

RS D7 2018

RELATING
SYSTEMS
THINKING
AND
DESIGN
7th
SYMPOSIUM

CHALLENGING
COMPLEXITY BY
SYSTEMIC DESIGN
TOWARDS
SUSTAINABILITY

TURIN
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS





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CONTENTS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- 10 | **Bistagnino Luigi** - Systemic Approach generates a new cultural paradigm
- 11 | **Bunnell Pille** - With a Grain of Salt
- 12 | **Govera Chido** - The Future of Hope: Social care for sustainable living
- 13 | **Iñiguez Flores Roberto** - Advanced Design cultures, a learning system perspective
- 14 | **Mauldin Chelsea** - Policy Design & Decision Making
- 15 | **Pauli Gunter** - Re-designing the framework: think natural, think local

PLENARY SPEAKERS

- 17 | **Jones P., Monastiridis S., Ryan A., Toye V., Van Ael K., Vandebroeck P.** - State of the Art Practice: Are we Ready for Systemic Design Toolkits?
- 20 | **Sevaldson Birger** - Systemic Design Association
- 22 | **Simon Widmer** - Circular Economy Toolkit

1 | POLICY DESIGN AND DECISION-MAKING

- 24 | **Bellefontaine T., Soliman M.** - Integrating Systems Design and Behavioral Science to Address a Public Sector Challenges from Within
- 27 | **Faiz K., Faiz P., Adha Binti Nordin N., McDonagh D., Woodcock A., Binti Shamsul Harumain Y. A.** - Permeating the barriers between the individual and policy designers in Pakistan: a cross-cultural study of women's mobility
- 32 | **Fassio F., Tecco N.** - Turin Food Atlas. Sharing knowledge towards urban food policies to develop circular cities
- 35 | **Feast L.** - Constitutional Realism and Sustainability: Lessons Learned From a Systemic Design Investigation of New Zealand's Democratic System
- 37 | **Mastroeni M.** - Smart specialization in non-metro canadian regions
- 40 | **Mehta N., Richard C., Raut S., Nahar P.** - A Systems Approach to Sustainability in Space
- 43 | **Metzner-Szigeth A.** - Eco-Social Transformations: Leading Principles and Generative Forces
- 45 | **Muirhead L., Mosse R., Hachey A., Scott N.** - Integration of multiple approaches into the Social Lab practice. A case study from a Social and Public Innovation Lab in New Brunswick, Canada.
- 47 | **Paulsen A., Wildhagen B., Sevaldson B.** - Gearing up the level of systems oriented design in public sector. Case, experiences and learning from Stimulab innovation program
- 50 | **Peter K., Kerr H.** - Alternative Narratives on Economic Growth: Prototyping Change at the System Level
- 53 | **Stamatopoulou A.** - Mapping-and-Designing (in) relationally composed fields

- 62 | **Taverna A., Mortati M.** - A reflection on connecting complexity theory and design for policy
- 66 | **Wildhagen B.**- Understanding variations of entanglement and complexity: A way to influence expectations of Service and Systems Oriented Design in public sector

2 | INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES AND AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

- 70 | **Dal Palù D., Coraglia V., Lerma B.** - The dark side of high tech precious materials recovery. Overview on the critical issues, opportunities and best practices from a material library point of view
- 73 | **Darzentas J., Darzentas J., de Bruin A., Power M., Prado P., Carmien S., Hobbs E.** - Systemic Design in Food Security and Resilience: Building A Holon
- 77 | **Giordano R., Montacchini E., Tedesco S.** - Building the fashion's future. How to turn textiles' wastes into ecological building products
- 80 | **Konietzko J., Bocken N., Hultink E. J.** - Business Experiments for Circular Urban Food System
- 82 | **Savio L., Thiebat F., Bosia D., Pennacchio R., Manni V.** - Natural fibers insulation panels: an adaptive production
- 85 | **Van der Velden M., Geirbo H. C.** - Repair = Care : Systems stories from Norway and Ghana

3 | SOCIO-TECHNICAL SYSTEMS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

- 88 | **Das B., Nahar P.** - Circular Economic Service System Design for Community Based Flood Resilience. Designing a Collaborative Grain Storage and Service System for the Annually Flood Prone Communities of Assam, India
- 92 | **Fiore E.** - New strategies for the refrigerator in the transition towards a circular economy
- 95 | **Germak C., Giuliano L., Abbate L.** - Co-design processes for cleaning and facilities services system
- 98 | **Lomas J., Patel N., Forlizzi J.** - Continuous Improvement: How systems design can benefit the data-driven design community
- 100 | **Tamborrini P., Remondino C., Marino C.** - Data, Fashion System and Systemic Design approach: an information flow strategy to enhance sustainability
- 103 | **Valpreda F., Cataffo M.** - Participatory Design for Service Robotics

4 | TERRITORIAL METABOLISM AND FLOURISHING ECONOMIES

- 107 | **Ambrogio F., Comino E., Dominici L., Rosso M.** - The use of water for technical development or technical development for the use of water?
- 110 | **Battistoni C., Barbero S.** - Systemic design for territorial development: ecosystem to support autopoietic local economies
- 114 | **Bofylatos S., Kampasi I., Spyrou T.** - Designing resilient creative communities through biomimetic service design
- 116 | **Bozzola M., De Giorgi C.** - Packaging reconditioned household appliances
- 119 | **Bucci D., Franconi A., Piovesan F., Tagliazucchi S.** - Analyzing OvestLab's collaborative regene-

ration process through a systemic design lens

- 122 | **Cattozzo L., Marotta L.** - Landscapes and systemic design: Po river Delta (Italy) case
- 125 | **Giraldo Nohra C., Barbero S.** - Post-industrial areas on the lens of systemic design towards flourishing urban resilience
- 129 | **Lambiase N.** - Mapping the Circle. Systemic analysis of the experiences of circular economy in Italy through an app
- 132 | **Lemos Oliveira Mendonca R. M., Ribeiro de Mello E. M., de Oliveira Nery S., Horacio M. P., Ro-meiro Filho E.** - Systemic network around education and community gardens
- 135 | **Schaus M.** - Narrative and Value: Authorship in the Story of Money
- 138 | **Toso D., Luthe T., Kiss T.** - The Systemic Design approach applied to water treatment in the alpine region
- 143 | **Varanasi U.** - Life conservation; A study into systemic design for wildlife

5 | SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

- 145 | **Campagnaro C., Ceraolo S., Di Prima N.** - Systemic and participatory design processes in care systems
- 149 | **Eriksson D., Turnstedt L.** - The Nordics as World Leaders in Sustainable Healthcare and why it Matters to you
- 155 | **Gharavi N., Hozhabri M.** - @Home in Transition. Encouraging asylum seekers towards more self-driven approaches to navigate the unknown they are surrounded with.
- 157 | **Kumar A., Wagle P., Bandarkar V., Nahar P.** - Design for the taste-makers: System oriented social innovation for improving the living condition of salt pan labourers
- 160 | **Kumar G. N., Gupta I., Ruchatz J., Nahar P.** - Ethos Design for a Good Quality Life : Building an innovation framework for individuals and organizations towards resilience and cognitive flexibility
- 163 | **Landa-Avila I. C., Escobar-Tello C., Jun G. T.** - Holistic outcome-based approach towards sustain-able design healthcare: aligning the system purpose through system visualisation
- 165 | **Nie Z., Zurlo F.** - Human-centered Approach for Flourishing: Discovering the Value of Service Ecosystem Design in Psychosocial Career Counselling Service
- 167 | **Rygh K., Støren Berg M., Romm J., Morrison A.** - Pre-fuzzy front end alignment of multiple stakeholders in healthcare service innovation - unpacking complexity through service and systems oriented design in Strategy Sandboxes
- 171 | **Savina A., Vrenna M., Menzardi P., Peruccio P. P.** - The Impact of Food Production on Public Health: Systemic Strategies for a Diffused and Transversal Prevention Plan

6 | MODELS AND PROCESSES OF SYSTEMIC DESIGN

- 176 | **Barba E., Osborn J.R.** - Measuring Sophistication in Systemic Design and Computing
- 179 | **Besplemennova Y., Tassi R.** - Systems Thinking for Service Design
- 182 | **Boehnert J.** - The Visual Representation of Complexity: Sixteen Key Characteristics of Com-plex Systems
- 185 | **Chaplin H., Christopherson K.** - Re-Defining Journalism Education: Using Systems Thinking and Design to Revolutionize the Future of Storytelling

- 187 | **Chung Y., Renaux J., Chikermane V., Rajani J. J.** - Co-Designing a Social Innovation Model for Changemakers
- 190 | **Darzentas J., Darzentas J.** - Perspectives on Systemic Design: examining heterogeneous relevant literature to provide a historical and 'systemically inspired' review
- 194 | **Davidová M.** - Trans-Co-Design in Systemic Approach to Architectural Performance: The Multi-Layered Media and Agency in Creative Design and Its Processes
- 198 | **Jamsin E.** - Computational Models in Systemic Design
- 203 | **Jones P.** - Evolutionary Stakeholder Discovery: Requisite System Sampling for Co-Creation
- 205 | **Lockton D.** - Old Rope: Laing's Knots and Bateson's Double Binds in Systemic Design
- 208 | **Luthe T.** - Systemic Design Labs (SDL): Incubating systemic design skills through experiential didactics and nature-based creativity
- 210 | **Maessen C., van Houten S., van der Lugt R.** - Future Probing for Proadaptive Organizations
- 215 | **Marines Hernández L. E.** - Mapping disciplinary mobility for tackling complex problems
- 217 | **Matic G., Matic A.** - Design for Emergence – Enabling Stakeholder Liminal Transitions and Innovation Value Pivoting through Complex Systemic Transformations
- 220 | **Murphy R.** - Finding the emic in systemic design: Towards systemic ethnography
- 223 | **Murphy R., Jones P.** - Give me the place to stand: Leverage analysis in systemic design
- 226 | **Passia Y., Roupas P.** - The Contingent City: decoding the possibilities of the city's sociospatial metabolism
- 234 | **Perera D.** - Wicked Problems, Wicked Humor: Fun machines as a Method to Frame Wicked Problems in Architecture
- 236 | **Real M., Lizarralde I.** - A constructivist and soft view of systemic design. A tribute to Jean Michel Larrasquet's work
- 239 | **Sevaldson B.** - Beyond User Centric Design
- 242 | **Silverman H., Rome C.** - Distinctions and Analogies: Mapping Social System Identity
- 245 | **Snow T.** - Regenerative Value Systems – Model(s) illustrating flows and transformations of value within production systems
- 252 | **Sweeting B.** - Radically Constructing Place
- 254 | **Tekogul I.** - Design as adaptation
- 257 | **Thompson W. T., Mesquita Da Silva F., Steier F.** - Binocular vision of designing process for whole systems design crossing boundaries
- 260 | **Van Alstyne G., Skelton C., Nan Cheng S.** - Systemic Design and Its Discontents Designing for Emergence and Accountability
- 263 | **Van Gessel C., Van der Lugt R., De Vries R.** - Socionas: Bringing the systemic view into the design for health and sustainability
- 269 | **Vargas Espitia A., Guataquira Sarmiento N. A., Álvarez Quintero C. D., Rugeles Joya W. R.** - Integration of methodologies through an academic toolkit for the design of products services systems for sustainability - SPSS - in Colombian contexts
- 274 | **Vezzoli C., Basbolat C.** - System Design for Sustainability for All. S.PSS Design applied to Distributed Economies
- 278 | **Zivkovic S.** - The Early Stage Analysis of a Systemic Innovation Lab

EDITORIAL

The seventh *Relating Systems Thinking and Design (RSD7)* symposium was held at the Politecnico di Torino, the 23-28 October 2018, for the first time in Italy, defining an important collaboration among the institutions that founded the informal group of Systemic Design Research Network (SDRN) in 2012. Not by chance, this symposium has seen the official establishment of the Systemic Design Association (SDA), with a public announcement during the first day. A new phase of the association and of the RSD symposiums started by proposing an inclusive approach to expand the membership and engage different systems- and design-oriented professionals and researchers, while looking after a strong identity of systemic design as a discipline.

The proceedings show the huge amount of contributions we received from all over the world that have inspired more than 200 people in Turin. The aim was to promote international debate on the multiple applications and purposes on which the systems thinking in design is developed towards sustainability. The symposium generated nurturing interdisciplinary collaborations and discussions, involving academics, designers and professionals. “*Challenging complexity by Systemic Design towards sustainability*” was the leitmotif of all RSD7 starting from the workshops, through the keynotes, the plenaries and the parallel speeches, and closing with the de-conference at Monviso Institute.

Four workshops were organized by international experts, coming from *Smart Circular Economy Network, University of Brighton, Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation, Namahn center* and *ShiftN*. Around 100 attendees had a full day workshop in which they investigated the theme of complexity, declined through different areas: IoT, material/immaterial places, Circular Economy and Systemic Design. At the end of the day, the workshops' results were shown in a plenary session and discussed all together with a breaking ice kick-off.

From 24th to 26th October, we had the proper symposium with 6 inspiring keynote speakers, 3 plenary sessions, and 76 presentations in the parallel sessions. We evidenced all the contents through abstracts, presentations and working papers, as well as videos and sketch-notes.

The RSD7 keynotes offered an inspiring range of perspectives on systemic design, emerging from different disciplines and experiences from all over the world. They brightly explained how Systemic Design can effectively integrate systems thinking with design to address complexity, by creating new resilient and sustainable systems in very diverse contexts. We decided to interview them and provide to the whole community a short video to have a glance of their contribution.

The plenary speakers were invited to explore special themes of interest for the community: the newborn Systemic Design Association, the pioneering activities run by Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation and the stimulating Systemic Design Toolkit.

The presentations in parallel sessions were dense and reflected the tracks we proposed. Here we have condensed the wide variety of contributions:

- **Policy design and decision-making** (Innovation in territorial governance, Strategies for sustainable innovation, Design thinking for decision-making, Democracy and responsibility);
- **Industrial Processes and Agrifood Systems** (Industrial ecology in a Circular Economy, Sustainable innovation in industrial development, Sustainability-

ty of agro-industrial systems);

- **Socio-technical Systems in the Digital Age** (User interaction and enhancement in the age of AI and autonomy, Internet of Things for sustainability, Information technologies in the design domain, Systemic Design for learning from data);
- **Territorial Metabolism and flourishing economies** (Local resources innovation transitioning to a Circular Economy, Sustainable development of regions and bioregions, City metabolism and urban ecologies, Interdisciplinary models for economy-design, New ways of communicating economic systems)
- **Social Care and Health Systems for Sustainable Living** (Sustainable innovation for health systems, Patient empowerment and caregiving, Systemic innovation in social care, Social Flourishing & Cultural Sustainability);
- **Models and Processes of Systemic Design** (Systemic Design theories, Innovation processes in complex systems, Systems and design thinking in education, Historical perspectives on Systemic Design).

The process to select the best presentations was crucial and it required double (and in some case triple or more) reviews, trying to provide a wider spectrum of experiences. In the end, the success rate was 48%. About two third of the presenters have submitted working papers.

The conference was also enriched by the exhibition “Visualizing Complex Systems”. The ability to collect, cross-check, visualize and study quantitative and qualitative information about phenomena and their patterns is itself at the core of the project, becoming strategic for enabling new systems thinking and their design application. Identifying the relationship between components, thus guaranteeing personal expression, horizontal communication and visual thinking, is the first step to enhance a more conscious and transparent decision-making process with a perspective of sustainability.

During the 7th edition of RSD we also experienced some moments of relaxed “learning-and-doing time”, during the “Books and Beers” events and the De Conference Event. In fact, at the end of each day, 3 decompressing “Books and Beers” were hosted in the close venue of Eataly. On that occasion, 5 recently published books were introduced to the audience and discussed in a more informal environment.

After the conventional RSD symposium, for the first time in its history, we proposed a 2-days De-Conference event, to favour networking, deepen conference topics and have a relaxed “learning-and-doing” time in a beautiful natural environment. It took place at MonViso Institute, in the community of Ostana, and it was organised in collaboration with ETH Zürich.

Lastly, I would like to take the chance of this publication to thank the international scientific committee because in the preparation phase they always pushed me towards higher and higher goals. A special thank goes to all the keynote speakers to have been central actors of this conference, sharing their inspiring experiences and knowledge. Finally, I would like to thank the local organizing committee because they supported me in every request and with great confidence in our capacity.



RSD7 and SDA chair

Turin, 29.03.19

Packaging reconditioned household appliances

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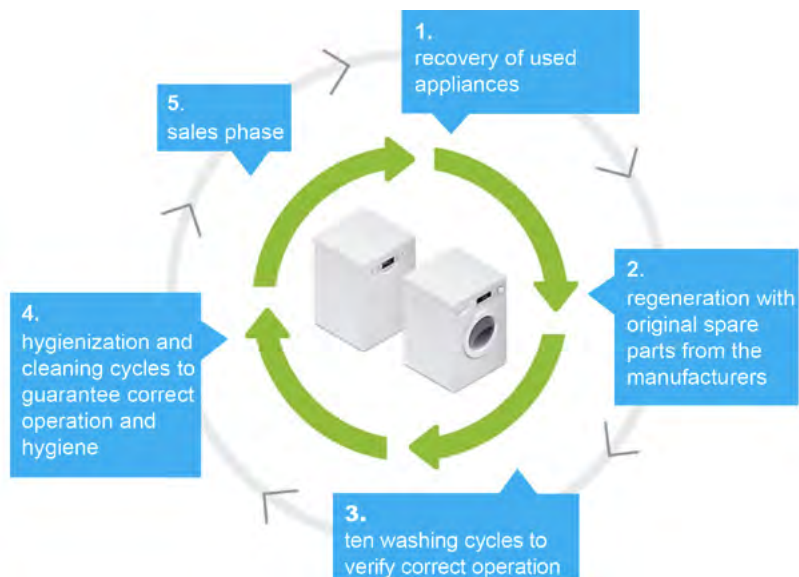
KEYWORDS

Packaging;
Re-use;
Household appliances;
Second-hand;
Social engagement.

This article aims to present a research and design work that focuses on exploring new possible approaches to packaging design as applied to the field of reconditioning and reintroducing old household appliances to the market. The work developed by the research group from the Politecnico di Torino – Design, in particular, is part of a research agreement signed with Astelav, a Piedmontese company based in Nichelino (Turin) and a leading distributor of components and spare parts for household appliances, in partnership with Turin-based Sermig, a non-profit organisation that aims to provide people marginalised by unemployment, social and financial problems with hospitality and both social and job support.

The company recently launched the Ri-Generation project alongside Sermig. This involves reconditioning used white goods (washing machines, dishwashers, fridges, ovens, etc.) by intercepting the WEEE (Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment) supply chain as well as encouraging socially marginalised people to gain new skills whilst assisting specialised technicians in reconditioning appliances. The work involves the replacement of damaged or broken parts, a cleaning process, followed by the product's placement on the market. It is an example of a circular economy that helps prevent the accumulation of waste in landfills, offers old products a new lease of life and new added value and, at the same time, creates new economies and new employment and social rehabilitation opportunities for people in difficult socio-economic circumstances.

Figure 1: Regeneration process phases



In such a scenario, the design work carried out attempts to develop new systems for the protection, transportation, presentation and sale of these used, salvaged and reconditioned products, so as to allow them to be distributed on the market, as well as to communicate their own particular image during the sales process. It is a very unusual packaging project because, apart from anything else, every product sold is different from the other, even if they share common characteristics.

The design challenge was tackled both in terms of its functional and marketing aspects, but also in line with a wider cultural paradigm that envisages the fine-tuning of a veritable system of activities and relationships that, in keeping with the characteristics of the Ri-Generation project, can generate innovation and sustainability at different levels: at a social level, by involving disadvantaged people and social cooperatives in packaging assembly;

at an environmental level, by salvaging old clothes to create the padding; at a production level, by specially training and organising personnel; and at a linguistic level, by applying new modes and registers of expression that stem from experimentation, particularly in the artistic field.

The new packaging design takes its cue from the use of the waste materials that Sermig receives on a daily basis through private donations, particularly second-hand clothes that are sorted, selected and then redistributed to people who are experiencing social and financial difficulties. The items of clothing that are damaged, ripped or worn out can be salvaged and, if properly processed, can be turned into efficient packaging systems. Garments are cut up and put together following clear procedural guidelines, and then positioned and sewn inside polyethylene tubes, creating a sort of “padded fabric” that is both waterproof and resistant and can wrap up and protect an appliance during the transport, storage and sales phases. The final product makes a strong impression: patches of clothing in different fabrics and colours surround the appliance, creating what looks like a cloth cube. Whilst it surprises and intrigues the viewer, it also expresses a narrative at different levels: an item of clothing that symbolises a product (a washing machine) declares its function at an emotive level whilst at the same time expressing the salvaging of a waste product, which is the principle that underpins the Ri-Generation project.

Since the most significant environmental problem for packaging systems is indeed related to the need to prevent waste before its production, the value of this salvaging process is further stressed by the reusability once it has finished transporting the appliance after sale. The information sheets included and the packaging’s own graphics suggest a “catalogue” of possible alternative uses (the protection of accessories and furnishings during house moves or for storing items in attics and warehouses, garage wall padding, informal poufs, pet cushions, picnic blanket undersheets, etc.).

Figure 2: The assembly phase and the final packaging]

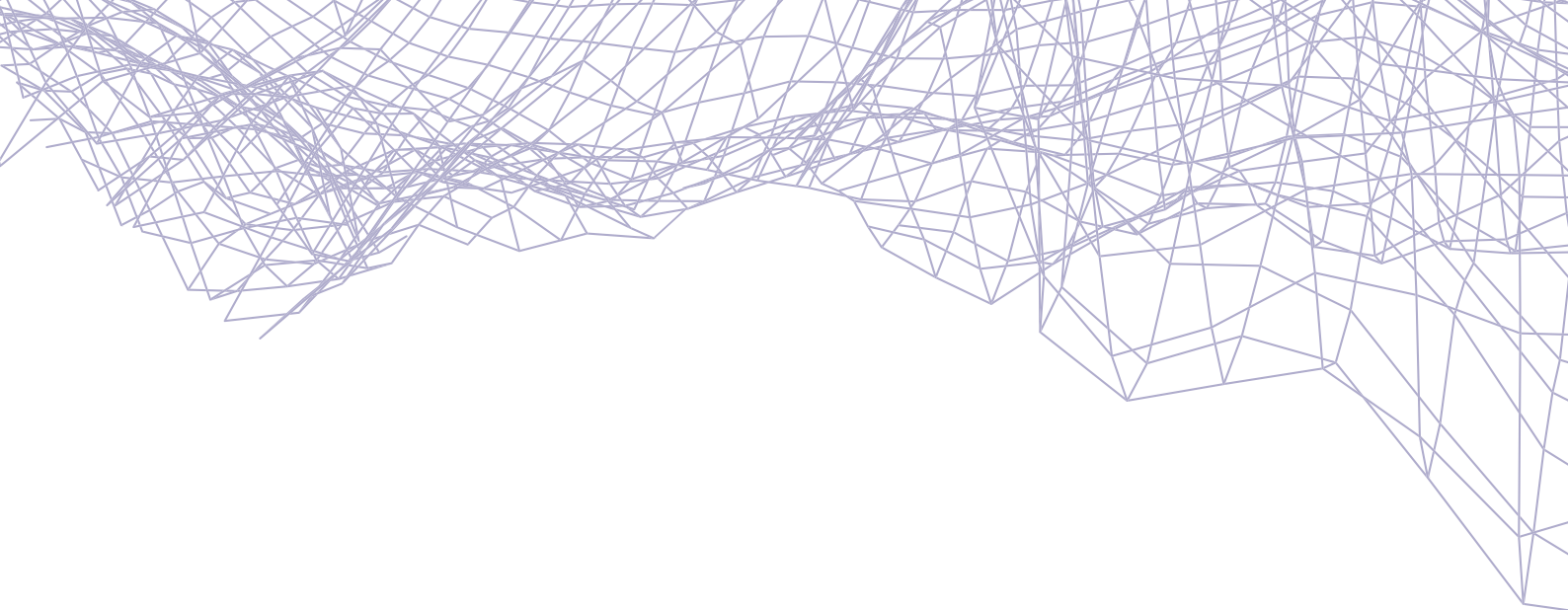


The product’s fine-tuning has involved Sermig personnel (supervisors and guests) and Astelav employees and some social cooperatives during a number of workshops coordinated by the Polito research group, designed to test the production methods and skills of people both joining and leaving the packaging production process. The packaging is assembled by social cooperatives, who are suitably trained using the above-mentioned direct experimentation and partial co-designing phases.

To date - having completed the production development, prototype and trial phases - the project is now preparing a pre-series of dozens of items that will be tested during their transportation and sale to consumers. The resulting feedback from these activities will allow the project’s organisers to streamline packaging production methods and the entire sales supply chain.

Among the possible outcomes foreseen, action designed to divulge this project in order to turn it into a repeatable or reinterpretable example of best practices is envisaged, as well as the promotion of the project's cultural merits. Such action includes:

- The declinations of the semi-finished product: the defined packaging system, could be considered as a new semi-finished product which, when suitably reshaped, that means it could also be used as packaging in other product sectors;
- The curatorship and creation of an exhibition to be put on display: the design of possible display concepts that could be shown at exhibitions and sustainable packaging trade fairs or used for creating a tailor-made event dedicated to Ri-Generation's case history;
- The creation of a special section on the Ri-Generation website: creating text, images, animation, etc. that can present the partnership with the Politecnico di Torino, the design process and the scientific and cultural value of the packaging design process;
- The creation of a narrative: a sustainable packaging case history could be the focus of a story told by a lively, abridged publication that could be distributed at particular events designed to promote the initiative and the Ri-Generation project's work.



RSD7 CONFERENCE

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