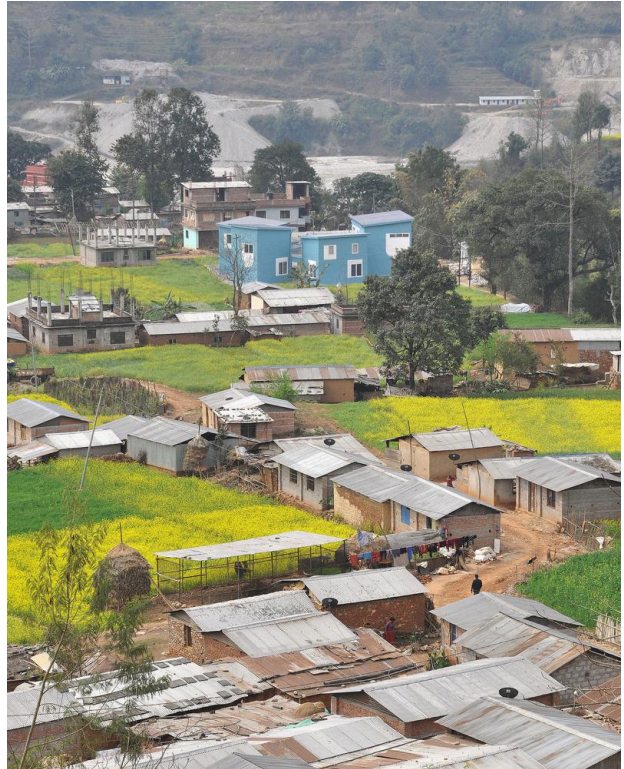


The School of Social Development / Studio Berardi Miglio

What form of life does the particular configuration of space afford?

An organization led by a local resident Jay Nepal approached the studio to design a school and plan a community center in a very far off and small village named Bodgaun, which is about three hour's drive to the north of the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu.

Within its scope of action the project aims to include every community of Nepal, however special focus has been given to indigenous communities 'the Majhis' which are considered as socially inferior and remain marginalized. The beginning of the project was a bit tough task as it began in the pandemic time, with no much site visits and lack of



financial support. This turned out to be major challenge for the studio to take up. The site been situated amidst agricultural landscape, besides a large plateau with few houses spread around it which do not generate any certain urban sense with the region missing of proper infrastructure, the project therefore thought of an idea of a village in a village, as the composition had to generate an opportunity for the villagers to come together.

With this modest building culture of the village, the primary cornerstone of project was to regard the social aspect of community and designing it in a simple way which caters for the interaction of people. Around a central open volume bounded by periphery of five spaces which hold different functions, it altogether works as a meeting point for the villagers. The whole design observes constructive simplicity with particular emphasis on how certain cluster of functions produce a public arena. The resultant arrangement affords flow of people inside to outside.

On the ground floor is an open air theater and five blocks which are a classroom, a training institute and a youth center. The theater is bounded by steps which serves as seating for the public. On the top floor is a canteen, volunteer residence and a wide open terrace. The units on the top are individually placed and do not have a common roof running over them.

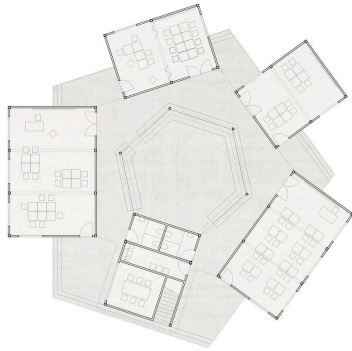


fig.: ground floor plan

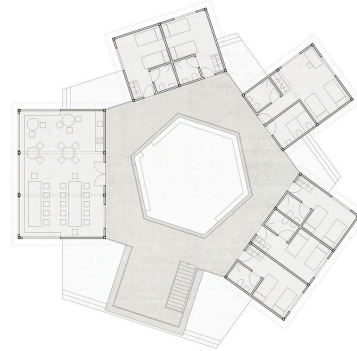


fig.: first floor plan

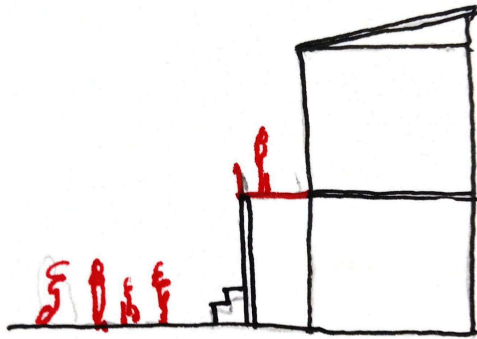
This kind of configuration affords public engagement in the center with various programmes happening around. The scale of the units is also thoughtfully kept proportionate to the existing structures in the village around which makes the villagers feel as if it is their second home. Also the units on first floor are thought as single rooms rather than one ring which makes a difference in the space formation. If the current spaces were all surrounded by one single wall running throughout and a common roof, it would have resulted in forming only one space whereas now there are separate blocks which when seen from far away, the whole builtform doesn't seem as a large chunk sitting on site; but is design which matches the language of the surrounding.



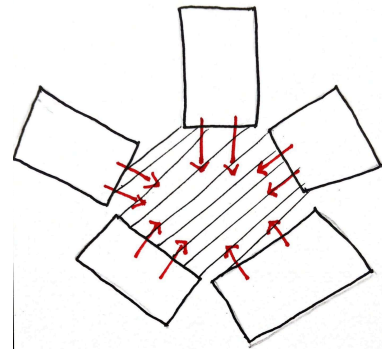


The language of simplistic builtform which does not have a heavy footprint is being kept the same like the surrounding, the openness is being responded to and multiple entry-exits to the ground floor which turns into a public plaza for gatherings. Instead of going for architecture which is rich in details, the interest of

the studio lies in emphasizing the capabilities of spaces the individual volumes create. All the functions that are accommodate in the units constitute of public involvement and not a single person engaging in the whole building which results in good footfall of villagers in the school which also fulfills the needs of Jay Nepal, who wanted higher attendance rates of school aged



students. Unlike other schools built in village whose units are strung along a long corridor, this one first understood the typology of Bodgaun village and then went on to make something for the community. The public theater in the center affords various kind of community gatherings and caters to mass functioning altogether. With each unit placed around the central




theatre, the visual connectivity stays in place and is not hindered. The terrace acts as a balcony for someone who wishes to view the activities happening on the ground floor. The steps in the court function as seating space too.

The response to the village is also thoughtfully crafted. The logic of huts and small scale houses of the village is somewhere kept the same in the structure; the openness and minute spaces being major of them. The school functions as a good pair between the setting around and the landscape and does not look like an isolated object. It is site responsive and also engages with the daily livelihood of the villagers. The children and young people come to classroom and youth centre in the morning respectively, whereas in the evening hours the school is taken up by the local women and the men acquire the canteen for tea and snacks. The multi-functionality of the project is a good response to the daily activities of the villagers. Additional to this, the structure does not overpower its neighboring houses but is in rhythm with them. The volume is similar to that of surrounding and the functions placed also involve high engagement of the public.

The school is just like another home or place to the villagers because it merges with the village - the scale, clustering of spaces, volumes, openness and most importantly the interface between public and open air theater. The multi-operational central open air theater is what brings engagement of the villagers with the school.

~ Devesh Turakane

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