CHALLENGES OF ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IN MEXICO: GLOBALIZATION, PERI-URBAN SEMIOTICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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Objective

• To introduce new architectural approaches widening the stance of architectural education, to understand the importance of forms of meaningful socio-spatial organizations in the creation of habitable space.
Contents

• Background
• The big question is.....?
• Theory framework
• Experiential learning in collaborative workshops
• Projects carried out
• Conclusion
Background

• **The globalized economy:**
  - Public policy: tying the nation up to global economic networks.
  - Cities as nodes in these networks.
  - Re-signification of urban territories through architectural image.
  - Socio-urban inclusion and exclusion.
• **Developer and management agents:**
  • Interest on economically promising urban areas.
  
  • High cost urban development vs. local human contents of place.
  
  • Expropriations and expulsion of local population due to intensive real-estate business.
The big question is…?

For whom is the Mexican urbanization planned?
Theory framework: Critical Realism, semiotics of habitable space and Experiential Learning

- **Critical Realism (CR):**
  - Transdisciplinary understanding of social, economic and environmental context.

  - Achieving locally sensible sustainability to attend the *socio-human dimension*.

  - Context as socially constructed or produced: materially shaped by social practices.

  - Existentially produced by cultural meanings, discourses and representations.
• **New approaches to teaching and learning:**
  • Enhancing learning skills in the framework of creative and critical thinking.
  • Collaboration and cooperation, conflict management, decision-making and problem-solving.
  • Planning beyond the narrow canonical, economic or political limits.
• The Systemic Functional Semiotics (SFS):
  • Semiotic processes and practices in the development of constructed environments.

• Experiential learning:
  • Participation in societal development: critical, creative, innovative and highest technical level education.
  • Accomplishment of research with social conscience: equal distribution of the benefits of globalization.
• Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle’s four dimensions:
  • 1) Abstract conceptualization.
  • 2) Active experimentation.
  • 3) Concrete experience.
  • 4) Assessment of the outcomes and reflective observation.
Experiential learning in collaborative workshops

• Involving students with professionals and local stakeholders:
  • Discovering, analysing, and assuming complexity of social-spatial reality.
  • Educational need focused on local perspective or New Localism.

• New localism:
  • Critical perspective to different social design practices.
  • Adopting Regenerative Design and Social Urbanism.
• **Regenerative design: The human being is:**
  • A source for environmental regeneration.
  • The site of architectural-urban intervention.
  • The interphase combining land uses, community development, edification and environmental meanings creation.
• Designer as the key agent for change: Adoption of regenerative design:
  • Capacity of living systems to co-evolve to new levels of diversity, complexity, creativity.
  • Life through participation and collaboration.
Cholula-project (2017)

• Solutions to the pressure of the rapid urban growth and land speculation.

• Collaborative workshop: re-creation of an ancestral agricultural auto-production mechanism.
Tochimilco-project (2018)

• Identification of resilient strategies to improve population’s emergency responses to natural disasters (earthquakes and volcano eruptions).

• Intervention projects to improve rural development and local governance to strengthen community building and identity through transmission of local contextual meanings.
Conclusion

• **Mexican urban peripheries:**
  - Transformation processes: clash between local cultural and social performativities and external economic and political demands.
  - Experiential Learning practices: semiotic and phenomenological understanding of the environment.

• **Experiential Learning in Architecture:**
  - Locally structured collaborative workshops to explore alternative approaches to architectural teaching and learning.
  - Identification of innovative professional practices sensible to Mexican realities.
References


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Thank You.
Gracias.

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