

## **REDENSIFICATION vs. SPRAWL; THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF THE CITY OF MEXICO**

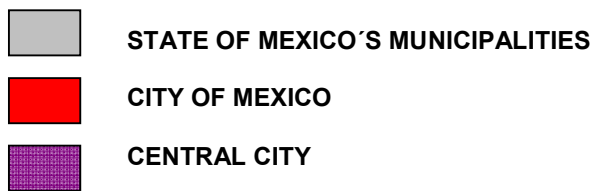
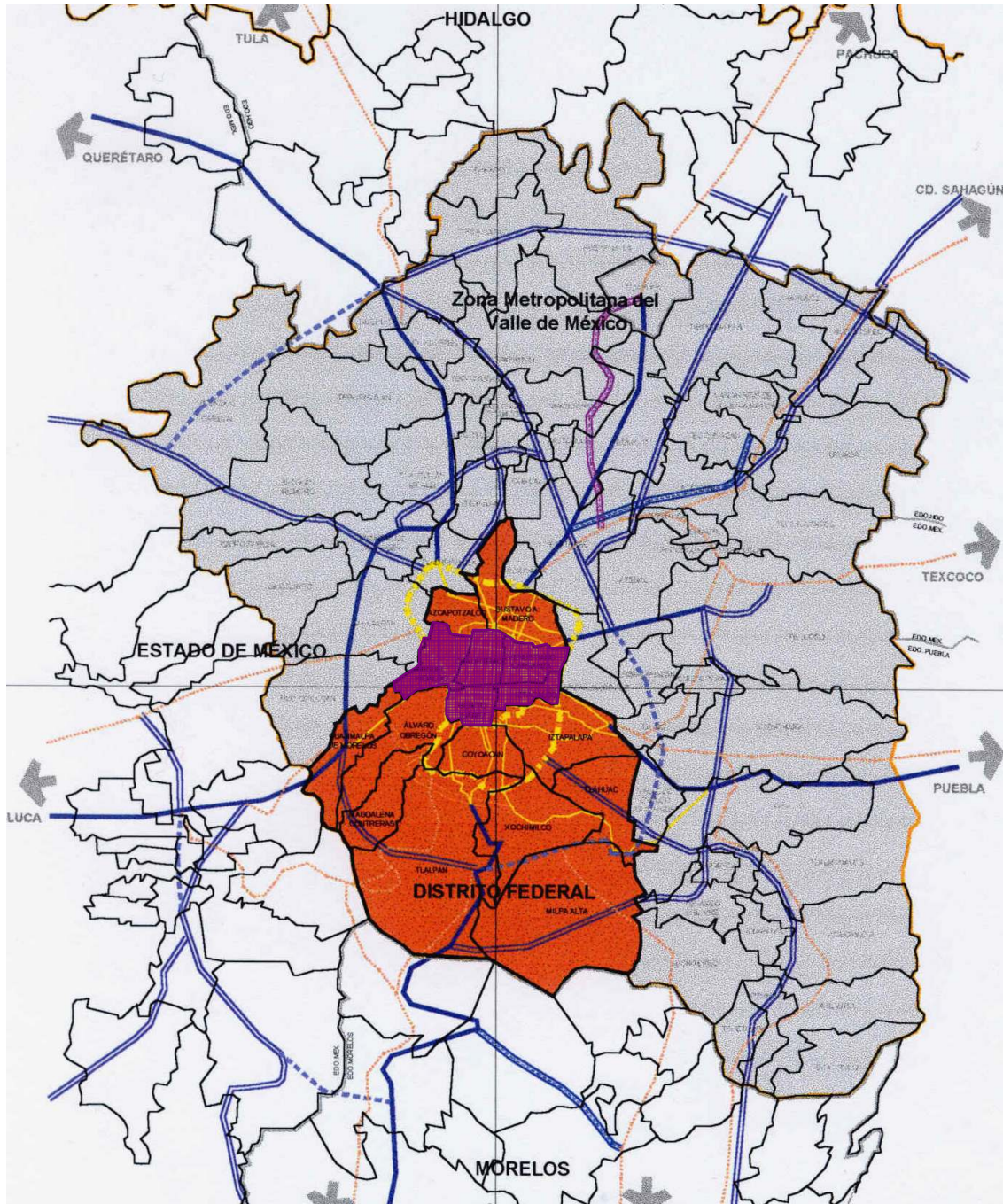
### **The Growth Process of the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City**

The Metropolitan Area of Mexico City (MAMC), conformed by 16 municipalities in Mexico City as well as 56 in the States of Mexico and Hidalgo, has had an uncontrolled growth through the length of its history, but this growth has been mainly developed since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. By this time, the sprawl on its urban surface has reached an unimaginable dimension, for to be able to cross from side to side (Cuautitlán Municipality to the north and Milpa Alta Delegation to the south) there is a straight line distance of approximately 60 km, but since the available routes are not direct, the real distance crossed is between 80 to 90 km, both with the time periods that might surpass a 3 hours journey.

As in most of the central zones of the world's principal metropolitan areas, the MAMC has showed up a population loss within the central area known as "Central City" (1) that represents almost half of it, since in a 30 years period it decreased from 2.9 million people in 1970, to 1.7 million people towards the year 2000.

This situation has its origins in two phenomena:

1. *Transformation to commercial land use*, which refers to the transformation of several land use, specially from a housing use to a commercial and/or service use, which is generated by the conditions of centrality within the zone (existence of the principal urban equipment elements, excellent accessibility, complete urban infrastructure coverage, etc.) that make the existing properties be more liable for a commercial or service use, obviously within the tertiary productive sector.
2. *Gentrification of the land*, generated by the loss or substitution of population subject by the increase in the land value, due to the centrality attributes mentioned in the previous point. The consequence then is a sub utilization of the urban equipment as well as the urban infrastructure within this city area.

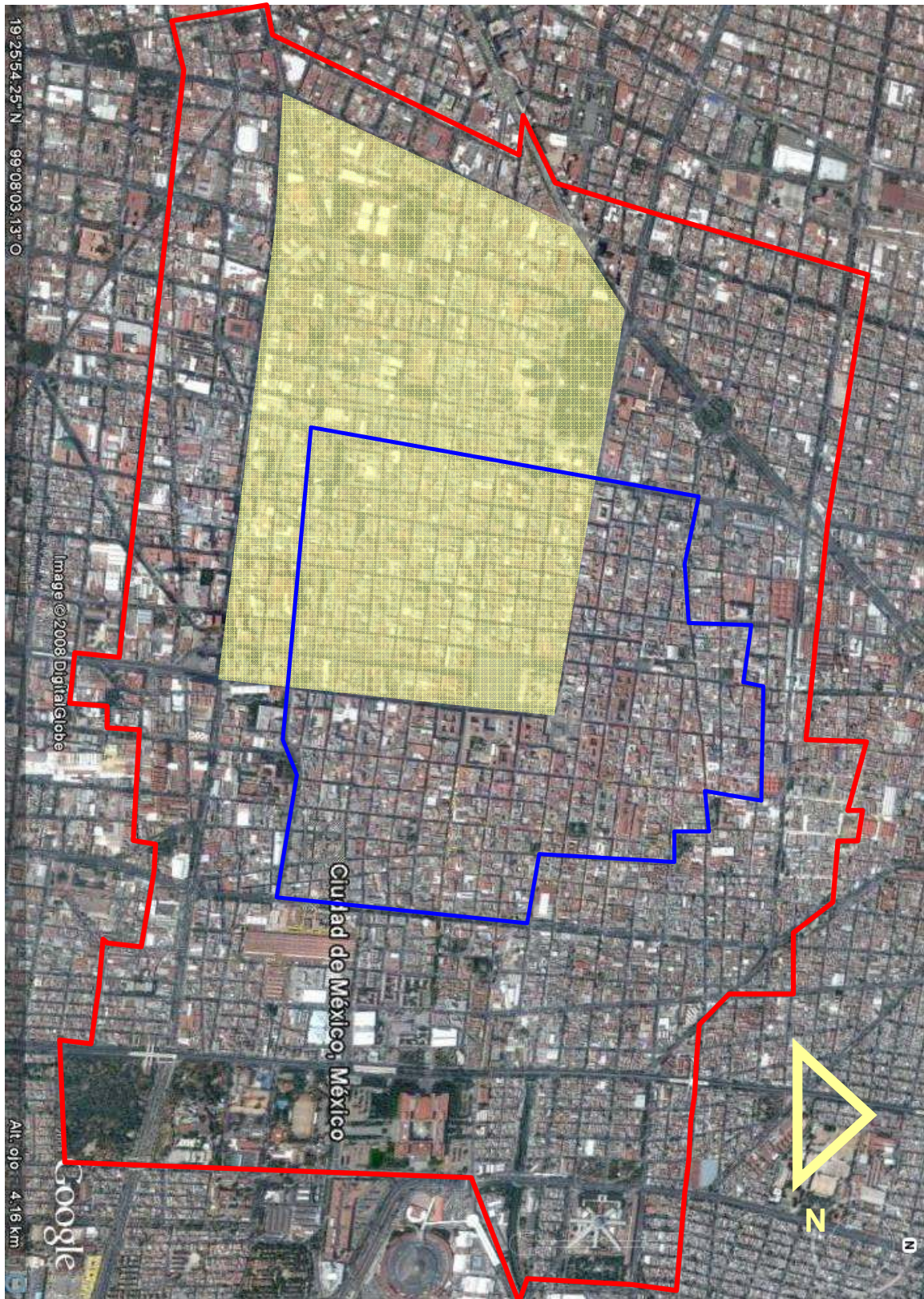




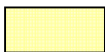
## **Redensification Policies of the Urban Development Program of Mexico City**

Mexico City's authorities, after directing the city's growth and since the issue of the Urban Development Program of Mexico City (1996), contemplate as one of their territorial policies, toward minimizing the tendency of sprawl in Mexico City, the "*Potential Recycling Zone*" which gives potential the use of urban infrastructure and equipment sub used mainly within the central zone. This policy has managed to recover its population and physic structure in several zones in the city as it follows:

1. *Compacting the city*, which searches the redensification of the population in the Central City, it is to say, allowing and promoting the realization of multifamily dwelling, in single family lots and physically deteriorated lots.
2. Give potential to the use of urban infrastructure and equipment that at the present time, are in a sub used state.

This policy known as "*Potential Recycling Zones*" has had a food outcome through out the Rescue Project of Mexico City's Historical Center, which managed to recover physically and in population, a great surface within the west area of the Historical Centre, with its consequence speculation in the real state's cost.



-  RING "A" HISTORICAL CENTER
-  RING "B" HISTORICAL CENTER
-  RESCUE PROJECT OF MEXICO CITY'S HISTORICAL CENTER

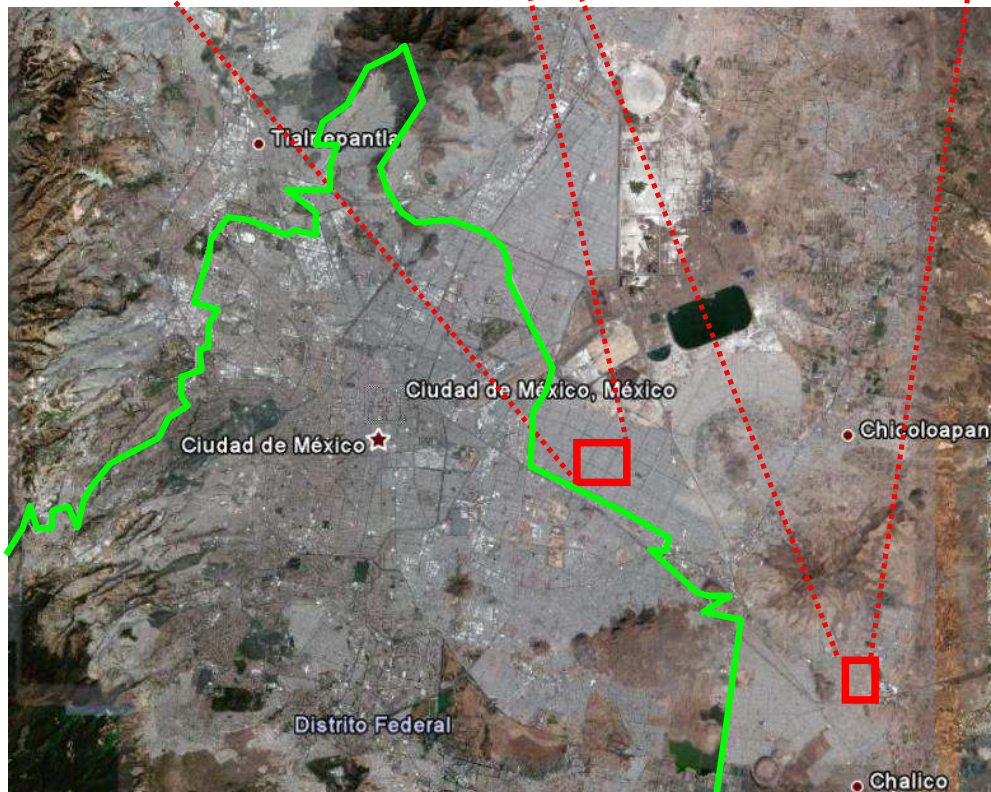
### **Sprawl Policies in Conurban Municipalities in the State of Mexico**

The contrast between the Urban Development Program of Mexico City 's policies and its authorities, and several conurban municipalities of the State of Mexico, north and west of the MAMC, such as Cuautitlán and Iztapaluca, support policies completely opposite to the ones in Mexico City; given that they promote the city's urban sprawl.

These municipalities of the State of Mexico, have granted construction permits to thousands of single family dwelling of social interest in the perimeter of the MAMC, without concern of the generation of environmental and urban impact. Which are characterized by: the lack of adequate routes that could handle the vehicular gauging, the inexistence of adequate urban equipment, as well as the absence of urban services (water, light, drainage, etc.); between other conditions that directly affect the population's life quality.



**Urban Sprawl**



## **Redensification vs. Sprawl; the urgent need of metropolitan coordination.**

While Mexico City works in policies to counteract the city's sprawl through compacting itself, the State of Mexico's municipalities allow the sprawl in the MAMC. This way it is very clear the non-existent coordination between both governments, in spite of the existence of metropolitan coordination instruments and commissions.

On the basis of the previous, it can be concluded the following three points:

- 1) Mexico City has executed actions based on policies that tend to counteract the city sprawl by means of compacting itself, through the redensification of the central zone, managing then to give potential to the use of the existent urban equipment and infrastructure and so, regaining population.
- 2) On the other side, the State of Mexico's municipalities allow the Metropolitan Area sprawl, in an uncontrolled and negative way, generating dwelling places lacking of urban services and equipment, added to the fact that they are far away from work places, creating home-work-home journeys that vary between 30 to 90km and represent periods of 3 to 5 daily hours with a consequence in the population's life quality.
- 3) This way it is clear that there is no coordination between the governments that compose the MAMC, that is to say, Mexico City and the conurban municipalities of the State of Mexico, referring to their territorial policies, in spite of the existence of the Metropolitan Commission of Human Establishments and the Ordering Program of the Metropolitan Zone of Mexico's Valley.

This situation exposes the urgent need to create technical and legal instruments, efficient and better designed, as well as promoting a political will with a "metropolitan governability character".

### **ENDNOTES**

1. **The Central City, is a homogeneous zone in Mexico City, characterized for being the area where the city finds its origins and at the moment has a 100% consolidated infrastructure; it contains more than half of the national and metropolitan urban equipment. Is considered a Territorial Unity conformed by four municipalities of Mexico City: Cuauhtémoc, Miguel Hidalgo, Venustiano Carranza and Benito Juárez.**
2. **Recycling Potential Zones. Considered by those areas that count with basic infrastructure and adequate urban services, located within great road accessibility, generally occupied by unfamiliar popular dwelling of one or two levels high and with important structural damage.**

**Counts with dwelling that could attract additional population through out the amplification, a more densified land use and offering better conditions of liability. Considers also the advantage of the sub used lots with parking, workshops and warehouses that informally operate or that represent a major potential of the land.**

**It applies also to deteriorated or abandoned industrial zones where the urban and economic processes most reconvert and avoid negative impacts to the environment.**

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