

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

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CREATIVE PLACES FOR COLLABORATIVE CITIES

Proposal for the "Progetto Habitat e Cultura" in Milan

Abstract

This paper presents an ongoing PhD research that aims to develop a solution to enhance the growth and development of creative places for a new urban everyday life.

In order to do so, it will be analysed the role of urban local communities in the creation of sustainable lifestyles, and the role of design as a strategic element to enhance, promote and replicate that creation. These communities are radicated in specific places in the urban territory, henceforth called **creative places**. They are a new type of urban *spaces* where *groups of people* collaboratively promote and manage a mix of *creative initiatives* in the fields of art and culture, economy and production, social services and urban regeneration.

There are many self-nominated "Creative cities" (Landry, 2000 and 2008) either because they have a huge concentration of creative professionals (Florida, 2004), or because they have a strong role as "art cities". But, a creative city is, in our working assumption, more of a **Collaborative City**, that is, a city with kernels of creativity, which are constituted by social services, artistic and economic activities. This collaborative city is a place where people interact and enact creating a symbiosis of activities that promote sustainable lifestyles, an active citizenship, social inclusion, cultural diversity and new economic models.

It is a city where hierarchies are transversal instead of vertical, i.e, where local authorities (urban leaders) create opportunities for **mass participation, bottom-up creativity** and **collaborative services**.

In parallel, there is a discussion about old ex-industrial areas and their potential for sustainable urban development. In fact, in the late 20th century the majority of European cities have seen many symbolic landmarks of industrial, merchant and military activity being abandoned and fall into disuse. This reality opened unforeseen perspectives as some of these abandoned places were re-occupied, converted to new uses and gradually began a new life.

These re-newed venues upgrade the urban environment of entire neighbourhoods. They encourage people to get involved in civic initiatives and to get together to back common causes, they provide emotional and intellectual outlets in creation, and in doing so they help people to form a better relationship with their environment and their lives.

To clarify what these places are, how they work, and what they produce, 2 emblematic case studies will be presented (UfaFabrik in Berlin and Grote Pyr in The Hague).

In the first stage of the research, the methodology used is based in case studies analysis whose aim is to create an interpretative model that will lead to the second stage: an experimental work in Milan. The Milan district is proposing a pilot project "Habitat e Cultura" for the creation of a multifunctional centre in the old milk factory of Locate. This centre will host a library, a cultural hall and, at the same time, the headquarters of 20 associations from Locate di Triulzi. Departing from this specific project "Habitat e Cultura", and drawing on international best practices identified through a combination of desk and field

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research, the research will identify and develop optimal strategies for building the necessary infrastructure in which sustainable collaborative services can flourish.

The broad idea is to develop a platform that will help local leaderships in the process of creating a supporting milieu to nurture and sustain social and economic innovation and to stimulate an active citizenship, providing tools for citizens to collaborate, create, and contribute in the process.

In particular, the project proposes to endow local authorities and these communities with a strategic plan and specific tools, respectively, to orient them in the most promising direction: that is, in the direction of becoming a network of effective laboratories of a new, sustainable, urban identity and active citizenship. Thus consolidating the concept of Creative Places whilst making their global and local role clearer.

The ultimate goal of this PhD research will be the design of an enabling platform and enabling solutions replicable in other contexts and with different variables, building a scenario of interconnected pockets of creative places that shape a collaborative city.

In practical terms there will be a series of activities that need to be developed and delivered which will be detailed in the paper.

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