



CON-TEMPORARY LIVING

Unexpected Housing Solutions
in Public Spaces

Laura Galluzzo

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A special thanks to Ambra Borin and Valentina Facchetti, without whom this book would not exist!

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My parents and My big family.

In this book we will analyse the meaning of the word temporary in relation to the change between space and time, time and use, use and memory. Specifically, we will look at the value of the temporary nature of design as applied to the world, the city and its inhabitants, the temporary urban solutions (Fassi, 2012), and finally the key place designed to host people's life: the home.

Although it can be said that today the meaning of the term "living" is broader and indicates more than a place to sleep, and therefore to the small domestic space of a house. This is shown by the fact that today we live at work, we live on the go, we live in the movement, but, the house still plays a central role (Galluzzo, 2018).

We will then draw up a categorization of the different types of temporary housing. Examples that in the world of design are multiple and, especially in recent years, have increased exponentially.

Temporary design has become an excellent instrument to occupy peripheral, degraded and underutilized areas of the city, to give them a new personality and new value, and to then find a more permanent form of use for them. In this sense, the temporary city is one that takes its least used areas and aspects and transforms them to accommodate new uses, new identities and new inhabitants.

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Laura Galluzzo



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04 - TEMPORARY SPACES AND SERVICE DESIGN

After having investigated the meaning of temporariness, the relationship between public and private spaces, and in particular the characteristics of temporary solutions for domestic and urban contexts, the relationship between spaces and services in a temporary dimension is investigated in the next paragraphs, in light of the classification of design solutions presented in the previous chapter.

In the academic discussion on the relationship between space and service design (De Rosa, Fassi & Galluzzo, 2018), an area of great relevance is certainly covered by urban public spaces, which present a strong relationship between the two sub-disciplines. Also in the topic dealt with in this book, there is an indisputable link between the spatial dimension of Temporary Housing Solutions and their definition in terms of the service offered. In this chapter, more specific issues related to these relationships are addressed.

We begin by defining the relationship of Temporary Housing Solutions and the urban environment, straddling the design of spaces and services; we then continue with an analysis of the dimensions of contemporary housing in relation to past housing; we then analyse the materials of temporary domestic solutions and the possible ways in which they can be realized; and we end with an analysis of possible temporary solutions for non-urban contexts.

This last chapter is composed of contributions written by four external authors.

4.5 Temporary Housing Solutions in Extra-urban Contexts

*Ambra Borin **

The phenomenon of urbanization has changed cities around the world through the possibility of employment, education and interaction with others. With the spread of COVID-19, the city became less attractive, and flats became stuffy and unliveable during quarantine.

A part of the population left the cities and moved to houses in suburban areas, and with the increasing phenomenon of 'working from home', there was an exodus from the city to more rural and

natural environments. In support of this, Professor Rebecca Katz of Georgetown University Medical Center states that while it is impossible to predict what the new normal will be, it may well be reverse urbanization¹.

Thus, a reverse urbanization involving the marginal and borderline locations of cities may well occur. A drastic, urgent transformation was also made tangible and necessary by the epidemic, enabling the implementation and experimentation of established urban methods on a different scale. Resilience has long been understood as the capacity of communities to respond creatively and constructively to environmental, economic, and social crises. It is characterized by a system of knowledge and behaviours that characterizes the capacity to respond to the unexpected and create new equilibriums centred on a sense of community, such as associations, circles of friends, residents from the same apartment or neighbourhood, etc. The COVID-19 pandemic's consequences could make it even harder to follow established guidelines for managing and planning urban infrastructure (Nahiduzzaman and Lai, 2020), and innovation with a territorial focus that improves proximity networks (Tricarico and De Vidovich, 2021). The public notice of *Piano Nazionale Borghi*² provided by the PNRR (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza) in 2022 and dedicated to small historic villages, aims to promote projects for the regeneration, enhancement, and management of the great heritage of history, art, culture, and traditions in small Italian towns, integrating the objectives of cultural heritage protection with the needs of social and economic and employment revitalization, and combatting dissent. This notice represents a significant opportunity to promote mountain and remote regeneration. Through cultural and social regeneration, it aims to transform a dispersed heritage into a widespread one, and to bring about favourable economic, social, and spatial dynamics (especially in smaller places). Through the regeneration of public spaces, infrastructures and the development of local services and recreational facilities, the means can be provided to transform the local rural and remote landscape and, by extension, improve the image of existing places (Epstein et al., 2018) and related services. The word rural (rural+urban) refers to a geographic territory/landscape which possesses the economic characteristics and lifestyles of an urban area while retaining its

*

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essential rural area features (OECD, 2020). Remote places, instead, are defined by the European Union (2008) as those contexts where “at least half of its population lives at more than 45 minutes by road from any city of at least 50 000 inhabitants”.

A remote place is a wider territorial unit that can be defined as remote by a variety of criteria (e.i. low population density, geographical barrier/allocation, no good transportation links, difficulties in accessing facilities, social divisions, struggling with economic issues, etc). The last fifty years have witnessed a significant transformation of the city and, thanks to a growing service sector, that of deindustrialization and relocation. The development of tourism and cultural industries has created new opportunities for work and consumption.

“Contexts (urban and extra-urban) emerged as increasingly important actors in this general framework, despite a parallel process of fogging, if not dissolution, of the great national systems, with the effect of atomization and fragmentation of economies” (Chilla et al., 2017); at the macroregional level, they create new systems.

Since the post-Second World War period, a significant part of Italy’s inner areas has gradually undergone a process of marginalization marked by a decline in population, sometimes below the critical threshold; a reduction in employment and land use; a dwindling supply of local public and private services, and social costs for the entire nation; and the degradation of the cultural and environmental heritage (Gaspari, 2016). At the same time, some inner areas have provided a space for good policies and good practices, because of which: the population has remained stable or grown; municipalities in the area have cooperated to produce essential services; and environmental or cultural resources have been protected and enhanced (European Union, 2011).

Communities flourish when they invest in people and look to the future to improve the small and remote areas while considering the social and environmental effects. Investment in education, in the capacity to keep people together, is especially vital for mountain communities, which are becoming increasingly open communities with no defined borders, capable of in-tegrating and confronting old and new, both within and outside (Ravazzoli & Valero, 2020).

This hybridization, on the cultural front, is very important because it brings together different pieces and can produce significant results on the path towards a quality future: identifying and envisioning growth collaborative strategies, it is possible to build a “system of products and services capable of transforming ideas into tangible actions within a certain territory” (Villari, 2012). Regions and metropolitan areas are put on the market and compete with one another on an international scale; they enter into city-marketing transactions, which necessitate increased investments from local budgets. One of the primary goals of new urban competitiveness is to prioritize visitor acquisition at

the national or international level. In these processes, “the service sector and the renewed cultural and tourist towns using the events as an opportunity to reposition the international visibility, economic development and tourism, and urban regeneration” (Sassen, 1997). Design has been characterized by a process of dematerialization, of it embracing not only its tangible side (products, furniture, spaces, artifacts), but also the intangible one (strategies, services, events, experiences etc.). In the tourism sector, the requests for local, unique and authentic experiences have become louder and more frequent and are included in the most important aspects of tourism. Tourism includes the processes, activities, and outcomes arising from the relationships and interactions among several stakeholders: tourists, tourism suppliers, host governments and communities, which are involved in attracting and hosting visitors (Goeldner & Givens, 2006). According to *The World Economic Forum*, the travel and tourism industry is continually growing, generating jobs, reducing poverty, driving growth and fostering development and tolerance. Nowadays the biggest hospitality platforms try to offer a palimpsest of local activities and experiences. In this field, design plays a central role, especially in researching and developing disruptive solutions through its methods and tools and with a strong focus on the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders.

The first strategic scenario in terms of tourism to materialize in recent years in many inland areas, especially in Italy, is the phenomenon of the *Albergo Diffuso* (Toson, 2015). An *Albergo Diffuso* is defined as a structure with unitary management but in which the accommodation units are located in different buildings from the services (no more than 200m away for obvious practical reasons). In order to qualify as a guesthouse, there must be at least seven rooms managed as a unit; and must offer a continuous service and a refreshment area as per national regulations, while an in house catering service is optional. One example is Santo Stefano di Sessanio, a village of medieval origin located 1,251 metres above sea level on the Apennine slopes in the province of L'Aquila (Abruzzo). The history of Santo Stefano di Sessanio took a turn in 1994 when entrepreneur Daniele Kihlgren chose to purchase a house in the village for his own use. He then decided to buy and restore several buildings with the ultimate goal of creating an accommodation facility: thus, the Sextantio project (<https://www.sextantio.it/en/>) was born, and completed in 2004 after a philological reconstruction of the village. It has a capacity of eighty beds, to accommodate tourists attracted by local traditions, which are revived within the village, and preserved by the memory of the inhabitants, who now number about a hundred.

Another significant example is Grottole, a small town of 2,100 inhabitants on top of the Lucanian hills in Basilicata. Today the centre has 300 inhabitants (over 60% over 70) and 629 abandoned houses.

Inhabited since prehistoric times, with a rich Roman and medieval history, during the last 60 years almost all the inhabitants have emigrated, abandoning the village. In this context, *Wonder Grottole*³ is an experimental project involving and connecting people and ideas from all over the world, a social enterprise working to reinhabit the historic centre of the village through the regeneration of abandoned houses and the creation of a new community.

Local and global, material and immaterial, past and future; living well together, and inventing and imagining new ways of living in community. Together with Airbnb, since 2019 they have launched the Italian Sabbatical project, opening the doors of Grottole to the world. Tourism in this case, is meeting with the local community, it is discovering the territory through slow ways, it is nature, it is becoming a protagonist; it is involvement, knowledge exchange, it is creating new bonds. All these premises are embraced by *Wonder Casa*, a widespread accommodation perfect for a type of responsible and sustainable tourism to get in touch with the true identity of the territory without limits.

The choice of a specifically localized site acts as a starting point for the recognition of different subjective pluralities; it is not taken for granted that pre-existing communities will identify themselves in the new inserted space, it is necessary to gradually bring them closer and accompany them in the identification, recognition and sense of belonging of that given space that originates the process and becomes a territory in common. The trigger phase thus originates in a symbolic and emblematic place, which identifies itself as an intermediary between public and private, a place open to citizens, necessarily rooted in the neighbourhood, periphery, and dimension of the area in which it is located. To activate it, then, forms of support for the project are required, which are identified in social structures ranging from the public to local associations, public-private partnerships, and administrative support, which act as guarantors for the durability of the project.

Each space reflects the community and the cultural identity of the place where it is located, and changes under these movements; each peculiarity is the result of a collective need, the result of active protagonists, of a collaborative policy that focuses on the common good, with an eco-systemic perspective. Therefore, if on the one hand, tourism can be considered a relational practice to experience the world, on the other, Johnston (2000) affirms that it constitutes the main threat to local cultures. The meeting between different cultures and the consequent process of cultural integration represents the moment of supreme "human comparison between the local community and tourists; this combination represents a useful competitive advantage for local development, since the tourists themselves endorse new relationships with the host community and become loyal to that type

of human experience" (Bozzato & Guadagnoli, 2021); this experience is characterized by the unrepeatable nature of that context.

On the contrary, if poorly managed, this effect may be asymmetrical and, therefore, determine the prevalence of one culture over another, contributing to an exogenous and instrumental reterritorialization of the places with the risk of building an image of the territory as a mere cultural projection of the investors (Pollice, 2005).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a series of health, economic and social crises, which had strong repercussions in everyday life. Social distancing is a new dynamic to which the entire population has had to adapt. From the labour point of view, after an initial phase of total standstill, in order to ensure the resumption of activities, most companies opted for flexible and adaptable working arrangements. The moment workers are released from the physical company space, they can choose to change their habits and even their lifestyle. It loses its meaning to maintain one's residence in a crowded and busy city with high costs for renting or buying a house. This opens a possibility for marginal areas of Italy that present all the characteristics of living apart, in the midst of a natural environment. In a way, a process of escape from the city has begun, in search of a safer life, sheltered from COVID-19 and the problems one is subjected to by living in the city. For the first time perhaps, the pandemic emergency has reversed our gaze, leading us to "think of inner areas not as places of needs, but as sources of desires" (Di Baldassarre, 2019).

In Tuscany, a start-up *HQVillage*⁴ was born with the objective of bringing smart-working to small Italian villages, accompanying local administrations and individual property owners through a process of regenerating infrastructures and dwellings that is sustainable, digital, and focused on preserving the authenticity of the place, all in order to offer new locations for companies. From the old model of corporate work, we then moved on to more agile work, understood as working from home, and then back to a physical corporate space that is relocated in the villages in favour of a home and work solution united in a single nucleus, which we can define as a diffuse office model. Over the past ten years, some municipalities have pursued a policy that could be described as a policy of selling off real estate. Unwilling to resign themselves to depopulation and abandonment, some have chosen to give away disused properties, with the intention of encouraging new families to move in. Whether it is one or the other hypothesis, municipalities can now work developing the project of selling houses for one euro. The birth of the phenomenon is placed in the city of Salemi (Sicily); where in 2008 the mayor at the time first proposed the *Houses for 1\$* (Case a 1€) initiative, which was officially presented two years later in Rome, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities.

It was based on the idea of assigning empty houses in the historic

centre to allow them to be quickly rehabilitated in the face of a state of almost total abandonment. The houses in the centre of Salemi had in fact been damaged by the Belice earthquake of 1968 and had never recovered. The initiative generated strong interest, especially in the media, with numerous demonstrations of interest from Italy and abroad. Local projects and policies were put in place to attract talents and people interested in living in a better place. Pilot projects like this can experiment with new ways of attracting people interested in being engaged in an active community-building life project.

Thinking about places, today and specifically in reference to urban and rural areas, is an emblematic exercise of democracy if the direct involvement of all the realities concerned is foreseen, as opposed to acting by representation: “we need to practise a beauty that knows how to adapt to the changes that the future has in store for us, without dempowering it; a beauty that speaks of an open, courageous, genuine and welcoming future for the growth of humanity” (Fuad-Luke, 2009). Territorial characteristics and contextual factors influence considerably the emergence and the development trajectories of social innovation initiatives, as well as their evolution and scaling.

The contextual factors refer to the existing set of contextual material and immaterial resources: natural, financial, social, and cultural characteristics that enable or constrain social innovation. In addition, one of the significant strategies in achieving sustainable development goals is by involving people at all levels in social, cultural and economic actions, and designing solutions based on social innovations (Cunha et al., 2022). The existing context significantly influences the actors' capacity to mobilize and transform existing resources.

As mentioned above, the events of today have become one of the key strategies of the urban economy. Urban sociology has, in recent decades, devoted a great deal of energy to the study of these phenomena and how events can really become an accelerator of urban transformation and a catalyst of visibility of the city.

These analyses are carried out through focus on some issues (Guala, 2007): the development of social indicators; the issue of quality of life; the change of context; and the new extra-city users and new marketing strategies.

Cities could be home indeed to different events and entities, and increasingly, the events transform the context, their image and opinions of residents and visitors, as “exceptional events can help (the city) to redefine its development model, and get visibility otherwise unimaginable, [...] reminds them over time” (Ashworth and Voogd, 1995), such as the Winter Olympic Games Turin 2006, for which a well-structured and innovative sustainability framework was realized to assess impacts and legacy.

The large flow of visitors and actors involved in a mountain realm

characterized by small realities to be protected and enhanced offers an interesting scenario on which to reflect and design in a multidisciplinary approach.

In other words, sports Mega Events in virtue of various dimensions, including visitor-friendly attractiveness, destination image and urban transformations, can attract extensive media coverage (Müller & Pickles, 2015).

Therefore, hosting such mega events seemed reasonable as highly expected positive socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental effects were caused after the act (Greenwell et al., 2019): the territory and its localities became more accessible with the interaction between the four components of urban planning system, transport system, opportunities and time constraints, and individual opportunities and constraints. For example, the attraction of actions and innovations may occur in mountain areas during extraordinary events, such as the forthcoming *Winter Olympics and Paralympics Milan Cortina 2026* in Valtellina Area in north Italy, but hosting these in a mountain area can be both an opportunity for new developments and a threat to excessive anthropogenic pressure and long-term footprints (e.g., excessive tourism or unused post-Olympic facilities). The future macro-objective is the event's legacy project and enhancement of the local area through the temporary adaptation of the existing heritage, the design of temporary, reversible, and eco-sustainable modules. In general, the attention paid to the assessment of the social and environmental impacts of each aspect of the project responds to the objectives of the local stakeholders involved as partners in the activities.

According to this development, mountain regions have recently entered a time of renewed vitality, during which relationships with the urban environment are crucial for reshaping cultural values, establishing physical and functional ties with the surrounding areas, and development of urban-mountain networks (Giordano et al., 2016). A substantial change in the nature of work is taking place (World Economic Forum, 2016) and the global demand for tourism has been growing for decades – in spite of economic and health crises – and addressing mountain destinations (Wen et al., 2020), for which potential conflicts can be envisaged between recreational uses of the mountain (Scolozzi et al., 2014), different types of tourism, tourists and local resident communities (Schirpke et al., 2020). In its contradictions, the Alpine macro-region also presents significant opportunities that depend, and will depend, on the adoption of a long-term perspective and a systemic vision capable of promoting local anticipatory governance, which at the same time addresses social, economic and environmental uncertainties.

In conclusion, the new activation urban temporary solutions, future scenarios, and territories' tactics and strategies are offered to bring

the inhabitants and small regional communities into relationships in order to develop new processes of inclusion and social innovation to regenerate extra-urban contexts in a long-term perspectives.

NOTES

- 1 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/01/future-of-cities-urban-life-after-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- 2 <https://cultura.gov.it/pnrr-borghi>
- 3 <https://www.wondergrottole.it/>
- 4 <https://www.hqvillage.com/en/>

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