The UCSD Community Stations:
From Hospitality to Infrastructures of Inclusion

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Abstract
Ravaged by war, persecution and poverty immigrants have immediate needs of food and water, medicine and shelter. Responding to these needs is the appropriate response of an ethical society. But needs become more complex over time, and hospitality is no longer adequate for building an inclusive society. We need to transform the city into an infrastructure of inclusion and integration, and this demands transformation in the social and spatial arrangements of the host city. We are seeking to advance this agenda through the UCSD Community Stations, a network of field hubs located in immigrant neighborhoods across the San Diego-Tijuana border region, where research, teaching and service are done collaboratively with community-activist partners. We believe that communities and universities can be meaningful partners to co-develop inclusive public spaces, where the construction of citizenship can be mobilized through cultural action.

Our work has forwarded the San Diego-Tijuana border region as a global laboratory for engaging the central challenges of urbanization today: deepening social and economic inequality, dramatic migratory shifts, urban informality, climate change, the decline of public thinking, and an increasingly 'walled world'. Now that this zone has become the main site of arrival for people seeking asylum from Central American violence and poverty, and a lighting rod for American nativism and hatred, geopolitics has once more turned intensely local.

During the last years, we have been telling a very different story about the border, declaring it as a site of urban and political creativity from which to disrupt our conventional understanding of belonging, identity and citizenship.

It is urgent today to reassert a global ethical commitment to the 'stranger in distress'. Typically the very first site of contact between the nation and the other is *the host city*. *Hospitality* is the essential first gesture, the charitable opening moment in creating a more inclusive and welcoming society, when the immigrant arrives. Ravaged by war, persecution and poverty immigrants have immediate needs of food and water, medicine and shelter. Responding to these needs is the appropriate response of an ethical society. But needs become more complex over time, and hospitality is no longer adequate for building an inclusive society. We need to transform the city into an infrastructure of inclusion and integration, and this demands transformation in the social and spatial arrangements of the host city. Inclusivity means integrating the immigrant and her children into the social, economic and political realities of the city, creating spaces for meaningful participation in civic life, and opportunities for education, as well as psychological and spiritual health. Real inclusion is more than a hospitable embrace; it is a process through which we ourselves transform alongside the other.

In our practice, we design the protocols that anticipate building. Besides designing 'things,' architects can design civic processes, modes of participation and urban pedagogy. Typically, as architects, we receive a client's brief, a program and a budget to execute building. We have been interested instead in designing the client, the brief, and the constituencies that

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rally collaboratively behind that brief and the shared economies to execute it. In the last years, we have committed to mobilizing simultaneous interventions into normative, institutional and spatial processes in the city, pushing architecture and urban planning, art and the humanities to engage more imaginatively in the challenges of urban development today. It is not enough to camouflage, with hyper-aesthetics and forms of beautification, the exclusionary politics and economics of urban development. It is not buildings but the fundamental reorganization of socioeconomic relations that must motivate the expansion of democratization and urbanization.

Inspired by the radical pedagogy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, we believe that civic education in public space is among the most important sites of intervention of our time. Freire argued that dialogue and pedagogy are the most effective strategies for changing hearts and minds, no matter how difficult and impenetrable the culture of dissention and violence might be. Critical spatial practices can play an essential role in shaping the future of the city, helping to unleash the electoral power of young, immigrant and minority communities across our cities. It is urgent to restore the linkages between government, social networks, and cultural institutions to reconstruct a new civic imagination. We believe that urban pedagogy – the transfer of urban knowledge across governments and communities – is the key to constructing a more inclusive urbanization.

We have become dissatisfied in recent years with the uptick of ephemeral acts of resistance, and short term artistic and cultural interventions in our own region, that dip in and out of the conflict. The energy that produces them quickly dissipates, and leaves little trace. We have been arguing for a more rooted infrastructure of partnerships that are spatialized through a network of public spaces that educate, taking a longer view of resistance, strategic thinking and anticipatory planning.

We have designed the UCSD Community Stations as a network of four field hubs located in disadvantaged immigrant neighborhoods across the San Diego-Tijuana border region, where research, teaching and service are done collaboratively with community-activist partners. We believe that communities and univer-

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sities can be meaningful partners to challenge social and economic inequality, and to co-develop inclusive public spaces, where the construction of citizenship can be mobilized through cultural action. We are rethinking public space beyond beautification. Public spaces must be more than physical amenities for leisure and consumption, but infused with the protocols, funding and tools to increase political capacities in immigrant communities.

Each Community Station operates as a civic classroom that is designed, funded, managed and programmed

by UC San Diego researchers and a community-based non-profit. Each has its own unique mission, projects, and research agenda, designed collaboratively between university and neighborhood-based social-agencies. The UCSD Community Stations are also a model of shared urban intervention. We have discovered that the university's social capital, programmatic capacity and economic power become leverage for our community partners as they develop their own infrastructure, housing and public space. This is what we mean by rearranging the logics by which the host city is orga-

nized: shifting surplus value from the private to the public, enabling marginalized communities to control their own resources.

This model of shared urban development can be illustrated with three examples across our Community Stations network:

We are co-developing the *UCSD-EarthLab Community Station* with the environmental justice NGO, Groundwork-San Diego, to advance K-12 environmental literacy and participatory climate action in the underserved southeast San Diego neighborhoods of Encanto. The San Diego Unified School District granted us a 4-acre vacant parcel to co-develop our station into an *open air climate action park*, to support the 6 public schools that surround the site. The District has committed school-bond funding for the capital project, while UC San Diego has committed resources toward programming, which will be designed collaboratively between the university, the District and the NGO.

We recently began construction of our *UCSD-CASA Community Station* in collaboration with the NGO Casa Familiar, located in the border neighborhood of San Ysidro. This station was co-developed through a hybrid economic proforma: the university's leasing of space and investment in programming, matched by foundation grants, became equity for Casa Familiar to qualify for municipal housing subsidies. The Community Station lives inside of *Living Rooms at the Border*, a mixed-use affordable housing development, challenging the conventional affordable housing model where 'units' are left to their own devices. This project is a strategic relationship between social housing and a public space that educates. 10 units of housing are threaded to a set of small accessory buildings for social services; and a variety of cultural spaces, including a black box theater, recording studios, and a civic pavilion where neighborhood youth access higher education through arts and cultural activities.

In Tijuana we are co-developing two Community Stations with local agencies, both located in the informal settlement of Laureles, adjacent to the border wall. The UCSD-Divina Community Station, in collaboration with the NGO Divina Providencia, is a hybrid program that includes a small high school (the first in a settlement of 85,000 people), and the UCSD-Alacrán Community Station + Housing project is a mix of social,

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cultural and economic programs co-curated and fund-ed by UC San Diego and other local community-based agencies. Both projects collaborate with MECALUX, a local maquiladora with whom we have been working to adapt their lightweight metal systems into frame-works to support informal housing. The collaboration with MECALUX demonstrates that multinational facto-ries who profit at the edges of these slums can direct materials and subsidies to the vulnerable communi-ties from which they draw their labor.

The UCSD-Alacrán Community Station + Housing is being co-developed with Gustavo Banda Aceves, a Tijuana-based activist-pastor-economist. Over the past years he and his wife Zaida Guillen began sheltering hundreds of Haitian and Central American migrant-refugees after the City of Tijuana turned its back on them. What began in 2016 as a few small self-built structures evolved incrementally into a set of warehouses within which migrants assemble camping tents. We have designed a housing frame-work that will be infilled incrementally with the local labor of migrants, increasing housing capacity, and producing longer term solutions for families, with 24 family units embedded in a set of social and econom-ic programs. We want to demonstrate that shelter is not enough. Inclusive refugee housing must provide opportunities for human flourishing and productiv-ity. We are co-developing an economic incubator, a fabrication shop, a nursery, an industrial kitchen, along with inclusive cultural, social and educational programming.

This moment is fraught with fear and real danger for immigrant communities. In the Alacrán station, the immediate task is protecting these communities from public reprisal or outright political repression that violates the human rights and dignity of the most vulnerable people in our society. But the physical con-sequences of immigration on cities at a time of rapidly accelerating global migration should also prompt us to think spatially and programmatically about the protocols and policies that are necessary to move our thinking, from hospitality to urban inclusion in cities everywhere.

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