

# Coccapani Planetary Garden

A transgenerational, common, possible learning  
space

spazio educativo comune  
natura e apprendimento  
giardino planetario educativo  
spazio di apprendimento possibile  
architettura dell'apprendimento  
**common educational space**  
**nature and learning**  
**educational planetary garden**  
**possible learning space**  
**learning architecture**

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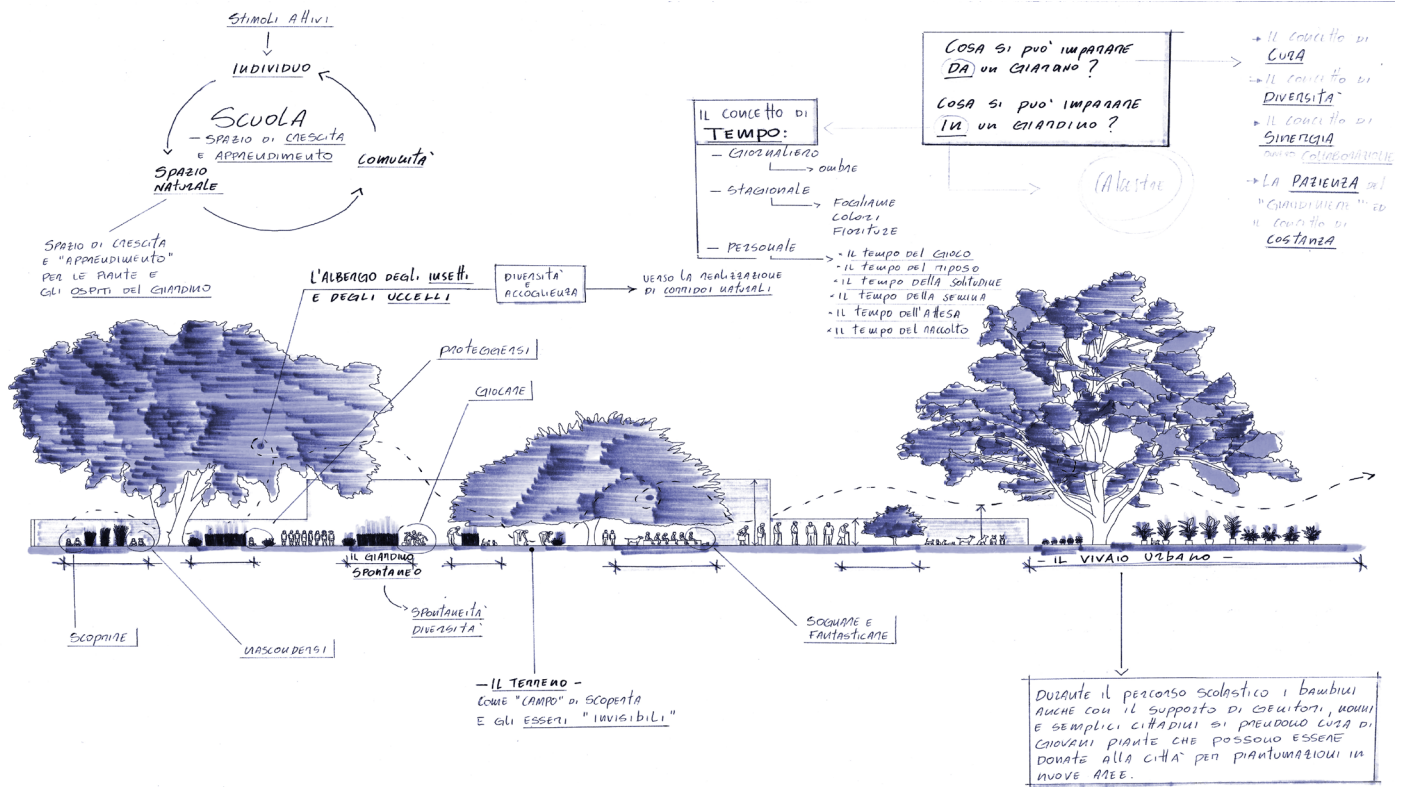


## Giardino Planetario Coccapani

Uno spazio di apprendimento possibile, transgenerazionale, comune

Gilles Clément ci ha insegnato a guardare il giardino come un pianeta. Insetti, uccelli, piante, alberi, ossigeno, acqua convivono sinergicamente in un giardino. E chi si occupa del giardino? I Giardinieri planetari. Questa metafora diventa il cuore del progetto vincitore del concorso internazionale Next Landmark 2020 indetto dalla Fondazione Iris Group, che si traduce in un intervento leggero nel rigoroso rispetto della struttura esistente aggiungendo valore attraverso l'inserimento di pochi elementi. Il bordo urbano, all'ingresso, si arricchisce di una nuova facciata verde; il parterre è concepito come un parco giochi. Dall'accesso, il nuovo passo carrabile accoglie un inserto colorato (per agevolare anche le disabilità) che guida i percorsi interni; l'area verde del giardino si amplia. È definito da un grande anello interattivo. Le linee ideali che collegano gli alberi proteggono le aree e suggeriscono i loro usi con lievi cambiamenti di superfici e materiali, sempre naturali. Le attrezzature vengono inserite tra piccoli arbusti, a misura di bambino, e le chiome degli alberi diventano tetti per le aule esterne. Come può il giardino di una scuola dell'infanzia diventare un bellissimo spazio comune in cui vivere tutti? Il progetto cerca di rispondere alle possibili esigenze degli utenti, aprendosi anche alla città: per i genitori che aspettano seduti a chiacchierare tra piante e fiori. Un posto funzionale e gradevole per gli insegnanti che vi lavorano; per il vicinato di tutte le età; per i bambini, radici della società, per formarli a diventare i giardinieri planetari del futuro.

**Gilles Clément taught us to look at the garden like a planet. Insects, birds, plants, trees, oxygen and water co-exist in a garden in synergy. And who takes care of the garden? Planetary gardeners. This metaphor becomes the heart of the winning project of the Next Landmark 2020 international contest announced by the Iris Group Foundation, which translates into a very light intervention that respects the existing structure, but it adds value through the insertion of a few elements: the urban edge, at the entrance, is enhanced with a new green façade; the parterre is designed as a playground. From the access, the new driveway holds a coloured insert (also to facilitate disabilities) that acts as a guide to the internal paths; the “green” area expands. It is defined by a large interactive ring. The ideal lines that connect the trees protect the areas and suggest their uses with slight changes of surfaces and materials, always natural. The equipment is inserted between small shrubs, child friendly, and the canopies become roofs for the classrooms. How can the garden of a kindergarten become a beautiful common space for everyone to live in? This project tries to respond to the possible needs of users, also opening up to the city: i.e., for parents who wait. It would be nice to sit and chat among plants and flowers. A good place for teachers; for the neighbourhood of all ages; for children, the roots of society, to train them to become the planetary gardeners of the future.**



**Giardino planetario Coccapani planimetria di progetto**

**l'angolo delle piante spontanee osservare, scoprire, accettare le differenze**

Il giardino spontaneo educa i bambini ad apprezzare la "spontanea diversità" e a dare valore anche a quelle piante considerate erbacce.

**l'aula dell'orlo ascoltare**

L'unico muro di recinzione in corrispondenza di alberi di alloro sempreverdi diventa occasione per ripensare un'aula all'aperto con una nuova pavimentazione realizzata con sezioni di tronchi posati con schema autobloccante su un letto di sabbia; la lavagna potrà essere posizionata sul muro, inglobare una bacheca di sughero. Alcune sedute sono realizzate con tronchi che salgono rispetto alla quota del pavimento.

**lo spazio dell'attesa attendere, isolarsi**

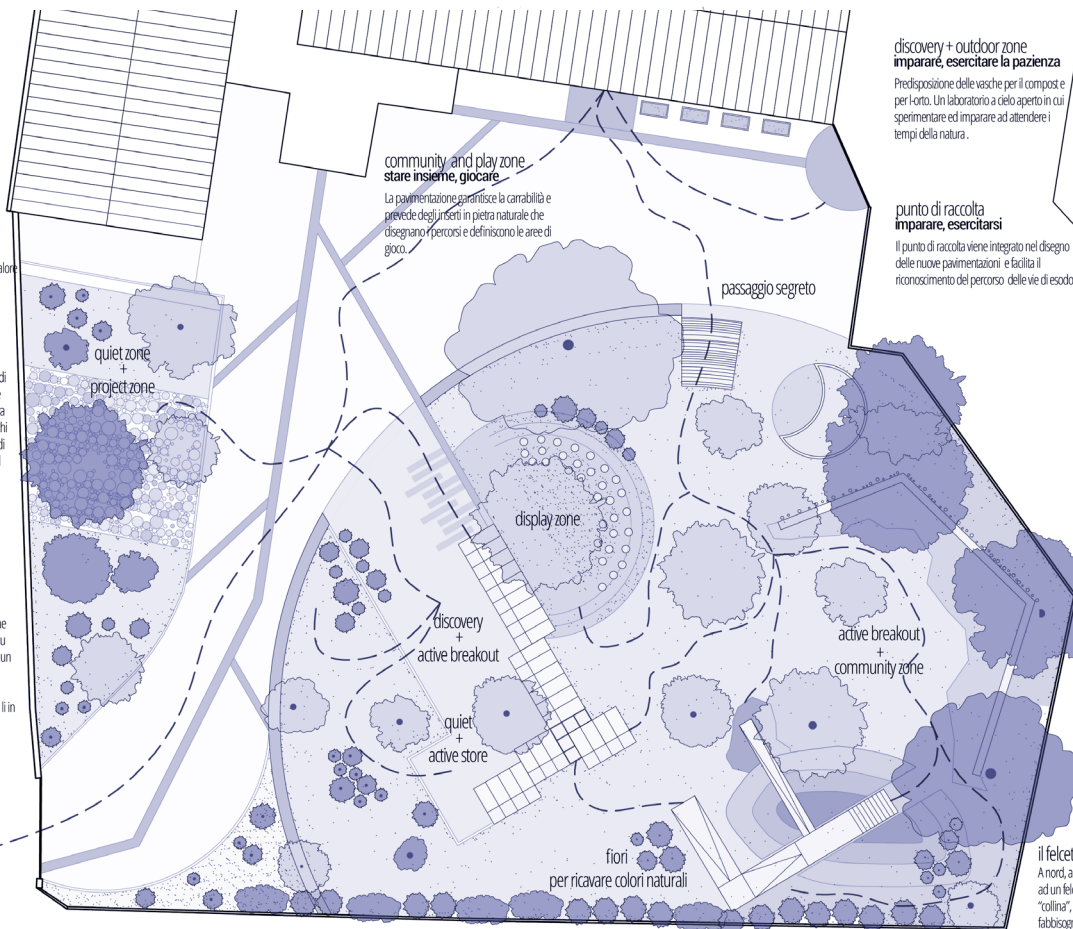
attendere qualcosa o qualcuno è un'azione che merita il giusto luogo dove compiersi; seduti su una panchina sotto l'ombra di un albero o su un lungo bordo colorato è possibile attendere, isolarsi a pensare o riposare, anche le piante cresciute nella nursery possono essere riposte lì in attesa di essere portate a casa o in un nuovo giardino.

**l'angolo del benvenuto ospitare**

il primo angolo di giardino che si incontra all'arrivo è il punto di accoglienza per tutti gli esseri viventi grazie alla presenza di arbusti colorati, fiori e profumati.

**il bordo urbano migliorare la qualità urbana**

I confini di un giardino sono i bordi della città. In legno si recupera esteticamente il confine del giardino visibile dalla strada, realizzando al contempo l'occasione di supporto stabile per piante rampicanti previste all'ingresso



**discovery + outdoor zone imparare, esercitare la pazienza**

Predisposizione delle vasche per il compost e per l'orto. Un laboratorio a cielo aperto in cui sperimentare ed imparare ad attendere i tempi della natura.

**punto di raccolta imparare, esercitarsi**

Il punto di raccolta viene integrato nel disegno delle nuove pavimentazioni e facilita il riconoscimento del percorso delle vie di esodo.

**community and play zone stare insieme, giocare tra gli alberi**

Le aree di gioco libero sono disseminate all'interno di tutto il giardino sviluppando l'area con maggiore estensione frontalmente all'edificio scolastico. Le aree di gioco libero all'interno del giardino sono caratterizzate dall'utilizzo di pavimentazione antirumore realizzata mediante l'uso di corteccia slusa di essere resinose. Tutte le attrezzature si dispongono tra gli alberi, il uniscono e creano lo spazio di interazione tra i bambini e la natura.

**la rampa, le scale e lo scivolo sulla "collina" giocare, osservare**

Il distello diventa occasione per giocare a differenti livelli, giocare con il concetto di scala, rampa e scivolo. Un castello dove rifugiarsi mentre si gioca a nascondino o dove scoprire un felceto nascosto

Fig. 1 – Philosophy of the project Coccapani Planetary Garden and Fig. 2 – Plan of the project Coccapani Planetary Garden.



## COCCAPANI PLANETARY GARDEN

Tackling the theme of places destined for education in the planning field attests to the profound influence that architecture exercises on generations, because it concerns the community both in the private and public spheres. The role of school architecture in Italy is in fact currently at the centre of important debates that aim to open new frontiers onto a renewed way of living in school spaces, implementing the role of design through the multidisciplinary dialogue between pedagogy, sociology, and neuroscience.

The ninth edition of the Next Landmark international architecture and design competition, titled An Educational Garden in Fiorano Modenese, was dedicated to young architects and designers who graduated from 2010 onwards, and who were asked to submit a redevelopment project for outdoor areas of the Casa Coccapani nursery school in Fiorano Modenese (MO). The project was then carried out in collaboration with the Luigi Coccapani Foundation and the Municipality of Fiorano Modenese. The Next Landmark invitation offered a precious opportunity for international discussion on the role of the pedagogical garden, inviting people to propose design ideas for the Coccapani kindergarten<sup>1</sup>.

The external areas belonging to schools represent learning environments that are very often marginal or completely unused. In place of this, it

would be very important to carry out pedagogical activities to the point of them becoming spaces for reconnection with nature, especially in urban settings. It is from a very broad idea of garden enhancement and from contextualized, careful and multidisciplinary research that *Coccapani Planetary Garden*<sup>2</sup>, the winning project, takes shape (Fig.1). The jury rewarded this project with first prize because the proposal comprehensively addressed the challenge balanced manner to preserve the peculiar features of the existing with a set of delicate interventions without missing the opportunity to provide a new identity to the Coccapani kindergarten outdoor spaces. The project narrative unfolds according to a sequence of frames, each featuring a pedagogical purpose and a spatial unity designed to explore nature, others and self. The project offers to the young members of the Coccapani community an open palimpsest on which, they and their educators, staff and families, can write their stories and grow together. Designed for making nature a driving force in the development of the child, the Planetary Garden is the proposal that best encompassed the competition's targets and that demonstrated its economic, social and environmental sustainability through accurate metrics.

The design of the space arises from the desire to trigger a process in which the school becomes a space for growth and learning. Three dimensions gravitate and interact around it: individual, collective, natural. Social, cultural, technological

and economic aspects also come into play. The garden opens up to the community and supports care processes which, in a sustainable approach, not only increase the participatory value for the actors, but also decrease the related maintenance costs. In this way, the garden in itself and the educational garden becomes an opportunity to gather natural and human ecosystems: different species and different generations in a common and shared space (Fig.2).

The project also seeks to redefine a new idea of plant beauty by also include self-seeding plants, which reiterates and accompanies respect for diversity as a sustainable action. Can today's children become the future gardeners of the world of tomorrow? From this question emerges the hypothesis that the school can become an urban nursery, where young plants can be grown that can be used to plant new public spaces at low cost. Architecture supports this social and cultural process by generating suitable spatial environments through the use of materials of natural origin; permeable flooring, the recovery of rainwater, and expanding the green area that invites people to cross and discover. The shape of the space, the choice of materials, colours and new sensory experiences, are inspired by pedagogical and free play principles according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this way, it is possible to imagine a place where children play and learn from nature and its little wild creatures, releasing



a vital energy that crosses the school fence and makes a dialogue with the surroundings, with people, and with the architecture.

Planetary Garden is also a tribute and clear reference to Gilles Clément, the Master who taught us to look at the garden as a planet. Whether small or large, insects, birds, plants and trees co-inhabit a garden, and planetary gardeners take care of the garden. This metaphor becomes the heart of the project that translates into a very delicate intervention that

does not distort the existing structure but enhances it through the inclusion of a few elements:

- the urban border at the entrance, which is embellished with a new façade made of wooden slats designed to accommodate the green of the climbing plants. The school enclosure protects but addresses the context to invite people to take care of the border wall between the school and the street; it also shows that something has changed.
- the parterre is designed as

a single large playground in which the asphalt is replaced with permeable flooring. From the entrance, the driveway becomes an opportunity for a coloured concrete insert (to facilitate visual and motor disabilities) that directs the internal paths towards the entrance to the school by way of different material and chromatic consistency.

- the green area expands and is defined by a large, inhabited ring, achievable in coloured concrete, which embraces the space, becoming

Giardino planetario Coccapani  
abaco attrezzature pedagogiche

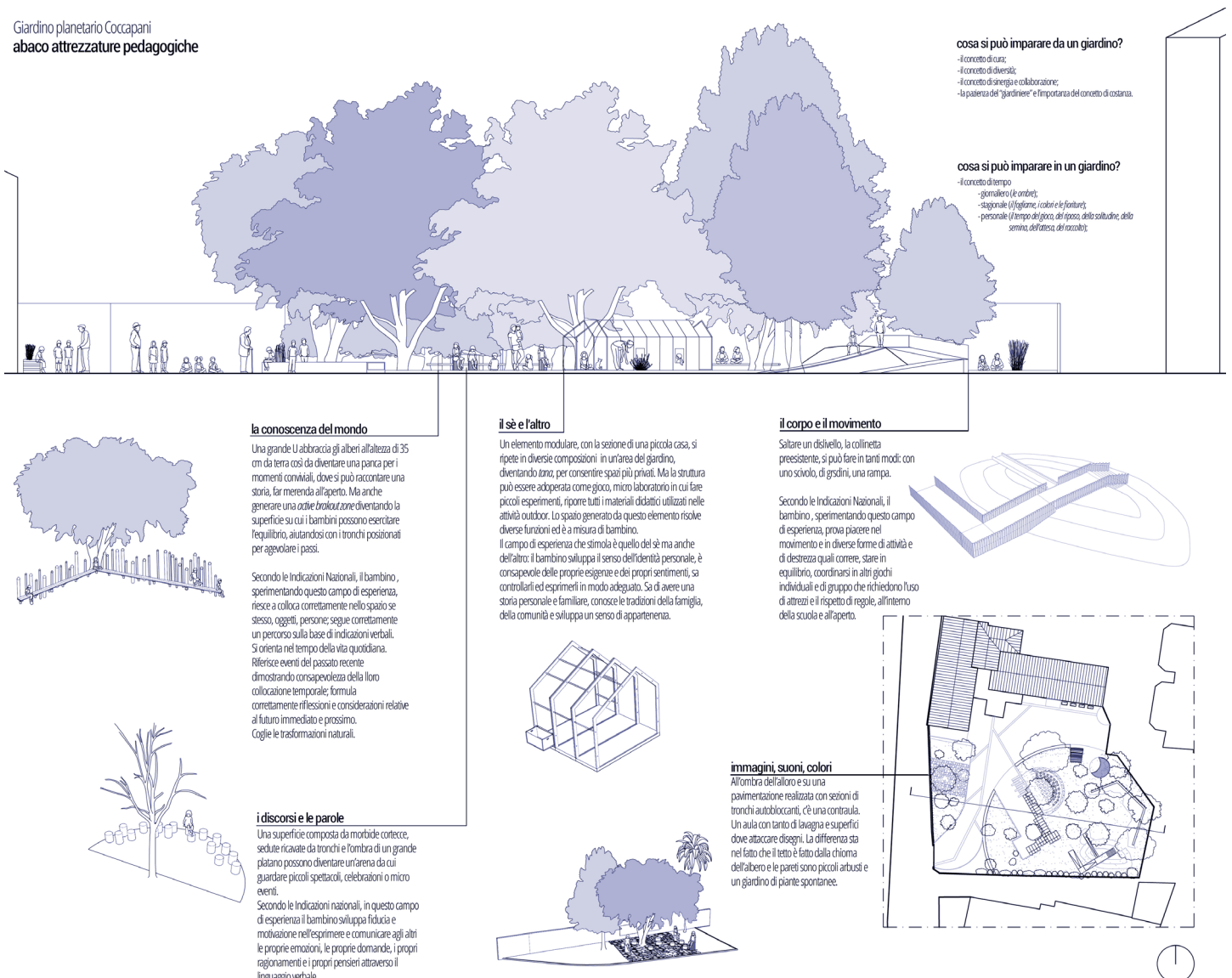


Fig. 3 – Abacus of pedagogical elements of the project Coccapani Planetary Garden.

seat, threshold - according to different heights - and inviting people to cross and discover. The ideal lines that unite the trees define the areas for games, and suggest their uses by slight changes of surfaces and materials, always natural. Equipment is inserted between small shrubs, suitable for children, and the foliage acts as a roof for external classrooms and the various pedagogical areas (Fig.3).

How can a kindergarten garden become a beautiful common space for everyone to

live in?

The idea that guides the project tries to respond to the possible needs of users, but also opening up to the city: for parents and grandparents who accompany, wait for, and participate in their children's activities. Everything is also designed for adults who accompany the children so that they can pleasantly hold back and admire the beauty of the flowers, sit and chat among plants and trees. For teachers the project facilitates the implementation of teaching,

thanks to the introduction of equipment designed to respond to the National Guidelines of the five Fields of Experience. Logs, bark or gravel floors are transformed into chairs and carpets, and they can read fairy tales outdoors, for example. Small shows and performances can take place in an arena under the large plane tree. The floor becomes the book of shadows, and hour after hour they move and draw trees in motion. For all ages of the neighbourhood, they can enjoy the new space and contribute to sharing the garden when ready

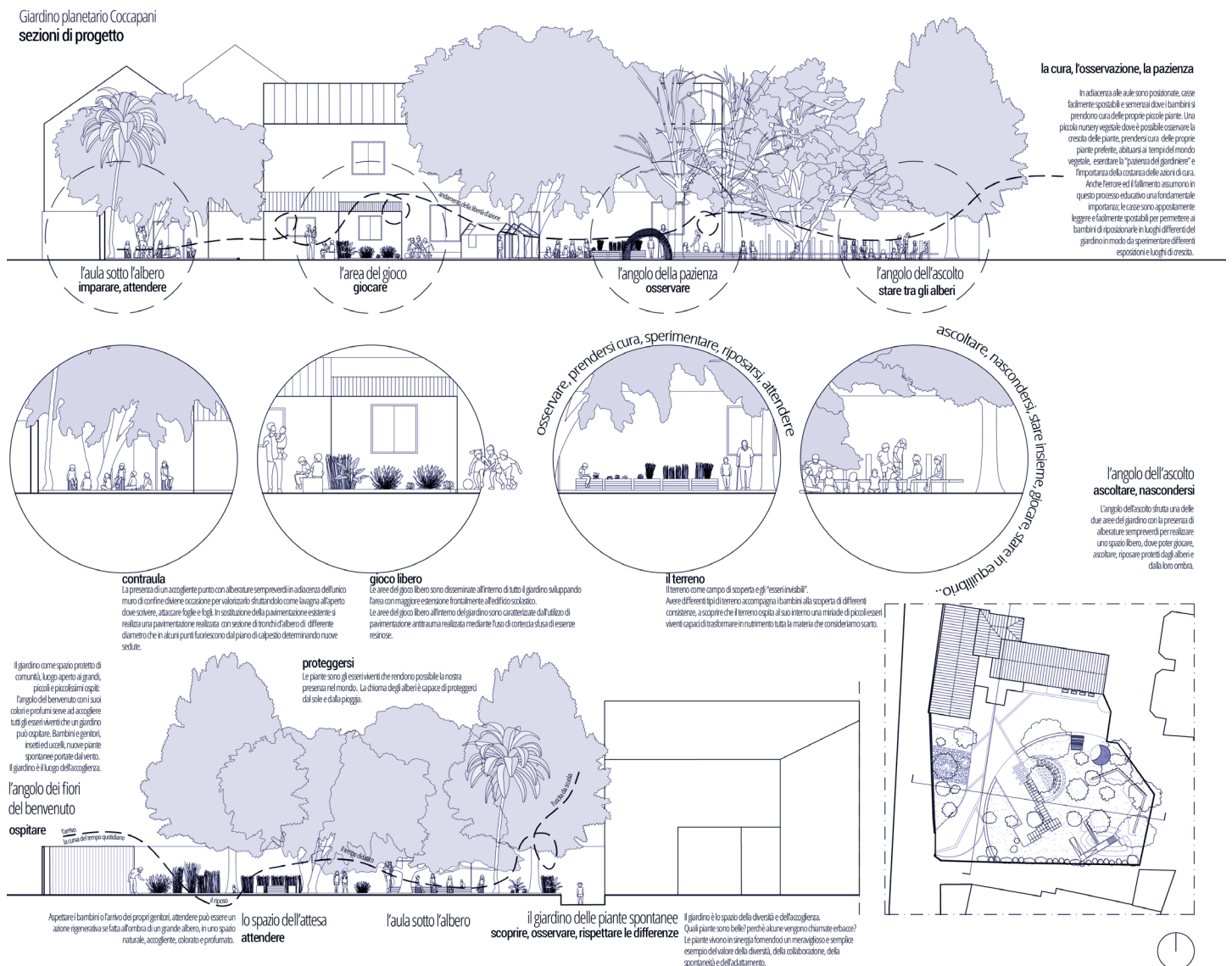


Fig. 4 – Sections of the project Coccapani Planetary Garden.



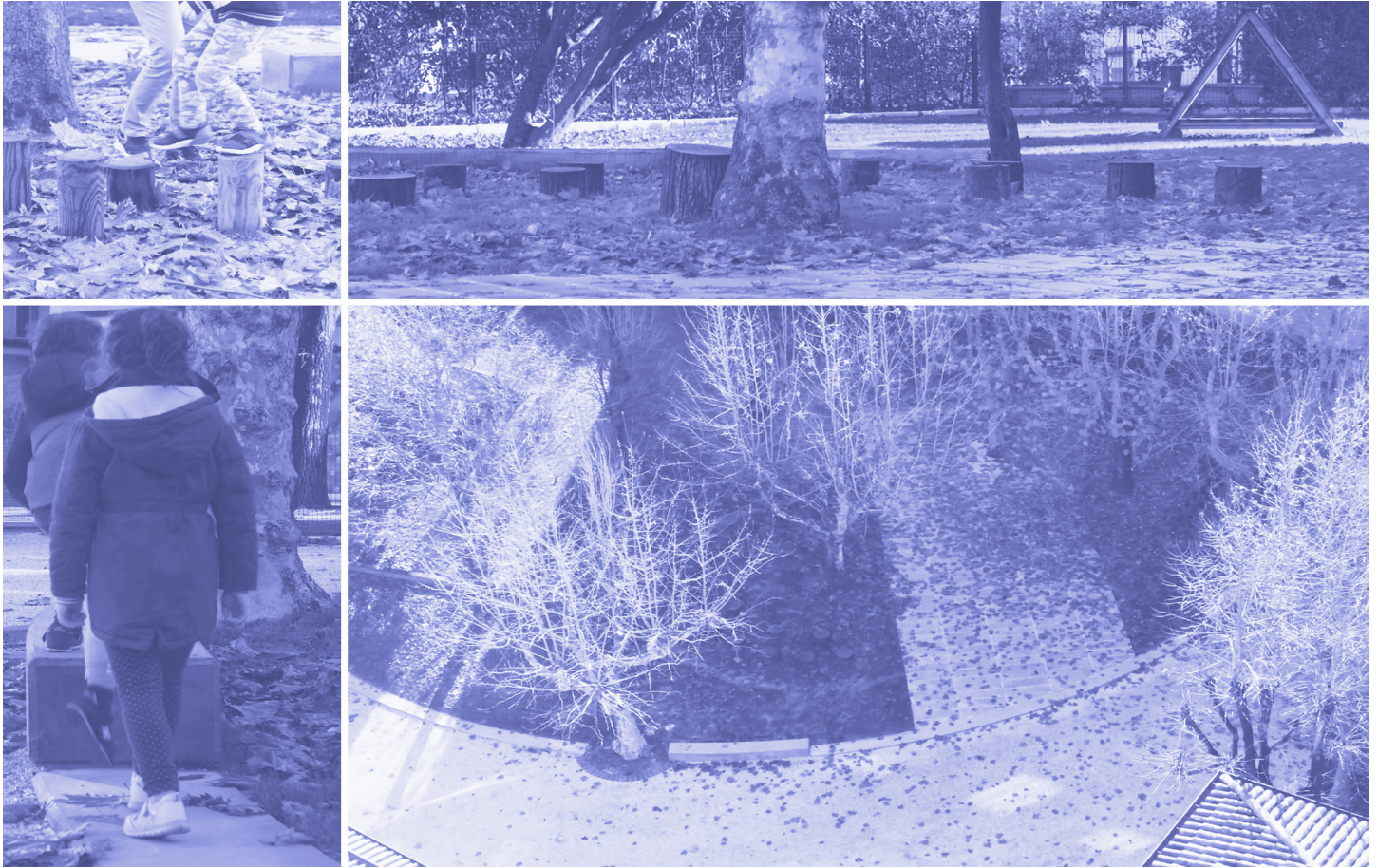


Fig. 5 – Realized Coccapani Planetary Garden project. Pictures of Iris Ceramica Group.

to be an urban nursery, where to exchange plants, donate seeds and knowledge during opening occasions to the city (Fig.4).

But first of all, the garden is for children, the roots of society, to whom a special space must be reserved where every day they can be protagonists of new adventures and train themselves to become, in the broadest and deepest sense of the term, the planetary gardeners of the future.

From an early age they can grow in harmony with all living creatures, guardians of principles of respect and sharing.

Can all this happen in a garden? Probably yes, if it is a planetary garden.

It is important to look at the living dimension of these spaces, and not only at the interiors we are familiar with: even the external spaces must be a concrete part of the architecture of the school. Consequently, it must be equipped and used in order to become a succession of areas in which to experiment, learn and grow together, and that above all does not end in the miniaturization of furniture and objects according to age. The future of school architecture must also enhance the role of schools as spaces open to the city and communities, rediscovering their multiple possible uses and potentials, as they are among the only public buildings currently left in the neighbourhood (Fig.5).

The project was realized and

thanks to the feedback from the teachers and management, it was possible to understand how the space has come to be used. The garden is currently the space of the classroom for educational and recreational activities outside, it supports the functions made necessary by the Pandemic, and lends itself to welcoming the principles of sharing expressed in the design idea with which it was conceived.

The theme of the common space, designed and built with, and in nature, translates the projects objective of educating children to beauty, increasing the qualitative aspects of schools, and accustoming children to the processes of care for the common space so that they can become the citizens of tomorrow.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Except from the motivations of the jury <https://www.floornature.com/nextlandmark/2020edition/>

<sup>2</sup>Planetary Garden is the title of the winning project of the Next Landmark 2020 competition designed by architect Bruna Sigillo. The name is inspired by the renowned landscape architect Gilles Clément, a prestigious cultural reference. <http://www.gillesclement.com/cat-jardinplanetait-Le-Jardin-Planetaire>.

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