



One afternoon in June a diverse group of seven McGill students met at Dorval airport to board a plane for Mexico City. We were leaving for two months to study an informal settlement in a resort town on the Pacific coast, under the auspices of the RAIC-CIDA Youth Program in Architecture.

Some had come alone with one travelling bag, others, who were not accustomed to travelling, were buoyed up by many relatives and suitcases. That afternoon we did not know each other, but by the time we arrived in Zihuatanejo, at the break of an unbearably hot and humid dawn, we had created the ties which come naturally from travelling together in a foreign and possibly

of La Esperanza. We spent the month of June making measured drawings of the houses and interviewing the families who live in them. In July, we surveyed the site and worked the ravines into the grid of identical lots which had been used as a map until then. Finally, we designed a public square for the community. If and when it is built, it will provide the community with the much-desired basketball court, but also give it a sense of identity.

The evening before our departure we were invited to a dinner under the trees of the plaza, the vacant lot at the entrance of the community. There lay a feast of snowy white fish, red chillies, hot tortillas, and cases of

Par un après-midi de juin, un groupe de sept étudiants de McGill prit place à bord d'un avion à destination de Mexico. Ce premier jour, nous nous connaissions presque pas, mais nous sommes rapidement devenus complices de voyage avant même l'arrivée à Zihuatanejo, à l'aube d'une journée torride. Tout au long du périple, et surtout dans la colonie de la Esperanza, nous avons eu la chance d'établir des liens d'amitié avec des gens issus d'un autre milieu et d'une autre culture. Cet ouvrage veut donc rendre hommage à cette amitié et à la générosité des gens de La Esperanza.

I still dream of hot tortillas

by Juliette Patterson



challenging environment. We were later told that our overnight bus from Mexico City had narrowly missed being highjacked, which had been the unfortunate fate of the two previous buses, only hours before.

That first week in Zihuatanejo felt like a month. We experienced that most addictive of sensations associated with travel, the slowing down of time to a standstill where neither past nor future exists, only the present.

We never quite managed to navigate the maze of Zihuatanejo. The town has no landmarks, no public buildings, only two-storey concrete constructions lining circular avenues. It was decided that the plan of Zihuatanejo was best conceptualized by the Celtic knot tattooed on Serge's chest.

Every morning, we would take the bus from our apartment in Zihuatanejo and drive out of town to the informal settlement

Corona. We started eating in the humid afternoon, as we watched Paula slowly wave a palm leaf over the fish, to keep the flies away. Carlos had caught the fish that morning. Its delicate and fluffy taste went extraordinarily well with the hot peppers and cold beer. We continued eating as it rained (blissfully), and finished much later under the setting sun. One fish fed thirty people. After a few Coronas, Carlos gave an improvised speech on the importance of our friendship. Indeed, we had the rare opportunity to create friendships with people of an entirely different culture and socioeconomic background. Carlos invited us to spend our honeymoon in La Esperanza, making sure we would get the best room in the community. This publication is our way of paying tribute to that friendship, and to the generosity we experienced in La Esperanza.

Una tarde de Junio, un grupo diverso compuesto por siete estudiantes de la Universidad de McGill, nos reunimos en el aeropuerto de Dorval en Montréal, Canadá. Nuestro propósito era abordar un avión hacia México, donde permaneceríamos por dos meses. Esa tarde aún no nos conocíamos, pero cuando llegamos a Zihuatanejo aparecieron los lazos que nos unieron a quienes viajábamos juntos a un ambiente ajeno y quizás también desafiante. Tuvimos la oportunidad poco común de hacer amistad con gente de cultura y situación socioeconómica completamente diferente a la nuestra. Esta publicación es una forma de rendir homenaje a esa amistad y a la generosidad que experimentamos en La Esperanza.