

## **ARCHITECTURE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION**

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Good morning/afternoon/evening

It is an honor for me to be here as a representative of the architects of Apec Mexico.

This great communication opportunity is to share our reflections on the practice of architecture in this era of globalization, and this directs me to talk about what we presently call "globalization".

Today, both our environment and the world we live in are a risky idea to speak about identity. It is risky because the amount of information coming from everywhere, questions what is or what is not authentic or own, because it is easier to know what is happening in Mozambique or in Buenos Aires than at home. The phenomenon of globalization (or the clichéd known as the phenomenon of globalization), overwhelms weak societies and influences consolidated social groups. This is an undeniable truth.

Globalization doesn't let us talk about what is proper or authentic, unless it is placed in the right environment and context it deserves. Weaker countries, with their own historic disorganization, are suddenly confronted against economically powerful countries, with societies more aware of their own responsibility, so there are influences produced that change and modify ways of being, customs, ways of dressing and eating, fashion and even moral.

Historically, the first phenomenon of globalization is produced based on the actions of powerful nations that in the search of territorial expansion of their own

domains, have made the war and conquered countries throughout ancient and modern history.

Roman cities of Hispania, Gaul, Britain, Baalbeck, Tyre and Palmyra are clear examples of the imperialist and expansionist phenomenon, which brings customs and lifestyles to be imposed, creating an emerging model of identity.

In the discovery of America, the presence of Spanish and Portuguese conquerors, brought the lifestyle, customs and morals for those countries. Its implementation in pre-Columbian America caused the rupture with the traditions of Mesoamerican people in order to impose a new religion, a new form of government, a new form of production and a new form of architecture. Thus, the emerging America's architecture created a phenomenon of globalization that generated its own peculiarities.

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia; Havana, Cuba; El Callao, Peru and San Juan de Ulua, San Diego, the Fortified City, Puebla city and Mexico City, all of these in Mexico, are examples of military and religious architecture, and they are also clear examples of the cultural and customary heritage to the conquered culture.

Time has done everything else. Earthen architecture, history around the world with more than 5.000 years old, has been well characterized in Mexico by the ancient construction methods that survive to present day. Cultural syncretism carried by the conquerors, which main component was the 800 years of Arab dominance in the Iberian Peninsula, brought as a result the renewal of forms and elements generated by the Moors. That characterization changed the shapes and spatial criteria forever, creating a hybrid culture that has been slowly creating its own roots.

This features variety created by a cultural group, is what we could define as the identity, but if we take a look in the dictionary, it doesn't lead us to something clear, because the **identité**, is the quality of the identical, the fact that a person or thing it is supposed or search.

I rather believe that identity is a set of circumstances that distinguish someone or something from others and that makes it distinctive, special and unique. Something different to anything else, and that set of features can therefore to generate identity.

The denial of the self and the adoption of different ways to replace our symbols is a way of resign to what is ours, and this leads us to imitation and the loss, in the best of cases, of our own values. Imitation occurs when we ignore our own wealth and we deny of our past. We see ourselves from the outside, when it should be exactly the other way around. We even tend to justify and appreciate our own cultural traits because of what we want to add to them, rather than its intrinsic value. Imitation is appreciated because it looks like what is done in other places and because it seems to be done for first world people.

Architecture appreciation is not from that. It is true that we cannot define what is still original and authentic because of different cultural mutilations made by human evolution.

Constant use of architecture allows formal and spatial elements to be adopted in a community, so it can be adopted, developed and improved until it reaches an own, special and unique seal.

A city is formed by the association of a human group in which the family is the origin of it. It is the core of social organization, and that family has rules, laws and goals. Family and its made customs, are the way of conservation of our

culture. The respect of the lifestyles, traditions and customs is what makes this group of people a socially indispensable element, in order to produce and defend their identity.

All of the above happened in a slow communication environment, so influence was given in a very slow pace. This allowed the making of an identity for each new country, city and town.

Those are our roots and our origins. We are a race with different characteristics and ways of thinking and acting. Today, we dress alike, eat in a very similar way and we do many things similarly.

50 years ago, very few of us could imagine what we are living today. We work at the school with a calculator, a ruler and drawing by hand. The revolution caused by the computer and telecommunications have reduced the world but broadened our horizon. Marshal McLuhan coined, in 1958 the term global village. The planet is as big as then, but with the world communication media, everyone can take a peek in other people's business.

Communication has globalized economy, ideology, customs, way of eating and dressing. Today we use American trousers, an Italian shirt, a Japanese car, a Korean television, an Australian wool sweater, a Canadian aircraft and we drink Mexican tequila and we met in this beautiful and historic city of Manila.

Technology is perhaps, the best product from globalization. Technology allows an improvement in architectural technical solutions, it offers an assorted offer of proposals for a better life and it promises many advantages.

Therefore, the performance of our profession, can be seen from 2 different sides.

The first side is a technique offered from one country to another. Globalization, on its positive side, has allowed the use of technology to spread ideas, to expand knowledge horizons and to know the big environmental damage we have produced.

A second aspect is the loss of identity while trying to mimic. For example, a building has the same appearance in Buenos Aires as in Bangkok, in Madrid and Istanbul, in Hong Kong or New York. Globalization has influenced the creativity in architecture. It is easier to make a bad copy than to make a good creation, and that let us see a lack of professional ethics. This is an attack against the identity of a place where a foreign architectural model is implanted. Therefore, the ideas of my team-mate Fernando Mora on how to teach architecture to the new architects involves training in the field, in encouraging creativity, social sensitivity, talent discovery and in teamwork ability as a means to reach personal fulfillment and happiness.

The importance of new ideas, concepts and activities between our countries, we should see them as positive if they do not destroy our cultural identity. That identity must be strengthened and we should take all the good things that globalization offers. We should also strengthen with actions our own culture, which is what distinguishes us and what keep us joined.

As in many countries, Mexico has many world heritage sites declared by UNESCO, and that commit us to preserve our own heritage

What do we have ahead of us?

The equivalence of requirements to be fulfilled by APEC architects according to each country's sovereign laws, is a challenge for our economies. These

requirements must be equitable, consistent and reasonable. They should not break our laws and regulations to ensure a healthy professional performance.

Architects of Canada, United States and Mexico have agreed to implement a test mutual recognition plan, where 3 architects of each country may be eligible to be recognized as such in the other two. This has not been easy, but we have made a great effort of communication and understanding. I am very confident that the results will be shared shortly.

What lies ahead?

Communication and outreach must be present. Architecture of the future is already here. It is up to us to strengthen personal and cultural values, so that our work as APEC Architects, is as successful as it is meant to be.