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BITÁCORA appears in the following indexes: Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals/ Periodica /Latindex. It is also available on line in the website: www.revistas.unam.mx.

Editorial

The dream of reason creates monsters

Undoubtedly, the city we know today is chaotic, complex and unwelcoming, yet at the same time, it is loved and hated for those of us who live it. Despite all its disadvantages, humans prefer to live in the urban scene.

A metropolis causes mixed emotions. Some deal with our daily routes, with the space we live in and we think belong to; some others, with collective memory, with the events sometimes traumatic and sometimes triumphant that have been engraved in certain places of our cities and in the minds of its inhabitants.

We present a series of researches that seek to know the passions that are loosed in a city, that understand human gatherings as emotional communities, with dynamics of complex identity and social cohesion, based on the effects and emotions as narrative and cultural constructs subject to time and space. These works are the result of a network or researchers from the GEE-MX Lab: City and Emotions (Laboratory for the Study of Emotions) under the direction of Johanna Lozoya of the School of Architecture of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

The role of emotion in architecture has been greatly studied. Let's remember the conceptualization of the sublime in art during the eighteenth century; the supremacy of sensations that interior design in the nineteenth century meant to achieve; or the manifesto of emotional architecture by Mathias Goeritz in the 1950s, which promoted the creation of an architecture (and art) that worked, primarily, as emotion. According to these ideas, a design could be developed over an emotional base, over the poetic essence of architecture. From the certainty that no other artistic discipline was capable of evoking such emotion.

However, nowadays, architecture struggles between functionality and extreme aesthetics through pure representation. A dynamic that has missing its emotive component within the logic of consumerism. As interesting as the debate can be, to go into detail about it is not the purpose of this issue. Instead, it proposes an abandonment of the analysis of the isolated architectural object to promote a complete study of the emotive environments of our cities. This implies a work from different disciplines besides city planning, landscape, architecture or cultural studies, such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, economy and even health sciences.

To be urban is an emotional singular condition. Being in a city feels different from being in any other place. This has been observed in the same definition of the modern metropolis. Such is the case of Georg Simmel, who reflected on

the impact of the modern city on mental life. To him, the difference between living in the city and living in a rural environment laid precisely in the nature of emotions. If these are deep in the countryside, in the urban scene dominated the so-called blasé attitude, provoked by the intensification of nervous, quick, changing and discontinuing stimulus to which an individual reacts with a certain indifference that protects them from excessive stimulation.

Nonetheless its remote evidence and transcendence, in the study of the cities is no frequent to discuss the importance or the characteristics of the sensations involved. The rational and scientific thought has diminished the role of body and emotion. They were seen as damaging to the effort of explaining things objectively. They were the enemy to vanquish. Now they are considered a positive force, there is work done in favor of a rationality of feelings, and now their knowledge has been considered necessary to be able to see the world and judge it. However, given its subjective and intangible nature as the complexity of discourses that define it, studying emotions and sensations is not an easy task.

We have been able to establish that urban planning design plays an only partial role on the development of cities. These have a different logic to the ideologies imposed beforehand, an unforeseeable development product of a culture and of the desires and aspirations of its inhabitants. It is not the city that is imperfect in relation with the way it was planned, but that the city as an expression of reality, enriched in its come about, results more valuable than the dream of who planned it.

From its starting point, architectural and urban proposes could be sensitive to those emotional qualities that define the city as hope, melancholy, expectation, anger, memory and oblivion. Invisible lines that produce meaning support the complexity and interconnection of the different places and relationships that constitute the city. We cannot ignore the emotional charge of certain places of our cities. The physical expressions of historical events are present in the scars that we can study to understand the social processes that underlie still. The use of historical processes is more understandable if we study them through the emotional processes triggered at the moment in its population. At the same time, the physical form of cities cause its inhabitants a series of emotions that are possible, at least, to foresee.

Cities have the memory of confined emotions that are complex, contradictory and, in most cases, ambiguous. We could try to ignore all these emotions, but they will helplessly define the physical and cultural structure of our cities beyond the whim of its designers and governors.

Cristina López Uribe

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