The University and the City: a reflection from Latin America

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University Town: a theoretical approach
University Town: a theoretical approach

“Group of buildings located on a delimited land, intended for higher education, particularly the one inherent to universities”

Definition by Real Academia de la Lengua Española

UBA in construction
University Town today is an American creation from the mid-19th century.

Colleges and universities were built in the midst of cities, as was the case of Columbia University, in New York City, which represented the insertion of green spaces in the middle of a city in construction.
The introduction of the American University Town model in Latin America has facilitated the development of a symbiotic relationship between City and University.

This relationship has been strongly defined by the political initiatives that gained strength within the region based on social structure modernization intentions.
University’s responsibility is not only toward students, transcends that relationship and goes beyond toward the City and the Nation as a whole.
2 University Towns in Latin America
University Towns in Latin America

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

UNAM Central Library. (de Troya, 2006)
As most of the University Towns around the region, the campus of UNAM was conceived as the architectonic representation of the bond between the past and the future of a society.

Siqueiros UNAM (McCarthy, 2004)
University Towns in Latin America

La Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos.
Lima, Perú.
The campus structure contributed to the urban development of the city. This campus in particular was provided with common services central forum, in which are created cultural spaces for the citizens.
Moreover, it is equipped with an extensive group of green common areas; where the pedestrian is the priority, being the *first large scale public spaces in Lima*. 

La Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Lima, Perú.
University Towns in Latin America

La Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA)

Pavilions 2 y 3 University Town UBA. (Goldemberg)
UBA is one of the most important exponents of three fundamental features on the universities of the region: quality-based academic programs, social focus, a big role in political activism.
3 The case of the National University of Colombia
(Universidad Nacional de Colombia)
The transformation the national reality during the decade of the 30s called for a series of reforms that were drive by the liberal government led by the businessman Alfonso López Pumarejo.

The case of the National University of Colombia
Despite the resistance of certain conservative political sectors close to the episcopacy, Lopez’s reforms moved forward at the fiscal, legal and administrative levels, under the slogan “Revolution in progress”, program in which the National University of Colombia took an active role as a crucial agent of change for the transformation of the city.

Rother’s plan. University Town in Bogotá. (Agencia de Noticias UN, 2009)
The impact of that factor was unthinkable; the reflection of a reform by the liberal government would transform the structure of the city for ever, and the way in which citizens were related to it.
With the advent of mid-century the country was embroiled in a series of political and social issues that concluded with the taken of the power by General Rojas Pinilla who censored a number of media broadcasters, suspended academic liberty and refused to recognize the democratic participation of professors and students within the university governance.
Several student movements emerged echoing the protest causing a deep impact on public opinion, to the extent of playing a fundamental role in the resignation of the Dictator.
The military junta and the alternated governments that preceded Rojas Pinilla introduced several reforms generating a deep institutional crisis, leading the university through the pathway of isolation.
In 1976 the National University builds a perimeter mesh which completely isolates the campus of the University Town, it could be argued that, for each meter of fence built it was built along a kilometer of distance with the rest of the society. The image of the University shifted from being the center of academic and scientific thinking in the country to look like a spendthrift, inefficient and chaotic institution which had to be isolated.
The institutional stabilization would not come until the eighties with a painful transformation of life inside the campus. Dorms were closed and the rectory was moved from the central tower of the University Town to the recently dislodged buildings.
The case of the National University of Colombia

Today the National University represents opportunities for thousands of young Colombians who seek to access to quality higher education.

The national circumstance towards a possible post conflict allows University to find out an opportunity to resume with courage the leadership of national thinking.

Science and Technology Building, Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo. Source: Unimedios
4 Knowledge Agendas
Knowledge Agendas

Knowledge agendas appears as a strategy to strength the knowledge generation processes conducted by researchers based on a collective construction of a vision of future.

- Organizational, economic and industrial development
- Habitat, city and territory
- States, legal and political systems