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Professor Terrance Galvin
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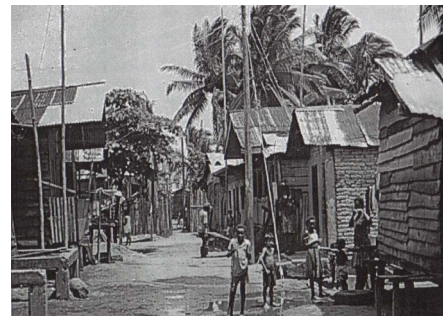
REPORT ON TUMACO AND SAN JUAN

ROMELIA HERNANDEZ

The present report is intended to highlight several common denominators among the case studies; San Juan and Tumaco in Colombia and others communities with several similar characteristics around the “underdeveloped” countries that could offer an alternative design for them in their quest for a new or better settlement. In a sense it is a record of the reasons, circumstances and achievements of the community. Important considerations such as the identification of social, economic, environmental, educational and demographic aspects that we as architects must take as a priority, in order to develop a successful design that will offer the community something worthy of their interest and aspirations for their future.



Tumaco (Colombia), San Juan (Colombia), Chiloe (Chile), Maracaibo (Venezuela), Villa El Salvador (Peru), Barrio Solidaridad (Mexico); communities all around the world with the same pattern, were first or, are now located on the edge of a larger urban center where they became susceptible to the degenerative tendencies and pressures of being a poor community, an underdeveloped one (in words of the modern world), where aspirations are neglected and rejected even from a self perception of its residents. These poor communities are usually labeled as “invaders” of a land that has not been legally purchased. *“But the community of the poor is also an invasion...its privacy, its dignity, the life of the community”*- Dr. Essy Baniassad. They became vulnerable of the legal and prosperous sectors of the society, life here happens in a different way, just waiting for the next thing to happen rather than planning a solution for the present and the future, but somehow this is a solution to carry out things when dealing with inaccessible authorities and fate tied into distant events and of course these aspects will bring bigger problems: addiction, indifference, hopelessness, insecurity, etc.



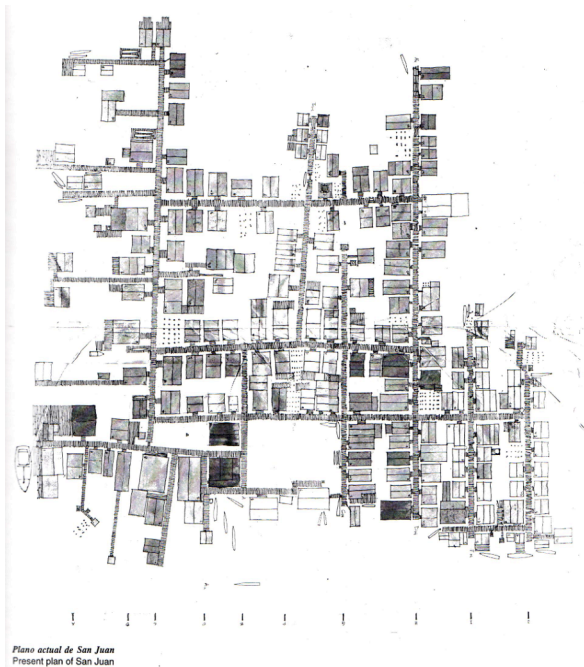
Another constant of these communities is the fact that they are located among beautiful landscapes, lands rich in sources or natural areas; so projects devised by their central governments and commercial interests have increased their poverty and resignation of being abandoned by outside assistance.

However a greater solution is being applied in all of these communities; that of independence, in which the community itself has maintained its dignity and energy to help themselves and instead of just focus on their specific human needs (shelter, food and water) they are or should start thinking of a development within the community that will lead for future self-sufficiency or real sustainability.

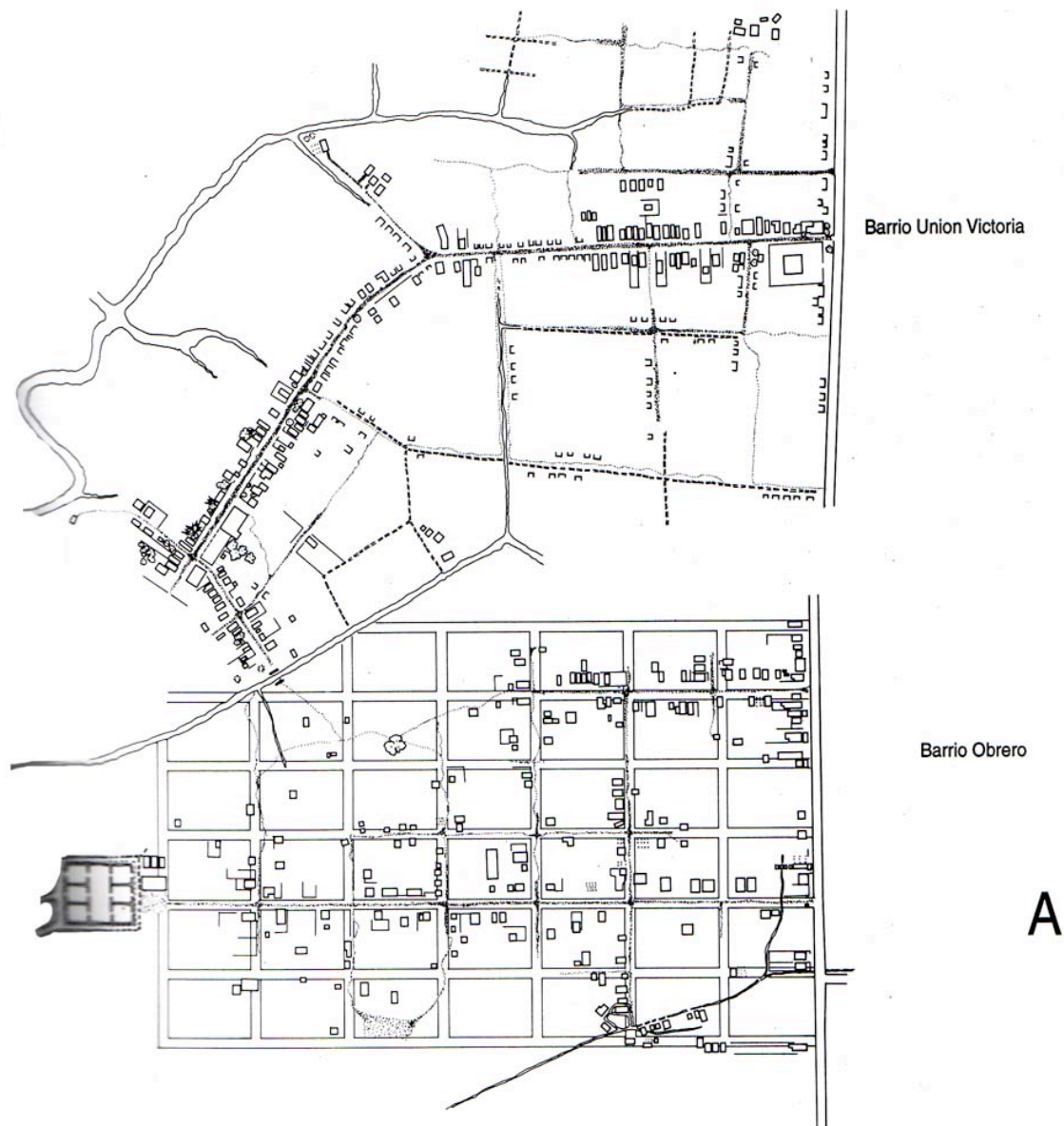
The concept of community is taken to its clearest definition: uniformity, cooperation, strong relationships between its members, self determination, local government and distinctive aspects like food, music, religion which give character to each barrio. This might sound as an ideal place to live in even when everybody knows they are isolated geographically, culturally and economically.

Fortunately there are groups, such as Habitat or non-profits institutions dedicated to help these people, to function as mediators between the communities and the government and to provide them with several options to improve their life quality while keeping their distinctive characteristics.

In architecture, there are constants or repetitive patterns as well; the majority of housing are boxes built of wood or concrete and in some cases on wooden piles driven into the sea supported on wooden platforms (palafitos), in most of the cases heavily populated and surrounded by self-built barrios linked by a highway that takes you to a more formal settlement.

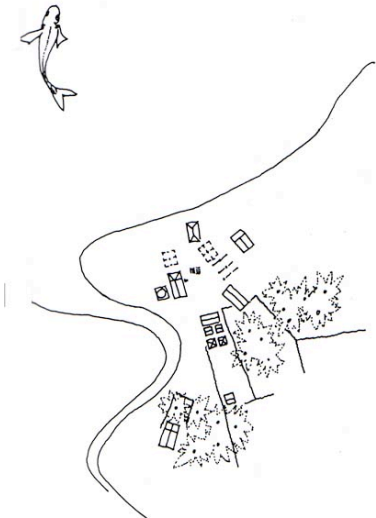


Barrio Obrero is an excellent example of an attempt of the government to incorporate these communities into the mainland. Due to the tsunami, the Colombian government gave the people legal lots in a new land, but they did not build immediately, they stayed at their homes on the coast. Rather they used the new lots as a secure land for the future or rented them to other families. Most houses were built like concrete and brick boxes, but they were incomplete because they ran out of money and materials. Therefore this community feels empty, incomplete and instead of homes there are construction sites.

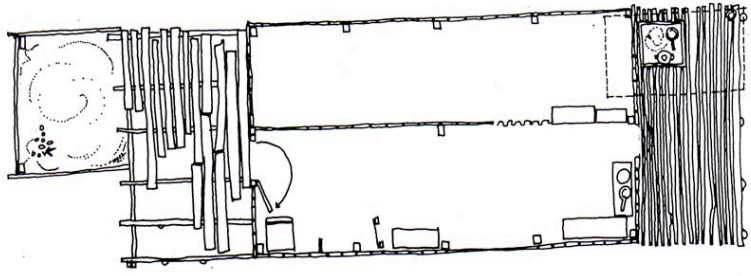
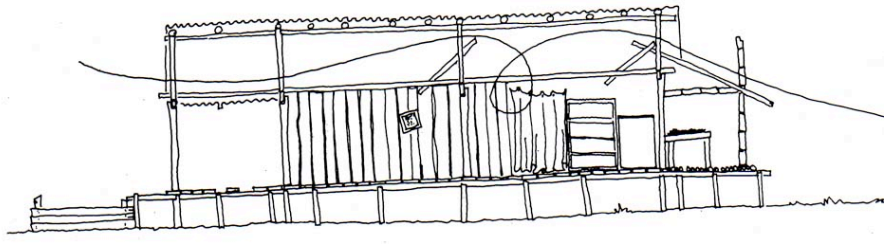
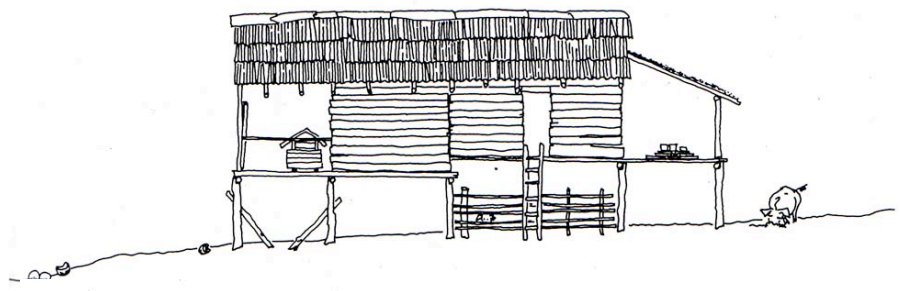


Opposite to what was happening in Barrio Victoria, in Barrio Cordialidad and San Juan (north of Tumaco) where wooden houses, structured based on pilotis and local building techniques responded geographically to the site.

Some other constants are the variety of buildings along the main street that creates a simple complexity of layers of habitation, commerce, religion, recreation and vegetation, very public street facades that clearly promote interaction among the habitants and keep private interiors behind, several houses are originally made of wood or cardboard and as they have more incomes they become poured concrete and brick.



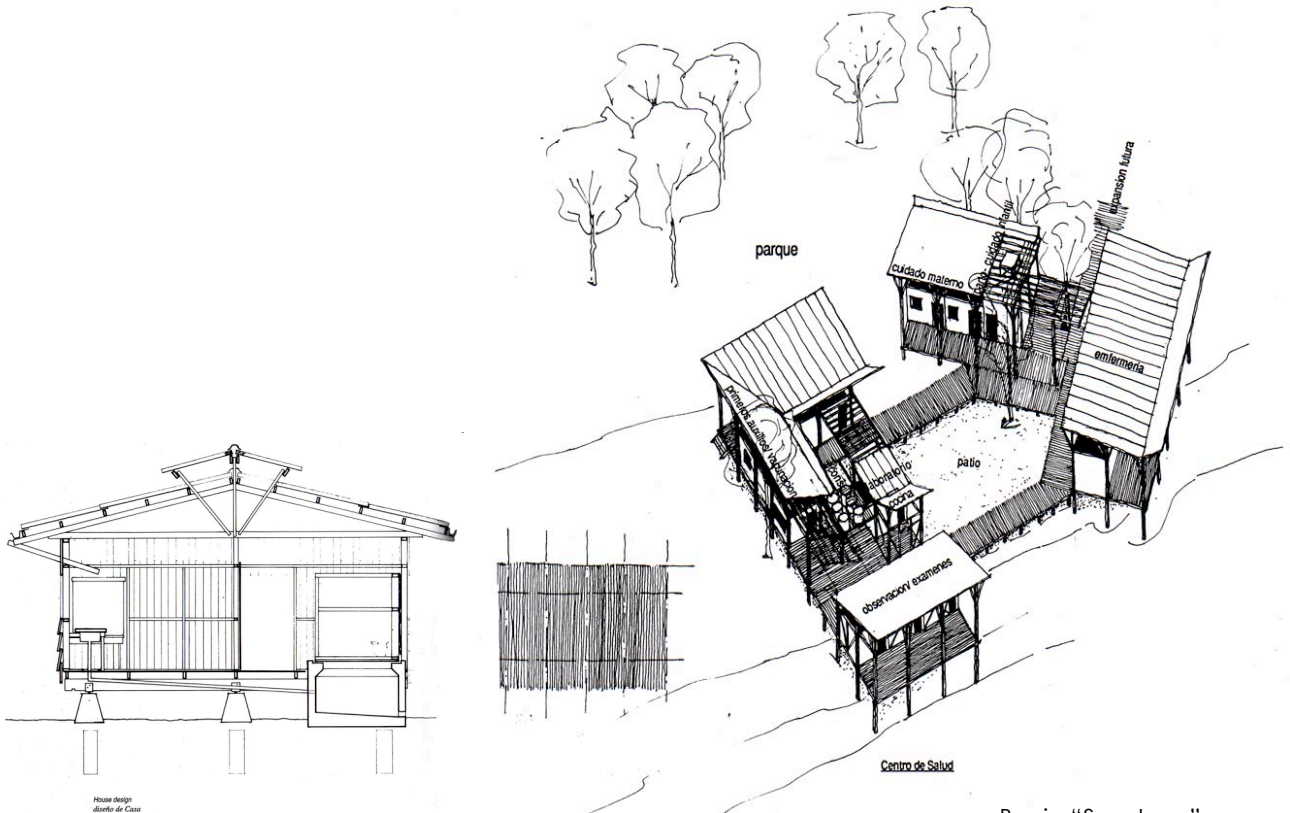
Barrio "El Bajito"
Marina's house



Barrio "Cordialidad"
Bernardo's house

According to the recording of the site and to the communities' desires (San Juan and Tumaco), the following intentions were considered for the project:

- A plan for a new neighborhood (San Juan), institutional buildings (church, school, agrarian bank) community services (soccer fields, community hall) green areas and some residential spaces were developed.
- Buildings would be built in phases to allow the community enough time for building and gathering resources.
- Building for future growth and change
- Building with local resources that are economical and more familiar to residents. By placing a concrete or stone foundation.
- Natural features: Vegetation of the zone and reducing human impact into the minimum.
- Water collection: collecting rain water for various uses and ground water mainly for drinking.
- Provide building stability
- Shed roof to provide shade, collection of water and allows ventilation.
- Flexible spaces to have different uses of the same space by using sliding doors, grouping furniture to give virtual division, etc.
- Design of each building according to the town's fabric.
- Integration of services into the houses (workshops, stores, etc.)
- Dry composting toilets.



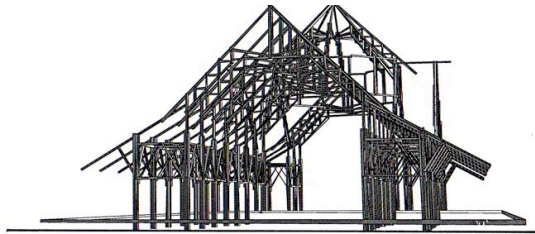
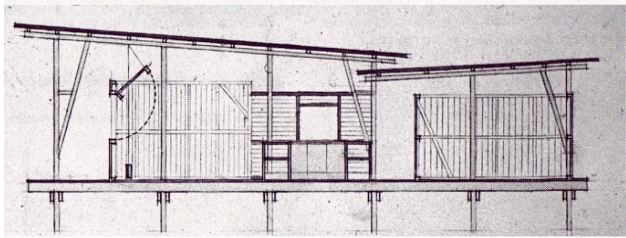
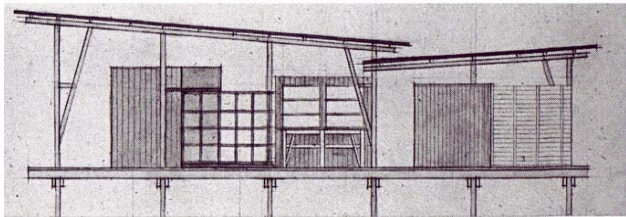
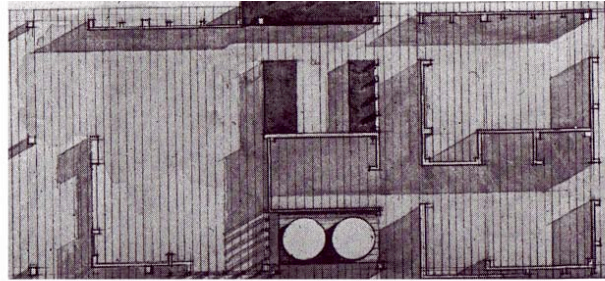
Barrio "San Juan"
Public Spaces

So before designing something we should first recognize the site, then understand it and finally design in such a way that it is retained and enhanced. Taking into consideration *cohesion and communality* since they are qualities quite fragile that can be destroyed as a result of designs or plans which creates adverse conditions both economically and environmentally; a clear example is the use of “modern” materials instead of the local ones, creating concrete paths instead of walks or importing goods rather than taking advantage of the local provisions.

We should learn how to build with people, to promote cooperation and to keep a virtual uniformity of form through a variation of basic geometry that enriches the experience of a community rather than to plan something ostentatious.

Our role should be to assist the community instead of offering a rigid and singular proposal for the built form, to come up with alternative designs that allow self-built housing and community buildings using local building techniques.

Simple methods hoping to improve a sense of community and consequently a **truly “sustainable” way of living.**



church

