

Designing Hybrid Spaces

ENVISIONING PLURAL ECOSYSTEMS AND SOCIO-CULTURAL
PRACTICES FOR REGENERATIVE URBAN FUTURES

Edited by

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PART 2

The Public Value of Hybrid Spaces

9. The social value proposition of Socio-Cultural Hybrid Spaces: insights from the OSMOSI Mapping

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the preliminary partial results of the OSMOSI mapping, which investigates socio-cultural hybrid spaces as enablers of social innovation through cultural practices. Based on 24 survey responses from Lombardy and Sicily Italian regions, the analysis presented here focuses on the social dimension of a broader sustainability framework that also includes economic and environmental aspects. The chapter explores the spaces' social value propositions, including their origins, promoters, identity, main activities, accessibility and the types of publics they engage – key elements that contribute to fostering social innovation. The findings highlight the relational and public-oriented nature of these spaces and outline a shared set of values, ranging from social inclusion and cohesion to territorial and cultural regeneration, including artistic and cultural innovation, critical education, and sustainability. Key patterns emerge that may inform broader policy and research on socio-cultural infrastructure.

9.1 Why and How Mapping Socio-Cultural Hybrid Spaces

In recent years, socio-cultural hybrid spaces (SCHS) have gained increasing relevance in the reconfiguration of urban environments, as catalyst spaces central to processes of change within the social and urban fabric of a city (Ostanel, 2017). These spaces often operate at the intersection of culture, social innovation, community engagement and urban experimentation (Sica *et al.*, 2024, Trapanese & Mariotti, 2022): a hybridity that challenges conventional categorizations and identification within established public governance and policy frameworks.

Mapping these spaces is a way for recognising their impact on cities and communities, through their economic, cultural, and social value, and understanding their role in processes of urban and social transformation. The mapping results can provide evidence-based insights to inform public strategies and supporting policy and governance. Furthermore, the mapping presented in this chapter aims for a deeper analysis of the diverse identities, governance models, and spatial configurations of SCHS across different regional contexts. It is hoped that this process of mapping will contribute to fostering networking and knowledge sharing among these spaces, thereby encouraging collaboration, peer learning, and the co-development of innovative practices.

In Italy, previous mapping initiatives have laid important groundwork for recognising socio-cultural hybrid spaces: the national Call to Action by cheFare¹ (2020–2021) collected data on more than 720 spaces through an open survey, offering the first large-scale snapshot of their diffusion and characteristics. At the city level, the 2021 Milan survey – conducted within the creation of the *Hybrid Spaces Network*² – mapped 26 entities and emerged as a bottom-up policy tool, still active, aimed at supporting de-functionalised spaces through formal recognition and tailored public strategies. Within this framework, OSMOSI positions itself as action-research which, among other actions, includes a research-driven mapping initiative focused on the Italian regions of Lombardy and Sicily. As presented in the paper *OSMOSI research Project: a mapping process for Socio-Cultural Hybrid Spaces* (Galluzzo *et al.*, under publication) the process was

Note 1.

The *Call to Action* was a research project led by cheFare, based on a public questionnaire addressed to new cultural centers, cultural operators, and their audiences, with the aim of creating a national mapping of these initiatives across Italy. Active from February 2020 to December 2021, the Call collected 845 spontaneous submissions from owners, organizers, and visitors of new cultural centers, leading to the identification of more than 720 spaces. The results: <https://www.che-fare.com/pubblicazioni/lacall-to-action>.

Note 2.

The document *Hybrid Spaces of Milan. 1 Manifesto, 1 Questionnaire, 1 Map for the 15-Minute City* became the starting point for dialogue with the municipal administration, which in 2022 recognized these spaces as local hubs and promoters of welfare. On an experimental basis, the City established the *Network of Hybrid Spaces* serving as a platform for dialogue and an incubator of new initiatives. The Manifesto: http://www.lastecca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/sSpazi-ibridi-socioculturali-BOOK_-compressed-1-1.pdf.

developed through a mixed-method approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007), combining desk research, surveys, in-depth interviews, and follow-up activities. This methodology aimed to comprehensively understand SCHS by integrating quantitative and qualitative data. The first phase included desk research and interviews to key actors and part of the OSMOSI support network, such as BASE Milano and Farm Cultural Park. These engagements, together with the previous mapping and the literature, helped identify the key characteristics and challenges of SCHS and informed the development of the survey structure. The questionnaire – the core data collection tool – was structured around a sustainability framework that incorporates three interrelated dimensions: social, economic, and environmental (Dempsey *et al.*, 2011; Folke *et al.*, 2005). Eight sections were developed, presented in the Table 1. The survey includes both open- and closed-ended questions to balance structured data with interpretive insights.

Table 1.
Sections and topics of
the survey.

Sections	Topics
Contact Information	Full name, role within the organisation, email address
Identity and History of the Space	Name, location, self-definition, founding year and initial conditions, promoters, legal status, affiliated organisations, ownership of the space
Size and Context	Square meters, number of staff and visitors, geographical context, nearby similar spaces
Value Proposal	Vision, mission, social innovation as outcome
People and Content	Collaboration network, target audience, main activities and functions, participation, and community engagement
Accessibility	Physical barriers, sensory and cognitive accessibility, plural communication, economic accessibility
Resources and Management	Revenue sources, turnover, net income, amount of public/private funding, relationships with public administration
Built Environment	Floor plan, spatial performance, acoustic, thermal, and visual comfort

The survey was distributed to 80 identified socio-cultural hybrid spaces (62 in Lombardy, 18 in Sicily), selected based on criteria of multi-functionality, cultural focus, public permeability, and through nominations from other SCHS and experts. After a 12-month data collection window, 24 (15 in Lombardy, 9 in Sicily) spaces responded, data up to

June 2025. While the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional contexts of Lombardy and Sicily differ significantly this chapter adopts a unified analytical lens. The data collected have been treated without disaggregating by region, to identify common patterns, shared values, and recurrent practices across the diverse realities involved. Although regional specificities influence how SCHS operate, the aim here is to highlight transversal tendencies and structural features that may inform broader reflections on the role of SCHS within the socio-spatial configuration of contemporary cities. It should be noted that these data presented here are exploratory and derive from a relatively small number of responses compared to the total sample identified. As such, they should not be considered statistically representative of the wider population of SCHS. The findings are instead intended to provide indicative insights and to stimulate further investigation. Data analysis was conducted through a combination of quantitative processing (to identify patterns, distributions, and typologies) and qualitative coding (to extract emergent themes and narratives). This mixed-method approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the data by integrating numerical trends – even if not representative – with contextual insights (Christensen *et al.*, 2015). The open responses were particularly valuable for identifying issues not fully captured by predefined indicator.

This chapter focuses on the results emerged from the social dimension of the survey, examining the drivers and value propositions that shape these spaces, as well as the activities they carry out to foster inclusion, participation, and community engagement. The primary emphasis is on how these cultural practices contribute to social sustainability.

9.2 The genesis of Socio-Cultural Hybrid Spaces: drivers and values.

The emergence of socio-cultural hybrid spaces in Italy illustrates a complex interplay between spatial availability, social demands, and grassroots initiative. These spaces are not the result of top-down planning but rather evolve from contingencies, where needs, actors,

and opportunities converge in specific configurations. An analysis of the initial promoters of SCHS reveals a strong prevalence of bottom-up actors – cultural associations, informal collectives, social cooperatives, and individual professionals – who play a foundational role in activating and managing these places. Public institutions are present but seldom act as sole initiators, and their involvement tends to emerge later, mainly through partnerships or property concessions. In fact, in about one-third of the cases (9 in total), the spaces are publicly owned and granted through concession agreements, often tied to specific funding programmes or policy contexts. In the remaining two-thirds, however, spaces are rented (in 8 cases), privately owned (6 cases), or held under mixed public-private arrangements (1 case).

The survey revealed that, in some instances, SCHS originated from the need to provide a physical home for cultural or social initiatives already in progress. These were projects that required a stable venue to expand and systematize their activities. For example, certain associations or artistic collectives sought environments in which to consolidate their practices, deliver workshops, or engage local populations in ongoing creative processes. A clear example is Everest – Spazio alla Cultura, in Milan, which was established to provide a home for an already active cultural association focused on performance activities. In other cases, it was the space itself that initiated the process. Abandoned or underutilized buildings posed challenges to owners or municipalities, including safety concerns and degradation, but also opened possibilities for reactivation through cultural and civic engagement. The availability of such spaces catalysed new projects that transformed these voids into resources for public use. Badia Lost & Found in Sicily exemplifies this trajectory: the cooperative promoted the cultural reactivation of an abandoned public spaces to reconnect local communities with their heritage. Sometimes happens that these two conditions emerge simultaneously: a latent project in search of a site and a space in search of purpose. Artepassante initiative, in Milan, was developed at the intersection of two complementary needs: on one side, a network of educators and parents sought locations to pursue their cultural mission; on the other, the property owner (in this case, a public transport infrastructure entity) faced pressure to re-

habilitate non-secure transit areas lacking programmed investment. Through this confluence, a form of low-cost but high-impact urban intervention became possible.

9.2.1 Constructing Identity: self-definition and shared values

In the survey, socio-cultural hybrid spaces were asked to provide a brief self-definition, from which key patterns and shared values emerged. Two notions figured out: «*space/place*» and «*culture*». These constitute the conceptual core of their identity. Culture, whether mentioned as *culture*, *cultural*, or *socio-cultural*, is the most dominant theme, reflecting the role of these centres in producing, hosting, and enabling cultural and artistic practices. Equally significant is the recurrence of the term *space (or place)*, which evokes the importance of a spatial dimension where things can happen, where relations, activities, collective experiences are enacted. The term space is often qualified with adjectives such as «*multifunctional*», «*multidisciplinary*», or «*hybrid*», revealing a dynamic and fluid environment where artistic, social, and civic uses coexist. Around these ideas of space and culture, values such as community and social inclusion emerge strongly, highlighting a focus on citizenship, collective agency, and participatory practices. Notably, when asked if they would characterise their organisation as a gathering place, all but one of the spaces gave an affirmative response. As well as, the use of co-design processes for activity selection is denied by only two of the twenty-four of them. These responses reinforce the idea that these spaces operate not only as cultural infrastructures but also as relational and community-building environments. Also, the urban and territorial dimension stands out, in fact terms like «*urban regeneration*», «*redevelopment*», and «*territorial activation*» point to SCHS' active role in transforming cities and neighbourhoods. Someone described it as an «*urban refuge*», suggesting a safe and welcoming environment strictly connected with the surrounding. Lastly, many of these spaces define themselves through terms such as «*hub*», «*living lab*», «*laboratory*», or «*platform*», underlining their experimental, open, and enabling nature. They are seen as sites for testing new models of cultural production, civic engagement, and sustainable living. The analysis of the value frameworks shared by the surveyed

SCHS reveals a coherent set of orientations that closely mirrors their self-definitions. Simplifying the responses given to the question «*Mission: what are the results and the value that you aim to generate? How? For whom?*» recurring themes point to a shared cultural and social grammar. At the centre of this framework there is a strong focus on social inclusion and cohesion, followed by values linked to community life, proximity, and participatory practices, as exemplified by the statement: «*The value is represented by the creation of symmetric and reciprocal relationships between individuals and communities*» (survey respondent, Moltivolti). Other prominent themes include territorial and cultural regeneration, where spaces act as engines of urban renewal – «*The initiative transforms culture into a collective exercise of well-being, regenerating urban spaces and creating a sense of belonging and local identity*» (survey respondent, Badia Lost & Found). Artistic and cultural innovation and dissemination are also recurrent, highlighting the role of these spaces as experimental and interdisciplinary laboratories. Finally, additional values such as critical education and sustainability in various forms further expand this vision, for instance in the mission «*to spread systemic thinking and stimulate curiosity, research, and the design of sustainable solutions to improve human conditions*» (survey respondent, C.I.Q.). Altogether, these orientations contribute to a broader vision of culture as a democratic and transformative force.

9.3 Accessibility as practice of social innovation

Socio-cultural hybrid spaces host a variety of activities and functions, which, among other goals, aim to foster social inclusion and community engagement. While most of these activities are cultural, some are non-cultural – either because they are closely connected to cultural practices or because they help ensure the space's economic sustainability. The Figure 1 outlines the main activities carried out by the SCHS involved in the OSMOSI survey. While the categories listed here serve as general descriptors, it's important to note that each label conceals a rich variety of formats, audiences, and approaches. What

is generically referred to as training and education for instance, may include informal workshops, technical labs, or peer-to-peer learning sessions. Similarly, artistic performance ranges from experimental theatre to site-specific events, and hybrid music-theatre experiences. Despite these specificities, the data highlights recurring clusters of activity that reflect shared operational models and purposes. Training and education are among the most widespread activities, indicating a strong capacity-building focus across spaces, linked to the value of critical education. Others public engagement formats such as talks and conferences are also very common, suggesting a drive to foster debate and cultural dissemination. These are often combined with artistic production and performance, particularly theatre, music, and multimedia, which remain central both in identity and programming.

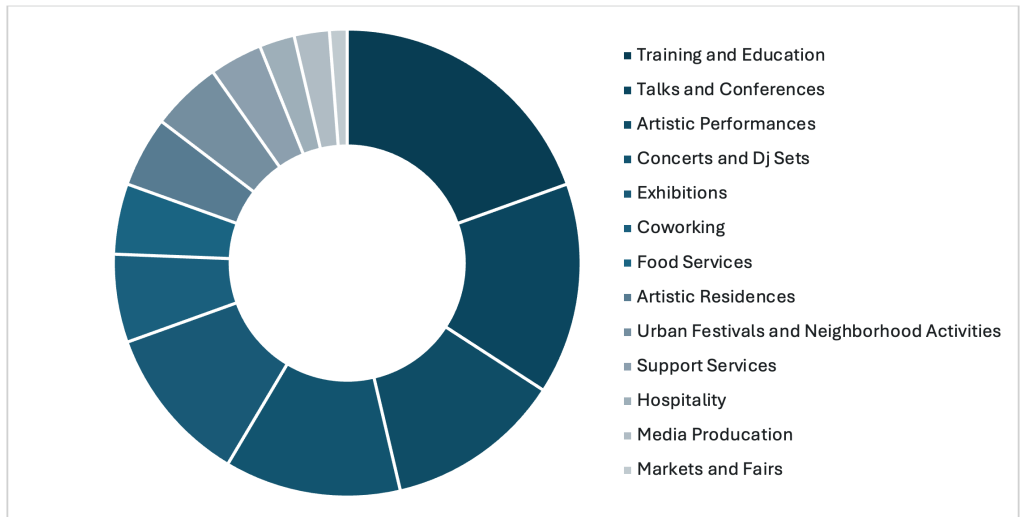


Figure 1. Prevalent activity categories in Socio-cultural Hybrid Spaces.

Accessibility emerges as a crucial condition for ensuring that SCHS truly serve their public-oriented vocation. To capture this dimension, survey participants were asked whether their spaces included freely accessible areas. Out of the 24 initiatives surveyed, 20 reported having areas open to the public. However, the permeability of this access, understood as the degree and modalities through which accessibility is enacted, varied significantly. In some cases, entry was restricted to specific times (e.g., «*during events*», «*once a week*») or conditional

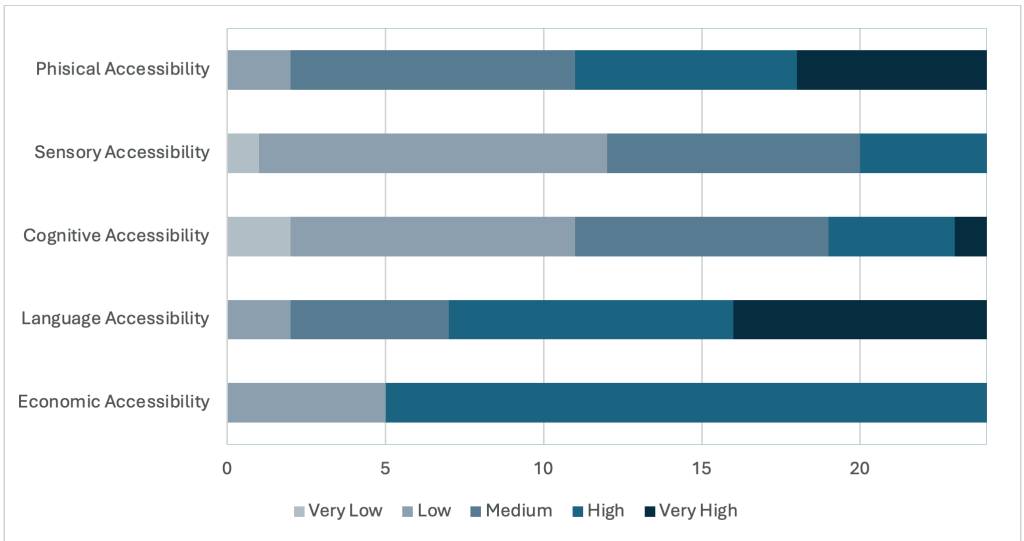


Figure 2.
Distribution of
Accessibility ratings by
dimension.

upon membership. Only 16 out of 24 respondents stated that they offered spaces which are always accessible, without requiring participation in specific activities. While accessibility refers here to the general condition of public openness, permeability highlights the nuanced spectrum between openness and restriction that characterizes how this condition is concretely practiced.

Building on this, the survey adopted a broader understanding of accessibility inspired by the *Un’IDEA Manifesto* promoted by BASE Milano (2023). This framework expanded the analytical lens beyond spatial or physical entry, incorporating cognitive, sensory, language and economic dimensions, with the aim of capturing how SCHS enact accessibility in a holistic sense.

As illustrated in Figure 2, physical accessibility is generally well addressed, with several spaces reporting the absence of structural barriers. Language accessibility shows a similarly strong performance, with most respondents placing themselves in the medium to very high range, while strategies addressing cognitive and sensory barriers remain limited. Economic accessibility was examined through a specific question, to which the majority responded positively, confirming the existence of pricing models aimed at having a plural public. The overall picture points to an orientation towards *plurality* that, although widely recognized as a value, is not yet systematically implemented

across all dimensions. These different levels of accessibility directly shape the kinds of publics that hybrid spaces are able to engage. All surveyed initiatives involve local residents, thereby reinforcing ties with their territorial contexts. Some attract national or international visitors, while others describe their audiences as «heterogeneous and transversal».

Yet follow-up interviews reveal a discrepancy between the aspiration to inclusivity and the actual composition of publics: participants are often students, creative professionals, or culturally engaged individuals, while groups with lower educational attainment or greater socio-economic vulnerability remain underrepresented. Few spaces explicitly design activities for youth, families, or people in fragile conditions.

9.4 Final Remarks

The data and reflections presented in this chapter show how socio-cultural hybrid spaces function as infrastructures for social innovation through their cultural vocation. They originate from the encounter between local needs, abandoned spaces, and grassroots initiatives, and in doing so they transform urban voids into civic and cultural resources. This regenerative orientation positions SCHS not only as cultural venues, but also as experimental platforms for participatory approaches and sustainable urban development. Their practices to openness, community engagement, cultural activation, and shared use of space are more than programmatic choices: they operate as mechanisms for fostering social innovation. The ways in which these spaces define themselves, articulate their missions and activities, structure accessibility, and engage with publics confirm that their primary value lies in their relational function. They provide physical platforms where communities can gather, express themselves culturally, and co-create meaning and belonging, through the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1991) and collaborative design practices (Manzini, 2015).

This research also faces some limitations. Although the OSMOSI mapping involved outreach to over 80 spaces across two regions, only

24 completed the survey over a 12-month period. While this partial response rate limits the generalisability of quantitative trends, the depth and richness of the responses provide significant insight into the operational logics and values of these spaces. The sample remains qualitatively meaningful, even if numerically limited. Importantly, data collection is not yet concluded, and several months remain to enrich the survey pool. This continuation is expected to broaden the sample and reinforce the analytical and comparative capacity of the dataset. The exploratory nature of this study suggests the need for further investigation.

Expanding the OSMOSI framework to other regional or international contexts would allow for comparative analysis and contribute to understanding whether the observed patterns reflect structural features of SCHS or context-specific configurations. Future research can thus not only extend the sample but also advance the discussion on how SCHS can be situated within broader debates on cultural policy and urban regeneration. In doing so, these spaces can be interpreted as laboratories for experimenting with new models of governance, cooperation, and cultural production, where questions of accessibility, sustainability, and participation intersect. Their hybrid nature makes them relevant for addressing contemporary urban challenges – from the reactivation of underused public spaces to the fostering of social cohesion and urban commons.

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Giulia Cantaluppi: Independent researcher and president of the Association Temporiuso.net. She has been a researcher for the Project Cultures Department of the Iuav University of Venice from 2019 to 2022. PhD in Territorial Planning and Public Policy at the University IUAV of Venice (IT), graduated in Contemporary Cultural Heritage at the University of Genova (IT), with a Master in New Exhibition Formats at Escola Elisaba of Barcelona (ES). She is also a board member of the Stecca3 cultural center, referent for grants application and management of space requests for sociocultural activities.

Giorgio Castellano: Architect and PhD in Architectural Technology whose research focuses on innovative construction systems using bio-based materials, digital fabrication technologies, and distributed production models. His work integrates technological experimentation, theoretical inquiry, and design practice, aiming to critically redefine sustainability in contemporary building processes. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering, Politecnico di Milano, within the Material Balance group. He has gained international academic and professional experience, with a focus on the relationship between materiality, technology, and architectural form.

Elisa Cinelli: PhD Candidate in Design at Politecnico di Milano and a member of the POLIMI DESIS Lab within the international DESIS network. She holds an MSc in Interior and Spatial Design, with a thesis on

accommodation systems for homeless people. Her research interests include social innovation processes, creative communities, services and public spaces, and participatory design. Her doctoral work focuses on rethinking urban public spaces through the lens of young children's rights, needs, and perspectives.

Stella Civardi: Degree in Modern Literature and Modern Philology from the University of Pavia, with a thesis entitled *La performance come dispositivo di rigenerazione urbana: il caso del borgo-quartiere di Chiaravalle milanese* (rel. prof. Fabrizio Fiaschini); she obtained a master's degree in *Eventi e comunicazione per la Cultura* at the Università Cattolica di Milano. She is *cultrice della materia* for the course in *Event Dramaturgies* at the Catholic University. In addition to studying and researching the performative device in processes of urban regeneration with a cultural basis, she has also gained field experience in the field of contemporary cultural design (Milan City Council - Culture Directorate).

Marta Corubolo: Researcher at the Polimi DESIS Lab, Department of Design - Politecnico di Milano. Her research interests focus on service design and design for social innovation, codesign methods and participative processes.

Salvatore Di Dio: Doctor of Environmental Physics, he is Associate Professor of Design at the University of Palermo. He co-founded the PUSH Design Lab, Piranesi Experience and MUV, entrepreneurial initiatives that intersect social innovation, urban sustainability and sustainable mobility through design. With a background in architecture, environmental sustainability and digital services, Prof. Di Dio has led international research teams in exploring the social and environmental impacts of design. He is committed to promoting ethical design practices and preparing a future generation of designers capable of tackling global challenges.

Roberto Falanga: Assistant Research professor at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon. His research focuses on the participation of citizens in decision-making processes beyond the ballot

box. He has been Principal Investigator at the host institution and team member of several international and national research projects. He has published extensively in high-ranked international journals on participatory democracy and democratic innovations.

Marinella Ferrara: Professor of Industrial Design and History of Design and Technology at Politecnico di Milano, specializing in material innovation and design paradigms. Her research advances understanding of materials' role in contemporary design. She received the 2019 Top Innovation Award from the China Industrial Design Association and the Premio Eccellenza della Lombardia for her book *Material that Move. Smart Materials, Intelligent Design*. Ferrara directs the journal *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design*, promoting research on design, innovation, and sustainability. She serves on evaluation committees for institutions including the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research and the French National Research Agency. Her work shapes industrial design education and circular design practices.

Laura Galluzzo: Laura Galluzzo, PhD in Design, is Associate Professor at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano. She coordinates the POLIMI DESIS Lab, part of the international DESIS Network (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability). Her research focuses on participatory projects concerning public spaces and services, with specific expertise in the co-design of spaces as activators of collaborative actions, community hubs, and incubators of social practices. She has participated in several national and international research projects on these topics. Her work investigates the relationship between Spaces and Services (S+S) design, with a strong interest in temporary interventions, domestic and urban transformations, queering design processes, plural public spaces, and places of coexistence.

Isabella Inti: Founding member of *Temporioso.net*, a network dedicated to the temporary reuse of vacant urban spaces and CEO of *Temporioso srl*, which leads initiatives on revitalizing abandoned sites. An architect and landscape technician, she holds a PhD in Territorial Planning and Public Policies from IUAV. Inti currently teaches Urban Planning at Politecnico and co-directs the M-US-T Master in Tem-

porary Uses program, focusing on innovative strategies for activating unused spaces. She is currently president of Stecca3, a hybrid socio-cultural space in Milan focused on community engagement and cultural events, continuing her commitment to fostering inclusive and dynamic urban environments. Her work centers on revitalizing abandoned spaces and large brownfield sites.

Paola La Scala: Lecturer and Research Fellow in Design at the University of Palermo. An architect with a Ph.D. in Exhibition Design, her work explores the role of cultural practices in the reactivation of public space, with a particular focus on sustainable tourism, participatory design, and museum experiences in both physical and digital contexts. She has taken part in national and international projects involving traditional and advanced technologies for the enhancement of cultural and architectural heritage. Her recent research investigates how temporary architecture can serve as a catalyst for urban and social reactivation, especially in smaller towns, and how the design of cultural practices can foster community engagement and drive social innovation by enabling new forms of collective use, care, and re-appropriation of the urban environment.

Tecla Livi: PhD, senior expert in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies, as well as in the strategic design of territorial development and cohesion policies. She has extensive experience in university teaching and socio-economic research and serves as a senior consultant for Public Administrations and social partners. Her research focuses on social and urban innovation policies, and she designs and supports processes of social innovation, urban regeneration, and place-based local development. From 2016 to 2023, she was a member of the Evaluation and Analysis Unit for Programming (Department for Cohesion Policies, Presidency of the Council of Ministers). Prior to this, she spent over fifteen years working on the planning and management of urban regeneration programs for the City of Turin.

Andrea Manciaracina: PhD in Design and Researcher at the Design Department of the Politecnico di Milano. His research focuses

on the relationship between communication and graphic design, public spaces and services through the mediation of technologies to experiment with visual communication systems that promote spaces and services, visual tools to implement strategies oriented towards social innovation, and communication systems that promote human interaction in spaces. Attentive to these issues, he contributes to the field of design by participating in researches and conferences, writing articles and publishing books.

Roberta Mastropirro: Born in Milan in 1974. She graduated in Architecture from the Politecnico di Milano and obtained a PhD in Architecture, Urban Planning, and Conservation of Living Places. With twenty years of experience in conserving and enhancing cultural heritage, she has led and collaborated on various international projects with Architetti senza Frontiere Italy and the Lerici Foundation, gaining expertise in transferring knowledge to local communities. Since 2018, she has been a Contract Professor at the Politecnico di Milano, teaching Built Heritage and Sustainable Development. She is also a board member of the Stecca3 cultural center, overseeing space management and programming, and since 2023, she has served as vice president.

Andréia Mesacasa: Associate Professor at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS/Brazil) – Design Department. Postdoctoral researcher at the Santa Catarina State University (UDESC/Brazil). PhD in Design from the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR/Brazil). Master in Regional Development from the Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR/Brazil). Graduated in Fashion from the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC/Brazil); Her areas of interest are focused on the following themes: Fashion Design, Graphic Design, Product Development, Drawing and Illustration, Design for Sustainability.

Elton Moura Nickel: PhD in Production Engineering from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, specializing in Product and Process Engineering. With an undergraduate degree in Industrial Design, he bridges design and engineering to investigate organizational ergonomics and participatory design approaches that enhance the relationship

between environments and their users. Head of the Design Department and current Coordinator of the Graduate Program in Design at Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina, he is also Editor-in-Chief of HFD – Human Factors in Design. His work focuses on transforming systems that improve human well-being and productivity.

Ingrid Paoletti: Full Professor in the Technology of Architecture at the Politecnico di Milano. She has a PhD in Building Technology from Milan's Polytechnic University and was an associated researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is the founder of the research group in theoretical and design experimentation Material Balance, where she is involved in innovative technologies and materials to develop a new and responsible material culture. Since 2023 she has been the Rector's Delegate for Exhibitions and Events. Her books include: *L'innovazione consapevole* (Maggioli 2012), *Advanced Customization in Architectural Design and Construction* (con R. Naboni, Springer 2015), *Material Balance: A Design Equation* (Springer 2020) and *Siate Materialisti!* (Einaudi 2021).

Irene Patria: PhD candidate in Service Design for Public Administration at Sapienza University of Rome, supported by ART-ER. With a background in Advanced Design, curriculum in services, and hands-on experience in participatory projects across Europe and Kenya, she explores how design can foster inclusive and sustainable territorial development. Her work combines research, fieldwork, and co-design practices to support innovation in public services.

Elena Vittoria Pedrina: Architect and Adjunct Professor in Interior design at Università luav di Venezia. She studied architecture at luav di and completed her academic training at the Escuela Técnica Superior del Vallès (ETSAV) through the Erasmus program. In 2000, she co-founded the architecture firm C&P Architetti with Luca Cuzzolin, developing projects at various scales, ranging from interior design to the creation of retail and showroom spaces, as well as architectural design in the residential and workplace sectors. Since 2019, she has been involved in academia as an adjunct professor within the Bachelor's Degree Program in Product, Visual Communication and Interior Design (Interior Design Curriculum).

Federica Pradella: PhD Candidate in Technological and Environmental Design of Architecture and she's part of Material Balance Research team at Milan's Polytechnic University. She holds a Master's degree in Architecture – Built Environment – Interiors and a II level Master in Material Balance Design. She focuses on bio-based materials, design for disassembly strategies, and innovative construction workflows. One of her works, showcased at the Lucca Biennale Cartasia 2024, merges research with real-world applications. She has collaborated with Architecture firms as ATI Project and Lombardini22, gaining experience in both concept design and execution phases.

Sandra Regina Rech: Associate Professor at the Santa Catarina State University (UDESC/Brazil) - Fashion Department; Tenured Professor of the Graduate Program in Fashion (PPGMODA/UDESC) - Professional Master's Degree in Apparel and Fashion Design and Leader of the Research Group on Fashion Design and Technology (UDESC/CNPq). She was a Visiting Professor at the Politecnico di Milano (Italy). She is the Coordinator of the laboratory FPLab - Futuro do Presente (UDESC) and Collaborating Researcher at the University of Lisbon (CIAUD/Portugal). Her areas of interest are focused on the following themes: Fashion Design, Trend Studies, Scenarios, Consumer Culture, Qualitative Research, Methodologies.

Mariana Rosa: Lisbon-based designer and master's student in Design for Sustainability at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon. Her work focuses on social design, emphasizing the role of designers as catalysts for change through community engagement. Mariana is involved in the INSPIRE project, contributing with her knowledge of design and art-based methods for Lisbon's pilot project as a research grant holder at Instituto de Ciências Sociais. Drawing on her background in participatory design, in April 2024, Mariana took part in the New European Bauhaus (NEB) Festival in Brussels, where she co-presented a workshop based on her Entre_Laços project.

Caroline Santos da Silva: Master's student in the Graduate Program in Fashion and Apparel Design at the Santa Catarina State University (UDESC/Brazil) and a professor in the undergraduate Fashion Design

course. She graduated in Fashion and holds a postgraduate degree in Photography from Universidade do Vale do Itajaí (UNIVALI/Brazil). Her areas of interest include Fashion Image, Creative Processes, Performance, Visual Arts, and Cultural Landscape.

Carla Sedini: Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities, IULM University. A sociologist with a PhD in Quality of Life in the Information Society, she integrates social research and design to explore themes such as social innovation, territorial development, and cultural industries. Formerly Assistant Professor at Politecnico di Milano, she has contributed to national and international research projects and authored numerous publications. Her work focuses on participatory processes, strategic design, and inclusive urban transformation.

Daniela Selloni: Associate Professor and researcher at Polimi DESIS Lab, Department of Design - Politecnico di Milano. She works on service design, social innovation, placemaking and more specifically on how co-design can be experimented in public and private organizations.

Mathew Spialtini: Research Fellow at Università degli Studi di Milano and a Research Collaborator at the Polimi DESIS Lab, Politecnico di Milano. He holds a Master's in Product Service System Design (2024), with a thesis on multispecies design in hybrid urban spaces. He is also a Teaching Assistant at the School of Design, Politecnico di Milano.

Mara Soncin: Senior assistant professor at the Department of Management, Economics and Industrial Engineering at Politecnico di Milano. She obtained her PhD focusing on topics related to the evaluation of performance in digital learning within universities, and has since continued this line of research alongside themes related to the economics of education and public administration management. Additionally, she is involved in teaching activities both at the university level and in post-graduate courses.

Paulo Eduardo Tonin: PhD candidate in Design at Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina, currently conducting research during a

visiting period at Politecnico di Milano. An architect and urban planner by training, his work integrates Cognitive Psychology, UX Design, Semiotics, Neuroscience and Anthropology to investigate Sensory Design and Human Experience within hybrid environments, with an emphasis on retail and exhibition spaces. Over the years, Paulo has engaged in studies at renowned institutions including University of Lisbon, Central Saint Martins, NYU, and Parsons. His research advances understanding of multisensory interactions to inform design strategies fostering meaningful and immersive environments.

Anna Turco: PhD student in Design at the Department of Planning, Design, Architecture Technology of Sapienza University of Rome. Her research focuses on Visual Communication Design, with particular attention to Environmental Graphic Design as a tool for the reactivation and regeneration of public space. Her work explores the intersection between graphics, environment and social dynamics, investigating the potential of the visual sign as a narrative, relational and transformative device in contemporary urban contexts.

Giulia Vaiani: PhD student at the Department of Management, Economics and Industrial Engineering at Politecnico di Milano. Her research interests focus on the use of digital technologies in school settings and on the quantitative analysis of educational processes.

Valentina Zaro: Urban planner and placemaker with more than 10 years of experience in community empowerment, community welfare, urban regeneration, service design, concept planning, communication, and facilitation of processes in the field of social housing. At Fondazione Housing Sociale, she is responsible for the Competence Center related to services and commerce in urban regeneration projects.

RESEARCH PROJECT

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RESEARCH GROUP



DIPARTIMENTO DI DESIGN



DIPARTIMENTO
DI ARCHITETTURA
INGEGNERIA
DELLE COSTRUZIONI
E AMBIENTE COSTRUITO



DIPARTIMENTO
DI INGEGNERIA
GESTIONALE



NETWORK AND SUPPORT

BASE

FARM CULTURAL PARK

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This volume investigates the potential of Socio-Cultural Hybrid Spaces as engines of urban regeneration, democratic participation, and cultural innovation. Emerging at the intersection of cultural production, social experimentation, and territorial transformation, these spaces challenge conventional boundaries between public and private, temporary and permanent, physical and digital. Through four main sections, the book develops a critical and impactful perspective on the functions, design and interdisciplinary approaches, and transformative potential of Socio-Cultural Hybrid Spaces. From their evolving role as plural ecosystems to their capacity to generate declinations of public value; from cultural and participatory practices that reclaim and reimagine the commons to the opportunities and challenges introduced by digital technologies; it offers a multifaceted lens on *hybrid practices* in contemporary urban and territorial contexts. By weaving together theoretical perspectives, empirical research, and case studies, this book provides critical reflections by and for scholars, practitioners, and institutions. How can cultural initiatives generate new alliances between institutions and communities? What forms of participation can strengthen the democratic role of public space? And what challenges arise in connecting physical and virtual dimensions for collective engagement?