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CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES.

Design spaces for children and adolescents.

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Abstract.

This paper presents the educational and laboratory experience of the course CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES, performed during the 2019 academic year in the School of Architecture and Design of Ascoli Piceno SAAD, University of Camerino, in collaboration with UNICEF Italia. The training course is the first in Italy that builds a dialogue between the discipline of Architecture and the protection and promotion of children and adolescents rights. The course was offered to the University students and was structured in two modules. The first module, TEACHING ACTIVITY, through a series of training seminars addressed the design of space for children and adolescents; elaborating on good practices and case studies. The second module APPLICATION ACTIVITY provided a practical laboratory which guided students in a participatory planning process. The students have experimented reading and planning a specific context in which they live through specially structured tools and methods.

The CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES training course theorizes a way of thinking about the design of spaces for children and adolescents taking into consideration their rights, promoting the learning of tools, design techniques and of new technologies. The competences of a participatory planning, that can be learned, allow to strengthen team work with important networking and listening opportunities, developing among young people a critical awareness of children and adolescents' rights and the quality of spaces dedicated to them.

Keywords: design spaces for children and adolescents, children and adolescents rights, laboratory, innovative didactics, participation

Introduction

Each year UNICEF Italia organizes Multidisciplinary University Courses on Development Education and Education in Rights; courses are part of the University Program which represents a historical activity of UNICEF.

Through the stipulation of an agreement between UNICEF and host universities, which make available specific and professional skills, a close collaboration is born in order to reach an important goal of offering young people tools to read and analyze the problems that affect the world of childhood and adolescence in Italy and in the rest of the world. The Convention on children and adolescent rights represents the main tool on which training courses are built and it remains the fundamental key to understanding these situations but also to identify possible solutions.

The diversity of the universities hosting the UNICEF University Program determines a wealth of readings and possible applications of the Convention of Children and Adolescents Rights, angled to the single disciplines and professions. The training course *CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES. Designing spaces for children and adolescents*, organized by the School of Architecture and Designing Eduardo Vittoria University of Camerino and UNICEF Italy during the academic year 2019, is the first in Italy to build a dialogue between the disciplines of Architecture and the protection and promotion of children and adolescents rights.

Other programs which UNICEF Italia carries out throughout the national territory are of significant importance for the project. Some of them include “*Child Friendly Schools*”, “*Child Friendly Cities*” and other international projects as “*Malnate. The city of children and adolescents*” which have provided the framework for this project directing both the actions and activities that were organized.

In all these cases, programs, recognizing the subjectivity of children and young people, aim to build a world suitable for children and adolescents through an integrated approach and a specific methodology. The CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES project, in line with the activities of UNICEF Italia and testing laboratory activities with a 'maker' approach, ensures the knowledge of the children and adolescents rights. It guarantees a priority attention to the perspective of children and adolescents in the local government structures and it promotes an active involvement of children in the issues that concern them; listening to their opinions and keeping them in mind during the decision-making processes.



Fig. 1. Some of the UNICEF programs realized in the national territory.

1 Construction of the training course.

The training course *CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES. Designing spaces for children and adolescents*, based on two important objectives. The first objective is the most immediate one, it aims to increase skills of the graduates on the theme of chil-

children and adolescents rights, of listening and participation of children and young people in relation to their study programs and their future professions. In the specific case, with regard to disciplines of Architecture, the training course aims to acquire a sense of awareness about the design of spaces suitable for children and adolescents, studying issues related to design devices, invested spaces, quality, project scales, technologies applied and it provides a TEACHING MODULE.

The second objective is to listen to needs and proposals of children and young people with the aim of improving specific contexts in which children and adolescents live considering the relations between city/neighborhood and educational/school context. In this case an APPLICATION MODULE was formulated with the direct involvement of the school children in a participation experience. For the implementation of CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES training course, it was necessary to create a network of subjects that make their skills and professionalism available in favor of recognizing the rights children and adolescents. In addition to the two leading subjects, the 'Eduardo Vittoria' School of Architecture and Design, University of Camerino and Unicef Italia, the 'Pericle Fazzini' Secondary School of Grottammare (AP) and the Municipality of Grottammare (AP) were involved in the project.

Collaboration between University, School and Administration is fundamental for the constitution of a territorial context in which the rights to the listening and participation of children and adolescents are guaranteed.

The speakers of the two modules are university professors, UNICEF experts, external consultants, and experts in participative methodologies.



Fig. 2. The billboard of the teaching course CHILD FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURES.

1.1 Teaching module

The Teaching Module 1 is aimed to 20 students of the Degree Courses of the School of Architecture and Design, University of Camerino and it has developed in 6 seminars exploring the themes of the Convention on children and adolescents rights, interpreting it as a working tool. An in-depth study is dedicated to the four general principles and to the Rights of Children according to the general ONU Commentary, with particular attention to the right to listening and to participation and to the right to education. How the spaces of the city, spaces of learning, spaces for leisure time and play positively influence both the quality of life and the educational experiences are explored in specific seminars dedicated to architectural disciplines. The relationship between architecture and spaces for children is analyzed through good practices and case study projects.

From historical examples to the contemporary spaces different topics are investigated i.e. the summer colony in Misano (RM) designed by Giancarlo De Carlo, the playgrounds by Aldo Van Eyck in Amsterdam, the revolution of the school spaces and the New Vertical Communities in Toronto.

A last part of the training is dedicated to the experimentation of new technologies such as 3d printing, laser cutting for the design and creation of games, teaching materials and children's friendly objects.



Fig. 3. Application of the laser cutting technique, for the realization of a game in the laboratory.

1.2 Application module

The activity that took place in the application module 2 involves the Secondary School 'Pericle Fazzini' of Grottammare (Ap) and the Municipality of Grottammare (AP), it provides for the construction of a laboratory aimed at secondary school adolescents in which teachers and students who are in the University training will participate as facilitators. The activity guides children through tools and methodologies specifically structured in the reading of a specific context in which the children live: a historical route which links the historic city and the coastal settlement. Students conducted a survey to understand the adolescents' use of the space and their idea of the city. The students then organized round tables in order to discuss the findings of the survey and the developments of the area. Through specific indicators developed, i.e. accessibility, pedestrian circulation, the reuse of disused buildings, and the green and water resources, the students identify topics of intervention where teenagers' desires and vision intersect in order to improve the environment for children and adolescents. Adults involved in the activity, make their skills available to support and accompany the children / teenagers along the way.



Fig. 4. Round table.



Fig. 5. Visit to the historical route.

2 Conclusions

The use of a teaching module and an application laboratory with a ‘maker’ approach offers students and school children a way to familiarize and experience their rights, in particular the laboratory satisfies one of the Convention rights: the creation of a physical space and an ideal context in which child and adolescents can express themselves and can be heard.

In the final relations, the University students sustain that the course opens an application of the rights of children and adolescents to the design of space, giving them a new perspective. The teaching experience sensitizes both the academic and professional world and the youth and student world to the protection of children and adolescents rights as a fulcrum of choices in organization, planning and management of public and private spaces.

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