

Designing Hybrid Spaces

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

Edited by
Laura Galluzzo and Salvatore Di Dio

Design International series

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2. Hybrid Spaces as Plural Spaces: Reimagining Urban Futures through Post-Anthropocentric Design

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates hybrid spaces as dynamic environments operating as plural spaces. They challenge conventional institutions through collaborative governance, flexible programming, and broad accessibility. The study uses a pluriverse framework to explore how hybrid spaces function as laboratories for post-anthropocentric design, integrating human and non-human actors. Analysis of three Italian case studies (BASE Milano, Cascina Cuccagna, Officine San Domenico) reveals distinct approaches: experimental cultural incubation, place-based sustainability, and ontological critique. Findings show hybrid spaces as dynamic entities defined by transformation capacity rather than static attributes. Their temporal adaptability and participatory experimentation are crucial infrastructures for navigating urban challenges. These spaces could represent a shift toward community-embedded and ecologically conscious practices, offering frameworks for reimagining urban futures grounded in interdependence and more-than-human coexistence.

2.1 Hybrid Spaces as Ecosystems of Possibility

Hybrid spaces are dynamic and multifunctional environments that serve as plural infrastructures: they are simultaneously physical places, social platforms, and cultural drivers. Their hybridity is not only functional but also social, enabling interaction between diverse publics and practices. Hybrid spaces act as experimental and relational ecosystems (spaces of proximity, care, and innovation) capable of responding to evolving community needs. In doing so, they represent a new form of cultural institution, grounded in co-creation, inclusion, and regenerative urban practices. They typically arise from the adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings or post-industrial areas.

This contribution explores hybrid spaces as plural ecosystems, examining how they cultivate accessible, sustainable, and adaptive urban environments. This perspective builds upon research into Hybrid Spaces and their potential as platforms for pluralism, positioning these spaces not only as socio-cultural hubs, but as opportunities to reimagine urban life through relational, post-anthropocentric frameworks where human and non-human actors coexist, interact, and collectively reshape the city. The investigation involved mapping hybrid spaces across Milan and other contexts, analyzing their structures, cultural functions, and capacity to respond to shifting cultural changes.

A particular focus was placed on their temporal adaptability, their accessibility to diverse communities, and their experimentation with plural, participatory approaches to spatial and social-cultural production. Hybrid spaces represent a different way of inhabiting urban space, one that prioritizes care, collaboration, and plurality. Understanding hybrid spaces as processual entities, defined by their capacity for transformation rather than static attributes, reveals them as living ecosystems integrated within urban metabolism.

The research positions hybrid spaces not only as social and cultural spaces but as frameworks for envisioning plural urban futures, capable of connecting the plurality of inhabitants of the city.

2.2 Hybrid Spaces in Transition

Hybrid spaces now serve as critical infrastructures within modern Italian cities, particularly where rapid social, economic, and cultural shifts reshape urban life. This reflects «the need to re-examine and re-create existing community spaces to ensure their relevance to changing needs of communities» (Johnstone *et al.*, 2016), growing the necessity for the resilience of communities in response to the prevailing neoliberal governance, which strengthens the individualistic narrative. Italy's experience with these spaces began in the latter half of the 20th century through grassroots cultural experiments. Organizations like *Circoli Arci* (in Italy), social centres, and community hubs pioneered what would become today's sociocultural hybrid model, as «they experimented with unprecedented forms of constructing subcultural offerings during the 80's, before coming into more articulate execution in 89's-90's with *La Pantera*» (cheFare, 2019). These early spaces functioned beyond mere cultural venues; they became platforms for social connection, dialogue, and creative experimentation, distinguished by their ability to evolve continuously alongside their communities.

Unlike traditional single-use cultural institutions, hybrid spaces today operate as flexible nodes within the city's ecology. They integrate multiple functions (cultural programming, education, social services, and economic activities), creating what Krasilnikova & Klimov (2020) describe as «a synergistic effect that afterwards contributes to the creation of new functional interactions within the hybrid space structure». Hybrid spaces offer models for adaptive reuse and community-driven regeneration. Their fluid nature enables them to address shifting local needs, functioning as «urban acupuncture points» where social-cultural needs meet spatial transformation.

This adaptive role became evident during economic downturns and periods when traditional institutions retreated. Hybrid spaces fill the gaps left by traditional cultural institutions through innovative collaboration and sustainability models, helping to «constitute presidia of civic innovation in the face of the complexities of new demographics, new intercultural landscapes, new needs, and new desires» (cheFare, 2019). These venues typically operate through

mixed funding streams, shared governance structures, and citizen participation, marking a transition from top-down cultural production toward participatory and community-embedded practices.

Temporality plays a crucial role in hybrid spaces, rather than relating to the lifespan of the space itself, it refers to the changing rhythms of the cultural, social, and educational activities they host. These venues often accommodate a wide variety of programs (exhibitions, workshops, performances, residencies, community meetings) each with different temporal demands. As a result, hybrid spaces must remain structurally and organizationally flexible, capable of adapting quickly to varied scales, durations, and audience needs. Temporality becomes a resource, enabling hybrid spaces to act as dynamic infrastructures that evolve with the communities they serve.

Hybrid Spaces demonstrate also significant cultural and political agency. «They represent places where culture, art, and the exchange of knowledge are not mere entertainment, commercialization of services, or volunteerism, but rather drivers for growth and change in society» (Lo Stato dei Luoghi, 2024, pp. 27). Networks like Lo Stato dei Luoghi position hybrid spaces as active agents in culturally based urban regeneration; Their social hybridity is shaped by the variety of functions they support, which enables them to bring together diverse publics, practices, and perspectives, understanding that «in this range of settings, spaces host relational entities and vice-versa, services take place in physical environments and determine tangible outcomes» (Rampino *et al.*, 2019, pp. 25-38).

2.3 Plurality and the Pluriverse

Hybrid spaces extend beyond just reacting to urban needs: they act as incubators of urban change and social practices, transforming abandoned buildings and spaces into new forms of social, cultural, and plural interactions. Through this transformation, they initiate a broader conversation about urban belonging: not simply who has the right to the city, but how that belonging is fundamentally built and experienced. This reconfiguration relies on plurality, an approach that overcomes traditional inclusion models by refusing to channel

participation through predetermined frameworks. Plurality creates conditions where multiple, intersecting identities and values can flourish simultaneously, enabling these spaces to foster urban, queer, and plural ecologies that adapt and transform in response to changing needs, resources, and communities. This conceptual evolution manifests in hybrid spaces like BASE Milano, whose public manifesto considers accessibility and co-creation. Their guiding principles like *nothing about us* without us and Designing with the unexpected person in mind reject top-down definitions of participation. BASE makes pluralism an active design methodology, weaving it throughout programming, spatial configuration, and institutional governance. This approach resonates with transformative movements across Italy's cultural landscape (i.e. Lo Stato dei Luoghi), where «the conquest of these spaces delineates a taking on of a new political value, in a trans-feminism sense of care as a crucial element for the transformation of our cultural action» (Lo Stato dei Luoghi, 2024). This plurality ethic resonates with Arturo Escobar's pluriverse theory, which presents a compelling alternative to the One-World Worldview (OWW): the dominant ontological and epistemological framework underlying modern western urbanism. The OWW operates through binary thinking: human versus nature, culture versus ecology, subject versus object. It systematically flattens diverse world-making practices into a singular dominant logic, eliminating alternative possibilities. As Escobar (2016) argues, «If the crisis is then caused by this OWW, it follows that facing the crisis implies transitions towards its opposite, that is, towards the pluriverse» The Pluriverse asserts that multiple worlds exist, not metaphorically, but materially and ontologically. This vision is captured in «the Zapatista dictum, un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos, a world where many worlds fit» (Escobar, 2016). These worlds comprise distinct yet interconnected ways of being, knowing, and relating, where humans exist not separately from, but entangled with other species, systems, and forces. This perspective is echoed by Bruno Latour (2017), who critiques the concept of nature as an external and passive background to human action. He argues instead for a political ecology that recognizes Gaia «made up of agents that are not prematurely unified in a single acting totality» (Latour, 2017), which inherently eludes any single unifying. Within hybrid spaces, the pluriverse

framework induces fundamental shifts in design practice and opens critical questions: How might we design not for universal users, but for multiplicities of coexisting human and non-human agents? How can hybrid spaces function as laboratories for alternative ontologies, embracing diversity as a foundation rather than an aspiration?

Haraway (2016) calls for «making [...] as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present» viewing relationships with other species, systems, and technologies as a way to stay with the trouble, rather than seeking control or resolution. In this sense, hybrid spaces become zones of multispecies entanglement and co-creation. This approach recognises design's potential to «highlight the re/creation of worlds based on the horizontal relation with all forms of life, respecting the human embeddedness in the natural world» (Escobar, 2018). In a variety of perspectives these methods increase design's possibilities «in terms of matrilineal cultures with feminists; in terms of autonomy and communal modes of living with those struggling to defend landscapes and territories worldwide» (Escobar, 2018).

This transformation aligns with feminist and decolonial design perspectives that critique structural exclusions within traditional urban systems. Plurality emerges not just as a demographic description but as political positioning which gives value to difference, interdependence, and care. Intersectionality becomes crucial for understanding social identities and power relations, revealing both who hybrid spaces serve and who remains excluded through design choices. This iterative, relational approach to space-making echoes Haraway's (2016) concept of response-ability, understood as «cultivating collective knowing and doing, an ecology of practices». In this view, hybrid spaces function not merely as physical infrastructures, but as sites where interdependent worlds, human and more-than-human, can be co-composed through ongoing, situated practices of care, negotiation, and learning. They support forms of worlding that embrace complexity rather than erase it, making space for diverse agencies to respond to one another.

The post-anthropocentric design paradigm, drawing on the reflections of authors such as Arturo Escobar, Donna Haraway, and Bruno Latour, materializes in practices that transcend the func-

tionalist, rationalist, and human-centered view of design, shifting instead toward ethical, relational, and co-situated forms of becoming. This perspective entails a significant reorientation of design, where interdependence between human and non-human agents is not only acknowledged but embraced as an epistemological and operational foundation.

Through this lens, hybrid spaces become capable of hosting both tensions and possibilities within the *pluriverse*. As incubators of urban change, they provide opportunities to prototype futures that are not only inclusive but structurally plural. They must negotiate complex socio-cultural dynamics to achieve accessible and sustainable environments while safeguarding their experimental nature. The challenge lies in developing design and planning strategies that embrace temporality and flexibility, designing and governing these spaces not as fixed typologies, but as living, relational infrastructures where the city's many worlds can encounter one another, coexist, and collaborate in creation.

2.4 Reimagine urban and plural ecologies through three case studies: BASE Milano, Cascina Cuccagna, and Officine San Domenico

The research presents results from co-design sessions with three Italian hybrid spaces, aimed at understanding the future direction and role these new cultural urban hubs will have in the framework of Plural Ecosystem. BASE Milano, Cascina Cuccagna, and Officine San Domenico present three distinct approaches to hybrid spaces. Each offers a peculiar interpretation of how hybrid spaces can adapt to ecological transformation, social plurality, and post-anthropocentric design.

Their differences are not just methodological but also ontological, reflecting different understandings of urban coexistence, care, and future-making.

BASE Milano

BASE Milano is an example of an urban cultural incubator grounded in the logic of cultural experimentation. Housed in a repurposed industrial building, BASE operates at the intersection of design, culture, and activism. Through programs addressing housing rights, plural accessibility, queerness, and multispecies design, BASE establishes itself as a dynamic space that adapts to contemporary urban challenges, shaping its cultural programming in response to the city's ongoing transformations. BASE is transitioning from using culture to advocate for more-than-human issues towards future directions of Pluriverse, which aspires to co-design with other species. This transition reflects a recognition that hybrid spaces must move beyond symbolic inclusion toward material and ecological participation. Central to this shift is ecofeminism, which underscores the significance of intersectionality and mutual dependence, not only among individuals, but also across different movements and causes. Ecofeminism helps reposition the human figure in a more liminal and less central role within the broader position of the world, emphasizing relationships and interdependence as the foundation for moving beyond a human-centred worldview. Within these principles, BASE seeks to explore what it calls a Pluriversal framework, investigated primarily through artistic mediation, understood as a key method for representing and rehearsing interconnected ecological relationships.

Cascina Cuccagna

Located in a restored 18th-century farmhouse in the south of Milan, Cascina Cuccagna exemplifies a territorially rooted model of hybrid space, deeply embedded in place-based sustainability, community engagement, and social ecology. Its programs range from farmers' markets to craft workshops and job training for vulnerable groups, often facilitated by associations hosted within the space.

The organization has emphasized the importance of multispecies design, identifying terms like Pluriculture, Innovation, and Sustainability as foundational pillars. Pluriculture embodies the necessity for hybrid spaces to function as places where a plurality of cultural concentrations, encompassing both human and non-human elements, can be recognized and acknowledged. Innovation functions as both an

economic sustainability driver and a catalyst for ecological and social transition, while Sustainability emerges from the imperative to safeguard urban environments where humans and other species coexist. Central to this approach is the concept of immaterial heritage, preserving and disseminating traditional artisanal practices that work in harmony with Earth's systems, unlike contemporary industrial methods. This philosophy materializes in the organization's garden, conceived as a meeting ground between humans and other species, where relationships develop organically with plants, insects, seasonal cycles, and climatic variations. The space recognizes non-human actors, particularly plants, as providers of essential ecosystem services, notably in mitigating urban heat island effects that benefit both the farmhouse and the surrounding area. This framework is implemented through concrete multispecies engagements: educational gardens, apiaries, and ethical nurseries managed by cooperatives like La Mescolanza. Rather than designing speculative futures, the space enacts ecological relations in the present, making non-human actors (bees, flowers, air, temperature) visible through practices of care and cohabitation. Here, hybridity and plurality are practiced daily through reciprocity, ecological responsibility, and social inclusion.

Officine San Domenico

Officine San Domenico, based in Andria (Apulia), offers a radically different positioning. The hybrid space a philosophical and ontological critique of hybrid space and how it should transform. Drawing from Southern epistemologies and cosmo-cultural thinking, Officine operates through a design approach as an act of philosophical reflection rather than intervention. Their methodology centres on concepts such as non-individual (a notion that challenges the idea of the autonomous, self-contained human subject by emphasizing relationality, interdependence, and entanglement with more-than-human worlds) and Escobar concept of *sentipensar* (thinking-feeling), which proposes alternative ways of knowing that dissolve the boundaries between self and world. These concepts guide a shift toward an imaginative reality, an elsewhere of thought, that is essential for rethinking the foundational basis of design. For the organization, multispecies design is not a practice to be integrated into existing frameworks but

a call to dissolve anthropocentric foundations entirely. Plurality thus emerges as a foundational value for contemporary cultural centres such as hybrid spaces. It enables these spaces to resist the compartmentalized logics of 20th-century cultural institutions and align with scenarios that seek relations, including mystical ones, with more-than-human entities. This orientation calls for a break from traditional co-design practices, whose rational and ordered methods are insufficient for addressing transformative change. Instead, hybrid spaces must be grounded in processes that allow for fundamental reimagining, free from the necessity of human-centered approaches.

From this perspective, design becomes an act of raising awareness of how partial and situated human worldview truly is. Our reality represents only one fraction among many possible ways of being, defined by human capacity to accumulate memory but blind to other modes of existence. Officine imagines the hybrid space as a counter-space: not only contesting current paradigms but also cultivating the possibility of radical change.

Together, BASE Milano, Cascina Cuccagna, and Officine San Domenico form a spectrum of hybrid spatial practices, from interventionist experimentation to embedded care, to philosophical resistance. These spaces extend the definition of hybrid environments in distinct directions, revealing diverse strategies through which urban and ecological futures can be reimagined (Table 1). Their contributions demonstrate how hybrid spaces can move beyond inclusion

Table 1.
Comparison between hybrid spaces views on Pluriverse.

Dimension	BASE Milano	Cascina Cuccagna	Officine San Domenico
Location	Urban (Milan, repurposed industrial building)	Urban (Milan, restored rural architecture)	Small city (Andria, civic center)
Focus	Artistic experimentation, inclusive design	Place-based sustainability, social ecology	Ontological critique
Non-Human Engagement	Artistic mediation, symbolic + practical	Direct care (gardens, bees, soil)	Philosophical engagement, decentering human
Mode of Action	Interdisciplinary design, co-creation, arise awareness	Community programs, social innovation	Conceptual thinking, spiritual reflection
Design Attitude	Experimental, future-facing	Situated, restorative	Ontological, contemplative
View on Plurality	Intersectional and ecofeminist inclusion	Social-ecological cohabitation	Plurality as radical syncretism and non-necessity
Hybrid Space Role	Experimental incubators of relational future	Ecosystems of cohabitation and reciprocity	Ontological counter-spaces

toward genuine plurality, with methodologies ranging from artistic mediation to cooperative agriculture to philosophical reflection. This diversity suggests that the pluriverse manifests not through uniform approaches but through intersecting practices of world-making that acknowledge both human and more-than-human agencies.

2.5 Conclusion: Toward Urban Ecologies of Coexistence

Hybrid spaces are not fixed typologies but living, relational entities that reflect and shape the sociocultural, spatial, and environmental dynamics of their urban surroundings. As this text has explored through BASE Milano, Cascina Cuccagna, and Officine San Domenico, hybrid spaces can operate at different layers, from spatial programming to ontological critique, but all share a common desire to cultivate plural forms of inhabitation. These spaces redefine socio-cultural spaces by focusing on temporality, adaptability, and inclusivity, challenging dominant models of cultural planning and policy. Their hybridity is not only functional but also epistemic: they offer new ways of knowing, relating, and imagining the urban area. Through co-existence, care, and critical design practices, they actively aim to dismantle anthropocentric boundaries that have historically shaped urban environments. As cities face intensifying pressures, from ecological collapse to social fragmentation, hybrid spaces offer a crucial infrastructure for reimagining belonging, sustainability, and interdependence. They operate as urban labs, not only adapting to change but actively shaping new plural and regenerative paradigms of coexistence. Future research and practice must now build on these foundations, exploring how design can facilitate multispecies governance, and co-creation with non-human actors, and change the anthropocentric design point of view. Rather than reinforcing anthropocentric perspectives, these plural ecosystems challenge designers to engage with ontological provocations, foregrounding care, reciprocity, and respect across the boundaries of otherness. As processual and adaptive constructs, hybrid spaces offer fertile ground for reimagining urban life not only through human-centered lenses, but

as entangled, evolving ecologies. Their temporality, flexibility, and responsiveness position them as key infrastructures for nurturing inclusive and sustainable urban futures grounded in interdependence and more-than-human coexistence.

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Alessio Caccamo: Designer with a PhD in design and a postdoctoral research fellow (RtdA) at Sapienza University in Rome. As an expert in information design and data visualisation, and a professor, he coordinates the SID 'Design for Education' research network and participates in several European research projects. His research focuses on the principles and practices of information design and their impact on society, politics, and education. He was awarded the SID Research Award in 2019 and the Sapienza Best PhD Thesis Award in 2023. Since 2025, he has been the Information Design Lead for the *Civiltà dei Dati* journal and Co-Head of the *Progetto Grafico* journal's editorial board. In 2025, he was a visiting professor at the Elisava School of Design and Engineering under the Erasmus+ STA programme.

Lucilla Calogero: PhD, is a researcher in Design at Università Iuav di Venezia, where she also teaches Interaction design in the Interior design curriculum. Her research focuses on interaction design applied to the enhancement of cultural heritage, and on the design of interactive digital systems in visual and multimodal communication, with particular attention to information design and data visualisation. She earned her PhD in Design Sciences at Iuav with a thesis on interactive documentary. She has carried out research at Iuav and at the Digital Cultures Research Centre (DCRC), University of the West of England. She co-founded at Iuav the Master Course in Contract Design for Public Interiors, where she also served as Scientific Director.

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

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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?