Challenging the city scale
2014-2018

Human Cities

Investigation
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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 Cieszyń [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 areas (1, 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-
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 methodology1 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.

1 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 projects rather than a value judgment on what they are. Once listed, the projects are organized to identify recurrent themes, the different facets and the general principles. The description process is then completed to propose the dimension of a state of the art that is not only retrospective but works as a chance to list future possibilities and the questions left unanswered by the numerous projects consulted elsewhere.
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 cases 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 reconceptionalisation of the city (Brabham, 2009). The spread of personal devices that allow individuals to express their 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 Ahmad, 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 declaration 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.
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.

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.

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.

The primary school of Petit Coin, Saint-Étienne, France, 2012
Designer: Agathe Chiron
© Aurélien Dupuy
They also strive to inspire other citizens to organise events and the organization of various interventions in local public spaces by All proposals received are published in the newspaper and the general public can vote on the proposals via their telephone. The response of the public has been very high.

Izola is a small town in coastal Slovenia, where the historic tradition of a vivid 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 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.

The organization of various interventions in local public spaces by the officially registered Izolani association which was represented by the citizens 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.

Izolani, tools, Bazilikijada
Bazilijada, tools, Bazilikijada
Bazilijada - Festival of basil in the pots of Izolani, Slovenia, 2013

Another criterion for classification of participatory tools is 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 that everyone can become an actor in the planning of the urban environment. The approach is based on the conviction that everyone is an urban planner because everyone has a relationship with a city — simply by using it.

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.

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

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

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 planning 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 everyone is an urban planner because everyone has a relationship with a city — simply by using it.

Another approach to involving the public in the planning of their city is the use of playful tools. These tools are adaptable to different types of users. From his experience as an urban planner in a particular community, he recognized an Izolani association with the main mission to facilitate 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 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.

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The three main modes of interactions within the group are:

- to support urban Helsinki through networking and online dissemination of the knowledge and opinion exchange of other group members,
- the interaction of the members who take part in the discussions, and
- the political climate regarding city planning and the results of the activities, keeping threads clean of provoking and off-topic comments.

In order to get to know the Uribarri neighborhood of Bilbao from the perspective of its citizens, a collective mapping was organized based on the usage of new technologies. Through this 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 Uribarri neighborhood 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 neighborhood, 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.

Digital mapping is not merely an extension of collective mapping into the virtual world—more than an 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 adjusted to any new directions in the debates. It allows accumulation of extensive data-sets and requires good data management for sensible results.

For example, a group of people established on Facebook under the name of Helsinki Circle has gained the media’s interest and formed itself into a community garden iconoclasistas. Due to its small size, it became a model for the more urban researchers, participate in the discussions. However, a large number of participants are laymen with an interest in city planning. Some initiatives 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 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. A large number of participants are laymen with an interest in city planning. The group has overcome the hurdle of digitalizing the intellectual content of the know-how into digital or could even be described as Intellectual capital. The group has the ability to affect 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 intermediaries. 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.

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 = 1 (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 autumn work in the gardens surrounding elderly people’s homes. This type of students’ activities are reminiscent of the working brigades from socialist times, when the working groups were organized around voluntary work 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, respect, teamwork, and work, and provides an opportunity to leave a lasting footprint of their own work.

Learning by doing is a super-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 spaces, the activities are often related to urban Helsinki. Its main motto is “We are creating a better city for people with the same interest in developing the urban fabric”.

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.

Zlinsko ČIŠČENJE
MARIBOR AND LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

The competition Spust po Ljubljani (Descent down Ljubljanica) is a one-day ecological competition in the form of rowing, which has been running on Ljubljanica’s river for more than 20 years. It began when two local scout groups of Bilška skala and Posavske kupeki got the idea to organize an activity in the city to promote the “civics’ way of life, and raise the ecological awareness in relation to Ljubljanica river. In these competitions groups of young people must solve tasks of 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. The City of Ljubljana has identified this organised action as a contribution to the revitalization program of the Ljubljanica river, and partly financiers the activities. After several years the competition still inspires many young and young at heart, as it promotes qualitative, healthy and socially responsible expenditure of leisure time, as well as offering an unforgettable experience of the “water” public space.

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.

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 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.

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© ŠOUM
Spust po Ljubljani, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2014

© Pablo Ares
More city to Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, 2012

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Spust po Ljubljani, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2014

© Pablo Ares
More city to Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, 2012
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.

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 Pogačerjev 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.

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

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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 neighborhoods located along the main communication routes, 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.
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.

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 initiat 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
An “open” city is hospitable, diverse and differences are appreciated. Is Graz an “open” city in that sense? How do the residents of Graz deal with their conflicts in an open way in public space? To explore this question, a unique and clearly visible table sculpture was designed by the Austrian artist Markus Wilfling.

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 tools 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.

Sources

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“Public spaces mirror the complexities of urban society” (Madinapour, 2010) in the contemporary age public places became fluid spaces (Baumann, 2000) 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, Memò, 2008). Public space, forgotten by years for industrialized societies, is regaining its traditional importance in our contemporary consumer and belief society. However, below this view of conformity something is moving in the opposite direction: public spaces are becoming places of social innovation, offering a context where creative communities act (Memò, 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 all 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. The main goals 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, 2008). 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 (Memò & 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 duration and aims, 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 in 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.
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 activites 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

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Belgrade Design Week
BELGRADE, SERBIA

The Belgrade Design Week, in Serbia, has become the most important event with as much visual and immersive 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 International Design Week festival, and secondly, on a concrete level, by creating easy-to-transport, pop-up solutions that are easy to dismantle and reassemble, 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 encourages a critical sensibility among the public, a gamble for the future.

Art as a motor of social change is an aspect that has been highlighted in the Belgrade Design Week, which in 2015 became a project of the European Union. The event takes place during the Milan Design Week, the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, in collaboration with the most important museums: the Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, Bilbao, the Kursaal Exhibition Room, the Maritime Museum and the shops of the Ensanche 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 in the evening in the galleries of the city. The participation areas and the selection of participating artists varies in sentiment and state of mind. Performances are held in Helsinki and the Urban Project, however, it plays a key role in achieving the objectives of the Initiative firstly by including the project within the International Design Week festival, and secondly, on a concrete level, by creating easily-transportable, pop-up solutions that are easy to dismantle and reassemble, designed to raise awareness and attract the public.

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Milan is basically a city on a human scale, so it is an example of how to make urban spaces accessible from the point of view of the user, in terms of their physical approachability, their use of space and their potential for entertainment. In Belgrade, the Belgrade Design Week is the most important event with as much visual and immersive 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 International Design Week festival, and secondly, on a concrete level, by creating easily-transportable, pop-up solutions that are easy to dismantle and reassemble, designed to raise awareness and attract the public.

The appeal of design and art is capable of inspiring events with high resonance and of acting creatively, but another important attraction is music. The Flow Festival in Helsinki and the Urban Project in Tallinn are examples, both focusing on the potential of attraction of music, but different in terms of aim and the way the public space is used. The Flow Festival reappropriates urban places and even ‘brownfield’ sites and events, 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
HELSSINKI, FINLAND

The Flow Festival emerged in 2004 from an idea by Tuomas Kallio and a few friends - the jazz collective "Museo" 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 and jazz event, it succeeded in attracting 30,000 people in 2004 and had to move to a new home in 2010. The organisers continued the tradition of reappropriating and inhabiting 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 performing acts and their signature programme of music, art and ideas to guarantee the surprise effect of the performances and the 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." Tullin Jazz Festival
TALLINN, ESTONIA

Tullin Jazz Festival was conceived in 2010 as an experiment for 2011, the year of the Tallinn 2011 European Capital of Culture. The organiser was the Jazzkaar festival, the Grape Jazz Festival, the Estonian Musical Theatre and the Chamber Music School, the Estonian Music and Theatre Academy of Tallinn, the Tallinn Succulent Garden Foundation and the Urban Project. Both festivals are joined by students from the Saku 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 showrooms, streets, parks and airports. On the urban project, however, it plays a key role in achieving the objectives of the Initiative firstly by including the project within the International Design Week festival, and secondly, on a concrete level, by creating easily-transportable, pop-up solutions that are easy to dismantle and reassemble, designed to raise awareness and attract the public.

The Flow Festival in Helsinki and the Urban Project in Tallinn are examples, both addressing the potential of attraction of music, but different in terms of aim and the way the public space is used. The Flow Festival reappropriates urban places and even ‘brownfield’ sites and events, an element of novelty and entertainment to make all inside and outside public space in Tallinn more interesting and fun to frequent.
Prototyping the city: goals and issues

Estonia, 2013  
Tallinn Jazz Festival, © Jussi Hellsten

Finland, August 2015  
Flow Festival Helsinki, © Jussi Hellsten

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 of Bilbao (CIB), a platform promoted by Lan Ekinpra, 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 format 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.

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 Corfe’s Benvenuta), which form the backdrop against which artists can create their temporary works. At the present complex counts three art galleries and a series of exhibition spaces: Farm-young-art, the Bartoli-Falter Foundation, Artegiovane Sicilia, the Terry Richardson Fan Club and the live Jaith 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, revitalising the social, participatory dynamics of a community.

The ambit of intervention were designing public space (revitalisation of Favara), 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 not only for events but also for every day.
Another fundamental activity was the “Ideas Sharing Stall”, an opportunity to purchase high quality products at good prices. The “Feeding Milano Project – Energy for Change”, a research project animated by a group of design researchers at the Politecnico di Milano, was taken as a point of encounter between ordinary citizens: the first because of the opportunity to sell directly to the client, the second for the opportunity to pursue three objectives: to make Tallinn more accessible and user-oriented, to produce design solutions offering accessibility and suitability for all kinds of users (tourists, children, the elderly and people with disabilities). More specifically, the design action was to provide people-orientated. The project started in 2011 with the aim of redesigning Tallin’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 focus on the accessibility of an accessible city.

Cities for All, Tallinn
Cities for All

Tallinn Transport

The project Cities for All, Tallinn For All started in 2010, bringing together a team of around 80 people including students from various faculties, 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 for various 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 problematic: 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.

To understand the importance of adopting a DIA 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 million by 2025, almost 30% of the total population, and this percentage increases in the countries with a functionalist (e.g. the Italian National Institute for Statistics).

This is a vast user sector for which design is called to intervene to optimise the use of the city 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 DIA approach and the benefits to be derived from inclusive design. This has been the aim of the “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 design stage: not all are designed to be the same, 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 babys and toddlers, the elderly, children). From this we can deduce that the term is strictly connected with design for everybody (DIA, Design for All), indeed it is the point of definition itself: “Design for All is design for human diversity, social inclusion and equality”.

Convolvility, 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 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 and 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 support of 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 “Tas Weekend-end”, the last of these relates to a zero kilometre tourism system in the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano.

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 organised through a co-funding agreement to 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 ambit 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 initiatives are around 40 producers of a wide range of products, mostly from Parco Agricolo Sud Milano. 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 and 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 support of 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 “Tas weekend-end”, the last of these relates to a zero kilometre tourism system in the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano.

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This example leads us to reflect on how urban mobility is capable of making public space inclusive, whether or not users have disabilities. Innovations in transport systems, 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.

A public event of Threesome Initiative on 4th 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 and people in general from other countries. In 2008, the British Council in Slovenia formed a group of 5 young professionals (a web developer, a public relations consultant) asking them to develop ideas for reducing CO2 emissions by cutting down the pressure of automobile use and traffic jams. 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 participate in the project. The project was carried out for the first time in May 2010, and the prizes were distributed to the city of Ljubljana at 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 patron. The competition was so successful that an experimental area was transferred to 3 cyclists in order to use the bicycle as a means of transport 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.

Prototyping the city: goals and issues

In other contexts, the active social participation of the whole city can be necessary: working across the entire urban fabric. Large-scale projects acting in the neighborhood would require considerable financial investment and overall urban planning by the institutions, however, with appropriate socialized or adequately guided, they are capable of setting up small, scattered projects. One situation of this kind can be seen in Ljubljana.

The ProstoRoz 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 fill 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 traumatic period for the city, which had to tackle phenomena like de-industrialisation, motorisation and suburbanisation. The city renewal plan 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 the new city renewal plan. The name “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. Maria Cecuio 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 the local community.

There are also situations where it is the city council which intervenes to propose initiatives for involving citizens in public space renewal processes. For example, the initiative “Savoška 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 Knjiznica rdeča it was a mother in Ljubljana who proposed the idea of her children: 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 their playing field. The ProstoRoz Association idea was to involve the students (around 14 years old) at the Ljubljana secondary 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 and regional authorities in less than 4 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 Knjiznica rdeča, literally “Object Library”, and it was

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, and it owes its success in terms of participation to its consensual nature and to its social component as an opportunity to share an activity with different peoples; 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.

Design, Tallinn, 2011

Tallinn Transport
Territori, Estonia

Design, Tallinn, 2011

Vtroje’s initiative is a creative workshop dedicated to 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.

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 Knjiznica rdeča, literally “Object Library”, and it was...
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, sensual, cultural or linguistic, etc.) as 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 have sufficient information, often before they leave their house, that makes them feel confident enough to access a building or space. Ensuring this “interactivity with the local community” 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 their home, and subse- quently, thanks to appropriate design-led initiatives, to see 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 enough superfluous equipment, too. The same is true for a public space, suitable equipment is required to cover out that the main function of spaces 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 a unique, or particularly noteworthy, architectural and environmental char- acteristics, 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 it out an area ad hoc to fullfil a prearranged function. One example of this is the Sarnevalle neighbourhood in the suburbs of Milan, characterised by its lack of a public square or piazza, an unusual situation in an Italian town.

The project, Displace. Made In Chiaravalle, was developed in 2014 to transform private empty space into a temporary plaza. 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: to transform private empty space into a temporary plaza 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 neighborhood is surrounded by a protected, green, rural area, the Parco Agricolo Sud, dominated by the mediaeval Abbey of Santa Maria di Rogoredo. 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.

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 plaza is to accommodate temporary events during the summer and welcome people in the place for re- laxing, reading and sharing moments together, and it is intended for its future to life that is capable of connecting people and overcoming the divide between some of the local associations. The arrangement plan for the plaza envisaged about ten items of self-built 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 rear- ranged to suit the occasion. The new plaza is an attempt to offer the local community an enjoyable place that compen- sates 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.

Atelier Toboggon

Atelier Toboggon 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 Lund group (formed by Pierre Brunel Vogel, Paul Buros, Roman Lou and Leo Viirvel) with the participation of students from the École Supérieure d’Art et Design (ESADEL). The aim was to recapture the inhabitants of the Crêt-de-Roch neighbourhood of Saint-Étienne around a shared, do-it-yourself activity on the steps that constituted the main access to the neighbourhood. The activity seeks to act as a trial-balloon 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 model of learning and skills exchange between designers and citizens. The workshop, on April 2017, saw the participation of young people and adults. The components of the slide (the children too contributed to the construction (by drawing, drilling and screwing) under the super- vision of their parents).

Around 150 people were able try out the slide during the evening and the open night, on the evening of its inauguration. The Captian Lund 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.

Night Yard

Night Yard is an interesting example of urban activism in Tallinn, in Estonia. The three-day operation was part of the annu- al 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 atmos- phere 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 authen- tic 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-Ilia Linn and Kadi Klemm 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.
Prototyping the city: goals and issues

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 made with recycled material from municipal stocks.

The objects collected were containers for glass, and school chairs. These containers deteriorate rapidly and when damaged 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)

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 road 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 a feeling of attachment to 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...
Prototyping the city: goals and issues

Bratovševa ploščad, blurring complementarity, Together to the platform!, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2016
© Andrej Hudnik
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 interventions 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 considerate. 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.

Prototyping the city: goals and issues

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 (Missverständniss 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 Anka Štrittmatter (architect, town planner and set designer), Erika Thömmel (curator and set designer) and students in the Master programmes: Betiina Bigler, Eva Brede, Sabrina Dolijsko, Elisabeth Eichberger, Christina Grabner, Kathleen Günner, Katja Kralis, Binela Lcina, 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.

ReNewTown, Velenje, Slovenia, 2014 © Matej Vranič

The public space before the implementation of the project.

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Volunteers at work
**Everybody’s a Champion!**

Saint-Étienne, France

Everybody’s a Champion! is an initiative that seeks to build, together with the town residents, a 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 through surveys on paper. Design plays an important role in the success of the event: in first place, implicitly through the use of 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, OpenFactorySaintes, 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-ups, incubators, fab lab managers and several agencies. The activities all take place outside, except for the workshops held at the fab lab and the CRÉA du design, and participation is administrated 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 events in first place, implicitly through the use of co-design methodology (ideating and prototyping workshops) in which participants are helped by designers and craftpeople 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 Fiorenza, later joined by Davide Portanome and Matteo Uguzzoni, had the idea of organizing a creative city, 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 certain 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 Roma, 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 marginalization. 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.

CriticalCity 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.
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, whether it is the relationships, the emotions we feel, or the activities that take place in the home, the management of the spaces is entrusted to numerous volunteers, and encourages interaction among readers.

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 Ljubljanica river). The initiative itself was to lead 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 bulk, but later it was entrusted to a designer, Andraz Tarman, who designed shielding, partitions and notice boards. As well as creating an image, the products were designed to be easily accessible to everybody and adaptable to different needs. The management of the spaces is entrusted to numerous volunteers, of 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.

The aim of the PleinOPENair Initiative is to go beyond a traditional setting to reach a wider audience, 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.

What happens when a city lacks animation? This was the case in Brussels, when Françoise Lefebvre and Virginie Cwajgenbaum 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 from 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 37,000 followers and the event takes place in various places in Brussels, every Friday evening from 30th May onwards, from 7pm to 11pm.

Restaurant Day is a culinary carnival that takes place four times a year and that invites people to 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, Anti Tomola, Dii 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 15 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 cater for. After that, give your restaurant a name, create the name of your restaurant, the furniture and furnishings, how to serve the food, the image you want to give to it, and the location. 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 safer and more suitable. 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.

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

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 users, making play and sports activities possible with a firm eye to social cohesion and with relational benefits for the various components of a 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, unicing positive sensations of enjoyment and joy and mirth. A playful, fun design action is undoubtedly an effective way of renovating a space and activating new flows towards it.

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

Reading tour around Slovenia.
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 work of the world. 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).

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, and also open architecturally: a 80sq.m structured open-space with all the single individual into an object of public interest for the community; this is possible thanks to the multidisciplinarity of the team managed by Casa Netural.

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 is the idea that came to the Polish association, “Odblokuj” (Unblock), a social organisation for the improvement of the Living Environment, consisting of a group of architects, designers, artists, photographers, graphic artists and sociologists. The main services offered by Casa Natural 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.

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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 "Slubcowe Dolinki".

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 Slubecznica 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 benefactors 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 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, well-being, 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-long 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.

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**Prototyping the city: goals and issues**

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Cité du design Saint-Étienne

How to make bottom-up initiatives viable and sustainable?

By Isabelle Daëron, Floriane Piat & Elda Teillier
Human communities have tremendous and inherent self-heal-
ing abilities. Though usually invisible, the mechanisms of social
cohesion organising them are very powerful and can enable
communities to regenerate after a shock through the re-construc-
tion of the social structures that foster and support its survival in
a new environment. 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 prac-
tices 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 rela-
tion 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 totalities of goods shared
by a group of people. It actualised into ‘communaux’, the com-
munal 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’1,2, they were composed of pastures, ditches and
hedges, diverse areas of woods and moors, and sometimes of
a river, or even, though more rarely, of a pond. While they some-
times provided villagers with their only source of pastureage for
livestock and wood for fuel, they were also open to the most
depressed 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,3 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 Pastre4, who champions bottom-up econ-
omy, 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-po-
litical principle was first conceptualised by German philosopher
Althusius, who defined hierarchy as support rather than suprem-
acy. 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 only ensures that those who are concerned are not disconnected
from the public decision-making process but which also empower-
ees individuals at each social level for their capacity to find the
solution that is the most relevant to their needs. In short the prin-
ciple 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 design-
ers, 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 be defined— 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 sustaina-
bility 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.

The Cité du design is a platform for innovation, research, advanced
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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.

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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 realised 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 souvenirs that will be designed in collaboration with local associations and NGOs.

Carried out with similar community mobilisation, the Walled Garden project is a communal garden in Bedford’s Park. In the Borough of Haringey in East London, initiated to help marginalised local residents, the project started in 2011 when Thomas Ereraco, founder of Chestnut Park, visited the site. Convinced by the potentialities of a place that had been badly neglected over the last 12 years, he partnered with Haringey Council, owner of the place, and local community group The Friends of Bedford 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 teenagers. 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 whole experiment was a sort of model of shared garden space aimed at being replicated in other places facing similar issues.

It is interesting to underline that the project was conducted under the local authority of Chestnut Park, which played a crucial role in the conception and implementation of any activity. 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 Bedford Park, a voluntary group of local people who promoted the project in the local population. About twenty committed volunteers regularly contribute to gardening and maintenance works.

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 public support and significant funded incentive, its inclusive nature slowed its implementation: developing a thorough understanding of the needs and possibilities of each stakeholder and organising a more complex process of participation 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 The Research Department of Saint-Politecnico di Milano invested 12,000 euros to implement the garden.

The convivial garden at Politecnico di Milano Bovisa campus.

10 The first programme – ‘Human Cities, reclaiming public spaces’ (2010-2012) – worked on the regeneration of 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 public support and significant funded incentive, its inclusive nature slowed its implementation: developing a thorough understanding of the needs and possibilities of each stakeholder and organising a more complex process of participation 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?

11 The POLIMI-DESIS Lab belongs to the Department of Design at the Politecnico di Milano. It is composed of a group of engineers who have adopted a strategic and systemic vision on each design, with a specific focus on design for social innovation and design for sustainability. This group works within the Design System for Sustainability and investigates the way the design can support and trigger social innovation, aiming at systemically working with the possibility to engage in co-design processes.

12 According to Minrow (2009), in which understanding values and meanings are crucial for the design process, a meaningful consultation is essential for successful and sustainable projects. The POLIMI-DESIS Lab belonged to the Department of Design at the Politecnico di Milano. It is composed of a group of engineers who have adopted a strategic and systemic vision on each design, with a specific focus on design for social innovation and design for sustainability. This group works within the Design System for Sustainability and investigates the way the design can support and trigger social innovation, aiming at systemically working with the possibility to engage in co-design processes.
How to make bottom-up initiatives viable and sustainable?

Coltivando, Milan, Italy, 2014
© Politecnico di Milano

The convivial garden mixing generations and populations on the grounds of Politecnico di Milano Bovisa campus.
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 conceived by the local government, and participants were fully responsible for the realization of the garden. In collaboration with local NGOs, Design studio Pracownia Pracowo, monitored the process so as to create a space meeting the needs of the gardeners and the requirements of the projects.

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 emphasizes the experience and know-how sharing.

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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, 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 1990s, the Dentice Frasso family winery was abandoned, and then bought by public authorities. In 2010 the young company Sandel and five local social-cultural associations won the call for applications for the temporary management of the site, and received 60,000 euros. As this...
How to make bottom-up initiatives viable and sustainable?

Consulting people to address their needs (when the project is not community-initiated) is the best way to anchor these initiatives of the common by the community has priority over any outside intervention. 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 norms and constraints of the public space in terms of living together and services. 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 Nextsavama 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 responsible to the spirit of Savamala. As for the Municipalities, it is a sound asset to 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, its bars 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.

Grad European Center for Culture and Debate

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...

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Restoring social cohesion and stimulating local community work, fighting 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-economic problems of a neighbourhood or a city, especially when cultural development sometimes tends to become a speculative concern.

Jakomini Quarter
GRAZ, AUSTRIA

The Jakomini piloting 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, Jakomini and Hohensalzburg. Public authorities (Graz City Council and its Department of Economic and Tourism Development) in cooperation with Creative Industries Styria, initiated different actions, to produce a space, and a design competition was organised to redefine the identity of the Jakomini district.

The winning project, "Ready, Steady, Go," by architects Sandra Ott and Elisabeth Schima from the archiLab Architecture Institute. 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 has become a focal point for the city.

The transfer of the project to other cities can only be possible if an 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.

For the first intervention, entitled "Neighbourhood sitting", took place in the Milan Design Week in 2011. All the residents of the neighbourhood were invited to bring a chair and sit around Jakomini street while a cup of tea was offered. These locally anchored artistic interventions can contribute to the image of a neighbourhood and enhance its attractiveness. This process of dynamisation, however, might lead to gentrification. Gentrification is the progressive reurbanisation of a city’s low-income areas. In her last book "Paris without the upper-income people.

Corvalisan 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 Millennium London Competition to garner ideas for temporary uses on three prominent brownfield sites. The competition brief asked projects to have a social, cultural and physical benefit for the local population and visually attractive to signal the potential of the area, and promoting an artistic impulse, based on a quite informal and convivial principle, in contrast to the Design Week official events. It was followed by a series of interventions designed to improve the surrounding public spaces: 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 forum 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 its original function, public space is used as an authentic and shared place for social exchange.

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Harlinge warehouse community

european capital of culture 2016

Harlinge warehouse community is a creative community of people who have transformed former industrial warehouses in the city of Harlinge in England. Harlinge 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, member of local associations or Harlinge Local Council. The organisation has implemented a programme to develop the identity of the artistic community. More than 1,500 people are now living in Harlinge’s redeveloped spaces.

Harlinge warehouse communities are former abandoned textile factories, adapted to touristic collective workspaces. Harlinge first created a shared accommodation and living environment. The warehouse residents were worried and feared eviction, but local companies, like the local company Loughton Scaffolding, has been working 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 Harlinge Arts and initiated the on-site facilities were built over two years with more than 50 volunteer trainees working along 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 Caravanserai, 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 Millennium London Competition to garner ideas for temporary uses on three prominent brownfield sites. The competition brief asked projects to have a social, cultural and physical benefit for the local population and visually attractive to signal the potential of the area, and promoting an artistic impulse, based on a quite informal and convivial principle, in contrast to the Design Week official events. It was followed by a series of interventions designed to improve the surrounding public spaces: 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 forum 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 its original function, public space is used as an authentic and shared place for social exchange.

The following projects are examples of space sharing approaches that have as results people reclaiming 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.

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A community is said to be virtual when the interactions between residents of alternative dwellings organise themselves to promote 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 themselves to consumerist societies. Gradually, the community was organised as a micro-society based on such values as sharing, necessity for political and financial support. In order to perpetuate the social context of a neighbourhood and its residents? interest, this movement was foreseen by Joseph Carl Licklider and Robert William as early as 1968. They heralded in the origin of “Resident in Via Fondazza” took up the idea of the “Kallio” movement, 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 “Resident in Via Fondazza” took up the idea of a Social Street 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 it without contributing to its organisation.

Kallio movement
HELSINKI, FINLAND

Kallio-likes 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 Pärä set up 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-like 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-likes allows the members to take part in a project or drop out of it very freely, and the volunteers often enroll for only one or two projects.

Kallio-likes 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-likes and Laru-likes, have followed suit.

Kallio-likes 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-likes 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 group on Facebook, thus realising their project without the constraints of setting up a new platform.

The ideal 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 it without contributing to its organisation.
There are currently 53 different Social Streets in Milan, with a total of approximately 7,224 members. Other cities are following these examples, and there have been recently appeared in France, Great Britain and Spain.

The following projects deal with services offered to communities. Anchored in a local area, driven by social and ecological motivation, these projects have been used to mediate services. In fact, Associations are often at the onset of these projects, which have become independent and evolved into paying services, spinning a new economy.

The success of Brixton Village has also been its weakness. It has become a well-known destination and some critics feared for having turned into a place for “suppliers” 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, and many commercial interests, it is particularly difficult to maintain the community spirit of a project and keep the risk of gentrification at bay.

Every year a few acres of arable land disappear because of urban sprawl. Responding to this fact, five friends founded the association Clinamen in 2012 in Saint-Denis so as to reintroduce local agricultural practices in urban areas. In 2013, Clinamen set up a cooperative called Les Bergers urbains (Urban Shepherds), which was meant to be an answer to the loss of agricultural land 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 had little value in a world dominated by the laws of industrial production, but they have now found a new place thanks to the advent of 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.”

Contracts are based on peer-to-peer interactions, and productions are no longer a matter of manufacturing and selling, but rather of sharing and exchanging. This new approach of making the economy has foundations of a market-based economy.

The Force of the ethereal
Design de service. Pourquoi les services numériques
©Rosario Mignemi 2015/ongoing

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 had little value in a world dominated by the laws of industrial production, but they have now found a new place thanks to the advent of 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.”

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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, neighborhoods, squares, wastelands, motorway embankments or roundabouts by installing different services. For instance, a hedge could 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 20 m2 to 1 hectare is needed for kitchen gardens, and between 30 m2 to 5,000 m2 for agriculture, transhumance should not exceed 12 km/day. Only volunteers run the association

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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*: “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.

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

Jan Bergers urban kilo (urban sheepfarm), France, 2016/ongoing © Studioe Leterter
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.
Human Cities: Challenging the City Scale is a European Project co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

Partners:
- Cité du design [Saint-Étienne]
- Politecnico di Milano, Department of design [Milan]
- Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia [Ljubljana]
- Clear Village [London]
- Zamek [Cieszyn]
- Association Belgrade Design Week [Belgrade]
- Pro Materia [Brussels]
- Aalto University, Faculty of Architecture [Helsinki]
- FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences [Graz]
- Estonian Association of Designers [Tallinn]
- Bilbao Ekintza [Bilbao]
- Culturelab [Brussels]

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As cities organizations are facing major urban and technological transformations, European citizens are taking possession of their cities, collaborating or acting for its renewal. Which kind of tools are set up to think and produce the public space together? How to make these bottom-up initiatives sustainable?

Human Cities_Challenging the City Scale is a European project, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union 2014-2018. Gathering 12 partners from 11 countries led by Cité du design Saint-Étienne, it explores how inhabitants reinvent the contemporary city through experimentation and surveys. This publication is a collaborative research work, made from more than 80 case studies collected by the partners in Europe. They tell about actions led by creative citizens to transform their urban environment. Researchers from Cité du design Saint-Étienne, the Department of Design of Politecnico di Milano and Urban Planning Institute of The Republic of Slovenia Ljubljana provide a state of the art of these initiatives. Analysing these multiple examples, they investigate how urban dwellers participate, get organized and collaborate with creative professionals to prototype more liveable cities.