



38 THE POLARIZATION EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE STATE OF QUERETARO, MEXICO

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Introduction

In 1986, Mexico began the process of opening its economy. In 1994, NAFTA began to operate. Such macroeconomic policies have had a strong effect in the spatial distribution of investment and population in Mexico.¹ This paper intends to show the polarization effects globalization is having on the state of Queretaro, Mexico. While the capital of the state transformed from being a traditional town to a regional metropolis in less than 40 years, peripheral municipalities remain critically undeveloped. The paper begins with a description of the processes that affected the capital city's development. Then, it delineates the case of a small municipality located in the central area of the state. After describing the differences between both of them, the author suggests the creation of intermunicipal coalitions as a means to promote a more balanced development. The key element to reach that objective is political consensus.

The History of Queretaro City

Spaniards founded Queretaro City in 1531, next to an Otomí settlement.² The location of the city contributed to the commercial, agricultural and industrial prosperity of the city. Queretaro played an important role as a link between the mining cities, located further north, and the agricultural cities in the center of Mexico. Such a role made the city a center of the tobacco and garment industries as well as a center for the distribution of industrial products. During the Spanish colonial period, Queretaro was a first-order religious center. Most of the monastic orders established centers in Queretaro to evangelize on behalf of the Spanish crown. The establishment of many convents in the city set the base for Queretaro's culture. Besides their evangelization duties, friars began to give general instruction to people. All that made of Queretaro a great cultural center.

The city of Queretaro has played a significant role in the national history. It was the home of the conspirator group which planned the independence movement. Later in the nineteenth century, during the empire of Maximiliano, the city was the scene of the confrontation of liberals versus conservatives. The confrontation ended with the execution of Maximiliano in 1867; after that war, the city was practically destroyed and society was very fragmented by political ideologies. In 1882, the construction of the railroad accelerated commerce and communications with the capital of the country and with other cities as well. The reactivation of the economy resulted in the construction of infrastructure for development: for example, the system for the distribution of potable water, and the first hydroelectric plant of the state.

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During the years of Mexican revolution (1910–1916), Queretaro went through a period of economic stagnation and a little population decrease. When the revolution ended, Venustiano Carranza, president of Mexico at that time, designated Queretaro as official home of the Congress which was in charge of writing the new constitution. During that time, the federal government invested in widening streets and renewing historical buildings. Due to the world economic depression of the 1930s, economic and demographic growth of the city stagnated once again. In the following decades, and under the influence of the Second World War, and the industrial development of the country, Queretaro lived a period of economic growth in close relation to the capital of the country and as an important agrarian center.

Nowadays, the location of Queretaro City continues to give it an important role in the national economy. The city is located 110 miles northeast of Mexico City, along the freeway Mexico City-Leon. The city is immersed in a highly populated region called El Bajío, which constitutes a net of important cities and secondary towns.

Queretaro City and the Industrialization Policies of the Federal Government

The City of Queretaro has benefited from several policies of the federal government designed to improve the distribution of economic activities and population in the country, and to avoid the excessive concentration of activities in Mexico City. Table 1 shows how Mexico City concentrates almost half of the industrial production of the country.³ The first of such policies was the Program for the Promotion of industrial Zones and Cities in 1970.⁴ The program had two basic objectives: to stimulate Mexico City's decentralization and to reduce regional inequalities.⁵ The criteria for selecting the cities benefiting from this program were: a) use of existing infrastructure and natural resources; b) equity in the distribution of the benefits of industrial development; c) urban and industrial decentralization; d) grouping of industries by affinity.⁶

The first industrial park in Queretaro was built in 1972. According to Aguilar Barajas (1993), Queretaro's industrial zone was one of the most successful in the country. Although many authors concur in claiming that the industrial zones' program was not successful in promoting decentralization from Mexico City,⁷ Aguilar Barajas (1993) points out that much of the industrial development of Queretaro City from 1960 through 1980 was due to the decentralization of industries from Mexico City. During those two decades, Queretaro transformed from a traditional town to an industrialized city. Following is a description of the physical transformation experienced by the city at that time.⁸

Table 1 Distribution of industries in Mexico (1930–1980)

	Number of Plants (percent)	Gross Production (percent)
1930		
Mexico	100.00	100.00
Mexico City	6.80	28.50
Rest of the Country	93.20	71.50
1940		
Mexico	100.00	100.00
Mexico City	8.70	32.10
Rest of the Country	91.30	67.90
1950		
Mexico	100.00	100.00
Mexico City	20.00	40.00
Rest of the Country	80.00	60.00
1960		
Mexico	100.00	100.00
Mexico City	29.90	46.00
Rest of the Country	70.10	54.00
1970		
Mexico	100.00	100.00
Mexico City	27.90	46.80
Rest of the Country	72.10	53.20
1980		
Mexico	100.00	100.00
Mexico City	29.50	48.00
Rest of the Country	70.50	25.00

Source: Garza (1986)

Queretaro, the Traditional Town (Up to 1960)

From 1900 to 1940, the population of Queretaro city was stable. In 1940 the city had a population of 37,000 people. Beginning in 1940, the population grew at a rate of 3.9% and in 1950 the city had 50,000 inhabitants. The center of the urban area presented a high population density which decreased gradually towards the periphery. Most of the population lived in the downtown area. At the edge of the city, residential areas with low density began to appear. The streets in the new neighborhoods continued the reticular pattern from the historic center.

The city was clearly delimited by the road belt (Figure 1). At this time, there were neither illegal settlements nor projects for the construction of social housing.⁹ The downtown area was the administrative, cultural and commercial center of the city. Land values decreased from downtown to the periphery. There were neither subcenters nor industrial zones. Income groups lived mixed in traditional neighborhoods. Land use was mixed.

The Fragmented City (1960 -1980)

The city experienced accelerated population growth. Between 1960 and 1970, the average annual growth rate of the population was 5%. In 1970, the population was 113,000. In the next decade, the population almost doubled and was 217,000 by 1980.

During the first decade, population density was increasing until fast spatial growth outwards began. There emerged new low-density residential areas in the periphery. There were also peripheral residential areas with high density, especially next to the industrial zone, where the first social housing neighborhoods were built. The new residential neighborhoods present the first curved streets, breaking the traditional reticular pattern. The city transcends the growth limits established by the road belt. The first irregular settlements appear in the periphery (Figure 2).

Urban commercial corridors emerge and in 1978 the first shopping mall was opened. Three years later, a new shopping mall was established. The commercial importance of the central area decreases. The highest land values are not found

in the central area anymore. Now, the most expensive land is the one on the new commercial corridors and on the exclusive residential areas. Real estate speculation begins which results in many vacant lots in the urban area, especially in the residential areas with middle and high income. The first industrial park in the city was built in 1972. Social segregation by income group began to be present. A new freeway to Mexico City was built in the late 1960s. A regional airport was built.

Queretaro in the National Urban Development and Housing Program (1984)

In 1982, Mexico faced a severe economic crisis as a result of the international crash of oil prices. The crisis resulted in a reduction of new investment.¹⁰ However, Queretaro City kept growing, thanks to several programs promoted by the federal government.

The new economic reality obliged the government to change its development strategy. Before 1981, Mexican government

Figure 1 Growth Model of Queretaro City (1940–1960)

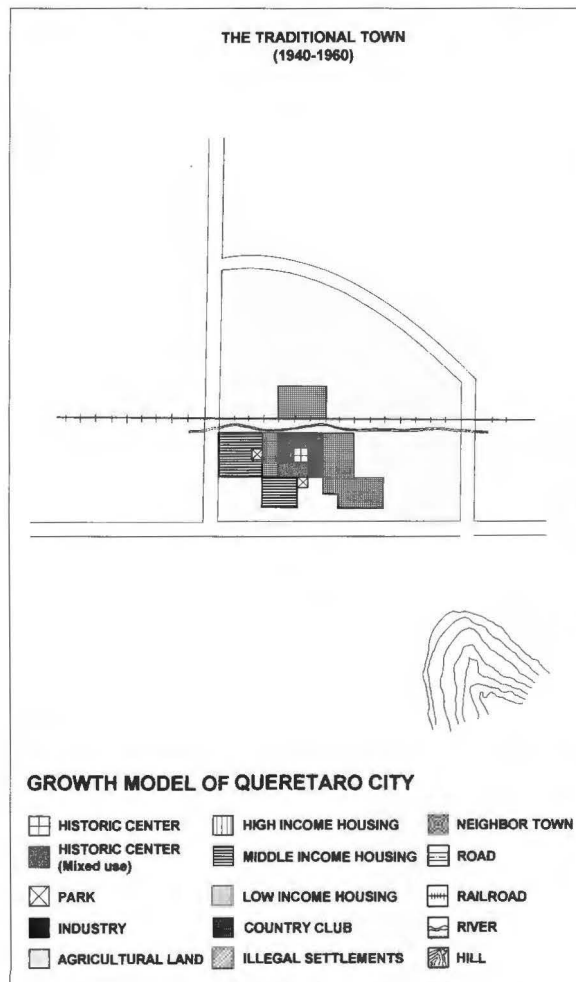
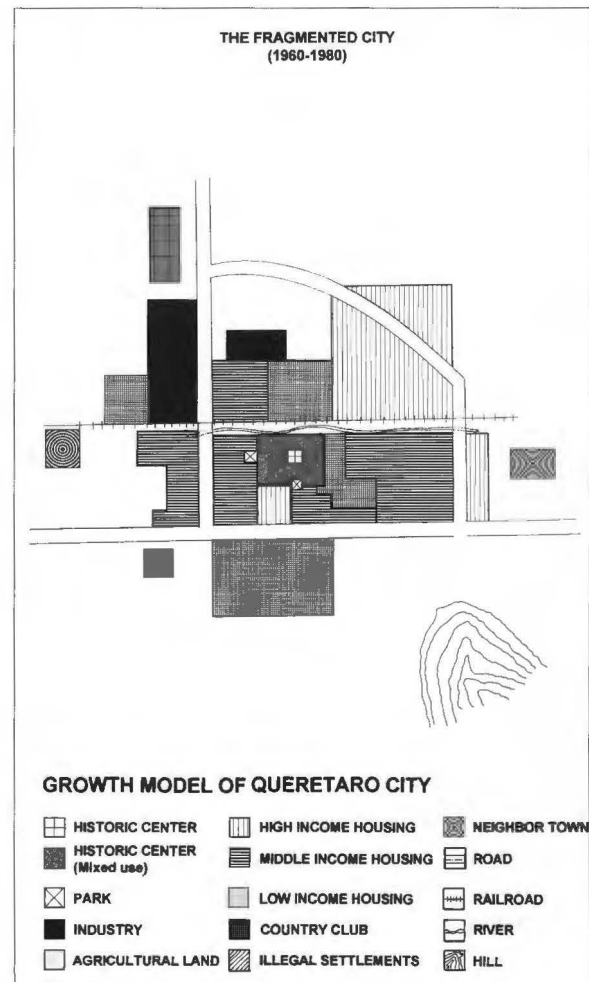


Figure 2 Growth Model of Queretaro City (1960–1980)



was planning to administrate abundance, because, thanks to the oil exports, the economy of the country was doing very well. After the crisis, the government had to plan more but with less resources. It was necessary to direct investment towards strategic points instead of creating new development poles as had been done in the past.¹¹

The National Urban Development and Housing Program (1984) established the development of medium-size cities as a priority. Investment was going to be directed towards cities with a population between 100,000 and 1,000,000. The government classified those strategic cities according to their economic vocation: a) agricultural centers; b) industrial centers; c) tourism centers.¹²

Also, the plan defined a smaller group of cities and urban corridors as critical zones. Such areas presented the following characteristics: a) demographic growth exceeding the growth of urban structures; b) fast growth expectations; c) a key role in the national economy.¹³ Queretaro was included among those critical areas. Thanks to that, the city was one of the major recipients of federal investment from 1983 to 1989.¹⁴

Decentralization of Mexico City after the Earthquake

The big earthquake experienced by Mexico City on the 19th of September, 1985, gave new strength to the decentralization arguments. Now, excessive concentration of economic activities was not only an obstacle for the development of the country. It was also a threat because people realized that a natural catastrophe could destroy half of the economic activities of the country.¹⁵ Garza (1996) argues that the key question at that time was: "Why to take such a risk if, earthquake or not, it is convenient to reduce the growth of Mexico City?"

In the years after the earthquake, Queretaro received several government offices which were decentralized from the capital city. In the research realm, Queretaro became the new headquarters of the Mexican Institute of Transportation, the National Institute of Metrology and the National Institute of Fiscal Instruction. In the cultural sphere, it acquired the National Ballet Company. The establishment of those institutions in Queretaro contributed to the cultural diversity of the city.¹⁶

The Commercial Opening and the 100 Cities Program

In 1986, Mexico began the process of economic opening. According to Graizbord (1996), trade policies in Mexico have had a greater effect than the policies especially designed to promote economic decentralization. The author says that, under the import substitution model, economics of scale were very important for industries. With the economic opening,

the benefits of economics of scale decrease and economic decentralization becomes not only possible but desirable.¹⁷

In 1993, shortly before NAFTA began to operate, the federal government set up its urban development strategy to reinforce the competitive position of Mexican Cities. The program had the name of 100 Cities because it was intended to spur development in 100 strategic cities.¹⁸ The 100 Cities program assumed that migration would flow towards the cities where the commercial opening had a significant impact. It was needed to provide those cities with enough infrastructure to accommodate the immigrants.¹⁹

Richardson (1995) made an analysis of the cities that were going to benefit from NAFTA, based on the types of industries which every city had. According to him there were going to be winner sectors and loser sectors. Queretaro's industries were within the winner sectors. So, the city was expected to grow very fast. Therefore, it was not surprising that Queretaro was included in the 100 Cities program. The program provided strategic cities with funds for projects such as: historic building restoration, church restoration, solid waste management facilities, cadastral modernization and urban development plans. Table 2 shows the amounts invested in Queretaro through this program.

Table 2 Distribution of industries in Mexico (1930–1980)

100 Cities Program Investment in Queretaro	
1993	71,400,000.00
1994	47,990,000.00
1996	17,980,000.00
1997	21,400,000.00
1998	26,428,000.00

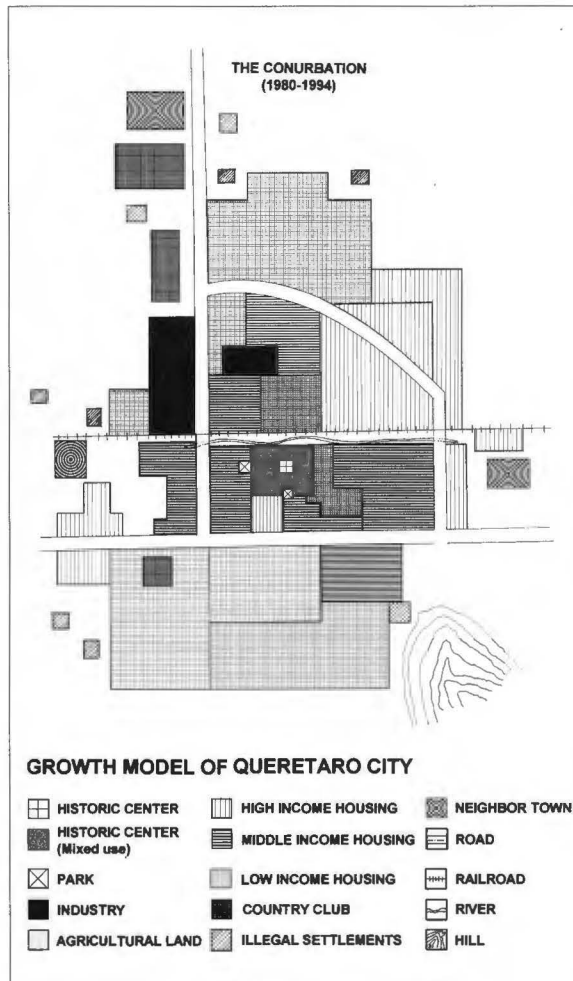
Source: The Ministry of Social Development at its Queretaro Office

The Transformation into a Regional Metropolis²⁰

The programs described above, contributed to the transformation of Queretaro from a traditional town into a regional metropolis in very few years. In the late 1980s Queretaro city began to "absorb" some of the neighbor communities (Figure 3).

Nowadays, the urban area of Queretaro City incorporates four different municipalities. The fastest demographic growth does not occur in the municipality of Queretaro but in the neighboring ones. New industrial zones are built in the municipality of El Marques, along the freeway to Mexico City. Many private universities began to operate in Queretaro City and new research institutions are being established. There are two subcenters in the city. The North Center has been occupied by low-income housing. The South Center resulted from private investment and is intended to become a regional

Figure 3 Growth Model of Queretaro City (1980–1994)



service center. It is going to be complementary to an industrial corridor from the city of San Juan del Rio to Queretaro.

New parks and sport facilities were built in the city. Also, demographic growth attracted private investors of the entertainment industry; Queretaro has modern movie theaters and shopping malls. Because of the cultural diversification, the city offers a variety of shows including concerts by the Philharmonic Orchestra and many other attractions such as theater plays and art exhibitions.

The Polarization of Development at the State Level

Queretaro has always been an important city. As was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the location of the city has been key for its economic progress. Therefore, it would be false to argue that globalization is the cause of the big differences in development between the capital of the state

and the other communities. However, all the investment Queretaro is receiving because of its role in the economic modernization of Mexico has widened the gap between the capital city and the peripheral municipalities. If, as pointed out by Richardson (1995), Queretaro is going to keep growing as a result of NAFTA, the polarization effect will be bigger. Currently, the capital of the state concentrates 50% of the industries in the state, 72% of the workers registered in the social security system and 45% of the population.

While Queretaro became a modern city, the rest of the state remains critically underdeveloped. Unfortunately, there has not been much research on this matter. Hence, the author presents the case of Ezequiel Montes, a municipality located in the central area of the state, as an example of what the situation is in the rest of the state of Queretaro.

The Case of Ezequiel Montes, Queretaro

Ezequiel Montes was founded in 1861 by 7 families who came from Queretaro City. Because of its location within the state, Ezequiel Montes became a commercial center for the center and northern regions of the state. In 1995, the municipality had a population of 25,605 with an average growth rate of 3.43%.²¹ Although Ezequiel Montes is one of the fast growing municipalities in the state of Queretaro, it presents serious deficiencies in infrastructure, public services and urban amenities. The author organized a focus group session with some youth from Ezequiel Montes who migrated to Queretaro City to understand in what way Ezequiel Montes does not satisfy the expectations of its population. The first reason to migrate, according to these youth, was the lack of educational opportunities. Most of the inhabitants of Ezequiel Montes cut their education after Junior High. There are two high schools in town but the academic level is very low. Therefore, students who plan to go to college, go to the capital of the state, searching for better education that will allow them to get admitted to the university.

The second reason to migrate is the lack of job opportunities. According to these youth, Ezequiel Montes is not an attractive place to work, because there is no diversity of jobs; almost all the businesses sell the same thing. Furthermore, most of the businesses are family enterprises and the important jobs are taken by the relatives of the owner. It is very difficult to get a good job there. People who graduate at the University of Queretaro cannot come back because there are no jobs for them in their hometown. They have three options: a) accepting a low paying job, b) starting their own business, c) migrating to search for better opportunities. Following in importance, they identify the lack of recreation facilities as the third reason to migrate. "There is nothing to do there". Other problems identified by them are: environmental pollution, lack of cultural activities, deficiencies in public safety service, heavy traffic due to the lack of adequate zoning, bad health services (there are no hospitals) and a very ugly urban image.

Duties of the Municipal Government

According to the Mexican legal system, municipal governments are in charge of providing public services such as: water and sewer, public markets, slaughter houses, solid waste collection, cemeteries, public safety and public spaces.²²

The municipal authorities also have to “formulate and manage urban development and zoning plans”. This faculty allows local governments to take part in all matters related with land use management, territorial reserves, construction permits, etc.

The Municipal Organic Law of the State of Queretaro

This law imposes on local governments the obligation of forming a *Municipal System of Social Participation*. The main objective of such a system would be to “open spaces of participation for the development of the community”.²³ The municipal organic law allows/obligates municipal governments to prepare Integral Development Plans and Sector Programs. Other faculties and obligations of Mexican local governments include:

- To establish a municipal entity for the control and evaluation of public expenses
- To formulate the Municipal Income Law every year²⁴
- To promote the social and cultural well-being of the population

Besides the pressure imposed by the many responsibilities local governments have, municipalities are facing a growing supervision by society. This is due, in part, to the fact that the municipality is the first place where a citizen can go to ask for the satisfaction of his/her basic needs such as primary services and public safety.

The universe of facilities and obligations listed above, plus a closer watch by citizens, imposes on local authorities the obligation of searching for new finance schemes and organizational forms which allow the municipality to increase efficiency (because resources are scarce) and to legitimize their decisions (through social consensus).

Facing those challenges is difficult, especially for small municipalities, which have neither large budgets nor specialized human resources to plan development. Besides their own limitations, small municipalities compete for the attention of the state government with the municipalities included in the industrial corridor Queretaro-San Juan del Rio. Municipalities within this corridor concentrate 70% of the state population, 76% of students registered at Junior High level and 94% of the workers registered in the social security system. Also, those municipalities generate 78% of the solid waste generated in the state and extract 87% of the water from different sources.²⁵ In the presence of such a concentration, the state government might minimize the importance of the problems in the rest of the state, because it

takes into account only the magnitude of the problems relative to the total numbers for the State. For example, the Municipality of Ezequiel Montes, represents only 2% of the state population; it has only 1.93% of students at Junior High level and 1% of the workers registered in the social security system. The municipality generates a mere 2% of the solid waste at the state level and extracts 1.5% of the water.

The above example makes very clear that, if Ezequiel Montes wants to get additional resources from the state and federal levels, neither the amount of its economic activities nor the seriousness of its problems would be the best argument. What Ezequiel Montes should do, through its plans and programs, is to show the existing development potential in the region, and to explain how larger amounts of investment in the area would contribute to the well-being of the State's population. Adopting a simplistic view of resources redistribution, by claiming that the municipality must receive more resources to promote equality within the state, would be a big mistake. As Garza (1986) claims, the relationship between the socio-economic structure and territorial phenomena has to be taken into account in the process of policy design. The author argues that it is not enough to identify the problem of excessive concentration of economic activities; planners must understand the causes of that concentration if they want to be able to reduce it.

Going back to our original problem, a municipality like Ezequiel Montes does not have specialized human resources to elaborate development plans which convince other levels of government that investing there is a good decision. Moreover, hiring a consultant to solve each problem would be too expensive considering the limited budget of the municipality. There is a vicious circle: the municipality cannot get more resources because it does not have an integral plan and because it does not develop productive projects. On the other hand, the municipality does not have an integral plan nor does it develop productive projects because it does not have resources.

To break that vicious circle, the author suggests, as an alternative, the coordination of efforts among municipalities. The author named this: *Intermunicipal Coalition for the Development of the Semi-arid Region of the State of Queretaro*. Five municipalities would be included in this coalition. Mexican legal system allows municipalities to form coalitions for a better provision of public services.²⁶ Following is a description, from the author's point of view, of the advantages an intermunicipal coalition would bring to individual municipalities:

Expansion of Horizons

A traditional municipal government works very hard to solve problems within its jurisdiction. That's the reason for its existence. However, there are problems which, although present within the municipality, have their origin elsewhere. Some other times, two or more municipalities share a problem

or one municipality may cause a problem to others. The creation of an intermunicipal coalition would help to reduce conflicts among municipalities. Also, it would be a powerful instrument to solve shared problems and to take advantage of external opportunities. In this way, the horizons of a particular municipal administration expand in terms of spatial jurisdiction, by taking into account the regional realm.

Time is the other important aspect of municipal government horizons. A traditional local authority is concerned with the situation of its municipality during three years.²⁷ This is good because mayors try to do better than former ones. However, the author argues that it is possible for the mayor to make things better in the future as well through the promotion of a long term culture. So, the municipal authority horizons would expand in time which would result in the sustainability of development.

Increase in Efficiency

When a municipality promotes development, it is limited by its resources. It may produce important and significant changes but always less than what it could produce joining efforts with others. With an intermunicipal coalition results would be regional. This is due to the fact that each municipality has different resources which can be put together for the common benefit.

Promotion of a Balanced Development

A municipality can raise the living standards of its population based on determination to improve capacity for negotiation and creativity. It might be assumed that a fast-progressing municipality does not have any incentive to associate with others where progress is slower. In the short run this may be true; however, the situation changes in the long run. If a municipality progresses very fast, it will retain its population. Furthermore, it will tend to attract population from neighboring municipalities. This would provoke a very fast population growth making problems more complex. Hence, in the long run, a municipality will do better if its living standards are similar to the ones of its neighbors.

Access to New Funding Sources

Individually, a municipality is limited to the traditional funding sources: its own resources, and state and federal transfers. Having an intermunicipal coalition may open many doors for local governments. If they have qualified personnel working for them, municipalities can seek links with national or international organizations interested in promoting development. In this way, the money invested in the coalition will be recouped through enhanced access to new funding sources.

What is Needed to Begin

Before this coalition can work, a political consensus on the benefits of working together has to be in place. It is very important to take the political aspects into account if this is to succeed in the future. Currently, this proposal to create a municipal coalition is being negotiated at the state level and among different municipalities in Queretaro. Hopefully, the intermunicipal coalition will be working very soon, trying to balance development in the state of Queretaro.

Notes

- ¹ See Graizbord (1996)
- ² The Otomíes were the ethnic group who lived in the region.
- ³ See Garza (1986)
- ⁴ For an explanation of the difference between an industrial zone and an industrial city, see Aguilar Barajas (1993)
- ⁵ See Garza (1989)
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ See Garza (1989) and Graizbord (1996)
- ⁸ The description was taken from PUEC-UNAM (forthcoming)
- ⁹ Social housing means the houses built through government programs.
- ¹⁰ See Pradilla Cobos (1995) and Quintanilla (1996)
- ¹¹ Conolly (1989)
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ See Aguilar, Adrián G. And others (1996)
- ¹⁵ See Garza (1986:232)
- ¹⁶ Data taken from PUEC-UNAM (Forthcoming)
- ¹⁷ See Graizbord (1996)
- ¹⁸ See map in the appendix
- ¹⁹ See Castro (1995)
- ²⁰ Taken from PUEC-UNAM (Forthcoming)
- ²¹ Data taken from the Integral Development Plan 1998-2000
- ²² Article 115 of the Mexican Constitution

²³ See Chapter II of the 4th title of the law

²⁴ This law establishes how much money a municipality will get during the year and the sources it is going to get the money from.

²⁵ Data taken from Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico (1996)

²⁶ Articles 115 of the Constitution and 34 of the Municipal Organic Law of the State of Queretaro

²⁷ According to law, a person can serve as mayor for three years without the right for immediate reelection

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