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Project name: The Kosovo Sustainable Settlement Redevelopment Program

Project client: Design Space Africa, the City of Cape Town, Kosovo Community

**Project Implementation**
The Kosovo Sustainable Settlement Redevelopment Program was successful in terms of meeting all requirements signed on to by the scope of work. As project leader I worked well with all clients, stakeholders and project partners. Very minimal changes were needed as the project progressed into completion. But with every project there are always minimal issues that arise and cause delays. With time and planning there were a couple aspect of the project that required timeline adjustments. In the beginning there were a few communication delays that required additional time be allocated to introductory phases. Delays also arose due to conflicting schedules on the part of project leader and project partner, we were unable to discuss work completed, critique, and modifications that needed to be made for a period of time.

Communication and engagement were major aspects for project success. Stakeholders were engaged at multiple points during the project development. They were interviewed in the beginning to gain a better understanding of their needs and desires for the project. They were engaged again after the schematic design phase in order to give their input and opinions on the direction that planning was taking and then again to give suggestions for stylistic approaches toward the end of design development. All conversations after initial interviews were held over email and Skype. Moving forward, I would have preferred to have been in the meetings to discuss the designs rather than having them relayed to me via my project partner.

**Project Management**
This project was very eye opening with both positive and challenging skills gained. I was able to develop better data collection skills and ways of sifting through data to find the appropriate items to benefit my project, with various case study analysis’ I picked up speed and efficiency is deciphering what elements and ideas would be effective for future development. I also continued to develop my skills and production efficiency, while maintaining detail and precision in specified time limits.

Even with the skills that I better developed there is a couple of skills that need practice. One, I need to work to effectively form communication materials, considering cultural difference and norms and various language barriers, as to better prompt timely responses no matter where a
stakeholder might be located. Two, I need to better develop ways of holding myself accountable in periods where there were no deliverables due, or deliverables were already created.

Skill development, challenges, and positive reinforcement help develop the project into where it is and what it transformed into. The initial research, interviews, and data collection phases were the easiest to implement. It was more time effective with information gained and understood in shorter time spans. The design implementation was the hardest; it was difficult to envision a plan to be implemented without being able to make trips to site.

Through the time committed to a project of this scale, you learn about yourself as a leader and as a planner just as much as you structure a successful project. Things surprise you as well as disappoint you. I was surprised at how connected I became with the project. I bonded with my contacts. I created a connection to the site and gained an insight into why these people moved there, why they stay there, and why they don't want their community bulldozed. I also learned that I am my own worst critic. I tend to second-guess practices and designs rather than believe in my ability to follow through with a stage in the design process. I can also misunderstand elements of design and sustainability if I don't allow myself the proper time to absorb the information, rushing doesn't make for a successful stage just causes a need for more modification down the line.

Moving forward into future projects there are changes that I would make in my planning and development process. I will consider location as a larger factor, I didn't truly understand how difficult it could become when after you leave a site and are unable to return. I believe that my succession of approaches for the project was a good route to take; it made detailing all information and implementing it within the design very cohesive.

**Advanced Learning into Sustainability Projects**

There are five major competencies, systems, anticipatory, normative, strategic and interpersonal competence, within sustainability leadership and project development. Within the five core sustainability competencies and the work within my Culminating Experience, I discovered that I am stronger in certain areas compared to others. With this I understood and began to restructure my methods moving forward as an anticipatory thinker. I was not anticipating possible roadblocks or challenges that may occur throughout the timeline, I did not consider issues with long distance communication, time conflicts, or technical resource difficulty that may have occurred. This caused my momentum and process to obtain delays, moving forward I addressed this main weakness and began to try and envision the “what if” scenarios along the way.

You build upon previous knowledge throughout your life, education, and career. There were a number of classes and internships that helped to prepare me for my applied project, classes from both my MSUS and MArch degrees, such as my global engagement studio that helped to introduce working environments with cultural differences, urban sustainability redevelopment which promoted ideas and adaptations that could be utilize within settlement redevelopment, and rural to urban sustainability representing the push for migration to urban centers and how we need to develop for them. The classes overlapped in many ways, I was taught different methodologies for gathering data, I gained valuable experience in developing design plans under various different circumstances, and I was provided with the knowledge that sustainability principles vary throughout the world, you need to understand the climate and culture before you can accurately practice or introduce a new process. When working or traveling abroad you need
to understand the differences between cultural norms, in South Africa it was an initial issue with understanding the different religious beliefs and the connections that form between the community and their religious sects. Another cultural hurdle to understand was the various meanings to different elements and how much certain parts contribute to the daily lifestyles of residents within the area.

There were a number of principles that I learned and developed throughout my sustainability education. Many of these were incorporated within my project planning and development. Sustainable urban development, green architecture practices, and use of local elements are the most effective and best-reflected principles of sustainability that can be seen throughout my project.

This project has provided me with real world experience and planning. I was given an incredible opportunity to explore something different within the sustainable architecture world that I hadn’t previously experience. It opened my eyes to a new stakeholder and another different design process.

**Project Accomplishments**

My clients, working with the City of Cape Town, were in the beginning phase of a full-scale informal settlement redevelopment. My final deliverables provided them with access to information necessary to moving forward with the process. They were provided with up to date documentation of the personal wants and needs of various community groups throughout Kosovo. They received a possible beginning layout and implementation process for the beginning of redevelopment as well as how these sustainability elements can be contributed within design phases.

At this time I have received feedback from clients and project partners of how the project was developing and the process and direction it was going in was inspiring. They approved of outcomes and deliverables along the way.

All short-term outcomes were met, all materials were created, and all data collected was influential in designing the final plans. These can be measured by the connections and flow of dialogue between my project partner, the clients, and myself. We worked in correlation with other current projects and the next steps moving forward would be to see how DesignSpace Africa takes my proposals and adapts them to the final full 28-hectare redevelopment process.

Working with designers and city planners in a country in a different hemisphere was a task. My project partner and client were in the process of working through a full sustainable redevelopment, therefore my project merely pushed their thoughts forward. I was able to build upon their initial ideas for sustainable redevelopment and advance it into a field of incorporation, mixed-use, and environmentally friendly design. I was able to gain an idea of all the changes that Kosovo residents wished to see happen and adapt them to tie into sustainable design and development principles creating a small scale sustainable redevelopment proposal for the people of Kosovo.

**Final Discussions**

My experience at ASU has been an incredible one. I was here for both my undergrad and masters education. The school, the programs, the people, and the climate made for an impactful
experience. I’ve learned about multiple new fields, gained valuable experience and have memories that I will take with me forever. I learned how to create an impactful design and how to implement it in multiple different areas. I’ve had the opportunity to travel with ASU and learn about different cultures and people and how they have adapted over the years and what they do to make them sustainable when they do not have access to all the advanced technology that we have at our fingertips. The world is huge and it is becoming to teach us new things and fill us with impactful experiences and my time at ASU has prepared me to learn and take on what the world has to offer.

Moving forward away from ASU and into the next steps of life’s journey, my culminating experience will be an important project to discuss on my resume, in interviews and within my portfolio. I could reference it as something like:

- Provided in-depth site analysis for an informal community urban upgrade ranging in scale from metropolitan to settlement
- Identified and implemented sustainable design project goals while meeting the needs of community members
- Presented site analysis, research, and design phases to clients and teams at different stages for review