

# P4 REFLECTION

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Complex Projects

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## **Problem statement:**

Due to the increasing gap between governmental ideologies and the next generation Cubans, more adolescents start to stray from traditional and vocational studies. Hence this threatens current economies which will have to adjust to future tendencies.

## **Research question:**

How could the Cuban education system anticipate future tendencies while supporting social-economic changes?

## **Ambition statement:**

To create an optimal learning environment that involves the local community that stimulates entrepreneurship on theoretical and practical levels. The school should also act as an example for future ideas and developments.



## Introduction

Every adult spends his early life generally around 15 till 20 years in education which will shape someone's personality. Apart from the information, knowledge and reasoning gained following this educative path, the matter of how we learn is the most valuable lesson learned so far. The concept of learning is entirely depended on the way how we transfer knowledge from one person to the other. Therefore, since the last years of studies the interest in grew didactics and what elements take part in this crucial process of educating people.

Education is perhaps one of the oldest forms of transferring knowledge. It represents the new generation which will build upon the old one. Continuing, education ought to combine culture, status and values of a society to reflect its true ambitions. So can we say that educative institutes function as societies' filtered and controlled models? If schools represent a community or society, could this also be reversed? What happens when we start with a conceptualized notion of a desired society by using architectural experience and didactic research to formulate new social and cultural interpretations which in turn reviews the current status?

## Implementation

After experiencing current situations and trends within the Cuban society, a major issue to address is the education in business management.

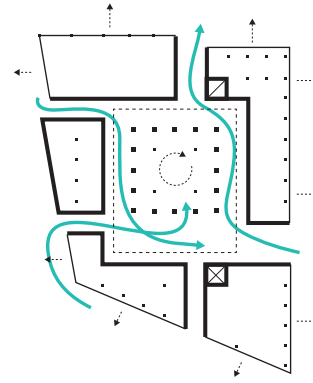
Due to a gap of consisting 60 years without proper management structures, (only ones driven by government) shop managing, market predictions and healthy ownership need to be displayed as opportunities instead of a negative result from more capitalist driven forces. In this the community and social relationships play the most significant role. Reflected in the building's design, a mirror between contemporary (outer façade) and vernacular (interior façade) architecture evokes an association with the surrounding buildings. Within its context, Havana's municipality of Jesus Maria is a dense and relatively poor residential area next to the old city centre. By choosing a one of the most decayed building blocks among two main trading arteries of the area this will activate the isolated centre of Jesus Maria. In order to respect the surrounding city fabric the new school constrains its height and tectonics towards the eclectic building style within the municipality. Therefore, the first floor opens up in form of five alleys approachable from all sides that reflects the contextual street profiles. An open character on the ground level merges students, workers and locals. These three main actors are related in the functions, form and materiality. Functions such as a library, auditorium, café, conference rooms and exposition are situated on the ground level and more private functions such as study spaces, lecture rooms and offices are directed on the upper levels. The connecting core surrounded by the open courtyard connects the public and private with communal functions like a covered market place, sitting areas and cafeteria. The

assembly hall as centre point from which routing is orientated. Along the inner façade, arcades connect the assembly hall, roof functions like open air tribune and garden with other spaces. With this structuring of program three routings are created; a formal routing around the building, a flexible routing wandering through the open spaces and a guided efficient routing. Following this routing a play is made with formal, informal and introvert, extravert tectonics.

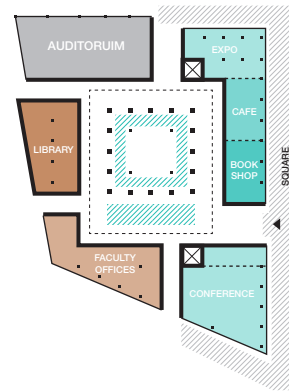
The accidental effect of special ambiguity created by the large diversity of building types and forms has been an important theme in the design making. In materiality, the facades facing outside are clad with wooden lamella and concrete. The lamellas refer to the wooden louvers and concrete to new building methods. The inner facades and construction are made from traditional red brick. Combined with the use of arches this strengthens the contrast between outside and inside. The assembly hall in the middle is clad with a traditional yellow brick. Combined these materials portray a mixed landscape of Cuban identities which resemble a new and traditional role in society.

## Methodology

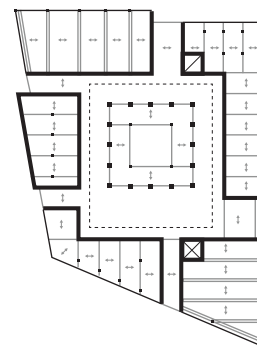
Approaching the complex environment of the dense residential area, several constraints were set to either react or disassociate from the surrounding. Besides vernacular influences from colonial periods, routing and social behaviour in public and private realms were researched to conceive Cuba's 'true' identity. In this search,



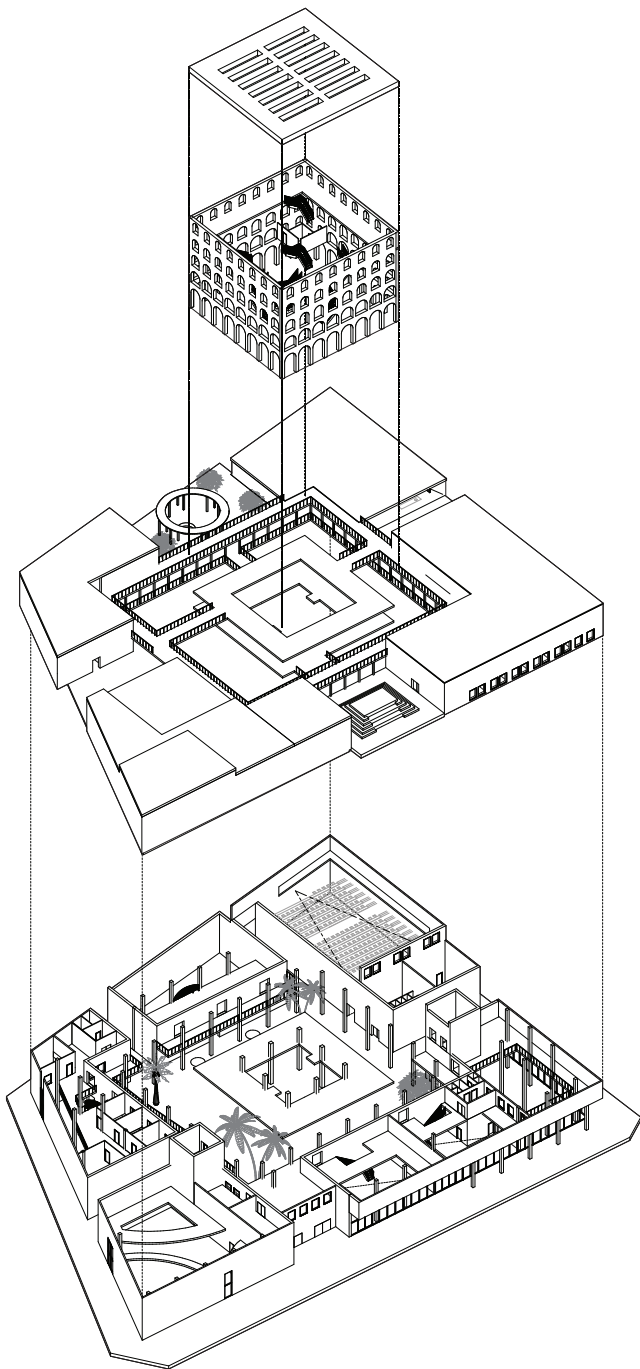
Routing



Functions



Construction



the courtyard element appeared to be crucial. Mixed with its open character and semi-tropic climate these courtyards act as secondary city square where people meet and activate. This layering of public and private is highly different from Dutch standards where open and closed are perceived as strong border. Balconies function in the same way. They are a more transparent layer which ensures social control between communities. Therefore social interaction appears not only in a direct but mainly indirect way. Vertical interactions stimulate visual recognition of a space and one's surrounding. In remarking these layers it appeared that these can be combined in four main elements: Four elements are principle in translating a micro city model to a school: Houses, streets, squares and parks. Classrooms are private spaces giving coverage for students to concentrate on their education. Learning and playing in a trusted environment are qualities copied from the living room. In this sense, houses are role models for classroom which provide the intimacy for students to feel safe and able to express themselves. Due to the classroom's relative small proportions contact with teachers triggers a conditioned attitude that is associated with the contact students have at home with their parents. The hallway functions as a transparent layer between classrooms, assembly rooms, study areas and practical facilities. New notions state that this 'learning street' should promote learning not only in the designated spaces but also promotes communication and sharing knowledge. By designing a street, just as in the urban fabric, it prefers a spatial

quality that invites people to stay in all sorts of quantities; alone, a pair or groups. When students are studying besides- or moving through these corridors they become aware of their surrounding enriching the noted societal interpretation. Le Corbusier refers this as an architectural promenade that triggers experiences while observing one's surrounding. Therefore, through accommodating rather than forcing activities will result in a more coherent and feasible architecture. The analogical in-between space of houses (class rooms) and the public (assembly rooms and play areas) should not only aim for functional mobility but incorporate an experiencing motive. Continuing, the city square converts into the assembly rooms and play grounds. Squares are open public spaces which gather infrastructural components into a large field surrounded by public facilities. This stage formed by collecting economic, socio-cultural and political dynamics shapes how people communicate with each other. The centralized space acts as meeting and orientation point from to which most functions are situated. Apart from the psychological these assembly rooms provide enough space to host special events for all students and their parents. Shows, performances, speeches, breaks or other activities will bond the type of space to one's association of such a space typology. Playgrounds also stimulate social interaction but focus more on the nature component.

## Conclusion

Cuba is on the brink of changing into an advanced technological driven country that mainly profits from exporting knowledge and research. Due to its geographical location, climate, free-trading-zones, quality labor and favorable tax conditions, Cuba positions itself as an ideal entrepreneur environment.

With this conception as hypothetical scenario, the proposal seeks to implement future conditions using urban elements to form a vocational business school which will accommodate the demand for new entrepreneurships and therefore contributing to advancing towards a knowledge focused economy.

