Rural Campus
University campus for community regeneration, Acatitlán, Mexico

Summary and appraisal by the jury
The new campus for environmental studies in Acatitlán, a small town west of Mexico City will trigger a local regeneration process, enriching communities throughout the region. The project’s design for the Universidad del Medio Ambiente is locally attuned, self-sufficient regarding energy and water, promotes on-site food production, and will be realized with low-impact materials to minimize the architecture’s ecological footprint. Rather than promoting efficiency for efficiency’s sake, the authors frame the university curriculum based on local knowledge. It’s not about the campus, it’s about a community. Enacted in three phases, the building is organized around a series of courtyards. Construction assemblies include stone foundations, wooden structures and wall finishes made of soil. The result is a sustainable and regenerative project, “a living classroom” that could readily be replicated.

The campus will be built in a rural community which is currently under great urban development pressure that is driving farmers off their land: forest is being cleared, access to water is being compromised, and insecurity is rising. It is anticipated that the sustainable, regenerative, eco-friendly campus will provide new opportunities to families who have been displaced by urbanization.

The project’s design for the Universidad del Medio Ambiente – the environment being at the core of teaching and research – and the campus design according to state of the art ecological principles. The project offers an excellent example of how to act locally, and concurrently thinking globally, fostering regional benefits and cultural exchange, while combining social, economic and environmental regeneration with long-term objectives.

Sustainability concept
The project seeks to achieve two very ambitious goals: resource self-sufficiency and system regeneration – and aims to deliver this via local talent, local materials, accessible technologies and at a cost no greater than USD 400/m².

This is possible by using an innovative design process that prioritizes learning over efficiency, and by taking time to learn from local knowledge. The result will be a sustainable and regenerative project that most neighbors will be able to copy. The campus will be a living classroom for anyone who wants to replicate the methodology.

The campus will be built in a rural community which is currently under great urban development pressure that is driving farmers off their land. If the land is being cleared, access to water is being compromised, and insecurity is rising. The project engages with its neighbors in several ways: a storytelling project raises local identity, open-day events promote on-site food production, and system regeneration – and aims to deliver this via local talent, local materials, accessible technologies and at a cost no greater than USD 400/m².

Any community must expand itself by sharing its physical boundaries, it must expand itself by sharing its boundaries, expanding the reach of sustainable development. This campus must not end at the building itself, the project is based on local materials and artisanal skills, complementing it with solutions that support the learning process of the students. The learning spaces are open to the environment to encourage observation, learning, and creativity.

Further authors
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Acknowledgement
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