

TIME
SPACE
EXISTENCE

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The architect as the instrument for change.

"Embracing human-centered design means believing that all problems, even the seemingly intractable ones like poverty, gender equality, and clean water, are solvable. Moreover, it means believing that the people who face those problems every day are the ones who hold the key to their answer. Human-centered design offers problem solvers of any stripe a chance to design with communities, to deeply understand the people they're looking to serve, to dream up scores of ideas, and to create innovative new solutions rooted in people's actual needs." – IDEO Field guide to human centered design.

This approach is core to our design philosophy. Architects have the power to create physical environments that challenge social injustices of the past. In the action of engaging with marginalised communities, who have seldom had the ability to exercise their own agency, it is an opportunity to assist these self-same people to create their own spaces and shape their futures.

This becomes the architect's challenge. The challenge is how to convey the experiences of the millions of people, while retaining dignity. Through story-telling we can gain a better understanding of our shared humanity.

Our garden exhibition deals with the issue of the migrant crisis in Europe, while reflecting on a similar situation in South Africa, where migrants flowing into South Africa from the rest of the continent, has led to xenophobic attacks. The idea for a living museum was conceived as a response to the question 'how might we create empathy for refugees?' and the follow on question, 'how could we start telling different stories on the topic of the refugee crisis in order to change attitudes and create a new narrative?'

A physical disruption of the urban landscape can become the catalyst for change. The concept of a temporary, modular, locally fabricated piece of architecture that would transform an environment for a limited period of time and encourage engagement, was the vision for the Museum of Human Migration (MoHM). It is imagined that this living museum could be placed in a historically meaningful urban space in a city, a contested space, to create a forced tension. It becomes a reflection on a society that is supposedly orderly and well-structured, being juxtaposed to the perceived invasion and disruption by the refugees. It forces dialogue around issues that are uncomfortable to deal with.

In this case, the physical transformation of the landscape is temporary, but the transformation of peoples' attitudes that witness, contribute and experience the content of the museum, is permanent.

