

COMPETITION AND COLLABORATION

A quality label for temporary reuse. Co-design practices

by Raffaella Fagnoni and Silvia Pericu

METADESCRIPTION

Reagente quality label is a service, a process, a brand to recognize value to bottom-up actions and temporary reuse of abandoned parts of our territory.

KEYWORDS

re-cycle, social innovation, temporary reuse, action design based research brand

ABSTRACT

The spreading of re-cycle and temporary reuse practices on abandoned spaces in our cities reveals a shift of paradigm of design discipline toward new ways of acting. It is also expression of social innovation and DIY attitude, that focuses on people more than on goods, throughout bottom-up actions connected to every day's life needs more than to consumption.

Designing a quality label is an opportunity: Reagente is a strategy to simplify policies, to recognize value to actions on territory and to enhance social innovation. Genoa and its community are an experimental field for a co-design process.

1. Enhancing places, discovering and envisioning territories through recycling and temporary reuse practices

Lately we have witnessed to an exponential growth of empty spaces in our cities and territories, caused by the economic crisis and changes, and the transfer of activities from real physical spaces to the Internet, according to the diffusion of the so-called sharing economy. Therefore, our cities are full of urban areas that have lost their original functions and remain unused¹, due to complex decision-making processes and to speculative logics. If on one hand these areas are resources taken away from the cities, unsafe places of physical and social decline, on the other they represent a breeding ground to experiment social relations, actions and events promoting new contents and methods. Historical buildings and sites also improve and define the view and character of our territories. They contribute to building identity and stories. Buildings and empty spaces are now an experimental laboratory, where informal actions, events and temporary reuse practices become innovative instruments.

In this sense recycling and reuse practices on abandoned areas, that have been deprived of meaning, have progressively spread in the latest years, becoming the subject matter of research groups who investigate the potentials of such strategies. The activist-designer, according to Fuad-Lukas (2009) is an *happener* and his project is an essential human expression able to smooth our transition towards a more sustainable future. Through recycling practices, urban makers

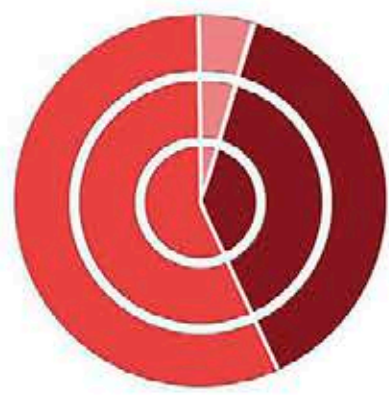
1. There are over 6 million empty spaces (housing, industrial, commercial and public buildings) of which a portion, from 3 to 6%, are spaces in good condition, that do not require interventions. In addition to these there are many abandoned historic buildings and sites, that testify the history and image of our country. Retrieved from <http://www.riusiamolitalia.it>.

[STATO D'USO]

12 aree dismesse =
1.265.857 mq

14 aree in trasformazione
= 2.067.429 mq

3 aree in uso = 232140 mq



36% dismesse
57% in trasformazione
7% in uso



[STATO DI PROGETTO]

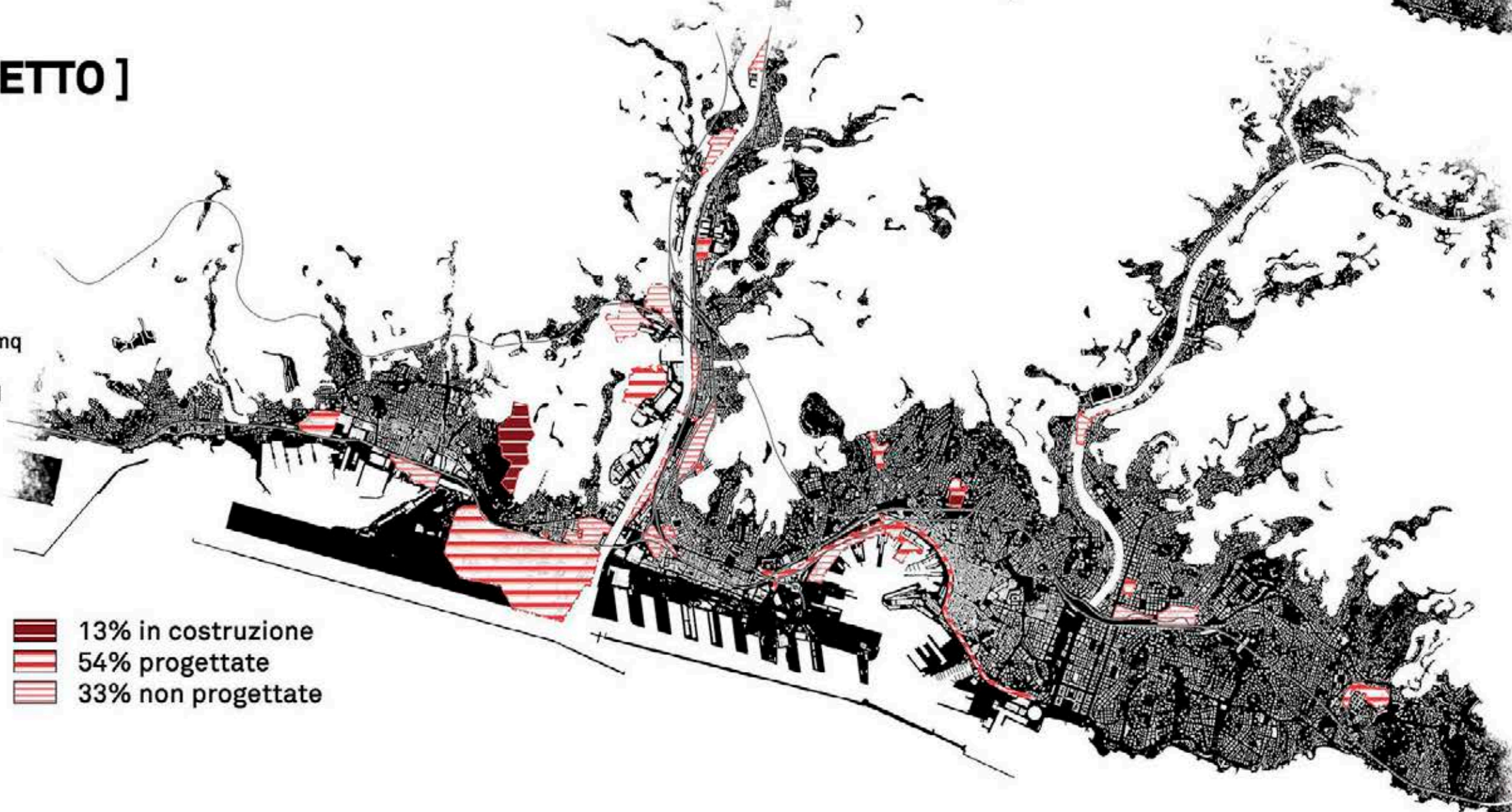
9 aree progettate =
1.920.458 mq

14 aree non progettate = 1.158.019 mq

2 aree in costruzione = 461.590 mq



13% in costruzione
54% progettate
33% non progettate



State of use and planned areas in the city of Genoa. Genoa Lab Re-Cycle.

reuse devices and instruments and combine them with new meaning, they look for solutions working on waste. Recycling is not only a physical process, it implies a change in meaning that involves the social, cultural and economic context, the various stakeholders and the citizens' lifestyles. Such process also involves those temporary reuse practices of residual spaces, leading to reconsider recycling as a conceptual and operative tool for facing emergencies that arise within a project, in terms of economic, social and environmental problems. Not only a political advantage, recycling is one of the most modern and sophisticated ways of making expressive research on projects.

With a certain delay compared to other European countries², Italy started its route towards recycling with the Re-Cycle exhibition in 2012 in the MAXXI museum in Rome, which launched the PRIN Re-Cycle Italy³ research, involving 11 universities with the aim of exploring the operational consequences of recycling processes on the urban system. The Genoa Lab Re-Cycle has carried out its activities in two synergetic subject areas, one regarding the abandoned patrimony, the other focused on the community: from footprint to promoting temporary reuse policies. The research team have started tracking the abandoned heritage with a system of parameters, in order to evaluate the signs and impact left by those empty spaces and to facilitate transformation actions and processes, and then have experimented recycling practices aimed at producing operational instruments. An agreement with Genoa's Municipality⁴ has allowed to monitor experiences made by active citizens, that have contributed to the creation of a reference system for managing temporary reuse policies and procedures. It's been an opportunity to prove design as a tool for enhancing territory.

2. As in the Urban Catalyst project (Oswalt, Overmeyer, & Misselwitz, 2013) funded in the 5th Framework Programme (2001-2003) o the research Reuse funded in 2005 (www.urban-reuse.eu) where the aim was to identify recurrent issues in the social re-use processes. The regulation of temporary uses, often inserted somewhere between legal and illegal, is the goal in Italy of Temporiuso project (Inti, Cantaluppi & Persichino 2014).

3. see also www.recycleitaly.it. The research team in Genoa was coordinated by M. Ricci with R.Fagnoni.

4. Research Agreement – Comune di Genova. 2015 - 2017- Re-Cycle Practices and temporary reuse on abandoned buildings and underused areas. Processes, experimental projects, communication and events. Academic research management: R. Fagnoni, with C. Lepratti, C. Vannicola, S. Pericu. Municipality management: G. Vincenzo - Participation office, A. I. Corsi - Special projects, and A. Colombini, S. Zarino – Patrimony office.

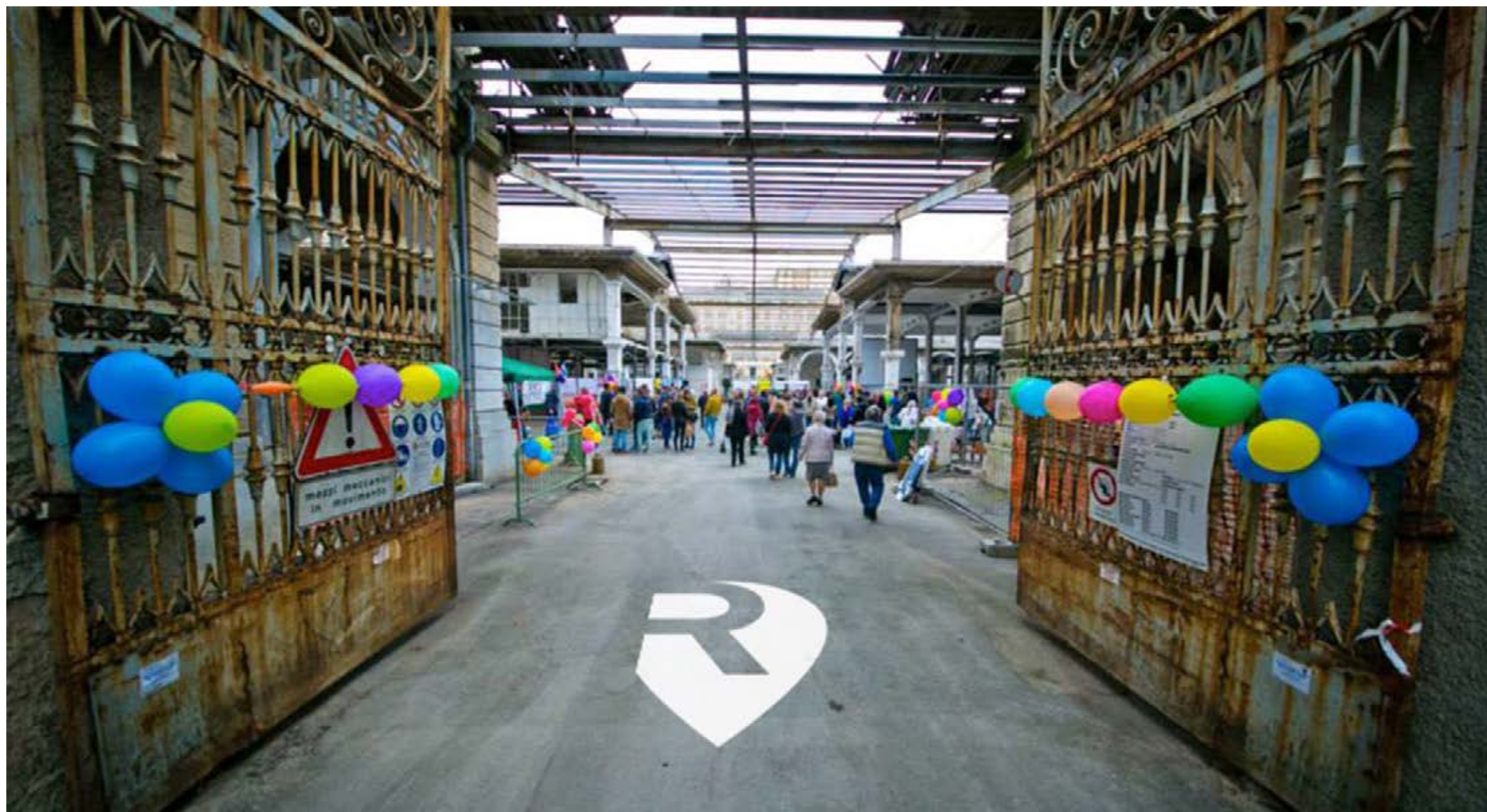
2. Re-cycle. New social, political, and environmental paradigms empowering design actions as new field for design activities and education

It was during the Nineties that designers started to be directly involved in the problem of waste and in the necessity of reusing it to create a meaningful transformation from waste to substance. Our project challenge is to reach this goal without losing beauty, by working on the edge and avoiding those common ideas that associate beauty with the glazed and shiny rather than rough and matt surfaces of recycled materials. The matter is to find “a new idea of beauty, closer to our condition of human beings, who are subject to refusal and discrimination. A beauty that preserves traces of the past, signs of what has been. A beauty that is not abstract, but firmly anchored to what is corruptible, and contains a hope for resurrection, when not for human beings at least for things” (Morozzi, 1998).

This role of designers committed to the public patrimony and welfare, ideologically opposing the most commercial aspects of industrial design, outlines the field of action of *social design*, which “highlights design-based practices towards collective and social ends, rather than predominantly commercial or consumer-oriented objectives. It operates across many fields of application including local and central government, as well as policy areas such as healthcare and international development.” (Armstrong, Bailey, Julier & Kimbell, 2014)

Design discovers its active role within the social, cultural, political and environmental context we are living in, and contributes to facilitate processes of social innovation, providing designers with new opportunities to intervene in a

world where everybody designs (Manzini, 2015). According to Gui Bonsiepe, “To raise our awareness of the contradictions that become apparent between the socially desirable, the technologically possible, the environmentally beneficial, the economically viable, and the culturally tenable should be one of the central goals of contemporary design ethics” (Groll, 2015).



Reuse of former market of Corso Sardegna in Genoa. Re-cycle action carried out by RiprendiamociGenova.

The political potential of design (Markussen, 2013) has been introduced by Victor Papanek (1971) with his so called activist behaviour. It is a call for designers to face the emergencies of our daily life and act for social concerns. Design Activism is defined as an act of developing new processes and artifacts focusing explicitly on social, environmental and political issues without losing the intervention to functionality (Julier, 2013), a way of thinking and practicing design to generate a counter discourse against mainstream drivers of the industry that can make a positive social, institutional, economic, and environmental change (Fuad-Luke, 2009).

The role of design in these new scenarios offers a series of possible explorations and considerations:

Interaction - The project is no longer the work of a single designer, but it becomes a collective space where necessities and

sensibilities are shared. Concepts such as open source trace a route that through participation leads to a soft but active complicity, that reveals itself in the contamination and spread of ideas and information. The culture of re-contextualization and recycling not only of products and spaces, but also of notions and visions, leads to reconsider the opportunities offered by a change of direction which has already started.

Intuition and event – Every human being is born with an immediate ability of understanding reality, that unfortunately they lose year after year growing up in a society founded on the cult of rationality. Intelligence analyzes and theorizes, classifies, distinguishes and smashes real duration. The ability of intuition is immediate like instinct and aware like intelligence (Bergson 1907). Any event is the opportunity to create systems according to which ideas can contaminate and become bigger than the sum of their single parts. Therefore, the increase of connections is a way to access information on the work of our ancestors and combine it with present intuitions, thus transforming it into something new, whose results will be eventually combined once again by someone else.

Education and training - The spreading of design activism, social design and social innovation practices has an impact on the conventional design education, that in Italy, excluding some specific cases, has not yet developed the social, political and economic aspects of design. “To educate designers for this era, from Transdisciplinary Design, to Design and Urban Ecologies, exploring the complex forces that influence urban growth and development, mean to provide opportunities for self-directed learning, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and exposure to academic areas beyond the traditional boundaries of art and design” (Allen, 2013).

DIY and spontaneous processes - The risk and limit of

spontaneous processes have been often attributed to their difficulties of being institutionalized and to the poor effectiveness of their projects, developed without the intervention of public institutions. Local administrations tend to institutionalize relations, forcing processes into official methods and procedures and remaining anchored to them. It is therefore necessary to adopt a new approach, in order to consider such actions not as fixed practices but in their global context. We should not merely interpret such phenomenon as a new way of doing things, but adopt a new point of view to consider what it is done, in order to maximize its effect on the public sphere.

3. The concept of a label, brand, service, network or design process for temporary reuse and new co-design policies and practices

A brand can work as a meme, a cultural unit that spreads from mind to mind. The most powerful memes can catalyze collective changes. They generate perceptions-thoughts-actions-behaviors through trust and reputation on one's social network and so create a chain-effect able to spread those perceptions-thoughts-actions-behaviors across other networks. The creation of a quality label can be a way for spreading values related to interventions, and for proving urban, environmental and process quality. The quality label proposed proves urban, environmental and process quality. It is assigned according to the fulfillment of specific parameters related to the launching of recycle processes of artifacts, areas, buildings, spaces and urban infrastructures. It guarantees the enhancement of cultural and environmental patrimony,

service culture, resources' availability and use, as well as the quality of such use. It represents the beginning of a route that leads to the synergetic promotion of the cities that have joined it.

The brand tells us a story on how we can face the present-future of our cities. By means of a symbol we state a community and its administration's attitude towards recycling, in this sense the brand is marketable to interlocutors and represents the optimization of resources, according to established and quantifiable criteria.



Design tools for Reagente: stencils Label.

Authors: R. Fagnoni, S. Pericu with C. Olivastri, E. Angella e N. Raffo.

Through its topics and values, as core elements to reinforce its audience's emotional and evocative ability, the brand proposes a clear moral. Its relationship with the audience is based upon an instant aesthetic and perceptive experience, and the brand's challenge is to find a new positioning able to communicate thanks to its own personality, through sensations, emotions and aesthetic effort.

The launch and promotion of our brand aim at enhancing single interventions, rewarding the cities-communities that carry out the largest number of actions, and the institutions

that are actively involved.

Through a shared process (from project to promotion) the brand gives visibility to its network and the related actions. Thanks to its distinctive quality, internal (cohesion of all subjects involved) and external awareness (proven quality, proposal of a development model, incentives to act and invest according to its direction), the brand plays a central role in affirming its reputation, and proves its attractiveness and prestige through the values it promotes.

Creating a brand implies many activities, from building its system of values to studying its visual identity, from validating it according to quality standards and criteria set by supervision authorities, to organizing its communication and promotion. It is a complex process, that could though start a new cycle of activities and give birth to a new development logic, founded on collective and results-based rather than punishing-regulatory systems.

4. *Reagente label*: co-design method and process

Reagente quality label, following the principles of the Re-Cycle Italy research, concluded in 2015, intends to reunite into a single label, subjects who are conscious of the importance of reusing territory and reducing soil consumption in the city of Genoa, in order to connect them through the Internet and help them recognize the value of their own actions. Genoa is a shrinking city and its population has been declining for many years; as a consequence, the city is full of abandoned properties, mainly industrial buildings linked to the port, which are no longer in use.

The Design research group⁵ has collaborated with the city administration that, as well as other Italian cities, is working to adopt a formal Agreement on cooperation between citizens and administrations for a shared management, care and regeneration of common urban areas. Thanks to this collaboration, a series of events were organized addressed to active and interested citizens, with the aim of creating a label to be joined through a collective process, that gives the opportunity to develop connections, share specific values and, in the end, give visibility and spread reuse actions outside the project.

The development of the label has two consecutive steps: a first inside-oriented step is addressed to people directly involved in the project or who might join it. Here the Label is a tool for gathering people from a constellation of autonomous subjects to a real community, where all subjects involved can identify themselves, participate and share the creation of common criteria. In the second outside-oriented step the quality label is a tool for corroborating, validating and spreading interventions. It is a results-based system useful to those administrations who want to promote reuse strategies for abandoned areas, forgotten or underused situations, that can be better developed to create social, environmental and cultural benefits, thanks to light and reversible systems, often more focused on soft rather than hard qualities of projects.

More than else, the Label is an instrument to involve a local community and afterwards become a label that can also be applied in other cities to projects with a similar philosophy. It is an instrument able to involve activists, associations and

5. The quality brand has been developed thanks to the support of a Progetto di ricerca di Ateneo (PRA) carried out in 2015: *Quality Brand Re-cycle Italy*. Coordination: R. Fagnoni with S. Pericu and in cooperation with C. Olivastri, E. Angella e N. Raffo.



Reagente call for action. Authors: R. Fagnoni, S. Pericu with C. Olivastri, E. Angella e N. Raffo.

common citizens, who are increasingly launching light reuse actions of abandoned areas all over. Quality certification can also become a way to promote recycle actions of abandoned areas and guarantee their quality and respect of specific parameters, and it can be applied to actions carried out on buildings, portions of buildings, parts of urban areas, infrastructures, infrastructural networks, landscapes, permanent and also temporary events focused on portions of territory

This *modus operandi* is also recognized by Italian law⁶, which states how local administrations can define their criteria and conditions to carry out projects of territorial

6. Art.24. Decreto Legge 12/09/2014.

interventions on common areas, designed by single or associated citizens. This is the reason why the Reagente Label's targets are, together with activists, policy-makers, whose policies support the investment of resources to enhance abandoned heritage.

The creation of the brand should be based on the definition of its own values, that in this case will be set according to the Re-Cycle research principles, in order to produce new values that, in addition to the previous ones, are developed through a collective activity, shared with the activist groups, who are the project's targets.

Who.

A network of active citizens is established in Genoa, with the aim of identifying the active subjects, the types of interventions they carry out, their objects and, in the end, their possible contributions to define the label's parameters. Through a series of events scheduled during summer 2016 it will be possible to define a set of shared criteria for the brand, that will be then available on an online registration platform. Results of this first process will be eventually verified with other stakeholders, represented by political institutions and authorities for the control and management of territory. Scope of such action is to share values with all the subjects involved in the project, in order to identify a common goal which is indispensable for the project's success. The values thus created will become the label's guidelines, which define the criteria in use for evaluating projects, initiatives and active groups who apply for quality certification.

What.

Since the brand's registration criteria can vary, they will be

constantly updated during their spreading process. They refer to parameters involving wider matters, such as public benefit, citizens' active participation, and the ways of intervention on built areas, to indicate which part of the original buildings should be preserved. The Label's assignment process must be absolutely clear and transparent, in this sense it will be open and available to everyone on the Internet, in order to fully share methods and instruments. The process for registering to the Label is based on a self-assessment procedure that the candidate follows by filling in an online form. Once authorized and registered to the Label, he receives the rules for using it properly, and becomes part of an open and flexible database, where all the recycle actions carried out on the national territory are inserted. Such database is in fact constantly updated by the subjects involved in those actions.

Where.

Genoa and the cooperation with the city administration offer the possibility of testing our project with a defined network of subjects and with reference to specific cases. The choice of using a method based on real experiences is due to the intention of eventually exporting such experience already made to other contexts, after an accurate analysis of results and the evaluation of each proposal's strong and weak points. In order to have an exportable brand, its process of assignment must be based on a self-sustainable system, able to work without the constant control of a so-called supervision authority, a system than can be repeated by the interested administrations according to a specific format.

5. Case studies selection

Nowadays design has more and more concentrated on territory as the object of its planning activity and has therefore consolidated project practices in this sense. New design experiments have spread with the aim of enhancing values focused on territory, proposing solutions for localized communicative, productive and service processes (Lupo, 2009), although they are still lacking of a theoretical development able to produce, at international level, an accurate and shared definition of the role of contemporary design in the improvement of place identity and enhancement of territory.

The work proposed for the Reagente quality Label as an instrument for sharing values and enhancing recycling actions on territory, represents a way to explore how the identity of territory and its resident communities should be considered as a choice of project (Zurlo, 2003).

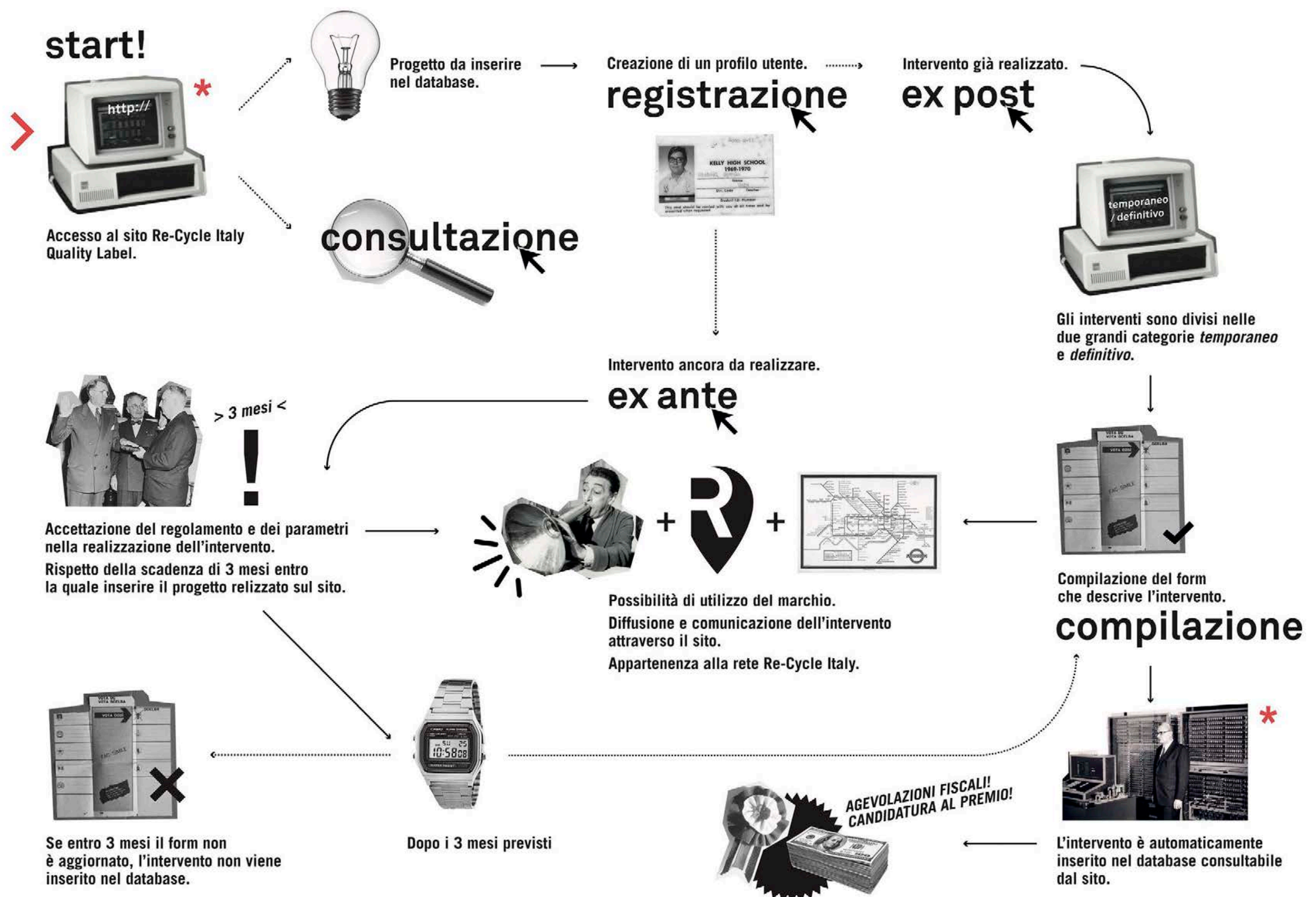
If the identity of a territory should be also built on a specific set of values that define its territorial capital, there is no identity without a collective recognition of the values to share and support in a coherent everyday practice of behavior (Parente, 2012). In this sense, the concept of community together with a collective awareness of belonging to it, becomes relevant.

The particular contribution of design to the enhancement of territories is due to its ability of transferring meaning towards a human dimension, not only as a reference, but also as an element able to connect a system involving places, communities, practices and processes so that it shares the same values.

This process cannot be imposed from above. It should be based upon the shared recognition of an identity within a

community and towards the system it is referred to. Place identity still needs new tools and a further development to its particular field of action – territory – as a consequence, quality labels represent an instrument for enhancing territorial capital, able to offer various unexplored opportunities that are clearly and particularly intended to share values and define reference parameters.

The use of quality brands applied to territories represent a proven method to promote a system of recognition and validation of those territorial entities that, sharing the same goals, have committed to the adoption of responsible behaviors and contributed to the promotion of the culture and methods of economic, social and environmental quality certification.



The first concept of self-assessment procedure for the Reagente Quality Label. Authors: R. Fagnoni, S. Pericu with C. Olivastri, E. Angella e N. Raffo.

It is a results-based system that has initially developed on products and then largely spread to guarantee and validate the quality of diverse services, since it is a transverse instrument that can be applied to products, services and places, and that allows a territorial brand to guarantee quality and become a process for creating a shared system of values within a territory. It has a double function: internally it gathers strategies from the various parts involved within a territorial community, without being focused only on traditional marketing. Externally it works as an instrument to spread specific values as part of a wider system that can be joined by whoever is interested. It does not exclusively work on visual design techniques, which are typical of the large diffusion of images and logos we have been used to in the latest years by the touristic market; on the contrary, it is based on communication and recognition of collective values shared with a community's stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the adoption of this type of instrument implies the consideration of some issues related to the creation and management of a quality brand. A brand is a collective good, whose products are controlled by different subjects, and in this sense it cannot determine individual choices made by whoever might join it. It must proceed on and evaluate already existing activities and invite possible stakeholders to participate within a system of shared criteria. It represents a strategic opportunity and not a coercive imposition, with all the advantages and limits that such condition implies (Demetz, 2015).

Two case studies have inspired the work on Reagente Label: *Quality Design for All Labels* and territorial quality Label *Salento d'Amare*.

Quality Design for All (DfA) Label was established as a label,

with the objective to certify the quality of the DfA's products, environments and systems already accomplished, which express significant principles connected to accessibility. It applies to all the realization of project of the material and virtual reality and it has two steps: DfA-Start and, once refined, the DfA-Quality Label. The work has been taken in analysis for some similarities: for the ability to transmit the values of the design for all through the assessment of projects accomplished and for the ability of the label to communicate complex values, which are not always easily identifiable, in order to promote them for a full social inclusion of all people. Finally it is a quality Label thought to be widespread and replicated. The assessment procedure is conceived as a prize, with a judgment done by members of a jury.

Since 2001 *Salento d'Amare*, as territorial brand, has become a success story of the Italian territory: significant increase in tourism, redevelopment of the area, cutting-edge initiatives to promote environmentally sustainable development. The Union of Municipalities of the Grecia Salentina has launched a brand *Salento d'Amare*, welcomed by local businessmen who had the courage to experiment it in the field of tourism and territorial promotion. The same Union verifies compliance with the parameters of those who embrace the brand (Oliva, 2006). The territorial label has been the tool to make visible products and services of the territories involved, a tool to promote a community which identifies itself with specific values. The shift from public initiative to a project led by private operators is a source of interest. Although not developed for the Internet it appears like a label with a very easy access and regulation.



6. Conclusions

Reagente is a quality label revised in order to develop a certification system for recycle practices and reuse actions on abandoned or underused areas in our cities. It aims to improve the effectiveness of active citizenship and to recognize its value, addressing at the same time to undertaken initiatives, as well as to projects on areas waiting to be regenerated in order to promote this kind of approach.

The process is based on shared values able to ensure the peculiarity of each stakeholder involved, to spread best practices, to simplify the regulation set in assigning spaces to groups of citizens taking care of their environment. It aims also to create a network as reference not only for partners involved internally, but also at a national level for other external subjects interested in it. Italian most important network on active citizenship and urban commons, i.e. Labsus, already showed his interest on the project.

The strategy put in place by Reagente quality label points to transform brand identity from a competitive mode to a cooperative one, for the promotion of interventions that reflect the same values on the recycling of abandoned spaces. It is conceived as an open platform, a mapping action to show links between different ways of regenerating urban spaces through reinventing a new meaning for them. From the beginning Reagente shared its ambition with the City Council of Genoa and the research team has organized three

meetings to involve groups of active citizens and associations, to know each other initially, and at the end of the process to define together with all the participants evaluation criteria and values of a shared labelling system that can be used in different situations. Reagente involves Design's role through service design and design for social innovation. The main abilities involved are the ability to analyze territory, to communicate, to define scenarios, to create a brand identity and to design artifacts for temporary actions.

Reagente is a process that could represent a contribution to the challenge of social innovation and Design's research for policy. The sharing of Reagente represents for the community of the city of Genoa an experimental field. Its improvement through a national network can contribute to evolve a collaborative practice capable to empower institution and citizens to take part in the actual culture of the sustainability and active governance.

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Mapping the territory for cultural development. The methodological assumptions of Artificio Project.

by Rossana Gaddi

METADESCRIPTION

Artificio project arised from the need of an innovative cultural centre in Como: design-focused, accessible, sustainable, widespread and participated.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Enhancement, Territorial Mapping, Participation, Design Methodology

ABSTRACT

The project Artificio (*Centro culturale urbano diffuso* - Spread urban cultural centre) is an on-going project (originally co-founded by the Cariplo Foundation) focused on the enhancement of the cultural resources of the city of Como, carried out by a participated and accessible purpose in which design plays a strategic role.

Indeed, design can be a tool for cultural and territorial enhancement, not just as a catalyst of good practices through projects, but even as a methodological tool for a deeper comprehension of a territory. In order to deeply understand the territorial resources, a mapping of the cultural resources of the city has been studied and realized. Quantitative and qualitative data were crossed and compared to analogous realities, to help the emergence of the real cultural needs of the citizenship.

Overview

In recent decades, the city is returning to play a distinctive role for cultural, economic and political development. The favourable geographical position of Como, its beautiful landscape and unique morphology, its recent and past history, in addition to its economic vocation, which relies on an entrepreneurial internationally recognized for excellence in production, could make the city competitive among the small European cities. Unfortunately, its profile is damaged by the lack of initiatives and insufficient care of its landscape. Como therefore seems still far from thinking and building an overall strategic project that promotes urban competitiveness, able to renew his physiognomy and economic and social dimension.

The project *Artificio* (*Centro culturale urbano diffuso* - Spread urban cultural centre) was co-funded by the Cariplo Foundation¹ (2013-2016) in response to the call “Valuing cultural activities as a factor of development of urban areas”. The Luminanda Association², networking with the Cooperative CSLS, the Association Nerolidio Music Planet and ComoN-ExT, are the project leader of *Artificio*, born from the desire to create an innovative and contemporary centre of art and culture in the city of Como: accessible, sustainable, widespread and participated.

A creative city is not just a city open to differences, but it is able to stir its diversities towards designing the future. So a creative city feeds on interaction between values, on

1. Cariplo Foudation - <http://www.fondazionecriplo.it/en/index.html>

2. Luminanda Association, main partner of *Artificio* project, is managed and animated by four women: Chiara Gismondi (President), Veronica Bestetti (Vice-Chairman), Ivana Franceschini and Anna Buttarelli (www.luminanda.net).

relations and on the sharing of talent, technology and tolerance, which when shared turn into culture, communication and cooperation. Therefore, the first design intention and the primary goal have been to foster the relational skills of the city of Como.

1. Designing Artificio: the role of design for urban and cultural enhancement

To deepen the knowledge of land resources, in the drafting phase of the project was carried out an info graphics mapping of the cultural resources of the city by a team of the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano³, where quantitative and qualitative data have been crossed and compared to analogous realities, to help the emergence of the real cultural needs of the citizenship.

Indeed, nowadays qualitative data must be interpreted and possible solutions envisaged in terms of sustainability and no longer in terms of unconditional increase in production. Comparing rapidly obsolescent artefacts with a model of long-term validity, which can be applied and replicated in different contexts, has highlighted the key role of design to analyse, visualise and build up possible models that are able to steer strategic decision-making.

The contemporary design has a wider scope for action than a few decades ago, no longer relying just on the strength of the practical design activities, to fit as a fluid discipline, tangential both to the design worlds and the social sciences.

3. The Design team was managed by Rossana Gaddi and Federica Gallarati (Design Department, Politecnico di Milano).

Design feeds on the evolution of the disciplines that could be called “classic” or “solid” but it is a discipline indefinable, in its being “liquid”, constantly changing. Liquid in being adaptable to the large container that is contemporary era.

Design System⁴ is a complex and branched apparatus that from the research point of view touches tangentially the humanities and from an operational point of view defines the procedures, the practices and the methodologies concerning our daily lives. A design strategy not only looks at the creation of a beautiful and quality products, but also to the identification of a specific identity, an effective focus, a collective aspiration to planning. Philip Kotler⁵ proposes a reflection

4. The definition of “Design System” is born from the research SDI (Sistema Design Italia - Italian Design System), a network of agencies for research, innovation and promotion in the field of design, which was founded as a spin off of a two year research program co-funded MIUR (Italian Ministry of University and Research), consists of 8 active branches at universities spread throughout the national territory (Milan, Florence, Rome, Chieti, Genoa, Palermo, Naples Federico II and Second University of Naples) in such as a nucleus of research and training is active for design. Its mission is to produce research opportunities in collaboration with organizations, associations, institutions to promote design as a competitive factor in the national economy and to spread the culture linked to the design also in other national contexts of production, focusing on the relationship existing between design and local production systems (and particularly in the industrial districts). The network also promotes concrete project actions that use the integrated approach of the product-system (the design action as the sum of the strategic aspects, service, communication and product) within the territories. These actions shall be realized through an original action research approach, which acts on the potential development of an entrepreneurial culture through local production and growth processes from the bottom and are addressed to local communities, to local administrations and training institutions, research and government, individual companies and consortia interested to implement innovation processes guided by the design contribution (design driven).

5. Philip Kotler (Chicago, 1931) is Professor of International Marketing at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. It was listed as the fourth “management guru” of all time by the Financial Times (after Jack Welch, Bill Gates and Peter Drucker) and hailed as “the greatest expert in the world in marketing” by the Management Centre Europe strategies. It is also considered one of the pioneers of social marketing. He has made an important contribution to the structuring of marketing as a scientific discipline, directing the formation of many students and managers worldwide. His main work is Marketing Management (first edition in 1967), which is generally recognized as one of the most authoritative texts on marketing, and is the most widely used in universities and business schools around the world, with a percentage close to adoptions 60%. Through his consulting

on the role that design can have in a company as coordinator of media plurality (buildings, places, products, services, distribution choices, interfaces) with which the company is on the market, defining its identity, but giving also shape their strategy.

Well-designed and well-structured services, such as cities, also represent an important opportunity for encouraging responsible behaviour and therefore help regenerate the social fabric by solving problems (such as accessibility) and to all intents proposing solutions for an advanced welfare.

According to the original call, the priority of Artificio project is to formulate proposals in order to create sustainable cities, implementing and testing a model resulting from collecting ideas workshops in a bottom-up approach. In particular, the main objective is to create a network of permanent structure in order to improve a design thinking approach to the urban regeneration.

Artificio is intended to make citizens more aware of their belonging to the future of a place, of their context of living, their role within their cities and history. Moreover, the project aims to promote a process of urban regeneration through an interdisciplinary approach involving different sectors of the society (creative people, decision makers, local and national authorities, designers, artisans, students, entrepreneurs) in order to reinforce economic, cultural and touristic cooperation at different levels between countries.

firm, the Kotler Marketing Group (KMG), Kotler has worked with many major multinational companies, including IBM, General Electric, AT & T, Honeywell, Bank of America, Merck and Motorola.

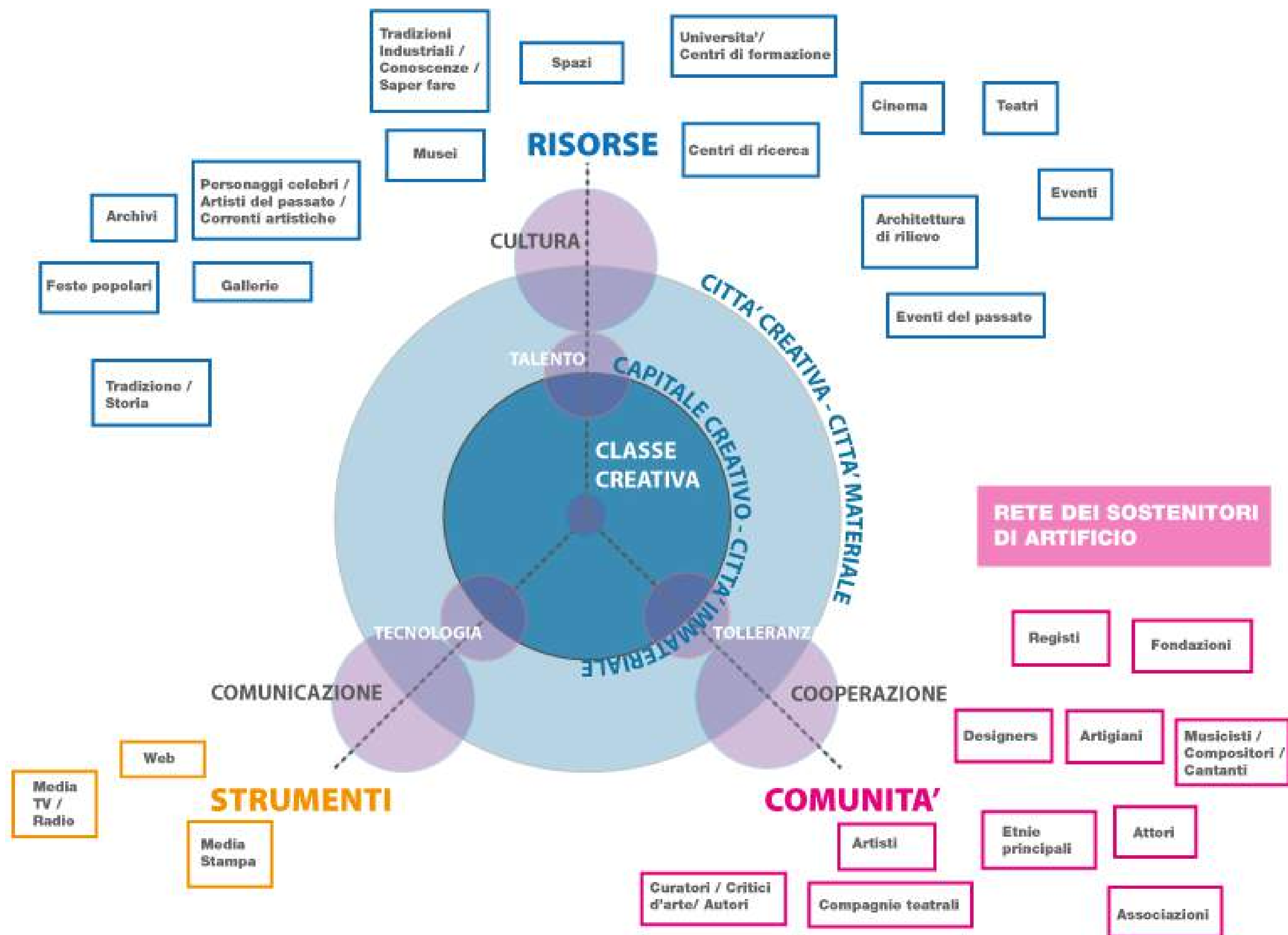


Fig. 1 Creative class / Creative Capital / Creative City (Carta, 2004 and 2008, re-elaborated version Gaddi, 2009 Resources (Risorse), Tools (Strumenti) and Community (Comunità) in Como Original Scheme in Italian language, Politecnico di Milano, Design Department.

Since the project is expected to demonstrate if and in which way design planning may contribute to the urban development in terms of social innovation, it has been appropriate to set up a strategic “reflection phase” dedicated to pilot activities where the project partners will have the possibility to test processes, models and techniques in order to verify solutions applicable to a wider set of users and territories.

The purpose of the project had been originally the networking of skills and public and private resources for the production, promotion and cultural offer as leverage to planning a creative urban development, vital and sustainable.

The primary objectives of the project were fixed in these following points:

- NETWORKING to build a common identity for local cultural operators recognized and recognizable;
- COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING to renew the relationship between citizens and the cultural identity of the city and allow the emergence of local talent;
- PARTICIPATION FROM THE BOTTOM to stimulate the active participation of the population to the city cultural planning;
- TOURISM AND COMPANY to allow a new characterization of the role of culture, no longer marginal and sectorial aspect but true urban development factor.

2. The mapping of the Culture in Como

Simultaneously to the pilot actions, necessary step of empirical audit of the analysis postulates of the cultural realities in Como, the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano, made for Artificio project the mapping of the cultural realities of the city, a “state of the art” of production and dissemination of culture in the city. The analysis was carried out following three main steps:

- A first quantitative mapping, which allowed the emergence of “facts and figures” about culture in Como;
- A second phase of mapping, this time qualitative, where the different realities that emerged in the first step are compared with regional and national indicators;
- A third phase, parallel and not sequential to the first two has been the development of two different types of questionnaires: one addressed to associations, organizations, cultural organizations from different backgrounds, the other to individual citizens, respectively, “dispensers” and

“users” of urban culture. The results of both questionnaires helped and guided the emergence of data otherwise not perceptible by an only theoretical analysis of the urban cultural structure. Data such as the expectations about the future, cultural habits, past attempts to create a network between similar associations.

- As it has been written before, during the feasibility study, it was decided to match the cultural mapping carried out by the Politecnico di Milano with some creative actions on the territory, in order to stimulate the participation of citizens, as well as inform them on Artificio project and test the feedback of possible initiatives to be implement later. A significant finding was the interdisciplinary nature of most of the actions: the coexistence of various integrated artistic languages has allowed to test the work team between the various realities of the network.

In particular, the creative actions have had the following specific objectives:

- Test the partnership and support network in the realization of joint initiatives;
- Validate the findings from the mapping of the culture in Como;
- Evaluate the response and participation of the public cultural offer potential Artificio;
- Contribute to building a communication strategy and promotion of the project Artificio.

All initiatives have resonated on artificiocomo.it website and on social networks linked to the project. Many actions were also promoted on partner sites and supporters and some of them have had a lot of visibility in the local press, both online and offline.

Methodology

The interpretative and methodological key that led the research was therefore based on a multi-channel system where the active participation of citizens (through questionnaires and creative actions organized during the research and mapping period) was intended as a guide for interpreting the phenomena transformation of contemporary urban culture.

The multi-channel approach in this research context was interpreted expanding the technological significance, and becoming a way to show the infinite possibilities of participatory construction of the brand and the urban identity of the city branding.

The research wanted to refer to Action Research methodology, historically used for the social sciences, then reconfigured for design. Action research is a cyclical action and verification process that comes from the awareness that the actions on the territory must necessarily start from below and refer to real situations. Precisely for this reason promotes the establishment of survey opportunities, the development of projects located in specific contexts of land resources, and the development of local systems, linked to places, to know how productive individuals.

Given the high variability of possible outcomes in an urban scale research (vitiating by social parameters, economic and political context), the operational line of action research is a methodological line was flanked inspired by Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where qualitative research allows developing conceptual categories directly from the data, and then make new observations by further developing these categories.

Specifically, the quantitative analysis allowed the definition ten typological categories (visual arts, plastic arts,

performing arts, music, literature, history and archaeology, nature and tourism, science and technology, sports, as shown in Fig. 2). Characteristic of a qualitative study is the immersion in the present context, where the researcher is operationally involved in the interrelationships that the actors put in place. The hypotheses are then taken directly from the data, without the need to create a priori models. The collection of data and information, follow the coding of the categories and subcategories, and analysis of data, in a continuous process of interaction.

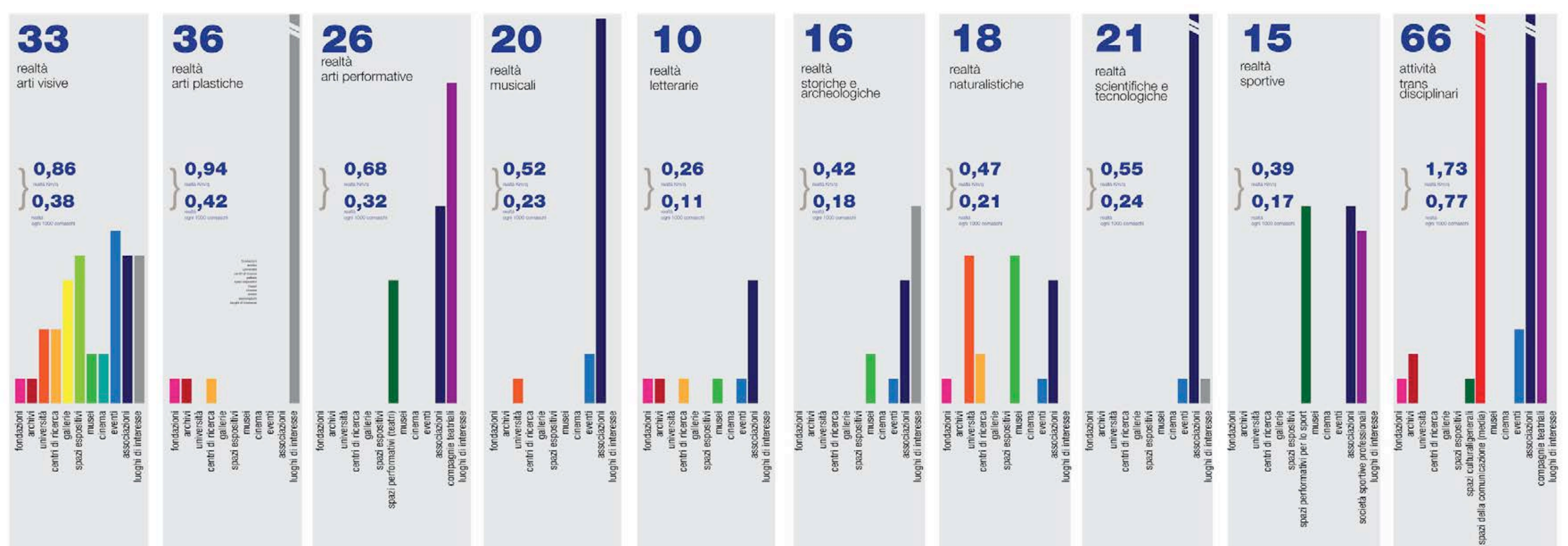


Fig.2. Activity density based on ten typological categories (right to left: visual arts, plastic arts, performing arts, music, literature, history and archaeology, nature and tourism, science and technology, sports, transdisciplinary activities)

Original Scheme in Italian language, La Mappatura culturale della città di Como – Progetto Artificio, Politecnico di Milano, Design Department.

Emerged results

The results of the questionnaires and the SWOT analysis carried out, from both citizens of organizations and associations of the Como area, shown a strong demand for cultural innovation. Enhancement of cultural assets Como is an explicit request of citizens and revival of city competitiveness.

The city of Como is characterized by a cultural offer rather poor and poorly planned, that little remains attentive to the

needs of contemporary life, continuing to offer cultural and tourist offers single-issue, targeted mainly at a high and traditional target.

This trend, in addition of not meeting the needs of a large section of the population, in the long run, risks to impoverish and even paralyze cultural fabric of the city, and further lowering the strategic urban ecosystem quality, presenting to Como the role of a dormitory city. Despite the location of the city extremely favourable at both national and European level, much of the Como population moves to the neighbouring centres such as Milan or the nearby Swiss cities as Chiasso and Lugano, where the cultural offer and consequently the participation to culture, is more developed and advanced.

Nevertheless, there are cultural events and with a strong identity: this refers particularly to the programming of the Teatro Sociale, with a rich variety in terms of exhibition, with more than ten different sub-performing; Parolario, a literary and cultural festival; the prestigious initiatives and training activities of the Antonio Ratti Foundation; ComON, an international creativity sharing event dedicated to young designers and creative talents, in synergy with the local industrial excellence. However, this cultural calendar is poorly arranged and planned: the cultural programming appears sacrificed the urban dimension in favour of a sectorial dimension or even individual and cultural proposals seem to overlook the appearance of a global vision of the context in which they are under reflux with accordingly negative both in numbers and in terms of communication and relationship with the public. Moreover, they remain little synergistic and integrated, far from becoming promoters of new models of urban innovation and unable to pursue a strategic investment for a real renewal of the cultural and social capital.

This little integrated planning is also the result of poor appetite networking by institutions and associations, which tend to establish vertical relations to major institutions, creating little cooperation between similar realities. Hence the need to invest in new horizontal networks, as well as to strengthen and rationalize the cultural and networking the existing structures resources.

The lack of spaces for cultural and artistic experimentation fruition is another important finding emerged strongly from both the quantitative mapping analysis from questionnaires. About 80% of respondents to the question “How do you think could be improved cultural offer in Como?” replied “By creating new spaces for creativity and culture to enhance the city”. Como boasts prestigious locations internationally recognized, but not exploited strategically and underutilized for most of the year.

Citizens also lack places used to sharing and creativity, where you can trigger fertile relational innovation processes. In this regard, the analysis of the cultural endowment of the Municipality of Como territory has allowed the emergence of a substantially clear picture. The cultural realities of Como (which are about 260, about 7 per square km and 3 per inhabitant) does not offer a homogenous cultural service to every possible functionality of space (exhibition spaces, performance spaces, spaces for research, significant architectures). Except for the area of visual arts, in many of these ten cultural types it is found little research that, if present, is not reflected in events, exhibitions, trade spaces.

In addition, from the strictly quantitative terms, the cultural activity has no typological excellent tips that reflect the natural conformation and historical territory.

An example: although Como is a city known for its lake

and the beauty of the landscape, cultural activities related to nature and sport are slim. Same goes for the architectural legacy of rationalism, or the art of abstractionist “Como group”. Following some focus on the most interesting fact emerged from the analysis⁶.

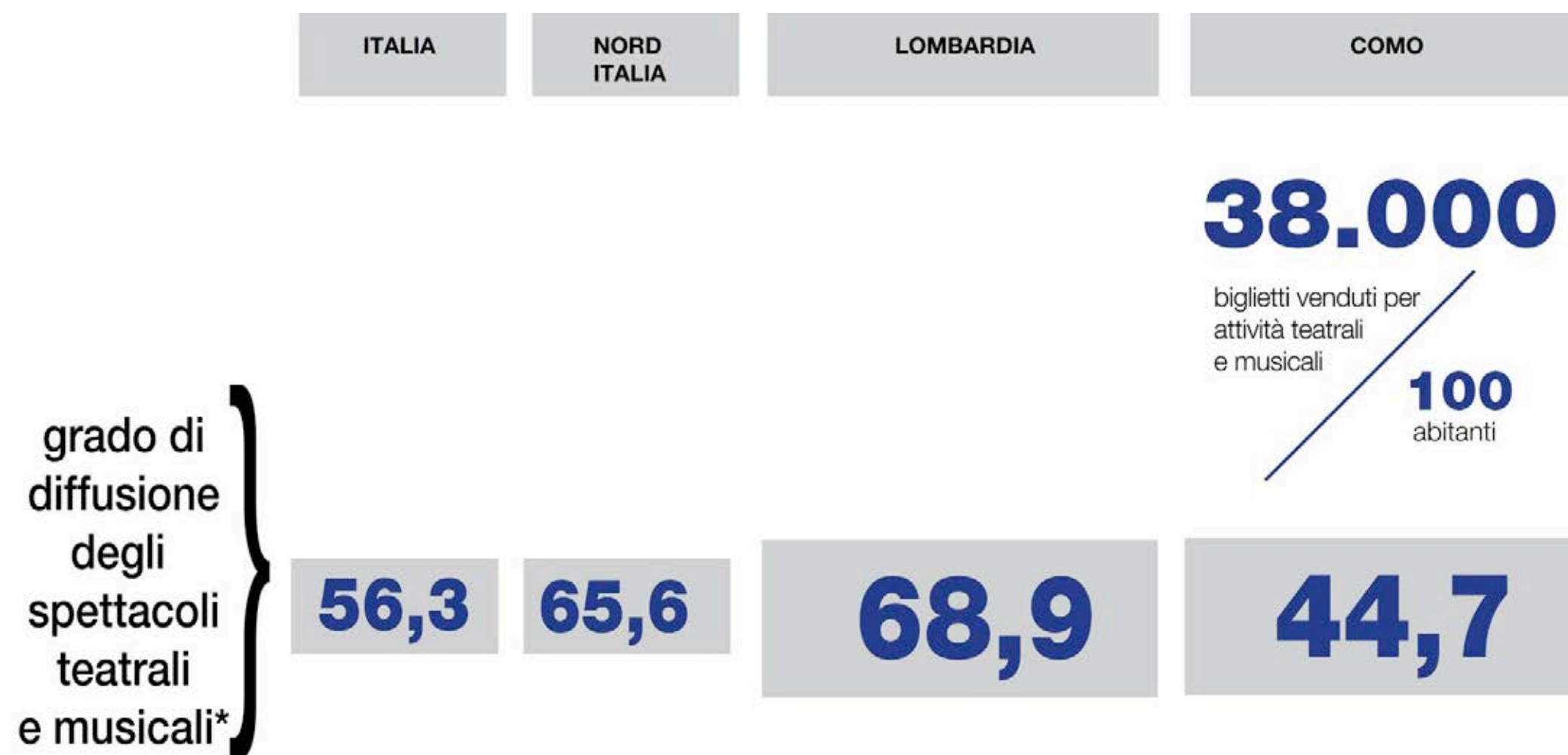
Performing arts

The degree of diffusion of theater and musical performances, Como has an index of about 45 tickets sold per 100 inhabitants, compared with about 70 in Lombardy and 57 Italians.

If we return to the first scheme, the activity density based on typological categories (Fig. 1), we notice a substantial absence of theatrical experimentation. No school of higher education, no research center, and an activity that turns at only three main theaters and a number of associations and theater companies (see comprehensive document mapping for more details). It should also be noted that there are two theatres currently closed, Teatro Cressoni and the Teatro Politeama.

Despite the greater theatre Teatro Sociale has a very rich offer in terms of exhibition (with more than ten different sub-performing categories), the most relative turnout is in the one and only exhibition of the Teatro Nuovo in Rebbio, the dialect festival (sold the 94% of available seats).

6. For the complete analysis, please visit www.artificiocomo.it, or contact the author.



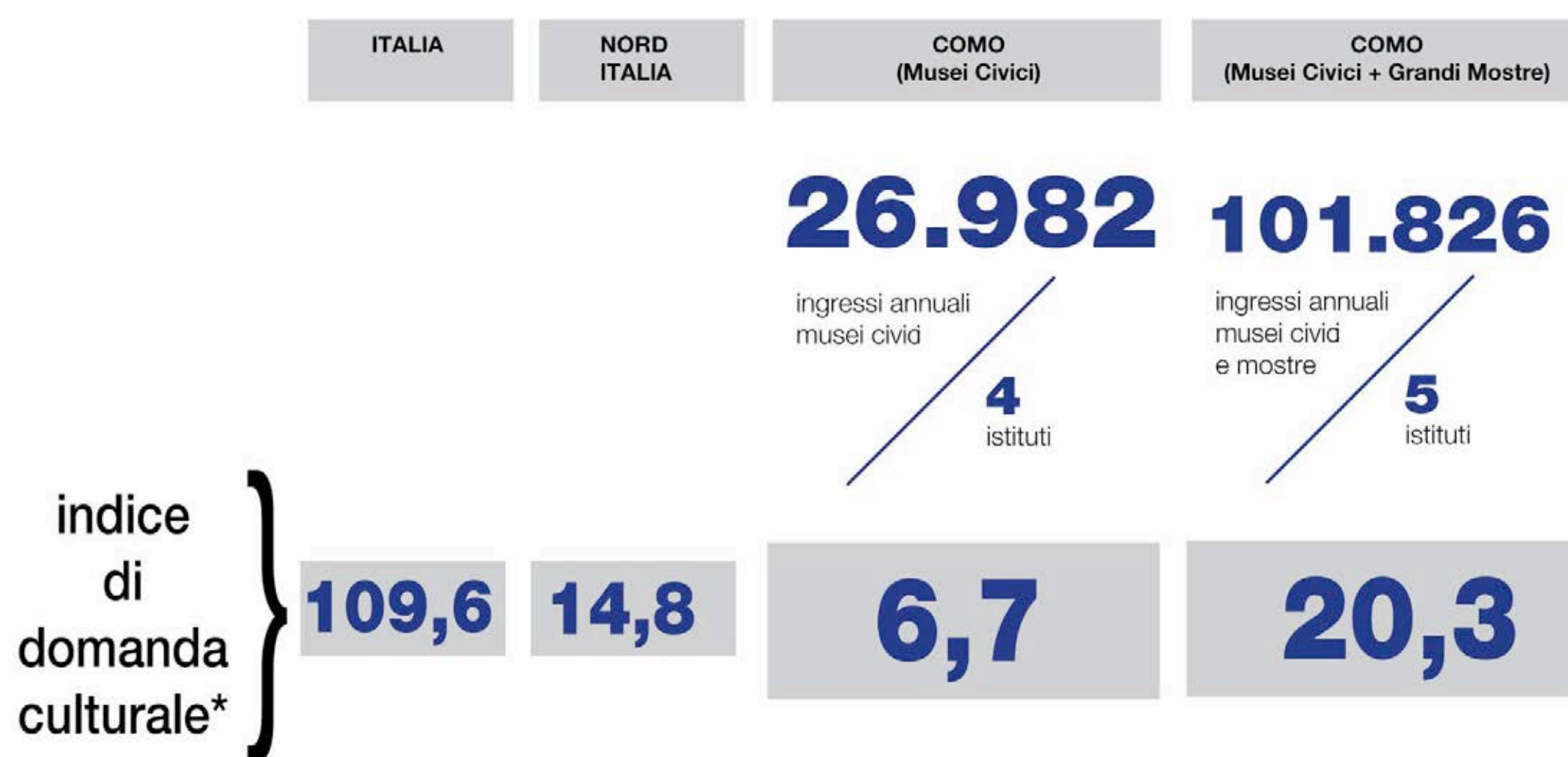
Index of cultural demand related to theatre and music shows / Comparison with Italian, Northern Italy, and Lombardia data. Original Scheme in Italian language, La Mappatura culturale della città di Como – Progetto Artificio, Politecnico di Milano, Design Department.

* Indicatore ISTAT
Biglietti venduti per attività teatrali e musicali per 100 abitanti

Museums

If we consider the unique museums Como and compare with the standards of the North Italy, we will notice that they are very weak compared to the index of Istat⁷, which highlights a small number of visitors to each museum of Como civic museums circuit.

Even from the questionnaires to citizenship it has emerged a little affection to Como museums, as they are now conformed. Therefore, the lack of attractiveness of museums -not adapted to the contemporary and far from being a strong place of identity, urged a rethinking of these spaces, a



Index of cultural demand related to museum access / Comparison with Italian and Northern Italy data. Original Scheme in Italian language, La Mappatura culturale della città di Como – Progetto Artificio, Politecnico di Milano, Design Department.

* Indicatore ISTAT
Numero di visitatori dei circuiti museali sul totale istituti statali di antichità e d'arte appartenente ai circuiti (valori in migliaia)

change in their appearance and functionality on the basis of a mode of use of the new cultural than in the past.

Cinema

The two active cinemas in Como try to make up for the inability to offer a rich program with quality exhibitions that have proportionally some success to reach the numbers of ordinary programming.

Comparing the SIAE⁸ data input to the halls in Italy, where on average there are about 2 inputs per inhabitant per year (the figure is almost identical in Lombardy), it can be seen in Como this figure is 4 times less, with 0,5 inputs / year per capita.

Despite the slightly varied and quantitatively limited supply, the questionnaires to citizenship emerges cinema as the main leisure activities, which suggests that many Como crossings to film outside the city. The shift of citizenship to neighboring centers can be attributed not only to the poor cultural offer, which presents the almost total lack of activity at certain times of the year, but also in part to an error in communication if not deficient of the activity taking place on the territory (since this emerged clearly from the qualitative analysis it is that the questionnaires to citizens).



Index of cultural demand related to cinema access / Comparison with Italian and Lombardia data
Original Scheme in Italian language, La Mappatura culturale della città di Como – Progetto Artificio, Politecnico di Milano, Design Department.

8. SIAE - Società Italiana Autori e Editori, Italian Society of Authors and Publishers
www.siae.it

3. The final result, Artificio project

www.artificiocomo.it

The main activities, available from a local and international audience, of Artificio project are:

- *Theatre Off "Visionaries Selection"*, a series of shows selected by the citizens, spread in the city, shared with the artists, international.

Selected from below: shows "Visionaries Selection" are chosen from about 50 citizens of Como, who selected each year 5 performances of contemporary theatre companies to be presented to the city.

Spread in the city: the Theatre Off Artificio does not take place in just one stage but spreads throughout the city, wherever there is an available space.

Shared with the artists: after each show another begins, that of the encounter between the public and the artists, who will have the opportunity to cancel the distance between stage and audience, discussing the show together.

International: all shows are subtitled in English to allow the presence of an international audience, tourists, international students (Activity supported by Mibac, Italian Ministry of Culture).

- *Festival of Intimate Theatre:* starting from the idea that theatre can be done anywhere there is an audience and that there is no need for large stages to stage great works, there is a new space to host performances and open rehearsals to meet artists and spectators in an intimate place. The shows will be presented to enhance the space of the Sant'Eufemia cloister (headquarter of Artificio) turning it into a place of performing art fruition.

- *Artifisciò, the little big Variety of Friday night*: in the first year of activity, over 100 local and national artists and have performed on the small stage called Artifisciò. Staged once a month, from the first episode has always sold out. On stage, performing artists of all kinds: comedians, acrobats, clowns, musicians, singers, actors, dancers, and the public, that can take to the stage to propose its own performance.
- *International residences for the performing arts*: the Sant'Eufemia cloister is part of a network of Lombardia residences dedicated to the production and experimentation in the performing field (dance, theatre, performing arts). Through a call for selection issued at the European level, in the year 2016/2017 will be selected companies and international filmmakers who will be housed in the Como area offering a rehearsal space to achieve an artistic production. This practice has the aim of strengthening the link between artistic creation and citizenship, through the involvement of the citizens of each city in the creative process. Moreover, the company will be allowed to establish bonds with the city, its history and its contemporary cultural experience.
- *Music Courtyards - Festival of music and words*: a review to listen to quality music and meet the artists closely. Always combined with an aperitif or a Sunday brunch. The music comes from the repertoire of national and international songwriters. In July 2015 Courtyards in Music has been realized in the charming courtyard of the Sant'Eufemia cloister, getting a great response from even international audience. The goal is to spread the event in other courtyards, to rediscover and enhance urban environment, hidden and evocative corners, out of the normal tourist trails.
- *Performing Guides*: unusual tourist guides in which visitors

are led to discover the city and its history from a different point of view. Actors, musicians and dancers are involved in the guide to discover the territory, not just describing but staging it, narrating a story to the visitor.



Chiostrino di Sant'Eufemia, Como.
Some of Artificio activities (Music courtyards, Intimate theatre, Artifiscio)

4. Conclusions

Heritage, architecture, history, landscape, geographical position: Como has a very strong competitive image, perceptible not only in Europe but also worldwide, of which all the social and economic fabric of the area could enjoy (citizens, public administration, businesses in the tourism and cultural sector, the manufacturing companies, etc.) that needs to be supported and promoted.

Despite the presence of two industrial districts of absolute international excellence as the silk and the wood and furniture district, the mapping data shown a framework very clear: a poor attitude to the strategic enhancement of these competitive factors. These assets should be valued more systematically, because it could provide a strong cultural advantage and, not least, a significant touristic and induced business impact. In contrast, the city is likely to experience a decrease in possible new private investment and a consequent cultural offer doldrums.

Policies towards culture, a shared orientation towards experimentation of new cultural strategies, oriented to innovation and to the contamination, the dialogue and cooperation between cultural operators, third sector, public sector and manufacturing sector, could provide new opportunities growth in Como, making it a creative city and state of the art, which promotes the integration and participation as a lever for the renewal and improvement.

Starting from a planned design attitude, Artificio tries to respond to this imbalance between cultural needs and resources, with an active, participatory, adaptive and constant planning.

Artificio project in the year 2015 has consolidated its

presence in the city thanks to the partnership with the Municipality of Como, which has entrusted the management of Sant'Eufemia cloister, that has found new life, not just the general headquarter of Artificio but a collection centre of all the project activities taking place in different spread locations in the city of Como.

Artificio in 2015 has received a major recognition at the national level by achieving the approval and the consequent support of Mibac, Italian Ministry of Culture, for the activities carried out in the first two years of training of a new generation of active audience.

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CampUS: co-designing spaces for urban agriculture with local communities

by Davide Fassi, Laura Galluzzo and Annalinda De Rosa

METADESCRIPTION

Co-designing community gardens as a means for social inclusion in urban public spaces: schools and universities as supporting labs for communities.

KEYWORDS

social innovation, strategic design, co-design, participatory action research, community-centred design

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at gaining insights and reasoning on social innovation-based experimentations developed within the research project “campUS. Incubation and settings for social practices” – at the Politecnico di Milano. The project is acting for a virtuous relation between university spaces and competence, and the local context in which they are located.

The authors start analysing the theoretical basis of participatory action research, its application in the research process and the reflective perspective of community-centered design approach supporting design activism for urban territories (social and spatial context). The paper focuses on the issues of urban agriculture developed specifically within the research project and more widely by the research team in general. It examines the design strategy, methodologies and impact, in terms of social innovation, of two experiments carried out in a nursery school and a middle school in Milan – zone 9. These were project-based experiments connected to specific contexts and goals; they were a step forward in a process working towards infrastructuring: “a more open-ended long term process where diverse stakeholders can innovate together”. (Hillgren, Seravalli, & Emilson, 2011). At the final consideration stage, almost at the end of the project, the authors reflect upon future steps to take in terms of outcomes and in terms of process development, starting by analysing the achievements and failures of the experiments. How can the experience gained in this and in previous research-actions on community-centred design for social innovation lead to a more strategic approach to developing urban territories through diffused hubs supporting communities?

1. Framework

campUS: objectives, actions and actors involved

“campUS – Incubation and settings for social practices” (2014/16) is a research programme acting for a virtuous relation between University spaces and competence, and the local context in which they are located. This relation between urban neighbourhoods and universities can be made possible through the organisation of spaces and actions that are able to increase resilience and facilitate interaction, integration and social cohesion. The campUS project falls within this scope and aims to become a flexible model for the interaction of local, social spaces, and an agent for the implementation of social practices.

The project is organized into four main work packages, one per goal to be achieved:

- WP1: the development of a new community garden on common land close to the campus;
- WP2: the implementation of the web social-TV involving “NEETS” (young people who are “Not in Education, Employment, or Training”);
- WP3: setting up a mobile pavilion in the neighbourhood to host activities by different associations in a four-months period during spring / summer 2016;
- WP4: developing an economically sustainable model to support the long-term continuance of the three previous goals.

The concept of this research originated in the Polimi Desis Lab¹ of the Design Department. In 2010, the process of

1. www.desis-network.org - DESIS NETWORK, Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability.

creating a Living Lab at the university's Bovisa campus began with the aim of enabling local residents to discover and use the campus, and to help students to come into contact with real life needs and design opportunities. This paper discusses the community gardens action (WP1), focusing on the educational urban agriculture activities developed in two schools in the university neighbourhood.

Community urban gardens: a cross-research topic

The focus here is on the community urban garden action, as part of a longer research process: campUS is the 2nd step in a complex, structured path started in 2011 with the creation of "Coltivando, the convivial garden at the Politecnico di Milano". In 2011, the Polimi Desis Lab research team started to work in the context of the Milano Bovisa campus, considering the main green area as a hidden public space to be empowered. The campus, hosting the School of Design, was built at the end of the 90s on the grounds of "Ceretti & Tanfani", a historical company producing cable railways, which made the Bovisa neighbourhood a working class district. The campus became an "island for students" and most of the people who once knew the place as an industrial area have never had the chance to see how it has transformed. Coltivando attempted to change this tendency. For this reason, the actors involved in this process are both from the academic community (professors, students and researchers) and from the neighbourhood (inhabitants and local organisations). The co-design activities played a central role in the design process, strongly involving the local communities in the development of a new shared urban space hosting a community garden.

This research project, now an established place in the

neighbourhood and recognised throughout Milan, led to the campUS action-research, which is trying to expand the experimentation into other contexts of the Zone 9 district, advancing the idea of the community urban garden as a means of social inclusion.

During the 2-years of research, the experimentation took place in different contexts, engaging various combinations of actors:

- the Bovisasca community garden, involving local organisations, groups of inhabitants, the local middle school community and Politecnico di Milano design students (masterclass, master thesis for in-depth analysis and actions, trainees);

- the Catone kindergarten community garden, involving children, teachers, parents, and Politecnico di Milano design students (master thesis for in-depth analysis and actions);

- the Maffucci middle school community garden, involving pupils and teachers, and Politecnico di Milano design students (master thesis for in-depth analysis and actions);

All these actions experimented co-design methodologies for social innovation and social inclusion, with a strong educational component all along the iterative field research process.

The project timeline

The research project started with a 3-months exploration by mapping the operational entities in Zone 9 in order to select touchpoints in the context. In this phase, the research team focused on intercepting local stakeholders (local organizations, informal groups, ongoing initiatives) and the main contact – already focusing on the urban garden topic – was “9x9 – Idee in rete”, an organization for the development of a community garden in the Bovisasca community

(not investigated in this paper). The exploration continued during the co-design and co-creation process of the Bovisasca community garden and lead to contact with interlocutors at local schools: the Catone nursery and, later, the Maffucci middle school.

A getting-to-know-you phase was crucial for each stakeholder: for this reason, a series of meetings between the research team, the Coltivando gardeners group and the teachers and children of the Catone kindergarten took place. Activities were organised to exchange and disseminate the good practices already tested within the convivial garden at the Politecnico di Milano.

A further 6-months of involvement were fundamental for the team-building process and the development of co-design workshops to set up the community garden in the Catone kindergarten. One year later, collaboration with the Maffucci middle school started: the same process was carried out, adapting the workshops to the different ages of the kids involved. A prototyping process was part of this step, planning and implementing activities for the co-creation of the schools' community gardens (hard and soft components): the system of actors (researchers, Politecnico di Milano design students, teachers and children) worked on: the orchard layout and fencing, positioning and planting the different species and building an insect house; the orientation and communication system, including the orchard manifesto; the distribution of tasks and roles for the following months.

Main focus

Almost at the end of the campUS research project (the project will finish in October 2016) and in the light of the research and teaching experiences, the authors reflect on and

attempt to consolidate the theoretical basis for future steps.

The reflection that follows starts by analysing the theoretical basis of participatory action research, its application in the research process and how contemporary issues are addressed through the dialectical and reflective perspective of a community-centred design approach that supports design activism for urban territories (social and spatial context).

With insight gathered from the experiments, the paper tries to evolve the discussion into a strategic design approach that aims to organise design thinking competence and methodologies into a system of actors able to address and support diffused opportunities. This paper seeks to lay a theoretical foundation for a reflection on how these processes can evolve from design experiments (that are fundamental to building relationships in the specific context) to a more strategic, long-term development, based on the concepts of “agonistic space” and “infrastructuring” (Björgvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2010).

2. Methodology foreword: participatory action research

The contemporary context: a (designerly) participative community

The social context today is characterized by the active involvement of people in the transformation of their existence, acting in their environment to achieve social change. This change is “social” because people² are not just asking local authorities or national governments - who are responsible

2. In this paper the authors use the word “people” to refer to groups of individuals not trained in research, such as clients, customers, users or citizens, according to research branches.

for that change in a top-down model - for economic, political or social transformations in a passive and abstract way, but are assuming a pro-active role through the development of bottom-up activities and actions; they are involved in local organizations and informal groups or through individual initiatives. These processes reveal a growing awareness of specific problems, how to tackle them and how to bring to light shared values and beliefs, increasing social networks in more or less local contexts. Activities and initiatives include various subjects, since they are related to specific concerns, but all contribute to an immediate problematic situation. This tendency is spreading more and more nowadays and what is remarkable is how the innate creativity and design capacity of human beings to invent and realize something new (Manzini, 2015) is bringing about a shift in contemporary society. The strength of this pro-activism lies in the level of diffusion and in the overall impact of these transformational processes. The problems in question are the so-called “wicked problems” that the contemporary world is facing and that social innovation embraces, addressing specific, complex and always changing issues in a diffused way, and involving multiple actors in multiple partnership configurations (individuals, groups, organizations, local governments and trans-national agencies). This continuous process of inquiry into social innovation can be carried out using the design thinking approach and applying a participatory action research methodology.

The co-design activities organized by the campUS team are participatory action research based. During the first year of the research, a co-design process with the Bovisasca residents and a parallel path with the communities in the Catone and the Maffucci schools were organized at the same

time.

Both processes consisted of 8 co-design workshops with the communities, but the order of the activities differed in accordance with the different typology of participants. In the neighborhood community most of the participants were adults, so activities started by examining the possible meanings of a community garden and its regulation and then moved on to more practical activities. On the other hand, the kindergarten community, consisted mainly of children, so it focused firstly on various practical activities and moved on later to the theoretical ones. Moreover, dealing with 3/5-year-old children and 11-year-old near adolescents also implicates rather different approaches.

The processes were designed to fit the specific context: the typology of participants, the specific dynamics of the actors involved and the specific design opportunity. These are, briefly, key foundations of the methodology applied - participatory action research (PAR) in co-design processes.

Participatory action research: reflections around the methodology

PAR is a methodology employed in various fields and settings and its nomenclature underlines a variety of approaches and interpretations: *action research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, contextual action research, co-operative design, joint application design*, are only some of the terms used. From these emerges the basis of this methodology, highlighting its constitutive assumptions.

First of all, PAR is a social process and has its origins in social sciences: it is transformative in aim, contributing “both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to further the goals of social science simultaneously” (Gilmore, Krantz, & Ramirez, 1986). It involves

researchers, practitioners and people in general (who), through collaboration, inclusion and social action (how), for a planned organizational change to solve real problems (why).

Therefore, PAR is applied to real, specific contexts, and sees the active engagement of both the researcher and the traditional object of social research: people.

The process of the action itself – cyclical, iterative and adaptable to changing circumstances – is much more relevant than its output, since it deals with a continuous co-learning and adjustment. Action research is in fact about learning by doing, through considering / reconsidering data, conditions, standpoints and procedures in the dynamism of human action, in dialectic exchange between theory and practice, subject and object.

The *object* we are talking about is a complex system composed of:

1. space (a specific and defined place, area or territory);
2. time (a specific period taken into account, time range of / for action);
3. people (for specific groups, communities, citizens).

These three main aspects are strongly connected one to the other, so defining the context of the action. Thus, addressing a (systemic) change or an evolution of a given situation requires combining many elements in a new way and a change in mind-sets.

Participatory action in design research

In design research, the level of participation and involvement are widely discussed.

PAR, as mentioned above, has its origin in social sciences and the research around this topic has been and is still

extensively examined and analysed.

The user-centred approach was acquired by the design discipline and later developed into co-designing with the user: a human-centred design approach.

Co-design was defined by Sanders & Stappers (2008) as a way “to refer to the creativity of designers and people not trained in design working together in the design development process”. Creativity is defined as the capacity to contribute and participate - in different ways - in a design process.

Human-centred design (HCD) scales up to community-centred design (CCD) (Meroni, 2007) when facing complex systems of challenges dealing with groups and communities at society scale, in order “to create innovative new solutions rooted in people’s actual needs”³. The design discipline addresses a system of contradictory and continuously changing elements, made of complex interdependencies.

This brief, in-depth analysis on methodology characteristics, and these last quotes, together define exactly the approach the authors employ in the action-research projects conducted, and especially in the on-going theoretical and experimental experience gained in the campUS project, which is the main focus of this paper.

3. Community-centred design in urban public spaces

HCD and, better, CCD are decisive approaches to addressing social issues, the main action platform of which are urban public spaces.

3. *The field guide to human-centered design: Design kit.* (2015). San Francisco: IDEO.

In the post-industrial era, the public space of contemporary cities is the scene of societal challenges, changes and actions: its transformed uses are the evidences of new emergences (individuals to sharing communities), new dominant structures (hierarchies to networks), of new design approaches (technology-centred to HCD)⁴.

CCD can support and implement the ability of design research and practice to impact on societal challenges and to promote a social change.

This is actually design activism (DA): a design act is “a designerly way of intervening in people’s lives” and “urban design activism is about introducing heterogeneous material objects and artefacts into the urban field of perception which invite active engagement, interaction or offer new ways of inhabiting urban space” (Markussen, 2013).

The urban territory is here interpreted as a complex system, a diffused entity that goes beyond national boundaries: a platform for global capital (Sassen, 2004) to be seen as a holistic system in which actions and changes at the local level have the capacity to influence the overall networked structure.

This is why experimentation before, and a strategic design action after, are fundamental to improving places in a participative way: an exclusively top-down action in public space would lead to new spaces, while dialectical and reflexive approaches encourage the fulfillment of its existing potentialities.

The role of the university as a lab for a design-driven innovation

4. Krippendorff, K. (2006). *The semantic turn: A new foundation for design*. Boca Raton: CRC / Taylor & Francis. p.14.

In the contemporary city-system, universities can play a central role not only for the internal community but also for the external one, counteracting the decline of national regulatory capacity (Chatterton, 2000). Nowadays universities play a pivotal role in-between public administrations, ventures and citizens and are encouraged from both sides to be active at their local level and leaders at a global one, in a complex territorial dynamic.

Design universities, above all, bring with them a design thinking approach, where user involvement, co-operation and action-creation-testing and continuous learning milestones can be introduced into governmental and civil society.

As stated in the first paragraph, the campUS project sees Bovisa campus as the pivotal starting point for experimentation, reflecting on how a hub for design education could enhance social inclusion at the local level. The “citizens” of the university (researchers, students) are actually part of a living lab, an incubator of knowledge with the capacity to spread it.

In the campUS experimentations, we shift slightly from the educational hub of the university acting on the local territories, to the integration of other educational hubs – local kindergarten, primary and secondary schools – realizing how these can become trans-territorial spaces for spreading the systemic change.

During the research process the communities we have chosen as the main targets – elderly people over 75 years and NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) – and especially the second target, have been very difficult to reach through local organizations and charities. At the same time many local schools contacted the campUS team to be guided into the design process of developing their own community

garden.

For this reason, the research team started to work with the kindergarten community and with the other two middle schools involved, not only with the kids but also with their teachers, parents and families. Coltivando, campUS project and the university campus became a reference point for the local schools and for the neighbourhood. The territories close by the university campus were engaged through the schools and their communities.

4. The goals of the experimentation

Through acquired knowledge and connections with the local context, the Polimi DESIS Lab started several educational programs to develop vegetable gardens in the local nursery, primary and middle schools. From this perspective, the vegetable garden itself is a means of applying design thinking to help, implement and motivate the final users to create innovative solutions for the society in which they live and to increase awareness of a sustainable lifestyle.

Schools often have underused green spaces. The goal of re-designing and enhancing existing green spaces is also part of a re-appropriation of common areas that may allow a greater number of collective and shared (especially outdoor) activities.

The purposes of the redesigned schoolyard are academic, behavioural, recreational, social (increased sense of belonging, self-esteem, and compassion), political (the schoolyard as a visible community asset), and environmental improvement (Blair, 2009). Schools are an excellent means for reaching out to families, both the younger generation, and those

responsible for the children (parents, grandparents, teachers). They also offer opportunities to deliver health promotion messages regarding the consumption of fruit and vegetables (Collins, Richards, Reeder, & Gray, 2015).

The activities focused on the multicultural language of food. Different recipes were discussed by parents, teachers, designers and children starting with the same ingredients, such as herbs and vegetables, to show different traditions and cultures.

5. The two experiments

The kindergarten, where the first co-design journey took place, is located in the private street “Catone”, in the Bovisa district. The piece of land chosen by the school administrators for the vegetable garden is a rectangle of about 20m², with sides of 3.5m and 5.5m. The teachers decided to dedicate a modestly sized space in order to see the children’s reactions following the first trial of cultivation activities and then to decide later whether to increase the size of the space.

At the beginning of the design activities, the land needed some basic work: thanks to the collaboration with “Coltivando - The convivial garden at the Politecnico di Milano” some garden tools were provided to remove the weeds and turn the soil to prepare it for seeding. During the design process with the children, it was decided to divide the beds into six 1.5m square frames, in which the vegetables, which had previously been sown and had sprouted during workshops held in the classroom, were grown with the support of the teachers.

The activities were carried out by four teachers and four designers, initially working with two parallel classes at the

same time, for a total of about forty children (3 to 5 years old) and then with a single class of about twenty children (divided into two groups of ten children). The design team together with the teachers decided to halve the number of participants (forty to twenty) in order to be able to interact more easily with them and improve the overall quality of activities. The duration of the activities varied between 30 and about 90 minutes.

The co-design process: 8 workshops of team building and co-creation

As mentioned above, the co-design sessions were organized in different ways according to the ages of the participants.

At the Catone nursery, with children aged 3/5-years, the designed workshops were:

- Workshop 1. 22/4/2015. “Germination of the sweet potato”: was based on the growing process of the sweet potato introduced by a short presentation about its characteristics, where it comes from, where it is commonly used for food, how to cook it and the germination process.
- Workshop 2. 29/4/2015. “Co-designing garden layout and combinations of crops”: the second workshop focused on the garden layout and how to combine the vegetables to be sown. The layout concept was presented to the children through the metaphor of giving each vegetable a “house” (garden bed) in which it could live with vegetable “friends” (vegetable combinations in the same bed).
- Workshop 3. 12/5/2015. “Creating the fences”: the third workshop was focused on designing fences for the garden by using recycled materials.
- Workshop 4. 19/5/2015. “The insect hotel”: from the pre-

vious workshops, the design team noticed that the children were extremely interested in small insects found in the garden. Given their importance for biodiversity in a garden and the children's interest, the design team decided to dedicate the third workshop to co-designing the insect hotel.

- Workshop 5. 27/5/2015. "How to set up a garden": the activity began with a brainstorming session stimulated by some question-cues, and getting the children to draw the answers to these questions on postcards: What is a garden? What is it for? What does "shared" mean? With whom do you share it? ... Then the design team showed the children a story called, "The history of our garden", a tale for children used as a useful way of retracing the process and confirming understanding of the steps to that point.
- Workshop 6. 28/5/2015. "What are management roles?": the last workshop focused more on defining the roles that the children would have to play in taking care of the garden.

At the Maffucci middle school, with kids aged 11-years, the designed workshops were:

- Workshop 1. 15-19/2/2016. "What is a shared garden?": the first workshop started with a guided visit to "Coltivan-do: the convivial garden at the Politecnico di Milano" led by local gardeners.
- Workshop 2. 1-4/3/2016. "Co-designing the layout": The second workshop included choosing crops, placing crops on a mock-up and positioning other activities. The second workshop was organized around an activity about co-designing space. The purpose of the activity was to encourage young people to organize areas of the school according to

activities to be performed, types of spaces, position of vegetables and general layout of the garden.

- Workshop 3. 14-18/3/2016. “Preparation of the ground”: the final layout was presented; clearing the soil of rocks, weeds etc. began. Students were asked to take a “hands on” approach, and most of the activities were done in the garden using garden tools. These were lent by *Coltivando* to continue the strong relationship between the two projects.
- Workshop 4. 4-8/4/2016. “Soil preparation and germination of the potato”: the fourth workshop focused on continuing soil preparation and on the use of the “Potato germination” workshop already conducted in the “Catone” nursery.
- Workshop 5. 18-22/4/2016. “Seeding, transplanting and borders”: the fifth workshop started with the presentation of a format to be used in the following activities, an A3 sheet with cards representing vegetables and the drawing of the existing plants. The design team gave two different tasks to each team: one team created the borders using a coloured cable while other students filled the garden beds with fresh organic soil. The final proposed layout met with the approval of the students, who also remembered many details of what was expected from them during the second workshop.
- Workshop 6. 2-6/5/2016. “Garden care and decoration”: the sixth workshop focused on stone decorations to make signs for the vegetables.
- Workshop 7. 16-20/5/2016. “Urban bees”: the seventh workshop was focused on urban beekeeping. A lecture on the importance of bees in the biological cycle was given by a postgraduate student who was developing a thesis on urban beekeeping. The thesis resulted in a handbook for running workshops in schools through a series of exerci-

ses, named “Beehave”. It was aimed at teachers in primary schools to help students understand the world of bees and their importance.

- Workshop 8. 23-27/5/2016. “Co-design of the Manifesto”: the last workshop was about summarizing the previous ones through the creation of a “Manifesto” of the activities. The task of drafting the five points of the Manifesto required considerable maieutic skill given the students’ low level of concentration.

The impact on the urban social tissue

As a result of these two similar experimentations, we gained insight into the relationships within the actor system involved in that specific circumstance. The interconnections between them affected the level of impact of such a process on the urban tissue.

Firstly, the research team had to adjust the workshop development to fit the school timetable, unfortunately weakening the possibility of involving parents and grandparents, and of opening up the school to the different neighbourhood communities as well as the school community. Secondly, although the meaning of a “shared” garden was fully understood and the children’s level of involvement rose from “neutral” to discovering new skills, the researchers were always presented as “teachers”, in a top-down educational model, and the vegetable garden wasn’t understood by the teachers as an educational, learning process to be integrated in the programme, but as a secondary activity to be developed only in the presence of researchers.

The partially achieved goals suggest that a longer planning phase is required by part of the users involved, in order to successfully spread a design thinking method, to increase



Fig.1 campUS project, Bovisasca community garden, first co-design workshop
 Fig.2 campUS project, Bovisasca community garden, second co-design workshop
 Fig.3 campUS project, Bovisasca community garden, third co-design workshop
 Fig.4-5 campUS project, Bovisasca community garden, Sabato della Bovisasca event



Fig.6 campUS project, Maffucci School garden, second co-design workshop



Fig.7 campUS project, Maffucci School garden, third co-design workshop
Fig.8 campUS project, Maffucci School garden, fourth co-design workshop

Fig.9 campUS project, Catone school garden, first co-design workshop



the collaboration of all the reachable communities, and to help, implement and motivate the final users to create innovative solutions for the society in which they live.

After two years of work many things could be improved but the most important is the relationship with the schools. In the past two years, campUS worked with the schools but in a temporary way, co-designing the community gardens as experiments. The next step could be a more structured path that transforms the schools into open-schools: opening them to other activities and other communities also in out of school hours, adding not only a community garden but also new services (kitchen, theatre, sewing machines, etc.) for the neighbourhood.

In the future we can imagine the schools as small hubs, embedded in the territories like the Politecnico campus but on a wider scale. The school communities are inside the territories and the social changes could start from there; also the negative aspects of gentrification processes can be reduced if a change starts from and with the local communities. The schools could become perfect examples of widespread transformation hubs within the territory. Through an urban approach that we can liken to acupuncture, the local schools could become the needles of the territory.

6. Discussion on future implementations: a dialectic between project-based experimentation and infrastructuring

The campUS experiments act in specific space / time / actor-system conditions. Reflecting on how to move a step forward, from experimentation to strategic action, the difficulty emerges of being in a dialectic process between the essential

specifics of an always variable complexity and the need for an adaptable strategy. The dynamism of any action and the resulting environment change must be taken into account, avoiding the stagnation of sterile models.

One of the final goals of WP1 in the campUS research is to lay down community garden guidelines and share them with the Milan municipality. The municipality is actively supportive towards the openness of the social innovation, community gardens and school spaces, and towards the whole issue of reusing neighbourhood and public spaces. The experiments in the research project were all developed in collaboration with the Council Area (zone 9). The guidelines consist of different toolkits (developed also thanks to the experiments): they are open, flexible models adaptable to different variables (space, time, location, community, purpose, etc.).

The definition of these guidelines unfolds the theoretical reflection around how project-based experimentation can guide infrastructuring in democratic urban development processes. Ongoing design research and practice is reflecting on how participatory actions, based on co-design processes, could be merged with strategic design in order to increase its impact in contemporary societal transformations and environmental challenges. When the micro-environments of these initiatives permeate the platform of urban territories, they act in a holistic way influencing the global system (Sassen, 2004). How can strategic design amplify this potential to regenerate the urban tissue?

In this paper, by focusing on a specific topic –*urban community gardens* – and in particular, on the present stage of a research experiment – *with local schools* – at the end of a longer and wider process started in 2011 – *the development of*

Coltivando the convivial garden at the Politecnico di Milano –, the authors have attempted to highlight the “ripple effect” of the research and experimentation carried out by the Polimi Desis Lab in the Milan Zone 9.

These prototyping actions on urban territories were conducted in the short-term, in a specific time span and with a partially agonistic perspective – the inclusion of marginalised voices – to set up forms of local alliance. This was fundamental in order to amplify the strategy by involving organizations, civil servants, municipalities and different groups of inhabitants. The Polimi Desis Lab acts as an urban living lab for local social innovation processes, precisely to establish the above-mentioned “ripple effect”, actually a first step towards infrastructuring. The purpose of Strategic design is to trigger systemic change by enabling the system to evolve through a series of actions. In an iterative and adaptable process, constructed and reconstructed over time, the innate temporariness of a single action is integrated into a complex strategic system that supports diffuse (space - time) opportunities. Thus a necessarily place-centred approach (space) is integrated into a trans-territorial one (service).

The ongoing reflection could rest on the following steps, which would seek to examine the effective role of these guidelines. The first research opportunity, at the end of the 2-year campUS project, could be to experiment the guidelines in another context, so as to understand whether they are applicable and whether the insights gained from a context A could be applied to a context B, and in view of that, to understand differences and similarities.

Another possible research opportunity would be to explore possible exit strategies in-depth: What is the role of the designer? Are all the inputs instilled in the social environment

fully acknowledged and assimilated, so as to enable further development without the designer?

Summing up, this paper focuses on how the 5-year infra-structuring process has been conducted, illustrating the role of the university as a lab for design-driven innovation and exploring the ongoing design research influences in what has already been done, and in the possible next steps. The dissertation contributes to the critical reflection around participatory design and co-design for urban context social innovation towards strategic design.

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The relevance of participation in the Systemic Design Approach for Rural Development

by Miriam Bicocca

METADESCRIPTION

The definition of the actor team for each phase of the project as one of the results of the research carried out to identify solutions for rural communities.

KEYWORDS

Systemic design, Rural development, Cooperation

ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to investigate and underline the importance of the role that the actor-team plays in a project focused on Rural Development. More specifically, the aim is to emphasise the relevance of the relationships among different actors in the research (Department of Architecture and Design at the Politecnico di Torino on Systemic Design Approach for Rural Development) based on the case study applied in the Mexican State of Guerrero, in the small community of Ahuacuotzingo. Especially the success of this research project is the definition of the relations' network that is generated in the designed system in order to activate and revitalize the territory. It is necessary to foster and manage the dialogue between the various actors during all phases of the project. The birth of the cooperative of farmers and other active actors on the area, it is an index of the successful of the project.

1. Introduction

The main issue discussed in the paper is the importance of the actor-team in the projects aimed to reach development in a sustainable way (that works for people, planet and profit - a 'triple P' challenge (Nattrass, B. and Altomare, M., 1999) in marginal and complex areas, in particular, in rural areas.

The term "rural" defines the non-urban territory of the land area of a municipality. It includes areas classified as non-urban (or not intended to urban sprawl) in which the main activities are agro-forestry and pastoral. The variety of existing definitions of the term "rural" is justified by the complexity of this topic. Depending on the specific case, usually, it is chosen the most fitting definition so that it is suited to the political strategy that is adopted. Usually, these definitions are related to geographical units combined with characteristics linked to the population. Define the rural area and its boundaries is not trivial or irrelevant. From this, indeed, it depends if an area is eligible or not to the political strategy. The United States Census (2000 Census) defines rural areas as those with fewer than 2,500 residents with a maximum population of 999 persons and a minimum of 1 person per square mile. Rural Development is a very relevant topic because of the quantity of people that lives in the territory around the world. More than 3 billion people live in rural areas and 1.4 billion people are extremely poor (IFAD, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial the identification and definition of innovative processes for the local development of small-scale farmers.

The main issue that is discussed in this article is the definition of the team of actors and the role of the farmers within the application of Systemic Design Approach (Bistagnino,

2011) for Rural Development. We deal with rural and marginal territories where agriculture, usually subsistence agriculture, is definitely the most important economic activity, sometimes the only one.

Design rarely deals with Rural Development. When it does, it often focuses on the design of product or service. Mainly, the designer has so far been committed to put his/her experience and expertise, related to product design, at the service of local handicraft in developing countries. The designers undertaken in this issue, work on design *with* or *for* the developing countries. In the first case there are projects developed from the contribution of local people, aimed to find a balance between consumption and production. In the second case there are mainly projects that research for solutions for the daily life emergencies. In both cases the aim of the work of the designer is to improve the quality of life in relation to specific activities. More and more often, however, the designer moves from being focused on the product or service to the process. This is particularly true when the approach that is used to develop the project is the Systemic Design Approach (SDA). In the design field the approach is usually considered systemic when it is able to put together the systems thinking and the human-centered design theories.

The central role that play local resources and relationships in the SDA makes it a very effective approach to support and encourage Rural Development in a sustainable way. By applying the SDA, it is possible to manage local resources and local products in a way that allows economic strengthening of the farmers and communities that live in the territory.

Since farming is a mainstay of most rural economies, the research aims to promote economic diversification combining traditional agricultural skills and new technical and

technological know-how.

In this case the Systemic Designer (SD) makes a further shift by moving the final goal of the project from the process to the whole territorial system. This kind of approach allows the SD to design and work on territorial level, on social networks generated in the territory. Especially this article looks at the social network that is based on collaboration and cooperation managed and conducted by the SD. This issue has been investigated during the PhD research “Rural development and sustainable innovation. How systemic design approach can contribute to the growth of marginal regions” by the author in the Department of Architecture and Design at the Politecnico di Torino. The research is based on a real case study applied in the Mexican State of Guerrero, in the small community of Ahuacuotzingo. The PhD had two objectives: on one side the development of the project carried out initially with 6, then with 15 Mexican farmers. On the other side the definition of models useful for future projects in similar contexts. The aim of this article is to underline one fundamental aspect that results from this research, particularly relevant for the success of the project: the role of the local Cooperative and the team of the actors involved in the project.

Considering the relevance of the Rural Development topic, it is essential that the projects that are dealing with this issue are designed to be replicated and, possibly, scaled in other similar context. This is why one of the most important outcomes of the research has been the definition of 3 models useful for future similar projects: the first one about the actors team involved in the processes, the second one is about the 4 steps for the implementation of the project; the last one is the framework of the whole project useful for other

designers that work in the same issue. As mentioned before the article explores just the model related to the actor team involved. In this model the participation is a crucial aspect: very often, the local actors, farmers, are asked to make substantial changes in their behaviour and lifestyles. We speak of a real, active participation, because they are not involved in a superficial way, but they are those that make real the implementation of the project. They are the ones who are committed, for instance, to convert the current cultivation in organic farming, to undertake new activities, they can decide to participate workshops to learn, for example, self-construction techniques, they can build micro-digestion plant to turn waste they produce in the fields and houses into something useful for the land. They can change their eating habits, aware of the link between this aspect and the impressive spread of cardiovascular and chronic diseases. Above all, they are the ambassadors of new values and different vision of the future.

2. Presentation of the research

Ahuacuotzingo, State of Guerrero, Mexico.

The most demonstrative case study of the PhD research is located in Ahuacuotzingo, Mexico, State of Guerrero. This region was chosen because of its particular features related to food, both the production and the consumption, and the high level of crisis that strikes the area. Take action on these aspects means managing environmental, social, economic and health consequences. Approximately one quarter of Mexico's people live in rural areas, and depend primarily on

agriculture. Farming is important for land use, for the management of natural resources and for their subsistence, thus, farmers are fundamental social, cultural and economic actors in rural areas. The agro-food networks are also important because they can be the leverage point of the changes.

The territory of the State of Guerrero, Ahuacuotzingo in particular, has been investigated and analysed from several perspectives with a complete holistic diagnosis.

Named from Vicente Guerrero, a leader in Mexico's wars for independence, the region became a state in 1849. Guerrero is divided into local governmental units called *municipios* (municipalities), each of which is headquartered in a prominent city, town, or village. Much of the state's population consists of impoverished Indians and Mestizos, a significant minority speaks an indigenous language as primary language; more than two-fifths of the people live in rural areas. Considering the standard economic measures, it is easy to notice that Guerrero consistently ranks among Mexico's most impoverished states. The rural population lives dispersed in scattered and often very isolated villages; in 2010 just over fifty-eight per cent of the state's population was spread among more than seven thousand communities with fewer than 2,500 residents (INEGI, 2010).

For a substantial majority of the rural population, the subsistence agriculture with supplemental commodity production or seasonal wage employment, it remains a way of life.

Actor-team model

Among key results from the research there is the development of the actor-team model. The actors involved are not subject to a hierarchical structure. There is not a more powerful actor than another one, but rather more significant

flows of information that run from one actor to another depending from the phase in which the project is (Analysis, Project and Action). The success of the project is closely related to the positive interaction of these actors. The role of each actor changes according to the objective and each one brings specific expertise to the project aimed to achieve a common and shared end-goal. The actors who have been identified as key players in the process of rural development achieved through the SDA are: the *farmers*, the *cooperative*, the *connective actor*, the *SD*.

What has been defined as *connective actor* is the one who is responsible of linking *farmers* and communities with the *SD*. He is essential during the whole process, from the analysis phase to the action one, focused on implementation.

The mentioned actors are the ones always involved in every phase. Furthermore we have identified, as important actors, the whole *community* and the *consultants*. For instance agronomists, biologists, sociologists that speak primarily to the systemic designer. But also technicians, that speak directly to the cooperative of farmers; experts on organic farming and methods for biological pest control, on self-construction and maintenance of micro biodigesters, on compost production, on green building, on self-construction of dry toilets.

The lack, the inefficiency of even just one of these actors hinders the system development affecting the success of the project.

Ahuehuetla Coop.

Since agriculture in Mexico is not only a fundamental economic activity of the rural population involving about 37% of the total population, but has also deep social significance and cultural meaning, the farmer is the central figure around

which the PhD project in the community of Ahuacuotzingo is developed. In the implementation phase of the project the farmers organize themselves into a cooperative.

In the Mexican case-study with the Ahuacuotzingo community, we initially identified 5 farmers (Nacho, Tonio, José, Angel with the Cavideco - Centro de Apoyo para el Desarrollo y Vinculación Comunitario, Beto) holding a total land of 43 hectares, but currently cultivating only 12 hectares. During the first year of the project other members of the community decided to enter into the Ahuehuetla Coop.: 1 group of women that cultivate organic vegetables in a greenhouse, 1 group of women who have recovered the activity of production of panela which had been abandoned by their father. The actors of the system work as if they were part of the same organism. Each farmer or actor becomes specialized in one particular activity. The waste of each activity are used and returned in other productive activities on the territory: this allows the generation of new products. Nacho is the farmer who recently became part of the Ahuehuetla Cooperative. His role in the project is important as a farmer of fish. For his breeding he uses worms arising from the production of Tonio. Tonio, which is at the moment the farmer better organized and with the best production, in the project produces sugar cane, which is useful for the feeding of animals but, above all, is brought to the group of women for the production of panela and derivatives. Thanks to a micro biodigester he produces biogas used in his tortilleria. In this activity he uses the corn that he produces on his own field. His other productions are butter, cheese and yogurt, worms, compost, agave. The main activity of Beto is instead the dairy where he produces cheese, butter and yogurt. These products can be partially sold and partially used at the Cavideco.

Jose produces sugar cane, corn and nopales. He has a small breeding whose products sells directly on the production site. Angel is the operator of the Cavideco that was founded in 2009. This centre was founded with the objective of developing the skills of men and women respecting environmental sustainability, promoting natural tourism projects and volunteering using local resources for the community development. This centre is one of the key locations for the project. It's a meeting point for cooperative members. There are the restaurant and the natural swimming pool for the whole community, there are laboratories for the transformation of the food produced by the farmers of the cooperative. Furthermore, it's the place where workshops and seminars will be organized. An important part of the project provides that the Cavideco will become an essential place to develop the potentiality of the whole community. Seminars and workshops will be organized primarily to support the farmers and other workers of the community in their activities. The part of the project relating to the education and organization of these courses is a practical outcome that we have already achieved. Inside the event Verano Intercultural courses were held to educate farmers in relation to self-construction of micro bio digesters and greenhouses for vermicomposting. Those are essential activities in the complex system project. Cavideco will also be the point of contact, the link between the Ahuahuetla Cooperative and the rest of the community. Here indeed it will be possible to purchase the products of the cooperative that will become the main results of a virtuous production system that uses in the best way possible the resources of the area and considers the output of the system not as waste, but as an important input for other productive activities.

The role of the Systemic Designer (SD)

The team of the actors involved in each phase of the project is multidisciplinary and requires the participation, on several levels, of professionals and inhabitants of the rural community, both during the analysis phase and during the implementation phase, that's a very delicate phase because of the necessity to put together around the same table professionals with very different skills. SD must collaborate and communicate with different actors with special characteristics and competences. This is necessary to design and sketch the output and input flows that run from one system to another, to organize and optimize all parts within the ecosystem so that they can evolve consistently with each other. Community participation in rural development projects is now considered a necessary basis. The creation of partnership and participatory forums structures pivotal point of any action plan on rural development (Celata, 2008).

The collaboration between local farmers, linked by a common history, a shared desire for a real and active re-appropriation of the land they own, becomes a strong base and a perfect substrate for the definition of the project. The role of the farmers was different depending on the stages of the project and on the objectives of the phases. During the analysis, for the drafting of the Holistic Diagnosis, the SD must investigate the context, approach the culture, understand the key features background, the potential and critical issues. He/she must get in touch with farmers and community members that will become part of the cooperative with which, then, he will develop the project. The SD must be able to point out the specifically needs of the community. In order to define the effective intervention strategy to obtain the necessary information it is not enough a simple

interview or a questionnaire designed hundreds of kilometres away. It is crucial the ability of the SD in generating trustful environment. In this initial phase, the SD must learn from the farmer. The farmer must teach the SD. It is not a trivial, obvious and predictable concept. I have experienced personally, that, cultural barriers, the distances that undeniably exist between the SD and the farmer, especially when you are working on a rural context, becomes in some ways a constraint, or rather, an obstacle. This is why the SD must create a good connection with farmers and he helped by the connective actor.

Finally the opening of decision-making has an intrinsically importance and represents a direct goal. It is about encouraging collaboration and the strengthening of the capital, building institutions, collective learning and empowerment, and promoting democratic participation by citizens. Participation is not only a way to increase the effectiveness of policies, but is itself the goal: “development is freedom” (Sen, 2000). The Indian internationally famous economist is not the first one to explicitly connect the concept of freedom to the opportunity to participate in political discussions or deliberations. Freedom is also connected to the social, political and economic life of the community and to the training of public decisions focused on how to foster development and social innovation. Involving key stakeholders, or those that are in local policies called beneficiaries, in a local development project, rural or not, it is not a new concept, nor recent.

The application of a framework provides beneficiaries that are not only actors involved in a superficial way, but they are essential part of the project both during the Analysis stage, the Project one, as the Action one.

The actors involved in the design process are many others,

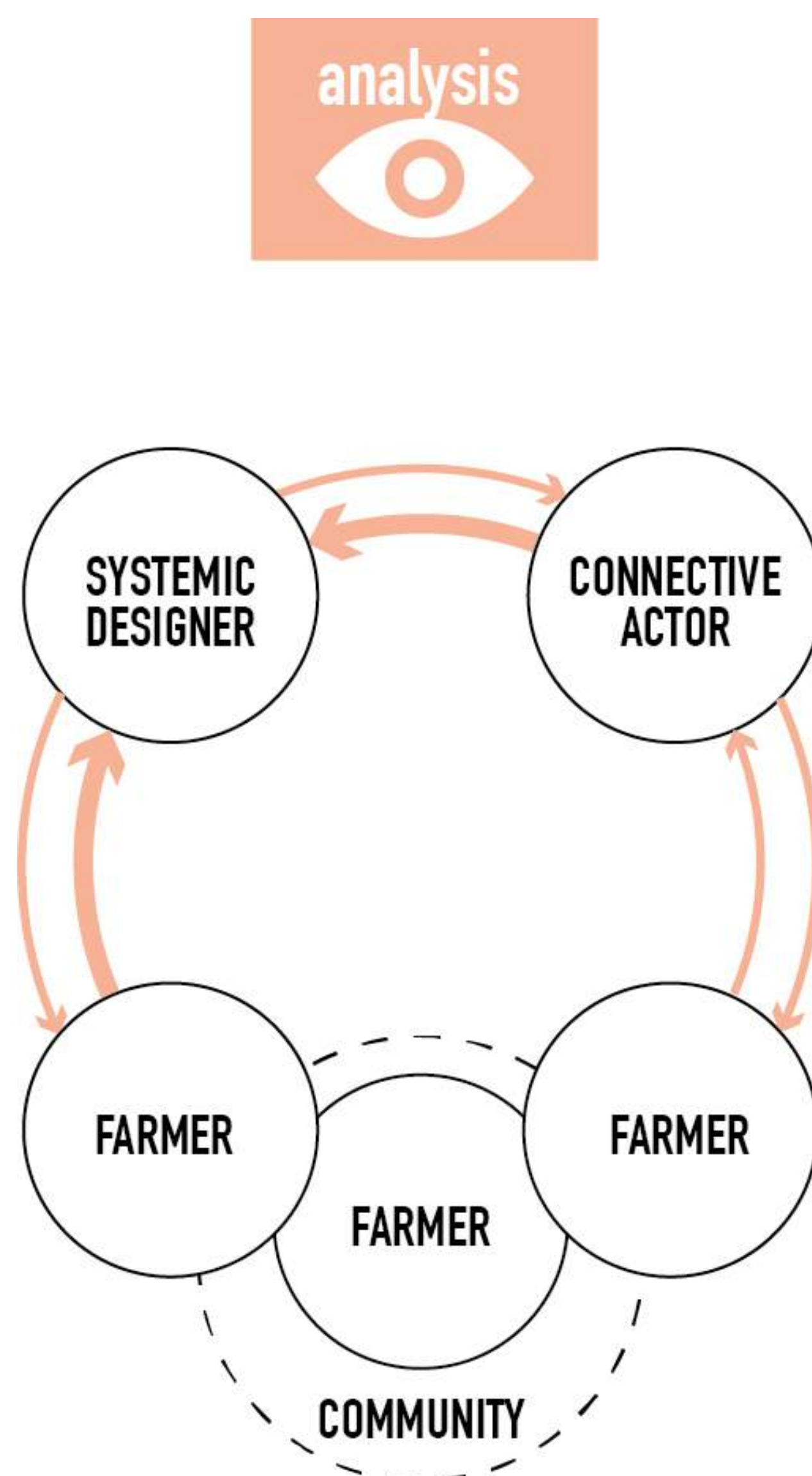
not only the farmers, as already mentioned, inhabitants of the community, such as the teacher or the doctor, who still have a very specific social roles.

The model shows us how the actors will change depending on the stage in which the project is. Actually, the actors do not change, are the relations between them and the flows of information that change.

As we can see in the picture, we have 3 different teams according to the phase.

Analysis phase:

The SD initially have to learn about the cultural, natural, social and territorial context and must build a strong relation with the community by explaining them the objectives and approach that will be used for the development of the project. In this phase, the SD must listen, learn, he have to dip to learn about the roots of the culture.

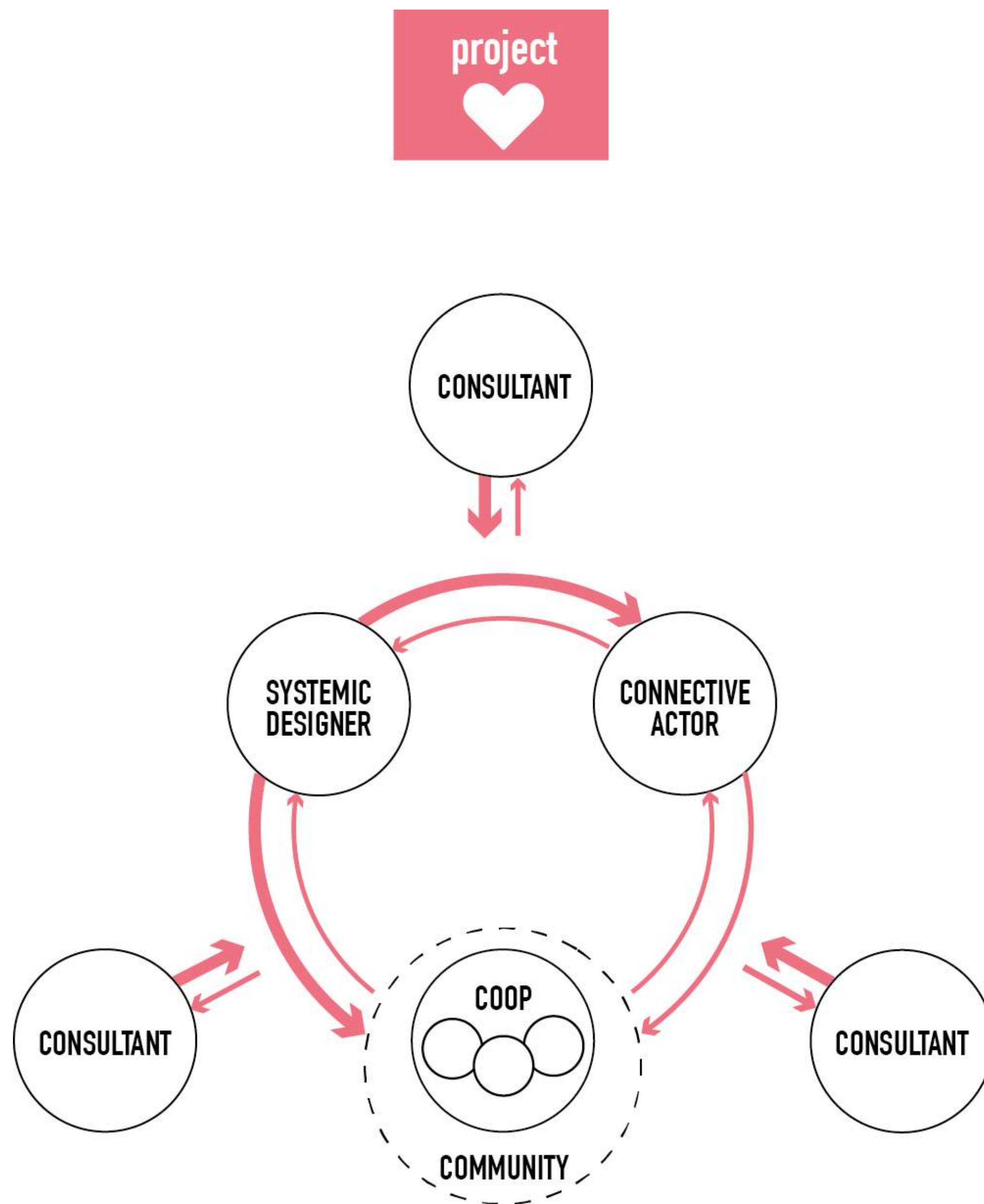


Actor team in the analysis phase of the project.

Project phase:

The consultants come into play at this stage, not only to provide their knowledge, but also to learn, from the SD, from the cooperative and the connective actor, the information about the system and the context. In this central phase the more consistent information flow runs from the SD to the cooperative and the connective actor.

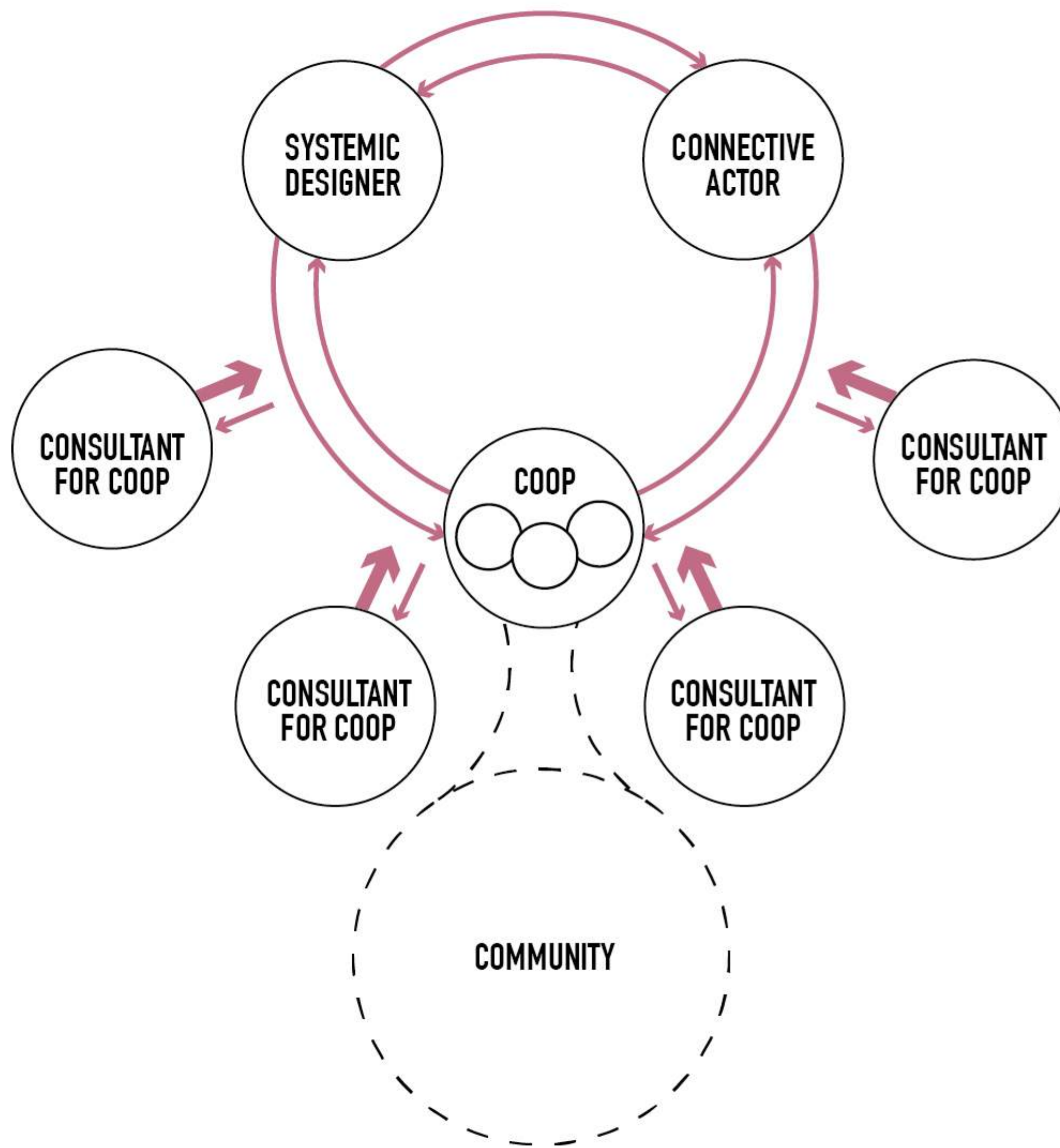
Actor team in the project phase of the project.



Action phase:

The implementation implies the presence of consultants who collaborate with the cooperative. The community becomes a relevant actor in the moment in which it buys products of the farmers cooperative and because it is involved in the processes of production and transformation of the products of the cooperative.

Actor team in the action phase of the project.



Left: Anguel, Mexican farmer, Ahuacuotzingo, 2015

Right: Miriam Bicocca: José, Mexican farmer, Ahuacuotzingo, 2016

3. Conclusion

The innovative aspect that emerges from the diagram of the team of actors, is reciprocity. If the DSA is characterized mainly by flows of matter and energy, which are created between the actors, so also results to be the actor team. This means that among the various actors there is a continuous exchange, an input and feedback system, which allows SD, but also the farmer and the consultant not to fit into a rigid and pyramidal hierarchy but rather in a circular structure in which relationships are built and develop into multi-directional way.

The role of SD, as connector and designer of flows, ends after the implementation of the system which, reached a situation of autopoiesis, generates itself without the need of the designer.

In conclusion, with this article I want to highlight the results of research carried on the application of the SDA to a rural context, specifically the small community of Ahuacutzingo, State of Guerrero, Mexico. The research allowed studying and defining a useful model for the construction of the team working on projects for rural development. As shown by the research work, by applying a SDA the key to success it is no longer the product (or service), but the network of relationships that is created between the actors, first and foremost among farmer-farmer, farmer-community, farmer-consultant. From these collaborations it is possible to build a real network of relationships and output exchanges that are converted into input. It is precisely this network that determines and leads the revitalization of the entire territorial system.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR DESIGN

PHOTO BY CARLA SEDINI

Photographer Carla Sedini, co-editor with Marina Parente of this issue, gave us permission to publish a selection of images about "design that is not there", "design that may be" and "tacit design" within urban territories around the world. We hope that many creatives will interpret the "Suggestions for Design" launched here.



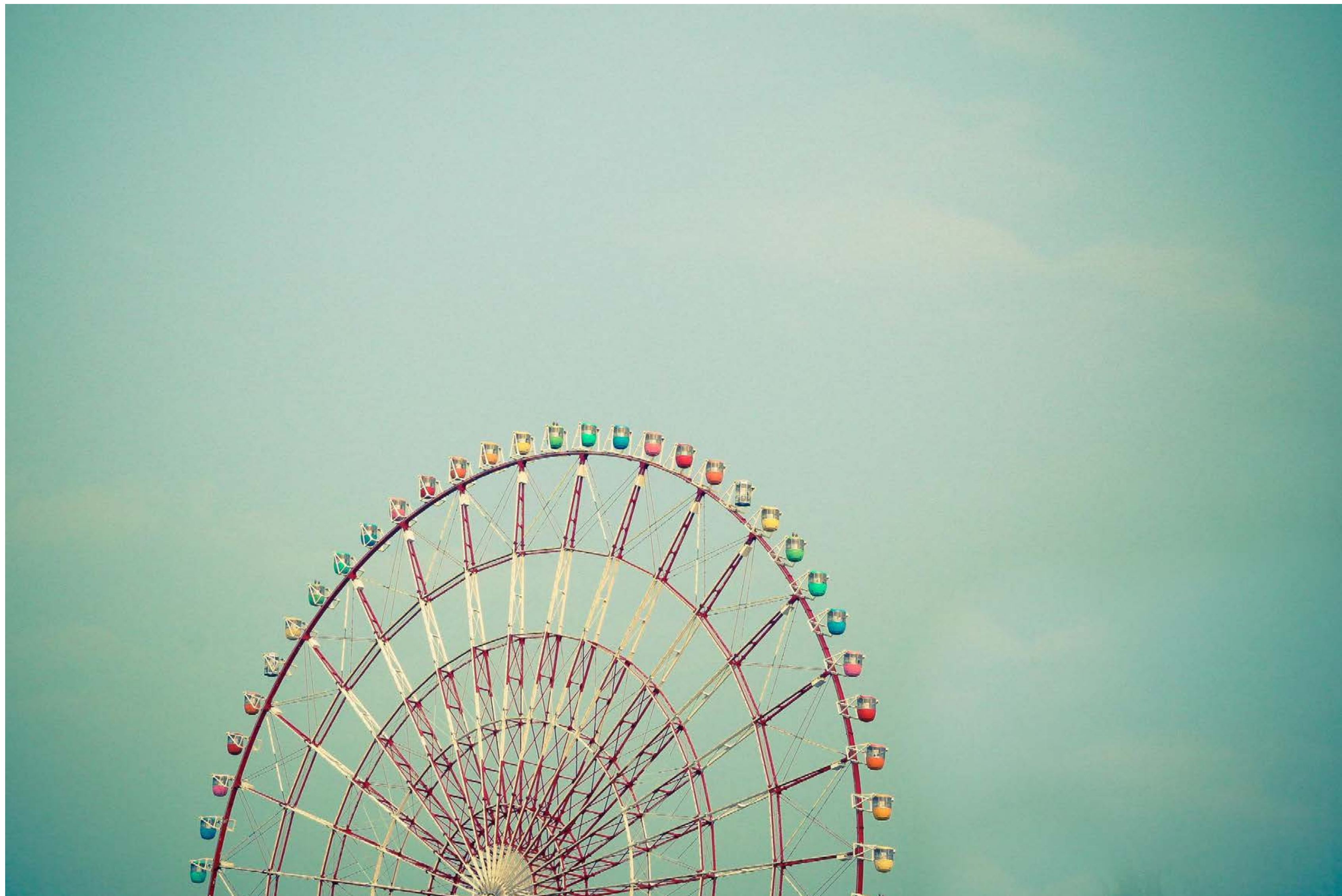










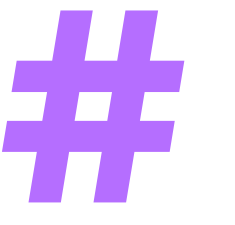












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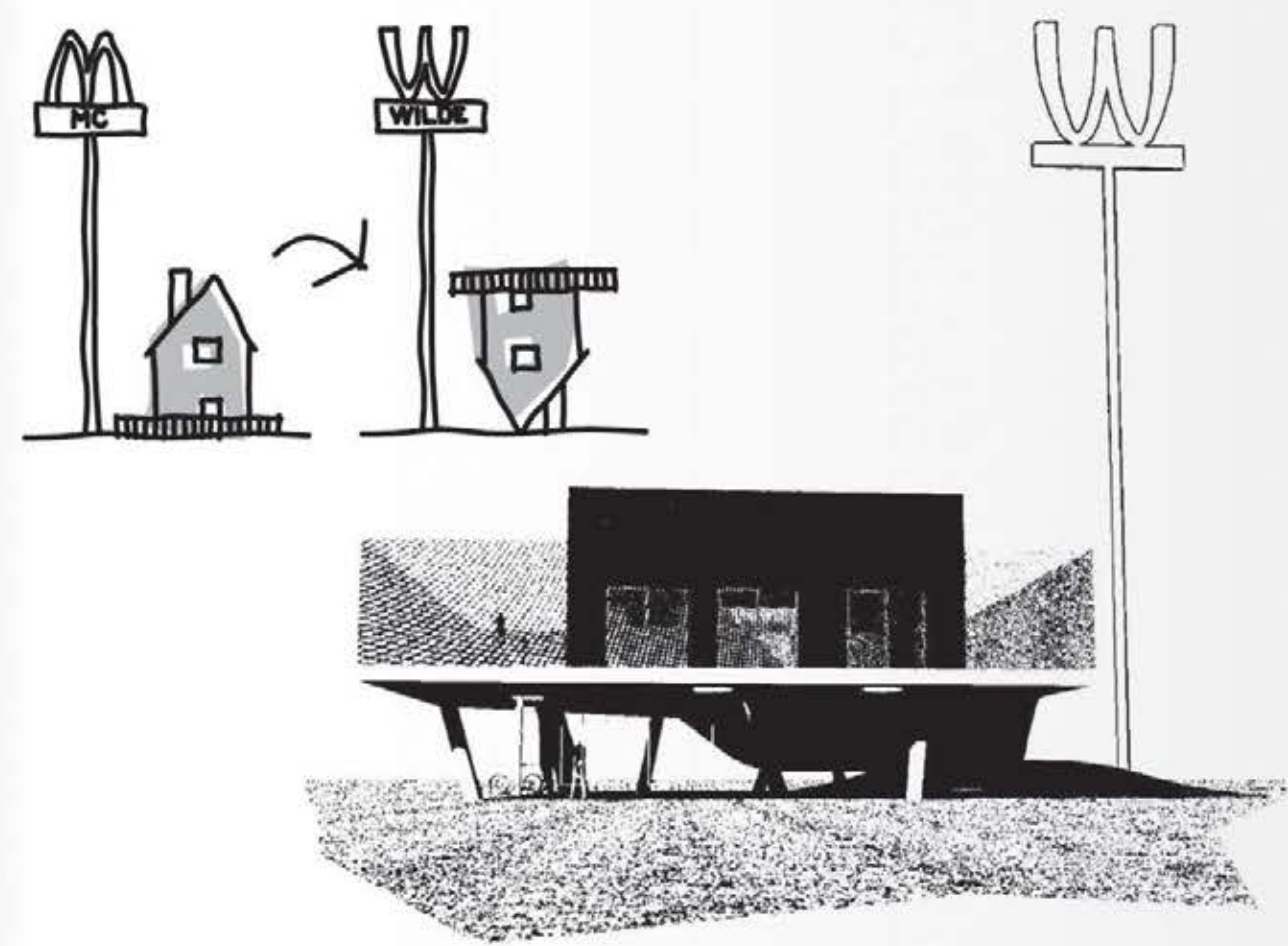
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