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One Amongst Many: higher education institutions in an ecosystem of urban pedagogies

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ABSTRACT – One Amongst Many: higher education institutions in an ecosystem of urban pedagogies. This paper explores how and why pedagogues within universities can and need to work as ‘one amongst many’ to advance critical pedagogies for urban equality. The discussion draws on two contrasting experiences: the networked schools of the Habitat International Coalition in Latin America (HIC-AL) – a coalition of civil society organizations, social movements and universities working in defense of habitat-related human rights – and the co-learning processes with housing rights activists activated by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) – a national education institution committed to the equitable, sustainable and efficient transformation of Indian settlements. Both experiences place emphasis on crafting critical pedagogies that seek to fundamentally disrupt, re-frame and re-position institutional relations of knowledges and learning practices, while advancing capacities for transformative urban change. The analysis demonstrates how epistemic injustices – often proliferated in and by higher education institutions – can be counteracted, and why fostering epistemic justice requires re-positioning universities as one amongst many in a wider ecosystem of urban pedagogies, in open and productive dialogue with new institutional forms that Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines as the ‘pluriversity’ and the ‘subversity’.

Keywords: Epistemic Injustice. Urban Planning. Critical Pedagogy. Pluriversity and Subversity. Social Movements.

RESUMO – Um Entre Muitos: instituições de ensino superior em um ecossistema de pedagogias urbanas. Este artigo examina como e por que os educadores das universidades podem e precisam trabalhar como ‘um entre muitos’ para propor pedagogias críticas para a igualdade urbana. A discussão está embasada em duas experiências distintas: as escolas em rede da *Habitat International Coalition* América Latina (HIC-AL) – uma coalizão de organizações da sociedade civil, movimentos sociais e universidades que trabalham pela defesa de direitos humanos relacionados à moradia – e os processos de coaprendizagem com ativistas pelos direitos à moradia facilitados pelo *Indian Institute for Human Settlements* (IIHS) – uma instituição educacional nacional comprometida com a transformação igualitária, sustentável e eficiente dos assentamentos na Índia. Ambas as experiências enfatizam a criação de pedagogias críticas que

procuram fundamentalmente romper, reformular e reposicionar relações institucionais de saberes e práticas de aprendizagem ao propor capacidades para uma transformação urbana transformadora. A análise demonstra como as injustiças epistêmicas – muitas vezes proliferadas em e por instituições de ensino superior – podem ser neutralizadas e porque promover a justiça epistêmica exige o reposicionamento das universidades como uma contra muitas em um ecossistema mais amplo de pedagogias urbanas, em diálogo aberto e produtivo com novas formas institucionais, definidas por Boaventura de Sousa Santos como a ‘pluriversidade’ e a ‘subversidade’.

Palavras-chave: **Injustiça Epistêmica. Planejamento Urbano. Pedagogia Crítica. Pluriversidade e Subversidade. Movimentos Sociais.**

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEI) are widely considered critical actors for addressing current challenges of urbanization and increasing inequality in the global South, an aspiration based on the role of the university as a producer and broker of knowledge for the public good, striving towards real-world impact, as well as academic excellence (Addie, 2019; Swartz et al., 2019). In the field of urban planning education, institutional arrangements of teaching, practice and research come together in various constellations, including collaborative studios and learning alliances, where learners gain planning experience as they co-produce knowledge with grounded communities of practice. Conceptually, many of these efforts rooted in Southern urban theory bear the potential of contributing to an ‘urban turn’ in critical pedagogy, a field that defines the architecture of learning as a political and moral practice (Giroux, 2011), stimulating critical thinking and reflective practice about how cities are read, understood, inhabited and shaped (McFarlane, 2011). However, in pedagogic practice, siloed understandings of disciplines, institutions and professions, and the hierarchies in city-making processes they represent, bring about significant tensions that inhibit critical urban learning and tend to reinforce or exacerbate hegemonic Western, colonial and exclusionary epistemologies of the urban (Watson; Odendaal, 2013; Wesely; Allen, 2019).

This paper addresses these tensions, drawing from three interconnected fields of inquiry: firstly, epistemic injustices in the context of the shifting locus of urbanization to the global South and the multiplicity of knowledges that are activated and mobilized in informal and popular urban development processes; secondly, the roles of HEIs in the global South in co-producing and brokering knowledges, and alternatives for pluralizing and unsettling the imaginary of the *university*; and, thirdly, the contribution of critical pedagogies for urban change to such endeavors. These three fields are brought into conversation through two contrasting experiences: the networked schools of Habitat International Coalition - Latin America (HIC-AL) as well as the co-learning workshops with housing rights activists at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements.

The Habitat International Coalition (HIC) is a global coalition that brings together more than 350 civil society organizations, research institutions and academia, social movements and NGOs working collectively for the realization of habitat-related human rights. The coalition has a nimble operational structure, and is governed by its Members and their advocacy and pedagogic strategies. Established in 1976, HIC has since been an active agent from local to international levels in making visible, producing and defending habitat rights for all (Habitat International Coalition, 2018). A distinct characteristic of HIC in the Latin American region – HIC-AL¹ – is the explicit vocation to work through multiple networked, yet autonomous schools (Wesely et al., 2021). These schools are an umbrella for a diversity of learning experiences run by individuals and groups of Members, such as schools of cooperativism, schools of community leaders, and schools of citizenship, among others. HIC-AL schools are networked and held together by the principles and practices which the Coalition commits to (Habitat International Coalition, 2018; Wesely et al. 2021).

The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS²) is a national education institution committed to addressing urbanization challenges in India and enable sustainable urban transformations at scale. Founded in 2008 with intellectual and financial contributions by a group of eminent Indians from all walks of life, the IIHS's vision revolves around training a new generation of urban professionals through the delivery of a set of new degrees in Urban Practice as well as undertaking interdisciplinary research and practice to help build new knowledge. The institute is currently structured around four core programs: Academics; Research; Practice; Capacity Building. Interdisciplinarity is at the center of all programs at IIHS, aimed at institutionally breaking the limitations of the one-department-one-discipline model of the university – the prevalent education system in India – to create new cultures of teaching, research and practice. In this paper, we discuss one of the pedagogic experiences of IIHS: its ongoing engagement with housing rights activists working in different parts of the country.

This paper uses Caldeira's (2017) juxtaposition of contrasting experiences as a method to ask: How do HIC-AL's and IIHS's pedagogic experiences challenge epistemic and institutional tensions in their respective contexts? In answering, we focus specifically on the contextual embeddedness, potentials and challenges of these experiences to disrupt, re-frame and re-position institutional articulations of the multiple knowledges and learning practices that make the 'urban'.

The HIC-AL analysis is based on a literature review which synthesized a large number of published and internal reports. Empirically, it draws from remote and in-person fieldwork conducted since June 2019, which includes in-depth conversations with 21 HIC-AL Members, coordinators and affiliates in nine countries and, in some cases, participant observation of the schools. In this paper, we analyze particularly those schools which are run by, or in collaboration with, university Members of HIC-AL. The IIHS analysis is based on two of the authors' participa-

tion in the design and delivery of these co-learning workshops. In addition to personal accounts and reflections, the analysis draws from process documentation, workshop archives, video testimonials, oral reflections of activists as well as discussions with other researchers, directly involved in these workshops and/or other pedagogic experiences at IIHS. All authors are researchers in the Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality program, which provides a platform for bringing these two experiences into a comparative conversation.

The following sections outline key debates in and across the three aforementioned areas of inquiry: epistemic injustice in urbanism and urban planning in the global South, alternative roles of higher education institutions, and critical pedagogies for urban change.

Epistemic Injustice in the Urban Global South

Urbanism and urban planning in the global South have long been sites of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), manifested, for example, in the structural marginalization of, and credibility deficit given to, informal urban dwellers in their capacities as knowers of their own reality (testimonial justice) and in social and institutional inability to respond effectively to their experiences (hermeneutical injustice). This has been partly attributed to the dominance of planning cultures and professional planning education in Southern contexts, which are largely rooted in colonial legacies (UN-Habitat, 2009; Watson, 2011). Aggravated by the shift in the locus of urbanization to the global South, the relevance and sheer representativeness of dominant urban planning theories has come under intensified scrutiny over the last decade. Several calls have been made to theorize from the South and from practice (Parnell; Pieterse; Watson, 2009; Parnell; Robinson, 2012; Watson, 2009) and to decolonize the education of future urban practitioners (Watson; Odendaal, 2013). Making a case for expanding a vocabulary of Southern urban practice, Bhan (2019) argues that coming from unrooted disciplinary education, urban practitioners often struggle to articulate knowledge prevalent in their particular forms of practice. Furthermore, he contends that urban practice itself is too narrowly defined and interpreted, reinforcing the hierarchy and segmentation of practitioners and their modes of practice. This, he suggests, results in known things across various modes of practice missing from disciplinary canons that dominate professional practice (Bhan, 2019).

Alongside calls to decenter urban theory, there has also been an emphasis on knowledge co-production, which foregrounds the need for recognizing multiple holders of knowledge in their capacities and agendas to articulate, negotiate and co-produce ways of understanding and acting upon urban change that truly advance more inclusive urban agendas. However, Mitlin et al. (2019) argue that co-production faces significant challenges, particularly in addressing the unequal power relations and status between academics and non-academics, suggest-

ing that academics often remain insufficiently self-critical of power dynamics, thus, unwillingly reinforcing testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. What requires further elaboration in this debate is a discussion on the underpinning pedagogies deployed to co-learn the city, as highlighted by Allen, Lambert and Yap (2018) and McFarlane (2018). In addition to the familiar questions of 'what counts as knowledge?' or 'whose knowledge counts?', McFarlane (2018, p. 323-324) suggests that urban researchers and planners need to interrogate "who [they] learn from, with, for what ends and under what conditions of power and inclusion". Allen, Lambert and Yap (2018) argue that we also need to critically address questions of 'where', 'how' and 'why' we co-learn the city. In this regard, the concept of epistemic injustice provides a useful lens to highlight fundamental issues of power and ethics in urban pedagogy in the global South (Allen; Wesely, 2020; Boni; Velasco, 2019), forcing us to think critically about whose and how knowledge is produced, translated, shared and appropriated in learning processes and with what outcomes.

In looking at how epistemic injustices can either be challenged or reproduced in Southern urban theory, practice and pedagogy, the following discussion unpacks the roles that universities play as one of many producers and brokers of knowledge and their potential to co-generate and transform urban learning practices.

Beyond Enlightenment: alternative roles of higher education institutions

Over the last century, urban disciplines have been institutionalized at universities in response to increasing levels of urbanization and associated demands to professionalize the sector, as manifested in the proliferation of degrees in urban planning, urban design and urban studies, amongst others (Davoudi; Pendlebury 2010). With the intention to facilitate the production and brokerage of knowledge, and to build capacities to shape an increasingly urban world, the university relies on several functions, such as teaching or training, research, practice, consultancy, advocacy and community outreach. As a site of higher education, the university holds 'institutional capabilities' for contesting inequalities through articulated values, a portfolio of practices and spaces of opportunity (Frediani et al., 2020). However, long-standing calls to decolonize the university highlight how it rather remains a site of embedded power that still today reinforces dominant Western and colonial epistemologies. In other words, the university actively creates 'others' and furthers the reproduction of epistemic injustices through three parallel, but separate projects (Boidin; Cohen; Grosfoguel, 2012; Santos, 2018). First, through the creation of disciplinary silos with rational, scientific or technological hierarchies. Second, by failing to acknowledge and counteract what is systemically unheard through colonial or patriarchal oppressive frames. Third, through the university's relationship with contemporary capitalism as a pedagogy, hence, as an

entity within a political economy that valorizes knowledge recognized by the ‘market’ (Giroux, 2003; Santos, 2018).

Advocating for alternate ways of thinking and practice, Santos (2018) calls for closer and critical attention to the collective and performative ‘epistemologies of the South’, located within “*the production and validation of knowledges anchored in experiences of resistance*” (Santos, 2018, p. 4). He questions the Eurocentric Kantian-Humboldtian model of the university that valorizes a singular form of knowledge and suggests the concept of a ‘polyphonic’ university. As the term suggests, the polyphonic university recognizes an ‘ecology of knowledges’ and “*exercises its commitment in a pluralistic way, not just in terms of substantive contents, but also in terms of institutional and organizational terms*” (Santos, 2018, p. 277). Furthermore, Santos argues that the polyphonic university can be actualized through two forms: the ‘pluriversity’ and the ‘subversity’ (Santos, 2018). The pluriversity is located within existing institutional structures, with possibilities to reform and decolonize the institution of the university from within. Discussions on the pluriversity include the inter-connections across its various institutional functions of teaching, research and practice, and a range of methods that recognize diverse knowledges and positionalities, feeding back into institutional spaces (Martinez-Vargas, 2020). The subversity, on the other hand, operates as a pedagogical space outside conventional institutional boundaries, for example through social movements, premised through a ‘pedagogy of conflict’ (Santos, 2018, p. 281). The subversity locates the university as one of several actors and one among several sites of power, and recognizes it for its ‘*counterhegemonic use*’ - subversively intervening in its conventional workings as a broker and producer of knowledge (Santos, 2018).

The debates and imaginations of the polyphonic university speak to the recognition of diverse knowledges, making the case for pluralizing the sites where knowledge is created, articulated, revealed and embodied. Connecting this argument to the urban realm, this resonates with the previous discussions on ‘learning the city’ (McFarlane, 2011), knowledge co-production in urban practice, research and pedagogy (Mitlin, 2008; Mitlin, et al., 2019), co-learning as a critical practice (Allen; Lambert; Yap, 2018) and the relationship of universities and activism as an urban practice (Frediani et al. 2020).

Critical Pedagogies for Urban Change

The field of critical pedagogy, as an explicitly political and moral practice (Giroux, 2011), has been a key space through which higher education institutions, social movements and other urban actors provoke critical consciousness and contest epistemic injustices in urbanism in the global South. Although Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) was developed in the context of rural peasants’ struggles and liberation theology in Brazil, it has long been challenged to open up to

different geographies and contemporary struggles (Tarlau, 2014). Several scholars, for example, have explored how critical pedagogy and civic education have stimulated the agency of learners in the context of disadvantaged urban neighborhoods or urban social groups of the US (Kirk et al., 2007, Zápotočná, 2012). In higher education, progressive urban planning degrees across the global South and North, have been engaging in grounded learning experiences, following problem-posing approaches such as studios, community engagements, and practica, to critically reflect and act on contextually specific urban challenges (Allen; Lambert; Yap, 2018; Watson; Odendaal, 2013).

Moreover, critical pedagogies have seen an expansion to intersectional rather than a single social class understanding of oppressed learners (Lynn, 2004). Black, feminist and indigenous scholars have pluralized notions of the oppressed in relation to structural, patriarchal domination (Gore, 1993; hooks, 2003). This resonates with the work of many scholars in Latin America (see, for example, Marzioni, 2012 as well as Ortiz Ocaña; Arias López, 2018), where, in addition, critical pedagogy has a long history of supporting the articulation of popular struggles and developing the agency of social movements and typically marginalized urban dwellers fighting for their rights to housing and to the city (Kane, 2012).

The discussion that follows seeks to illustrate and compare the experiences of HIC-AL and IIHS to elucidate how their critical pedagogies for urban change disrupt, re-frame and re-position institutional relations of knowledges and learning practices, contributing to advance ideas and practices of the pluriversity and subversity.

Networked Schools of HIC-AL

HIC-AL schools are run by HIC Members, friends and allies with a high degree of autonomy, as the Coalition prioritizes foregrounding and strengthening the agency of the social forces supported by its Members. The schools are characterized by a high heterogeneity in terms of learners and pedagogues (community leaders, cooperativist members, youth, women's groups and local government officials, amongst others), as well as a commitment to horizontal, counter-hegemonic learning. Pluralistic perspectives on knowledge (co-)production are central to these pedagogic experiences, often involving higher education institutions and academics as one of many actors. Moreover – aligning with Freire's notion of the 'movement as a school' (1991, apud Kane, 2012) – HIC-AL schools are not one institution, but rather an assemblage of highly diverse pedagogic practices that place equal value on fostering critical ways of doing and knowing (*saberes y haceres*).

These heterogeneities mean that HIC-AL schools do not take place in a unique and defined institutional space, such as the university, but permeate multiple sites of learning, including neighborhoods, online platforms, community centers, and in some instances also formal edu-

cation sites. Moreover, schools do not follow a pre-defined, commonly agreed curriculum. Rather, the curriculum is open, oftentimes collectively developed 'on-the-go', guided by the Coalition's principles, and fundamentally responsive to the particular political, economic, social, cultural and ecological challenges faced by each school.

Nevertheless, what most schools – their pedagogies and rationales – have in common is their capacity to be responsive to epistemic and institutional tensions through pedagogic strategies that are analyzed through concrete experiences in the following paragraphs.

Strengthening the recognition of popular habitat practices in higher education

The Taller de Vivienda (housing workshop) at the public Autonomous University of Mexico-Xochimilco (UAM-X) is an illustrative example of an integrated and holistic approach to research, teaching and public engagement to advance habitat-related rights. Situating itself along the tension between professional planning practices and the popular housing practices that are the dominant mode of urban and rural development across Mexico, its fundamental objective "is to form professionals who support processes that tackle socially relevant problems, [through a system of teaching that] is one of learning through resolving" (Academic interview, 11 December 2019).

Since its foundation in 1974, UAM-X adopted and further developed the so-called 'Sistema Modular' (Modular System), as a counter-hegemonic strategy to prevailing siloed and disciplinary organizational and pedagogic structures in universities and the epistemic tensions these provoke – e.g. between local and academic knowledges, between social and natural sciences, amongst others. The Modular System is organized around departments and multi-disciplinary research groups rather than disciplinary faculties, applying a research-based pedagogy to pose, reframe and potentially solve problems with societal relevance throughout the curriculum (Arbesú García; Ortega Esparza, 2006).

The Taller de Vivienda emerged after Mexico's earthquake in 1985 to first investigate and respond to immediate housing demands and, later, to inform the long-term, just reconstruction of affected popular neighborhoods. Its research-based, problem-posing pedagogy aims to bridge the gap between academic education and practice siloes, by provoking thinking and action through urban-territorial challenges that demand inter- and transdisciplinary responses (Academic interview, 11 December 2019). This means that students and pedagogues from different disciplines work together with affected local dwellers to address specific housing challenges based on their lived experiences. The latter range from insufficient indoor ventilation to lack of adequate public space, thus requiring responses from the perspectives of health, architecture and design, environment, public policy and others. Thereby, this pedagogy refuses to organize education along themes or subjects; and breaks up the assumed linearity of learning from theory to praxis.

Through iterative individual and collective reflections along the process, it makes explicit the positionality of students, residents, pedagogues and others within the political economy of knowledges actively operating around habitat issues (Arbesú García; Ortega Esparza, 2006). Another important element is the notion of the *investigador/a-docente*, hence, the pedagogue-researcher as an intrinsically linked role. Teaching and learning are always benefitting from, and contributing to, specific research projects, and students and alumni often transition into research projects after their participation in initial workshops. The Taller de Vivienda has long-lasting engagement with and in popular neighborhoods, where learners within HEIs co-produce pathways to housing solutions in partnership with local residents. Unlike other university-driven experiences, critical engagement with practice happens from the outset of the degrees, thereby supporting learners continuously to build professional skills and capacities to become one of many actors in development planning. Simultaneously, popular knowledges and practices related to habitat rights become visible and validated in the formal space of the university in different ways. This includes the content of the curriculum, the physical juxtapositions that bring the classroom to the community and vice versa, as well as the university's policy to increase access to tertiary education for students from popular neighborhoods. The latter is particularly noteworthy, as it nurtures the capacity of community members to transform their own reality, while providing impetus for students to learn from each other and recognize the knowledges they bring to a common learning space (Academic interview, 11 December 2019).

Fostering pluralistic knowledges and intersectional perspectives

Another key epistemic tension is tackled by making visible, valorizing and intersecting indigenous and feminist knowledges around habitat issues, both by those who draw their knowledge from direct experience and those who are situated within formal institutions. Several schools reported the simultaneous credibility deficit given to communities' experiential knowledge, and epistemic excesses of institutional or professional knowledge that exacerbates testimonial injustices, manifesting, for instance, through the imprint of neoliberal housing policies on popular housing imaginaries. In the small town of San Martín de los Andes, Argentina, a participatory design-process comprising 42 workshops on themes such as energy autonomy and land restitution, was started in 2011 with the NGO Vecinos sin Techos, and the Indigenous Comunidad Curruhuinca Mapuche, facilitated by the National University of Córdoba. Their pedagogic approach explicitly addressed the deeply entrenched stigmatization of the indigenous community and its socio-spatial manifestations, seeking to nurture pluralistic and synergistic perspectives through so-called *espacios de interaprendizaje cultural* (spaces of cultural inter-learning) (Academic interview, 29 November 2019).

This pedagogy is built on the explicit juxtaposition and articulation of professional technical and local knowledges with the intention of cross-fertilizing ideas and practices. That is, collectively identifying and validating the existing knowledges of the indigenous community, low-income residents and professionals that are contributing to different aspects of inhabiting a neighborhood, and seeking to combine these different ways of knowing and doing (*saberes y haceres*) to generate solutions and leverage political advocacy for pressing housing issues and more structural ones. In this process, the use of participatory methods such as role plays and visioning exercises, built capacities for critical thinking and practice by nurturing imaginaries of future ways of conviviality, while also putting learners in each other's shoes (Academic interview, 29 November 2019). This well-documented and widely recognized participatory process was generative to an intersectional understanding of identities, and the formation of the so-called *Barrio Intercultural Sustentable-Comunidad del Cambio* (Intercultural Sustainable Neighborhood-Community of Change), which fundamentally reshaped hierarchies in knowledge and practice. The experience has been consolidated conceptually, methodologically, and institutionally in a certified Diploma course called *Diseño Participativo Sustentable del Hábitat* (Participatory Sustainable Habitat Design), coordinated by the National University in Córdoba, Argentina and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Enet; Romero, 2019). In this program, the inhabitants of Barrio Intercultural are part of the team of pedagogues – dialoguing, and critically analyzing their experiences to foster learning and collective agency across indigenous, intercultural, habitat struggles in Latin America.

Carving spaces for the pluriversity and subversity

The previous paragraphs have shown different pedagogic avenues to carve space for the pluriversity and subversity, by bringing *saberes y haceres* of the social production and management of habitat to universities and exposing learners to popular habitat struggles that usually do not form part of formal curricula of built environment professions. At the same time, other HIC-AL schools contest neoliberal HEI education models and capitalist pedagogies by developing further models of the subversity, such as the Centro Educativo Integral Autogestionario (CEIA) established by the Argentinian Movement of Occupants and Tenants (MOI) or the school of community lawyers of the Civil Association for Equality and Justice (ACIJ).

The former experience refers to an autonomous educational institution run by cooperatives, which includes a nursery, two popular baccalaureates, a library and a training center (Habitat International Coalition, 2018; Rodríguez, 2013). The latter comprises a 3-month long program for women and men living in informal settlements, in which rights-based concepts and theories (such as the right to the city and human rights) as well as hands-on practices (formulating demands for

public services to authorities and making campaigns) are discussed and developed through a series of workshops (NGO representative, Personal communication, 5 June 2021). Building the capacities of community lawyers to participate in urban development processes to claim their rights presents a stark rupture to the prevalent imaginary of the university-educated, professional lawyer. Importantly, the program was developed in collaboration with, and physically run at, the Faculty of Law of the University of Buenos Aires. The physical site of learning is remarkable and counterhegemonic insofar as the Faculty is spatially adjacent and overlooking, yet in stark socio-economic contrast and without much contact to, Villa Retiro, a neighborhood whose community representatives gained access to the HEI campus for the first time thanks to the school. Moreover, professionally-trained lawyers from the Faculty are only one amongst many pedagogues teaching in this course at the university, alongside with local NGO and community members (NGO representative, Personal communication, 5 June 2021).

Pedagogic strategies and tactics for contesting testimonial and hermeneutical injustices

The HIC-AL pedagogies hold several avenues for addressing testimonial injustices. Many schools start from people's lived experiences and problems associated with their habitat on a small scale but in their full complexity. For example, experiential knowledges based on collective neighborhood organization, navigating bureaucratic processes, legal rights and mechanisms to challenge evictions, or women's experience of harassment in public spaces are, among others, acknowledged and valued in their collective impact. By discussing, reflecting and validating these experiences, the schools forge a dialogical relation across – rather than subordinating local experiences to other forms of professional knowledge. Moreover, HIC-AL schools operate on a basis of learning from '*haceres*' and '*saberes*', meaning that different ways of doing are inextricably linked to ways of knowing. Therefore, action does not become an afterthought or byproduct of learning but rather follows a Freirean relational and dialogic approach. For example, tenure security as a conceptual-theoretical proposal is linked from the onset to individual and collective political actions such as resisting evictions, strengthening cooperative and community-based housing models outside of markets, constructing buildings with artisanal techniques that are more resistant to extreme weather events, and making neighborhoods safe especially for women, girls and LGBTQ+ communities. One could argue that this relational, agency-activating pedagogic approach generates capacities to contest testimonial smothering – the decision of (oppressed) speakers to remain silent or adapt their testimony for fear of an audience that is not genuinely listening and rather is prone to manipulate or deny this testimony (Dotson, 2011).

The explicit aim of many HIC schools to pluralize knowledges and identities, such as in the case of the *Barrio Intercultural*, further

provokes a reframing of the positionality and responsibilities of different knowers and their individual and collective agency in shaping urban change. Stimulated by methods such as role plays and critical cartography, HIC-AL schools support shifting relations of dominance and traditional hierarchies that are oftentimes ingrained in the relation between popular habitat practices and professional knowledges, provoking a more nuanced and horizontal articulation and testimony between social movements and professionals, including academics.

The deeply structural nature of hermeneutical injustices makes them difficult to be pinpointed in the particular experiences of individual schools. However, at the network level, their shared vocabulary of the social production of habitat and human rights – which includes key commoning notions such as *'autogestión'*, habitat-related rights and cooperativism – provides an important vehicle to make popular experiences communicable, understandable, and understood. For instance, since its inception to support reconstruction efforts after the earthquake in 1985, UAM-X's Taller de Vivienda has brought together students and the inhabitants of popular neighborhoods to work collectively on housing issues, and thereby institutionalized popular knowledges and territorial struggles in the university across and beyond the curriculum. This approach to the *'formación'* as the holistic education of architecture and urban planning professionals contributes to hermeneutical resistance against the marketisation and commodification of land and housing by expanding and professionalizing a methodological, conceptual and practical vocabulary around alternatives of popular and collective housing that counter dominant discourses of exclusionary and elitist urban development.

Iterative processes of reflection and consolidation in networked learning

Many HIC-AL schools have operated for decades under challenging political contexts, such as transitions from dictatorship to democracy, constitutional changes or governance shifts to decentralization and municipal autonomy. The wide geographical reach, high diversity and longevity of HIC-AL schools brings about a rich opportunity for translocal and intergenerational learning. Hermeneutically, it hosts potential for an iterative, continuous updating of a shared vocabulary around the 'social production of habitat' and habitat-related rights that is sensitive to different contextual struggles fought by HIC-AL Members. Furthermore, HIC-AL is continuously consolidating and reflecting on its repertoire of pedagogies, with the possibility of creating further spaces of translocal co-learning. To this aim, HIC-AL has an established Capacity-Building Working Group, which brings together 61 pedagogues from seven countries in Latin America since 2013, working particularly on synthesizing and translating pedagogic experiences from social movements and CSOs into formal curricula. Over the years, this group has created the above-mentioned Diploma Course at the National Autono-

mous University of Mexico, based on the participatory design experience in San Martín de los Andes.

Recent shifts to online learning have been expanded due the COVID-19 pandemic, opening up further possibilities for virtual knowledge exchanges, in which the experiences of collective struggles are shared across the region with learners from various institutional and organizational backgrounds. An ongoing HIC initiative to develop 'co-learning spaces' across Latin America, Africa and the MENA regions seeks to continue this consolidation and expansion of networked learning within and beyond HIC-AL to advance the articulation of critical pedagogies with HIC Members, friends and allies globally.

Co-Learning with Housing Rights Activists in India

Over the years, IIHS has conducted a number of short to medium to long-term courses. We focus here on our ongoing engagement with housing rights activists working in different parts of the country. This experience is embedded in the IIHS's capacity building program that targets a wide spectrum of urban practitioners - including administrators, elected representatives, municipal engineers, planners, grassroots movements and activists. The collaboration had a modest beginning in 2015 with the running of a two-day workshop for activists on urban planning in India; and since then, it has evolved into a continued pedagogical experiment in co-learning. Operationalized primarily through workshops, this collaborative engagement is learner-centric, dialogical and incremental in its approach. At the time of writing this paper, a total of ten workshops, over a period of five years, have been conducted across four cities in India, with participation from approximately 80 activists and community workers, eight fellows enrolled in a 9-month fellowship at IIHS, and 15 academics and researchers at IIHS.

The need to engage with planning education

Many scholars have argued that planning education and, consequently, planning practices in India, produce unjust urban spaces, and perpetuate inequality and exclusion in cities (Mahadevia; Joshi, 2009; Mahadevia; Bhatia, 2018). Socio-economic realities of large sections of Indian urban society are unrecognized and unaddressed, while many are often actively marginalized through the use of outdated colonial planning instruments. In this context, this experience aims to engage with some of the tensions of planning education in India, which, on the whole, continues to remain exclusionary and exclusive.

While on paper, planning remains a participatory process in India, very few people have access to the knowledge and understanding of official planning processes. The 'professional' or 'expert' language of official plans still prevents citizen groups and activists from engaging with these processes meaningfully, thus determining who, in practice,

engages with transformative urban change through their tacit knowledge and everyday practices, including activism, social mobilization and advocacy. While the technical knowledge of urban planning does not reach citizens, the on-ground implications of the planning instruments do. Amidst growing focus on urbanization in India since the turn of the century, as development projects and evictions began to cite these plans, housing rights activists recognized this lack of understanding as a struggle. The demand for learning the rationale of master plans came in early 2015 from a collective of activists working on land and housing rights across the country, who felt an in-depth understanding of how official planning processes and outcomes work would be a useful addition to their bag of tools. At the end of our first workshop, one of the participants emphasized:

“We go to the streets, we bargain and we fight [...] we have done silent marches, we’ve done everything. But how to get the government to listen to us and work in collaboration. Today I go back with a tool [Master Plan]” (Video testimonial, 7 November 2015; translated from Hindi).

Through these engagements, we do not intend to suggest that formal planning knowledge and practices carry more weight and importance than lived knowledge and everyday practices. In reality, the majority of the Indian cities do not resemble their plans, however, as argued by Bhan (2013, p. 69) “[...] urban practitioners in a city like Delhi have no choice but to engage with the plan because precisely of the continuing relevance of its failure”. Designed in response to hermeneutical injustices, the intent of IIHS’s workshops is to strengthen and expand activists’ knowledge and vocabulary to contest epistemic injustices in urban planning. It is important to highlight that the technical vocabulary in itself does not ensure that the testimony is heard, however, it does allow for moments that unsettle assumptions of people as knowers, thus wielding them power. In a recent discussion, one of the participating activists from Indore shared an experience of how a community successfully defended their right to stay by citing their compliance with land use provisions in the city’s Master Plan (Academic interview, 4 March 2021). Among others, this example highlights one of the core intended outcomes of the activists workshops - to expand and diversify activists’ knowledge and skills to better manoeuvre between what Mirraftab (2009) calls ‘invented’ and ‘invited’ spaces of participation, ranging from protests to public consultations, to make claims on the city.

Making planning education accessible and strategic

Over the years, IIHS has explored many operational models for its workshops with activists and citizen groups – in partnership with NGOs, on our own, and as part of a research project KNOW – to identify and use key pedagogic devices incrementally, key features of which are discussed below.

Shifting the site(s) of learning: First and foremost, this experience stems from a recognition of activism as a mode of urban practice and

a productive site for knowledge exchange and co-learning. The initial workshop at IIHS Bangalore had participation from mostly senior activists who work with grassroots organizations and social movements in their own cities and states. Subsequent engagements became more context specific in collaboration with the participating activists. Land, housing and planning are state subjects in India, and laws and policies vary across states, making it critical to work at sub-national and city scales. The two locations where most workshops have been conducted include: Ranchi in Jharkhand, and Indore in Madhya Pradesh. These are not big metropolitan cities of India like Delhi and Mumbai, where most urban scholarship has focused so far. Running workshops with activists in these cities also meant that a lot more residents and community activists could participate without worrying about the time and costs of coming to IIHS headquarters in Bangalore. We complemented this learning experience with collaborative research in these cities to develop relevant and relatable content (Anand, 2017; Anand; Deb, 2017; YUVA; IIHS, 2019).

Layering and translating knowledges and the curriculum: The collaborative design and delivery of context-specific content meant doing things differently compared to a regular classroom. Most prominently, we had to overcome dichotomies in language, and ‘technical’ knowledge. This was challenging not because some of the activists did not understand English or technical terms, but because none of the academics and researchers had been exposed to planning in another language, in this case, Hindi. Thus, translation has become an important part of this pedagogic experiment across languages (from English to Hindi and vice versa in this case) and across codified and tacit forms of knowledges. It is important to highlight that here translation has a two-way intent, of both opening up the accessibility and comprehension, as well as challenging the implicit power official language holds. While all attempts are made to unpack and simplify concepts in Hindi, participants are also encouraged to become fluent in certain technical terms (e.g. land use categories, zoning, violations) in English to articulate their claims and strategies before officials in a language that is often used to intimidate and exclude citizens.

The workshops are designed to be interactive, introducing layers of knowledge through the sessions, in order to bring to the fore the plurality of knowledges held within the room. We start with participants’ lived experiences and overlay them with the planning context in their cities. The extensive use of games and exercises as pedagogic tools incrementally introduce capacities to manage and navigate complexity. Participants locate themselves and their settlements in the city and its Plan, and from there we dive into the contents and process of the Plan. Linking theory and practice, every workshop ends with a discussion on strategies for securing housing rights. These range from short to medium to long-term, based on the layering of participants’ needs, aspirations and experiences, as well as the planning and policy landscape in which they mobilize their claims. Multiple workshops are conducted in

each city to allow for continuous and reflective learning, and its consolidation over time.

Diversifying learners and pedagogues: As a core pedagogic principle of this approach, diversifying learners and pedagogues pushes the boundaries of assumed roles and implicit hierarchies in planning knowledge and practice. From translating and grounding the content to learning across experiences and rethinking the pedagogy, the series of workshops have also been an immense co-learning experience for us, academics and researchers at the IIHS. They have also been a space for us to parallelly engage with research, teaching, and practice, and collectively reflect upon planning processes and outcomes in India from these ground experiences, something that is rare in usual academic programs in India. By the third year into this engagement, we also introduced some of the fellows from our full-time nine-month Urban Fellows Programme as participants to these co-learning workshops. Thus, we now have three kinds of learners: activist and community learners; academic learners; and fellow learners, who bring their different backgrounds and experiences to these workshops.

Treating lived experience as the primary claim to expertise, we have attempted to create a non-hierarchical learning space where everyone is a learner, and everyone is a pedagogue. This allows all of us to learn from each other while reflecting upon our own limits of knowledge and lived experience. This is not to say that we have resolved all issues, such as power relations, that have been previously discussed in this space, but we are constantly trying to work on them by being aware of them. For instance, recruiting activists as ‘fellows of practice’ into IIHS (Bhan apud Frediani et al., 2020) has made it possible to institutionalize their position as practitioners and pedagogues. Similarly, owning up to our own limitations of local language and knowledge help us, to an extent, in not coming across as trainers or “experts”, but rather as co-learners who have much to learn from lived experiences. The process of co-facilitation and sharing of roles amongst academics, activists and fellows help create a horizontal learning space in the workshops. However, it also has its own set of dynamics based on age, experience and gender, as is with any mode of facilitation, which require further reflection as we continue with these workshops.

Future potentials and challenges of co-learning experience

While our current scale and reach is small, and it is early to gauge the long-term impacts of these workshops, this pedagogic experience holds the promise of and is already showing signs of opening up planning education and practice. Some activists who have been part of these workshops have started to run versions of these workshops on their own and develop their own toolkits (Academic interview, 14 January 2021). The idea of shared resources is central to running and multiplying these workshops. Outside this space, activists are also invited as faculty members for IIHS’s other short-term training workshops and the fellow-

ship program. These multi-way engagements with activists are critical in bringing different voices and knowledges into planning education and practice. Activists, academics and researchers have also been able to take learnings from this experience to other initiatives, such as a people's campaign around the Master Plan in Delhi called *Main Bhi Dilli*³.

This co-learning experience is not without its challenges, especially once we start thinking about scalability and long-term sustainability. For example, the issue of language and translation remains critical while thinking about the scalability and translocality of the workshops and resources. Thinking through what can travel and how, while maintaining the integrity of the workshops and associated pedagogic characteristics, is especially relevant in the context of the numerous regional languages in India. Another set of issues are linked to institutional resources and priorities. IIHS is a private institution, and so far, we have had the flexibility to incrementally develop these workshops, and fund them through different projects. While it is useful to have this engagement sit outside a single project, we still do not have a long-term home for this experience in the institution, triggering reflections about possibilities for institutionalizing these workshops to ensure their continuity even if people or projects at IIHS change. The fact that we are trying to root this pedagogy both inside and outside the institution also means that we must remain open to new topics and workshops, which are useful and relevant for our learners at the time, based on their changing situation and experiences on ground. These are not easy or straightforward processes to imagine or find resources for in a higher education institutional setting.

What can we learn from both experiences for addressing epistemic injustices through urban pedagogy?

Both pedagogical experiences highlight how higher education institutions are one amongst many actors in the urban realm, rather than authoritative knowledge producers and brokers. Inserting them into an 'ecosystem of knowledges' (Santos, 2018) reveals the necessity to re-negotiate their roles in producing, shaping and using their professional knowledge alongside more popular and experiential forms of knowledges held by urban dwellers, activists, civil society organizations and others. The pedagogic repercussions of this re-positioning are manifold, as this does not only require questioning whose knowledge counts, but how different knowledge holders – learners and pedagogues within and beyond HEI – come together and learn from each other. Moreover, how in testimonial terms, beliefs, knowledges and assertions of different actors and their relations are given credibility, and in hermeneutical terms, whose and which concepts and interpretative tropes make a social contribution to treat the urban as a political space. Thus, activating the roles of HEI within an ecosystem of knowledges requires an explicit attention to and in-depth valorization and engagement of the underpinning ecosystem of pedagogies.

Obvious, but still important to highlight, is how both pedagogic experiences contest the 'banking model of education' (Freire, 1970), whereby a knowledge holder deposits a singular knowledge into the brains of learners who are treated as empty vessels. Instead, HIC-AL and IIHS demonstrate how roles such as learners and pedagogues, lay-people and professionals are fundamentally questioned, blurred and juxtaposed with the purpose of strengthening intersectional positions, exchanging and validating pluralistic urban knowledges throughout the learning process. This goes beyond inviting activists or social movements as 'guest lecturers' into classrooms, or students visiting informal neighborhoods to study them and come up with solutions. Rather, such as in the experience of the Taller de Vivienda, problem-posing pedagogies are used to co-produce a transdisciplinary diagnosis of housing problems with grassroots movements and urban dwellers. In the experience of IIHS, activists are part of the contracted faculty at the Institute while academic and research staff have been one of many groups of learners.

Both experiences also rely on translocal learning tactics, by mobilizing pedagogic experiences across socio-spatial structures. In the experience of HIC-AL schools, particular attention is paid to networked and intergenerational learning, while the approach adopted by IIHS focuses on intra-and inter-city learning. Hence, the ecosystem of pedagogies gains temporal and socio-spatial dimensions, enabling dialogue across diverse forms and contexts of knowledges to reveal common values, principles and practices, as well as to make visible, confront and deliberate on paradoxes and tensions. It is this dialogue, and the space of iterative translation (McFarlane, 2011) across vocabularies and hierarchies of codified-and-tacit, English-and-regional languages, urban-peripheries-and-rural, disciplinary-and-lived experiences, which allows to build a shared vocabulary and diverse set of practices. The translocal approach of both experiences also highlights the role of collectives as networks and partnerships across individuals and institutions, such that emergent practices and pedagogies are collectively held, mediated and facilitated, sustained and travel further across time and regions through dialogue with others, shared resources, and continued processes of translation and cross sharing.

The analysis highlighted the potential of these experiences to contest epistemic injustice through the process of co-learning and co-production of knowledge, as well as through the crafting of alternative institutional relations. The orientation towards the 'social production of habitat' in HIC-AL schools and 'planning, housing and urban informality' in IIHS workshops is strategic to not only disrupt dominant discourses of 'how planning should be done', but to valorise already existing, alternative institutional relations and practices. In their current *avatar*, with multiple groups of learners in IIHS workshops, parallels can be drawn with collaborative studios or knowledge co-production more broadly where students and researchers work with the communities to produce knowledge and research. However, while there is a recognition of plural knowledges in all these initiatives, primarily address-

ing one form of epistemic injustice - i.e. making 'testimonial' relations between speaker and hearer more equal - the primary purpose of IIHS workshops is to build technical knowledge of activist learners in conjunction with their existing knowledge and experience.

Thus, the workshops give activists a vocabulary to read and comprehend plans, and to articulate and communicate their knowledge and strategies in a language that has historically been spoken only by professional planners and policymakers. For example, one of the modules in the IIHS workshops focuses on violations by the elite and violations carried out by the state to unpack informality as a mode of urbanization (Roy, 2005) rather than something that is only associated with the urban poor and often used to stigmatize, sideline, and threaten them. Hence, the social production of habitat and the planning vocabulary are both indicative of an approach that speaks directly to addressing hermeneutical injustices. This, in turn and over time, also has the potential of addressing testimonial injustice in broader urban planning and development processes. Through the experience of co-learning in the IIHS workshops and HIC-AL schools, sensibilities of learners and pedagogues have been developed to address testimonial and hermeneutical injustices in their own research, teaching and practice. For instance, as seen in Indore and through Main Bhi Dilli in Delhi, there is a shift in the way activists engage with the urban actors and processes in their contexts, strengthening their activism through strategic use of the planning instruments and their language to protect and make claims to the city. In the case of the Barrio Intercultural, the participatory process has triggered the self-identification of residents, who are not part of the indigenous community, as 'mestizos', and subsequently, led to nuanced reflections on their identities, ancestry and colonial history.

How does the mobilization of critical pedagogy and epistemic agency challenge and shift the role of higher education institutions?

In the pluralizing efforts of pedagogic experiences, it becomes important to be specific about the contributions and value added by university actors. One contribution by HIC-AL's university Members relates to their ability to accredit learning programs, which in turn, adds visibility and legitimacy, firstly, to the social production of habitat as an alternative mode of urban development, and, secondly, to the qualifications of urban learners who might not otherwise have access to formal (tertiary) education. This opens up possibilities for professionalizing urban knowledges and skills which – although widely and popularly practiced – are still considered fringe issues in wider academic debates on Southern urbanism. For example, the work with activists at IIHS not only benefits the activists themselves to strengthen their capacities and skills to engage with formal planning processes. It also demonstrates to the fellowship participants that activism can be a career path for professional planners.

Furthermore, universities are important actors in nurturing the dialogic relation between theory and practice that is of essence for critical pedagogy, going beyond purely experiential pedagogies. For example, HIC-AL's Working Group on Capacity Strengthening synthesizes the concepts, methods and practices developed across schools and theorizes from popular pedagogic practice to integrate these learning processes into formal educational spaces. Moreover, as we have shown elsewhere (Wesely; Allen, 2019), it cannot be denied that the majority of universities and planning education institutions are located in cities, giving universities a central responsibility and opportunity to become a strategic ally of (popular or informal) urban development. In the case of UAM-Xochimilco, this important public role was imprinted since its foundation in 1974, engaging in the field of planning and architecture particularly on issues related to its peripheral location in Mexico City and popular housing in surrounding neighborhoods. IIHS, on the other hand, expands how an elite private institution can strive for researching and teaching equitable urban practice in the context of a highly unequal country.

What strategies, then, can universities employ to unsettle traditional teaching protocols, and activate their potential to create and support not only more equal learning environments but also building new sensibilities and sensitivities amongst learners? Critical in this endeavor is diversifying faculty as well as learners, as reflective of the 'ecosystem of knowledges' discussed above. However, while bringing in different actors is essential, it is not sufficient. As pointed out by other authors as well (Mitlin et al. 2019), there is a need to interrogate and challenge traditional hierarchies in higher education, including the power relations between and within academic and non-academic faculty. Similarly, the site of learning needs diversification and an explicit recognition of its power and agency. For example, the IIHS experience and Taller de Vivienda show that there is a need for higher education institutions to recognize multiple learners' modes of learning and practice, and also go to where learners are, and not just vice-versa.

The learning experiences of HIC-AL and IIHS draw attention to pedagogies that are iterative and dialogical, and that build on the idea of praxis, translation, plural knowledges and strategic action. As ways of thinking, these suggest epistemologies that speak to the purpose of education as a space of transformation, action, and shaping the world in a Freirean sense. Using these epistemologies as an entry point to reposition the pedagogic purpose, rather than the institution itself, is helpful to then open new sites and arrangements across institutional forms of higher education and social movements – as a *bridge* of the 'pluriversity' and 'subversity'. Such bridging sites of higher education map and value demand beyond market goals, to strategically challenge epistemic injustices. In the case of IIHS, the demand for the pedagogic spaces emerges from the activists and communities, while the means of sustaining these are created from different funding sources. In the experience of HIC-AL, social movements and community-based organiza-

tions strategically work with universities towards collective pedagogic goals. Significantly, the experiences discussed suggest an influence on institutional processes and structures, as well as on the political economy of practices outside the university. They point to forms of learning alliances and practices, within the university and outside, through collectively held knowledges and notions of scale that extend across the relationships of what Santos (2018) suggests as a pluriversity and subversity.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of two learning experiences offers insights into innovative tactics and strategies of the critical pedagogies of IIHS and HIC-AL, which unsettle the idea of the university and re-frame understandings and hierarchies of knowledge and practice. The paper has paid particular attention to epistemically marginalized urban dwellers, social movements and activists in the fields of housing and the social production of habitat in India and Latin America, revealing kernels of change and multiple entry points for reframing higher education institutions as one amongst many actors and institutions. Both pedagogic experiences suggest that advancing simultaneously the pluriversity and subversity is imperative to creating the spaces and abilities for often marginalized actors in an ecosystem of urban pedagogies to contribute to a pool of epistemic resources that reflect the diverse theories and practices of Southern urbanism.

The co-learning experience at IIHS exemplifies an effort to move towards a pluriversity. HIC-AL schools are born out of subversity efforts in the sense that from the onset, universities are indeed one among other actors. HIC-AL engages in networked pedagogies with full awareness and vocation to use its counter-hegemonic power to the full. Yet, both processes of reconstruction – the pluriversity and subversity – meet in their radical destination and objectives. The former constitutes a significant effort to reinvent the university from within, whereby ‘within’ means being, knowing and learning with others. More fundamentally, it requires ‘making space’ institutionally to other key mobilisers of grounded knowledge and learning, such as human rights activists in the experiences examined. The radical proposition lies here in the effort to create an institutional ‘us’, tackling head on radical changes in the political economy of HEIs that otherwise prompt them to unwillingly reproduce epistemic injustices.

In the case of HIC-AL the common objective driving the schools is the formation of subversive ways of knowing and doing, and of articulating these ways to effect transformative change. Here, apart from the experience of the Taller de Vivienda, the emphasis is not so much on transforming HEIs and their political economy but rather on preserving the capacity of the networked pedagogic efforts to have strong political incidence while keeping ears and eyes simultaneously rooted on the grounded collective experience of epistemic injustice and the mov-

ing relational map that offers resistance and openings to effect radical change.

Efforts to craft the pluriversity and subversity are not at odds with each other, but rather converge in the sites of struggle they target to advance epistemic justice. They position radical and transformative urban pedagogies as a field of moral and political practice, whose significance goes beyond the urban as a site of learning and rather calls for forging a reframed understanding and practice of Southern urbanism in two regards. First, by expanding the mobilization of epistemic agency to multiple urban actors, including higher education institutions, social movements and activists. Second, through exploring how critical pedagogies for urban change – as moral and political practices – address epistemic injustices that perpetuate colonial, exclusionary, and disciplinary urban planning practices⁴.

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Notes

1 <https://hic-al.org>

2 <https://iihs.co.in>

3 <https://www.mainbhidilli.com>

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