

# /CLASSROOMS FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

The value of a  
Participatory  
Process

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Participatory  
Process**

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**CLASSROOMS FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN  
The value of a Participatory Process**

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## Notes for the reader

The thesis observes the complex phenomenon of human displacement that in recent years has involved, directly and indirectly, different places in the world.

In asking whether architectural practice can play a decisive role within this reality, it is proposed a vision that, focused on the definition of a participatory process, aims at creating a network of schools around the world.

This could help to address the widespread early school leaving that afflicts many children currently living in refugee camps.

For this reason the text is divided into four main sections, each corresponding to the different stages faced during the research.

### **I. Meanings and Definitions**

A first section allows to pose the research within a theoretical context. In setting some clear aspects that help to understand a complex phenomenon, it is furthermore introduced a focus to deeper analyze the born of intermediary, temporary and suspended spaces: the refugee camps.

### **II. Learning from EAHR**

An in-depth study, it is then proposed the case of Emergency Architecture and Human Rights which normally operates within the realities previously described.

By presenting their projects, it is possible to identify some commons aspects, useful to collect information in participatory and educational terms. Furthermore, the recent case of the Classroom 01, opens up the possibility to more considerations.

### **III. Work on Participation**

Thanks also to the desire of extending the results obtained through the Classroom 01, starting from August 2020, it was possible to directly work with some components of the previously mentioned team.

The collaboration started initially understanding how to make children as main actors through a participatory process. In doing this it was necessary to set out some tools, each one with specific intentions.

### **IV. Process | design | Project**

Finally, the last section, conducted by working within the Danish studio during the month of November, focuses on defining an organizational method, capable of actualizing the entire participatory process.

The latter has been also assessed in regard to the inevitable comparison with the variable of contingency.

## foreword

"If you ask a potential architecture student why they want to study architecture, the most common response is along the lines: "I want to design building and make the world a better place." The question then arises as to exactly what constitutes better and what means are used to achieve it?"

N. Awan, T. Schneider, J. Till,  
Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing  
Architecture.

In an attempt to answer to the words used within the spatial agency text, this research intends to start from the observation of a condition of necessity. During the last few years, the world has been subject of political, economical and climatic contrasts. Those are just few reasons that convinced entire populations to move, looking for better living conditions.

The observation of this macro issue has been addressed following a double vision. Firstly, an analysis was carried out with the intention of framing the problem, underlining also the birth of places with connotations that are so far from a temporary or migratory idea.

Inside these widespread realities, it can be noticed that people have difficulty in leaving this kind of places. Also because the majority of them are children, who often are not able to get access to different status, finding themselves excluded due to an evident cultural lack.

Within this theoretical background, there is the desire to seek out a solution, wondering how architecture can help to address the issue by providing assistance from an humanitarian point of view.

Through the support of the Danish studio "Emergency Architecture and

Human Right”, currently one of the European leaders in matters that links architecture to sociology, there is the intention to structure a participatory process. This should organize and plan effective responses addressing them directly to children or generally to all the communities involved in crisis situations.

Thus, the aim of the thesis is trying to provide answers regarding tools, methods, as well as the various aspects that a planning activity should paid attention to.

All these aspects conduce to define a process, in which children are not just considered as subjects, but also as main actors that could co-design and co-realize their own space, as well as adults.

After this, a second overview vision tries to re-trace all the steps in order to create a generalizable condition. This helps to provide a possible operational method which consider participation as a value to develop better future solutions.



**Meanings  
and  
Definitions**

# I.I OEUVRE

The variety of meanings the term “Participative Process” can assume, opens up an interesting debate, which can be addressed starting with the word “oeuvre”<sup>1</sup>.

This term, coming from French, means literally “work”.

As explained by the theorist Henri Lefebvre, it is suitable for explaining the vision according to which cities have highlighted an ever greater need to rethink themselves, linked to ethics and finally to the project.

In keeping with his thought, city should be understood and thought as an “oeuvre”: a practice in which all citizens can participate and be included in activities that affect the public sphere and condition. In fact, Lefebvre identifies participation and social inclusion as two great possibilities for dealing with urban changes, especially because they allow citizens to be constantly informed, interested and socially

active. However, it remains a deep illusion, a mirage that quickly leads the entire social system back to a condition of passivity and detachment. This is due to the fact that the real problem lies not in the society conviction, but in a capitalist economic system that has also pushed architecture to become an object of consumption, associating it with real actions of neoliberal policies<sup>2</sup>.

The direct consequence is the birth, in odds to the disappearance of the collectivity, of a desire for individualism, which leads to a disintegration not only of society, but also of spaces and places, normally designed to trigger interactions and connections. In contrast with this condition, Lefebvre himself introduces the question of rights and space, pointing out how urgent is taking a position on increasingly

evident issues, the so called “right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit”. Moreover, according to his words, “the right to the oeuvre, to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city”<sup>3</sup>. The issue has also become the main topic of a deep debate developed through the Architecture Biennials. In fact, starting with the fourth edition of The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR), the attention has been shifted precisely to the theme of coexistence, to be understood as the desire to create adequate spaces to re-establish a contact between architecture and society. In an attempt to summarize the reflections promoted within the biennial, Tim Rieniets, co-curator and co-author of the reference text of the event “Open City: Design in Coexistence”, introduces the theme by writing:

“Instead, we were asked to investigate urban “situations”, in which the Open City exists in all its complexity and elusiveness: Refuge, Community, Collective, Squat, Reciprocity, and Maakbaarheid. These six “situations”<sup>4</sup> are not related to particular programs, requirements or sites, but socio-spatial processes that are shaping urban spaces and

urban life in many places today.

Refuge, Community, Collective, Squat, Reciprocity, and Maakbaarheid do not represent what we might call an Open City, but rather the opposite, challenging notions of coexistence in different ways: they tend towards urban fragmentation, social segregation, and inequality, yet they also offer opportunities to revise or reinvent the Open City. Whether in a state of “not yet” or “no longer” an Open City, these “situations” are important testing grounds in which to develop the necessary innovative projects and strategies”<sup>5</sup>.

What is interesting, compared to what has been introduced, is the reflection that can be addressed through the keywords reported, focusing on three in particular.

In fact, starting from the term Collective,<sup>6</sup> we want to investigate the theories produced to become the paradigm of an egalitarian and radical urban development. The result of mass production and the standardization of urban space are in force, a typical vision linked to the modern movement, which managed to prove its usefulness, as well as its complete failure. This has probably influenced the desire for definition of a Community with respect to an increasing tendency to identify

oneself through thematic macro clusters linked to religion, lifestyle or cultural background.

This situation, architecturally and sociologically speaking, has resulted in the realization of residential or commercial districts, in detail designed to meet the needs of a specific social target.<sup>7</sup>

In the worst case scenario, however, it is translated into a real segregation, in which the possibility of having urban conditions with minimum quality levels is totally lacking. In fact, it is the case of urban realities characterized by particularly critical conditions or conflicts on a social as well as spatial level, in this case identified through the term Refuge<sup>8</sup>.

However, the debate is inherited from the third Rotterdam Biennial, in which the curator, Roemer Van Toorn, deeply supports and defends a vision of architecture in close contact with political action.

Reasoning on this condition, he emphasizes that architecture can be political<sup>9</sup> if it becomes the representation of a space-time sensor, able to hold together or to distinguish, to include or exclude relationships of different types within the space.

Architecture is political as it allows

the concept of organization and form to be made visible, but above all it imposes a direction giving society a voice. This brings us back to the most ancient definitions of Civitas, which is the public institution capable of representing the collective desires of a community of inhabitants, who live together and coexist within a place. This consequently refers to the term of Urbs, that is the infrastructure that physically supports the choice<sup>10</sup>. Considering the problem from this point of view, however, it means to apply a very schematic vision regarding social conditions that are often very complex and difficult to be summarized.

The most common idea is to develop a design strategy able to establish and achieve solution through traditional tools, such as maps or masterplans, making the project a real useful element for negotiation. However, the achievement of this type of approach started to show some limits linked to an often too schematic and exclusive vision of the various formal methods.

To overcome the growing need to respond to these new urban and social issues, it is therefore possible to find out a generic definition, open to further considerations, according to which:

a Participatory Process represents a panning possibility, as well as decision-making, with the main objective of involving different subjects within the various stages of development of a project.

This way of operating, according to an inclusive vision, based on the exchange of views, allows different subjects to have the possibility to influence and modify operational decisions.

Usually, in a common project activity, these aspects would be taken “a priori” without paying direct attention to the needs of the target, which the project itself should be addressed.

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# 1.1.1 Phenomenological Observation

By observing the situation of contemporary cities with a global perspective, it can be seen how these have grown by concentrating the greatest number of activities and resources in a more or less evident perimeter. Observed from this point of view, it can be inferred in a very summary and general way, that the most advanced cities have been designed to become useful machines for the development of markets and different economic activities.

In this sense, the research on Global Cities<sup>1</sup>, carried out by sociologist Saskia Sassen, is particularly useful. Within the text, it is supported the hypothesis according to which global economy has produced spatial effects, especially evident in massive concentrations of resources within localized territories.

This phenomenon led to the establishment of places with high quality, characterized by efficient connections and rapid exchange of information based on knowledge-based services. However, at the same time it has developed strong unbalanced conditions, more evident at the edges of these polarities, generating places excluded from the logic of globalization, identifiable under the term “black holes of marginality”<sup>2</sup>.

1 S. Sassen, *The Global City*. New York, London, Tokyo, rev. ed., Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001.

2 M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society. The Information Age*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, Cambridge, 1996.

The trend is not to recognize this lack of balance, but instead a desire for urban competition, pursuing the idea of “wanting more global cities because each of these cities allows to expand the global platform in order to become a bridge between the global and the particularities of every national and social economy”<sup>3</sup>.

The direct consequence is the obvious antagonism that pushes entire populations to massive migrations, claiming a sharing of these urban resources.

However, population increase implies the need to occupy space and the definition of a place where to live.

This, due to the poor economic availability of people who come mostly from rural areas, happens by by-passing the traditional methods of urban organization and administration, causing a process of self-regulation and self-management of new forms that can be recognized through the term of informal-settlements.

The definition of these places can be particularly complicated, considering the fact that often they cannot be recognized under a single and univocal vision. Sassen, however, emphasizes a duality, a close relationship that relates the formal aspect to the informal one, admitting a condition of complementarity: “The scope and character of the informal are defined by the very regulatory framework it evades”<sup>4</sup>.

The result is the setting up of temporary zones, without any application of rules and urban planning, gray spaces<sup>5</sup>, which are going from unnoticed to the subject of strong actions, with important collective values.

3 S. Sassen, *The Specialized Differences of Global Cities in South American Cities: Securing an Urban Future*, 2008.

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Predicted Urban Growth from 2010 to 2025

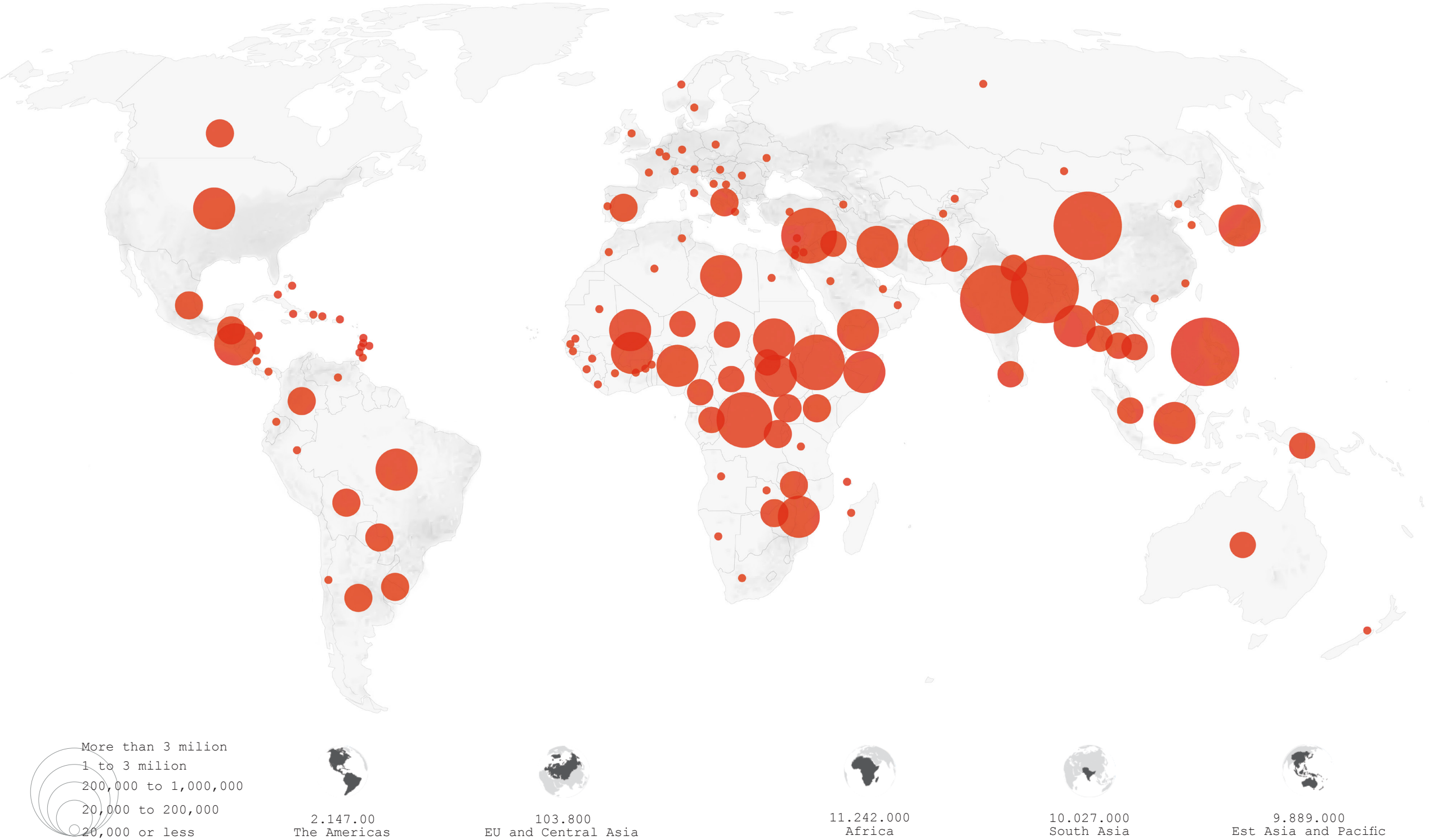


Data source: UN, Conservation International

New Global Displacement, 2019

Source: International Displacement Monitoring Center

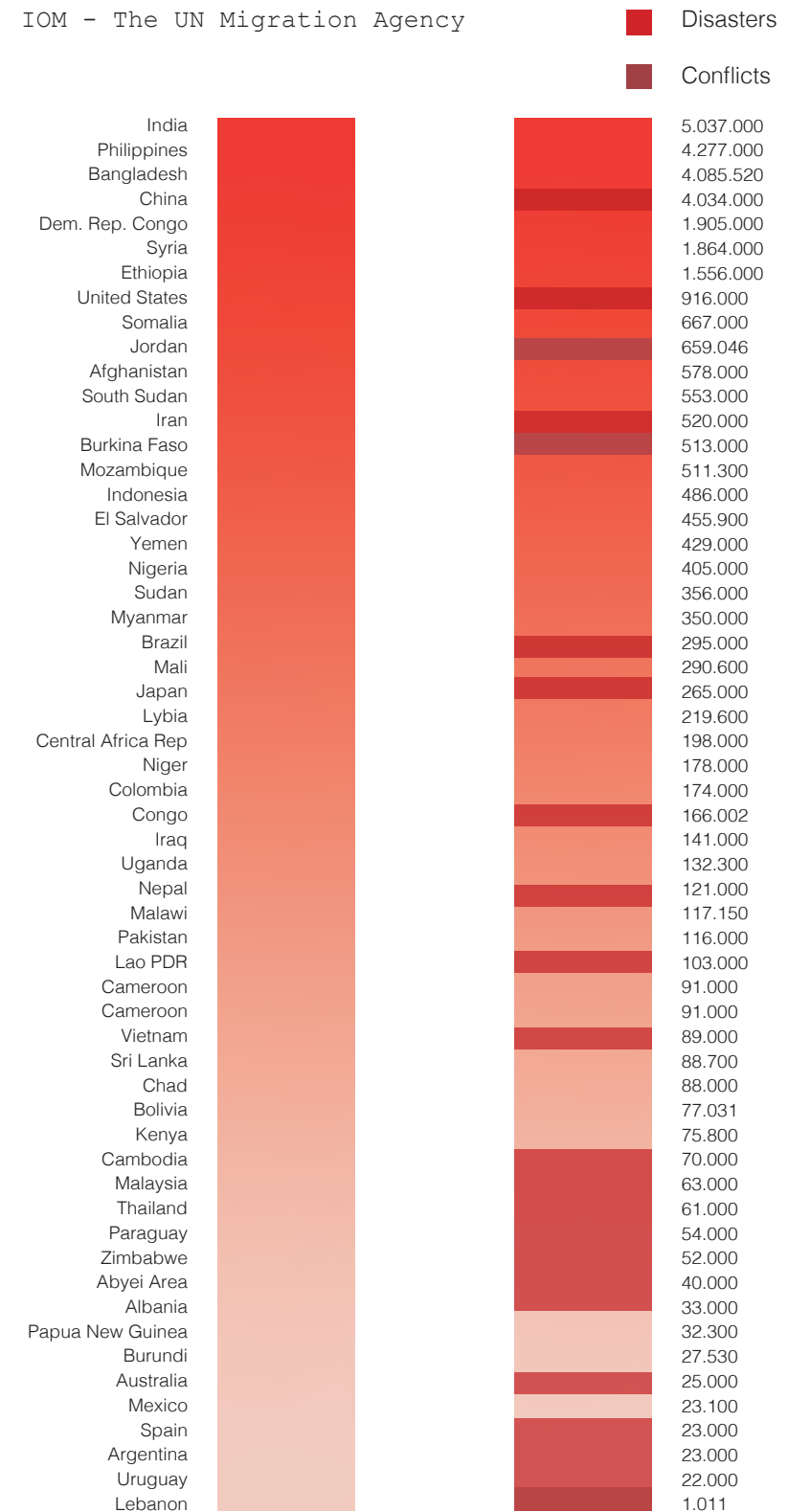
The size of the phenomenon involved around 33.4 million of new displacements across 145 countries and territories just in 2019.



## Displacement by conflicts and disasters in 2019

Country	Population	Disasters	Conflicts	Total
India	1.353.000.000	5.018.000	19.000	5.037.000
Philippines	106.700.000	4.094.000	183.000	4.277.000
Bangladesh	161.400.000	4.086.000	520	4.085.520
China	1.433.783.000	4.034.000	-	4.034.000
Dem. Rep. Congo	90.528.000	233.000	1.672.000	1.905.000
Syria	18.500.000	17.000	1.847.000	1.864.000
Ethiopia	112.688.000	504.000	1.052.000	1.556.000
United States	328.200.000	916.000	-	916.000
Somalia	4.500.000	479.000	188.000	667.000
Jordan	10.300.000	46	659.000	659.046
Afghanistan	38.041.000	117.000	461.000	578.000
South Sudan	39.578.000	294.000	259.000	553.000
Iran	81.672.000	520.000	-	520.000
Burkina Faso	20.955.000	-	513.000	513.000
Mozambique	32.144.000	506.000	5.300	511.300
Indonesia	273.849.000	463.000	23.000	486.000
El Salvador	6.520.000	1.900	454.000	455.900
Yemen	24.000.000	31.000	398.000	429.000
Nigeria	200.964.00	157.000	248.00	405.000
Sudan	39.579.000	272.000	84.000	356.000
Myanmar	53.710.00	270.000	80.000	350.000
Brazil	210.147.000	295.000	-	295.000
Mali	19.853.000	6.600	284.000	290.600
Japan	127.019.00	265.000	-	265.000
Lybia	6.293.000	4.600	215.000	219.600
Central Africa Rep	5.167.000	102.000	96.000	198.000
Niger	20.670.000	121.000	57.000	178.000
Colombia	49.892.000	35.000	139.000	174.000
Congo	99.320.00	166.000	2	166.002
Iraq	42.492.000	37.000	104.000	141.000
Uganda	46.000.000	130.000	2.300	132.300
Nepal	29.855.000	121.000	-	121.000
Malawi	20.098.000	117.000	150	117.150
Pakistan	216.565.000	100.000	16.000	116.000
Laos	7.447.000	103.000	-	103.000
Cameroon	23.440.000	24.000	67.000	91.000
Vietnam	96.000.000	89.000	-	89.000
Sri Lanka	21.000.000	87.000	1.700	88.700
Chad	11.412.000	30.000	58.000	88.000
Bolivia	10.059.000	77.000	31	77.031
Kenya	47.564.000	74.000	1.800	75.800
Cambodia	14.138.000	70.000	-	70.000
Malaysia	32.049.000	63.000	-	63.000
Thailand	66.559.000	61.000	-	61.000
Paraguay	6.983.00	54.000	-	54.000
Zimbabwe	12.577.000	52.000	-	52.000
Albania	2.927.000	33.000	-	33.000
Papua New Guinea	5.190.000	31.000	1.300	32.300
Burundi	10.396.000	27.000	530	27.530
Australia	25.807.000	25.000	-	25.000
Mexico	135.740.000	16.000	7.100	23.100
Spain	46.940.000	23.000	-	23.000
Argentina	45.742.000	23.000	-	23.000
Uruguay	3.483.000	22.000	-	22.000
Lebanon	6.856.000	-	1.011	1.011

Source: IOM - The UN Migration Agency



## 1.1.2 Refugee Cities Refugee Camps

The forecast of urban development, if it is compared with the analysis of global displacements and also related to the growing demand for reaching these areas, highlights the importance of a phenomenon that is no longer marginal.

Observing the process that pushes millions of people to abandon their places of origin, looking for better lives, it is essential to pay attention to real intermediate spaces: refugee camps.

The common imagination leads to define these places in a tragic way, associating them with particularly complex conditions, in which the role of humanitarian aid is essential to ensure survival. However, these statements are not to be considered entirely correct as they often do not correspond with the opinion that refugees themselves have towards their respective environments, which are described according to a vision of absolute normality.

As paradoxical as it may seem, the idea of a temporary tent-city has gradually taken on such a physicality, and subsequent materiality, to allow the transformation of the aforementioned camps into real cities with definitely urban characteristics and dimensions.

“Dei circa trentacinque milioni di rifugiati e di persone disperse nel mondo, circa la metà vivono in campi profughi o in condizioni paragonabili. La ricerca non riguarda dunque una condizione marginale, ma al contrario una condizione nella quale milioni di persone trascorrono spesso decine di anni. E per milioni di persone i campi per rifugiati rappresentano il primo contatto con qualcosa di simile a un ambiente urbano e possono essere letti come veri e propri motori di urbanizzazione, in particolare se consideriamo che, una volta cessati i conflitti, molti rifugiati non fanno ritorno ai loro villaggi rurali di origine, ma scelgono invece di trasferirsi nelle città principali. Possiamo infine affermare che osservare i campi per rifugiati consente di assistere alla nascita di una condizione urbana: da un gruppo di tende su un terreno sabbioso del Sahara al sorgere di baracche di argilla, di nuclei abitativi, mercati, mode ed espressioni culturali, una protocittà va lentamente delineandosi”.

Lotus International n.158 - People in motion  
Ricerca urbana sui campi per rifugiati  
Manuel Hertz

The contemporary panorama denotes a statement in which the lack of tools capable of regulating or legitimizing the development of these fields is used as an excuse to ignore the real problem. Nevertheless, the gradual consolidation of these urban forms has reached such dimensions as to be able to undermine the urban system itself, which has to deal with issues of social, spatial and political, as well as architectural, interest. The current challenge is to overcome the indifference generated by the idea of marginality, which in turn generates inequality. By posing fundamental questions which allow to reflect on what actions can be concretely implemented in order to address issues that are not generalizable and unambiguously definable. Indeed, it requires a specific understanding in which the greatest difficulty lies "in identifying a center which in turn defines the margin"<sup>6</sup>. Only through a clear understanding of the causes and the most external conditions, it will be possible to set up a pragmatic vision<sup>7</sup>, capable of combining the awareness of architectural practice together with the fragility of the social and local aspect<sup>8</sup>.



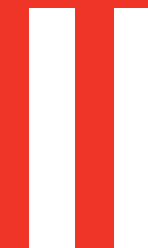
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**Learning  
from  
EAHR**



Emergency Architecture & Human Rights (EAHR) is a Danish non-profit organisation founded in 2015.

By joining social approaches and architectural principles, EAHR seeks to empower the most vulnerable groups and to increase community resilience to inequality, humanitarian crisis and violation of their human rights.

Today, EAHR focuses its activities on humanitarian and development interventions as well as training in the fields of architecture and social sciences.

EAHR work has received several recognitions, among others:

The Biennale of Chile 2017 (Valparaiso)  
Building of the Year 2018 (archdaily.com)  
Global Award for Sustainable Architecture 2019 (Paris)  
SDG Tech Awards Denmark 2020 (Copenhagen)

EA-HR.COM

## II.I A WAY OF ACTING

The EAHR team constantly works within the previously described realities, in an attempt to reach solutions by interacting directly with companies and local institutions. The team's intent is to act in a mimetic way, by understanding local skills and techniques, establishing a comparison based on the exchange of opinions, so that a direct relationship with the communities can be established.

This desire to immerse themselves directly into the context in which they operate, allows a better understanding of the social and material potential, ensuring listening to the greatest number of people and effectively managing to record wishes, memories, needs and abilities.

Each intervention is proposed with the aim of addressing, and subsequently resolving, at least one of the seventeen SDG's, or

"Sustainable Development Goals"<sup>1</sup>, established by the ONU since 2015, to raise awareness and promote actions capable of responding to issues such as economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.

Paying attention to these topics, focused on the desire to produce long-term effects, allows the communities, through a training period, to manage and resolve any future problems on their own.

Such a vision authorizes to develop a work capable of intersecting and connecting individual and collective skills, reaching concrete objectives through the involvement of different subjects<sup>2</sup>, who strongly believe in the potential of a participatory practice.

**Emergency  
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works and builds  
for vulnerable  
communities around  
the world  
that face inequality,  
humanitarian crisis  
and violation of their  
human rights.**

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## 2.1.1 Strategy

In general, any type of professional activity and practice requires an organization of techniques and methods through which operate, so as not to be guided by improvisation. Even more so, managing situations in places characterized by critical conditions from social and spatial points of view, requires a preventive preparation of the possible tools to be adopted.

The team's previous experiences have also made it possible to capitalize some information, in order to define a basic strategy from which each project is derived and developed.

This is possible through the definition of a chart, capable of summarizing four main moments around which the team use to work, fixing also some operational conditions.

### Research & Facilitation

Taking point of departure in the local capacity, we make it easier for people to organise, be heard and get motivated to participate in local and societal change.

### Co-Design

Every person and community is full of resources and have the power to bridge needs, wants and dreams with practical solutions.

### Co-Creation

Building resilience in people and communities to overcome struggles and be capable of embracing the now and the future.

### Monitoring & Evaluation

Improving relationships by monitoring and evaluating the process of working together as a community.

## Practice

Specifically, the four keywords that define the macro categories of the strategic phase must foresee and contain all the activities necessary for the development of a project.

This means starting a substantial research activity that has as its objective the definition of each design step.

That it is possible to examine the possible criticalities that could arise, in response to a hypothetical intervention, and the methods through which starting and developing the whole process.

However, it is necessary to be very careful in interpreting this preparatory moment not in an extremely formal and decisive way, but rather as a flexible and permeable action.

In fact, the risk is to transform this phase, not surprisingly defined by Jeremy Till as “critical practice”<sup>3</sup>, into a real practice which, starting with the desire to seek answers to a question, is resolved by advancing a solution purely architectural and therefore considered critical.

Rather, it is preferable to carefully consider the impact that a structured operation could produce within a community, trying to pay attention to the countless variables that are capable of decreeing the failure of an action of this type.

To reinforce the vision, the sociologist Bruno Latour presents a further specification around the desire to define the critical issues in the architectural field. In fact, he proposes a distinction between an “architecture as a matter of fact” and “architecture as a matter of concern”<sup>4</sup>.

Through this clarification, he makes clear the need to escape from an architectural practice often associated with the use of rules and methods, considered precisely

as a matter of fact, which is unavoidably correct, albeit static. Instead, it would be advisable to prefer a vision capable of giving weight and value to the social consequences that an architectural action, even if feeble, is able to generate, distinguishing this vision from a formal, architectural object.

Therefore, the usefulness of structuring an intervention proposal makes sense and effectiveness if it manages to keep all the aspects mentioned above together, through the definition of a structured and inclusive logical process. The procedure must pay attention to evidence, necessity and possibly also to the contradictions a territory is characterized by without neglecting the determination to discussion and participation, but above all “to be more concerned with the good effects of architecture rather than with good intentions”<sup>5</sup>.

## Process

The strategic phase and the practical activity, however, lose their strength and relevance if implemented in a strictly planning manner, presenting the potential client a proposal developed in total autonomy and independence. The design activity can in fact take on interesting characteristics, potentially more appropriate if it is decided to tackle it in a participatory way.

Attempting to define the meaning of the term “participatory process”<sup>6</sup> is not easy, especially because of the infinite possibilities in which this can be used and understood.

Surely it refers to the desire to encourage comparison of all subjects involved in the entire design process, recording their needs and opinions, making the project activity very close to the idea of an “open source”<sup>7</sup>

in which the opinion of the individual is able to add a significant contribution to the design process, raising issues that in ordinary conditions could be neglected.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that a participatory process is useful for educating society<sup>8</sup> making it capable of understanding the difficulties of a design practice, while transmitting the value that the action of the individual can bring during the entire cycle; both at the design level and in the construction techniques, this process allows to have the necessary knowledge to replicate the activity, finally arriving at the ability to manage it autonomously.

To better identify the value of participation, the words of Giancarlo De Carlo are certainly useful. He admonishes the figure of the designer, underlining that his role is in attendance of people, and as such must create the conditions for a reconciliation between architecture, understood as a creative opportunity, and the subjects the activity is addressed to. This must lead to ensuring that Architecture “is less and less the representation of those who design it and more and more the representation of those who use it”<sup>9</sup>.

The greatest difficulty lies in accepting the fact that through this vision, the process will no longer be able to end with the achievement of a single result. On the contrary the comparison will lead to the revision and continuous rethinking of the various proposals, which in a cyclical way will require the rethinking of various aspects, with the aim of obtaining a final solution as inclusive as possible and close to the opinions of those who will directly use the artwork.

Only in this way it will be possible to overcome trivialization, seeing no more usefulness in the application of standardized models: only by fitting into a specific context, with the intention of building through dialogue, it will be possible to obtain better results.

- 1 United Nations, Department of Global Communications, May 2020.
- 2 A. Brillembourg, K. Feireiss, H. Klumpner, *Informal City - Caracas case*, Munich: Prestel, 2005
- 3 N. Awan, T. Schneider, J. Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture*, Routledge, 2011.
- 4 B. Latour, Why has critique run out of stream? From matters of fact to matters of concern, *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2004), 225-248.
- 5 S. Mockbee, *The Rural Studio*, in *The Everyday and Architecture*, ed. by J. Till and S. Wigglesworth, London: Academy Editions, 1998, 79. Through the words of the founder of the "The Rural Studio" team, is possible to emphasize the importance of an action that focuses on the possibility of generating change based on the conditions of need, rather than paying attention to technical and formal issues.
- 6 G. Federici, *Defining Participation - Norwegian refugee council*, January 2020.
- 7 M. Kallehauge, L. Jorgensen, *Elemental - Alejandro Aravena*, Denmark, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2018, p. 207.
- 8 R. Ingersoll, C. Tartari, *Architecture without people*, essay in *Lotus International 124*, Milano, Lotus, 2005.  
"l'architettura non mira soltanto a soddisfare i bisogni delle persone, ma anche a migliorarne i comportamenti".
- 9 G. De Carlo, *L'architettura della partecipazione*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2013.

## 2.1.2 Archive from the past

# Kisipidi Community Centre

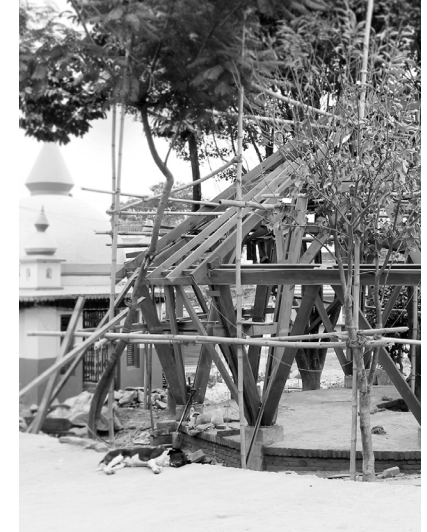
**Location:** Kisipid, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Area:** 55 sqm

**Year:** 2019

**In 2015 an earthquake hit Nepal, destroying the homes of 2.8 million people, and damaging 7,000 schools. Most of the damage occurred in rural areas. During the rebuild, many western techniques and materials (concrete) were used. As a result, timber construction is at risk of disappearing in these communities. Local knowledge of how to build with timber is also in danger of becoming lost for future generations. Indeed, the aim of the project was to restore a physical structures to make more stronger a social systems that is the driver of this reconstruction within a community.**

EA-HR.COM









# Azraq School

Location: Azraq, Jordan

Area: 330 sqm

Year: 2018

**EAHR, together with other partners, assisted a local Jordanian NGO in providing access to safe and inclusive education environments to Syrian refugee children and youth.**

**The constructions ultimately allowed 200 out-of-school children (from age 9 to 18+) per week per year to attend formal class education, thanks also to a training period for 10 teachers in applied-science education, as well for 50 workers in brick production and vault making. After training, these workers were hired in the construction of the school.**

EA-HR.COM











## II.II CLASSROOMS

### PHOTO CREDITS

/ Kissipidi Comunity Center

01. C. Garbelotto, Construction phase, 2019, p.41.
02. C. Garbelotto, People talking around a concept, 2019 p. 42-43.
03. C. Garbelotto, Construction phase, 2019, p. 44-45.
04. C. Garbelotto, Children from the site, 2019, p. 46-47.

/ Azraq School

01. M. Rubino, Man laying briks, 2018, p. 49.
02. M. Rubino, Front elevation, 2018, p. 50-51.
03. M. Rubino, Perspective view, 2018, p. 52-53.
04. M. Rubino, People during the construction phase, 2018, p. 54-55.
05. M. Rubino, Children from the site, 2018, p. 56-57.

## 2.2.1 By refugees For refugees

The case of the Azarq School allowed the team to expand the researches within educational issues.

The results obtained and the effectiveness of the training process, as well as subsequent autonomous management by the community, have shown the possibility of expanding this type of intervention in places characterized by conditions with similar criticalities.

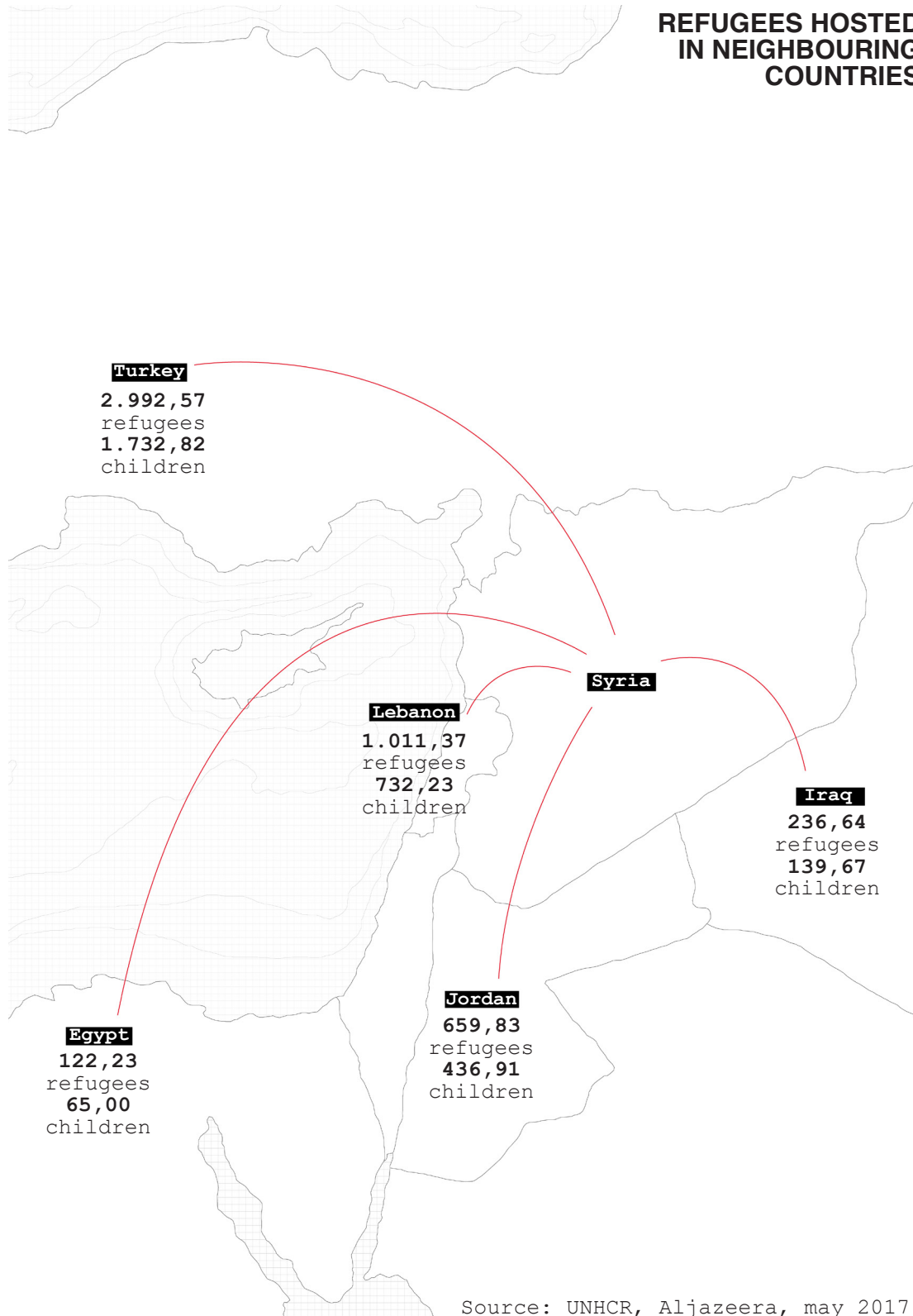
In this regard, since 2011 the Syrian territory has been the site of numerous civil wars, some of which are still ongoing, causing the need for a large part of society to migrate elsewhere, away from the centers of more danger.

Currently, a large part of this society lives informally, in refugee camps or host communities, which unfortunately are unable to guarantee minimum levels of health, social security and even less the provision of activities or educational facilities.

The situation is further worrying, considering also that the majority of refugees are not adults, but children or young people. Due to difficult political situations, they risk being excluded on a generational level, not being able to have an adequate quality of life. This state of things causes an evident situation of social injustice. For these reasons, the EAHR team believes in the possibility of proposing effective solutions with the aim of improving current living conditions, creating the necessary basis to invest in educational values, for a more just, equitable and resilient society.

However, in order to transform into a concrete and effective intervention what is proposed within SDG number 4, it is necessary to plan a path of involvement that respects and understands cultural diversities and at the same time introduces new opportunities.

## REFUGEES HOSTED IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES



The succession of clashes and conflicts has periodically imposed on society the need to move, looking for places that are able to offer temporary support, moving away from conflicts and critical issues.

The condition of initial temporariness is however destined to vanish when it is realized that “the average life span within a field is between 10 and 17 years”<sup>1</sup>.

The value of the term temporary, although flexible, seems to be easily replaceable by the idea of a real suspension, of time, of places, of normality.

In fact, the data furnished by the various bodies that provide humanitarian assistance show that most of the subjects interested in this phenomenon are children under 18. Reporting the thoughts of sociologists Diken and Laustsen, it seems that within contemporary spatial understanding, suspension has become a recognizable factor almost everywhere.

This gives rise to “a society in which the exception is the rule, but what happens when the exceptional start to be normalized?”<sup>2</sup>.

The risk is certainly of sinking into indifference towards apparently distant realities, aggravating the impossibility of accessing conditions that can be culturally defined as “normal”.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, Global Trends, forced displacement in 2019.

<sup>2</sup> B. Diken, C. Laustesen, *The Culture of Exception*, New York, Routledge, 2005.

## 2.2.2 Classroom 01

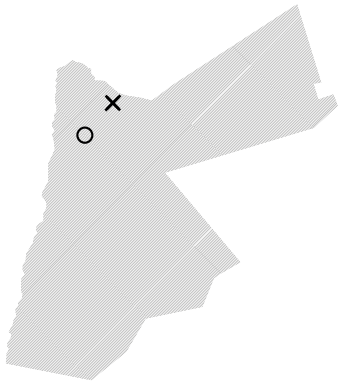
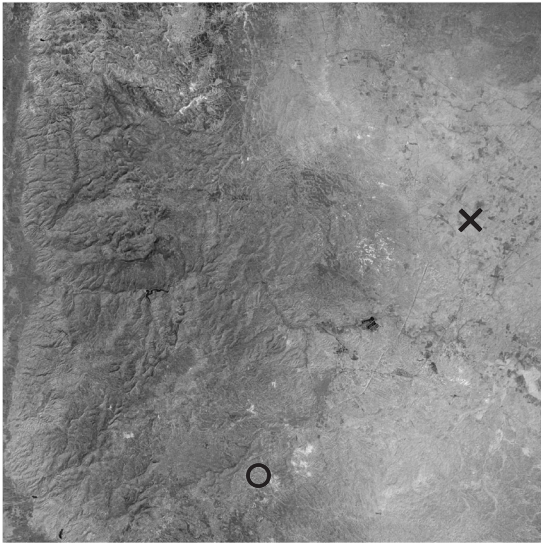
Thanks to the collaboration with the non-profit organization “Acting for Change Jordan”, the opportunity opens up to take concrete action within the current largest refugee camp in the world for Syrian refugees<sup>3</sup>. The camp is located a few kilometers from the capital of Jordan, Amman, which takes the name of Zaatari. Inside, more or less 15.000 Syrians and 13.000 Jordanians, who fled the violent civil wars, transformed this place apparently devoid of any conditions suitable for life into a real permanent settlement<sup>4</sup>.

However, the difficult situation makes it possible to insert a project interested in expanding the existing school structure, increasing the reception capacity for all those who wish to have access to an educational path<sup>5</sup>. The flexibility and the desire for inclusion are in fact the keys that motivated the hypothesis of creating a structure whose use is foreseen to carry out educational activities together with children during the morning, and together with adults in the afternoon. The aim is to arouse interest from the entire community, encouraging free access throughout the day.

<sup>3</sup> S. Hayden, All'interno del campo per rifugiati siriani più grande del mondo, marzo 2017, in The Irish Time.

<sup>4</sup> M. Kimmelman, Refugee Camp for Syrians in Jordan Evolves as a Do-It-Yourself City, in The New York Times, July 2014.

<sup>5</sup> EAHR\_100classrooms\_booklet.



○ Amman | Capital  
X Zaatari Camp | Project site  
Surface | 5 km<sup>2</sup>



The involvement of different actors is a fundamental point to determine the success of the entire process.

One of the most complex aspect to manage is given by the desire to combine a purely architectural issue together with an approach mainly centered on people. This can be easily addressed starting from the indications provided in SDG 4 (A): “build and update educational structures that are sensitive to children, disabilities and different genders, providing safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”.

All this can be achieved if the main purpose is to empower local communities through a path that primarily includes the understanding and development of certain skills. In fact, through the definition of various local partners, an attempt is made to trigger a change that is able to continue to produce sustainable effects even after the physical presence of the team, entrusting much of the task to the community itself.

It is therefore essential to provide participation from the very beginning, to facilitate the understanding of social and environmental peculiarities, and easily continue towards a moment of co-design and subsequent co-creation.

The usefulness of a participatory approach is also to encourage towards a sense of belonging, as well as a value of public property. Its understanding and meaning is able to improve, and potentially increase, the will of management by the entire community, which must have the necessary knowledge to ensure the effectiveness of the activity towards future generations.

## 2.2.3 Specific Approach

In considering the design phase, it was decided to start from the observation of traditional structures achievable through local techniques. The classroom is in fact inspired by the vernacular architectures “ad alverare”<sup>6</sup>, quite usual reference for the construction of numerous houses in Syria, more typical for the cities of Aleppo and Homs, from which most of the refugees come.

Due to the limited choice of construction methods and materials, as well as the harsh environment characterized by hot summers and cold winters, the *beehive style* turns out to be a valid solution for school building, easily achievable through the super-adobe technique. This mainly use of local soil, which through a minimum amount of water, allows to create a compound that is partially viscous, elastic and adaptable to different shapes.

This type of construction technique does not require high tensile strength or reinforcements, and can be implemented quickly with unskilled work, achieving better performance than curtains, concrete blocks and corrugated sheets in terms of both thermal insulation and costs. Through a “capacity development” approach<sup>7</sup>, an attempt is made to pass on to the local community the skills necessary to master

<sup>6</sup> J. May, A. Reid, *Handmade Houses & Other Buildings*, thames & Hudson, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Could also be used the term of “capacity strengthening”, to indicate that people have some capacity/skills that might be understood from the team, to adds more emphasis to the whole process.

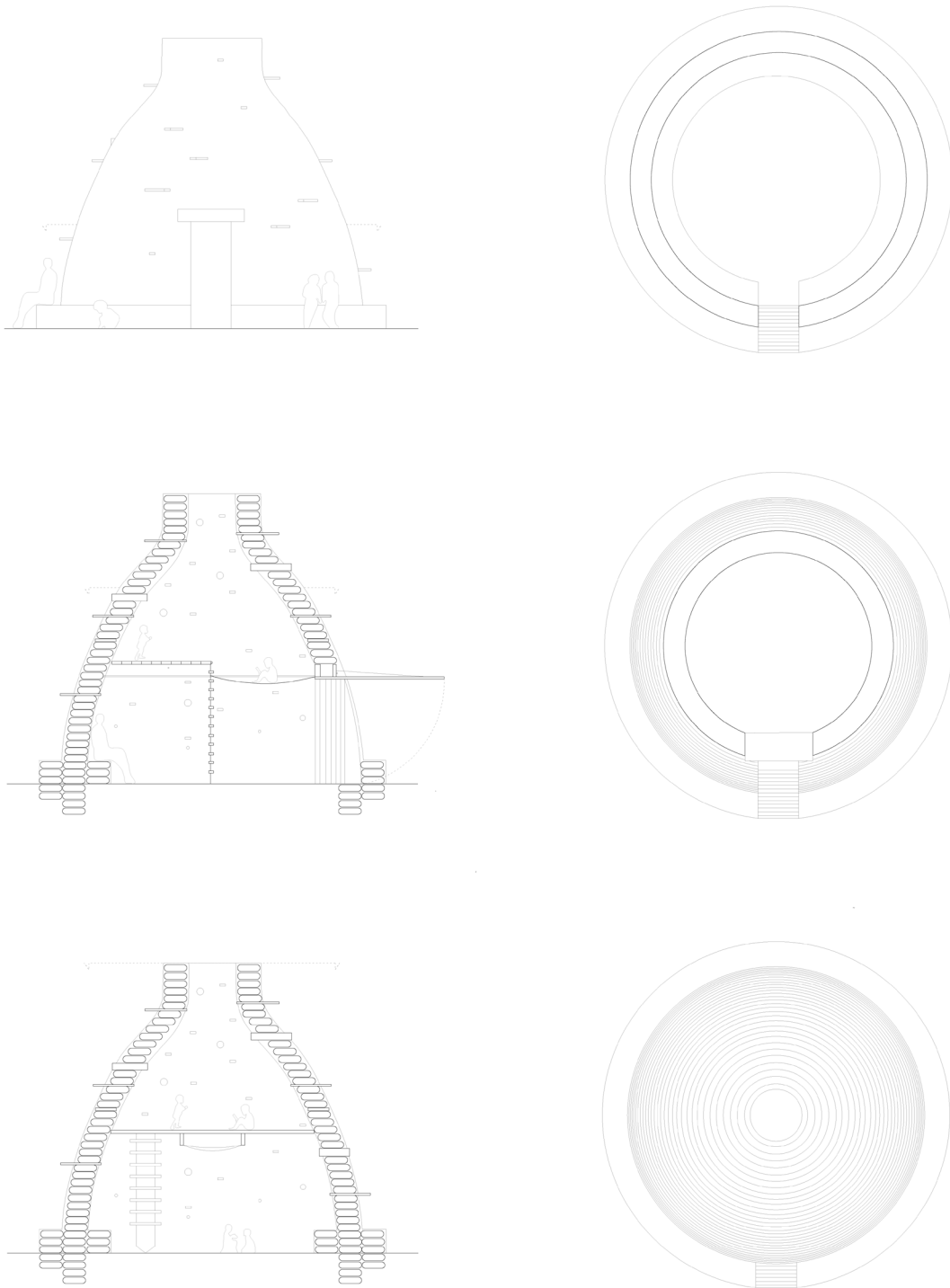
some techniques that do not require particular professional skills, such as super adobe or compressed stabilized earth blocks abbreviated to “cseb”<sup>8</sup>.

Through the support and direct supervision of the EAHR team, the community itself will take care, and execute the construction, interacting within the site and the construction process. By integrating eco-sustainable practices, the aim is to raise awareness in society regarding environmental issues and an approach that is as attentive to the environment as possible. Finally, the goal is to make the community aware of real needs, offering also the ability to properly manage all the resources and processes necessary to physically rebuild a suitable, safe and sustainable place.<sup>9</sup>

This term, coming from theories of urban sustainability, demonstrates that it is not just a question of climatic-environmental conditions, but also everything that is potentially capable of influencing common human activities, from the most simple to the most complex. Sustainability is therefore climatic, environmental, territorial and social.

<sup>8</sup> Aurorville Earth Insitute, UNESCO Earthen Architecture, report and definitions of Saptrem Maini.

<sup>9</sup> J. Gehl, *Ciudades para la gente*, Infinito, 2014.



0 1 4



Photo credits: Martina Rubino









PHOTO CREDITS

/ Zaatari Camp

- 01. M. Rubino, Final result, 2019, p.72.
- 02. M. Rubino, Construction phase, 2019, p.74.
- 03. M. Rubino, Outdoor spaces, 2019, p.76.
- 04. M. Rubino, Playing activities, 2019, p.78.

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M. Kimmelman, Refugee Camp for Syrians in Jordan Evolves as a Do-It-Yourself City, in The New York Times, July 2014.

5

EAHR\_100classrooms\_booklet.

6

J. May, A. Reid, Handmade Houses & Other Buildings, thames & Hudson, 2010.

7

Could also be used the term of "capacity strengthening", to indicate that people have some capacity/skills that might be understood from the team. That rapresent a potential that could adds more emphasis to the whole process.

8

Aurorville Earth Insitute, UNESCO Earthen Architecture, report and definitions of Saptrem Maini.

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J. Gehl, Ciudades para la gente, Infinito, 2014.



Work  
On  
Participation

## III.I MORE THAN 01

The excellent results, recorded through the experience of the first classroom, have allowed the team to believe in the desire to expand this intervention.

Starting from a critical analysis of the entire design process, it is possible to note how social involvement represents the main value and objective.

However, it cannot be denied the great difficulty in managing this aspect, which in order to be addressed and treated correctly, requires great awareness of the possible effects that, voluntarily or involuntarily, could occur.

For this reason, the centrality in the construction of a strategic intervention plan is essential to ensure success with respect to the objectives set, in which in the specific case of the EAHR team, it is achieved with the definition of a chart.<sup>1</sup>

This, in addition to being a tool, represents also a strong operational support, offering the ability to view the steps necessary for the completion of

<sup>1</sup> Strategy, referred to the definition on page 34.

the entire project, summarizing them in a simple and intuitive way.

What is innovative is the fact of having a quite structured scheme, which can also be delivered into the hands of individuals who do not have specific knowledge or skills. This offers them the opportunity to create real “Self Building Cities”<sup>2</sup>, which pay particular attention to the social and public aspect, realizing interventions that, however simple, are able to stimulate the birth of new forms of cooperation, intervening with respect to recognized collective needs.

The chart therefore becomes a key element that permits to compare, for example, together with the various international organizations that deal with education and refugees actions. The aim is convincing them not only of the effectiveness, but also of the possibility to include the figure of children during the design of spaces normally accessible to them.

The greatest complexity is found in being able to program a tool that establishes rigid and universally generalizable conditions. As a tool, it does not necessarily have to be managed and used directly by the team, its condition of generalizability allows it to be delivered at the local partners, who are preliminarily prepared to independently face the entire development process, perhaps requesting the intervention of the team at a later time. This allows to maximize the effects by making the communities responsible and able to manage the development of a project independently, overcoming the possibility of reaching territories with different cultural and

<sup>2</sup> C. Bianchetti, Spazi che contano, Donzelli editore, Roma, 2016, p. 46.

linguistic aspects, reducing time and costs. Above all limiting also the need to send directly human resources in places where access is normally difficult.

As complex as it may seem, defining a participatory process together with children is possible, but it requires reflecting specifically on the type of activities to be proposed, how these are to be presented and what results are expected to be gathered through each action. The activities must necessarily be related to the target, having to take into account the differences that make up and identify the cultural aspect, remembering that these must be understood and respected.

For this reason, the words of Alessandro Coppola<sup>3</sup> remind us that acting in these contexts means knowing how to combine very different knowledge and skills, it means guaranteeing accessibility through an inclusive and circular proposal, allowing difficult leaps of scale that often hide reasons deriving from major conflicts.

To adequately understand what is proposed below, it is important to specify that a series of items appear within the chart.

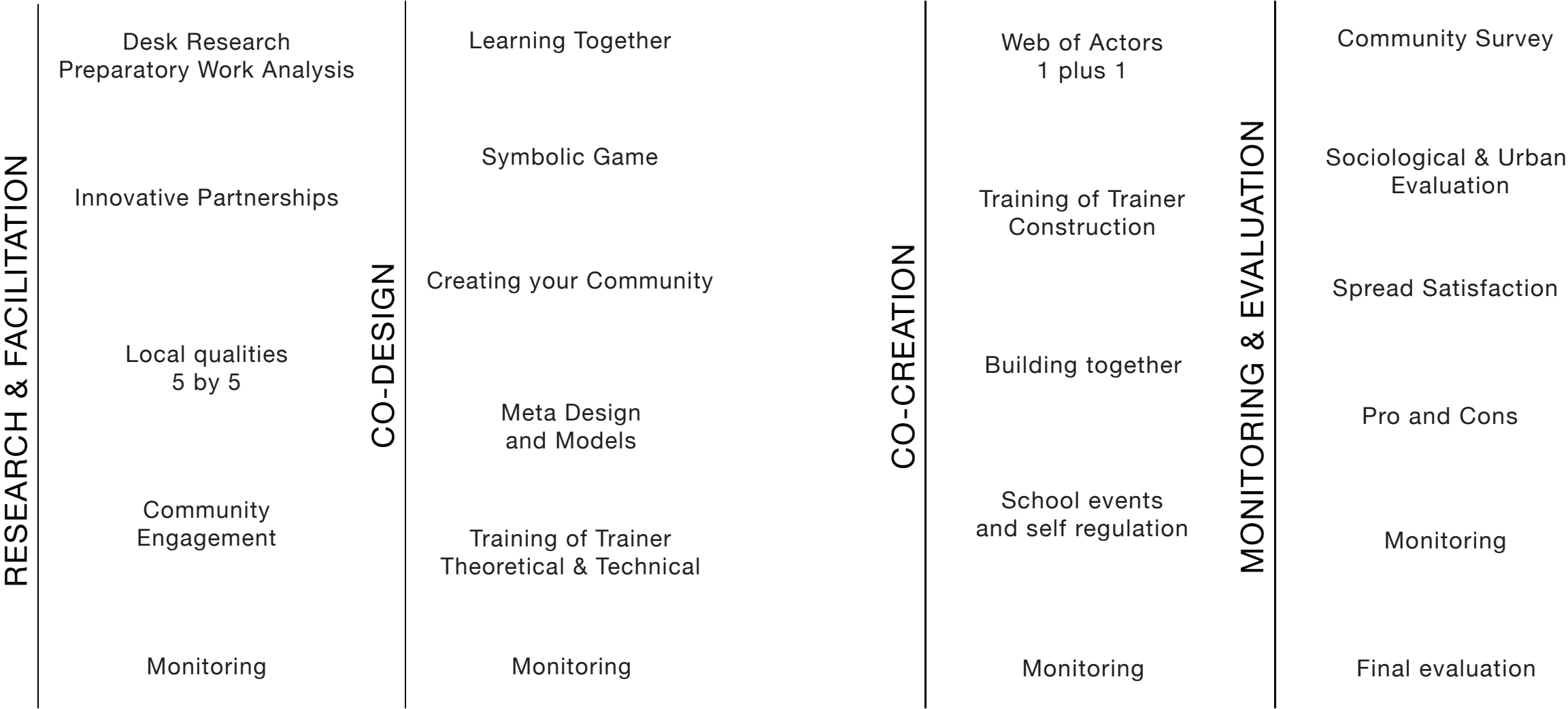
Some of these are directly referred to specific activities to be implemented, while others represent the so called “social matters”<sup>4</sup>, or actions that are carried out with the aim of encouraging and stimulating interactions between people.

To decode this graph, it is better to start from the horizontal direction, in which the macro categories described above can be identified and, for each, vertically.

<sup>3</sup> A. Coppola, B. Pizzo, Letture dell’azione pubblica nell’urbanistica, in Urbanistica e Azione Pubblica, Donzelli, Roma, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> P. Singer, Ethics in the Real World, The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 2016.

Actions that need to be considered to define a process.



### 3.1.1 Co-design with Children

## Is it possible to include children in different stages of the design process?

As co-designers, the idea is to consider children as stakeholders throughout the entire experience, contributing to the process as experts of their own lives.

It is important to acknowledge their competence and provide them with methods of self-expression that encourages comfort and creativity.

Monica Landoni, expert in children education and engagement systems, states that children are often included in the ideation phase of a design process, but rarely engaged in other phases and reflection.

They are mainly considered as final users of a product or service<sup>5</sup>.

Always more often was felt the need to build a new method aimed at co-design with children, firstly with the intention to build a process that put them at the same level of designers and adults, but also to make real some needs that come directly from the users to which all the project is addressed to.

Therefore it is necessary to clarify the degree of involvement that is possible to achieve: do we consider the children as users or as partners? Are they informants or co-researchers?

However, considering that treating children as protagonists<sup>6</sup> encourages reflection and provides them the opportunity to have an important voice during the entire design process,

<sup>5</sup> M. Landoni, E. Rubegni, E. Nicol, and J. Read, How Many Roles Can Children Play?, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> A. Hansen, Co-Design with Children. How to best communicate with and encourage children during a design process.

could be one of the right ways to approach the issue.

It is not just a matter of working together to obtain a final product, but also of developing thinking and reflection skills, aimed at understanding and empowering the action that is taking place.

This will allow the architectural element to completely move away from being considered as an “empty box”, representing from the beginning a real place for education.

“Rather than pushing children to think like adults, we might do better to remember that they are great learners and try harder to be more like them”.

Seymour Papert (1928-2016) LEGO ®  
Professor of Learning Research  
MIT Media Lab

### 3.1.2 Learning Through Play

One of the key issues for the definition of a co-design process is certainly that relating to learning methods. It can be complex to discuss architectural issues with children, but it is possible to make them aware of all the elements that must be taken into consideration to develop an idea that is architecturally strong.

Issues such as understanding the different climatic challenges, rather than understanding the social context or the use of local materials, are certainly not easy to face together with children between 5 and 10 years old. For this reason, it is essential to plan a method to approach and communicate the necessary information, but above all, through the most appropriate ways.

However, it must be remembered that nothing should be taken as a total certainty, in fact there is a risk that the effects of this planning are inappropriate to satisfy and meet the learning ability or interest of the child himself.

The most effective method that also allows the possibility of advancing extremely complex issues, is learning through play<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The Lego Foundation in support of Unicef, Learning Through Play.

Play is one of the most important ways in which young children gain essential knowledge and skills. For this reason, at the core of some educational programs, is emphasized the will to create the conditions that could help and stimulate exploration, curiosity and hands-on learning. Indeed it is crucial to create the correct atmosphere, where children's actions are valued and acknowledged, but most of all, their achievements must be judged in the context of their abilities and should be recognized openly. It has been shown that cognitive development and learning ability are particularly sensitive and active between the first year of life and eight years<sup>8</sup>. During these years the child is able to absorb as much information as possible, also deriving from sectors or in any case different thematic spheres. It is therefore particularly important to ensure that the information transmitted is correct, above all because it will be what will influence and characterize the way of thinking of the person in the adult phase.

<sup>8</sup> J. Shonkoff, D. Phillips, From neurons to neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.

A crucial aspect, as teachers or practitioners, is understand the different abilities and needs that children possess, in a way to develop skills and vision, but also to build together a creative and educative path that enables the child to feel free to express himself<sup>9</sup>.

When working with children in the initial phases of the matrix, it is important to pay attention to when the children struggle or have difficulties. To promote a growth mindset, it is important to help a child transform a moment of apparent weakness into a possibility of creation and investigation. To do this for example, time limits are avoided in a way to work on a complete and creative activity

<sup>9</sup> C. Drifte, Early learning Goals for Children with Special Needs, Routledge, 2013.

without being pressured by external constraints. In addition, it could be useful to think about iterative and repeatable <sup>10</sup> activities that allow to define ideas more times, coming at an idea as complete as possible, that is the reason why it is important to have all the time needed without external pressures.

<sup>10</sup> The Lego Foundation, What we mean by: Learning Through Play, Lego, June 2017.

Another useful approach, is certainly to develop a series of exercises that are as exciting and stimulating as possible, but also appropriate to encourage children to be creative. There are many opportunities that are effective today, however the choice is never defined and it is possible to experiment with different types of actions, depending from the goals that the learning process aim to achieve<sup>11</sup>. As matter of facts, the use of stories and poems, arts and crafts, physical games, trips, workshops, tasks with parents or older children, are all strong opportunities that should be used extensively.

<sup>11</sup> D. Kleine, G. Pearson, S. Holloway, Participatory methods: Engaging children's voices and experiences in research.

What is very interesting with respect to this method of learning is the scarcity of limits that can be encountered.

First of all, there is no suitable place to play and then learn, the educational activity can in fact be carried out on the street, in a classroom, as well as in a park or in a village. Secondly, the learning methods are still not fixed and much less defined, there is the possibility of opening to new scenarios and the possibility of defining further educational areas, always having a clear understanding of the goals and objectives to be achieved.

More and more often it could be noticed how much the educational methodology requires a phase of play, despite the fact that this approach

is still little recognized within school environments and realities of different kinds and types. The mistake that is often made is in fact to consider the learning activity as something necessarily serious and defined within a rigid scenario where attention must be achieved through traditional methods.

The peculiarity of a playful activity is the possibility of transmitting various types of information that are not limited to a single target, but first of all include any type of age<sup>12</sup>. Secondly, they allow to tackle even difficult issues, which traditionally require complicated approaches, even through the assistance of multiple professionals figures. It does not mean minimizing the potential of this method, considering the more traditional ones obsolete; rather, consider the union of two visions through different methods, which open up new possibilities for intervention.

To develop all this, however, it is necessary to ask questions that lead the team, or the various figures involved within the process.

<sup>12</sup> J. Holt, *Escape from Childhood. The need and Rights of Children*, E.P. Dutton, 1974.

Indeed, the objectives in planning a system of this type will have to be identified taking into account the cultural background within which one acts, despite the absolute possibility and willingness to create a strategy that can be adapted to different contexts.

The best result occurs when practical and concrete ideas are introduced, noting how these are then modified also on the basis of different skills and learning methods<sup>13</sup>, thus further underlining the need for a structured system, but even more appropriate, flexible and therefore adaptable to different realities.

<sup>13</sup> C. Drifte, *Early learning Goals for Children with Special Needs*, Routledge, 2013.

### 3.1.3 Dealing with a traumatic condition

The purpose of this research, as previously mentioned, is to develop a participatory process together with children, including and comparing them in the two fundamental phases of the design process.

The aim is to create a place that concretely meets the needs of users, in a way to have a suitable environment where grow and receive an adequate education; despite the possible presence of particularly complicated conditions that define the context of action<sup>14</sup>.

The design activity aims to be applied within territories characterized by situations of humanitarian crises of various types, focusing mainly on realities dominated by refugee camps, people with refugee status, and also high density informal settlements, or even people seeking asylum. Within these realities, however, there is a strong marginalization of the figure of children, who are forced to live and survive without proper education, learning as a result of the difficulties that life poses.

<sup>14</sup> S. Nicolai, C. Triplehorn, The role of education in protection children in conflict, Publish on Demand Ltd, 2003.

It is therefore not difficult to understand how a design team should be prepared to tackle even complex psychological issues. The team is voluntarily intervening within a reality that may have caused trauma or in any case may have influenced the ways of thinking of people, who have found themselves, and still find themselves, living in potentially definable conditions as extraordinary.

The greatest difficulty will therefore be related to the need to establish a constructive dialogue with children, but also with adults, in a way to be able to establish a relationship of trust and confidence that allows a positive and not imposed interaction.

The most common reaction to an activity of this type is in fact to consider the problem with sufficiency and detachment<sup>15</sup>. In fact, it is difficult to recognize a trauma and even in some communities the problem is ignored, or even worse, its existence is denied.

In light of these considerations, it is therefore necessary to foresee how to face in parallel the desire to understand the context in which one lives, the causes that have caused certain living conditions, and the various social and environmental problems, taking into account however also the psychological aspect of the subjects which it addresses.

It should be remembered and underlined that the entire path must take place in total freedom of access and participation. A constraint, as well as being an incorrect way of acting at the start, would obviously be experienced as something negative.

<sup>15</sup> C. Herbert, F. Didonna, Capire e superare il trauma. Una guida per comprendere e fronteggiare efficacemente i traumi psichici, Erickson, 2016.

**trauma** noun /'trɔɪ.mə/ /'traʊ.mə/  
violent and instantaneous injury to the body, mechanically produced by external agents and such as to cause even more or less serious consequences of a general nature in the organism: head trauma.

Psychic trauma, severe disturbance of psychic stability, resulting from a violent emotional reaction. gr. tràuma

**trau•mat•ic** adj /trɔɪ'mæt.ɪk//traʊ'm/  
that it is produced by trauma or that it is related to it; which is trauma: bruises, wounds, traumatic dislocations; traumatic disease, morbid state deriving from the complex of modifications that a trauma has caused in the organism. gr. traumatikòs

**trau•ma•tize** verb /trɔɪ'mətaɪz/  
cause trauma or, more generally, serious damage to the organism. to be greatly disturbed, to be upset following an event that causes a vivid impression.  
p.pr. traumatizing  
p.p. traumatized

A series of events are recognized that can directly or indirectly generate traumatic conditions and can be of different nature, starting from wars, conflicts or terrorist acts, abuses, aggressions or inhumane acts, finally reaching environmental disasters, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, fires, famines etc<sup>16</sup>.

Through this obviously incomplete list, the research does not want to belittle or briefly describe the possible causes of a trauma; rather, it can help to understand the variety of possible causes that can affect people.

To date, there are no guidelines capable of defining a standard to address the issue, also because it would be ideologically wrong to define a universally useful procedure with respect to problems characterized by strong subjectivity and gravity.

However, an action requires knowledge of certain conditions, namely the specific needs of the person with whom you are coming into contact.

"These needs follow a hierarchical order, so it is necessary that all basic needs are met before those of a higher order can be satisfied".

Claudia Herbert e Fabrizio Didonna. "Capire e superare il trauma".

The first condition to be achieved is certainly that relating to the feeling of physical and psychological security, which can be reached by defining a stable, potentially imaginary situation. Perhaps, over time, arriving at a phase of acceptance of the problem and objective vision of the conditions that need to be faced.

<sup>16</sup> B. Young, J. Ford, J. Ruzek, M. Friedman e F. Gusman, L'assistenza psicologica nelle emergenze, Trento, Erickson, 2002.

It has been shown that the experience of trauma leads most people to realize that the “outside” world is not a safe, predictable and controllable place, automatically creating the will for a detachment that quickly leads to a disconnection from the reality.

To help restore a situation of normality and mental stability, the definition of an imaginary scenario can help, useful for acquiring a feeling of balance and serenity, potentially visible also in motor activities<sup>17</sup>.

This condition can be particularly useful for both adults and children, who may feel more relaxed in dealing with complex issues.

It is also advisable not to include real people or subjects closely linked to the life conditions within an imaginary environment, this allows to exclude the possibility of breaking the scenario, especially following any mutations in inter-personal relationships, which normally change in time.

To confirm of what has been said, it is in fact possible to define an imaginary environment as story, similar to a fairy tale, in which the educator or whoever works for him has the important task of guiding the subject towards an autonomous definition of imaginary conditions, also through the aid of previously stable and identified inputs or stimuli.

Although there are various methods<sup>18</sup> to apply and define this story, the fundamental concept to be revealed is however that of making the imaginary concepts precipitate at a certain point in the situation, bringing attention back to a spontaneous narration of real problems, strictly connected to reality and no longer in the imaginary world.

<sup>17</sup> J. Binder,  
Primary Care  
Interviewing,  
Springer, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> E. Giusti, C.  
Montanari,  
Trattamenti  
psicologici  
in emergenza  
con EMDR per  
profughi,  
rifugiati  
e vittime  
di traumi,  
Roma, Sovera  
Multimedia, 2000.

### 3.1.4 Ethical Considerations

Another aspect that it is essential to pay attention, with respect to any type of activity that interests children or adults alike, is linked to ethics.

During the development of an educational path is necessary to take some decisions, it means correctly know the population, resources and funding, the possibility to get access to young people, and foresee the possible conflicts that could arise.

Any action that does not consider the ethics during the research, could potentially damage a community with truly terrible results.

For this reason it may be useful to define some keywords, to be considered as a starting point for further reflections:

• **Participation:** <sup>19</sup>

Ensure that working with children is in their best interest and does not cause new problems. It is important to keep in mind that there is a context characterized by some cultural variables that put adults and children in close relationships. Indeed is fundamental to evaluate every possible danger before acting.

<sup>19</sup> J. Wilkinson, Children and Participation: Research, monitoring and evaluation with children and young people, Save the Children, 2000.

• **Conflicting:** <sup>20</sup>

Adults are not always willing to accept seeing things according to the suggestions received from children. Because of this consideration, could be a useful moment of understanding and negotiation with adults before pushing them to really consider children's ideas.

<sup>20</sup> J. Boyden, J. Ennew, Children in Focus-a Manual for participatory research with children, Radda Barnen, Stockholm, 1997.

• **Transparency:**

Make sure that the whole community involved is adequately informed about the roles during the different moments of the learning process. Be aware that the inherent power relationship between the adult and the child means that the child may feel nervous to express its opinion.

Considering these conditions <sup>21</sup> before intervening within a territory, allows to avoid any conflicts on a social level, causing the community to leave, generating distrust and potential difficulty in achieving the intended objectives.

<sup>21</sup> P. White, Developing a participatory approach to involve crisis affected people in a humanitarian response, Alnap 1994.

"It is important to recognize that children, like women, don't form a homogenous social category. Childhood and the personal history of each child is defined by the material, historical, sociocultural circumstances of their life, including the social systems, cultural beliefs and practices, political and legal environment... gender, age, disability, ethnicity, class, caste, religion, are some of the factors which produce different conditions, and hence realities and experiences for different types of childhood."

Faruqi, F., 1997:3, Putting Children First! Child Rights, Participation and Development, in South and Central Asia's Children, No. 8, SC UK.

- 1 Strategy, pag. 34.
- 2 C. Bianchetti, Spazi che contano, Donzelli editore, Roma, 2016, p. 46.
- 3 A. Coppola, B. Pizzo, Letture dell'azione pubblica nell'urbanistica, in Urbanistica e Azione Pubblica, Donzelli, Roma, 2018.
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- 16 B. Young, J. Ford, J. Ruzek, M. Friedman e F. Gusman, L'assistenza psicologica nelle emergenze, Trento, Erickson, 2002.
- 17 J. Binder, Primary Care Interviewing, Springer, 2013.
- 18 E. Giusti, C. Montanari, Trattamenti psicologici in emergenza con EMDR per profughi, rifugiati e vittime di traumi, Roma, Sovera Multimedia, 2000.
- 19 J. Wilkinson, Children and Participation: Research, monitoring and evaluation with children and young people, Save the Children, 2000.
- 20 J. Boyden, J. Ennew, Children in Focus-a Manual for participatory research with children, Radda Barnen, Stockholm, 1997.
- 21 P. White, Developing a participatory approach to involve crisis-affected people in a humanitarian response, Alnap 1994.

## III.II TOOLS

Is it possible to develop an educational path in order to make children between 5 up to 10 conscientious and capable to face with climate and architectural challenges? With which methods? What instruments are necessary?

CO-DESIGN

Learning Together

Symbolic Game

Creating your Community

Meta Design  
and Models

Training of Trainer  
Theoretical & Technical

Monitoring

## 3.2.1 Learning Together

The “learning together” phase is the first of a complex process, in which the team has to try to communicate the challenges that the design activity tries to face and subsequently solve, confronting not only with the socio-cultural aspects, but also the climatic and environmental ones.

Among the playful proposals of creative and cognitive enhancement, it is worth mentioning the coding activity.<sup>1</sup> This cognitive and physical game allows to solve problems with complex characteristics, developing a computational thinking, a logical-creative process that allows to break down a big problem into different parts, to simply tackle it one piece at a time, in order to solve the general problem.

Activities of this type have been already submitted and subsequently analyzed within both kindergarten

and primary school, observing and finding a positive achievement of different teaching objectives.

Starting from the kindergarten, is possible to notice that the coding activity allows to develop logic, linguistic, mathematical and topological exercises, even more if they are linked to graphic or numerical elements. This approach allows the child to become more confident in learning directions and counting criteria, but above all, he designs, builds and memorizes some codes to achieve the end of the game.

Generally it is possible to notice how during the activity the child is able to interact with other subjects. At the same time he/she evaluates the risks due to the conditions that receives, this also allows him/her to recognize their body within a space, learning

its properties in terms of sizing and positioning.

The same activity has found wide possibilities of use also in primary school, with the possibility to expand the range of people to which the coding activity could be subjected. The objectives remain unchanged, adding however the possibility of operating within more complex choices. Also in this case, the aim is develop skills that are as transversal as possible, to develop a shared design ability with the intention of generalizing a simple procedure for multiple similar situations. This will help to develop a capacity in solving complex problems, acquiring a greater awareness of the possibilities that exist with respect to defined problems and try a possible solution according to a shared and participatory vision.

In a second moment, after the game phase, a brief could verify that the educational aspect has really been understood by everyone.

To link better all the information and make easy the possibility of understanding by the child, it may be useful to create and define a scenario, a context within which insert the activity. This context can be described through a short story with clear and simple information.

### EXAMPLE

“In a land not too far away a small group of people have started to build a village. One day, however, their quiet was interrupted by a violent storm. The heavy rains made the only river that surrounded the houses to overflow, flooding the fields and submerging them completely. Without a roof and a shelter they asked us for help, wondering if we can help them rebuild a new village. This time, safer and that takes into account this constantly climate changing. We have to find a solution!

A legend says that not far from us, a man left some clues and secrets. Inside a labyrinth he has hidden information that could help our new friends to rebuild their homes and go back to being happy and content. Can you help us to collect the information we need?”

To satisfy the requirements presented previously in relation to the psychological issues related to a potential trauma, in addition to the ethical ones, an example based on particularly general and imaginary conditions was proposed.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the intent is to set a theoretical background for the entire gaming activity, which on the one hand precisely underlines the issues to be addressed, while also paying

## PLAYERS INVOLVED

attention to the considerations that an intervention of this type can cause in psychological terms. At the base of the narrative that is introduced, in this case, through a story, there is the desire to abstract from reality thus allowing the individual not to recognize potential dangers related to any real trauma. It should be noted that this should not be regarded as a fixed and rigid scheme. Rather, it should be understood as a possible guideline that can be modified on the basis of the willingness or not to accentuate certain aspects over others. In addition, it should be remembered that the child in turn must feel free in dealing with the play activity by dialoguing, adding or modifying the speech also on the basis of the stimuli he has received, responding actively.

The carrying out of this type of activity is proposed by addressing directly to the child community identified in the place where operates. For a correct development of the game process, and an adequate achievement of the previously defined educational values, it can be assumed to form small groups of variable size, especially based on the number of children present within the community. However, it is recommended to start the activity with a minimum of 4 children.

In order to unlimit the cognitive and psychological possibilities of the minors we are addressing, it is advisable to exclude the figure of adults during this moment, whose presence could influence the child's behavior or attitudes.

Among the people who must be present there are two representatives of the main team, one of which has previously faced a training for the development of the game, and a second able to monitor, assist and record the developments of the activity. The presence and collaboration with an educator or, in general, a figure of the community who already knows the children and any difficulties related to the social as well as educational context may be useful.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

How to approach during the game:

- The aim of the game is to get out of the labyrinth and collecting the cards. These will lead us to the exit.
- Cards are precious. You have to keep them until the end and read the words written on them aloud.
- We must be careful: inside the maze there are some pitfalls. We need to avoid it in order to don't stay inside the labyrinth forever.
- Only one person at time could enter inside the labyrinth because a strange magic will not allow to move freely.
- The friends outside will guide your steps and show the way to escape with the clues.
- It is possible to move only after receiving the code from your friends.
- The game ends if you collect all the cards and reach the exit.
- There is no limit of people to participate, just remember to enter one at time.

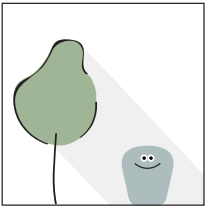
The purpose of this game is to allow the child to collect all the cards and carry them until the end. Once out of the labyrinth it will be necessary to explain to everyone the relevance of the words written inside the tiles, in order to understand that are good intentions to be adopted to improve the future living conditions. But above all to help the new friends to rebuild their village, safeguarding the environmental conditions, avoiding possible errors. The possibility of setting up a labyrinth can vary on the basis of the climatic conditions to be faced. It will therefore be important to prepare different scenarios based on the different social, climatic and environmental challenges.

However, to set up a game that is as flexible and adaptable as possible on the basis of different contexts, it is proposed to adopt two basic elements, which may subsequently vary based on the needs and issues that the team will want to address. In this sense, it will be important to change not so much the rules of the game, but rather the cards, the keywords and all the elements to which the child will have to pay attention.

# STEP 1

Let's prepare some cards, depending from the environmental conditions. Some of these will represent the positive aspects to be collected, others are negative to be considered as obstacles.

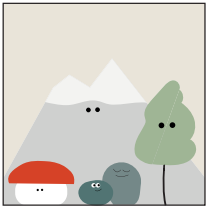
 **POSITIVE ASPECTS**



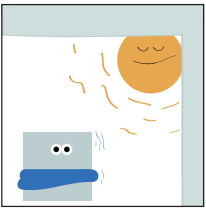
SHADOW SYSTEMS



RAIN HARVESTING



BIODIVERSITY



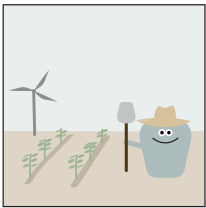
SUN AS RESOURCE



RESOURCE RECYCLE

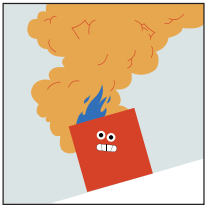


LAND USE

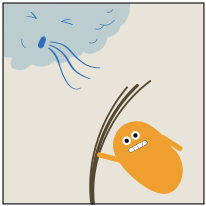


SUSTAINABILITY

 **OBSTACLES**



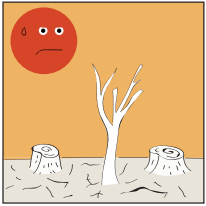
FIRE



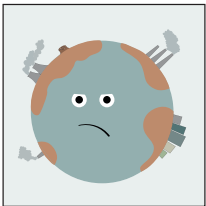
STRONG WIND



FLOODS



DROUGHT & DEFORESTATION



UNCONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT



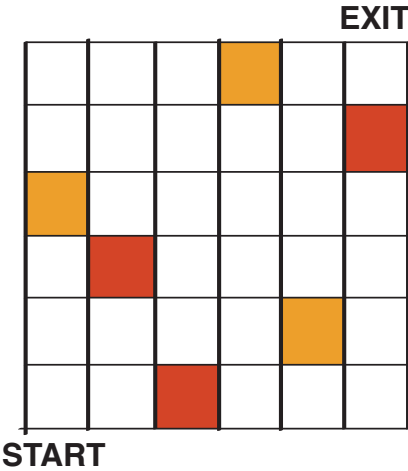
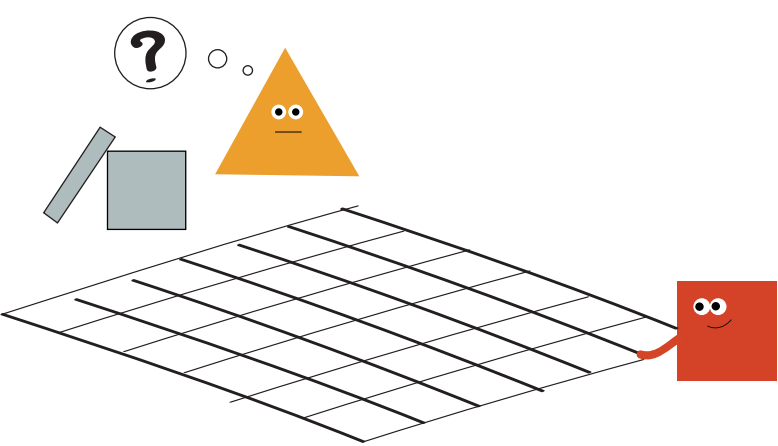
WASTE ATTENTION



WATER CONSUMPTION

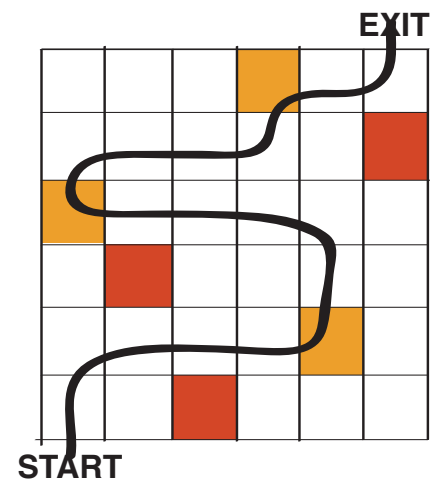
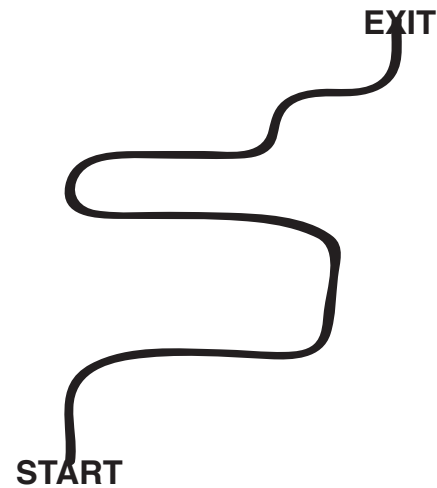
# STEP 2

Call two friends and build a 6x6 grid on the ground. Each square can be 40cm wide. Then set the cards into the grid with a logic that allow you to make a path.



# STEP 3

Get out of the maze! Avoid the obstacles and collect the keywords to learn and understand the environment around you.



The activity was proposed within an elementary school, made up of 23 children aged between 7 and 8 years. The results obtained will be specifically analyzed in the next chapter.



## 3.2.2 Symbolic Game

Following the Alison Clark's research about the "Mosaic Approach"<sup>3</sup>, two main considerations may arise. This tool is very useful to create an image of the children's word, combining traditional methodologies of observation and new participatory tools.

Clark, within her book "Ways of seeing: using the Mosaic approach to listen young children's perspectives" argues:

"Children use cameras to document what is important here; they take the researcher on a tour and are in charge of how this is recorded, and make maps using their photographs and drawing. Each tool forms one piece of the mosaic".

But what if we put the children in front of some photographs and ask them to

complete them based on their needs or opinions?

Starting from the observation of an element already created could allow children to express an opinion, and secondly is offered the possibility to make physical changes of the environment<sup>4</sup>, based on personal criteria that must be expressed and recorded.

From the didactic point of view, this tool allows to tackle a research activity, also regarding the theoretical aspects addressed through the previous activity. In this case, however, the action is facilitated through the proposal of analysis of projects already completed, so both the cognitive aspect applied to a real case study can be combined, together with the possibility of developing a critical vision through an imaginative and creative game.

This tool could be addressed both

to children and adults in a game form, such as "let's imagine of...".

The coexistence of the two figures could be better in this case because it could lead to concrete but at the same time creative solutions.

Indeed, during the resolution of a symbolic game, especially if complex, children are able to solve real problems that require to set out a risolutive hypothesis.

However, in different moments of the game, could be useful the figure of an educator who will review the materials, understand the choices and perhaps make suggestions to stimulate further changes.

The important fact here is that at children are given the opportunity to reflect on a real case that is already made, therefore it is his responsibility to be critical and objective with respect to the desire to highlight problems or favorable points.

To support and facilitate the child to respond, it is important to make several elements and also more opportunity to find ways of thinking or looking at the same question. Some young children would be barred from answering if is offered only one method to build an hypothesis. That is the reason why it might be useful to use different methods like colors, materials, other photos, drawings etc.

### EXAMPLE

A series of scenarios and photographs representing educational places and architectural structures already built, linked to familiar environments, which do not differ too much from reality and local culture, are submitted to the attention of the child, in order to face the research through a feeling of familiarity .

After carefully observing the photographs, the educator introduces the activity: "Let's imagine that we are young architects and can modify and fill these spaces in total freedom, what would you modify? What would you add? But above all why?"

It will in fact be the child's task, that could work in pairs or small groups, to fill the space through the possibility of choosing from a series of predefined elements that will constitute a sort of library.

Once the "imagine and complete" activity is understood, the educator could be asked to freely insert additional elements, in order to allow the possibility of freely express his/her own opinion on the initial question. This can be done by drawing directly within the pre-configured environment, or by simply writing a word that reflects the need for a certain element.

## PLAYERS INVOLVED

A tool like this can be associated mainly to children, but it does not exclude the possibility of asking the same question also to adults, perhaps varying the condition of choice among a series of more complex elements.

The activity can be carried out by defining small work groups, consisting of at least two children, in order to be able to manage the confrontation in a much more direct way, establishing a relationship of trust and greater serenity.

As mentioned before, the possibility of playing with adults is not excluded, who in this case can accompany the development of the process, communicating their own stimuli and actively participating in play groups.

During the entire development it would be right to provide for the figure of a facilitator. His presence should be aimed at ensuring that all members of the group can express themselves without the idea of a single prevailing or limiting the freedom of expression of the other participants. He could also assist the little ones during their choices, providing advice or giving indications that help the child to implement and formulate complete and informed choices.

Possible rules and steps:

- Provide and analyze the available material.
- Understand the purpose of the activity.
- The main question of “how would you modify this space? You can get inspired by using a set of starting elements, remembering that you yourself can create new elements if you need it”.
- It is recommended and preferable to carry out the activity in small groups.
- There is no time limit and there are no possible solutions, as long as the idea is valid and possibly achievable, as well as justified.
- The game can be considered concluded if the subject believes that he has reached a sufficient degree of satisfaction.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The aim is to be able to understand what children’s ideas are, what they consider essential, and what uses they would apply with respect to a place.

There are no wrong answers, rather different ways to observe.

The expected results will be of a different nature, but it will certainly be possible to understand some spatial qualities and preferences with respect to the choices made to fill the space.

These analysis will help the team in the subsequent decision-making phases, in an attempt to steer towards more targeted and aware design choices with respect to the real conditions of need. The methods for analyzing the results produced are varied. The quickest is probably to collect the various results and create a sort of book within which a distinction can be made on the basis of effectiveness or by grouping similar ideas.

In addition, the research of Carla Rinaldi<sup>5</sup>, educator and president of the Reggio Emilia Children foundation, within “Documentation and assessment: What is the relationship?”, in “Beyond listening: Children’s perspectives on early

child- hood services”, demonstrates how the use of a multi-modal approach that exploits some bases of the Mosaic approach, can develop in the child some self-reflection skills. For example about listening, openness to interpretation, curiosity and desire of documentation.

# STEP 1

Observe the proposed scenarios and imagine of being able to modify it from your personal point of view. If you could create an educational space of desires, what would it be like? Draw it!



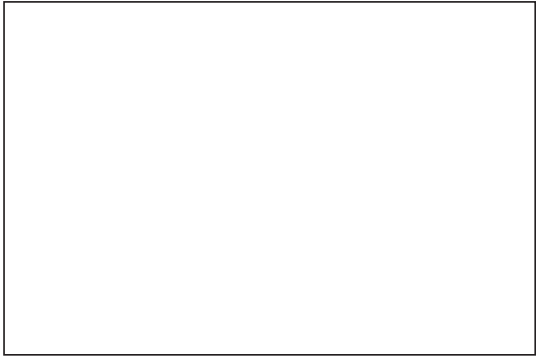
CLASSROOM



OUTDOOR SPACES



COLLECTIVE SPACES



YOUR IDEA FOR A NEW SPACE

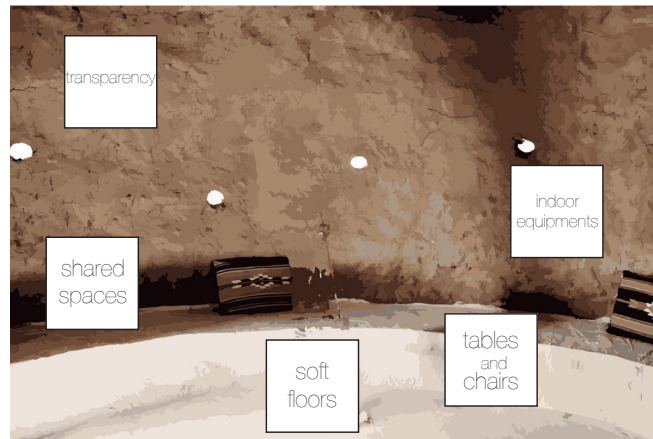
# STEP 2

Use the cards to take inspiration for your filling activity. If in your opinion something is missing, try to create your card.

tables and chairs	benches	soft floors	playground	indoor recreation area
open space	close space	outdoor equipments	indoor equipments	transparency
solid materials	flexible use	domestic feeling	shared spaces	your ideas

# STEP 3

Fill all the scenarios and customize them. Don't forget to be creative!



# TEST

The game was submitted to a six-year-old child to evaluate the possibility of obtaining congruent results with respect of what was planned. Also in this case the results will be analyzed in the next chapter.



### 3.2.3 Creating your Community

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Once we have understood, together with the children, what the main challenges are, it is important to introduce the social and educational issue.

Introducing this kind of themes requires the sensitivity to understand the significant differences in the subjects to whom one is addressing, primarily due to a large age difference.

This is why it can be important to define a first moment of collective discussion, between children, adults, the team and local partners, to understand the fundamental topics that will be addressed.<sup>6</sup>

To make the community informed and aware of the fact that we are acting with the goal of creating a flexible and inclusive educational structure, we can start by introducing three main topics :

- Education:  
Why did the team take the decision of providing an educational structure? All the informations and the motivations that allowed to give life at the initiative are shared.
- Development:  
this activity could represent an important resource for the entire community, not only for the children. This means that everyone, including women's, disable and older people could freely get access.
- Urbanity:  
The placement of this element inside the environment must be strategic, so its access must be as easy as possible to play a fundamental and not marginal role for the entire community.  
So where to place it?

The main difficulty of this phase is to capitalize on the information that could arise later at the moment of meeting. Is necessary a stakeholder who is able to record the proposals and needs that are advanced, but more than anything else, total availability towards listening must be guaranteed.

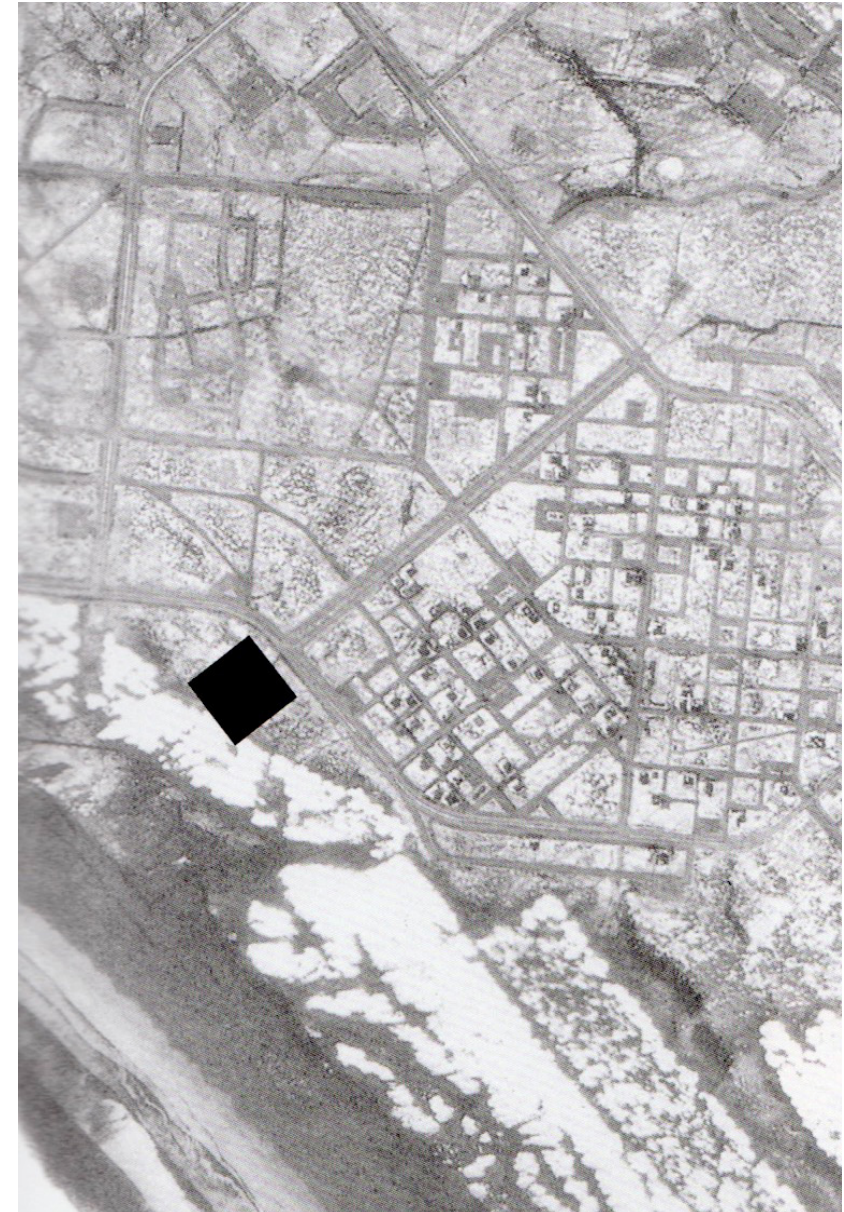
Surely after having concluded this moment of collective discussion, the intent will be to seek and obtain answers to the issues that have been introduced. A solution can be obtained through a mapping phase, with the aim of correctly identifying a place that is acceptable to the entire community. This will have to be identified on the basis of some characteristics that can be expressed and listed directly from the community.

Places can be described through various methods,<sup>7</sup> from a simple walk with the intention of directly understanding and experiencing the places accompanied by those who already live within that reality, or through an understanding of the territory through an in-depth phase of mapping.

This phase is perhaps an important moment of the participatory process. It requires to foresee and define with certainty all the variables that can

influence the project activity with the intention of developing a co-design process with clear and defined starting conditions. It also needs to be clear how to record the results from the activities and how these will be used to proceed to the next steps.

Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau,  
Vanishing Act, from S, M, L, XL.



## PLAYERS INVOLVED

The main peculiarity of any debate is dictated by the fact that anyone can take part, if interested in the topics being discussed.

The success of this moment is therefore defined by the free access by the community to which it is addressed. It will be important to guarantee the involvement of local partners and a large part of the adult community which, from this point of view, has greater knowledge regarding the evaluation of the context in which one lives and operates. The presence of children is not excluded, whose opinions can still represent an added value to the entire debate.

The greatest responsibility and coordination of this specific moment is entrusted to the design team, which will be in charge of foreseeing the figure of a series of facilitators. The task of these people will be precisely that of organizing the meetings, allowing them to take place in a clear way and aimed at identifying the place of intervention.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

Listening to everyone's opinion will be hard, but very important, especially since it will allow to highlight public opinion and any critical points at a cultural level. It is possible that through an intervention of this type very complex issues are faced, such as the impossibility for the female to get an education, or the lack of interest on the part of the entire community because the little ones represent a potential workforce.

Indeed, this path should lead to understanding the meaning of designing an educational environment, also reflecting on how children play and use a space. Thinking on the ways this happens can provide adults with very relevant information to subsequently develop creative ideas for the definition and co-design of this structure..

The purpose of this phase is to correctly define some guidelines that will make all participants satisfied and informed in terms of decision making. Also to guarantee answer and solution to the ethical considerations (transparency) presented previously, facilitating and encouraging the possibility of participation.

## 3.2.4 Meta Design & Models

Once the team has verified that the community has understood what are the fundamental and minimum elements to create an educational space, and the possible variables related to local conditions, it is possible to move on the next step. How a project can be defined, starting from an understanding of the surrounding context?

The answer to this question can be obtained by defining a meta-project. A meta-design analysis is a theoretical investigation that aims to define a project proposal based on collecting and understanding of a series of fundamental information for the achievement of a hypothesis. This research does not aim at the definition of a particularly high project, rather more a strong concept.

The meta-design activity is usually marked by two main moments:

A first phase of collecting data and information is necessary for the understanding of the place, its peculiarities, critical issues etc. At this point it is essential to meet and dialogue through the type of target involved, as it allows to underline elements that would otherwise remain not so evident or even sometimes overlooked.

The outcome that is usually expected to obtain following this type of meeting is to underline a series of fundamental characteristics for the development of the subsequent design concept, which can be presented in the form of schemes, concept maps, series of keywords, preliminary graphs and sketches.

What are the minimum requirements we want to achieve?

The second step concerns the definition of a very generic design

hypothesis, with a specific focus aimed at understanding some essential points. It is necessary to clarify the criteria that have been taken into consideration for the achievement of this proposal, which conditions were excluded, and finally what are the objectives to be achieved.

Although it may apparently be complex, the use of standardized geometric shapes such as rectangles, squares or circles, can facilitate the path of understanding and preliminary synthesis. What is important and which can be of main relevance through the comparison with children, is the desire to teach an application method based on the observation of a precise path that is interested first of the more general conditions, and then goes down more and more in detail.

During the phase of reconstruction of the environment, it is important to be in real contact with all the issues previously addressed, allowing to give continuity and application purpose.

The theoretical background built earlier now is necessary to observe a specific case, in an attempt to reach a possible solution based on observation and comparison between the various actors involved.

## EXAMPLE

The first step requires the use of some simple geometries with the aim of reconstructing the urban surrounding. As this process takes place, it is important to ask yourself some fundamental questions that must arise and be evident through the final result.

- What are the main connections?
- What are the empty spaces?
- What are the densest spaces?
- Are there any relationships or similarities with respect to elements already present?
- What are the consequences that can be produced following certain choices?

The answers to all these questions can be obtained through the simple observation and reconstruction of the surrounding space. Even a simple walk in which you try to count your steps, in an attempt to draw an urban map with the appropriate proportions, can be effective. The metric scale and the unit of measurement in this case will be the children's steps.

Once the peculiarities of the place are understood, what has been learned can be configured through a drawing, a map or simple geometric

shapes. It could be helpful to start with the provision of simple and recycled materials such as cardboard or industrial cardboard, or in any case materials that can nevertheless allow the definition of more curved shapes, which escape from the mere idea of schemacity.

The activity aims to make the space understandable, to easily highlight some favorable or unfavorable points. The reconstruction effort should also allow everyone to have a material capable of communicating certain issues, which could or should be taken up in the design phase. The reflection, if approached taking these ideas into account, also facilitates the development of a form which, for now, can also be represented through a generic mass.

Within this geometric shape, what space do I imagine can come to life?

Imagining that a sort of grid is created, with full and dense areas, and more empty and free areas, the game becomes to start giving a shape to this mass, a correct orientation that adequately exploits the climatic conditions, or simply defining considerations in terms of ratios, and therefore length, width and height.

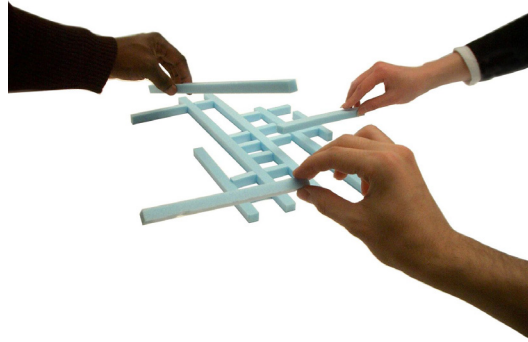
The educator or the one who will be interested in coordinating this moment, has the important task of continuously stimulating the child through the introduction of a series of

questions that aim to introduce new themes and motivate the research without allowing it to become a boring moment, perhaps introducing them through the "What ... if ...?"

- What happens if it rains tomorrow?
- What happens if we move this shape?
- What happens if we consider the movement of the sun?

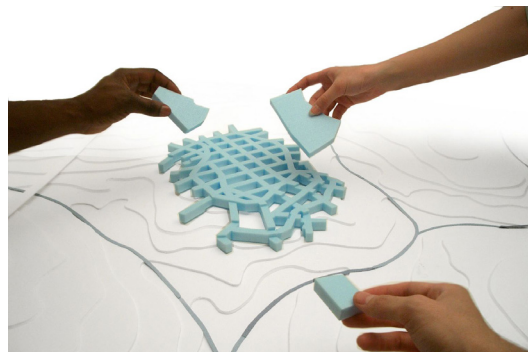
## STEP 1:

Try to reproduce the urban context previously identified. Use simple geometric elements, but try to get as close to reality as possible.



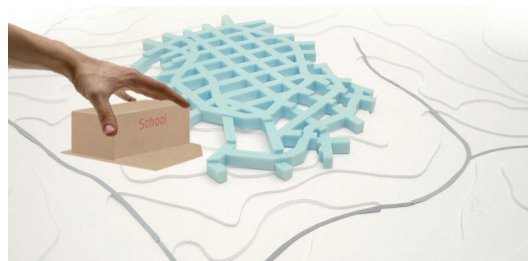
## STEP 2:

Use simple geometric shapes to understand how to intervene within the space. Imagine a shape and write which spaces you would like to have inside it.



## STEP 3:

Develop your idea as much as possible. Use the materials available to unleash your creativity. However don't forget all the climate and urban consideration



Concept organization from  
Abuja Aist,oma.eu, Projects.

## PLAYERS INVOLVED

Children, as well as an adults, cannot be left alone in making decisions of this kind. Some actors of the team and the various educators will have the responsibility to assist the creative process, providing availability of materials and means freely realize their ideas, but also to limit weird or impossible solutions. It might be useful to use this type of approach with children over the age of 7 and to adults, or in general subjects who are able to develop complex concepts. It will be essential to define a team able to approach in a uniform and stimulating way, accompanying the largest number of people through a creative and constructive process.

Possible rules and steps:

- Try to reproduce the urban context previously identified
- Use simple geometric elements, but try to get close to reality as possible
- Identify the area that feels right to you to host your idea and project
- Observe the context, and its architectural features
- Imagine a shape and write which spaces you would like to have inside
- Keep all the conditions expressed before and make a strong concept.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

An action of this type should stimulate the child towards the understanding of different spatial qualities, while the adult should be able to govern the common methods of urban planning and design. However, the intention is to transmit two main information: the first relating to the fact that a design action must start from the understanding of a series of elements already present in the area, and that these must be understood and made universally acceptable. The second is linked to responsibility, reaffirming that a design action is able to profoundly alter the conditions of a space, so it is very important to understand what the starting conditions are and what the final ones could be.

Specifically, the team should follow the various actors involved, in order to convey the value that each individual decision has compared to the current situation, and finally, the request for understanding the space is aimed at creating free geometric shapes, as long as they are motivated by conscious choices.

All the results or in general the considerations that arise from this game are profoundly useful for developing the final project.

### 3.2.5 Training of Trainer

The Training of Trainer defines the final step for the entire co-design process where the team must begin to question itself after having collected the information and results produced in the previous phases. This will help to develop an effective strategy that is able to meet desires and collective needs.

After a careful analysis that allows to accurately identify certain preferences, it will be the team's task to develop a concrete and consistent project proposal with respect to what is expressed by the community. This does not mean that all decisions must be made and conducted by the team, without consulting the community. Rather, proceed towards the definition of a design idea that is as inclusive as possible, with the aim of being discussed in a community way to give everyone the opportunity to understand its peculiarities,<sup>8</sup> but above all to question what is considered most critical or unfavorable to the collective and educational interest.

Acting in this direction does not mean excluding the target to which the entire process is addressed, but it can perhaps allow to

define a stronger project proposal, taking into consideration some limits of costs, times and construction possibilities, as well as local techniques useful for the realization of the project, as well as an initial identification and quantification of people necessary for the co-creation.

In short, a decision-making moment must be assisted by those who possess the necessary skills to formulate at least one concept as structured as possible in terms of techniques and necessary activities, underlining the fact that the entire process should be guided by the desire to co-design and co-creation with children. The greatest number of conditions must be foreseen in order to don't afflict the success of the whole project.

Once the team has produced a convincing and shared project proposal, in which methods and techniques of realization are specified above all, it will be possible to move on to the identification of small working groups that are able to see the participation of adults and children to allow any activity takes place under the supervision of an adult.

It will be necessary to think about defining a chronological program that allows the achievement of a series of objectives and different elements, but also to identify the people involved during each moment.

In conclusion, a first Training of Trainer moment is absolutely fundamental to realize the co-design process.

The objective is certainly structuring an action plan that makes possible to work with individuals who do not have adequate skills and technical knowledge, but believe in the value of a collective action.

## 3.2.6 Mid Evaluation

In an attempt to correctly follow the various tools presented within the matrix, at the final item of this co-design phase, there is a mid-evaluation. Predicting a moment of this type at the end of the design means having the opportunity to observe what has been addressed in a critical way, evaluating the positive and essential aspects, as well as the negative ones to be improved for future activities. This can be an excellent moment for the team to capitalize on what they have dealt with, and highlight the crucial actions of the experience.

The whole process intends to prefigure an educational path that initially deals with concepts on a macro scale, touching on very general issues with the aim of introducing the subjects participating in the process towards the understanding of some basic notions

to possess the minimal knowledge in order to address the various difficulties that could arise.

The first two tools are therefore designed to form the foundations for the entire participatory process, in which the second action is closely linked to the success of the first. Moreover, the second step represents the direct application of the first theoretical background, that must be used to observe the specificity of some local condition. As useful as it is, the moment of “symbolic game” can be a complete failure if at the child is not given the idea that what is being observed, serves as a base on which to concretely develop an architectural project. It will be the task of the educator and the various members of the team to ensure that this condition is correctly perceived by all children, who may underestimate or not perceive the

responsibility of their decisions. Nevertheless, the desire to have creative and fun moments should not be neglected. In this way, the game truly becomes the cornerstone tool of a two-way communication. This is the reason why it is important to act clearly, remembering the objectives, in an attempt to bring the activity back towards achieving at least some expected results. A lack of clarity and bad organization when the activities are carried out, could determinate the failure of the entire process also because it would affect the collection and the analysis of the various outcomes, that would probably be inappropriate for the development of a project.

It is necessary to specify that these two preliminary phases are useful if addressed at the beginning of the process, as one is considered the applicative consequence compared to the previous one. Both were conceived in an attempt to circumscribe the broad design discourse, paying attention to some essential considerations for the understanding of an architectural discourse. This must not result as the will to define a rigid, fixed and pre-packaged scheme. Rather, it should be understood as a further modifiable and detailed guideline with respect to local needs, different climatic conditions, evident social

or cultural, as well as architectural, particularities.

Following a real test phase, with children aged within the expected target, it is possible to say that what was expected was relevant and interesting to stimulate an excellent moment of dialogue and comparison. The coding phase was subjected to a group of 23 children, for a duration of an hour and thirty minutes, with an excellent level of interest and constant participation. All the children have shown that are able to understand complex terminology and theoretical aspects in an active way. They tried to express their opinions with a lot of comments, providing also a lot of solutions in respect of the obstacles.

The symbolic game, on the other hand, was subjected to a 6 years old child, for a duration of 45 minutes. Despite the high time, he was able to understand the activity carefully and consistently, without particular difficulties, combining both the suggestions proposed and some personal opinions, developing them freely in the form of drawings. Interesting was the spontaneous addition of the linguistic component with which he further defined his personal vision of space. In conclusion, it is possible to confirm the success of the two preliminary activities, obtaining results that meet the expected requirements.



Children during the  
coding maze test to  
prove the functionality.  
© Giulio Marzullo





Children testing the  
symbolic game to verify the  
possibility of achieving  
the intended objectives.

© Giulio Marzullo





The second part, which opens through the “Creating your Community” phase, is the most flexible and subject to the possibility of introducing additional variables capable of being influenced by social and local conditions.

This requires the definition of some collective moments, in which children are also supported by the figure of adults, whose role is to try to answer three main questions:

- Are you able to identify a place where the design idea can be realized?
- Does this place have some characteristics for which it is chosen?
- How can you describe them?

To help and facilitate people who are not used to thinking in these terms, or simply to pay attention to these considerations, it is recommended to introduce an investigative approach. This can be modified and addressed in various ways, not necessarily by following the directions proposed above.

The activity may vary on the basis of the elements and considerations that are to be made evident. What is described is in fact a possible way

to tackle urban research, which can even be considered superfluous on the basis of the aims to be achieved. Despite that, if the intention is to follow this issue, to make the investigation effective from an urban and territorial point of view, is proposed a reflection based on some possible aspects to consider:

- Ease of access
- Main or secondary connections
- Urban density
- Presence of urban voids
- Centrality
- Security
- Environment healthiness
- Environmental conditions
- Proximity to services

Also in this case, it is important to reiterate this series of factors should not be interpreted as the necessities imposed to face the research. Further needs or considerations will surely arise following the discussion with the community, or even the desire to address the investigation using other methods if deemed appropriate.

As previously expressed, once all the necessary information has been collected, the team will have to capitalize on what is produced, analyze it and enclose it within an effective and targeted project proposal. It is not difficult to

understand how this part should be managed by those who have the skills and tools to deal with the subject correctly, completely structuring an idea that can provide for the collaboration of the local community even in the construction phases.

It is therefore useful to foresee the procurement of local resources, adequate timing, but above all a calculation related to effort, i.e. who will do a specific operation, when, and how long.

Once a project proposal has been reached that highlights the wishes expressed by children and adults, this will be presented in a public and participatory way.

Also in this case the usefulness of this moment, which takes place through a debate, is to question some variables of the proposal.

If, on the other hand, at best, the proposal is accepted, one could move towards the “Training of Trainers”, which, as the meaning of the term suggests, is aimed at preparing the co-designers for the construction phase, specifying their duties and willingness to work in total safety, despite allowing children to have limited access to a real construction site.

The flexibility to which the entire

design process tries to respond can be considered an excessively open condition, bordering on unsolved. Nonetheless, it is important to reiterate that the purpose for which this research was born is to identify a scheme, a matrix, which presents within it a procedure useful for tackling an architectural discourse with children.

As fixed and defined, this scheme will never be able to replicate itself indistinctly with respect to the different contexts with which it will be confronted, due to social, political, environmental and architectural differences.

It means trying to make concrete that Pragmatic vision that Albena Yaneva identifies as one of the possibilities to definitively understand the value that architecture places on society, despite the fact that the unpredictability due to various factors is repeatedly emphasized.

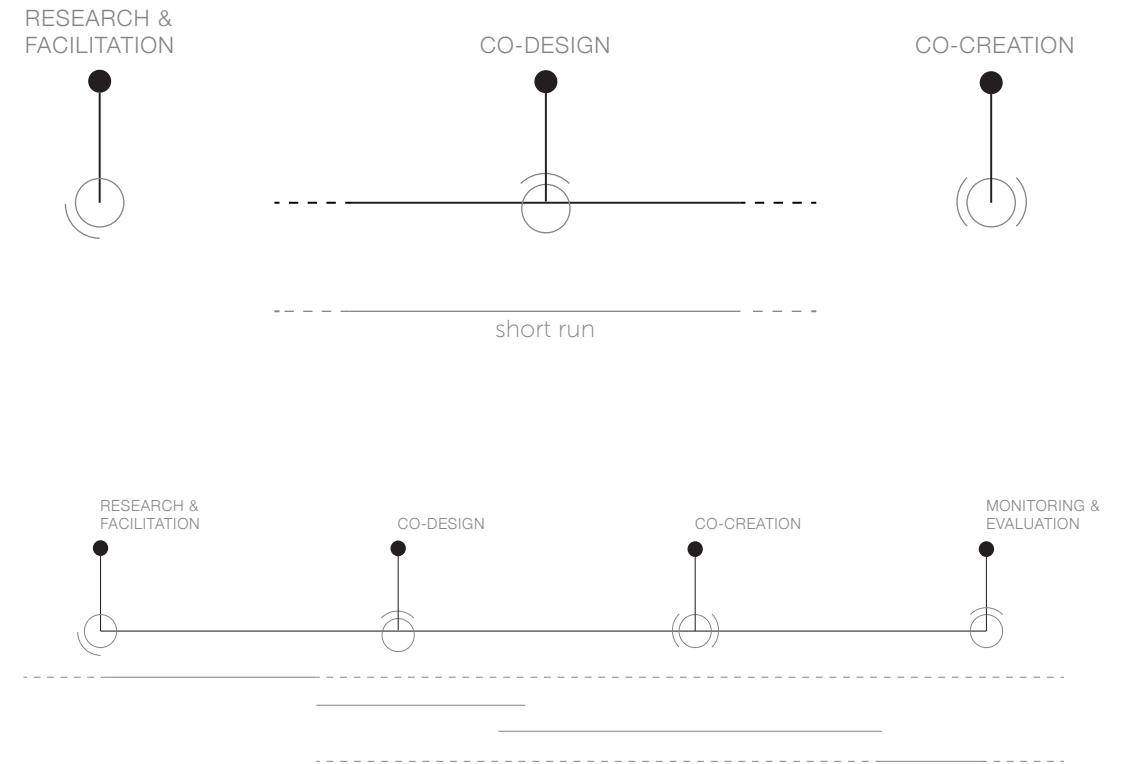
To use a metaphor, it is like the creation of a sheet of transparent paper with signs inside. This sheet must not cover the elements on which it stands, on the contrary it must let them shine through, making them constantly visible, despite the desire to introduce some useful conditions to generate changes.

To define a forecast within which the entire process can be developed, it is important to start from the considerations relating to the testing phase. By spreading the activities over several days, the co-design phase alone could be completed in a very short period.

Considering also this piece into the entire process, it is necessary to establish a preliminary research phase that is certainly the longest. Through this, the team could fix and define all the theoretical aspects that want to achieve into the other steps. However, this would take place within the project team, in which several figures could deal with different considerations.

Another long term phase will be that of construction, which despite not requiring specific skills, is expected to be carried out together with the figure of the children. Although this represents a positive aspect, it is to be considered the possibility that it produces a lengthening of the times compared to what is expected, precisely due to possible hitches due to the inclusion of these stakeholders.

Finally, the monitoring activity. Could be wrong to establish a time to be able to carry out an assessment, which in any case should take place for a period of at least a couple of years, in order to objectively observe the reality of the effects produced within the territory. Parallely this should be a right moment to build a team knowledge background, also to evaluate the right or wrong aspects that appear during different moments of the entire process.

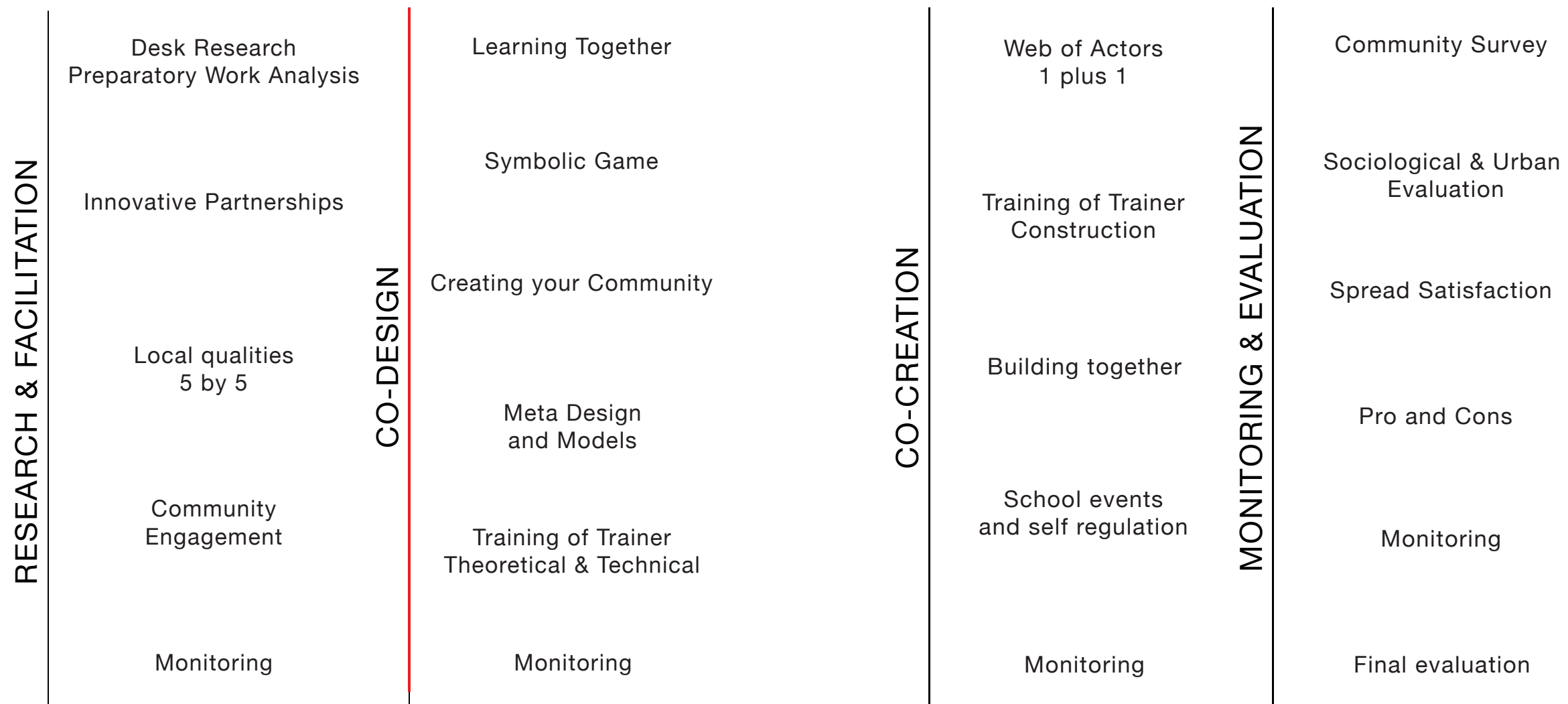


In conclusion, this part of the research began with a specific question, of which this chart should represent a concrete answer of feasibility.

There are still many variables that could influence the development of the process, and which have not yet been considered, but the aim is not to present an indisputably correct scheme.

Rather, it is the desire to provide and prove a possible vision to deal with the architectural issue, by observing it with respect to the coexistence of dynamics and real entities.

Re-proposition in respect to what has been tackled within the chapter.



- 1 P. Ricchiardi, C. Coggi, *Gioco e potenziamento cognitivo nell'infanzia*, Edizioni Erickson 2011.
- 2 O. Cullen, C. Walsh, *A Narrative Review of Ethical Issues in Participatory Research with Young People.*, SAGE Publications and YOUNg Editorial group, 2019.
- 3 A. Clark, *Ways of seeing: using the Mosaic approach to listen to young children's perspectives*, in A. Clark, Kjørholt and Moss, *Beyond Listening. Children's perspectives on early childhood services*, Bristol: Policy Press, 2005.
- 4 A. Clark, A. Kjørholt, P. Moss, *Beyond listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services*, Bristol: Policy Press. pp. 17-28.
- 5 C. Rinaldi, *Documentation and assessment: What is the relationship?*, The Policy Press, University of Bristol, 2005.
- 6 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *VCA toolbox*, 2007.
- 7 K. Appel, E. Buckingham, K. Jodoin, D. Roth, *Participatory Learning and Action Toolkit: For application in BSR's Global Programs*, 2012.
- 8 B. De Carli, C. Macedo, L. Caistor-Arendar, *Pedagogy of Inclusion*, University of Sheffield 2018.

# IV

## Process designs Project

“Ma cos’è un progetto,  
a questo punto e in queste condizioni?  
Il progetto non è un risultato ma un  
processo. Non è una descrizione, ma  
una prescrizione e una performance.  
Cioè, in primo luogo, un oggetto  
indipendente dal soggetto e dalle  
sue intenzioni”.

M. Ferraris, Il progetto dettato, in Ardeth 01.

## IV.I BUILDING A PROCESS

The following pages intend to reconstruct the planning path at an ideological and design level, as well as at a procedural one, which took place within the EAHR team.

The objective of this part of the research is to start thinking about the methods and tools useful for the development of a participatory model that will necessarily have to include the entire community which is addressed to, including precisely the figure of children within this category.

However, in order to make what has been said concrete, the proposal aims to interact through a matrix of possibilities.

This must be understood as a scheme able to highlight the main goals to be achieved, also providing a first outlook of the ways this process can be tackled with.

In this way it is therefore possible to begin to provide guidelines able to define a logical process, within which comparison and participation will be essential, so that what is proposed becomes the basis for starting an activity of modification, composition and decomposition, customizing what is observed.

If, on one hand, this process requires to set certain limits and boundaries, dictated by the will to intervene, also with respect to the specificities that each case poses, on the other hand, the possibility to insert and modify the elements present within these boundaries is ensured.

This approach is in fact proposed starting from the desire to identify some essential conditions, advancing possible solutions in relation to different critical conditions, in order to start creating a catalogue of minimal

elements, drawn to circumscribe the problem in a fast and effective way.

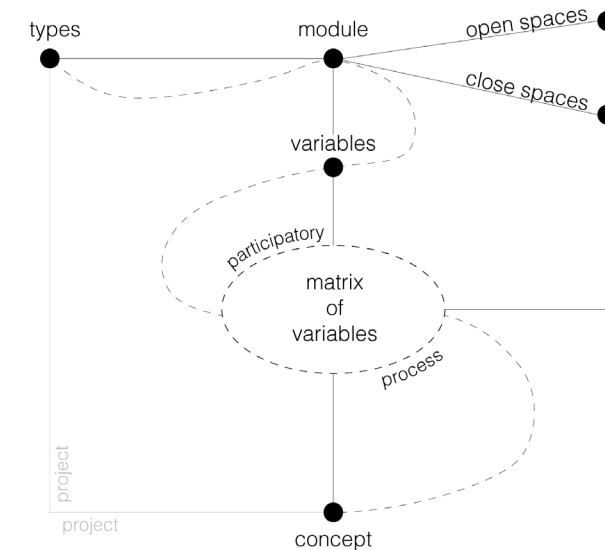
The potential inherent in the development of such a tool lies in the fact that a double benefit can be obtained.

From one side, the team proposes a series of solutions in the awareness of their skills, thus ensuring the security of being able to control and manage the technical, economic and construction aspects.

On the other hand, by appropriately training the subjects to whom it is addressed, a method is transmitted to them, as well as the necessary knowledge, to be able to face future problems in total autonomy and independence.

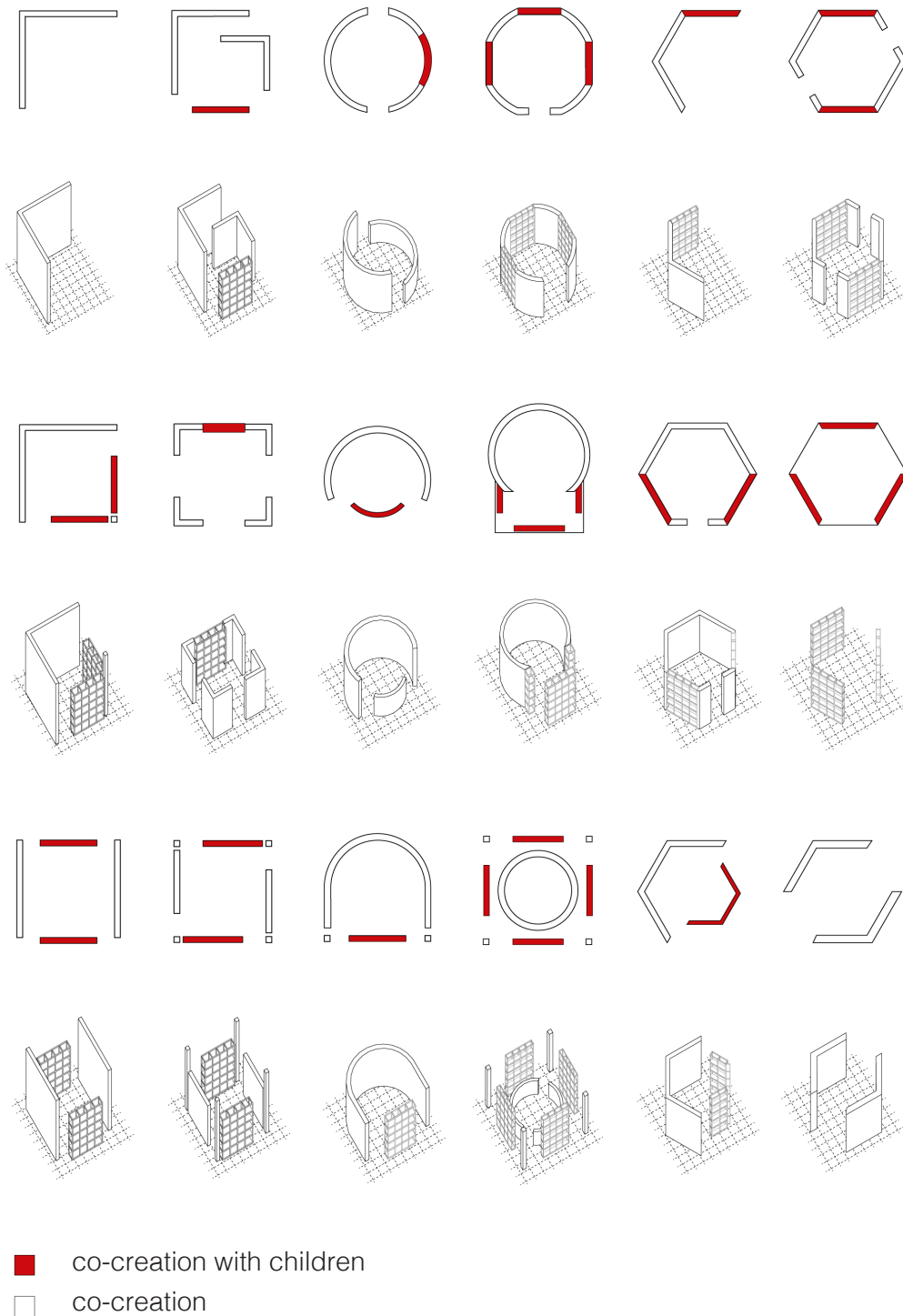
The dialogue between the parties involved therefore constitutes a fundamental element for the success of the entire process, especially during this phase, in which the comparison and exchange of information, can lead to consider aspects also outside those envisaged through the matrix.

In an attempt to summarize what will be tackled in the next chapters, a simplification is proposed below regarding the main issues that have been taken into consideration to define the matrix. The process begins with the definition of some forms and types and comes to an end with the achievement of an architectural concept.



mind map and logical aspects

## It is not just a formal issue



### 4.1.1 Types

In the effort to give an hypothetical classroom a shape in spatial terms, this part of research begins to consider the purely compositional and formal aspect, hypothesizing a series of possible geometries useful for hosting educational activities within them, with respect to the different cultural backgrounds. These geometries have been hypothesized with the aim of defining them first of all as types<sup>1</sup>, therefore useful for a first and general schematization of opportunities.

In order to clarify the intention of this moment, it is possible to use the words of Quatrème de Quincy, who, providing a definition to the concept of “type” in his Historical Dictionary wrote:<sup>2</sup>

“la parola “tipo” non rappresenta tanto l’immagine di una cosa da copiarsi o da imitarsi perfettamente quanto l’idea di un elemento che deve egli stesso servire di regola al modello. Il tipo è per contrario un oggetto secondo il quale ognuno può concepire delle opere che non si rassomiglieranno tra loro. Tutto è preciso e dato nel modello; tutto è più o men vago nel tipo”.

<sup>1</sup> G.C. Argan, Progetto e Destino, saggi di arte e di letteratura, Il Saggiatore, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> A. Mainardi, Dizionario Storico di Architettura contenente le nozioni storiche, descrittive, archeologiche, biografiche, teoriche, didattiche e pratiche di quest’arte, di Quatrème de Quincy, vol. , Fratelli Negretti, Mantova, 1842.

"Il tipo si configura così come uno schema dedotto attraverso un processo di riduzione di un insieme di varianti formali a una forma-base comune. Se il tipo è il risultato di questo processo regressivo, la forma-base che si trova non può intendersi che come mero telaio strutturale, ma come struttura interna della forma o come principio che implica in sé la possibilità di infinite varianti formali e, perfino, della ulteriore modificazione strutturale del tipo stesso. Non è infatti necessario dimostrare che, se la forma finale di un edificio è una variante del tipo dedotto da una precedente serie formale, l'aggiungersi della nuova variante alla serie formale determinerà necessariamente un mutamento, più o meno marcato, nel tipo."

G.C. Argan, *Progetto e Destino*, saggi di arte e di letteratura, Il Saggiatore, 1965.

Reflecting on spatial issues means being able to foresee and anticipate the technical and construction aspects as well, wondering precisely how this can affect the subsequent phases. It is in fact taken into consideration that this type of hypothesis has the real potential, and therefore the responsibility <sup>3</sup> of becoming an object to start a participatory activity together with the figure of the children.

<sup>3</sup> V. Lenna, *Riconoscimento e responsabilità. Il ruolo del progetto nel Community Land Trust di Bruxelles, in Ardeth 04*, Rosenberg & Sellier, 2019.

A series of red elements are in fact marked within the graphic representation on the previous page.<sup>4</sup> These will be addressed and entirely realized through the involvement of children, allowing them firsthand to take part in the construction process.

<sup>4</sup> Referred to the image at page 158 under the item "co-creation with children".

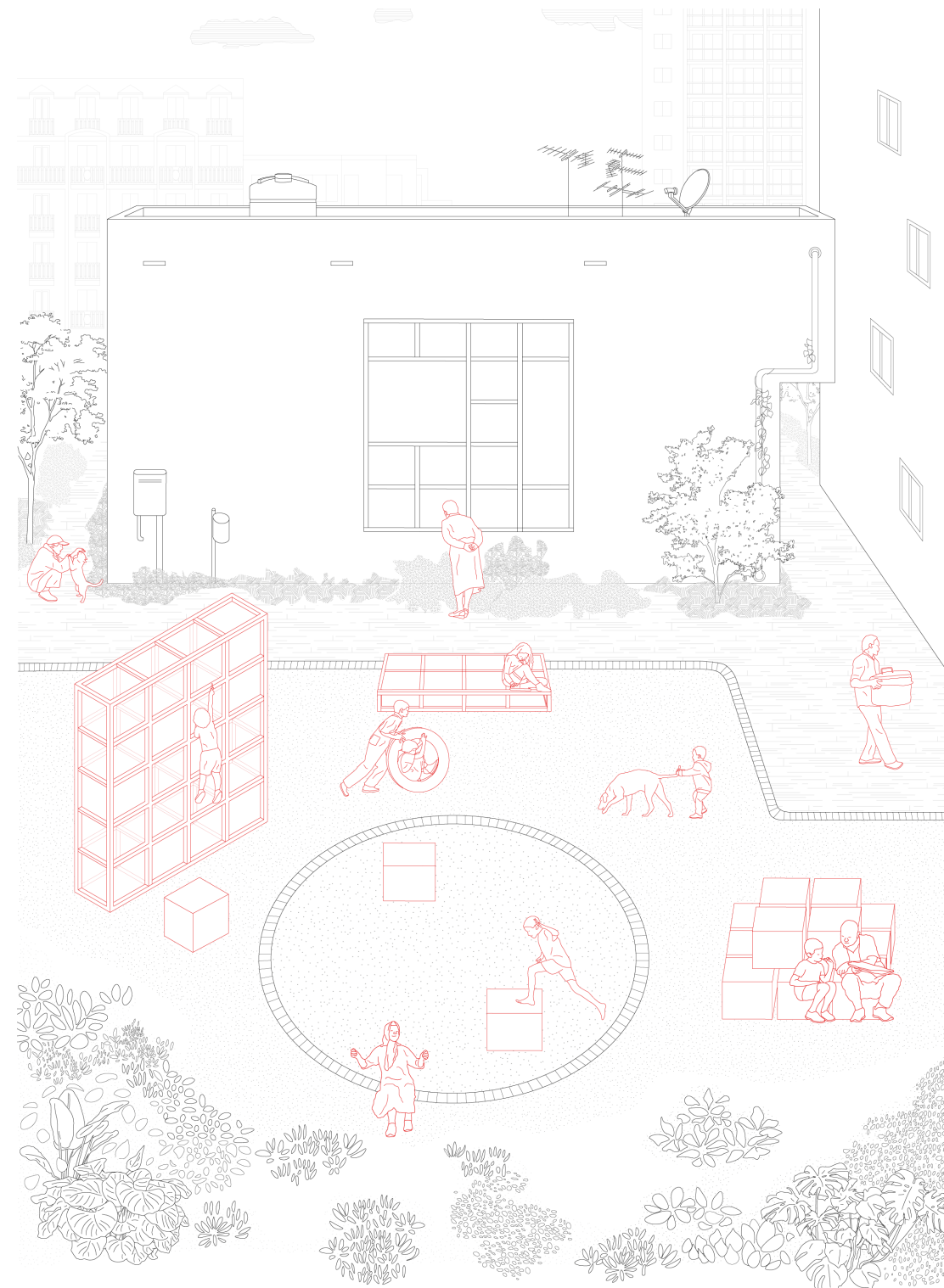
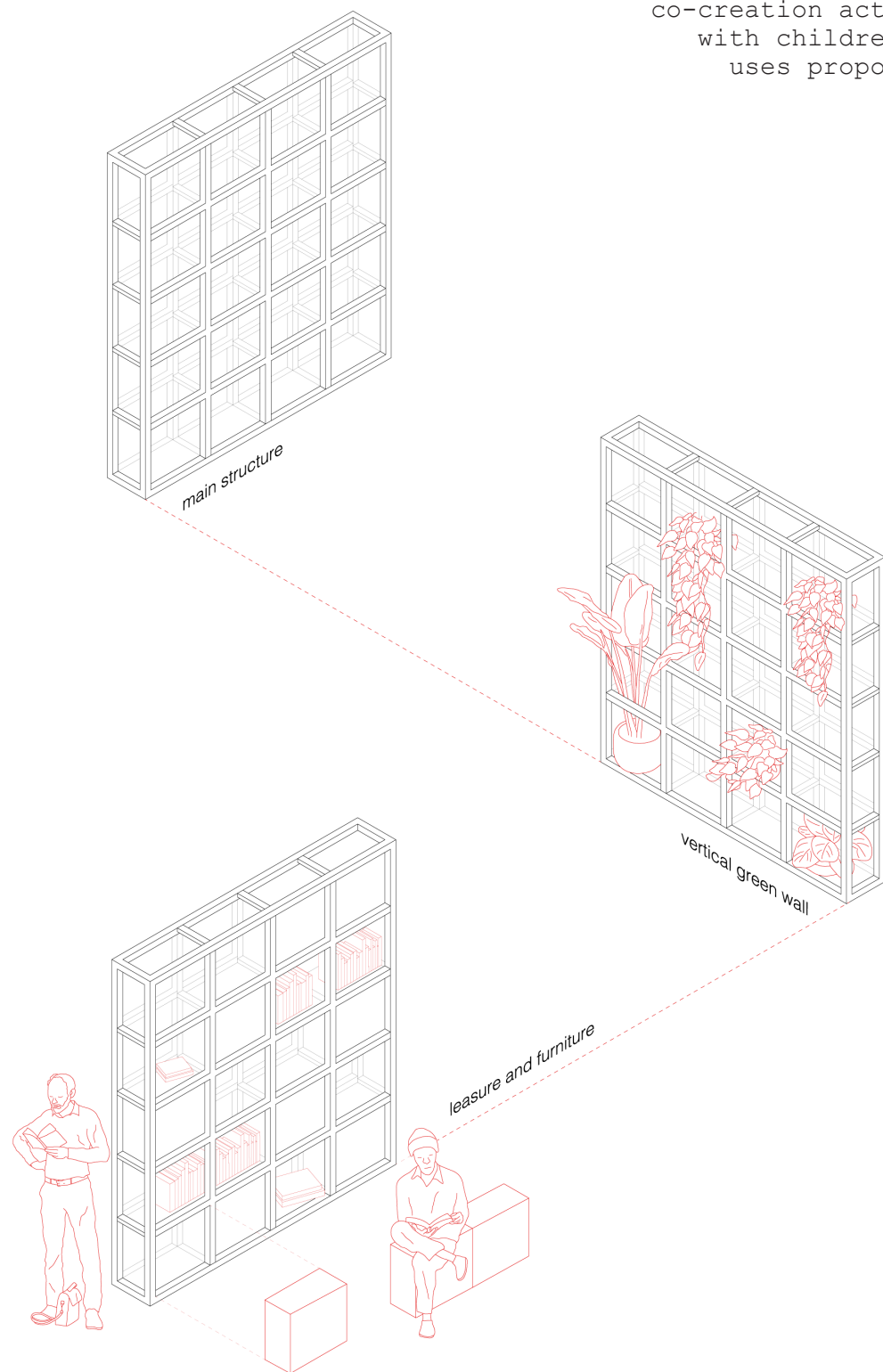
Specifically, the proposed object is a modular and versatile structure, achievable through the use of local materials.

The flexibility of this element, which will be afterwards described, aims to become a characterizing factor for indoor and outdoor environments.

Taking into consideration the latter, to be understood as playgrounds or school courtyards, it can be used as a real compositional element, easily varying its use in different conditions, becoming for example a game which children can climb, or even a grid that hosts mobile seats that can be extracted, arranging them freely in the space, perhaps leaving the children themselves modifying it, by changing its use.

At the same time, in the case of indoor environments, it can become a partition element, which can be composed and transformed according to individual needs.

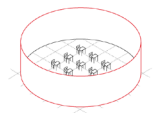
Module dedicated to the  
co-creation activity  
with children and  
uses proposals.



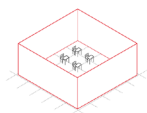
Possible scenario for the composition of  
a recreational outdoor space.

## 4.1.2 Variables

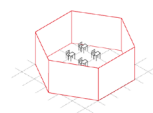
### SHAPE



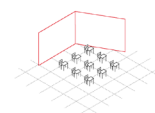
CIRCLE



SQUARE

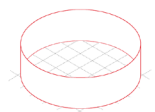


POLYGON

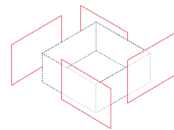


PORTION

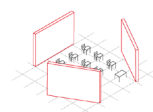
### ENVELOPE



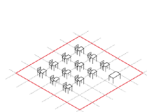
CLOSE



SLIDING

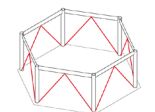


PARTIAL

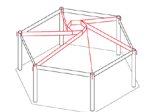


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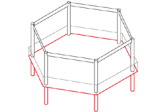
### NATURAL HAZARDS



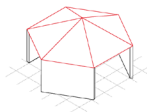
EARTHQUAKES



CYCLONES

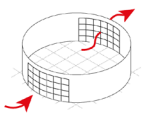


FLOODS

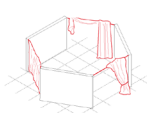


HIGH °C

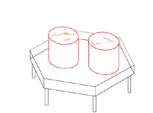
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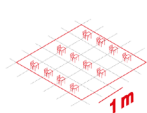
AIRBORNE



VECTORBORNE



WATERBORNE



DIRECT  
CONTACT

To avoid falling into the risk of making the typological study a mere condition of form, it is in this case much more useful to consider this preliminary phase of analysis as a first step to be included within a broader research.

The attempt is therefore to adopt a pragmatic vision<sup>5</sup> in order to address the issue in architectural terms, without reducing the complexity of the question. It is in fact proposed to consider a series of variables, making explicit the will to include conditions of genericity, through a finite series of possible solutions.

<sup>5</sup> A. Yaneva, *Mapping Controversies in Architecture*, Ashgate, 2012.

Specifically, these variables were determined with the intention of creating an operating model that allows those who receive it to quickly reach a solution with respect to the condition set by the variable itself. In such a way, the solution will no longer be just theoretical, but it will be combined with practical hypothesis.

The idea is to try to build a theoretical catalogue, which various subjects can be drawn from, in order to reach the resolution based on different critical conditions.

Using this tool to open a dialogue with different communities, it is important to remind them that

**Architectural board  
made in collaboration  
with EAHR**

this is also structured on the basis of a double benefit.

The team of experts consciously inserts itself into the context, providing a series of techniques that is able to control and obtain an adequate solution. On the other hand, it seeks to establish a training condition with the intent of emancipating companies in difficulty, making them autonomous<sup>6</sup> to act and choose, providing them with the notions to be able to reason independently also for future problems.

In doing this, the theory has the urgency to consider the sociological and cultural aspect within which it intends to place itself.

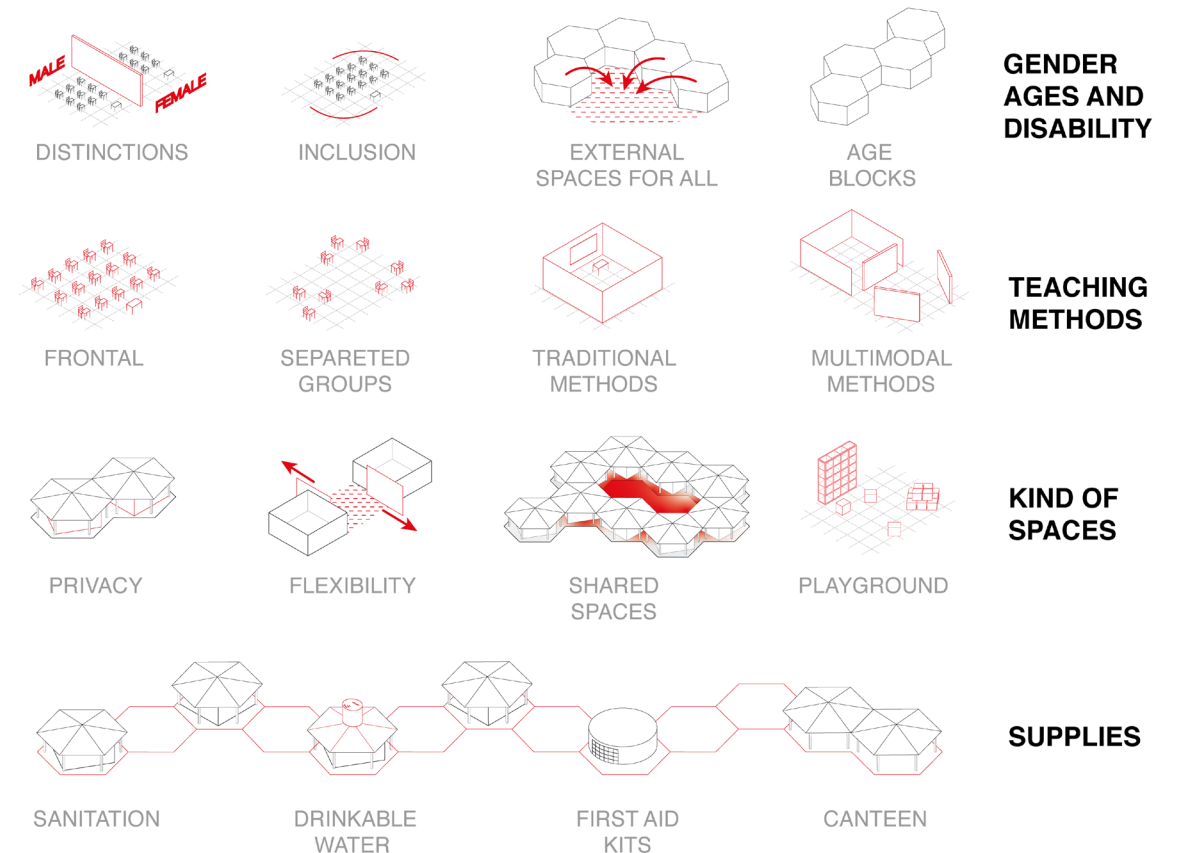
This is a fundamental consideration if the will is to bring architecture back to being a real solution to human needs, an architecture that is not linked to the spectacularity of its results<sup>7</sup>, but which proves to be an instrument at the service of collective needs.

Therefore, the matrix cannot be limited to the exclusive consideration of the constructive aspects, especially with regard to the fact that the flexibility of this tool must allow it to be applied even within culturally distant contexts, deeply marked by cultural, religious differences or simply deriving from traditions.

Within this multifaceted cultural spectrum, however, there is the will to introduce a condition of change that not only remains at a theoretical level, but that can also be translated into concrete action much more responsible than in the past being its virtue based on the interdependence of knowledge, skills and subjects that no longer act individually.

6 R. van Toorn, Repositioning. Theory now. Don't excavate, change reality!, in This Thing Called Theory, p.888.

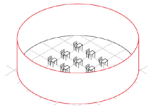
7 W. Hesford, Spectacular Rhetorics, human rights vision, recognitions, feminisms, Duke University Press, 2011, p.18.



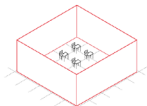
**Sociological board  
made in collaboration  
with EAHR**

Board of Variables  
made in collaboration  
with EAHR

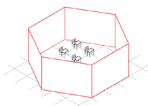
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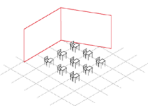
CIRCLE



SQUARE



POLYGON



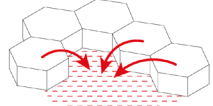
PORTION



DISTINCTIONS



INCLUSION



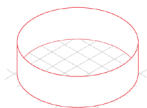
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SPACES FOR ALL



AGE  
BLOCKS

GENDER  
AGES AND  
DISABILITY

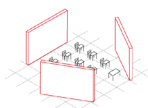
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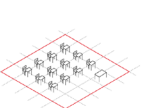
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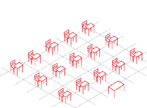
SLIDING



PARTIAL



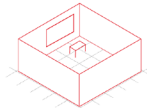
OPEN



FRONTAL



SEPARATED  
GROUPS



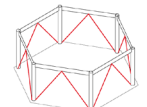
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METHODS



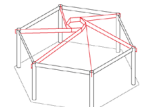
MULTIMODAL  
METHODS

TEACHING  
METHODS

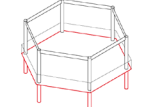
NATURAL  
HAZARDS



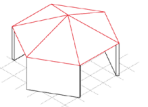
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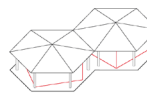
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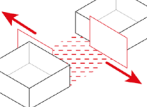
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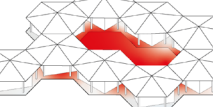
HIGH °C



PRIVACY



FLEXIBILITY



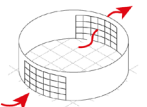
SHARED  
SPACES



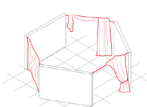
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KIND OF  
SPACES

INFECTIOUS  
DISEASES



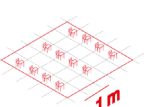
AIRBORNE



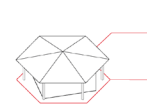
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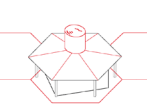
WATERBORNE



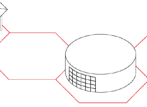
DIRECT  
CONTACT



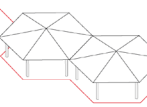
SANITATION



DRINKABLE  
WATER



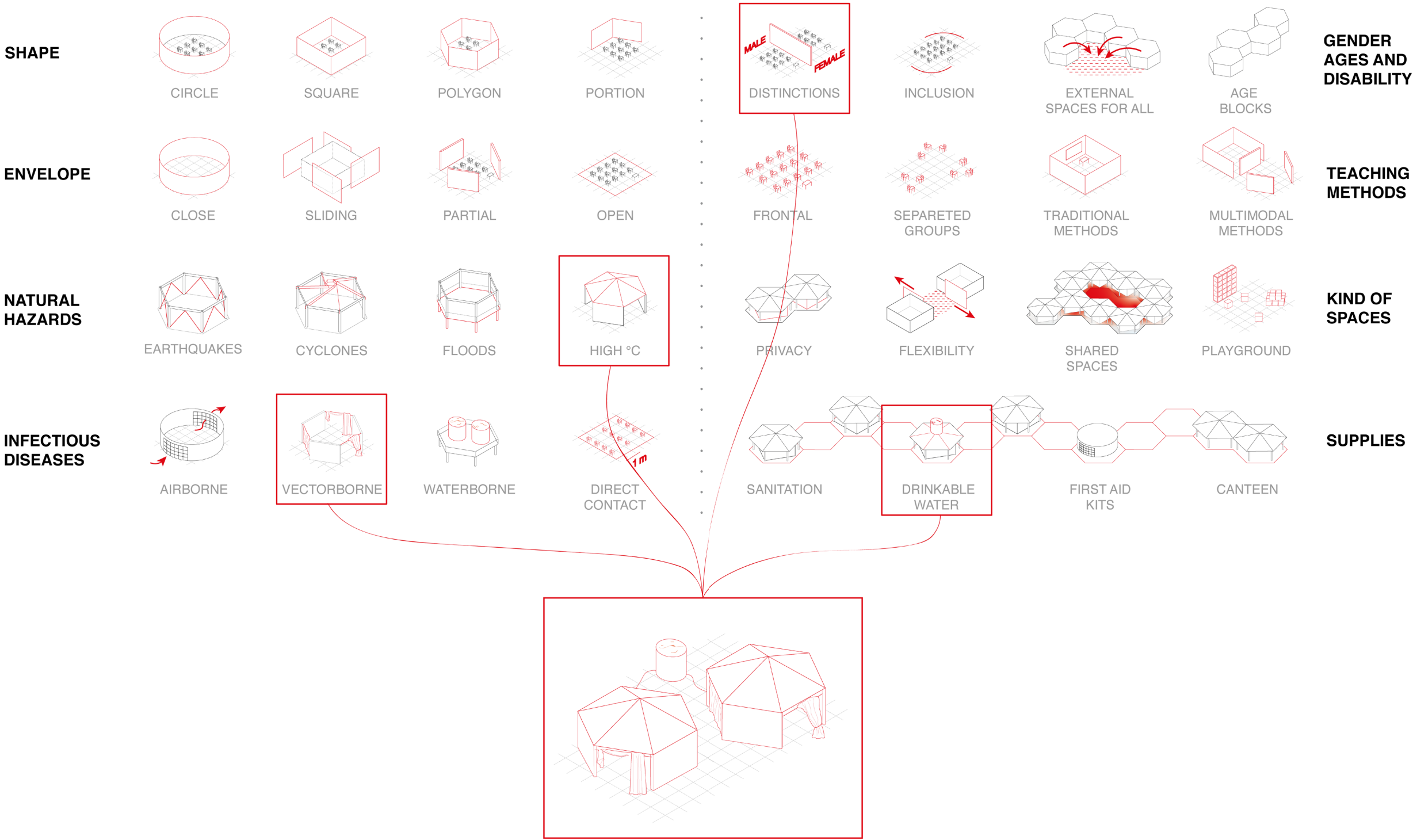
FIRST AID  
KITS



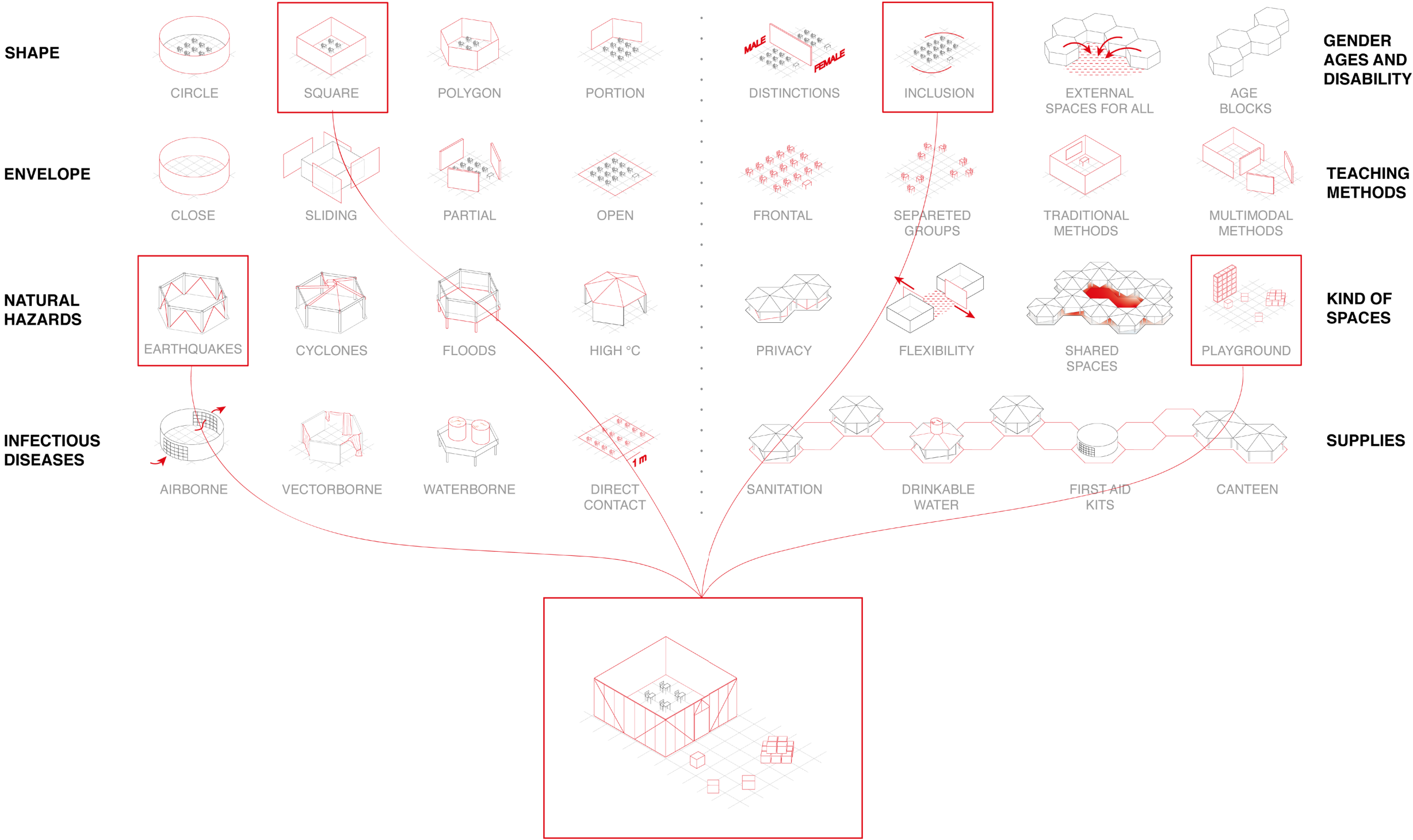
CANTEEN

SUPPLIES

Way to use  
example 1



Way to use  
example 2



### 4.1.3 Purposes

Several questions can arise from what has been described before.

One could easily ask what purpose this investigation has, how such a research is linked with participatory practice, or to whom these elements are addressed and for what purpose.

Without any doubt, the goal is to create a real and concrete tool that helps to find quickly an effective schematization towards the definition of a concept that gives substance to the idea of classroom.

The choice to conduct a study at such a general level, avoiding configuring the choices linked to a specific place, is dictated instead by the fact that it was preferred to draw up guidelines, providing a method to approach the issue without establishing a priori result.

It is for this reason therefore that any presumption of considering the matrix as a finished and preconfigured object is abandoned: it is better to be assumed and interpreted as a possibility to operate and continue to investigate.

It should also be remembered that its use was conceived within contexts characterized by evident problems, such as refugee camps or

slums, in which society is forced to live and survive in conditions that are commonly identified through the idea of temporariness or informality,<sup>8</sup> while not occurring.

So why proposing the creation of a classroom?

First of all, to attempt to resolve the issue around which the thesis opened also thanks to the internal collaboration of the EAHR team: the will to tackle educational dispersion within, mainly, refugee camps. What is worth reiterating is the fact that specific places and situations were deliberately not taken into account.

The main reason is due to the fact that it was considered more appropriate to first propose an investigative method, universally acceptable, which only subsequently leads to defining the specificities, only through the participation and direct application of the matrix itself.

Furthermore, maintaining a universal gaze, also allows to observe on a global level the phenomenon which in 2019 alone was estimated to have potentially involved about 33 million children of the 272 million international migrants, about 29 million of which are refugees and asylum seekers, displaced by force from the countries of origin<sup>9</sup>.

Reasoning and investing in education and schooling questions would make it possible to deal with the issue in organizational terms, in an attempt to stem the dispersion of children, promoting fair and culturally useful access for all those who do not intend to be penalized by conditions they do not voluntarily choose.

<sup>8</sup> Definition referred to what was dealt within the chapter 1.1.2.

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF Data: Monitoring the situation of children and women, report of child migration, updated on April 2020.

A similar objective aims to solve and mend the cultural gap that often forces this part of society to remain trapped within these realities, which inevitably produce a sense of exclusion and marginalization, transforming transience and temporariness into a slow ordinariness.

The ambition is therefore to be able to address a series of critical issues directly or indirectly linked to the educational theme, creating a reference point for different needs and on different scales. In fact, it is very likely that health problems can also be included among the generic conditions, for those who, for example, are fleeing conflicts and wars, ensuring the inclusion of adequate services for minimal medical assistance.

Or even provide elements that are of help and support against diseases, infections or epidemics, such as malaria.

And finally, making proposals related to climatic and food conditions, through long-term decisive interventions that are primarily capable of educating in making society autonomous in managing the specific adversities it must face.

The purpose is therefore to demonstrate that through an agile and simple tool like the matrix, it is possible to plan and organize an intervention.

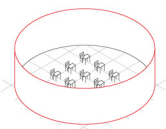
At the same time, the research is aimed at professionals, sociologists, architects and theorists, or in general to all those who, within their professional career, intend to deal with the complex situations described so far, by providing them a possible mode of action that sees in participation the engine on which base an intervention hypothesis.

"The work of philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, cultural critics, linguists and alike has been brought into architectural theory courses, introducing students to the study of social science and humanities; demonstrating how architecture is perceived and utilized. Theorists such as Charles Jencks, Umberto Eco and Roland Barthes demonstrate that the meaning of buildings as interpreted by society, might not match up with the intentions of the architect.

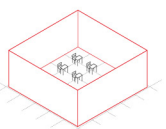
Knowledge gained from the humanities and social studies challenge the disciplinary boundaries of architecture and need to be an essential part of the education of the architect allowing the re-examination of the common places of an often too complacent and tradition-bound practice; but here architecture theory should not stop, the question is as much how theory can drive practice – become operational."

R. van Toorn, Theory: to reflect, in This Thing Called Theory, Routledge, 2017.

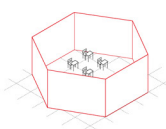
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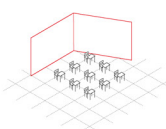
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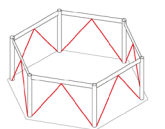
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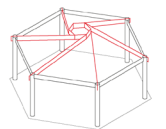
POLYGON



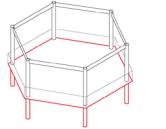
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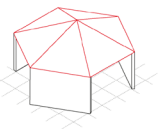
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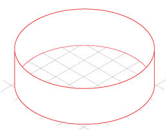
CYCLONES



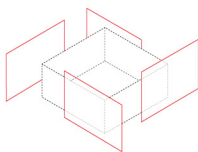
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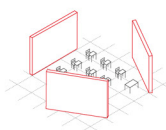
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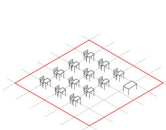
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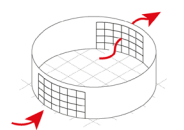
SLIDING



PARTIAL



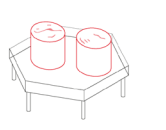
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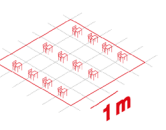
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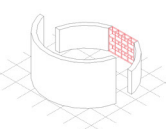
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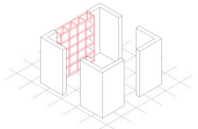
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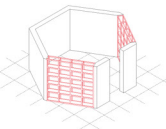
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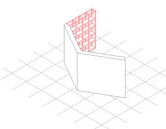
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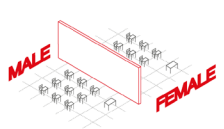
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TYPE 3



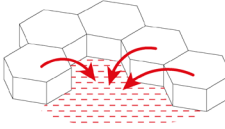
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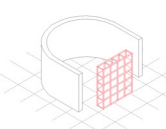
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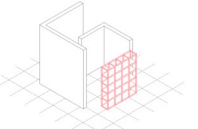
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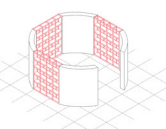
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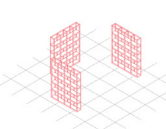
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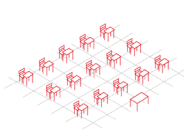
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TYPE 7



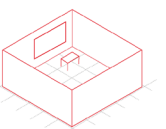
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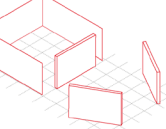
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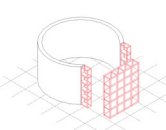
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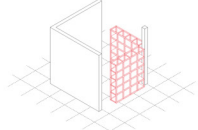
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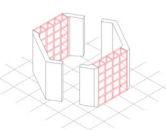
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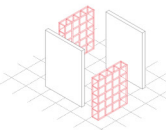
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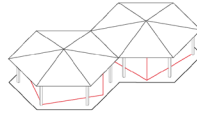
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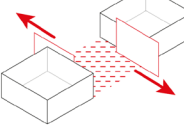
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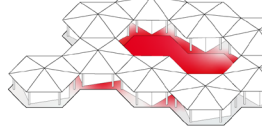
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PRIVACY



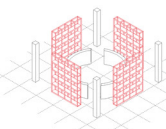
FLEXIBILITY



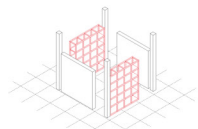
SHARED SPACES



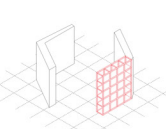
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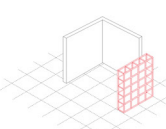
TYPE 13



TYPE 14



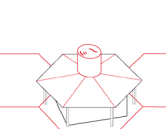
TYPE 15



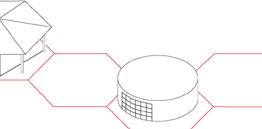
TYPE 16



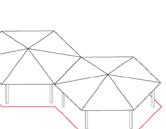
SANITATION



DRINKABLE WATER



FIRST AID KITS



CANTEEN

- 1 G.C. Argan, Progetto e Destino, saggi di arte e di letteratura, Il Saggiatore, 1965.
- 2 A. Mainardi, Dizionario Storico di Architettura contenente le nozioni storiche, descrittive, archeologiche, biografiche, teoriche, didattiche e pratiche di quest'arte, di Quatremère de Quincy, vol. , Fratelli Negretti, Mantova, 1842.
- 3 V. Lenna, Riconoscimento e responsabilità. Il ruolo del progetto nel Community Land Trust di Bruxelles, in Ardeth 04, Rosenberg & Sellier, 2019.
- 4 referred to the image at page 158 under the item "co-creation with children".
- 5 A. Yaneva, Mapping Controversies in Architecture, Ashgate, 2012.
- 6 R. van Toorn, Repositioning. Theory now. Don't excavate, change reality!, in This Thing Called Theory, p.888.
- 7 W. Hesford, Spectacular Rhetorics, human rights vision, recognitions, feminisms, Duke University Press, 2011, p.18.
- 8 referred to the chapter 1.1.2.
- 9 Online UNICEF data and report. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/migration/>
- 10 R. van Toorn, Theory: to reflect, in This Thing Called Theory, Routledge, 2017.

## IV.II CONTINGENCY

"Is it possible to establish recurring conditions for design work, or should we always pay undivided attention to the singularity of the situations?"

Editorial Board, *Design and the Challenge of Change*, in *Ardeth 06*.

## 4.2.1 Definitions

Contingency can be defined and understood as an occasion, a particularly singular and extraordinary circumstance, which often does not allow to act according to the most common canons of probability. Bringing this concept closer to the discipline and to architectural question may appear particularly complex and unusual, considering also that the project of architecture is often understood as a tool providing definitive solutions to a circumscribed issue that can be analyzed as a “fact”.

However, what escapes from planning action is that often, along with the planned path, external conditions, real elements of exceptionality, manage to take over.

Therefore, in asking how, and if it is possible to foresee the effects, it is common practice to answer by defining a path that anticipates the possibility of undergoing variations. In this sense, it may be useful to mention the theory of the state of exception<sup>1</sup>, advanced by Carl Schmitt and expanded by Giorgio Agamben, according to which the most common attitude in wanting to respond to an exceptional situation is researching or applying patterns and norms. Through this system, the goal is to bring the singularity back into a sort of ordinariness.

“the theory of the state of exception addresses the priority of decisions and their exceptional

and conjunctural form in establishing a framework in which norms are thus applicable”.

Pier Vittorio Aureli,  
Possibility of an Absolute  
Architecture, The MIT Press,  
2014.

Despite this, it is advisable to be cautious in assuming in a universal way that contingency defines a sort of sphere whose boundaries are marked by singularity and pure unpredictability.

It is also possible to support the vision according to which all that has been explained so far can take place within common scenarios, or at least observable through ordinary themes and issues, creating the possibility of giving life to a real architectural project.

The idea is precisely to bring the two concepts closer, noting how the observation of a common architectural process is continuously influenced and modified by a series of contingent elements. These can be of various types and of different nature, but however unintentional and extraneous to the logic of prediction, they can be simply considered as such, and

observable as a phenomenon. The various possible moments of negotiation, the unforeseen events in the course of work, or even any unexpected effects and results, constitute a shadow of uncertainty and potential fragility. This is often not considered, as an opportunity within which it is possible to intervene through the study of what could be defined by the term of variable.

# 4.2.2 A methodology

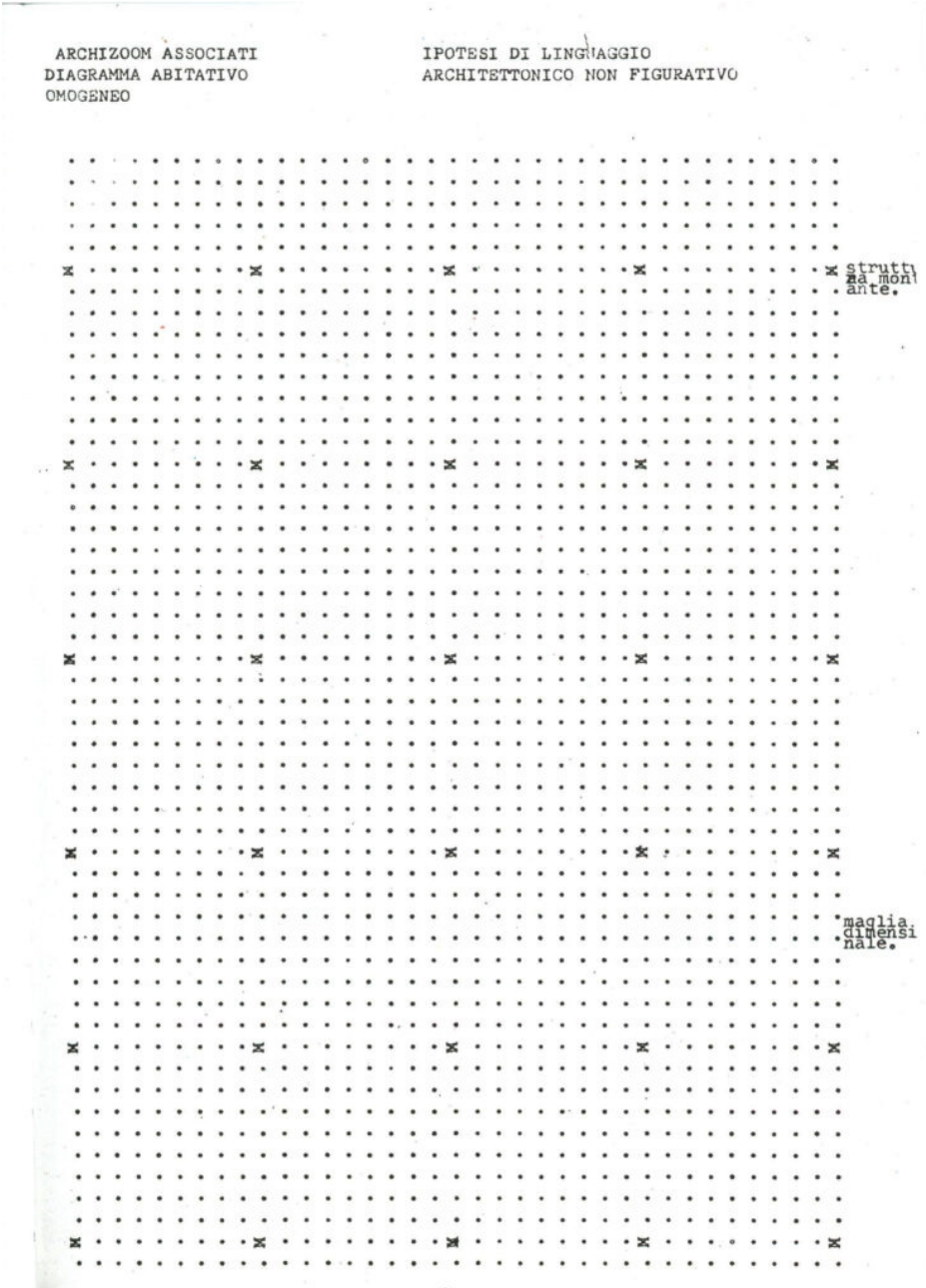
The intent of this part of the research is to broaden the range of observation in an attempt to define a “non-figurative”<sup>2</sup> methodology.

The term is taken up and analyzed within the text “The Project of Autonomy” in which it is used to describe the desire to create a language capable of abstracting the architectural research, with the logic of developing hypotheses that eliminate the relationship with a direct reference<sup>3</sup>, focusing more on defining and replying the effects rather than the concrete outcome of planning.

This kind of methodological approach should serve to outline a design tool that allows anyone to understand its processuality by decoding a series of operational elements.

In this way, a real method could be created. This contains and defines the minimum modalities, quantified and codified, useful to guide the decisions of a potential designer or student. As such they can resume the operational and organizational perspective for the development of a future intervention.

- 2 Pier Vittorio Aureli, The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism, FORuM Project and Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.
- 3 Definition of “non figurative”.



Archizoom, No-Stop City, 1968-70  
Diagram of a homogeneous habitat.

The direct collaboration with the EAHR team has therefore made possible to carry out a process in an attempt to identify and order the categories of intervention, which can represent an operational framework.

The various items that will be specified below make up a series of categories of intervention, which the team generally follows to organize individual project activities.

These categories have been collected on the basis of past experiences, as told from chapter 3.1. Following several analysis an attempt was made to evaluate, in an objective and thoughtful way, what has been achieved, but above all if certain decisions have allowed, or less, the achievement of the objectives initially set.

By doing so, is possible to establish exactly those “recursive conditions”<sup>4</sup> around which the chapter has opened.

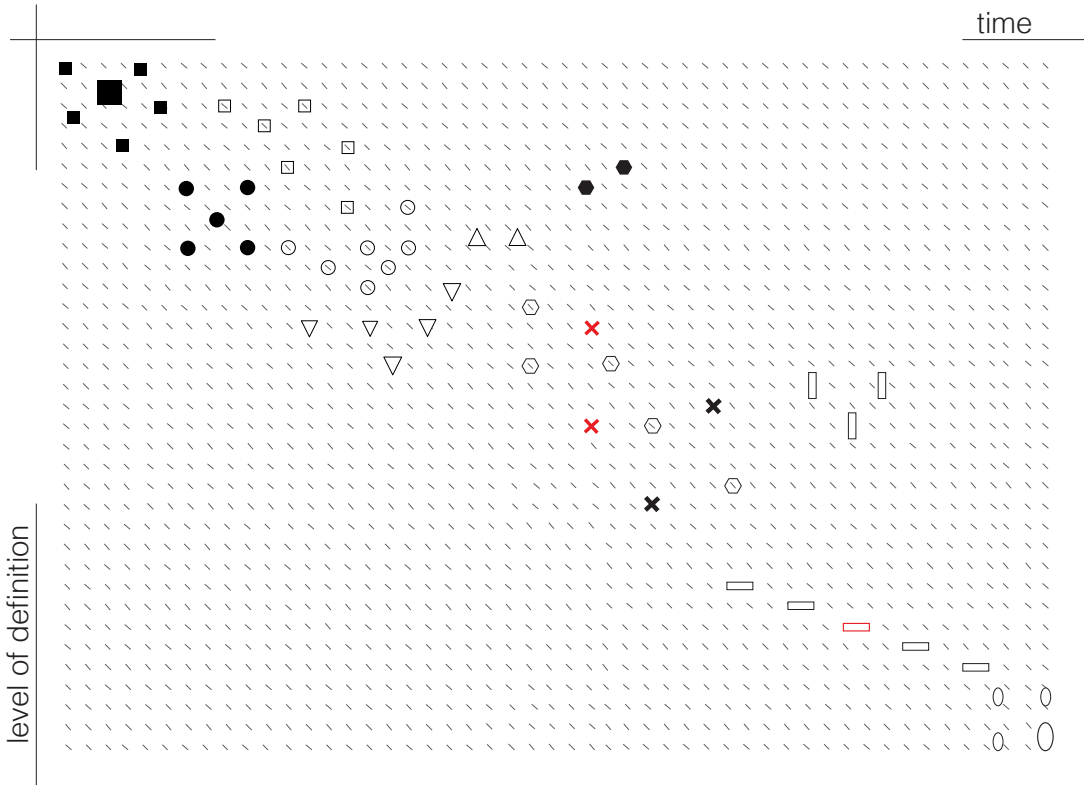
This would authorize to address the issue of contingency, starting precisely from the critical observation of the project idea, which in this case can be interpreted through the words of Teddy Cruz and Fonna Forman<sup>5</sup>:

“In our practice, we design the protocols that anticipate building. Besides designing “things”, architects can design civic processes, modes of participation and urban pedagogy”.

In an attempt to provide an answer to this clarification, an interpretation is therefore proposed with respect to the theoretical considerations that have been taken into account during the development of the entire research.

4 In Ardeth 06, p. 13.

5 From Hospitality to Infrastructures of Inclusion, in Ardeth 06, p. 40.



- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ■ main topic               | ● community engagement     |
| □ partnerships             | ○ minimum expected results |
| ● 5 by 5                   | ✕ co-design                |
| ○ overlapping similarities | ▤ 1 plus 1                 |
| △ C.S.O.                   | ▢ co-creation              |
| ▽ $H \times V = D$         | ○ evaluation               |
| ✕ with children            | ▢ with children            |

## EXPLANATION OF VOICES AND SINGLE INTERVENTIONS:

- **The topic** mainly concerns the desire to create a network of classrooms around the world, founding the research starting from 5 elements of preliminary investigation:
- Search for data that can demonstrate the usefulness of considering the educational issue.
- How to deal with the educational aspect.
- Methods for involving children to create new stimuli.
- Act with the intention of respecting the SDG's.
- Building a participatory process.

**Search for partnerships** consists in contacting potential interested parties to invest skills and knowledge for the development and subsequent implementation of the research idea.

The current are:

- ☐ Internal Planning Agencies
- ☐ Emergencies Organizations
- ☐ NGOs
- ☐ Universities
- ☐ External consultancy societies

### 5 by 5

EAHR, with the partners involved,

- looks for 5 possible cases that deal
- with issues as close as possible.
- These 5 options, in 5 different
- contexts, are then compared to
- evaluate their common aspects,

especially from the point of view of:

- Climate e geography.
- Culture.
- Emergencies.
- Natural disasters.
- Climate change.
- Manmade emergencies.
- Pandemic.

### Definition of Community Service Organization

that conceptually corresponds to some local partners within the place where it is decided to act, without which it would become difficult to build a hypothesis of real intervention.

According to this, it is proposed to make an assessment, from which two possible outcomes can follow:

- △ If they are able to evaluate the intervention individually, they are left with the task of doing it independently.
- △ If they are unable to do it by themselves, all the practical and theoretical aspects are explained to make the subjects involved autonomous in the future. The purposes are, on one hand, to make them understand the meaning of self-assessment. On the other hand to be able to act following the relationship according to which:

$$\text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability} = \text{Disaster}^5$$

By studying the interventions previously carried out, the team was able to understand how the

only variable on which it is possible to intervene, to reduce the extent of a phenomenon, is vulnerability. By reducing this factor, it is possible to propose long-term improvement interventions. Attempting to reduce vulnerability means continuing the overlapping work previously addressed, which from a series of generic cases, begins to descend within the context of intervention. In this specific case it is proposed to act on:

- ▽ Geometries and shapes.
- ▽ Construction systems.
- ▽ Natural hazard.
- ▽ Infectious disease.
- ▽ Cultural, social and educational differences.

### Community engagement

Through a discussion with the local actors, the minimum aspected results are defined, based precisely on the possible actions to be taken

- to limit the extent of the Disaster. This is achievable by establishing what is identified by the term
- VCA, or Vulnerability Capacity Assessment.<sup>6</sup> This usually serves to clearly define the ways in which the decision is taken to address critical issues, with the intrinsic possibility of influencing and obtaining certain results rather than others.

### Minimum expected results

are in fact taken into consideration

also on the basis of the methodology that is decided to use and apply. It means anticipating the co-design phase, considering that this is structured with the desire to collect certain information, data or concepts, which in this specific case are :

- Learn to recognize the risks that human actions can potentiality generate.
- Possibility to express a subjective and critical opinion through the project observation.
- Understanding of architectural and strategic factors.
- Positioning and observation within the real case.
- Provide knowledge and skills useful to proceed independently.

### Tools

Parallel to the phase of identifying the minimum results, an attempt is made to structure a series of tools, or instruments through which it is proposed to achieve the minimum conditions expressed above. In this case they are:

- ✕ Learning together
- ✕ Symbolic game
- ✕ Create your community
- ✕ Meta design & models

### 1 plus 1

The partners initially involved

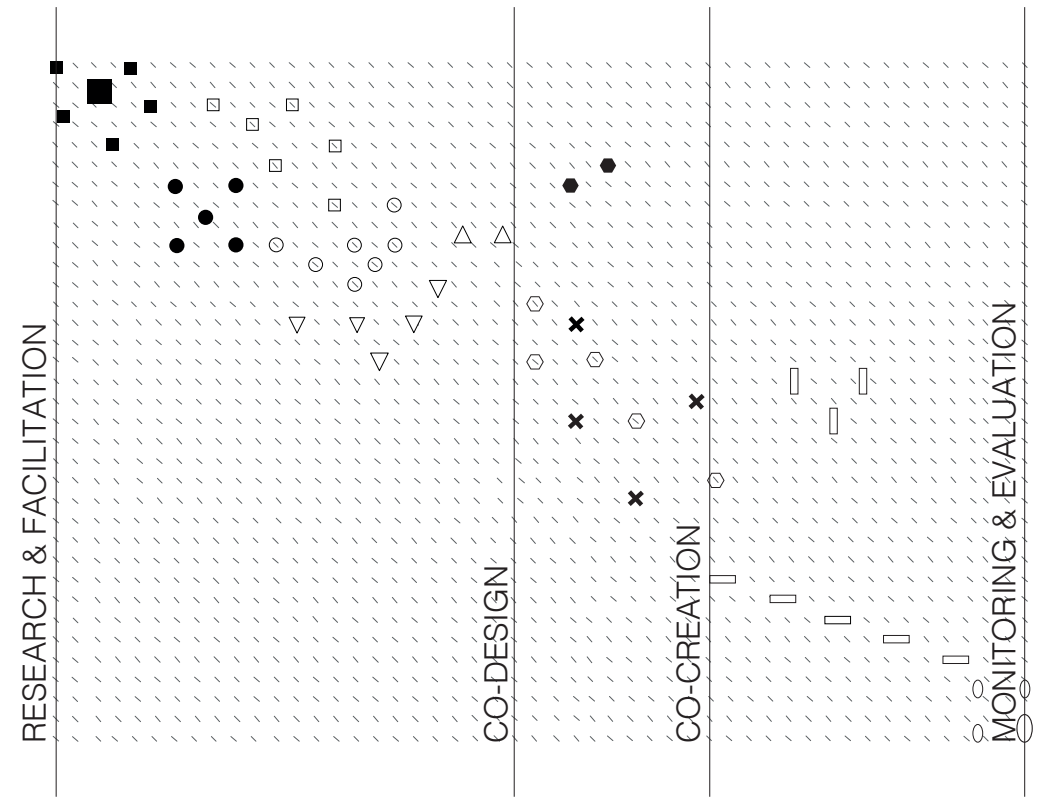
- ▮ are now contacted again to communicate the data collected during the co-design phase, in an attempt to understand how to use

them to develop a concrete project. This should allow a series of volunteers and technically trained subjects to reach local partners and work together with the community, teaching them a construction technique.

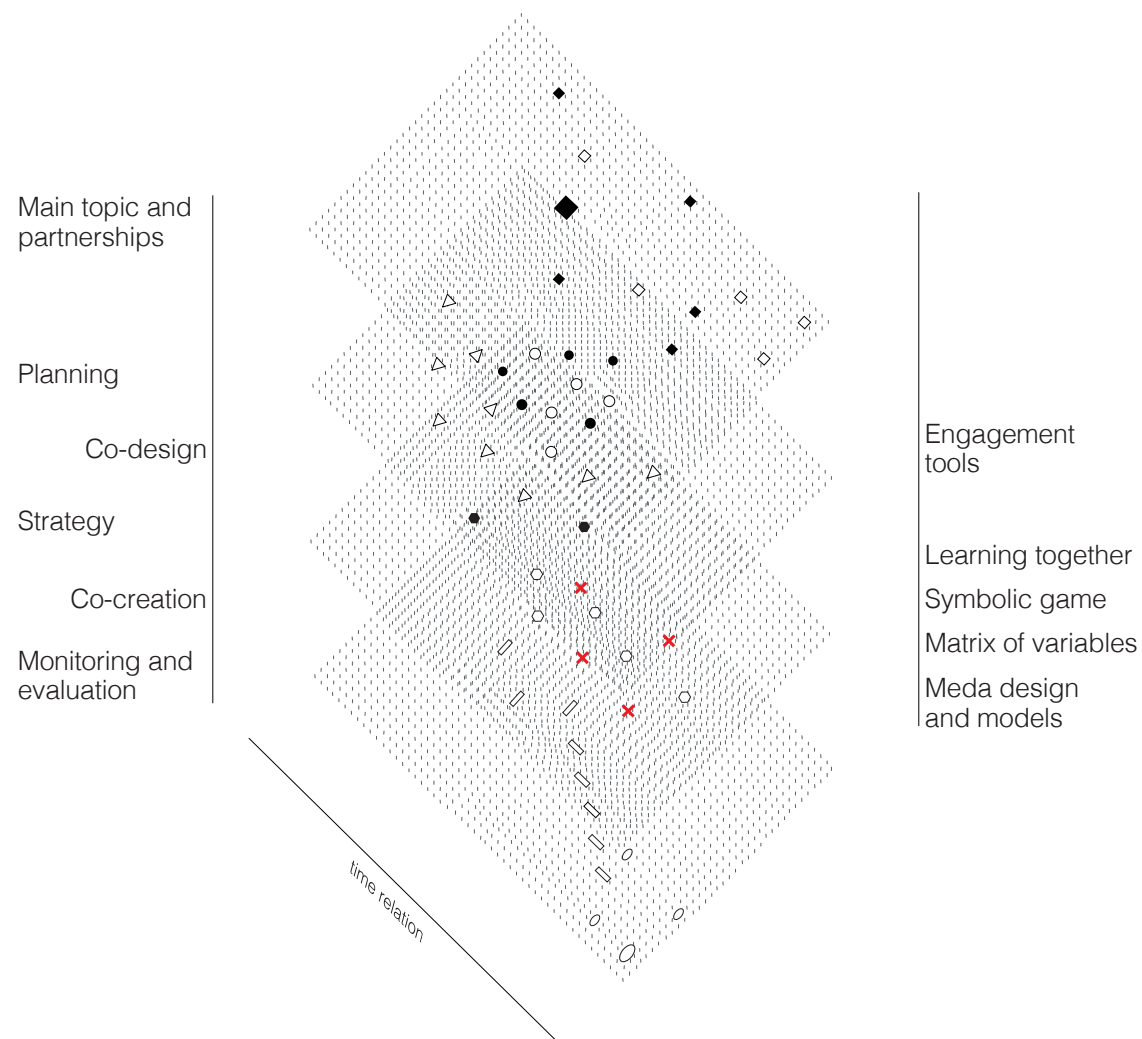
### Technical aspects.

- ▢ Through the involvement activity, the theoretical foundations are introduced to correctly address the constructive path, allowing the design idea to be realized under a perspective of full sharing and collaboration, including the figure of children in this process.
- Once the practical phase is completed, the community will
- ▢ directly define its uses.
- The team's task will only be to verify
- ▢ its correct and continuous usage over time.

- Finally, the process ends through
- the activity of **observation**.
  - In this phase it is possible to fix the themes that the team will try to observe in the years following the realization. An attempt will therefore be made to monitor the
  - use by the community, evaluating whether it has been able to
  - produce effects on an urban and social scale. Moreover, it would
  - be useful to record the opinions of the population involved, trying to discover any satisfaction or opposition following what was introduced.



Overlapping categories of intervention in respect to the phases of which the process is made. Phases are referred to what has been dealt starting from the third chapter.



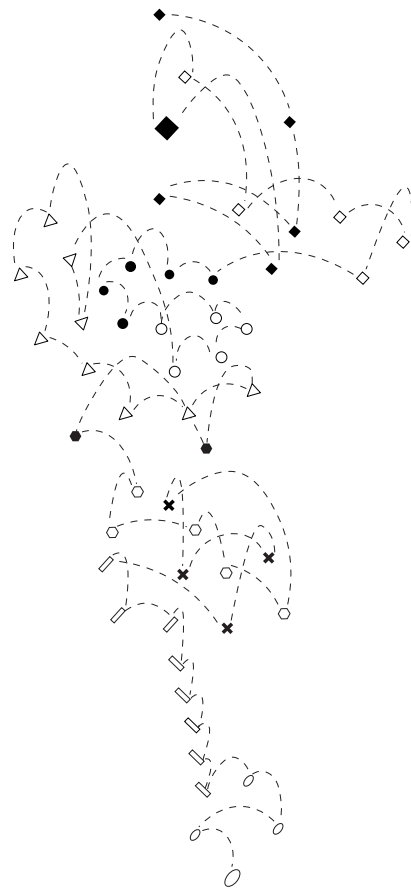
Phases, Categories and Specificities.

Exploding the graph on 4 layers, identifiable with the phases of the process, it can be seen how the moments of co-design and co-creation are placed in an intermediate level, representing a solution for the planning activity that requires the configuration of a strategy.

The process phases are transformed and concretized through a series of actions, interventions and tools, which, if related to the phases, can be grouped into intervention categories.

In particular, the research investigated the items present within the co-design phase, focusing more on the definition of the tools necessary to relate and achieve proper involvement between children and adults, presenting them a series of designed instruments to obtain information regarding the objectives set.

The tools, marked with red crosses and listed on the right side of the graph, together constitute a category of intervention, which precisely allows to give life to the co-design phase.



Movement visualization.  
Recursivity or linearity through the process.

Trying to retrace, in an orderly manner, the various points previously places into the space, it can be noted a degree of interdependence between the individual dowels that, once connected to each other, give an image of a path.

The observation of this route that starts from the identification of the research topic, and ends with the monitoring and evaluation activities, allows to advance a consideration.

The preliminary research and facilitation phase is undoubtedly the most complex. In fact, it requires to be prepared to retrace their steps, checking constantly what has been achieved through the previous moments.

The activity is often recursive and indeed defines a cloud of links.

However, once the actors involved begin to operate in an organized way, establishing the first common objectives, through the use of tools to reach them, everything becomes clearer and more linear, to easily reach the end of the process.

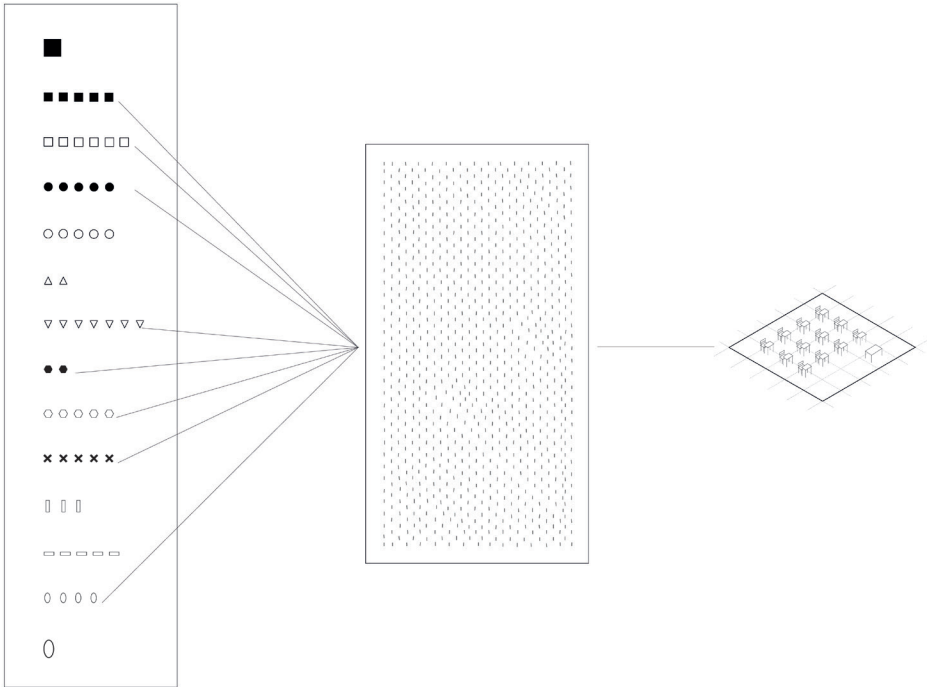
# 4.2.3 Traces

Until now the intention has been to provide answers by supporting the opinion that, through a methodological organization of work, the effects of contingency can be faced.

In an attempt to establish potential traces to follow, an “information process”<sup>8</sup> has been voluntarily built, which corresponds to devices and logics capable of offering plural and open answers, but above all, aware of being flexible in the event of external, unforeseen solicitations. However, our attempt to order the elements notwithstanding, placing them within a sufficiently stable and safe boundary, there is no complete certainty that these will lead to the same results each time the method is reapplied.

Being aware of this therefore confirms the previously expressed opinion according to which, within a participatory process, it is probably better to focus on the effects to be achieved, rather than on physical and material solutions. Based on these considerations, it is advisable that the process leaves open the possibility of achieving results that are also totally different from

8 Term used by Manuel Gausa Navarro, which refers to the unification of the informative aspect with the formal one.



each other, being guided by a methodology that in its general schemes is recursive in its intent.

Exactly for these reasons, simple schematizations are accepted as obtainable results, voluntarily not defined by the planning action, which is similar in identity and definition to the “quasi-objects”<sup>9</sup> described by Latour. In other words, hybrid products contain and enclose within them the arbitrariness, dictated by openness to social aspects, together with the considerations that bind them to a shape, an object. “However, quasi-objects are much more social”.<sup>9</sup>

9 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter, New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

"Whereas architecture, in searching for definitive solutions to the challenges it confronts, realizes one possibility among many, history places architecture before an open field of possibilities, exposing the most stable plans to unforeseen forces that inevitably disrupt them."

D. Sherer, translator's introduction, in Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, 2006), p.16.



Incubator of ideas.

The image intends to abstract the idea of participatory process, noting how this can become the driving force for the functioning of an incubator of ideas. A series of ideals motivate the desire to observe a place, whose peculiarities allow to calibrate participatory tools. The process, despite the contingency, hopes to solve critical issues through the definition of a project.

## 4.2.4 Reality

Leaning on the image shown on the previous page, a last reflection could be introduced.

Architectural practice often has the tendency, and the self-conceit, to set up elements defined once and for all, in a certain sense perfect, moving away as much as possible from the thought that these can be challenged by pure contingency<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, p. 28.

Ideas should not remain confined within a crystalline and static perimeter.

Thought should rather take life internal decisions, moves by bold ideals which come into close with individual geographical realities, in an attempt to solve their problems.

However, difficulties spread out when our techniques, or our strategies, are subjected to the harsh confrontation with reality<sup>11</sup>, which inevitably could perturbate its conditions and results.

<sup>11</sup> J. Till, Architecture Depends, The MIT Press, Cambridge, London, 2009.

“While architects may try to calm the resulting flux through the imposition of standard design methodologies, the storm is never abated.”

B. Lawson, How Designers Think, 2nd edn, London, Butterworth Architecture, 1990, pp. 76-81.

The complexity of an action that aims to change, or even to a small extent, influence the evident social problems, working within them in an attempt to deal with individual issues, implies the need to not impose itself with a clear and static vision of things.

What we need to ask ourselves is whether we want to understand this contingency as a possible opportunity not to set limits (as a situation from which results of great value could still arise, in a perspective available to accept its potential) or treating it as a circumstance that inevitably, sooner or later, will appear in front of our eyes.

Faced with these two scenarios, the thesis intends to expose a renewed proposal, which is not frightened by the unpredictability of things. In this sense, it is not limited to observe some elements, but to consider them as variables that can affect the outcome of the process.

In this, Latour's words once again warn about the danger of falling back into an architectural practice that produces "desperately static" <sup>12</sup> objects.

It might be useful start to think architectural activity as a process that also takes into consideration changes and variations.

In understanding this, process and project are not two terms in opposition and mutual exclusion, rather one should be complementary to the other. Indeed, a conscious project springs and starts from an open and responsible process that assimilates contingency as its material. The process is just as important as the outcome.

"Contingency is a necessary, although not sufficient, condition of freedom. In a world which is completely tight and exact in all its constituents, there would be no room for freedom. Contingency, while it gives room for that freedom, does not fill that room."

<sup>12</sup> B. Latour, A. Yaneva, Give me a gun and I will make all buildings move: an ant's view of architecture.

J. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 238.

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