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FINAL REPORT

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With the rise of the modern world, development, progress, growth, evolution, prosperity and well being, became the banner of the western systems, and whatever comes to resemble it in the present world; but all of these terms were subsequently applied only to what the self-designated First World developed countries had already achieved and still to be secured through its economy, science and technology, and not yet available to the rest of the world. In the words of President Truman the “underdeveloped” countries of the Third World had to develop first before even thinking about real progress.

Since 1949, from that time on (even though some people assure the era of development is over), billions of people ceased being what they were, in all their diversity. Most of them started to lose their identity (cultural, economical and social), which is really that of a heterogeneous and diverse majority and turned simply in terms of a homogenizing and narrow minority. Since then, there has been a mission to escape from the undignified condition, with the whole connotations that this carries, called underdevelopment.

Today for all the residents of the “underdeveloped” countries a life experience of subordination and of feeling left behind, is a normal condition. For them, as for many others, the concept of underdevelopment had substituted a new word for what had already been there: backwardness or poverty.

Latin America is a good example of this situation. According to them, the condition of poor or backward countries was due to the colonization process and the continued capitalist exploitation: underdevelopment was then the creation of development. Therefore the modern western systems, as a way of “domination” started to transform people’s autonomous activities that embody wants, skills, hopes, interactions with one another and with the environment into **needs** that could only be satisfied by consuming and becoming dependent on the various global and economic markets.

Due to the rapid consumption of the resources and the creation of the *homo-economicus* as a result of the so-called “progress” the term sustainability has become a supposed new way of thinking, and every field is looking forward to its application.

Now we talk about sustainable economics, sustainable development, eco-tourism, sustainable and green architecture, etc. For several people sustainability is just a matter of meeting the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the future: think global, act local.

But we should start thinking about sustainability in a broader way, balancing cultural, social, economic, political, educational and environmental aspects that we as architects must take as a priority in order to develop a successful design that will offer the developed and developing countries or communities, something worthy of their interest. We should promote a development within the community that will lead for future self-sufficiency or **real** sustainability.

In architecture we can talk about “truly sustainable” projects besides those that deal with green architecture and the integration of active and passive systems within a building. Quoting Professor Galvin, we should remind ourselves that *architecture has always been culturally sustainable*.

Since the creation of home as a shelter, or a place for protection, to its relation with the context; the understanding of all biological, physical, and cultural factors involved in the construction of a building is what gives great value to the so-called vernacular architecture. At first sight this seems to be the answer for a sustainable architecture, because it is responding to all the local factors. But our task as architects is to study and understand these typologies and then to translate them into our contemporary designs.

When referring to green buildings, sure they are accomplishing a great role on today's architecture by the use of different systems that reduce the outcome of a building, and save a great amount of energy. Therefore, the metabolism of the building starts to behave as an “organic entity” that allows a better quality of life to its inhabitants as to the rest of the site. But yet, it is not a fully sustainable design unless we consider the sustainability and development notions within wider cultural contexts.

Along the term a selection of examples from local developing countries were analyzed as models, such as the works of Samuel Mockbee, Hassan Fathy, Richard Kroeker, Balkrishna Doshi, Laurie Baker or NGOs like India's Barefoot College, working along with people interested in communities with several similar characteristics around the “underdeveloped” world that could offer an alternative design in their quest for a new or better settlement, since they became susceptible to the degenerative tendencies and pressures of being poor communities.

All of these projects stick to the belief that being poor does not mean having cheap or substandard designs. On the contrary, as Samuel Mockbee saw it, it should be an *architecture of decency*, showing respect for collective, traditional knowledge, beliefs and practices of the community. Sustainability should incorporate the use of appropriate technologies and local production that sustain the community, and not to deprive people of their livelihoods by

imposing new materials and technologies of the western world (that are not locally available, and therefore expensive).

However, as designers we should learn how to build with people, to promote cooperation, and to keep a virtual uniformity that enriches the experience of a community, and not that of a global context in which the search for homogeneity at every level of life has become a gradual loss of identity, roots and community. So in order to survive in this system, people are compelled to achieve new minimum levels of consumption; rural people are often forced by their circumstances to move to the Megacities of the Third World, causing more problems to the fragile structure in which they lay.

Therefore coming from Mexico (and Mexico City), I am aware of all these phenomena. The big problem there is that nobody wants to take action, not the government nor the inhabitants. After looking at examples from local developing countries and analyzing them, I believe that most solutions to problems lie within the community, a rural or an urban one where design solution must take advantage of local technologies and production, people's skills, like those of craftsmen, and provide the inhabitants with flexible and alternative designs that are affordable, culturally appropriate and aesthetically beautiful, rather than to plan a rigid and singular proposal for the built form.

The inclusion of multi-disciplinary subjects along the term such as design, representation, building systems interface (BSI), and the seminar in sustainable development, gave me greater tools for my future professional practice, since each of them work as a complement for the others.

This is why, the exchange during this term has been one of the richest experiences in my life which is definitively contributing for self growth in academic, cultural and social aspects. It allows me to see my country with a different perspective and to place it in the global context by using the tools of critical thinking and design.