

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

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REAL-TIME LAYOUTING

A design “*way of doing*” to improve participatory process tool-kit, applied to converting buildings

The **topic** of the paper is to make a connection in between design discipline (and interior design as specific field), contemporary phenomenon of dismissing urban areas and participatory processes.

“Economists predict that the biggest industries of the 21st century will be the social industries, health, education, wellbeing etc. These will contribute 30% to the economy. The old industries such as cars, IT, telecoms will contribute 5%” (Green 2006). In add, it is possible to observe how urban re-structuring has become, as a sort of background, another huge phenomenon of the century, which conveys all Europe. This dynamic process taking place today is “a phenomenon of enlargement in appropriation of space for private use, able to generate a positive and creative movement of urban and social renewing, in which each person can find out own proper life project” (Mello 2002).

The **aim** is to make clear that the processes described may represent an opportunity for design to research about how to deal with these types of orders. In background, design discipline is seen as a producer of innovation strategies and as an indispensable instrument which may intervene in reshaping urban dismissed areas, according to its dialogical skills (briefing methodology, lateral thinking and other forms of brainstorming, problem finding attitude, etc.). In fact, the re-using of abandoned structures and the internal transformation of a large part of those still in existence, can be a potential field for testing the capabilities of the discipline, and its crucial role.

At this point, zooming in, interior design takes on essential importance as a "catalyst" which adapts the existing spaces to new roles and functions. The request of converting buildings would be answered with design working instruments and not only referring to building industry. In particular, I would speak about the part of the discipline concerning an activity of micro-scale planning.

Interior design practise must be able to solve a primary function: to give the definition for new ways of using space -linked to the evolution of the more traditional functional categories-; it may continue in design and using innovating devices such as new furnishing systems and architectural subsystems which encourage the adaptability, temporary and reversible, of existing spaces or ones that have to be built ex novo; but, all these issues must be managed, within an overview attitude, as parts of a unique strategy.

Finally, the **purpose** of the paper is to make clear how interior design practise can make active part in participatory processes with an own proper instrument, which can be add at the existing ones (such as OST, focus groups, multi-criteria analysis, kit for Planning for Real and so on) to improve the specific methodology. **Real-time layouting** is a tool for micro-scale planning able to make in system the following variables: time and lifecycle of the building, users needs and visions about spaces and its meaning, resources of the building in terms of potential space and available structure and stuff. An

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instrument which can promote and sustain a social learning process and may become an *auto-management tool* for regenerate the social fabric.

At present time, team which deal with participatory processes are interdisciplinary; the *équipe* is often composed by sociologists, architects and planners, commonalities, citizens. Recently, also designers have found their role in these teamworks, their recognized strength mainly concerns with a strategic attitude and an activity of visioning.

But, look at this process as a chain of value, it is possible to outline a precise point for insert something new and to make it longer and more useful (perhaps not complete), especially in the participatory experiences applied to converting building processes. At a certain point it is necessary to translate the common vision built up with the scenario activities in a real strategy of space management, and also, in a second time, this theoretical "manifesto" will have to become reality.

An **interior designer** can have a precise role in these later phases. "It becomes decisive to be able to determine a design approach capable of recognizing the specificities of the context within which the project is called to intervene and, on this basis, determine the possible intervention strategies" (Crespi and Rebaglio 2007).

In short, the purpose is to shift co-design attitude and apply it to interior design field, managing some practical phases of project.

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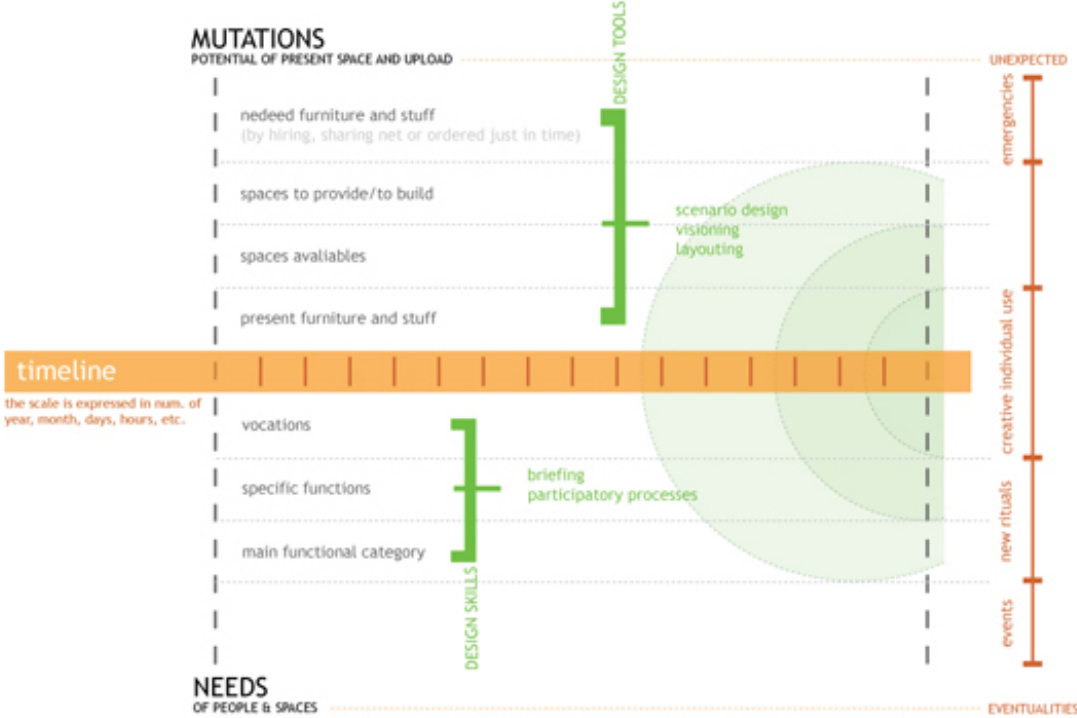


Fig. 1: Example of real-time layouting scheme (not filled with project data). Design may develop not only a mindstyle but also a precise tool for the interior designers involved into participatory processes for converting buildings.