
MONOGRÁFICO: ARQUEOLOGÍA DE LA ARQUITECTURA EN LATINOAMÉRICA:
UNA FUSIÓN DE TENDENCIAS / MONOGRAPH: ARCHAEOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE
IN LATIN AMERICA: A FUSION OF TRENDS

Introduction: Archaeology of Architecture and Latin America, a round-trip journey

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For this brief presentation we are going to use, almost literally, some ideas we wrote some years ago (Azkarate 2013) about Latin America and what is referred to as Archaeology of Architecture (AA). Unlike European historiography, which tends to discuss the fields to which AA should refer, we praised the versatility shown by the archaeology of that region, which wastes no time in invoking the "archaeology of architecture" regardless of the focus of its thematic approaches and the theoretical positions that support them. This is an extremely different position from that found in Europe, for example, which is much more restrictive in specifying the boundaries of certain thematic and methodological fields.

This Latin American regional trait probably derives from the researchers' flexibility, forged by theoretical and methodological influences from diverse sources, both of Anglophone origin - basically American - and from the European tradition. However, above all, it is a consequence of the will -renewed and diversified - of a type of archaeological research that, in rejecting the pervading modernity, has been giving rise to "creative forms of archaeology" over the years (Tantaleón 2019: 233) and to a discourse that, in many aspects, is

different from the view imposed by western academic approaches².

It is not surprising that, among the increasingly extensive production of historiography, it is possible to find publications that address the construction and management aspects of historical architecture (Arrazcaeta 2002; Cohen 2011; Benedet 2012; Cirigliano 2015a, 2015b), investigations that deal with pre-Hispanic monumental and ceremonial architecture that places greater emphasis on its spatial and symbolic aspects (Acuto and Gifford 2007), major studies on pre-Columbian "archaeology of domestic architecture" from diverse theoretical perspectives (Scattolin *et al.* 2009; Albeck *et al.* 2010; Haber 2010, 2011), contributions from contemporary urban contexts (Schávelzon 2012), or proposals that

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² As an example, you may consult the interesting discussion on "public archaeology" that has recently arisen as a result of a recent publication by three renowned Spanish archaeologists (in the English version: González-Ruibal, Alonso González and Criado-Boado 2018 and in the Spanish version: González-Ruibal, Alonso González and Criado-Boado 2019). We find the comparison between the comments published in this paper in Spanish and English of interest: the former by Manuel Gándara, Wilhelm Londoño, Pedro Paulo Funari, Andrés Alarcón-Jiménez, Henry Tantaleán, Félix A. Acuto, Dante Angelo and Alejandro Haber (*Chúngara* vol. 51, nº 1, 2019, pp. 121-153) and the latter by Reinhard Bernbeck, Susan Pollock, Yannis Hamilakis, Laurajane Smith, Gary Campbell and Larry J. Zimmerman (*Antiquity*, Vol: 92, Issue: 362, April 2018, pp. 507-515 (paper) & 525-27 (response). Doi response: <https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2018.26>).

abandon the typological approach taken by traditional research into architecture in favour of delving into the socio-political connotations concealed in the shaping of built-up areas (Funari and Zarankin 2003; Zarankin and Niro 2006; Diana *et al.* 2008; Zarankin and Salerno 2011). Based on the instrumental tooling of “space syntax”, the Foucaultian inspiration is unquestionable in this approach to architecture as coercive spaces and technologies of power (Foucault 1984). Some of these points of view are reflected in this monograph.

Despite this open-mindedness, there is something in the archaeology of that region that remains a challenge. Latin American archaeology is not accustomed to working on above level 0 archaeology, i.e. on buildings that are still standing and in use. Indeed, with few exceptions, they appear to have given up working above the ground. We find this troubling, since the mistake could be made of leaving built heritage - particularly in cities - in the hands of those who study it from conservative historiographic perspectives and/or who only see it as a set of spaces that can be given another function or demolished based on strictly financial interests (Azkarate 2013). Needless to say, this is not just a Latin American problem.

Our scientific link with Latin America goes back to the year 2000 when, invited by Eusebio Leal Spengler and Roger Arrazcaeta, we gave a seminar on “The Archaeology of Architecture” at the Havana Archaeology Office on February 29 and March 1 of that year. Subsequently, we have been invited to deliver PhD courses and seminars on the Archaeology of Architecture in various establishments, mainly in Puerto Rico, Peru, Uruguay, and Argentina. It was in this context of uninterrupted contacts over two decades that the need to work transversally between the two continents arose. Two lines of research emerged from this desire, both of which currently focus on the field of historical archaeology.

The first³ emerged in response to an observation: we had to free ourselves from the loop into which the Archaeology of European Architecture was in danger of becoming trapped. By dealing predominantly with architecture with marked stratigraphic visibility (“naked” architecture) belonging to fundamentally medieval historical contexts (Christian and Islamic), it was ignoring

much of the “dressed” architecture of modern and contemporary times - a strategic error for a field that should have a more timeless and holistic vocation. It could be said that the Archaeology of European Architecture has created a no man’s land in which there is a risk of overlooking and failing to pay attention to the “dressed” architecture belonging to these more recent centuries to the extent it deserves. The exchange of experiences between the two continents is giving rise to an extremely interesting context in which knowledge is being created.

The second⁴ extends the context to cities - that overwhelmingly key scenario in the near future. It is based on the idea that cities are the product of a dialogue between the fixed and the flowing, the things that remain in a given space, and the dynamics that transform them. Beneath the reality that we can see, there are, therefore, hidden structures, underlying patterns of behaviour that affect the forms and mode of being of that reality - a permanent confluence or clash between “planned development” and “spontaneous development” (García-Gómez 2009). Reflecting on the urban phenomenon, committing to its sustainable development, to people’s memories and identities at a neighbourhood level is a matter of great urgency. More so at a time when urban space has become a commodity and when unapologetic real estate capitalism has resulted in increasingly frequent and outrageous cases of destruction of our heritage (Azkarate and Azpeitia 2016).

These two lines of thought will be developed further by researchers from the various universities on both sides of the Atlantic. We would like to use these lines to extend an invitation to all those interested in sharing experiences and knowledge.

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³ “La Arqueología de la Arquitectura: nuevos retos metodológicos y su aplicación en Europa y América Latina” (HAR2015-64439-P), funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

⁴ “Arqueología de la Arquitectura entre el viejo y el nuevo mundo: de la estratigrafía del edificio a la estratigrafía de la trama urbana” (PID2019-109464GB-I00), funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities.

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