

Merida-Mexico: Urban Transformation City and Consumption

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between different kinds of stores, shopping malls and the quality of their surrounding infrastructure and dwelling in the metropolitan region of Mérida, Yucatán, México. Mérida is a city of very rapid geographic and demographic growth since the seventies and represents the most important service area of the south-east of the Mexican country like Cancún and Campeche. Spatially and sociologically the city of Mérida has been transformed over time to a very segregated urban agglomeration which is obvious in the spatial distribution of advanced high-level shopping malls and small stores, which implies a different distribution of urban infrastructure and dwelling types, for example. This investigation deals also with aspects associated to visual connections, like areas of isovists and the functional connections such as types of connected spaces, open spaces, type and quality of streets, which allows different kind of movement and accessibility by residents and visitors. It also investigates the degree of integration of spaces and the difference factor to indicate the relationship of spatial integration between supply stores, infrastructure and dwelling type. The work aims to reveal the pros and cons of specific urban transformation. The data was collected by field research through questionnaires, physical measurements, and structured interviews of responsible planning staff in Mérida. The analyse uses space syntax methods, non-parametric statistics, photographic documentation, spatial expansion patterns. Some of the main results show a tendency of transformations in the suburban areas to a spatial neighborhood of big, luxury shopping malls, high-level dwelling, super-infrastructure and a very high security-level, but a lower level of social solidarity. On the other side there is a small structured pattern of a great number of small “corner” stores, small scaled dwelling areas, third class streets and a higher level of crime, but a higher level of social solidarity. The investigation is a work in progress.