



REPORT COLOMBIA October 24th – November 6th 2017

Habitandando 'the trip as a method the territory as aula', the workshop that since three years brings in Italy professors and students of the Universities of Architecture of Colombia organized by the International Network of 'Dialogues in Architecture' together with the University of La Salle of Bogotá, this year went beyond the ocean, in Colombia.

And this time from Italy, teachers and students of the Università d'Annunzio of Pescara came for a trip in the Colombian territory for the direct experience of its places, its people, its territory, together with Bogotá's architects, in all 12 people.

Habitandando is not just a tourist trip: it has something more that comes from the living together, knowing the places directly, which has consequences for the world of culture, business and associations.

And here our travelogue begins, a series of flashes, to transmit a bit of the richness of those days, of this new study method and the work offered by this workshop.

Our departure is from Bogotá, from the south of the city the strong contrasts and challenges of this land are immediately clear; the Italians arrived for the first time in Colombia look lost, and at once they feel the need of 'changing the eyes' to turn the view through the heart and the mind to look at this country full of strong contrasts and with different relationships between the environment and the territory.

We cross then, beyond 3000 meters, the Eastern Cordillera and we reach the center of Villanueva, a colonial village, a small oasis in the middle of the mountains, where, at first sight, it seems that time has stopped. But right in that morning, we witness an evacuation exercise of all the inhabitants in case of earthquakes, and the meeting in the main square of the village gives us the opportunity to live this moment together with the community.

The journey continues on a long, downhill road, twisted through tunnels that sometimes reveal the intense green of the mountains and the sight of beautiful panoramas that accompany us;

Just for a moment it's possible to discover the man's intervention who is building an arduous connection bridge.

We reach then Llano's door: Villavicencio. The outside's temperature is very high, as warm as the welcome of the people we meet in the public space under the central and majestic tree that repairs us from the strong light.

We continue our way through 'el llano', a plain, a huge expanse that in its great beauty confuses us perhaps because it's something too big to hold it. It is a different, uninhabited nature so much different than the megalopolis from which we started our

adventure.

Next stage: Yopal, a city which none of the group had ever visited before. But it immediately becomes familiar for the warm welcome we receive.

We are impressed by the visit of the Università Unitrópico: a young university with a very strong opening experience who has just started an interesting interdisciplinary social architecture course. As in all Latin American countries, also in Colombia, architecture cannot be separated from the social side, and that comes from the dialogue and the relationships built with the communities, with the people. An academical relationship with this impressing is now ready to start.

Close to Yopal there's also the University Campus 'Utopia' of the University of La Salle. It's a pilot experience for young people coming from rural areas, victims of the guerrillas' violences, who, combining studying and working on land, are able to get a training in Agrarian Sciences and the opportunity to start autonomous careers. The visit and the knowledge of this experience told directly by the persons involved is very touching. We are faced with a strong and concrete experience of Peace that really gives hope.

We are only halfway through our trip and it could end up here, but after a good typical breakfast, we start again to reach the colonial cities of Monguít, and Tunja, the first capital of Colombia. A city enriched by grandiose colonial squares which gives us a very good feeling, such as Villa de Leyva, a city preserved by law, where several indigenous peoples witness us their strong identity that today is well shown in the colonial architectures.

We return then to Bogota from the North. The impact is almost stronger than leaving the South of the city. In fact, we cross the richest area with its enclosed houses in security fences and with particular care of the green.

Habitando has its end here but the experience continues and the reflections, the thoughts made during the trip find an immediate concrete impact in the new laboratory organized by the Urban Observatory of La Salle University, in the peripheral district of South of Bogotá: Altos de Cazucá.

We move to Cazucá for a week, knowing families and their children closely, sharing food and sleeping in their homes.

The impact is very strong. We are together with young university students from Germany, Bogotá and Yopal. About 70. Poverty is very high, but realizing that the solidarity exists among all, the relationships, make us discover the identity of that place that at first sight could appear without it.

The Work experience is new! We work together with the community. It is about completing the exteriors of some homes, making small vegetable gardens, painting some facades, planning a library, drawing murals following their requests, since it's not only about an artistic and fun exercise but expressing the life of the community.

The murals in fact are made to tell stories and give hope to the people. We are strongly impressed by a particular subject: an entire family symbolically represented by birds including the son recently killed by local delinquency: a deep pain that we shared together.

"We worked together and made our neighborhood beautiful ... now we will continue to complete the streets." tells us a young boy of the neighborhood. These words, other evidences, their joy, their looks are imprinted within us: a great enthusiasm and a strong hope invade us.

This experience lived in Colombia has had something more: the intercultural exchange is a real enrichment of new perspectives in making architecture together with communities.

In this way the architect by providing his skills and knowledges in a concrete service can help rebuilding the social fabric, creating spaces that help preserving and growing the identity of a place with his community. We are fully loaded with this experience ... that will continue!

Grottaferrata (Roma) ITALIA tel: 00 39 06.94 54 07 e-mail:
segr.architettura@focolare.org