

# Adaptation to the Context—A Jam Manufactory in Southern Mexico

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The DesignBuild-Studio 'Mexikoprojekt' is an interdisciplinary lecture and practice workshop based in Germany. Here, learning is combined with social engagement and the students develop their own ideas for the benefit of others and get to know their discipline and to practice creative work in reality.

In the preparation semester, the design is developed to the level of being implemented. The house and grounds are then erected in the state, Oaxaca, in southern Mexico. Since 1998, 43 building projects involving nearly 500 students have been realized.

The project presented shows a facility for the production of jams and conserves for a women's cooperation. Over the last ten years they have established their business and can now pass on this useful knowledge through their educational work. The desired spatial program included two main functions. A production area and an area for education and workshops. Furthermore the site itself needed to be planned for the production of fruit and vegetables, access and circulation, erosion control and rainwater management. The proposals needed to be financially and technically sustainable, also in terms of seismic requirements.

The design is based upon the duality of the two main uses, which is embodied in two buildings. Through their positioning in the landscape, they define an "interior/exterior" space, and enable a large variety of external areas with diverse functions. Within 7 weeks, 25 students from Europe and Mexico completed the project.

The original design developed mainly at the school in Germany in consultation with the partners in Mexico needed to be adapted upon arrival.

Due to the steep slope of the site, the two buildings had to be placed in different locations than in the original plans. The planning was adapted to fit the context of the village, where the inhabitants are motivated to build their homes in creative ways due to the steep inclines.

It was possible to locate many functions at the base of the slope by the footpath "camino real". The site itself had a large supply of slate stones that were used for building the terraces. The new centre of the ensemble was the 2m high edge between the lower building and the slope with a newly constructed four-step wall. It stabilizes the slope and provides seating in the outdoor area. In order to connect the two houses, concrete steps were integrated with the terrace.

The presentation of the project will focus on the adaptation of the design to the context as a challenge that many cross-cultural Design-Build Studios face. Design adaptation during the construction process is influenced by the existing conditions of the site, climate, and conversations with the clients. Incorporating multidisciplinary in the design stage already can help to tackle this challenge. In the case of the project presented, the close collaboration between architects, landscape architects and engineers made it possible to implement changes in a very effective way.

