

“The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,--
One is nearer God’s heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.”

Dorothy Frances Gurney
(Willis, 2006: 11)



conclusion

Chapter 9

Fig 9.1 View of linking pathway between schools. [Author, 2016]

9.1 Reconnecting child to nature

In the aim to address the disconnection between man and his environment, both physically and biophilically, the dissertation investigation came to the following conclusions:

THE EXISTING GARDENS

By investigating the existing gardens in a biophilic manner, according to the features that exist on site and translating them into richer dimensions of biophilic design, the gardens play a role in healing the disconnection. They form catalysts in the installation of biophilia, showing that the existing natural site, neglected or not holds biophilic potential.

THE PROGRAMME

Through the integration of the Reggio Emilia approach to learning where the environment becomes the third teacher, these gardens and their identity, be it negative, like the dead date palms after the fire, or positive, they both can become didactic, teaching children the importance of nature in their lives, on a day-to-day basis, completely sensually immersed in the physical, functional and emotional attributes of the environmental features.

BUILDING

The concept of applying the principles of biophilic design such as biomimicry, prospect and refuge, curiosity and enticement, diffused light, landscape elements defining building form and the use of natural systems to passively control the climate of the spaces to the architecture, enables the building itself to not only facilitate learning of the existing gardens but becoming a teacher in itself. In this way, a new garden is formed that becomes didactic in its very essence.

RELATIONSHIP

Through the relationship between existing gardens and the new garden (the building), a new relationship is formed between man and nature, creating not only an appreciation of natural systems but complete dependence. This enables a relationship between child and nature to form that will be carried with them for their entire lives, and hopefully, enable ecological cities to become essential to their very existence.

9.2 Biophilic Design = Restorative Design

The dissertation enables an evolved human-nature relationship to form as well as place-based relationships which are the intended biophilic dimensions of the dissertation through the integration of a multitude of biophilic principles, where the fundamental principles mentioned below:

Firstly, the biomimicry of natural systems was applied to the overall design of the building. This creates an awareness of the trees through the facilitation of the growth of new trees and the protection of old ones. This also relates to the ecological connection to place, creating a stronger identity in the community as a safe space for children. This also relates to the principle of using landscape features to define building form.

Cultural connection to place is addressed through the integration of outdoor sport facilitates and use of school rooms for community events that connect and revive a dead site into a rejuvenated space that will be giving back to the community for extended periods of time. The integration of the children into the site interweaves the youngest and most important members of the community in the most restorative manner: through education.

In terms of the intentions, most of the spaces designed for children, connect them to the aspects of site. In the classrooms of regrowth or the home-base classrooms, the first storey connects the children to the living skin where the ground floor connects them to the courtyard. In the occupational therapy suites, the connection to the river is evident with the therapy pods positioned in the landscape with the intention of associating therapy with the therapeutic effects of water and trees. In the garden of shadow, the biophilic connections are slightly lost and will hopefully be given meaning through the functions that take place within these spaces.

On the whole, the design fulfilled the original intentions of the scheme, apart from a few “gardens”, however, the interweaving of inside and outside spaces counteracts for the lost connections and contributes towards new ones between the child and the natural world.