The complexity of the metropolitan condition is a factor that the teaching of architecture tends to skip. Although it is easier to assess singular proposals in contexts with few constraints at play, this implies a lack in delivering the tools needed to deal with complexity. This academic project – a studio – combines these two approaches through exercises in which the massiveness is faced with an urban fragment.

If something characterizes the contemporary city is its metropolitan condition. Massive, intense, connected, fragmented and uneven: everything is metropolitan landscape. The large-scale nature of the city no longer relates to the plan’s utopian desire for the order, it has been replaced by a geography of spaces of intensity and density.

This fragmented, massive condition – characteristic of the metropolis – is one of the main challenges and conflicts for contemporary architecture. To act within this context, the self-referential, naive architectures of the isolated object are diluted, forcing to think about buildings with sufficient coherence and size to transform and rearticulate existing urban spaces.

Two decades ago, Rem Koolhaas stated that “beyond a certain scale, architecture acquires the properties of Bigness. […] only Bigness instigates the regime of complexity that mobilizes the full intelligence of architecture and its related fields” (Koolhaas, 1995). Although Koolhaas argued that the Bigness condition entailed the rupture of the context through the project, its size also gave birth to a new place, reassembling what it broke and giving a new meaning to what it maintained. In other words, making room to go from ‘Big’ to ‘Large’.

The concept of Bigness has been globally surpassed by a form of aggregation and superposition closer to Largeness, which forces the understanding
Subcentro / Sub-center
Plaza O’ Higgins, Viña del Mar
Alumna / Student
Diego Guerra

Subcentro / Sub-center
Tobalaba, Providencia, Santiago
Alumna / Student
Pedro Stekel
of the urban form as based on multiple aggregated projects. Such a viewpoint benefits an introductory studio on the urban project. It defines a basic pedagogy on urban design that introduces the student to the city’s large scale, forcing them to think of the urban form as a coherent whole that integrates buildings, collective space and diverse, dense and massive programs. At the same time, it shows the students the ideological, programmatic and formal tensions behind interventions on fragmented and incomplete metropolitan contexts, but also its strong potentials, proper of metropolitan sub-centers today. These are the conditions that enable exploration of high-density architectural strategies, hybrid programs and radical spatial reconfigurations of the environment. It’s about seeing the city as fragments able to recompose a pre-existing context while teaching to think architecture from its ability to transform the metropolitan archipelago. ARQ

LARGENESS

Equipo Docente / Professors: Luis Eduardo Bresciani L., Francisco Quintana, Nicolás Ureña, Juan Pablo Vázquez
Teaching Assistants: Pedro Pablo Contrucci, Valeria Muñoz y Begoña Linhe

Bibliografía / Bibliography

koolhaas, Rem. «Bigness or the problem of Large» en oma; koolhaas, Rem; Bruce mau s.m.i.xe. Nueva York: The Monacelli Press, 1995.
According to the 2017 Census, 66% of Chilean people live in metropolitan cities, understood as intercommunal cities with high levels of dispersion and spatial fragmentation.