

Creative Places for Collaborative Cities

Proposal for the "Progetto Habitat e Cultura" in Milan

Teresa Franqueira¹

Abstract

This paper presents a proposal for a pilot project in an old milk factory in Milan, which is part of 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. Places 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.

This places help to shape a different city. A Collaborative City, that is, a city with kernels of creativity, 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.

¹ POLITECNICO DI MILANO (ITALY), INDACO, PHD STUDENT, TERESA.FRANQUEIRA@POLIMI.IT
UNIVERSIDADE DE AVEIRO (PORTUGAL), DECA, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, TERESA.FRANQUEIRA@UA.PT

1. Introduction

The great demographic concentration in cities and the fast paced rhythm of technological change, together with the phenomenon of globalisation, have converted the city into a big crossroad of cultures, but where ever-increasing individualism is dominant. Interestingly, in the same way globalisation has prompted the rebirth of the “local”, rugged individualism has revitalized the idea of (or the need for) community.

From previous European researches (EMUDE, in particular) surfaced that a dynamic new form of community emerging is emerging, which is based on a diffused creativity put co-operatively into action by “non-specialised” people, representing a significant expression of contemporary society. The EMUDE research has defined these enterprising people as creative communities. That is: groups of innovative citizens organising themselves to solve a problem or to open new possibilities, and doing so as a positive step in the social learning process towards social and environmental sustainability (EMUDE, 2006; Meroni, 2007).

These communities are an alternative to the system, generating outputs alternative to it. They are born from the inertia and lack of flexibility of governmental bodies and the failure of nation states and their welfare systems to address the very complex problems modern society is faced with. They are groups of people who create places where they can, in groups and collaboratively, develop various activities. They produce culture, alternative economies, environmental and social sustainability, socialisation and collaborative services.

What social entrepreneurs and creative communities have in common is that they are ordinary people that invent new ways of overcoming everyday problems and of participating in public and social life in an active way.

This activity, not so common in a society mostly characterized by passivity, derives from the will to promote change and not to sit back and wait for the traditional institutions to solve all everyday problems. And they are put in practice by creative people that persist and invest in their own ideas and are able to convert them into innovative services, responding to everyday needs. These ideas are social innovations, that is, new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs and improve peoples’ lives (Young Foundation, 2007).

These places and these groups of people can be found worldwide, and even though they are not mainstream they can operate major shifts and changes to society. As Mark Penn refers, it takes only 1 percent of people making a dedicated choice – contrary to the mainstream’s choice – to create a movement that can change the world (Penn, 2007).

2. Collaborative City

Between 2007 and 2008, for the first time in history, more than half of human population, 3.3 billion people, will be living in urban areas. By 2030, this is expected to swell to almost 5 billion. The future of cities in developing countries all depend very much on decisions made now in preparation for this growth (Martine, 2007). The impact of globalization on city growth patterns marks a critical difference between past and present transitions (Cohen, 2006).

CEOs for Cities² has defined the areas in most urgent need of fresh thinking in cities as: 1. The Talented City (Developing, maximizing, attracting and retaining talent); 2. The Innovative City (Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship); 3. The Connected City (Fostering connections that link people with ideas to talent, capital and markets; cities to regions; and regions to the global economy); and 4. The Distinctive City (Capitalizing on local differences to build local economic opportunity). According to CEO, cities performing well on these dimensions are destined for success. These dimensions make cities more competitiveness, but these strategies have a strong economical dimension.

What in the past was a competition between countries nowadays is a competition between cities. As countries before them have battled for technological supremacy, cities now strive to implement strategic plans that will grant them a place as financial and cultural powerhouses in the globalised world.

Cities are the main beneficiaries of globalization and the progressive integration of the world's economies. They incubate new businesses, connect people, ideas, money and markets and house most universities. In our increasingly diverse society they are the crucibles for connecting cultures and generating opportunity. People follow jobs, which follow investment and economic activities.

Today's cities must speak to a world well beyond national government. They have been benchmarked against each other in terms of liveability and wellbeing, economic and cultural offer and according to the functional importance they have in various global networks (Young Foundation, 2008). They need to attract investment, inward-investing companies, property developers, the talented the world over. To survive well, cities must play on various stages – from the immediately local, through the regional and national, to the widest global platform. (Landry 2006)

And this competition is continuously reinventing the way cities position and envision themselves. London had a plan to become a creative city, now it has commissioned a study on how to become a collaborative city. Toronto and Brisbane, amongst others, also follow in the creative trail, whilst Berlin has in its local agenda 21 strategies to foster not only creativity, but to become a sustainable, social and participatory city.

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". In recent years creativity has been introduced in economic and urban policies as a key resource to compete in the global knowledge economy. Many creative city strategies have focused on providing the spaces - physical and social environments – to stimulate the production of creative contents and communities, the start up of value added economic activities and the regeneration of degraded urban areas [Creative London, 2005]. On closer examination most of these city strategies have been actually concerned with strengthening

² CEOs for Cities is a bipartisan, nonprofit alliance of US mayors, corporate executives, university presidents and nonprofit leaders, that works with local and national policy-makers to advance the economic competitiveness of cities.

the arts and cultural fabric and/or fostering the creative industries (Landry, 2005) which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (advertising, architecture, art, crafts, design, designer fashion, television, radio, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing and software creation).

But, a creative city, regarding its social and sustainable dimension 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. It is a creative, connected and collaborative city.

A collaborative city is open, as opposed to the structure of other urban government typologies, usually closed. What we can observe in very many urban strategies is this shift from systems enclosed in themselves to open systems and a growing political will to involve citizens in the decision making process, to invest more in culture and intellectual capital.

For traditional institutions and organisations this means working differently, in collaboration with people who are not usual partners. It also means that informal networks between organisations, based on personal peer-to-peer contacts rather than formal arrangements, will become increasingly important (Young Foundation, 2008). To do this they need to develop an adaptive capacity that enables them to change the way they do things.

3. Creative Places

In tandem with the creative city's debate, there is a discussion about old ex-industrial areas and their potential for sustainable urban development. Europe has a rich legacy of industrial archeology, due to its heavily industrialised past followed by the relocation of heavy industries to other parts of the world. It now has to find new uses and solutions to these empty and abandoned places.

The passage from a period of industrial prosperity to a post-industrial one disfigured entire urban areas. It left behind not only abandoned industrial sites, but made many of the inhabitants jobless and transformed previously booming neighbourhoods in rundown ones. But this reality also opened unforeseen perspectives, as some of these abandoned places were re-occupied, converted to new uses and gradually began a new life.

The "available" architectures of these buildings were able to adapt to the most unlikely projects, and welcomed change. Open-ended in their essence and with no predetermined role they welcomed new experiences and were open to various re-interpretations. Together, the mindsets, skills and values embodied in these re-interpretations help make places out of simple spaces.

These renewed and converted places 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. They promote social cohesion and inclusion and become active agents of a participatory democracy.

They form the backbone of what we consider, for the purposes of this research, creative places. Creative places 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.

Creative places are the hotbed of innovative societies, in the sense they promote the exchange of existing ideas and visions and their recombination in innovative mixes (Leadbeater, 2006).

In the framework of this debate, the ongoing research intends to explore Creative Places' economic, cultural and social role within contemporary cities, investigating how they actually manage to reconcile economic and cultural development with the regeneration of citizenship and identity. More particularly, to explore the potential of Creative Places in order to propose a strategic plan and design tools that support urban regeneration processes and allow Creative Places to integrate their physical, social, cultural and environmental dimensions.

In this respect, our hypothesis of work are the following:

- Creative Places are expressions of emerging urban culture, identity and citizenship and, at the same time, they are social laboratories where these urban culture, identity and citizenship are actively and continuously produced and reproduced.
- Creative places enrich city life, promote an active citizenship, improve cultural diversity, and generate a system of relationships with the neighbourhood and the city.
- Creative Places are experiments for a sustainable city: places where creative communities can conceive and develop sustainable ways of living and producing, re-assigning new meanings to physical spaces anticipating some aspects of what could be a sustainable society.
- The re-use of abandoned spaces helps in sustainable urban regeneration and reinforces the sense of identity and belonging.
- One of the strategies for sustainable urban regeneration may be based on a facilitation process that transforms abandoned spaces in creative places.

To clarify what these places are, how they work, and what they produce, two case studies are presented, UfaFabrik in Berlin and Grote Pyr in The Hague. The data and its interpretation are the result of extensive desk and field research.

4. Case Studies

UfaFabrik. The UfaFabrik is a one-of-a-kind European experiment in community. What began in the 70's as a "squat" of the old Berlin Universal Studios led to the transformation of the buildings and extensive grounds into a local artistic, social service and ecological centre. Many lower income families living nearby were initially skeptical of the artists' intentions. But over time, this redevelopment process used the arts to engage, include and ultimately revitalise the entire community.

In 1979, West Berlin was one of the priciest cities in Europe and affordable housing was not readily available. Consequently, some individuals, resorted to squatting – the practice of occupying and living in abandoned buildings. One building taken over in this way was the former Universal Studios film studio in Berlin. The studio, famous for many productions throughout the 30's and 40's, was abandoned after the Second World War. In 1979 a group of young artists moved into the dilapidated facility, shortly before the planned demolition of the buildings. This action was referred to as the "Big Post Robbery" as Universal Studios had sold the buildings to the local post office.

The grounds of the former UFA Film studios in Tempelhof are „peacefully re-activated“ on the 9th of June. A large banner was placed at the entrance reading “Welcome” to invite all of those interested to take part and to interpret the plans of the activists for themselves: a place, where the wide range of social spheres can be brought together in a co-operative project.

45 people decided to live together in a residential community, shared their income and took the chance to build their own sustainable village in the metropolis Berlin. New ideas have been

implemented at the ufaFabrik over the past 25 years, involving ecology and sustainable development, the testing of concepts for producing culture and approaches to social development and neighbourhood work.

Today the activities of the 30 residents and over 200 co-workers continues to be informed by the vision of shaping a meaningful integration of living and working with culture, creativity and community. Each of the residents is in charge of a sector of activity. Some of these activities at UfaFabrik include: An International Culture Centre that offers free space for performances; the Neighbourhood and Self-Help Centre, providing assistance with social, health and family matters (services include family care services, a day-care centre, ecology programmes for local school groups and a Medical Centre); The Children's Circus School committed to the development of talented young performers; A Children's Farm (open door for children, keeps animals seldom seen in the city: pigs, chicken, geese, ferret and ponies); A private school; In-house Organic Bakery, Natural Foods Store and Confectionery; a variety of Ecology Projects combining food production and alternative energy systems; The Café Olé. They also organize workshops ranging from parents dancing with their 2-year-old kids to senior citizens practising chinese qi-gong meditation, Aikido and Tai chi skills as well as classes for dance, afro-drumming and brazilian percussion, among others. (Figure 1 - UfaFabrik)

Grote Pyr. The Grote Pyr is the "offspring" of the Blauwe Aanslag, a former tax office squatted in 1980, which was (forcefully) evicted in October 2003. The City of Den Haag offered what is now the Grote Pyr for sale to the former inhabitants of the Blauwe. Since 2002, the inhabitants (20 adults plus 20 children) and user-groups have been busy with the renovation of this monumental school building from 1907 into an ecological freespace. As this building is a national monument, the residents have the legal obligation to maintain the façade and its original characteristics, whereas the majority of the classrooms and the enormous attic are being modified into living and working spaces.

Common spaces are managed and cared by everyone, but this is more than a courtesy amongst residents; according to the set of rules governing the Pyr, each of the residents and companies present has to work 8 hours/month towards the management, maintenance, renewal and cleaning of common living spaces – or pay 80€, in case of unavailability to meet this obligation.

In this place people cook and eat together, share utilities and bits of their lives with each other. They meet together once a month to discuss practical problems, to divide tasks and to monitor the works in the school and the management of the common spaces – as the garden, amongst others.

There are different activities in Grote Pyr, from cultural ones to economic ones, like a blacksmith's shop; a bicycles repair and conversion shop; a biologic catering company; a theatre group; a photography studio; a ballet studio; an interactive museum where children can play with materials and make their own scientific experiments, exhibitions, events and lessons; and a restaurant open to the public.

Grote Pyr represents, for the city, a place of social sustainability and a link between the centre and other zones. (Figure 1- Grote Pyr)

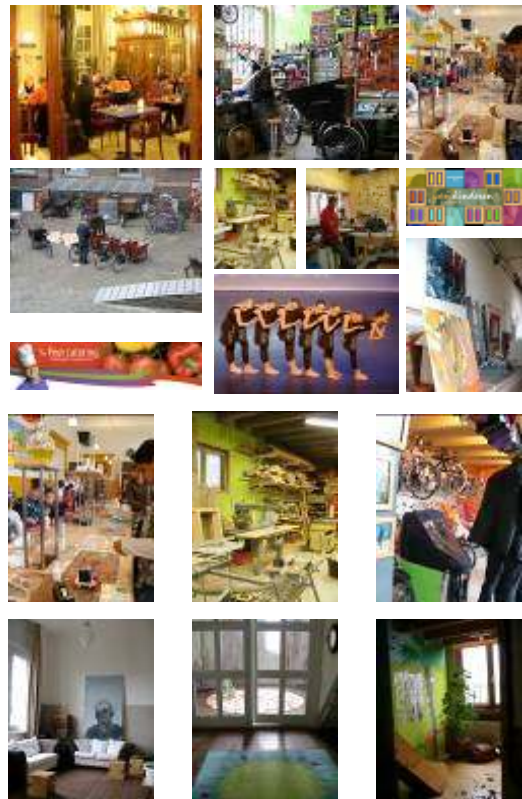


Fig. 1: UfaFabrik (above) and Grote Pyr (bellow)

5. Project *Habitat e Cultura* for Locate di Triulzi

Project's Background. The Province of Milan 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 research, this investigation will identify and develop optimal strategies for building the necessary infrastructure in which sustainable collaborative services can flourish.

The Habitat e Cultura project is part of a larger programme put in place by the Milan's provincial Directorate of Culture and Integration, constituted of three projects concentrating in the experimentation of integrated cultural systems in the region. It is aimed at creating and activating new cultural instruments for community development, social cohesion and integration.

Context. Locate di Triulzi is a municipality with 9.000 inhabitants in Milan's province, with an area of 12 km² and just 10 km away from the city centre.

The old milk factory is situated in a strategic location: close to the overground station, accessible through the main pedestrian circuits of the municipality and close the centre but in an area undergoing major residential renewal works.

These characteristics make the Multifunctional Centre a service with obvious supra-municipal potential.

Project's Object and Objectives:

- To build the identity of the Multifunctional Centre, differentiated from the individual identity of its multiple component parts.
- To design the interactions between all the different parties and the management of some internal and shared services
- To access the skills and competences present in the centre and propose collaborative services (developed jointly), maximising the potential of existing resources.

In the first phase of the project's development, a workshop with the associations was organized.

Summary of the Meeting with the associations involved in the Locate di Triulzi's project. The first part of the meeting (introduction) was dedicated at introducing the objectives of the project and showing some case studies able to inspire and stimulate the ideation phase (suggestions). In the second part the association's representatives were asked to share their ideas (team building) and to discuss possible ways in which the project could be developed (brainstorming). The third phase was dedicated at compiling and comparing the participants' ideas in order to promote the dialogue and establish some common grounds (Data organisation). Finally, the importance of creating a differentiated identity for the Centre was discussed (conclusions). To structure the discussion and help in the brainstorming session, the participants were given cards in which they were requested to state their opinions on some specific issues.

Workshop proceedings and results

Attendees. 14 associations:

1. *Associazione Culturale Namastè*. Promotion and commercialisation of fairtrade products and intercultural activities;
2. *Associazione Genitori Insieme*. Training, integration, and promotion of the role of the family
3. *Associazione Puer*. Childhood
4. *Comitato Bambini Bielorussi*. Committed to promote the well being of native Bielorussian children
5. *A.N.P.I.*. Anti-fascist movement during World War II
6. *Laboratorio Musicale*. Classical and contemporary musical training
7. *Ass. Artisti Locate*. Arts
8. *Centro Aggregazione Giovanile*. Pedagogical and educational activities for pré-teenagers, teenagers and youth
9. *Ass. Il Centro Culturale Sport &T.L.*. Sport
10. *Ass. Teatro Laboratorio La tela del ragno*. Theatre
11. *Gruppo Hobbisti Locatesi*. Hobbies and free time
12. *Motoclub Locate di Triulzi*. Motorcycle enthusiasts
13. *Auser Locate*. Promotion of the active and social role of senior citizens and people with difficulties
14. *Ass. Teatrale Ciclotimici*. Youth Centre's Theatre group

Discussion. From the discussion of the project's objectives and the possible scenarios presented to the participants, it emerged the need to coordinate the existing resources of each association with the new resource materialised in the Multifunctional Centre site, in order to tackle the problems the associations already face and the ones that might arise from the new structure.

The issues that have concentrated most attention were: *accumulated experience, space and identity, material resources*.

- *accumulated experience*. common activities; more visibility and the creation of a network between the associations.
- *space and identity*. sharing spaces; creation of a new identity for the Centre that is more than the sum of the individual identities of the associations involved; ability to maintain their individual identities, not being dissolved in the Centre's new identity.
- *material resources*. the associations' activities are very different; preference for maintaining their own spaces and instruments; the new reality gives the opportunity to share resources and maximise them, by doing things together; management of common/shared resources; running of common spaces; schedule of each individual association's activities; creation of a structure to ensure the management of the organisational aspects and to distribute responsibilities; create an effective self-management system.

Brainstorming cards. Participants were given cards, which they had to fill in individually, to access their opinions on the following points:

Card n° 1

- What can the Multifunctional Centre mean for Locate di Triulzi? (3 adjectives)
- Propose a name for the Centre

- What can each of the associations do for the Centre?

Card n° 2

Participants organised themselves in groups, with a representative of each association, to discuss the individual results of card n.1, and achieve a consensual group card on the following points:

- What can the Multifunctional Centre mean for Locate di Triulzi? (3 adjectives)
- Propose a name for the Centre
- What are you willing to share (material resources and competences, 5 proposals)

Answers to card n° 2

To Question 1: What can the Multifunctional Centre mean for Locate di Triulzi? (3 adjectives)

The answers to this question are summarised below:

Entertaining

Attractive/ Pleasurable

Culture/new creations

Meeting/gathering/sharing

Diversity/ openness

Driving force/catalyst

To Question 2: Propose a name for the Centre

Some of the names proposed are linked to a specific cultural and territorial context, others highlight a vision of the Centre as a place to create and promote a new community dimension for Locate.

Princess Cristina Di Belgioioso (local history)

Agora (place for public meeting)

The ideas' central (place of doing)

Ideas Factory

The milk factory of ideas

Active level (place "alive" with creation)

To Question 3: What are you willing to share (material resources and competences, 5 proposals)

The participants have shown interest in exploring ways of sharing know-how and resources, and willingness to rethink their own contributes. Points emerged:

Motivation /Responsibility

Efficiency/ Availability

Association's Visibility / Communication

Volunteers

Contacts/Collaboration

6. Proposal for Locate' Milk Factory Multifunctional Centre

Starting with these preliminary results, some proposals have been developed. As this is a participatory project, there will be more meetings with the associations to answer to their needs and to limitations in the project.

Since some of the association's representatives have demonstrated difficulties in imagining some of the possible concepts (like the organizational model and self-management, the sharing of responsibilities and material and imaterial resources, and the offer of joint activities), possible scenarios to materialise those concepts have been developed, in order to stimulate and feed discussions in the next meetings.

Some of the premisses for the concept and project development derive from a particular historical heritage in Locate.

Premises for concept's development. In the late XIX century Locate di Triulzi was considered a progressive municipality thanks to the social and educational initiatives promoted by Cristina Belgioiso, and it can reclaim this progressive status through the successful implementation of the Multifunctional Centre and the activities to be developed there.

The pilot project, proposed in the framework of the Habitat e Cultura initiative, can place the Province of Milan, in particular the municipality of Locate, in the vanguard of a worldwide phenomenon as referred in this paper. A phenomenon based in cultural innovative actions that promote social cohesion and integration, community's development, a sense of belonging and collective identity, sustainable behaviours and active citizenship.

The functioning strategy proposed for the Centre is based in the study of strategies adopted in similar cases and in the know-how accumulated by DIS in similar past interventions.

Three functions were identified as a conceptual framework:

- **Cultural** function - the centre as a reference point for cultural activities.
- **Social** function - the centre as a hub for activities with strong social characteristics.
- **Urban regeneration** function - the centre as a hub for the creation of positive relations between the different actors, the citizens and the urban territory in which it is located.

Also, three dimensions were identified regarding the design framework for services & activities:

- **Quality of the human resources** available in each of the associations and their competences
- **Openness** to the city and its citizens
- **Introduction of the best practices** identified at international level

Proposal. From the cases studied it is possible to extract some models, or a mix of models and the project can be developed at two levels:

1. Management (organisational system & infrastructures' sharing system)
2. Services & Activities (for the local community - offered by single associations and in cooperation with others & monthly activities, workshops, courses, events)

A draft of a system map was developed, detailing what spaces and resources could be shared. In the same way, a draft of a system map was developed regarding possible common activities.

1. Management

Regarding the Organisational system. After the workshop with the associations, the available elements are the number of participants (14), and their area of intervention.

The system of management and organisation should be structured to enable responsibility sharing. A speaker should be elected, in representation of all the associations. This figure is to be responsible for organising a monthly meeting between all the representatives of associations, and representatives of other sectors involved in the Centre's smooth running.

Also to be elected:

Responsible for the management of material resources

Responsible for the spaces' management

Responsible for coordinating and managing the activities on offer

Responsible for the digital platform (both intra and inter net)

Responsible for communications on behalf of the Centre

Positions should be rotated every 6 months, allowing for the participation of all associations.

Infrastructures' sharing system. Besides the Library and the entertainment venue, there are some spaces that can be shared and used by every member of the Centre. A conference room, a meeting room, a storage room and also a kitchen.

A restaurant/café could further open the centre to the local community and forge stronger ties between the centre and the general public, since it is a socialisation place by nature. It can also play an important role in the dissemination of good eating habits and practices.

Regarding the material resources, it is also possible to share the Fax machine, a Copy machine, a DataShow and some Consumables. (Figure 2 – Shared resources)

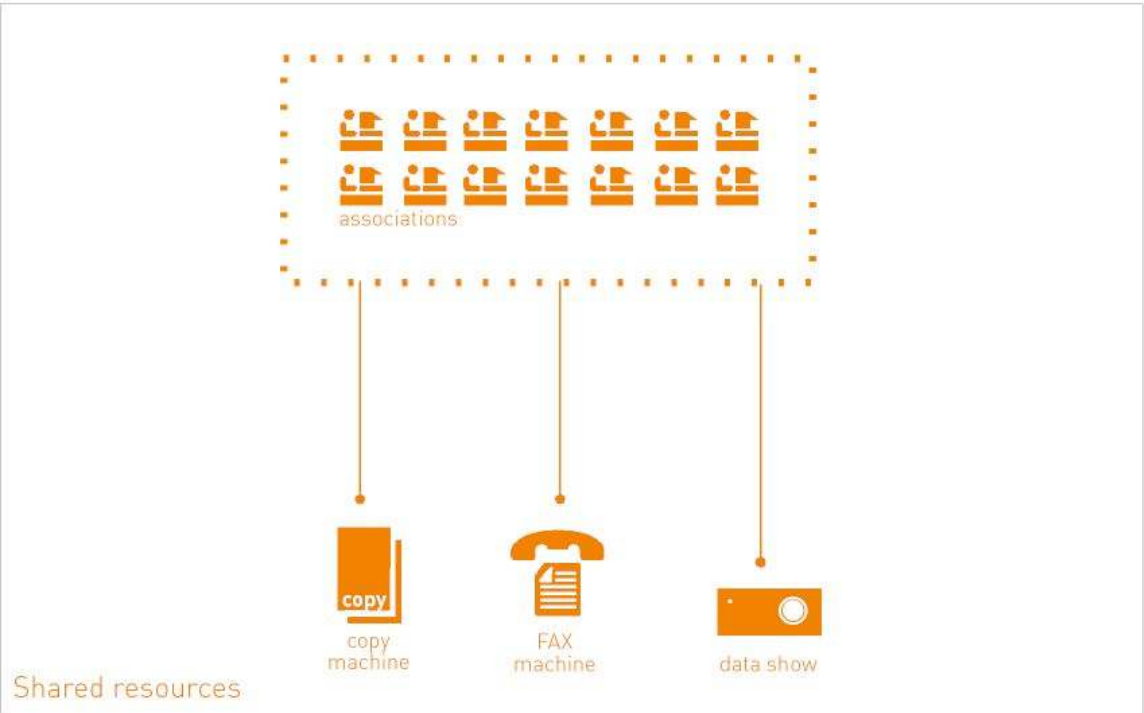
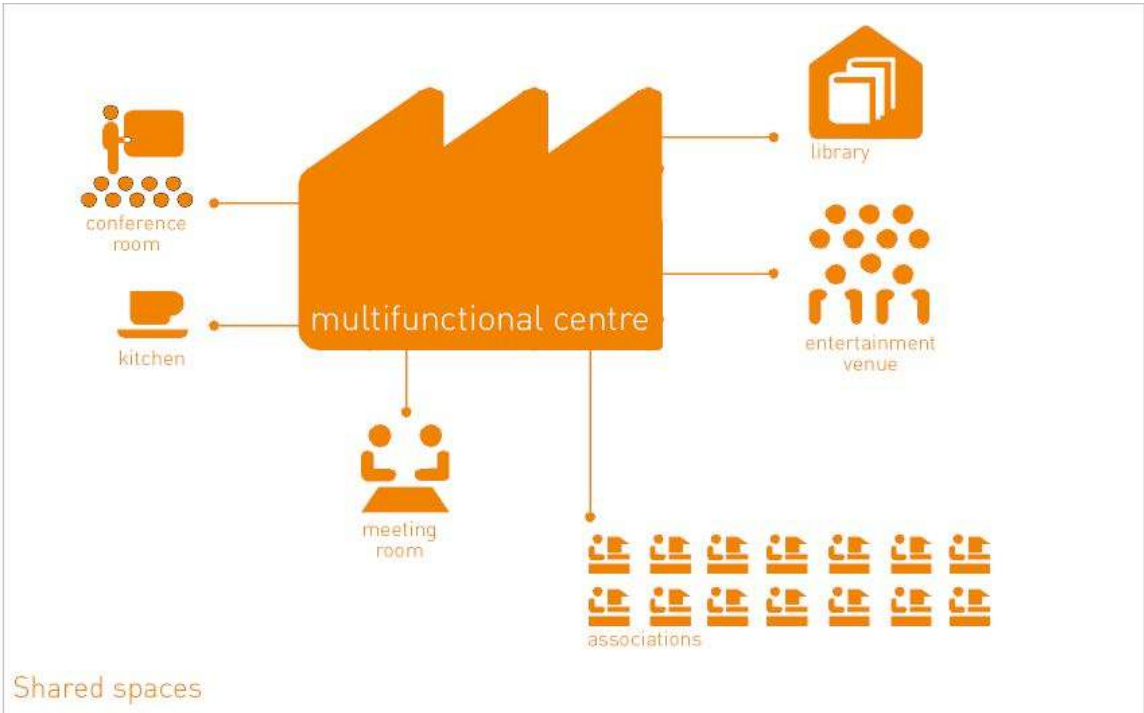


Fig. 2: Shared spaces (above) and Shared resources (bellow)

2. Services & Activities offered by single associations and in cooperation with others & monthly activities, workshops, courses, events

Each association must carry on with their own set of activities, independently of the others, but on a monthly basis they should get together (in groups of 3 or 4) to offer a common activity/project, taking advantage of the existing synergies and competences.

They should organise workshops for a wide public, inviting experts when possible. Participation in those workshops should be paid, and money should be distributed between participating associations and used to finance the costs of organising them and pay possible guest speakers.

There are some possible activities to be organised in cooperation:

Cultivating a **vegetables garden** – [AUSER + PUER] (Figure 3 – Activity 1)

With this resource, some workshops and events can also be proposed by some associations:

Organise lectures/workshops with or for schools about farming, horticulture, etc. [Genitori Insieme] (Figure 3 – Event 1)

Organization of open days dedicated to gardening [Gruppo Hobbisti Locatesi] (Figure 3 – Event 2)

Prevention & Safety on the roads targeting children and teenagers [Motoclub + Genitori insieme + Teatro Laboratorio La tela del ragno] (Figure 3 – Activity 2)

Creation of an **intercultural centre**, with multiple activities directed at children. Complementarily, a museum could be created where to exhibit the different national traditions, behaviours and heritage [Namastè + Pro Bambini Bielorussi + Laboratorio Musical + Artisti di Locate]

. Creation of a lab for the development of creative skills [Musical Lab+ Gruppo Hobbisti Locatesi + Teatrale Ciclotimici]

Monthly they could offer workshops teaching how to play musical instruments and acting. These could be on offer for scheduled school visits, or could be held on a regular basis, to a wider public.

In the **Library** it can be created by all associations a Reading club and Ludic centre, and a shop of second hand books offered by the local community.

Reading and acting of children's plays [Teatrale Ciclotimici + Teatro Laboratorio La tela del ragno]

In the common **Kitchen** there could be also some culinary workshops, with the participation of other associations and the wider public – like ethnic cuisine workshops to foster integration and awareness of the other.

For instance, the NAMASTE association could sell their products to the restaurant, and could even, depending on the garden's size and production, organise an organic garden to supply the restaurant – or at least some specialities.

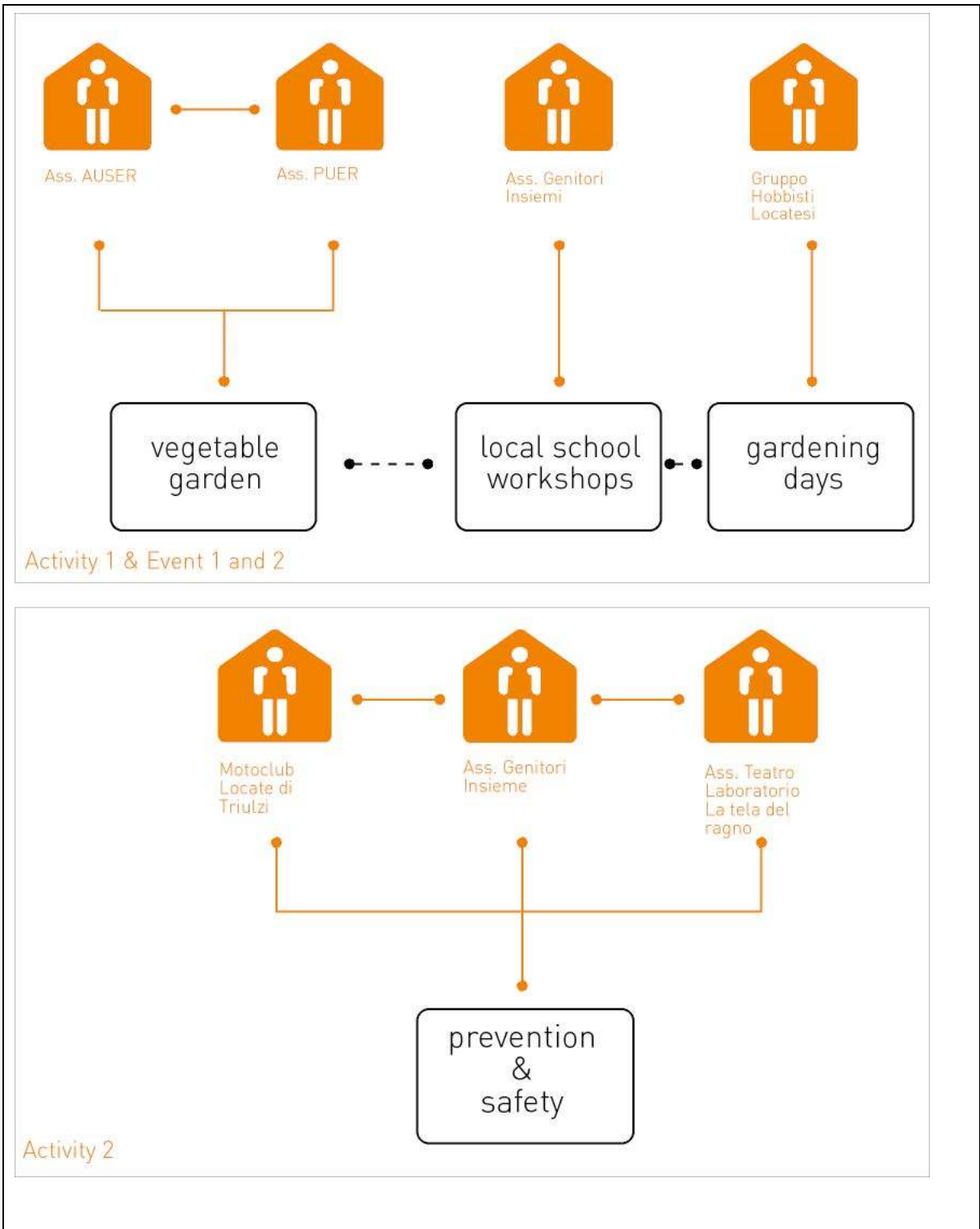


Fig. 3: Vegetables Graden & Events (above) and Prevention & Safety Day (bellow)

These are some of the possible scenarios that can be developed in the Centre. Nevertheless, all proposals will be developed on a participatory basis, i.e., with the inclusion, participation and feedback from all associations involved.

Preliminary conclusions. This is an early stage of an on-going project and only after the meetings with the participating associations we will be able to define a more detailed brief.

As a first observation we highlight the resistance on the part of some of the participants to the idea of sharing spaces and resources, due to the fear of losing identity and independence. The difference from the case studies analysed is evidently the existence of a physical space being offered by local authorities. In the cases of Ufa Fabric and Grote Pyr, the participants had common goals, but lacked a place where to develop them. In Locate the opposite occurs - the associations have their own individual headquarters spread in the territory, and pursue their own specific goals. The idea is to enhance their output by allowing them to benefit from each other's skills and competences, creating synergies that impact positively in their common goal of providing a service to civil society.

On a more positive and inspiring note, other associations, more open to the idea, regard this option as an opportunity to introduce innovation in their activities.

"...creativity is often highly conversational and so innovative societies need to be populated with spaces, real and virtual, where people mix, publish, talk and debate. (...) Without such public platforms society becomes balkanised, sectarian, and divided" (Leadbeater, 2006:9)

7. Conclusions

For too long urban design involved only architecture and land-use planning. Now other professions began to form an essential part of the city-making. We have learned that the physical alone does not make a city or a place (Landry, 2006). So our vision of a possible city is based in the idea of a Collaborative City.

In a closer look to this city, we discover its several hubs, in particular places made of and by people, which work as creativity incubators, laboratories of new cultural experiences, centres of social and solidary dynamism where new economic models are being forged.

Places where people lead sustainable lifestyles, and from where they are able to show to the remainder of society how traditional ways of life can be changed.

Amongst the possible approaches to sustainable development, we give a special focus to the design of services oriented towards new social models, in order to develop and strengthen cultural identities and sustainable lifestyles. In this sense, the innovation driven by design operates within an integrated system, with multidisciplinary teams that can help to build new social scenarios. These scenarios presuppose new attitudes towards the unsustainable patterns we adopted, implying new business strategies and new ways of promoting quality of life and well being. This scenario offers design a different approach and a new opportunity to develop and enhance a sustainable future.

Design is about culture and creativity, is about problem solving, and these "projects" are solving problems arisen from everyday activities that people have to carry out in this complex society.

In these framework design should act as an interface between two levels (top-down and bottom-up initiatives), for top-down initiatives are strategic whilst bottom-up ones are more tactical or operative. Design has the capacity of being both strategic and tactical, this means that design can potentiate people's and government's visions, creating scenarios according to those same visions, benefiting city life in meaningful ways.

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