Collective spaces under pressure
the case of San José de Chiquitos, Chiquitos Bolivia
promoters (Yves Schoonjans & Jeroen Nys (KU Leuven, Belgium) & Victor Hugo Limpias (UPSA, Bolivia)

AIM:
This exercise aims to discuss and raise awareness on the specific complex development issues of the indigenous peoples, migrant Latinos and issue of sustainable tourism in area of San José de Chiquitos, Chiquitos Bolivia where accelerated economic transformation and displacement of indigenous groups require deeper reflection and discussion on the part of society as a whole with a view to the construction of a common future. This project for students in architecture and urbanism aims to set up a critical discussion in the development-cooperation debate on the design of collective spaces in the global south.

The objective of this in-situ fieldwork/workshop local-interactive project is to understand the nature and development of the changing cultural landscape of San José de Chiquitos, Bolivia. The project will collect data and create a better insight, in the way how the population (local and newcomer) of this remote area cope under the changes by the recent social developments and migration changing their identity in relation to the creation of new urban and architectural spaces.

It gives the students the opportunity to experience in real life the problems of these groups (the various indigenous people and the Spanish speaking Bolivians) and to discover its complexity.

The aim is to understand and explore people’s daily experiences. It investigates the intertwined elements of space-production, place-making and identities focusing on the use of public and collective spaces. Linked to the needs of the poorer indigenous and Latino population, an urban design strategy for the development of spaces that could help social and cultural development and integration to take place with in mind the importance of local identities and place making. A correct understanding of those aspects is essential to maintain and develop a social sustainability and social cohesion.

It intends to use this understanding to design innovative and practical social sustainable proposals/strategies for the future.

The students will focus on different neighbourhoods in San José de Chiquitos and surroundings. For each case, it will cover field observations, data collection and semi-structured interviews with the key local actors and stakeholders on the collective spaces. The key objectives are:
(1) to gain a better understanding of the existing urban structure of San José and its surroundings; mapping at the same time the needs of the population towards the collective spaces as their contemporary use. This mapping will also detect and describe the spatial morphology of the spaces. It will explore the intertwined elements of space-production, place-making and identities, focusing on the use of buildings, the urban fabric and surrounding cultural landscape.

(2) to gain a better insight on the Andes migration of the indigenous population towards San José. Which areas of the municipality or the surrounding landscape are they using when arriving. How do they keep their local traditions, can they keep their local traditions and do they want to? How do they relate to the city? It will investigate the development of the appropriated fragile modest inherited typology in their locality and understand and explore people’s daily experiences of this at ground-level. It explores how meaning is constructed by (re)appropriating and (re)negotiation by inhabitants and the migrants. What are the opportunities and challenges.

(3) to create strategies for (re) appropriation of local techniques for a sustainable development as nodes of development in its capacity as receiver of population.

From this design-strategies will be developed.

WHO: 10 students (3rd year bachelor or master) from the Faculty of Architecture, KU Leuven together with 8 of the Facultad de Arquitectura, Diseño y Urbanismo Univ. Privada de Santa Cruz de la Sierra – UPSA & 8 students Universidad San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca Sucre Bolivia. The students are fully mixed and accompanied by professors from the all participating Universities, local authorities and NGOS.

CONTEXT

The region of the Chiquitos is located in the eastern side of Bolivia. It is together with the Gran Chaco in the center of Latin America mainland an important ecological entity. The Seco Chiquitano Model Forest is situated in a transitional ecoregion between the humid climate of the Amazonian region and the dry climate of the Chaco. The Chiquitos region is not only important for ecological reasons it has also cultural and historical value. The eighteenth-century Jesuitical in-culturalization in the region is still very powerful in the local indigenous population, who appropriated and preserved the Barroco-Misional heritage in the manufacture of handicrafts and in the architectural, spatial and landscape development of their habitat.

The Chiquitos region is currently experiences a weakening/change of its cultural identity due to a large population growth due to the increase of tourism (and the accompanied migration to support tourist facilities) and the Andean immigration provoked by new paved roads to the small municipalities in this region. Carlos Hugo Molina, director of CEPAD, explains in the newspaper Los Tiempos, that ‘the reasons people decide to leave their place of origin are the limited opportunities for progress. The family labor in rural areas is not monetized, causing discontent. Another cause is the poor infrastructure, low income, low population density, and lower power consumption options’ (2016). Members of the Chiquitania population that lived in small communities of 30 to 50 families are moving to those municipalities. This creates positive elements like a better economic condition, better basic and social services,...

This growth gives a pressure on the existing urban fabric. In this development, the real local identity is often overseen. At the same time professionals realize that existing urban and architectural typology of inherited buildings (often of modest nature) are responsible for a large part of the social construct of the neighborhoods. It builds up an identity (in tangible but also in intangible ways) that is closely linked with the local population. The importance has been shown of inherited urban and landscape typology in developing countries as a generator of social and economic benefits to the local residents. Regeneration-projects repeatedly fail to give voice to many excluded, disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

On top of that due to migration new social groups arrive and establish them often in deprived neighbourhoods. This...
brings up the issue of new appropriation of existing buildings and urban fabric and the formation of new identities in the public-private collective. Consequently, tensions between the newcomers and the established population; the mainstream and alternative cultural practices are rising without providing the necessary insights and experience of making regeneration projects that respond properly to new socio-spatial conditions.

Little effort has been made on creating insights on those transitions or growth of local smaller municipalities. It is very crucial that, in relation to the importance of local cultural & social sustainability, designers and researchers comprehend those aspects, understand how those systems are functioning, and how the link between the use of existing buildings, the use of the surrounding landscapes and settlement structures, the social construct and collective spaces is being established. A correct understanding of those aspects is essential to maintain and develop a social sustainability and social cohesion.

This local-interactive project will be located in San José de Chiquitos, one of the six villages that make up the Missionary circuit.

The project is supported by the research group “Urban Projects, Collective Spaces and Local Identities” (http://www.collectivespaceskuleuven.be/). It is an interdisciplinary research group at the Department of Architecture (formerly ASRO) of the University Leuven (KU Leuven) gathering researchers from several disciplines. Its aim is to initiate and develop research on the making and use of collective spaces in urban projects in relation to the theoretical approaches and discourses. The different research projects investigate how people and buildings relate to each other, how space is appropriated and local identities are formed and how it contributes to the built and social environment of urban life. Some of the projects focus especially on multicultural places and the diversity of appropriation. The research group Urban Projects, Collective Spaces and Local Identities seeks to study this balance of parallel mechanisms of space production in different contexts and test the outcomes through real life and hands-on projects, considering the local neighbours, stakeholders, the protagonists and main beneficiaries.

The project is also supported by CIDI (Centro de Investigación Desarrollo e Innovación) of the Facultad de Arquitectura, Diseño y Arte, Universidad Nacional de Asunción, Paraguay and their research project called: “Infrastructure and Territorial transformations in Paraguay – 1960 -2014”. (https://60py14.wordpress.com) This project is funded by the National Council on Science (Conacyt) and the FADA UNA, and is coordinated by Prof. Juan Carlos Cristaldo. The research project is being developed by an international network of scholars and young scholars from Spain, Bolivia, Switzerland, Australia, Belgium, Peru and Paraguay. In the context of this project, the Chaco case is one of the case studies under analysis and prospective studies. In their approach the focus on local social needs on development in relation to architecture and urbanism is very important. (https://60py14.wordpress.com/2016/06/15/el-chaco-paisaje-resiliencia-y-transformacion/)

QUESTIONS: Yves Schoonjans (yves.schoonjans@kuleuven.be)

DEADLINE: 04/03/2018, mail motivation letter, short CV and track record of yours grades to Yves.schoonjans@kuleuven.be

- All participants book and pay the needed travel and accommodation costs and agree to be present on Monday 2th of July, 2017 on the previously communicated meeting point (late arrivals or early leave will not be accepted).
- All participants are personally responsible to obtain all legal documents and permits to travel and stay in Bolivia, KU Leuven does not have responsibility in this matter.
- All participants arrange travel modes and insurances individually for the whole stay, KU Leuven does not have responsibility in this matter.
- After completion, all participants will receive an official certificate of participation at the Summer school. Study credits will be granted for participation. The students have to enroll in the Elective ‘Participation to an International Program’ (this is compulsory to get a grant), and complies to the standards set in this elective.