

## **Experiences of participatory design and building with indigenous communities of Mexico**

### **ARCHINTORNO**

Inspired by the *Praktikumsseminar Mexiko* of the TU-Berlin, Archintorno has promoted three projects in the last 7 years, in which Italian students were directly involved in designing and building architectures that support self-help development programs proposed by indigenous communities of the Oaxaca State, Mexico.

Italian students and indigenous communities are main actors at each step of the projects. The here presented contribution focuses on the complex participatory process, by which such distant worlds are put into relation, communicate and cooperate in order to reach a shared objective.

This cooperation starts with a visit in the communities, where all elements useful for the project's development are collected, and a first exchange of expectations, ideas and arrangements takes place. The latter continues during the architecture design and with the choice by the community of one project among different proposals. After that, during the construction step, technical exchange among the participants is pursued; the attempt is to valorize local building materials, knowledge and expertise - and through this to strengthen the community's self-esteem-, and to practically suggest possible improvements in these fields. Moreover, an important goal in this phase is the cultural exchange, which emerges spontaneously thanks to the experience of living and working together for some months. This aspect has been further improved in the last project through an household survey lead by the students with the families of the host village, in order to understand local lifestyles and housing cultures.

Archintorno is a non-profit association with seat in Naples that promotes its projects in collaboration with "C.A.M.P.O. a.c.", an Oaxacan NGO. One important objective in each project is to stimulate networks of cooperation and solidarity on our territory and abroad, by involving different actors: public, private and the various expressions of the civil society.