

NO TO THE CONVENTION AND CULTURAL CENTER IN THE CERRO DEL FORTIN

1. THE BACKGROUND

Historical witness, stage of the Guelaguetza, permanent reference, lung of the city...The Cerro del Fortin is fundamental for the city of Oaxaca and its neighbors, but it has been seriously damaged by the reckless urban growth and multiple public and private construction projects. From the air, the Fortin seems as a green island besieged by an ocean of houses and cement.

2. THE CENTRAL POINT

The Cerro del Fortin is at the same time fragile and of great ecological, historical, and cultural importance; and the project of the CCCO (The acronym in Spanish for the Convention and Cultural Center) for its location, size, and design, **will have profound social, environmental, and urban impacts, both direct and indirect, of a local and regional character.**

3. WHAT WE DEMAND (AND WHAT THE CCCO DOES NOT HAVE)

- **An integrated and sustainable project**, with a foundation in studies
- **The fulfillment, of the legal process and laws.**
- **An authentic process of an informed consultation with the affected peoples.**

4. WHY IS THIS NOT AN INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE PROJECT?

- **Because it pretends to be constructed in an area of high geological instability and with a high risk level of landslides.** (The environmental impact statement does not include geological or soil mechanics studies).
- **Because it has not adequately considered the direct or indirect environmental impacts of the project.** (The felling of hundreds of trees, the impediment of the filtration of water, the increase of traffic and contamination, the acceleration of the urbanization, etc.)
- **Because it is a very expensive and financially unsustainable project.** There is no cost-benefit analysis. It includes public money, money that is from everyone.
- **Because it is conceived as a mere infrastructure project, with a narrow perspective of what to do with tourism, for the benefit of a part of the population but not of the common sectors.**

If it wants to further develop tourism, they cannot kill the goose that lays the golden egg, going against cultural and natural heritage. It should better the quality of life in the city: less cars and trash, more green spaces, better security, better public transportation, clean air...

- **Because it lacks an holistic urban vision for the long term.** The subject at the heart of this is the city that we want to live in and how we can move towards it.

- **Because, together with the veil of the auditorium, it will break the landscape, the architectural and cultural harmony of the city, to the point of putting at risk the declaration of the historic center of the city of Oaxaca as a UNESCO World Heritage site.**
- **Because all of the process has been improvised, opaque, deceitful, and has an unconcealed stink of a conflict of interest and shady business.**

5. HAS IT COMPLIED WITH THE LAW?

No. It has tried to cover the regulations, without success, but without dealing with the structural problems: the lack of protection of the environment, the transparency for the public project, and the collective benefit and security. The principal legal irregularities of the project (moreover the violation of a suspension ordered by a federal judge):

- It goes against state law: the **Zoning Plan for the Urban Zone of the city of Oaxaca (POZCO by its initials in Spanish)**
- It does not comply with **the Environmental Impact Statement on the federal level.** Which it requires because of the size of the project, the fact that it is partially on federal land (the federal highway system) and that the terrains have a decree in effect of the federal protected area.
- It intervenes with the **Program of the Management of the State Park of the Cerro Del Fortin,** that among other aspects determines a buffer zone of 119 hectares, inside of which the project is located.
- The permissions obtained to construct and fell trees given by the municipality of Oaxaca de Juarez **are illegal: they violate the provisions of the Partial Development Plan** decree and the **Regulation of the Historic Center.**
- Infringes diverse provisions of the state and federal regulations of a **public and transparent project,** among others, the obligation to bid for the public contract of 36 million pesos for the executive project of the CCCO (Refer to the various posts by @FortinLeaks on Twitter and FortinLeaks on Facebook).

6. IS THERE INFORMED CONSENT?

-The Secretary of Development of Tourism and the Economy (SDTyE by its initials in Spanish) confirms that it has conducted more than 50 meetings about the socialization of the CCCO project and on the other hand it brandishes lists of acceptance of the project of the neighbors of the adjacent neighborhoods. Nothing could be more alien to an authentic, systematic and serious process of consultation. The meetings consisted basically in the presentation of specific groups and organizations, behind closed doors, from an architectural model and the description of the economic panacea which will come with a convention center.

7. WHO DOES THE LAND BELONG TO?

In 1995 during the municipal administration of Sada Solana, he created the **Parque de la Amistad** (Friendship Park) on terrain that was donated to the municipality with volunteers and support from the citizens of Oaxaca and Palo Alto, California. Before the expansion of the highway, the park occupied the land where today they want to construct the convention center and the parking lot. The neighborhood planted trees, put playground equipment and an irrigation system for the trees.

Ten years after the park was severely damaged and altered by the projects to widen the highway, of which the new section cut the park in half. **Who is the legitimate owner of these lands, an intergral part of the Cerro del Fortin? Without a doubt, the people!** It belongs to the Oaxacans, to everyone, not the government, and much less an appointed official.

8. IS OUR FIGHT LEGITIMATE?

With this background, the **Frente en Defensa del Fortin** (Front in Defense of the Fortin) was constructed the 16th of June 2015. There are a little more than 60 organizations from the civil society and a growing number of people and organizations that have come together in solidarity for the local, state, national, and international fight.

The surprise and anger of the government officials to this vast opposition is understandable: the current officials have not done more than what they always do: improvise projects with a public/private conspiracy. Proud, they don't evaluate the satiety of the citizens. They cannot accept the winds of change, elemental principals such as **government accountability**, or governing **in favor of nature and with the people**.

Aldo Leopold, the legendary pioneer of conservation in North America, recommended that we *think like mountains*. Maybe as citizens and officials we should, even if only for a moment, *think and feel like the Cerro del Fortin*.