

Reloading Spaces: How design makes urban spaces more liveable

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ABSTRACT

Design has been often used as a key-lever in the transformation of urban places to respond to the arising needs of the contemporary society. Our cities see the growing demand for places where people can cultivate a sense of wellbeing, share their daily life and get closer to other inhabitants. This paper focuses on the challenging task of designing new scenarios to reactivate urban spaces and abandoned or underutilised interiors, on the ground level of the city, in some difficult contexts. Urban interior design could help to create welcoming public places where the ethnically diverse neighbourhood, the co-existence of a progressively ageing population together with young families, the mix of council housing and private ownership, could be a value. This paper introduces the neighbourhood of San Siro, where the final design studio lab experience of the Bachelor of Science in Interior Design, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano, Reloading Spaces took place. Design lab projects were aimed at the activation of dynamic redevelopment and revitalisation of the neighbourhood through strategies for the re-appropriation of the urban spaces that bond different environments in order to communicate and strengthen a common identity of the neighbourhood. The ultimate goal of the design lab projects was to imagine possible scenarios that could become innovative trends, starting with an enquiry into people, their behaviour and their contemporary needs.

FROM HABITABLE TO LIVEABLE URBAN INTERIORS

The ancient Greeks had a custom that involved giving a fragment of pottery or a coin to a departing friend as a symbol so that, upon their return, they could be identified through a process of matching the fragment with the corresponding object that had been preserved in its original place. The token served, therefore, to 'recognise' the friend; a process of identification and recognition that is based not on personal features but on a symbol of the friend's being and, ultimately, of ourselves.

There was a time when the 'great stories' (meta-narratives) of the past ended and we were immersed in a post-modern era that was networked and liquid, where horizons seemed to be only global and the forces of time, image and immateriality were predominant. Yet we still, now, seem

to be in a phase of transition, characterised by large movements of people between continents and economic crises struggling to be resolved. Nevertheless, we recognise some human constants remain unchanged and, since the time of the ancient Greeks, resonate in and around us. So now, as then, the relationship with a friend or a place remains central in our sphere of values, also – and perhaps even more – in the challenges of the current economic state:

Family bonds, the sentimental ones, those with the neighbourhood, the district, with the territory, they seemed to have disappeared, remaining in the background of a society that in recent decades seemed to liquefy (...) and now re-emerge as major players. In this sense we are now beyond the liquid modernity.¹

This renewed bond with the territory where you live, where you are 'at home', seems to emerge from the multiple forms of re-appropriation of urban space implemented by its inhabitants.²

This process provides a new agenda for institutions and politicians, raising the question of re-lived and re-semantised spaces in our cities. Spaces and significant urban places, which have sometimes become privatised, are occupied through dissent and re-invented into public spaces. Places of the urban landscape that were sadly closed or underused are re-activated by different ideas – such as the common good, the importance of sustainable living in cities, the principle of social justice. These are critical responses to the processes of unbridled globalisation and address the need to make all living spaces accessible.

Interior urban design includes new instances and adopted tools, methods and processes – of which fewer and fewer seem to belong to the discipline of architecture; while some are historically established they are increasingly influenced and affected by related and varied disciplinary practices. The boundaries between the process of design and the project will fade due to the activation of participatory and inclusive paths in which the community becomes the main stakeholder. Design practice will be more and more integrated with artistic practices and reflections carried out by social disciplines that are anthropological and geographical in nature. Common areas, collectives, micro-worlds and courtyards are sought and re-activated as urban interiors. Spaces are immediately and temporarily changed, so that people can 'be' and 'do' together.

At the macro level, many authors describe the development of the city through the expansion of its margins and a reduction of its density, highlighting new modes of relations between town and country as well as the emergence of new forms of inequality and difficulties of cohabitation.³ At the microscopic level, these phenomena leave their mark on urban living space that has suffered processes of divestment of productive places, privatisation of public spaces, diffusion of small residual spaces. The re-appropriation of these spaces and the establishment of new connections reveal inherent values in these spaces, not only functional but an urban sociality manifested through the awakening of a collective creativity and a new demand for wellbeing and happiness.

For some years now, we have seen how 'wellbeing' has been researched and measured 'subjectively' by quantifying the perceived wellbeing of people. In 2007, the European Union launched the initiative *Beyond GDP* (Gross Domestic Product)⁴ to develop indicators that are as clear as the existing GDP but more inclusive of environmental and social aspects of progress. Economic indicators such as GDP were never designed to be comprehensive measures of prosperity and wellbeing. In addition to the more traditional indicators of GDP, the concept of the measurement of wellbeing was developed. Wellbeing indicators are used to broadly illustrate people's general satisfaction with life or to give a more nuanced picture of wellbeing in relation to their jobs, family life, health conditions, and standards of living.⁵ Perhaps it is the economic crisis that makes additional measures of the new GDP even more important and necessary. In 2009, the European Commission of the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress presented its report to the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy.⁶ The Commission recommended broadening the scope of traditional measures for economic performance to include measures of quality of life, inequalities and wellbeing, as well as better taking into account sustainability and environmental conditions. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has advocated the need to develop new measures of people's wellbeing and societal progress and has recently launched its *Better Life Initiative*.⁷ The general objectives of the operation call for the identification of policies for improving the quality of the built environment: 'The framework for regional and local wellbeing starts with the consideration that making better policies for better lives requires making where people live a better place.'⁸ Participating in the international debate on 'overcoming the GDP', Italy presented, in 2013, the first Report on *Sustainable Wellbeing Fair (BES)*, a project coordinated by ISTAT (Italian National Statistical Institute) and CNEL (Italian National Council of Economy and Labour). For the first time in Italy, the National Statistical Institute has promoted a collection of data involving 134 indicators grouped into 12 domains that express an overall sense of wellbeing.⁹

At the international level, the need to observe expectations that are personal (but, at the same time, almost always refer to a

collective dimension of wellbeing) has been established. Further, some institutions have been working on the measurement of additional significant and innovative data: that of happiness.¹⁰ The OECD in particular measures life satisfaction, which depicts how people evaluate their life as a whole rather than their current feelings. But it also refers to 'happiness', or subjective wellbeing, which is measured by the presence of positive experiences and feelings such as enjoyment, feeling well-rested, smiling or laughing, and/or the absence of negative experiences and feelings such as pain, worry or sadness. Among other initiatives it is important to note the United Nations' working program UN-Habitat, which aims to focus on the quality of cities: 'Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.'¹¹

We observe, therefore, a new and growing attention to 'soft' and subjective values in the development of a framework of 'living together'¹² within the urban environment in transformation. It is also interesting to note that specific proposed indicators are always present: on the one hand, connections/relationships; and on the other, the perceived quality of environment 'matters intrinsically as many people attach importance to the beauty and the healthiness of the place they live.'¹³ In this sense, we can say that an urban space in which to identify, in which to build relationships, which recognises an aesthetic quality – in short, that is liveable and more habitable – has to be at the heart of political agendas, as well as the designer's sensibility.

URBAN INTERIOR AND THE PARADIGM OF DIFFICULT LIVING

The challenges of liveability in urban places are more real when we observe a stress in the dynamics of social inequality and in complicated cohabitation, where the goals of individual wellbeing are far from being achieved and often are accompanied by a collective discomfort. In the Italian context, we refer in particular to the council housing estates, where there still exists an excessive concentration of occupants in difficult conditions and what we could define as 'difficult living'.

In 2007, *Cronache dell'abitare* (translated by the authors as *Chronicles of Living*), an extensive study about the state of dwelling in the city of Milan led by the research group Multiplicity,¹⁴ described the 'condition of *difficult living*' characterised by the concurrence of three main conditions. The first one is a lack of integration between locals and foreigners from disadvantaged areas, many of whom are from non-European seaward Mediterranean countries. Indeed it involves people who have a long tradition of immigration to Italy and become part of a network of informal protection when they arrive. This is the case of immigrants from Egypt, Morocco and the Philippines. There are also many groups of people that come to Italy 'without a network' who must integrate into their new community with their own poor resources. The second condition is the lack of adequate housing that necessitates the coexistence between vulnerable categories, such as recent non-EU immigrants, as well as students from other cities or elderly people. The inaccessibility of the housing market necessarily leads them to choose home sharing. The house collects many different individuals who have their own private requirements and yet, due to their circumstances, not even the bed corresponds to the sole function of sleeping; instead, it plays a role in daily living. The third condition concerns the lack in the quality and the maintenance of the built environment; this is not necessarily linked to the previous two but is clearly related to the public building sector. This stems from the absence of building maintenance by responsible institutions and has a relevant endemic character because it produces and disseminates further degradation around the inhabitants.¹⁵ Neglect of buildings weighs negatively on interpersonal relations among the occupants, leading to weakened social bonds and conflicts. The coexistence of these three conditions creates the scenario of social exclusion and economic poverty, but especially that of cultural weakness that prevents a clear interpretation of the system of causes and effects.

In order to counter these phenomena, since 1998 the Italian Infrastructure and Transport National Department, in collaboration with the local municipalities, has supported the 'Neighbourhood Contract' programs.¹⁶ These programs provide a series of actions

and regenerative interventions in critical neighbourhoods for whom the concept of 'periphery' is not strictly linked to the physical distance from the city centre, but concerns the elements of exclusion and the unequal distribution of resources, services and opportunities. Thanks to a joint effort between the government and local stakeholders, beyond the aim of improving the physical and tangible places of everyday life, there are several supporting actions and social cohesion initiatives. The main tool that connects the department and residents is the Centre for Social Activities, which mainly consists of a group of educators who support and promote empowerment in the neighbourhoods. Since 2002, the city of Milan has adopted the Neighbourhood Contract II and it is currently active in five districts: Ponte Lambro, Molise-Calvaire, Mazzini, San Siro and Gratosoglio.

In the European context different experiments have been conducted on similar urban situations that work through collaborative and participatory processes. Indeed the redevelopment of urban interiors as spaces that are able to pick up the threads of relationships fosters the coexistence between diversities. One of the most interesting of these experiments is the one that involves the district of Peckham in South London. The history of this area is marked by the presence of the North Peckham Estate,¹⁷ one of the largest complexes of social housing in London, which in the 1980s became one of the most deprived residential areas in Western Europe. Vandalism, graffiti, arson attacks, burglaries, robberies and muggings were commonplace, and the area became an archetypal London 'sink estate'.¹⁸ Since the early 2000s, thanks to the innovative and visionary approach of Alistair Huggett at the Southwark Council, the Peckham Programme was launched.¹⁹ In addition to the residential and services redevelopment – including, for example, the Peckham Library by Will Alsop, who was awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2000 – many bottom-up actions have also taken place. The strength and value of these phenomena are noteworthy, especially when they happen in those communities where the biggest problems are related to multi-ethnic coexistence and cultural integration. In the case of Peckham, in fact, the traditional London working-class community now coexists with other communities from Bangladesh, China, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey and Vietnam. These communities

have also experienced a steady gentrification of some of the areas to the south of Peckham and this has meant that it was necessary to create services and spaces able to represent the positive multicultural character of the neighbourhood through transformation. As well as the webzine *Peckham Peculiar*²⁰ and the creative and educative charity Peckham Platform,²¹ there are other examples of virtuous design projects. One of them is *Peckham Co-Design*²² involving the Southwark Council, who wanted to work with local people to understand and realise their aspirations for sites around Peckham. The initial co-design process was commissioned in 2014 to examine new visions for the area around Peckham Rye Station. The Co-Design Shop hosted meetings, discussions, exhibitions, workshops and editorials that were led by several creative teams in partnership with the people of Peckham. Throughout the process, *Peckham Co-Design* has engaged writers, urbanists, horticulturalists, artists, filmmakers, poets, activists and visionaries. The group has grown thanks to a democratic and inclusive vision where 'anyone can become a co-designer because it means to be passionate about Peckham and to choose to get involved in shaping its future.'²³ The group is today engaged in many activities that are shared and updated on an online platform. The most innovative aspect of this process is the tool 'Atlas of Aspiration', which is a set of thirty priorities defined through an online voting system on which the group intends to work in co-operation with the Southwark Council.

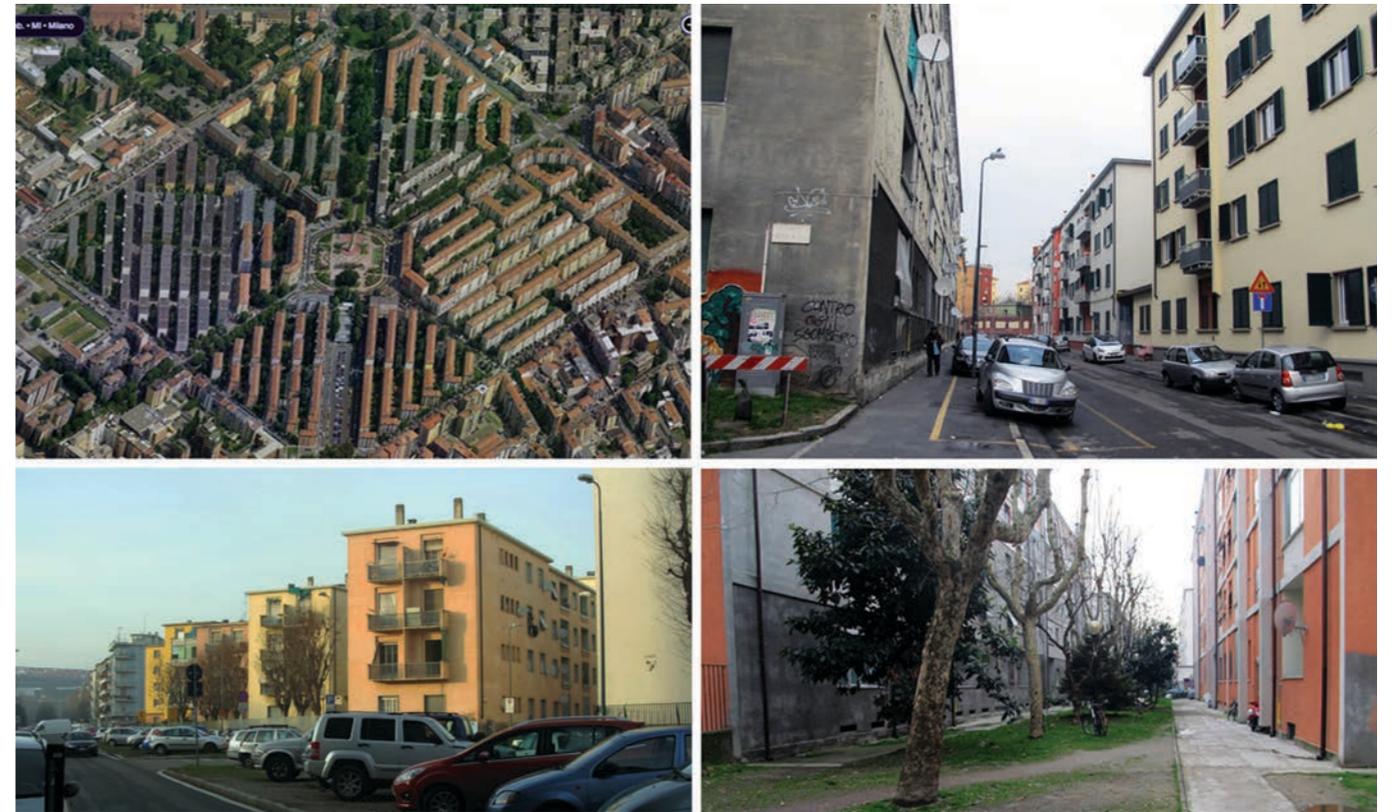
Pocket Places Peckham is simultaneously occurring within this process. It is a brand-new project signed by Sustrans,²⁴ a sustainable transport charity. The main goal of this two-year-long project is to intervene in the high streets to make them democratic for people to travel via cars, two wheels or on foot. The people of Peckham are invited to collaborate and innovate to make unused space along Rye Lane live again. It is a process oriented to the discovery of 'potential' spaces through a series of actions that build a sense of awareness and belonging. The moments of debate are spaced out through practical activities, such as the *Evening Pocket Tour*, to visit the area during the night and discover its unusual aspects, or to plant seeds of new species of trees during the *Seeding Days*. The most important event that has a real impact on the main street, Rye Lane, is the festival

Pocket Places Peckham Spaces. Temporary installations to simulate the interventions proposed by the community have been created and are accessible as a test phase aimed at realisation. It is also an event in which people are involved in workshops and animations in order to emphasise the relationship between people and their daily places. Sustrans has also recently launched several calls for artists, designers and makers to build permanent interventions in some parts of the district. The most recent of these interventions, currently in development, is a series of 'parklets' by Not Tom²⁵ outside the Peckham Cinema in Moncrieff Place.

Alongside these informal bottom-up activities, there are official interventions in public spaces. The latest involves two focal points of the borough, the Peckham Rye Station Square led by Landolt + Brown Architects and the Peckham Library Square led by Carl Turner Architects. What emerges from these experiences, and which will be described below with further study, concerns the concepts of 'care' and 'beauty'. Regarding care, as our existence occurs in the world when we take care of things, things exist when we are able to use them. This suggests our closeness to things implies that they have to be reachable and 'at hand'. Space is not an abstract form, but it can be defined as the set of determinations of proximity or distance from things, based on their useability. 'Beauty' is an ingredient of wellbeing and of happiness. The lack of beauty is, in fact, one of the most immediate ways of recognising poverty and deprivation.²⁶ Beautiful development – well designed, attractive and set in a well-designed landscape – is easy to market and likely to perform better, in terms of demand and in people's readiness to look after and preserve it. Its value will continue to rise. Beauty is not a guarantee against decline and abandonment, but it is good insurance policy. Pride in a place can motivate collective action to protect beautiful assets.²⁷

DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR RELOADING URBAN SPACES: A CASE STUDY

The final design lab (design studio) of the Bachelor of Science in Interior Design, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano titled *Reloading Spaces*²⁸ envisioned new scenarios to encourage the reactivation of public urban spaces affected by difficult living



conditions through strategies of redevelopment and adaptive reuse. The design lab focused mainly on areas located on ground level of the neighbourhood San Siro in Milan, thus involving public outdoor spaces, and abandoned or underutilised interiors on the first floors of buildings.

An ultimate goal of the lab projects was to imagine possible scenarios for the development of the neighbourhood, incorporating innovative trends and starting with an enquiry into the people, their behaviour and contemporary needs. Existing research by students in the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies titled *Mapping San Siro*²⁹ provided detailed information on the architectural heritage of the concerned urban area and also an ethnographic study of its population. Further, the *Mapping San Siro* team had already activated relations with the neighbourhood and with associations that support the local citizens. This co-operation enabled students from the final design lab of the School of Design to start their project process with an 'in-depth knowledge' brought by the contribution of diverse skills, among them the approach of traditional urban planning and architecture disciplines.

Both *Reloading Spaces* and *Mapping San Siro* were, and continue to be, part of the activities promoted by *Polisocial*, a program launched in 2012 by the Politecnico di Milano in collaboration with Politecnico di Milano Foundation, to foster the dynamics of change in society and extend the university's mission to social issues and needs that arise from the city of Milan and the surrounding territory.

The neighbourhood of San Siro is located in the northwest part of the city of Milan. It was built between 1935 and 1947 in accord with the rationalist approach of some of the greatest Italian architects of the time, among them Franco Albini, Renato Camus and Carlo De Carli. The entire neighbourhood was designed to achieve a high building density and this was at the expense of green areas and public facilities.³⁰ Today, still, the ratio between population and public facilities is not sufficient to ensure the quality of life of the residents. The static linear buildings, three or four floors high, are interspersed with courtyards and are distributed along a neatly orthogonal street system that determines the characteristic frame of the neighbourhood, now known as 'the quadrangle of San Siro'.

Above
Figure 1: Aerial view and some glimpses of the San Siro district.
Photographs: Daniela Pettillo, 2015.

The areas selected for the student projects included public urban sites, such as a system of two squares, a small street park and some highly visible abandoned retail spaces overlooking the squares. The retail spaces are in public ownership and could be included in the public-space system, hosting indoor and outdoor interventions. Both the recently renovated system of streets and the one affected by extreme critical social issues were also considered suitable project areas for temporary settings to enable residents to interact within and 'reload' urban space with new meaning. Schoolyards and the urban road system around the schools have a relevant value because they represent the first opportunity for migrant women to become members of the community through their children. The courtyards, between one linear building and another, are fenced and protected semi-public spaces. They were already strategic within the original project of the 1930s and today they represent the chance to create a community of neighbourliness and mutual support, even if they are often the place of mistrust and contrast. Gatehouses are the focus of these controversial relationships. Furthermore, some important abandoned buildings were proposed as points of reactivation through the introduction of new or mixed functions. They stand out in the neighbourhood, thanks to their architectural form and their importance in the local history. For example, the ex-ANPI was a headquarters of the National Association of Italian Partisans, while the former ONMI – Centre for Maternity and Childhood – was an important public service to the citizens in the 1930s.

The progressive ageing of the Italian population, the increasing presence of immigrants seeking housing and individuals with mental health issues are the main demographic features of the San Siro district. This plurality of issues has triggered and fuelled a widespread conflict that affects the lives of residents, feeds prejudices and thus leads to an increased sense of insecurity. Furthermore, a series of physical, territorial and social elements outlines an image of marginality that, over time, has been linked to this area of the city. The partly decaying buildings, few remaining shops and the neglected public spaces have strengthened the perception of 'social enclaves'. Alongside these critical issues, some elements of social dynamism are recognisable, including the active presence of groups who support the residents, volunteer associations and social co-operatives. Despite this, interaction and dialogue with the rest of the city is still essential to help activate latent socio-territorial conditions and expand the horizon of action of the local community. This change in perspective then allows for the transition of the identity of the neighbourhood from a 'fenced' and confined place to a more open and attractive one as a part of the big puzzle of the city.

The overall objective of the final design lab *Reloading Spaces* was to imagine strategies that could enable the processes of rehabilitation of space and revitalisation of the neighbourhood of San Siro. The projects, which include the design setting of 'urban interiors', such as temporary events and community laboratories, were characterised by different specific objectives, some of which were at times integrated with each other. Actions were aimed at encouraging citizens to take care of the urban environment in which they live, thus helping to create the awareness of belonging to a community. The projects also provided innovative services to the community and suggested

existing ones; the design of urban interiors became a display of new needs of sociability, public safety and a sustainable use of space. Finally, the proposed activities and scenarios within the selected projects promoted skills training and the creation of new activities in the employment field, which helped to attract external investment into the district.

Several design strategies were proposed in order to pursue these goals. The design process began with the identification of certain 'actions' – to celebrate, to take care, to make, to share – which could allow various aspects of community life to be evoked and introduce some interesting subject areas as a basis for conceiving projects. A specific subject area was assigned to each of these 'actions': 'to celebrate' explored innovative forms of 'cultural spaces' in which the community could meet; 'to take care' could offer a variety of fields of design from which we selected 'welcome and hospitality spaces'; 'to make' corresponds to the contemporary debate on the return to self-production in its different forms, and involved the envisioning of innovative 'workspaces'; and 'to share' addressed the thematic area of 'food spaces'.

Students individually investigated their chosen thematic field in an effort to give a personal reading through keywords and diagrams. They identified consumer trends and current behaviours in cultural spaces, hospitality, workplaces and food spaces. Having identified the trends, the students tried to test them within the local situation on the basis of the knowledge acquired through scene investigations and contact with stakeholders. Then each student, individually, prepared ten A5 format 'cards', representing selected case studies to be played within the macro-thematic groups. The comparison of keywords and cards has allowed students to select and adopt their own specific scenario of intervention and then continue with the development of their project. The scenarios that emerged in relation to each subject area were:

'To celebrate' marks a meaningful day or event, typically with a social gathering. The reason to celebrate can be tied to religion, sports and entertainment, or just to a specific place to be honoured. It requires a narrative to share meanings and values and often includes a performance, a prayer, a dance or an artistic exercise. That is the reason we assumed that, in the design lab activity, the action 'to celebrate' could refer, in a broader sense, to the category of 'cultural spaces'. The construction of 'urban theme parks' was one of the chosen approaches, with reference to music and sound – *Symphonian Park* – and another highlighted the new projects foreseen by the design lab – *Admira* – within the district. They produced entertainment facilities and lighting systems to enhance and make accessible the urban areas.

'To take care' means 'be cautious' and 'keep oneself safe and welcome'. 'To take care' can be addressed to categories of weak and vulnerable users, such as the elderly, children or new migrants. People in these categories often require the assistance of other citizens, and specific dedicated spaces. This involves the construction of a community around them. *Domestic Outdoors* was a project that proposed to activate a new relationship between neighbours in the courtyards



located between one linear-shaped building and the other. *Outdoor Wellness*, creating settings for training, play and entertainment, was another important approach proposed by some students in order to provide new urban spaces geared towards elderly residents. The action 'to take care' enabled us to investigate the design of spaces for 'welcome and hospitality' that sought innovative forms to support the reactivation of the district and contribute to the construction of its identity. One scenario, the fragmented hostel project titled *Drew Hostel*, spread its services over different sites throughout the neighbourhood.

'To make' introduced the contemporary debate on the fragmentation of production and processing with the return to self-production and, thus, involved the creation of innovative interpretations of the 'workspace'. Co-working spaces for collaborative and synergetic activities, as the concept of a hub of workers, allow users to test new development opportunities for the community. These spaces can promote the sharing of knowledge, the training in new skills and the opportunity to address the economic decay of a segment of the population in this district. Some students designed systems of urban laboratories for the creative activity of 'making together', sharing tools and equipped spaces, for sewing together – *Atelab* – or recycling work outdoors and indoors – *Mislands*.

'To share' signified the joint or alternating use of something – goods, a residence, etc. Indeed, the 'sharing economy' refers to economic and social systems that share access to goods, services, data and talent. The reference to categories of design related to co-working and co-housing can be traced in the previous sections 'to make' and 'to take care'. 'To share' can invoke, instead, a broader meaning of conviviality and participation as expressed in 'food spaces'. This sphere of action, in the district San Siro, was an effective lever to celebrate the identities of different cultures. This theme is currently strongly linked to the spread of the culture of nutrition with a growing attention to origin, seasonality and quality of food. Some students proposed food-focused projects – for example *Mondopiatto*, *Food Urban Oasis*, and *The Shape of Taste* – with a mixed-used restaurant

incorporating a market or urban vegetable garden. Indeed, nutrition is highly topical and thoroughly represented in the contemporary cultural debate thanks also to the great international event EXPO Milan 2015, *Feeding the Planet. Energy for Life*.

TRUST SAN SIRO

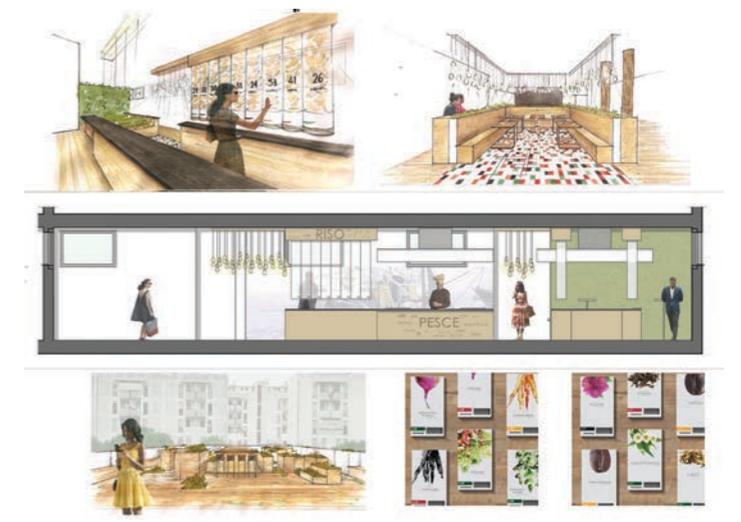
The design concepts of the final design lab worked to remedy some features of the difficult living in a city that aims to play a relevant role in the global context. EXPO fostered a wide process of urban regeneration throughout the whole city of Milan with the renewal of central districts, involving public transport improvements, new spaces for culture and tourism, and an increasing demand for hospitality facilities. Nevertheless, some parts of it, some peripheries, demand specific and innovative tools of intervention.

The design of everyday living spaces, as urban interiors, becomes a central element for the sustainable development of the city. There, the social exchange leads to the recognition and to the construction of interpersonal relationships necessary to the individual and collective wellbeing. For San Siro, the main aim was to 'feed' the urban interiors with projects able to reactivate the connections and relationships between the residents. These could provide services and places to allow the sharing of positive experiences and to enhance the qualities of the environment, through bottom-up actions and 'soft-qualities' approaches. This approach cannot exclude some other primary needs of the neighbourhood occupants such as housing, jobs and social inclusion. In these challenging contexts, discussing the design lab projects with occupants was a tricky but significant phase.



Opposite left
 Figure 2: Final design lab. Domestic Outdoors, 2015.
 Design: Yiyi Ren, Francesco Rossetti, Vanessa Sbravati, Fabrizio Scribano

Opposite right
 Figure 3: Final design lab. Mislands. An indoor and outdoor maker lab, 2015.
 Design: Valentina Trentarossi, Simone Vecchi, Davide Vitali, Luca Zambelli Bais.



Above left
 Figure 4: Final design lab. Urban Living Room, 2014.
 Design: Laura Bani, Giulia Begal, Gaia Cairo.

Above right
 Figure 5: Final design lab. Mondopiatto. A mixed-use restaurant, 2015.
 Design: Valentina Cerra, Chiara Corbani, Chiara Ferro, Camilla Panzeri.

We wondered if our proposals were too ambitious. The projects have been presented and discussed in official public consultations promoted by the Municipality of Milan with the presence of local stakeholders and residents. This showed us that the residents' expectations were flowing in the same direction as our wide perspective. Facing our humble showing of the students' proposals, the participants' assertive response was: 'Why not here? Trust San Siro.'

NOTES

1. Francesco Morace, *Crescita felice. Percorsi di futuro civile* [Happy growth. Path towards a civil future] (Milano: Egea, 2015), 21.
2. The phenomenon is widespread and well-known, although perhaps not sufficiently well-documented. A sort of catalogue was presented at the 13th International Venice Architecture Biennale (Fall 2012) in the U.S. Pavillion. It was titled *Spontaneous Interventions* and can be seen here: <http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org/>. 'Spontaneous Interventions frames an archive of compelling, actionable strategies, ranging from urban farms to guerilla bike lanes, temporary architecture to poster campaigns, urban navigation apps to crowd-sourced city planning' (From the website).
3. Edward Soja, "Regional Urbanization and the End of the Metropolis Era," in *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). Edward Soja is the main reference for the American post-metropolitan phenomenon; also the European cities, although smaller than other metropolises, were described as widespread-cities (Enzo Rullani, "La città infinita: spazio e trama della modernità riflessiva," in Aldo Bonomi and Alberto Abruzzese, *La città infinita* [Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2004] 65-93. Bernardo Secchi, *La città del ventesimo secolo* [Bari: Editori Laterza, 2005]).
4. *Beyond GDP. Measuring progress, true wealth, and the well-being of nations* http://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond_gdp/index_en.html (Accessed April 2015).
5. "Wellbeing measures can be both "subjective" and "objective". The subjective measures are based on self-reporting by individuals, which makes it possible to capture direct measures of high complexity such as life-satisfaction. Objective measures, on the other hand, attempt to capture these complex life-satisfaction variables by looking at indicator variables, such as leisure time, marital status, and disposable income'. *Beyond GDP. Measuring progress, true wealth, and the wellbeing of nations*: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond_gdp/indicators_en.html (Accessed April 2015).
6. In 2008, under the leadership of Sarkozy, the government established a commission which brought together Nobel laureates such as Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen. The goal was to overcome the traditional view of the national accounts, proposing an integrated approach: no more than one number (such as, for example, GDP), but a set of indicators related to more dimensions.
7. The website <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/> allows one to compare wellbeing across countries, based on the 11 topics the OECD has identified in the areas of material living conditions and quality of life.
8. *Framework to measure regional and local well-being*: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/regional-well-being-framework.htm> (Accessed April 2015).
9. The 12 domains of the BES report are: health; education; reconciliation of work and family life; economic wellbeing; social relationships; policy and institutions; security; subjective wellbeing; landscape and cultural heritage; environment; research and innovation; quality of services. *Measuring and evaluating progress in Italian society*: <http://www.misuredelbenessere.it/> (Accessed April 2015).
10. Some institutions that explored the topic of happiness are, for example universities (see <http://worldhappiness.report/>) but also private agencies (see <http://www.actionforhappiness.org/about-us>).
11. <http://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-at-a-glance/> - mandated by the UN General Assembly in 1978 to address the issues of urban growth, it is a knowledgeable institution on urban development processes, and understands the aspirations of cities and their residents.
12. Richard Sennett, *Together: the Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).
13. OECD, "How's Life? 2013: Measuring Well-being," http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/economics/how-s-life-2013_9789264201392-en#page1 (Accessed May 2015).
14. The group was based at Politecnico di Milano, Department of Urban Planning and Architecture and was led by architect Stefano Boeri.
15. George L. Kelling, James Q. Wilson, "Broken windows: the police and neighbourhood safety," in *The Atlantic*, March 1982, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/> (Accessed December 2015).
16. Definition of "Contratto di quartiere" taken from the website of *Italian Infrastructure and Transport Ministry* <http://www.mit.gov.it/mit/site.php?p=cm&o=vd&id=60> (Accessed December 2015).
17. The complex was demolished in 2000 after the murder of young Domilola Taylor. More about the story of the area and its community at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/1841755.stm
18. A sink estate is a British council housing estate characterised by high levels of economic and social deprivation. The term is relatively new and came into usage in 1990s, probably coined by British journalists.
19. *Peckham Programme News*, http://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/200184/peckham_programme (Accessed February 2015).
20. *The Peckham Peculiar*, <http://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/> (Accessed February 2015).
21. *Peckham Platform – connecting art, people and places*, <http://www.peckhamplatform.com/> (Accessed February 2015).
22. *Peckham Rye Co Design*, <http://peckhamcodesign.org/> (Accessed May 2015).
23. *Peckham Codesign Manifesto*, <http://peckhamcodesign.org> (Accessed May 2015).
24. *Sustrans Join the Movement*, <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/> (Accessed February 2015).
25. *Not Tom*, <http://not-tom.com/>
26. Irena Bauman, "Beauty, deprivation and Richmond Hill," in *Beauty, localism and deprivation - People and places*. Essay three, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment CABE, 2010 (Accessed September 2013). <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/people-places-irena-bauman.pdf>.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Almost 100 students attended to the final design lab of the Bachelor of Science in Interior Design at the School of Design of Politecnico di Milano entitled *Reloading Spaces* in the academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15. Professors: Agnese Rebaglio (co-ordinator), Barbara Camocini, Elena Giunta, Luigi Brenna, Alessandro Colombo; tutors: Maddalena Mainini, Riccardo Pagura, Silvia Panza, Daniela Petrillo.
29. Courtesy of Francesca Cognetti and Beatrice De Carli - <http://www.mappingsansiro.polimi.it/>
30. An in-depth analysis about the borough available at http://www.laboratoriodiquartiere.it/contratto_quartiere_index.htm