

Living with scale

Human Cities

Challenging the city scale
2014-2018

Investigation

Living in the city scale

• London

• Brussels

• Saint-Étienne • Milan

• Bilbao

Human Cities

Challenging the city scale
2014-2018

Investigation

State of the Art

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Introduction

Since 2014, and thanks to the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union, the Human Cities_Challenging the City Scale project has been exploring the new and different ways urban dwellers can reclaim their urban space. Through the study of local actions initiated by communities, it promotes the development of an urban public space based on sustainability, conviviality, and solidarity. These values are shared by all the partners of a network that has kept growing since its creation: Cité du design Saint-Étienne [FR]; Politecnico di Milano, Milan [IT]; Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana [SI]; Clear Village, London [UK]; Zamek Cieszyn [PL]; Design Week Belgrade [RS]; Pro Materia, Bruxelles [BE]; Aalto University, Helsinki [FI]; FH Joanneum, Graz [AT]; Association of Estonian Designers, Tallinn [EST]; BEAZ/Bilbao-Bizkaia Design&Creativity Council, Bilbao [ES]; CultureLab, Bruxelles [BE].

After *Celebrating the Public Space* in 2006 and *Reclaiming Public Space* in 2010, the new project of the *Human Cities* programme, *Challenging the City Scale* questions urban scale and urban co-creation. *Human Cities*, a 12-partner network led by Cité du design Saint-Étienne since 2014, is a European project whose aim is to study how civil society, through community action, organises itself to regenerate the urban common space—a square, a street, or a neighbourhood, etc.

As more and more people in the world live in urban areas¹, cities must cope with many socio-economic and environmental issues. Challenges such as rising social inequality, social segregation, housing and energy crisis, a global economic crisis that limits the financial involvement of public authorities, unemployment and climate change... These are systemic issues that question the livability of future cities. At the same time innovative socio-technical opportunities have developed in the world and have stimulated large-scale alternative systems of organization based on collective or individual initiatives. This raises the question of preserving or creating the best lifestyle conditions for urban dwellers. Or in other words, is it possible to reconcile economic development, respect for environment, urban densification, and well-being?

These issues encouraged some city-dwellers to transform their environment through the actions of neighbourhood committees, associations or com-

¹ (33% of the world population lived in a city in 1960, 54% in 2016)/UN source)

munities. Their projects inspire and are inspired by a specific vision of society: reconsidering our living environment in relation to process design values such as creativity, experience and experimentation. The aim of this publication is to give a state of the art of their initiatives. Following a methodology² conceived by the Research Pole of Cité du design Saint-Étienne, the partner cities of the *Human Cities* programme have listed about 90 case studies in which inhabitants participated in the requalification of a public space, the strengthening of social cohesion, the preservation of a natural, architectural or culinary heritage, etc. These different initiatives are presented in three parts and have been described and problematized by three teams of writers.

The first part, written by the *Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia* (Ljubljana) lists various collaborative and co-creative tools used by communities to transform their public space. It presents new ways of involving residents and users in the conception phases of a transformation project. The second part, written by the *Politecnico di Milano* tackles the aims and issues of urban space: how can cities become more inclusive, attractive, playful, or comfortable? The third part, written by Saint-Étienne Cité du design, analyses these initiatives in terms of durability: can a balance be found between community projects and public authorities? What roles can the institutions involved play?

This publication relates specific case studies to theoretical concepts. Each of the twelve partner cities contributed to this collective work through a paper on a chosen subject or case study. The result is an instructive and detailed collection highlighting the ideas and experiences of those who work to enhance the livability of European cities.

² The State of the Art is a research tool developed by the Research Pole of the Cité du design. Its aim is to list the most innovating projects initiated by creative actors (designers, artists, architects, engineers, etc.) and to describe, categorize and problematize them according to a chosen theme. The description process is essential since a state of the art requires a fully documented text with numerous examples and the general principles involved in the creative process. This methodology is based on an approach that requires an objective description of the pro-

jects rather than a value judgment on what they are. Once listed, the projects are organized to identify recurrences. The different texts are accompanied with an iconography that goes beyond illustration to enter in dialogue with them. The aim is to identify research fields from what already exists, from what is implicit, or even missing. This is the prospective dimension of a state of the art that is here being requested: what exists as a chance to list future possibilities and the questions left unanswered by the numerous projects consulted upstream.

Slowly Ljubljana

Urban Planning Institute
of the Republic of Slovenia
Ljubljana

Tools for participatory provision
of urban public spaces:
Human Cities experience

The Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS) is the central Slovenian research organisation in the field of spatial planning and related disciplines. Founded in 1955, UIRS was transformed into a public research institute in 1993, a status which continues to apply to date. Its basic activities are research, education and publishing. It also operates a public library with an extensive literature stock and large collection of other references in the field of spatial planning.

Active citizens eager to change urban environments for the better utilising their own ideas and activities are good news for any future oriented city. The knowledge, abilities and other resources that individuals or groups of citizens hold, are a precious resource for the functioning and social cohesiveness of a contemporary city.

Unfortunately these attributes are often overlooked or not fully taken advantage of by the official mechanisms in top-down urban management approaches. Only wise governing and administrative bodies fully incorporate citizens into city making procedures to reach better final results. At the same time the grass-root and self-organized movements that are completely independent from the representations of official powers are on the rise.

This paper focuses on both types of participatory practices in the field of public space provision – initiated and led by some forms of power in a rather top-down manner as well as completely self-organized and sustained initiatives based on bottom-up approaches, which all have one common goal – to achieve places that will better respond to the needs and reflect the aspirations of the users.

The case studies collected during the Human Cities project illustrate the different ways the active participation of citizens is making urban public spaces better. More than the kind of the improvements that the initiatives across Europe seek to implement, this first part focuses on the tools utilised in getting citizens on board with the particular process of participative public space improvement.

For decades, the active participation of citizens in city planning has been an established concept, or at the very least a desire, in all levels of urban planning documents – international, national, and local. Many internationally approved documents stress the importance of democratic approaches to city planning issues in general (Habitat Agenda, 1996; UN, 2005; EC, 2010; Adopted Draft of the New Urban Agenda, 2016) and point out the specific role that the co-creation of public spaces plays in achieving better living environments in particular (UN Habitat, 2015).

These participatory approaches have gained additional attention with the rapid spread of information technologies that have reframed and reconfigured the relations between the players and the receivers in the reconceptualisation of the city (Brabham, 2009). The spread of personal devices that allow individuals to express his/her own points of view on urban design issues and instantly share it with wider communities is the new reality that city officials are still trying to make sense of (Campagna et al, 2013). There is a common understanding across the disciplines that making use of possibilities offered by new technologies is an opportunity for strengthening the participatory approach to urban planning, not only because it helps to achieve a more just solution in the end (Michell, 2003), but also because including users into the processes can bring about true innovation (Von Hippel, 2005).

Even if the political agendas and technological means develop in support of crowdsourced information for participatory urban planning, it still does not happen as often as one would expect. Research shows there are still major concerns related to the legislative aspects of the approach, data and identity protection, data processing, and issues related to the reliability of the information gathered this way (Buddhadeb, 2014, Correia de Freitas and Amado, 2015).

That said, citizens are not merely waiting to be asked their opinion; instead they are actively organising. The Human Cities' experience suggests grass-root activities related to public space reclamation are present everywhere in Europe and significantly contribute to the improvement of public spaces in various forms and by different actors (Copeland, 2008). The scene is vibrant and the recent economic downturn has obviously not suppressed it. On the contrary in fact, with less money allocated towards official city-led public space improvement programs, citizens have self-organized and have more say in their local environments (Nikšič, 2014).

The following review shows the variety and richness of the tools and methods that are used for participatory public space design, ranging between bottom-up and top-down, building on face-to-face or virtual encounters among actors and making citizens active to various degrees. Not all of them can be interpreted as tools for participation in the public space, but all of them can be seen as tools for participation in the improvement of public space. This means that some of the tools represent only a step in a series of activities to change real, physical public spaces for the better but have no direct, physical relation with the spaces themselves.

1. Formal vs Informal

The review is structured along three main lines that offer a deeper insight into the state of the art. The first distinguishing criterion is related to the level of formality or informality of the process the tool is used for. The public participation in public space redesign can be initiated and encouraged by the official structures of power or by civil society in a bottom-up manner which influences the choice of the tool. Some tools better fit the requirements of the well-structured, pre-defined, and hierarchical participatory practices used in official and legally binding procedures. Other tools suit the unstructured, informal and rather spontaneous functioning of civil initiatives that often do not have an official form but are built around the strong enthusiasm and contribution of the members.

An approach classically used in urban planning is that which formally includes public opinion out of obligation. Public opinion is asked only at a certain point of the whole process. This tool does not encourage a co-creation and development of ideas, but rather helps to collect comments of what has been proposed by some official bodies.

Saint-Gilles Esplanade/Sint-Gillis Voorplein
BRUSSELS, BELGIQUE

In 2013, the municipality of Saint-Gilles in Brussels decided to form a pedestrian area in Saint-Gilles Esplanade. Parallel to this political decision, there was a vote calling for projects to renew and reclaim the potential public space area, which was there but needed to be transformed. The local public authorities went through a long process of selection to finally decide in 2014 to select the project of the Brussels-based landscape architecture Bureau Bas Smets. This studio developed their idea and presented it via an exhibition of sketches, which were then the basis for the consultations with the wider public.



Saint-Gilles esplanade perspective, Bruxelles, 2014
© Bureau Bas Smets

Workshops are a more interactive form of a participatory process. They demand active input from the actors. In a workshop an idea or product is normally not only discussed and debated, but is also taken to a new level. Oftentimes workshop activities seek to solve an initial problem and aim to deliver a concrete result, either in an intellectual, non-material form or as a physical product.

Je participe à la rénovation de mon école
SAINT-ÉTIENNE, FRANCE

Je participe à la rénovation de mon école is an initiative developed by the Cité du design and socio-cultural center Espace Boris Vian in collaboration with local and regional authorities. It runs in seven public schools in the French department of Loire. The initiative is built around the provision of better schooling environments via a design led renovation. It is embedded into a wider idea of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network and combines two assets of St. Étienne: its historic industrial heritage and its contemporary development of creative industries. It aims to get the young population active in the design of their own (schooling) environments. The main principle is to achieve a well-designed environment with the pupils, working through the whole process from the initiation of ideas to the subsequent development and implementation. This is achieved through a series of steps among which workshops play an important role. Workshops are used at an early stage in order to raise the awareness of the importance of good and participatory design. The workshops are the medium that links designers and municipal schooling authorities, but also includes pupils, parents, teachers, other members of school staff to develop common scenarios and plans in a collaborative way. Workshops are placed into a broader and rather formal protocol that aims to assure that all main objectives of all involved parties are met (e.g. fulfillment of the official curricula).

Within such a robust framework there is enough space for fruitful interactions, exchanges, sharing and collaboration.



The primary school of Petit Coin, Saint-Étienne, France, 2012
Designer:
Agathe Chiron
© Aurélien Dupuy

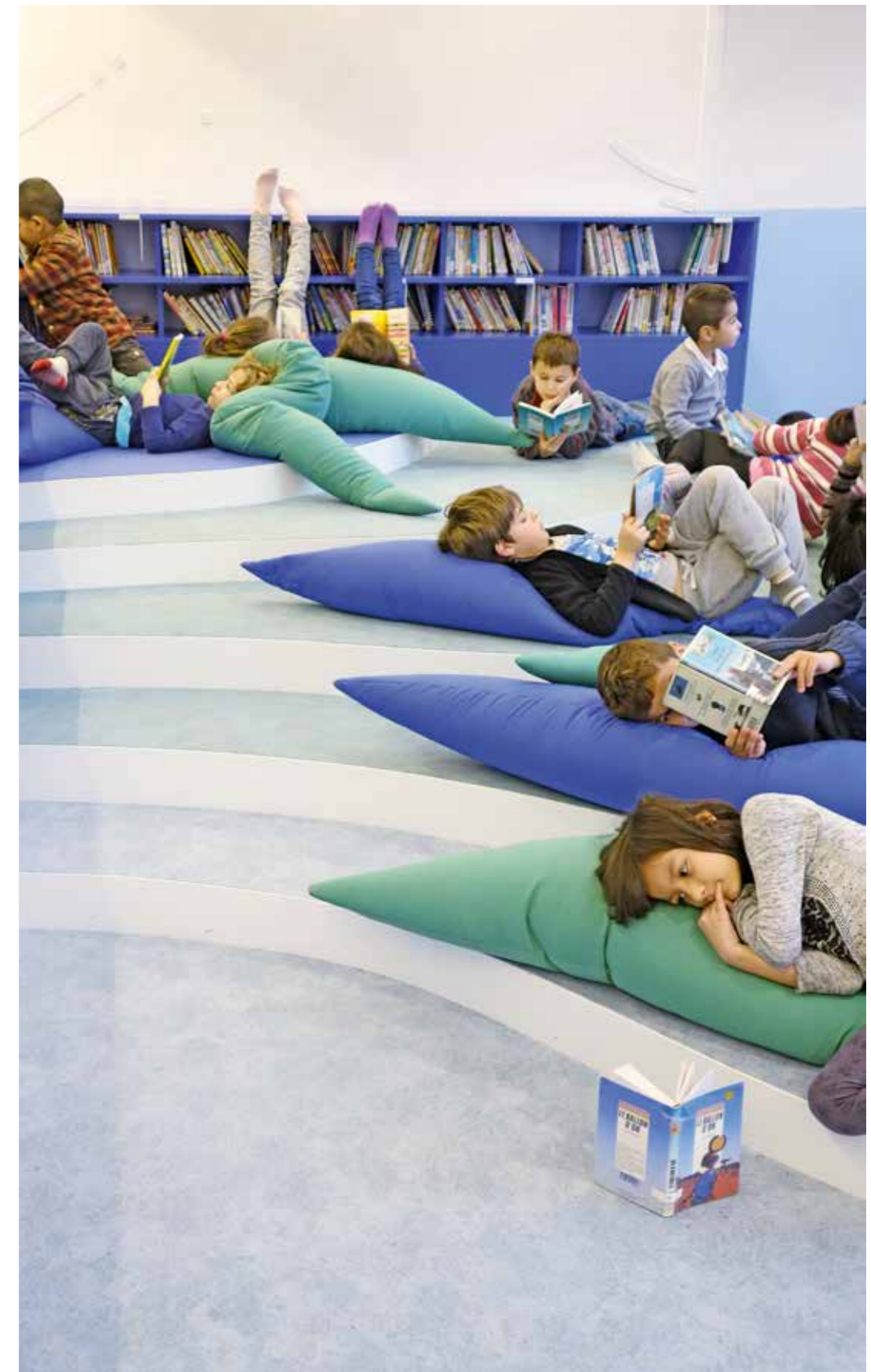


Another tool consists in organizing competitions and public calls for ideas. Competition is a participatory practice that demands less organizational management in terms of direct involvement with the public. This may be one of the reasons for its popularity in top-down participatory approaches. Entries are not usually interrelated as they are developed separately. It is up to the management authority of the call to merge the valuable ideas and thus make this approach qualify as participatory. An important issue is also the reach the public call has—if it does not reach a considerable volume of the potentially interested public, its participatory dimension is additionally threatened.

BilbaoTxokoak
BILBAO, SPAIN

The initiative is managed by Bilbao Ekintza, the local development agency of the Bilbao City Council with a public service mission to improve the quality of life of the citizens and the city of Bilbao. It ensures that development maintains a socio-economic balance among the city's districts and their residents. One of the tools is holding international and interdisciplinary public tenders, open to any individual or group, that seek new ideas for the urban recovery of greater Bilbao. The proposals are submitted anonymously which allows citizens to compete with professional bodies on an equal basis. This provides a venue for true citizen participation. All the received proposals must estimate the implementation budget. They are ranked according to a series of criteria, such as artistic quality (contribution to local identity), particularity (ability to address the requests and demands of the local population), viability (capacity for social and economic invigoration), innovation, visibility, sustainability of materials and techniques, and robustness and interdisciplinarity (ability to integrate diverse

The primary school of Petit Coin, Saint-Étienne, France, 2012
Designer:
Agathe Chiron
© Aurélien Dupuy



disciplines). One of the important aspects of the public tender is also the participation of the general public at a selection stage. All proposals received are published in the newspaper and the general public can vote on the proposals via their telephone. The result of telephone voting represents 25% of the final vote by the jury; the jury is composed of representatives of the city administration, local associations and academia, as well as some recognized personalities from the worlds of culture and media. Two editions of the call for proposals have been organized so far and the response of the public has been very high.



Exhibition with the selected proposals for the Bilbao Triennale Awards, Bilbao, Spain, 2013

The organization of various interventions in local public spaces by citizens themselves is a grass-root approach that embeds many essences of true participative practice. The occasions and activities that inspire people to come out of their private homes and be active in the public space vary. They are for example developed around the topics of food production/delivering/preparing/sharing, improving the physical conditions of public spaces, or providing cultural/socializing opportunities.

Bazilikijada
IZOLA, SLOVENIA

Izola is a small town in coastal Slovenia, where the historic tradition of a vivacious street life has started to vanish with the development of modern society, even when the social ties stay relatively strong. A group of locals recognized the problem of diminishing street life for the quality of daily life. They self-organized an Izolani association with the main mission to facilitate the conditions and events that will enliven their local public spaces. They also strive to inspire other citizens to organise events and meetings that will get local populations to spend more sociable time outside their homes. One of the best known and widely recognized events is Bazilikijada (Basil street-event). It was born spontaneously out of a habit of an inhabitant who was planting basil in the pots in front of her entrance door. More neighbors followed and soon the street was filled with pots planted with basil. This completely changed the appearance of the street and made it more inviting. Some inhabitants got the idea of organizing a street event where locals and visitors could try various dishes prepared with basil.

The event has been organized five times so far and has not changed in character. It stays spontaneous to its core—those who want to participate can propose their own dishes and offer them on the street. The only form of formalization is represented by the officially registered Izolani association which was needed in order to lead legal procedures with the municipality (registering public gathering, etc.).



Bazilikijada, Izola, Slovenia, 2015

Basil street-festival pops up on streets of Izola and encourages people to meet and to share basil food and other basil products.



Urban walks are a popular tool used in raising awareness of local public space issues. Walking, an obvious daily activity, is upgraded to focus on a theme and enriched with additional activities (such as play and creating, solving a quest, etc.). It is a handy way to get people on board in developing their own and active attitudes towards public space. With some adaptations, the tool can be used with any generational group which also makes it fully implementable in intergenerational communities.

Pazi!park
LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

One of the association's goals is raising the general awareness of the importance of good public spaces for the quality of urban life. They try to achieve this by organizing playable walks around places. Different techniques are implemented such as photographing, video-recording, and sketching along the walks; each activity is adapted to the topic and the specific public involved.



Play in another way?, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2017 © Luka Vidic

A series of playful walks in the Tivoli Park were organised to bring nature in the cities closer to different types of users.

Space as a three-dimensional physical category is hard to mentally grasp for some people. Communicating the ideas for its

redevelopment may be thus difficult to anyone not trained in three-dimensional expression. This can often make thinking and expressing oneself about the possible future of one's local public space difficult. In such circumstances model making is a convenient and popular way of involving people. The approaches vary; from a built-to-scale model which uses predefined elements to consistently reflect the actual context, to a more artistic approach where the model building techniques are free and left for the participants to choose.

Place it!
U.S.A

Place it! is a design and participation based urban planning practice using model-building to involve the wider public in the planning and design processes. From his experience as an urban planner for the past 20 years, James Rojas realized just how difficult it was to get average citizens to participate in the urban planning of their city. Urban planning is a field that remains relatively inaccessible to nonprofessionals because of abstract language, and challenges reading maps and plans, etc. From this observation, he set up a participative planification methodology. Through workshops, James Rojas works to understand how to change the planning process and make it more open so that everyone can become an actor in the planning of the urban environment. The approach is built on the conviction that every citizen is an urban planner because everyone has a relationship with a city—simply by using it.



Envision Pacoima Wash, Bradley Street Festival de la Plaza, Los Angeles, CA, 2014 © James Rojas

2. Real vs Virtual

Another criterion for classification of participatory tools is related to the rapidly evolving new communication and information technologies. They open new channels and offer new opportunities for communicating one's convictions, ideas, and desires related to urban public spaces. When new technologies are implemented in participatory practices, rarely is the whole process undertaken in a virtual sphere, more often it is in combination with the tools for face-to-face encounters.

An example of such tool for a real-time-and-space interactions among users are hands-on-sessions. They aim to deliver a final product for a better functioning or improved experience of a concrete public space and are often used as a teaching method or a method of passing one's knowledge to other members of a community. Techniques such as street furniture design sessions or urban greens maintenance sessions, etc are often used. They happen in a real space and take the context of a concrete space as one of the starting points.

Sa.Und.Sa
ITALY

Sa.Und.Sa is an architecture studio created by Salvatore Carbone and Sara Omassi in 2007. The team runs participatory meetings to reactivate local common places and increase social cohesion. An essential part of their workshops is the construction of concrete elements that improve public spaces, done in a collaborative process with the citizens on board, and with prior analyses of the local context and discussions. Design workshops and interventions where participants design and (re)construct places by themselves are central to *Sa.Und.Sa's* approach.



Collaborative workshop UPDATE#05 - Abascio fountain in Altavilla Irpina, Southern Italy, 2015 © SaundSa



Collaborative workshop UPDATE#01 Estia, la stanza del focolare, in the ruins of Senerchia village, Southern Italy, 2013 © Sa.Und.Sa

In relation to public space participatory design, collective mapping is often used as a phase of the creative process. It aims to build a common, collectively approved record of the state of the art in a definite space. At the same time, it may envision the possible futures. The method of collective mapping is most often based on pre-defined, self-evident icons that are understandable to everyone and become a basic means of expression and communication. The icons can also be developed jointly through the collective process. In some cases, the mapping is closer to an artistic act as the language of expression is entirely dependent upon the producer.

Demo Graz Ya!
GRAZ, AUSTRIA

The initiative developed mapping into a joint creative act that aims to construct the collective examination of a certain place. The specifics of their approach are in a creation of self-evident icons that enable communication without a common spoken language. This is in line with, and contributes to, the belief that everyone who participates is an expert—no extra skills are needed for expression about urban matters.



Collective mapping iconoclastas, community garden Niesenberger, Pablo Ares, 2012



Social media as a universal contemporary tool of communication can be easily leveraged in participatory processes related to public spaces, as both public spaces and social media are a podium for people's interactions. Thus, it makes sense that social media be an easy entry point into the sphere of public space reclamation. Some initiatives may use social media as a starting point for their activities, while the interactions in the offline world may remain a side activity. Social media is especially handy to facilitate discussion, debates and awareness raising campaigns.

More city to Helsinki
HELSINKI, FINLAND

More city to Helsinki is a group of people established on Facebook to support urban Helsinki through networking and online discussions. The aim is to create an easily approachable forum for people with the same interest in developing the urban fabric of Helsinki. Its main motto is "We are creating a better city for everybody". The group quickly became popular in city planning circles, it also gained the media's interest and formed itself into an important movement with over 7000 members. From the beginning the discussions in the group have been actively moderated, keeping threads clean of provoking and off-topic comments. Many experts in the field, such as architects, city planners, and urban researchers, participate in the discussions. However, a large number of participants are laymen with an interest in city planning. The group has overcome the hurdle of digital to physical. The actual content of the group is digital or could even be described as intellectual capital. The group has the ability to affect the political climate regarding city planning and the results are already visible in the execution of ideas in some areas.

The three main modes of interactions within the group are: the interaction of the members who take part in the discussions, the knowledge and opinion exchange of other group members, and the extended influence of people who are not members,

but are connected to the group through intermediates. The strengths of the group are its transparency, approachability, and taking good care of moderation. Without these the group would not be as influential, nor as popular as it is today.



Urban Helsinki's proposal to extend the pedestrian center, born from the urban ideas movement developed by the group *More City to Helsinki*. © Urban Helsinki

Digital mapping is not merely an extension of collective mapping into the virtual world—more than a one-time exercise it is a continuing process that can attract various publics along the way. It is a flexible tool that can be quickly adjust to any new directions in the debates. It allows accumulation of extensive data-sets and requires good data management for sensible results.

maTIKO
BILBAO, SPAIN

In order to get to know the Urizarri neighborhood of Bilbao from the perspective of its citizens, a collective mapping was organized based on the usage of new technologies. Through this a broad database of various public space issues specific to local inhabitants was established. The activities were based on a digital workshop aimed at acknowledging, sharing, and communicating the characteristics of the Urizarri neighbourhood with a new, alternative approach closer to the needs of the people. By introducing this form of digital mapping, insights not often evidenced in official mappings were revealed. This form of crowdsourced information-collection is also an important tool for the activation of social relations within the neighbourhood, as it encourages people to share location-based information. Moreover, the dynamic form of this approach has high economic potential as a platform for the stimulation of the urban economy through the collaboration of business clusters, start-ups, and entrepreneurs.



Outcome of a workshop made in *Matiko* Auzo Factory, Bilbao, Spain, 2014

3. Acting vs Attending

The form in which a certain tool manages to encourage (or not encourage) a single citizen or a wider group of citizens to participate in improving public space is crucial. The level of involvement of citizens varies considerably from case to case. Based on the way citizens contribute to a public space reclamation initiative, two distinguished types of participation and corresponding tools can be identified. The first one is participation by acting. In this type of participation, the actor is alert and actively invests their knowledge, skills, ideas, time and resources in making things happen. The second type is participation by attending, where the actors hold a more passive position, i.e. a position of a follower or observer.

A typical approach used to facilitate participation by acting is volunteering. Volunteer activities have a strong driving force in people's self-determination for changing things for the better. Volunteering as a participative tool in improving public space has many forms. It is often related to improvements of the physical layout of a place or its environmental conditions.

Zimsko čiščenje
MARIBOR AND LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

The winter cleaning of courtyards, access paths and public walkways from snow is performed by young volunteers as part of the activities within their students' organisations. In Maribor the activities, titled *Zimsko čiščenje* (Cleaning in winter), have a 10-year tradition. The Slovenian capital city, Ljubljana, joined recently with the project *Pomagam + migam = kidam* (I help + I am physically active = I clean the snow). The purpose is to offer help to the elderly and vulnerable groups of people who may have difficulties cleaning snow from the front yards of their homes. Both student organisations are in contact with elderly homes and centres, which have a good insight into the needs of the elderly and others in need. These activities strengthen inter-generational cooperation, as well as encourage other relevant actions, such as spring and autumnal work in the gardens surrounding elderly people's homes. These type of students' activities are reminiscent of the working brigades from socialist times, when the working groups were organized around volunteering in the spirit of brotherhood and comradeship. For today's student population, taking part in such actions is an opportunity to know the value of volunteering, friendship, respect, team work, and provides an opportunity to leave a lasting footprint of their own work.



Zimsko čiščenje, Maribor, Slovenia, 2014 © ŠOUM

Students enjoying in helping older people.

Another approach is to make people compete to achieve certain goals or gain a prize by contributing to a better public space. Most often the competitive component is used as a means to get people to participate, while other more profound objectives are tackled along the way. An issue could be that participants lose interest once the competitive factor is withdrawn from the activities.

Spust po Ljubljani
LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Spust po Ljubljani (Descent down Ljubljana) is a one-day ecological competition in the form of rowing, which has been running on Ljubljana's river for more than 20 years. It began when two local scout groups of Bičkova skala and Posavski kurirji got the idea to organize an activity in the city to promote the scouts' way of life, and raise the ecological awareness in relation to Ljubljana river. In these competitions groups of young people must solve tasks at individual checkpoints placed along the river. The tasks vary from passing on information, improving skills, to just for fun; while the central tasks involve collecting garbage along the riverbed. Thus, the City of Ljubljana has identified this organised action as a contribution to the revitalization program of the Ljubljana river, and has partly financed the activities. After several years the competition still inspires many young and young at heart, as it promotes quality, healthy and socially responsible expenditure of leisure time, as well as offering an unforgettable experience of the "water" public space.



Spust po Ljubljani, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2016 © Rod Bičkova skala

The competition tasks strengthen an ecological note, as well as test members' physical fitness on the water.



Learning by doing is a superb long-term tool, at its core it encourages participants to become active not only during the course of the activity but afterwards as well. It has the capacity to pass on knowledge, skills, and abilities to a greater number of people. Once acquired, participants can keep utilising them on their own. In relation to urban public space, the activities are often related

to disseminating knowledge on urban gardening, producing and maintaining street furniture etc.

Place au changement!
SAINT-ÉTIENNE, FRANCE

In 2011, the public urban planning agency of Saint-Étienne (EPASE) opened a public call for a redesign of a 670m² left over space in Châteaucreux area. Won by Collectif Etc., an association of students of architecture, the call eventually developed into a truly participative design process—as a number of local players and associations were invited to redesign the site. Three types of workshops have been set up and were fully open to anyone: a carpentry workshop to build all the urban furniture; a landscape and gardening workshop to create a shared garden; and a graphic design workshop to work on imaginary housing. The main aim was to teach people to take an active role in the maintenance of their public space while also socializing.



Place au changement!, Saint-Étienne, France, 2013 © ETC

Temporary public space with urban furniture and collective garden made after collaborative workshops.

—
The anonymous brownfield became "the square of the Giant", named after the wall painting made by street artists Ella&Pitr during the collaborative workshops.



Some initiatives use nutrition as an incentive for people to pause and socialize in the public space. Building on one of the basic human needs it hardly fails to get a response. Nevertheless, it normally has to be combined with other approaches to achieve some more considerable and long term public space improvements.

Odprta kuhna
LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Odprta kuhna (Open kitchen) is a unique food market project that brings food lovers and culinary adventurers to the stands of Pogačarjev trg—the open public space in the heart of Ljubljana and next to the city's main food market. For one week, it gathers chefs of carefully selected restaurants, inns and tourist farms from all over Slovenia to cook right in front of visitors in the open urban space. It has quickly become a synonym for

a Friday-get-together featuring international food and drinks, alongside beloved traditional Slovenian fare. The event attracts large numbers of locals, as well as tourists, and turns the nearby public space into a truly bustling place of informal encounters and delicious food.



Odprta kuhna, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2017 © Odprta kuhna

Lunch time at the Open Kitchen Food Market.

—
A place to meet friends, grab a bite and catch up.



The embellishment of public space by different forms of art can entice people into a space. When designed in a co-creative way or when conceived in a way that enables the passers-by to modify and interact with it, public art may not only act as a generator of the passive presence of people in public space, but a generator of new social bonds and activities.

Bus with us
GDYNIA, POLAND

The placement of interactive boards that can be altered by the manual intervention of passers-by, changed the bus stands into more than just a place to wait. They have attracted local children and their parents from neighboring housing estates to spend their time playing there, and have transformed their time waiting for the bus into a playful experience.

They are juxtaposed against the modern tendency to commercialise street furniture with billboards featuring advertisements. By transforming the bus stops into places which encourage creative activities, they now remind residents of the importance of art and playfulness in everyday life. The bus stops that underwent the transformation were chosen according to their frequency of use and their proximity to the neighbourhood; located along the main communication route, their impact also reaches all the users of public transport in the city. This case study notes the role of public art in achieving sustainable urban planning goals—it is a form of encouragement for the citizens to use public transportation more often.

Place au changement!, Saint-Étienne, France, 2013 © ETC

The anonymous brownfield became "the square of the Giant", named after the wall painting made by street artists Ella&Pitr during the collaborative workshops.



Odprta kuhna, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2017 © Odprta kuhna

This is how Fridays look like at the lovely Pogačarjev trg square in the heart of Ljubljana.





Odperta kuhna,
Ljubljana, Slovenia,
2017 © Odprta kuhna

View from the
top - sunny afternoon
at the Open Kitchen
Food Market.



Bus with Us, Poland,
2013

Bus stops are good
places for creative
activities.



Zusammensetzung. Mit Abstimmung
GRAZ, AUSTRIA

In essence this participative project aims to address the conflicts in public space by the usage of an artistic intervention. The central art object is an oblong curved table placed into public space, which acts as an attraction in and of itself, but also encourages citizens to sit along it and talk to each other in an effortless way. The curved form of the table encourages the changing of conversational partners by simply turning one's body in another direction—and through this enables the possibility of interactions amongst people from different walks of life. The role of the artistically designed table is not merely to arouse someone's attention, or to make him/her pause in space by sitting along the table, nor does it just improve the visual attractiveness of space, above all it inspires people in the public space to get active, to participate, and to play a role. As such it can be declared as a new genre of public art.



Zusammensetzung,
Graz, Austria, 2014
© Wolfgang Rappel

The main goal of the
initiator "InterACT-
Werkstatt für Theater
und Soziokultur" is to
deal with the political,
creative and lively
"Space of Possibilities"
in a city.

4. Discussion

In practice, formal and informal approaches are often combined, proving to be a recipe for success. Oftentimes the first step towards the participatory approach is initiated by an official body as a part of the prescribed public-involvement procedures demanded by law. Nevertheless the review of the participation tools that are used in formal approaches shows that true participation is rarely achieved this way if not linked with other actors skilled in moderation of truly bottom-up approaches. For example, public hearings might be a good step towards opening the discussion of urban planning matters to a wider public but not a sufficient step to a truly participatory public space design.

The main strength of the formal tools lies in their embeddedness in the official frameworks which gives them legitimacy from the start. Some bottom-up initiatives may face a shortage in this field. This can be a problem when the activities must be linked to some formal procedures to reach optimal results. Therefore some completely informal and spontaneous initiatives get formalized at some point and to a certain degree (e.g. registering as a society, interest group, civic club, etc.) in order to profit from the resources that are available within formalized procedures. This gives them the legitimacy to take the advantage of acquiring public funds or communicate with official structures more easily.

In the future the questions of how to support the fruitful balance between formal and informal approaches must be exhaustively addressed. This would be beneficial for both—formal and informal—approaches. Formal approaches would among other things benefit by getting a closer insight into what is going on in real life situations, while informal approaches would benefit by gaining some official and institutionalized support, which might be crucial to make their activities sustainable in the longer term.

Contemporary participation has not been limited to real space and time encounters as virtual interactions among actors are on the rise. The Human Cities inventory however shows that many classical participation tools built around face-to-face gathering of people are still an essential part of urban public spaces reinvention. Rather than being a competitive threat to classical approaches, virtual technologies are an important support.

So more than a question of which tools—face-to-face or virtual—have more potential to strengthen the participative approach to public space design, the issue of how to combine them in a most fruitful way must be addressed. Another important question is how any of them could initiate participation, i. e. make people enthusiastic to join and take part in participatory practices. Here the choice of the right tool seems to be crucial and depends on the audience it addresses—while younger crowds would most likely easily follow any digitalized approaches, older generations would prefer more classical ones.

Initiatives often start their activities by using the tools that support the participation of wider crowds by their mere attendance. Only when they grow in their experience, competences, and self-esteem do they try the tools that support participation by acting. This appears to be a well-reasoned approach on one hand as participation by acting is more demanding in organizational terms. On the other hand, the initiatives that do not integrate tools for



Zusammensetzung,
Graz, Austria, 2014
© Wolfgang Rappel

An "open" city is hospitable; diversity and differences are appreciated. Is Graz an "open" city in that sense? Do inhabitants of Graz deal with their conflicts in an open way in public space? To explore that question a unique and clearly visible table sculpture was designed by the Austrian artist Markus Wilfling.



Zusammensetzung,
Graz, Austria, 2014
© Wolfgang Rappel

The sculptural installation displayed on the main square of Graz.



participation by acting in their work may risk keeping superficial players in a participatory approach arena.

It is important to note that both groups of participatory citizens are needed for a reclamation of public space to be successful—without active players the activities would not happen, at the same time without people who come and make use of what is offered, the goal of organizing an activity to enliven public space would not be reasonable.

In practice the same tool used in participatory processes can involve both crowds—the one that contributes actively and the one that plays the role of a passive observer, follower or consumer of what has been offered. The roles are often blurred and changeable. It is important to understand these dynamics, namely the triggering factors that make people switch from a passive to an active role. This opens another important perspective—operating with the two groups of actors (active and passive) gets too superficial at some point. Each of the two groups is very heterogeneous within itself and includes actors with diverse characteristics. In order to really understand them, sub groups must be identified and even personal approaches undertaken.

Concluding thoughts

The Human Cities inventory has revealed the existence of a wide range of tools for the participatory provision of urban public spaces in Europe. They have proven to be an important means of sensitizing citizens to their local environment, but even more than that, they give them a chance to make local environments better through their own contribution.

Such an approach is beneficial for citizens as it gives the chance for their aspirations related to their local environments to be fulfilled. It also makes the social ties within the community stronger. In addition, it is hugely beneficial for the governing structures as well; not only in terms of making use of the local human resources available, but also by contributing to a truly inclusive society which is the goal of any democratic authority. Implementation of participatory tools in public space design bears an even greater importance as a bridge between all the stakeholders whose interests often compete in urban environments. An early and consistent implementation of participatory tools can help reduce the tensions and channel the discussions into a more constructive direction.

As such, these tools ought to be implemented regularly and developed even further by leveraging new technology, legislative advancements, and any other means at society's disposal. It is crucial, however, that by doing so the fundamentals are not undermined; it is human beings who are the real tool that makes a city a pleasant and habitable place.

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OMTEC II

Milano

Design Department,
Politecnico di Milano

Prototyping the city:
goals and issues

By Davide Fassi & Laura Galluzzo

Politecnico di Milano is the largest technical university in Italy. It offers undergraduate, graduate and higher education courses in engineering, architecture and design. The Department, together with the School of Design, the Research Doctorate in Design, the Laboratories and the POLI.design Consortium, forms part of the Politecnico di Milano Design System, and has come to represent the largest research and education institution in the design field in Italy and one of the largest in the world in terms of numbers of permanent teaching and research staff (with over 100 internal staff), rivalling centres of excellence at the international level.

The Design Department promotes the significance of design and its practices as a key element of research and education; it practices the capacity to act within the various processes of production of tangible and intangible goods, focusing on the central role of the individual, the group, the community, and society as a whole. It highlights history and culture as founding elements of design, in an ongoing dialectic between the contemporary and historical roots. It shares methods and tools, which are continuously evolving, as a key element to support design, with various cores of the different areas of research cross-pollinating each other. Finally, it embodies a polytechnical approach: a virtual and concrete coexistence with an extremely broad, diverse range of polytechnical subjects, in which design not only plays a mediating role but is also a critical element which steers activities towards design ends and methods.

“Public spaces mirror the complexities of urban society” (Madinapour, 2010) and in the contemporary age public places become fluid spaces (Baumann, 2002) of exchange and participative action, not only as contexts but as scenarios able to embody new meanings, contributing to the creation of community identity (Borlini, Memo, 2008). Public space, forgotten for years by industrialized society, is regaining its traditional importance in our contemporary consumer and service society. However, below this veneer of conformity something is moving in the opposite direction: public spaces are becoming places of social innovation, offering a context where creative communities act (Meroni, 2007) to bring original solutions to everyday problems that the current economic system is no longer able to provide.

The bottom-up actions of these active groups of citizens who find their own answers combine with the top-down actions of institutions (Mulgan, 2008). This creates opportunities for social transformation and sustainable growth that is modifying the existing pattern, replacing the old individualistic values with a new sense of community, sharing, exchange of knowledge and information, and mutual support. The reclaiming of public spaces allows people to come together in an inclusive way—opening roads, squares, and the city itself to free enjoyment by all. This happens when people become fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, opening horizons to endless opportunities.

There are two main aspects to public space: one social and the other relating to its shape and form. The social aspect is the true essence of society and it affects the aesthetics and form of the urban site. As pointed out by Manzini (Manzini, 2010) a contemporary designer must be able to interpret the city as a place of “social laboratories where new ideas and new solutions are being invented and experimented within all fields of daily life”, where culture leads to new forms of citizen participation and a deeply renewed sense of community.

The first chapter analyzed the tools used by the various communities to set up the public space projects that were investigated during the research work carried out by the international Human Cities team. This chapter will analyze the prototyping processes used in the various projects and how they were carried out. An aspect central to all the case studies is the way in which the reference communities brought the spaces/services into being. It is this that makes it possible to analyze and evaluate the cases themselves, but also how they come to be enjoyed by a wider public.

Not all the projects are characterized by the same time frame: some are temporary, others are one-offs, others are ephemeral—lasting only a few days or hours—and are never repeated (Fassi, 2012). The duration of a project depends on various factors: the characteristics of the local area, the community running the project, the aims to be achieved by the reappropriation of public space. Some ephemeral actions often have a longer-term impact on the surrounding area because they raise questions forcefully with the communities living there and often also with the governing and administrative bodies.

However, above and beyond the varying duration and aims of each case, all the examples analyzed are tangible projects that have, over a longish period, been accomplished or prototyped. The prototyping process allows the ideas, projects and solutions adopted to be tested, for and with the users and those who will benefit from them at the times and in the ways envisaged. It thus serves as a sort of provisional run-through of the project. Prototyping is a tool

that comes from the ambits of product design and is also used, in different forms, in service design. In the projects illustrated here it has also been applied to space design.

The tools used for service prototyping tend mainly to be evocative simulations, but they may also be very realistic descriptions: ranging from rudimentary acted-out scenarios with hand-sketched screens or improvised props, to detailed mock-ups of the system, the environment and the staff. (servicedesigntools.org)

The main goal of prototyping the solutions is to make the ideas immediately tangible by focusing on the people at the center of them. It also allows different ideas to be explored in parallel (Brown, 2009). Prototyping public spaces means designing and creating installations, events and strategies that lie somewhere between the design of spaces and of services. Public spaces offer a perfect context for testing and prototyping bottom-up projects and actions with the local communities. (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). Appropriate timing is vital to the expert designer's role in these processes of involving people in developing social innovations, because the initiatives must become self-sufficient and the community independent of professional expertise.

The selection of projects presented in this chapter shows how the strategies enacted in urban space may have different objectives, and may lead to different characteristics in different places. For this reason each paragraph heading contains an adjective that characterizes the public space in question: attractive, inclusive, well-equipped, playful, domestic. The main aim of the cases described in each paragraph will be to make the space attractive or inclusive, or to equip it better, and so on. This does not mean that the only aim of the community was the objective stressed in the paragraph in question, it is simply a way of classifying the cases, which helps to highlight the goals and the main issues in the designing of public urban spaces.

1. Make the public space attractive

Public space is full of possibilities, but the way people make use of it depends on what it is like. The capacity to bring a number of people together in a given place is strictly linked to the attractiveness of its form, use and structure. But what is it that makes a public place attractive?

Sometimes it is the perceived characteristics of the space itself or the presence of a scenario that differs from the surrounding context: a green space, a beautiful panorama, a quiet secluded spot within the city. More often however the attractiveness of a place does not depend only on its appearance, but also on how it can be used: a group of people come together there because they are attracted by the possibility of enjoying the particular situations, structures or services it offers.

Over time the attractiveness of its services, in particular, has contributed to determining one of the characteristics of the contemporary city: its fragmentary nature, which has turned some city areas into mere places of transit, or into deserted spaces where people never stop or even pass through (think for example of ex-industrial areas). With this in mind, there are many documented initiatives that seek to combine the demand for convivial places in the city with the need to reconnect certain areas with their surrounding urban fabric. These projects often develop around a strong theme that is able to stimulate the interest of a wide range of potential users: art, design, music, trade, social participation.

In Italy, one such initiative, which seeks to revitalize little-used places in the city of Milan and appeal to large numbers of users, is the Public Design Festival. This is an international research project that promotes research and the development of virtuous activities and innovative ideas capable of changing the way public space is seen and used, thus facilitating the meeting of design professionals with ordinary citizens.

Public Design Festival
MILAN, ITALY

The main promoter of the initiative is the Esterni group, in collaboration with the Municipality of Milan which is responsible for the bureaucratic side. Esterni is a cultural enterprise that has been designing public spaces since 1995. It designs community services, promotes and organises events to bring people together and develops the required participatory communication campaigns. We particularly owe Nicolò Bini and Anna Spreafico, the event co-ordinators, for the idea of the first Public Design Festival, which was held from 18th to 26th April 2009. Since then a selection has been made each year of the most innovative proposals and projects for turning areas of mere transit into accessible, interesting, enjoyable places, in other words into attractions. The event takes place during the Milan Design Week, which is the best time to find a high concentration of design professionals in the city and to trigger a design mentality among ordinary citizens, enabling them to see themselves as a community.

Esterni sees public spaces as the starting point from which to design the city of tomorrow, and design as an instrument capable of anticipating, interpreting and responding to the new needs of contemporary living by analysing the various aspects of public places. By means of an effective system of on- and off-line communication people are encouraged to discover new places in their city, which has temporarily been invaded by design installations, inviting them to experiment services, urban furnishings and solutions that make public places more sustainable and fun to go to. The places and activities change each year, so that the event is always stimulating.



Public Design Festival, Milan, Italy, 2009/ongoing © Luca Rotondo

The urban orchard: an unexpected green oasis in the urban chaos.

Milan is basically a city on a human scale, so it is an example of how specific, underused places need to be revitalized from time to time. Cases such as the city of Bilbao in Spain, where public space has recently undergone radical transformation, are rather different. From the dull, grey city suffocated by steelworks and containers from the industrial river port that it was until the seventies, it has become a green, human-friendly city with a new vocation for culture and tourism. Many of the initiatives aimed at citizen re-appropriation of public space see art as an attraction

factor. This is certainly true of the art events in the *Bilbao Art District*, a public/private venture in support of the visual arts in Bilbao that turns the city into a meeting point for various artistic figures and disciplines, as well as bringing art to the general public.

Bilbao Art District
BILBAO, SPAIN

Art as renewal: the *Bilbao Art District* continues along the path of transformation started 15 years earlier with the opening of the Guggenheim Museum, which has proved to be the winning option in giving the city a new identity and attracting visitors, as well as creating jobs. The main sponsors are the Bilbao City Council and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, in collaboration with the most important museums: the Guggenheim, the Museum of Fine Arts, Rekalde Exhibition Room, the Maritime Museum and the shops of the Ensache district.

Now at its third edition, the initiative takes place during a weekend in May and offers a rich programme of art events, exhibitions, musical performances and other activities until late evening in the streets galleries of the city. The aim of design in an event of this kind is to increase the level of participation: both implicitly at event management level and explicitly through a series of activities designed to raise awareness and attract the public, especially young people, towards the arts. To this end, conferences, themed trails, guided tours, competitions and activities for children are set up, along with actions designed to make galleries more welcoming and user-friendly and art more approachable and affordable. The aim is to turn galleries into meeting places and encourage a critical sensibility among the public, a gamble for the future.



Bilbao Art District, Bilbao, Spain, May 2016

Amiarte, an association of people with risk of exclusion, making an art intervention in the street. Bilbao Art District project.

The importance of culture in the redefinition of public space is a central theme at this moment in history: social problems, environmental challenges and the economic crisis, all need to be tackled with innovation and creativity. How is it possible to redefine our current economic model and launch economic growth on the basis of knowledge? For the organisers of Belgrade Design Week the answer is design, an intuition confirmed by the noteworthy social appeal of the event: over 15,000 visitors each year, 50% of whom are locals, 30% regional and 20% international guests and visitors.

Belgrade Design Week
BELGRADE, SERBIA

The *Belgrade Design Week*, in Serbia, has become the most important one-stop connection points between the creative industries, businesses, governments, the academic world and the

mass media in south-eastern Europe. It is an event that sees the participation of all sectors of creative industries: design, architecture, publishing, branding, publicity, communication, art, photography, sales, education and culture management.

Founded in 2005 as a non-governmental organisation, the *Belgrade Design Week* was the first festival of the creative industries in Serbia and the South East of Europe. In subsequent years it has successfully woven numerous intercultural and commercial relationships between the world design scene and the regional industries of Belgrade. The initiative falls into the great cultural festival tradition, acknowledging and filling the gap created by the total lack of creative industries in Belgrade and Serbia and bringing them into the world design scene. This was an important mission in spite of the absence of an adequate design sector in the country such as to justify a fair of this size. In Serbia the creative community falls victim to the dominating values of pop/commercial culture and the Belgrade Design Week holds among its objectives the challenge of indicating a new direction to follow: it is not by chance that "Brand New World" was the motto of the 2014 edition. As far as regards the urbanistics of the city, with the disappearance of the Yugoslavian Federation many government buildings lost their function or were downgraded to secondary level functions, a far cry from the glory of their representational past. The Belgrade Design Week also acts in this sense, helping to bring new life to such points of cultural reference in the city that have fallen into oblivion and offering visitors the possibility of taking a trip back in time through these buildings. Over time many places have been reopened or converted, such as the Museum of Contemporary Arts or the Stakloplan Factory, constituting a heritage of Serbian industrial architecture.



"Freedom squared" conference, Belgrade Design Week, Serbia, 2012 © Vladimir Mladenovic

The appeal of design and art is capable of inspiring events with high resonance and of acting virtuously, but another important attraction is music. *The Flow Festival* in Helsinki and the Urban Project in Tallin are examples, both focusing on the potential attraction of music, but different in terms of aim and the way the public space is used. *The Flow Festival* reappropriates urban places in decline, whereas the Urban Project seeks to introduce an element of novelty and entertainment to make all inside and outside public space in Tallinn more interesting and fun to frequent.

The Flow Festival
HELSINKI, FINLAND

The Flow Festival emerged in 2004 from an idea by Tuomas Kallio and friends of his from the jazz collective "Nuspirit Helsinki". The idea was to offer something new in the music and events field in Finland. The first editions of the festival were held in

the ex-railway houses: Parrukatu, 00540, Helsinki. Starting as a relatively small soul and jazz event, it succeeded in attracting 57,000 people in 2004 and had to move to a new home in 2010. The organisers continued the tradition of reappropriating and enhancing public space, by choosing the vast abandoned area of the ex-power station at Suvilahti, easily reached from the centre by public transport or on foot. The growing interest in the Flow Festival is due to the attention paid by the organisers to the experience offered by the event, as well as to the selection of the concert programmes: Flow is famous for its unique atmosphere, its art and decorations and the food and drink available. The general mood fosters comparison and exchange between different subcultures and although Flow has become one of the most important music festivals in Finland, it has kept its indie/underground identity which creates a feeling of community among its participants.

Tallin Jazz Festival
TALLINN, ESTONIA

Tallin Jazz Festival was conceived in 2010 as an experiment for 2011, the year in which Tallinn was elected European capital of culture. The organiser was the Jazzkaar Festival whereas the creative mind belonged to the saxophonist Siim Aidla; the George Ots Music School, the Estonian Music and Theatre Academy of Tallinn, the Viljandi Culture Academy in Viljandi and the Eller Music School of Tartu also collaborated in the project. In 2015 these were also joined by students from the Saue and Pärnu music schools. The Urban Project mainly takes place in the city centre, but the idea is to take music to unexpected places with a programme that varies in sentiment and state of mind. Performances are held inside public places such as shopping centres and airports, on public transport (trains and trams), as flashmobs in the city squares and in schools during break. The idea is to surprise the daily life of the city with brief performances of no more than 30 minutes that do not call for long introductions and feel like improvisations, in which both musicians and listeners have fun.

In the Flow Festival, design contributed to the identity of the event with as much visibility as the musical component. In the Urban Project, however, it plays a key role in achieving the objectives of the initiative: firstly by including the project within the Jazzkaar Festival from the point of view of visual communication, and secondly, on a concrete level, by creating easily-transported, pop-up solutions that are easy to dismantle and reassemble to guarantee the surprise effect of the performances and the success of the musical component.

When observing life in contemporary cities, the need to reappropriate spaces outside the home often emerges from the community itself in order to weave new social relationships (convivial situations, the sharing of goods and services, play parks) and to create working and/or commercial situations (new connections and co-working) or connections between citizens and services (installations and infrastructure).

So, we go to a place for the interaction possibilities it offers and the services we can find there: these are sometimes pre-existent services made functional again by reviving the flow of users who return to make use of them, or the introduction of services ex-novo to animate a place lacking in attraction. By using urban space as an attraction in which to develop new cultural and eco-



Flow Festival Helsinki, Finland, August 2015
© Jussi Hellsten



Tallinn Jazz Festival, Estonia, 2013
© Rene Jakobson

conomic relationships, Bilbao also reconfirms its status as an *avant-garde* art city with *Bilbao Arte Shop*.

Bilbao Arte Shop
BILBAO, SPAIN

Bilbao Arte Shop is an initiative involving art schools that turns the city's shops into a show case for the students by offering a unique experience for the discovery of art and commerce in the city. The organisers and promoters of the venture are the Bilbao City Council through Lan Ekintza, a local public company. The participants are 75 students from the faculty of Fine Arts at the University of the Basque Country, guided in their projects by professionals in the art sector from the Bilbao Arts Foundation. Finally, the Innovative Trades di Bilbao (CIB), a platform promoted by Lan Ekintza, seeks to reunite traders in an innovative spirit to make the city's commerce a benchmark for creativity and innovation. *Bilbao Arte Shop* is 50% funded by the European Social Fund: the project was presented on 29th June 2011 and is now, at its 5th edition, well-consolidated in the panorama of city events. The *Bilbao Arte Shop* experience is organised in guided visits and trails through the 13 city districts, in groups of 8-10 people previously booked by email or phone.

The *Arte Shop* is an innovative collaboration between young artists and the traders of Bilbao and an enriching opportunity for both. Students can take up the challenge and try out their creativity outside the academic environment, without limits of form and materials, focusing on the commercial aspect of the product. The resulting trail through the shops is as attractive and stimulating as a true exhibition, one of a kind and unrepeatable. To conclude the event, a prestigious jury selects three winning works and the public awards a special prize for the work it considers the best. The idea of the *Bilbao Arte Shop* is an example of how design can support the commercial activity in a city, offering a different environment in which people can enjoy a new purchasing experience.



Arte Shop, Bilbao, Spain, 2011/ongoing

Guide visit to art intervention in the shop. Sombreros Albero.

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Art Intervention in the shop using information and telecommunication technologies: Itxaso Denda.



In Italy, one intervention that uses art to relaunch the local economy is the Farm Cultural Park, an interesting project in which art becomes an integral part of a local context: the heart of Favara, a small historical Sicilian town in the province of Agrigento, transformed into a permanent exhibition of contemporary art.

Farm Cultural Park
FAVARA, ITALY

Farm Cultural Park is located in Favara, a small town in Sicily. The creative idea comes from the grassroots, the local community itself or, more specifically, from two of its members: Andrea Bartoli and Florinda Saleva, who decided to invest energy and money in renovating the centre of Favara and creating an open-air art gallery. As well as themselves, other artists take part in transforming the public space, experimenting with different types of creative residence inside the city, and the residents of Favara welcome visitors and artists and make them feel at home, making sure that their stay in the town is pleasant and comfortable. In particular, there is a group of citizens known as FUN (Favara Urban Network) made up of young volunteers who contribute by animating the town centre. As the project grew and the need for funding appeared, other people intervened in support of the initiative by creating a philanthropic community to back the *Farm Cultural Park*. The project consists of 7 small courtyards displaying a typical Arabian architecture (known as "Cortile Bentivenga", which form the backdrop against which artists can create their temporary works.

At present the complex counts three art galleries and a series of exhibition spaces: Farm-young-art, the Bartoli-Felter Foundation, Artegirovane Sicilia, the Terry Richardson Fan Club and the Uwe Jaentsh Museum. There is also a centre for contemporary architecture, which curates the temporary projects, a library, spaces for meetings, parties and events, language laboratories and educational departments for adults and children. Various fringe services are provided associated with catering (unconventional restaurants like "Nzemmula"), accommodation (a diffuse hotel) and transport (bike hire).

The importance and courage of this great venture can be appreciated even more if we look at the political context in which it has emerged: an area of Italy characterised by its lack of institutions and dominated by the local mafia. The town also has a high unemployment rate and little attention is paid to urban planning. This great project was made possible by the private initiative of Andrea and Florinda and the philanthropic community, who purchased the buildings in the town centre with their own investments and set up a private, community venture in the public interest of the entire community and its visitors. Currently, with its intense cultural programme, Favara has become a new centre of contemporary arts in the south of Italy and an example of how innovative, bottom-up drive can generate attraction, rivitalising the social, participatory dynamics of a community.

The ambits of intervention were designing public space (redeveloping buildings through the original use of the courtyards) and designing interiors to stage exhibitions (there are permanent and temporary exhibitions, but each space has been designed to display something). The result is fascinating: the *Farm Cultural Park* has become a place of visitor flows, of social and artistic interaction, a hybrid environment in which residents and visitors live

side by side with no distinction between public and private. From the farsighted initiative of two single individuals it has become a project that has benefitted the entire community of Favara.



Farm Cultural Park, Favara, Italy, 2010/ongoing

Art installations at Farm Cultural Park. (Source: <http://www.farm-culturalpark.com>)



Earth Market MILAN, ITALY

Earth Market is the agricultural market that recreates the atmosphere of traditional Italian markets, recuperating old values and experiences thanks to the power of conviviality, and re-launching spaces and relations with specific actors in the city of Milan. The project is organized through a co-funding agreement subsequent to a memorandum of understanding signed by Slow Food Italia and Parco Agricolo Sud; the main sponsors are the Milan City Council and the Fondazione Cariplo in the ambits of the "Feeding Milano Project-Energy for Change", a research programme promoted by the academic institutions (Politecnico di Milano, Design department and the University of Gastronomic Science) and Slow Food Italia. The main actors involved in the initiative are around 40 producers of a wide range of products, mostly from Parco Agricolo Milano Sud. Both the producers and ordinary citizens are beneficiaries: the first because of the opportunity to sell directly to the client, the second for the opportunity to purchase high quality products at good prices.

Another fundamental activity was the "Ideas Sharing Stall", animated by a group of design researchers at the Politecnico di Milano. It was run from the start of the activity until 2014 and consisted of a series of co-designing activities. The idea was to have a physical space in which to make contact with the potential users of the services to be developed and with whom to co-design, prototype and try out the food services before their actual implementation. *Earth Market* started as a simple farmers' market, but it went on to become a new public space for the neighbourhood and was taken as a point of encounter between citizens and as a moment of recreation because of the fringe

activities held there (Taste Workshops, co-designing meetings, music performances). The role of design in the *Earth Market* is basically explicit: the market is part of a research project in which designers participate and apply the skills they have developed in the various fields of design (interior design, service design, communication design). The result is the design of a new public space, in which the conviviality created by the combination of food, initiative and entertainment is the fundamental characteristic. An important role is played by service design with the Ideas Sharing Stall, which leads ordinary citizens to take part in the co-designing of new, short-chain, food and catering services, and in understanding people's needs and wishes. Thanks to this activity various services have been tested, among which the "Farmers' food box", the "Local Distribution System" and "Yes week-end". The last of these relates to a zero kilometre tourism system in the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano.



Earth Market in Largo Marinai di Italia, Milan, Italy, 2014 © Feeding Milan



Conviviality, music, art and design; fun and social participation; the creation of new synergies; the search for specific services or experiences: many are the components that contribute to making public space attractive. In this panorama design possesses the tools for organising, managing and structuring events and activities and making them successful. An attractive public space will be a place designed to fulfill and satisfy the expectations and needs of its citizens, connecting each individual to others and to the city dynamics. Attractive space is living space.

2. Make the public space inclusive

Inclusive is an adjective that means "having or embracing other things within", it evokes an image of unity in which a larger part contains smaller components within it. When associated with a public place this is a quality which indicates that the possibility of enjoying that space, and taking part in the activities carried out there, is extended to as many subjects as possible. For this

to occur it is essential that the right decisions be taken at the designing stage; that potential user diversity be taken into account so as to create projects (for products, services, spaces etc.) that can be used by everybody, not only by people with disabilities but also by other sensitive user categories: mothers with babies and toddlers, the elderly, children. From this we can deduce that the term is strictly connected with design for everybody (DfA_Design for All), indeed it is part of the definition itself: "Design for All is design for human diversity, social inclusion and equality".

To understand the importance of adopting a DfA method it is enough to look at some statistics: according to the EIDD - European Institute for Design and Disability, Stockholm 1993-there are 150 million people in Europe with disabilities, at least 15% of the total population, without considering that anyone may become temporarily disabled. The percentage of the elderly population is also significant: again in Europe, 100 million in 2000 and with an increase to 113.5 million forecast for 2025, almost 30% of the total population (source Istat - the Italian National Institute for Statistics). This is a vast user sector for which design is called to intervene to break down the current barriers faced by the elderly, such as limitations to mobility and access to public places, access to technology, need for health care and/or access to specific services.

The initiative partly owes its success to the working methodology used: designing effectively for diversity requires a close acquaintance with the users for whom the product or service is being designed. The best way of achieving this is to involve them in the creative process. Information plays a fundamental role, which means teaching professionals, students and institutions about the DfA approach and the benefits to be derived from inclusive design. This was the intuition of Ilona Gurjanova, president of the Estonian Association of Designers (EAD) and council member of the EIDD Design for All Europe, who saw the need to increase awareness of, and accessibility to, Design for All through the initiative *Cities For All-Tallinn For All*.

Cities For All, Tallinn For All TALLINN, ESTONIA

The project *Cities For All, Tallinn For All* started in 2010, bringing together a team of around 80 people including students from various European design schools, designers, representatives from the public sector and people with disabilities who wished to take part in the co-design process. The participants were asked to pursue three objectives: to make Tallinn more accessible and convenient for a wider range of residents (elderly people, young mothers and the disabled); to produce design solutions offering tangible results; to introduce the Design for All methodology.

After attending seminars led by design experts, participants divided into groups and worked on the development of solutions to three areas where accessibility was problematical: access to the city centre and cinemas; information design for public transport; products and services for the visually impaired. The output of the workshops were concrete design solutions that were presented during the European Innovation Festival and Design Night in 2011.



Cities for All, Tallinn, Estonia, 2010-2013

Urban walks and "gulliver maps", tools used by designers to involve various users to draw the guidelines for an accessible city.



Tallinn Transport TALLINN, ESTONIA

Tallinn Transport focuses on improving systems in the city by using tools, and making the surrounding urban panorama more people-orientated. The project started in 2011 with the aim of redesigning Tallinn's public transport system and making it more transparent, logical and satisfactory for passengers. The reason for this lies in the previous communication system for public transport services, which was created by various different entities (service providers, local authority departments, private ticket issuers and infrastructure management companies) and lacked any visual unity. The scenario to be worked on was restrictive: lack of resources (financial, human and time), bureaucracy and the infrastructure planning led the designers to opt for mainly strategic and graphic solutions because other elements such as lighting and the positioning of shelters could not be modified. Years of disorganised planning had led to visual confusion and a lack of regard for user needs.

The solution in terms of accessibility was made possible by unifying information, standardising and simplifying the message, thus optimising the user experience and making it more pleasant for all kinds of users (tourists, children, the elderly and people with disabilities). More specifically, the design action was to provide those responsible for public transport with the tools by which to manage, assess and create the communication graphics: a Tallinn Transport Design Standard was drawn up containing guidelines for the design and the communication elements (from infrastructure and information signposting to the definition of easily understandable language, coded by colour, typescript and layout etc.). The initiative won the 2012 Design Management Award, a significant accomplishment since it was the first time that a design management prize of such importance had been awarded to Estonia and confirmation of the social and commercial advantages deriving from good design management practice.



Tallinn Transport Design, Tallinn, Estonia, 2011
© Rasmus Jurkatam

We motivate people to choose sustainable mobility also for visiting leisure activities.

This example leads us to reflect on how urban mobility is capable of making public space inclusive, whether or not users have disabilities. Innovating the urban transport system, reducing the number of cars in circulation for instance, is an opportunity for citizens to make use of public space in different and more sustainable ways. *Threesome*, for example, is the provocative name of an initiative for the promotion of a sustainable form of mobility in the city of Ljubljana and throughout Slovenia.

V troje
LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

A public event of *V troje (Threesome)* initiative on Novi trg square in Ljubljana promotes the benefits of using the bicycle for daily errands. Threesome is a competition in groups of 3 cyclists who will cycle to work for a month. The project owes its existence to the British Council in Slovenia, an institution that promotes cultural relations, language, the arts and other British values throughout the world and facilitates relations with professionals and people in general from other countries. In 2008, the British Council in Slovenia formed a group of 5 young professionals (a researcher, a web developer, a politician, a journalist and a public relations consultant) asking them to develop ideas for reducing CO2 emissions by cutting down the presence of automobiles on the road in favour of bicycles. Every day the kilometres covered by the group will be recorded, then added together to give the total for the whole month. The group with the highest total will be declared winner of the competition.

Since there are insufficient funds to carry out the project, it has now been put on hold and it is up to the three team members to decide whether or not to go ahead autonomously, asking the Danish Embassy in Ljubljana and other entities interested in sustainable mobility (Agency for Safe Transports, the Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of Transport and the Municipality of Ljubljana) to act as sponsors. The project was carried out for the first time in May 2010, and the prizes were placed at the disposal of the Danish Embassy. The success and continuing growth of the initiative enabled it to take place every year, with the participation of a different Ambassador as sponsor for the prizes each year, until 2015 when management was transferred to Bike2Work (a European mobility programme) and its name was changed to "Bring happiness to work".

Right from the beginning the project relied on careful design, particularly in terms of image: firstly its catchy name to attract the attention of the public, then its choice of logo and the production of souvenirs like T-shirts, posters and bike accessories.

The project was also advertised on the web through its internet website, which was subsequently improved to facilitate the user enrolment procedure. The primary objective was to raise awareness of the need to adopt more sustainable mobility solutions, but it owes its success in terms of participation to its competitive nature and to its social component as an opportunity to share an activity with different people: family members, work colleagues, friends and groups of the same age. Not only do cyclists benefit from the positive sides of competition and conviviality, but also the whole of Slovenia (especially the citizens of Ljubljana on account of the high level of participation), thanks to the reduction of particulate matter in the air and the benefits of cities and countries with fewer automobiles in circulation.



V troje (Threesome), Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2010-2015
© V troje.



The prospects opened of a more inclusive urban scenario are therefore not limited to offering a more accessible physical/spatial context, but also include the possibility for users to feel part of the activities and initiatives, and to enjoy moments of conviviality. Making a public space inclusive also means making a community aware of the problems and limits of the place they live in and, by using design tools, draw them into the renewal processes.

La Cartonnerie
SAINT-ÉTIENNE, FRANCE

La Cartonnerie is a sort of creative workshop dedicated to public places, shared by citizens and professionals who occupy urban spaces as architects, sociologists, artists, gardeners and designers. It is an innovation-generating environment, strictly connected to local life. Saint-Étienne is an industrial city that has felt the effects of the economic crisis strongly yet, in spite of this, has responded to the difficulties with creativity, associative dynamism and a cultural richness linked with immigration and the city's industrial past. *La Cartonnerie* has been installed on a 2000 square meter area in the heart of the Jacquard neighbourhood, located between the centre and the

newly-emerging creative district. It was created as a temporary, experimental public space by the association, Carton Plein, constituted on the initiative of EPASE (Saint-Étienne Institution for Public Development). Carton Plein is a multidisciplinary association that supports and promotes the public space projects proposed by its members: it is open to citizens from any sector, and occasionally invites external artists and researchers, hosted in dedicated residences, to bring their contribution to the research project.

Step by step *La Cartonnerie* has shaped itself to the opportunities the city offers: after the opening of the public site, collaborative activities and workshops were set up gradually creating an urban laboratory with co-working, and opening the residences in 2014. The association organises suitable situations (shared gardens, creative projects, events etc.) to encourage citizens to act tangibly on their living environment, and situations that facilitate exchange and the dissemination of information (workshops, performances, city walks, interviews and so on). The space is a sort of building site in constant transformation to open new perspectives.

In *La Cartonnerie*, design enables associative dynamics to form, thus developing the power of citizen action and participation in the invention of new models of urbanism. By exploiting the multiple human, cultural, physical and energy resources of a city, design leads to the construction of unique public spaces, and by applying new tools and forms of mediation it opens up the fabric of a city to its citizens and communicates the idea of people-centred public space. Design and creativity also work for local areas: in the long term they reinforce relationships between the city's institutions, local associations and residents. Creating a project of this kind during urban development enriches the social fabric and provides a real space open to debate.



La Cartonnerie, Saint-Étienne, France, 2011
© citedudesign

The experimental public space receiving the contribution of Human Cities partners for the summer edible garden and terrace.



In other contexts, the active social participation of the whole city may be necessary when acting on the entire urban fabric. Large-scale projects acting in multiple neighbourhoods would require considerable financial investment and overall urban planning by the institutions, however, if citizens are well organized or they are adequately guided, they are capable of setting up small, scattered projects. One situation of this kind can be seen in Ljubljana.

ProstoRož
LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

The *ProstoRož* association, literally "Space of flowers" is an initiative that explores, examines and opens up new possibilities for using public space in conformity with the needs of its inhabitants. It attempts to show how, sometimes, limited means and minimal actions are enough to fit out enjoyable spaces for going out, playing and working in the open air.

The association emerged from a particular urban and political context: after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the economic concept of the free market was gradually introduced in Slovenia. It was a critical process for the city, which had to tackle phenomena like de-industrialisation, motorisation and suburbanisation. The centre of the city proved to be rather inadequate due to traffic and lack of services. On the basis of this observation the initiative was started in 2004, before the city council started working to improve the situation: the city renewal plan "Ljubljana 2020" was actually set in motion in 2006-2007. The idea for the project came from three women architects from the University of Ljubljana who were tired of their unappealing urban surroundings: Maša Cvetko, Ana Grk and Alenka Korenjak. Given the crisis in the building sector, they focus on bottom-up, participatory initiatives. Their projects are backed by other citizens, who carry out technical or managerial roles, and benefit from collaboration with associations in the city.

There are also situations where it is the city council which intervenes to propose initiatives for involving citizens in public space renewal processes: this is the case of "Savsko naselje", an idea to make local residents more responsible and active in the management of the neighbourhood itself. More specifically, the project consists in giving people the possibility of identifying the problem areas in the neighbourhood where they live and developing practical solutions to solve them.

In the case of *Knjižnica reči* it was a mother in Ljubljana who proposed an idea in favour of the community: after losing an adolescent son who was a basketball enthusiast, she donated the money set aside for him to the association in order to restructure the playing field where he used to train.

ProstoRoz's idea was to involve the students (around 14 years old) at the neighbourhood school in the designing of the new basketball court, making it accessible to people with disabilities. The project was presented, approved and carried out by the local council after a series of workshops held over several months. Now, the association and the young people are continuing their urban renewal activities in a playing field near the basketball court.

Another project set up by the association was to equip an unused space for a particular form of hire service. The name of the project is *Knjižnica reči*, literally "Object Library", and it was

inspired by a place in Berlin: a library where what was on loan was not books but objects. The selection of things collected was decided after a survey conducted among the townspeople to identify what they would most need to hire, such as trekking shoes, work tools, domestic appliances, etc. The project was financed by a city council fund for social projects, whereas the objects were made available by the townspeople themselves in exchange for a year's free hire; everyone else pays 30 Euros per year for the service.



Vintage market, Archive ProstoRoz, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2017



Art market, Archive ProstoRoz, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2017

Inclusiveness as participation: citizens included in public space will be active citizens interested in the dynamics of the place where they live, as long as they have the possibility of benefiting from services, places and activities. An inclusive space will therefore be an accessible environment for all, without any kind of barrier (be it architectural, visual, sensorial, cultural or linguistic, etc.) as is summarised in the declaration: "Making environments easy to use for everyone means considering signage, lighting, visual contrast and materials. Access to buildings isn't simply a question of their physical layout. It also requires people having sufficient information, often before they leave their house, that makes them feel confident enough to access a building or space. Ensuring this 'intellectual' and 'emotional' access means considering signage, lighting, visual contrast and materials. People's opportunity to use all elements within the site, including the inside of buildings, is crucial." (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, England, 2006). It is crucial to respect these guidelines so that everybody can enjoy the spaces in his/her own city, and subsequently, thanks to appropriate design-led initiatives, to see to it that the space is also endowed with the quality of uniting people and stimulating them to a social life.

3. Make the public space well equipped

Let's imagine having to undertake an excursion in the mountains: we'll need to take functional equipment with us that will satisfy all our requirements, but have nothing superfluous in our rucksacks. The same is true for a public space, suitable equipment is required for it to carry out certain functions. Fitting out public space does not necessarily mean massive interventions: a completely empty space does not lend itself to many functions and is not very inviting but it is enough to add a bench, for example, and it becomes a place where you can sit and rest or have a conversation. On the other hand there are some cases in which a space has unique, or particularly noteworthy, architectural and environmental characteristics, such that it becomes an attraction in its own right and invites people to gather there, think for example of certain mediaeval palaces to be found all over Europe. Naturally, many communities wish they had public spaces that are attractive in their own right, but if these are lacking then it will be necessary to fit out an area ad hoc to fulfil a prearranged function. One example of this is the Serravalle neighbourhood in the suburbs of Milan, characterised by its lack of a public square or piazza, an unusual situation in an Italian town.

Displace. Made in Chiaravalle MILAN, ITALY

The project, *Displace. Made in Chiaravalle*, was developed³ in 2014 to transform private empty space into a temporary piazza in answer to the local population's request for a public space where they could meet and socialise. The name of the project plays on the double meaning of the word "displace": "to move" and "this place" from an Italianised pronunciation of "this place in the sense of the place where you can feel comfortable and build relationships. This is the aim of the project for a temporary piazza in the suburb of Chiaravalle. The project seeks to create a place for meeting and proposing cultural and social actions, while awaiting the future design of a permanent piazza.

Chiaravalle is situated in the south-east suburbs of the city. It has a population of 1,355 inhabitants and although administratively part of Milan, it feels physically like an independent village. The neighbourhood is surrounded by a protected, green, rural area, the Parco Agricolo Sud, dominated by the mediaeval Abbey of Santa Maria di Rovignano. An abandoned railway separates the village from the Abbey, contributing to its isolated character, and only one bus route links it to the city. In the past Chiaravalle was an important agricultural centre belonging to the Abbey, but with the industrial development of the city it has gradually lost its significance.

3. The Displace piazza was designed by students from the School of Design at the Politecnico di Milano under the guidance of Interior Design teachers, Agnese Rebaglio and Luigi Brenna, with Annalinda De Rosa. It is part of a wider campaign, "Borgomondo per Chiaravalle sostenibile", an urban regeneration project aiming to create a cultural, creative, sustainable district in the city of Milan. The campaign was initiated and promoted by two cultural associations, Imondidelmondo founded by Daniela Rocco, and Terzo Paesaggio conceived by Andrea Perini, with the sponsorship of the Municipality of Milan. In addition to the founders, other entities have supported the initiative in various ways: Fondazione Cariplo (financial contributions), the Politecnico di Milano - Design Faculty (technical sponsor and tutor for the design process), Depur-Depuratore in Nosedo, Locanda Chiaravalle (technical sponsors) and the local enterprise, Strade Bianche, which has made part of its property available for the piazza.

From the outside it is easy to see the place as a functioning rural district, but in reality it is a commuter area, lacking in public and cultural spaces. In answer to this situation Chiaravalle is now living a process of transformation thanks to some active citizens who have decided to move there to enjoy the advantages of living in a country area.

The purpose of the piazza is to accommodate temporary events during the summer and welcome people to a place for relaxing, reading and sharing moments together, and it is intended for the whole community. The aim is to bring a shared project to life that is capable of connecting people and overcoming the divide between some of the local associations.

The arrangement plan for the piazza envisaged about ten items of self-built street furniture that could be repeatedly tailored to contingent requirements: large wooden archways mark the entrance and can also serve to provide covering; chairs, tables, vases, modular furniture and bookshelves can be rearranged to suit the occasion. The new piazza is an attempt to offer the local community an equipped, enjoyable place that compensates for the general lack of services, transport and cultural activities. From a design point of view, the empty spaces offered a stimulating opportunity to co-design significant places under the guidance of expert design.



Displace. Made in Chiaravalle, Milan, Italy, 2014 Courtesy the Displace team.

The construction workshop days.

Meeting with the citizens of the neighborhood at the beginning of the co-design activities.



Night Yard TALLINN, ESTONIA

Night Yard is an interesting example of urban activism in Tallinn, in Estonia. The three-day operation was part of the annual Design Night, and was carried out in the historical market square in the heart of the city, almost like an urban guerrilla action. An installation was set up that recreated the atmosphere of a back garden with grass, cushions, games and a fireplace: a place for resting, reading, meeting friends... The reason underlying this idea was that the square, full of costly

local items for tourists, has lost its identity and lacks an authentic local social life. The project creators, directors and builders are a group of young women, graduates in landscape architecture Aljona Galazan, Karin Bachmann, Merle Karro-Kalberg, Anna-Liisa Unt and Kadri Klementi who transformed the square with just a few elements, allowing local residents to re-appropriate a historical place of meeting and socialisation that had gradually lost its significance.



Õõ_ÕU, Night Yard, Tallinn, Estonia, 2008 © Kadri Klementi.

Atelier Toboggan SAINT-ÉTIENNE, FRANCE

Atelier Toboggan is a workshop to construct an urban slide in the streets of the French city of Saint-Étienne, conceived and organised by designers from the Captain Ludd group (formed by Pierre Brunet Vogel, Paul Buros, Romain Le Liboux and Léo Virieu) with the participation of students from Saint-Étienne College of Art and Design (ESADSE). The aim was to reunite the inhabitants of the Crêt-de-Roch neighbourhood of Saint-Étienne around a shared, do-it-yourself activity on the steps that constitute the main access to the neighbourhood. The activity seeks to act as a trailblazer for a programme of actions for residents who will regularly be invited to take part in small projects to improve the life of the community. The aim however is not only to organise a participatory action, but also a moment of learning and skills exchange between designers and citizens. The workshop, on April 2015, saw the participation of young people and adults in building the components of the slide: the children too contributed to the construction (by drawing, drilling and screwing) under the supervision of their parents.

Around 150 people were able to try out the slide, between 8pm and 11pm, on the evening of its inauguration. The Captain Ludd designers used an interactive, playful approach to establish a shared dialogue among designers and neighbourhood residents on aesthetic, creative and manufacturing notions, with an eye to sustainability. Indeed only waste materials were used for the project (wood and cardboard), which determined its final shape.

Les Vieux Beaux SAINT-ÉTIENNE, FRANCE

The project, called *Les vieux beaux* (the beautiful old ones), took place during the International Biennale design Saint-Étienne 2017. The aim was to investigate and create new scenarios for the transformation of the Jacquard neighbourhood. It was organised in collaboration with the Saint-Étienne City Council and l'EPASE (Local Planning and Development Authority) and was held



TOBOGGAN in the Crêt de Roch staircases, Saint-Étienne, France, 2015 © Captain Ludd

A collective slide to activate the city.



Les Vieux Beaux (the beautiful old ones), Saint-Étienne, France, 2015 © ETC

Playful urban furniture made with upcycled material from municipal stocks.

during the "Croisement" workshop led by Carton Plein and Cité du design, in collaboration with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Carton Plein is an association that emerged in October 2010 as a multidisciplinary team of architects and town planners, psychologists, graphic artists, artists, musicians and photographers.

The first *Les Vieux Beaux* intervention took place in December 2014 when ETC Collective drew up an inventory of neglected or abandoned city street furniture, from which suitable items were subsequently selected for renovation and reuse by Carton Plein. The first prototypes for recycled urban furniture were created during the following months and later exhibited in the International Design Biennale 2015. In addition, the workshop "Croisement", focusing on the production of other kinds of furniture in collaboration with citizens and Biennale visitors.

The objects collected were containers for glass, and school chairs. These containers deteriorate rapidly and when damaged they are stored by the Saint-Étienne City Council in considerable quantities. Now, with the ETC project, they return to a new life as "*les recycleurs*": new street seats that remain faithful to the aesthetics of the initial objects and invite the observer to remember their existence. Although the old school chairs in wood and steel have now disappeared, they constitute part of collective memory and have been recuperated with wooden frames to create "*les redoublés*": recreated seats of various types, from benches to rocking chairs. The project is interesting for the relationship between the ephemeral and sustainability: the recycling of worn-out furniture and the arrangement of these elements in public spaces for a month, in the context of an event (*la Biennale*).



Les Vieux Beaux (the beautiful old ones), Saint-Étienne, France, 2015 © ETC

Playful urban furniture made with upcycled material from municipal stocks.

Skupaj na ploščad! LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Bratovževa ploščad is one of the numerous dormitory areas of Ljubljana that have no life of their own or local identity. Although it can boast numerous paved spaces and green areas, these are desolate, lacking in facilities and unused. Their great potential was noted by two architects from the district, Damjana Hudnik Zaviršek and Špela Nardoni Kovač, who decided to transform a vast asphalt area between the buildings, and start up activities to encourage the neighbourhood residents to come out of their homes and live the shared open space. It is from here that the project derives its name *Skupaj na ploščad!* (Together to the platform!). Their role was to start and co-ordinate activities, prepare the space for events and involve as large a number of locals and volunteers as possible, to guarantee the success of the initiative. The aim was to turn a bare asphalt square into a space for so-

cialising and growing plants. To achieve this two kinds of activities were started up: in the first place, the residents were involved in designing and creating street furniture, which was entirely lacking. Secondly, theme events were organised to facilitate socialisation (cinema projections, an organised exploration of the place using all the senses, a sculpture laboratory, the exchange of unused toys, a knitting laboratory, a herb-sowing session etc.).

Thanks to the idea of the two architects it was possible to re-establish, or at least reinforce, the lost sense of community and overcome the general tendency towards individualisation in Slovenian society, reminding people about the old habits of meeting each other in the shared open spaces. By encouraging people to go out of their homes and interact with their neighbours the programme of events contributed to re-establishing social connections between residents. Everything started from the bottom, with no support from the authorities except for minimal city council funding and the issue of permits for the event organisation: a demonstration of how the power to change spaces and habits also rests in the hands of the community itself.



Skupaj na ploščad! (Together to the platform!), Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2016 © Blaž Jamšek/Photoarchive UIRS.

Pupils from the primary school OŠ Danila Kumar evaluated their open spaces at Bratovževa ploščad and listed their wishes for the future.

The initiative was then extended to the surrounding area. In order to call attention to other open spaces inside and outside the neighbourhood, walking trails were marked out on the ground linking residents with the surrounding countryside and with some local agricultural producers who occupied the area long before the district was built up in the seventies. The aim of the trails is to encourage exchange with these farmers, among whom there is still an attitude of refusal towards the "new arrivals" in the neighbourhood. Breaking down these mental barriers would benefit both sides. The simplicity and generic nature of these marked trails make them an easy way of stimulating residents to explore their surrounding area, one that is applicable anywhere.

4. Make the public space playful

Fun is a well-known concept, anyone can imagine a large number of playful situations and activities: some may involve a lot of people of all ages, others may involve people with certain characteristics (age, sex, personal tastes, etc.). A fun activity triggers pleasurable feelings, so public space can be made a fun place, indeed, it should be the place of preference for pleasurable activities and, above all, for social interaction outside the home.

So, a playful fun public space can be associated with a game function, a place equipped with structures that make it suitable for play activities: a basketball court for teenagers, a playground for



little children, tables for board games or cards for older people. Whatever the fun activity, play brings people together and the presence of play in public spaces is implicitly requested by local communities.

ReNewTown pilot project
VELENJE, SLOVENIA

Should the community nucleus be missing, there are projects that intervene on a social level to create new ties between the inhabitants of a city, as well as renewing the urban space. This is the case in Velenje, a town in the north-east of Slovenia which, during the second world war under the socialist regime of Tito, was transformed from a little village into a large mining town. At the time, the urban nucleus was built with the idea of creating "a town in a park" and giving the miners a healthy, green environment after their work underground. In accordance with the socialist spirit, numerous volunteers made their contribution to the construction of housing, infrastructure and administrative buildings. Nowadays, Velenje is a town of about 25,000 inhabitants and was selected by *ReNewTown*, a European project that deals with urban regeneration in post-socialist cities, to host a pilot project funded by the European Union for the renewal of an old public area. The *Velenje pilot project* took place in a very precise area of intervention: an abandoned playground of about 3386 sq.m, situated between 6 apartment blocks in via Kozeljskega in the local community of Gorica, destined to be transformed into a garden with a new playground. The project was designed to involve local residents, recovering the socialist tradition of solidarity and mutual help to bring local people together again in a shared activity.

The project had two main aims: to create a new, multifunctional, public space to be used by people of all ages and all social groups, and to create a strong neighbourhood community, by developing a multi-generational dialogue during the designing stage.

The operation was started in 2011, with a preparatory stage of context and target analysis, and completed in the summer of 2012, with 64 volunteers from the neighbourhood working for 1567 hours between the 9th and 13th July. Although the project was not developed in collaboration with the end-users, the participation of local people and citizen associations was considerable. *ReNewTown* brought together a large number of people with the shared aim of improving the appearance of their neighbourhood, making the transformation process itself fun, not just the end result of the playground reconstruction, and facilitating the creation of new social ties that will bring long-term mutual benefit.

Misunderstanding
GRAZ, AUSTRIA

Where does the inspiration for a touch of fun in public space come from? Architecture and design are capable of intervening playfully, varying colours, shapes and perspectives to amaze the observer and break with the dictates of convention. This was the challenge faced by a group of students during an academic design workshop in Austria, in the city of Graz, using as a reference a potentially amusing central theme to be transformed into a project. The idea of creating playful installa-

tions in urban space was developed during the "Projektarbeit" course, in the Master programme in Exhibition Design, based on the theme of misunderstanding (*Missverständnis* in German). *Misunderstanding* is seen as the result of an interference in communication between the sender and receiver of a message. So, the students analysed possible interferences and developed 11 settings dealing with a wide spectrum of actions: from imperceptible changes in common habits to absurd moments when oral signals are taken too literally. The initiative organisers were Anke Strittmatter (architect, town planner and set designer), Erika Thümmel (curator and set designer) and students in the Master programme: Bettina Bigler, Eva Brede, Sabrina Dojlidko, Elisabeth Eichberger, Christin Grabner, Kathleen Grüner, Katja Kraiss, Binela Licina, Sabine Pichler, Stefanie Wiesenhofer and Astrid Zawodnik. The workgroups dealt with all stages of the project, from the definition of concepts to the technical development of the projects, and the communication of events in the public space. *Misunderstanding* was set up in June 2012 in various central areas of Graz; every installation proposed a different interaction with passers-by, ranging from digital communication, to analogue communication through cups and threads hanging on a tree. The installations were explained graphically and people were free to interact and experiment with the installations.



Misunderstanding,
Graz, Austria, 2012
© Team Misunderstanding



T A L K Modell,
Graz, Austria, 2012
© Team Misunderstanding

ReNewTown, Velenje,
Slovenia, 2014
© Matej Vranič

The public space before
the implementation
of the project.

—
Volunteers at work





Everybody's a champion!
Saint-Étienne, France,
2015 © Charlotte Pierot

Introduction of bike polo, a sport using public space as a playground, to the inhabitants and users of Carnot-Manufacture district.

Everybody's a Champion! SAINT-ÉTIENNE, FRANCE

Everybody's a Champion! is an initiative that seeks to build, together with the town residents, the future of physical activities in urban contexts. The idea emerged in a larger, international event called People Olympics, a game with the theme of social innovation based on collective physical competitions, in which every city participating in the initiative enters a team of citizens (which may include as many as 10,000 people) whose physical activities are recorded on a portable electronic device, and their physiological data monitored. The results of the recordings are then compared with those of the teams from the other cities. The aim of *Everybody's a Champion!* (in French, Tous Champions!) is to promote physical exercise in urban areas through both mainstream sports, like football or basketball, and more "underground" ones such as bike-polo and street-golf. At the same time, a further aim is to organise prototyping and co-creating workshops for temporary facilities with the event participants, and together to imagine and explore new scenarios for physical exercise in the city.

Everybody's a champion! has taken place twice a year since May 2014 in the French city of Saint-Étienne, with the participation of over 250 people in the first edition and 11 proposed activities. The event owes its initial idea to the association, Cité du design, in collaboration with People Olympics, the city of Saint-Étienne, Saint-Étienne metropolitan area, OpenFactorySainté, OpenSCOP, Laboratory of Physiology and Exercise, and the Jean Monnet University. It takes place in the creative district of Manufacture Plaine Achille, where the presence and interaction of a variety of creative figures is useful to the functioning of the workshops: students of design and engineering, start-up incubators, fab lab managers and several agencies. The activities all take place outside, except for the workshops held at the fab lab and the Cité du design, and participation is administered informally: open to all, with the possibility of enrolling for multiple activities. The level of participation is monitored through surveys on paper. Design plays an important role in the success of the event: in first place, implicitly through the use of co-design methodology (ideating and prototyping workshops) in which participants are helped by designers and craftspeople both in the elaboration of new sports infrastructure for urban areas, and in imagining and discussing new future scenarios. From a town-planning point of view, the initiative triggers stimulating thought on the way sports activities can influence, or depend on, the urban infrastructure (illumination and street furniture).

CriticalCity
MILAN, ITALY

Changes that renew public space can also be triggered by the games themselves. Can a city be transformed by playful actions? A group of newly graduated students in Milan tried to do just this: Matteo Battaglia and Augusto Pirovano, later joined by Davide Portanome and Matteo Uguzzoni, had the idea of organising *CriticalCity*, an urban game in which the participants have to complete a creative mission to improve the city of Milan, especially more poorly-served areas and the city outskirts. The idea emerged in 2007, inspired by Jamie Lerner's Urban Acupuncture theory applied to the Brazilian city of Curitiba to resolve cer-

tain urban challenges. After a year of development, the *criticalcity.org* website was activated in 2008 and the first nocturnal event, *CriticalTrophy*, was launched in Milan. With time, the initiative spread to other Italian cities like Rome, Bologna and Florence, and a smaller version was started in Modena, Ancona and Brindisi. Since 2009 the project has been part of the Focus co-operative (which the creators of the game have also joined). However, the turning point came in 2010 when, with funding from the Fondazione Cariplo, the final version of the game was set up and renamed *CriticalCity Upload*. The first season of the game lasted one year and attracted around 5,000 players for a total of over 800 creative missions throughout Italy; four years later *CriticalCity Upload* ended with an event in Milan that attracted 13,901 players who completed an amazing 21,064 actions.

The creative missions concern various types of interventions, for example: "guerrilla-gardening" style actions like tree planting; organising convivial events on neglected roundabouts; organising flash-mobs or other socialisation facilitators. The main idea of *CriticalCity* is based on the creation of "local hubs", meaning sensitive areas where it would be opportune to accomplish missions that could be of benefit to the players. Such hubs are usually located in poorly-served or run-down areas, which are transformed through numerous creative actions, set in motion by the players themselves who can start up the process of activating the hub and making it official when three actions have been accomplished in the same place. Anybody can participate in the initiative: the first mission must be completed in the home of the player, who then acts alone in public space (stations, neglected parks, town squares etc.), creating connections between these sensitive places and developing positive interactions with people, especially immigrants, to reduce social marginalisation. The whole process is documented by photos and/or videos, and the hubs are marked on a map in a continuous, close relationship between real and virtual.

Public space is fun: "game design" is an emerging branch of design and aims to facilitate interactions between people through play in a stimulating, educational and fun way. In a game like *CriticalCity* it is necessary for the designer to play a director's role, generally narrating the game and then, more specifically, design becomes a tool for gathering consensus and guiding players actions with participatory practices.

The initiative depends on bottom-up actions and this is its particular strength: there are no specific, or particularly ambitious objectives to achieve on the part of the organisers, it is the citizens, when they become players, who are free to choose where to act and how. The game is implicitly a vehicle of values and virtuous actions that can bring about positive changes on various fronts: from the personal point of view of the single individual to the urban level of an entire community.



Critical City, Treviglio (Bergamo), Italy, 2014. © Rita Pidkivka

Creating new ways for waiting the bus in Treviglio.



Critical City, Milan, Italy, 2014. © S&V

A welcome committee for strangers at the Central Station in Milan.

In the heterogeneous panorama of scenarios dealt with, an idea of multifaceted "playfulness" emerges that takes into consideration various connotations of the term. Playful public space is functional and responds directly to the recreational needs of its users, making play and sports activities possible with a firm eye to social cohesion and with relational benefits for the various components of the community. Playful public space however is also what we think of from a different approach: it is fun and it is able to strike citizens on an emotional level, arousing positive sensations of amazement or joy and mirth. A playful, fun design action is undoubtedly an effective way of renovating a space and activating new flows towards it.

5. Make the public space domestic

The term domestic comes from the Latin word "domesticus", derived from "domus" meaning house, or home. From this it is easy to see that the word "home" embraces many concepts that go beyond the physical place of inhabitation. Everything that belongs to the home environment is domestic: the spaces, the activities that take place in the home, the relationships, the emotions we feel when we find ourselves in a familiar environment. Making a public space more domestic implies acting on its spaces, qualities and equipment to arouse positive sensations in those who go there: a sense of familiarity and intimacy, security and comfort; and maybe organising special activities for the same purpose.

One of these could be the pleasure of reading a good book, a moment of relaxation that often occurs in one's own home after buying a new book or borrowing one from a library. Tina Popovič, event organiser for the 2010 Ljubiana Festival, found herself queuing for a concert with some friends when she realised that the public space lacked interesting things to do.

Knjižnica pod krošnjami LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Knjižnica pod krošnjami (Library under the Treetops) meaning an open-air library in the city. To facilitate the realisation of her idea, Tina and two other women founded a non-governmental organisation called "Divja misel" (a translation of "La Pensée sauvage", in English "The Savage Mind", title of a book by the famous French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss), which then went on to set up various cultural projects on Slovenia.

Tina's initiative attracted the interest of the Slovenian Tourist office, which recognised it as an opportunity to develop something in public space that would be capable of attracting new tourists, particularly as recent urban and architectural renovations in the city centre had led to the creation of many new, but rather empty, public spaces. The support from the tourism office enabled Tina Popovič's initiative to develop and achieve its aim. Library under the Treetops is not merely a library, it has the ambitious aim of spreading a reading culture in Slovenia and attracting users who would not otherwise visit a library of their own accord. The solution lies in the inversion of the norm: in taking the library to the people and creating a cosy corner of public space in which to pause, read a book, and socialise. In fact Library under the Treetops does not offer a lending service, but enables people to conveniently enjoy an external environment and encourages interaction among readers.

The libraries keep to the opening hours of the places they are in, and stay open from May to September; the books are donated by the publishers, but a dedicated box is also provided in which people can donate their own books to the project.

The first library was set up in Tivoli park, the main green area in Ljubljana, followed by four others scattered around the city (at the Castle, Congress Square, Tabor park and along the Ljubljana river). The initiative was so successful that it started to spread to other cities like Izola, Polhov Gradec, Ribnica, Nova Gorica/Gorica, Kanal ob Soči and Mala Planina. As it expanded it became necessary to define an image that made the initiative recognisable in any location. At first, furniture was purchased in a shop, but later it was entrusted to a designer, Andraz Tarman, who designed shelving, partitions and notice boards. As well as creating an image, the products were designed to be easily accessible to everybody and adaptable to fit user needs. The management of the spaces is entrusted to numerous volunteers, often people who came into contact with the initiative and have since become keen supporters. Various commercial enterprises also collaborate, providing space for storing the furniture during closing hours.



Knjižnica pod Krošnjami (Library under the Treetops), Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2010/ongoing © Matej Perko

A book to read, a place to sit. In Ljubljana city center Park Zvezda

Les Apéros Urbains BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

What happens when a city lacks animation? This was the case in Brussels, in 2004, when François Lafontaine and Virginie Cwajagenbaum had the idea of organising aperitifs in public places where people could gather and socialise after work. The first "Les Apéros Urbains" (The Urban Aperitifs) was organised in 2005 through the social media and attracted the participation of 25 people. Starting as an informal event, on the fringes of legality, it gradually grew until the organisers had to face problems with the police due to the lack of authorisation to use public land. So, from then on, the initiative had to seek city-council backing in order to develop. Now the facebook page for Les Apéros Urbains counts around 37,800 followers and the event takes place in various places in Brussels, every Friday evening from 30th May onwards, from 7pm to 11 pm.



Les Apéros Urbains, Brussels, Belgium, 2005-ongoing

Les Apéros Urbains attracts professionals from all over Brussels to gather on Fridays in magnificent places in the city.

PleinOPENair BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

PleinOPENair (outOPENdoors) is an annual festival of open-air cinema, free of charge, that explores little known or abandoned corners of the city, following an idea by two local associations: Cinema Nova and City Mine(d). Founded in 1997, Cinema Nova is a film theatre in Brussels orientated towards showing independent films and videos, which has gradually become a point of reference for alternative, rather than mainstream, audiovisual arts in Belgium and abroad. The association consists of 15 members and hundreds of others who regularly serve as volunteers.

City Mine(d) is an international network of individuals and groups involved in local actions within the city. Through debates, artistic projects and campaigns it brings questions generated in local neighbourhoods to the attention of a wider political arena (also at European level).

The aim of the *PleinOPENair* initiative is to go beyond a traditional setting to reach a wider public, offering a programme in line with the social changes of the moment. Every year since 1997 the festival has proposed a specific theme, in line with the film programme, that tackles such urban issues as the privatisation of public space, insecurity, or the sustainability of cities. In the same period as the film projections, a series of cultural and artistic activities are organised in the city in support of the festival programme (debates, guided walks, musical performances and so on).



PleinOPENair, Brussels, Belgium, 1997/ongoing © cinema Nova

As mentioned previously, making public space more domestic may involve multiple factors: a physical domestic environment; an activity that usually takes place at home; arousing positive feelings of familiarity and intimacy. For example, we could imagine a space with a homelike feel, or the garden or courtyard at home with a dinner table laid ready for guests, prepare the dishes in the kitchen at home and serve them to a group of people who wish to share a meal in an informal atmosphere.

Restaurant Day HELSINKI, FINLAND

Restaurant Day is a culinary carnival that takes place four times a year, during which anyone may open their own restaurant for one day. Many are the people who organise or go to eat in one of these pop-up restaurants just for fun, to share new culinary experiences and enjoy with other people the spaces where we live our everyday lives.

The event was conceived by three friends, Antti Tuomola, Olli Sirén and Timo Santala, as a revolutionary act to contrast the demanding bureaucratic procedure required to open a restaurant. They had the idea of setting up a bicycle-bar in which to sell drinks and tapas, inviting friends to do the same. To bring the idea of *Restaurant Day* into being, the first volunteers created an association, with one of the creators, Timo Santala, as managing director.

The first *Restaurant Day* was held in Finland on 21st May 2011. It involved 13 cities and 45 restaurants, but it rapidly spread to other countries: the 15th February 2015 edition saw the participation of 1,375 restaurants spread over 34 countries. Altogether, from 2011 to 2015, *Restaurant Day* attracted 17,400 restaurants, 70,000 restaurateurs and about 2 million clients. Anyone can take part in the initiative, just enrol on the website and decide on a menu and the number of people you can catered for. After that, give vent to your creativity: the name of your restaurant, the furniture and furnishings, how to serve the food, which friends to draw in to lend a hand. The location is a key element: in summer, the ideal places are parks, courtyards and street corners; in winter, houses, offices and other places under cover are preferable. For one day, cooking enthusiasts have the opportunity to open the restaurant of their dreams, moving rapidly from conceiving to achieving.

A small act of rebellion has given rise to a worldwide public event: as well as the Finland Prize, *Restaurant Day* was nominated Cultural Act of the Year 2011, Food Phenomenon of the year 2011 by Gloria food and wine magazine, and Best Event 2012 in the Best of Helsinki competition.



Knjižnica pod krošnjami (library under the treetops), Nova Gorica, Slovenia © Tina Popović

Reading tour around Slovenia.



Restaurant Day, Helsinki, Finland, 2011/ongoing
Image courtesy of Restaurant Day/Tuomas Sarpara

A popular concept in Restaurant day is selling food out of your window using a basket for the orders and deliveries.



Restaurant Day, Helsinki, Finland, 2011/ongoing
Image courtesy of Restaurant Day/Heidi Uutela

Ville Hulkkonen setting up the Truffan Tyrnibaari, a bar that sells foods using the Finnish superfood, sea buckthorn.

Making a public space more domestic brings various benefits to the single individual, who finds himself in a place similar in some ways to his home environment, and therefore in a situation that is psychologically and physically ideal: a condition that may also bring benefits to the whole community, if applied to the world of work. This intuition has been understood and applied for a long time in co-working environments: places that offer a suitable space for working outside the home, but that are equipped with many of the comforts typical of the domestic environment, such as a place for cooking and eating meals or a quiet place for relaxing. However, some people have thought of extending their experience of co-working to co-living, giving a team the possibility of coming together to live in a shared space and thus developing projects in a shorter time and a more intensive way. One young couple decided to create such a space in a locality that lacked anything of this kind, but which is very interesting for its historical and social context: the city of Matera in the south of Italy, famous for its "Sassi di Matera", ancient cave-like stone structures considered to be one of the earliest human settlements in Italy (dating back to 7000 BC).

Casa Netural MATERA, ITALY

Capital city for the region of Basilicata, with a population of 60,000 people, Matera is a UNESCO heritage site and has been declared European Capital of Culture for 2019. As well its cultural interest, it is also a sensitive area due to the economic problems and backwardness suffered by many cities in Southern Italy. Given these premises, in 2012 and at their own expense, Andrea Paoletti and Mariella Stella set up "Casa Netural", a new kind of co-working environment inside the Sassi, which soon turned into a multifunctional public space. Andrea and Mariella also established numerous collaborations with other innovative local and national companies and entities, such as Impact Hub in Bari (another co-working environment), Fred (social book-sharing network), Gnammo (social-eating platform) and many others. In order to open and manage the space they founded an association and put together a team of 10 young professional designers, photographers, managers and tourist guides: a multidisciplinary group that animates the space and looks after the guests and their needs. Anybody can use the *Casa Netural* for various purposes ranging from event organisation to work, for teaching or learning: indeed the space has been designed to be open in the sense of sharing and collaborating, but also open architecturally: a 80sq.m structured open-space with alternate work-stations and places for relaxing, a kitchen and a panoramic terrace. The project and communication have been supervised by Andrea, an architect specialised in the design of

co-working spaces all over the world, and now studying a modular, flexible system for interiors. The communication material too has been carefully designed so as to unite all the activities under the same image. On a designing level however, the main focus was on participatory design including co-design methodology and tools, with a community-centred approach. The aim of Casa Netural is not only to facilitate new connections between people, collaboration and the exchange of skills, but rather it seeks to be a generator of innovation and growth for the area, inspiring people to change; a neutral space that hosts relation flows and interconnections.

The main services offered by *Casa Netural* are three: Co-working, with a membership card like similar services; Co-living, addressing entrepreneurs, self-employed professionals and start-up groups who wish to develop projects quickly; and finally the Dream Incubator, a consultancy for citizens with innovative ideas who wish to transform them into business projects.

The importance of an initiative like this is to act as a bridge between citizens with dreams and the world of start-ups and enterprises, helping to transform the entrepreneurial intuition of a single individual into an object of public interest for the community; this is possible thanks to the multidisciplinary of the team managed by Casa Netural.



Casa Netural, Matera, Italy, 2012
© benatural



M3 Unblock it!, Dolinka Służewiecka WARSAW, POLAND

In this case it is a co-working environment that acquires domestic characteristics, but is the process possible in reverse? The physical home environment can become the object of study, analysis, debate and exchange of ideas about the future of public space. This was the idea that came to the Polish association, "Odblokuj" (Unblock: Association for the Improvement of the Living Environment), consisting of a group of architects, designers, artists, photographers, graphic artists and sociologists

working on the development of multidisciplinary urban projects. The association set up the project, M3 Unblock it!, a platform for spatial and artistic activities, created inside a typical two-room apartment for three people built in a residential area of Warsaw after the war. The residential apartment blocks were called "Służew nad Dolinką".

The association symbolically transferred a residential model typical of the seventies to a public space, the structure of which became a frame for numerous public events, exhibitions and meetings linked to cultural, architectural, historical and natural themes. The initiators of the idea presented the history of one of the most characteristic residential complexes in Warsaw and the visions for its future. They started a debate trying to answer the question of whether, 30 years after its creation, it has been possible to create a neighbourhood; they reflected on what the area might look like in 2030, and above all, they concentrated on the present, trying to re-launch the valley area.

The interior designers demonstrated some possible ways of restructuring a two-room flat, adapting it to the requirements of various generations of residents. In collaboration with the local residents, who provided the books, a neighbourhood library was also created, in the living room.

Exhibitions associated with the architecture of the area and its past were also organised: series of photographs concerning the space and inhabitants of the valley. The presence of the M3 apartment in the Służewiecka valley was also intended to trigger debate about improvements in the quality of life in urban districts and the use of green areas. Local citizens were involved in the development and creation of the pavilion, as well as becoming the main beneficiaries of the creative workshops and the debates proposed. The initiative was important on a social level to bring local people together in shared activities.

Domesticity is that quality of space that makes users feel they are in a situation that is in some way similar to their own homes. Feelings of belonging, wellbeing, relaxation, fun, happiness and warmth are awakened in comfortable, safe places, where it is possible to enjoy and share pleasurable leisure activities like cooking, eating, listening to music, reading a book or watching a film. The private sphere of the home and the public sphere of outside space are two dimensions subject to constant comparison and exchange to satisfy all the needs of individuals.

Concluding thoughts

As we can see in the case studies presented in this chapter, the strategies used in prototyping the projects vary. They can be classified on the basis of their impact on the place where they occur and on the communities taking part in the realization of the projects themselves. As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, time is a decisive factor in the relationship between the prototyped projects, their final realization and the involvement of local communities.

What is interesting is the distinction between the terms temporary, ephemeral and provisional: "Temporary is on the border between provisional and ephemeral. Ephemeral is all that has a short life, generally of one day. The term is very often used in the field of biology to describe what is born, grows and dies within 24 hours, leaving little trace of itself due to its intrinsic nature. Provisional is

an event originally intended for a medium-short term but which, for various factors whether external or internal to its provisional nature in itself, moves into the medium-long term. Provisional refers to all that substitutes what is real, appearing as an expedient in the place of reality, which is reproduced, shown, represented. The temporary takes certain characteristics from these two extremes, building its own autonomy: like the ephemeral, it has a time limit, but it might have the opportunity of living longer than initially foreseen, of extending its own life-cycle, dying to be born again somewhere else and leaving traces of its own passage. At the same time, it shares some characteristics with the provisional: although it maintains its own qualities and does not appear as a mere substitute for reality. It generates added value to the existing world. The temporary is developed with a precise, programmed objective, with a scheduled time horizon and with well-identified aims." (Fassi, 2012)

Some cases represent a sort of test, to generally try out the installation in question, the main objective of which is to involve the local residents and communities who live in those particular urban spaces. Other cases can already be described as nearly complete accomplishments of their projects: they are not just initial tests but almost full renderings in which the communities are thoroughly involved. It is often the end-users themselves who build and set up installations and equipment, maybe under the guidance of facilitators such as individual designers or groups of designers who steer the process.

Finally, some projects may leave an inheritance that is still more important than the initial temporary action carried out in the public space in question. These are projects that can be considered successful: best practices in which the facilitators have focused their task and at the end of the set-up stage have left the project in the hands of local communities who manage to guide and run it. In the next chapter we shall investigate the idea of inheritance more fully, especially the sustainability of public space projects characterized by a bottom-up process.

When talking about temporary installations however, it is important to remember that even when the structure can be physically dismantled the memory of that particular spot may be permanent. Duration is the mark that a project, a place or an event leaves on the memory of the users, even in the case of temporary structures and temporary uses that may be characterized by a longer-lasting permanence. Such is the case of temporary projects, which were created to revitalize and reclaim unused zones of the city but which then trigger long-running processes that end up leaving an indelible mark on the city, on the space and on the uses of the site. For this reason we like to speak of temporary structures and uses but permanent memory.

M3 Unblock it!
A platform of spatial and artistic activities, Poland, 2011

The aim of the project was the symbolic transfer of a model of a typical '70s flat to the public space.

The depiction of the M3 flat in the open space was supposed to provoke a discussion on the improvement of life quality and the use of green areas.



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Cité du design, Saint-Étienne

Cité du design Saint-Étienne

How to make bottom-up initiatives viable and sustainable?

The Cité du design is a platform for innovation, research, advanced education, economical development and promotion of art and design supported by the City of Saint-Étienne, the Saint-Étienne Metropole, the Rhone-Alpes Region, and the State (Ministry of Culture).

The Cité du design and the Saint-Étienne Higher School of Art and Design have formed an EPCC (public institution for cultural cooperation) since 2005, a legal tool combining the cultural and economic aspects of design. At the heart of a Living Lab, the Cité du design focuses on innovation through uses and social mutations.

It is the driving force of the local, national, and international development of a territory, Saint-Étienne, UNESCO City of design.

“Human communities have tremendous and inherent self-healing abilities. Though usually invisible, the mechanisms of social cohesion characterising them are very powerful and can enable communities to regenerate after a shock through the re-contruction of the social structures that foster and support its survival in a new environment ⁴”.

Public space planning has ceased to be an exclusively specialist’s territory. It has become the subject of citizens’ debates in a large number of European cities. Residents, associations, shopkeepers, urban planning experts, local councillors—all engage together to define a collective space in which individual needs and practices will fuse into a common project. How can these initiatives be made viable? How can communities organise to implement those actions?

The meaning of the French word ‘*communauté*’ differs from its English counterpart ‘community’, which naturally conveys the notion of ‘empowerment’. While the French term is thought in relation to the concept of ‘nation’, in the sense of national community, the Anglo-Saxon political tradition has given to ‘communities’ that of an organized micro-society.

The French word ‘*commun*’ refers to the totality of goods shared by a group of people. It actualised into ‘*communaux*’, the communal lands that prevailed in Europe until the 18th century. These communal lands consisted of parts of the village land that were not individually owned. They were de facto communal—that is they were held in common by all inhabitants. Often described as “*vain and vague* ⁵”, they were composed of paths, ditches and hedges, diverse areas of woods and moors, and sometimes of a river, or even, though more rarely, of a pond. While they sometimes provided villagers with their only source of pasturage for livestock and wood for fuel, they were also open to the most deprived people, allowing them to raise a cow or a sheep for their basic food needs. With enclosure conducted by the State these common lands have now almost disappeared. However the concept of the common (in the sense of that which is common) is recently being re-evaluated with the rise of the collaborative economy, also called the sharing economy. In their last book, *Common. Essay on revolution in the 21st century* ⁶, Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval re-define the concept of the common in view of the contemporary enclosure of the web and extend its meaning to those of cooperation, co-production, and collaboration.

Economist Olivier Pastré ⁷, who champions bottom-up economy, defends the principle of subsidiarity, according to which the responsibility of a public action—when necessary—has to be handed over/entrusted to the competent authority the closest to those who are directly concerned by this action. This socio-political principle was first conceptualised by German philosopher Althusius, who defined hierarchy as support rather than supremacy. The hierarchical order should not intervene unless mobilised by the next lower social body having failed to solve a problem on its own. This ascending organisation of power is in complete

opposition with the orthodox model of task delegation controlled by the highest policy-making spheres. It is a principle which not only ensures that those who are concerned are not disconnected from the public decision-making process but which also empowers individuals at each social level for their capacity to find the solution that is the most relevant to their needs. In short the principle of subsidiarity aims at determining the level of intervention that is most relevant.

This third part collects projects implemented by civil society actors (residents, students, associations, artists, concept designers, etc.) who have transformed public spaces and contributed to restore and generate social cohesion within them. Challenging the city scale is not only the modification of green spaces, abandoned buildings, or neglected neighbourhoods, it can also mean—in line with the digital common that are the collaborative interfaces or platforms—inventing virtual versions of the city we all live in. Thus allowing the actors of these changes to design the collective services of the city of the future.

1. When local communities take on the requalification of green areas

Urban green areas come first in the regeneration process of public spaces because they allow a more spontaneous and immediate community-based engagement. Perfect for leisure or breaks, they can also be used for actions targeted towards urban sustainable development such as composting, gardening, recycling and sorting, or mulching, etc. Community gardens are spaces where people meet and can get informed on issues related to food and health. The experience of sharing and environmental learning take shape through collaborative initiatives in which communities can reclaim their place within the neighbourhood they inhabit.

Chestnut Park
CIESZYN, POLAND

The redevelopment of *Chestnut Park*, a town park in Cieszyn in Poland, is an urban renewal project illustrating new design and conception dynamics. Rarely used by people, the park had become an abandoned urban space—most likely because of lack of maintenance and renovation. In order to restore its lost conviviality, the City of Cieszyn initiated public consultation workshops. And in 2012, an exhibition entitled *Where to play?* and showing drawings of kids’ playgrounds triggered a series of questions on playground spaces in the city. It also was the occasion to raise awareness of the park’s future. This first event was followed by the creation of a working group—composed of urban residents, town representatives and designers from *Pracownia K studio*—in charge of answering the following question: *What and where can we play in Cieszyn?* To analyse the qualities of Chestnut Park, residents and consultation workshop participants were asked to draw the site from memory. The aim was to discriminate the most important areas of the park from those that were unacknowledged. To compare

4 Servigne and Stevens, *Comment tout peut s’effondrer. Petit manuel de collapsologie à l’usage des générations présentes*, 2015, éditions du Seuil, coll. « Anthropocène ». In this work, (How everything can collapse. A short guide to collapsology for present generations), Servigne and Stevens propose an interdisciplinary study of current crisis phenomena and the

possible exit strategies, starting with a new *vivre ensemble* (modes of living together) based on local communities.

5 Ces terres dites “vaines et vagues” <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/communaux/>

6 Pierre Dardot, Christian Laval, *Commun. Essai sur la révolution au XXI^e siècle*, Paris, La Découverte, 2014.

7 Olivier Pastré, French banker and economist, and author of “*Repenser l’économie – L’économie bottom-up, La sortie de crise est entre nos mains*”, Paris, Fayard, 2013 (*Rethinking economy – The bottom-up economy. Crisis exit is in your own hands*)

the drawings with reality, walks in the park were then organised. This exercise revealed flaws since the park was not really adapted to the young kids and the elderly people who used it. Those discussions led to the definition of four different zones that could meet the present and future needs of the park's users: sport, nature, culture and relaxation. The town council took care of the installation works (benches, play areas, electricity and water supplying). Prototypes were realized and installed in the park to get feedback from users and to gradually improve their pertinence and suitability. The medium-term objective is to add new equipment that would be designed in collaboration with local associations and NGOs.



Chestnut park, Cieszyn, Poland, 2013
It was the first natural playground for children in Cieszyn.



Chestnut Park renovation process proves the necessity of a constant dialogue between the different actors of an urban site, whether they be users or founders, in order to plan and carry out a viable long-term project⁸. Developed by a multidisciplinary team made of residents, city representatives, designers and local associations, this initiative has addressed what should be at the core of preoccupations: the reality of the park's uses, the specifics of its local environment and of its users (residents, professionals, and so on). The whole process was based on a constant dialogue with the public authorities (two representatives of the city council have been involved from the initiation phase of the project). Thanks to the discussions that took place, a long-term and economically viable future for the park has been made possible.

⁸ It is interesting to underline that the project was conducted under the supervision of design studio Pracownia K., which played a crucial role in the conception and implementation phases of the project. It generated ideas and forms for future realisations while taking into account budget constraints.

The Walled Garden LONDON, UK

Carried out with similar community mobilisation, *The Walled Garden* project is a communal garden in Bedfords Park in the Borough of Havering in East London. Initiated to help marginalized local residents, the project started in 2011 when Thomas Ermacora, founder of *Clear Village*, visited the site. Convinced by the potentialities of a place that had been badly neglected over the last 12 years, he partnered with Havering Council, owner of the place, and local community group *The Friends of Bedfords Park*, to transform the garden into a food-growing space that could address some of the area's most urgent social problems: obesity, a rapidly ageing population seriously challenging the health care system, low-frequency physical activity, etc.

The Walled Garden develops targeted programmes for disadvantaged people such as long-term unemployed, older people, disabled people or deprived teens. Activities mainly focus on alimentation, and their aim is to improve the health, well-being, and life expectancy of the people in the area. *The Walled Garden* experiments with a model of shared garden space aimed at being replicated in other places facing similar issues.

Thanks to a major grant from the *Local Food programme*, restoration works began in 2013. While historical walls and buildings were repaired, a toilet block, a kitchen and teaching rooms were built. About 6,000 square metres of unused space was transformed into a growing space.

At the same time, the project team organised a host of events and public meals to promote the garden and engage the local community. These included a *Big Dig*, a *Big Lunch*, a *Midsummer's Night Event*, and many others. In addition, the team worked together with local partner organisations to develop targeted programmes for beneficiary groups, such as training programmes for unemployed, social activities with an emphasis on physical exercise and well-being for older people, and the *Grow Cook Eat programme* to raise awareness about healthy eating habits among deprived school children, and thus reduce their risk of developing obesity.

Design has played a two-fold role in the project. The conception of the garden was based on a co-creative approach. In September 2011, a *Garden Angels Lab* brought together dozens of volunteers to design an initial vision for the garden. And in March 2013 a series of Co-Design Labs were held for local people to provide ideas on how to re-design the garden. The ideas were then reworked by professionals and resulted in an overall plan for the garden. The different programmes and activities in the garden have been developed through the same participatory design process. Co-design Labs were organized for volunteers, schools, and organisations representing the elderly and unemployed people. The aim of each lab was to identify with participants how the garden could address their specific needs and requirements.

After this design phase, *The Walled Garden* project became viable thanks to the support of *The Friends of Bedfords Park*, a voluntary group of local people who promoted the garden among the local population. About twenty committed volunteers regularly contribute to gardening and maintenance works.



The Walled garden, London, UK, 2014
© Thomas Ermacora



One of the main assets of the project was its capacity to coordinate public intervention and local involvement. It has been developed in close collaboration with the Council owning the Walled Garden and through the teamwork of both users and partner organisations—a synergy that offers significant advantages. The project addresses the needs and aspirations of all participants at all levels, whether individual or administrative as for its strategic management. If this collaborative approach has received large support and secured significant funding, its inclusive nature slowed its implementation: developing a thorough understanding of the needs and possibilities of each stakeholder and organising a monitoring process which may involve all participants at every step of the project requires a lot of time. This questions the organisation of community-based urban regeneration as well as the upstream anticipation of partner contribution. What are the relevant protocols for collaborative actions? How can design interplay with public policy? Can we imagine our authorities being redesigned^{9?}

⁹ The Research Department of Saint-Étienne Cité du design is conducting the Authorities and Design research programme, which studies how citizens reclaim the space of political representations.

¹⁰ The first programme—'Human Cities, reclaiming public spaces' (2010–2012)—worked on the regeneration of public spaces for urban communities. The second—'Feeding Milan, energies for change' (2010–ongoing)—aims at shortening food chains in the Milanese region. Both research programmes (one European, the other national) have resulted in the conception of a first prototype, before the Politecnico invested 12,000 euros to implement the garden.

Coltivando. The convivial garden at Politecnico di Milano MILAN, ITALY

The *Coltivando* project is not as dependent on municipal policies as the former ones since it is situated in the more limited space of a university campus. It is a shared garden experiment conceived within the framework of research programmes¹⁰ run by POLIMI-DESIS Lab¹¹, a research lab at the Politecnico di Milano Design department. The originality of the project lies in its community-centred approach¹², which involves both the university students and staff and the inhabitants of Milano Bovisa district. The project was initiated in Autumn 2011 when students created a garden after a workshop called the *Temporary Urban Solutions*. The following year three co-design sessions were organised to include other stakeholders and to adjust the first proposal. About 100 people (experts, academics and residents) participated in the project. One year after the opening of the garden, the *Coltivando* community reached 25 to 30 permanent members and an ever-increasing number of visitors who occasionally take part in maintenance activities.

Not only has the *Coltivando* initiative resulted in the creation of a new convivial space enhancing trans-generational exchanges of ideas and best practices but also in reconnecting the campus to its urban context. Two communities have thus been able to meet through the shared garden: the academic community, used to work in a specific environment, can now interact with representatives of the civil society within the boundaries of the campus. The people of Bovisa area also have the possibility to participate in leisure or sports activities. The collaboration between the internal academic community and the local external one has helped the common space of the campus to open to its neighbouring community.



Coltivando, Milan, Italy, 2014
© Politecnico di Milano

The convivial garden mixing generations and populations on the grounds of Politecnico di Milano Bovisa campus.

¹¹ The POLIMI-DESIS Lab belongs to DESIS Network and is based in the Department of Design at the Politecnico di Milano. It is composed of a group of researchers who have adopted a strategic and systemic approach to design, with a specific focus on design for services and design activism. It has a background in service and product-service-system design for sustainability and investigates the way design can support and trigger social innovation, combining creativity and visioning with the possibility to engage in co-design processes.

¹² According to Meroni (2008), Community Centered Design (CCD) is an approach that scales up the consolidated methods and tools of User Centered Design to community size. She proposes to refer to design focusing on creative communities (Meroni, 2007) as CCD", in which understanding values and behaviours and collaborating with the most active social communities in conceiving and developing solutions (Ogilvy, 2002; Jégou, Manzini, 2008) is the distinctive work of the designer". CCD is not focused on a single user but on the entire community as enabling local change, as a resource to be valorised and from which to learn.



Garden without borders is a community garden with an unusual situation since it is located in Cieszyn, a town on the Czech-Polish frontier, where 35,000 citizens live on the Polish side and 30,000 on the Czech side of the border. It is situated on Castle Hill in Cieszyn, on a parcel of land that used to be a car park. It rapidly became a working and playing space, and the aim was to manage to cook a collective meal from community grown products.

While young people are more and more attached to social media communication, several local associations joined to co-create a garden that could help reconnect active citizenship with reality. *Garden without borders* is a place where people can learn about ecology, work from natural materials, and develop sustainable development and environmental respect (efficient energy use, waste management, recycling, etc.) This approach emphasises experience and know-how sharing.

The project also stresses the importance of a three level cooperation—local government, NGOs and citizens—for a project to be durable in the urban public space. *Garden without borders* was indeed funded by the local government, and participants were fully responsible for the realisation of the garden. In collaboration with local NGOs, Design studio *Pracownia K.* monitored the design process so as to create a space meeting the needs of the gardeners and the requirements of the projects.



Garden without borders, Cieszyn, Poland, 2015
© Parostatek

Growing from seeds.
Author: Justyna Świerczek,



Garden without borders, Cieszyn, Poland, 2015
© Svátek čaje

Urban garden in use,
Author: Šimon Horák,

Les Composteurs de quartier (*The neighbourhood composters*) is the name of a collective urban composter designed by a community of women to encourage city-dwellers to adopt sustainable development practices. In 2011 in Nantes, the members of *Les Idéelles* association decided to organise activities that would take place in the public space of their neighbourhood. Their first initiative was the creation of a garden combined with a small composter. After contacting *Faltazi* studio design to help them improve this equipment, a prototype was created in 2013 in partnership with the association *Compostri*¹³. *Faltazi* imagined a collective composter that serves as street furniture offering new functions in terms of urban integration and simplification of composting processes¹⁴. After an initial phase of negotiation, the City of Nantes agreed to fund the project. Four years later, in 2015, the composter was installed in the Malakoff district in Nantes.

This equipment can be used by each and everyone: urban dwellers who do not have a garden but want to compost their kitchen waste, taxpayers who want to reduce their tax incentive¹⁵ when required by their town, conscious consumers who know that composting at source produces ten times less CO2 than biowaste collection, regional authorities wanting to develop policies of waste reduction at source and to significantly reduce the amount of landfilled and incinerated waste at a lower cost, as well as other local actors such as companies, institutional catering establishments, commercial catering businesses, hotels and restaurants, supermarkets and hypermarkets, mini-markets, distribution centres, markets, companies without catering activities but likely to produce organic waste, market gardeners, florists, festivals, or any structure developing shared composting.



Shared composter
Ekovore, Malakoff district, Nantes, France, 2014
© Faltazi
www.ekovore.com

13 *Compostri* assists people in the implementation of shared compost projects in the Nantes Métropole area.

14 *Faltazi* design studio has developed a wide range of outer shells (wood, steel, weathering steel, powder-coated steel to your choice of colour) to allow for optimum integration, in accordance with local town planning guidelines.

15 In France the Tax incentive helps financing the waste elimination public service. It has replaced the Household Waste Removal Tax (*Taxe d'Enlèvement des Ordures Ménagères*) since January 1st 2014. It is based on actual use and incites people to reduce their household waste

The results of the initiative are mixed. The project encouraged residents to work together and proved their empowerment at neighbourhood level. Although local elected officials pointed the positive aspects of the *Composteurs*, their future is somewhat compromised. Many municipalities in France are already under contract with waste collection and management companies—a legal situation adverse to waste management alternatives being included on the city councils' political agenda.

These various initiatives echo the Transition town movement, which invites groups of citizens, NGO networks, and *in fine* local authorities to step up and mobilise around the common goal of reimagining and rebuilding their world. This approach is based on themes such as energy, economy, food and means of subsistence, transports, education, health, or even spirituality. Even though it claims its non-political nature, it can impact the political life of a city. Incidentally, the first transition initiative in the city of Totnes in the United Kingdom has promoted knowledge and experience transfer through study trips with elected officials from other regions. Citizens imagine collectively the solutions adapted to their common reality whether it be launching their own local currency (to encourage re-localisation and boost local trade, including food production), strengthening the relations between residents and local economical actors, creating shared gardens and co-ops, bartering, exchanging and recycling, car pooling and sharing, developing soft mobility and promoting energy sobriety. The common goal of these different approaches is to build resilience. For waste sorting to be the first step towards resilience, it has to be followed by its converting into insulation materials.

2. When a local community takes on the requalification of abandoned buildings

The increasing number of abandoned buildings in urban areas is one of the symptoms of *shrinking cities*. This expression refers to urban decline in many western cities. The phenomenon appeared in the US in the 1970s following the first oil shock, and the concept emerged in Germany at the beginning of the 1990s to describe the evolution of some cities in former East Germany. It later encompassed the study of the effects of population migration and of industry evolution through Europe and the world.

The process of urban decay has both economic and demographic causes since the deindustrialisation of some regions goes with rising unemployment and depopulation. Urban mutation has become a recurring preoccupation of local elected officials and is now receiving a growing media and urban research attention.

The Shrinking Cities International Research Network is a research consortium of 30 scholars and experts that was founded in 2004 within Berkeley University's *Center for Global Metropolitan Studies*. It is pursuing researches on shrinking cities in a global context through notably the consequences of the current housing crisis on the cities already economically weakened by deindustrialisation. European studies explore the consequences of regional industrial decline and the issues related to the isolation process of the urban areas that are disconnected from the new economic centres emerging from demographic transformations.

Urban decline features abandoned industrial areas and city centres in many European cities, especially in small and medium-sized agglomerations unable to compete with the drawing power of metropolises. While old industrial premises turned into

derelict land precluding any economic development, the decline of economic activities caused the increase of commercial vacancy. With the disappearance of convenience stores, which shape the maintenance of social cohesion, entire streets and neighbourhoods have lost their attractiveness.

Abandoned neighbourhoods are economically and socially weakened and cannot be managed according to the traditional urban development models, which are subordinated to the economic growth paradigm. The initiative project developed by the Project Office Philipp Oswalt aims at understanding the causes and consequences of urban shrinkage as well as developing innovative urban policies that could improve the prospects of cities with negative images through strategies based on the development of culture. In his books *Notes on the Moire House* (or *Urbanism for Emptying Cities*¹⁶) Ernesto Oroza shows that citizens have the power to reinvent the organisation of their every day life so as to change and adapt abandoned urban spaces to their needs.

When communities reclaim vacant urban spaces, social dynamics, neighbourhood attractiveness and economic recovery are re-stimulated. The following projects are based on the rehabilitation of abandoned buildings through initiatives designed by and for the population. Associative and cultural life has been a key factor in transforming vacant spaces into common ones.

The *Cascina Cuccagna* project started in the 1990s when a group of residents opposed Milan City Council regarding the future of a 17th century farm house that was left abandoned to disuse and decay. Residents wanted to preserve and restore it while the City had decided to demolish it. The absence of specific policy from the authority triggered a wave of protest from the residents, who gradually organised and joined together to form the *Associazione Cooperativa Cuccagna*, a cooperative that could engage in a credible dialogue with institutions and develop a reliable programme to rehabilitate the farm. *Cascina Cuccagna* has now become a laboratory for civic participation, which runs many activities and initiatives related to sustainability, culture, social cohesion, urban agriculture, and food.

Cantiere Cuccagna Consortium is a network of sociocultural local associations managing the space and the activities provided in the old farmhouse. The main beneficiaries are the local residents and more generally the inhabitants of Milan who consider *Cascina Cuccagna* as one of the city's most gorgeous and enjoyable places.

16 Ernesto Oroza, Gean Moreno, *Notes sur la Maison Moirée* (ou un urbanisme pour des villes qui se vident), Saint-Étienne, Cité du design and Saint-Étienne School of Architecture, 2013.



Cascina Cuccagna,
Milan, Italy, 2016
© Cité du design

The courtyard set-up during Milan Design Fair.



St-Clements hospital
LONDON, UK

St Clements hospital is a historical hospital site of 19,000 square miles that was redeveloped into an affordable housing complex in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. East London has been subjected to major real estate changes in the last ten years, especially near and in the Olympic site of the 2012 Games. An increasing demand for housing has caused the soaring of property prices. The average home cost more than 620K£ per year in 2014, which had an impact on the local population, and especially on families.

In 2011 the Greater London Authority issued a call for tender for a redevelopment project in St Clements hospital site. *The East London Community Land Trust* (ELCLT), an activist network for community ownership since the early 2000s, won the bid and became the owner of the whole site in partnership with Galliford Try, a construction company, and The Peabody Trust, a housing association. The specificity of the project is that twenty-three houses will be made available for ELCLT members and sold at half the market price in East London.

The collaborative aspect has been a central preoccupation during the elaboration phase of the project. As ELCLT says on their website: "If local people aren't involved in the design process then the expertise of the local area is not capitalised on and people feel alienated by the entire process, often resenting any form of change that is being proposed. It is their home—they deserve their say." During the consultation stage ELCLT held a dozen of workshops on the whole site with more than 250 people participating. The results of these workshops formed the basis of the propositions for the bid. In the next phases the community was consulted several times on specific design ideas. Architects and masterplanners John Thompson and Partners held a series of workshops. More than 350 people took part and had the opportunity to help develop design solutions that were integrated to the final project.



St. Clements Hospital,
London, UK, 2014
© Robin Houterman/
Clear Village

Renovation works in progress.

This predominantly collaborative design project was developed by private structures. Unlike the bottom-up approaches presented in this state of the art compendium, the top-down conception in that case has allowed the elaboration of a legally and financially stable project. While the initiators (developer and associations) developed a fully mastered framework, residents, empowered by the collaborative design process, were able to adapt its content to their specific needs. The housing issue is a societal concern that triggers significant civic mobilisation. Involving the community in the very definition of the project has strengthened this initiative and ensured its viability and sustainability in the neighbourhood.

Dodo Ry
HELSINKI, FINLAND

Dodo Ry is an environmental association based in Helsinki. Its goal is to promote renewable energy, common spaces and urban gardening. It reclaims abandoned industrial buildings to promote a collaborative design approach through workshops and discussion groups that address issues related to city of the future.

Dodo groups have also formed in other major cities such as Lahti, Oulu, Tampere or Turku, but the *Dodo Ry* site in Helsinki offers an urban farming garden, a café, a greenhouse, and other projects related to food production. Among its 300 members, 36 are junior members under 29. Their activities include urban agriculture courses, managing an urban gardening centre, outdoor kiosks with solar chargers for smartphones, reading groups, walks in the city, and a urban life fair.

Ex-Fadda. Laboratory of Knowledge
DENTICE DI FRASSO, ITALY

Ex-Fadda, Laboratory of Knowledge is a creative and design-led social innovation hub situated in Dentice di Frasso former winery in the Puglia region in Italy.

In the last ten years, the political situation in Puglia has changed radically, with a specific focus on young people. A regional Programme for Youth called '*Bollenti Spiriti*' was implemented to help young people to realise social innovation projects for local communities. *Ex-fadda* emerged from this context, financially and politically helped by different institutions such as *Regione Puglia* and the municipality of San Vito dei Normanni.

After booming activities until the 1950s, the Dentice Frasso family winery was abandoned, and then bought by public authorities. In 2010 the young company *Sandei* and five local sociocultural associations won the call for applications for the temporary management of the site, and received 60,000 euros. As this

Dodo ry, Helsinki,
Finland.
Image courtesy of Dodo
ry/Kimmo Kivelä

Dodo ry has an urban farming garden, a greenhouse and a café at Pasila railyard in Helsinki.



amount was not enough to cover the full renovation costs, the members of *Sandej* imagined a renovation project in collaboration with the local community. The project was based on self-build from waste materials or materials given by companies.

Ex-Fadda now runs several projects and activities: a recreation centre, a music school, a carpenter's workshop, a collective of photographers, a library, a bar and a radio. There is also a social restaurant—*X Food*—using local food-suppliers and employing 16 disabled people, and an open air space—*X Lives*—for young people to organise parties and concerts. *Ex-Fadda* can be seen as a space of flows, the practical application of a new concept of flexible public spaces, whose meanings and uses are defined by users according to their different needs.



Ex Fadda, Dentice di Frazzo, Puglia, Italy, 2014
X-food restaurant.



Sharing and discussion are key factors in the management of this public space based on general assemblies. Public authorities only assume a neutral and supportive role since the management of the common by the community has priority over any outside intervention.

Consulting people to address their needs (when the project is not community-initiated) is the best way to anchor these initiatives within the social reality of a neighbourhood. However, open and collaborative design approaches require a precisely defined formal framework that will structure and help implement the collected ideas without losing sight of the initial objectives. The constant presence of a managing body—whether it be a local association, a foundation or an artists' centre—is necessary to create and facilitate dialogue with the population as well as to act as intermediary with the required public authority. For these initiatives to be relevant and durable, a balance has to be found between the framing stage of the project, often developed with local governments, and the more informal and natural approach of the local communities involved in its conception. The dialogue with public

institutions brings the political and financial support needed to consolidate the initiatives developed.

3. When an artistic community bets on cultural projects to revitalise a neighbourhood

The requalification of a neighbourhood through cultural initiatives is synonym with revitalisation and attractiveness and can help other types of activities to be reintroduced. Many European cities such as Milan, Lyon, Graz, Bellgrade, Helsinki or London have supported the creation of arts centres in deprived neighbourhoods. Cultural projects can contribute to restore social cohesion, stimulate local community work, fight against social exclusion, or reconstruct individual and collective identities. How can these initiatives be financed? How can locally empowering cultural projects stand the test of time? In other words, how can such projects be made durable? Should they be made durable? What are the ultimate and actual benefits of such initiatives?

The following projects illustrate this will for neighbourhood requalification through different cultural initiatives: incubators for creators and artists in deprived areas, artistic projects organised by cultural centres, or art interventions fostered by local artists.

Grad European Center for Culture and Debate BELGRADE, SERBIA

The Grad European Center for Culture and Debate—also known as KC GRAD—was opened in 2009 in the heart of Belgrade, on the banks of the Sava River. It occupies a post-industrial empty warehouse and is the result of a rehabilitation project following the determination of the municipality to regenerate a relatively deprived industrial area of the city. It is a cultural and arts and design place which gathers interdisciplinary actors and is open to the population. Project initiators are invited to cooperate and take part in the dynamic life of the place. It has now become one of Belgrade's most prominent post-industrial venue with more than 8,000 visitors each month, which adds up to approximately 70,000 visitors a year. The activities offered are diverse and range from exhibitions, festivals, performances, lectures, debates, book presentations, workshops, music events, and film screenings...



GRAD European Centre for Culture and Debate Belgrade, Serbia, 2009/ongoing ©Nemanja Stojanovic



Urban project incubator BELGRADE, SERBIA

Urban project incubator is a Goethe-Institut project supported by the City of Belgrade and the Municipality of Savski Venac. It is an incubator involving ten local and international projects in the fields of art, architecture, urbanism and social engagement. These initiatives were present and operational in Savamala in 2013, a historically rich neighbourhood that had lost its attractiveness and dynamism.

Art historians and sociologists were actively involved in the analysis and development of the processes implemented through the incubator. Aspects of daily life in the neighbourhood and its local collective memory were collected to preserve the authenticity of the place. Through the independent crowdsourcing platform Nextsavamala people were invited to reflect and discuss their ideas for the future development of their neighbourhood. Activities were organised through diverse cultural programmes. Under the slogan *We Also Love the Art of Others*, the artists' cooperative *Third Belgrade* worked jointly with artists who were responsive to *the spirit of Savamala*. As for *Listen to Savamala!*, it is a sound art project implemented to collect old and new sounds from Savamala and feed them back into the same area in formats such as installations, concerts, or radio programmes.

Savamala's low rents and creative energy encourage alternative life styles. Its studios and galleries, clubs and bars, new start-up enterprises and small shops are fertile breeding-ground for creation. Savamala has thus become an experimental proving ground for a number of projects ranging from urban regeneration to cultural transformation.



Savamala, Belgrade, Serbia, 2013/ongoing

Annenviertel! The art of public intervention GRAZ, AUSTRIA

Annenviertel! The art of public intervention is a project that has been initiated by the contemporary art association Rotor in 2009 in Graz. Its aim was to involve artists in urban transformation projects so as to confront artistic freedom of expression with the norms and constraints of the public space in terms of living together and services. Rotor directors Margarete Makovec and Anton Lederer, and cultural theorist Elke Krasny first identified and contacted a large number of local associations working on various social subjects (immigration, genre, religion, culture, retired people, etc.). Guided tours have also been organised to fully grasp the social context of the Murvorstadt, a former mining area characterised by a high percentage of socially deprived population and by an important cultural diversity shaped by successive migratory flows.

The same year, Graz City Council initiated the renovation project of a zone nearby the train station. The communication campaign developed by Rotor revealed the issues at stake in this neighbourhood, proving the project was relevant with the city's urban. A mapping study was conducted with the different local actors to implement the artistic projects in urban space. A dialogue was initiated with other European art institutions in order to contextualise a new project framework and to exchange networks right from the start so as to make these initiatives durable.

If Rotor received governmental and EU grants, the success of the programme is first and foremost due to the commitment of stakeholders. The communication tools used allowed artists, theoreticians and activists to meet local people, politicians, shopkeepers, civil-servants, and so on, to build a strong participative network around the project. The inhabitants of an area who live and work side by side are brought together to conduct actions, thus contributing to make their neighbourhood more autonomous.



Annenviertel!, Graz, Austria, 2013 ©rotor-engage

Mood of people in the district Annenviertel.

Map and process desk.



Restoring social cohesion and stimulating local community work, fighting against social exclusion, or contributing to social and professional integration are the intended outcomes. However, a cultural project alone cannot confirm and solve all the socio-economical problems of a neighbourhood or a city, especially when cultural development sometimes tends to become a speculative concern.

Jakomini Quarter
GRAZ, AUSTRIA

The *Jakomini pilot project* started in 2010 and was also implemented in the city of Graz. It addresses the problem of vacant ground floor retail spaces through street regeneration. The area that was chosen is a depopulated district crossed by two former commercial streets, Jakoministraße and Klosterwiesgasse. Public authorities (Graz City Council and its Department of Economic and Tourism development in cooperation with Creative Industries Styria) initiated different actions to address this issue, and a design competition was organised to redefine the identity of the Jakomini district.

The winning project, "Ready. Steady. Go." by architects Sandra Janser and Elisabeth Koller, has a strong visual impact. Their proposal takes the form of running tracks painted on the streets and covering an area of 4,600 square metres. It marked the aforementioned streets as a significant area encouraging the development of an artistic network. Following this intervention, public authorities offered low rents for the artists who wanted to open their studios in those 2 streets. In one year about fifty companies have settled in the vacant premises, and *Jakomini Quarter* has now 89 start-ups.

The transfer of the project to other cities can only be possible if artistic intervention sends a strong public signal. Its implementation in common public spaces that are not normally used is a way for local communities to reclaim their common spaces. The economical aspect of the project, contrary to the usual speculative system, guarantees a socially stable neighbourhood.



Jakomini street, Graz, Austria, 2016.
© team Jakomini

3 Minute service intervention by FH Joanneum students - Passers-by are invited to be pushed through Jakomini Street while having a cup of tea.

NIL28
MILAN, ITALY

NIL28 is a participative project conducted in Milan by an association of creative professionals founded in 2011. Since then Sergio Colantuoni, Controprogetto, dotdotdot studio, Grammatiche metropolitan, Metrogamma and CameraZimma Architetti have been designing creative interventions in the neglected areas of their city.

Their first intervention, entitled "Neighbourhood sitting", took place during the Milan Design week in 2011. All the residents of the neighbourhood were invited to bring a chair and sit around a 120-metre long table. This social and provocative installation was based on a quite informal and convivial principle, in contrast with the Design Week official events. It was followed by a series of interventions designed to improve the surrounding public space: transformation of a weekly local market into a neighbourhood living room, creation of a repair workshop, guerrilla gardening actions on abandoned parking spaces, or creation of an information totem for elderly people who are not able to use the internet. The aim of the project is to transform an urban zone into a creative district, an area strengthened by its creative emulation spirit. By giving back to streets and squares of a city their original function, public space is used as an authentic and shared place for social exchange.



Members of NIL28, Milan, Italy, 2011



Neighbourhood's sitting, NIL28, Milan Design Week, Italy, 2011
© NIL28 - Sorrentino

These locally anchored artistic interventions can contribute to change the image of a neighbourhood and enhance its attractiveness. This renewed dynamism, however, might lead to gentrification. Gentrification is the progressive embourgeoisement of a city's low-income areas. In her last book "Paris without the people. The gentrification of the capital city¹⁷", geographer Anne Clerval describes the key-factors of this social mutation. As deindustrialisation and rising unemployment are gradually driving lower-income families away from some neighbourhoods, vacant and abandoned properties are re-occupied by artists. Educated low-income people follow, drawn by a blooming artistic and creative emulation. Houses are being restored and local services reorganised to adapt to a new attractiveness. The revaluation of

17 *Paris sans le peuple. La gentrification de la capitale*, Anne Clerval, Paris, La Découverte, 2013.

neighbourhoods encourages housing market speculation and the displacement of the last poor urban residents in favour of upper-income people.

The causes of this process are resonant with the described projects, in which cultural initiatives are carried out to revive run-down and low-class areas. The socio-economic consequences of these projects may not be those that were originally expected: as land value is increasing with growing attractiveness, social ambition is replaced by economic speculation.

4. When communities get organised to live together

In the face of globally and rapidly rising land value, more and more people face being shut out of the housing market. Getting access to housing requires measures that include daily practices and uses to allow low-income people to get affordable and decent housing.

Solutions have been found to tackle the housing crisis. Architects work at reducing the cost of housing, lessors propose specific housing schemes, or citizens develop new way to live together. Alternative experiences become more visible. Even though they are still marginal and independent, some are more organised, or even legally supported. Cohousing, houseshare, housing communities, or intergenerational housing are among the new habitats which durably change the relation to housing and property. These mutations raise issues specific to living/housing-space sharing since the distribution of common goods and spaces challenges the different uses of living spaces. Housing has to be redefined according to new models of community life.

The following projects are examples of space sharing approaches through which groups of people reclaim neglected post-industrial areas or create community villages. Alternative housing models address current socioeconomic issues and fundamentally change our relations to space, property and community.

Haringey warehouse community
HARINGEY, UK

Haringey warehouse community is a creative community of people who have transformed former industrial warehouses in the city of Haringey in England. Haringey Arts is the social enterprise running the warehouse community. It is in charge of curating artistic projects and coordinating the whole warehouse site. It helps connecting all the creative talent in the area, whether they be artists in residence, owners, local associations or Haringey Council. The organisation has implemented a programme to develop the identity of the artistic community. More than 1,500 people are now living in Haringey's redeveloped spaces.

Haringey workhouses are former abandoned textile factories that were gradually turned into collective live/work spaces. Haringey Council first accepted this transformation, before publishing a report in 2013, limiting the use of the industrial sites and denouncing the residents' precarious living conditions. The warehouse residents were worried and feared eviction, but local media picked up the story and the community became a recurring subject of local debate. When the Council finally decided to support creative industries, the residents develop initiatives to promote their community, including the inHouse Festival, a film festival which has become a large-scale event. The warehouse community works closely with Haringey Arts and initiated

most of the region's artistic projects, arts having an explicit role in local policies.

It took time for the warehouse residents to be accepted by the local population and authorities, but they gradually proved their talents and abilities. Today, however, just a few of them assume full responsibility of the initiatives conducted, even though the future of the community depends on all its members. Similarly, there should be more than one source of financing – as it is the case today. This raises the sensitive issue of a necessity for political support. The initial impulse, based on protest and a will for autonomy, is now being limited by essential financial needs.



Haringey warehouse community, Haringey, UK, 2014
©Robin Houterman/ Clear Village.

Entrance to Catwalk Place with part of the mural commissioned by Haringey Arts and Prowell Ltd.

Canning Town Caravanserai
LONDON, UK

Caravanserai is an experimental and locally-driven public space opened in 2012 in the east London district of Canning Town South. Canning Town is one of the most ethnically diverse and most deprived wards in London. The organisation of the London Olympic Games in 2012 in East London changed its image radically. In 2010 the London Development Agency (LDA) and the London Borough of Newham launched the *Meanwhile London Competition* to garner ideas for temporary uses on three prominent brownfield sites. The competition brief asked projects to have a locally-driven approach, enticing for the local population and visually attractive to signal the potential of the area, and promoting entrepreneurial activities. Ash Sakula's *Caravanserai* was one of the winning proposals.

The on-site facilities were built over two years with more than 50 volunteer trainees working alongside skilled professionals. Everything was built on site, including the 17-metre long table designed by the Caravanserai team with materials donated by local company Loughton Scaffolding.

Canning Town Caravanserai opened a few months before the 2012 Olympic games. Inspired by the caravanserais that lined the Silk Road, and that offered visitors not only food and rest but also opportunities for business and cultural exchange, the Caravanserai is something of a small village. It has a community garden, an open-air theatre, a children's play area, sheltered tables, market kiosks for local entrepreneurs, and a micro-manufacture workshop. Canny Ash of Ash Sekula aims for the Caravanserai to be a model for a new type of public space, which integrates forums and facilities, events and activities, all collaboratively created by local hosts and guests.

However, financial viability remains Caravanserai's major problem. And although some small stands can be rented out, the principal resources come from volunteer work, materiel donations, and

grants. These types of urban regeneration projects would need public authorities to be involved at a more strategic level.



Canning Town Caravanseraï, London, UK, 2013 © Robin Houterman/Clear Village

Each shed has its own function, for example a community classroom.

Lescar Pau, an Emmaüs Village LESCAR, FRANCE

Lescar Pau is an Emmaüs Village founded in 1982 at Lescar, a municipality located 10km away from Pau, in the South West of France. As an independent community offering an alternative way of life, the Village is increasingly sought out by people in precarious situations or on an ideological quest. Today, it is home to a motley crew of 130 individuals: companions, employees, volunteers and trainees. After Germain Sarhy met Abbé Pierre, he set up the village, a community whose aim is to distance itself from consumerist societies. Gradually, the community was organised as a micro-society based on such values as sharing, solidarity and mutual assistance, relying on recycling, restoring and selling various objects. All the members are thus involved in a variety of activities including waste rehabilitation, eco-construction, fixing and repairing, maintaining the village or working in the shared garden. They accept, for an allowance, to conform to the ground rules and values of the community.

Community houses efficiently address the issue of social housing. However their implementation is often hindered by the necessity for political and financial support. In order to perpetuate them the residents of alternative dwellings organise themselves along rather strict lines which leave them limited freedom. This is in part what the experiment of the Emmaüs Village of Lescar Pau demonstrates: its social structure, under the guise of embracing an absence of hierarchy, is rather rigid, and the members are expected to relinquish some of their rights as citizens.

5. When a project is supported by a virtual community

A community is said to be virtual when the interactions between the different members take place on IT networks. This new mode of relationships was foreseen by Joseph Carl Licklider and Robert William as early as 1968. They heralded in *The computer as a communication device*¹⁸ the emergence of interactive online communities, not based on geographical closeness but on common interests. This may be observed in Helsinki or Bologna, where some projects are supported by social networks. The onset of these emerging communities raises some questions: what is their impact on real life? Do they actually allow their members to influence the social context of a neighbourhood and its residents?

¹⁸ *The computer as a communication device* was published in *Science and Technology* in 1968

Kallio movement HELSINKI, FINLAND

Kallio-liike is a virtual group founded in 2011 in the old working-class neighbourhood of Kallio, Helsinki. Notorious for its underprivileged, bohemian and student population, this neighbourhood is a big favourite with middle-class families with young children. Erkki Perälä founded the movement after hearing that some aid services might get closed and people were threatened with evictions. Arguing that the neighbourhood belongs to everybody, *Kallio-liike* is open to everybody and to all sorts of ideas, organising events for the benefit of the residents. Although the movement is independent, there is a political involvement to serve the interests of the local population. The aim of the members is to maintain the dynamic social diversity of Kallio in spite of the ongoing process of gentrification.

The main actors in this organisation are local volunteers. Events are organised together with some associations and small businesses from the neighbourhood, blurring the differences between the different parties. The structure of *Kallio-liike* allows the members to take part in a project or drop out of it very freely, and the volunteers often enrol for only one or two projects.

Kallio-liike usually organises carefully chosen activities in one street or another, thus encouraging the development of a localised common identity. The main event every year is the *Kallio Block Party*, which occupies a large part of the neighbourhood, welcoming some 10,000 people. Flea markets, meals and political debates are organised throughout the year. The members also get involved in urban planning, with for instance the development of cycle lanes along Hämeenkatu Street. Other neighbourhoods in Helsinki, such as *Töölö-liike* and *Laru-liike*, have followed suit.

Kallio-liike's main asset is solidarity, uniting the local participants and consequently capturing the attention of the media. The participants try to highlight certain local concerns that they believe are insufficiently taken into account by the authorities. In September 2015, the *Kallio-liike* facebook page got 14,833 likes, representing almost half of the neighbourhood's population. This shows that this virtual movement is widely supported, as it deals with very real issues and locally organises concrete events.

Social Street BOLOGNA, ITALY

The idea of *Social Street*, set up in Bologna in 2013, originates from the Facebook group "Residenti in Via Fondazza – Bologna" whose members wanted to maintain a social link between the street residents. Federico Bastiani, one of these locals, decided to create a Facebook group in order to meet people whose children were the same age as his own son. Three months later the page had about 500 members. The people at the origin of "Residenti in Via Fondazza" took up the idea of a *Social Street* closed group on Facebook, thus realising their project without the constraints of setting up a new platform.

The ultimate aim of *Social Street* is to encourage interactions between the residents of a same street, using a common platform on which ideas and projects are shared, leading to film screenings, meals, and so on. One of the specificities is that roles are not fixed; anyone may organise an event or simply participate in one without contributing to its organisation.

Emmaüs village Lescar Pau, Lescar, France, 1982/ongoing © citedesign, 2015

Examples of eco-construction built by the community.



Kallio movement, Helsinki, Finland, 2011/ongoing
Image courtesy of Panu Pakkamaa

The popular flea market enlivens the area and promotes reuse and recycling of old clothes and things.



There are currently 53 different *Social Streets* in Milan, with a total of approximately 7,224 members. Other cities are following the example: 365 *Social Streets* are listed in Italy, and some have recently appeared in France, Great Britain and Spain.



NoLo Social District, Milan, Italy, 2015/ongoing ©Rosario Mignemi

GiraNoLo ("Exploring NoLo") tour, 2017. Bottom-up tours of the neighborhood on various topics; each stop is curated by one or two local citizens.

More city to Helsinki
HELSINKI, FINLAND

More city to Helsinki is a group which aims at creating discussions and therefore promotes urban environments in the whole of Helsinki. Every now and then an urban planning question from one of the neighbouring cities is brought up for discussion, but only when Helsinki is or would somehow be affected by the consequences of that decision. As many of the members agree that infill development is the easiest and most effective way to create new urban areas, many of the more tangible subjects deal with the outskirts of the inner city.

In 2009, Mikko Särelä (post-doctoral researcher at *Aalto University*, researching in computer networks, Internet, security and critical infrastructure) started a group on *Facebook* called *Lisää kaupunkia Helsinkiin*. The aim was to create an easily approachable forum for people with the same interests, developing the urban fabric of Helsinki. The group quickly became popular in city planning circles, and in 2013 it already had 900 members. At this point, the media started to pay attention. Since then the growth has been rapid, and today the group has over 7,000 members.

However, many of the participants are neophytes with an interest in town planning. The group has an influence on the atmosphere of urban planning in Helsinki and the surrounding region. It provides a platform for new ideas for the city or solutions to existing problems, both structural and practical. Several events such as excursions and meetings have been organised through the group. Smaller combinations have also been established within the group, the most famous of these being the Urban Helsinki-group, whose members proposed an alternative master plan for the city in 2014.

These three projects highlight several positive traits. Indeed, a virtual community enables to quickly set up a more efficient form of counter power than a traditional association dealing with the media and the authorities. Set up costs are also reduced. These *Facebook* groups have the actual ability to impact a street or a neighbourhood, organising meals, film screenings or any other event susceptible of maintaining social bonds in urban environments. But they can also be more ambitious, like the group *More City to Helsinki*, who played a major role in the development of

the city. These remain relatively rare examples. How could local authorities and virtual communities work together using social media? To what extent is it possible to exceed the level of electronic involvement?



More City to Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, 2011 © Carlos Iamuela

Iansibulevardi Kaupunkibulevardit rose on the horizon the group in spring 2011. In autumn 2011, it made the council amend the initiative of a street in the west bus.

6. When projects become services...

Western countries have been going through a thorough economic mutation since the end of the 20th century. With the relocation of industries and the advent of state-of-the-art technologies, workers have largely been replaced by service providers. Services used to be the prerogative of domestic servants and were of little value in a world dominated by the laws of industrial production, but they have now found a new place thanks to the new economic models, becoming a crucial source of income in the process. Today value is not in the product any more but in the trading. As Cyril Afssa states in his book *Designing Services. Why have domestic servants become fast-food restaurants and digital apps?*, "service implies a task is performed by a third party for a fee, it's a social exchange whose worth is based on action or reflection, even though it may sometimes involve tangible objects. [...] These actions and reflections are not invested in objects and constitute a crude job whose value is itself"¹⁹.

Services are based on peer-to-peer interactions, and production is no longer a matter of manufacturing and selling, but rather of sharing and exchanging. This new approach challenges the foundations of a market-based economy. Laurent Habib²⁰, in his book *The Force of the ethereal*, argues in favour of a service-based economy as "the appearance of a more durable and virtuous set of values, whatever the point of view: economical, social, environmental, or even moral. Value is less and less attached to the material world, but has shifted towards the intangible."

19 *Design de service. Pourquoi les serviteurs sont-ils devenus des fast-foods et des applications numériques?* Saint-Étienne, Cité du design, 2013, p.11.

20 Laurent Habib, CEO of Havas France and president Observatory of Intangibles since May 2011, author of *La force de l'immatériel, pour transformer l'économie*, Paris, PUF, 2012.

The following projects deal with services offered to communities. Anchored in a local area, driven by social and ecological motivations, they represent alternatives to usual modes of consumption. Associations are often at the onset of these projects, which have become independent and evolved into payable services, spurring a new economy.

Brixton village
LONDON, UK

Brixton Village is an indoor market from the 1930s located in Brixton in south London. The site was acquired in 2007 by London & Associated Properties and slated for redevelopment. At the time the market had been going downhill for years and twenty units were sitting empty. To maximise the value of their investment, the owners proposed to demolish half the site and construct a ten-storey apartment block on top of it. However, the proposal met with great resistance from the local community. The 'Friends of Brixton Market' led a determined campaign to conserve the market and the owners were eventually forced to withdraw their proposal in 2009.

The result was a deadlock. The solution that was proposed by the local council was to turn to *Space Makers* in the hope that they could initiate a project that could achieve a win-win situation for both sides. The subsequent success of the project is a strong argument for trying to set up similar projects elsewhere: projects that are driven by a 'catalyst' organisation working together with the local authorities, site owners and the local community.

With seed funding from London & Associated Properties, *Space Makers* started their initiative to rebuild the social life of the market. They launched a social media drive and managed to attract more than 350 people to their first 'Space Exploration' event. *Space Makers* gave interested people a week to come up with proposals for taking over a vacant unit; those with successful proposals would then get three months free rent. 98 proposals were submitted within the week and *Space Makers* selected 30 of them. These ranged from food stores to lantern-makers, from fashion boutiques to community shops, and from galleries to band rehearsal spaces.

Space Makers continued to support the revitalisation process afterwards. They facilitated regular events to increase footfall and worked closely with the community to increase local participation. As a result, *Brixton Village* has always been a movement much more than a collection of shops. As Dougald Hine, the founder of *Space Makers*, said: "it wasn't just about businesses. You came down there and it felt like a space you wanted to spend time in." Six months after the project started, *Brixton Village* was being written about in the *New York Times* and *Time Out*. And by the time *Space Makers* finished their work, the market was fully let for the first time in 30 years.

The initiative can be described as a 'flow' that overcomes the barrier between the private and the public and commercial. *The Brixton Village* project made the most of the DIY spirit that was already part of the area and enabled local people to apply this in the commercial setting of a marketplace. On the one hand this created a flow towards entrepreneurial activity. On the other hand it also transformed the character of the market by reducing the emphasis on pure business and emphasising a spirit of innovation and collaboration.

The success of *Brixton Village* has also been its weakness. It has become a well-known destination and some criticize it for having turned into a place for 'yuppies' from other parts of London, rather than a place for the local community. As was the case in *Brixton Village*, where a space is owned by a big landlord with commercial interests, it is particularly difficult to maintain the community spirit of a project and keep the risk of gentrification at bay.



Brixton Village market, London, UK, 2009/ongoing © Robin Houterman/ Clear Village

Brixton Village was voted best private market in 2013.

Urban Shepherds
SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE

Every year a few acres of arable land disappear because of urban sprawling. Responding to this fact, five friends founded the association *Clinamen* in 2012 in Saint-Denis so as to reintroduce agricultural practices in urban areas. In 2014, *Clinamen* set up a cooperative called *Les Bergers urbains (Urban Shepherds)*, which was meant to become a research centre for the development of urban agriculture. The aim is to help citizens-residents, sponsors, local companies-move on to new ways of managing green spaces, maintaining urban grazing land, vegetable gardens or building hen-houses.

Urban Shepherds can mainly be found around Paris and in Northern France. They advise both private owners and local communities to improve their public parks, neighbourhood squares, wastelands, motorway embankments or roundabouts by installing different services. For instance, a hen-house may be built on a surface of between 10 and 300 m², plots from 1,000 m² to 20 hectares may be turned into grazing land, between 30 m² to 1 hectare is needed for kitchen and market gardens, and between 30 m² to 5,000 m² for agriculture, transhumance should not exceed 12 km/day. Only volunteers run the association, which gets financial input thanks to the flock and farming equipment.

These two projects all have led to the setting up of services for communities, whether they be related to food or the maintenance of green spaces. They follow the principles of "short circuits". Traditionally used when referring to agricultural production, the phrase indicates that the actual distance between producer and consumer is reduced-this distance may be spatial or human. Indeed, the number of intermediaries between producer and consumer is taken into account as well as the actual geographical distance between the production site and the selling point. Some projects combine both notions of proximity, thus embracing the economical and social values of sustainable development. The idea of short circuits challenges production and distribution methods, and leads to a more collaborative mode of consumption.

Concluding thoughts

The processes of collaborative design are often resorted to when public spaces (green spaces as well as abandoned buildings) are to be redefined. A community's involvement suffices to trigger a project, but this study has shown that the support of local authorities is crucial to ensure its longevity. This support may be obtained right at the onset of the project or once things are in place, and it may take different forms, from mere political support to subsidies. These projects have positive effects socially, environmentally and/or culturally, but it remains difficult to assess their actual economic impact. Maybe this study should be continued, integrating assessing tools to take the financial aspect into account. But economic profit is rarely the driving force behind these projects, which are therefore to be evaluated according to other criteria. This is what Ivan Illich suggests in *Tools for Conviviality*²¹: « I choose the term "conviviality" to designate the opposite of industrial productivity. I intend it to mean autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value. I believe that, in any society, as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrial productivity can effectively satisfy the needs it creates among society's members. » Another example is provided by Bhutan's famous Gross National Happiness. Evaluation criteria therefore raise questions, which may be tackled by Human Citizens in their design development projects.

This study also underlines the necessity for the different parties involved in a project to communicate, indeed dialogue is necessary between residents, promoters, public institutions, companies, and so on. On several occasions, mapping was mentioned as a useful tool allowing all people concerned to have a common image. Indeed, designing maps or any other visual documents to analyse a site and therefore grasp its strengths and weaknesses

is a very effective first step. Such documents show a territory's experience; they support exchanges between all the actors and include the outlines of a common project.

Finally, the third part of the study tackles projects set up by virtual communities. Information and communication technologies have indeed given rise to a new kind of communities, sustained by social networks and freed from the constraints of the actual physical world. These virtual communities open up onto a different level of understanding and acting in the city. They embody a new way of challenging urban environments thanks to participative facilities and thanks to certain values they defend, notably conviviality and spontaneity.

The development of virtual platforms thus offers new modus operandi to the residents who wish to have an influence on their neighbourhood. One example is *MySociety*, an e-democracy project based in the UK. The aim of *MySociety* is to offer IT tools that will have an actual impact. Some of these tools include the following: *Alaveteli* helps citizens access theoretically public documents which are in fact difficult to find, *WriteToThem* makes communication between elected representatives and citizens easier, *FixMyStreet* allows people to report urban issues directly. The latter is an open source platform allowing city dwellers to notify the local authorities when they become aware of problems including, broken street lamps, damaged benches or littering. Could these apps and services facilitate exchanges between residents and local authorities? Could they lead to another way of relating to common spaces? Is open sourcing the advent of a new age for urban planning? It is obvious that these new developments are placing users in a new position of power, not as the result of some revolt against public authorities, but thanks to a process granting them freedom and autonomy. If control technologies become the norm in the near future, will freedom of choice be guaranteed in spite of third parties looking into the interface or the proposed services? This question is the main issue regarding the actions of citizens in the long term, and even the official establishment of these actions should be considered.

Les bergers urbains
(Urban shepherds),
France, 2014/ongoing
© Guillaume Leterrier



21 Ivan Illich, *La Convivialité*, 1973. Published by Seuil, Points Essais, 2003.

Conclusion

Human Cities – Challenging the city scale: State of the Art proves the diversity and vitality of citizen-led initiatives in European cities. These projects reflect a common will to create or strengthen urban social cohesion and to open up to others, welcome them and share with them the specificities of a neighbourhood or a city. The challenges cities are to face in the future will test the solidarity and social cohesion of their communities. It is good news that some cities are already working on and experimenting the Human Cities they want for today or tomorrow.

We should however analyse the ambitions and realities of these actions with a critical eye if we want to assess their relevance and reproducibility. The examples studied in this publication have benefited from a combination of favourable circumstances: one or several participants had the skills and resources required to initiate a project which – through its nature and its compatibility with its socioeconomic and cultural context – received the support of the population. The success of these actions indeed depends mainly on high levels of involvement from the citizens they are aimed at. It is therefore essential to encourage exchanges between and feedback from the “initiators” in order to identify common success factors among situations that may be different but close in their intention.

Cities provide a large number of services to individuals (whatever their expectations or their physical, personal and socio-professional situations) as well as to economic actors. The skills required needs to be various and interdependent to reach accuracy. Some of these initiatives are deeply rooted on a will to do without institutional rigidity and to involve city-users in a more direct, rapid and pragmatic way than with that of a classical democratic process. These *bottom-up* initiatives have an impact on the life of the city since they reclaim public space and tackle issues that fall within institutional or political expertise. In some way they give urban citizens the possibility to get pragmatically involved into political actions and to put into practice, as individuals or communities, their beliefs and aspirations. Experimentation is thus made easier and more rapid because of the flexibility and immediacy of this ascendant approach.

That being said, inhabitants cannot be the sole driving forces. Large-scale projects and those tackling important but often unattractive issues can only be initiated by authorities. As for citizen-led projects, their longevity will depend on the capacity to expand the scope of expertise. Whether it be for the project itself—humane and material resource management, communication strategy implementation, public access management—or for its proper and specific interfacing with the city—urban global network and transport management, securisation of public spaces, temporary or long-term provision of public spaces by authorities, etc.

The projects that already shape and will shape the Human Cities of the future will involve numerous and very different actors: urban citizens from all backgrounds, skilled professionals from diverse fields, local associations with city-oriented activities, public authority representatives... On various occasions this paper has shown that architects and designers had a central role as empathic mediators between citizens, communities and elected representatives. With their knowledge of representation tools and design methods they can synthesize a project input data and transform them into actions within the city. They focus on observation, experimental approaches, and co-creative processes with citizens. As such, they invent new methodologies proving that public space planning is no longer a specialist's prerogative.

We hope that the results of the *Human Cities_ Challenging the City Scale* project will help change the perception of European policymakers about the valuable role of inhabitants and creators in reinventing a more humane city—collectively.















