

Experimenting the possible. The transformation of space as an inquiry tool.



A space for familiar relationships: a small redwood pavilion inside the meeting garden of the Milano-Bollate prison*.



A new public space of coexistence: a grass, a wooden platform, four seats, three flower boxes and a painted pavement**.

Two experiments of real transformation of space carried out by a group of researchers at the Politecnico di Milano into two different research, in which I have actively taken part in. Although completed, their value lies in being part of a wider project network.

Through the storytelling of their conception and realization process, performed collaboratively, we want to investigate a possible innovation of the role of architecture design. In particular, contributing to making decisions in transformative processes of marginal contexts. Marginal areas are those multi-problematic situations which, due to their complexity, are often excluded from requalification programmes and projects.

The realizations described are not to be understood as attempts to resolve, but as tools to investigate the opportunities of contexts, following the cut (Ingold 2013) to see where it goes, ever alert and responsive to clues in a variable environment. Starting from what the project does (and not what it could be), putting the peculiarities of architectural knowledge at work, the project opens up to the collaboration of others. The engagement takes place through doing.

The project assumes the form of a relational process, a contingent and relative 'social object' (Ferraris, 2009). It opens to the contribution of different actors and knowledge, professional and common. In this habitat, the specific contribution of the architecture is to advance tentative forms, an explorative prefiguration of the conditions of transformation. They aren't a prototype but an attempt to define an effective method.

From this point of view the designer becomes an activist as described by Hirschman "it is not my aim to predict trends; rather, I apply myself to trying to understand what is possible and to calling people's interest in it" (1994). It turns out that the project is not so much an image of a future state of the world as an orientation to action and "continuous work on potential effects" (Pasqui 2018).

* *Prison Architecture: from Space of Detention to Place of Relationship*, FARB2016, a call for basic university research.

** *West Road Project. A device for activating networks and public spaces throughout the diffuse neglected areas*. Polisocial Award 2017 that rewards research with social purposes.