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## **Designing with the Participation of the Community – an On-Going Project of Redesigning a School Yard in Serbia**

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Is it possible to gather ideas from school children and teachers, translate them into design language and build them into an architectural design of a school yard?

With this project we intend to investigate and broaden our knowledge of the methodology and process of participatory and cooperative design in the specific environment of a local elementary school in Serbia with limited financial resources. The research is focused on creating methods and techniques of gathering data from all user groups (children, school staff, parents), weighing them with respect to the available spatial, organizational and financial conditions and, finally, formulating the relevant architectural brief.

The research input data focused mainly on diverse uses of the school yard space, problems users encounter daily, and multiple needs of school yard users. The data was collected through: interviews with the school staff and parents; hands-on workshops with school-children, producing drawings/models and led by urban design students as mentors; questionnaires for all categories of users. The data gathered was analyzed both statistically and through qualitative content analysis, and the research outcomes were then applied by the design team as a starting point for developing the architectural design of the school yard.

Since the research showed that user-centered design process can benefit significantly from developing new methods of gathering "design data" from direct users and that "translating" them into the design language is a powerful design tool, it can be used as a case study for further research in the field of participatory design in limited conditions.