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DOSSIER TRANSLATIONS

Learning from Latin America

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I refuse to act hegemonically as a guest editor. So, this edition of MATERIA ARQUITECTURA was edited by Supersudaca, a group I belong to. I extended the invitation to my colleagues, with whom we agreed to create a dossier on the particular moment Latin America is going through: the old world in crisis is learning from it.

From various cities of the region, Supersudaca made enquiries regarding what we have learned and what we can contribute with. The first thing we know is that in order to learn you have to ask questions. Having this in mind, we proposed to invert the structure of the magazine, changing articles for interviews. These should have a common topic framework, as a collection of essays might have, but it would be fresher and first hand information

Supersudaca aimed at reflecting on a possible positive image of Latin America. The thematic framework would be the global post-crisis context, with Western structures and models being revised (indignados, sub-prime, PIGS countries versus BRIC countries, internal terrorism in Noruega, USA debt, student demonstrations, and so on).

Latin America has experience with crises and has known how to get around them. Does it have potential as a referent source for a new ideological, economic and social project?

To start up, we proposed a quick exercise to several architect friends who work from the region. We asked them to send us not answers but questions about the theme of the magazine. The following are, in a cadavre exquis, the answers we received.

What is the advantage of Latin American architects? The availability of sophisticated technology and qualified artisan labour without the rigid laws of industrialized construction? How did we learn to be "resourceful" and reach our project objectives with lack of means where there are hardly opportunities? **Sandra Barclay and J. P. Crousse, architects (Lima).**

What do so many social programmes, plans and projects done without the participation of their beneficiaries teach us? To what extent do people know what their problems, wishes and needs are? **Paulo Chiesa, architect and professor CAU UFPR (Brasil).**

Does Latin American international prominence in architecture and urbanism reflect something more than the favourable conditions that define a continent homogenized by language, culture, religion and the absence of severe social, political and financial conflicts? **Roberto Segre, architecture critic (La Habana, Río de Janeiro).**

What qualities do those who were leading development until now see in us now that they see themselves so vulnerable? What is the ultimate interest? How bad is the crisis, if paradigms are allowed to be rethought? **David Barragán and Pascual Gagotena, architects (Quito).**

Are we, Latin Americans, interested in Latin America? **German Valenzuela, architect (Talca).**

To what extent can architecture, from its specific knowledge, reduce huge inequality? **Francisco Quintana, architect (Santiago).**

Where does the strong wish for democracy of South American citizens come from? Are we becoming the reservoir of democratic culture? But, what is the most important? The artistic contribution to the development of love? The artistic contribution to the expansion of conscience? **Arturo Torres, architect (Santiago).**

How many more "crisis" should there be so that we can understand the architecture behind the buildings? **Marcelo Danza, architect (Montevideo).**

How can we combine the local construction techniques with new technologies of design? **Verónica Arcos, arquitecta (Santiago).**

Is there any sense in insisting on a Latin American architecture? Where is that idea based? On its conceptual operations? On its programmes? On its design strategies? On its management and implementation models? **Mario Marchant, architect (Santiago).**

Is it convenient for us to incorporate exportable projection dynamics? **Jose Luis Uribe, architect (Talca).**

Does it make sense to continue to think in geopolitical terms? **Marcelo Faiden, architect (Buenos Aires).**

Are these questions of any use? **Cristóbal Palma, photographer (Santiago).** 