

From Territory Patrimony to Food Innovation Design

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Carmine Gambardella



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Carmine Gambardella
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From Territory Patrimony to Food Innovation Design

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Abstract

Mainly characterized by culture and tradition, the territories change and communities enhance themselves, always requiring more ways of interaction and communication. It is precisely these characteristics that bring new challenges, which can only be answered by enabling a continuous process of innovation and requalification through the collaborative path of research and constant dialogue between the actors involved.

Know-how, cultures, and techniques related to innovation, defined as a mix of shapes and disciplines, are the main topics of the Innovation Design Laboratory of the Politecnico di Torino which fix itself the goal to teach and understand changes and evolutions that can take place in the various fields, developing concepts and projects of impact. This is the aim of the Food Innovation Design project, where through the food topic, it was possible to open new design opportunities able to meet the particular contextual need by forecasting and transmitting value with their action enabling sustainable innovation.

This paper presents the path of the project with the explanation of the design process adopted within his methodology and three real outcomes. As a case studies, choose among the most critical area of the Turin's neighborhood, they explain how it was possible to transform the endogenous resources in new innovative value able to increase the quality of life of his inhabitant.

Keywords: systemic innovation design, territory, food, sustainability.

1. Introduction

Starting from territory and his elements of identity like natural and cultural heritage, infrastructures, characteristics of economic systems and so on, strongly come to light the food question which represents not only a primary good, but also a global common language, a means of expression of community's traditions, a vehicle for interaction and exchange among different ethnic groups and cultures, a source of well-being and health for different populations target, both inhabitants (elderly people, youth, children, foreigners-natives) and city users (employees, visitors), symbolic element of socio-cultural identity and urban attractor, even against new emerging polarities like universities. This scenario becomes even worst if we pair these kinds of issues with the growing demand for sustainability in the society, economic and environmental factors. All these aspects are the precondition why nowadays there is more attention to the research for tools able to handle the increasingly complex phenomena.

How cans the food question influence the context is well being? How food and design can enable re-qualification process in the areas involved?

This is the challenge at the base of research and educational path developed during the last years in the Innovation Laboratory of the Politecnico di Torino.

The research exposed aim to understand changes, forecast, and evolutions that can take place in the context of the city of Turin to develop innovative projects with impact by spreading value and enabling enhancement and requalification with the use of the food topic and focusing it on existing resources. More specifically, to do that, the Laboratory adopted an interdisciplinary approach where know-how, knowledge, cultures, and techniques related to innovation, defined as a mix of shapes and disciplines, with the contribution of three main fields: design for innovation, sociology of innovation and innovation management.

The Innovation Laboratory is focused on driving, with a specific methodology, the innovation process of development as a mix of creativity with particular attention to environmental, economic and social sustainability themes [1]. With the sociology of innovation, the project aims to apply the appropriate tools for the study and the evaluation of the territorial potentially, in the more general outline of urban sustainability, with the social implications of innovation. These are factors influenced and shape by the organizational models and processes of territorial technological advancement in the innovation field. Therefore only with the help of innovation management, it is possible to go beyond actual system by outline how the territorial system works, and which are the principal players involved.

A tangible multidisciplinary approach that allows learning and constantly experimenting the complexity of relations at play and the strength among them [2], is the most important characteristic of the Food Innovation Design project.

Through some specific case studies, the paper wants to show how an appropriate quality and quantitative territory fieldwork and a multidisciplinary approach allows highlighting potentialities and strong points otherwise not easily identifiable. This process can enable new good design practices in a perspective of sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship, starting new requalification process in the areas involved.

2. Innovation Framework

The innovation practice involves many aspects, from technical and economical to cultural fields, and its impact is a critical and a great driver for the construction of a better future [3]. Innovate is hard because it requires a correct cultural approach, considerable time and resources, a strong coordination and cooperation, hard work, appropriate spaces, knowledge, and tools [4].

As a matter of fact, when it comes to innovating it is necessary to have information and materials organized according to specific logic, analyzed and verified for giving and organic and clarity unity to all the results of the project able to explaining why such a result has taken shape in a particular way [5]. This structure needs tools and method to increase the understanding of the complex system where we will introduce our innovative initiatives as to reach real impact results.

For that reason, we developed and used our methodology, the Systemic Innovation Design Methodology, during the educational and research path in the Innovation Laboratory.

Within this experience, the challenge's project was to design and develop sustainable innovation into different territorial contexts. Following the Systemic Innovation Design Methodology, the designers involved in the project were able to go from the contextual analysis phase into the concept development phase following specific steps taking into account the relations between people, the activities and the resources of the context of action with the multidisciplinary approach described before [6].

Starting from the analysis phase to arrive at development phase, and passing through the concept, the outcomes results have the goal to enhance the resources existing according to with culture and local knowledge and identity to produce new growth and well-being for individual, society, and context.

In the specific case of the Food Innovation Design, the project focus on introducing innovative design project within specific areas of the city of Turin to enhance the territory from their existing resource with the food vector.

The creation of social and environmental innovations involved the food as an innovation vector able to connect the contextual identity, information, cultures, resources, and assets with the need of the people living in it with the goal to reassemble all of them in new forms able to create new and better values for the socio-economic development [7].

The design process formulated within the Systemic Innovation Design Methodology starts from an overview of the thematic actions that an innovative sustainable project has to explore:

1. carefully context analysis;
2. the requirements identification of that the project is seeking to fulfill;
3. the vision and the design of what it takes to meet them;
4. the result, regarding how this will be adopted and the measure of its performance.

It is possible to find each of these prerogatives in the three leading stage of the project process: exploration and formative phase, research and analysis, concept and development. All the process is thought to focus on real problems.

2.2 Exploration and Formative Phase

The intent of this phase is to introduce the themes of Innovation Design, the approach and the methodology used in the Laboratory. The Innovation Design field of study acts with a vision and a process that start from the meaning, by answering "why" we need to introduce or develop an innovative initiative overturn the traditional engineering and economic perspective that starts from the "how". To act in this point of view is it necessary to explore and analyze the context of action in many perspectives very carefully.

The multidisciplinary approach in this phase, that include innovative trends, entrepreneurship, and data visualization lessons is necessary to set the initial scenario around the topics and are preparatory for the next stage.

2.3 Research and Analysis Phase

The research and analysis phase is a strategic and a basilar stage for the project's development. Identification, selection, and reorganization of the data in the context, where the project is acting, are possible only with a deep analysis conducted on all the characteristic that compose the context itself. To collect all this data, the course taught the tools and the method during the sociology innovation course.

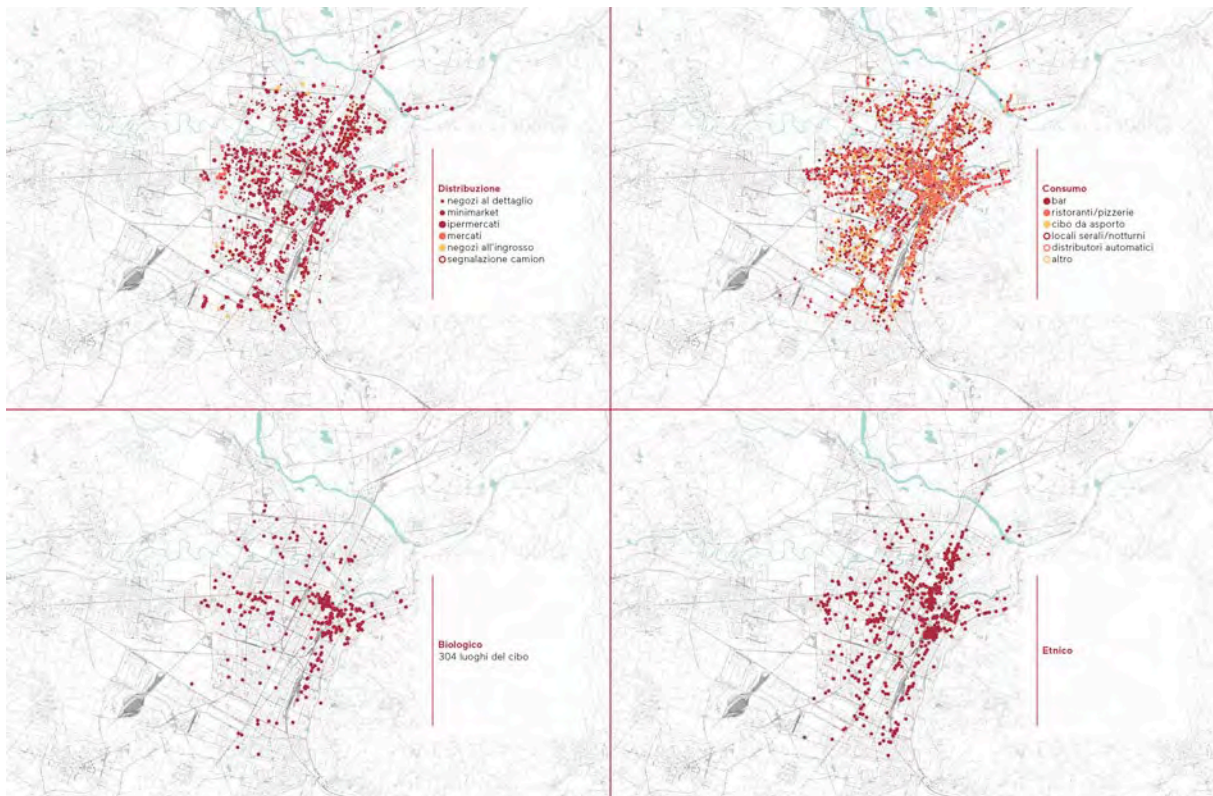


Fig. 1: Analysis Maps Examples

The different teams analyzed different types of qualitative and quantitative information on the natural, anthropic, social and economic context aspects [8]. These data were collected, analyzed and structured from existing information, like database research, open data, reports, case studies, scientific and general reviews and from a step of information integration research conducted in the field.

During this step, all the existing data collected are blended with survey, direct perception and empathy analysis. So every designer can build a careful analysis on the livability, the everyday life and the perception of the area. These aspects made a significant contribution to know the neighborhood aspects. This vast amount of data and information material is then structured by using the information and data visualization rules [9] in different maps that are going to compose the project data book (Fig. 1). This report contains all the contextual data correlation, the list of criticalities and the list of potentialities of the territory necessary to start to design the innovation initiative

2.4 Concept and Development Phase

In the last phase of the project, the designer starts to design an innovative initiative concept able to introduce a value improvement in their neighborhood following the results of the analysis and research phase. To do that it formalize some project guidelines to set the values and the goal of improvement that they will introduce with their action.

Every decision, every project development has to be aligned and coherent with the data book and the guidelines. This process leads the designer to design concept and develop a project based on objective fact, trust on real data with a better possibility to reach an outcome of success.

All the project outcomes were accompanied with a project book where it will be possible to find all data collected during the research and analysis phase, but also all the essential aspects of the concept as clear purpose identification, user identification, value and functional maps, product or service blueprint, business strategy, communication strategy and expected sustainable impacts.

3. Food Innovation Projects Overall Results

The qualitative and quantitative analysis carried out on the field have allowed the teams to obtaining an overall picture of the different neighborhood of Turin very exhaustive and complete with the identification of specific potential and strengths of each district.

All this information were structured in several maps and visualization in the project data book.

The data analysis derived from ethnographic research has given rise to peculiar characteristics of each reference district with the design of 27 innovative results very different to each other although the food topics were the common theme.

The projects resulting differ by user and actors involved, theme and kind of outcome project.

In fact in the 27 projects developed we can find an innovative proposal for users ranging child to senior users, from tourist to worker involving actors from the citizen to institutions (fig. 2).

The key issue is the construction of the network of actors involved in the project; networking is, in fact, considered essential for the growth of an ecosystem because of cooperation and inclusion processes help optimally managing the project [10].

Also, the theme has wide range spacing from various issues as the multicultural integration, the cultural heritage, the social inclusion, the sport, and tourism promotion, the health enhancement and the traditions and cultures valorization.

Even the outcomes of projects have followed this trend with the developing of a different series of product, service and models design, digital or analogic.

However, considering different possibilities that bring out the expansion of the project to cross-cutting themes, user specifications to which the project intends to address and actors that are thought to be involved in the same project, it goes without saying that the tools are configured differently from time to time, thus creating digital platforms and applications for smartphones, paper guides in support of visiting and exploring the city, the cargo-bike projects associated with planning events or the proposal of new services.

Three cases study were selected among those who turn out to be the most significant outcome, and we will be described below.

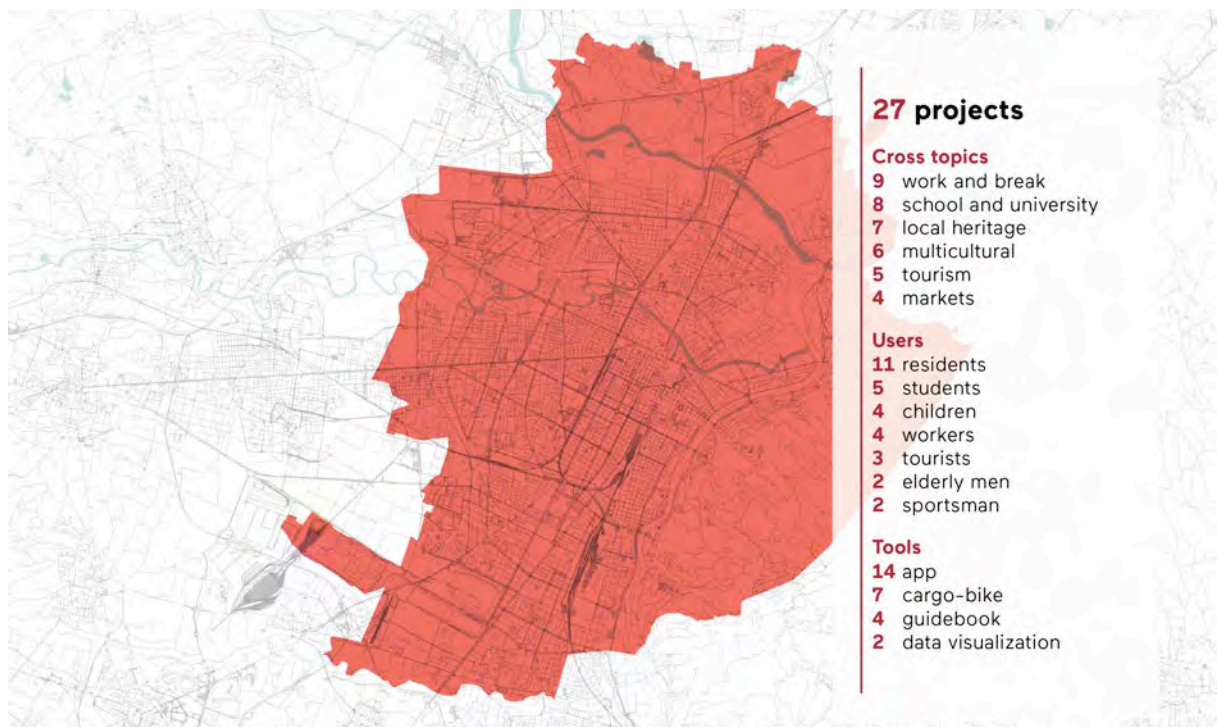


Fig. 2: Overall Projects Results.

All three projects start from the analysis of three different neighborhoods in Turin, but with similar characteristics from the social point of view: they appear to be, in fact, the most marginal neighborhoods of the city where the impact of the outcomes will be most considerable.

3.2 Mens Sana

Mens Sana is a project consisting of a network of services developed around the issues of food and healthy living, by relating agricultural and socio-cultural resources that characterize the area and the needs of the considered utilities, also controlling the isolation and impenetrability which have always distinguished the neighborhood.

The area analysis has indeed shown that the Falchera district, one set in the far northern suburbs of the city of Turin district unlikely of passage for non-residents because of the position that constitutes and define a particular isolation, appears to be almost a separate town with an active industrial center for the city itself.

On this basis, the project is directed towards two distinct categories of users with the goal of creating a true social network between the resident community and the employees of the industrial area on the edge of the same neighborhood.

The proposed network of services aims to promote the consumption of healthy food, creating a local culture related to food and the conducting of a 360-degree style of life. The project consists of food delivery services and packed lunch, delivered directly to the workplace and in offering agricultural and sporting activities after work for CNH employees and residents. Membership of the network is based on a system of credits you can spend on the same network for the proposed activities, the system managed through a simple application designed specifically.

Cascina Falchera, a place that kicked off the expansion of the district and for this reason, it preserves a particular value in the collective imagination of the community, was identified as an active and proactive hub, ideal for the coordination of services and activities of an entire project. The impact of the project can be multiple; the creation of a new service on the neighborhood could make this less isolated, enhancing and reinforcing the sense of belonging and identity that characterizes the community. The project also creates new jobs within the area, taking advantage of green areas and farmland not widely used outside and bringing the strong industrial reality confined to the territory.

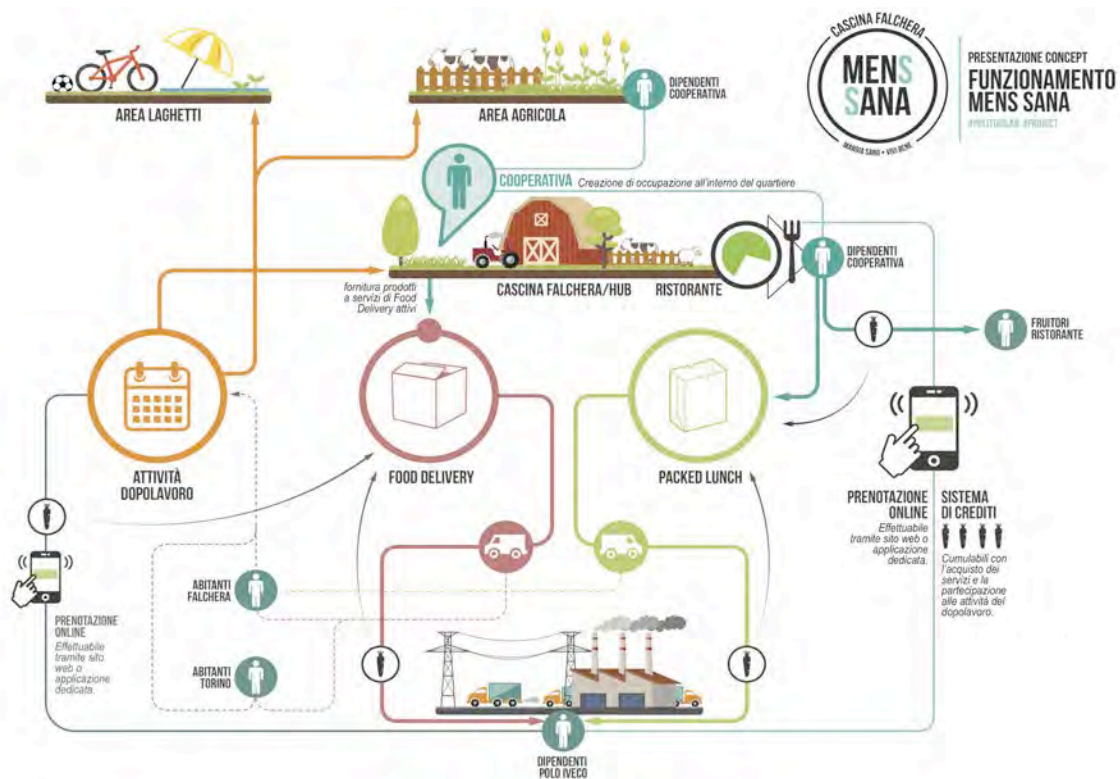


Fig 3: Mens Sana – Functional Concept Schema.

3.3 Mirafiori

The Mirafiori project aims to create a new value chain connecting the local players in order to generate economic, social and environmental objectives in the neighborhood, starting from the food surplus.

The analysis of the homonymous district, located in the southern suburbs of the city of Turin and known historically to the strong impact of Fiat industry, which made the area one of the most populous city, has shown that this area was severely affected by problems such as social isolation and integration. Strong potential of the district, however, was detected in the CAAT (Centro AgroAlimentare di Torino), which provides today, almost constantly, the majority of small retailers and street vendors present in the city of Turin, but also a great source of excess.

The aim of the project then becomes to recover food surpluses identified in the structure of CAAT, managing working through dislocated structures on the territory, enhancing the skills of those involved in the distribution of the service and the food preparation, thereby generating actions social interaction between people from different biographies.

Mirafiori is therefore proposed as an interdisciplinary laboratory oriented to the empowerment of people in marginal condition, where food becomes a means to initiate and trigger a series of actions for a return to the neighborhood community placing.

The Mirafiori project may have internal and external impact to the neighborhood, not thus remaining confined to administrative boundaries. Within the district, it can offer an alternative to the food surplus by supporting needy people in the area, through active community involvement and participation. Externally, the implications are in terms of image, requalifying and bringing to a social plan an area always associated with the gray industria.

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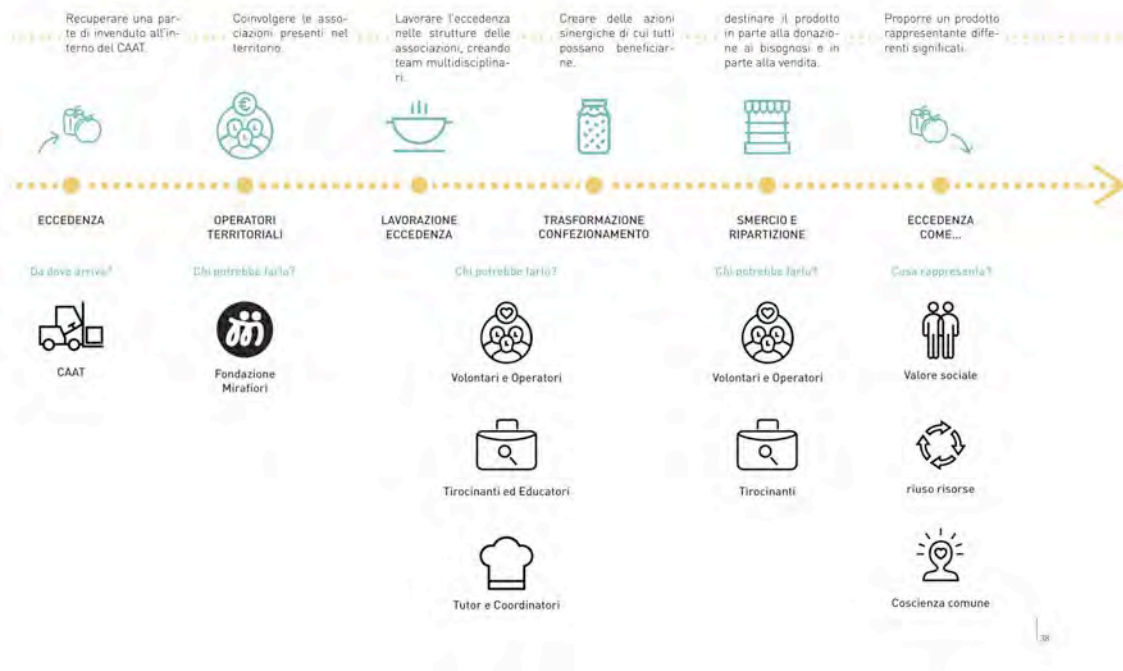


Fig. 4 : Mirafiori – Food Chain Schema

3.4 Walkeat

Walkeat is an association able to create a network of connections between people and places food on the Barriera di Milano district in Turin. The aim of the project is to use food as a vehicle for cultural exchange, eliminating the prejudice of the inhabitants of Turin and integrating the ethnic groups that live in the neighborhood.

The project stems from the analysis of Barriera di Milano district, a borough built as a proletarian and laborer, located a few kilometers away from the city center. To date, this zone, it is one of the neighborhoods with the highest rate of foreign inhabitants and is therefore of particular interest and sensitivity of the issue of multicultural and integration.

The initiative includes a series of thematic food and wine tours for adults and children and school groups. These routes have different themes ranging from architecture to photography, to the enhancement of street art, very present in the neighborhood. The tours are run by the ambassadors of the figures, which offer their knowledge, ideas and experiences about the area and the food being proposed, making the experience more immersive and less touristy.

The project goal is to enhance the quality of the context to create a relationship between the places of the food offering the user a complete experience formed by local flavors and ethnic, immersed in the characteristic culinary and cultural landscape that the district offers.

The service wants to make participants and residents feel involved in the place that they reside and live, increasing the flows of people who frequent it, improving the image of the area and its integration in the city of Turin.

The enhancement of the food places of Barriera di Milano can have strong repercussions on not only economic, but also social; improved communication and attractiveness of the area can requalify a heavily discriminated neighborhood negatively associated because of the high percentage of foreign residents.



Fig. 5: Walkeat – Food and Street Art Tour Example.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the workshop Innovation is double. On one hand, it wants to help, inspire and to advocate into the innovative speech the new generations of designers by making them aware of their important role, with a strategic responsibility, to shape the future of human society with their project action. On the other hand it wants to test and redefine our methodology and tools to concretize in real innovative activities, the approaches and the vision teach and experiment in the Laboratory.

After this project experience, and the first result, we can state that the results accomplished the purpose with the creation of innovative initiatives going beyond the mere commercial and technological aspect, focusing on the social and environmental requalification as a primary aspect.

The use of the same methodology with the same topic, the food, in different territorial context has produced significant results with different souls. So we are confident that through the iteration of this case study presented in this paper, our research team will validate and communicate even more the importance of the role of design as a strategic guidance for innovating, preserve, and enhance the territory peculiarity.

The design is a strategic tool for positive change and for affecting the territorial value systems by creating new values and by leading the society towards a more sustainable life.

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