



“Il Senso
Della Vita”
(*The meaning
of life*),
Collegentileco
(RI), 2018.

I met Ludovica Gregori when she came to ask me to be her supervisor for her Major Degree thesis project and already in this first encounter I was amazed by the maturity of her approach to the topic's choice and the way she introduced herself. The motivational lever behind this research work was evident from the presented documents and, above all, from the accounts of the volunteer experience in the territories of Central Italy hit by the earthquake in 2016. The fruitful dialogue between her experiences and my knowledge of the state of the art of research on the topic, carried out within the disciplinary research group¹, was a valuable opportunity to broaden our view of project responsibilities and new topics for research. That heartfelt and personal account of the effects of the earthquake are clear in terms of social disaggregation and psychological trauma. They called for the need to add to the search for resolutions on the material effects of the earthquake; a type of research that would also consider the intangible effects that can often be even more damaging to people. In recent post-earthquake scenarios there has been a growing awareness of how the built environment is not only the first material reference for the affected populations, but also an intangible reference in many respects. Indeed, the destruction of the built environment compromises the collective memory on which a community relies for its history and identity². This aspect is independent from the size or function of the building to the point of assuming particular value in cases where, due to its historical and cultural importance, it also comes to assume a strong symbolic relevance for the inhabitants, as in the case of churches, monuments or historic buildings. Restoring these elements of identity is a task of great responsibility for the future life of the place, both in material and economic terms and, even more so, in the future relational and social developments that the reconstruction process can produce. The events and critical issues surrounding the construction of the S.A.E. (*Soluzioni Abitative di Emergenza* - Emergency Housing Solutions), also known as 'casette' (little houses), pro-

¹ Publications include: Bologna, Terpolilli (2005), *Emergenza del Progetto, Progetto dell'Emergenza*. Milano: Federico Motta; Bennicelli Pasqualis (2014), *Case Temporanee*, Milano: Franco Angeli.

² Grande, Migliorati (2016), *Maurice Halbwachs. Un sociologo della complessità sociale*, Morlacchi ed.

vide a basis for reflections and considerations on emergency management and its impact on the territory.

In Italy, studies on post-earthquake reconstruction, such as the example of Friuli, have highlighted how the possibility of preserving pre-existing neighbourhood relations and being able to verify *de visu* the progress of the reconstruction of one's home and village have undoubtedly influenced the progressive re-establishment of the equilibrium altered by the trauma of the seismic event.

For these reasons, urban planning solutions and, more generally, those concerning the construction of S.A.E. settlements, even if adopted in an emergency phase, should be the result of careful planning that adds to the merely technical aspects other perspectives related to the specificities of the territory and the population living there. Solutions should be effectively implemented with the concrete participation of local administrations and the population itself involved in seismic events.

Italian regulations and experiences for post-emergency living are meagre and lack social and environmental perspectives. The research shows how post-emergency temporary homes fail to meet people's needs and to help them accept the loss of their homes and towns. In contrast, a high-quality public space, designed not only according to the functional and rational canons of urban planning but also with community needs in mind, could promote active engagement by the affected community, accelerating trauma elaboration and combating social isolation.

In the absence of legislation on temporary urban developments, the research proposes tools to support the design of open spaces for temporary post-disaster settlements, offering a resilient method to promote social interaction and address critical social challenges.

The strong commitment of the architect to their social role underlies this work, and it emerges in the awareness of the need for an expert contribution. This role requires the ability to analyze and interpret spaces, places, and architectural pre-existences, while also translating the needs and expectations of the inhabitants, fostering their awareness in claiming their spaces both individually and communally. This is the ethos and intention behind this book, which demonstrates a commitment to integrating multiple facets while maintaining a clear, rigorous, and mature methodology on a research topic that is not only unique but also valuable in outlining new directions for project priorities, embodying Jan Gehl's sentiment: «First life, then spaces, then buildings.»