



Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II  
Scuola Politecnica e delle Scienze di Base



INTERNATIONAL MASTER DEGREE COURSE IN  
DESIGN FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

# fundamentals dbe

#9\_Self-construction and  
participation.



dipartimento di architettura  
università degli studi di napoli federico II  
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## Self-construction and participation.

Nowadays, university education is too focused on a theoretical and philosophical approach, which on one hand stimulates imagination and creativity, but on the other hand it makes the human dimension disappear. For this reason, it is really important in the design process to understand how to build by yourself structures which are strictly linked to the human figure and dimension, taking into account the movement of the human body inside the space.

In this sense, the best way to catch the importance of a participated architecture process is through **self-construction**. It is a way of doing architecture that is common used to solve social problems of local communities through a **participatory approach**. This method brings together the culture of architecture and craftsmanship to realize light structures very fast. In Italy and around the world many collectives are using the self-construction method both to recover ancient buildings and to redefine the meaning and use of public spaces.

There are many groups developing, such as Orizzontale, Collectif etc, Elii, Enorme and others, which are using this technique to involve the population in the transformation process of cities. In this way, people become active subjects of the design process and they accept the change.

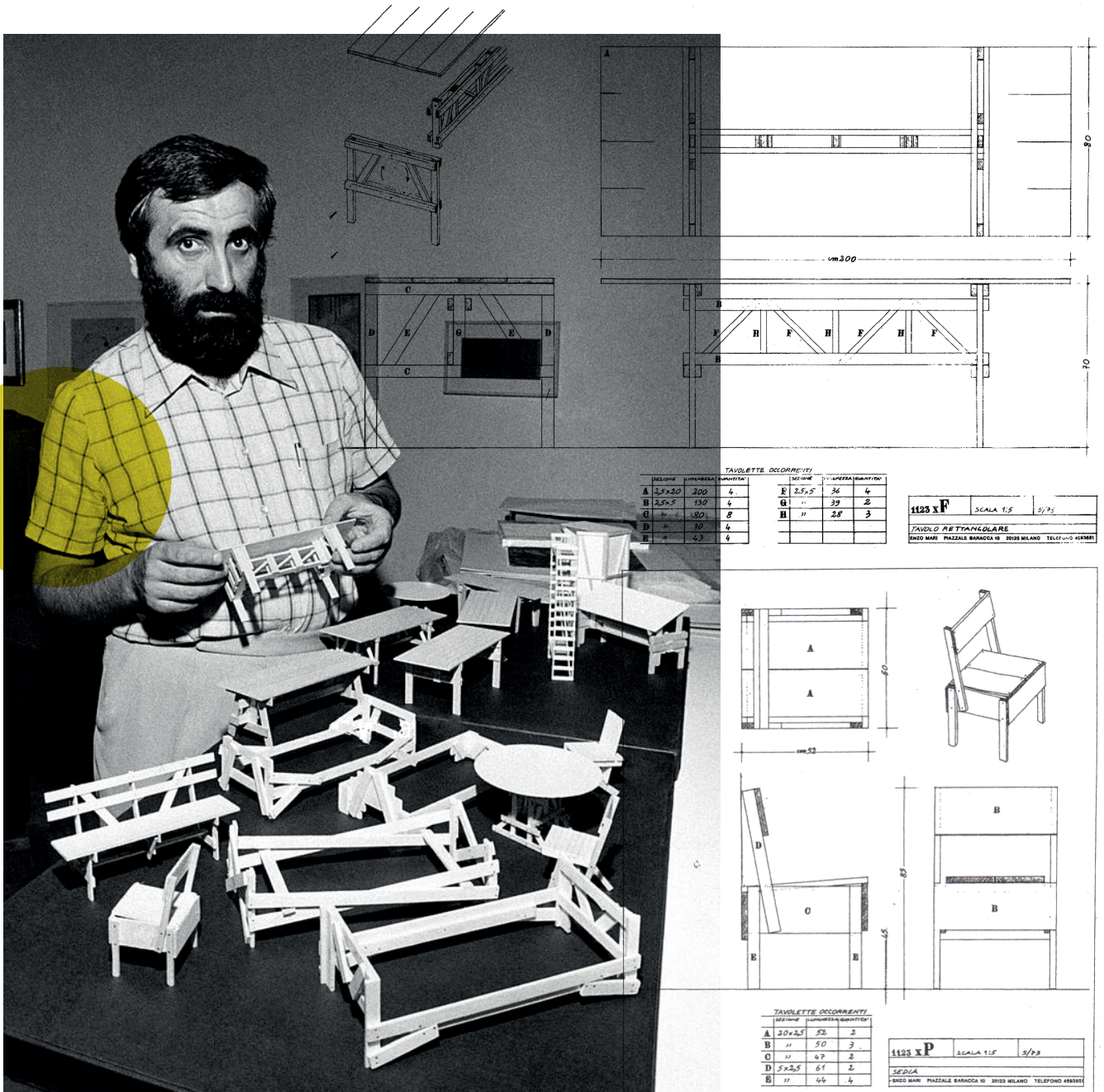
The hardest part of this method is to define the shape of architecture basing on the use of it: the shape becomes important only in function of the relationship with the human body. For this reason, the designer has to think both as an architect and as a user, and this is why it is really important the participation of the community in the design process. The materials used for self-construction are cheap and easily available on the market, to demonstrate that good architectures can be built even with poor and simple elements. The construction techniques used are really simple, as well as the joints, to let people and students build their own project by themselves.



## Focus on

Throughout history, many architect used the self-construction method to give an alternative to the theoretical approach. Some of the most important ones were **Enzo Mari, Victor Papanek and Bruno Munari**, who tried to make people understand that

there was the need for a cheaper way of making architecture. In this sense, the Enzo Mari's book "Autoprogettazione" is a real manual for building by yourself the furniture for your home.



## To know more

E. Mari, Autoprogettazione?, Corraini, 2002.

J. Hennessey, V. Papanek, Nomadic Furniture, Schiffer publishing ltd, 2008.

N. Flora, Per una architettura mobile, Quodlibet, 2011.

Norberg-Schulz, Ch. (1980), Genius Loci. Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture, Amburgo, Rizzoli, 1980.

## Short exercise #1

Choose a project from the Enzo Mari's book "Autoprogettazione" and redraw it in 2D and 3D, paying attention to the abacus of the elements that compose the project. Then, with the same method and style, design by yourself a piece linked to the one that you chose, e.g. table and chair, bed and bedside table and make an A3 panel similar to the Enzo Mari's one. Don't forget to make the maquette.

## Short exercise #2

Try to catch the way of using the public space in your country through photography. Take 9 pictures that synthesize the use of the public space in your culture and put them together in a single panel in squared frames.



short exercise #1, example

**COUNTRY**


Name Surname

short exercise #2, layout