



Meanings of Design in the Next Era

21-23 October 2019, Osaka, Japan



4D · DESIGNING DEVELOPMENT
DEVELOPING DESIGN

Conference Proceedings



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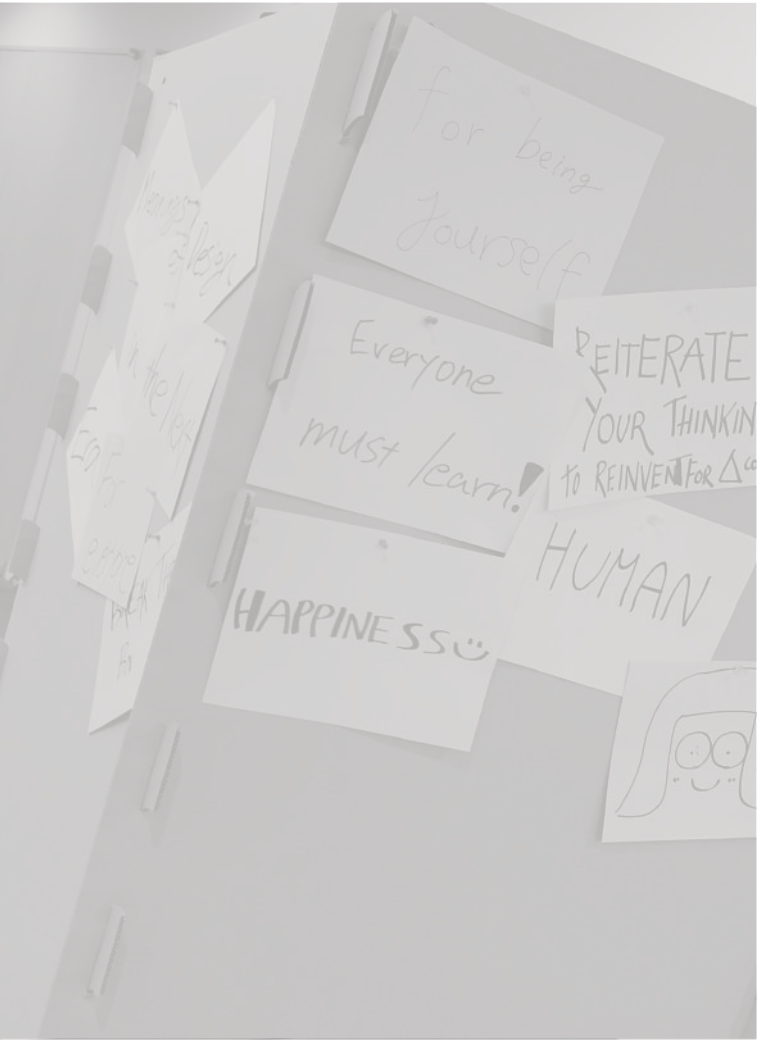
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About the Conference

4D is an international conference aimed to discuss the role of Design in developing value for social entities, technological advancement, and business creation and revamping. This conference is the second in the series of the 4D Conference since 2017. The first conference was organized in Kaunas, Lithuania.

Modern and nascent economies indeed are adopting design as a competitive lever to embed continuous and discontinuous technology in new product language as to propose new entrepreneurial ventures. Moreover design has become a strategic lever for social entities to run fund-raising, to create new user engaging logic's, to combine social and economic value.

Specifically 4D conference embraces both perspectives:

“designing development”

where design is the main input to create feasible conditions to enhance social values, to diffuse new technology paradigms and to create new ventures.

“developing design”

where design is the “output” of the inter-playing of social, economic and technological supporting forces.

The conference is organized within 3 tracks:

TRACK 1: Meanings of Design in Social Development

Topic 1.1: Design for the Future Craftsmanship

Topic 1.2: Design for Third Sector and Social Innovation

TRACK 2: Meanings of Design in Technological Development

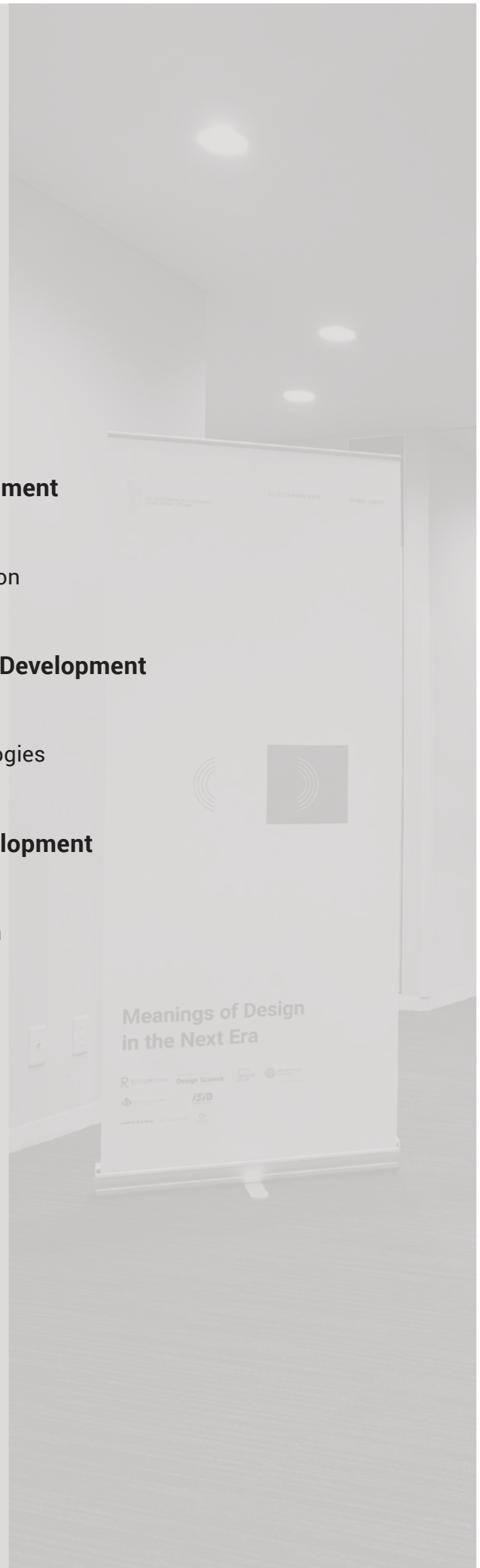
Topic 2.1: Design for New Paradigms in Production

Topic 2.2: The Role of Design in Humanizing Technologies

TRACK 3: Meanings of Design in Business Development

Topic 3.1: Designing Tradition in Global Markets

Topic 3.2: Design for Business in the Post-human Era





TRACK 1: Meanings of Design in Social Development

Topic 1.2: Design for Third Sector and Social Innovation



Prototyping Temporary Urban Solutions in Milan

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Abstract: This paper will explore a research and teaching project that involves a number of different Milanese associations: several small local communities of the Martesana District, Cargo, a private furniture company, and a group of students from an elective 2nd-year course in the Master's Degree of the School of Design of Politecnico di Milano, all working together for the common purpose, to create new social inclusion in the neighbourhood.

By strengthening the social fabric and generating new ideas of citizen well-being, the quality of the social and physical contexts together with collaborative actions create new forms of community and spaces which have a higher value. Behind each of these promising cases of social innovation are groups of people who have been able to imagine, develop and manage them. The re-occupation and re-design of public and urban spaces are increasingly frequent, especially in the suburbs, far from the city centre. This is principally thanks to co-design and co-participation with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, promoting activities and new scenarios. In this attempt to activate new solutions, scenarios and strategies are proposed, bringing together the resident population and the small local communities, through the students' design skills, to create synergies and new processes of inclusion and social innovation. The project described in this paper takes advantage of Cargo's spaces, a furniture store located in the north-east of Milan. Cargo Hi-Tech asked the Polimi DESIS Lab, a research team of the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano, to help improve their relations with the neighbourhood while also offering the residents a new space for gathering, community and sharing. After an in-depth concept analysis of the context and the associations involved, the course will generate a prototyping event, Martesana Fest, also including some co-design sessions open to the neighbourhood. Over the course of a day the students gave a public presentation of their projects, with scale models and full-scale details that best expressed their project. Design practice is trying to go through and across the barrier created by the framework of market-driven economies, by co-designing and using a community-driven approach at its core.

The role of the designer, and in this particular case, of forty design students, is to help these communities consolidate themselves through co-design and to help generate new ideas, and then to spread and replicate them in an urban context. The general vision is to move from being relatively marginal to becoming more widespread and, in the not too distant future, to be mainstream through a new social communication network within a neighbourhood. This event is a first step, with the constant assistance of the local communities, intend to act as spokespersons for a new regeneration and to build original solutions to the needs of contemporary urban living.

Keywords: co-design, networked society, social innovation, open innovation, local communities, social communication.

Introduction

The project is the product of a collaboration between Cargo Hi-Tech, an iconic furniture store located in the north-east of Milan, and Polimi DESIS Lab, a research team from the Design Department of the Politecnico di Milano, to help increase the company's relations with the district and also to offer residents a new space for coming together, a sense of community and sharing. After an accurate conceptual analysis of the context and the associations involved, the workshop will generate a prototyping event, including a co-design session extended to the whole district. Co-design is a fundamental aspect of the project, particularly because the six local associations of the neighbourhood have been chosen for their work and their intention to strengthen the identity of the area. The local communities carry out an important role for the project in question, because it is interesting to understand what dynamics are created between a group of students who follow a teaching method and how this is applied in terms of design on an urban scale. The main intention is to help these communities consolidate through co-design and help generate new ideas to be disseminated and replicated in an urban context. Thanks to the path of co-design and involvement with the people living in the neighbourhood, promoting activities and new scenarios, the reoccupation and redesign of public and urban spaces are becoming more frequent, especially in remote areas that do not have a good network of communication and internal relations.

Context

According to Voorberg et al., (2015) to design for social innovation means the creation of long-lasting outcomes aimed at addressing societal needs by fundamentally changing the relationships, positions and rules between the involved stakeholders, according to an open process of participation, exchange and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including end-users, and therefore crossing organizational boundaries and codes (Hartley, 2005; Bason, 2010).

Collaboration, and consequently co-production, are seen in this essay as the citizens' and local community associations' motives for becoming involved in the co-production of social services.

Particularly relevant is the relationship between different stakeholders involved in the same process of designing social innovation, such as students as designer, local community, a private company and local associations and third sector organizations. The latter can be described as a range of organizations that are neither public nor private sector. They include voluntary and community organizations (both registered charities associations, self-help groups and community groups), social enterprises, mutual and co-operatives (NAO, 2010). The main purpose of the described process is, by strengthening the social fabric and generating new ideas of citizen well-being, to increase the quality of a particular social and physical context in a collaborative manner with creative actions which aim to create new forms of community and new spatial changes that are of a higher value.

The third sector is often viewed as an important force in social innovation, indeed according to Maxwell in Goldenberger et al., (2009) "in communities, the non-profit sector plays a vital role in social innovation". Particularly in the suburbs, far from the city centre, the re-occupation and re-design of public and urban spaces are increasingly frequent, which is also thanks to co-design and co-participation with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood that promotes activities and new scenarios (Camocini & Fassi, 2017).

In this essay, new activating solutions, scenarios and strategies are proposed, bringing the resident population and the small local communities into relationships, through the students' design skills, to create synergies and new processes of inclusion and social innovation.

The starting points of this research are the private spaces of a Milanese furniture store named Cargo, which is located in the north-east of Milan. Cargo asked the Polimi DESIS Lab to help them increase their connection with the neighbourhood by offering the residents a new space where they could gather together. After an in-depth concept analysis about the context and the associations involved, the elective course Temporary Urban Solutions (TUS), involving 40 students from different backgrounds, aimed to generate a prototyping event, including some co-design sessions open to the local community. Using a community-driven approach at its core, the purpose of the design practice is to go through and across the barrier created by the framework of market-driven economies, by co-designing and testing the solutions with the involved community.

Many local associations have been involved in this process, and they are all located in the Martesana District, a region characterized by a complex cultural fabric that is socially fragmented. The ability to expand their influence was being blocked, because of the barrier shaped by the complex spatial fabric, culture and generation gap within the district. The investigation shows that 20% of the residents do not know any associations in their district, 70% of the residents know at least one, and only 10% residents know several associations. The point is, after being engaged in this district through field research and the co-design process with local residents, a huge requirement of community activities is to show their strong necessity to and aspiration to improve social connections. The district has an extensive foundation of bottom-up and grassroots energy for design-driven social innovation. Beckmann (2012) describes the promise of social entrepreneurship as follows: “the public sector has preference for the status quo – solutions already known and tested. Social entrepreneurs, in contrast, are able to test much riskier and innovative approaches. Once these solutions demonstrate their effectiveness and deliver the proof of concept, other actors, including the public sector, can adopt them. Social entrepreneurship can thus achieve a potentially high dynamic impact over time”. This project contributes towards social innovation, by developing a sustainable ecosystem which includes tangible spatial design and intangible service design to enhance the connection among the third sector, local enterprise and local residents. According to Manzini (2015), “social innovations are solutions based on new social forms and economic models. They are those social changes towards sustainability when they can reduce the environmental impact, regenerate common goods and social fabric”. To achieve that, public space design is where social innovation takes place, the activities happen, and the values of the service appear. Sustainable long-term social innovation can be produced during the multidisciplinary process of the practice, and it can be said that all those sectors are components of social innovation.

Martesana District

The original memories of this district were rural. Then with the development of urbanization, it gradually became part of Milan city with vastly increased numbers of immigrants. This highlights the complex characteristics of the culture and history of the Martesana District as an abandoned industrial area which has a lot of hidden space, and a lower cost of living that attracted many small creative associations who continue to increase the complexity of regional society, with the result that an invisible wall has been built.

The government has made some top-down contributions to the building of the infrastructure and is very important in promoting quality of living, as well as continually being an important force in building the metro or increasing the amount of public space for local people to communicate or spend their leisure time. However, all those contributions cannot generate a sustainable and inclusive system to integrate communities without continuous impetus.

Complex historical factors influencing the environment surrounding Cargo Hi-Tech show an organically but sometimes non-linear development of urban expansion. The complexity of this district, on one hand, is made up of many different components like diverse types of immigration, but does not depend solely on this, on the other hand, the complexity is due mainly to the fact that the core element of cities is multiple actions. As Portugali (2016) observes: “As a set of material components alone, the city is an artifact and as such a simple system; as a set of human components – the urban agents – the city is a complex system”. The diverse associations and mixed functional public spaces show the trace of the superimposed urban fabric. The core of identifying and regenerating the district by the local communities themselves is to build a sustainable and inclusive network which bring about all the making and reconstructing relationship activities.

Co-production of new social services with six different local associations

Six Associations

The main focus of the research project is to focus on the Martesana District, making it a model for the entire metropolitan city of Milan: transforming the area from an invisible district to an important peripheral centre, where cultures, events, commercial activities, work, study, and entertainment for the old and the new generations converge. It is important to connect all the separate associations, to give a voice to citizens so that they can start from scratch and cultivate all that is possible to achieve, in order to improve the lives of residents.

In order to activate the citizens and the district itself, recourse is made to the work of the non-profit associations of the district, which fight for the principles of aggregation, enhancement of culture, and social inclusion, and which are defenders of civil rights and mediators in establishing relations with the Municipality.

Promoting the character of local communities – through cultural, artistic and debating activities, social cohesion and economic development, makes the neighbourhoods into a theatre for different audiences. Different actors such as institutions, companies, students and artists, and different generations with different cultural backgrounds, all contribute to this process.

Starting from a system of social and communicative activation in the surrounding areas, cultural, artistic and debate activities are aimed at different audiences, not only local residents, to transform their territories into new centres of attraction and stimulation for all the other neighbourhoods around the city. Making a neighbourhood richer in events, activities and social commitment also means helping its economy, thanks to a network of active collaborations between citizens, local shopkeepers and the activities and associations already present in the territory and exploiting the public and empty spaces in the neighbourhood that have potential for development. The reclaiming of public spaces allows people to come together in an inclusive way – opening roads, squares, and the city itself to be freely enjoyed by all. Understanding new actors' motivation to initiate and drive bottom-up projects could help policymakers work together with them and design policies to make best use of the energy and skills within these community groups and organizations (AA. VV., 2018).

This new enterprise and innovative planning of public spaces is happening more and more frequently, especially in the peripheral and semi-peripheral districts. This paper wants to give voice to a teaching and research project that starts with the collaboration of different actors such as the small local communities of the Martesana district, who will be protagonists of a co-design with forty students from an elective TUS course, supervised by the research group Polimi DESIS Lab that was contacted by the private Milanese company Cargo Hi-Tech, an icon of the district. The role of the design discipline is to exploit the fertile context of the Martesana District of Milan by proposing new activating solutions,

scenarios and strategies, and connecting the resident population of small local communities by using the skills of design students to create synergies and new processes of social inclusion and innovation. The challenge is to create a new dialogue with the various multifaceted and identities of the Martesana District, through the involvement of six local communities: small non-profit organizations that are based on the principles of equity and sustainability, and deal with contemporary art, culture, pedagogy, social experimentation, music and entertainment.

Some of these associations are very active in the area and the choice fell primarily on those small organizations with strong potential and a strong desire for growth in terms of activities within the district and that are concerned with strengthening the social aspect of internal relations. Each of them deals with different themes and aims, so much so as to be chosen as the object of study and co-design for the students of the TUS course: their themes have been analyzed, put into practice through a research into the needs and requests of citizens in the form of prototypes for new temporary urban solutions.

The first association chosen is *G.A.S. (ethical purchasing group) Crescenzago*, a local community of people based on the rejection of the consumer lifestyle, the care of natural products and fair pricing. The main activities of G.A.S. are the production, purchase and consumption of seasonal food ingredients, which are produced without the use of strong chemicals and artificial flavours and colouring. A purchasing group does not just look for the lowest price, but puts people and the environment before profit, choosing products and producers on the basis of respect for the environment and solidarity among group members, traders and producers.

The second association was chosen for its approach to using art forms as a means of expressing an ethical and social direction. *Assab One* is a non-profit organization that provides artists with a non-conventional environment for research and expression, and produces and promotes exhibitions, events and art projects which focus on initiatives that integrate different languages capable of reaching beyond the art world. *Assab*, the name of an African port, has thus become the symbol of a meeting place where exchanges take place between different individuals, associations and cultures.

WeMake Fablab, supports and provides a space for digital and traditional manufacturing, and also provides access to fablab technologies to explore new fields of innovation involving the local and global community in different skills and learning processes. *WeMake* is a multifunctional urban factory that plans and develops courses, workshops, initiatives and co-design sessions to stimulate the exchange of knowledge and develop new areas of innovation.

Associazione Sonomusica was also chosen. Their main objective is young people, but they interact with all ages. It is a large community that puts music at the centre of a training and social project, in which children, adolescents and adults can enjoy musical and cultural experiences through meaningful opportunities.

Another association is *Arti Girovaghe*, which promotes the spread of a culture of promotion through socio-cultural, educational, research and social experimentation, particularly in creative development and free expression, to create processes of socialization for a new social community.

The last is *City Art*, a non-profit cultural association where thoughts, forms and actions that reflect on complex everyday life, become energized and dynamic. It represents a multi-functional place for reflection and meeting about public and social art through local events, shared with the inhabitants of neighbourhoods and schools. *City Art's* projects concern the protection of and respect for the environment, social relations and the mediation of conflicts in all those places where the capacity for active participation in social and public life can be increased.

The choice of the associations was a fundamental element in order to start a co-planning process for the creation of new scenarios for the Martesana district, with the aim of creating stronger networks of relations between other local communities and those who live in the area, while at the same time encouraging social growth and identification with the already more developed areas of Milan.

Methodology

Cargo asked the Polimi DESIS Lab to help extend their relations with the neighbourhood by offering the residents a new space for coming together, community, and sharing. After investigating the place Cargo is located, an initial concept was generated in the teaching group. Cargo's request offered very coherent opportunities to apply the concept on the elective course TUS, which is a practical course focused on combining design theory with practice to create new opportunities for social innovation in service and spatial design fields. The characteristic of Cargo as a local enterprise and the complexity of the location and local communities including associations and residents raised the following questions:

- how can the new position of a specific public space be redefined in the complex urban fabric?
- how can a sustainable and inclusive ecosystem be generated among local enterprises, associations and residents through design?
- how can design facilitate the self-identification of this district?

During the course, forty students from different professional backgrounds – interior design, service design and product design – and from different cultural backgrounds were divided into six groups to explore an undefined area through the design approach, including co-design sessions, design thinking, human-centred design, and community-centred design. Working and discussing together with small local communities involved various types of resistances and diverse stakeholders.

The course took place over six intense weeks, each having a specific design phase that created a linear educational process to reach the final prototyping stage. During the first week the students focused on the analysis of the context and the local communities to create their own general overview of ideas and actions. In the following three weeks the groups were involved in the ideation phase through a brain-storming phase and concept generation. During this time the most interesting element for the generation of ideas was the co-design session with the assigned local communities, to learn more about the problems and needs of the neighbourhood and understand which positive aspects were to be most valued. Finally, the course ended with the design and prototyping phases, where the latter was staged during a public event organized to show the results of the students as a first step of urban renewal and social innovation. Students as activators of improvement of the neighbourhood, using their designing ideas, co-designed with different local associations. To build the social network among communities and to allow the idea of the local to deeply integrate into communities requires the participation of both space and service. Thus, a specific concept of redefinition of this public space was generated, a social platform for sustainably and inclusively integrating and merging the ever-growing requirement of the communities.

Within the social platform co-created by all types of stakeholders, the third sector plays an important role. As mentioned on the previous paragraph, there are some places where state and market lack of the ability to provide support, but it is in those areas that third-sector organizations can accomplish more (in particular with regard to social innovation). This is because they are accepted as the organizational embodiment of civil society: "NPOs encourage social interaction and help to create trust and reciprocity, which leads to the generation of a sense of community" (Donoghue, 2003).

Third sector organizations are described as "facilitators of social learning" (Valentinov et al., 2013). This in turn increases acceptance of innovations and serves as a significant variable in building and

maintaining the legitimacy, which has proved so crucial for social innovation viability, sustainability, and, ultimately, impact.

Human-centred design is regarded as an important design methodology approach, through the deep comprehension of the communities and the understanding from their perspective which creatively solved the problem. Just as IDEO (2019) has stated, starting with the people you're designing for and ending with new tailor-made solutions to suit their needs are the main features of this process.

There are several steps that need to be taken, and questions which the students need to consider: how can students have this deep empathy with people? And how can this empathetic research have long-term support for the "social platform" contributing to autonomy and to taking communities' initiatives further? The requirement for the students learning from the experiences of human-centred design research is the importance of understanding in which stage of development the social innovations need to seek support from designers and for how long is needed to make initiatives become self-sufficient and the community 'competent' (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011).

The first of the four phases of human-centred design is *Empathy*, which means learning about the local residents the students are designing for. In this step, students need to think about how to deeply engage in the local context. Several methods were offered: desk research and field research, and tools like interviews and photo reportage. *Define* means defining and focusing on the questions which are generated from the stage of empathy. Third, *ideate* through co-design sessions that are opened up to the local communities, understand their ability, necessity and aspiration through the use of different tools and methods. And finally, *Test*, to find a precise way to implement the solution to reality, and to a market in the real world.

Those four steps were applied over six weeks. During the kick-off session, the student group gave a presentation to explain the core values and plans about the temporary urban solution class, and from the first to the fifth week, the students needed to complete the four stages mentioned above. In the final week the students hosted the prototyping events for Cargo and the six associations, and also invited local residents.

This is a designer's way to intervene in people's lives, motivate actions, activate stakeholders, and create "spaces of the context", which will reveal and challenge configurations and conditions of society that already exist. This is also an opportunity to turn designing 'for' the community to designing 'with' the community into allowing communities to design 'by themselves' (Brown, 2009). By sharing what has been done with the people you're designing for and also putting innovative new solutions into the world, it is therefore about producing ideas and building prototypes. As the central core of the process, keeping the same people you are designing solutions with means a far higher probability of success with more. Therefore, students were required to participate in the local communities, not only once, but in all different stages of the process in order to promote social innovation and build sustainability.

Martesana Fest: new scenarios and social inclusion prototypes

The results

Design is often the perfect tool for finding solutions to problems. The idea and the design can help increase profits by making the whole system more functional, attractive and safe, and by helping improve compliance by taking advantage of the optimal use of urban space.

The research and teaching project, which involved the active part of the local communities in the neighbourhood, set up the six projects in terms of space applications, services and future vision through Virtual Reality (VR) technology. To involve the neighbourhood, Cargo organized a public event in its outdoor spaces to invite all the local residents and specifically to show the associations how their

activation and participation has brought added value to the regeneration of the area. The event, Martesana Fest, took place in May 2019 as the perfect ending to the six-week intensive course. In a single day the students gave a public presentation of their projects, with scale models and full-scale details that clearly explained their project. The communication of the event, supported by the research team, regulated the setting and the arrangement of the space. Each group had a single station, set up according to the main characteristics of their project, together with booklets describing the design process that each interested user could read and analyze in depth. During the event there was a much active participation, both from the neighbourhood and the associations involved in the design.



Figure 1: *Martesana Fest*

The first project was *RE-MIX*, which aims to give priority to human factors and to re-establish a better connection between people, creating a larger and stronger community. The students collaborated with the G.A.S *Crescenzago* group. In order to create a social, efficient and pleasant activity, that was at the same time environmentally friendly, they invented a strategy for the reusability of waste materials and their transformation into furniture or other useful objects. To facilitate this process and make it accessible they designed a mobile shed, containing the tools necessary for the construction of the objects. The result is the creation of a new community, which is concerned with more intelligent consumption, and the upcycling of goods for better environmental awareness. During the event they explained and demonstrated how recycled plastic can become a fixed joint for structures such as benches, bookshelves and flower boxes.

The *DYNAMIC ART* project was born in collaboration with *Assab One*. The desired goal was to change the appearance of the neighbourhood by involving people through activities: looking through panels cut into the shapes of different body positions that are placed in front of an existing wall to change their artistic perspectives; painting the surface of the bridge, that connects the Martesana canal with the Cargo Hi-tech, with thermochromatic paints that change colour with the movements of the body; and finally, inviting people to jump, climb, throw and paint using textured objects, hands and to burst balloons with darts, giving rise to a new attractive wall. This last activity was repeated during the event, inviting all participants to make their own artistic contribution.

The third project was *iCreate* with the participation of *WeMake Fablab*. The project consisted of an urban garden that hosts a series of workshops on how to grow and harvest fruit and vegetables with the use of technology, as well as how to transform the crop for consumption (raw food). This promoted more innovative and sustainable social activities for urban activation and community revitalization through the development of technologies for everyday life. The activity proposed during the event was

to simulate these new technological approaches with the use of a 3D pen for the creation of food and everyday objects.

The *ECHO* project is a stage that will be raised in front of Cargo's shop to host musical events (in the day and night). Its purpose is to bring together the inhabitants of the area along the canal and create a stronger identity for the neighbourhood. The project was born from the collaboration with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and the *Associazione Sonomusica* through interviews, surveys and co-design activities. The contribution of the association was fundamental to the event because the stage was used for the first time for the performance of one of the music students at Sonomusica, whose voice was a positive addition to the exhibition.



Figure 2: *Martesana Fest - ECHO project and performance of Sonomusica's singer*

The project in partnership with *Arti Girovaghe* was *SEEDS OF POETRY*. It aimed to develop a new social experiment in which people are free to participate and express themselves. By purchasing the kits available in the surrounding shops, people would have the necessary items to plant seeds and write their own poetry. People were attracted by the large number of kits present on the day of the event; they could be customized with their own poems and they could choose whether to take them with them or leave them on show in the vertical structures available.

As in a textile each single filament increases the structural strength of the final whole, the potential of a community can be expressed through a healthy collaboration between its inhabitants. This is how the *TRAMA* project, born from the co-design with *City Art*, was described. It proposed the creation of a collaborative open space that led to the creation of rope artefacts, through knots, with the collaboration of the inhabitants of Martesana. The rope was also the leitmotif of the activity they proposed during the event: thanks to a full-scale module you could participate in the creation of these nets through a tutorial and with the help of the students who presented it.



Figure 3: *Martesana Fest - TRAMA Project*

Design practice is attempting to go through and across the barrier created by the framework of market-driven economies, by co-designing and using a community-driven approach at its core. The role of the designer, and in this particular case, of forty design students, is to help these communities consolidate themselves through co-design and generate new ideas that can be spread and replicated in a wider urban context. The general vision is to move from being relatively marginal to becoming more widespread and, in the not too distant future, to be mainstream through a new social communication network within a neighbourhood.

Conclusion

The project to reinvent the Martesana district, presented during the public event and exhibition of the students of the TUS course, is only the first of many achievements. This is made explicit because the activation of local associations is only a first step in trying to unify the neighbourhood and give it a new identity. Cargo, with the participation of the six groups, will commit themselves to maintaining a stable relationship, proposing these projects to the neighbourhood in order to move on to the phase of complete realization. In the future these two major actors, with the constant assistance of the local communities, intend to act as spokespersons for a new regeneration and to build possible original solutions to the needs of contemporary urban living. Defining the needs, starting from the experiences that they are confronted with, allows us to assume a dynamic perspective towards needs by constantly redefining outlines and a conscious and reactive approach towards the future that they anticipate. A future that urgently requires that the ability to activate individuals and communities be received and integrated by public and private decision-makers within a framework of systemic vision.

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