

Who Cares for Chilean Cities?

Academic Answers from Architecture, Public Space and Urban Projects

Conference to be held in Santiago de Chile on October 19, 2013

The success of the event "Assess: Chile at Columbia," held on March 29, 2013 in Wood Auditorium at Columbia University illustrated the broad academic interest in the question "Who cares for Chilean cities?" Chile, while enjoying international recognition for producing a generation of excellent architects, still has a debt with regards to the quality of life of its citizens. "Who cares for Chilean cities?" thus, began by asking why good architects have not made a real impact in improving the quality of urban life.

The relevance of this issue was reinforced by a recent report published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which confirmed that Chile's capital, Santiago, has the highest index of inequality of all the countries belonging to this organization. The study highlights the unequal distribution of housing, income, services, and parks within the urban territory of Santiago; furthermore, seven other Chilean cities surveyed (Temuco, the Metropolitan area of Concepción, Chillán, San Antonio, the Metropolitan area of Valparaíso, and La Serena and Coquimbo) are listed among the OECD's 25 most unequal cities. All these cities together are home to 10 million people, which is equivalent of 60% of the Chilean population.

The depth of this problem raises questions about the role of architecture, urban design and planning in relation to the way Chilean cities have been thought and developed in the last decades; from that point of view, the academic community still has room to contribute with answers.

The main aim of this project is therefore to insist on the importance of the question "Who cares for Chilean cities?" discussed during the previous conference at Columbia University, bringing it back to the country it came from and sharing it with Chilean academic institutions that may join the effort in looking for its answers. In this regard, the goal of this conference is to have a second—and decisive—stopping point in the search for alternatives for the future of Chilean cities, this time in Chile and open to Chilean academic institutions.

This conference will also allow the debate around the contemporary state of Chilean cities to become an exchange of academic approaches between Columbia and Chilean universities, as members of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) will present and open to debate their current and ongoing projects in relation to contemporary cities abroad.

OPEN CALL

As a way to gather different forms of academic research and proposals aimed to improve the quality of life in Chilean cities, and to tackle the persistent inequality in many of them, the GSAPP's Latin Lab and the Columbia Global Centers / Latin America (Santiago) are launching this Open Call for abstracts for the seminar "Who cares for Chilean cities? Academic answers from Architecture, Public Space and Urban Projects" to be held in Santiago, Chile, in October 19, 2013. The goal is to establish a meeting point to exchange experiences between different local schools concerned with the problem of Chilean contemporary cities.

The open call is for academic projects or initiatives that may propose answers to the question "Who cares for Chilean cities?" that begun between 2008 and 2012, either currently completed or ongoing. This call is open to all the Chilean Schools of Architecture and all the Chilean Academic Centers of Urban Research belonging to Universities accredited for at least four years. The projects must have been developed within the academic framework, and be led by an appointed faculty.

Submissions must fit within one of the three categories: "Urban Projects", "Public Space" and "Architecture," and must have been initiated between 2007 and 2012. A committee from Columbia's GSAPP will select three proposals from each category to be presented during the conference in a 15-minute lecture.

There will be nine projects selected, three from each of the following categories:

Urban Projects considers academic research and/or academic projects both in urban planning as well as in urban design. Chilean cities are not only hit by the country's economic inequalities, but also by natural disasters and even by badly conceived projects. Certain events in the last few years have inspired a new consciousness in relation to the quality of cities, replacing the relative indifference Chileans experienced in previous decades. Acknowledging this new scenario, this conference opens a unique opportunity to track and analyze whether that shift has had an impact on academic urban research and academic urban projects since 2008.

Public Space includes projects where design contributes to expand public engagement, citizenship and democracy. During the last few years there has been widespread debate around these issues, mainly after 2011 when social movements raised the question of the public condition of urban spaces around the world. Two years later, as the events in Istanbul and other cities around the globe seem to demonstrate, the question of the quality of public space will remain a concern in contemporary cities. In this regard, this conference is also a space to discuss how Chilean academia has addressed this issue, and what can be proposed for Chile based on recent experience.

Public Architecture aims to highlight architecture research projects and built work regarding public use. As the academic community has a responsibility towards the public sphere, this conference will be an instance to see how architecture schools are addressing the issue of the public condition within architecture, whether through research or academic projects. Therefore, one of the aims of this open call is to know about those projects developed by and within Chilean universities in order to generate a productive conversation around these experiences.

DEADLINES

Launching:
July 1, 2013

Each school or research center can submit no more than one project for each category; that is, there is a maximum of three projects per institution. To ensure adherence to this condition, applications must be submitted with the signature of the Dean of the corresponding school or faculty, according to the attached format.

Questions:
July 31, 2013

The application, as per the attached submission sheet, must contain:

Reception of Abstracts:
August 20, 2013

- Category
- Name of the Project
- Name of the Researcher or Instructor(s) in charge, including their academic category.
- Dates
- Abstract (200 words max)
- Goals (100 words max)
- Institution – includes the signature of the Dean/Director
- Funding sources

Results:
September 10, 2013

Submissions must be sent either in English or Spanish to latin-lab@columbia.edu with the subject "Application - Columbia at Chile" no later than August 20, 2013. The selected projects will be announced on September 10, 2013.

Conference:
October 19, 2013

Questions must be submitted to latin-lab@columbia.edu until July 30, 2013, with the subject "Inquiry - Columbia at Chile."

Selected proposals' representatives will receive a stipend of US\$ 300 in the form of an honorarium for their participation in the conference (gross, in its equivalent in Chilean pesos at the exchange rate for that date).

The official languages of the conference are both English and Spanish.