

INCLUSIVE CITIES AND REGIONS *TERRITOIRES INCLUSIFS*

14° Biennale of European Towns and Town Planners, Naples

Edited by
Marichela Sepe

#Special Workshop



INU Edizioni

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I volumi pubblicati in questa collana sono
preventivamente sottoposti ad una doppia procedura di 'peer review'

Progetto grafico
Valeria Coppola

Prodotto da
INU Edizioni Srl
Via Castro Dei Volsci 14
00179 Roma
Tel. 06 68134341 / 335-5487645
inued@inuedizioni.it
www.inuedizioni.com
Iscrizione CCIAA 81 4890/95
Iscrizione al Tribunale di Roma 3563/95

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Finito di stampare
Giugno 2024
Officine Grafiche Francesco Giannini e Figli SpA

In copertina
Hug. Napoli, San Francesco di Paola colonnades.
(source: Marichela Sepe' archive)

ISBN: 978-88-7603-255-4 (e-Book)

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with 'otherness'

Coordinators

Andrea Bortolotti

Dario Minervini

Giulia Caterina Verga

Copia omaggio autori

Re-opening the circle Steps towards an epistemologically diverse circularity

Andrea Bortolotti*, Dario Minervini**

In Europe, the concept of a circular economy (CE) capable of decoupling economic growth from resource depletion and pollution has recently taken hold in many public policies and programmes. Criticisms of the theoretical, heuristic, and methodological weakness of this interpretation have been widely discussed against a neoliberal economic system conceived and organised as linear (Kovacic et al., 2019; Völker et al., 2020). In order to counteract the recursiveness and finiteness of the metaphor of the circle, a 're-opening' of its conceptual formulation is proposed that i) questions its epistemological foundations, e.g. the link between moral values and scientific modelling that informs global discourses but also the situated applications of circularity; ii) promotes the adoption of a more comprehensive approach that includes the more properly social dimension in the formulation of ecological transition strategies.

Four "moves" are proposed that "start from" and "tend towards" an epistemological diversity to reopen the closed circle of the CE: #1 *Move the circle upstream!* supports the idea of considering impacts upstream of consumption choices, rather than focusing on disposal which, despite the ubiquitous formulation of waste and pollution as a post-consumer waste problem, is often only part of the problem. #2 *Measuring the circle (differently)* recalls the need to reframe how we measure circularity to make it meaningful for end-users, citizens, and workers (formal, informal, precarious, etc.) at the frontline of material recovery and recirculation. #3 *Slowing down circularity* suggests thinking in terms of different temporalities of decay, generation, and destruction of value to help conceive material obsolescence as produced by social conventions and norms embedded in the very design, production, and consumption of products and goods. Ultimately, #4 *Caring circularity* refers to the informal and hidden work of those that underpin circularity but

are excluded from its narrative and accounting. These movements aim to help rethink the implementation of circularity through local policies that can influence the transformation of the relationship between production and consumption in terms of the composition of often divergent (economic, social and environmental) priorities.

Firstly, a greater focus on prevention and reduction objectives, rather than efficiency in production and consumption, may represent a first element of discontinuity with the status quo. One example is the adoption of tax incentives to stimulate the reuse of secondary raw materials in key economic sectors such as construction, product design, and fashion. Secondly, a redefinition of monitoring strategies seems fundamental to build CE indicators that consider the experimentation, conflicts, and social practices that animate territories, for example through forms of action-research and design activism (Faud-Luke, 2009). Plans and projects should then equally address the push for digitalisation and technological innovation as well as the social innovation experienced daily in public squares, schools, workplaces, etc. to understand better, support and scale it. The third movement refers to the bioeconomy and the revision of the growth paradigm. From this point of view, the issue of local regulation appears crucial, as it comprises limiting extractive practices, reducing material flows, and managing accumulated material stocks within specific contexts. Lastly, the rhetoric of local valorisation, often limited to a territorial marketing strategy and emphasis on identity and typicality (of products, landscapes, experiences), will have to be combined with support for the development of fair and solidarity-based exchange systems that strengthen social cohesion and encourage the strengthening of local networks that convey relational goods.

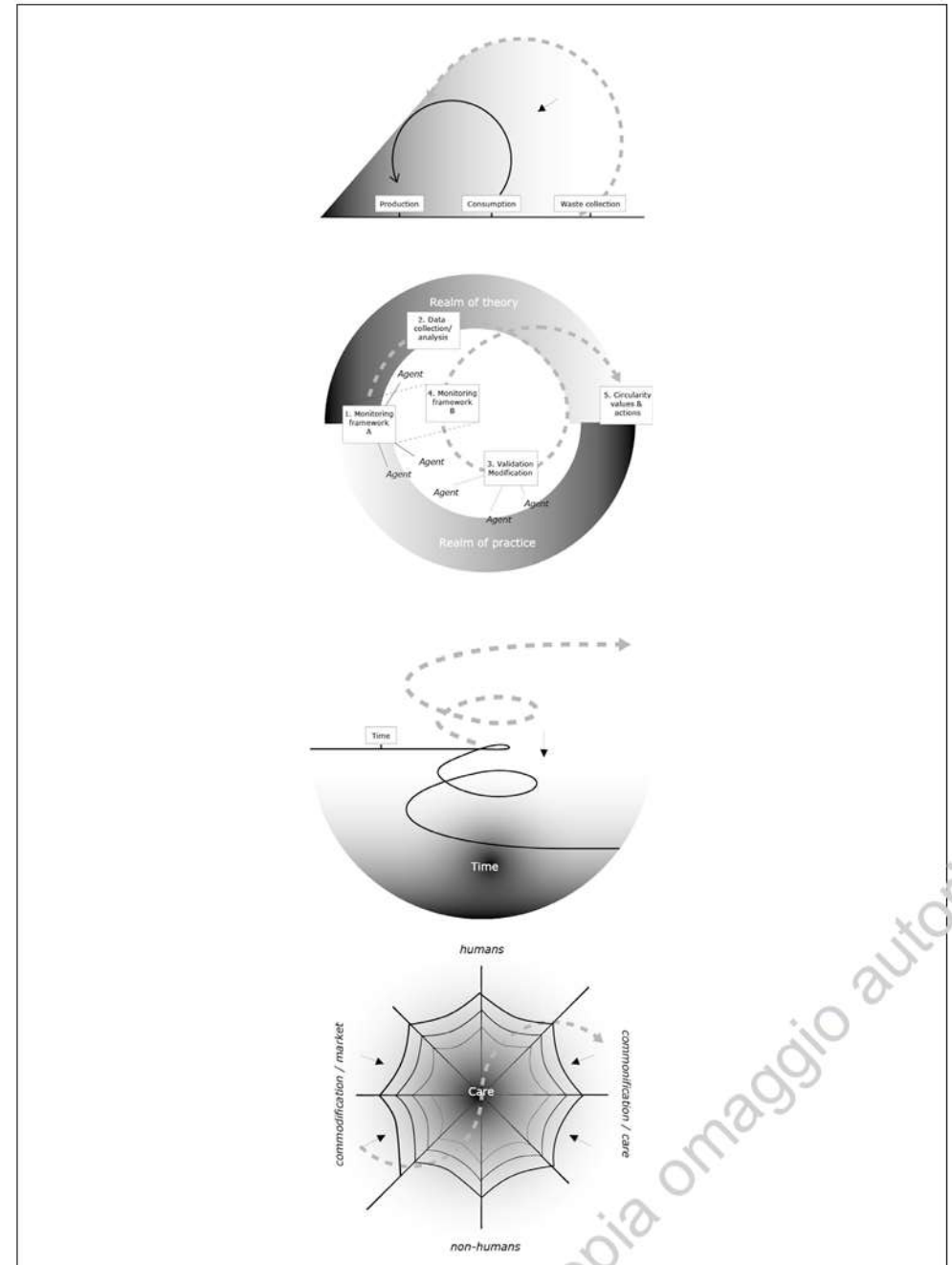
The above raises the need for grasping territorial specificities and developing place-based policy approaches that consider the capacity embedded within each territory and promote the design and implementation of inclusive and participatory policies (Tapia et al., 2021). This is what exposes the perfect notion of the circle to the messiness of

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Fig. 1.
 The four conceptual
 "moves" to reformulate the
 scope (#1 Move the circle
 upstream!), accountability
 (#2 Measuring the
 circle (differently)),
 temporality (#3 Slowing
 down circularity), and
 inclusiveness (#4 Caring
 circularity) of present and
 future circular project
 trajectories (elaboration: A.
 Bortolotti).

practice and politics. Within this framework, reopening the circle means reopening the possibility of implementing alternatives, including different epistemologies (and not only economic rationality), accepting that a trans-disciplinary and post-normal dialogue between sciences, practitioners, and laypeople (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993) can prefigure a plurality of models in which socio-material flows are articulated. In conclusion, the politicisation of circularity constitutes a fundamental theoretical and practical exercise to avoid reifying forms of legitimisation which, as in the case of modern industrial linearity, has often not gone beyond the adoption of a rhetoric of green sustainability. However, the theoretical and practical activation at the same time of an epistemological pluralism that reshapes the relationship between production and consumption in an eco-social perspective is a twofold challenge, as it requires space for experimentation but also the tools (and the political will) to recognise and make visible the alternatives that are already in place, even if they are disregarded and placed at the margins of the closed circle.



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The Biennial of European Towns and Town Planners is an event of the European Council of Urban Planners ECTP-CEU which aims at discussing the main issues in the European debate relating to urban planning by sharing them with urban planners, architects, engineers, economists, sociologists, historians of architecture, citizens, politicians, private and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The theme chosen for the 14th Edition, organized from 22 to 24 April 2024 in Naples with the INU as the main organizer, is Inclusive Cities and Regions/ Territoires inclusifs. Inclusion is understood in its multiple declinations that define the 10 general themes of this Biennial - Regional issues and regional disparity, Metropolitan or city proposals, Urban regeneration and Public Spaces, Migration and cultural inclusion, Cultural heritage, Resilience and adaptation, New economic approaches, IT and the use of artificial intelligence in planning, Ports, airports and other infrastructures, Underground space – and in additional ones proposed by the participants who further specify the general themes namely About Spatial Inclusivity, Urban regeneration and spatial justice with Nature-Based Solution, Inclusive public spaces for water cities facing climate change, Italian UNESCO Chairs vision and actions, A Transdisciplinary Approach to Placemaking and Inclusivity: COST Action Dynamics of Placemaking, Inclusive city Ecosystems, Youthbanism for a New Generation of Urbanists, Fragile geographies. Visions, projects and studies to mitigate and adapt to environmental and anthropogenic risk, Green Oasis for the 15 minutes city model, Making/unmaking urban circular economies with 'otherness', Public space for inclusive cities: the Biennial of Public Space, Universal accessibility and university education, the knowledge network, Findings and Evidences from the PNRR project RETURN, and River Contracts as voluntary and negotiated planning tools.

The works contained in this Catalogue, presented by administrators, professionals, academics, and researchers concern projects, policies and research that have international interest and, at the same time, attention to the local, all at different scales.

It is possible, from this vastness of topics, to understand the broad discussion that resulted, outlining new interested subjects and involved actors, as well as new possible intersections of themes.

Marichela Sepe is Associate Professor at the DICEA Sapienza Università di Roma. She has also joined the ISMed-CNR and the DiARC-University Federico II. In 2013 she has been visiting Professor in the Peking University and held lectures in the Peking, Wuhan and Xi'an Universities. Her research interests include: urban design and planning; place identity; healthy city; livable public spaces; creative urban regeneration; multimedia. On these topics, she has published several national and international journal articles, conference papers, books and book chapters.

Currently she is Responsible of the Urban Impact Unit of the "SUMMA" PRIN 2020, and member of the COST Dynamics of placemaking, and Writing Urban Places. She is responsible of the Scientific Laboratory "Geodesign and Urbandesign" of LUPT University Federico II.

Sepe is President of the Biennial of Public Space Association, Vice President of INU Campania section and member of the national INU Governing Board, coordinator of the GUDesign network, member of the Eura Governing Board and member of Urban Design Group. In 2014-2023 she won: the Ardito-Desio Award for the paper presented at Ipsapa 2014, 2016 and 2018 Conference; the Urban Planning Literature Award of the Italian National Urban Planning Institute (INU) in 2014, 2015 and 2017 and the 2023 Horizon Europe Sapienza Award.

In the cover

Hug. Napoli, San Francesco di Paola colonnades.

(source: Marichela Sepe' archive)

Formato digitale

ISBN: 978-88-7603-255-4 (e-Book) Euro 9,50

Copia omaggio autori