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Reflection

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The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

The graduation project 'Educational Homes' is developed as an Explore Lab graduation project. It focuses on the housing and education of children in vulnerable situations in Colombia. This project is approached as a design system that could be applied/positioned in different regions with different climates and customs.

The graduation project 'Educational Homes' is divided into a research and a design part. The research consists of understanding the complexity of 'citizenship' and denoting its chore notions. The translation of these literate notions to spatial ones concludes into a tool box of architectonical guide lines in order to communicate the values of citizenship through architecture. The second part is the design proposal, is drawn form the researched tool box of spatial notions with the purpose to propose a constructive system for the educational functions as well as for the residential ones. These educational functions are spread through eight family houses and a common building.

This project is developed from a personal fascination and concern for children's rights and welfare and educational architecture. I always have been concerned about inequalities between children at a global scale. When I was twelve I decided that I would be active in order to achieve some improvements in the life of vulnerable children. I then envisioned it as a large family house for my thirty adopted children, the staff and myself. A stable family was then already considered as an important part of the children's educative environment.

Considering the conflictive context of Colombia where different parties are exchanging violent acts around rural settlements and where access to education is threatened, the matter of citizenship and the rights that it defends, is therefor the binding element between the research and the design and also the frame of the thesis.
Like the Post Modernists' vision and attempt to narrate the values of citizenship in the architecture of schools, I am testing through this thesis the hypothesis that the notions shaping the literate definition of citizenship can be related to the material world of educational environments.

The relationship between research and design

The analysis of the three case studies have offered a catalogue of spatial configurations and architectonical means that stands for and communicate the divers civic values. Together they form a tool box of various means and guide lines. Moreover the research have given insight in the relation between the program of activities, the stream of movements that it provokes and the language of the applied delimitations. This stream of movement is the illustration of the user's participation as an active citizen inside the educational realm.

The research has helped shaped my design proposal in two ways: The first one consisted in helping decide the dimensions of the grid and the constructive system. It had to offer different size of spaces. Some which would offer enough space in order to evoke inclusiveness and commonness and others which could allow more intimacy.

The second one consisted of the types of delimitation found in the case studies. The level of privacy, formality and security or on the contrary the level of commonness, informality and accessibility are the factors leading the classification and choices for the types of boundaries. These boundaries or delimitations are applied consequently with the purpose of creating a readable plan for the common building as for the eight family houses.

At the end of the elaboration of the design proposal, my project could be considered as the final case study to realise in order to test if the values of citizenship would be communicated well enough to its future inhabitants.

Although the research has influenced many aspects of the design other aspects were very significant for the design proposal. These others studies were made about the three chosen regions and their climates through the mean of on sites research and observations. A second one consisted on the existing humanitarian system of *S.O.S children village,* which consist of the reconstruction of families around a caretaker. The third one is the educational method of rural schools of Colombia called 'Escuela Nueva' this school methodology combines the Montessori method with the rural activities in order to create a stronger relation between the school program and the local customs and habits. The fourth aspects was the political and social context of Colombia. I found it important to understand the origins of the everlasting conflicts which already caused over six millions of internally displaced Colombians. And at last, the chosen material: bamboo which has required a lot of observations and studies from existing buildings in order to obtain a feasible construction system.

Time wise, the research have taken a considerable amount of time (one year) during which a site location research of one month was realised and the design proposal was initiated. I have encountered during this time some personal difficulties; I was afflicted with the mononucleosis virus for five months during which I pursued on a low tempo my research. Furthermore I had difficulties leaving the safety of the citizenship definitions —from the literature— to propose my own translation of the found notions to spatial and material characteristics, by fear of being considered as naive.

The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The topic of the importance of education and child protection for a substantial citizenship is in many countries in the world a very relevant topic. A lack of education is in most cases correlated with a non substantial citizenship in regions or countries where violent conflicts occurs. It is demonstrated in this research through the case of Colombia.

During the fifty years of internal conflicts, many events have affected and still are affecting the citizenship of the Colombian people. The violent history of conflicts between numerous actors, their resulting internal displacements, from the rural to the urban, and the already existing inequalities towards the different ethnicities inside the Colombian population have brought up many issues challenging and even defying their status of citizens. Of the many victims of these violences, the children are without fail the most vulnerable group. The greatest existing threat to their citizenship is the current lack of education, as it is a major hindrance and offence to the equality principle that citizenship stands for —more precisely in regard to the social rights of citizenship.

Although citizenship can mainly be defined and be sustained by political decisions, its safekeeping mostly lies within the hands of an education which spreads and transmits the values it defends to the entire population of a country. Education is a powerful tool striving to harmonise life inside society. It is a utensil which shapes unspoken set of rules and behaviours making cohabitation possible inside the civic, political and social aspects of the daily life. Moreover, the relation between

this term and education was already proven, during the enlightenment and the French Revolution, to be of the most crucial importance.

The architecture of educational environment can, at first, appear to be of little significance for the safeguarding of citizenship. Still, as an evidence to the correlation between citizenship and educational architecture, much importance was accorded to the architecture of schools, day-cares, orphanages and even cultural centres, in the post WWII period, when the well being of the child became the main focus point for the program and the design. Also, as far as I am concerned, citizenship is entirely immersed in daily lives, divided in civil, political and social aspects. Therefore, the environment where citizenship is being taught and practiced should be more than a inanimate canvas, it should be a lively participative support, or environment that I call "realm of citizenship", illustrating the various facets of citizenship.

This project demonstrates that a tool box can be formulated —from the literate notions of citizenship— and applied, even if partially, in order to bring forward and communicate the values of citizenship in the use of the spaces. These guidelines could help better the configuration of educational places in the case of children in vulnerable situations but also in the case of children in stable situations.