mabry shows in his study on the relationship between the state and the National University, the PRI's control over the UNAM was both indirect and subject to contestation. Mabry also shows how fragile the business of commanding the UNAM was; a rector depended on his alliance with the state to keep control over his office and the university, while he also had to inspire the confidence of the president that he could contain student politics within the University walls as much as possible. This is why pushing through unpopular academic or procedural reforms under the umbrella of the Organic Law was not necessarily politically wise, as Garrido doubtlessly understood.

In sum, students, united in a cause, had influence and real leverage. This was, of course, why the workers tried to make an alliance with them in 1958, and why outsider political groups sometimes tried to manipulate the student organizations in order to secure themselves a power base.¹⁸¹ The university and government administrators came to recognize that they contributed to a structure that allowed students to establish a formidable power base in the UNAM. The university rectors knew this; their use of the *porras* and other coercive methods, such as the practice of buying off student leaders, was a testament to this. UNAM

¹⁸¹ The Mexican Communist Party, for example, was often accused of meddling in university politics.

learned that it controlled the university only with the tacit approval of the student population.

The Students, the State, and the University: Ritualized Dissent

Contrary to the way that students were depicted by the press and envisioned by the Organic Law - usually as apathetic and socially disengaged, or worse, as overly-engaged but naïve and idealistic - these students were actually politically skilled when it came to manipulating university and national politics. Although their tactics could be described as rough, spontaneous and unruly, student *rebeldismo* created a lot of attention, while actually risking little of themselves; they were protected sometimes by their social status and always by the public visibility of their acts.

In addition, their rebellious tactics did not really threaten the fabric of society. Student struggles were for the most part concerned with seeking accommodations with the state, thus legitimizing as opposed to defying the status quo. Unlike the working classes, students gained from an unequal society and, to a degree, consented to existing structures of power simply by going to university. In fact, their strikes, protests and petitions can be viewed as part of a negotiation ritual among the students, the university, and the state; all parties knew their roles, knew what they were after, and understood the terms of engagement.

Gutmann suggests that protest can actually reinforce social relations by providing a venue to air grievances and thus perpetuate existing frameworks of power.¹⁸²

The rhetorical devices adopted by students to make demands pertaining mostly to internal university issues is a good illustration of how students tried to play politicians, administrators, and even other students off one another by "poaching" on fashionable national political discourses.¹⁸³ The most common method to denounce an enemy at the university in the post-war years was to accuse them of being a communist. In 1945, for example, when medical students were protesting over examination requirements, they struck out at the rector by accusing him of allowing "communist agitators" to infiltrate the National University. Similarly, when politicians began to propagandize a "crisis in values" and a "vanishing culture," students followed suit. At a congress in Monterrey organized by the Catholic branch of the Confederación Nacional de Estudiantes in 1951, the students campaigned for a return to the 1929 autonomy law, then condemned the UNAM's current Administration for placing too much emphasis on technical education at the expense of the humanities and philosophy; in other words, the UNAM was being accused of having become too capitalistic, too "foreign."¹⁸⁴

But why did the increasingly authoritarian state allow students such freedom to dissent at that time? They destroyed property, disrupted the capital's

¹⁸² Gutmann, *The Romance of Democracy: Compliant Defiance in Contemporary Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 131. This observation applies to the case of the 1958 union demonstrations, which coincided with the election campaign of Adolfo López Mateos. Union demonstrations, as Philip Taylor makes note, were common in Mexico during the period between election campaigns and presidential inaugurations. Taylor, "The Mexican Elections of 1958," p. 739.

¹⁸³ This term borrows from Michel de Certeau.

¹⁸⁴ Mabry, *The Mexican University*, p. 205.

daily economic activities, contested patriarchal authority, and challenged law and order. During the 1920s and 1930s, students were largely immune to harm because they were the children of elites, many of whom were government functionaries, but the post-war expansion of higher education resulted in a demographic shift wherein students were increasingly from the lower-middle class strata. One reason for the government's tolerance was that the UNAM was one of the principal theatres of recruitment for *priistas*, especially after Aléman's presidential term. Secondly, the political training they received there was valuable. Many politicians, like Aléman's secretary of the presidency, Rogelio de la Selva, were former student activists themselves.¹⁸⁵ Elena Poniatowska, one of Mexico's leading cultural critics, observed:

In Mexico there is an age to be idealistic, another to be *guadalupano* [a devotee of the Virgin Guadalupe], another to be anti-imperialist, another to be anti-government, and another to be *priistas*. All of the other stages are youthful follies. How many men who were once leftists now recall their youthful years with a pat on the back and a mischievous little smile?¹⁸⁶

1958: A Turning Point

The student and union conflicts of 1958 were a sobering lesson to the state. Popular unrest began that year in the countryside when "*paracaidistas*" (literally, parachutists) overran land held by individual farm-owners. Leaders were jailed, and one *latifundia*, Cananea, was expropriated by the state.¹⁸⁷ It was not until disturbances reached the city, however, that the situation became

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 198.

¹⁸⁶ Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968," p. 556.

¹⁸⁷ The Yucatán was one of the principal areas of unrest where peasant-workers, earning only twenty pesos per week, could not support their families. *Excelsior*, July 19, 1958.

threatening to the state. Agitation started with telegraph workers, and then spread to elementary school teachers and petroleum workers. Labour dissidents eventually banded around the railroad workers, led by a radical rank-and-file Demetrio Vallejo Martínez. At first, the state attempted to seek a resolution with strikers by agreeing to hold new elections to replace a number of unpopular union leaders. When this action did not suppress the strike, the state declared the strike illegal; the army took control of the railways and Vallejo and thousands of his followers were imprisoned.¹⁸⁸ Student unrest in 1958 was therefore not much more than a sideshow to much more consequential social and political events, but the student action did deeply concern the government.

The students of 1958 were not like their predecessors, the "spoiled" and "decadent" juniors of the 1920s and 1930s who seemed to cause trouble just to broadcast their impunity from the law. These new students faced real economic hardships. They were, for the most part, representative of a growing, newly urbanized middle class whose prosperity was due to the post-war economic upturn stimulated by industry. Only 27.6% of the students were born in the capital and most worked part-time to finance their studies, so the bus crisis was of real importance to them as they relied on cheap and reliable transportation to get to and from work and the university. This group of 1958 students were representative of the student population described in the census of 1949 that

¹⁸⁸ When Vallejo later stood trial in 1963 for his leadership role in this illegal strike, he was sentenced to jail for sixteen years for "conspiracy and sabotage." Although some scholars have described the 1958 union conflicts as one of the earliest proletarian social movement in Mexico, as Peter H. Smith observes, these events also showed that the state would respond heavily to independent unionism. For details, see Peter H. Smith, "Mexico since 1946: Dynamics of an Authoritarian Regime," *Mexico Since Independence*, pp. 349-350.

reported the UNAM had 23,527 students (82% male) in contrast to only 8,154 in 1929. Many were the sons and daughters of small business owners, store employees, professionals and, to a lesser extent, workers and farmers; 18% had mothers who were wage earners.¹⁸⁹

These students were also nothing like the youth of the radical, left-wing student movement that came later in the 1960s. In fact, student political activism during the 1950s could hardly be called "a movement" at all as it was impossible to sustain student action amid the rapid growth of the university population and the great social and ideological cleavages that were evident during those times. Most of the students in the 1950s, in fact, were simply more interested in obtaining a technical education that would secure a well-paying job and an elevated social status.¹⁹⁰

Nonetheless, if the state had tolerated student disturbances in the past it was because it saw the UNAM as a place where intellectual dissent could be contained. The 1958 student activism demonstrated that the "choreography of protest" had changed. The pressures on higher education caused by modernization meant that it was becoming increasingly difficult for the state and the university to meet the demands of the student population. The students proved that they were capable of making potentially threatening cross-class allegiances with other larger, social and political organizations, however short-

¹⁸⁹ UNAM, Insitituto de Investigaciones Sociales, *Primer Censo Universitario*: pp. 23-49, quoted in Mabry, *The Mexican University*, p. 204.

¹⁹⁰ Anne Rubenstein notes how social conservatism among the new middle classes grew visibly over this period, especially when Ruíz Cortines was in office. See Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

lived and superficial. In short, the ritualized practice of student dissent that in earlier years was evident and accepted, somewhat begrudgingly, by the state now was disintegrating; this process would become increasingly clear over the course of the 1960s as the state began to use more oppressive measures to discipline the middle classes.

Rebels without a Cause or Political Activists?

What, in the end, motivated student actions in 1958? Although they paid lip service to the plight of the workers in their demands to the president, it seems clear that they were not so interested in the proletarian cause. What, then, was the nature of their involvement in the 1958 strike? To a large degree, their protest erupted over issues that primarily inconvenienced themselves: student facilities and services, academic concerns, governance and procedural matters. Would it be fair to say that the students in 1958 were no more anti-establishment than the juniors of past decades? This view has often led critics to judge the students' actions as a form of petty, elite politics. One American scholar, for example, writing in 1960, described student involvement in the 1958 conflicts as follows:

Purposeless student participation occurred, and delinquents took advantage of the situation to become marauders. A climate of violence was created which rose higher and higher. The culmination was reached in August on the question of long overdue and essential bus fare increases. Some workers protested, but students of the National University, who were not personally involved, engaged in systematic and completely vicious defiance of both government and common sense. The constitutional autonomy and prestige of the university were invoked to protect them, and the fear

that they would become even more destructive produced a curiously ineffectual government response.¹⁹¹

This view was also representative of the opinion of the contemporary Mexican press. More recent scholarship, however, tends to treat students more romantically, especially in light of the 1968 student massacre. I would like to suggest that neither of these treatments is entirely fair; the answer lies somewhere in the middle. The students were reacting – at times, viscerally – to the sense that they were marginalized physically, socially, politically, and, to some extent, economically.

Although the majority of the students in question owed their existence to the wave of prosperity linked to the industrialization process in Mexico, they also lived with the pressures inflicted by modernization. Not only were they dislocated from traditional community networks, but they also must have experienced a sense of anxiety associated with uncertainty of their social status. They were the new middle class and their wealth or social position would not easily have been taken for granted. The fact that they were concerned with "student" issues, such as academic issues, the state of facilities, the availability of scholarships, cheap modes of transportation and accessible living arrangements, is not at all surprising in this light.

It would be a mistake, however, as Gutmann suggests, to treat class as an airtight concept to determine social behaviour. There was undoubtedly more at play than this. Students were facing an authoritarian state, a conservative society, and an overly bureaucratized UNAM. In protesting issues that touched

¹⁹¹ Taylor, "The Mexican Elections of 1958," p. 738.

their daily lives, they were also striking out at broader societal structures that attempted to dominate them. Their political activism alone resisted discursive representations of what it meant to be a "good" and obedient young person.

When asked why he thought the CU was built, César Villaluz replied "...the city centre was becoming overpopulated [and] there were problems with space, but this was probably less important than the political problems associated with the concentration of people." It cannot be known whether Villaluz perceived this at the time, or whether his interpretation grew more cynical over the decades, but the materiality of students' responses during the 1950s, such as the 1954 campus boycott, suggests that if students were not aware of the political motivations for constructing (and rushing) the University City, they certainly resisted its impact on their lives. The issue of the CU's physical isolation, often couched in the bus debate, came up repeatedly over the course of the decade. As Anton Rosenthal notes, the nature of space is more social and situational than it is just physical.¹⁹² The importance of having a trustworthy bus service was thus not only a practical concern, but also socially important as it connected students with the cultural nodes of the metropolis, and defined their relation to them.

The ways in which students also "subverted" the intended usages of the buildings and spaces at the CU also suggest resistance to such an authoritative space. Mexican modernist architecture and painting at the CU attempted to control its uses and functions, including restricting the movements of students. For example, all the buildings destined for student use were no more than four-

¹⁹² Anton Rosenthal, "Spectacle, Fear, and Protest," *Social Science History* 24 no.1 (Spring 2000), p. 33.

stories high, a clear contrast to the imposing 12-storey Rectory Tower, a building that could be entered by high officials through an underground parking garage. In various ways, however, the students reappropriated, or "poached," on the campus' authored meanings. They put graffiti on walls, used its auditoriums for political rallies, and occupied its most iconic buildings. Just after the presidential inauguration of the CU, a statue of Aléman – standing 30-feet high – appeared before the Rectory Tower under somewhat mysterious circumstances. The statue suffered all kinds of humiliations at the hands of students; it was vandalized, spray-painted, dressed in silly clothing, and even occasionally bombed by student activists during the 1960s. Since no one seemed to know where it came from, politically sensitive university rectors obviously could not remove it, so it stayed centre-stage until it was finally removed in the late 1960s. The Rectory Tower was also a conspicuous target for students as it was the most prominent symbol of authority and loomed over the main plaza like the watchtower in Jorge Luis Borges' *The Aleph*.¹⁹³

New Life on Campus

Many years later Fernando del Paso described the University City as a cold, "sterile atmosphere," which he said he regrettably used as a backdrop for his great novel *Palinuro of Mexico*.¹⁹⁴ Yet, I would argue that this portrayal of the CU responds more to the myths that have surrounded modernism than its

¹⁹³ Pani and del Moral complained about the massive damage inflicted on buildings and murals caused by having to repeatedly re-paint walls in order to conceal graphitized political messages. Pani and del Moral, *La construcción de la Ciudad Universitaria*, p. 220.

¹⁹⁴ Ilan Stavans, "An Interview with Fernando del Paso," in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 16 no. 1 (Spring 1996), under www.centerforbookculture.org/interviews/interview_delpaso.html (accessed December 19, 2007).

correspondence with reality. The events and experiences at the CU demonstrate the frailty of the modernist concept of "the plan." Its architects and planners could not dictate the terms of life for the campus, just as the state had trouble seamlessly promoting its hegemonic projects. Most of the outcomes at the CU were unplanned, unintended, altered, modified, or incomplete. Contrary to del Caso's description, life *did* happen.

A variety of factors accounted for new forms that the campus acquired: population growth, urban sprawl, lack of resources, bureaucratic hold-ups, and student subversions. Before the original project could be completed, plans and visions for administering the new campus – and the new student – had fissured. Components of the master plan that were considered vital to the creation of a *comunidad universitaria*, such as the Central Club, the Aula Magna, and the residential components were never realized. Efforts to centralize and rationalize the university failed, resulting in the splintering of the campus, a trend that continues to present day.

In addition to planning oversights and errors, the university community did not materialize because modernist discourses were too optimistic about modernizing pressures, such as vertiginous population growth in the capital, and the shortage of financial resources needed to build up the infrastructure of El Pedregal. The campus itself was not even fully constructed until the end of the decade, despite Aléman's conveniently-timed, end-of-term inauguration address in 1952.

More important, the *comunidad universitaria* project failed because students successfully contested the two elements it relied on most of all: the containment of university politics within the walls of the campus, and the successful implementation of the Organic Law. The new law proved incapable of handling issues that were related to students' daily lives, and the enforcement of academic and procedural reforms was contested by student activists as it was in the past. Moreover, the matter of university isolation did more to excite student rebellion than preclude it, and planners quickly realized that an "isolation of spirits" was safer than the consolidation of students to a well-defined territory like the IPN student dormitories. The campus also provided students with new ways of resisting authorities, ranging from the destruction of property and vandalism to barricading the entire campus.

Although elites contended that they were bringing a new nation into existence, the politics and development of the CU exposed the myth of community in the face of greater cultural segmentation and social alienation. Weak states, to repeat Lomnitz, face considerable difficulty managing their public image, even if "image" is all the more important for them to control. Above all the 1958 conflicts revealed that hegemonic projects are never complete; power is fragile. The University City provided a keyhole into the politics of consensus and accommodation between the state and UNAM students, who represented a rapidly expanding urbanized lower middle class in post-war Mexico. This thesis does not wish to depict 1950s student activism with undue heroism; their critics were not entirely wrong when they called their quarrels pointless elite trifles. *Rebeldismo* was not about undermining the status quo, but perpetuating it.

Nonetheless, what the student struggles do show us is that, intentionally or not, this group threatened a delicate balance of power by allying itself with other discontented sectors of society and showing the state that as their ranks grew, their actions became increasingly difficult to predict and therefore control.

In the end the perception of youth as a social threat– reflected in the public's preoccupation with a cultural crisis, or crisis in values, as discussed in chapter two –parallels the very real fact that students could jeopardize political stability. The formulation of a *comunidad universitaria* was conceived as a method to mitigate this threat of *rebeldismo* and was ultimately concerned with reproducing Mexico's elite governing class. Students, albeit largely due to circumstances that were outside their control, exposed the fragility of the discursive framework that enabled the *comunidad universitaria* to be imagined in the first place.

APPENDIX: THE CIUDAD UNIVERSITARIA IN PICTURES



Photo courtesy of Archivo Histórico de la UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación. Used with permission.

The abstract geometric composition of the CU compound is illustrated in this aerial photograph. The visual effect of the campus' simplified form from a bird's eye view is emphasized in contrast to the surrounding lava beds.



Photo courtesy of Archivo Histórico de la UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación. Used with permission.

This photograph provides a view of the western side of the great plaza-garden in the center of the CU's academic zone. At the far end of this picture stands the Rectoría Tower, situated on a plinth-like square, and defined on its northern side by the Central Library and by the School of Architecture to its south. The vast open spaces emphasize the monumentality of the buildings. These green spaces and the many trees shown in this image represent the "taming" of a wilderness that was previously considered uninhabitable.

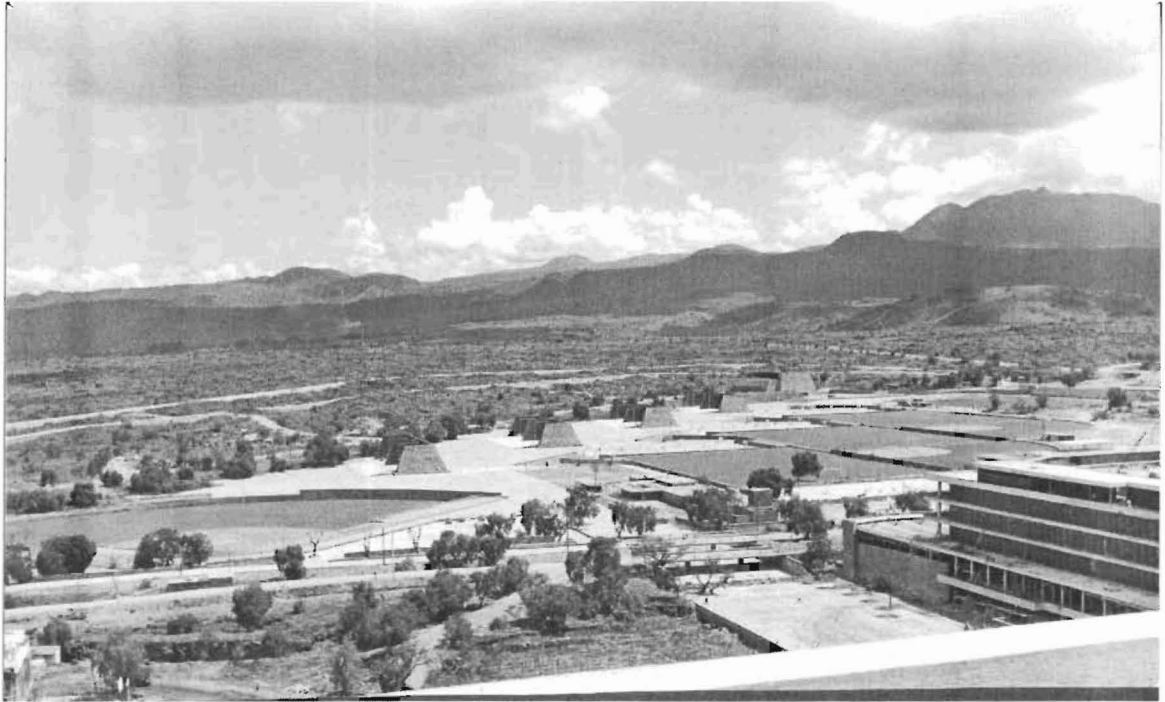


Photo courtesy of Archivo Histórico de la UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación. Used with permission.

The *fronton* courts, constructed in volcanic stone, evoke the outlying hills of the Sierra de las Calderas.

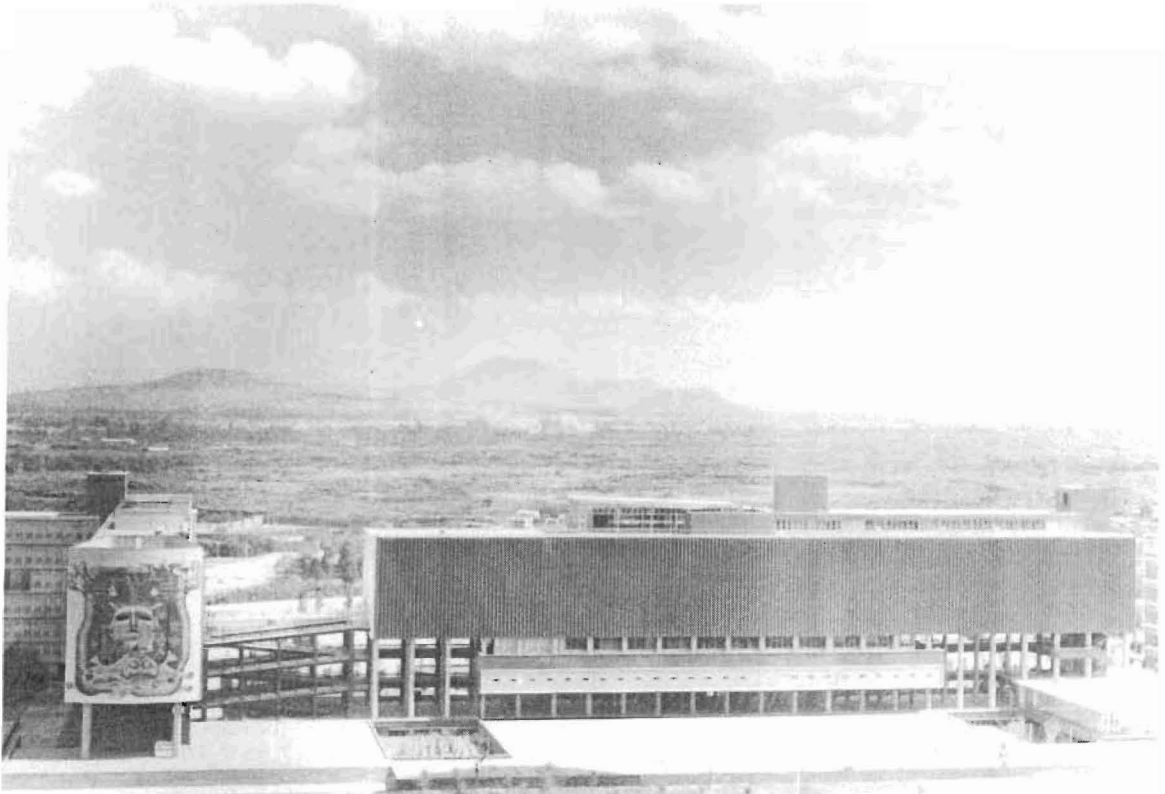


Photo courtesy of Archivo Histórico de la UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación. Used with permission.

This photograph shows a frontal view of the Faculty of Medicine, on the far eastern side of the plaza-garden. This photograph, probably taken by Mexican photographer Armando Salas Portugal, juxtaposes the symmetrical shapes of the buildings with the outlying landscape in a way that suggests the spatial separateness between civilization and the wild.



Photo courtesy of Archivo Histórico de la UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación. Used with permission.

This is the rear view of the 30-foot high statue of President Miguel Alemán, situated on the eastern side of the Rectoría Tower plinth. The low perspective of this photograph not only exaggerates the grand scale of the plaza-garden but, more importantly, is meant to express Alemán's enduring political authority.



Photo by author.

Juan O’Gorman originally planned for the Central Library to contain open-access bookshelves, a proposal that was later rejected by Carlos Lazo. In O’Gorman’s account, the CU’s project managers told him that if the students were to have direct access to the collection, the books would be stolen, leaving the library empty within a few years.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Antonio Luna Arroyo, *Juan O’Gorman: autobiografía, comentarios, juicios críticos, documentación exhaustiva* (Mexico City: Cuadernos Populares, 1973), p. 146.



Photo courtesy of Archivo Histórico de la UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación. Used with permission.

"The reconquest of space by the pedestrian."

Like many of the previous images, the following two photographs were taken as evidence of the progression of the CU's construction. The subsequent photos are different in that they include the images of the labourers. While the workers may insist on expressing some part of their individuality to a contemporary audience (the proud young adolescent in the ditch, for example), the *construction* is the primary subject matter of these photographs. This is in keeping with broader trends in Mexican photo journalism during the 1950s, which often treated workers as "generic types" who seldom appear in an illustration without the accompanying industrial machinery.



Photo courtesy of Archivo Histórico de la UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación. Used with permission.

19-111-24-A 6/18-1953



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