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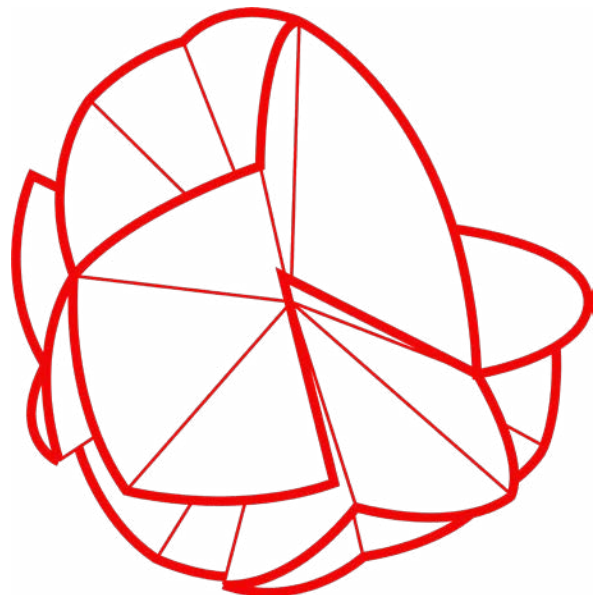
Disrupting Geographies in the Design World

Proceedings of the 8th International Forum of Design as a Process

Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna

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Designing for the Future of Education Through Cultural Heritage

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Abstract
In recent years, cultural heritage has taken up a broader purpose in Europe, becoming a substantial tool for social enhancements and economic gains. One of the bigger purposes of cultural heritage is its relationship with the education sector. Despite the efforts made to recognize the potential of cultural heritage in education, we cannot turn a blind eye to the challenges facing the education sector nowadays. Designers of today realize that the field of education has been subject to various disruptions over time. The current use of technological tools in the cultural sector has facilitated a new relationship between cultural heritage, communities, and education. Similarly, it is up to the designers to reconsider the methods through which knowledge can be produced and consumed in the education sector. In this contribution, we will explore the use of digital tools for participatory approaches in experiences collected from two distinct projects.

Conceptual Framework

Cultural heritage is now acknowledged in Europe as a tool for providing benefits on both social and economic levels. It encompasses the creation of identity, the improvement of life quality, the formation of social cohesion, as well as the engagement of local communities and their empowerment (Ferrilli, Sacco, Blessi & Forbici, 2017).

After years of research supported by the European Union (EU), the notion of heritage has expanded beyond tangible and intangible goods, to embrace landscapes, rural and urban areas, digital archives, and other new domains. The EU has also highlighted two main themes for cultural heritage which consider it as *a vehicle for cultural identity* and *a medium for economic development*. According to the *Lisbon Treaty*, the role of the EU is to ensure the safeguarding, enhancement, and promotion of Europe's cultural heritage (art. 3.3.), while recognizing diversity and bringing forth shared attributes (art. 167 TFEU) (European Commission, 2007).

The Faro Convention, among other significant policies developed by the European Commission (EC), stressed the role of individuals and communities, and suggested the safeguarding of values associated with cultural heritage (Council of Europe, 2005). In the report *Getting Cultural Heritage to Work for Europe,* the EC considered the advantages of cultural heritage, and recommended the formation of policies and an agenda for cultural heritage research and innovation (European Commission, 2015). In 2018, the EC launched *the European Year of Cultural Heritage* to highlight the opportunities and challenges derived from Europe's shared cultural heritage. The theme focused on safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting innovative solutions for social, cultural, economic, and educational problems (European Commission, 2018). Moreover, the *Innovation in Cultural Heritage* research acted as a benchmark for completed, on-going, and prospective EU funded research on cultural heritage. It focused on six main themes: European identity formation; tangible/intangible in an urban context; assessing place and events; intersectoral cooperation; cultural heritage communities; and digitalization of cultural heritage (European Commission, Sonkoly & Vahtikari, 2018). The *New European Agenda for Culture* included among its key actions social objectives, economic goals, and international cultural relationships. It also discussed the ten initiatives presented in the 2018 *European Year of Cultural Heritage*, under the four pillars of engagement, sustainability, protection, and innovation, to ensure their impact on the future of cultural heritage (European Commission, 2018). This approach has also been incorporated in the *New European Bauhaus,* which considered cultural heritage as an integral dimension for connecting science, technology, art, and culture (Europa Nostra, 2020).

Despite the efforts made to recognize the potential of cultural heritage, it remains a vague concept. Thus, the role of cultural heritage must be revitalized to ensure its valorization and the formation of social and economic benefits. According to Celaschi & Trocchianesi (2004), promoting knowledge through design could be the way to enhance cultural heritage and connect it with its users (Celaschi & Trocchianesi, 2004).

Enhancement of Cultural Heritage and Education

The definition of "*enhancement*" of cultural heritage, as found in *the Code of Cultural and Landscape Heritage* (art. 6 par. 1), states it as "the activity aimed at promoting knowledge of cultural heritage and ensuring the best conditions for its utilization and public enjoyment" (Code of the Cultural and Landscape Heritage, 2004). Since education is a process through which we create and gain knowledge, then we assume that it is vital for the protection, recognition, and appreciation of the values of cultural heritage (Petraroia, 2014). There are several policies that promote cultural heritage education and training. The *Third National Plan for Cultural Heritage Education*, for example, consists of strategies fostering the involvement of a variety of stakeholders to find innovative solutions for educational problems and promoting the use of digital tools. Other strategies include *the New European Agenda* initiatives, which act on integrating culture in education, increasing accessibility, raising awareness, promoting citizen participation, and fostering social innovation (European Commission, 2018).

Looking at the actual education system, we perceive a backwardness in meeting the challenges of the 21st century, which must be confronted by changing the current approach (Hannon, Thomas, Ward & Beresford, 2019). In light of the pandemic, the education system experienced a disruption in its existing paradigm. However, seeing the pandemic as a window of opportunity, designers began to rethink the education sector. The increasing adaptation of technological tools in the cultural sector of today made it possible to facilitate new links between cultural heritage, communities, and education. This cross-sectoral approach has also been highly acknowledged in the museums and education sector relationship.

Although we traditionally view education in terms of classrooms, there is an increasing interest in learning that takes place in museums. As stated in *the Guide for Local Governments, Communities and Museums*, museums must be recognized for their role in the education and training of youth on cultural heritage (OECD & ICOM, 2019). Thus, museums can become real engines of economic and social change. Through proximity strategies and a *win-win* logic, they can support economic activities such as those of the cultural and creative industries or the tourism sector. Through the idea of community museology, museums can also support social cohesion and community identity.

The OECD & ICOM (2019) *Guide for Local Governments, Communities and Museums* suggests five themes for museums and local and regional governments seeking to maximize the local development impact of heritage:

1   The power of the museums for local economic development;
2   The role of museums in urban regeneration and community development;
3   Culturally aware and creative societies;
4   Museums as spaces for inclusion, health, and well-being;
5   The role of museums in local development (OECD & ICOM, 2019).

Initially, museums were designed to increase cultural awareness and education. Over time, they assumed more complex roles such as training and life-long learning, not just for native populations, but also for immigrants and other marginalized communities. The primary mission of museums is to promote self-awareness and change in the way people think about past and present issues. By displaying an inventory of past creations, they help us understand why and how objects have been created, thus promoting a broader creativity culture. According to Roca (2018), we assume that museums are at the crossroads of a revolution:

- Narrative Revolution: Providing knowledge based on solid foundations and not just sentiment. Following the principles of *Responsible Research an Innovation* approach (RRI) and avoiding the spread of false information;
- Property Revolution: Without artifacts and records, museums resemble a coin that does not inspire trust. With the aid of digital tools, face-to-face experiences can be enhanced, and physical visits simulated;
- Organizational Revolution: The museum's internal organization and its relationship with public administrations have become flexible and more interconnected;
- Citizenship Revolution: Through effectively mobilizing knowledge, museums can promote awareness, beauty, and the city;
- Tourism Revolution: Through the use of digital tools, new experiences are created for visitors (Roca, 2018).

Being public institutions of knowledge, museums can break the barriers between academics and citizens, tradition and innovation, and local and global. As Colombo (2020) stated, "participatory practices are important forms of restitution, the symbolic value of which is exactly the opposite of the hostage museum of an intellectual self-referential elite, unable to negotiate and meet" (Colombo, 2020). Participatory practices in museums enable research and innovation by making use of rigorous and academic knowledge. With only a few resources and a *win-win* model, museums can create a common standpoint for culture, territories, and social organizations. In addition, digital technology allows this approach to grow and encourages the idea that anyone can be a producer of culture. The survey by *the Digital Innovation Observatories* of Politecnico di Milano has coined a new term to express the hybrid environment that has enriched the cultural experience. This term is referred to as *phygital*, and it expresses the combination of both a physical and digital cultural ecosystem. It is made up of physical environments including museums, cultural centers, archaeological parks, and digital platforms such as social networks, e-commerce sites, and blogs, that when combined can enable innovative relationships with the public. During site visits, digital tools promote engagement and personalized and interactive experiences, while online channels prepare for the site visit. According to Simon (2010), we consider three typologies of cultural engagement: user generated content; sharing; and capacity building (Simon, 2010). The third typology has been considered for *BE-HERE*, a project interested in the acceleration of cultural innovation. The project adopted a platform through which local communities can be involved and transformed into a storytelling

community. The idea is based on redefining the concept of collection and shifting from a curatorial process to a co-creation one. The project is activated by the stories that matter to people. Starting from these stories, the museum was able to design an exhibition. From the start, this project was aimed at ensuring relevant and successful participation. The *co-creative approach* allows people to replace the experts at the center of the curatorial project and gives their stories an equivalent value to that of museum collections.

Digital Technologies
for Cultural Heritage and Education

During the pandemic, museums retained their educational role by turning to digital tools. This was the case of various museums worldwide, such as the Tate Museum (Tate Museum, n.d.) and the Museum of Modern Arts (Museum of Modern Arts, n.d.), which provided online access to diverse mediums such as videos, audios, games, and quizzes to provide art lessons for children. Museums in Italy implemented similar actions to support informal learning for students through their structures. This was the case in Bologna, where access to virtual tours of the medieval city was granted. The Civic Museum of Natural History in Piacenza also offered a series of online workshops for students to enrich their distance learning experience during the pandemic (Museo di Storia Naturale, n.d.). Another example is that of the Art Stories initiative of *the Bartolomeo Cultural Association*, where students navigated through various cultural heritage sites and listened to narrations about the arts, history, and architecture (Art Stories, n.d.).

According to Colombo (2020), knowledge transmitted through museums often arises from the emotions experienced in front of an object and develops through an inductive process (Colombo, 2020). This experience-based knowledge helps increase empathy, understanding and appreciation. Thus, it is important to treat the visit as an experience, not only based on communicating but also on listening.

The questions we must address are: "What are the materials that teachers can draw on? And what dynamics should change the frontal lesson?" These issues were the focus of the two research projects, EDU.C.A.TE and ARTERI'A, conducted by lecturers and researchers of Politecnico di Milano and University of Bologna[1].

The *EDU.C.A.TE* project, involving the Management Board of the UNESCO Sacri Monti of Piemonte and Lombardia and the Lecco Laorca Lab Association, combines education with cultural heritage and technology. The aim of this project is to find innovative solutions for the valorization, safeguarding and sustenance of the above-listed cultural heritage sites. The project believes in enabling local communities through knowledge, leading to their active participation in the decision-making process. This aim was pursued by the digitalization of the sites to engage different communities or groups, such as inhabitants, cultural institutions, and designers, in the design of new material for educational activities. Through education, this project connects the three main aspects of society, science, and technology (Fanzini, Achille, & Tommasi, 2021). Through the activation of train-

ing courses at middle school and high school levels, students were made aware of the cultural significance of these sites and acquired information around their history, cultural value, prospects, and challenges. At the middle school level, students were invited to discover the sites, recognize their history, and understand the meaning and importance of cultural heritage. At high school level, students were encouraged to interact with the local community, collect tangible/intangible data, conduct surveys, and use digital tools. As an outcome, this project allowed younger generations to be aware of their heritage and to come up with their own enhancement projects.

The *ARTERI'A* project involves the Vigolzone Municipality and the *Cultures for Local Development* Association. Starting from the EDU.C.A.TE experience, the research aims to create a project HUB within the headquarters of the former Municipal Civic Center of Vigolzone to activate local development initiatives on the basis of cultural and social impact. This objective emerges as a response to the changing needs of the patrons of the Municipal Civic Center of Vigolzone, who started as simple users of cultural services and transformed themselves into advocates of local culture, as well as providers of new services for locals and visitors. The project gave rise to the opportunity of reactivating the abandoned Val Nure railway that once connected the tourist destination of Grazzano Visconti to the other cities in the valley. This disused physical infrastructure will be transformed into an intangible pathway for promoting new uses of the territory. Not only will this project restore the physical aspect, but it will also revive the historic memory of the railway through the creative intervention and resourcefulness of the citizens in the area. A fundamental prerequisite is therefore to enhance the design skills of the participants by supporting the combination of expert and non-expert knowledge and using technologies for enabling co-design. The fundamental ingredients of this proposal are places and their historical values, citizens and their local associations, experts contributing to the creative process, and IT technologies for conducting extensive and ethical exercises on collective creativity and carrying out virtual prototyping of proposed solutions.

The design exercises aim at empowering local citizens to lay the foundations for the project HUB in the Municipal Civic Center of Vigolzone. The on-going activity includes the following:
- Historical/environmental surveys to highlight the characteristics of the places and their possible evolutionary prospects;
- Seminars to initiate the design activity, detailing of organizational agreements, and aligning of operational aspects;
- Creative workshops for participatory planning and co-design and involving experts, young creatives, the inhabitants of the area, and potential visitors. The workshop foresees a phase of creative divergence, followed by a phase of convergence, relating the proposals to a strategic action framework;
- Digital prototyping and virtual staging of proposals and solutions outlined by the working groups;
- Evaluating ideas and proposals through the organization of contests and exhibitions;

- Realizing in real-life the proposal with the greatest number of votes;
- Enhancing the results by creating a digital catalog for all proposals of the Living Lab.

Grouped into three macro-areas, these activities intend to: revive, through artistic creations and projects, the traces of a disappearing railway, and reactivate the system of flows and relationships that once nourished the territory and its capitals; concentrate the design intervention on a few representative thematic stations; pursue the quantitative and qualitative rebalancing of tourist flows which are currently concentrated in Grazzano Visconti. Thus, the railway will take on the function of a cognitive infrastructure for the reactivation of internal ties to the territory. The outputs of this project consider both the works of citizens and experts alike due to the numerous actions of the civic center and the cultural associations present, and the digital co-design platform that will be tested throughout the design activity. This platform will enable the prototyping and virtual staging of the works and their use in immersive and augmented reality. Since the platform will be tested throughout the project, it can be easily transformed into a scalable process/product for other cases where *design thinking* principles can be adopted to address similar issues.
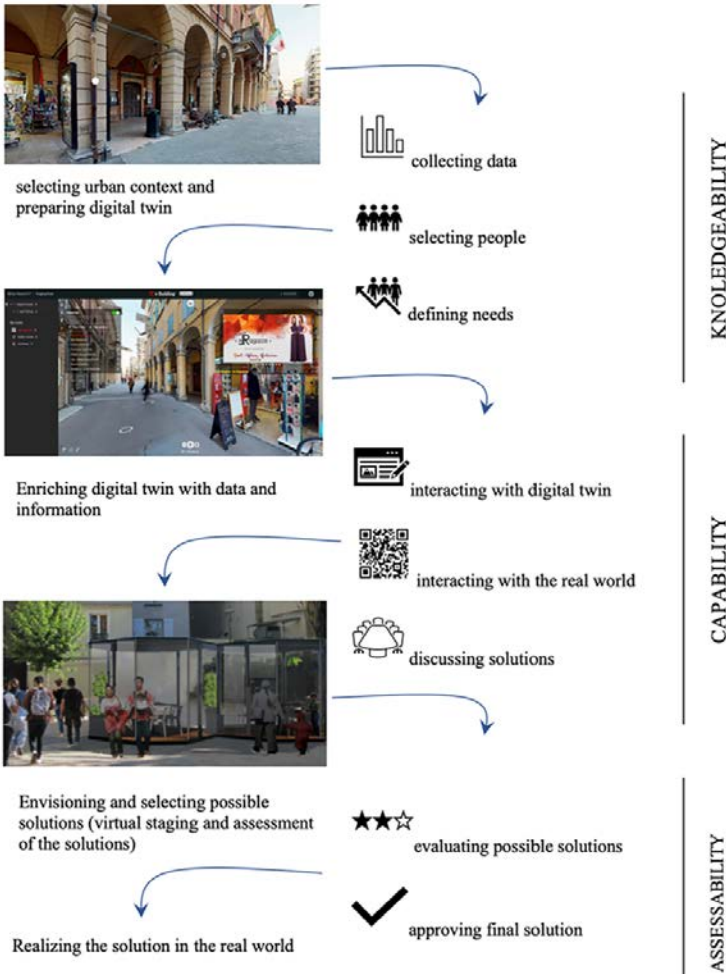
Fig. 1
Workflow of the Design Process. By Fanzini, D. 2022.

selecting urban context and preparing digital twin

collecting data

selecting people

defining needs

KNOLEDGEABILITY

Enriching digital twin with data and information

interacting with digital twin

interacting with the real world

discussing solutions

CAPABILITY

Envisioning and selecting possible solutions (virtual staging and assessment of the solutions)

evaluating possible solutions

Realizing the solution in the real world

approving final solution

ASSESSABILITY

Conclusion

In light of the above, how can designers benefit from these experiences? And what must they consider for the future of education?

Design has become a mediator of the production and consumption systems. According to Celaschi & Formia (2010), we can assume that design is "the spark that triggers the need for innovation and the master over decision making" (Celaschi & Formia, 2010). The education sector, which has seen several disruptions over time, most recently during the pandemic, includes one of the many challenges that designers now face. As suggested in this call, designers acknowledge that the production and consumption of knowledge in the education sector must be reconsidered.

Therefore, to answer the previous questions, this contribution highlights the role of schools and the importance of cultural heritage education. It considers schools as the laboratories in which designers test their different methods. We must not only consider what the designers can give to the future of education, but what education, in the form of schooling, can provide the designers. Therefore, schools and cultural institutions must work closely together to create incubators where students actively participate in the design and decision-making processes related to cultural heritage. The knowledge these students acquire is based on formal (through schools) and informal learning (through intergenerational dialogue, interaction with cultural heritage, and engagement with local communities) (Hannon, Thomas, Ward, & Beresford, 2019). This contribution suggests that informal education must be considered as a formal learning tool. The expected outcome of this research is a model that can be implemented for the education of the future, where schools become think tanks for designers, stakeholders, and policymakers. This model can be reproduced and adopted as a permanent solution for cultural and education sectors.

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The 8th International Forum of Design as a Process, themed "Disrupting Geographies in the Design World" was held in Bologna from 20 to 22 June 2022. The event was organised by the Advanced Design Unit of the Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, Department of Architecture, in collaboration with two partner universities: Tecnológico de Monterrey (TEC) and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

The Forum engaged speakers from the Global Design community, expanding the original vocation of the Latin Network for the Development of Design as a Process to include researchers and designers of the Mediterranean Area, Middle East, IOR (Indian Ocean Region), and Global South regions. The goal was to share new perspectives on imagining design futures in a responsible and just perspective, at the forefront of change, while building strategic partnerships and creating accessible knowledge.

Structured around three pillars — seminars, workshops, and exhibitions — the Forum hosted meetings, reflection opportunities, networking activities. It involved designers, scholars, young researchers, design entrepreneurs, in an experimental format.

Speakers' contributions not only inspired the practices of the designers' community, but also resonated with students and the broad audiences. The presentations explored intersections of materiality and culture, post-coloniality, decoloniality, gender studies, and other areas of human thought and action which seek to analyse, question and challenge the disruptive geographies in the world, today.

The papers submitted to the five tracks proposed are published in the Digital Special Issue 1 of *diid. disegno industriale – industrial design*, celebrating during those days its 20th anniversary and serving as the fourth partner of the event.

The Editors
Erik Ciravegna, Elena Formia, Valentina Gianfrate, Andreas Sicklinger, Michele Zannoni