

## **HYBRID AND EDUCATION: A POSSIBLE SPATIAL ANSWER TO SEGREGATION**

### **RESEARCH TOPIC**

Within a vast discourse on current social and economic conditions characterizing communities globally, a specific discussion can be established around some significant trends. These list specialization of professions and extension of demanded skills to individuals as major drivers of change.

Indeed, individuals nowadays are expected a deeper degree of knowledge in their respective field of action, but also the ability to effectively dialogue and operate in increasingly wider and more complex professional fields. A demand for competencies that, while being specific, are also transversal, in the sense that they allow an understanding and addressing of the different subjects comprised in their range of profession.

Clearly, the relevance of such a demand links to the potential, and adequacy to respond to it. Also to the related challenges, that is recognized in the educational system, entrusted with the provision and transfer of knowledge to individuals to ensure a sound response to these challenges. These new conditions are consequentially capable of leading us to a questioning of existing models and methods applied in educational settings.

Architecture has the potential to respond to these urgencies with powerful, innovative models, able to translate the ideals of a system founded upon ambitions of openness, interrelation and integration into a concrete spatial vision.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

We can wonder about new models that challenge past ones, for instance characterizing the historically applied division of subjects, and in turn places, in higher education campuses. Or the distance - leading to segregation in extreme scenarios – that separates them from the city and its activities. A phenomenon which we may call a “territorialization” of, and within, campuses, referring to an issue which lies in the presence of activities and places with a lesser degree of communication and interchange between them, and from and to what happens in the city around and, in many cases, within them.

Objective of the research is to understand how these ambitions – openness, interrelation and integration – are translated into innovative models, assess their efficacy and efficiency in addressing the problematic circumstances presented before, and doing so validate the significance of these solutions to the benefit of their affected subjects.

Consequently, the research stemming from this set of conditions is one centered around the question: “How can architectural planning promote openness, interrelation, integration among activities through innovative spatial solutions in educational fields?”

## **METHODOLOGY**

The relevance of such a problem demands, in turn, in its process leading to an understanding of adequate responses, a method capable of acting as a guiding tool to explore potential ways to address it.

Influenced by a historical perspective and foundation of study, this method is one comprising different tools. These include qualitative one, like literature review and analysis of academic and professional productions – e.g., papers, essays, articles – but also first-hand sources of analysis, like direct observation, surveys, questionnaires, implemented in the relevant and respective field of study recognized.

But the spatial attribute of our discourse calls for additional tools to the ones aforementioned, to increase the scope and investigate the nature of our response with greater effectiveness. These include analysis of relevant case-studies – comprising projects, practices, studios – and use of field-specific tools – such as mapping, diagrammatic studies and visualizations – to promote a building of a fertile field of research and reference, and foster, in turn, a contemporary response. In addition, Research-by-Design is used as a tool to foster innovative solutions, driven by an explorative approach in which design work is assumed as a special form of research. Projection and Speculation, supported by the use of tools such as of modelling, formal and typological comparing studies, mapping in advanced forms, drive the exploration of unexpected solutions, fostering the provision of new and original ways to address challenges and questions.

## **FRAMEWORK**

A central theme, relating to the set of ambitions presented, and around which the discourse is developed, is the “Hybrid” character of these solutions: it is understood as a fundamental one to address this “de-territorialization” of spatial entities and related destinations, so that “(...) *the individual programs relate to one another and begin to share intensities*” (Joseph Fenton, in *This Is Hybrid*, Fernandez et al., 2011).

Exchange, interaction, interrelation is nowadays as urgent, significant and powerful as ever, and with them the spaces capable of fostering them, of promoting valuable, profound, frequent and lasting relationships between fields and contexts; ones which are fundamentally capable of better addressing mutated social and economic conditions, as briefly mentioned, and in turn become potent drivers of sound, resilient and sustainable development.

Objectives within the proposed response are recognized as well, stemming from the problematization stage previously introduced: an environment focused on social inclusiveness, integration with social and urban strata in the wider context, diversity and sustainability (development over growth). Themes which in turn take the dialogue back on the arguments of hybridization of different functions in space (at the same time) and time (in the same space), and adaptability (flexibility) to promote an optimal and efficient use of given resources, ultimately fostering resilience towards profound changes understood as urgent, critical, relevant and extensive ones.

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE LARGER DISCOURSE

A work that acts as a moment of reflection and proposal, then, with an ambition to represent a positive contribution to the discussion happening in the practices and academic environments of the architectural field. But also to external agents and stakeholders, which may very likely find themselves represented in the set of groups and individuals touched and influenced, and pro-active part of a discussion whose foundations and implications are of the strongest scope. A first contribution may be recognized in its call for the building of a collective and individual conscience towards the phenomena acting as its principles, or foundation of research. A recognition of their urgency, of their influence over our lives, but also a recognition of the role the built environment has, and can have, in shaping our existence as a primal and final cause, acting as principle and objective, in a bi-directional dialogue between human being, as a group and individuals, and the built environment. But a contribution also as a work whose outcome is a proposal which can be looked at as a potential model for future interventions, promoting a creative exchange of analysis, studies, intentions, expectations, and a reasoned collection of spatial solutions, examples, items for the creative practice in the wider sense.

A call for a building of collectiveness, of public resonance.

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