

# PUBLIC AND COLLABORATIVE

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF DESIGN,  
SOCIAL INNOVATION AND PUBLIC POLICY

Ezio Manzini and Eduardo Staszowski, Editors.

Christian Bason

Andrea Botero

Joanna Saad-Sulonen

Margherita Pillan

Irina Suteu

Eduardo Staszowski

Scott Brown

Benjamin Winter

Nik Baerten

Adam Thorpe

Lorraine Gamman

Per-Anders Hillgren

Virginia Tassinari

Luigi Ferrara

Magdalena Sabat

Mariana Amatullo

François Jégou

Clara Delétraz

Giovanna Massoni

Jean-Baptiste Roussat

Marie Coirié

Kristin Hughes

Peter Scupelli



**DESIS  
NETWORK**

**PUBLIC & COLLABORATIVE  
EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF  
DESIGN, SOCIAL INNOVATION AND  
PUBLIC POLICY**

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Illustrator: Amy Findeiss

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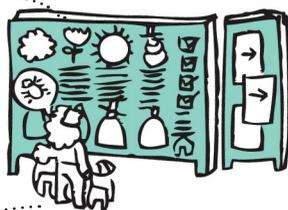
Christian Bason



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# CHAPTER 1

## DESIGNING NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THE STATE

1. PEER-PRODUCTION IN PUBLIC SERVICES:  
EMERGING THEMES FOR DESIGN RESEARCH AND ACTION  
ANDREA BOTERO, JOANNA SAAD-SULONEN
2. SERVICE DESIGN FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE  
MAKING A STEP FORWARD TOWARDS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY  
MARGHERITA PILLAN, IRINA SUTEU
3. REFLECTIONS ON DESIGNING FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION IN  
THE PUBLIC SECTOR: A CASE STUDY IN NEW YORK CITY  
EDUARDO STASZOWSKI, SCOTT BROWN, BENJAMIN WINTER



# SERVICE DESIGN FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOG. MAKING A STEP TOWARDS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

Margherita Pillan, Irina Suteu

## ABSTRACT

*The Italian society has traditionally been identified as a mono-cultural one, being characterized by homogeneous values (concerning, for instance: family, religion,...) and strong attachment to local customs; the country we live in is usually praised for its cultural heritage, and famous for its rigid, complex and cumbersome bureaucratic system. Recently Italy is passing through demographic and social changes bringing a mixture of cultures that converge into the Italian environments. In particular in Lombardy the presence of foreign population increased in the last decade by 11 % by year with peaks between 19-23% in the period from 2003 to 2005,<sup>11</sup> changing the picture of the Italian demographics and creating a constant pressure at the administrative level. The phenomenon of immigration in Italy has grown significantly over the last three decades. However, many public services have a complex, outdated organization system and the presence of many citizens of foreign origin exerts pressure on institutions, urging them to change. Up to now, political parties have not been able to propose innovative solutions in the law system and in the public service*

**DIGITAL SERVICES**  
**CULTURAL DIVERSITY**  
**INTERCULTURAL DIALOG**

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
Service Design

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
Politecnico Di Milano

**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
Italy

**SERVICE AREA:**  
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**MAIN PARTNERS:**  
Associations: Naga, Asnada,  
Fondazione Interculture,  
Metid Center

**PROJECT LEAD:**  
Margherita Pillan

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
irina.suteu@gmail.com



*institutions so to correspond to the social changes. A number of nongovernmental organizations offer services in different fields, such as education, health care, basic help for the poorest.*

*The research and education activities reported in this paper were guided by some questions: how to promote social cohesion in multicultural urban environments? What role can service design play with respect to a full acceptance of social change due to multicultural complexity? How can we contribute to public service innovation so to correspond to multicultural issues?*

*Acknowledging this, the next paper presents a pedagogical experiment aiming to address the social issues coming from the above-mentioned situation and that starts an inquiry on the possible role of the design in proposing intercultural dialog scenarios. The course is part of the wider research on social sustainability expressed in the public and collaborative cluster of the DESIS Network.*

## **1. SOCIAL CHANGE FOR A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

### **1.2 Italy from a homogeneous to a diverse social context**

Over the past decades, Italy has seen the arrival of a growing number of foreigners who moved to our country in search of job opportunities, to study, for personal or political reasons, and more.

In this paper, we will indicate these people with the terms: new Italians or new citizens [2], to emphasize their belonging to the social structure of Italy, and their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Despite the complexity of the different phenomena that can be related to the progressive transformation of Italian society toward a multicultural asset, it is possible to single out some issues that should be afforded in order to improve life quality and social wellbeing.

During our research, we have addressed many different aspects of living conditions of the new

citizens and tried to understand what the priority 'to be addressed and the issues on which the design of the services may bring contributions more' important.

The Italian law system is mainly based on the *jus sanguinis* principle, that is, the citizenship rights are normally granted only to those who were born from Italian citizens; for this reason, the children of immigrants do not automatically get citizenship even if they were born on Italian soil. Most Italians tend to take the *jus sanguinis* principles underlying as natural since the long lasting tradition; a change of this deeply rooted principle will require time and work. Due to the relative novelty of the immigration phenomena, most people tend to consider as 'new comers' and 'last arrived' all the citizens with a foreign origins, even when they were born in Italy; public institution managers slowly start to consider the different needs emerging from the multicultural social

composition and in most cases the search for practical solutions to problems is empirically carried on, without a real political debate about the ongoing change and suitable strategies.

Despite the relevancy of the new citizens in the Italian work system, many immigrants get jobs that under-use their skills. Historical professional association tend to protect their privilege opposing bureaucratic obstacles to the free professional practice of new citizen who studied abroad: local protectionist policies are opposed to innovation that newcomers may bring in different professional sectors. While these phenomena represent an under exploitation of the cultural resources and thereafter a lost for national economy, they also contribute to increase personal frustration and social friction.

In Italy the overall quality of public services (such as health care assistance and education) is high and free for all the citizens, but bureaucratic procedures are quite complex and appear as obscure for new comers since very low attention is paid to communication. Some specific features of the local service organization make quite complicate and frustrating the access to some public services for new citizens.

**“From our research it appeared as evident the importance of cognitive and psychological phenomena related to sense of belonging and identity.”**

To better understand the complex issues related to the wide topic of multiculturalism in Italy, we made researches based on different activities. Firstly previously the beginning of the course, we had interviews with experts of different disciplines and carried on an investigation into the literature in fields as sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology. Secondly we contacted and started to individuate the main areas of intervention along with selected organizations aimed to the solution of specific objectives such as health care, cultural exchange, language learning. These ONG are based on the

active participation of the new Italians together or are completely founded by citizens of foreign origin; As our research community is characterized by a high number of researchers and PhD students coming from foreign countries finally, the personal involvement of the members of our research group is very high and personal. Thirdly one of the essential issues was to draft a project brief that will allow students to get close to the intercultural communication concept, by designing digital services. It is important to stress out that one of the main objectives of the course was to teach students how to learn by doing, this referring to the transfer of social interaction dynamics in digital service solutions.

**1.3 Raising the awareness on the national identity change**

We chose to not focus our attention on extreme events such as the attitudes of racism and foreclosure, and instead we concentrated our attention on everyday life small and great difficulties normally encountered by new citizens and often taken as given and non modifiable. We would like to make a contribution in terms of service design to the solution of big and small problems, reducing friction that every day new citizens experience living and acting in Italy. In other words, we choose to adopt both top down and bottom up approaches to embrace the different aspects of social complexity.

From our research it appeared as evident the importance of cognitive and psychological phenomena related to sense of belonging and identity.

As new citizens face with practical problems (residence permit, job search, medical care), the ability of each individual to make the best use of his/her own resources and actively seek solutions to the problems and needs of everyday life are 'strongly influenced by the quality' of human relations. The daily confrontation with stereotypes and prejudices produce friction and fatigue in every daily action and these difficulties do not vanish with time, and are still experienced by children of immigrants, born on Italian land, especially when the physical appearance puts in evidence the foreign origin.

The condition of a citizen with a foreign background does not end in a short time and sometimes cannot ever run out. Everyone has the right to maintain a strong link with the traditions of the country of origin,

with its cultural roots, with specific tastes, values, and habits. Diversity is human, and must be accepted and valued in all its forms. Especially in cases of the visible minorities, the ethnic minority status might never end. To minimize the psychological problems related to the cultural shock and to reduce fatigue related to the condition of “newly arrived”, it is very important that Italian citizens mature a new awareness of the potential of multiculturalism. In order to understand the perception of the migration flow in the present Italian society, it is necessary to briefly review the evolution of the foreigners’ image in the public opinion.

## 2. TOWARDS THE EXPLOITATION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

### 2.2 Italy from an emigration to immigration country

The imaginary attached to the Italian culture is strongly rooted in the cultural heritage and the rich architectural and art scene, and emphasizes the strong national identity recognized and preserved even in communities outside Italy. In the same time the Italian society is historically an emigration one the phenomenon reaching important peaks at the beginning 1900’s when the emigration flow accounted more than 600,000 persons each year. Although the main target stayed the United States a considerable part of the population also choose France, Germany and Switzerland as destination countries. This situation continued throughout the 50’s and 60’s, the migration being however legalized and encouraged by legislation acts that released temporary working visas to Italian citizens especially in Germany <sup>[3]</sup>.

If until the first half of the last century the migration flow exited the country, the phenomenon of internal migration emerged as a strong trend in the 50’s and 70’s. This changed radically the demographics of Italy reporting more than 2 million regional migrants <sup>[4]</sup>. This phenomenon of inter-regional internal migration underlined the distinction between “strong and weak” economic areas and between south and north.

The brief review of the migration trends shows a society in continuous transformation that experienced internal changes, in this sense revealing strong economic and cultural regional identities. This sets up the scene for one of the most significant social

changes that occurred in the last 10 to 12 years, in which Italy has seen an increasing inflow of foreigners coming from North Africa, the Middle East, and the Eastern Europe. Some of the most attractive areas are in the northern Italy and in particular Lombardy <sup>[5]</sup> in this respect the foreign population following an inter-regional migration trend. Having seen the transformation of the shift from an emigration to an immigration society in Italy several important issues have to be considered. First the already consolidated immigrant population started to integrate in the social tissue, the mixed families constituting 8,3% in 2009 <sup>[6]</sup>. This brings the emergence of the second generation Italians, who inherited a double cultural identity and are perfectly integrated in the Italian society. Second an important incoming factor is the diversification of religious beliefs and practices, that include Islamic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish <sup>[7]</sup>. The above-mentioned data show at a closer look a phenomenon of cultural diversification that wasn’t present before, and that raises questions regarding the integration of the foreigners in the Italian culture and how this will affect the traditional cultural heritage.

### 2.3 Foreigners in the public opinion

This change is received from the public opinion with certain reluctance; most of the times the metaphor attached to the incoming flows of foreigners is that of intruders into a terrain to which they don’t belong. In a study on the public opinion since the emergence of the immigration phenomenon in Italy, Sciortino e Colombo emphasize the changes on the public discourse referring to foreigners. Analyzing the printed press from the 1969 to 2001 the authors drafted a distinct change in the attitude towards foreigners and the image constructed around the figure of the immigrant. In this study the perception of the phenomenon changes slowly from its recognition as significant [‘69-81] to the acknowledgement of the immigration impact and its politic implications, [‘82-’91] and then to the construction of the Pandora box myth, advertising the image of the immigrants in a negative light <sup>[8]</sup>.

It is important to stress out how the factors influencing this changes have different sources, in part being influenced by the major socio - political changes that took place, such as the falling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the communist regime the event of the

European Community, or more recently the war in Somalia.

## 2.4 “Noi e loro” in Italy

The above-mentioned changes mark a deeper change in the socio-cultural identity of the Italian society, that has seen a shift from focusing on the regional differences, during the inter-regional migration period into acquiring a more coherent cultural identity in contrast with the incoming foreign culture brought by immigration. This counter posing of values, beliefs and languages evolves from the necessity of negotiating a simultaneous presence into a shared territory. As Triandafilydou, explains, the host countries and societies are faced with the indispensable re-affirming of each communities' identity creating in this way a “others-within” situation in which the political and social order is constantly re-negotiated [9]. This process can be seen from Social Identity Theory perspective in which the in-group, out-group paradigm emerges [10]. In social identity theory, the individuals consider themselves part of a certain group according to cognitive and perceptive aspects. The group members are not initially linked by affective ties, but rather share the same behavioral patterns and perspective on the surrounding context. This paradigm can be extended to large groups and communities in order to understand the host national group and its natural reaction to the diversity of the incoming foreign groups [11]. In the next chapter we will argue that understanding the dynamic between different groups could lead to negotiate a more cohesive and therefore sustainable society.

## 3. CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY AS A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION ACTIONS

### 3.2 Culture as an emerging sustainability factor

Environmental, economic and social sustainability and sustainable development have been a growing major concern in the public discourse since the formulation of the first action plan in the 1987 in the Brundtland Report and Agenda [12]. If culture was initially seen as part of the social sustainable development, a more recent perspective stresses the importance of culture, bringing it forward as the fourth pillar of the sustainable development [13] arguing that sustainable communities depend upon the capability of individuals to understand and respect each other's values, and

this qualities are built through cultural interaction [14]. Moreover, Nurse argues that culture should be considered the central pillar of sustainability because peoples' identities, signifying systems, cosmologies and epistemic frameworks shape how the environment is viewed and lived in [15]. This perspective is reinforced at international level by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, that states that “parties shall endeavor to integrate culture in their development policies at all levels for the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development and, within this framework, foster aspects relating to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions” [16]. In this context the focus on culture, brings a new, more detailed dimension to the social sustainability, emphasizing the role of the cultural aspects in the creation of a cohesive and therefore more sustainable social environment. The social innovation as suggested by Mulgan concerns “social activities that are motivated by the goal of meeting social needs and that are predominantly developed and diffused through social organizations who's primary goals are social” [17] within this definition the intercultural dialog can be placed as a main goal to attain in the context of an increasing multicultural society. As shown before the specificity of the Italian social context is that of a continuously changing one, a change that operates at the cultural level activating contrasting forces.

We suggest that it is in the realm of this tension that the social innovation actions geared towards cultural sustainability are relevant and necessary. Rather than perceiving the barriers that cultural diversity imposes, the social innovation activities enable the stakeholders in this changing process to sense the opportunities and acknowledge the benefits of a heterogeneous society.

### 3.3 Intercultural dialog and communication design

Having individuated the overall area in which the social innovation actions can be implemented the next step is to draw the attention on the precise issues that can be addressed through these actions and how this could inform the work of the communication designers. Taking a closer look at the intercultural contact several literatures shown the impact that the immersion in a new and unknown cultural environment has on the foreigners. The notion of “cultural shock” pinpoints

the psychological phenomenon that occurs in the absence of cultural cues that can help the foreigner decipher the new environment [18] [19] [20]. In the same time the social context reacts to a critical mass of foreigners that have the potential to influence an established system of values, beliefs and traditions. Rather than a uniform background to which foreigners have to gradually get accustomed, the hosting context has to be seen as a dynamic system that modifies through cultural influences and exchanges. At individual level the intercultural contact has to be seen from both sides, weighting the phenomenon of cultural shock also from the perspective of the locals that come in contact with foreigners. A strategy to build an intercultural dialog has to be constructed from both sides and can constitute the objective of a communication design activity.

The task of the designer in this case is to observe the dynamic of the social interactions, acknowledge the cultural differences, anticipate the emerging frictions and draft strategies that can be applied in order to decrease the impact of the intercultural contact. In the specific case of the exercise in the design of digital services, the digital tools are intended to offer support in the mediation of the intercultural social interactions. The final purpose of the digital services is to sustain the creation of a multicultural cohesive society, in which the cultural baggage of all its participants is considered to have a value. This sets up an important challenge for the designers, who have to be conscious of their own identity as individuals and groups in order to deconstruct the “us and them” concept and identify connection points on which the intercultural dialog can be built.

## 4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

### 4.2 Areas for service design interventions

The design of public and collaborative services can play a relevant role to promote new forms of dialog between institutions and citizens; meaningful services can provide relevant experiences, offering innovative solutions of practical problems but also offering opportunities for a better exploitation of the potentialities related to multicultural social composition. This opens a wide area in which the communication design can play an important role. The objectives that can be tackled through a design

approach range from promoting an increased awareness on the issues related to a multicultural society to suggesting solutions to practical problems, and seeking new organization forms that take into account the cultural diversity.

Italy is now a multicultural society and in several aspects, most Italians have accepted the change while most new comers find Italy a place where it is possible and convenient to stay.

On the other hand, new and old citizens strongly feel the need of a system renewal; in order to reduce the friction experimented in every day life, and especially with respect to the law system and during the fruition of public services. But the answers to the problems are not simple. We can better explain some of the tangles of the present situation through an example referred to the education field.

Traditionally, public Italian primary school provides excellent education programs, at least in most parts of the country. Teachers feel socially responsible to transfer basic language and math skills so to ensure the minimum knowledge set to all citizens.

### 4.3 Education system for a multicultural society

As the number of immigrants grew, we assisted also to a relevant increase of the number of non-Italian speaking (or better, non Italian mother tongue) children. While young people usually can learn new languages in very short time, it is also evident that, when the number of non-Italian mother tongue students increases, the education goals and methodologies should be re-defined. As Italy is a mono-language country, teachers are normally not trained to manage multi-language classes, as instead happens in multi lingual countries as Belgium and Switzerland.

Several teachers face therefore a contradictory situation: on one hand they are quite willing to welcome the non Italian mother language children, encountering their specific education needs; on the other hand they experience a sense of betrayal with respect to Italian mother language students if they cannot guarantee a full achievement of the education goals as indicated by the education ministry. In 2010, the previous education minister Mariastella Gelmini issued a law decree establishing the maximum

acceptable number of foreign students per class, starting it at 30%. This measure is obviously incapable to provide a solution to the problem of how the public education service should be innovated in terms of objectives and teaching methods; nonetheless, this decision is a significant sign of the inability of our country to address the necessary changes in the organization of public services and in relation to social change. This contradictory situation is made more critical as the economical crisis reflects into a progressive reduction of the economical resources dedicated to public education. At first sight, we face with a difficult dilemma: on one hand teachers should ensure a high level of education inside the public system; on the other hand they have to adjust times, goals and methods to respond to the needs of students who do not possess those basic knowledge skills, that until a few years ago could be taken for granted. Teachers are left alone in front of a challenging task. The renewal of the education methodologies is a very slow process, needing time and resources also in terms of experimentation opportunities. But students and families cannot wait since, for each child, education is a not replicable and non-reversible experience: what to do? In absence of convincing solutions, several families that can afford it, tend to switch toward the private education system, in search of schools that can guarantee didactical high standards; this is quite a negative process, increasing social divide and relighting the processing of social cohesion between new and native citizens. The search of a solution cannot be delegated to education scientist and education experts: it requires a cultural change of attitude as a preliminary condition to prepare the ground. Such a change requires a positive attitude toward innovation and the cooperation of all the actors involved in the process: teachers, families, politicians, and education experts.

In other words, the real innovation can be stated in terms of a change of value and only consequently, can become effective in terms of practical goals and tasks. In the case of the education, the change of perspective consists in the understanding that citizens with multilingual capabilities can play a very important role in our country.

Italy is a relatively young country, being unified in the present form only since 1861. Since the unification, teachers activity was driven by the difficult goal of

unify the nation from the cultural and linguistic points of view. After second world war, the goal of spreading official Italian language, opposed to deeply rooted dialects, was taken as priority and mandatory in the definition of education guidelines. Now, dialects have almost disappeared and our nation can be considered as quite homogeneous from the linguistic point of view. Now, children with good knowledge of foreign languages and traditions should conveniently be considered as a resource: people capable to bridge our country with other nations around the world, so offering opportunities for exchange and cooperation in a more connected world [21].

#### ***4.4 Professional skills and social integration***

Beside education, we investigated other domains also presenting similar dissonances. As an instance, some significant phenomena concern the employment field. In Italy, new citizens are widely present in several fields of activity, but their presence is more relevant in blue-collar labors and medium to low skilled work, the field of work being small manufactures, household and agriculture (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, 2012) [22]. The presence of new citizens is notably less diffused in some high skill fields as it is still rare to encounter a foreign origin doctor, teacher or accountant. In several cases, as previously mentioned, professional associations oppose bureaucracy barrier to people that obtained degrees in foreign countries to protect the privileges of the professional community members the employment rate being higher than in the case of the Italian citizens. In 2012, the percentage of employment was 65.3 %, for EU citizens residing in Italy and 59.5 for non-European legal residents, compared to 43.0 % Italian citizens [23]. In some way, this closure attitude is supported by the Italian tendency to drive their choice in the search of professional contribution; mainly following tradition criteria instead of adopting merit based comparative analysis. As an example, a trained and experienced architect who obtained his/her degree out of Italy needs examinations or even to join again university education programs before he or she can practice in Italy. This defensive closure is coherent with the dominant defensive attitude aimed at the conservation of privileges, very negative with respect to innovation and real merit dynamics.

To translate these statements into practical actions, we conducted a one-semester project at the School of

the Design at Politecnico di Milano. The participants were students of the first year of a master degree in communication design during the second semester of the 2011/2012 academic year.

The assignment required the development of collaborative services capable to give a contribution to the solution of a practical problem experienced by new citizens and, at the same time, to promote a better awareness of the unexploited potentialities of cultural diversity in our social environment.

In order to provide a better insight of the proposed issue, we invited as speakers, some representative members of the associations we cooperated with. Students were left free to choose the association to cooperate with and the specific domain of activity on which to focus the attention.

## 5. PARTNERS AND STUDENT PROJECTS

In order to accommodate the multifaceted phenomenon of immigration and the problems that foreign citizens encounter upon their arrival in a new country the partners involved were associations and private agencies, which responded to different needs of the foreigners in Milan.

**Asnada** school, is one of the few associations with a consolidated tradition of offering free Italian language classes to foreigners present in Milan and Rome. The school embraces an alternative approach to education,

featuring an interdisciplinary range of activities, such as model making, acting and performing, singing and story telling. The school is open to both foreign and Italian citizens in mixed educational and creative activities [24].

**Naga** association is a non profit organization providing medical care and legal help to illegal immigrants in Milan. The association is not an alternative to institutional services, but comes to complete a services offered by the government and the municipality. The association is active in the Milan area and brings together more than 300 volunteers. In one year the association offers more than 1500 medical visits and legal advising sessions, and 800 persons are contacted by the Street Medical Unit service. [25]

**Fondazione Intercultura** is another non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the intercultural dialog and cultural exchanges for high school students in Italy. The association has as main aim to bring an increased awareness on the intercultural dialog, being active in the secondary school system. By organizing international exchange internships for high school students, the Intercultura association and foundation, enables an opening towards the positive perception of other cultures, both on the Italian territory and overseas[26]. Along with the above-mentioned associations, the students were introduced to the **Intese project**, an online platform developed by Metid center and dedicated to foreign students at Politecnico di Milano[27].

FIGURE1. Class and activities schedule

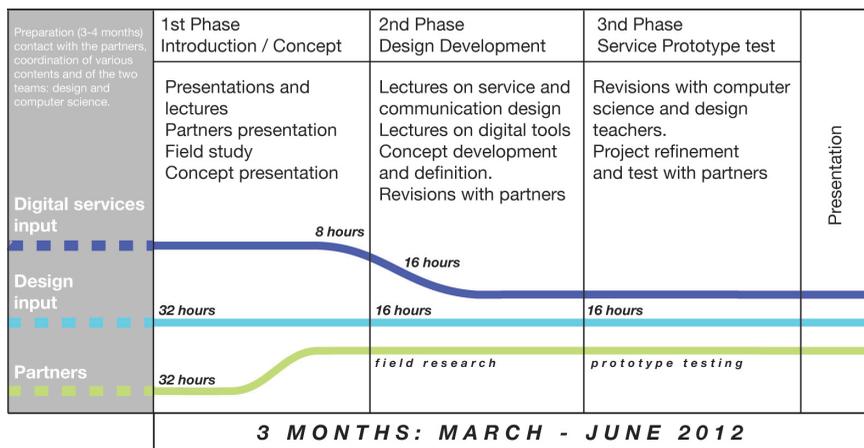
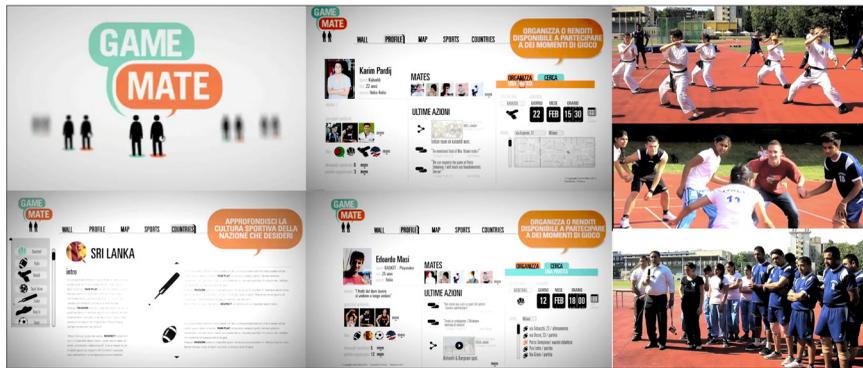
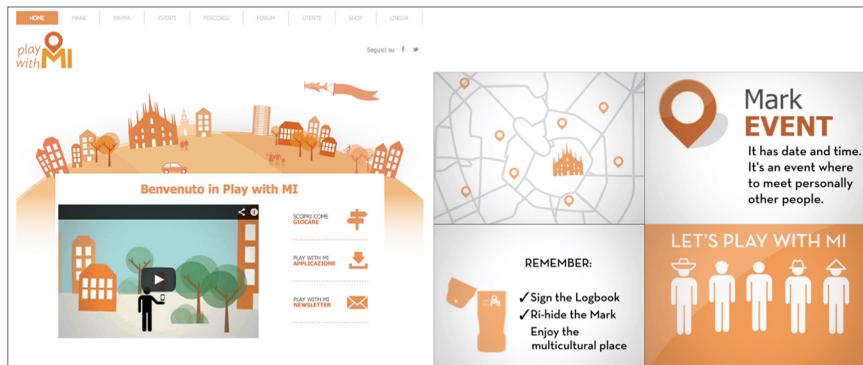


FIGURE 2. Game Mate Project



Some of the most interesting projects related to the free time of the immigrants away from home and acknowledged the lack of services that encouraged the outdoors and sports. *GameMate* (Bozzato, Castro, Leoni and Xia) is a project that proposes the organization of multicultural sport events, in this way enabling the creation of social ties between people from different cultures but sharing the same passion for sport.

FIGURE 3. Play with MI Project



*Play with Mi* (Peretti, Recalcati, Teruzzi) is an online and offline game aiming to invite the local residents of Milan to discover the multicultural events and interesting locations. Working touristic guide, the project is intended both for Italians and foreigners and proposes the collaborative creation of an alternative map that signals the presence of positive multicultural places.

As mentioned before, the introductory phase where the lectures and exercises concerned mainly the theoretic knowledge and were intended to sensibelize the students bringing them closer to the concept of diversity, and helping them working with the partners. In result the projects tackled the issues discovered on the field research and were relevant to the specific problems of foreigners in Italy. The lectures were taught by a multidisciplinary group of teachers and lecturers whom balanced the content of the course and emphasized the hands on experience. An important factor was the field research and the

encounter with the stories of the social workers and foreign residents, this motivating the students to develop their concepts.

## 6. DISCUSSION – SPECIFICITY AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE ITALIAN CASE

As far as we know, the topic of social innovation with respect to multicultural societies is a new one for the service design community and for the P&C DESIS cluster. For this reason, this first experience should be

FIGURE 4. ABC Diario Project



ABCDiario (Students: Sassi, Verrengia, Zangrandi) is an online vocabulary that links the words in the Italian vocabulary with the stories of the participants. The website allows users to upload pictures and drawings to describe the significance of the letters and words in their language. The target users are the students at Asnada language school.

FIGURE 5. Extraskills Project



Extraskills (Banchelli, Biraghi, Gasparini, Tonelli) is an online platform that has the aim to emphasize the underused professional skills of the foreign citizens and putting them in direct contact with individuals and small businesses looking for part time collaborators. He service identified the gap between the real potential of the foreign professionals and the actual employment opportunities they have access to through traditional channels.

considered as a first investigation of a promising terrain. In our belief, the need of social innovation with respect to multicultural social dynamics is a P&C issue since in Italy the need of change is evident, and furthermore, it is also evident that the direction of the change are not yet clearly defined; the priority seems to be the activation of a dialog actively involving citizens – new and traditional – politicians, managers of public service institutions, experts (education, health care, job market experts) and, of course, designers. The primary role of designers is the construction of meaningful experiences aimed to create an awareness of the state of being of our society, to enlighten

the potentialities of a mixed and diversified social composition, and to provide positive experiences of intercultural dialog.

It could be observed that we only provided quite vague and too ample project brief with respect to the usual education laboratory assignments. Probably that's true, but we preferred to present the results of our research without attempting simplifications or complexity reduction. It is a strong belief of the authors of this paper, that design should always try to embrace the real complexity of contexts while, from the education point of view, it is very important to

guide the students toward some form of modeling of tangled contexts without suppressing contradictions and inconsistencies, exploring dynamic and changing phenomena. The projects developed as well as the class feedback showed several aspects that have to be taken in consideration when embarking in a class that emphasizes a highly debated social subject: 1. the course content involved students both professionally and emotionally, asking them to tackle a highly sensitive social issue with which they might not empathize. 2. being a multidisciplinary course that asked students to acquire technical skills the difficulty stays in balancing the importance of the service design and digital tools maintain the focus on the actual objective of the course. 3. The contact with the partners and the field studies have to be coordinated suggesting tools that could enable the active observation and conduct meaningful interviews. Altogether the class performed well in all activities, understanding the intention of the exercise and presenting projects that received a positive feedback from the partners.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion the entire process of preparing, conducting and reviewing the results of the course acquired it unfolded a double value: that of a research into a much discussed and controversial social issue,

and the impact that such an issue can have on the design students. The course revealed, or rather verified the existence of several layers of perception of the reality. In this case the academic world that shapes the young generation was confronted with the entangled reality of the migration. One of the issues that came forward in the class was the acknowledgement of the regional migration, from south to north in Italy. This analogy helped students to come closer to the immigration phenomenon and find familiar meanings to it. One of the challenges of the teaching team was to avoid common places and stereotypes in explaining the pedagogical content and reviewing the student works. Having completed the course it is important to underline the complexity of the issues we approached and relevance of a more extended implementation of the intercultural dialog in the communication design. This field is still far from being thoroughly investigated and carries an important potential for creative expression in the field of service and interaction design.

In Facebook you can find some communities created by new citizens. One of them is named Yalla Italia.

In some way we could summarize with these words, the results of the research activities we carried on to prepare the project phase with our students: Yalla Italia, Italy, wake up!

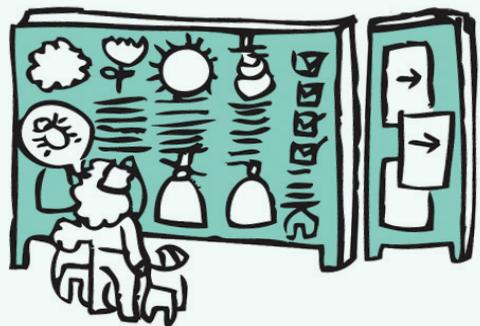
## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

The course unveiled a still little explored niche of intervention for service design and in particular contributed to adding a design perspective to the intercultural dialog. It is very important to stress out the relevance of bringing the cultural issues in the realm of communication design practice in particular in the contemporary Italian context. If most of the times the design brief follows the market needs, in this case the exercise anticipated the change and the needs of a multicultural society.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

Social issues have already a recognized place in the design curriculum, however the novelty of the approach stays in the direct involvement that a theme related to intercultural contact and dialog imposes. In this case rather than placing themselves outside the inquiry field, the students and teaching staff experienced the emotional involvement triggered by the close analysis of highly sensitive social issues experienced on everyday life.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS)

**Margherita Pillan, PhD** is executive vice dean and associate professor of Communication and Interaction Design at the Design School of Politecnico di Milano. Her research activities deal with practical and theoretical aspects of the design of services, interactive systems and solutions, including the study of emotional and cognitive processes, and individual and social aspects of communication. She devotes special interest to the design and study of digital and multimedia technologies, and the creation of interactive sensory experiences. She actively cooperates with the DESIS network, coordinating e-learning activities in the Public and Collaborative cluster.

**Irina Suteu, PhD** is research fellow and lecturer at the Politecnico di Milano. Trained as an industrial designer, her work combines theory and practice in the communication and interaction design field. Her present research activities concern the investigation of public spaces and the relation between local communities and academic institutions on the territory of Politecnico di Milano, Leonardo Campus. Other research interests range from social interaction in multicultural work groups to the application of ICT tools in social innovation scenarios.

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