

Degrowth in architecture. Technique, technology and management.

NOTHING IS MORE

We must learn to live with nothing.

Gandhi.

To construct from renouncement (n'UNDO) is an attitude, a cultural reaction, extendable to any field of knowledge and life that, from architecture and by means of the implication of diverse disciplines, aims to generate a base of thought and action (No Construction, Minimization, Reuse and Dismantlement) as a way of doing sustainable architecture of the territory and the city. This is formulated as a philosophy of renunciation, of the search for the essential and necessary, of the do without doing, as the *nothing is more* philosophy.

Two major crises challenge our models, one systemic and cultural, samples that the subculture of masses of our society, advocates insatiable consumption, irresponsibility, continued growth, uncontrolled accumulation, obsolescence, unsustainable waste generation, mass propaganda and monumentality. A culture where speculation has replaced economy; technocracy is understood as politics; consumption as freedom and charity as social justice.

At the other end, a primary crisis, of basic needs, where countless data show the situation of many countries called euphemistically South. These numbers reveal that 2200 million people worldwide do not have health care, 1200 million lack access to safe water or that last year, forty-four million people had to flee their homes to seek refuge somewhere else.

In this complicated and little encouraging context, which nevertheless opens enormous potential of improvement, to see, to think and to act are constituted as basic tools for

progress towards global sustainability and development for all. They are constituted in n'UNDO as a theoretical basis that allows visibility, reflection, further reaction and the progress of practice.

A manifesto condenses the main considerations about architecture, territory and sustainability that lead to generate modes of action that are able to materialize architecture as one of the fundamental rights to improve the lives of people. All this ideological reflection leads to sustainability as the only means to achieve global development. Development treated as human wellness, creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests, as described by the UNDP (United Nations Development Program).

The actual wrong concept of development, based on infinite and tricky conditions, has generated an exclusionary model, which insists on confusing energy efficiency and sustainability. Efficiency is a better use of resources and better energy consumption, but as seen in the case of construction, it is useless to make very efficient buildings or ones that even produce and return energy to the system, if for its construction they have consumed more land, energy and resources than will be able to generate and return in their life cycle. Is a mistake to think that new technologies and efficiency will solve problems that are political and ethical.

So from here we propose another definition of sustainability, which states as Stravinsky, that free exaggeration perverts all things, all the forms to which it is applied; a definition which accompanies the one of consuming resources below their limit of exploitation and says, that to be sustainable is to produce only what is necessary and relevant, what is a must.

The next step is then setting the criteria of the relevant. Several tools are useful, first, a cultural reflection on the impositions of propaganda and the impossibility of infinite growth, which is summarized in two indications, economy needs to shrink and this is the time in

which the necessary will be the important, which should lead to a change of model and values and the promotion of diversity as one of the basic principles of sustainability.

The second is to promote and implement consultation and collective participation as means to ensure that what is being constructed is truly required by society.

Finally, a reconsideration of the meaning of resources and more specifically, territory, will lead to the conclusion that despite the possibility of finding new and almost unlimited energy sources (renewable, hydrogen, etc.) territory, our greatest asset and one of the least reversible, is finite and limited. Thus not all the territory may be developable but everything is worthy of being respected, and any intervention should be pondered, argued, debated and agreed on social, environmental, urban, economical, ethical and cultural criteria, in defense of all landscapes, including regular and frequent, as Derrawat classified them. From the new territorial debate is intended not only to appeal to the legality or illegality of the proceedings, but to criteria such as respect, educated common sense and good practices.

Then two questions arise that summarize this thinking. How many and which actors should be involved in territorial decisions? What must precede sustainability further than need?

In search of solutions, as from architectural and territorial discipline many of the (no) architectures that pollute land and cities are reversible, shrinkable, reusable or disposable, the following areas of analysis are identified, from which to reflect, evaluate and rank:

_Pernicious town planning. Interventions, usually under town and territorial planning, which threaten the development of human relationships. With low density and extensive use of private transport, consume large amounts of land, energy and resources, with a high environmental impact. They trigger rupture and discontinuity in social networks. Promoted by economic and speculative interests.

_Abandoned buildings. Structures and buildings that are abandoned for various reasons, large war industrial machinery cemeteries and obsolete infrastructures.

_Unsustainable constructions. The Bruntland Report (1987) defines sustainable development as the new equilibrium able to respond to the needs of the present without compromising the ability to ensure the needs of future generations. Unsustainable buildings are therefore, performances, unacceptable environmentally, energetically and morally, based on insatiable investments, whose contribution to humanity and the planet is negative and unjustifiable.

_Over adequacy to the environment. Interventions in high natural interest areas that provide easy and comfortable access in hardly accessible places, executed under the excuse of improving or recovering tourist areas, considering them as leisure consumption, greatly altering the environment.

_Dispensable elements. Useless items that invade our cities, providing distortion, discomfort, shock and alienation, with single economic and advertising purposes.

_Outrages against environment. Infrastructures, and architectural and engineering interventions that alter ecosystems and the lives of other living beings. Usually built to meet energy needs.

Constructions against humanity. Constructions in which humanity relies, for acting against their own rights and individuals.

_Energy waste. Indiscriminate and irrational use and abuse of energy.

_Land, sea and space debris. Areas or forms of indiscriminate accumulation of waste in different surroundings, without any treatment or recycling.

Based on this analysis, the question of where is architecture going and what is its duty, appears, once it is clearly not only a tool to generate unequally distributed wealth that exhausts the territory. Requires this architecture that has abandoned its citizens, to be completely rethought and questioned in its relevance, in its need. Requires to speak about

another architecture or architectures, the one which is not done and the one that takes apart all those not-architectures that are among the paradigms that Alejandro de la Sota called highbrow architecture and popular architecture. And it is feasible to obtain it by means of no intervening, by minimal interventions or by that one that reducing, regenerates and recovers city and landscapes. Because Architecture should add value to the place where it is implemented, since there should be no construction that does not improve the environment or the lives of people globally with its presence.

All these unnecessary non-architectures aim to generate an activity that allows, by means of the following modes of action: No Construction, Minimization, Reuse and Dismantling, to check these constructions and to turn them in really pertinent and necessary.

No Construction is understood as Respect, for the people, for the existing, for the environment, for the territory, for the emptiness and the peace. Not to construct means renouncement, a process of elimination of aspirations to adjust to the social, ethical, cultural needs, pertinent to the environment. As T. W Adorno says in his "Study on Ideology and Language", where it reveals the productive value of the denial, *not always we demolish to destroy and to construct later. On the contrary, demolition comes to gain free space, air, light, which meet with diligence there where the obstacles are suppressed.* In the same way Lao-Tse and Kant propose an ethic and an aesthetic of the renouncement as the way of separating and revealing the false, the inopportune, the banal.

To Minimize or to clean, it is to integrate, to diminish the impact, to eliminate decoration; what Kant narrates as distinguishing between the interesting and the important; because truth must be constructed by truths and in this discerning we must be capable of getting away ourselves from the false needs. To more (quality) by less (quantity) wrote San Juan de la Cruz.

To Re-use is to recover, to reactivate the existing, to promote development without growth. This re-using, re-placing, is understood as saving, as caring, as valuing the unsustainable of infinite growing, and questioning the quality of the new of being better than the old, just for being new. To inhabit, over a business, it is a need and a right.

To Dismantle allows by means of intervention, to regenerate, to recover previous conditions, to cut, to clean up. The positive character of the dismantlement should serve in addition, to slow the invasive and colonizing ecstasy of the territory, devastated without major goal than mercantile speculation. The positive value of the dismantlement its revealed not only as way of recovering and re-valuing again territories or cities, but as a sustainable way of generating value in employment, education and tourism.

There will likely be music, but we'll manage to find a silent corner where to converse. Erik Satie.