



RAISE THEIR VOICES

*RETHINKING THE ARCHITECT'S ROLE IN A
COLONIAL CONTEXT SUCH AS MAYOTTE THROUGH
EDUCATION AND ANTI-RACISM*

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figure 0.1: Informal construction

ABSTRACT

It is nowadays essential for an architect to make her practice evolve since the society and its challenges are changing. It requires new radical approaches to answer issues that are no longer tolerable in the lives of people. For that, a critical architect needs to analyse, dismantle and propose new ways of working.

As a legacy of the global expansion, territories are embedded in the colonization/ decolonization process. For that reason, the objective of this thesis is to look at the impact architects and architecture can have to support the decolonization process by rethinking the role of architects and architecture in the current society. It aims to explore how architects can raise awareness of the communities, towards the built environment as well as raising the voices of those who have been omitted in the architectural debate. That way, people will be able to engage and take responsibility for the context they live in.

Therefore, the main research question of this thesis is:

"HOW CAN ARCHITECTS REDEFINE THEIR ROLE TO BECOME SUPPORTERS IN THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS AND ACT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ANTI-RACIST SOCIETY?"

This thesis' research was based on two different focuses. The first one was to determine a **strategy** to guide the research development. This strategy was designed to debunk bias in order to avoid racism in the creation process. With the help of inspiring literature, this strategy is made out of four steps: [unlearn], [relearn], [reflect], [apply]. It has been used at a personal level to analyse several grounding concepts but also in the field study with the stakeholders.

The second focus was a **field study** interaction. After several detours due to the reality of the field, the study case was about experimenting ways for the stakeholders to grasp their surrounding environment and restore their right to act towards it. For that, I have designed tools and workshops to encourage dialogue, which is the first fundamental step to conceive an inclusive built environment. The study case took place with teenagers in Mayotte an island in the Indian Ocean, torn between the states of Comoros and France.

Three different influences, among others, have inspired the research: the work of Wai Think Tank, Paolo Freire and Achille Mbembe.

KEYWORDS:

architecture; education; community; anti-racism; critical and dialogical pedagogy; methods; participation; diversity; inclusivity; community; sharing; collaboration

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PERSONAL BACKGROUND

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As a teenager, I did not know what I would do as a profession later. I only knew two things:

1st: I liked very different subjects at school such as sciences, sociology, languages, etc. so I needed a work that combines all of them – perfect, architecture does so – ;

2nd: I wanted a profession that matters, that could shape the world I am in – perfect, architecture does so too – .

Going through my studies, I jumped from one school to the other, in order to discover different ways to make architecture. This is how I ended up in Chalmers. And what I found with Reality Studio, changed definitively my view on architecture.

Working WITH people and not only FOR people, and exploring strategies engaging with humans gave me hope for my future profession.

This master's thesis is my way to start acting in this world. This master's thesis is a call for tolerance towards humanity.

Manifesto

1.

Architecture impacts the lives of everyone.

2.

Every person deserves to be heard, no matter their skin colour.

3.

Architecture decisions are currently reserved for a certain elite.

4.

Architecture is historically built upon settler colonialism.

5.

Traditional architecture education is still imbued from colonization and racism.

6.

Other models of architectural education are not only possible but imperative.

7.

Architecture can be used as bonding agent.

8.

Architecture can be a key towards anti-racism society.

PROJECT OVERVIEW





In this introductory chapter, I have defined the academic frame of the thesis.

First, there is the thesis description and the reasons why I decided this topic was important.

Then, I have specify the aim of the thesis, the main research question, as well as the sub-research questions, and the scope of the thesis.

After defining the aim, I have designed a method, composed of the different steps I took to achieve my objectives.

This method had to be structured and planned along the year at my disposal, therefore the thesis timeline presents the steps of the method according to the time I had.

This chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the study case I have chosen for this thesis. It contains a short explanation, a short presentation of the study area and the reasons why I chose this place.

project overview

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THESIS DESCRIPTION

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Architects have seen their profession change over centuries. At some point they were sculptors, painters, poets, writers, philosophers, engineers, urban planners, masons...

Today, the built environment is overcrowded and this situation asks questions about the impact on climate change (Delestrac, 2013). Society has evolved throughout time, therefore the role of the architect needs imperatively to change again too (WAI Think Tank, 2020). Perhaps today, an architect needs to become a facilitator, an educator, a sociologist, a political scientist, an activist.

After an intense experience in South Africa with the Reality Studio at Chalmers, I felt shameful of enjoying a life so easy and passive, and not dedicate a part of this easy life to act where people are in need. It was an evidence that my master thesis would be about the influence architecture can have on the life of people and how it can alleviate tensions and issues.

Inequality, poverty, discrimination, violence and fear are not inherent to South Africa. They are inherent to every land that suffered or still suffering from colonization.

Colonization has created segregation and racism, which influenced architecture. My research tries to demonstrate that architects could "reverse" the process (see figure 1.2). By influencing architecture with anti-racism, it would generate cooperation and collaboration that would ideally lead to decolonization.

As a sensitive person, I needed my future profession to be meaningful and actively helping to create a more desirable society in which oppression will not be the only way to get a better life.

As an architecture student, I started with conventional architecture. Later, teachers and peers introduced me to some alternative ways to design. Therefore, since conventional architecture had not all the requirements for me to find meaning in this profession, this thesis became the opportunity to explore and to rethink the role of architects and architecture.

To imagine a new way to use the power given to architects to mould this world, I needed to understand the deep roots of racism in architecture, embedded in the colonization process. From that, I developed a strategy to unravel bias and avoid racism in the creation process. This strategy has been helpful for my own reflection and I hope it will guide more people during their design process. The strategy will further be explained in a chapter dedicated to it.

As a thesis claiming that architecture could influence the lives of people, it was necessary to get in contact with this population on site. For that reason, I decided to do a year of thesis, so I could spend at least six months in a place suffering from colonization and racism.

The thesis is also a contribution to the ongoing discussion around architectural education and the inclusivity of architecture nowadays. It underlines the importance of an interdisciplinary approach and the value of research on the anti-racism architecture education.

project overview

AIM

The thesis' aim is to look at the impact architects and architecture can have to support the decolonization process by rethinking the role of architects and architecture in the current society. The research explores how architects can raise awareness towards the built environment as well as raising the voices of those who have been silenced due to oppression.

The diagram below shows how I intended to act within this thesis to reverse the process of colonization and set in motion a process of decolonization.

The unlocking key towards decolonization is placing the users, the local stakeholders, the field actors in a central part of the social debate. By expressing their voices and their

needs together, the community can break the oppression and aim toward cooperation. From that, they can imagine a better system, more egalitarian, fairer and stronger.

In the frame of this thesis, acting against colonization and racism was first, to understand the history, the impacts, and the different challenges regarding these topics. Then, to put in action the theoretical finding, I needed to experiment tools and methods on the field to raise the voices of my stakeholders.

The focus of the research is on three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG): 4. Quality Education, 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities and 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

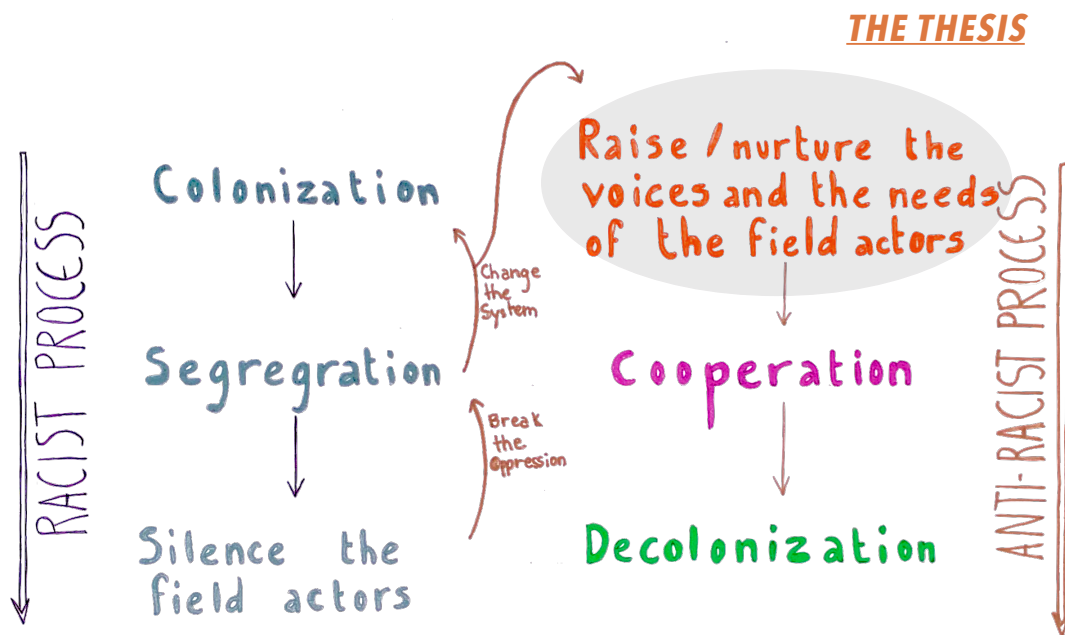


figure 1.2: Reversing the process

HOW CAN ARCHITECTS REDEFINE THEIR ROLE TO BECOME SUPPORTERS IN THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS AND ACT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ANTI-RACIST SOCIETY?

Sub-research questions:

How can architecture be politically engaged, in the current society, for the cause of decolonization and anti-racism?

"Politically engaged": notion of activism, being advocates for the cause one cares about. Unravel the colonial legacy, and understand its impact on the current society. Explore decolonization and its opportunities, but also its power to regenerate societies.

In which way architecture create tensions between communities and how can architects help alleviate these tensions?

Consider the responsibility of architecture in the spatial discrimination and rise of conflicts. Then, considering this responsibility, determine a way to inverse the process, and use architecture to gather people rather than separate them. Explore the different ways architecture enact for anti-racism, meaning all powers engaged to overcome the barriers of ethnic difference and face racism.

How can collaborative and students driven learning be fostered by architects through dialogue?

Enhance critical reflection in the couple educator/trainees. Architects assume the role of facilitators and transmit this role to the citizen. People start to investigate their environment. Open dialogue and let the stakeholders go on the topics that concern them. Listen the words used to describe their world.

Scope:

This thesis is not about coming in a sensitive environment as someone who can free anybody. It is not about reproducing this settler-colonialist approach where the "white" is aiding the "poor" as a move towards redemption (Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is not about physically building. It is neither about finding the best and the cheapest solution to design a building, nor to call upon a wealthy investor to make a charity case.

THEN WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This thesis is about leaving my bias behind, and shifting my vantage point. It is about planning workshops and discussions. It is about designing tools to enhance awareness towards the built environment. It is about confronting the theoretical researches to the reality of the field. It is about stating strong assertions, and daring to be provocative. It is about building cooperation, communication and collaboration.

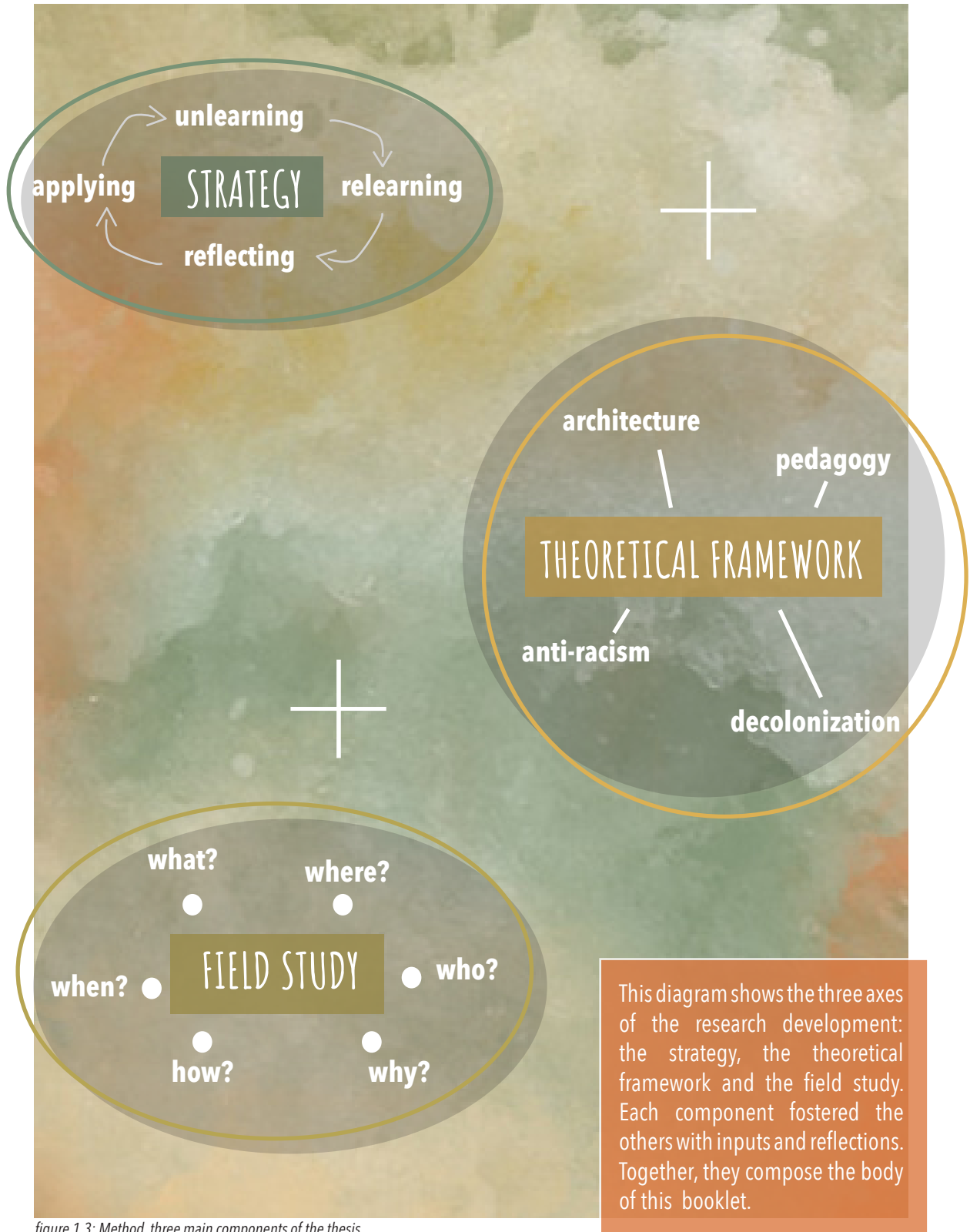
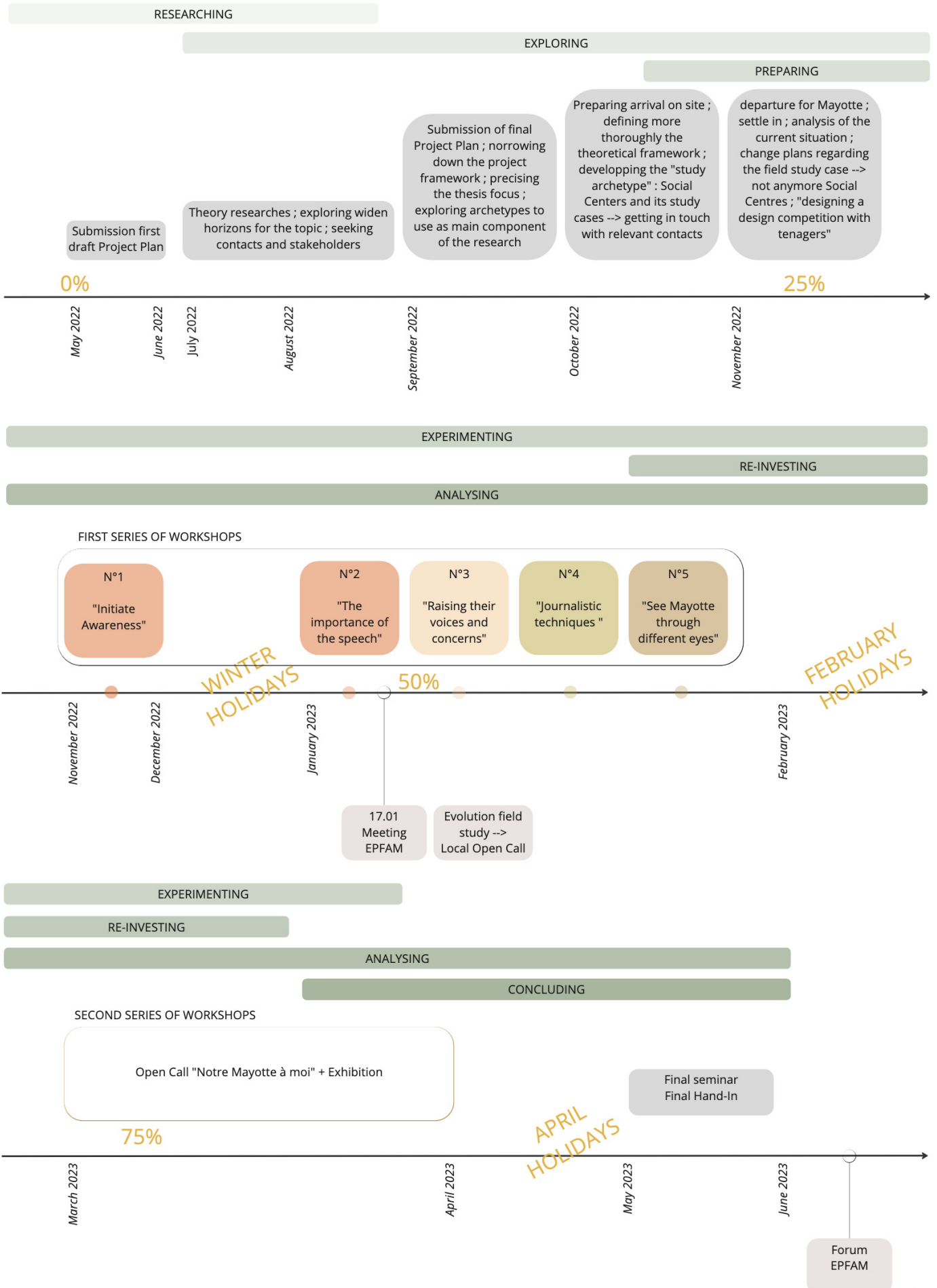


figure 1.3: Method, three main components of the thesis

project overview

TIMELINE



When thinking of where to act, where to help, always come to people's mind third world countries. But when looking at my own country, France, I found out that many things were possible to investigate. In my researches, I heard about this little island, in the Indian Ocean, torn apart by colonialism, immigration, anger and despair. This island is Mayotte, a volcanic archipelago included in a bigger archipelago, the Comoros. History has made her French but challenges came with this decision, and inhabitants pay nowadays the consequences.

Fifty years ago, Mayotte voted to stay under the protectorate of the French State. Therefore, the territory became very attractive for the populations living in the countries around. Due to immigration, an important part of the population now suffers high repression from the police and the locals. The French state tries to contain the flow of people with more and more restrictive measures, the ultimate step being deportation.

Interested by the topic of anti-racism, as a mean to fight the on-going racism, what better place for a study case than a place torn by "open racism" between white and black people, between natives (Mahorais) and immigrants (Comorians, Malagasy and East Africans), and between French and locals.

BUT! Am I not the most inadequate person to tackle this topic? I am white, plus I come from the same colonial empire (France) that still possess "this colony" (Mayotte) nowadays? Why talking about racism when I am not a victim of it myself?

Perhaps, I am the most adequate person despite to appearances. Indeed, I may have the possibility to hijacked the system from within.

My skin colour offers me possibilities and rights denied to many others. Instead of "just" living with my privileges, I could use them for better purposes.

As many other white people coming from mainland France, I found a job in education. I am an Art Teacher in a general and vocational High School. The daily lives of my students influenced my thoughts and after several detours, they became the actors in my workshops. They reflect the reality that most people on this island are facing. Most of the students are undocumented and live in precarious environments. Therefore, taking part in the architectural debate is the least of their concerns. Yet, they are the first ones impacted by local urban planning, usually starting with the destruction of their shacks, their shelters.

Even though working with teenagers was strenuous, the experience with them was worthwhile. For twelve weeks, we ran together two series of workshops. I used the hour per week I had with them in Art class and eventually, about 300 students participated in a local Open Call on the theme "Building and living Mayotte together". This field study has its own chapter later in the thesis.

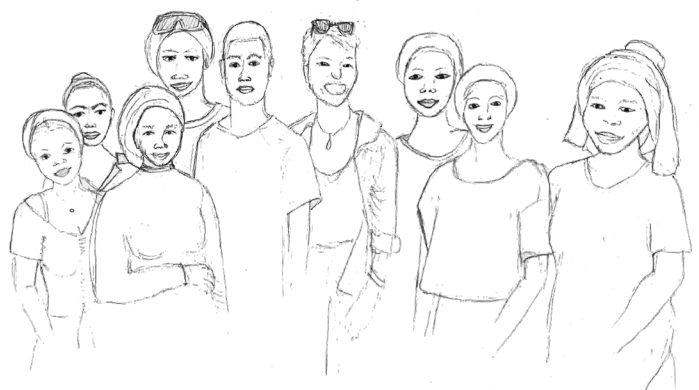


figure 1.5: Some of my students and myself

In this chapter, I have clarified the aim, the scope, the method and the plan for the thesis. I have also introduced notions that will be discussed along the reading of the thesis.

The following chapters of research are structured in three parts, each one fostering the other.

The first step is to define a strategy guiding the whole process of research as well as the process of intervening.

The second phase, intertwined with the first and the third steps, is to determine a theoretical framework to ground the research. For that, I needed to redefine several notions in the light of embedded and on-going racist society and colonial legacy.

The last step is about applying and experimenting the knowledge acquire in a field study, in order to answer the main research question.

To close this paper, I discuss important points lifted by the year of research and draw my conclusions.



2 STRATEGY



Nasser



This second chapter presents the systematic *strategy* I have put in place to guide the entire process of research.

This *strategy* was necessary since I was navigating an unsettling context and concepts I was distant to, even though I had interest in them. This strategy also came from the need of challenging the bias I had and finding a specific, systematic and structured line of thoughts to answer my research question. The *strategy* is composed of four steps:

_UN-LEARNING is about starting a process of identifying my bias and becoming aware.

_RE-LEARNING is about taking a new vantage point and raising awareness.

_REFLECTING is about becoming an activist and an anti-racist architect by initiating my personal revolution.

_APPLYING is about implementing my findings on the field and gathering knowledge from study experimentations.

It is a strategy that I tend to apply in most of the aspects of my daily life, here in Mayotte. In the conversation I have with the people living here, with the students in the classes I teach, in the workshops I lead, in the meeting I do, in the literature I read, overall, in the life I live here...

Some specific literature has inspired this chapter and this strategy, particularly the work of Pelin Tan (2018), Michel Rolph Trouillot (2015) and others.

This chapter is showcasing the strategy, but is already put in relation with the whole topic of colonization/decolonization.

Step 1: UNLEARNING

Unlearn myself and start becoming aware

Step 2: RE-LEARNING

Raise/enhance awareness

Step 3: REFLECTING

Become an activist/anti-racist architect

Step 4: APPLYING

Implement in the field study

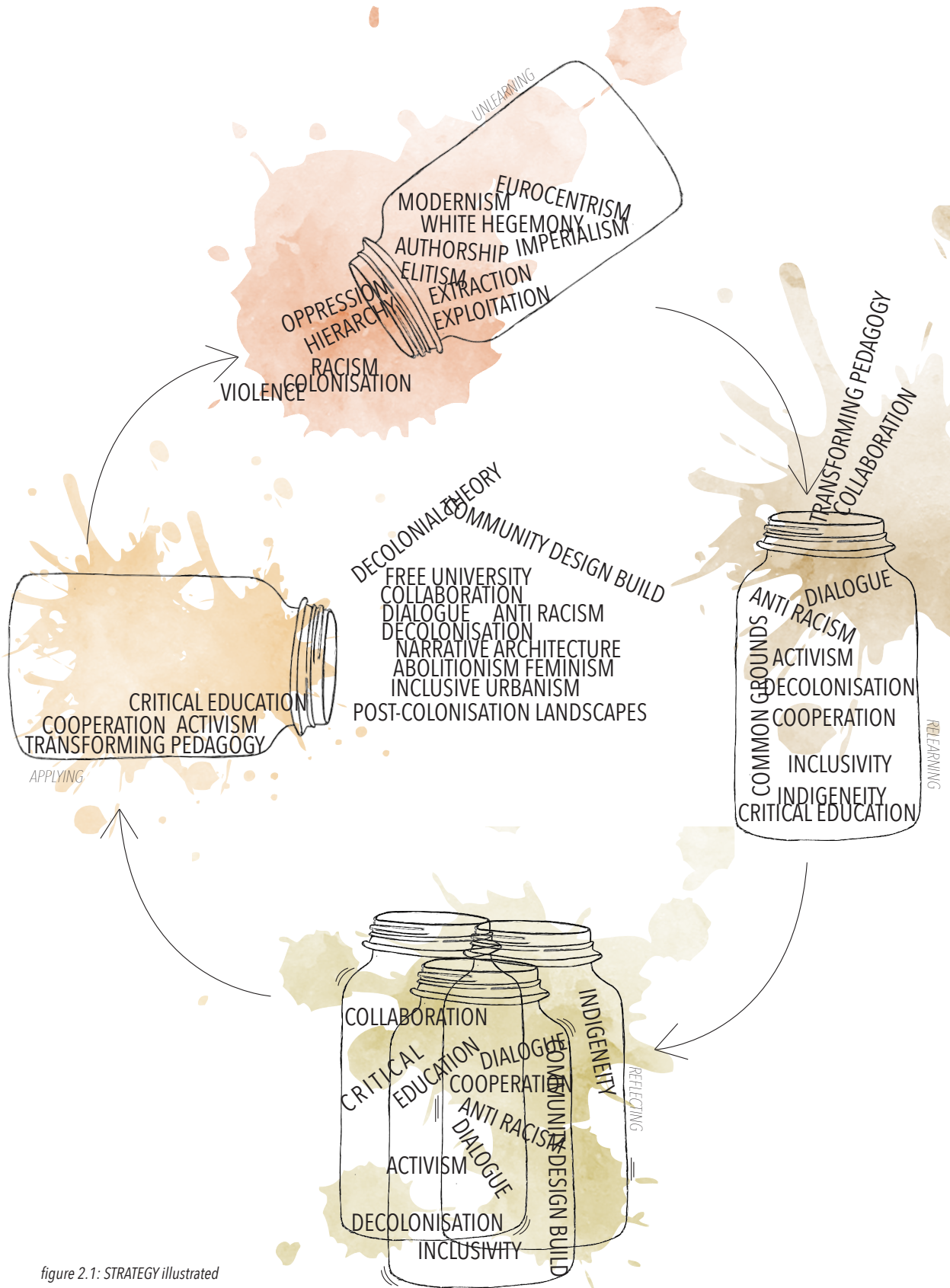


figure 2.1: STRATEGY illustrated

STEP 1: UNLEARNING

Unlearn myself and start becoming aware.

What happens when we recognize that the knowledge we have gathered all these years of training is biased by our personal background, and the social structure we have evolved in? We start questioning. Was my opinion on this subject the absolute truth or was it only one side of the story? Is this side of the story the more legitimate, the more accurate, the more adequate?

In the different pillar concepts of this thesis, this question is fundamental. Indeed, how would I do architecture that answers the needs of a population, if I come with my own bias formed in a context that has nothing to compare to the context I am working in? How could I teach properly to people living in the 21st century when the method I have learned was made in the previous one? This is why we need to unlearn.

To accept that the context, the culture, the time is different I need to make the radical effort of emptying the jar of knowledge I have accumulated during my formation. It is necessary to acknowledge my ignorance to be ready to relearn. It is decisive to make room in my head to start perceiving the world painted with different colours.

Michel Rolph Trouillot (2015) says that the past can be understood as "what happened" and "what is said to have happened"; the latter according to our received historical understanding. Historical narratives have been written by groups and individuals who have unequal access to means of contributions. In some other words, the powerful got to write the history and the oppressed had to comply with.

According to Swati Chattopadhyay (2020), *unlearning sources* is about three things:

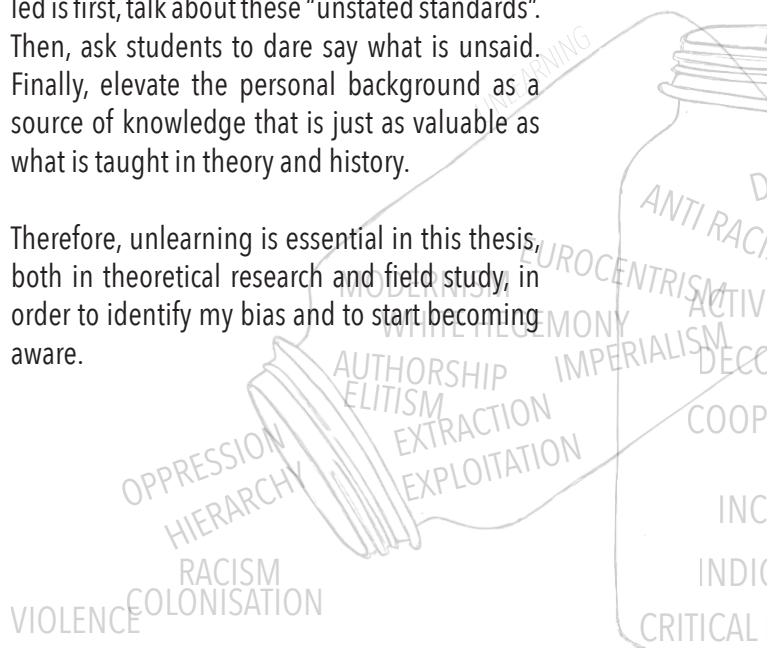
1. Refusing the priority of imperial formations
2. Shifting the vantage, the perspective
3. Changing the scale of space and time

But unlearning is not throwing everything I know away. It is about taking the actual state of things and see what it is composed of. Then, I can dig and put into light the stories of those who have been / are silenced, and unravel the missing pieces in the archives (Wilson, 2020).

In terms of architecture, unlearning sources is not about finding a text or object that no one has seen before, and plugging it into a narrative that is at its core rotten (Smoke, 2021). The only way to reject these markers of white supremacy is to accept the construction of architecture itself as a white supremacist project and to offer alternative ways into the methods needed to understand, resist, and dismantle this project (Leon, 2020).

This dismantlement can start in the architectural studios. As related by Charles Davis II (2020), architectural studios can be perceived as "liberating spaces" but often, it can be violent. With the Beaux-Arts legacy and the students following the patron, there is a lot of "unstated standards" that pass from one generation of architecture students to the other. Charles Davis II's strategy to unlearn the way a studio is led is first, talk about these "unstated standards". Then, ask students to dare say what is unsaid. Finally, elevate the personal background as a source of knowledge that is just as valuable as what is taught in theory and history.

Therefore, unlearning is essential in this thesis, both in theoretical research and field study, in order to identify my bias and to start becoming aware.



STEP 2: RELEARNING

Raise/enhance awareness

For me, relearning can be defined as the thorough process of studying knowledge already known, but from a different vantage point.

It concerns the content of the knowledge as well as the procedure to acquire this knowledge. Indeed, rather than perpetuating passive forms of individualized learning principally made to reproduce the *status quo* in the society, Lawrence Chua (2020), historian of the global modern built environment, recommends to start developing collective learning as a way of thinking with others.

In the education's field, it would mean shifting from a hierarchical system to a horizontal system, from one human to the other. At school, the teacher would change her position as someone above, providing knowledge to become an active participant in the knowledge learning process. Therefore the educator and the students would start learning together. The program would be questioned and rethought due to its inaccuracy to the present challenges the society is facing (Harari, 2011). Communities need to have the courage to experiment new educational systems.

Relearning is a political act. It asks to question, to doubt the current state of things. Therefore I wonder... Can politics and people actually decolonize as they colonized? Or are they taking the time to learn from their mistakes, to recognize the hurtful truth about their past and to change the methods for the future. Can they start acknowledging the stories that has been erased through time? Can they enhance collaborative relearning to unravel bias?

Regarding the social and cultural structures, relearning is much more than recognizing ones'

differences. It is about endorsing that society is racist, is made out of racist structures and systems, and that people are complicit in racism by their passivity. Let's remember that European democracies have been erected upon slavery and settler colonialism (Mbembe, 2016). And when coming to a place such as African countries, nations wish to impose (again) their racist social structures, themselves the legacy of exploitation and non-recognition of the local traditions. Ignoring others' cultures and perpetuating social dominion must stop.

As architects, we shall cease the "tabula rasa" exercise and the design approach regardless of the local traditions and materials, but initiate the study of vernacular architecture and local narratives. Euro-centric's teaching should be challenged with ongoing global issues (Wai Think Tank, 2020). If we do not make this effort, it will be an endless failure. Indeed, people will never recognize themselves in the building environment surrounding them.

Until this introspective moment, my education and culture came from a white Euro-centric environment, biased by socio-historical taboos and built upon shame and selective narrative erasure (Wilson, 2020). Therefore, relearning, for me in this thesis, is about acknowledging the role my country have in the colonization and decolonization process, and the impacts on me and around me.

In this thesis, the process of relearning is systematically and simultaneously done with the process of unlearning, and applied to the fields of architecture, education and social structures, as well as in the field study.



STEP 3: REFLECTING

Become an activist/anti-racist architect

According to Paolo Freire (1968), to become an activist, you will need two elements : "reflection" and "action". If you are neglecting "reflection", your actions will lack engagement. If you are neglecting "action", your words will not have an impact.

The first element, "reflection", ensue from the two steps described previously : "unlearning" and "relearning". Reflecting is about absorbing the unsettling changes of perspective and building upon this unfamiliar knowledge. When the whole perspective on the world is changing, it can be used to start a revolution (Freire, 1968).

In my case, my revolution is trying to become an anti-racist architect (the concept of anti-racism will be developed in the following chapter). That means that I have to unlearn my thinking mechanism of a privileged white European and to relearn the origins of the systems currently in place, and how racism did become such a fundamental cornerstone to our society. This way, I can reflect upon the role I aim to take as a future architect and decide on the actions I will take on the field.

Being anti-racist would mean two things here: first to take full responsibility of the colonialist heritage, second to fight the ongoing bias and white hegemonic world view and its impacts.

Indeed, reflecting on the current systems, the white hegemony, the democracies, was about accepting that everything people know in Europe is possible because of the past of settlers, colonizers and masters. As Achille Mbembe would explain, our sense of freedom here, as French, Swiss or Swedes came at a price of slavery and racism overseas.

The society I am living in has literally been built

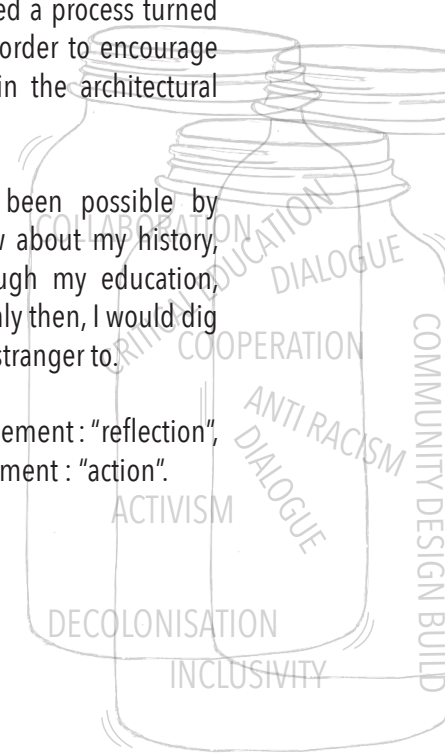
with the sweat and the blood of people deprived from their right to be free on the other side of the globe. And of course, this has left marks embedded in the global system: the rootless deported, the immigrants with no lands, the white guilt, the violence as the only means to survive and so on (Mbembe, 2016).

Anti-racism applied to architecture education would mean highlighting the white hegemonic structures in architecture's schools, and researching about inclusive and restorative architectural pedagogy and practice. In the theory department, for instance modernism, post-modernism or deconstructivism, built upon colonialism, could be counterbalanced with transmodernism, decolonial theory or pedagogy of the oppressed. In the history department, Euro-centric history, nation state history of style or emphasis on authorship could dialogue with global history of settler colonialism, architectural, racial and gender fabrication or critical history of architectural authorship (Wai Think Tank, 2020).

Learning to be an anti-racist architect led me to rethink the role of an architect in the current society. I have started redefining the process of architecture. Thus, I proposed a process turned towards the field actors in order to encourage them raising their voices in the architectural debate.

This awareness has only been possible by letting go elements I knew about my history, knowledge I learned through my education, values I took for granted. Only then, I would dig into the knowledge I was a stranger to.

So, after exploring the first element : "reflection", I will explore the second element : "action".



STEP 4: APPLYING

Implement to the field study

Following the line of thoughts of Paolo Freire (1968), after the first element "reflection" comes the second one "action". Because without "action", reflection stays words.

Acting is going beyond the words. It is leaving, for a while, the educated and sometimes elitist world of knowledge to start shaping the concrete reality with the findings made.

Moreover, the field teaches lessons and brings fresh knowledge that can be combined with the theoretical learnings from the academic literature. Knowledge in the books, in the articles, in the academic papers is not enough. Knowledge has only one purpose: understanding humanity, the world and their mutual relation to be capable of evolving within it. This means that any researcher should interact with this humanity and this world.

Therefore, as an activist to become, I had to apply the knowledge I gathered on the field.

My field study, that will be developed in a chapter dedicated to it, was taking place in a High School in Mayotte. The stakeholders were my students. This setting was fit to apply the findings I got from the literature, to do some activities with the students but also to understand better the context of Mayotte. The students have another perception of their environment. That came as complementary to my understanding of the island.

Interacting with people also brought unexpected challenges, that only the field study could teach me. Every obstacles bounced back at me, and forced me to refocus and clarify my goals.

Even more with teenagers, it is necessary to take actions, make projects, create, to keep up their

interest but also to show them I care about their lives and their daily challenges.

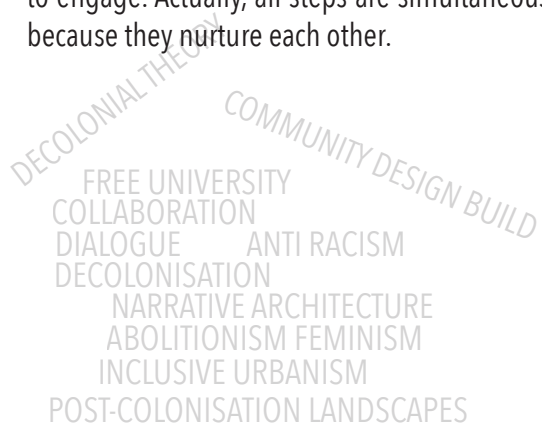
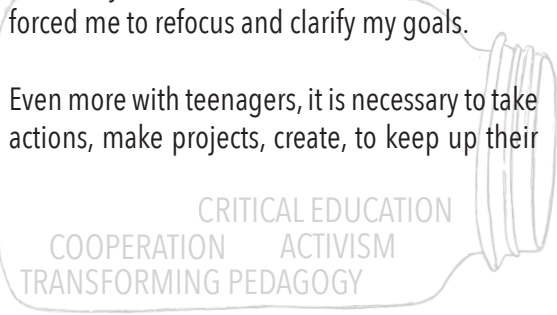
It was important with stakeholders, to earn their trust, to show I can give time, energy, resources for them to get engaged and to give back.

Every workshops tackling certainties, every discussions giving space for students to open up, every racial barriers I was overcoming were steps further in the attempt to break down racism.

Trying to perceive racism through the eyes of someone racialized and discussing about racism with the students broaden my definition of anti-racism. Mayotte as a field study is a complex context (see Chapter 4: Mayotte). Only with the help of local inhabitants, hereby my students, could I understand a bit better the environment.

Implementing my research on the field actually made me grow in every aspects of my life, not only the thesis. Every obstacles asked me to question what I took for granted. The knowledge gathered on the field, is for me, the most valuable. Sometimes, I needed to use more than words, I needed emotions and sensitivity. This is something books cannot fulfil. Books cannot give you the energy an interaction could procure.

Applying is the final step of the strategy presented, but it does not mean it is the last one to engage. Actually, all steps are simultaneous, because they nurture each other.



CHAPTER'S CONCLUSION

Unlearning is difficult because it asks to put aside what was previously granted. Identifying bias and becoming aware is destabilizing. But it is only when a jar is emptied that it can be filled again.

Relearning is about shifting the vantage point and filling the jar of knowledge with conscious content. It demands to question and to raise awareness to every pieces of information gathered.

Both unlearning and relearning come together as a pair. If I just unlearn, I will feel desperate because I cannot rely on anything. If I just relearn, I will have so many opinions that my mind will be confused and incoherent.

This is why reflecting is necessary. It allows me to structure my thoughts. This way, I can reflect upon the role I aim to take as a future architect and decide on the actions I will take on the field. This is the first step taken to become an activist and an anti-racist architect.

Applying is about implementing my findings on the field as well as collecting informations from the stakeholders. Applying enhances the interactions and compels to overcome the unexpected challenges that makes reflection flourish. Applying/acting is bind with reflection.

To sum up the chapter, the strategy is made of four steps, to navigate this thesis: unlearning, relearning, reflecting, applying. They are done simultaneously and sustain each other.

The following chapter will analyse four concepts that will be considered in the light of this strategy. They will constitute the theoretical framework.



POTENTIAL FUTURE APPLICATION

The developed "strategy" could find echoes in architecture's schools and architecture's offices. The four steps could be used to debunk possible bias and racism in architects' projects. Therefore they could start by unlearning their bias linked to Occidentocentrism and colonialism. Then, they would relearn the perspective of the local stakeholders, their history and their culture, reflect on it, co-design and apply in a thoughtful project.



Laimoune

THEORETICAL } FRAMEWORK



In this third chapter, I will define several notions that will support the theoretical framework of this research and the attempt of a conception of anti-racism architectural education. All the present notions will be studied in the light of the strategy I have just defined.

THE BASE: *Architecture as a process*

First I need to explain what I mean by "*architecture as a process*" in order to understand the radical stance I am taking in this thesis, about architecture.

THE WAY: *Critical Pedagogy*

Then, I will develop the concept of "*critical and dialogical pedagogy*" because it will become an essential tool in the experimentation I intend to lead.

THE GOAL: *Race, racism and anti-racism*

As I want, with this thesis, to tackle the limitations of racism and the opportunities of anti-racism, I will define the different terms of "*race, racism and anti-racism*".

THE FRAME: *Decolonization*

The context I am evolving in is tainted by the colonization. Therefore, I want to research on the impacts of the "*decolonization*" process on its surrounding environment and its actors evolving in it.

While investigating the usual description of the role of architecture and architects, I always crossed this conventional way to design. Generally, it is about feasibility, authorisation, designing, planning, supervising the construction and finally delivering the building to its project's sponsors. All along, the major stakeholders are the architect, the client and the authorities.

But architecture should not be summarized in designing fancy houses, eccentric museums or 200 storey skyscrapers for wealthy investors.

For the purpose of this thesis, I tried to question myself about what it meant for me "architecture". When I looked at the society and its challenges it faces today, I wanted to explore the possibilities to transform the architectural process.

I have been inspired by the words of Ana Maria Leon, Eladia Smoke, K. Wayne Yang and Andrew Herscher in their discussion for the seminar *Unsettled Lands: Architecture, History, Pedagogy*. Different ideas emerged from this conversation. One idea was that architecture could be about transforming the pedagogy and unlearning notions of property authorship, while another one was about this idea of the architect being the helper, in a sense of someone helping to circle back to the population, someone speaking for a territory.

In the Zulu language, architect is "umqambi wesino" equally translated "magician of space", "a maker of a situation" or "maker of a sensation" (Lesley Lokko). This is a definition that opens wider perspectives for the profession.

What if the architect could become this "maker of a situation", this "magician" that brings people together and unites them to build

stronger social cohesion?

Because, nowadays, the build environment is already overcrowded by conventional constructions. So to build wisely, decision-makers and architects need to start asking what the populations really need. And for the population to determine their needs, they might ask for the help of facilitators. This is, perhaps, where we, architects, have a role to play.

According to K. Wayne Yang, to do architecture, it needs to be unlearned and redesigned. All that students learn at architecture school needs to be scrutinized and deciphered. Architecture needs to be re-learned through the process of decolonization. Reflecting on it means shifting the vantage, analysing what has been done until now and deciding to do architecture in another way. It implies leaving authorship to turn towards raising stakeholders voices, refusing the ongoing mechanisms and challenging our legacy. Applying is about becoming an architect that does not answer the conventional definition of architecture.

How I envision the process of architecture now is quite different. It is mostly inspired by the work of Architects Without Borders. This process should be turned towards the field actors. A process that would first survey the actual needs on the field, build awareness to the surrounding environment, design in collaboration with the future users, and finally intervene for and with the stakeholders. And maybe the stakeholders will decide not to build but to restore, to improve, to change what is already existing, but this will be their decision regarding their needs. The diagram presented thereafter is depicting the shift of perspective upon the architectural process.

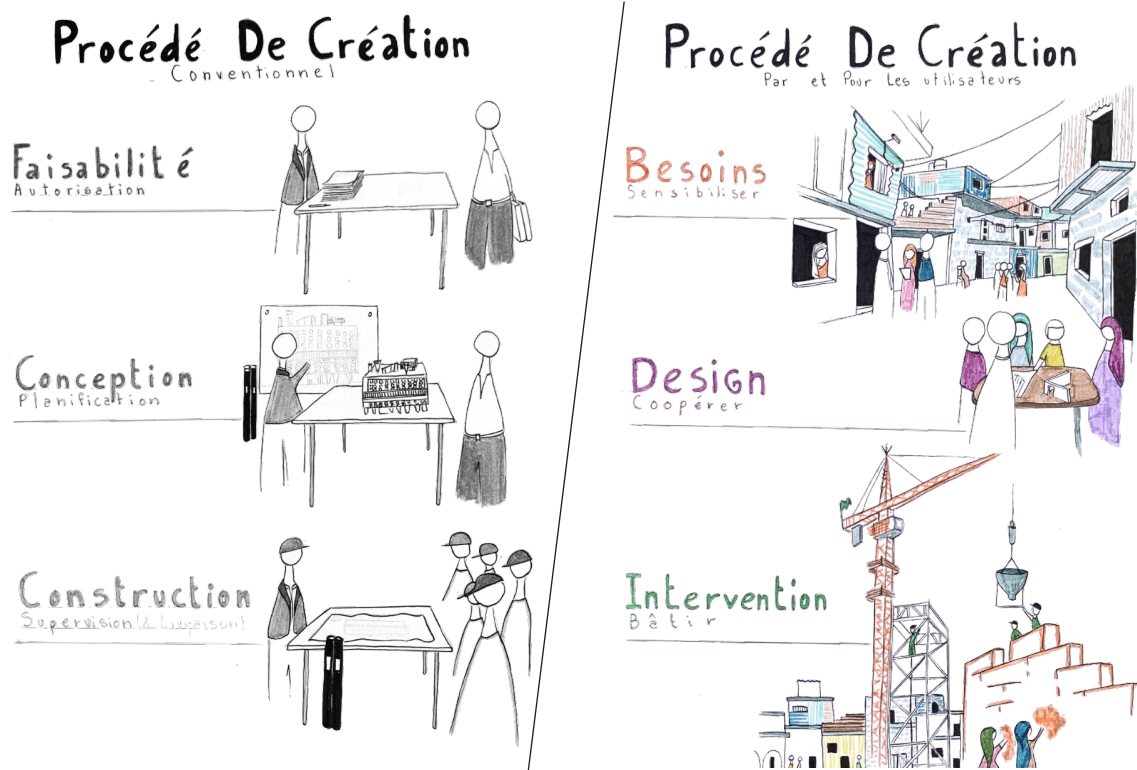


figure 3.1: Parallel between "conventional design process" and "field actors focused design process". This diagram is in French since it has been presented to the students during the field study to make them reflect on the architectural process. The diagram on the left was inspired by my classes as a bachelor. The right one was inspired by the philosophy of Architects Without Borders.

Translation: (on the left, from top to bottom) "Creation process, Conventional" ; "Feasibility" ; "Conception" ; "Building" (on the right, from top to bottom) "Creation process, By and for the stakeholders" ; "Needs" ; "Design" ; "Intervention"

Education is the roots of society. By acting upon the education system, it is the society that will be redefined by repercussion. Education is a political act.

This thesis revolves around the work of Paolo Freire and his influential book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1968). This book tackles several issues all interlinked: the relation oppressors/oppressed, the traditional "banking" pedagogy, the "critical" pedagogy, the "practice of freedom".

WHAT IS OPPRESSION?

Oppression is an instrument to dehumanize a certain group of people, through injustice, exploitation, violence, loss of humanity. The oppressed might even tend to sub-oppressed as a fake approach to free themselves since the only model they have is oppression.

The situation of oppression is not the monopoly of dictators. Sometimes, even the relation teacher/students can be perceived as a situation of oppression. Indeed, as related by Paolo Freire, the "banking education" model is a static, passive, educator-centred strategy. The teachers are feeding the students with biased and sometime irrelevant knowledge. Students are often asked to sit still and quiet and the only voice that matters is the one from the teacher. Students are never asked about the program, nor their interest in it. This "culture of silence" (Blakeney, 2011), is the modern tool to oppress the freshly educated young women and young men.

On the other hand, Paolo Freire and his team of specialists and researchers developed what they are calling "the critical education" model.

This model is founded on consciousness, critical reflection skills, and conscious actions. This is led in an environment where educator and trainees work together, in a horizontal way, on the theme, the program and then the achievement of this program. Collectively, they develop the competence to deal critically with the reality and to recognize their own ability to transform themselves and the world around them.

This revolutionary way of dealing with education has been tested by Paolo Freire and his team in Chile, in a project with illiterate adults in a farming area. Together they elaborated "culture circles" where dialogue was the principal tool to foster critical consciousness. (see figure 3.2)

WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

Poetically and genuinely true, Paolo Freire says that "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world", "to change it". He adds, "Human beings are not built in silence, but in words, in work, in action reflection." Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. Therefore it cannot exist in a relation of domination.

What I did in my field study is to reintroduce dialogue inside the walls of the conventional school. I have experimented a different approach with my students in terms of responsibility, consciousness and leadership. By unlearning and relearning pedagogy, I have decided to not place myself as a know-it-all supervisor but as an ally in their quest for finding their path. Against the "culture of silence", we have used dialogue to raise their voice.

theoretical framework

CRITICAL AND DIALOGICAL PEDAGOGY

Culture Circle

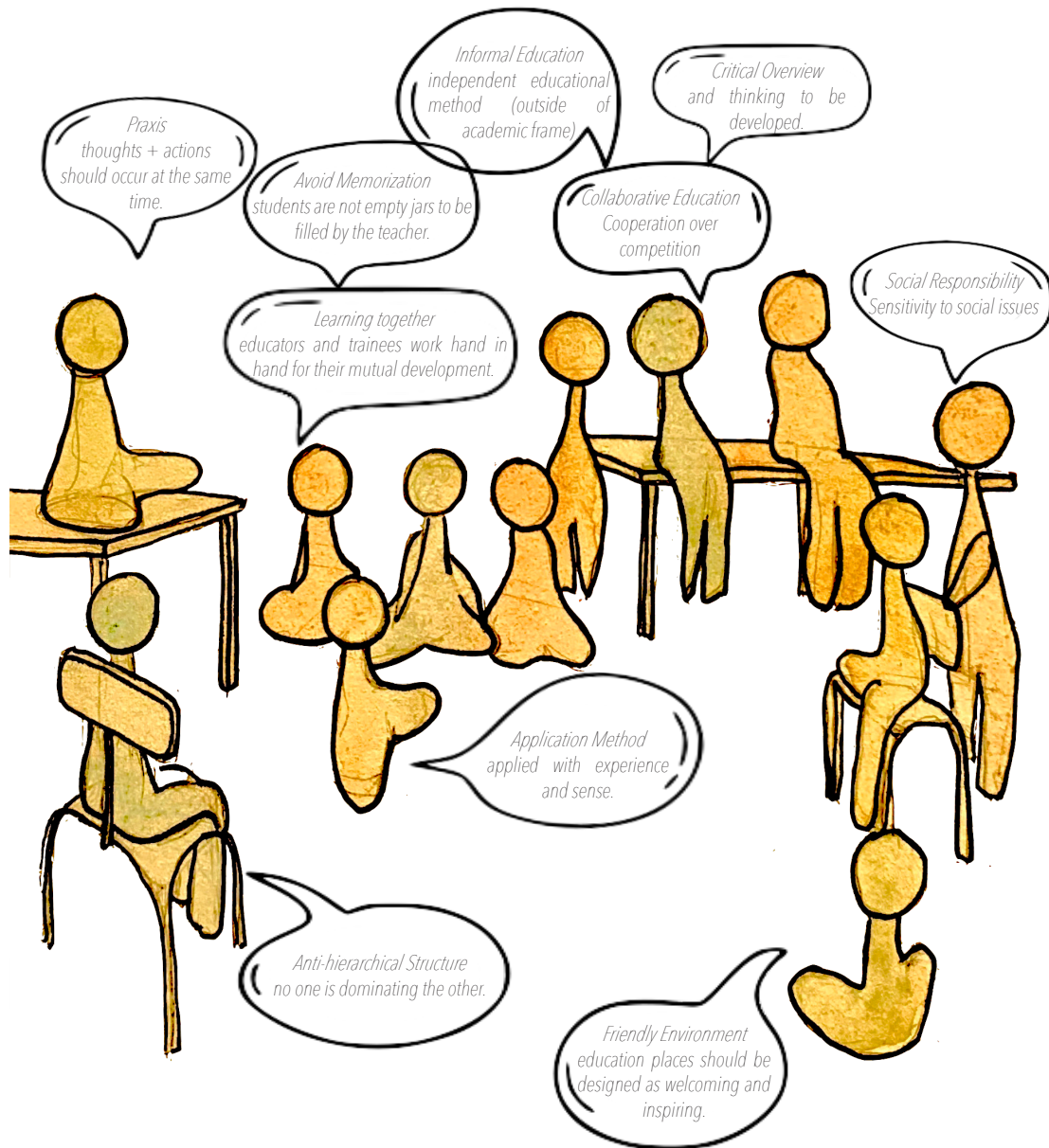


figure 3.2: Dialogue as a radical first step, inspired by the work done by Paulo Freire in Chile (Freire, 1968).

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

Desmond Tutu

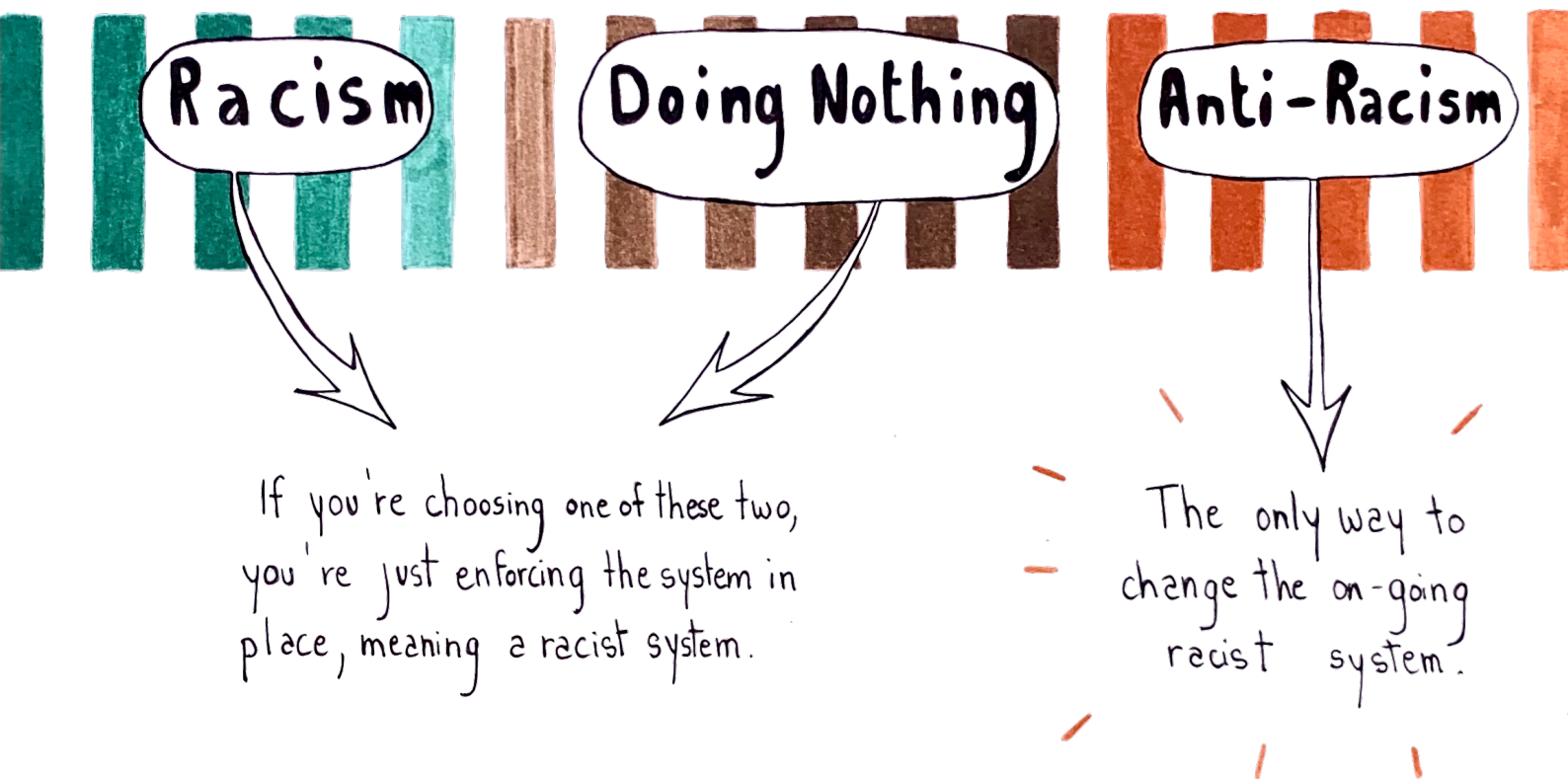


Figure 3.3.b: From racism to anti-racism

Colonization started when countries of Europe decided to expand their mercantile system in the Americas in the fifteenth Century. Added to the Slave Trade, it became the core values to the industrial capitalism expansion. Africans were taken from their land and deported to the New World to work as machines for white-occidental masters. Segregation, separation, oppression, domination, violence, were and still are the essence of colonization (Leon & Hersher, 2021). Still it is important to differentiate "trade colonization" and "settlement colonization" to understand their respective impacts nowadays. The first one was only to enrich the mainland nation in terms of material and money whereas the second was an "extension" of the nation (Mbembé, 2016).

Decolonization is a political project. In the work of Fanon (1952), it is about this force of refusing and the opposition to dependency. But for Mbembé (2016), decolonization requires "mutual recognition" from the two subjects (the oppressor and the oppressed) as two human beings. This "mutual recognition" is the pre-requisite to break down spatial division and segregation. Once this is done, Earth can become Home to everybody and therefore no one can be deported "back home".

Architecture is not exempt from the colonial legacy. Actually, architecture is "both an instrument and a product of coloniality" (Hersher & Leon 2021). For instance, when one considers History of Architecture, most of the time there is no attention paid to concepts such as *colonialism*, *indigeneity* and *slavery*. This observation is not restricted to History of Architecture. Indeed, as mentioned by Ana Marià Leon, "cities [are still] spaces of ongoing settler colonialism, indigenous survival and resistance, and struggles for decolonization."

Decolonizing architectural pedagogy should be about tackling *authorship* and *cult of excellence*. A decolonized architectural pedagogy should emphasize local traditions and recognition of the history of all communities, even those that have been erased due to imperialism. A decolonized architectural pedagogy might turn to the built environment and the myriad ways in which people house themselves on the earth. It could become a recognition of the many forms of labour involved in the production of the built environment, and honouring the investments of care, time, and materials required of this labour (Herscher, 2021).

Therefore, a pedagogy that takes the current footprints of colonization could be like that:

- 1 : acknowledge the historical precedents
- 2 : understand why it has been done like that
- 3 : seek why they are not valid anymore

In other words, take what you have, where you are and peel the layers. There is no need to just throw everything away.

Colonization and decolonization are frames dually important in this research. First, in the unlearning architecture process, decolonization is a recursive topic. Secondly, in the context of the field study, since it is implemented in a "former" French colony, decolonization is an ongoing issue. Moreover, being born in mainland, I am confronted with the emptiness of my knowledge about the past and the present of Mayotte, a land that has suffered and still suffers from colonization.



figure 3.4: Manifesto, Decolonization bursting the Modernist Frame built upon Imperialism

CHAPTER'S CONCLUSION

This chapter was meant for the reader to understand how I appropriated myself certain notions, essential for the conception of the research *theoretical framework*.

The four pillar concepts of this thesis are: [*architecture as a process*], [*critical and dialogical pedagogy*], [*race, racism and anti-racism*] and [*decolonization*].

Following the *strategy* previously exposed in Chapter 2, I started by unlearning these concepts. Then I researched from different academic and sociological sources to widen my knowledge on these topics. Eventually, I analysed these sources and composed the *theoretical framework*.

Therefore, while examining the topic of architecture, I came to redefine the process itself. From a top down approach, I am rather exploring a field actors approach. About pedagogy, I highlighted the importance of dialogue for a critical and mutual education. Exploring the topic of racism and anti-racism, I had to reflect about my place in this debate, as a white French person, in a coloured racialized context. Finally, looking through literature about colonization and decolonization, I understood better the current issues and challenges the society is facing today.

I will end, adding that community should be the starting point, the red thread and the final character of any architectural, pedagogical, social or structural projects.

Now, relying on this, it was obvious that I needed to make an experimentation on the field with stakeholders. It will be displayed in the next chapters.



MAYOTTE



Idriss



This chapter presents the context of the field study. It develops the peculiarities of the place I have chosen : Mayotte.

This "French" island in the Indian Ocean is very specific and complex.

To start this chapter, I need to explain what is Mayotte and why I chose this island as a place to ground my thesis.

Then, for the reader to understand better the complexity of Mayotte, I draw an overview of the historical and geographical situation of this land.

The chapter ends with a socio-economical analysis of the island.

Hopefully, this chapter will help the reader to grasp the challenges I faced with the field study.

WHY THIS PLACE?

In this section I define the context in which I have implemented the field study. I elaborate on the historical, geographical and socio-economical aspects of Mayotte, this French island 8000 kilometres from Paris.

This thesis is grounded in this French department because I am French, and I am concerned about the struggles the island is facing. I want to unravel how much we (French people) are the cause of their struggles. Moreover, I care to find alternative approaches than the current white settler colonialist's ones. Being in a new position of power as a white teacher, I can debunk "White Saviourism" from within.

In terms of architecture, urbanism and landscape, Mayotte is confronted with several challenges such as the issues of being an island, in other words, a limited space with risks of sea level rise and overcrowded population. Due to socio-economic reasons, it hosts several informal settlements and the "biggest slum of Europe". 4 houses out of 10 are shacks (INSEE, 2017) and most of the architectural decisions are taken in the higher spheres and generally in metropolitan France.

Since the island is overcrowded by people, and the average age is below 25, the schools are overcrowded too, therefore the structures cannot provide good services. The system is also non-adequate to the culture and the needs. And educators are dealing with students with adult responsibilities. Therefore students consider education as secondary in their concerns.

As a "former" colony, and a transit route for centuries, lots of populations have been fighting the right to stay on the island. But today, we can witness an open racism between "natives" (Maoré) and "immigrants" (Comorians, mostly).

This is actually not new under the sun. The different islands of the Comorian Archipelago have been rivals for a long time, "fighting like brothers".

Another key element to this racism is the process of colonization and then "decolonization" of Mayotte. While colonizing, French brought oppression, exploitation and Euro-centrism. They did not acknowledge the rich culture already present and the African roots of the people, therefore imposing inadequate Euro-centred politics. On top of that, when French "decolonized" the Comoros and Mayotte, they turned Mayotte into a French territory, meaning an entrance gate to Europe coveted by the surrounding countries. So, people are flocking here with the hope for a better life.

WHY THIS COLONY RATHER THAN ANY OF THE NUMEROUS FORMER COLONY FRANCE OWNED?

1st: Because it is still owned by France. According to the UN, France should have released Mayotte to the Comoros sixty years ago.

2nd: Because this island is the only one, owned by France, to have the same migratory situation as Lampedusa (Italy), Lesbos (Greece) or Malaga (Spain), while being thousands kilometres from Europe.

3rd: Because France, on top of imposing its dominion, uses Mayotte as a laboratory for repression and anti-migration practices. (Bumaye, 2021)



Figure 4.1.a: View from one of the highest mountain of Mayotte. It is interesting to note the tropical and wild aspect of the island.

Figure 4.1.b: Geographical situation of Mayotte in the World In the Mozambique Channel, besides Madagascar



Figure 4.1.c: Hill of Kaweni, where the school is located

As stated by the official French governmental website (Mayotte.Gouv.fr, 2015), Mayotte is a volcanic archipelago of 374 km², in the Indian Ocean, consisted of two main islands: Petite Terre and Grande Terre and several smaller isles. The islands are themselves the eastern part of the Comorian Archipelago. Mayotte has a beautiful and still preserved lagoon with coral reefs. The mountainous relief is less and less marked due to erosion, sea levels rising and the fact that the island is sinking. The climate is tropical and goes from the dry season to the rainy season.

Timeline based on different French official websites, archaeological research papers available in the bibliography as well as the article of Bumaye (2021) for the online magazine The Funambulist.

○ **≈ 800 - 1200**

Mayotte, located in the Mozambique Channel between Africa and Madagascar, was a migrating crossroad since the ninth century. The first settlers were originally Bantu, coming from East Africa. Trade between Madagascar, East Africa and the islands in the Channel was quite important and increased with time. African and Arabic invasions came with Swahili culture and Islam religion.

— **≈ 1400**

The first Europeans arrived and used Mayotte as a supply point on the road to India.

— **≈ 1600 - 1800**

Malagasy raids cut Mayotte population to 3000 inhabitants.

— **1841**

To escape from the Comorian and Malagasy

raids, the Sultan Andriantsoly, who was ruling over Mayotte, sold the island to France. Since then, Mayotte became French protectorate.

France started construction works and tried to establish a slave colony with sugar economy, but this last one failed.

— **1846**

Slavery was abolished.

After that, France extended its protectorate to the rest of the Comoros Islands. To be noted, tensions have always been present between Mayotte and the other Comorian islands.

— **1974**

Referendum: Comoros ask their independence (90%) with the support of the United Nations but Mayotte asks to stay French (63%).

— **1976**

Following a referendum (99% in favour of staying French), Mayotte is integrated to the French territory with a special status.

— **1995**

Minister of the Interior É. Balladur imposed the requirement of a visa to travel between Mayotte and the rest of the Comoros.

— **2011**

Mayotte became officially the 101e French department.

— **2014**

Mayotte became a peripheral region of the European Union. UN still do not recognize Mayotte as a French territory.

▼ **Nowadays**

In 2017, the average age on the island was 23 years old and 50% of the population had less than 18 years old (INSEE, 2019). Today, the situation might be the same if not increased. Therefore, the more sensitive and affected population is the teenagers. They are the first concerned by the issues of the four topics of interest discussed in the thesis.

ARCHITECTURE:

Most of the students I am working with (about 80 to 90%) are living in precarious environments. They live mostly in shacks (called Bangas) where resources are scarce. This type of dwelling is not connected to running water and electricity.



FUN FACT

Traditionally on the island, shacks were built as "bachelor apartments". Young men were hosting parties and invited their first girlfriends.

figure 4.2.a: Informal settlement of Kaweni. Source: Getty Images, 2017.

And the materials used to build rapidly and cheaply (tin plate and wood) are not resistant to the harsh rainy season. Bangas are

also uncomfortable and extremely hot during warm days. In terms of the neighbourhood, the houses are crammed and the city is built organically. But in some ways, these dwellings are really resilient and have very small impact on the climate. Apart from this method of construction, one can find traditional houses and European-style houses. While discussing with my students, they explained to me two

traditional ways to build, one can still find in some places in Mayotte. One is made out of rammed earth and straw while the other involves braiding coconut palm branches.

EDUCATION:

As described previously, homes are not the best environment to study. This is maybe why they prefer coming to school. Unfortunately, schools are overcrowded. This has several impacts. The first one is obviously the space missing per individual. So, to solve this problem, they have to extend the hours/days of school. Second problem is that, most of the students do not get the academic career they wished, so they end up doing a curriculum they do not like. The third problem, linked essentially to the absorption of the French system, is an educational system that does not answer their needs and their habits. It is inadequate to their customs.

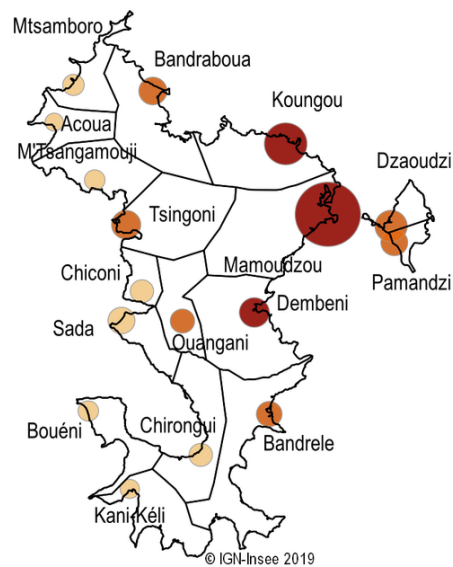


figure 4.2.b: Map representing the repartition of dwellings in Mayotte and the proportion of shacks. Source: INSEE, 2017

RACISM:

At a personal level, I was startled by the open segregation. On one side, there is the “Muzungu”, the white people coming from metropolitan France. They constitute a circle of people with very specific jobs (teachers, nurses, soldiers, policemen...) coming for short missions. They generally come with very few knowledges of the island and its context. There is a certain White Supremacy and non interest to the local issues.

Then, there is the “Mahorais”, the natives of the island from several generations. They have a beautiful culture and are very welcoming but when it comes to immigration, an open racism is then showed towards the people migrating from the neighbouring islands.

Those people, are the last category of inhabitants in Mayotte and represent 48% of the population. They come from the Comoros (95%) mostly, or Madagascar (4%), and sometimes from East Africa (1%) (INSEE, 2017). On the island, they live in precarious environments, mostly shacks, have low rights and high repression (from the police but also the natives). Immigration is the scapegoat for every problems the population are facing (Harari, 2018). Rivalries, hatred and violence are daily routine due to their need for survival since they cannot work legally and when they do, they are accused to steal the jobs of the Mahorais (Bumaye, 2021).

People are experiencing a new variety of racism, not based on biology and skin color but on “incompatibility of civilisations” (Mbembe, 2016). This means the cultural shock is so great between two “different” communities that nothing can bring them together. They would be like water and oil... immiscible.



figure 4.3.a: “Mayotte is Comorian and will be forever”.
Source: *Jet d'encre*, 2019 [Online newspaper]

(DE)-COLONIZATION?:

Decolonization is a term the students could find difficult to understand since French presence still looks like occupation and they know Mayotte only this way. Indeed, teenagers are learning one language at home and they are forced to speak and write at school, in another language they did not choose. Colonization is still omnipresent. White people, and sometimes natives, assume a job with responsibilities, such as teachers, policemen, doctors, firm directors, etc., while immigrants cannot have great prospects. The children can become orphans from one day to the other because their parents have been deported due to their undocumented situation. But for them it has always been like that. They were born after the natives voted to stay under the French protection. It was after the revolts of the “Chatouilleuse” (ticklish) and they are now growing in a place that is considered as an extension of mainland France.



figure 4.3.b: Les Chatouilleuses, a militant group of women, Mayotte
Source: *Habari Za Comores*, 2017. [Online newspaper]

CHAPTER'S CONCLUSION

At first, I came to Mayotte with a naive curiosity knowing this island was facing some challenges. After some time on site, I understood this context was exactly corresponding to my research.

I knew the colonial legacy my country had, but I never measured, witnessed nor lived its consequences.

This territory is embedded in past and current colonization. Due to this, power dynamics are disrupted and unequal therefore creating anger, repression and vulnerability.

Mayotte is affected by racism, injustice and oppression. The first to suffer this situation are the teenagers since they represent 50% of the population. Plus, a large number of these teenagers are undocumented leaving them with no other choice than surviving at all cost.

Regarding my research question, Mayotte is the adequate place to investigate the role of architects. It is a place still agonizing from colonization, and experimenting solutions to break down racist patterns.

Beyond the complex situation and the way people and media depict Mayotte, I developed a great affection and respect for the inhabitants of the island. My personal experience here is above all expectations.

With this apropos about Mayotte, I hope the reader will understand better the environment I evolved in for the field study I led with teenagers in a local High School.



FIELD STUDY



Nadia



WHERE?

Mamoudzou (Capital), Mayotte
Neighbourhood: Kawéni
High School: Lycée des Lumières
Approx. 2500 students (70% undocumented)

WHAT?

The field study aims to initiate awareness for the built environment in a school frame through a series of workshops with the purpose of enhancing engagement.

WHY?

Since the students are lacking perception of their surrounding environment and are systematically silenced due to two factors: their youth and their blackness, they are not represented in the architectural decision making debate. By empowering their voice, they might restore their right to act towards it. It is also the opportunity to rethink the role of architects as facilitators in this context.

WHO?

The main stakeholders are the students I teach in Art class.

HOW?

To open and develop discussion/reflection, I introduced and experimented tools (cards ; journalistic techniques ; dialogue) in a series of workshops.

WHEN?

From December 2022 to April 2023

OUTPUT?

The students have materialized their vision of Mayotte through photographs that has been displayed in an exhibition, at the school, answering an Open Call from a local organisation (EPFAM).



figure 5.1 : View from the yard, High School "LYCÉE DES LUMIÈRES", Mamoudzou, Mayotte

WHERE?

The school opened in 2017 in Kawéni, a neighbourhood known for its difficulties due to migratory pressure and hostility. Few years later, the high school has been re-baptised Lycée des Lumières as a reference to the Age of Enlightenment and its philosophers fighting for culture, knowledge, engagement and citizenship (Perzo, 2021), values that the school administration tend to defend.

The high school welcomes around 2500 students aged between 15 and 20 years old, coming from very different horizons and countries. A high percentage are undocumented teenagers, with irregular situations and sometimes without familial structure. Nevertheless, everything is put into place to offer them equal opportunities.



The teaching staff is also heterogeneous and composed of locals and expatriates, mostly from mainland France.

This is currently my position. I am coming from metropolitan France and as I was looking for a job to finance my studies, I applied as an Arts teacher. Therefore, I have around 500 students, that I see one hour, once per week. Since this class is about Applied Arts, the program touches upon architecture as well as design in general. In this context, with the authorisation of my hierarchy, I combined my thesis research and my profession. My students became my stakeholders. At first, I experimented workshops with one specific class. Since it worked well, I later expended the experiences to the rest of my classes.

figure 5.2.a.b: Some of the students in the course of Applied Arts, Lycée des Lumières, Kawéni, Mayotte. Personal picture with students consent.

field study

WHAT? WHY?

All About Raising Voices

The field study aimed to initiate awareness for the built environment in a school frame through a series of workshops with the purpose of enhancing dialogue and engagement.

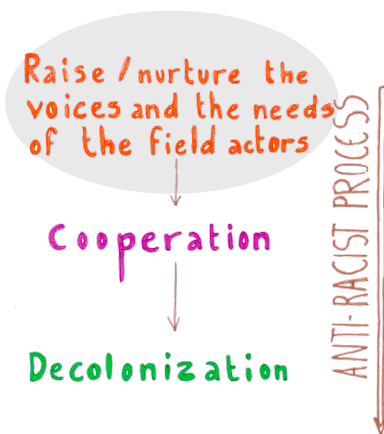


figure 5.3: Extract from diagram "Reversing the process"

Let's take back the diagram presented in the Introduction Chapter. "Raising and nurturing the voices and the needs of the field actors" is the first step to start an anti-racist process towards decolonization. Therefore, I had to meet the local voices and dialogue with them.

BUT WHY?

The field actors are the only ones able to give accurate answers from the field, since they experience it daily. Plus, after theoretical researches, it was necessary to go and experiment the possibilities to rethink the role of an architect as a facilitator in a specific context. Moreover, teenagers, the major stakeholders of this thesis, are systematically silenced due to two factors: their youth and their blackness. Therefore, they are not represented in the architectural decision making debate. By empowering their voice, they might restore their right to act towards it.

I have grounded this study case in the school I am already working in because I was able to reach the public more easily and I had better access to resources. In a pedagogical perspective, it was a win-win. Students were learning from the workshops and I was learning from them. Above and beyond that, we were learning together.

As an activist approach I wanted to tackle the conventional educational system and the regular architectural process. These experiences could light a spark that would shake the traditional systems from within.

LIMITS:

The time frame was really tight, I had to make efficient decisions in order to stick to the academic schedule.

The context was unpredictable. The territory being torn by repression and rebellion, some workshops had to be re-scheduled.

The workshops did not always come out as expected and unexpected opportunities popped along the way. Therefore I had to adapt and redirect the following workshops and the thesis.

I also needed to think about how much I could ask from the students in terms of time, energy, and resources but also what was adequate for their age, their interests and so on.

To be clear, the objective of the field study was not to turn the students into architects neither to make them build something specific. It was rather to enhance sensitivity towards their island and reveal their ability to become actors for its future.

field study

WHO?

Stakeholders

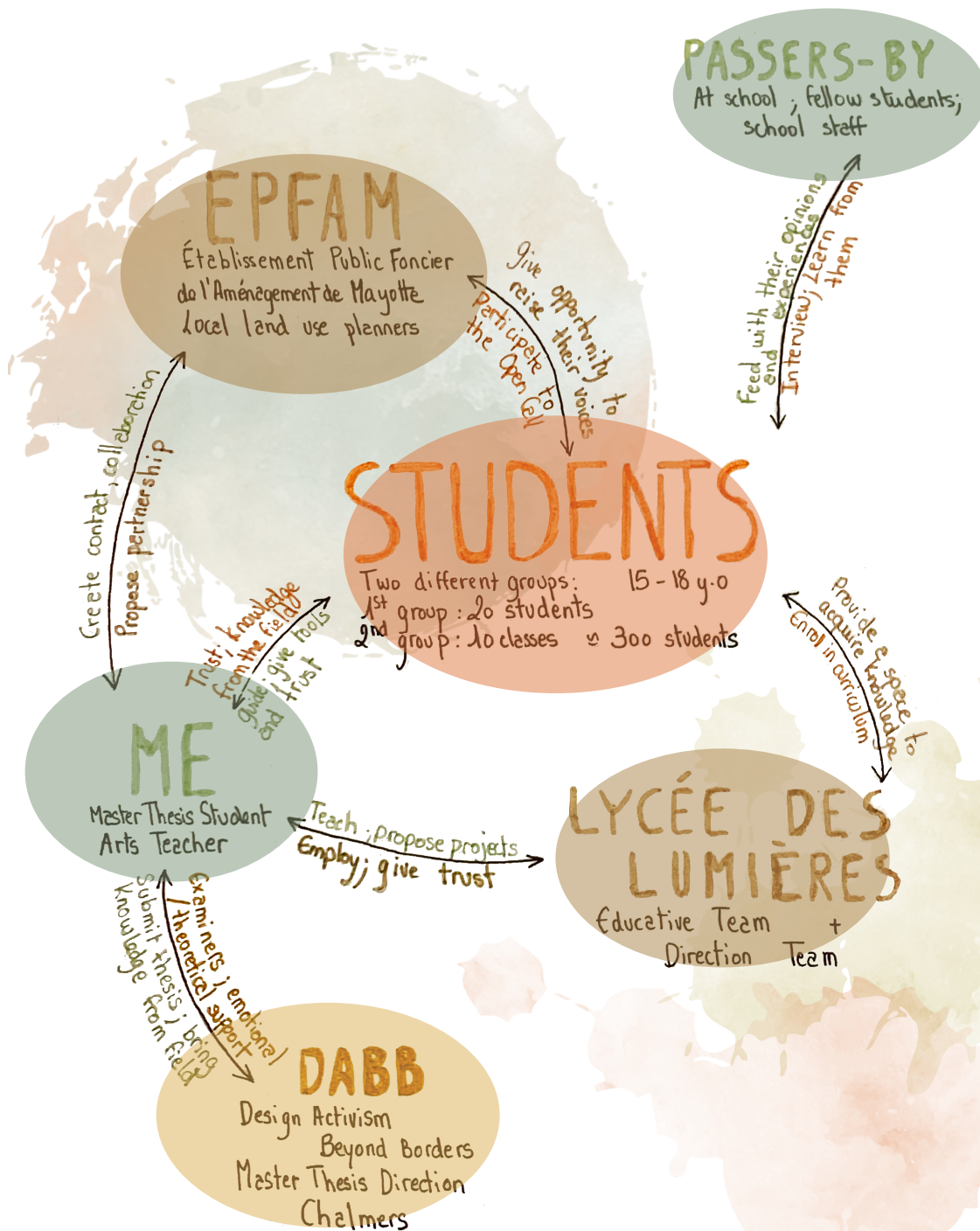
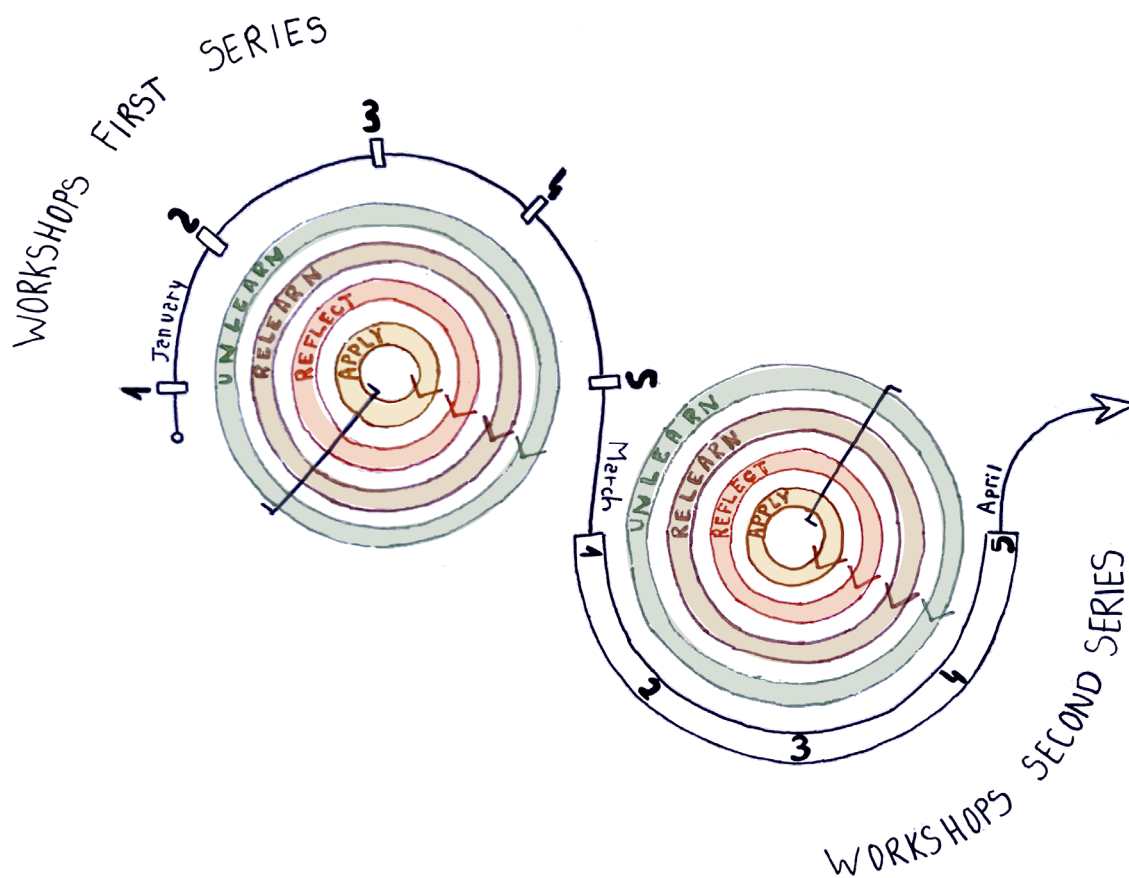


figure 5.4: Diagram of the stakeholders and their connections

field study

HOW? WHEN?

Methodological Diagram



WORKSHOPS FIRST SERIES

- 1** Initiate awareness
- 2** The importance of speech
- 3** Raising their voices and concerns
- 4** Journalistic techniques
- 5** See Mayotte through different eyes

WORKSHOPS SECOND SERIES

- 1** Phase 1 : Theme cards
- 2** Phase 2 : Surveys
- 3** Phase 3 : Photography
- 4** Phase 4 : Open Call
- 5** Phase 5 : Exhibition

figure 5.5: This diagram is representing the different phases I have undergone with the students. It shows the workshops and the relation with the "strategy" developed in Chapter 2.

HOW?

Workshops

Initially, the intention for the study case was to co-create a Design Competition, from the conception of the brief to the plan for implementation through a series of workshops ran with the students. This idea came in a discussion with the headmaster.

The Design Competition would have been set up next year for all the students of the school to participate. It would have been composed of elements exploring participatory process as well as regular project drawings and descriptions.

Along the workshops and the unexpected outcomes, the intention for the study case had to evolve to something answering better my main purpose: *redefine the role of an architect to act for anti-racism and decolonization*. Co-creating a Design Competition may have consider anti-racism and decolonization, but hardly the role of architects.

Therefore, I created workshops designed regarding the needs of the stakeholders and the results from the previous workshops. Together, the workshops composed the pieces of a "toolbox" meant to bring a new perspective of the built environment and enhance the strong inner feeling that everyone have a right to make their opinion count.

To enable that, I had to personally unlearn my architects' automatism and develop new assets as a facilitator. The strategy [*unlearn, relearn, reflect, apply*] previously presented has supported an unfamiliar process of thoughts. I had to work at the essence of the students reflection and let them bloom their own way. Still, I kept four keys to guide the workshops : critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity (Davidson, 2017). That became the spine for the workshops.

In January and February, I ran a first series of five workshops with one group of 20 students.

Eventually, the series can be summed up in five key moments:

1. LEARNING TO DIALOGUE
2. UNRAVELLING THE NEEDS WITH THE CARDS
3. EXPLORING SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES
4. SURVEYING
5. CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

In march, an opportunity presented itself to us: participating to an Open Call with a local organisation. This event was the occasion to test, on a broader spectrum, the cards and the workshops developed previously with the first series of workshops. Since the number of participants was bigger (300 students) in this second series of workshops, the method had to evolve.

I considered this second series as a big workshop with several phases to achieve one objective : create, in the High School, a photo's exhibition, made by the students, answering the theme: "Build and Live Mayotte Together", in partnership with the organisation EPFAM, for the Open Call, "Notre Mayotte à Moi".

Even if this series of workshop was realized in order to reach a tangible goal, the inherent intentions were still the same as the first series: bring a new viewpoint on the built environment and empower the students.

The sequence of the second series was ideally made out of five phases, based on the first series of workshops, but I had to adapt to the students availabilities and to the hazards of the context.

Workshops will be detailed in the next pages.

A large, abstract watercolor splash graphic in the center of the page. The splash is composed of various colors including light green, yellow, orange, and red, with a soft, blended appearance. The text 'FIRST SERIES OF WORKSHOPS' is overlaid on this splash in a white, sans-serif font.

FIRST SERIES OF WORKSHOPS

HOW?

Workshop 1

INITIATE AWARENESS

(description)

The first workshop was the starting point of our journey with the students. Basically, the structure of this intervention was to present a short documentary to the students about architecture and then ask them to answer the question, "What is architecture for you?" They could answer with a short text, a drawing or a mix of both.

(purpose)

The purpose of this workshop was to set in motion different notions. The idea was to start conceptualizing the notion of architecture, of space, of implication. It was also about beginning to create awareness towards the environment surrounding them on a daily basis and on their role in the future environment that will surround them. This workshop was the opportunity to give them precedents and references on which they can base their reflection.

(reflections)

Talking with the teenagers after watching the documentary was essential. I realized that the concept of "architecture" was for most unknown. I thought at first it was a problem of translation. But quickly I realized it was the concept itself that was foreign. Yet, some students told me about the role of planning, of architects being the "ideas-makers" and their task to organise the building process. They started linking the concept with the practice of building when I asked them if they had ever been part of the construction of a "house" or even witnessed it.

Showing the movie to the students introduced them well with the notion of architecture but

First Series

also biased their answers. Few students did not think of what architecture meant FOR THEM but described what was depicted in the documentary. Therefore having a support helps opening the discussion and the reflection but it might distort their discourses.

Talking with the students enabled me to learn about local techniques of construction and about their bias on local materials.

Most students detached architecture with the building of their own house, of their own shacks. According to them, architecture is for rich people or public purposes. This reflection came with the ultimate fact that they are building without architects, therefore in their opinion it does not produce architecture.



figure 5.6.a: Francis Kéré in the documentary proposed to the students. Source: YouTube.

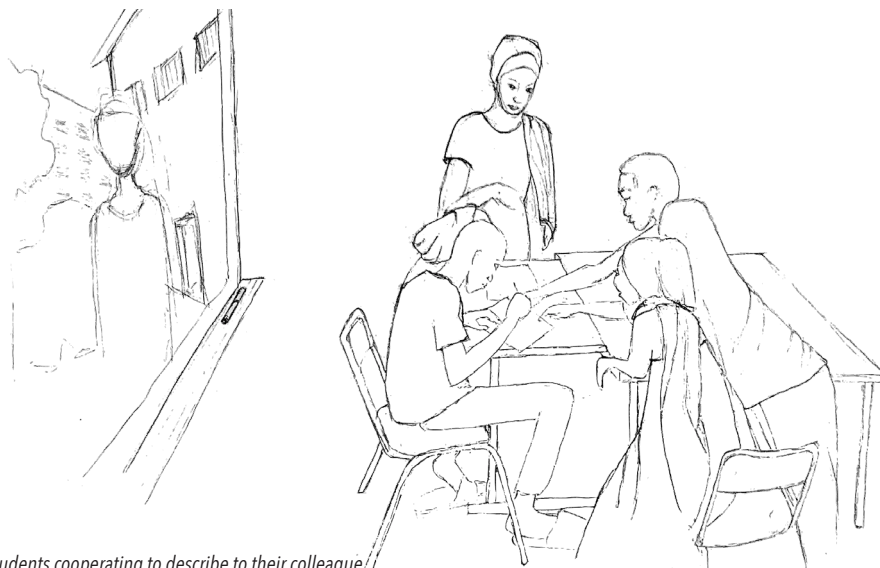


figure 5.6.b: Students cooperating to describe to their colleague.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEECH

(description)

It was a workshop made on the model of a game. The students made two teams. Each round they selected one of their peers to be the one to draw. The one to draw would turn his back to the whiteboard where I would project an image. The rest of the team would make the last one draw the image projected by describing it the clearest way possible.

(purpose)

This exercise was made for the students to develop their ability to cooperate, to speak clearly and precisely, but also to listen to the others. It has the double purpose for them to analyse an image, to integrate it and to retransmit to someone else.

(reflections)

The pictures were related in different ways to the notion of "space" even though the students did not seem to perceive it.

Finding the right words was difficult. Finding

the right words in French (not their mother language) was very difficult. As a comment for myself, it would have been great to have a translator. Indeed, students are way more talkative in Shimaoré (their mother tongue), but because of my presence they had to speak French, therefore the students had to restrain their speech.

It is actually an important lesson, in general, for projects where people do not speak the same tongue. Consciously or unconsciously, articulating thoughts in one's mother language is definitely more natural and flowing.

The workshop did not turn out exactly as I had expected. It was mostly my fault since I was under-prepared and the students felt it. I learned an important lesson that day: children and teenagers need someone solid, prepared and reassuring in front of them especially when assuming the role of the person in charge.

As I started to discover, field was bouncing me back information that I had to take into account, and change my expectations but also adjust the track of the workshops.

HOW?

Workshop 3

First Series

RAISING VOICES AND CONCERNS

[description]

As a preparation for this atelier, I have made 18 cards picturing different topics such as "the city", "the family", "education" or "access to water". During the hour we had together with the students, we used the cards to arouse discussion on the topics that was concerning them in their daily life. A new theme was picked when the students had nothing more to say about the previous one.

(full display of the cards available in the appendix)

[purpose]

The workshop's aim was to make the stakeholders [the students] reflect on their surrounding environment. Besides that, it was the opportunity to test the cards as a tool to open the dialogue and deepen their thoughts.

[reflections]

The cards happened to be a very efficient tool to start the discussion. Of course, a certain lead from my part in the discussion was necessary to dig deeper. But overall, the conversation was engaging and student even started debating on different view points they had.

Surprisingly, the students drifted on sensitive topics by themselves. They touched upon, segregation, question of colour, question of gender and so on.

I chose the themes for the cards according to my perception of what was important in my life. Later, I asked the students to pick the themes by themselves and they were more accurate to their needs. Cards would be an excellent way for architects to engage discussion with the stakeholders, but the themes have to be picked in collaboration with the stakeholders.

Contrarily to the previous workshop, students kept speaking in French with only few interventions in Shimaoré. I have mixed feelings about that. For me, obviously, it was easier to understand, but for them it might have been restraining. I keep thinking that an intervention based on "talking" should be in the mother tongue of the stakeholders.

The cards were so efficient that they have taken a more prominent place in the development of the workshops and the thesis.



figure 5.6.c: Eighteen theme cards to open discussion with the students.

JOURNALISTIC TECHNIQUES

[description]

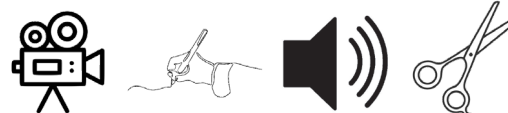
How to interview someone and collect answers? That is what the students and I worked during this new workshop. We exchanged ideas on tools we could use in the interview process and then we tested them. I printed a set of cards for all the students, so they went per group and selected a media to test with the cards. At the end of the hour, we discussed on whom they could interview in their surrounding environment. Then, I asked them to interview someone in their family, in their group of friends or in their neighbourhood and come back the week after, with the results.

[purpose]

The intention with this activity was to give them all the material they needed to go and investigate their surrounding environment. Why investigate their environment, one would ask? I think interviewing people is the best way to perceive the actual context. By confronting their perception to someone else's, students can grasp a broader and clearer picture of what is happening around them and shift their vantage point. It is "unlearning" and "relearning" applied in the field, with the stakeholders.

[reflections]

At the beginning of this workshop, I tried to explain the purpose of these workshops to my students, namely "becoming actors in their territory". In which bigger plan it was inscribed. I am not sure I have succeeded, but nevertheless, they participate gladly as usual. It was interesting to observe them appropriate the journalistic tools. It was unusual for them to take roles and be in the spotlight, but technically they knew instinctively how to use the tools.



Videos

Notes

Audio

Collages

These were the four tools I presented them during the workshop. They had thirty minutes to explore and test them. Apparently, their favourite tools were recording videos and audio. It might be because they are not very confident writing in French ; with videos and audio, they were able to speak in Shimaoré.

ANECDOTE

Funnily, when a group of three students tested the video tool, they took roles. They created a whole story about an old "Mama" selling pineapple pizza complaining about the noise at night. The way they were mimicking gave me a sensitive insight of their vision of their daily lives.

HOW?

Workshop 5

First Series

SEE MAYOTTE THROUGH DIFFERENT EYES

[description]

Initially this workshop was about analysing the students' findings from their assignment. Since most of them did not do it, I had to change plans. So I asked them to take a paper, a pen and if they had one, a phone to record, and I brought them in the main hall of school. There, they could interview their fellow students.

[purpose]

Several purposes were at stake for this activity. First, it was the occasion to use the journalistic techniques we had tested the previous week. Then, it was about "meeting the other", getting out of their "comfort bubble" and taking initiatives.

[reflections]

The students were at first very unconfident and reluctant to interview their fellow students. But after several attempts, they became more confident. Most interviewees were responsive and it helped my students gaining assurance.

When they came back in the classroom, they were really happy to share their results and we were able to discuss and debate about it. They felt this responsibility of conveying a message. They touched upon this role of facilitators, of "voices carrier".

Again, for me, this activity was a mere proof that, as a researcher, I needed to be flexible and always ready to bounce back to the unexpected. This way, I would be able to seize every opportunities to relearn through the eyes of my stakeholders, and dig deeper in the layers of knowledges of the local actors.



figure 5.6.d: Students interviewing passers-by

24th of April 2023

WAMBUSHU

Two days before the Aïd, major moment in the Muslim calendar, the French State started an operation of massive destruction of the island's informal settlements as well as extensive deportation of the people to the Comoros. This operation should last two months at least. Their major motive for this operation? Insecurity and violence. Their answer? More repression.

A large, abstract watercolor splash graphic in shades of yellow, orange, and red, centered on the page. The splash has irregular, organic shapes with some darker, more saturated areas and lighter, more translucent areas. The text is overlaid on the central part of the splash.

SECOND SERIES OF WORKSHOPS

HOW?

Phases 1-2

Second Series

I considered this second series as a big workshop with several steps to achieve one objective: create, in the High School, a photo exhibition, made by the students, answering the theme: "Build and Live Mayotte Together" with the tools and methods developed in the previous series.

PHASE 1: Theme cards

[description]

For the first phase, the students were asked to create four theme cards related to Mayotte's problematics, having as an example the cards used during the first series of workshops. Added to these cards, they had to reflect upon a list of questions they would ask in the following phase.

[purpose]

With this phase, the students started a reflecting process about the perception they had about the island, plus they enhanced their creativity.

[reflections]

Some themes were recurring such as environment, violence, security. This already gave me an overview of their major concerns.



figure 5.7.e:
Card made
by a student
depicting
violence in
Mayotte



PHASE 2: Surveys

[description]

In the second phase, the students went in the school's corridors to survey their fellow students with the cards and came back with notes they had to analyse, reflect and discuss.

[purpose]

By surveying their peers, they confronted their perception with someone else's. They also discovered the usefulness to have a medium such as the cards to open discussion.

[reflections]

Students were startled to meet stranger but the activity opened real critical thinking.

HOW?

Phases 3 to 5

Second Series

PHASE 3: Photography

[description]

Phase three was a course on photography techniques such as composition and analysis of images.

[purpose]

This activity was a side activity to give the students tools for the next phase. Therefore, they would use the advices on photography I gave them to take a relevant picture for the exhibition.

[reflections]

With this exercise, students could perceive that images have a strong power if they are done with intention, therefore images can pass messages.

PHASE 4: Open Call

[description]

Perhaps the decisive phase was phase four. Students had to select one picture that represent "Build and Live Mayotte Together" for them and write a text to motivate their choice.

[purpose]

Phase four was about giving a medium to stakeholders to express their voice and an opportunity to participate in a local initiative.

[reflections]

Even though it was a chaotic phase, it was particularly interesting, session after session, to push further their critical reflection, to go beyond the recurrent local beliefs.



figures 5.7.a: Pictures of the students have been gathered to constitute a mosaic representing Mayotte. The texts have been assemble in two books. They are the testimonies, the voices of the teenagers of Mayotte.



figures 5.7.b-c: Exhibition Opening with EPFAM and a group of students that presented their work for the exhibition.
Photo credits: Adélie Barbotin

HOW?

Exhibition

Second Series

PHASE 5 : Exhibition

[description]

To conclude the intensive work done by the students, and to propose something special to hand over to the organisation EPFAM for the Open Call, the students, the documentalist and I prepared a photo's exhibition displayed in the Documentation Centre of the school. About 300 pictures and drawings were assembled in a mosaic forming the shape of the island of Mayotte (pictures page 62). Accompanying the mosaic, we made two books, regrouping all the testimonies written by the students.

On the 20th of April, a delegation of five people from EPFAM came to visit the exhibition. Students had prepared speeches about their choice of picture. After that, professionals and students discussed around the topic of building Mayotte for the future generations.

[purpose]

Why doing an exhibition, you will tell me? During this past few months, I evolved around these teenagers, and opportunities for them to be proud are scarce. They grow in a tough environment, where the possibility to express themselves, and their creativity are rare. It was important to show them they had the right to participate in the architectural debate and to speak up their voices.

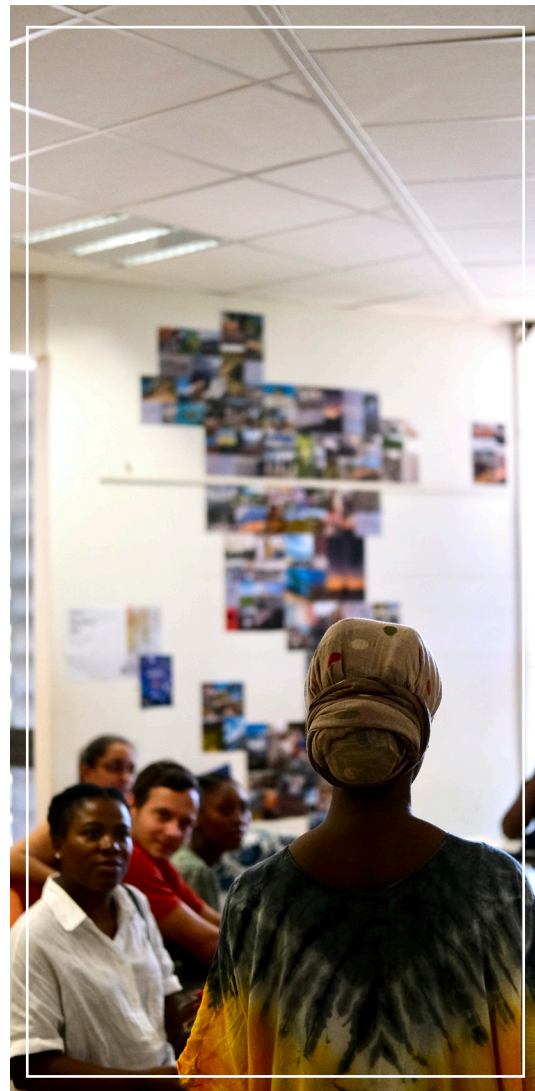
[reflections]

I could have given the pictures and the texts to the EPFAM without doing the exhibition but now I know that every time a student enters the Documentation Centre, it reminds him/her that he/she is part of this territory, and he/she have the legitimacy to act for it.

While working on the Open Call, the students

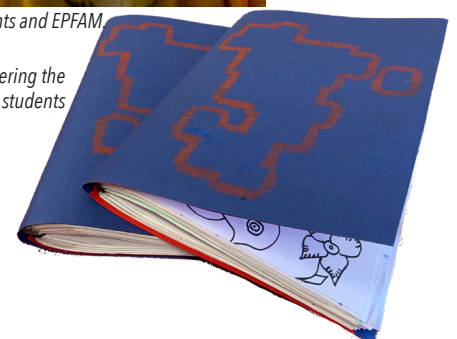
have faced their environment. Perhaps they have started becoming aware of the colonization legacy they are evolving in and initiate a personal decolonization.

This Open Call is part of a bigger project. In June, a forum will be held where construction's professionals, politicians and inhabitants will meet and debate for the future of Mayotte's territory.



figures 5.7.d: Exhibition with students and EPFAM. Presentation from the students.

figures 5.7.e: Books gathering the testimonies of the students



OUTPUTS? OUTCOMES?

The thesis is focusing on this special moment where architecture and architects can play a special role in this shift of consciousness from building constructions to building awareness. For that, I needed to create a safe space for my stakeholders to express themselves and to express their needs. In regard of architecture, my purpose was to create sensitivity towards the built environment as well as introducing dialogue and engagement.

Initially, I planned the workshops with the goal of co-designing something, anything, with my stakeholders. The first idea was to use architecture as a pretext to bring the field actors around a common project. I thought naively that gathering people around the same table would start an inclusive and anti-racist virtuous circle.

The truth was that my stakeholders, namely my students, did not have a clear notion of architecture like I had after five years of architecture school. And they never got the opportunity to analyse and grasp the problematics of their surrounding environment.

By pulling a thread, the stakeholders started with highlighting their needs. This led us to explore their possible participation in the architectural debate. Eventually, I came to redefine the architectural process.

By redefining the architectural process, I explored ways for the stakeholders to apprehend their surrounding environment and restore their right to act towards it. This is the main outcome, while the outputs were the design of workshops and tools to engage with the local stakeholders, as well as the participation to the Open Call and the exhibition.

POTENTIAL FUTURE APPLICATIONS

Following the field study, a deeper work could be undertaken with the students to measure the effective impacts of the research. This could result in a community project. Perhaps a Social Centre? Or a teenagers house? They would use the cards, or a different deck of cards, made by them, to survey the needs of the population. Then, they would use dialogue with their community to find solutions for the best way to design this place. They could rally the skilled persons in their community and start building something that fits their needs. Therefore, they would become the facilitators, my help would no longer be required, and so my mission achieved.

Another direct use on the field would be to run the cards and the workshops outside the architectural field. These could be tools in community's surveys to raise concerns regarding amenities available or highlight inequalities. The following discussions could provide communities adequate responses.



Roihimdine

CONCLUSIONS
REFLECTIONS



The following chapter is about drawing the conclusions of this research thesis but also opening reflections and discussions.

First and foremost, the chapter opens with my personal impressions and outcomes.

Then, the discussion continues with questions I had to clarify during my research such as "How can I say my work is architecture, anti-racist or successful?".

As a consequence, the next point is about the obstacles on the road, and their impacts on my thesis direction.

To conclude this chapter and the thesis, a throwback to the research question is necessary and therefore, a thorough reflection about the thesis outcomes is done.

THE MANIFESTO'S POSTER

As a takeaway, I imagined something, quite enigmatic and playful, that would trigger the viewer's mind. By looking at the poster, the viewer would consciously or unconsciously start a journey towards anti-racism architecture.

I designed this poster, as a seed that would grow and bloom if nurtured properly. It came from my personal experience as well as my professional journey.

The Poster could definitely find its place in architecture's offices and architecture's schools.

(Poster, page 72)

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS

This year of research has been particularly unsettling.

First, I discovered how hard it was to work alone. Of course, I had support from the thesis direction Design Activism Beyond Borders (DABB), but being unable to exchange ideas with a pair was something I never did before.

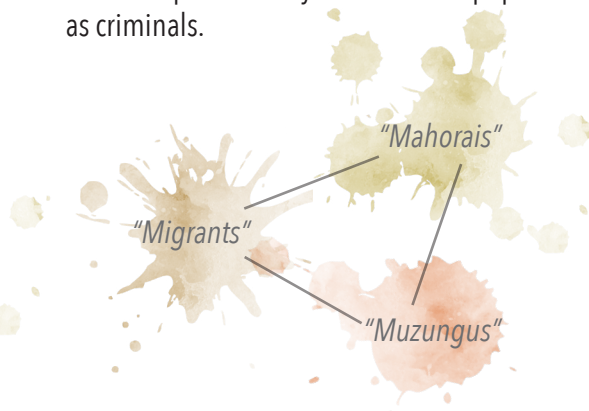
Then, and maybe it is the biggest point, I moved in a very new context with very specific issues. Officially belonging to France, Mayotte is much more complex than any other French region. Indeed, the local culture is closer to the African one, while the structure and the administration is definitively French.

As mentioned before, I was flabbergasted by racism and assumed segregation in Mayotte. On one side, the "Muzungu", aka white people, mostly coming from metropolitan France for short missions. I often encountered people here giving "eloquent speeches" on how the actual situation in Mayotte should not be, because Mayotte is French, therefore France should not allow such situation. Of course not everyone are xenophobic. Some people really tried to find human based solutions, such as the comity Cimade, that works for the protection of the migrants rights.

On another side, the "Mahorais", aka the natives of the island for more than a generation. They share a common legacy with the neighbouring islands of Comoros, still they are very hostile to immigration from those islands. They think Comorians are stealing there jobs, and causing troubles. The fact is: they have got good benefits becoming French, and they do not want to share.

On the last side of this racist triangle, there is the mentioned migrants. They suffer from

low rights and high repression. As a mean to survive, some have to turn towards delinquency, therefore perceived by the rest of the population as criminals.



So, I must admit. I had the feeling of fitting nowhere, of losing all my marks and of being powerless. I think it was the first, major, part of my emotional burden.

Second and maybe the most confusing burden was the one of being a white French woman in a French black colony, fighting for decolonization and anti-racism while I was not even a victim of these situations. Why these preoccupations? Was it White Saviour Syndrome? Or was it only one human, trying to understand my country's legacy, therefore my responsibility of changing the passive pattern regarding racism issues?

Because, on top of feeling inadequate in my personal context, I had to assume my job as a teacher and the closeness with my students. They are bearing complicated issues in their lives and my wish to help them was greater than my qualifications.

Watching and hearing about all the poverty, the violence and the insecurity enhanced anxiety, not only for me, but also for my students. Because of all this indoctrination, everyone stopped seeing the beautiful aspects of this island.

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS

Regardless of this personal challenges, needed to embrace a personal change, this year of Master Thesis improved greatly my personal knowledge. With the strategy of unlearning/relearning, I examined and acquired a great deal of sensitivity about myself, my country, our settler legacy, but also racism, anti-racism, colonization, decolonization, White Supremacy and most of all Mayotte.

About myself, I unlearned thinking mechanisms. For me, when I arrived, the way most people lived on this island was unacceptable because I came from a country where comfort standards were different. So, I had to unlearn the way I was looking around me: with pity. My students helped me relearn, and de-construct the fatality of their way to live. There was no shame living in a shack, only an opportunity to have better prospects for the future.

Future, also a notion I had to unlearn. We, European are embedded in the notion of time, but here, with the African influences, the habit of living with the rhythm of the sun and the necessity to see one day at a time, past, present and future are vague notions.

Family, religion and traditions are also three notions I started to perceive differently in this environment. People are putting great importance on these three notions whereas in Europe, at least in France, I have the feeling that they are less and less considered.

About my country and our colonial legacy... well, it was eye opening. Indeed, education taught me as a teenager that France was great, that France was triumphant, that France fought for human rights... what a disappointment when I started digging in the circumstances of this "greatness" and discovered the real price

of this democracy. By that, I mean that most of European Countries built their power with slave trading, violence and domination and people tend to forget it.

This thesis made me grow and become a human ready to accept her responsibilities.

Anti-racism is a stance I am ready to take, actually that needs to be taken, even if I might be perceived as an extremist by a part of the population. I was tired of living in a world that outraged me with the feeling I was not entitled to do anything. That is not true. It is not because I am white, that I cannot fight racism, it is not because I live in a colonial country, that I have to accept the politics in place. Now, I see that I can use my privileges to participate at the creation of another world, based on compassion, respect and equity.

It might appear that I am rejecting architecture. But it is actually the opposite. I could not have undertake the work I did without the four years of architectural education that gave me knowledge, critical thinking and wisdom about the built environment. Architecture is my "platform" to stand for a future that can still happen if more people acknowledge their responsibilities. I am young in the profession but during the research I discovered organisations and architects such as Architects Without Borders and Wai Think Tank, committed to improve the lives of the field actors, that gave me hope for the future of architecture.

This thesis most probably did not change anything at a big scale in this island, but if only one of my students feels he/she is legitimate to raise his/her voice because it concerns him/her, and that his/her skin colour or his/her origin does not matter, then it would be a success.

DISCUSSIONS (final seminar)

During the final seminar, the external critic Lisa Bomble, Senior lecturer at Högskolan i Väst and architect, pointed out a missing piece in the research I undertook.

While focusing on the field study and on theoretical anthropological concepts, I omitted to look at what was already done in the architecture and urban planning field in terms of shifting the role of the architect.

In the 60's, two planners, Paul Davidoff and Linda Stone Davidoff developed a theory of urban planning, named "Advocacy Planning", based on the principle that not all stakeholders are equally represented and involved in the planning process. Therefore, advocacy planners would use their abilities to engage with disadvantaged groups to develop plans that would include and preserve their rights in the decision-making debate (Davidoff, 1965).

Advocacy Planning cannot be reduced to a platform for expression. According to the authors, the first purpose of the method is to raise awareness to the public. Indeed, participatory planning makes the stakeholders realize they are legitimate to assert their rights in the urban development debate. The second is to allow competition among the planners in order to raise the standards and quality of the planning practices and outcomes. And the third purpose is to provide a place for the project's detractors to bring forward their concerns (Davidoff, 1965).

This theory appears to be the scientific development of what I tried to find intuitively this whole year. It put a name on the people I named until now "facilitators", and gave a stronger frame for later researches on the topic.

DISCUSSIONS

HOW CAN I SAY MY WORK IS ARCHITECTURE?

This thesis is, after all, mostly about the architectural process and the role of the architects for the future. Indeed, this research aimed to question the viability and the potential change of these two previously mentioned. Here, I was trying to find an alternative to the conventional architectural thinking. And with this research, I found and experienced tools to make architecture more inclusive and participative. By breaking the segregation in the architectural debate and raising voices of those who have been silenced, I hope that future generations will create a more equal world.

HOW CAN I SAY MY WORK IS ANTI-RACIST?

As mentioned just before, the strategy, the methods and the tools I have developed and used are made to raise the voices of every stakeholders in the architectural debate. Therefore leading towards inclusivity. By proposing a shift in the architectural process and placing architects as facilitators, they could assume a proactive role to fight racism rather than enforcing the current racist system.

HOW CAN I SAY MY WORK IS SUCCESSFUL?

I cannot openly state that my work is successful. That would require years of observation of my stakeholders to perceive the impacts of the process. But I can rightfully say that this attempt to find an other way to do architecture changed my perception of the current architectural world. With the good strategy, architects have the capacity to mould communities. Perhaps, by reading this thesis, some others will start unlearning and relearning what they took for granted. Still, I am very glad of the strategy, methods and tools that I developed and I am sure they can find purpose for later projects. I am also very proud of my students, their work and their participation to a local Open Call.

OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD

This whole year of research has been like a hike in the mountain. Several times, I had to pick a path, sometimes to walk back on my steps because of dead end, and sometimes I had to make detours because of obstacles. Every time I had to remember what was my goal, what was my summit.

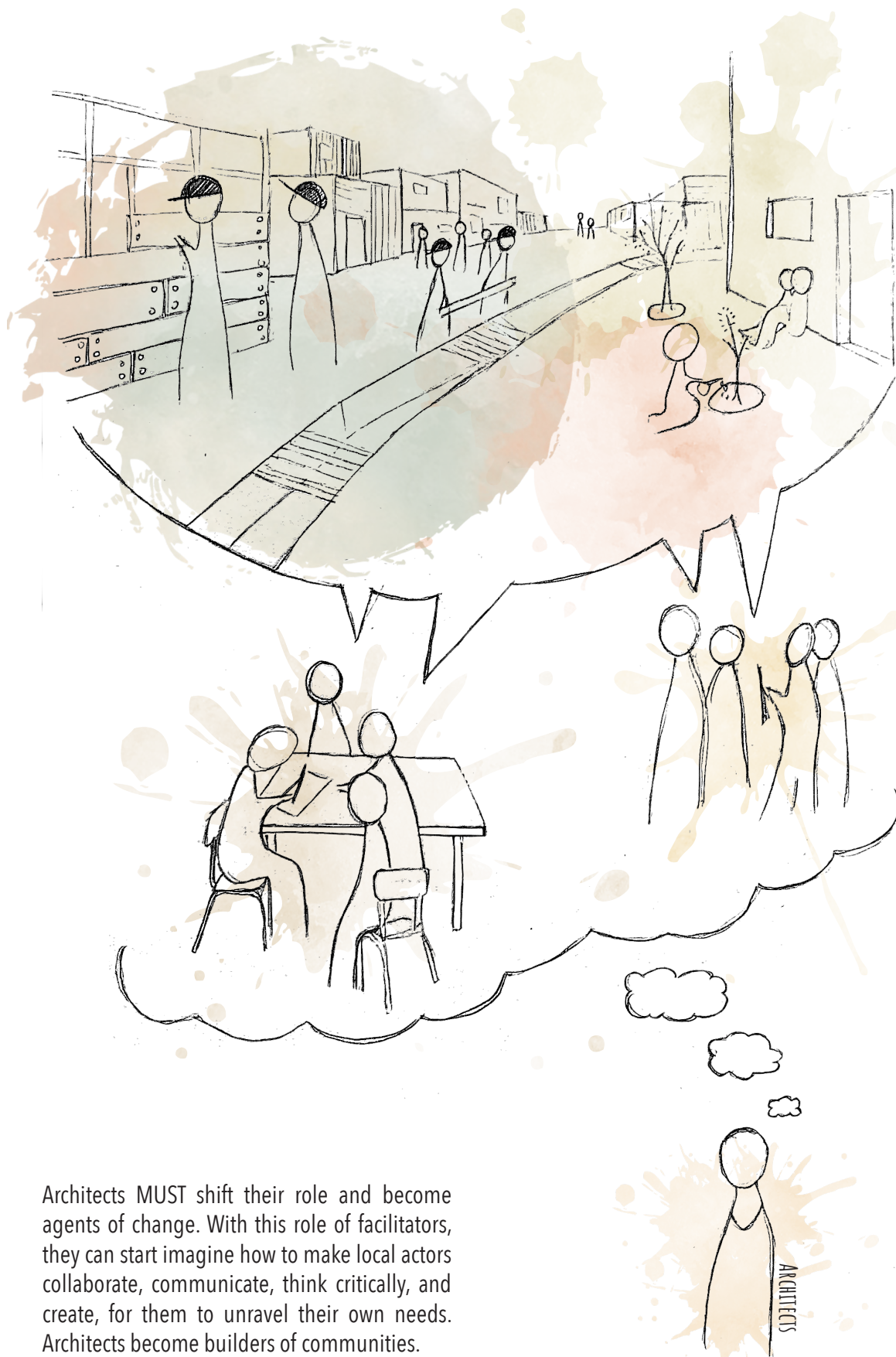
At first, I wanted to work with Social Centres, and because of the lack of a good partner on site and a lack of time, I had to change my environment of study. Social Centres were the perfect "third space" to start the initiative I had in mind. But because of the field reality, I had to leave this idea for another time.

Since I worked as a teacher besides my thesis, I decided, with the agreement of my administration, to work inside the premises of my school, with my students. Initially, the idea was to co-create a design competition with the students. I realized my objectives for the workshops were not only too ambitious but also not answering my research question. I had to re-focus. What is it I wanted to explore with my students?

After some reflections, I decided I should concentrate my time and energy with the students on unravelling their needs and enhancing awareness towards their built environment. My students became emissaries and surveyed their community. Even though it was sometime strenuous, it felt more adequate to the context and the research question.

And after disappointments, changes in the path, opportunities, and mostly workshops, my students are now participating to a local Open Call, which aim is to raise the voices of every residents of the island. This is, eventually, the greatest accomplishment of this thesis.

GRAPHICAL MANIFESTO



Architects **MUST** shift their role and become agents of change. With this role of facilitators, they can start imagine how to make local actors collaborate, communicate, think critically, and create, for them to unravel their own needs. Architects become builders of communities.

FINAL CONCLUSION

“How can architects redefine their role to become supporters in the decolonization process and act in the construction of an anti-racist society?” was the research question that led the thesis development.

To answer this question I have dissected the question in three major components :

First, **“become supporters”** was mostly about shifting the role of architects from planners to facilitators. Here the idea was to become supporters to the users and not only to the clients. For that, I had to debunk the conventional architecture process and propose a different process placing the users as the major stakeholders. Becoming supporters was also related to supporting the change toward decolonization.

Then, the **“decolonization process”** was first about decolonizing myself and my thoughts process. Only after that I was able to relearn all the wrongs done by my country and all the wrongs done due to colonization. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that in order to start a decolonization process I had to raise the voices of the people omitted from the architectural debate. By influencing the architectural debate and reflecting on those participating to it, perhaps architects could affect the colonization/ decolonization process.

Finally, **“construction of an anti-racist society”** was about finding what it meant to be anti-racist and the different challenges the society was opposing. Then, highlighting propositions to change slowly the current system. Therefore, architects could take this role of becoming the “builders” of this anti-racist society. They could start creating awareness in their own mind and in the stakeholders minds.

To create this awareness, I have proposed a **STRATEGY**. It contains four steps to do systematically and simultaneously. These four steps are: **unlearning - relearning - reflecting - applying**. The purpose of this strategy is to take another perspective on the world that surrounds people. To change this perspective, it means that people need to identify their bias that built them. Once identified, they can have a critical eye on them and change them if necessary. Knowledge has a great power but needs to be scrutinized in order to fit the current challenges.

This strategy could be applied in every aspects of people's lives, but for the stake of this thesis, a **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK** was necessary to sketch the outlines of the research. Therefore, four points have been examined : **architecture, education, anti-racism and decolonization**. By researching these four topics, I learned knowledge that supported my reflection and my field study.

The last but not least part of this thesis is the **FIELD STUDY**. The purpose of this interaction was to initiate dialogue with the main stakeholders of the island: the teenagers. With tools (the cards) and methods (the workshops), I guided the teenagers to create a certain sensitivity towards their built environment. In the long run, this might lead towards their own decolonization.

The strategy and the theoretical framework prepared me for the field study, but the interactions with the field actors bounced back at me with thousand more decisive knowledge. These three elements were complementary and helped me fulfil my expectations for the thesis. This research is only the beginning of an answer.

MANIFESTO'S OFFICE POSTER

First word you will read will be the first step of
your journey to become an anti-racist architect.

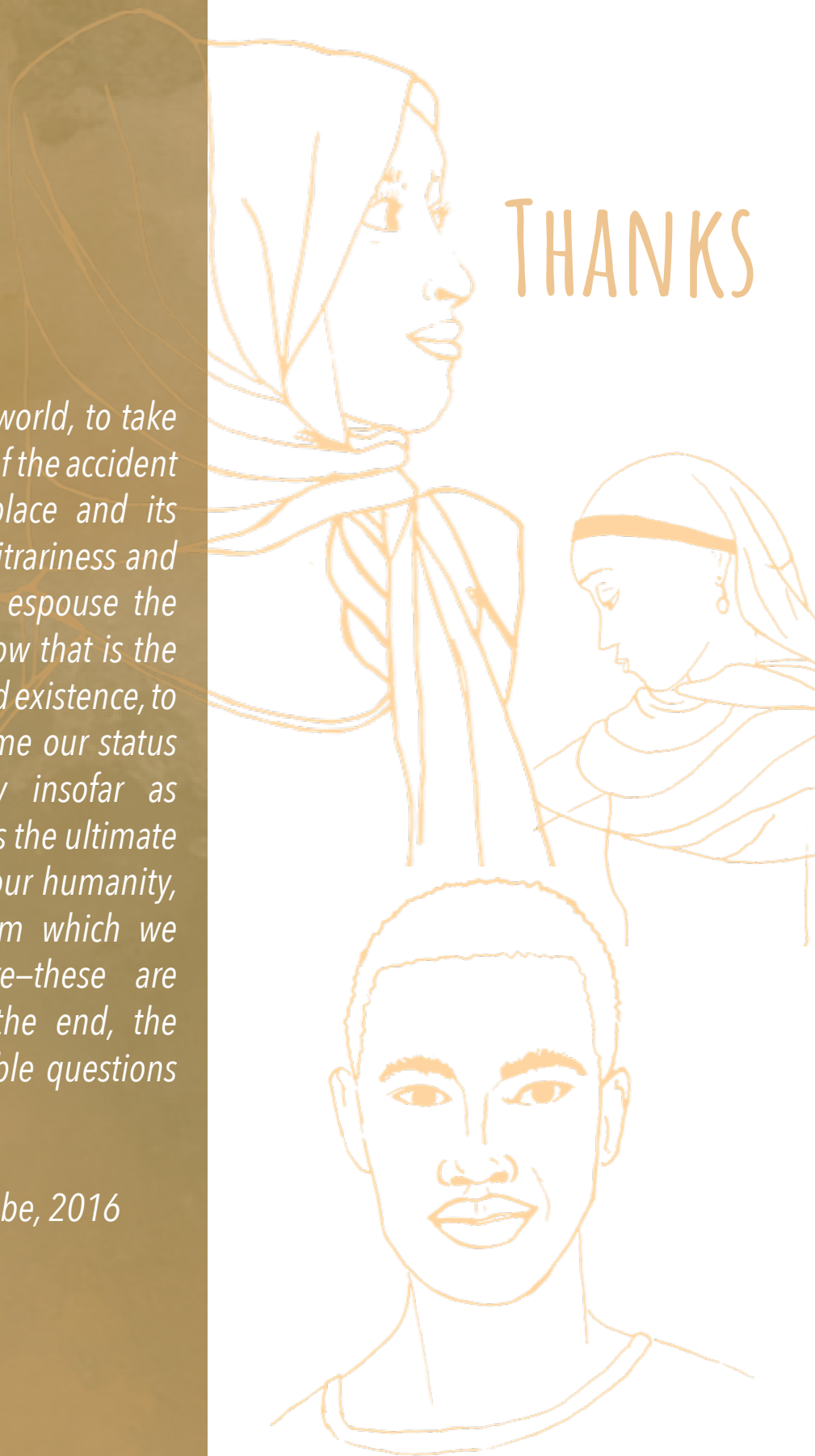
U N L E A R N X O M C G A E I B K R N
D E X D B I T S B U P D I H L S M E I
V U P U H N M R O K A Y P J D G D O U
Z M I C O C G E C G O R E L E A R N K
B J O A Q L V S E M I V Q R C X C W H
C R V T C U A P H A E X L T O K I M S
G K T I E S B E K O J R E F F L E C T P
U F D O V I P C T F W G T P O V Q L A
Y V G N K O U T Q U M Y W Z N H B M R
I F S H U N D I U N C O N F I D E N T
A V P W A S T J X V Y Q A N Z U P V I
E B F N I A P P L Y V R F H A T C J C
K H I A F R S O D H N J X W T K M L I
A D G P U C J V I T E R A T I V E S P
L N R T L H Z D A R O Q N Y O U I R A
X O B K A I K S L N A P T R N O G P T
P M R D Q T V A O Z M Y I M V T W Z I
A H I U V E T N G U C H R A I S E U V
L T N W M C S Y U D J K A O J L D S E
U B C G S T I X E L B Z C W P E H M F
F T F O H U R Q M S V O I C E S U O Q
W O X Y V R B O V B P Q S D J M T R Z
A D U S L E F W L H S V M I T B A Y J



THANKS

"To cross the world, to take the measure of the accident of our birthplace and its weight of arbitrariness and constraint, to espouse the irreversible flow that is the time of life and existence, to learn to assume our status as passers-by insofar as this is perhaps the ultimate condition of our humanity, the basis from which we create culture—these are perhaps, in the end, the most intractable questions of our time."

Achille Mbembe, 2016



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Fazuil

APPENDIX

7

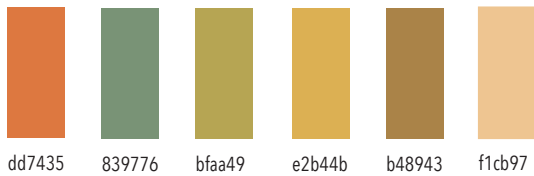
appendix 1

COLOUR CHART

78

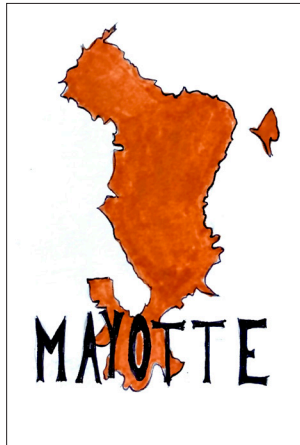
WHY THIS CHART?

- Mayotte colours of :
 - the soil,
 - the lagoon,
 - the trees,
 - the sun,
 - the skin colours
- the diversity of life on the island
- mostly warm and intense colours for an architecture of strong emotions

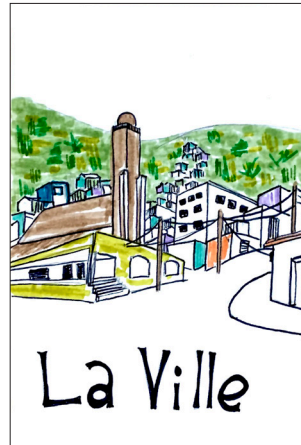


Background courtesy of Adelle Barbotin

THEME CARDS



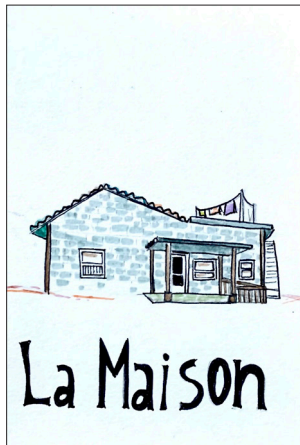
MAYOTTE



CITY



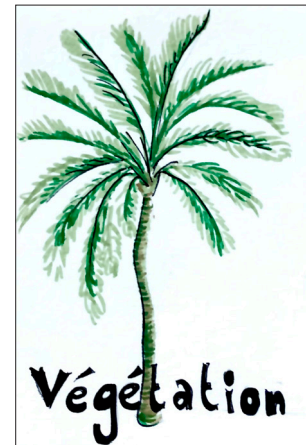
NEIGHBOURHOOD



HOME



LANDSCAPE



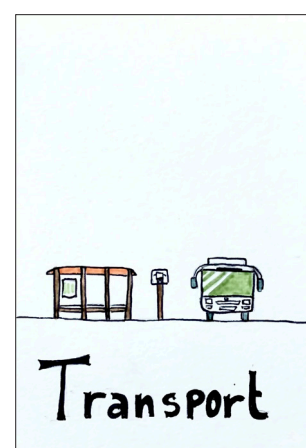
GREENERY



COMMUNITY



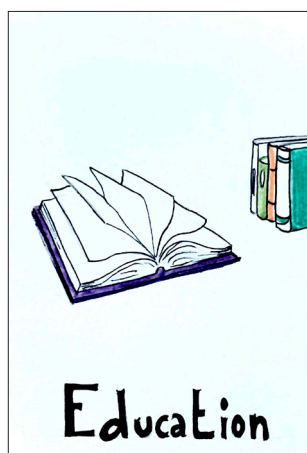
FAMILY



TRANSPORTS

The theme cards have been used during the two series of workshops to enhance dialogue with the stakeholders. Later, the stakeholders even created their own cards for the topic I forgot.

THE CARDS



EDUCATION



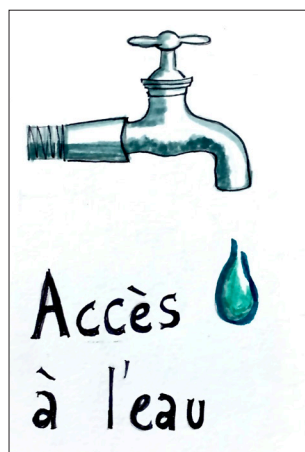
PLAY AROUND



SECURITY



EQUITY



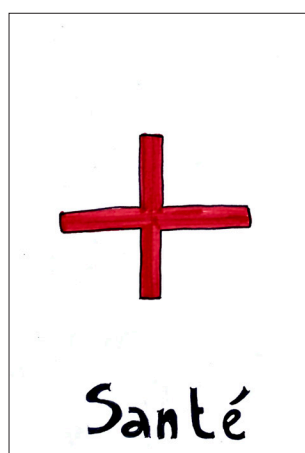
ACCESS TO WATER



ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY



PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT



HEALTH



SUSTAIN ONESELF

Creating these cards was a good exercise to unravel the direct and latent needs of the local population. The cards were a good inspiration for the students and a useful tool to interview.

appendix 3a

FROM SOCIAL CENTRES TO HIGH SCHOOL

At the beginning of the research, in order to keep my study in the time frame given, I decided to focus on a specific archetype/typology. So, I analysed different programs: "private housing", "hospitals", "schools" and "social centre". To choose one of these archetypes, I made a list of pros and cons regarding the context. Eventually, I made the decision to continue with the typology "social centres".

But why "social centres"? Because it was the perfect place to start a social and collaborative project. Those spaces have been initially thought to bring people together regardless of their work, origins or incomes. They have also been made as spaces for expression, self-development, mutual aid and sharing. Social centres are "third places". They are here to be in between work and home, school and family.

From this archetype, I have selected two theoretical study cases and one "on site" study case.

The first one was the Social Centre "Leoncavallo" in Milan, Italy. It was opened during the 70's, starting as a squat in an abandoned factory. The squat was located in an area of social housing and gathered radical left groups. They established a self-managed space without internal hierarchies, valuing the individual autonomy and the freedom of each person.

figure A.3.a: Picture of the Social Centre Leoncavallo in the 80's
Source: Leoncavallo website.



figure A.3.b: Picture of the Social Centre Les Clefs.
Source: Les Clefs website.

The second theoretical study case was the Social Centre "Les Clefs" in Le Teil, France. This place also celebrated its 50's few years earlier. While Leoncavallo is in the suburb of Milan, a busy city, "Les Clefs" is located in a regular town in the countryside. So it has a rural outreach.

I had the pleasure to meet the director, Madam Charbonnier. She worked in different social centres, in different contexts, so she had hindsight on the topic. She told me about their work as social agent, and facilitators.

At the centre, they already have started initiatives such as workshops around racism. But also, they gathered people to discuss the future city plan and bring to the city hall, the main issues and concerns of the inhabitants.

This social centre is the perfect example of a "third place", where people can find refuge, dignity, help, respect and inspiration.

I could have imagined working with them because they have solid foundations and they are looking for workshops to push further their engagement with people. They are constantly growing in their reflection/vision of the centre.

With these two theoretical study cases, I was looking at one social centre in Mayotte, to run the field study. I contacted the director of the social centre Mlezi Maore in Chirongui.

It seemed to be a good collaboration but when I went on site, the field's reality was different. Indeed, twice I went, twice it was empty from any public. There were only the educators but no one to take part in the workshops.

So I wondered what to do with a place quite disengaged and unattended by the community.

I had two options.

First to persist with the social centre and tell myself that it was, on the contrary essential that I run my workshops there. I could have integrated the French class for adults and participate to their sporadic activities for the people to know me better and to start trusting me. Perhaps after few months, I could have attracted five or six people to test the sequence I had built. But it was too much uncertainty with the availability and interest of the stakeholders. My time frame is limited and I needed to be efficient. On top of that, the director I had contact with was leaving his job for another organisation.

So I needed to think of a Plan B.

Since I am also working in a vocational high school, I started to think my students could be my stakeholders. And even though we were staying inside the school frame, it could have been interesting to come up with an alternative approach in a conventional system.

Funnily, schools were also on my list of typologies to explore before I chose Social Centres.

This is how I shifted the orientation of the study case, while carefully reflecting on the compatibility with my research question.

Researching on social centres taught me a lot on third places and perhaps in the future, I'll come back to this very special and stimulating program.