THE EX HACIENDAS SAN NICOLAS DE ESQUIROS AND SANTA MARIA DEL REFUGIO. THEIR PATRIMONIAL IN A NEOLIBERAL CONTEXT

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Abstract
San Nicolas de Esquiros and Santa Maria del Refugio Haciendas emerge from colonial times in Mexico, instituting their communities based on this and the figure of peasant subsumed to that of the authority. Based on its morpho-spatial characteristics and its festivities, communities form what is meaningful for them: their heritage and their identity. Due to the neoliberal economic system they live in social exclusion and economic poverty, having to sell or divide their patrimonial to slightly solve this situation. This has led to the disarticulation of these heritage spaces, thus affecting their being a community. A growth of its hull destruction can be observed as well as pollution of its springs and the transformation of their celebrations. Economic problems are leading them to live in ways that oppose their constitution of identity and because of this condition of submission and poverty, governance still seems far from being handled.
It will be shown how the current economic system has a negative impact on the patrimonial of its populations, thereby harming the social, spatial and identity tissue. The impossibility to state governance for the preservation of its governance will also be displayed.
The method used was the critical dialectics, performing ethnographic work (semi-structured interviews and participant observation), in site readings and works analysis. All of it taken to a database from the two approaches: first the one for discovery and afterwards that of explanation.

Introduction
Former haciendas of San Nicolas de Esquiros and Santa Maria del Refugio have been formed by the incidence of various historical, political and economic facts. These are the most
important: colonization, independence, agrarian movement and the Agrarian Reform. It is from the first moment when the figure of the peasant subsumed to an authority was built. This fact is essential to his nowadays behavior.

San Nicolas de Esquiros has been listed as an architectural heritage by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) and Santa Maria del Refugio is known for its springs. In addition, both carry out festivities and religious traditions valued not only by the community but all over the region.

Now the neoliberal economic context has led the communities to forms of defenselessness not seen before. While urban areas are suffering the brunt of this economic system, the field lives it with greater profusion and aggression, since the state has become a competitive and non-protective institution. In addition to this, stigmatization has been installed in the way of living in rural areas, leading to additional effort to appear as 'urban' and therefore as 'modern'. Thus, all that is done or decided in these communities has to do with this new approach to life.

In this sense, and under the aggressive economic system that exists, its patrimonial, that is, all that has been valued for its meaning, is running the same fate as its rural being: the transformation or destruction of its essence. It seems that governance could solve this situation, however, social conditions to assume it on their own, still haven’t been observed.

This is the context for the doctoral research project in architecture that was carried out and of which this piece of work is part.

The socio-historical context.

Location

The community of San Nicolas de Esquiros is located 15 kilometers north of the city of Celaya, Guanajuato and Santa Maria del Refugio, 6 kilometers to the south, in the area called Bajio Guanajuato; in central Mexico.

Figure 1.  Location of the communities
Historical tour

The communities have lived several historical and political events that have labeled them significantly. San Nicolas de Esquiros was born as a prison before the year 1570, to guard the silver for the Spanish people and Santa Maria del Refugio as an hacienda for work in 1609 due to its springs and farmland. The first one building fortifying elements as perimetral hull “garitones”, parapet and housing; and the second, without the parapet but with barns and stables. Even during the Colony, San Nicholas de Esquiros is transformed into a working ranch, adding barns and stables for use and leaving space inside the hull as room for the managers and outside it the very small houses for peasants. It is at this point when it acquires the morpho-spatial structure which was cataloged in 1996, as an architectural heritage by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

In the early twentieth century, the Mexican Revolution arises leading to the distribution of land. This it was called The Agrarian Movement. Derived from this, in the year of 1940 communities evicted the owners and appropriating both the land and the hull, leading several families of peasants to distribute the space. Right from that moment it becomes communal property under the figure of the “ejido”. Santa Maria del Refugio starts destroying the hull and in San Nicolas de Esquiros to keep it as it was. This was the unique case in the region that this happened: families that used to live outside the town now live inside it. However, in this community as the amount of families living inside increased, the space starts becoming small, so, twelve families decided in 1970 to leave and build outside it. This how the community was composed by those living ‘inside’ and those living ‘outside’, leading to different and complex social and architectural responses. Santa Maria del Refugio instead, has grown in a freer way since it didn’t leave any physical limitations.

Figure 2. Current state of both communities. The hull and other complete buildings in San Nicolas de Esquiros, the first one and Santa Maria del Refugio and its springs on the second one
With the government of President Salinas de Gortari, neoliberalism comes to the country in the figure of the Agrarian Reform. With it, “ejidos” are likely to be sold losing the community’s support. Both communities begin selling and breaking in pieces their plots and San Nicolas de Esquiros also loses its place in the hull. This has led to further reduction of its space and with it, families become cramped. In addition to this, under this economic system, peasants are unprotected by state decisions, leading to more sales of land plots or housing and migration to the United States. They are communities with high percentages of migrants.

The communities and their social social fabric

Society is not a system built a priori to any event, not even itself. The institution of any society is condensed in specific ways that the community determines, being aware of it or not, in its need to understand that reality specifically lived. Arendt inserts these to conflicts arising from the daily struggle, where even forms of violence for that institution can be seen. The communities are instituted in valuations that the group in the power determines. For that reason and as consequence of colonization that was lived, the figure of authority moved to the group of “ejidatarios”, who, from the moment of agrarianism, took the role of authority over the rest of the community. The communities have also built other figures of authority that are related to their historical development. An example of this is the construction of a clear hierarchical figure around “ejidatarios” and institutions. These are shown with the full strength of economic and political power, causing, among other things, problems and frictions between the “ejidatarios” and those who aren’t and submission to the decisions of state.

In this patriarchal society, besides, women are completely subsumed to men. These ways of being patriarchal, come from ways of being social. In communities, when married, women become the domain of the husband’s family, preserving the patriarchal structure of the peasant family. Also, the figure of authority represented by the landowner, has been moved to other shown in the communities. The vertical structure keeps on being observed.

The system of positions, although shown as the group that organizes its festivities, has also emerged as the most efficient construction material to consolidate an identity that, as Velasco Santos says, “... faces a context of social dispersion result of socio-economic transformations, resisting the thrust of the capitalist system based on individualism. Likewise, the presence of the former hacienda in San Nicolas de Esquiros and the springs of Santa María del Refugio more than ways or spaces for social recognition, have turned into symbolic goods. The social social fabric, then, has been reconstructed by that condition of spatiality, as the spatiality has been constituted by the ways that the social social fabric has taken. The architectural fact of the former hacienda in San Nicolas de Esquiros and the springs in Santa María del Refugio, particularly that of La Huerta, have marked the communities significantly to communities. The festivities in both communities have also done the same in the construction of the social social fabric.
Capitalism in the communities

The capitalist system

Fields are characterized by two specific features: the peasant mode of production and the peasant as a subject. In capitalism land ownership appears as a new principle of differentiation of land, building with this a new private space for domination, that is, which appears in the same social class, dominance in the relationship of production and distribution, because there is a different volume and capital structure that allows them to practice a certain symbolic power in consumer relations. Capitalism enters every human space, taking to the field an even bigger problem: psychological, social and economic unpreparedness of the subjects that work to face such task. In this system of capitalist production the employee is separated from the means of production then the sole abstract activity that he can make and that is use value for the capital. A permanent struggle is thus instituted by subordinating the worker and appropriate the capital of the capital gain. Capitalism looks at the field as if it was an industry and if it requires large production, it won’t be the peasant who will solve this pace, but the implementation of mechanisms outside him, such as machinery, use of pesticides use, chemical fertilizers and transformations in the fields’ same process. Castoriadis emphasizes: “Capitalism is not simply the endless accumulation for accumulation, but the relentless transformation of the conditions and means of accumulation, the perpetual revolution of production, trade, finance and consumption.” In this regime, nature is conceived as a set of raw materials that are bought and sold, that is, that can be used to produce goods which generate an added value on those people that live them, and who should be treated under this objectifying logic. In this sense, every human being is reduced to commodity status and thus to its way of monetisation. However, despite that human labor is the creator of value, it does not show itself in the form of money, because it will be on who has the capital to sustain that capitalist production rate, then, the expression of social antagonism is observed. The expansive productive logic of capitalism enhanced with neoliberalism, has needed the fields for its development, discarding most of the time, the traditional agricultural activities because they don’t suit those interests. In Mexico, with NAFTA has boosted the dismantling of agricultural production, having a particularly negative impact over small-scale production mode, that is, in the “ejido’s” production. Thus, the cultivation of cereals such as corn, sorghum and barley, among others, have ceased to be a source of livelihood for households. Neoliberalism has become a State Project. Due to the above, the competitive State overlaps the welfare State, since social policies are seen and thus reduced as a technical issue of poverty reduction and not as a political principle of social cohesion. Now communities are required to promote their projects or developments from the figure of governance. But how will they be organized if they live in the immediacy and no class awareness? How will they be organized if they live under the submission to the authorities whosethem as institutional? The concept emerged assuming they were on the way

to be given, the social conditions for communities to take such an undertaking. It is not the case for the vast majority of them in Mexico. They are waiting for the government to solve their problems, without realizing that it is the State, the one that is sinking them more and more. This way of waiting for an answer can be observed from the Colony. The peasant solved the peasants’ problems, now they expect the government to do so. In addition to this, formal education in this sense, has not solved or helped to develop critical nor propositive people.

**Socio-economic impact**

The rural farming community, is formed as a social group that is organized, lives and is determined by the particular historical conditions, showing a group of families attached to the floor, materializing the effective relationship in use. However, changing the way of using, and with the relationship within that family, as well as in their relationship as a community. That relationship of the peasant with his agricultural land, either as part of the estate or as “ejidatario”, is broken with the introduction of the capitalist system of owning the land, as it develops as a good for exchange, not for use, neither for identity. This has led to the separation of the individual with the element that had just formed and shaped him: the fields and therefore those spaces that meant to him as community, for example, its patrimonial. This represents a break up with his being peasant and with his being a community.

Agriculture of the paused biological rhythm of the peasant against the agriculture of the big money based on this timeless and spaceless frenzy². The results for the first have been disastrous. This capitalist environment is burdening the rural economy, pushing its disbandment as a resource to ensure the reproduction of the family. The peasant is also being displaced from its status in the social scale. All because of his inability to keep the pace of the changes in productivity. The neoliberal ideology is imposed not only economically, but also in the social sphere. Derived from this, the general population generally faces a huge fragmentation of what is social and a brutal economic globalization². With this, poverty and social exclusion in rural areas shows, bringing communities to various forms of helplessness.

Money is identified as a magic key to the progress and welfare. Therefore, wage labor in the city becomes, in the imaginary plane in a space full of opportunities for personal and family satisfaction². However, job placement, is carried out in the lowest paid and most exploited spaces, not representing a significant economic improvement for the family. In addition to this, now the land, their family farm and community spaces, are also beginning to be seen monetarily. That is, when sold, they will get the possibility of fast money thinking that this will solve their economic situation. Soon they find out that they don’t have any more money. Then, people and their communities are faced to the modification of what makes them be human: their spirit.

**The patrimonial in the communities**

**The patrimonial and the architectural heritage**

In this established society, subjects by the fact of living and existentially be part of the community, become aesthetic individuals, that is, the source of their own experiences that will
contribute significantly to the existentiality of the society of which are part. This, in its institution, also establishes the space which will therefore, be habitable and intrinsically related to its habits. These forms of space, that is, the place of man, are so important to him, as his own self. himself. The former hacienda and the springs are therefore, more than architectural spaces constructed in other historical times. They are the spaces that the community has taken as its own and as essential in their being a community. That a priori spatio-temporality has resulted in the community’s here and now, thereby establishing cultural ties, customs and familiar contexts that will define them and at the same time differentiate from the others. This is their patrimonial³. The ‘order’, is embodied in different ways. One of them is the architecture or places and another one, equally important, is the language built based on the specific way of being community and territoriality. As the hull of the former hacienda, expressions denote the importance of it.

Doña Toribia Landín, inhabitant of San Nicolas de Esquiros says:

*Those big buildings, so big that seem very high and strong [...]can be seen from anywhere...*²

Mrs. Antonia Rangel inhabitant of Santa María del Refugio

Oh ... so the springs, are the ones that when they come ... they visit us; springs like the ones we have this here at Los Sabinos [The Orchard], there is another one ... well, there are some outside the ranch, there is another one here on this street, but high up there are a precious water [...] gentlemen and ladies come to carry water, they like very it much.².

Communities have built a language to name what is meaningful in their lives, showing the order and hierarchy of the social fabric. The presence of the hull of the former hacienda and springs have significantly marked their conformation. The community as a community, is it because and in the spaces that have transited to places for community encounter and reencounter: its patrimonial. Patrimonial will then be, everything that communities are giving value to and architectural heritage what an institution did. In the case of this community it is matched with the hull of the former hacienda, although for different reasons. In the Santa María del Refugio with its springs and both also with its festivities. Patrimonial, even if it is a building or a manifestation of them, will become a “body” for the community; a significant body of both of the community that materialized it, and as of itself that returns to it by its own strength.

**Identity and belonging**

The territory has several dimensions, such as the pragmatic, the social, the political, the legal and symbolic-identitary through its reference to the links of domain, belonging, ownership and diversity of meanings built there.² Thus, urban or rural areas, will be intimate or public as long as they emerge as ontic aspects of being community. The being-there of communities, is the being-there of the patrimonial, since both are formed and become the matter of it totality dialectically instituted. That communities consider something as a heritage. And will go beyond the practical-utilitarian issues (which also contains them), it will require think of it as of its dasein.

In both communities, mindsets were formed from the estate of work, which transited specifically to its patrimonial valorization for allowing feeling itself in the world. Mindsets and images are essential for the culture, not only in the classic sense of the word, but in putting it into
everyday’s life for problem solution. In addition to this, patrimonial has allowed people to feel different to others, to strengthen their identity and sense of belonging.

Figure 3. Elements of the former hacienda of San Nicolas de Esquiros.

Figure 4. The main spring in Santa Maria del Refugio.

The instrument of domination has become an instrument of identity and belonging. During the interviews to the two communities studied, expressions of belonging to their place of residence were inserted. Patrimonial implies then, the onto-gnoseological and teleological of the community the institutes it. The property in this sense, appropriates its owner. Architectural
spaces and festivities, in this case, the patrimonials are the what of the who, and in the social sense, are the elements that allow the community to have cohesion as community. In the patrimonial of both communities, a dialectical pledge has been deeply sustained in the sense that there has been an intentionality as pulsion to objects, Mandoki would state. However, it is not unusual that the value of tangible use of a good contradicts in practice, its formal value. The so aggressive economic conditions of the capitalist system, the paternalistic tradition they have lived and the immediate consciousness, besides their use value, have contributed to the helplessness of its own patrimonial, leading with this to a negative impact on what has allowed the construction of their identity and sense of belonging.

In these new values represented by money and stigmatizing all that is rural, communities begin to sell or to significantly modify their patrimonial. Each time the perimeter wall, the “garitones” and parapet of San Nicolas de Esquiros, they are even selling part of the inside to people whose interests are opposite to the community. In Santa Maria del Refugio, it can be observed that the springs have been neglected and used increasingly more to the extraction of water without any control, just to get money out of it. In both cases, the materials used in the city for housing construction or other spaces, are inserted into them, leading to destruction of the original because of not looking ‘modern’. They say that selling their plots or family farms, gives them a little relief from their economic problems, no matter if they are part of the hull of the former hacienda or of a community setting.

Thus, despite this symbolic identity burden on their patrimonial, conditions of poverty, social marginalization and new appreciations of life, sustained in capitalism, are leading the owners to sell without even noticing the loss this will represent in the short-term. Money will solve very little their socio-economic situation and it will cause a big damage on their identity and sense of belonging.

In this context, communities are now been asked to promote the preservation of its heritage with self-management, as signaled by the concept of governance. The peasants were constituted subsumed to the authority figure, no matter if this represents what is meaningful. In the reality this will not be possible if outside groups that carry out activities of social work and awareness of what they value themselves, such as their heritage, aren’t gathered. It will not be possible if they are not given real possibilities of economic improvement with activities other than the sale of their land and heritage. The symbolic and identity values of the populations should prevail over the economic and practical-utilitarian ones, because the spirituality of the community goes along with it.

**Conclusions**

The communities studied do not have the social conditions to install governance. More social and institutional work is needed in order to begin the process. The reality seems to be very complicated, but with possibilities of success if we look at the emergence of their own discursive expressions. A big step has been accomplished by getting, through the research work, that they bring present their heritage, now this must become an institutional project.
The neoliberal economic system is objectifying everything for the sake of its own benefit, thereby bringing communities to sell what it means to them. This is not only about selling plots, family farms or heritage sites, but releasing what made them become a community and gave them a sense of belonging. In the same sense, losing these elements that are cohesive for the community, will have a strong impact on the social fabric, making them therefore, more defenseless against the onslaught of the big capital.

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