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Bahia B. Marks

“Architecture as a Means for Empowerment and Transformation”

Architecture is typically misunderstood to consist mostly of design. However, the reality of architecture is more complex, involving the morphing of science, anthropology, sociology, geography, politics, economics, religion, etc. into a process of understanding and shaping our environment. The subtleties surrounding us in the environment are subconsciously or purposefully neglected by most people - intangible dimensions such as the positioning of public space, housing, and sidewalks and many other issues need to be profoundly thought about before construction. But it often does not happen. During the past summer, I learned much about this more complex architectural approach in an architecture office in Haifa, Israel, and while working on a housing project in the hinterlands of Guyana. The former sought to express the beauty and simplicity in a building while the latter sought a way to empower and transform people through housing. Through these two very different experiences, I realized that a higher form of consciousness is needed in order to address the reality of our environment and go beyond the obvious to find ways to generate change.