

In a small, densely populated, highly connected Planet, people's intelligence, sensibility and creativity are the most abundant resources. These social resources, if and when catalysed, become powerful drivers for sustainable changes. And design can (and must) help the process.

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DESIS, network of schools of design and other institutions, companies and non-profit organizations interested in promoting and supporting design for social innovation and sustainability. You all are welcome to join us!

EDITORIAL

By Ezio Manzini

1. This is the first DESIS Newsletter. As everything in this network, it is the result of few people's personal efforts (in this case, of Andrea Mendoza's energy and enthusiasm, and I think her lot for that!). As everything in the DESIS Network, it is a small and light initiative. But again, as everything in this network, it is open, connected and, therefore, potentially, strong and meaningful. Presenting local cases, initiatives and projects, it will contribute to make them more visible, and hopefully, to connect them with other ones and, therefore, to make them stronger.

2. Some 30 years ago E. F. Schumacher wrote his very famous book Small is beautiful. At that time, because the degree of connectivity was (relatively) low, the small was really small and the local really local (that is, isolated). Therefore, Schumacher's option in terms of the small and local scale could be proposed only as a cultural and ethical choice. Today, it is no longer like that: with a higher degree of connectivity, when the small can be a node of the networks and the local can be open to the global flow of people and information, the small is no longer small and a local is no longer local, at least in traditional terms. In fact, with the networks, it becomes possible to operate on local and small scale in a very effective way. Moreover, these networking and flexible systems indicate the one and only possibility to operate in the complex and fast changing environment generated by the double transition towards a knowledge and sustainability based society.

3. This Newsletter goes in this direction. It will bring to the whole community's attention different (small and local, but also open and connected) initiatives where social innovation and sustainability converge. And where, in different ways, design played a meaningful role.

DESIS DOTS (in the net)

Short presentation of projects

DESIS Brazil

Designing a food system for Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) to promote better, cleaner and fairer collective dining
By Carla Cipolla

The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) started the twenty-first century decided to be prepared to "a future marked by transdisciplinarity and the universalization of higher education" (UFRJ, 2008). In this context, among many other actions, takes shape in UFRJ a new project for its food system, particularly focused on the "official university canteens", considered as a key issue in university community life. Such a view is reinforced by the strong social policy implemented by the government of President Luis Inacio da Silva, which the discussion on access to food has become central.

Considering such demand, the doctorate student Nadia Carvalho, director of the University's Food System and her advisor Carla Cipolla, Associated Professor at PEPI/COPEPE and coordinator of DESIS-Brazil have started up a doctorate research project, targeted to define a public management policy and design strategy for the food system in the university. It is composed by the following actions:

a) establishment of a model of horizontal and participatory management policy through the definition of a Food Management Council for the university (composed by faculty members, students representatives, administrative and technical staff), seeking to democratize political decisions.

b) Strategic design project where the various aspects of food system products, services and communication, are designed to promote initiatives for social innovation for sustainability in the sector of food production and education, particularly considering a "slow" perspective (www.slowfood.com), i.e. a design process founded upon the concept of eco-gastronomy – a recognition of the strong connections between plate and planet, aiming to get good, clean and fair food. Consumers are considered as co-producers because by being informed about how food is produced and actively supporting those who produce it, university canteens and its "clients" become a part of and a partner in the production process.

Among the first actions of the project was the event "Sabores e Saberes": a partnership between the staff of the restaurant, the Institute of Nutrition and University Innovation Agency. The event promoted lectures, workshops and cultural events on the theme of fair and quality food. Various cooperatives and farmers in the State of Rio de Janeiro exhibited their products. This event, strongly influenced the university community. It was a milestone for establishing partnerships with potential suppliers to the system of university restaurants. The event started up the establishment of a regular organic fair at the university.

The project is looking forward connections with other initiatives in a promotion of a better, cleaner and fairer collective dining. In this direction, Nadia and Carla are going to take part in the "Terra Madre Brazil" event. The Terra Madre international network is made up of all those who wish to preserve, encourage, and support sustainable food production methods.

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DESIS EUROPE

OPM Cities – Malmö Design Exercise

By François Jégou

The aim of OPM Cities is to drive long-term systemic change in partner cities and develop a new model of mobility that combines radically reduced car dependency and increased quality of life with reductions in CO2 emissions from personal mobility that are compatible with a European trajectory of 95% carbon reductions.

The initiative is led by WWF and involves so far 5 European cities (Barcelona, Freiburg, Lille, Malmö and Sofia). As part of the initiative a scenario tool is currently being developed that will be able to create scenarios for CO2 reductions from applying different policies for urban mobility. The tool will also show the systemic links with other mobility related factors like air pollution, travel time and quality of public services. It will provide local policy makers with scenarios and policy recommendations.

To create the innovations required to transform the current unsustainable model of mobility, the initiative will not only work with local policy makers but will engage a variety of actors from different sectors that can support the process of systemic change.

In addition, designers are supporting the process by using participatory design to engage the people on the ground in creating innovation and develop creative scenarios for sustainable mobility. A pilot of this creative part of OPM Cities is currently being organized in Malmö. WWF, Strategic Design Centres, K3 Design department of the University of Malmö are leading this project with the collaboration of the City of Malmö. The experimentation is focused on a design exercise and consists in a process started in December 2009 and aiming to deliver final results in spring 2010.

The partners involved agreed first a framework to start with: Malmö is already one of the leading European cities in sustainable mobility and has one of the best bicycle infrastructures and very ambitious targets for both increasing the use of public transport and radically reducing the use of cars. These are aims of the Environmental Programme of the city for 2020. Subsequent changes in mobility behaviour require a radical set of well-considered measures, the development of new infrastructures and creation of innovative services to support mobility users to shift towards new and more sustainable ways of living. In particular, a better understanding of people's daily practices is needed where public authorities generally stick to macro statistical approaches: the devil is in the detail!

DESIS INDIA

Social Innovation and Design from the Indian Outback Innovative system for Mutual Help

By Sahil Baggia & Sarthak Sengupta

The harsh terrain of rural Rajasthan has been the mother of many survival innovations; motivated by the scarcity of resources and the sheer survival instinct it arouses in its native communities. We would like to share a case of social innovation that we observed in the village community specific to the Pali district of the Indian state of Rajasthan.

In the state of Rajasthan, innovative system for mutual help has emerged over the years amongst the various village communities. The farmer community works according to seasonal cycles. Each time they start with a fresh cycle, they need to prepare the land by getting rid of wild grass that grow during the gestation period. The farmer community then turns to the Rajasthani Chaika Rebari community, who are traditionally shepherders and work as temporary labourers on other's farms.

They come to a mutual agreement, where the farmer community allows the Rebari community to let their live stock graze on their fields or allow them to cut and collect the wild vegetation to be used as fodder. This simple yet innovative system has ensured a productive relationship between the two village communities for many generations.

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CHINA

Eltopé: The Kitchen Project, Final Presentation

By Rao Qingfang

January 17-18th, 2010 "Eltopé: The Kitchen Project" the rural kitchen joint workshop had the final presentation at TUNJ Innovation Center. The presentation was held from 8pm to the midnight, all in a favorable atmosphere.

The rural kitchen joint workshop was an international communicative initiative on design, co-organized by Bern University Applied Science and Technology, Switzerland, and Tongji University, involving 40 students and 10 tutors. The workshop originally started in September, 2009, followed by three periodical presentations and a final presentation by means of videoconferencing.

In the final presentation, the six teams showed their collaborative achievements after 6-month endeavour from diverse aspects, such as kitchen renovation on architecture and environment, kitchen life-style and service system, cookware design, pollution and energy problems, etc. The students discussed on how to technically solve the problems of gas, fuel, etc. in the rural kitchen, and provided various scenarios and service system, in order to seek for possibilities of rural kitchen to satisfy the requirements of the daily life as well as provide.

COLOMBIA

Urban Dynamization

By Andrea Mendoza

How to engage public spaces so that urban dwellings become more livable places in the midst –and despite– contemporary threatens? How to prompt a sense of re-appropriation in citizen and thus, design more secure urban spaces? How do designers, working in hand with architects, biologists, anthropologists, scientists, filmmakers or artists (among many others) can shape better livelihoods and thus prompt more healthy and vibrant cities?

In the framework of DESIS International activities, the different Desis-local have found common interests and fields to start a series of cross-fertilization and collaboration; for instance, Desis-Africa and Desis Brazil are interested in Community Based Tourism whereas Desis-ME (Middle East) and Desis-Colombia move towards Urban Dynamization UD.

Talking specifically about the Colombian cluster, there was to ask: what does urban dynamization mean? Which is its relation with design?

For us, it means to stimulate the city, to make from square markets, theatres, cafes, alleys, and daily common streets, places where people can easily, freely and self-confidently move at anytime, any given day. That might sound banal for other contexts, but is quite relevant for the Colombian one. Our aim is to, first of all, give people back a sense of well-being, of safety, of security, which is embedded in the national collective imaginary, starts fading away. But for this, even if the role of policy makers, infrastructure and police is undeniable, it is important that citizens start getting awaken in order to shift the mainstream view that assumes any idea aiming at improving the city like an "utopia".

In the framework of design for sustainability, we consider dynamization as a crucial aspect of design explorations/intentions for the field of design for sustainability. So far, where design has a potential role to play and become a catalyser. There is also to say that these changes are already being experienced by the academic-partners, and professors involved (including, among others: La Tadeo University, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Pontificia Universidad Bolivariana, Universidad de Caldas and Los Andes University, all of them belonging to the National Network of Design Schools RAD).

The main issue here is that those who are engaging our process are keen to connect their single agendas to common and interdisciplinary/inter-institutional meeting points so that the network can grow as a whole. This Common agenda is slowly raising thanks to different initiatives, which go from classes, to exhibitions, conferences and especially the production of didactic tools as well as innovative design approaches to nurture the design knowledge society from a not so formal and/or standardized viewpoint.

In short we're trying to do in the framework of this cluster, is changing the "chip" in citizen's mind settings by means of the interstice: art-social sciences, design, and make them reflect upon their lived behaviours, to change the logics in which cities are assumed, experienced and "daily".

In the next issues we hope being able to bring information regarding the "Urban Dynamization" cluster in Berlin and Tel Aviv.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGES

News regarding information exchanges and horizontal connections among DESIS members

AFRICA

Community-based Tourism: inspiration from DESIS-Brazil

By Mugendi M'Rithaa

DESIS-Africa has recently embarked a community-based tourism project to promote dialogue between participating communities and other actors operating within a Design for Sustainability (DfS) paradigm. This initiative was born following a formal visit to Cape Town by Prof. Roberto Bartholo of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in February 2009. In São Paulo, a number of inspiring cases under the auspices of the DESIS-Brazil network. The visit was co-hosted by Stuart Warden and Mugendi M'Rithaa, both of the Faculty of Informatics and Design, Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). Stuart and Mugendi had previously visited the Brazilian cities of Curitiba, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in November 2009 at the invitation of DESIS-Brazil members, Professors Aguiñaldo dos Santos, Carla Cipolla, and Bartholo.

During his visit Prof. Bartholo engaged with a number of activities, including seminars/presentations to undergraduate and postgraduate design students, courtesy calls to CPUT officials and professional designers in industry, as well as attending the 11th edition of the world-renowned, Cape Town-based **Design Indaba** conference.

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CHINA

Coordinator of DESIS-china Prof. Lou Yongqi meets with Sam Adams, Mayor of Portland, US

By Rao Qingfang

Feb 24, 2010, Coordinator of Desis-china Prof. Lou Yongqi met with Mayor Sam Adams of Portland. They explored the potential for collaboration through academic collaboration. Prof.LOU introduced his practice and research on design for sustainability. Mayor Adams said that Portland is on a promising path toward becoming a hub for environmental design and innovation.

Quality, high efficiency design is a fundamental component of creating a sustainable life in Portland. They both believe that city can work more aggressively toward its sustainability goals with a high level of access to important innovations.

BUILDING UP KNOWLEDGE

New air in Design: Reports on recently published works from students

ITALY-CHINA

Fresh Ph.D. Thesis: "Collaborate Services in Ubiquitous Network: Exploring design for social innovation and sustainability in network society".

By Miaosen Gong

On 26th of Feb, Miaosen Gong, a PhD candidate of Ezio Manzini in Dis-Indaco, Politecnico di Milano did his Thesis Defense. His thesis: "Collaborate Services in Ubiquitous Network: Exploring design for social innovation and sustainability in network society", aims at investigating the emerging social innovation enabled by cutting-edge technologies and their design implications of them.

In particular, it focuses on "Mobilized Collaborative Services", as a convergence between radical innovations in everyday life and cyber spaces. By phenomenological research and designing action research, it inquires the system and interaction of them and explores how design intervenes them.

ITALY

Fending the city. Peri-urban sustainable agriculture as a driver for territorial development through a Service Design approach.

Giulia Simoene Ph.D. Thesis

The focus of this research was on the so-called peri-urban area. Periurban agriculture (farms, agritourism, leisure, education...) which close to the city, which work both with intensive production methods, and organic ones; which grow products (vegetables, breeding, milk and eggs) both for commercial purposes, and to deliver services to urban population. Service Design perspective allows to tackle this topic for the kind and the quality of the relations that occur between city and surrounding countryside.

Findings:

The main outcomes of this research can be seen in two levels, the first one, theoretical, is the adjustment of a Service Design methodology for the community based and sustainable territorial development. The output of this theoretical outcome is the "Design Handbook for Sustainable Territorial Development". The second level, application-oriented, is the activation of applied design cases (the initiative "Milan Energy for change" promoted by INDACO dept. of Politecnico di Milano, Slow Food Italy and University of Gastronomic Sciences, and granted by Fondazione Cariplo, Comune di Milano and Provincia di Milano. It will allow the application, and the proof check, of the foresaid methodology and it will fit with Milan Expo 2015 topic: agricultural, helping Service Design to play a defined and acknowledged role in terms of scientific research and applied project.

COLOMBIA

Recognition to new approaches in Design knowledge

By Andrea Mendoza

How to reward innovative efforts and build up knowledge from not mainstream courses and research projects that challenge the logics of both: city and the academy?

On February the 11th, in the framework of the Design Academy Awards (Premio Academico de Diseño PAD) granted by the Javeriana University in Bogotá, the winner in the category Design and Social Responsibility was the "DRAT Venecia Museum" an initiative developed in a Bogotá neighborhood called: Venecia (and in the framework of their "Bienal de Venecia", by a group of teachers and students from the Javeriana University -Design Department- who did activate the local dynamics by building up an ephemeral museum that people could help assembling and thus re-appropriate after the event. It became a space to articulate pedagogical strategies aiming at exploring the links between art and the neighborhood's daily life.

In another category of the PAD Awards: Graduating Projects and Thesis, Andrés Ortiz a recently graduated Designer from Los Andes University, obtained the second place with his thesis: "Espacios Vivos", a dissertation on Urban Agriculture.

According to Professor Gonzalo Gómez, coordinator of the Awards, the event was a space for faculties and other design schools in Colombia to interact around topics such as: local values, environmental performance and cultural identity.

DESIS ALBUM – work in progress

A "behind the scenes" space to periodically introduce Desis members and partners

Adital Ela
Adital is a product designer specializing in projects to emphasize the pleasure of using the products. He runs an active sustainable design studio based in Israel promoting various projects with companies, non-profit organizations, and social groups. Adital is Lecturer at HIT Holon Institute of Technology.
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DESIS VOICES

A space for members/guest to "have a say"

On Curitiba

By Liliane Chaves

"I am Liliane Chaves, professor of the Design Department of the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR). I am a UFRJ, some of my classes and myself, participate in the Sustainable Design Research Unit, coordinated by Professor Aguiñaldo dos Santos. This is the framework to develop the activities of the DESIS Network in Curitiba. Curitiba is a cold city in southern Brazil and the majority of its inhabitants have European origin.

As our first activity, as part of the DESIS network, we promoted an Extension Course titled: System Design for Social Innovation. Eight students attended the course, four of them from the UFRJ and four outside the UFRJ. They are: Mariana Amaral Tomaz, Patricia Milte Kojima, Rosana Vasquez, Tássia de Matos Bianchini, Eder Leideia Loureiro, Mariana França, Osdair Casquei, Nielei Brás de Prouença e Rebecca Laísa Alves Storzer.

The participants lead real example cases of social innovation in Curitiba. The cases raised were discussed and selected to develop three scientific workshops will welcome numerous Belgian and international experts, professionals and students in urban planning, architecture, design and sociology, as well as key figures from public service. They will share their experiences, work and thoughts on urban planning, and its general uses, focusing particularly public spaces. Throughout the festival the «Places to Be» exhibition will creatively promote the work and reports selected from the international call for entries launched under the framework of this European project. To emphasize the pleasure of using the products, the exchanges between an urban Sunday brunch will take place on 9 May 2010 in the vicinity of BOZAR. Other unique forms of entertainment will be organised throughout the festivities until 16 May. This festival is the result of a European partnership «Human Cities: sustainable urban design» supported by the European Commission's «Culture 2007-2013» program.

<http://festival.humancities.eu/en/introduction>

CHINA

Cumulus Shanghai Conference 2010: Young Creators for Better City and Better Life.

CUMULUS Shanghai Conference 2010 will be held by College of Design & Innovation of Tongji University from Sep. 7th to Sep. 10th during World EXPO 2010. The theme for CUMULUS Shanghai Conference 2010 is Young Creators for Better City and Better Life. The conference aims to explore how the young generation of designers can improve our environment and life in creative ways. The emerging missions and visions of future design education, research and practice, together with its economic, political and social impacts of the era, will also be discussed during the conference.

www.cumulusassociation.org

INDIA

SUSTAINABILITY IN DESIGN: NOW!

Challenges and Opportunities for Design Research, Education and Practice in the XXI Century

LENS

The Learning Network on Sustainability

Sustainability in Design: NOW!

Challenges and Opportunities for Design Research, Education and Practice in the XXI Century

Bangalore, India, 29th of September – 1st of October 2010
Deadline for abstract submission 31st of March 2010
Get more info and register on-line at www.lensconference.polimi.it

The Sustainability in Design: Now! conference is a platform for sharing the latest knowledge and experiences in product, service and system design, to promote sustainable design thinking in design education, research and practice communities. The conference approach is to look at various stakeholders in this arena: designers, design educators and design researchers - as a unique learning community.

The objective is the creation of a new ethos, within such a community, enabling all possible synergies and fruitful processes of knowledge and know-how osmosis and cross-fertilisation.

This conference is promoted and organized as the conclusive event of the LeNS - Learning Network on Sustainability - project, funded by EU under the Asia Link Programme, that aims at the development and diffusion of design for sustainability in design institutions.

There is no conference fee and proceedings will be published (with ISBN).

For more information on the conference please visit www.lensconference.polimi.it or contact lens@polimi.it

For information on the LeNS project please visit www.lens.polimi.it or contact lens@polimi.it

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Students visiting the "Sabores e Saberes" fair. (Credit: UFRJ Imagens)



The "Sabores e Saberes" fair. Various cooperatives and farmers in the State of Rio de Janeiro had exposed its products. (Credit: UFRJ Imagens – Marcelo Fernandes)



The initiative is led by WWF and involves so far 5 European cities (Barcelona, Freiburg, Lille, Malmö and Sofia). As part of the initiative a scenario tool is currently being developed that will be able to create scenarios for CO2 reductions from applying different policies for urban mobility. The tool will also show the systemic links with other mobility related factors like air pollution, travel time and quality of public services. It will provide local policy makers with scenarios and policy recommendations.



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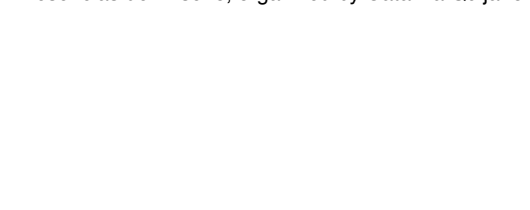
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