THE RISE OF COMMUNITY ECONOMY

From Coworking Spaces to the Multifactory Model

BY LORENZA VICTORIA SALATI & GIULIO FOCARDI

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TANDEM EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION

This book is intended as a small contribution to the debate on the future of the economic and social system.

We believe in an ideal of social and technological progress that is based on the innovative power of companies.

Local companies, rooted in their territory, known, responsible, able to balance social, environmental and economic sustainability.

We reject the distracting pessimism of those who see a grey future subjugated to global and sprawling multinationals, but also of those who uncritically superimpose the concept of "enterprise" on the stereotyped image of seventeenth-century steelworks and consider every entrepreneur as a ruthless and predatory subject.

The reality is very different and is made up of innovative and environmentally friendly business models, and new sustainable companies led by a new social class that perceives itself as a driving force for social change and takes up the traits of craftspeople, artists, professionals and entrepreneurs, hybridizing and adapting them to the times.

These pioneers of a new way of doing business are among us and successfully lead companies and projects based on concepts of community, social inclusion, professional exchange, mutual help, and responsibility towards the community.

How did we come to these conclusions?

By exploring, touching, and traveling to discover innovative projects.

Between 2012 and 2018 we visited over 120 different workspaces, travelling across 20 countries and three continents in search of successful models, inspirations and experiences.

We made traveling the core of our research, adopting an ethnographic approach and using many theoretical tools from visual anthropology and participatory anthropology.

To some places we went only once, to others we went back regularly. At some we stayed half a day, at others for months at a time.

We drew important ideas and reflections from all of them and to all of them we owe a debt of gratitude.

The result of this research is the Multifactory Model, a model of intervention designed to be a guide for all those who want to create, from scratch, a shared workspace based on concepts of collaboration, mutual aid, social innovation, sustainability, and the free flow of knowledge.

1 DISCOVERING A NEW SOCIAL CLASS

1.1 THE BEGINNING

THE JOURNEY BEGINS IN 2012, ALMOST BY CHANCE, BUT WITHIN A SPECIFIC HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT.

To understand this better, we must take a step back. Imagine, therefore, going back to the second half of the 2000's, to Italy. If you had passed through the suburbs of Milan, you would have been able to walk for a while through abandoned sheds, former factories and entire newly built, semi-derelict buildings. Everywhere in the city, ruins of the industrial past were interspersed with unsuccessful building speculations and residential complexes that had never been populated due to the financial crisis.

In particular, the entire northern strip, from east to west, would undoubtedly have attracted your curiosity, if, like us, you are fascinated by industrial archaeology. From the Arese to Cologno Monzese, between the mid-nineteenth century and the end of the twentieth, industries such as Alfa Romeo, Pirelli, Ansaldo, Breda, the Pero refinery, the Falck steelworks and dozens of others were located there, later to be flanked by publishing, services and IT giants.

In just less than a hundred years the entire north-east quadrant had been transformed from a country into a uniform and populous area, where houses and factories had overlapped and

Ex Falck: Former Steelworsk, Sesto San Giovanni

Alfa Romeo: Former Car Manufacturing Plant, Arese

intertwined to the point that only the presence of a sign could help one understand where one town ended and another began. Then, in less than thirty years, enormous urban areas had been silenced, leaving immense open spaces and abandoned warehouses. Many of these spaces had been transformed into university buildings and shopping malls since the 1990s, and some of them had already been abandoned again soon afterwards.

However, it would be a mistake to imagine this urban landscape was only one of degradation and decay. Many beautiful projects had arisen in these places, some of them of regional, national or even international importance and, in any case, you would always have found these areas alive and industrious. And yet, despite all the traditional skills and good will of the peoples of Lombardy, old or new, native or newly arrived, it is not an easy or quick process to reconvert and bring back a sense of orderliness to a series of disused areas that taken together might be equivalent to an average provincial capital.

So, you would certainly have encountered fields of scrub, ruins, rubbish and industrial waste of all kinds here, but also many experiences of reuse and preservation of historic, industrial buildings. There was room for everyone and everything at the turn of the millennium, including a few projects that were somehow visionary, curious and inspiring.

And so to a curious scene you could have witnessed, somewhere in the north-eastern quadrant, an afternoon in November back in 2012.

That day, it would have been two or perhaps three in the afternoon, about 20 people were sitting in a circle, on chairs placed in the middle of a square, animatedly debating who knows what. The square was surrounded by buildings that were obviously in use. The day was cold, humid and unpleasant as only the Po Valley can be. Looking at the group from a distance, you might have noticed that some were very young, others less so. Some of them were wearing typical work clothes of crafts-

speople, while others were elegantly dressed. From a distance you certainly couldn't know that those 20 people, ourselves included, were all participants in the Made in MAGE, a project of temporary reuse of a historical, industrial shed, once part of the Falck steelworks.

You might have found it hard to imagine why this group of people had decided to gather outside the surrounding buildings rather than inside, but you would certainly have guessed why if, driven by curiosity, you had entered our soon to be occupied but still empty shed. Just inside, you would have been immediately struck by the twentieth-century architecture, the height of the ceiling, the light, the stained glass windows, the columns, but more than anything else you would have been fascinated by what was inside. For a couple of years the shed, a former bolt making factory, had been transformed into a massive open space of 1700 square meters, without internal partition walls

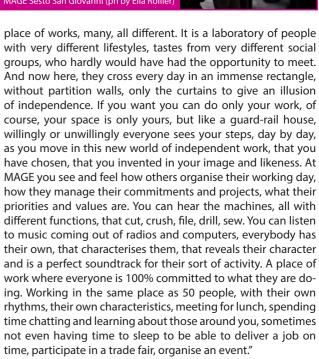Falck: Bolt Making Department, Sesto San Giovanni

and hosting over fifteen different projects. Each individual project occupied a contiguous space, demarcated by simple cotton curtains.

MAGE was a magical place, imbued by history. In wartime, more than 200 women worked under its roof and it was here, that in March 1943, they started the general strikes that triggered the process of liberation from Nazi-Fascism in Milan.

It has always been a place of great change and, so who knows, maybe you too would have been enchanted by its power. Maybe you would have wished to join. Maybe you would have waited for those 20 people to come back, to meet them, to collaborate, to be part of a project even if only for a short period.

How would you have told others of your new experience? What could you have said about it? This is what was written of MAGE by an artisan who had been a member of it for a while: "It is a

MAGE, Sesto San Giovanni

MAGE Sesto San Giovanni (ph by Elia Rollier)

place of works, many, all different. It is a laboratory of people with very different lifestyles, tastes from very different social groups, who hardly would have had the opportunity to meet. And now here, they cross every day in an immense rectangle, without partition walls, only the curtains to give an illusion of independence. If you want you can do only your work, of course, your space is only yours, but like a guard-rail house, willingly or unwillingly everyone sees your steps, day by day, as you move in this new world of independent work, that you have chosen, that you invented in your image and likeness. At MAGE you see and feel how others organise their working day, how they manage their commitments and projects, what their priorities and values are. You can hear the machines, all with different functions, that cut, crush, file, drill, sew. You can listen to music coming out of radios and computers, everybody has their own, that characterises them, that reveals their character and is a perfect soundtrack for their sort of activity. A place of work where everyone is 100% committed to what they are doing. Working in the same place as 50 people, with their own rhythms, their own characteristics, meeting for lunch, spending time chatting and learning about those around you, sometimes not even having time to sleep to be able to deliver a job on time, participate in a trade fair, organise an event."

Among artisan's thoughts, there were also some critical elements. Noise, dust, stacks of dishes to wash. But even some-

MAGE, Sesto San Giovanni

thing more: "This strange coexistence is a very delicate balance. The extreme diversity in approaching the idea of work allows you to see and learn about other methods, contamination is inevitable, with those who have chosen to be here to work with others, but also with those who have more concrete reasons for being here, such as paying less for the laboratory. With the course of time, with the events that happen day after day, a microclimate is being created that can become the magical one of the submerged city or can turn into a suffocating greenhouse, it depends. What does it depend on? It depends whether we want it or not."

Fantasies.

But returning to the prosaic, after entering the shed you would certainly have known for yourself why the meeting had taken place in the yard. On that November afternoon, a pale sun was lighting up Milan and outside was warmer than in. The heating system was out of order and the group was considering how to deal with it. Most probably, after having wandered around amongst unpowered machines, you would have decided to go back outside and chosen instead to observe the closing stages of the meeting.

Quite frankly, we do not remember what was decided about the heating system and that was not the most relevant issue for the group. What we remember well was that, through discussion, everybody pointed the importance of a common approach, which should represent MAGE as a one entity. But, the following question was, "common to whom?". Everybody had entered with a personal project, answering a public call and ended up in the midst of people so different from each other: artists, craftspeople, architects, designers, small leather goods and acces-

sories companies and an innovative start-up. No doubt it was a "group", certainly with something in common, but what? To answer these questions, two very distinct proposals were put forward. I, Lorenza, a documentary video maker, was accustomed to using video as a tool for social research and community development and proposed to "tell our story through a small documentary of up to twenty minutes, in which we would pay a lot of attention to the interviews, both in terms of photography and content. The aim would be to highlight, among the enormous differences, the small daily contacts between us and the possibilities of interconnections and growth, and to visually create an image of what we could become. This activity would offer cues for reflection and encourage people to understand that exchange is the essence and the strength of this project. Along with respect for every single individual

SPAZIO FASE, Alzano Lombardo

for what they want to be". I, Giulio, on the other hand, as a social researcher and corporate consultant interested in the study of complex systems, had an alternative in mind, to carry out a short research piece to "define a general model of integrated management of competences, as a conceptual basis for starting a concrete discussion. Starting from the analysis of the system as a whole, it would be possible to understand which were the key elements of the competence management system, how they could interact with each other, and how they influence each other. Then, once we had understood the structure of the system and the dynamics that exist between the various elements that make it up, we could identify any critical points and inefficiencies, understand how they were generated and find corrective actions, making them sustainable through the exploitation of resources freed from a reduction in inefficiencies within the system itself."

At that time, the two of us we were light years apart from each other. Like all the others, we were two ships from very distant worlds that happened by chance to be in the same port. Both of us were very busy and we knew that it would be difficult to carry out our projects by ourselves. We thought it was reasonable to try to join forces, develop the two ideas together and merge the two approaches into a joint study.

We imagine, although we are not sure, that after the meeting the two of us stopped to discuss the project. If that had happened, we would certainly have met with you and exchanged a few words. After that, you would certainly have continued towards the Falck village, then perhaps Crespi d'Adda and finally the Seriana valley where, in front of the abandoned former Italcementi plants or Pigna paper mills, you would have finished your journey.

Ours, however, was about to begin.

1.2 THE RESEARCH

IN THE BEGINNING, WE HAD PLANNED A MONTH AND A HALF OF WORK, MAYBE TWO MONTHS. WE DECIDED TO ORGANIZE THE PROJECT BY STRUCTURING IT ON A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH SOME OF THE COMPANIES THAT WERE PART OF MAGE, CHOSEN IN SUCH A WAY AS TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INTERNAL VARIETY OF THAT PLACE.

We would interview Fabrizio Saiu, a wood artist dedicated to noble materials; Ricreazioni, a creative laboratory of furniture and design objects based on recycled materials; Girocambiando, a company founded by a former IT specialist who became a woodworker; Elio Cristiani, a former manager who switched to raku ceramics; Vectorealism, perhaps the most famous laser cutting service in northern Italy at the time; Ghostzip, a company that produces innovative bags; Garbage Lab, a leather goods company that mainly uses recycled materials.

Each interview would have had a spiraling structure, starting from general topics and then going more and more in detail (BOX 1 - questions)

From the interviews we would then extrapolate some clips, to be edited in the form of a short documentary.

We decided to base the work on a qualitative basis, with the aim of having an overview of who these people were, what they believed in and how they lived their community experience.

Different companies, different experiences, different ages, different interests, different backgrounds. We were sure that it would be an interesting cross-section and that from the heterogeneity of the answers we would get a lively and variegated picture.

At the same time, we decided that it would be important to keep a stylistic uniformity, a common thread that would unify the different interviews, expressed in the form of shootings featuring "Flemish aesthetics".

BOX 1 - QUESTIONS

What does "work" mean to you?

Who are your main suppliers?

Who are your main customers?

How do you sell your products?

Do you have collaborations with other economic subjects? Do you plan with others?

What do you think about the craftspeople?

What do you think about the factories?

What do you think about fixed job?

Are you an entrepreneur? If not, who are you?

How do you organize your work?

How do you organize your time?

What does "culture" mean to you?

What does "doing business" mean to you?

Why did you decide to do the job you do?

How did you find the funds to get started?

What are your biggest professional motivations?

How do you see yourself in a year?

In 5 years?

In 10 years?

What does " professional updating " mean for you?

Which relationship do you have with technology?

Are You Happy?

Do you know what the other organizations in MAGE are working on?

Do you work with them? In which way?

What did you learn from others?

What did you teach others?

Had it not been for MAGE, would you have been doing the same job?

What drove you to come to MAGE?

Which were your expectations?

What did you find?

How did MAGE make you grow?

How did MAGE limit you?

What do you expect from the institutions?

What is actually the role of the management body?

What should it be?

Against all expectations, the responses of the people interviewed were all surprisingly similar.

With regard to ethics, values, expectations, work organization, priorities in personal life, the responses of these different people seemed almost perfectly overlapping.

When taken individually, their activities were small, but when viewed from an overall perspective, the importance of being part of a unitary structure clearly appeared in all its strength.

What emerged from the interviews was that our interviewees viewed MAGE as more than just a collaborative space. It was a real organisational structure based on exchange, mutuality and sharing. To some extent, it seemed as if these different artists, companies and craftspeople, working horizontally together, were part of a single, large "invisible factory", in which everyone could represent a company function.

Perhaps MAGE was a unique experience, an anomaly, a particular combination of factors that had led to that result. Or perhaps, if that structure had taken place, there were reasons linked to a more general change and it was the expression of a social change, related to people who began to have other values and other priorities than in the past.

In any case, if it had been possible to identify the basic mechanisms underlying the relationships between the different components of the system, to understand which ones were functional with respect to an increase in the overall level of competences, it might have been possible to identify solutions to make these mechanisms reproducible, so as to define a model that could be exported.

We weren't aware of other places like MAGE, but this didn't mean they wouldn't exist. Even if they had been there, they would have been in their early days. They would have been experiments, they would have had the same doubts and, just like MAGE, they would not have been able to define what they were.

To continue with the work, we decided to follow a double path.

On one side, we decided to propose the same interviews to a group of farmers from the South of Italy, in Basilicata, who were all part of a project meant to create a local supply chain, to see what the answers would be in a totally different place from Milan. From different people, in a different context, we expected that we would receive different answers.

On the other hand, we decided to look for a space outside Italy. That period was economically very difficult in Italy, so we speculated it might only be the lack of money that was pushing people to get together and then, once they had started to earn enough money again, all these experiences would be doomed to disappear.

On the other hand, if the collaborative model was really something important that was beginning, and if it was really emerging as a response to a structural change in the system, then we should look for something similar elsewhere in Europe. If we could find similar experiences in another country, then we could say that the new collaborative trend did not depend on specifically Italian circumstances.

Choosing the destination was easy. In Europe, when it comes to social innovation, two capitals have always been ahead of their time: Berlin and London. We chose London. We bought the tickets without having yet identified any places to visit, but we knew that, if it did exist, we would be able to find it in London. At the time, the concept of "shared work" was much less developed, in 2012 for example there were less than 2000 coworking spaces worldwide, in which about 80,000 people worked in total. In the following five years, the spaces would increase by ten times and the members would exceed 3,000,000 people. We began an intense search both on the Internet and by word of mouth, sending emails and making phone calls.

Meanwhile, it was time to go to Southern Italy, direction Pollino Park.

1.3 THE FIRST 5000 KILOMETERS

FROM ROME WE TRAVELLED TO POLLINO, FROM POLLINO TO NAPLES, FROM NAPLES TO SALERNO, FROM SALERNO WE JOURNEYED TO EBOLI, AND FINALLY, AFTER MANY HARD MILES, WE REACHED OUR DESTINATION, LAURIA.

Here, we would get to know the farmers who were participating in the Micro Supply Chain project.

Pollino comes as a shock. Of course, it is not a closed and defined place like MAGE and like almost all the others that we will visit in the years to come. Neither is it a shared working space in the strict sense. Yet, or perhaps precisely because of this, it surprises us. We ask the same questions to Lucanian farmers as we did to the people from MAGE. We had never expected to receive answers perfectly overlapping those given by the artists and designers of Milan.

Like 1500 km further north, we found entrepreneurs who put quality of life above money, who combined innovation with tradition, who based the success of their businesses on mutual help, on sharing experiences and skills, companies that innovated through hybridization and experimentation. We found a network of relationships that pushed people who never thought they could do business into becoming entrepreneurs.

Was this simply the answer to a particular economic and historical moment? Or were these the first experiments of innovative economic structures, the prelude to structural change? In other words, we asked ourselves, what if we were facing the start of an economic revolution?

EVRA, Lauria

Of those days we will always remember having had twin sensations. On the one hand was the excitement of potentially being part of a revolution in progress and being able to document it, live it and study it firsthand, right at its inception.

On the other hand, we were conscious of needing to keep our feet on the ground. It was always possible that the cases we thought we were observing could turn out to simply be an incidental anomaly, an unusual appearance of absolutely ordinary phenomena.

We understood that we needed a direct immersion with the international scientific community, to exchange our ideas with other researchers. We began to respond to various calls for papers by conferences on related topics, in Europe and the USA, looking for some feedback. Our research was in its infancy and was not yet structured enough to be officially presented. We will forever remember finding a comment in a peer reviewed paper that simply said: "Section 1.3, for example, is a complete mess". Yet this proved to be a very useful activity, because the feedback from the evaluation committees and Peer Reviews helped us a great deal to choose the way forward, in those initial and confusing phases.

After Pollino, we anticipate results in London. We needed to understand if, in a land of social experimentation, we would find something similar to what we had observed to date in Italy. Our departure was scheduled for February 27th 2013. We had the ticket, but not destination. Yet! Our journey into the world of shared workspaces has only just begun: we needed to focus our research and we decided to concentrate on spaces that had the three characteristics that we considered important:

First of all, they should be places where something concrete is being produced: objects, prototypes, small scale production. They could also be somewhere to accommodate 'workers of the intangible', those who might only need a desk and a computer, but a productive element would be mandatory.

Then, they should be places characterised by broad heterogeneity; young and old, artists and craftspeople, start-ups and established companies, traditional craftspeople and 3D printers, architects and cyclists, local companies and companies with a global outlook.

Finally, they should be community projects. We are not prescriptive about which governance structure would be acceptable. Be it privately owned, perhaps with an established management structure or typically anarchic, our only concern is that the bodies or individuals using the space should be an active part of the space's governance. The ethos of 'from below' or 'grassroots' is non negotiable.

We want to investigate the point of view of those who aim to start and manage one of these spaces, understand how they intend to make it work and their reference models.

On 9 February we contacted Building BloQs, a new-born space in the North-East suburbs of London, via email.

"Hi,

we are two makers from Italy: Giulio and Lorenza.

We work in a place that is very, very similar to Building BloQs, MAGE in Sesto San Giovanni (Milan), also known in Italy as the "Town of Factories".

MAGE is an industrial building of 1700 square meters, formerly used as warehouses.

At MAGE now you can find 17 small companies and/or associations: crafts makers, sewers, dressmakers, two bag factories, a bike factory, laser cutting, 3D printing, photographers, architects, jewellers, filmmakers, and artists. We produce goods, ideas and culture since 2010.

On February 12, Alejandro Parra, one of the founders, replies:

"Dear Giulio and Lorenza,

We are delighted by your proposal.

The delay in responding to you was purely to do with how busy we have been.

MAGE sounds very exciting and from what we can understand from your website (we speak French and Spanish between us) it looks very similar to what we want to achieve.

We would be very pleased to welcome you both to stay, to make links and learn from your experience and to take part in your documentary.

We are currently in the very early stages of development.

Our building and facilities are rather rudimentary and we don't have 5 star accommodation to offer you but you can be sure of our enthusiasm and a warm welcome.

Currently we are offering build space to set designers who are making sets for commercials, we have a band shooting their music video being next weekend and are hosting the first of what we hope will be many events in our venue/rehearsal space. We are also continuing with our own private work in the workshop in order to fund ourselves a little.

In the meantime we are building some of the infrastructure we need to open up our doors more widely and begin signing up members.

Please do contact us and we will begin to arrange when you're coming to stay.

I will call you soon too.

Best wishes
Al"

1.4 BUILDING BLOQS

Two weeks later we found ourselves in the middle of a subway station concourse in the far north-east outskirts of London. It's 22:00 on February 27, 2013 and the evening is unexpectedly warm.

Our rendez vous with Al is close to the bus stop, just out of the subway, but because we've only exchanged phone calls and emails with him we don't know what he looks like. From inside a red VW Golf, a man with greying hair beckons us to approach. There are some road works being carried out and it's very dark, but we have all the video equipment with us and we don't go unnoticed.

Al welcomed us with a smile, we loaded our luggage and we went straight to Building BloQs. While driving with prudence and attention he talks about the suburbs we are passing along the way. All about him is strongly British: his accent, his way of doing things, his distinct kindness.

In a few minutes we've passed by abandoned factories, motorway junctions, old city gas holders, and past a petrol station. Then we're heading towards a canal and then after another left, we're in a small street with no exit. Here, on the right, an orange wall stands amongst industrial warehouses. We have reached Building BloQs.

BUILDING BLOQS, London

Just inside the front door there is a short corridor which leads to the work area. Just before that, on the right, a small door opens onto a large kitchen. There is a professional fridge, and a big table. A shelf serves as a pantry, whilst dishes are stacked on a 1950s dresser. A gas hob sits on a piece of furniture, and just behind it there is a large window that overlooks the workspace. Al leads us into the makeshift guest quarters, an area between the kitchen and the offices. A wall is filled with a giant projection screen, another with a large blackboard. In a corner stands a red velvet sofa bed that proves, despite appearances, to be more comfortable than expected.

We arrived with cameras, microphones and a rough storyboard. But now that we're here, what will be interesting to shoot? What will their answers be to our questions? What does London have for us? Sleep takes the place of a thousand questions, we have a week to find answers.

Our wake-up comes early in the morning, when from behind our bedroom wall someone puts a circular saw into action.

Building BloQs welcomes us with all the energy of a newborn place. Around a table about ten people work, discuss and plan. Besides Al there are Arnaud, Vinnie and Julien, the other three founders of Building BloQs, plus other friends who have come to help. They offer us scrambled eggs with black bread which we exchange for a couple of bottles of Italian wine to drink with dinner. It is the beginning of a friendship.

BUILDING BLOQS, London

They are curious to know why we are here, why we chose Building BloQs and, above all, how we found them. This has not been easy.

When we started our research, we realised that there was not yet a category that would bring together the spaces characterised by the three characteristics we were looking for. Several times in the course of our work we will find out that many of them do not know how to define themselves. One described themselves as a "coworking+ workshop", another as a "creative space", and a third as a "coworking for people doing practical work".

Therefore, we initially hypothesised that some could derive benefit from the development and transformation of different types of shared workspaces, such as coworking spaces, cultural centers, fablabs, makerspaces. Starting from this basic assumption we started to contact spaces that presented themselves as coworking, asking if they conformed to our desired characteristics or, if not, if they knew other spaces to contact. We found spaces in this way, from contact to contact, through word of mouth.

We would soon discover that BloQs too had encountered the same difficulties while looking for reference models to draw

inspiration from. Al tells us that before starting with their adventure, they had looked for analogues consistent with the idea they had in mind, without finding anything: *"We looked for other models and were thinking that surely this must exist. Wee found that some of our ideas had been put into practice in the States, and when MAGE contacted us we realised this was happening in Europe too. But we did not see any analogues or models doing exactly what we are doing here."*

Once we have finished our eggs everyone gets back to work. Al gives us a guided tour and, with the camera on, tells us what Building BloQs is and what it wants to be. At the moment the space looks like an incredible jumble of materials, tools, furniture and various objects. A FIAT 500 and a Morris Minor Traveller are waiting for restoration, whilst two set designers are preparing a full-scale wooden replica rocket engine for a movie. A wooden wall, about fifteen meters long, and a cabin with an inscription "TIME MACHINE" on the door are traces of the New Year's party.

"Building BloQs is a new creative space for coworking. Others are more computer based, cerebral and professional. Our reason for being here is so that professionals can make a living by making."

Building BloQs had opened in November of the year before and was still just a rough sketch of what it wants to become, but the founding members have a clear vision.

"We provide the use of space, first and foremost, workbenches where practical work can be done and all the services around that so people have light industrial processing for materials, from wood, metal, paper, plastic, electronics and other such things."

Al shows us the room where they plan to build a Café, divided from the workspaces by a huge wall of brand-new windows, each of different size, framed by a wooden box structures.

Al explains that the glass panels were discarded from a company based in the area, although perfect. Beyond the wall you can see the real workspace, about 1000 square meters of shed to be equipped with workstations, a mezzanine, and a closed and soundproofed area for events, courses, and exhibitions.

"This is a place for people to create and make and do their business, indeed if people do want to put on a production here we are not gonna stop them. And we do have the facilities for small events, here. We want to provide all the facilities to do what people want to do."

Al comes back to the office and we continue with shooting. Our eyes bounce from one object to another, each one tells strange stories and they are all beautiful to shoot but we soon realize we are wasting time. We must stop and think.

We go back to our room and take control of the blackboard. We spend our first two days shut up in there, putting together our ideas collected so far, and finding out that being 2000km away it's easier to think.

What had we got so far? First of all we had a name. A new word that had been born just a couple of months earlier. Back when we began our research, we had been looking for places with specific characteristics but we had no idea where and how to find them and we certainly didn't know what to call them. We really needed a term that described what we were working on. It was a November night in 2013 and we were at MAGE working despite the heating still being broken. Sitting at our desk, a heater pointed at our feet, we were trying to gather our thoughts. Half roasting and half freezing, we sat in front of our computers, cups of tea in hand, and suddenly the name came out on its own, as if it had been suggested by MAGE itself: "Multifactory".

"We loved it immediately. Straight away it gave expression to the themes of heterogeneity and production whilst solidly embedding the concept of 'factory'.

Secluded in our London office in Building BloQs, we wrote "multifactory" on our blackboard, followed by "heterogeneity", "production" and "bottom-up". Then we started to add other important terms that had begun to emerge for us.

"Work", "crisis", "happiness", "change", "institutions", "society" and many other terms intersect with each other. After each addition we take a picture.

At 4 a.m. on our second day, after a thousand photos have been taken, our ideas are getting clearer. As well as clarity we also now have a stop-motion piece for our documentary, a tide of chalk writings that appear, transform and disappear again.

1.5 WHAT DRIVES THE INITIATORS

BEFORE WE HAD EVEN ARRIVED IN LONDON WE UNDERSTOOD THAT A MULTIFACTORY DOESN'T START BY CHANCE. WE KNEW ALREADY THAT A MULTIFACTORY CAN ONLY BE ESTABLISHED ON THE BASIS OF A STRONG COMMITMENT.

We are curious to know what drove Al, Vinny, Arnaud and Julien to invest a large part of their own personal savings to rent a warehouse in the outskirts of London and build a shared workspace for people making furniture, sets, design objects, prototypes and developing artistic projects.

That evening we ordered a takeaway dinner from an Indian restaurant. Whilst we wait for the food to arrive, we had an opportunity to talk to the four of them. They were obviously tired but very happy. We share emotions, worries and dreams.

BUILDING BLOQS, London

In interview over the days to come we would hear many of the same themes repeated as we heard that night but our immediate and lasting impression of the evening was of how we could completely share in their experience, that incredible mixture of joy, excitement, and travail that are the stock in trade of any project founders embarking on something so momentous and challenging.

Arnaud was expansive and friendly, a dreamer in a overalls. *"I would love to be part of the birth of a village, to set a new community."* We find he always speaks frankly and directly, looking straight at you with his piercingly blue eyes and a smile that's hard to forget.

Vinny is reserved and introspective, and talks only after a little thinking. *"Maybe I'm a catalyst, a sort of instigator, helping to make things happen. Essentially somebody that sets the ball rolling. We don't' know where it's gonna go, and that's exciting. I'm quite confident that lots of interesting and amazing things will come from it. But the way I see myself in it, if it was a stage play, I'd like to be the guy who works behind the scenes'. I'm the guy to shine a spotlight on the stars, because the people will be the stars. The people are the stars, absolutely. And if we get to the point in the future when Building BloQs pays for itself, pays for its own rent, pays for its own energy supplies, its maintenance and everything else that goes with it, I'll be delighted and that would be enough for me."*

We identify very much with this need of Vinny's to create a platform, much as we at MAGE experience the power of a workplace that is not just a space but is also an opportunity for sharing. It is Arnaud who highlights a key concept: *"Many people talk about brilliant ideas every day - all the time - hundreds of ideas. I don't think an idea is a personal thing, an idea can come at the same time all over the world. We just want to go ahead and make it happen rather than talk about it. The important thing is to realize your idea and to make it happen. Or at least try, take a risk, do something different, doesn't matter if it doesn't work."*

Many people have good ideas, but the hard part is to make them real, if you are alone, while together it becomes something feasible: *"We will re-inspire people to innovate again rather than following set rules. We will allow people to try their ideas and when there is more than one person trying an idea it's much more interesting and we can go a lot further with innovation and new ideas by creating a surrounding which doesn't restrict them."*

Amongst all of them Al is less of a "maker" and much more of a strategist. He deals with keeping the accounts, administration, institutional contacts, writing and taking calls. His distinctive walk and accent fit perfectly with his outfit of old desert boots, brown trousers, a Shetland jumper and a corduroy jacket. He feels that what they are doing in a forgotten outpost of north London can somehow be revolutionary and he is already thinking about they will spread the concept: *"our dream is that we create something here which proves to be so useful, so beneficial, so interesting, and innovative that is only a question if time before we ourselves or somebody else builds the next Building BloQs so we can spread the benefit of what we are achieving here as far and wide as possible. We will not necessarily be employing a lot of people directly as an organisation but what we are doing is job creation and this is so necessary here across the UK, but also right across Europe now."*

Julien is the artist of the group, a painter, an illustrator, a true intellectual bohémien with an extraordinary talent and round glasses. He and Arnaud were part of a production at the Secret Garden Party, an independent arts and music festival held every year near Huntingdon, an experience that Julien defined as "being in another dimension", and described it as being one of those situations that creates a family.

As we talked to them we understood that beyond their friendship and shared experiences, what brought these four people together was that all of them were gaining a sense of personal satisfaction by being able to connect people and projects, by being catalysts for the development of ideas. We would later discover that all the coordinators of the shared spaces we visited would in some way share this attitude.

The following day we went out for a walk along the canal with Vinnie, Arnaud, Julien and a friend of theirs. We leapt at the chance to shoot outdoors. The canal was dotted with geese and a few boats, whilst gasometers boldly occupy space in the landscape. We took in the patchwork of liminal green spaces between a network of gas pipelines and bits of industrial plant, each protected by high fences.

We closed our eyes just for a moment and tried to imagine how vibrant and chaotic the place would once have been when thousands of workers toiled here.

"Workers". A term that by itself describes a life. We realised that those who are reshaping these places are not able to identify their profession with a single term in the same way. *"It's not easy to define yourself as one thing, because one moment you do one thing that is business, next moment you do woodworking and there is lot of people and all of us who are multi-skilled and so it's an all round ability to run and make projects work that makes things happen." said Arnaud, describing himself and his fellow adventurers. In some way, his multidisciplinary approach is almost imposed by the economic situation. We wondered if perhaps Arnaud would like to devote himself only to making in wood and metal. He is well aware of the value of the profession of craftsman and of all his fellow co-founders he has the keenest appreciation of its worth. "A real craftsman has the skills attached to him, if we lose craftspeople, we lose those skills too."*

A barge slid silently over the water, whilst a swan flew towards the sunset. Julien told us that in the UK swans are special animals because all wild swans are property of The Queen. He suggests us to go see the Swan Upping, the famous swan census that is an annual ceremony that has been held since the 12th century to the present day and takes place the third week of July. "Why not?" We said. "We could come back in July. It would also be a lot warmer."

To the east, a dirt road led into a residential area. From a small hill, the houses with their well-kept garden overlooked the industrial scenery. The view was not very impressive, but it was peaceful place. We spent some time shooting, then made our way back again along the road through the fields, pipes and fences. Suddenly a young man came running in the opposite direction, jumped over a fence and disappeared off behind a building. Just a few seconds later a group of five or six other young people appeared at a run. They were all about 20 years old. They paused for a moment to take a look around them, and then, turning left, they started running again. This time, it seemed, luck was on the side of the first young runner. "Maybe', we thought, "the neighbourhood isn't as quiet as it seems."

Also keen on a run, Vinnie and Arnaud broke into an impromptu race with a group of teenage girls that happened to be passing by. We learned that they were on a 'cross country run'. "It's what we British do," one of girls explained as turned to go. It was time for us to get back as well. We turned off the camera and headed towards Building BloQs.

That evening, with a cup of earl grey tea in hand, we discovered that Building BloQs is actually situated just two and a half miles from the epicentre of the infamous London Riots of the summer of 2011. Some of the guys recounted their feelings of shock and vulnerability at the time, a weird sense that their city had become undecipherable, even for those who had always lived there.

We talked about London, the United Kingdom, the social changes that were taking place. We discussed how it is more and more difficult to recognise oneself in the traditionally accepted social categories, to describe oneself to others with a few, simple shared references: *"We are a mix of working class and middle class. Our class system is changing. We are all working class as we do things but we absolutely are entrepreneurs. I've not seen this particular model of what we are building here at Building Blo-Qs in operation anywhere else in the world, so I think that makes it entrepreneurial. We are businessmen, but not exactly as most businessmen are. They are supposed to have profit in mind, whereas our model is not for private profit."* What Al tells us is something we've already heard but expressed in a very different language just a month before, deep in the South of Italy. Hearing some of the same concepts repeated by a Londoner in such a "polite" way, makes both of us feel a thrill.

We wonder whether or not this is a sign of cultural globalisation, if the fact of feeling "European" leads to the generation of similar thoughts, values, and self-expressions even thousands of miles away.

Perhaps this is a sign that we are moving from a local culture to a supranational culture, one made up of many local cultures that develop in parallel in similar ways. Culture, in particular the culture generated and shared by a community, is a theme that arose several times during our stay in London. For Julien it was a reason to live, for Vinnie and Arnaud it meant making the sense of community visible. Vinnie made himself clear when he said: *"What is my concept of Culture? I could answer your question by changing your question to what is my concept of community. It's people working together, collectively, for one goal, to achieve something together."*

On the other hand, for Arnaud it is more of a consequence: *"I suppose we do culture. Culture is life around us: friends, colleagues, people making things with us. And knowing other people's culture, when you go abroad to visit and see different ways people live together in community."* What comes first for Arnaud is the construction of a participatory project: *"I think that Building BloQs, when it grows and as it grows, will draw lots of people who will necessarily meet. Here, in this place, where different cultures can meet, and different people from different backgrounds, doing different work with many skills will bring people together and will make, I suppose, a new form of community which could be called a cultural change, but I'm not sure."*

At Building BloQs, just as in MAGE, we found that the sense of community is important. We were not at all surprised to find that a sense of community should arise from a shared use of physical space. Working together can lead to very close relationships and this has both its advantages and disadvantages.

Back in the office we paused to think about this. Usually in projects based explicitly on adherence to a common set of values, the "why" people are part of a project is the most relevant aspect. This is typical of political projects, or of civil activism. We are already conscious that it isn't possible to base a multifactory on an "a priori" sharing of values. Such varying group of people

can certainly succeed in building a common ethic, but only after a process of mutual convergence and mediation between points of view. A common ethic is something that grows while experiencing the community, not before. We imagine a multifactory as a community of purpose, a place designated to work, where people enter to work at their best, no matter what their personal motivations are. In order to create the right conditions for shared values to arise, careful attention will need to be given to designing a suitable governance structure that allows the desired outcomes.

The days passed quickly. The entire BloQs building crew was very busy as they have to build a toilet block and showers in a very short time. Despite this they found time to answer our questions. We have found that interviews are important not only as content for the documentary, but also as a tool to fix our interviewee's ideas and opinions, to record them, enabling us to listen back with ease in later on. We found a wall that made the perfect backdrop for our interviews. We asked the BloQs crew where they found the stimulus to carry on with their project.

"We run this project with the belief that it's a necessary thing." Arnaud replied disarmingly. "We could have approached this in a very business angle, but it's not really what it is. That works for a profit lead company, but we're a community company, it's an organic process and trying to fit that into a society of rules and regulations has been a challenging thing. And the risk is "will it work?" who knows."

Behind Building BloQs, it is now very clear, there is no immediate public funding or private corporate financing. All renovation work is done by the founders with the help of the craftspeople who are already members of Building BloQs.

Al explained that they started by of founding a company to manage the space, but in the process of creating Building BloQs, the four founders realised the value of creating a non-profit company to carry out their work and that this new awareness had changed the organisational structure they had first had in mind.

"It's very difficult to go along and find somebody who says "Ok, yes! I really really want to give my time and help with my efforts in order for you to get wealthy." As soon as we made it a non-profit organisation, suddenly the flood gates opened and people become able to invest time and ideas to help us create the vision we had in mind. When we removed money as the primary objective of the company, suddenly the development possibilities grew enormously."

We find again the essence of this choice in Arnaud's words: the willingness to do something for the common good and not only for the sake of building a personal career.

"Traditionally, entrepreneurs go for profit and growth. The one thing that is important is profit. It's all about growth and profit. But what we are trying to set up here is not the company's growth, but the growth of people within it."

Then, however, once a group has been formed, there is the need to keep it together, and to achieve this goal it is necessary to transform the group into a community. For Arnaud this is a natural evolution:

"I imagine an organic community. A community that creates itself through the people who get involved with it. It's not a community where we decide what the goal will be. It will grow of its own accord. The people will come and get involved with it, with the things created here. This will create a community in itself and I don't think there is any plan exactly on how it will end up. It's an open ended project".

A grassroots community where everyone can participate in governance and make decisions. Al's idea is that the group of founders should guide the development, but that that development should then be defined by the community.

"We want our members to have an influence, to help us to run Building BloQs, so there will be more formal arrangements made so they may be able to take part in an AGM or in monthly meetings with their own ideas. What they need and want from Building BloQs is of foremost importance to the management, so we can create what people need, as this is not a business only to make profit, but to enable those creators and makers in the industry."

We found that many of the concepts the guys had shared with us over our stay were reiterated more formally in the interviews. It came to an end all too quickly as our return flights were fast approaching. It was a Sunday of March, when Al took us back to Tottenham Hale station. We say goodbye to the abandoned but sunkissed factories, the light making the bricks look even more red than they really were.

Goodbye dear dreamer friends, we'll see you soon.

1.6 AFTER LONDON

AFTER LONDON IT WAS TIME TO REARRANGE SOME IDEAS. WE DECIDED TO TOTALLY CHANGE THE STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENTARY AND BEGAN TO SELECT AND LISTEN TO THE INTERVIEWS WE HAD SHOT. WE CREATED SEVERAL TIMELINES, ONE FOR EACH TOPIC, AND THE COINCIDENCES BETWEEN THE ANSWERS GIVEN BY ALL OF THE INTERVIEWEES WAS STARTLING.

It was really strange and fascinating to hear English craftspeople, farmers from Southern Italy and designers from Milan

aligned on values, perspective, and on an approach to work and life. We were aware that three cases did not represent a statistically valid sample, but together they gave us very important indications.

We began to crystallise our thoughts in these terms:

With our trip to London we had found confirmation that, to some extent, a multifactory needs a catalyst agent who creates the necessary and sufficient conditions to structure specific relations between the different actors. This agent can be a public or private subject, but should not be understood as a "director".

The agent simply creates an opportunity and carries out facilitating actions, but the socio-economic structure of the multifactory has to evolve and develop autonomously.

The community should grow step by step, defining common rules and autonomously elaborating these rules starting from the resolution of concrete cases. A multifactory is a self-organised system with emerging governance and although there are some institutional subjects of various kinds that define some basic rules, it is then the agents within the system to define autonomously the micro social norms.

Therefore, the overall organisation of a multifactory is the result of an adaptive process. A multifactory is a system of heterogeneous interacting agents, a self-adaptive and self-organised system, in which the rules are not established in advance but emerge from the resolution of specific cases and, once verified their effectiveness, they become a shared asset. This is a slow but important process, especially for the construction of the group and the community.

By now we were fully convinced of how important more research was going to be. We planned a two pronged approach. Firstly we would seek a comparison with the international academic environment. Secondly we would plan our next expeditions in search of more shared workspaces.

LX FACTORY, Lisbon

we visited Oficina Colectiva included provision for eight distinct activities and a mixture of artisans, companies and freelancers came to a total of 16 people.

By July we had moved to the very heart of Europe, Berlin. An experimental city, Berlin has always been receptive to new ideas.

AGORA COLLECTIVE, Berlin

We visited Beta Haus, a well established coworking space in Berlin, and Prinzessinengarten, a leading project for the construction of city gardens to be based on a community management model. We realised that both these projects were, whilst highly laudable, of little immediate relevance to our research focus and so, in search of suitable subjects to interview, we made our way to The Agora Collective.

We found Agora to be an 800 square meters space over four floors of a historical building in Neukolln, a creative and multicultural neighbourhood in south east Berlin. The Agora Collective could host up to 80 people. Most of the community were freelancers and artists but there were also a workshop for manual working, a guesthouse for artistic residencies, an event space and a café. In 2017 The Agora Collective moved to some former industrial building in Kreutzberg, east Berlin, and the project was remodelled so it could also include a co-living space.

While we are in Berlin, almost by chance, we are told about an interesting project not far away in the historic city of Potsdam. Potsdam is very close to Berlin, but it is totally different in spirit and social structure. Traditionally considered the German Versailles, it has numerous palaces and gardens from it's imperial past and is now a popular tourist destination.

However, during it's time as part of the GDR, Potsdam had been used as a sort of buffer zone between the Communist superstructure and West Berlin and had suffered a great deal as a result. In the 90s, soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the city centre had been virtually abandoned and as a result had become the home to over 100 squatted buildings that counted

We decided to go and see other examples in a southern European country, interesting for reasons of cultural similarity to Italy. We choose to go to Lisbon and from May to June we would go to investigate two more exciting spaces.

The first we visited was Balnéario, a small shared workspace that is part of LX Factory, an ambitious regeneration plan for a former industrial complex. Balnéario had been initiated by a group of architects, and was run by an association called Planobao. At the point at which we conducted our interviews Balnéario occupied about 300 square meters and was composed of twenty professionals, artists, and artisans. Oficina Colectiva was also run by two architects. It is located in a 200 square meters space with windows looking out onto the street, a former industrial bakery in the creative neighbourhood of Lisbon. When

many social projects and co-housing models in their number. Because of this history of social activism, and the austerity that underpinned it, we expected to find a strong community identity in evidence.

With the 2000s came economic growth and the valuable expansion of the tourist industry to the city, and most of the squats had been evicted. But many cultural projects had been derived and had arisen from its recent experiences and had followed various paths to legitimacy and legalisation.

One of these projects is FreiLand, a creative center for young people, artists, and creatives covering an area of about 15,000 square meters that had once been owned by the local gas and water company. FreiLand includes companies, artisans, artists, makers, cultural associations, a FabLab, a café, a club for concerts and events, a guest house, an area for conferences and workshops. At time of interview there were more than 40 projects running in FreiLand, involving around 120 people.

After Berlin and Potsdam we added clips from the new interviews to our thematic timelines and, once again, added yet more voices that would interleaf with those we had already collected.

We now had about 50 interviews, shot in four different countries, with people from completely different backgrounds, professions, ages and experiences. They belonged to seven projects which called themselves coworking, artisan spaces, centers for young people, or cultural institutional projects. From all of this variety the answers to our questions would form a compact, coherent, solid and unified framework.

We were now certain that we were dealing with a global phenomenon and we had the basis to start codifying and disseminating so of the key elements of this phenomenon.

Once more we responded to calls for papers from two important European conferences, the WES sociological conference, and the ECCS a conference on complex systems.

This time round, we were accepted by both.

By this stage we had come to realise that a seeding model, a structured form for designing and creating a shared workspace from scratch, would be very useful. It could be a path to be followed by those initiators, those pioneers who, when faced with an empty warehouse, decide to start a community project.

So we decided to work on two parallel levels. Firstly we would continue with our research and systematisation of experiences and reference models, whilst simultaneously work on the construction of an intervention model divided into phases of a conceptual map and some guidelines for the construction of shared workspaces.

We started by isolating the key points, right from the design of a governance system through to the definition of a credible sustainability plan. We began to make diagrams and spreadsheets, that gave a formal structure to the many suggestions that we had collected from the real examples we had seen.

At the end of September conferences were being held both in Warwick, England and in Barcelona. We decided to use the opportunity to deepen some themes and return to Building BloQs. We returned a few days earlier than necessary so we could see what our London friends have built in the intervening six months. Building BloQs surprised us again. We found it

as energetic and creative as the first time, but also profoundly changed. Six months is a long time if there is a cohesive, competent and passionate group of people working together. This time we found a café, outdoor facilities, a huge mezzanine and a partition wall to enclose the cafe that was made up entirely of windows. The workspaces were much more clearly divided and there were many more people working in them. The project was growing day by day and we took the opportunity to interview the founders again. They were tired, but determined. After the initial, pioneering phase, they had to find a way to structure the membership system. The question they were faced with was how to maintain the informality and freshness of relationships whilst at the same time ensuring economic stability for the project? We would later come to realise that it is this point that is one of the most critical for most shared workspaces. All too often we have seen beautiful places thrown into crisis by business models which were either far too optimistic, or which relied too heavily on the voluntary work of project enthusiasts who would then themselves having to do jobs for which they did not have the skills or vocation.

In their efforts to structure a membership model our friends had been referring to the only experiences available to them for online consideration, namely the Makerspaces in the USA. We took this to be evidence that our idea of working on an intervention model was a sound one, as we suspected that the conditions in the USA and Europe might be worlds apart and models may not necessarily overlap perfectly from one environment to the other. We opened one of our spreadsheets and added our best efforts to help the guys try and figure out a way forward. Days at Building BloQs flowed as fast as the first time. We had to go to Warwick. The conference was organised by the British Sociological Association and we were curious to see what reaction might be. The research project was unexpectedly well received and, for the first time, several people pointed out an affinity between our model and some Marxist experiences.

From London we flew directly to Barcelona for ECCS. The speakers were mainly physicists, computer scientists, engineers, and mathematicians. Presentations ranged on subjects from the neurosciences to Big Data and financial market modelling. Everywhere we saw papers that were made up to 90% equations and tables, whilst by contrast the heart of our presentation was video. However, we could not imagine a more complex system than having 40 entrepreneurs under one roof, committed to growing their business, and we wanted their authentic voices to emerge and be apparent to the conference audience. Some people were surprised, our presentation perhaps a little too "emotional" for them but, perhaps unexpectedly, from most of delegates we received both support and encouragement to continue. Many of them identified themselves with the people and words they saw in our presentation. Nowadays, more than ever before, we have found that barriers between professions are becoming blurred.

After the conference we stayed a few more days in Barcelona. We visited Hangar, a project financed by the municipality that promotes artistic residencies and international exchanges and which had recently opened a coworking space. We were increasingly becoming convinced that the classical model of coworking space was not attractive to us. This model necessitated large initial investment, high management costs, the need for a considerable staff, had a limited user base and suffered the difficulties of creating a community out of members who identified themselves as users rather than active agents of a project. Also if we believe this model can work very well in city centers, and as a place to support digital nomad freelancers.

We therefore decided to look for suitable interviewees at MOB.

MOB (Makers Of Barcelona) is a hybrid space with an ambition to bring desk workers and practical workers together. Founded and directed by an American architect it demonstrated a curious layout divided over two floors. On the ground floor was the coworking space and in the basement the makerspace, managed by a no-profit independent association. During our staying at MOB we learned about many new aspects, especially with respect to the coexistence of two so different souls within the same project.

We returned to Italy and worked hard on the Multifactory Model. The intervention model had now been shaped and we wanted to test some aspects of the governance and of the collaboration between members. It was the birth of our experimentation with the Bigmagma Multifactory.

The Bigmagma Association was a non-profit of micro-entrepreneurs, craftspeople and artists. We were part of it and until then it had operated more like a collective. In order to test the Multifactory Model, we decided to ask the members of the Bigmagma Association to transform the organisation into a multifactory with the aim of testing our overall model and the tools we had developed to foster sharing practices among members.

At the end of this experimentation phase the Bigmagma Association dissolved but happily the professional relations and friendship among its members remain strong.

Since 2014 we have begun proposing the Multifactory Model to both institutions and to private individuals as a tool for urban regeneration and as a means of generating local job opportunities. Some of the resulting negotiations have come to an end, while others are still ongoing. Between 2014 and 2016 we spent several months working at FreiLand, Potsdam, to continue refining the model. In the meantime we have visited many other spaces across Europe and we have begun to lay the foundations of the Multifactory Network and for the development of the 'Invisible Factory', a project designed to scale the Multifactory Model.

The Multifactory Network is a project aimed at fostering and enabling direct collaborations between members of workspaces in different countries. The Multifactory Network aims to remove obstacles in terms of design, sustainability and work-life balance that usually makes it difficult for artists, craftspeople, professionals and small economic players to travel and develop international projects.

The idea of the Invisible Factory first came to us at MAGE in 2013. Currently our focus is to consolidate a transnational structure of companies, artists and professionals linked by stable relationships that is able to imagine, design, develop and produce complex products and services, utilising horizontal coordination between small local producers.

Our research continues on other bases to the current day, our aim being the implementation of the Multifactory Network and refining the development of the Invisible Factory. Between 2012 and 2018 we visited a total of 120 spaces of all kinds in Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, the UK, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, the Netherlands, Croatia, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, the United States and Ecuador.

2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF SHARED SPACES

During our research we visited very diverse spaces, often inspired by general models, in some cases hybridized with each other. Here you will find brief definitions in no particular order of the most popular and known models.

2.1 COWORKING SPACE

A COWORKING SPACE IS MAINLY AIMED AT FREELANCERS, CREATIVE PEOPLE, WEB DESIGNERS AND WORKERS IN GENERAL WHO NEED A DESK, A COMPUTER AND AN INTERNET CONNECTION.

A Coworking Space has no production inside and is usually located in a city centre. Generally the spaces are predominantly made up of single workstations equipped with a table and a power socket, sometimes with the ability to leave one's personal belongings. There is always a coffee machine, a relaxation area and rooms for meetings. Coworking Spaces are usually managed by a company that provides top-down care for the organisation and rents spaces on a weekly, monthly or annual basis.

OPOLAB, Porto

BETAHAUS, Berlin

CASA CORSINI, Fiorano Modenese

DO IT YOURSELF, Prague

2.2 MAKERSPACE

MAKERSPACES ARE ENVIRONMENTS FOR SHARING EQUIPMENT (BOTH FOR HOBBY AND PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES) STRONGLY FOCUSED ON DIGITAL INNOVATION WITH PARTICULAR REGARD FOR 3D PRINTING, LASER CUTTING, CNC MICROCOMPUTING AND DIGITAL FABRICATION IN GENERAL.

They also always have a supply of traditional equipment and machinery that can include carpentry, metalworking, sewing, printing and small mechanical processes. They are often managed or sponsored by private companies and in many cases serve as external research and development laboratories.

MUMALAB, Munich

2.3 HACKERSPACE

HACKERSPACES HAVE A VERY STRONG VALUE BASE LINKED TO THE HACKER MOVEMENT AND TO THE SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE, ESPECIALLY IN THE FIELDS OF FREE SOFTWARE, OPEN SOURCE, COPY LEFT, AND SHARE ALIKE.
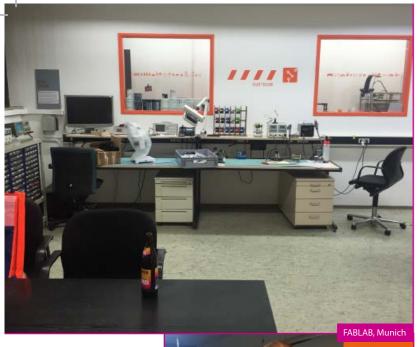
Therefore an important aspect for them is the organisation of laboratories and workshops between peers. They often propose the collective creation or improvement of free software. These are mainly places for free time, usually managed by a non-profit association.

SYN SHOP, Las Vegas

23B, Fuellerton

33C3, Hamburg

NOISEBRIDGE, San Francisco

FABLAB, Munich

2.4 FABLAB
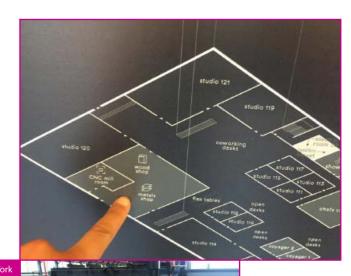
FABLABS (FABRICATION
LABORATORIES) ARE WORKSHOPS
RUN, ALMOST ALWAYS, BY NON-
PROFIT ORGANISATIONS AND
DEDICATED SPECIFICALLY TO
DIGITAL FABRICATION AND
RAPID PROTOTYPING, WHERE
THE COLLABORATIVE ASPECT IS
STRONGLY LINKED TO THE SHARING
OF MACHINERY SUCH AS 3D PRINTERS,
CNC MACHINES, LASER CUTTING
MACHINES AND THE SHARED
DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE.

Compared to a Makerspace, the hobby vocation is much
stronger and there is a high commitment to the spread of cul-
ture through courses, seminars, events and collaborations with
schools and universities. Many of them are hosted by or part of
public institutions.

FABLAB Chemnitz

2.5 INCUBATOR

INCUBATORS ARE SHARED WORK
ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH START-
UP COMPANIES WORK IN PARALLEL
FOR A DEFINED TIME, UNTIL THEY
ARE SUFFICIENTLY DEVELOPED TO
LEAVE. THEY DO NOT PROVIDE FOR
AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN COMPANIES
AND A COMMON STRATEGY.

NEW LAB, New York

We also met several Workers' Collectives and cultural centers,
organised as spaces for artistic and cultural production that
promote the idea of art and culture as a common good, sup-
port claims for rights of workers, as well as the promotion of the
experimentation, using cryptocurrency and horizontal models
in the management of common goods.

It is important to note that the boundaries between these cat-
egories are increasingly blurring and hybridizing, and mutual-
ly assuming the characteristics of the others. For example, the
definitions, activities, and vocations of Fablabs, Makerspaces
and Hackerspaces change considerably between countries and
often overlap and mix. Alternatively, it is often the case that
professionals working in a Coworking business start to need to
prototype or produce objects, leading to the incorporation of
small workshops into a Coworking Space.

3 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MULTIFACTORY MODEL

The *Multifactory* Model reflects our approach, our filter, our vision. It focuses on the idea of a community made up of economically minded subjects, such as SMEs, craftspeople, freelancers, or artists and non-profits that adopt an entrepreneurial approach in the search for economic sustainability.

The following pages collect some images of the spaces visited and briefly present some key concepts that emerged from our research and that have been incorporated into the *Multifactory* Model.

3.1 COMMUNITY PROJECT, DIVERSITY, PRODUCTIVE VOCATION

WE BELIEVE IN SHARED WORKSPACES
AS IDEAL PLACES TO ENABLE
THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS
PROJECTS. THE MULTIFACTORY IS
THE MODEL OF SHARED SPACES
THAT WE CONSIDER MOST SUITABLE
TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF
COMPANIES.

In a multifactory, each company keeps its own operational independence and private spaces and is responsible together with all the others for the common parts and strategic choices concerning territorial development (calls, institutional relations, common events). The three key principles of the multifactory model are: **to be a community project, have diversity and a productive vocation.**

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

A multifactory is a community project since all the companies that are part of it are also members of the managing body of the multifactory itself. All companies are responsible for the decisions and performance of the multifactory. No one in a multifactory can perceive

MAGE, Sesto San Giovanni

ROSENWERK, Dresden

WERKRAUM, Augsburg

WERKBOX 3, Munich

GOWANUS STUDIO SPACE, New York

DIVERSITY

Diversity means that the companies that are part of a multifactory are heterogeneous in terms of history, vocation, product sector and age of the participants. Diversity reduces the risk of internal competition and increases the opportunities for cross-contamination.

QUELLE KOLLEKTIV, Nuremberg

MAGE Sesto San Giovanni

LA TEJEDORA, Quito

QUELLE KOLLEKTIV, Nurnberg

R84, Mantova

ATELIERGEMEINSHAFT, Dresden

CRASH SPACE, Los Angeles

PRODUCTIVE VOCATION

The companies that operate in a multifactory can produce goods or services but it is important that they are companies that follow the entire life cycle of their products and it is important that there is a proportion of craftspeople. Only in this way can a real local value chain, which brings wealth to the community, be established.

BIGMAGMA, Sesto San Giovanni

CRITICAL CONCRETE, Porto

SYN SHOP, Las Vegas

OPOLAB, Porto

CRASH SPACE, Los Angeles

ZENTRALWERK, Dresden

3.2 THINKING OF ITSELF AS AN ENTERPRISE

MULTIFACTORY PROMOTES AN APPROACH TO WORK ORGANISATION MODELLED ON "DOING BUSINESS AS AN ENTERPRISE". MICROENTREPRENEURS, CRAFTSPEOPLE AND FREELANCERS SHOULD ALSO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS ENTREPRENEURS.

This means that everyone is not relying solely on their own skills and does not have their own time as their main resource, but is able to organize and coordinate the work of others, leveraging on systemic effects, so that the value of the coordinated work of a group of people is greater than the sum of the value of the work of individuals who compose the group.

Compared to a traditional company, Multifactory promotes the idea that for freelancers and very small enterprises the most important resources are other professionals who are part of the group. Multifactory is a team of equals, with the enormous advantage of coordinating the work of people who know each other well (greater efficiency) and being able to count on senior resources (greater effectiveness).

INTEC FAIRE, Leipziger Messe

MOTOR SHOW, Bologna

EX FADDA, Brindisi
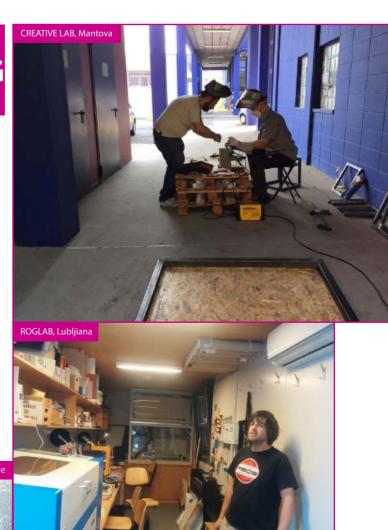
3.3 MULTIFACTORY AND MANUFACTURING COMPANIES

A MULTIFACTORY IS A KIND OF SHARED SPACE SUITABLE FOR THE GROWTH OF COMPANIES, INCLUDING ARTISANS OR MANUFACTURERS, AS IT COMBINES THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING PRIVATE SPACES (SO THAT THE WORKFLOW IS AUTONOMOUSLY MANAGED), WITH THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING PUBLIC SPACES TO BE USED AUTONOMOUSLY TO MEET SPECIFIC NEEDS (PARTICULAR EQUIPMENT OR THE TEMPORARY USE OF MORE SPACE), OR FOR COMMON ACTIVITIES.

CREATIVE LAB, Mantova

ROGLAB, Lubljiana

PRAGOVKA, Prague

HEI, Munich

23b, Fuellerton

3.4 STARTING FROM THE COMMUNITY, NOT FROM SPACES

HAVING AN EMPTY SHED AND FILLING IT WITH 40 DIFFERENT PROFESSIONALS DOES NOT MEAN CREATING A COMMUNITY, AND TRYING TO BUILD IT AFTERWARDS IS AN INEFFICIENT AND USUALLY INEFFECTIVE PROCESS.

We believe that the community should exist before the space and that the establishment of the group of pioneers is a key element. In a multifactory the constitution of the group comes even before filling the empty spaces and dividing them, as well as the writing of a declaration of intents, and the constitution of a participatory body for the management of the multifactory, including the writing of its statutes and the definitions of the governance of the entity. What comes next are the regulations and the internal rules. Just as a stable house needs a solid foundation, a well established community is the foundation of a multifactory.

CRASH SPACE, Los Angeles

This is everyone's space.
Please take out the trash when it is full or smelly.
Thanks!

Wonderful people x xx

CRITICAL CONCRETE, Porto

NYC RESISTORS, New York

3.5 COMMUNITY ECONOMY

IN OUR DEFINITION, THE COMMUNITY ECONOMY IS THAT SET OF MODELS, TOOLS AND METHODS RELATED TO ECONOMY WHICH ARE BASED ON THE EXISTENCE OF HOMOGENEOUS COHESIVE SYSTEMS, ORGANISED IN THE FORM OF LOCAL PEER COMMUNITIES.

For the Community Economy, the very existence of the community and the relationships that are established within it are to be considered explicit assets, which are directly incorporated into the generation of economic facts. The relations which are generated are of a systemic type, i.e. they have properties emerging from the interactions between the nodes of the system which are different from the sum of the properties of the single nodes. It is interesting to note that the Community Economy shares with other economic forms like Sharing Economy and Collaborative Economy some aspects, such as exchange and sharing, but Community Economy differs from Sharing Economy and Collaborative Economy as they are explicitly focused on peer-to-peer exchange and on the role of IT platforms as enabling tools for transactions between providers and users, which do not necessarily have to be considered as "peers" and do not necessarily share elements of cohesion and common peculiarities.

FREILAND, Potsdam

3.6 KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

IN ORDER TO GRANT THE CONSTANT GROWTH OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP, A CONTINUOUS TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IS ESSENTIAL.

This is possible through a constant mutual exchange of opinions and a constant transfer of competences. If the direct intervention of one of the professionals of the group is necessary to support others, this can take the form of mutual help, not necessarily in the form of direct barter. The regulation of these exchanges is of course subject to current national laws, but within the legal framework of each country, it is the community of companies that regulates itself. Those who tend to offer more help to the community are also those who receive more help and get the most benefits from being part of the community, while those who prefer to keep a lower profile also get less benefits from being part of a multifactory.

BRMLAB, Prague

HEBEWERK, Heberswalde
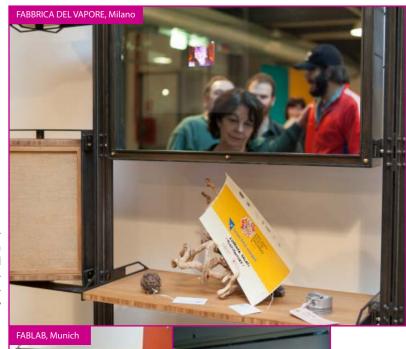
3.7 INVISIBLE FACTORY

THE INVISIBLE FACTORY IS BASED ON THE IDEA OF DEFINING OTHER ECONOMIC SUBJECTS IN THE SAME WORKING ENVIRONMENT AS POSSIBLE RESOURCES.

There are peer resources that carry out their own individual activity, but that can be activated in case of need in order to plan demanding projects, on the basis of a structure of pre-debated and pre-accepted agreements within the system of the multifactories. Always available buffet of resources, of which everyone is part, and from which everyone can get the necessary skills when required.

One of the advantages of the Invisible Factory is to enable a group of small companies to tackle large projects by supporting a low initial investment and taking on a low business risk, unlike what happens when a small company acquires a large order and finds itself in a financial and resource crisis as it is highly exposed as a prime contractor or has to incorporate human resources which, once the project is completed, are then difficult to fully employ.

FABBRICA DEL VAPORE, Milano

FABLAB, Munich

FABLAB, Munich

R84, Mantova

3.8 FLEXIBILITY

FLEXIBILITY IS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT FOR CONTEMPORARY COMPANIES.

A multifactory allows each company to be flexible but within a coherent business development project. This is true for each company on its own, both thanks to the availability of flexible spaces for example, and due to the potential of the Invisible Factory. Being flexible does not mean accepting any job under any condition but being equipped to respond to any need with the highest possible competence.

GOWANUS STUDIO SPACE, New York

NDSM, Amsterdam
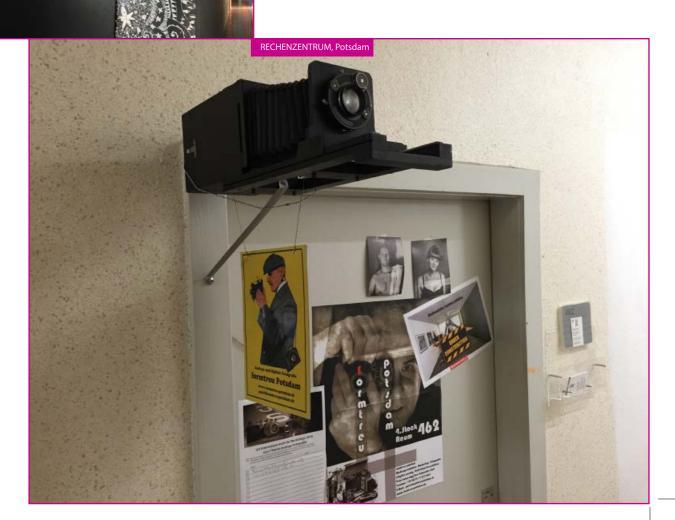
3.9 IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE SPACES

BIGMAGMA, Sesto San Giovanni

IN THE MULTIFACTORY MODEL EACH COMPANY HAS A PRIVATE SPACE, THIS IS IMPORTANT AS:

• It makes people free to work independently

• It anchors people to their own space, with their own rhythms, their own environment and their own comfort

• It makes people directly responsible for what happens in their own space.

• Makes people directly responsible for what happens in their own space

LA TEJEDORA, Quito

RECHENZENTRUM, Potsdam

3.10 SYSTEMIC APPROACH

A MULTIFACTORY IS A COMPLEX ECONOMIC SYSTEM. A SYSTEMIC APPROACH IS REQUIRED FOR ITS FOUNDATION, MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION.

A systemic approach means a project design that takes into account the need to act on the dynamics starting from the nodes of the system, i.e. the choice of partners, the definition of governance bodies, the balancing of competences, and the consistency in the definition of the scale size of the different operations.

BIGMAGMA, Sesto San Giovanni

FERRARA SHARING FESTIVAL, Ferrara

OVESTLAB, Modena

3.11 FROM A COMMUNITY OF PURPOSE TO A COMMUNITY OF CARE

THE DECISION TO JOIN A MULTIFACTORY IS NOT BASED ON A COMMITMENT TO COMMON VALUES.

A multifactory is first and foremost a community of purpose, where the common purpose of its members is to work and develop their own businesses. In this context, mutual support is a shared tool that helps them to work better, not a moral principle to defend. The everyday experiences and sharing of work and existential challenges then turn the community of purpose into a community that takes care of a place, but also of shared values that emerge over time.
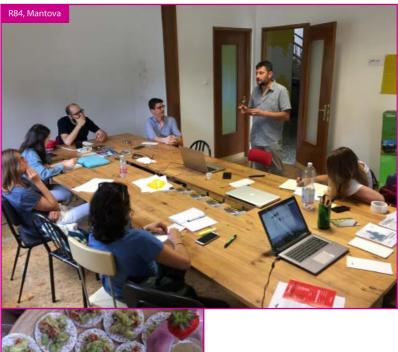

PRAGOVKA, Prague

PROJECT HOUSE, Potsdam

CRETATTIVA, Sesto San Giovanni

3.12 NEW TOOLS FOR NEW NEEDS

TO START AND MANAGE NEW ECONOMIC DYNAMICS NEW TOOLS ARE NEEDED, WHICH IN THE MULTIFACTORY MODEL ARE IN PART DERIVED BY SOLUTIONS FOUND BY OTHERS AND IN PART HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF THE MOST RECURRING AND UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS THAT OCCUR IN SHARED WORKSPACES.

For example, how to share investments and earnings between multiple parties in the case of a joint project, how to protect ideas in a peer group, or how to set the right price for your product or service. A multifactory can benefit from solutions already implemented in similar contexts and can in turn contribute to the general improvement of the system of shared workspaces by making its own solutions available. Making resources available is more than just a gift, a general strengthening of the system, but is also a direct benefit since having other strong and stable spaces in the shared workspace system multiplies the opportunities for collaboration and extends the boundaries of the *Invisible Factory*.

R84, Mantova

MAGE, Sesto San Giovanni

MAGE, Sesto San Giovanni

LA TEJEDORA, Quito

EX SNIA, Lecce

SYN SHOP, Las Vegas

3.13 A VIABLE SOLUTION

THE MULTIFACTORY MODEL HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO BE FEASIBLE, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE OWNERS OF THE BUILDINGS, WHETHER PRIVATE OR INSTITUTIONAL BODIES.

Initial investments are very modest compared to other models of shared workspace, typically a fifth to a tenth, because there is no need to equip spaces with machinery or design furniture. Of course, it is essential that the spaces are safe, accessible, healthy and equipped with heating, bathrooms, running water and electrical wiring. Operating costs are also low and, in any case, directly repaid by the fees paid by the members. It is therefore a medium-term project that guarantees a constant return, in addition, of course, to the social value deriving from the contribution to job creation.

That said, it must be stressed that starting a multifactory is not a speculative operation, but a system to regenerate an area and maintain efficient and used spaces otherwise destined to deteriorate, thus repaying fixed costs and with the prospect of achieving a profit.

While a multifactory is probably less profitable than a classical lease of an area to a single tenant, with a single tenant the risk that it will suddenly leave or become insolvent is real. In a multifactory, however, the revenues come from a variety of sources, thus reducing risk.

3.14 ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE MULTIFACTORY MODEL IS APPROACHED STARTING FROM ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY.

Organisations that are part of a multifactory should be able to support themselves, their owners and all those who work within them. A multifactory helps economic sustainability by reducing expenses, increasing the resources available to each company and multiplying business opportunities.

The local structure of the multifactory promotes social sustainability at the same time as it generates local value, strengthens cohesion in the locality and improves the overall safety of the area.

At the same time it also has a positive impact on environmental sustainability because the production of goods designed for local consumption and using local suppliers reduces the environmental impact of those goods or similar goods produced thousands of miles away.

FREILAND, Potsdam

3.15 ENTREPRENEURS AS CULTURAL MEDIATORS

NOWADAYS, RUNNING A LOCAL BUSINESS MEANS RESTORING FROM SCRATCH A LOCAL NETWORK OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS.

Multifactories are usually in peripheral and interstitial areas, so, doing business as part of a multifactory means having a role in rebuilding the social and urban structure. The reconstitution of local value chains is the basis of urban regeneration, since a network of small businesses is inherently self-sustainable and naturally well cared for.

Reshape Petroleum Scapes (graphic design BY Marta Lonardi)

RED EMMAS, Baltimore

3.16 MULTIFACTORY AND GENTRIFICATION PROCESSES

THE PROCESS OF GENTRIFICATION IS NEGATIVE SINCE IT REMOVES AREAS OF THE CITY FROM THE FRUITION OF ITS INHABITANTS.

Creating local employment opportunities (not exclusively related to food and beverage) is a way to create local value and allow an organic development of a neighbourhood. Moreover, since multifactories are usually long-term projects, the risk of speculative real estate investments is reduced.

The negotiation of leases with the property is more efficient if it is done by a community that can occupy a large space rather than a series of individuals who are naturally weaker and in any case exposed to the arbitrary nature of intermediaries.

At the same time the owner of large areas of a neighbourhood has an advantage to start a multifactory as the presence of a multifactory attracts other companies to that neighbourhood, increases the social attractiveness of that part of the city and therefore, in the medium term, attracts significant investors for the remaining available areas.

NORTH TOOL LIBRARY, Baltimore

3.17 ROLE OF ART

ART AND BUSINESS HAVE ALWAYS HAD A DEEP CONNECTION, EXPRESSED IN DIFFERENT FORMS RANGING FROM RADICAL CRITICISM TO PATRONAGE, OR SOMETIMES AS A PARALLEL EXPRESSION IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF COMMON SOCIAL ISSUES AND A COMMON VISION OF THE WORLD.

What can be, today, the role of art in connection to the business sector? Let's imagine a world where art plays a leading role at all levels within companies, from communication to research and development.

By its very nature, a company must evolve, research and experiment, explore new paths. At the same time it should convey solidity, concreteness and uniformity of vision for the future.

So how can a company propose visionary projects? With art. Art is free to experiment, since the result is not in the perfection of an installation, but in the transmission of concepts that such installation allows.

Art, especially when it expresses itself through technological installations, can foresee the times, and can concretise ideas in a fast and focused way. Art is a powerful tool to investigate, test, experiment new business ideas and verify the reaction of the possible audience.

The artist can be a precious resource for companies. If a relationship of mutual respect and collaboration is established and consistent, the artist can propose visions to the company and the company can suggest themes to the artist, to be developed together.

A multifactory is a place for mediation, a space where the language of business and the language of creativity are both spoken, and where business and art can meet and interact.

FABBRICA DEL VAPORE, Milano Città Mondo

3.18 AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

IN MULTIFACTORIES, INTERNATIONALISATION IS A KEY FACTOR AS IT EXTENDS THE BOUNDARIES OF THE INVISIBLE FACTORY, WITH GREATER CHANCES FOR COLLABORATION, OR GREATER BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.

Travelling on a regular basis fosters constant collaboration with other experts, whilst engaging with other cultures and markets allows space to learn and import new ideas and models, or to test the effectiveness of new projects and access new markets.

HOLE OF FAME, Dresden

3.19 POLITETTO

MANY NEW ENTREPRENEURS ARE ACTUALLY SEMI-NOMADIC, WHICH MEANS THAT THEY SPEND SEVERAL MONTHS OF THE YEAR IN BETWEEN TWO AND FOUR DIFFERENT CITIES.
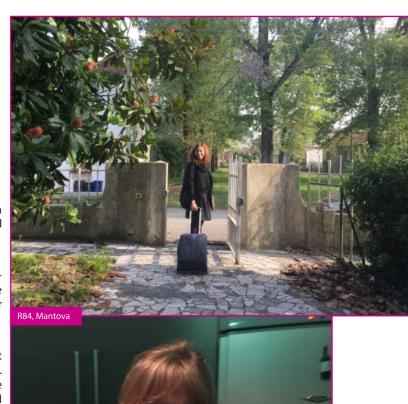
The problem is that often they have to spend a lot of time in places that you can never call "home", with significant costs and considerable fatigue.

Being part of a network of people similar to you means facilitating personal life, for example the management of children, the home or daily bureaucracy because you can count on a number of stable professional friendships in each city.

We call this concept "Politetto", which means "having different roofs" and feeling at home in different places at the same time. It is not a matter of travelling but of establishing parallel home routines, passing from one to the other. This concept is based on the relationships that can be established in each place, of course, but a key element is the availability of living spaces that can be shared and used alternately by people in similar situations.

So in a multifactory the availability of a guesthouse is important, as it makes you feel local and "at home" and maybe you can leave some personal effects without having to necessarily live with a suitcase in your hand or look for a temporary solution on every occasion.

R84, Mantova

ZENTRALWERK, Dresden

3.20 A NEW SOCIAL CLASS

THE PEOPLE WHO ANIMATED THE SPACES WE HAVE VISITED WERE DIFFERENT IN AGE, LIFE PATH, EXPERIENCE AND PROFESSION. YET, AT THE SAME TIME, THEY EXPRESSED UNIFORMITY IN THE WAY THEY WORKED AND LIVED LIFE. PRIORITIES, LIFESTYLE, VALUES, MOTIVATION, LIFE CHOICES, INCOME.

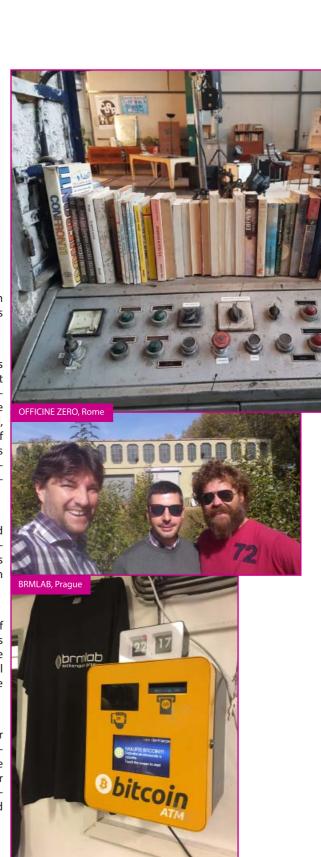They are artists, craftspeople, entrepreneurs. We called them Crowdworkers because of the importance of the group of peers when establishing their businesses.
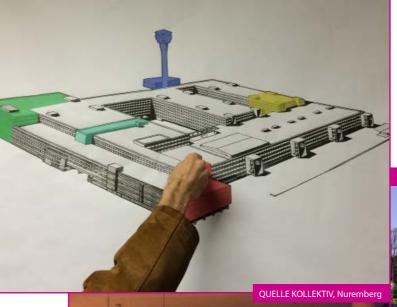
Crowdworkers, as a whole, propose a peculiar model of access to the means of production, which are individually owned but often collectively used. They present specific elements of Social Stratification, both from the point of view of Class (they are based on self-employment, exclude the use of third capital, base their assets on the sharing of knowledge and means of production, carry out activities of a local type), and of Status (they have a medium-high level of education, a liberal mentality, prevalence of the quality of life over money, tendency towards internationalism).

They also show feelings of psychological identification and solidarity, they share the same conception of society, they recognise themselves as part of a movement, even if its borders are still blurred, and they are aware that they share a common destiny.

These elements of self-representation, the self-perception of their own specificity and distinctiveness, the sharing of values and experiences as a result of professional experience, the same social framework, are elements that historically define a social class and of this fact there is an awareness amongst the people we met, at least in part.

All these aspects together suggest that Crowdworkers, in their specificity, recognisability and representativeness, can really constitute a new social class that can create truly collective production spaces and create something concrete and peculiar within their socio-economic system of reference, which they relate to in their ambition to propose to local models of use and development that are peculiar and different from the past.

OFFICINE ZERO, Rome

BRMLAB, Prague

QUELLE KOLLEKTIV, Nuremberg

QUELLE KOLLEKTIV, Nuremberg

NYC RESISTORS, New York

Auf AEG, Nuremberg

4 R84
MULTIFACTORY

THESE WERE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUILDING A MULTIFACTORY.

To better understand how a multifactory can start, we will briefly talk about the evolution of one of them, R84 Multifactory Mantova.

The story of R84 Multifactory starts in December 2013. In that month IES, *Italiana Energia e Servizi spa*, decides to close the extracting part of its refinery in Mantua, a Lombard city in the heart of the Po Valley. Two months later, the entire refining plant is shut down and only the logistics hub, that is the part used to store and distribute the products, remains active.

The resulting loss of jobs is considerable and in order to mitigate its impact, IES launches a selection process to identify external projects to be located in unused spaces.

The task of managing this transition is assigned to a Milan-based company specialised in corporate crisis resolution, Sofit srl. In those months, we are in touch with Sofit and we decide to answer to the call for projects, proposing they create a multifactory in a part of the area.

Two years of meetings, negotiations and crises talks begin involving representatives and administrators from the municipality, the region, some ministries, trade unions, and the regional environmental protection agency (ARPA). The negotiations are extremely confidential and it is forbidden to talk about them to anyone, so we go several times to Mantua, to explore the city, but always incognito.

The three selected projects are finally announced in spring 2016. One of them is ours, aimed at establishing a multifactory.

In June 2016 we also launch a Call for Projects to identify the initial group of pioneers who will start the multifactory. In September the initial group of companies that will start the project is constituted. It is agreed that the multifactory will be taken over by a trade association, formed by the companies belonging to the Multifactory itself. During the first few months, we all work together with the future members of the multifactory on the statutes and the forms of governance to be applied. In the meantime, IES is carrying out basic maintenance work to make the spaces accessible, including the removal of some asbestos pipes and the installation of new gas-fired heating boilers.

In December we start to discuss the name of the association with future members. After numerous meetings, three names remain to choose from: Yes Multifactory, La Raffineria delle Idee and R84. We entrust the final decision to the citizens and launch a public survey. The survey is published on January 6, 2018 in the "Gazzetta di Mantova" and on social networks. About ten days later, the votes cast award the name- R84: R for the refinery and 84 is the sum of the numbers identifying the first three buildings that the multifactory will occupy.

On 31st January the association R84 is founded, on 21st February the contract between IES and R84 is signed, on 2nd March members receive the keys to their spaces. Thus R84 Multifactory is born.

R84 Multifactory covers a large area called "ICIP villas", consisting of green spaces and six buildings, once a mixture of residences, warehouses and workshops formerly used by the workers of the refinery.

These spaces are now used as offices, studios and laboratories by around 40 professionals, craftspeople, artists and small entrepreneurs.

R84 Multifactory Mantova is part of the project to renovate the eastern suburbs of Mantua and is part of an extensive urban renewal project, aimed at regenerating a place with special characteristics, since the conversion of a former refinery is an extremely challenging task. On one side, there are very strict constraints, imposed by various agencies and public bodies because of the strategic value and for environmental reasons. These are areas that have been heavily transformed during the years, with substantial pollution in the actual "production" areas, which remain inaccessible and dangerous even after the refinery has been shut down. Then there is a social issue, because of the image that a refinery carries and because of the thousands of negative stories that are remembered in the city linked to those places. But there are also a thousand positive memories, stories to tell, and emotions to express.

A refinery is not just a steel and cement forest. A refinery has plenty of contiguous, ancillary, and interstitial areas in the purest meaning of the word, which can be reanimated first and so drive a process of change for the whole area.

Giving back to the citizenship those places means, first of all, giving a possibility to rethink the spaces, to live and express within them new emotions. It's also a chance for the community to express needs and identify solutions.

Reinventing places as workspaces means exactly this, looking at the future without destroying the memory of the past. Where there was a refinery, the main symbol of heavy industry and globalisation connected to primary resources, today another kind of production is taking place, which seems to be totally different: local, small, sustainable. Yet one element links them. Much as at the beginning of the 20th century a refinery was a symbol of progress and an example of the most advanced technology, today the lean, fast and sustainable companies of R84 Multifactory reiterate the same concept of progress, in this case under the form of advanced models for horizontal and sustainable business development and organisation. Just as a refinery addressed the challenges of the 1900s, a Multifactory addresses the challenges of the 21th century, promoting an integrated model of regional development that links economic sustainability, local development, local production of goods and services, environmental protection, and attention to the needs of individuals and the community.

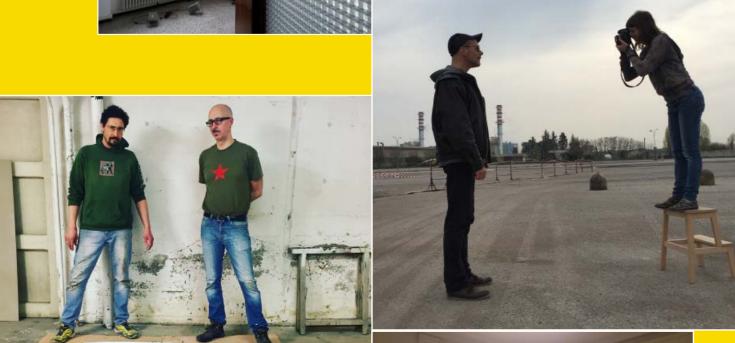**5 COMMUNITY ECONOMY, NOT JUST FOR SHARED SPACES**

SHARED WORKSPACES ARE AN EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITY FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GROWTH AND, IN THEIR VARIOUS FORMS, THEY ARE GROWING EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

However, companies, associations and NGOs are also facing the challenge of adapting to a totally different economic structure than before.

Community Economy is a theoretical framework within which it is possible to develop effective economic solutions to support the development and transformation of these entities, companies, associations and NGOs.

Community Economy in its wider sense is based on the idea that any economic fact is the direct consequence of choices made by individuals, as members of community. We challenge the idea of the invisible hand of the market; the market is made up of people with needs, people who are part of communities and who, within these communities, perceive their own needs. Organisations and companies are also constituted by people who live most of their conscious time at the workplace and interact with their colleagues, and are themselves a community. Community Economy means identifying and highlighting the existence of these communities, defining their boundaries, determining their characteristic traits, understanding how they can interact and structuring a series of actions that can foster certain interactions rather than others.

The traditional pyramid-shaped organisational model of companies is obsolete, inefficient, and ineffective. The management structure based on the idea of a command chain in which lower levels of the company have lower importance, autonomy and lower decision-making capacity is now obsolete as it fails to respond to the need for flexibility which is characteristic of contemporary markets, that means being able to address every day a new need.

The lack of flexibility of this structure slows down innovation in the company and creates a distorting effect on internal communication. Of course, it also has advantages, ranging from the control of processes to the management of the working environment, to the optimisation of the lead time. However, these advantages are only relevant in the presence of well-established businesses where the top management really have full control over all aspects ranging from production to the market, while for small or medium companies that have to respond to the needs of different customers every day, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Of course, for associations, NGOs and also for small businesses, these advantages are not perceptible. An association is not a company, even if it provides services to users and has an important economic dimension.

Just think that for a non-profit, in the vast majority of cases, users will never turn into customers.

Community Economy helps organisations to grow and transform by focusing on the heart of the organisation, which is the community made up of employees, partners and collaborators.

The solution is to create horizontal structures in which decision levels and responsibilities are distributed among functional cells belonging to decision clusters.

If there are issues or if there is a change in progress, it is essential to avoid acting on the dynamics, and focus on the nodes of the structure instead. For example, if there is a change in progress, it is perfectly useless to define in detail all the individual tasks that must be executed, but it is instead of fundamental importance to identify within the community those who want to take responsibility for leading specific areas of change and to outline their motivation and skills to do so in order to build a group commitment to that specific area of change. The main question that growing organisations have to answer cannot be where are we going, what we have to do and how to do it, but rather it should be, what are we becoming, who wants to be part of this change and whether we have the necessary skills.

Let us take some examples of problems that are very difficult to deal with, or even to discuss in traditional models. For instance, consider organisations that have grown a lot and in which a disconnection has arisen between the top management and the operators, or in which the atmosphere is excellent but in which all responsibilities are concentrated in a few fundamental people, exposing individuals and the structure to huge objective risks.

We are thinking of organisations that are typically in the cultural sector and that have grown fast thanks to some grants and that, after years, are facing the need to maintain heavy and expensive structures, while they do not have ordinary activities that can even cover fixed costs. This situation forces them to look for funding regardless of the focus of the organisation itself, weakening the organisation.

In all these situations, the only way to get out of the spiral is to change the structure of the organisation by redefining the business model starting from the values and wishes expressed by the community of workers and volunteers.

Any transformation is something that has a deep impact on the organisation and, since this is a complex system, there are exponential tendencies which should be kept under control in order to avoid changes that would be too quick and drastic. Starting dynamics in a socio-economic system is easy, but managing them is a very different matter.

Changing a structure means:

- **mapping the existing on all levels**
- **creating an effective descriptive model**
- **building a dynamic model to drive the change, that should include all the interconnections on different levels and that can lead to a desired output, based on actual data and coherently developed, tested and applied.**

The models deriving from the Community Economy help in this delicate task, as by abandoning the pyramidal model and adopting a Cluster structure, we shift to an organisational structure made up of an explicit system of relations that take place on different levels and that influence each other in a circular and retroactive way.

Through the involvement and empowerment of all workers it becomes easier to increase the ability of employees to read the company by linking the level of operations to the level of economics, so that each worker shifts from being an implementer of services to a conscious producer of value.

Finally, rethinking the structure is an opportunity to review and rethink the business model, that is the logical structure that leads to the production of income through the sale of goods or services. For example, by involving its suppliers and partners it is possible, even for traditional organisations, to implement a design and production system similar to the Invisible Factory described for shared workspaces.

6 TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE MULTIFACTORY MODEL AND THE AUTHORS

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED TO SEE THE PEOPLE WE INTERVIEWED AND TO HEAR THEIR VOICES, YOU CAN WATCH OUR DOCUMENTARY ON YOUTUBE.

If you are interested in deepening your knowledge of any of these research topics, we have listed some of our recent publications. All references can be found below. For any other curiosity or need, you can find our email addresses under biographies.

LORENZA VICTORIA SALATI

Lorenza Victoria Salati holds a masters degree in Political Sciences (with focus on economic history and visual anthropology) and a specialisation at the School of Cinema and New Media of Milan. She has developed methods derived using visual anthropology as a support to the self-perception of individuals as change makers.

Lorenza was formerly a documentary filmmaker and explored agricultural and ethnic issues in Africa (Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Senegal). Since then she has been considering the new communication needs that have arisen from the opportunities offered by the Web 3.0. She has also investigated new forms of expression and innovative methods of storytelling. She has made many documentaries and is the co-author of several books.

Lorenza is the co-founder of the Italian firm Osun WES and is the co-owner of a German based company specialising in technological tools to support collaborative projects.

She is one of the founders and vice-president of R84 Multifactory Mantova.

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GIULIO FOCARDI

Giulio Focardi holds a masters degree in Economic History and his main topics of professional and research interest are in the fields of Community Economy, Collaborative Economy and Social Economy.

He promotes urban regeneration through the creation of value chains by developing local projects involving micro-enterprises, artisans, artists and cultural managers.

He has worked as a consultant, mostly in the HR, strategic development, and multidimensional planning. He has developed various mathematical models of social systems and is the co-author of several books. His working method starts from the systemic analysis of situations, developing intervention models through a trace-back process, starting from the phenomena to reaching to the causes.

Since 2009 he has been interested in researching organisational models that contribute to guaranteeing artists economic sustainability and, at the same time, freedom to research and experiment.

He is the Co-Founder and CEO of Osun WES, a consulting firm specialising in developing companies as collaborative systems, and is one of the founders and president of the board of R84 Association in Mantova.

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MOST RECENT JOINT PUBLICATIONS

G. Focardi, L. Salati, "Comanufacturing and New Economic Paradigms", Hershey (PA, USA), IGI Global, 2019, pp. 240

G. Focardi, L. Salati, "Multifactory: an Emerging Environment for a New Entrepreneurship" in N. Baporikar ed., "Handbook of Research on Entrepreneurship in the Contemporary Knowledge-Based Global Economy", Hershey (PA, USA), IGI Global, 2016

G. Focardi, L. Salati, "Social Media as Elements of Shared Workspaces: The Multifactory Case Study" in A. Goel ed., "Product Innovation through Knowledge Management and Social Media Strategies", Hershey (PA, USA), IGI Global, 2016

G. Focardi, L. Salati, "A New Approach to Knowledge Sharing, the Multifactory Model" in O. Terán and J. Aguilar ed.s, "Societal Benefits of Freely Accessible Technologies and Knowledge Resources", Hershey (PA, USA), IGI Global, 2015

THE DOCUMENTARY

2014 "Multifactory. The Invisible Factory" HD, 60 min. Independent documentary.

Retrievable from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6Zn-hC7B9iE

CONFERENCES, COURSES, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, CURATORIAL PROJECTS

2018, March. "A triggering of creative processes. Collaborative and community economy" Public debate and movie screening "Multifactory. The Invisible Factory". Former psychiatric hospital San Giovanni, Trieste.

2017-2018. "Redesign. Irregular practices and experimental uses", one of the workshops of "The seven days of Super" organized by *Io sono Super, the slow festival of Milan's suburbs*. Program supported by the European Cultural Foundation. Mitades, Milan.

2018, October. "Collaborative Economy and New Models for Urban Regeneration. Multifactories: shared workspaces based on mutual help between peers". Seminar. Ca' Foscari University. Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage,Venice.

2017, June. "MAKE A PLACE" Workshop. Professionals in the fields of architecture, art, design and making, together with university students and under the coordination of *CRITICAL CONCRETE* (Portugal) design and create the furniture of the common spaces of *Creative Lab* and *R84 Multifactory*. Organised together with *Pantacon*, Mantova.

2017. "2 cultures. A workshop about leadership between museum and business". Workshop part of a project developed by *AB-Città* (Milan) and *4iS - Platform for Social Innovation* (Aveiro, Portugal) within *Tandem Europe - Cultural Managers Exchange*, in collaboration with the association *Il Lazzaretto* and the *Molteni Museum*, Monza.

2017. Curators of "Pollino NATU(AR) Creative Contest - NATUre in Augmented Reality." An artistic exploration of a new relationship between man, technology and nature towards a sustainable world. A contest for artists with the support of *VeroNatura* and the patronage of the *Municipality of Mantua*. In collaboration with *R84 Multifactory* and *BePart Movement*.

Tandem Europe supports experimental collaborations between cultural change makers from Europe. It is tai-
lor-made for cultural managers who work on creative solutions that tackle contemporary challenges in our so-
cieties and want to cultivate pioneering ideas and generate socio-economic impact with partners throughout
Europe. The programme helps to create and sustain culturally innovative impact across sectors, disciplines and
borders and allows cultural professionals from many different disciplines to acquire skills required for innovation
processes, engaging long-term partnerships and organisational change.

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