

The ugly side of knowing better

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Comentarios

Pune's Future Towers, the latest MVRDV housing project in India, is a representative example of the recent wave of large-scale housing projects being built in the world's fastest growing economies. These projects are characterized by their similarity to the housing schemes built in the West during the post-war period. In the images below you can see an example of such schemes; St Louis' infamous Pruitt-Igoe housing project (built in 1954 and demolished in 1972) and Pune's future towers, when compared, their similarities are astonishing.

The 'Comments' section of design blogs where MVRDV's project is featured show the strong reaction these projects elicit in the West. A minority perceive these developments as they relate to their environment and regard them as an opportunity to improve current conditions; the opposing reaction, held by the more vociferous majority, believes that this type of architecture is irresponsible and perilously close to criminal, supporting them is the history of failure that housing developments of similar size have had in the western world.

This second reaction is underpinned by a familiar theme in the subconscious of western minds, the idea that we are living in their (China's, India's) desired future, a subtly condescending notion that fails to address the cultural variables that make a society what it is. In architectural terms this is demonstrated in our attitude towards mass-housing solutions being implemented in those countries, we observe with disbelief and criticize their eagerness to adopt "aged" models while we wait with certain giddiness for those models to implode. We hope this implosion confirms that just by looking through our history we can tell what is best for everyone else.

However, is it possible that this collective attitude is blinding us towards the fact that other cultures might be better at living with each other than we are? Perhaps the mass-housing solutions that failed so miserably in the West did so not because of their architectural characteristics. As a society, maybe we were just not well-equipped to make them successful; perhaps we are simply not good enough at living with each other in such close quarters. Is that a possibility?

Or perhaps these housing models are bad architecture...



Future Towers, Pune, India by MVRDV



Vaughan Public Housing Complex, St Louis, USA by
Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth

1. Future Towers, MVRDV 2011; <http://www.mvrdv.nl>

2. Pruitt-Igoe, United States Geological Survey 1963; <http://www.usgs.gov>

Seguramente, en toda arquitectura, antes de realizar un análisis arquitectónico deberíamos preguntarnos y responder por quiénes la fomentan y proponen, quiénes la financian, quiénes se enriquecen con ella, a quiénes va dirigida.

El problema no es tanto del modelo arquitectónico, sino del modelo de gestión que los arquitectos y demás técnicos somos los cómplices ideales, unas veces conscientes, y otras, lo que es peor, de manera inconsciente.

La globalización que todo lo uniforma, lo equipara y lo hace anodino, también barre los pensamientos y las ideas, limando las diferencias, las particularidades, la diversidad. Los esquemas culturales y sociales son difícilmente exportables, salvo excepcionales casos de vecindad o parentesco, y nunca se podrán aplicar como simples parámetros dentro de una ecuación urbana. Al menos, eso esperamos.

Modelo económico como paradigma vital: punto de partida para entender nuestra tozuda persistencia en insistir en lo caduco. Todo error deja de ser tal cuando, al pasar por la oscura magia de los arcanos numéricos, se le otorga el título de rentable, lo que le confiere "ipso-facto" las de impune e indiscutible. La economía es una alquimia que necesita ser ciega cuando no puede abarcar las relaciones que tejen el mundo.

No son comparables las obras de Yamasaki (o cualquiera de esas malas obras de occidente) y MVRDV, porque no lo son la diversidad social y el nivel de renta, la complejidad tectónica y funcional, el enfoque emocional o las ambiciones de centralidad. India es un buen lugar donde ensayar la congestión, y lo que ha de valorarse es la planificación general de Pune. La belleza, como la emoción, no es un asunto exclusivo de la tectónica.

jm
Cómplices ideales

cavillare
Al menos eso
esperamos

Axolotl
¿Modelos?

Rei