

diid

disegno industriale
industrial design

theoria
pòiesis
praxis

diid.it

DIGITAL
SPECIAL
ISSUE
2

Stretch the Edge

Design Driven Processes for Reactivating
Small Walled Towns and Inland Areas

Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Antico Monastero Santa Chiara, San Marino
22-23.06.2023

Editors
(Eds.)
Giorgio Dall'Osso
Silvia Gasparotto

STRETCH THE EDGE

Colophon

diid
disegno industriale
industrial design
Digital Special Issue 2
— DSI 2

Year
XXIII

diid is an open access
peer-reviewed scientific
design journal

diid is published
three times a year

Registration at Tribunale
di Roma 86/2002
(March 6, 2002)

www.diid.it

Copyright © 2025
diid disegno industriale
industrial design

Scientific Board

Jimena Alarcón Castro
Universidad del Bio-Bio

Mariana Amatullo
Tecnológico de Monterrey

Laura Badalucco
Università Iuav di Venezia

Alberto Bassi
Università Iuav di Venezia

Anna Lalanne-Bernagozzi
École Nationale Supérieure
des Arts Décoratifs

Paola Bertola
Politecnico di Milano

David Bihanic
Université Paris 1
Panthéon-Sorbonne

Andrea Boeri
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Olindo Caso
Delft University
of Technology

Manuela Celi
Politecnico di Milano

Erik Ciravegna
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

2

Editor-in-chief
Flaviano Celaschi
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

**Deputy Editor-in-chief
and Managing Editor**
Elena Formia
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Editors
Giorgio Dall'Osso
Università degli Studi della
Repubblica di San Marino

Silvia Gasparotto
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Founded by
Tonino Paris

Mirko Daneluzzo
Dubai Institute of Design
and Innovation

Claudia De Giorgi
Politecnico di Torino

Alessandro Deserti
Politecnico di Milano

Dijon De Moraes
Universidade do Estado
de Minas Gerais

Franco Fassio
Università di Scienze
Gastronomiche di Pollenzo

Daniele Fanzini
Politecnico di Milano

Lorenzo Imbesi
Sapienza Università
di Roma

Edu Jacques
SDRJ

Luigi Ferrara
George Brown College

Carlo Franzato
Pontifícia Universidade
Católica do Rio de Janeiro
— PUC-Rio

Giuseppe Furlani
ISIA Design Firenze

Associate Editors
Silvia Gasparotto
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Viktor Malakuczi
Sapienza — Università
di Roma

Lorela Mehmeti
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Elena Vai
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Art Director
Davide Giorgetta

Editing Assistant
Olga Barmine

CC BY-NC-SA
Creative Commons
Attribution
NonCommercial
ShareAlike

Claudio Germak
Politecnico di Torino

Valentina Gianfrate
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Miaosen Gong
Jiangnan University

Christian Guellerin
École de Design Nantes
Atlantique

Roberto Iñiguez Flores
Tecnológico de Monterrey

Edu Jacques
Strategic Design Research
Journal (SDRJ)

Çiğdem Kaya
Istanbul Technical
University

Giuseppe Lotti
Università degli Studi
di Firenze

Mario Losasso
Università degli Studi
di Napoli Federico II

**Guilherme Englert
Corrêa Meyer**
Universidade do Vale
do Rio dos Sinos

Publisher
Fondazione
Bologna University Press
Via Saragozza 10
40123 Bologna
Tel. (+39) 051 232 882
Fax (+39) 051 221 019
www.buonline.com
info@buonline.com

ISSN
1594-8528

ISSN Online
2785-2245

DOI
10.30682/diiddsi25

ISBN Online
979-12-5477-632-2

The Proceedings of the Symposium "Stretch the Edge - Design Driven Processes for Reactivating Small Walled Towns and Inland Areas" have undergone a rigorous peer-review process to ensure the scholarly quality of the contributions contained herein. The Editors extend their sincere appreciation to all reviewers.

Roberto Montanari
Università degli Studi
Suor Orsola Benincasa
di Napoli

Nicola Morelli
Aalborg University

Andrew David Morrison
Oslo School of Architecture
and Design

Spartaco Paris
Sapienza Università
di Roma

Daniela Petrelli
Politecnico di Milano

**Nelida Yaneth
Ramirez Triana**
Universidad Nacional
de Colombia

Andreas Sicklinger
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Francesca Tosi
Università degli Studi
di Firenze

Ambra Trotto
RISE — Research
Institutes of Sweden

Michele Zannoni
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Main Partners

Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino

Elena Brigi, Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Massimo Brignoni, Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Giorgio Dall'Osso, Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Silvia Gasparotto, Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Riccardo Varini, Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Karen Venturini, Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino

Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna

Flaviano Celaschi, Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna
Elena Formia, Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna
Valentina Gianfrate, Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna
Andreas Sicklinger, Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna
Elena Vai, Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna
Michele Zannoni, Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna

Beijing City University

Liu Xiaoxi, Beijing City University
Liu Rui, Beijing City University
Yang Anqi, Beijing City University
Guo Xiaoxia (Ruth), Beijing City University
An Yifei, Beijing City University
Meng Yuan, Beijing City University
Xu Zhenhua, Beijing City University

Contents

14
University Network

18
**Stretch the Edge. Design Driven Processes
for Reactivating Small Walled Towns
and Inland Areas**

20
People and Partner

Research Contextualization

34
**Design, Microcosms
and Guardian Communities**
Massimo Brignoni, Riccardo Varini

46
**The Paradigm of Small Walled Towns.
An Advanced Design Driven Approach
to Reactivate Cultural Heritage**
Flaviano Celaschi, Elena Formia,
Andreas Sicklinger

58
**Design for the Enhancement and
Reactivation of Small Walled Towns.
Stretch the Edge: A Case Study Analysis
and Data Visualization**
Giorgio Dall'Osso, Silvia Gasparotto,
Michele Zannoni

76
**Challenging Design Practices
at the Edges. Values, Networks,
Evaluations in Territorial Regeneration**
Federica Natalia Rosati, Margo Lengua,
Anna Guerra, Francesco Mancuso, Chiara
Amatori, Federica Francia

88
**From the Metropolis to the Village:
The Art of Designing Disorder
as a Transitional Practice. An Interview
With Pablo Sendra**
Laura Succini, Riccardo Mercuri,
Pablo Sendra

Track 1

Activate the Edges

100 Editorial

Activate the Edges

Daniele Fanzini

104

Design Research Reload: Architectural Strategies for the Reactivation of a Rural Village in China

Gerardo Sempredon

116

I Live in Vaccarizzo. Social Transformation Lab for the Repopulation of the Italian Inland Areas

Federica Benatti

130

Restart Oliena – Innesti Urbani 2016–2024. A Reiterative and Participatory Regeneration Approach

Giuseppe Boi, Barbara Camocini,

Laura Daglio, Roberto Podda

142

(Dis/Re)Articulate Contexts Identities: Places as Platforms for Community Regeneration and Interdependence

Annalinda De Rosa, Davide Fassi

154

Slack City - Slack Land. Strategies, Processes and Projects for Intermediate Territories

Francesco Alberti, Eleonora Trivellin

Track 2

Join the Edges

168 Editorial

Join the Edges

Raffaella Fagnoni

172

Design for Island Activation: The Architectural Practice of Jiming Island Wedding Hall

Li Li, Yang Xinyi

182

Tremona Archeological Park and Virtual Reality

Matteo Besenzoni, Tiziano Leidi,

Achille Peternier

192

Designing an Expanded Shared Memory: The Civic Digital Collection of Quero Vas

Emanuela Bonini Lessing, Alessandra Bosco,

Mario Ciaramitaro, Gabriele Toneguzzi

204

Innovations and Practices in Responsible Planner System, Taking Xingfeng Sub-District in Beijing as an Example

Yuefang Rong, Jian Song, Yuang Zheng,

Zhiyuan Ma, Shuhan Guo

Track 3

Enhance the Edges

218 Editorial

Enhance the Edges

Claudio Gambardella

224

Design as a Dialogic Practice for Fragile Heritages. A Community Micro-Museum in the Heart of Sicily

Francesco Monterosso

234

Play Alghero - Playful Itinerary: Identity and Public Experience

Nicolò Ceccarelli, Nada Beretić

244

Design Driven Processes for Identifying Urban Evolution. The Workshop Firenze Forma Continua / Urban Scenographies

Vanessa Staccioli, Gaia Vannucci

254

Perceptual Place and Identity Space in the Regeneration of Historic Villages

Francesco Saverio Simone

264

Ecological and Cultural Resources Help Rural Revitalization: a Case Study of Industrial Planning in Beizhuang

Xiaoxi LIU, Rui LIU, Yichen Yang

Short Stories

288

Archivio Atena

Martina Alessandrini

290

L'isola del Futuro

Elena Marsiglia, Alberto Sogni

292

Pecioli

Comune di Peccioli, Belvedere Spa,

Fondazione Peccioliper

294

Ghost 'n Found

Claudia Molinari, Matteo Pozzi – We Are

Müesli

296

I Fumi della Fornace

Giorgiomaria Cornelio, Roberto Paci Dalò

298

Unpae

Andrea Croce, Alessia Delli Rocioli,

Michele Sablone

300

Buonanotte Contemporanea

Fabio Armillotta, Carmela Palmieri,

Marco Santomauro – CASa Associati

302

Junça da Beselga Mask

Álbio Nascimento, Kathi Stertzig

– Origem Comum

304

The Crin Collection

Camila De Gregorio, Christopher Macaluso

– Eggpicnic

306

Robida Magazine

Robida Collective

The Symposium

Stretch the Edge — Design Driven Processes for Reactivating Small Walled Towns and Inland Areas was an international symposium held at the Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino (Antico Monastero Santa Chiara) on June 22–23, 2023. It was promoted by the Research Units in Design of the Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino, the Advanced Design Unit of the Department of Architecture at Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, and Beijing City University.

The event explored how design can serve as a valuable tool for reactivating territories located in inland areas, enclosed by natural or artificial barriers. These territories, due to their size, morphology, and environmental or anthropic characteristics, often face significant challenges. However, their unique attributes also grant them a strong identity, making them socially, economically, and environmentally attractive. The values of uniqueness and identity represent tangible opportunities for natural, urban, and rural development. As such, they must be enhanced, revalued, reinterpreted, and systematized in future processes of repopulation and community settlement — with the goal of transforming these territories into multi-species and inter-species ecosystems, tangible places of sustainable living.

Sixteen international case studies — in which design played a central role in reactivation and regeneration — were presented in three sessions. These sessions were moderated by Raffaella Fagnoni, Full Professor at Iuav University of Venice; Daniele Fanzini, Full Professor at Politecnico di Milano; and Claudio Gambardella, Full Professor at Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli.

Each session was introduced by a keynote speaker: Helena Casanova, architect and author of *Public Space Acupuncture*; Agostino Riitano, cultural manager and director of *Pesaro Italian Capital of Culture 2024*; and Pablo Sendra, architect, Associate Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning, and co-author (with Richard Sennett) of *Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City*.

The symposium opened with the presentation of a mapping of 150 national and international case studies. This collection was compiled through contributions from a network of international researchers and professionals who responded to a call, submitting effective examples where design interventions impacted circumscribed spatial contexts. The case studies were organized in an online database, shared with the network before the symposium. The presentation addressed both the theoretical framework that emerged and an analysis of the collected data.

A parallel activity, conducted before and after the symposium, involved the establishment of three working groups — 'Reactivation Strategies,' 'Community Engagement,' and 'Networked Territories'. These groups were aimed at fostering a spirit of

knowledge-sharing and discussion, strengthening the network, and increasing stakeholder participation in debates on specific issues. The discussions were preceded by the sharing of case studies and best practices. This initiative, structured in two meetings — one online and one onsite — was intended to examine key aspects of the diverse reactivation efforts undertaken by practitioners, academics, and communities. The goal was to encourage collective reflections and develop conceptual frameworks. The working groups explored issues, approaches, and objectives related to engaging different types of communities (both onsite and online) in the reactivation of small fortified towns and inland areas. Particular attention was given to the tools through which design facilitates community engagement (e.g., participatory activities, co-design, etc.) and the stages of the design process in which these tools are employed.

One of the goals of the symposium was to amplify diverse perspectives. Academics, professionals, members of public agencies and administrations, associations, and volunteers all had the opportunity to share their knowledge, insights, and experiences in this setting.

These proceedings bring together the work conducted by the research team, with contributions of the participants of the working groups and those of the speakers. These contributions are presented in two formats: 'Research Papers', which showcase research activities, and 'Stories', which are short fact sheets describing the case studies presented during the two-day symposium.

People and Partners

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Yang Anqi
Beijing City University

Elena Brigi
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Massimo Brignoni
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Flaviano Celaschi
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Giorgio Dall'Osso
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Daniele Fanzini
Politecnico di Milano

Elena Formia
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Silvia Gasparotto
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Valentina Gianfrate
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Michael Kaethler
Department of Architecture, KU Leuven

Stefano Luca
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Liu Rui
Beijing City University

Andreas Sicklinger
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Elena Vai
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

Riccardo Varini
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Karen Venturini
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Liu Xiaoxi
Beijing City University

Guo Xiaoxia
Beijing City University

An Yifei
Beijing City University

Meng Yuan
Beijing City University

Michele Zannoni
Alma Mater Studiorum
— University of Bologna

Xu Zhenhua
Beijing City University

AMBASSADORS/CHAIRS

Raffaella Fagnoni
Università IUAV di Venezia

Daniele Fanzini
Politecnico di Milano

Claudio Gambardella
Università degli Studi della Campania
“Luigi Vanvitelli”

SYMPOSIUM MANAGER

Silvia Gasparotto
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Giorgio Dall'Osso
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Massimo Brignoni
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

Riccardo Varini
Università degli Studi
della Repubblica di San Marino

MANAGING EDITOR

Lorela Mehmeti
Alma Mater Studiorum
— Università di Bologna

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

**Chiara Amatori, Federica Francia,
Anna Guerra, Margo Lengua, Francesco
Mancuso, Federica Natalia Rosati**

GRAPHIC DESIGN, WEB DESIGN, SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT, REGIA AND SPACE SETUP

**Ilenia Balella, Dorotea Balsimelli,
Irene Casadei, Tommaso Lucinato,
Emanuele Lumini, Davide Giorgetta,
Alberto Guerra, Alessandro Renzi,
Iaria Ruggeri, Francesca Santi,
Giulio Urbini, Giulia Zafferani**

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Helena Casanova

Registered Architect, Urban Planner and Landscape Architect

Agostino Riitano

Cultural Manager, Author and Lecturer, Expert in Projects And Policies for Culturally Based Local Development

Pablo Sendra

Architect, Urban Designer, Associate Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning Ucl

SPEAKERS

Martina Alessandrini

Archivio Atena

Matteo Besenzoni

Tremona Archaeological Park

Massimo Brignoni, Giorgio Dall'Osso, Silvia Gasparotto, Riccardo Varini

'Stretch the Edge': Research presentation

Giorgiomaria Cornelio, Roberto Paci Dalò

I Fumi della Fornace

Camila De Gregorio, Christopher Macaluso (Eggpicnic)

The Crin Collection

Alessia Delli Roccoli, Michele Sablone, Andrea Croce

Unpae

Jiang Dongrui

Citizen Technology and Participatory Community Renewal

Wu Fengxue

Design for Island Activation: The Architectural Practice of Jiming Island Wedding Hall

Renzo Macelloni

Peccioli

Elena Marsiglia, Alberto Sogni

L'Isola del Futuro

Claudia Molinari

Ghost 'n Found

Francesco Monterosso

Micromuseo Immateriale del Grano e del Pane

Carmela Palmieri, Fabio Armillotta, N. Marco Santomauro

Buonanotte Contemporanea

Vida Rucli

Robida Magazine

Liu Xiaoxi

Ecological and Cultural Resources Help Rural Revitalization: A Case Study of Industrial Planning in Beizhuang Village, Miyun District

Rong Yuefang

Community Renewal Design

PARTICIPANT OF THE WORKING GROUPS

TABLE — ONE

WG 1 — COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Facilitators: Francesco Mancuso & Federica Natalia Rosati

Rita Elvira Adamo

Belmondo

Federica Benatti

Live In Vaccarizzo

Barbara Bollini (Castello Di Borgo Maggiore, San Marino)

Riqualificazione della Frazione di Baldisserona

Jamila Campagna

Tap Path. Percorsi Digitali Per La Fruizione Museale Storica - Artistica e Partecipativa

Giacinto Cerviere

Piramid Shire

Laura Daglio

Restart. Innesti Urbani

Giacomo Dalpane

Fantastika Castel Guelfo

Roberto Ercolani (Castello Di Serravalle)

Il Sole Illumina le Mura di Serravalle

Cinzia Ferrara

Ustica

Ilaria Margutti

Caserma Archeologica

Tomaso Rossini (Castello Di Città Di San Marino)

Riqualificazione 'Ex Tiro A Volo Di Murata'

Pietro Renzi (Castello Di Faetano)

Un Viaggio nel Passato. Il Castello di Faetano tra Storia e Racconti

Saverio Simone

The Perceptive Valorization of Italian Villages (The Petraria Survey Project)

TABLE — TWO

WG 2 — REACTIVATION STRATEGIES

Facilitators: Anna Guerra & Margo Lengua

Martina Attenni

The Architectural Heritage of Fiumefreddo Bruzio

Daniele Azara

The Rude Awakening

Annalinda De Rosa

Smoties Project. Creative Works with Small and Remote Places

Federico Ghignoni

Caserma Archeologica

Mario Festa

Ru.de.ri – TAM la Cultura è un Fiume

Eliana Saracino

La Pentana

Gerardo Sempredon

Design Strategies for the Reactivation of Zhangyang Village, Fujian Province, China

Vanessa Staccioli, Gaia Vannucci

Firenze Forma Continua. Scenografie Urbane

Enrico Tarò

Habitat

TABLE — THREE

WG 3 — NETWORKED TERRITORIES

Facilitators: Chiara Amatori
& Federica Francia

Bernardo Bruno

Terminalia Psychogeography Festival

Mario Ciaramitaro

Quero Vas

Nicolò Fenu

Abitare Connessioni

Giulia Grassini

New Project Ideas to Support Boroughs
Reactivation (Clust-Er)

Giacomo Rinaldi, Aurora Cherubini

Bike Hotel e Albergo Diffuso
di Montegiardino

Eleonora Trivellin,

Francesco Alberti, Elena Grippo

Ferrara Slack City

PROPONENTS

Research Unit in Design, Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Advanced Design Unit of the Department of Architecture, Alma Mater Studiorum —
Università di Bologna
Beijing City University
Confucius Institute of San Marino



MAIN PARTNERS



WITH THE PATRONAGE OF



(Dis/Re)Articulate Contexts Identities: Places as Platforms for Community Regeneration and Interdependence

Annalinda De Rosa

Dipartimento di Design,
Politecnico di Milano
annalinda.derosa@polimi.it
ORCID 0000-0002-8531-592X

Davide Fassi

Dipartimento di Design,
Politecnico di Milano
davide.fassi@polimi.it
ORCID 0000-0002-8436-5028

Abstract

The article reflects on the cultural, social, and political role of the 'place' construct for a meaningful social regeneration of communities within the dynamics of culture, power, and economy. We focus on the role of public spaces in the framework of an action-research project — SMOTIES — to foster the development of deeper relationships and civic engagement in remote and semi-rural European contexts through participatory processes. It involved the community of Albugano, a town of approximately 500 inhabitants in the Basso Monferrato area (Italy). The research reflects on design as an aesthetic and political language and on recognizing place-rooted collectives and cultures by rearticulating the area's social and cultural foundations with its communities to enable all voices to be heard and to make interactions with and through the environment. The research approach is positioned in the interplay between participatory design, foresight methodologies, design for social innovation and relational design.

Keywords

Situated knowledge
Participatory design
Action-research
Spatial design
Temporality and place

Introduction: A Political Discourse on Public Spaces

Urban revitalisation has long focused on reclaiming public spaces and fostering community building, with growing attention in the past two decades to urban commons and participatory approaches. Citizens increasingly shape public spaces through creative, grass-roots interventions that address the limitations of top-down planning, tackling issues like marginalisation, socio-economic redevelopment, and aggressive urban transformations. Acupunctural strategies, such as Barcelona's *Superilles*¹ and the 15-minute city concept (Manzini, 2021), exemplify how shared resources can foster inclusive, sustainable communities. Initiatives like *Piazze Aperte*² and others emphasise collaboration among citizens, educators, and policymakers to create vibrant, equitable, and socially integrated urban environments.

Design approaches in the context of communities of practice — such as community-based design (Fassi & Manzini, 2021; Manzini & Meroni, 2017), co-design, participatory design (Björgvinsson et al., 2010; Hillgren, 2013), and design for social innovation (Evers & Ewert, 2015; Kiem, 2011; Manzini & Staszowski, 2013; Margolin & Margolin, 2002) — have arisen as a field addressing global concerns on a local and distributed scale, adopting a situated learning perspective (Haraway, 1988; Lave et al., 1991). This perspective involves conducting research that engages with the multiple 'worldings' (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018) and works like an apparatus of producing "[...] a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions" (Haraway, 1988, p. 579). This approach reflects the evolving design philosophy of co-creation, rooted in the Design Participation DRS conference led by Nigel Cross (1972) and continually advancing to the present (Dalsgaard, 2010; DiSalvo, 2010; Escobar, 2018; Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Manzini, 2015) and inquiring extractivist and transactional methods (Udoewa & Gress, 2023) through a decolonial lens, "breaking down [...] subjugation to dominant Euro-Western-centric design discourses" (Akama et al., 2019, p.4). This article explores the cultural, social, and political significance of 'place', highlighting its constitutive role in shaping phenomena and agentiality in unfolding events, drawing on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey. It incorporates material-social factors – from the concept of "contingent spatiotemporalities" of Donna Haraway (1997) – , and is a topological matter within the dynamics between space, time, and matter, also responsible for reconfiguring the material relations of the world (Barad, 2007, pp. 224 and 246). Drawing on Escobar's (2018, p. 87) contrast between modern and relational worldviews:

[...] Moderns imagine the world as an inanimate surface to be *occupied*; for many relational cultures, on the contrary, humans and other beings *inhabit* a world that is alive. While moderns occupy space, non-moderns dwell in places by moving along the lines and threads that produce the place.

It examines how spaces can rearticulate interdependence in distributed systems of agency and power. Using the SMOTIES project as a case study, it highlights efforts to revitalise underused public spaces in rural villages, focusing on the Italian pilot.

¹ Superilles, meaning 'superblocks' in Catalan, refers to car-free urban zones. Through this concept supported by a government-funded strategy, Barcelona aims to recover space for the community, improve biodiversity, move towards sustainable mobility, and encourage social cohesion.

² Open squares. The city of Milan has developed this innovative program for the regeneration and enhancement of public spaces to pursue urban regeneration. www.comune.milano.it/en/

Viewed from the place-specific perspectives of environmental psychology, political geography, and phenomenological anthropology, we examine the concept of place as a socio-physical unit shaped by agents over time, embodying identity, relationships, and tensions between cultural, historical, and ritual meanings (Bechtel & Churchman, 2003; Casey, 1997; Escobar, 2001). It critiques how places are defined, often privileging human perspectives while neglecting other relationships entangled in places (Bastian, 2014; de la Bellacasa, 2017; Tsing, 2015). Urban spaces emerge as arenas mediating political, social, and behavioural dynamics, highlighting their role in power structures and the democratic regeneration of commons (DiSalvo, 2010; Manzini, 2015; Ostrom, 1990). Participatory and co-design practices offer tools to reframe democratic discourse and regenerate commons (Beckett et al., 2015; Borch & Kornberger, 2015; Dellenbaugh et al., 2015; Foster, 2011; Hess & Ostrom, 2011; Ostrom, 1990), resisting ephemeral solutions and addressing “questions of boundary, connectivity, interiority and exteriority” (Barad, 2007, p.244). The paper questions how spatial design and public spaces narrate and reshape power and agency. Urban spaces act as arenas where political, social, and behavioural dynamics converge, mediating power structures (DiSalvo, 2010; Manzini, 2015). Such approaches attempt to avoid and oppose the impulse to provide immediate answers and hastily establish shared interests among diverse publics. Such interests reflect power systems increasingly directed towards creating ephemeral spaces to communicate rather than be inhabited; conversely, they manifest through neighbourhood transformations, through forced neighbourhood transformations.

This raises critical questions: how do spatial strategies narrate power, and can public spaces still represent and reshape public agency?

Framework of the Case Study: Critical Elements and Approach

Through design-led participatory practices, SMOTIES explored how depopulated rural areas can benefit from cultural innovations in public spaces, collaborating with local stakeholders to drive social transformation. The strategy focuses on geographically disadvantaged European regions, such as mountainous or sparsely populated areas rich in cultural heritage, where weakened connections and fading traditions hinder social cohesion. Many rural communities lack public spaces for interaction, limiting their ability to exercise their rights. By enhancing the liveability of these areas, SMOTIES aimed to stimulate socio-political and economic growth. The research has involved local actors, including associations, tourist centres, informal groups, and municipal staff.

In Albugnano Fig. 1, a community of about 520 inhabitants, the population is largely ageing, with proactive entrepreneurs and a few newcomers. The research emphasises adapting activities to the community's values and pace while considering the dynamics between individuals and their institutions to revitalise local heritage. Given the area's resources, particularly its wine production and Romanesque cultural heritage, there is a strong desire for change.

However, differing stakeholder interests led to multiple directions for this transformation. Challenges included navigating a complex political climate that slowed development and fostered more responsive actions. Political apathy nearly resulted in an election without candidates in 2020, but the newly elected mayor garnered support from various social factions. However, as community consensus weakened, disputes intensified, leading to the collapse of the local government in 2022. The pandemic also delayed progress.

Fortunately, connections with local inhabitants had already been established before the project's launch. A designer-entrepreneur involved in wine production and social innovation reached out in 2019, which aligned with the research team's focus on non-urban projects. After securing funding, the project presented ideas at public meetings, gradually building a network through informal conversations. Despite a pandemic pause, the first year and a half were spent developing methodology. In 2022, co-creation resumed with citizens and key stakeholders at local farms, the municipal library, and cultural association spaces. These sessions included public co-design activities with the mayor, winemakers, associations, and an artistic company reviving theatre in public spaces. By that stage, the project had completed in-field research and developed scenarios. Determining where to focus the co-design process was challenging due to political associations with various locations, so engagement activities were postponed until after the elections. With the former mayor's re-election in 2023, conditions became favourable for participatory activities.

The research approach combines participatory design, foresight methodologies, social innovation, and relational art to ensure all voices are heard and foster constructive dialogue through interactions with the tangible environment. It uses scenario-building as a core methodology, drawing on future studies (Hillgren et al., 2020; Jantsch, 1972; Mazé, 2019) to guide project ideation and development. In SMOTIES, scenarios (illustrated in Auricchio et al., 2023 and referring to the Design Orienting Scenarios by Manzini & Jégou, 2000 and Maschi, 2002) acted as lenses to reshape communities' relationship with their surroundings, encouraging meaningful engagement with local stories, multiple temporalities and their legacies. Internal team sessions between co-design workshops helped refine data and guide the next phases, fostering increasing local stakeholder involvement.

The approach was complemented by relational design practices, including Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin, 2006; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) and Psychogeography Mapping (Biesta & Cowell, 2012; Debord, 1958; Sidaway, 2022), with semi-structured interviews forming the core of the SMOTIES ethnographic research (De Rosa et al., 2023). This phase aimed to capture citizens' stories and personal connections to significant places, helping shape the impact pathway for Albugnano Tab. I. The future-oriented perspectives guided the participatory design phase, where local network actors engaged in a series of co-design activities to transform co-created visions into actionable project concepts. The participatory process included community mapping, walks, focus groups, interactive workshops, real-scale prototyping in public spaces, and sense-making sessions, all of which played a crucial role in building stronger community ties.



Fig. 1
View of the Abbey
and Albugnano
(©Polimi DESIS Lab).

WoF n. 3 <u>Beyond Tourism.</u> By creating more meaningful experiences, we could envision transitioning from the concept of tourism (visiting a place as a visitor) to a deeper understanding and exploring the world (visiting a place to blend with the local culture and leave a mark).	Scenario n. 4 <u>Super Tourist.</u> Super tourists intentionally travel to become temporary citizens of the places they visit. They know exactly why they will be going to a specific destination to become active players in the future development of that place in the medium term and through direct engagement resonating with their capabilities and expertise.	To promote local treasures through identifying, mapping and pathfinding to support/increase the local tourism economy.	Several sectors attract tourists: the Romanesque church circuit, walking and cycling routes, the hospitality system integrated with the production of great local wines and related experiences.	An integrated tourism system through the development of visual and distributed panels in 8 places of the centre with maps, information, contact, historical data, and citizens' stories.	Enhanced attractiveness of the territory beyond existing and recognized assets	Strengthening local tourism economy	- Tourists - Larger public - Members of external cultural associations
---	---	--	--	--	--	-------------------------------------	--

Window on the future (WoF)	Scenario	Strategic objective	Asset	Output	Outcome	Impact	Target
WoF n. 1 <u>Citizenship and Governance.</u> The scenarios in this Window focus on active citizen participation and new kinds of governance, how people will participate in community life in the future and how they will be able to shape collective future endeavours.	Scenario n.1 <u>The virtuous circle.</u> In a semi-open system, innovation from the outside is brought inside thanks to young creatives who return to their hometown with new experiences and abilities to share and put into practice for innovative solutions or giving form to creative hubs.	- To reinforce local pride through shared services and public spaces to nurture citizen participation - To enable the connection of local cultural and creative excellences through building an agora' for future collective governance	A private garden, unused and in the historic centre, left on loan to the municipality for 20 years	- Co-creation sessions - Aesthetic and structural renovation of the square through tactical urbanism intervention - Aesthetic and structural renovation of the garden to make it a place for open air performances and gatherings	- Increased debates and building collaborative capabilities - Experimentation of bottom-up models for governance - Enhanced engagement in activities promoted in the space	Increasing the citizens' project attitude toward the future of the territory and enhancing pride towards their city.	- Citizens
WoF n. 5 <u>Distributed Education.</u> The scenarios in this Window focus on the future of local cultural and creative knowledge. The scenarios build on the potential of cultural and creative education to develop local individual and communal skills by supporting cultural diversity of expression. Actions encouraging international talent to exchange knowledge could help sustain new generations of local creators.	Scenario n. 2 <u>Storytelling Our Culture.</u> The small and remote place becomes a narration in which the local culture is valued and treasured. Cultural institutions and citizens come together to define their identity and develop a common storytelling that attracts talents from across the globe.	To find stories and inclusive narratives of the creative local community for defining the local identity.	A local summer festival of participatory theatre, with a three-week programme of performances by national and international artists performing in the public spaces of the village.	- Interviews - Co-created stories - Storyplaying events - Development of a visual narrative system	Co-created narrative of the shared local identity that can be transmitted to a wider public.	Strengthening the sense of belonging to the village and larger territory.	- Local creatives - Citizens - Tourists

The Role of Public Space in Disarticulating Interdependencies

Tab. I
Impact pathway for Albugnano (©Polimi DESIS Lab).

Integrating relational and spatial data with subjective viewpoints and shared narratives provided insights into the community's connection to its surroundings as an evolving assemblage of cultures and identities embedded in territories. We identified key places that reflect the village's relationship with its territory: those rooted in the past, which shape its primary connection to the land through personal memories and symbolic meanings, and those focused on the present, representing efforts to reclaim and renew the community's future. This vision also aims to recover what has been lost due to factors like spatial closures or changes in land use driven by socio-economic transformations. Human relationships unfold and take shape in these places, influencing the dynamics of these connections: "Things are their relations" (Ingold, 2011, p. 74). The co-designed interventions took on political significance within local conflicts, with an agonistic perspective guiding us to consider a systemic intervention that fosters connections between places in competition with one another. These places overlap, in fact, with local relational networks, reflecting diverse ways of living and experiencing space (De Rosa et al., 2023).

The Design Strategy

The strategy identifies eight key places in the village Fig. 2 that reflect its shared experiences, cultural history, and contemporary aspirations. Symbolic sites include the square, a scenic gathering spot currently used for parking and transit; the library, with an underutilised presentation space; the Pro Loco venue, soon to reopen after years of closure; and the Old Parsonage, which hosted a summer theatre festival in the courtyard despite its need for extensive rehabilitation. Cultural heritage sites include the Belvedere, which offers a panoramic view, and the Abbey, the village's primary tourist attraction. Spaces related to current needs include the Garden, a privately

leased area envisioned as a social and performance venue, and the Enoteca Organization, which promotes local products and facilitates community activities in a repurposed school. The concept across the places is 'the distributed home' (building on the Italian concept of *Albergo Diffuso* — a decentralised hotel model where guest accommodations are spread across various historic buildings in a village — the strategy reimagines key sites to blend community life with cultural and tourist experiences) Fig. 2. It addresses the increasing demand for regaining a sense of belonging among inhabitants and valuable storytelling towards visitors. It is about providing informative signage Fig. 3 and experimenting with the tactical urbanism strategy to reclaim public spaces and reopen long-abandoned locations for temporary events. The square has been collaboratively implemented through a tactical urbanism action and used during the yearly theatre festival Fig. 4. Furthermore, we co-designed a service prototyping performance Fig. 5 for the festival with the playwrights and performers: they staged citizens from the future who spoke about the Albugnano of tomorrow. Through these interventions, we aimed to establish a network of distinct yet interrelated locations central to the community and fulfil the requirements of the village residents and visitors.

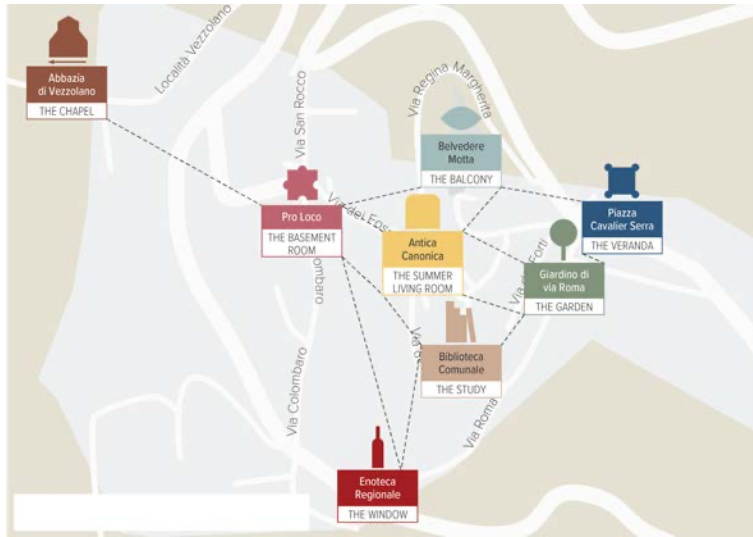


Fig. 2
The places' concept strategy (©Polimi DESIS Lab).

Fig. 3
The main narrative installation in the square (©Polimi DESIS Lab).



Fig. 4
The square hosting an event of the QUADILA Festival 2024 in the area pedestrianised through the tactical urbanism intervention (©Polimi DESIS Lab).



Fig. 5
The prototyping performance staged by the theatre company "Lo Stagno di Goethe" (©Polimi DESIS Lab).

The Ontological Value of Disarticulating Interdependencies Through the Place Construct

Working in a remote context, where encounters were occasional, highlighted several challenges. Despite difficulties in engaging more isolated groups and impacting internal community relationships, we detected the positive effect of our occasional physical presence on local dynamics. SMOTIES catalysed diffuse projects and indirectly sparked renewed interest among local stakeholders, creating new opportunities and discussions. Our intermittent presence over four years ensured that the desire for change wasn't passively awaited but actively fostered new initiatives, encouraged citizen involvement, and created spaces for agonism (DiSalvo, 2015; Mouffe, 2007).

SMOTIES has intercepted possible vibrations and set the tone for parallel actions. This contexts acts as a stimulus to designing acknowledging the political and the social. The project reflects on design as an aesthetic and political language and on making,

regenerating, and redefining place-rooted collectives and cultures by rearticulating the area's social and cultural foundations with its communities.

Stepping back during the peak of the local crisis clarified our collaborative position with all parties involved. It allowed us to understand how strongly some places were identified with certain aspects of the debate. Creating a distributed communication strategy for sharing local stories enabled us to a deep listening of marginalised voices, entangled with the places. Furthermore, the abandonment of more tangible planning (since the places, apart from the square, did not undergo the significant transformations we had expected) allowed us to embrace the fallibility and extractivist nature of solution-oriented actions. It was an acknowledgement that four years of the project are just the beginning of a gradual process, capable of having greater potential in the long term after the project's conclusion and subsequent developments. Recognising the value of achieving partial goals is a stimulus to caring and encouraging a focus on small, chained interventions over time rather than short-term, solution-driven efforts.

These places reconnect past dimensions with future intentions; they try to give the tools to experiment with new ways of being inhabited. Through their symbolic reconnection, we found a way to disarticulate political debates around the sharing of past social ties around places and re-articulate them towards a future sociality project that can take place in those same places, re-inhabiting them in a renewed way. The scenario-building method elicited these considerations: as SMOTIES ends, new collaborations emerge. We are about to join the scientific committee for a participatory art project in Albugnano, promoted by a newly established local association. Additionally, we will continue implementing a new collaborative governance strategy for a tourist itinerary highlighting cultural spaces and hidden community places identified in SMOTIES, activated by place-based itinerant theatre performances. These initiatives fit perfectly within the envisaged scenarios with the citizens.

The fact that around a situated work that has taken a long time to listen, co-design a shared vision, gather local narratives and translate the project into a tangible form, the prompt activation of the experimentation of new shared governance models reveals that we have found ways to re-articulate the possibility of this future and a counter-narrative (De Rosa et al., 2021).

This stands in the ontological and phenomenological empowerment of place to develop a sense of identity and belonging and to enact cultural practices where the inevitable immersion of human beings in place, and not the absoluteness of space, has ontological priority in the generation of life and the real. Co-design approaches regenerate spaces and redefine relationships within the physical and social environment, considering various temporal aspects (DiSalvo, 2015; Huybrechts et al., 2022). Identifying the relational potentials of different voices meant the understanding that relationality happens across space and time, supporting more systemic and just futures (Escobar et al., 2024). Storytelling ensured that opinions became narratives for the outside world, conveying in a narrative form the shared need to reflect the community's values. The recently regenerated square is appreciated by the majority, who

recognise that it creates space for gatherings and reduces room for cars. However, some citizens still dissent from the municipality by parking on it: we believe this form of dissent will be better understood soon. It should be acknowledged that while places convey identity in a design form that we mediated and did not design ourselves, they initiated the emerging collaborative projects, demonstrating a sense of responsibility and autonomy in planning the regeneration processes.

The political challenges made us refrain from providing answers that have not fully captured the internal debates and quickly finding common interests among disparate groups to prompt collective actions. It requires transitioning from giving answers to posing more questions, creating uncertainty about the common interests we assume and the concept of place. This process created alternative narratives and frictions in any environment characterised by heterogeneity, fragmentation, and diverse ecological and social elements (Tsing, 2015). Designing for the appearance of friction does not offer the desired solutions initially sought but instead aids in imagining alternative possibilities and recognising the unique role everyone has in bringing about change. Re-evaluating the process of designing from this viewpoint necessitates re-evaluating our epistemological framework, knowledge processing and production, work strategy, expectations, and our role as 'expert' designers.

Conclusions

The participatory and relational place-based approach engaged with different temporalities of the physical and social environment, addressing the situatedness from which we design for participation. As said above, the detected nodes of relationships have settled over time and entangled in places (Tsing, 2015). In this interconnection, the cultural reconfigurations of spaces are traditionally considered as determining qualities that have followed one another over time and made a space 'a place', referring to the phenomenological interpretation of place. This vision makes envisioning a more relational and multiverse 'place' possible. The illustrated social innovation project, conducted by the authors, is trying to address this transformative approach to understanding participatory place-centred practices. We explored how this approach supported us in providing agency to all voices to construct the public realm collaboratively. This paper addresses the need to reframe participatory design and its understanding of public spaces in an attempt not to favour — even unknowingly — existing power structures. We must acknowledge that in this project, we have seen how a participatory process should at least make these dynamics evident and prevent them from being repeated. We believe that the project's greatest impact lies in enacting possibilities: the projects being launched at the end of the SMOTIES project have been entirely designed by local actors seeking our collaboration or simply our endorsement. We believe this can be a form of redistributing power and an invitation to embrace uncertainty, plurality, and decoloniality in design.

Annalinda De Rosa
Assistant Professor in Design. Her research focuses on relational and participatory design, fostering social cohesion in urban and rural communities through collaborative projects that bridge spatial design, service design, and future studies. She co-coordinated 'Human Cities/ SMOTIES - Creative works with small and remote places' (2022/24, Creative Europe program).

Davide Fassi
Full professor in Design. He published *Temporary Urban Solutions* (2012) and *In the neighbourhood* (2017). His research concerns the relationship between space and service with a community-centred approach. He was awarded the XXV Compasso d'Oro in 2018 for the project *campus - Incubation and settings for social practices*.

References

- Akama, Y., Hagen, P., & Whaanga-Schollum, D. (2019). Problematizing Replicable Design to Practice Respectful, Reciprocal, and Relational Co-designing with Indigenous People. *Design and Culture*, 11(1), 59–84.
- Auricchio, V., De Rosa, A., & Monna, V. (2023). SMOTIES: scenario building for creative solutions in remote places. *ServDes 2023 Conference* (pp. 161–183). Linköping University Electronic Press.
- Akama, Y., Hagen, P., & Whaanga-Schollum, D. (2019). Problematizing Replicable Design to Practice Respectful, Reciprocal, and Relational Co-designing with Indigenous People. *Design and Culture*, 11(1), 59–84.
- Bastian, M. (2014). Time and community: A scoping study. *Time & Society*, 23(2), 137–166.
- Bechtel, R. B., & Churchman, A. (2003). *Handbook of environmental psychology*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Beckett, C., Paulissen, V., Gablier, L., Stokfiszewski, I., & Tokarz-Haertig, J. (Eds.). (2015). *Build the City. Perspectives on Commons and Culture*. The European Cultural Foundation (Amsterdam) and Krytyka Polityczna (Warsaw).
- Biesta, G., & Cowell, G. (2012). How is community done? Understanding civic learning through psycho-geographic mapping. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 31(1), 47–61.
- Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P., & Hillgren, P.-A. (2010). Participatory design and democratizing innovation. *Participatory Design Conference*, 41–50.
- Borch, C., & Kornberger, M. (2015). *Urban commons: Rethinking the city*. Routledge.
- Casey, E. (1997). *The fate of place: A philosophical history*. University of California Press.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative Inquiry: A Methodology for Studying Lived Experience. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 27(1), 44–54.
- Cross, N. (1972). *Design participation: Design Research Society's conference, 1971*. Academy Editions.
- Dalsgaard, P. (2010). Challenges of participation in large-scale public projects. *Participatory Design Conference*, 21–30.
- de la Bellacasa, M. P. (2017). *Matters of care: Speculative ethics in more than human worlds*. University of Minnesota Press.
- de la Cadena, M., & Blaser, M. (2018). *A world of many worlds*. Duke University Press.
- De Rosa, A., Finardi, M., & Auricchio, V. (2023). *Relational design practices in design for social innovation: A place-centred approach*. IASDR Conference.
- De Rosa, A., Tassinari, V., & Vergani, F. (2021). Envisioning in participatory design processes for civic sense-making. A collective articulation of a counter-narrative through prototyping fictional worlds. *Convergences Journal*, XIV(28), 13–24.
- Debord, G. (1958). Theory of the Dérive. *Internationale Situationniste*, 2, 62–66.
- Dellenbaugh, M., Kip, M., Bieniok, M., Müller, A., & Schwegmann, M. (2015). *Urban commons: Moving beyond state and market* (Vol. 154). Birkhäuser.
- DiSalvo, C. (2010). Design, democracy and agonistic pluralism. *Design Research Society Conference*, 366–371.
- DiSalvo, C. (2015). *Adversarial design*. MIT Press.
- Escobar, A., Osterweil, M., & Sharma, K. (2024). *Relationality: An emergent politics of life beyond the human*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Escobar, A. (2001). Culture sits in places: Reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization. *Political Geography*, 20(2), 139–174.
- Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds*. Duke University Press.
- Evers, A., & Ewert, B. (2015). Social innovation for social cohesion. *New Frontiers in Social Innovation Research*, 107–127. Springer.
- Fassi, D., & Manzini, E. (2021). Project-based communities: Lessons learned from collaborative city-making experiences. *CoDesign*, 1–12.
- Foster, S. R. (2011). Collective action and the urban commons. *Notre Dame L. Rev.*, 87, 57.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.
- Haraway, D. (1997). *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan.© Meets_Oncomouse™: Feminism and Technoscience*. Routledge.
- Hess, C., & Ostrom, E. (2011). *Understanding knowledge as a commons*. MIT press.
- Hillgren, P. A. (2013). Participatory design for social and public innovation: Living Labs as spaces for agonistic experiments and friendly hacking. *Public and Collaborative: Exploring the Intersection of Design, Social Innovation and Public Policy*, 75–88.
- Hillgren, P. A., Light, A., & Strange, M. (2020). Future public policy and its knowledge base: Shaping worldviews through counterfactual world-making. *Policy Design and Practice*, 3(2), 109–122.
- Huybrechts, L., Devisch, O., & Tassinari, V. (2022). Beyond polarisation: Reimagining communities through the imperfect act of ontologising. *CoDesign*, 18(1), 63–77.
- Ingold, T. (2011). *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Routledge.
- Jantsch, E. (1972). *Technological planning and social futures*. Halsted Press, a Division of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Jégou, F., & Manzini, E. (2008). *Collaborative services. Social Innovation and Design for Sustainability*. Poli.Design.
- Kiem, M. (2011). Designing the Social, and the Politics of Social Innovation. *Design Philosophy Papers*, 9(3), 207–216.
- Lave, J., Wenger, E., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* (Vol. 521423740). Cambridge university press Cambridge.
- Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. MIT Press.
- Manzini, E., & Jégou, F. (2000). The Construction of Design Orienting Scenarios, Final Report, SusHouse project. *Policy*.
- Manzini, E., & Meroni, A. (2017). Catalysing Social Resources for Sustainable Changes. Social Innovation and Community Centred Design. *Product-service system design for sustainability*. Routledge.
- Manzini, E., & Staszowski, E. (2013). *Public and Collaborative: Exploring the Intersection of Design, Social Innovation and Public Policy*. DESIS Network.
- Margolin, V., & Margolin, S. (2002). A “social model” of design: Issues of practice and research. *Design Issues*, 18(4), 24–30.
- Maschi, S. (2002). *Scenarios within design processes: A theoretical framework to support the production of visually-based cognitive models of systems of products, services, and stakeholders* [PhD Thesis]. Politecnico di Milano.
- Mazé, R. (2019). Politics of designing visions of the future. *Journal of Futures Studies: Epistemology, Methods, Applied and Alternative Futures*, 23(3), 23–38.
- Mouffe, C. (2007). Artistic activism and agonistic spaces. *Art & Research*, 1(2), 1–5.
- Ollerenshaw, J. A., & Cresswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(3), 329–347.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sidaway, J. D. (2022). Psychogeography: Walking through strategy, nature and narrative. *Progress in Human Geography*, 46(2), 549–574.
- Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press.
- Udoewa, V., & Gress, S. (2023). Relational design. *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change*, 3(1), 101–128.

Stretch the Edge – Design Driven Processes for Reactivating Small Walled Towns and Inland Areas was an international symposium held on June 22–23, 2023, at the University of the Republic of San Marino. Promoted in collaboration with the University of Bologna and Beijing City University, the event explored the potential of design as a booster for the reactivation of small, often isolated inland areas and walled towns that, despite challenges, possess strong territorial identities and unique characteristics.

Sixteen international case studies on designed territorial regeneration were presented across three thematic sessions. ‘Activate the Edge’ explored design as a driver of place-making and place-keeping. ‘Join the Edge’ focused on community engagement and connecting places through design. ‘Enhance the Edge’ highlighted the role of design in valuing cultural heritage and local identity. Each session demonstrated how design can foster sustainable and inclusive reactivation.

The symposium opened with the presentation of a database mapping 150 national and international case studies, submitted by a global network of researchers and practitioners.

Parallel to the symposium, three working groups—‘Reactivation Strategies’, ‘Community Engagement’ and ‘Networked Territories’—convened through both online and onsite meetings. These groups promoted knowledge sharing and stakeholder involvement, focusing on design tools and co-design methods for community-based reactivation.

The proceedings compile contributions from speakers, participants, and working group members in two formats: ‘Research Papers’ highlighting the academic perspective and ‘Stories’ presenting interesting case studies shared during the event.

Editors

(Eds.)

Giorgio Dall’Osso

Silvia Gasparotto

DSI No. 2 — 2025

Year XXIII

ISSN 1594-8528

ISSN Online 2785-2245

ISBN Online 979-12-5477-632-2



Bologna
University Press