



Contemporary transversalities in architecture and urbanism: from materiality to epistemic identities

Transversalidades contemporáneas en la arquitectura y el urbanismo: de la materialidad a las identidades epistémicas

editorial

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We embark on the 15th year of the journal with editorial news from our home, the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Cuenca. In November 2025, we presented two collective works to the public, which were born out of an interest in situating the history, theory, and practice of architecture through the lenses of teaching, research, and community engagement. These works are intertwined by our Faculty's influence in Cuenca and southern Ecuador, and by the urgency of a chorus of Latin American schools seeking to rethink architectural education. These books would not have been possible without the backing of our authorities, the support of the UCuenca Press Editorial Center, and the dedication of our Faculty's Research Center alongside its technical and administrative team.

A work comprising 20 chapters by 33 authors and edited by Jiménez-Pacheco (2025a), *Un lugar con arquitectas y arquitectos* stems from the commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Cuenca. However, it stands not merely as a celebration, but as a reflexive exercise regarding the trajectory of one of the fundamental institutions for architectural production and urban development in Cuenca.



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The book weaves together the history and present of the Faculty through its body of professors, addressing everything from the historical foundations and scientific missions that molded the school to the contemporary challenges facing curricula in the age of artificial intelligence and digital expression. It is distinguished by a structure that encompasses institutional memory, the role of retired faculty, and a critical look toward the future of the profession, consolidating itself as a key document for understanding the evolution of architectural thought in southern Ecuador.

From Lima, within the context of the V Meeting of the Network of Latin American Architecture Schools and Faculties (REFAL), the work *1000 Páginas latinoamericanas. Reflexiones sobre la disciplina e interdisciplina en Arquitectura* was launched. This work features three volumes, 45 chapters, and the participation of nearly 100 authors from 13 schools across Latin America. The books, edited by Jiménez-Pacheco (2025b), came to fruition thanks to the support of REFAL and sister faculties in Lima (FAUA-UNI), Bogotá (FAU-UNAL), and São Paulo (Arquitectura-USCS).

This ambitious trilogy proposes a situated and plural perspective on the modes of production and teaching of architecture in Latin America, articulating tradition with the experimentation necessary for the challenges of the 21st century. Its chapters contribute to diverse fields of the discipline, such as theory, design, and architectural technology; the city and the territory; as well as critical pedagogy, architecture as a social practice, and innovation from our region.

Both open-access works consolidate the public university's dedication to democratizing knowledge and forging a robust, plural disciplinary identity. Furthermore, these books dialogue closely with the research lines of this journal, establishing the need for mutual reference between their contents.

In this direction, the 29th edition of *Estoa* presents itself to the international academic community as a rigorous compendium that not only documents the current state of research in architecture and urbanism but also challenges the traditional boundaries of our disciplines. In a historical moment where the climate crisis, urban inequities, and the search for regional identities converge, this edition of twenty-one articles offers profound methodological and theoretical answers. Through five thematic blocks, the authors weave a narrative that transits from the molecular scale of construction materials to the immateriality of architectural theory and pedagogy.

The search for comfort in construction

The first block addresses the urgency of rethinking materiality in light of environmental and social performance. The discussion commences with a critical examination of building envelopes in the tropics. Research by Cobeña-Loor and Moreira-Macías (2026) in Portoviejo establishes a vital comparison between Guadúa cane and concrete. Their finding, which positions Guadúa cane as a thermally superior solution compared to the inertia of concrete, not only vindicates vernacular knowledge but also underscores that thermal comfort depends intrinsically on conscious bioclimatic design.

Complementing this vision from a macro perspective, Vélez-Torres and Alvarado Palacios (2026) offer a systematic review of the life cycle of concrete and steel in Latin American social housing. By identifying the high carbon footprint of these predominant materials, the authors do not limit themselves to diagnosis; they propose a roadmap toward circularity and data governance, asserting that while technical feasibility exists (supplementary cementitious materials, recycled steel), effective implementation demands both political determination and legislative action.

Habitat, built heritage conservation, and climate resilience

The second thematic grouping transports us to the complexity of inhabiting the territory and the need to preserve our built memory against both climatic and anthropogenic threats. Ceballos-Ramos and Sierra-Moncada (2026) address the issue of neighborhoods of informal origin on the hillsides of Bogotá. Their methodological proposal is pragmatic and socially sensitive, advocating for controlled densification (three-story buildings) as a management strategy that benefits both owners and investors, avoiding displacement and improving habitability.

However, the contemporary habitat faces the challenge of the Urban Heat Island (UHI). González Meza et al. (2026), through their study in Puebla, Mexico, demonstrate how low-albedo materiality and the loss of green areas exacerbate this phenomenon. Their approach highlights the importance of environmental education and waste management as neighborhood mitigation strategies.

This climatic stress affects not only inhabitants but also the skin of our history. Lajo Cuno et al. (2026) present an innovative analysis of the impact of heat on the industrial heritage of the Peruvian highlands. Through thermography, they evidence how noble materials like wood and ignimbrite suffer accelerated deterioration, even altering urban pedestrian flows. In a similar vein of conservation, Herr and Rolón (2026) take us to the Adobe Route in Argentina. Their pathological characterization, based on the ICOMOS-ISCEAH glossary, reveals the constant tension between vernacular earthen techniques and the intrusion of industrialized materials, advocating for preservation strategies that integrate community criteria.

Urban ecologies and cultural landscapes

The journal advances toward a discussion on the symbiosis between nature and culture. Rey-Pérez et al. (2026) introduce the concept of “Low Intensity Complex Heritage Landscapes” through the case of Sancti Petri (Cádiz, Spain). This article is fundamental for understanding those environments where heritage is invisible to traditional regulations, requiring new cartographic and management tools for its stewardship. From southern Ecuador, Moncayo-Vega and Balcazar-Gallegos (2026) document the biocultural landscapes associated with horchata lojana in Ecuador. Their multi-scalar analysis reveals how the production of this medicinal drink configures the territory, creating a mosaic of gardens that are intrinsically a living heritage, warranting protection.

This nature-culture relationship is theorized by Zafer Küçük and Ciravoğlu (2026), who propose a “post-naturalist architecture”. Their systematic review invites the incorporation of non-human entities into design, expanding the ethical and aesthetic limits of the discipline toward deep ecology. In practice, this translates into the valuation of Cultural Ecosystem Services, as demonstrated by Quintero-Sandrea (2026) in the industrial context of El Tablazo, Venezuela, where green and coastal spaces act resiliently against petrochemical activity. Closing this block, Meignen-Martínez et al. (2026) illustrate the application of greenery in intermediate spaces in Barcelona, demonstrating with the cases of Turó de la Peira and Sants that vegetation is a structural tool for spatial cohesion and climate mitigation.

Urban studies and territorial dynamics

The fourth thematic axis focuses on the transformation of the city through data analysis and the observation of socioeconomic phenomena. Sanchez-Sepulveda et al. (2026) present “Acciona y Conecta”, a project that utilizes data science to quantify walkability and cyclability in Barcelona, offering a replicable methodology for evidence-based sustainable urban transformation. Meanwhile, Zami et al. (2026) establish a robust theoretical framework for the design of Smart Sustainable Urban Open Spaces (Smart-SUOS), identifying landscape and technological elements essential for quality of life.

The city is also a stage for economic and symbolic disputes. Aşçı Coşkun and Penpencioğlu (2026) use the case of Starbucks in Izmir to discuss the “one-dimensional city,” showing how global brands drive gentrification and reconfigure the built environment toward consumption. In parallel, Sarkar and Nag (2026) analyze the transformation of shopping malls in India, warning of the rupture of the traditional urban fabric in the face of modern typologies. Finally, Salas Velásquez (2026) addresses urban expansion in Cusco, exposing how normative variation and the misuse of communal management laws are fragmenting indigenous land for residential purposes, a critical phenomenon for Latin American peripheries.

Theory, history, and architecture education

The conclusion of this edition is dedicated to epistemological and historiographical reflection. Méndez (2026) performs a necessary act of historical justice by making visible the participation of Argentine female architects in competitions between 1947 and 1967, challenging the gender bias in official historiography and the press of that era. In the pedagogical realm, Silveyra Rosales (2026) criticizes teaching that is disconnected from design, advocating for a constructivist approach that links theory and practice to foster student autonomy. In a similar vein, Benavides-Alvarez and Revelo-Morales (2026) examine the dialectic between the local and the universal in architectural pedagogy, employing the mimesis and abstraction of Ecuadorian art as didactic strategies.

The validation of knowledge is the focus of Martínez-Osorio et al. (2026), who debate scientificity in creative disciplines. Their article is a call to legitimize project-based research and artistic practice as valid forms of rigorous knowledge production. Finally, Arnet-Callealta (2026) closes this edition with a potent reflection on Latin American architectural identity. Transiting from supermodernism to neotraditionality, the author defines identity parameters—from the Chilean landscape to Brazilian tropicalism—that consolidate the existence of a distinct Latin American condition in global architecture.

In this way, the publication of Estoa 29 proposes an interdisciplinary dialogue within an expanded architecture. From the technical validation of Guadúa cane to the vindication of women in history and the search for a plural and symbolic architectural space, these works demonstrate that architecture and urbanism are fields in constant redefinition, vital for facing the challenges of a transforming world.

Conflict of interest. The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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