

## **The Ownable City: Urban Strategies That Promote Identity**

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*The city of San Andrés Cholula has a strong cultural heritage which gives it an important historic character and at the same time allows citizens to establish a relationship with the urban surroundings. From the complex relationship between historic and modern aspects and rural and urban settings emerges a unique development promoting social diversity.*

*The focus of this investigation is the city's social and built environment and the development of urban strategies that promote identity while enhancing sense of place and community interaction.*

## About the Author

Alexandra Ramírez Stege, nicknamed *cholugringa* for her American heritage and *Cholulteca* upbringing, was raised bi-culturally in the city of San Pedro Cholula which exudes a strong influence on her work.

Daughter of an American English teacher and a Mexican business owner, her childhood was largely spent in the community of the San Pedro Cholula's market which forged her Mexican identity and brought her closer to popular folklore.

Her passion for the arts was influenced by her summer visits to the cities of Chicago and Milwaukee where she saw the work of architects like Mies van der Rohe, Daniel Burnham, Santiago Calatrava and Frank Lloyd Wright. These experiences, together with her travels to countries like China, Cambodia, Korea, Italy, Germany, France, Finland, Russia and Colombia, have nurtured her passion for Architecture, Art and Design.

Cultural contrasts and environmental psychology are issues that she often explores to understand her personal immersion in the disparity between rural and urban environments.

This dissertation paper is the result of the investigation conducted during her undergraduate studies in architecture at the Universidad de las Americas Puebla and was presented to attain her Bachelor's Degree.

Ramírez is a creative, versatile, committed and passionate architect who contemplates aesthetics, identity and functionality in every project she undertakes.

To S. E. A. M.

*"All the variety, all the charm, all the beauty of life is made up of light and shadow"*  
(Tolstoy)



## **Introduction**

San Andrés Cholula is a city with a strong cultural heritage which gives it an important historic character and, at the same time, allows individuals to establish a personal relationship with the space itself giving the city an ever changing and evolving quality that is determined by the citizens. Given this dual relationship between historic and modern aspects, we have witnessed the emergence of a unique urban development that promotes social diversity.

In San Andrés Cholula there is a tendency to differentiate between two main social groups: locals and foreigners. However, these groups have been gradually losing their distinctions due to urban expansion and social diversity. This phenomenon is a pattern, repeated worldwide, where people are returning to cities for economic reasons, in search of better jobs and a better quality of life.

One of the goals of this study is to better understand how the interaction of citizens within the urban realm has a direct impact on transforming the built environment. In this document I will detail several strategies that provide citizens with a closer relationship to the city and I will describe projects that are being developed locally to promote these new ideals.

The aim of this dissertation is to describe San Andrés Cholula's social environment and establish a set of design strategies both to serve the citizens' needs and also enhance their sense of community and heighten their identity within the urban realm.

I hope to prove that a need for the development of design strategies exists and can be implemented in San Andrés Cholula to improve the individual experience of space and relationship with the city.

How can we promote spaces for this diverse population? How can we develop a sense of community between a wide range of social groups? What is the importance of the reinforcement of individual identity within the urban realm?

These are some of the questions this investigation will try to answer.