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Community Hubs as Spaces of Contemporary Participation

Studying participated management through observation and engagement

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Summary

In this thesis I study community hubs as multi-purpose spaces that aggregate people, ideas and energies to provide activities and services that are both targeted to their local community and provided by it. Like other contemporary participation practices, community hubs are in dialectic with the context in which they exist; people experience them in different ways and attribute different meanings to them. However, no community hub is like any other. Each can host different uses while having a governance structure that depends on a diverse array of actors. While community hubs are containers of participation, they also exist because of participation. Spaces, in other words, are constitutive of their social reproduction. I explore community hubs through the question: how do humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs?

Community hubs are rooted in their territory – which means that they are contingent to their context, and depend on but also support their urban and social fabric – and in continuous evolution – because every community hub must strive to balance between having enough structure to function consistently and remain flexible and permeable to integrate the external contributions it needs to thrive. To dive into the controversies, contradictions and paradoxes of community hubs, I combine participant observation and direct engagement in three case studies. Two of them were top-down structured participation processes in Chieri, Italy, while the third revolved around a self-managed hybrid between co-working and community hub in Valencia, Spain.

I use actor-network theory to explore each process in terms of concentric networks of interaction between humans (people and groups) and non-humans (built space, digital tools, and text documents). This approach allowed me to frame the role of human and non-human entities, trace how they transfer their influence across concentric actor-networks, and highlight the challenges of starting and running a community hub. As multipurpose spaces of participation, community

hubs need to integrate different needs and uses, craft a shared narrative, find economic sustainability, and continuously experiment with their governance. However, being multi-purpose is both a social mission and a necessity for survival. Community hubs then need to maintain a negotiable definition of what they are and what makes their community, while devising ways to let outsiders permeate their spaces of decision-making.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Communal spaces are essential for our collective well-being: they provide opportunities for people to meet and connect, discuss and debate, relax, organize on shared issues, build solidarity towards each other or less privileged groups. In other words, communal spaces are spaces of participation where we build a meaningful understanding of our community and a practice to care for it.

In this thesis I explore community hubs as spaces of participation. Community hubs can cover different functions – such as social mediation between citizens and their local administration; provide urban welfare; promote inclusion and even support local production. I argue that in essence community hubs enable citizens to contribute to the provision of services and activities for their community. The fact that people can be actively engaged in the creation, management, support and care of common spaces evokes ideas of mutual recognition, solidarity, emancipation and democracy.

Through three case studies in Italy and Spain, I investigate through what activities, arrangements and interactions those values take form. Since the central goal of this thesis is to study the participated management of community hubs, I being by conceptualizing both participation and community hubs, and developing a methodology by which they can be meaningfully investigated.

In chapter 2 I seek to a develop an understanding of what participation is and address the distinction between meaningful participation and phony practices. While scholarly research does not offer much clarification or consensus on this issue, it provides accounts and interpretations of previous experiences. When talking about participation practices in urban environments, there are two main arenas of reference. In the first, citizens self-organize and autonomously address issues and needs that matter to them. For instance, people might occupy an abandoned building to manage it in ways that better represent and respond to their needs, instead of leaving the choice to private developers. The second arena opens when those who have the power and legitimacy to manage urban spaces invite their constituents through various forms of collaboration. For example, local

administrations might involve citizens to give input about how to develop a certain area.

Looking at participation practices in Europe and the US during the last sixty years, we can identify both recurrent and peculiar elements. Whether it originates as an independent, bottom-up effort or a (more or less) orchestrated top-down initiative, participation is expected to lead to new ways of managing urban spaces through more inclusive decision-making. That said, over time practices have grown in number and variety, and the more we study participation the more questions arise. If widening the circles of decision-making change how urban spaces are managed, does that also guarantee outcomes that are both different and more desirable? Does it guarantee that when outsiders are let into those circles of decision-making, they will be granted significant influence? Whether participation leads to innovative practices and arrangements or becomes instrumental to the reproduction of pre-existing socio-economic configurations depends on many factors. And often it can be both at the same time.

I conclude chapter 2 by arguing that participation should be understood as a context-sensitive and contested concept. Context-sensitivity implies that no practice can be understood outside of the broader social, political and economic context where it emerges and develops. On the other hand, participation is contested because even within the same practice, people can have different experiences. What to one person was a fruitful endeavor might feel exploitative and disappointing to another. If the different meanings, contradictions and paradoxes connected with participation cannot be solved but must be accepted, it follows that no approach, method or set-up is better than another. Participation is both an invitation to conflict and a possibility for consensus. We can recognize the context-sensitive and contested nature of participation is an inherent paradox and attempt to strike a balance between naïve enthusiasm and ruthless critique.

I then apply these same ideas to the study of community hubs. Community hubs are spaces that aggregate people, ideas and energies to provide services for the community and by the community. Like other participatory practices, community hubs are highly contingent, and none is like any other. I understand community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation that are rooted in their territory and in continuous evolution.

Community hubs are rooted in their territory because they emerge in response to and evolve in dialectic with their local circumstances. As we will see, to develop and maintain services and activities, community hubs depend on the urban and social fabric of the territory where they operate. However, they also support that territory through a broad understanding of urban welfare. In addition, community hubs are also symbolic interventions onto local landscape. They often regenerate existing buildings by giving them both a new use and a new narrative. That said, although community hubs usually exist and operate within a building, built space is not simply the container of participation. Rather space is constitutive of participation because it is one of the elements that contribute to its social reproduction. In other words, if participation exists because there is space where it

can happen, that space also exists because participation supports its reproduction as a community hub.

Secondly, community hubs are in continuous evolution because they depend from heterogenous contributions to survive. Being multi-purpose is both a pillar of their social mission and of their survival strategy. In order to adapt to changes in demands, resources and other external factors, communist hubs must remain both permeable and flexible while also maintaining enough structure to function consistently. The need to balance such opposing needs often leads to complex forms of governance.

In addition to elaborating my definition of community hubs, in chapter 3 I problematize how conceptualizing them as rooted in their territory and in continuous evolution leaves three open issues: firstly, by saying that space is not only the container of participation but constitutive of its interactions, there emerges a need to reconcile the material and immaterial dimensions of community hubs. Secondly, community hubs rely on a mix of diverse and interdependent actors that often lead to unconventional organizational structures, which in turns makes it hard to define what a community hub is and who is included in its community. And finally, there is a need to explore how community hubs can maintain enough structure to function consistently while remaining sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes and sufficiently permeable to integrate the external contributions they need. To address these three issues, I integrate concepts from literature on other spaces of participation that shared some fundamental characteristics with community hubs, namely houses of the people and urban commons.

Houses of the people were spaces of participation that existed in different European countries between the late XIX the first decades of the XX century. In her study about Italian houses of the people, Margret Kohn (2003) proposed two concepts that I readapt to community hubs. The first is 'encounters,' which refer to how people interact through various exchanges, both verbal and corporal, both conscious and unconscious. Kohn also discussed 'spatial coding,' which she defined as the set of scripts and repertoires that are appropriate to that specific place. As the product of a dialectic between a space's physical dimension and the encounters it hosts, spatial coding can either highlight or obscure patterns of interaction of the world at large. I use spatial coding to reconcile the material and immaterial dimensions of the space of interaction I will study.

Taking from literature on urban commons, I conceptualize community hubs as the product three inseparable components: space, people, and encounters. Once we go beyond understanding cities as territorially bounded entities and start considering them as forms of social organization whose components are inevitably interrelated, we can see how the boundaries of components of urban commons are continuously renegotiated (Kip, 2015). For community hubs, this implies that questions such as what the space of participation is, who are the people involved and with what roles, and what arrangements are necessary for that space to continue to exist, are ever-present. This can help shift a perspective on what a community hub is, who is included in its community and how these elements interact in its social reproduction in ways that fit their contingent and mutable nature.

Finally, if community hubs cannot be understood as isolated forms of social organization, they also cannot survive in isolation. That boundaries continuously renegotiated is both inevitable and instrumental to the functioning of community hubs. This is especially true given that they depend on external contributions from heterogenous actors. Openness to negotiation and change, however, should not be confused with a lack of structure and hierarchy. Community hubs need to maintain a solid yet flexible structure to adapt to changing circumstances and remain permeable to the external contributions that they need to survive. Borrowing from Stavrides' (2019) work on institutions of commoning, I argue that to function as permeable organizations, community hubs must allow for unpredictable identities and enable their differences to be integrated. In this sense, the concept of thresholds – which Stavrides defined as spaces where insiders meet outsiders – is useful to identify think about the permeability of community hubs and participation practices in general.

Hence, I investigate community hubs as the product of their inseparable components: not just built space, but the people that meet in them, the activities they carry out, and the various arrangements that enable their social reproduction. Since in community hubs space is constitutive of participation, I focus both on the encounters between people, as well as those between humans and non-human entities like space. Community hubs, then, become spaces of encounters with otherness, whose thresholds offer zones where differences meet and negotiate a shared narrative and norms of communal living. Accordingly, the research question that guides me is: How do humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs?

In chapter 4, I propose to address this question and study community hubs as context-sensitive and contested by mixing participant observation and engagement. Observation phases were guided by actor-network theory (ANT), during which I step aside and follow the actors without pre-determined conceptions, while when actively engaged I tried to implement principles of action research (AR). Borrowing from ANT's jargon, I approached community hubs as black boxes waiting to be opened. ANT understands social formations (actor-networks) as vibrant entities that are continuously made and unmade through the interactions of humans and non-humans (actants), and states that no entity is inherently strong or weak by itself: an actant can only become stronger, and thus influence others, by forging alliances, while it will weaken in isolation or as a result of contrasting associations. My analysis starts from the idea that both people and built space can have the same relevance in the making and unmaking of community hubs, without excluding the possibility that other entities might also play important roles[1].

Chapters 5 to 7 provide a detailed report on the interactions between human and non-human entities in three case studies on the participated management of different community hubs. The first two case studies cover a year-long field work

[1] As I will discuss shortly, I started this thesis with the proposal to study of digital tools could support participation processes. Hence my focus also included digital spaces of interactions as non-human actants. In addition, over my time in the field, text documents also emerged as relevant non-humans.

in Chieri, a town of around 37,000 people in the province of Turin, while the third centers on Colector, a self-managed hybrid between co-working and community hub in Valencia.

In May 2017, the municipality of Chieri published a call for facilitators to lead two processes of participatory management of public buildings (which I will refer to as Chieri1 and Chieri2). Chieri1 was about a former textile factory of 30,000 square meters located in the city center, a majority of which had been unused since 1995. Facilitators were tasked with supporting dialogue among diverse participants; design experimental activities that would intensify the use of currently active spaces and reactivate part of the unused one; and draft a proposal for more long-term solutions. Chieri2 focused on three buildings – a former slaughterhouse, a youth center and a section of a private school – whose rooms had already been assigned to local associations. The process was expected to improve the use of common areas, foster synergy and collaboration across associations, and define how external actors could use parts of each space when empty. On the other hand, Colector's goal was to become a hybrid between a co-working and a community hub – situated within an ex-monastery in Valencia – through distributed self-management as a means to a more inclusive development of local communities.

In each process, people and groups interacted with other non-humans actants. Depending on their role, actants influenced the process in different ways. While zooming into individual actants confirmed the relevance of non-humans, by zooming out I found a new way of reading participated management of community hubs. Each case study, then, is structured according to how events unfolded in three concentric actor-networks: the core, inner and outer networks.

The main promoters of each process interacted in their core networks, where most influence and responsibilities were concentrated. The core networks in Chieri1 and Chieri2 included the facilitators and the different departments of the municipality, while in Valencia it was made of the group of co-workers more involved with the management of Colector. Inner networks were made of people from the core network interacting with selected groups of participants, namely citizens and local associations that were invited in Chieri, and other co-workers in Valencia. And finally, outer networks formed when outsiders, like external collaborators or the people who participated to public events, entered a process.

Although all processes revolved around a community hub, the circumstances of each initiative, their goals, the actors involved were different. I do not intend to compare my experiences in Chieri and Valencia, and I will likely disappoint readers looking for generalizable results or guidelines about good or bad participation. Rather, I build on empirical experiences to discuss the recurrent and distinctive elements of each process, their contradictions and paradoxes, and link them with both practical matters and shifts of perspective that can hopefully be relevant beyond the contexts of my study.

In chapter 8, I discuss the findings of the study. My ANT-based analysis looked at how, in each case study, human and non-human actants interacted in concentric actor-networks. By zooming in and out of their networks of interaction, I could emphasize different nuances about how their roles and influence intersected. I

divided actants in four groups: people, built spaces, digital spaces and text documents. In addition, the structure of concentric actor-networks emphasized how some entities were present only in some actor-networks, theirs influenced all of them; and among them there were actants that appeared united in outer networks but were fragmented on inner ones. Finally, thresholds, those in-between spaces where insiders and outsiders meet, existed not only at the outer border of each process, but between its core, inner and outer networks.

I also hope that my work can generate dialogue between both academics and practitioners. While spatial coding can help us think about the complex relations between the material and immaterial dimension of community hubs, the people involved in their management seldom use such abstractions. I wanted to reflect, then, on how spatial coding manifested in the contexts I studied.

Across processes I identified four issues that influenced the spatial coding of each community hub. The first was connected to how community hubs must be permeable to survive and thrive. Multipurpose spaces must deal with the differences that arise from hosting different uses and users, and the incompatibilities and conflicts that often arise from integrating different needs, understandings and identities. Secondly, community hubs must craft a narrative that tolerates and integrates these differences, and that is shared by those who interact both within and with the community hub. Meanwhile, community hubs must remain sustainable and accessible to groups from all income levels, although they often lack resources, both in terms of people and funds. To do so, community hubs need to optimize their use of assets, chiefly space that can either be rented or used to host services that generate income. The more uses a space hosts, the more differences it will need to deal with: these three issues, then, are connected to the struggle of devising, and keep improving, unconventional structures of governance that reconcile mutual recognition and solidarity with pragmatism.

If it is not possible to define clear answers or generalizable guidelines on addressing any of these issues individually, it is even less realistic to propose re-usable models that can handle how they intersect in real life. However, building on the literature on urban commons I argue that we can integrate shifts of perspectives on how we understand and approach the participated management of community hubs.

As regards defining the boundaries of a community hub and its community, I borrow from the idea that, like with urban commons, these are subject to continuous renegotiation. In other words, what the community hubs is, the different roles of the people who get involved, and the arrangements through which space is shared, are always under question and can change. This shift of perspective can help untangle the fact that being a multipurpose space means dealing with differences not only in how different people might use and relate to the space, and the conflict that can arise from these differences, but also with difference in how people contribute to the social reproduction of the community hub.

Finally, the problem of how community hubs can maintain enough structure to function consistently, while remaining flexible to the contributions they need from outsiders, can partly be addressed by focusing on how community hubs can

maintain permeable thresholds. Thresholds exist at different levels: a place can be open at the outer level, for example because it organizes initiatives and events that are open and economically accessible, while having impenetrable inner networks. Recognizing this helps to shift our perspective on how community hubs, and perhaps other participatory initiatives as well, can enable ways for outsiders to pass through their different thresholds.

1.1 Research approach

While writing this thesis I tried my best to give order to the what has been an unpredictable research process. I want to challenge the notion that, when seeking knowledge, researchers follow a linear series of steps, each legitimized by its contribution to a robust investigation. I think it is important to contextualize my work and remain transparent from the beginning. Hence, I want to provide some information about me, how this research started, and how my goals and approach evolved over time.

Before starting a PhD in urban studies, I did a master's in economics where I wrote my thesis on open government data initiatives. While qualitative inquiry is unconventional in economics research, I decided to use interviews because they allowed me to delve into the pragmatic issues that people involved in the supply-chain of public information faced in their daily work. I was left, then, with two sources of inspiration. Firstly, I had developed a passion for how digital tools could impact the participation of citizens in their cities and local communities. Secondly, I found myself comfortable in using qualitative methods and thought there was value in emphasizing the concrete issues that people dealing with digital tools faced.

During this time, I had come across action research and was struck by its purpose and how it relied on collaboration with non-academics, something I had never heard of throughout my education. As I read more, I was inspired by authors like Gergen (2015, 2017) and Saija (2014, 2017), for whom action research should strive to address knowledge production and social change at the same time, thus maintaining activist trajectories based on a ethical and epistemological stance that amplifies the transformative power of learning. When I started my PhD in late 2016, then, I wanted to study a topic that was at the intersection of spatial planning, technology and civic engagement through a pluralistic approach and engaged positionality.

At the time, digital tools already had a prominent role in our lives. The debate, both in academia and public discourse, mainly saw digital champions – who blidnly claimed that on-line platforms could reproduce direct democracy – confront skeptics – whose challenges to those claims were used to justify an unwillingness to experiment. I remember feeling unsatisfied by how superficial this polarizing debate felt. Studies on digital democracy were nothing new, but most of what I could find were participatory processes that had been built around a specific digital tool. Could existing digital tools be re-adapted to participation practices? What benefits, if any, could they bring to the organization of small groups by complementing, rather than substituting, off-line interactions?

Since I could not find any study that tried to experiment with available tools to support participation, I developed an action research proposal whose goal was to experiment with how digital tools could be adapted to support processes of participatory urban management. My aspiration was foundational to this thesis because it made me seek opportunities that were both relevant to my interests and allowed me to participate. Unsurprisingly, things did not go as planned and I had to re-adapt my idea, focus and research question in tandem to how circumstances evolved around me. What started as an exploration of the relationship between digital tools and participation became a study on how people interact in community hubs, with digital tools as one of the many entities at play. (If I had to rephrase my initial goal now, I would say that I was looking to explore how digital tools could expand spaces of participation.)

In the field, my research evolved into a combination of participant observation and engagement. During my first months in the field I only observed, learning all I could while looking for opportunities to advance my proposals. I started wondering how I could combine information from the parts when I participated to those when I could only observe – which were and remained most of what I did – and considering integrating a second approach to complement action research. Following a suggestion from one of my supervisors, I looked into actor-network theory, which caught my attention because the emphasis it gave to non-humans seemed to complement the role that digital tools had in my work. In addition, actor-network theory required me to carry out an ethnography-like description of the interactions I was observing, which seemed close enough to what I had been doing. Hence, I decided to follow actor-network theory for observation phases and applied principles of action research when I was able to participate.

Trying to combine observation and engagement did not only define my epistemological strategy, how I studied community hubs, but also what I studied. While investigating spaces of participation (both physical and virtual) I could integrate other non-human entities to my understanding of the processes in which I was involved. By zooming into each process, I could give all actants the same potential relevance and let their interactions reveal how each affected participation.

My choice of case studies also followed a similar dialectic between my research goals and circumstances in the field. At the end of the first year of my PhD, I was drawn to Chieri by the possibility to both observe and participate in the two top-down processes (chapters 5 and 6 respectively). By the time that first field work experience was ending, one year later, my research focus had shifted from how digital tools could support participatory processes to a more general interest in the intricacies of participated management of built space, and how, in each process, people interacted with both each other and with spaces (both built and digital).

A few months after my work in Chieri had ended and I had started looking for a second case study, I met some people that I would later collaborate with in Valencia. They told me about Colector: an ex-monastery whose owner they had recently convinced to let them rent the space to develop what they called a ‘civic factory,’ a self-managed hybrid between co-working and community hub. I was captivated by their attitude towards collaboration and how the group that managed

the space was familiar and used several digital tools that I had wanted to propose while in Chieri. And although Colector was substantially different from – and clearly incomparable with – what I saw in my first case study, certain elements that are now central to my framework, and had already appeared in Chieri, caught my attention only after experiencing them in Valencia – like the importance of being multi-purpose and the challenges this implies in terms of integrating differences.

Since my understanding and the reflections I emphasized are surely shaped by my experiences on the field, the geographic focus of the thesis was also determined by the case studies in which I was involved, which took place in Italy and Spain between 2017 and 2019. I will also refer to literature that focuses primarily on Europe and the US. This is not because I consider non-Western scholarship irrelevant, rather I want to clarify the geographical scope within which I feel comfortable.

Although I did not follow a well-established approach, combining observation and engagement helped me deal with the unpredictability and loosened control of collaborative research, adapt to circumstances and negotiate the field with my gatekeepers. Action research guided my entrance to the field and shaped my attitude in it. This led me to experience different roles, but I also ended up in unexpected situations that enriched both me and my work. For instance, in one of the case studies I started a project with teenagers and university students, although I had no training or experience with that. In fact, although I had facilitated workshops and took part in participatory initiatives outside of my PhD work, in most of the engagement phases I had to learn by doing skills that I had never trained for. Meanwhile, actor-network theory helped me remain open to new perspectives without losing track of my broader research goals.

While actor-network theory and action research are not the only approaches that imply a non-linear path of discovery, I appreciated how both not only accepted that doing research is messy but also invited me to be transparent about it. I wonder, then, how common it is for researchers to use a mixed toolbox while in the field. Without presuming to say what constitutes good or bad research, I want to stress how the quality of research depends on a mesh of relations that will inevitably affect how it evolves. Hence, while my experience deals with community hubs, citizen participation, urban commons and digital technologies, I hope this thesis can also ignite the curiosity of readers interested in collaborative action-driven research.

Chapter 2

Understanding participation as context-sensitive and contested

'The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach, no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.' This is how Sherry Arnstein started *A ladder of Citizen Participation* (1969), which is often used as a starting point in many texts about participation in planning. (And this is no exception.) 'Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy – a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone. The applause is reduced to polite handclaps, however, when this principle is advocated by the have-not[s]' (p. 1). In other words, unlike spinach, participation can have many different flavors.

Although it was written in 1969, Arnstein's article is still widely cited, perhaps because it 'appears to many people to be the closest thing to a "theory" of participation' (Kelty, 2016, p. 6). In her article, she framed participation as normative and aspirational good: something that is hard to be against in principle, but that can easily be corrupted by the many things that can go wrong in practice. Arnstein was not calling for more participation but for a more conscious dialogue about it.

I hope that this thesis can contribute to that dialogue by exploring not so much what participation is but what it can mean and how it can be understood. Citizen participation in planning is a vast topic and I do intend to provide a complete overview of relevant debates nor a proposal for a rigidly defined theoretical understanding. Rather, my goal for this chapter is to identify and delve into those

concepts that are relevant and useful for the coming discussion about community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation. I will attempt to do so in three steps: provide a brief overview of practices and how they evolved in tandem with sociopolitical circumstances; highlight how contemporary participation is made of both recurrent and distinctive elements; and propose to study participation as context-sensitive and contested.

As a first step I will go through a brief overview of the last sixty years of participation practices in planning. The goal of the first section, then, is to highlight how selected participation practices evolved in tandem with their social, political and economic contexts. It is important to point out a few things. Firstly, I use planning to refer to a broad array of practices that affect how both built environments and the relation people have with them. And secondly, while events and processes keep happening and evolving, stepping back and assigning arbitrary labels can help find some order within the chaos and messiness of reality. At the cost of reducing a myriad of different initiatives across periods and geographies that overlap, I will implement two simplifications. I will divide practices in three periods: the post-War era of the sixties and seventies, the regression of the eighties and the revival of the nineties (which I consider the start of contemporary participation). And I will group practices across a spectrum that builds on the work of Membretti (2005) and categorizes practices according to three types: functionalist, reformist and radical participation.

I will then move onto discussing contemporary participation as made of both recurrent and distinctive elements when compared to the decades that preceded it. The goal of the second section is to highlight those features that will appear in the case studies. These include two recurrent elements: the role of space and how conflict and consensus exist and relate in different practices. And four distinctive elements, two of which two are more general – the increased scale and scope of participation initiatives and their dependence from a diverse coalition of actions – and two that are more specific but relevant to the case studies, namely facilitation and digital tools.

The third step, is to recognize how the increased number of practices and new experimentations brought innovation but also mistakes and paradoxes that further erode any confidence we might have had to distinguish meaningful participation initiatives from phony ones. I want to conclude by saying that this is not necessarily a problem because participation should be understood as a context-sensitive and

contested concept, whose different meanings, contradictions and paradoxes cannot be solved but must be accepted.

Context-sensitivity implies that each initiative is in dialectic with the context in which it emerged (including the events and practices that preceded it): it is influenced by its context, but it also can influence it. As we will see in the first two sections, practices are seldom consolidated within the sociopolitical fabric of a territory. Rather, they emerge in response to and are influence by a mix of social, political and economic circumstances. Each initiative shows a degree of 'family resemblances' that combine 'distinctively local features, appropriations from elsewhere, and new inventions' (Barnett & Low, 2004, p. 13).

And even when contextual variables are accounted for, evaluating a participatory process is complicated because its outcomes are subject to a variety of interpretations. In other words, participation is contested. Participating in the same initiative can mean different things to different people. Unanimous consensus is unlikely even in the most successful cases: whether a process was truly open to external input or a farce to impose a decision that had been already taken, whether that decision justly redistributes benefits, and whether participants learned from each other remain subjective matters.

2.1 Skimming through the history of participation

Participation initiatives are often divided between bottom-up practices – where citizens self-organize to advance demands or address issues that are important to them – and top-down initiatives – where those who hold power (often public institutions) offer those who do not the chance to be decision-makers for a day (Polletta, 2016). I propose to understand top-down and bottom-up not as discrete categories but as the extremes of a spectrum, and build on Membretti (2005) to divide participation practices in three groups. At one extreme of the spectrum, he identified functionalist participation, which he used to group top-down efforts managed by public institutions. In between, there were reformist initiatives, citizen-led efforts to mediate the relations between local institutions and their constituents. Finally, bottom-up radical practices (like social movement) occupied the other extreme.

Membretti started his overview of participation practices in the sixties, which were years of strong involvement of public institutions in planning that led to widespread increases in well-being. However, many still lived in underprivileged

conditions, especially in cities were planning revolved around factories that employed large parts of citizens. Participation practices across the spectrum aimed at engaging people to improve living conditions, although with different understandings of what both engagement and improvement meant.

In that context, functionalist efforts included national strategies implement by local administrations to involve marginalized groups in decisions relevant to their lives. However, participants were often expected to comply with normative values that had been defined unilaterally by those in power as shared and desirable. In different ways, functionalist practices existed both in Europe and the US. For instance, in the federal social programs studied by Arnstein (1969) there was a 'critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process' (p. 216). Participation, then, 'was not pursued as part of the legislative process of deliberation and voting but as part of the administration of the government's practical affairs,' and often characterized by 'understated euphemisms' (like citizen involvement) and 'exacerbated rhetoric' (total control) (Kelty, 2016, p. 5).

Towards the middle of the spectrum, reformist participation aimed at bringing representative democracy at the local level through a distributed network of local associations. Although they often revolved around politics, culture, recreational activities or sports, these initiatives also offered a channel for citizens to express needs and ideas. Reformist practices were usually less bureaucratic than public institutions, but often emulated their practices. Associations often used traditional hierarchies (some more complex than others) and formalized procedures to coalesce around and deliberate about local issues (Membretti, 2005).

At the other end of the spectrum, social movements led radical grassroots practices that addressed both material needs, like housing and socio-cultural services, and immaterial ones, as they fostered a sense of belonging within their local communities. A prominent phenomenon were self-managed social centers in occupied buildings, which prevailed in cities and metropolitan areas (Vasudevan, 2017). Radical practices were characterized by informality, horizontal organizing and direct democracy. Often, they focused on local actions but their ideological approach also implied an alternative vision of global issues (Membretti, 2005).

Since we are placing participation practices along a spectrum, we should expect that some initiatives spanned across categories and combined their characteristics. For example, the US-based Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) integrated characteristics of social movements with a reformist approach. They relied on

parliamentary procedure and bureaucratic offices while maintaining an informal and egalitarian style; and promoted a macro-political vision of the world that disagreed with mainstream civil rights groups (Polletta, 2016).

If participation practices in the sixties and seventies were on the rise, the eighties saw significant declines across the spectrum. Widespread relocation of factories was gradually changing industrial societies and leaving many people unemployed. The combination of worsening economic conditions and rising crime rates bred insecurity, which spurred skepticism and conflict between residents and the newcomers that were crowding cities, many of whom were foreigners. As fears mounted, people retreated away from public arenas and into private ones, while communities shrank to the minimum of family and close friends. Membretti (2005) called it *riflusso* (lit. 'regression'), which partly resonates with the withdrawal into a self-interested apoliticism that Putnam discussed in *Bowling Alone* (2001).

Local administrations reacted, on one hand, by implementing securitarian policies that ranged from fencing green areas to expelling immigrants and evicting squatted buildings (Vasudevan, 2017). On the other, functionalist participation initiatives served as a vehicle for a softer response through urban regeneration projects aimed at changing the material dimension of neighborhoods while proposing new narratives for the communal future of their inhabitants. For example, in the US urban planners experimented with alternative ways to resolve conflicts. Since participation in environmental and planning decisions, which by then was a widespread formal requirement but 'had become so adversarial and litigation-dependent as to be counterproductive,' new structured opportunities emerged for developers, landowners, residents, and environmentalists (usually referred to as stakeholders) to 'talk during or even before such battles emerged' (Polletta, 2016, p. 236).

The regression also affected other areas of the spectrum. Those associations that functioned as intermediaries between neighborhoods and public institutions had been turning into 'small empty parliaments,' whose rigid bureaucracies had little relevance on decision-making. Social movements, on the other hand, resisted any collaboration with public institutions and marked a gradual closure to their surrounding communities (Membretti, 2005).

Meanwhile, a new form of grassroots action emerged from the bottom of the spectrum. In Italy, residents spontaneously organized in *comitati dei cittadini* (lit. 'citizen committees'), aimed at addressing those dangers (real or perceived) that threatened their well-being and their spaces of daily life. In the Anglo-Saxon world,

not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) actions started as 'local opposition to a certain establishment in one's own neighborhood, [who had] no objection to locating it elsewhere' (Borell & Westermark, 2016, p. 3)[2].

These initiatives can be read as reactions to the loss of trust in functionalist and reformist participation channels where citizens used to express their needs and advocate for them. However, these actions focused on a single issue, often social relations would disperse once it was solved. They are examples of civic involvement in the public sphere that was instrumental to private interests, the defense of individual comforts and the appropriation of spaces through conflictual, and sometimes even violent tactics. Participation was, in other words, being alienated from common interests (Membretti, 2005).

If in the sixties and seventies participation initiatives revolved around communities whose scale coincided with neighborhoods or small territories, in the eighties they adjusted to a narrower understanding of who was included in one's community, from neighbors to family and close friends. A gradual reversal of this trend started from the nineties onwards, with a revival of practices aiming at wider understanding of local communities. This marked the start of what I consider contemporary participation.

Like in previous decades, practices were linked to wider societal dynamics that were influenced by intersecting and multi-faceted trends. Unlike then, these are still being assimilated by different territories and an appropriate overview of their heterogenous impacts is beyond the scope of my study. Rather, I want to briefly introduce the four developments that are most relevant to my focus and move onto the participation practices that emerged in response.

Firstly, global competition led companies to move out from domestic markets towards countries with lower costs of labor and more favorable regulations and taxation. This led to a gradual yet 'major geographical reorganization of production and distribution' (Stein, 2019), and the subsequent post-industrial hangover that left behind many vacant buildings (Pichierri & Pacetti, 2016). Those that were not repurposed turned into empty shells that, if neglected, often led to degradation.

Secondly, the transition from manufacturing to a service-driven production paradigm led to rose the demand for residential and office buildings, but also for new places of leisure and consumption. As the potential value of land increased,

2 Note that this characterization was criticized for being simplistic and misleading (Mcclymont & O'hare, 2008).

‘city-branding’ efforts became necessary to attract external investments (Vanolo, 2017).

Thirdly, following their deregulation during the eighties and nineties, the influence of financial institutions, markets and executives spread within and across nations. In local urban development ‘public-private partnerships flourished’ because local administrations needed more resources than what could be collected through taxation, and ‘planners increasingly sought profit-oriented entities to do the work of urban design, construction and maintenance’ (Stein, 2019). The influence of financial, insurance and real estate firms kept increasing even after the 2008 crisis, which was largely due to overvaluation and speculation practices for which they held most responsibilities. In general profitability became the driver of urban transformation , while in cities ‘run by real estate’ land-fueled capitalist growth has become a crucial political issue (Stein, 2019). If in lucrative territories administrations increasingly lost negotiating power compared to private actors, in less profitable contexts where capital would not venture buildings remained empty.

Finally, the austerity policies that followed the 2008 financial crisis forced local administrations to tighten their budgets, which led to their gradual retreat also from the provision of urban welfare services, while the need for the latter was increasing.

How did functionalist, integrationist and radical participation practices evolve in increasingly globalized and privatized urban environments? Participation experienced a revival of older models, although they had to be readapted to these new social, political and economic circumstances. The retreat to the private sphere was gradually reversed by demands for new spaces and opportunities of sociality and culture. As new practices emerged, some eventually consolidated, and within them new roles were defined.

From the top, different approaches developed in Europe and the United States. In Europe, the expansion of territorial governance beyond the national scale meant that authority had to be shared among more institutional levels (Hagendijk & Irwin, 2006). Both political and ideological reasons led to a general increase of participation initiatives, which were routinized to contain skepticism towards supra-national institutions (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007). As sources of funds to finance regeneration efforts diversified, cities started competing in national and international calls to fuel their experiments with citizen engagement (Laino, 2001).

In the US, on the other hand, where involving citizens in decision-making was an investment into preventing costly litigations after decision had been taken, top-down participation initiatives were more driven by pragmatism (Polletta, 2016). An

example was communicative planning, which ‘became the primary professional mode’ of planners who focused less on changing cities and more on mediating interests between relevant stakeholders (Stein, 2019).

In both continents, whereas cities became increasingly connected and globalized the ‘democratic deficit’ started emerging: ‘at the same time that government [was], in some ways, less capable of acting on the will of the people, it [had to] convince [them] that it [was] more willing to do so’ (Polletta, 2016, p. 234). Meanwhile, diverse coalitions of both public and private actors tried to craft consensus through channels and methods of engagement that often focused more on consultation rather than deliberation (Membretti, 2005).

The middle of the spectrum was perhaps where the most diverse initiatives developed. Like previous decades, reformist initiatives were still rooted in their territory and presented themselves as mediators between local administrations and their citizens. Sometimes, these initiatives installed in spaces whose continuous presence was meant to foster trust, cohesion and belonging among the community they served.

In some case reformist initiatives were run by experts tasked with making bureaucratic procedures more approachable. For example, in the Italian *contratti di quartiere* (lit. ‘neighborhood contracts’) of the 1990s, which were the local implementation of a national policy designed to support the implementation of requalification processes, social mediators remained available for residents to seek clarification and voice their concerns. They practiced an ‘integrated approach’ aimed at addressing both material needs (like improving housing and infrastructure) and community-building (Laino, 2011).

Finally, at the grassroots level physical spaces became a central focus of communities looking to claim back the abandoned industrial heritage that urban transformations had left behind. Motivation and approaches varied. Some initiatives were born to oppose re-qualification projects that served investors more than residents; others aimed at giving activating local communities in areas that investors had ignored. Some occupied spaces illegally, whereas others proved more collaborative towards institutional actors. Among these diverse array of bottom-up efforts, a new generation of social centers aimed at proactively developing and managing spaces of sociality, which would catalyze energies, enable the activation of local communities, and create shared narratives rooted in the history and materiality of each place (Membretti, 2005).

2.2 Recurrent and distinctive element of contemporary participation

I proposed to understand contemporary participation practices as a revival of what preceded them because they revered the eighties trend towards a narrower sense of community by rediscovering old practices while also readapting them to new circumstances. A revival, then, implies that we can find both recurrent and distinctive elements.

One recurrent element is the relation between participation and space. In the sixties and seventies, initiatives emerged to support marginalized groups that had been left behind by factory-centric urban developments. However, towards the end of seventies globalization started drawing firms away from cities, factories closed and unemployment spread. Urban centers had to restructure production relations towards service jobs, but this left behind a heritage of empty buildings, many of which remained to this day untouched, especially in those areas that could not attract private investments.

At a more local scale, bottom up approaches related to space in different ways. Occupied buildings considered space a collective good and use conflict to support their struggle for material and social demands, which were also connected with broader ideologies about citizenship and rights. Citizens committees, on the other hand, understood space as private property, and used conflict to defend what they considered as rightfully appropriated. In a way or another built space (buildings, squares, parks, or streets) has often been more than the container where participation happened. The next chapter, and the rest of the thesis, will focus on participation practices that not only happen in space but where space is constitutive of participation.

Another recurring element is the duality between consensus and conflict, which characterizes initiatives along all the spectrum and depend on the underlying motivations of each.

Consensus prevailed in functionalist initiatives that sought to build or maintain agreement at the local level about choices that were often made at higher geographical scales, like urban regeneration projects accused of co-opting public opinion. Top-down participation often considered conflict dysfunctional to a *status quo* of supposedly shared values within which differences should be assimilated. Membretti (2005) suggested that these can be understood as examples of

participated planning rather than *participatory* panning, where passive engagement is considered enough to confirm or adjust decisions made elsewhere, and influences does not get redistributed among participants.

Conflict, on the other hand, prevailed in practices that reclaimed spaces that are either out of reach or under risk of being lost, like occupations and manifestations. But citizens committees also used conflict to protect appropriated spaces and enclaves of rights by coalizing individuals or building closed communities.

However, rather than being mutually exclusive, conflict and consensus often co-exist, either in contrast or contradiction (ibid.). Even the most antagonistic initiatives seek to promote alternative visions of development both within their community and through alliances with other organizations. Social movements, for instance, build consensus among their members to advocate their demands through conflict.

The relation between consensus and conflict becomes more nuanced towards the middle of the spectrum. Reformist initiatives can use antagonist practices but mostly operate within the limits of institutional and legal frameworks that are shared by all the actors involved. That said, since they aim at building consensus among a range of actors, reformist initiatives should integrate more inclusive perspectives than functionalist assimilation efforts.

In addition, initiatives might evolve over time. For example, Membretti (2007) studied Leoncavallo, an occupied social center established in Milan in 1975. Over the decades, Leoncavallo changed how it approached both its local community and its relationship with institutional actors through flexible institutionalization, which among other things implied that two of its members entered the city council and the Italian parliament, respectively in 2001 and 2006.

Whether contemporary practices lead to innovative social configurations or become instrumental to the reproduction of already prevailing socio-economic configurations depends on many factors. And often they can be both at the same time. As more initiatives crowd the spectrum, increasing diversity makes it harder to categorize them according to one or more defining factors. Membretti (2005) acknowledged the issue but argued that, if we accept substantial simplifications, new practices can still be associated with the three approaches he had proposed. Polletta (2016), on the other hand, identified four distinctive elements of contemporary participation: the increased scale and scope of initiatives; their dependence on diverse coalitions of actors; the professionalization of mediation; and the relevance of digital tools.

The first is the increase number of initiatives (scale) and the issues they addressed (scope).

Indeed, especially in the last decade, there have been experiments that adapted practices and tools from other fields, like participation in workplaces, international cooperation and product design (Kelty, 2016). In addition, new approaches developed to address city issues that span beyond planning, like participatory budgeting (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014; Pateman, 2012), citizen science (Clarke, 2013; Wynn, 2017), participatory art (Ferilli et al., 2016), and maker space (Bradley, 2015; Kostakis et al., 2015). Finally, more peculiar examples show how the ethos of participation has expanded to a wide range of issues and environments – like the Obama presidential campaign (Kreiss, 2012) or the organizations of the festival Burning Man (Chen, 2009).

Building on this, the second distinctive element refers to how the increased variety of configurations meant that many practices depend on diverse coalitions on actors (Polletta, 2016). And each actor has its role, motivations and goals.

In functionalist initiatives in the sixties, local administrators mainly interacted with residents. When public-private partnerships spread, administrations also had to interact with investors and constructors, whereas mediators became necessary to imagine with citizens creative futures for their cities, and convince them of its benefits (Helling, 1998).

Meanwhile reformist and grassroots initiatives have, with different strategies and to different extents, continued promoting alternative development trajectories. However, since the pressure to privatize welfare services that grew stronger towards the end of the last century intersected with the 2008 financial crisis, local administrations have become less able, willing and responsible to provide urban welfare services. As a consequence, many reformist and bottom-up initiatives had to reinvent themselves and gradually shifted from being marginal to essential providers of urban welfare (Fregolent et al., 2014). While these initiatives were still addressing the democratic deficit, they increasingly had to face public budget deficits. This led to an increasing number of partnerships between public, private and civic sectors, like those aiming at transforming available assets (like vacant spaces) into new spaces of social aggregation that I will discuss in the next chapter.

Clear divisions that were relevant in the past – like those between haves and have-nots (Alinsky, 1971) or administrators and administered (Arnstein, 1969) – have become increasingly ill-equipped to capture how the new ‘vectors of social innovation’ not only can be found both within and outside institutions, but also

often assume that role unknowingly and gradually (Laino, 2001). An increased pace of experimentation led to a myriad of approaches and configurations, making it hard to initiatives or generalize trends. More experimentation also led both to more innovation and to more mistakes, paradoxes and contradictions. Any understanding of participation, then, is becoming more temporary and fragile. As Kelty (2016) said 'today schemes to induce or appropriate participation tend to be much less permanent, more open to critique, possibly more open to revision and modification on the model of a "recursive public"' (p. 12). He provocatively suggested that we might be in a situation where there is too much democracy in all the wrong places, and that such variety erodes any confidence to distinguish meaningful initiatives from phony ones.

Of the four elements that (Polletta, 2016) identified as peculiar to contemporary participation, the increased number and scope of initiatives and the dependence on a diverse coalition of actors are likely to affect most practices. The other two, facilitators and digital tools, are additional tiles in an increasingly complex patchwork of practices. These might not be relevant to all initiatives, but are especially important to the ones discussed in the case studies. Hence, before moving on, I want to discuss each in more detail.

Facilitators

Mediation is an important function in many participation initiatives and mediators are often central to many of them. Since the eighties, planners organized structured opportunities to mediate interests between groups involved with functionalist initiatives. Planners were public officials with insider knowledge of the administrative machine, its bureaucracy, procedures and regulations. However, when they met outsiders, they had to translate this knowledge in ways that helped find common ground and set shared strategies.

In a similar way, reformist initiatives had social mediators tasked with bridging the dialogue between parties involved. And although mediation is easily associated with consensus and, in a way or another, is more present in functionalist and reformist initiatives, it can also help manage conflicts. Mediators, then, might exist also in grassroots initiatives, although they might not label themselves that way.

Contemporary participation has seen the rise of public deliberation specialists (Polletta, 2016), or public engagement practitioners (Lee, 2015) or, as I will refer to them, facilitators. These are professionals hired to support a process and maximize the opportunities that can emerge from the interactions of diverse actors.

Facilitators can have multiple tasks that build on the role of the planner-mediator but, depending on the needs and circumstances of each initiative, they can also be animators, activists, consultants and project managers (Laino, 2001).

In general, the central goal of facilitators is to support dialogue through structured opportunities where people meet, discuss and deliberate. However, behind the scenes facilitators are often responsible for task that go beyond preparing and running events, and there have been calls for more clarity about what is expected of facilitators and how they should carry those tasks (Alwaer & Cooper, 2019).

Facilitators meet a lot of different people and groups, investigate their motivations and goals, map their influence, and identify which of them are more likely to support the process. They listen and gather opinions, and then highlight shared points that might hide behind rhetoric that seem incompatible at first. Facilitators, then, can be understood as the builders and maintainers of networks of diverse actors, whom they can help reach meaningful outcomes. They synthesize narratives that must recognize the complexity of each context; that highlight complementarities but also accept compromise; and that remain accessible and captivating enough for participants to buy into them.

To practice their craft, facilitators must be chameleonic: confident in formal settings but also pleasant and relatable in informal ones. Their skills blend with psychological traits, can hardly be learned through formal education, and require practice, talent and self-reflection (Alwaer & Cooper, 2019; Mackewn, 2008). Finally, facilitators often need to experiment, improvise and shift strategy throughout their work.

How do facilitators prepare for their work? The facilitators that were surveyed by Lee (2011) trained in a variety of fields: organization development, management consulting, communication, planning, social work and conflict resolution. Most of the facilitators I met had a formal training in either architecture or planning, although I cannot say how they developed their mediation skills.

If there is no defined path to become a facilitator, there is also no accepted approach to how the job is done. As I said, facilitators work to map actors, roles and interests; make these meet and interact; and build a narrative that synthesized a more pluralistic understanding of a process' opportunities and risks.

For Bobbio and Pomatto (2007) and Fareri (2009) facilitation is based on dialogue and mutual learning. The first distinguished between pressure-led participation (like advocacy, demonstrations, sit-ins, etc.) and dialogue-led (or

facilitated) participation. In pressure-led participation people claim their right to influence public decisions, usually through coordination within social movements and associations. Pressure-led participation juxtaposes those who hold the power to those who lack it – the governors and the governed – or *we* (people whose interest converge with mine) against the *others*. Consequently, the success of participatory efforts is measured in terms of social justice and the ability to refrain vested interests from exploiting common resources.

In dialogue-led participation the focus shifts to the extent that participants trust their perspective got across while also understanding that of others. Facilitation can help actors with diverse and often conflicting views engage in mutual learning, exchange knowledge, share points of view, and reach creative solutions that would likely remain unexplored otherwise. Hence, a participatory process is satisfactory when those involved had a chance to 'express their thoughts, gain new information, and have an impact' independently of the 'value' of the results the process will produce (Bobbio & Pomatto, 2007).

Fareri (2009), on the other hand, focused on the importance of identifying the truly relevant issue(s) rather than solution. He prioritized problem-setting over problem-solving since participants must be able to influence both how policy issues are understood and, only then, how they might be solved.

Drawing from Lindblom & Cohen (1979), Fareri also distinguished between scientific knowledge (held by experts), ordinary knowledge (that of the average citizen) and interactive knowledge (which emerges when experts and citizens interact). To be usable, any knowledge needs to be accessible (everyone understands it) and legitimate (everyone trusts it). Mutual learning, then, can be understood as the process through which interactive knowledge emerges and is made usable.

For Fareri, the main objective of facilitated participation is to produce usable knowledge through mutual learning. As such, facilitated participation can be considered a policy instrument to design more effective, and thus more applicable solutions to complex issues through structured interactions that facilitate mutual learning.

Other authors drew on the tradition of consensus building and alternative dispute resolution techniques to argue that policy issues are often addressed with a simplistic approach leading to relevant issues being overlooked. For example, Susskind et al.'s *Consensus Building Handbook* (1999) is an extensive study of tools and techniques to facilitate structured participation. More recently, Sclavi and

Susskind (2017) synthesized them in 'creative confrontation', which they presented as 'a mature method with well-defined structures that can approach complex situations through a wide and continuously evolving toolbox.' By recognizing the peculiarities of each context, creative confrontation aims at creating ad-hoc policy-making processes that can be adapted to changing conditions and thrive on the diversity of expertise involved.

And since facilitators can be found in different fields beyond planning or policymaking, their techniques are assimilated across disciplines and sectors. For example, *Gamestorming: A playbook for innovators, rulebreakers, and changemakers* (Gray et al., 2010) offers a collections of serious games that, although developed within and for business environments, are likely sound familiar to facilitators in policymaking. In a similar way, product and service designers have developed a wide range of ways to structure interactions, improve communication and generate 'human-centered' ideas, insights and strategies (IDEO, 2015).

Whether they follow a more traditional style of roundtables and focus groups or experiment with diverse techniques to structure interactions, facilitators set the rules of engagement. They avoid that extrovert participants monopolize talks and impose their opinion by making sure that speaking turn; they encourage introvert participatnts to take a stand; they highlight common ground without precluding disagreements; and help participants think outside of the box and connect with their feelings and fears. As 'neutral, honest brokers,' facilitators should prevent that certain ideas, chiefly those of facilitators and their sponsors, have a disproportionate influence on discussions (Polletta, 2016).

In other words, facilitators take care that participation is inclusive, pleasant, and meaningful by leveling the playing field and make people connect in ways that undermine expectations associated with roles and backgrounds. However, facilitated participation also has limits that even the most adequate and effective techniques cannot address.

Firstly, since they are professionals, facilitators must be paid. If it would be unfair to expect that facilitators carry out their work for free, it would also be naïve to expect that the mandate that they set with their sponsor does not influence how they work. Likewise, it would also be naïve to think that facilitators can afford the privilege to work only under ideal conditions. Usually their sponsors are the same of the participation initiative, who invest into making that initiative more meaningful. What if sponsors advance unrealistic demands or set conditions that do not reflect the reality of doing proper facilitation? Good intentions and creativity

must exist within the borders of an initiative's mandate, which in explicit or implicit ways influences what can be achieved (Laino, 2011).

In addition, we cannot expect that facilitation is free from the constraints of other professional assignments. Mandates, which are usually agreed at the beginning, might not always prove flexible enough to accommodate how circumstances change throughout the process. This also leads to questions about how long facilitators are paid for, since constraints of time, budget and workforce might impose them to stretch their practice.

Schedule and resources also influence how many events facilitators can organize, and who will take part in these sessions. Effective outreach campaigns require resources (money, time and connections) that might not always be available. Who gets invited to events? Who finds out about them, and how? Who, among these people, has professional and personal schedules that will allow them to participate? There will always be a risk of excluding all those voices that might not be able, or willing, to come to structured interactions. Or if promising ideas emerge towards the end of a mandate, they might end up as recommendations and guidelines.

Even if facilitators can negotiate with sponsor to have appropriate resources and enough flexibility to carry out their job according to their ethical and professional values, the rules that are necessary to structure participation inevitably favor certain types of interactions over others, and can have side-effects. Those who organize participation initiatives believe in the democratic potentials, but truly inclusive forums are complex and unpredictable, and even the most experts organizers are likely to make errors (Polletta, 2016). Proving too confident of their skills and expertise, facilitators migh understand and organize interactions in ways that limit how citizens can act. Even when facilitators genuinely aim at making participation more inclusive, considering techniques of facilitated talk as universally applicable can still prove narrow. Facilitators privilege civil and reasonable talk over the messy contentiousness of routine politics (Irwin, 2006). But sometimes educated discussions might not be the best way to navigate conflict and consensus, no matter how unpleasant alternative might be.

As Polletta (2016) said 'deliberation aimed at getting people to accept cuts in workplace benefits is assimilated to deliberation aimed at soliciting public input into the design of a new downtown and to deliberation aimed at resolving a conflict between organized stakeholders. [Facilitators] do not broach the possibility that those settings might require different kinds of talk in order to be democratic. They

do not broach the possibility that sometimes participants might not be well served by [facilitation], even if sponsors are' (p. 238).

And on top of managing expectations of participants, facilitators also need to manage their ego. Even if facilitators are trained professional, their actions and beliefs are unconsciously shaped by the agreement with their client. Despite training, experience and a predisposition towards self-reflection, facilitators walk a thin line between detached and self-referential work (Laino, 2001). In other words,

Finally, structured participation is not immune from turning into an exercise of tokenism and consultation. There is no guarantee that participants will be convinced that facilitators are not skilled consultants who craft consensus, or even manipulate opinions. In fact, if the practice of participation does not match its rhetoric of involvement and pluralistic solutions, it can lead to the democratic deficit (Conrad, 2010). Facilitators can thus function as a 'social filter' between citizens who are less and less used to advance demands and decision-makers that do now want to be directly involved with them (La Cecla, 2015).

Whether participatory processes are organized by public institutions or through grassroots action; whether they involve diverse set of participants (like public, private, and civic actors); or differ in both aims (consultation, deliberation, etc.) and impact (whether they influence decision making), facilitation can help address complex issues through an inclusive exchange of information among stakeholders. And although it does not always lead to unanimously approved solutions, structured participation can also be instrumental to promote harmony among chaos by offering tools that recognize the complexity of each process and its issues. But judging participation only because of the knowledge it produces shifts attention away from whether more pluralistic information had a significant effect on outcomes. In other words, there is no guarantee that influence will be re-distributed.

It is not only that facilitation cannot fit all situations. If structured discussion become the only arena of decision-making, they crowd out other forms of interactions. And when that happens, the limits that were just discussed will influence the rest of the participation effort. When facilitation is elevated to be everything an initiative needs to be meaningful, attention shifts away from other crucial aspects – like the aims of the sponsor, the limits of the mandate, etc. – which might do more harm than good.

Digital tools

The last peculiar element that I want to discuss is the increasing reliance of participation initiatives on digital tools. As I explained in the introduction, my initial intent was to experiment how digital tools could support participation practices, which makes them particularly relevant to this thesis.

When I talk about digital tools, I refer to a wide range of devices (hardware) and applications (software) that rely on information and communication technologies (ICTs) to store, elaborate and retrieve information, and that can communicate with other devices through the Internet. These include applications that run on computers, smartphones, and wearable devices (like smartwatches), but also sensors that collect and transfer of data autonomously.

As different digital tools have become increasingly present in our daily lives, their influence has been felt in many aspects of society. Digital tools have changed how we consume media, purchase goods, travel across countries, move around cities, and, more generally, how we interact in communities small and big. As Shaw and Graham (2017) said: 'Digital technologies and the people, machines, and information they connect, have redefined urban life in the twenty-first century. Everyday life is enmeshed by it. Throughout work, leisure, consumption and production; almost everything and every place is now mirrored, represented, mediated, or shared online as digital' (p. 4).

Given their undeniable relevance, it would be unsurprising that digital tools had not affected participation practices. In this section, I want to discuss four groups of digital tools that are usually associated with participation practices: devices and software related to smart city initiatives, social media platforms, tools that were developed to support specific participation initiatives, and tools that can be readapted to support participation. (In the case studies I will focus on web-based applications that run on computers or smartphones that were either developed or readapted to support each process.)

Since digital tools are mainly about connectivity, they have lent themselves to techno-deterministic arguments about how increased computing power, internet speed and diffusion of devices can solve the most complex problems in our cities (Morozov, 2013). Smart city promoters argue for 'building an [Internet of Things] at the city-scale by installing networked objects throughout the urban environment (and even human bodies) for a wide range of different purposes' (Sadowski & Pasquale, 2015, p. 3). These include monitoring, modeling and predicting services

that are important to urban management (like transport, energy consumption, and production) by means of aggregating and analyzing the data produced.

It is undeniable that many issues related to planning and urban management would benefit from more real-time information. More often than not, however, smart becomes a 'nebulous' term that gets 'treated like a floating signifier that can change referents whenever needed' and that 'evoke[s] positive change and innovation' (Sadowski & Pasquale, 2015, p. 3). By inflating how smart devices automate repetitive tasks of data collection, storage and transmission – undoubtedly useful but far from what many would consider intelligence – the smart city rhetoric fails to highlight how such devices need to be produced, installed, and maintained; and also how both hardware and software are not flawless but require skilled workers that local administrations often lack. Making a city smart, then, also means signing a long-term contract with a technology and services provider. 'The "smart city" is not an actually existing entity. It's a misleading euphemism for a corporately controlled urban future' (Sadowski, 2019, p. 3).

Smart cities have also been associated with participation. Companies that produce smart devices and offer the indispensable services that are necessary to take advantage of them, also promise a seamless participation of 'smart citizens' in matters of urban management (Noveck, 2015). However, this is arguably a passive participation. Like other elements of the smart infrastructure, citizens participate by sharing data, often unknowingly, about location, consumption and interactions that contributes to mirror the urban environments where they live. In other words, 'the ambition at the heart of the smart city is nothing other than control – the desire to achieve a more efficient use of space, energy and other resources' (Greenfield, 2013).

Social media platforms are another group of digital tools that are often associated with participation. Social media helps us share multimedia contents with other people, either publicly or with specific groups or individuals. And over the last decade, as smartphones started becoming an object of daily use, a few platforms have reached billions of active users. Initially, social media platforms were hailed as tools that would revolutionize our daily lives, communities and society: 'as digital media make participation easier, more and more citizens ditch bowling alone—only to take up blogging together.' (Morozov, 2013, p. xi)

Internet-fueled activism has prominently manifested through social media, which proved effective to catalyze energies and coordinate collective action. For

example, they enabled disruptive operations to influence public discourse and politics, like email and tweet bombing, at a much faster pace (Joyce, 2010).

Social media platforms have also been, together with instant messaging applications, instrumental to the organization, coordination and communication of social movements around the world. La Cecla (2015) discussed their roles in the famous protests in Thair Square in Egypt, Ghezi Park in Turkey, and Hong Kong. But as he noted, while Facebook and Twitter have undoubtedly helped those popular revolts, we cannot afford to confuse the substance of the process with the tools that supported it.

In the same way that we should question how the goals of participation initiatives and their promoters affect the process, we also need to question what are the main goals of the companies that own social media. Most of them offer their services at no cost, but what users do not pay with money they do with information. Users provide labor in return for free access to the service, without having a clear idea of what data is being collected and how profitable it can be (Iverson, 2017). In the age of ubiquitous connectivity the adage 'if something is free, then you are the product' gets more relevant than ever.

Although social media platforms might not state it in their home pages, most of them platforms are marketing firms. Their business models revolve around monetizing their users' private information (age, sex, residence, workplaces, etc.); the preferences they manifest (the people they interact with, praise or argue against); and their interactions with the platform (Shaw & Graham, 2017b). In fact, this is the case with many applications that we use in our daily lives, although it is in social media that we voluntarily disclose a wide range of contents about ideas, emotions, experiences and relationships.

Companies hold extensive and sophisticated file of each of their users, which are continuously fed by their digital footprints, bits of information about their activities within and beyond social media, on-line and off-line. Most platforms make money by collecting and elaborating that data to sell it to whoever is willing to pay. In other words, social media platforms have automated and scaled to worldwide level the work of questionnaires, focus groups and other more costly and less effective ways of aggregating information about people and predicting their preferences.

Even though they might have been used also to support certain forms of bottom-up participation, social media platforms were not designed and are not run with that intent. If we were to compare social media platforms to a square where large scale

demonstrations are more easily organized, it would be a space where every movement people make, every interaction they have, everything they look at, and even how long they look at it, gets recorded. In addition, since their business models are based on selling advertisement and which are built to catch our attention and keep us interacting with their content, social media platforms found that divisive and polarizing content is more effective at this than seeking consensus.

For these and other reasons, in the last few years social media platforms have been under a less favorable spotlight. The same tools that help us keep in touch with our network of friends, relatives, co-workers can also foster a form of digital alienation. The same tools that allowed dispersed communities to connect around topics that were meaningful to them, also created echo-chambers where people with similar views are not exposed to the opinion of others. And the same tools the supported decentralized news provision in authoritarian regimes also enabled the spread of fake news to an unprecedented scale.

Hence every discussion about the opportunities that social media platforms bring to participation should also weigh their side-effects. Kelty (2016) used the expression 'from Wikipedia to Wikileaks' to remind us how a collaborative encyclopedia was created with the same tools used for monitoring and monetizing online interactions at a massive scale. 'Even if technology does not determine outcomes', he said, 'technologies have "affordances"' that favor some outcomes over others.'

The third group of digital tools I want to discuss are applications that were explicitly developed with the intent of supporting participation. There is no shortage of scholars who championed how digital tolls have made participation easier to organize and more effective (Gil et al., 2019; Shirky, 2010). Since they lower the costs of joining, forming and coordinating groups, digital tools seem the ideal fit to support participation.

Simon et al. (2017) drew on literature on democratic legitimacy (Geissel, 2009; Scharpf, 2006) to discuss at how digital tools help improve input, output, and process legitimacy. (Input legitimacy reflects whether decisions respect the will of those involved; output legitimacy refers to whether outcomes promote the community's welfare; and process legitimacy evaluates the fairness, transparency, inclusiveness and cost-effectiveness of the process.) As the figure 1 shows, digital tools can do so in several ways.

The examples they studied ranged from making neighborhoods more livable to spotting loophole in laws and found that increasing the number of perspectives on

an issue and collecting them in a more structured way helps find creative solutions. However, they recognized that the evidence available remained 'tentative at best' and that, while digital tools can empower citizens to influence decision-making and monitoring processes, when it comes to implementation they are mostly kept on the side. They also found 'few examples of online participation which mirrored the demographic structure of society' (p. 83). In the cases examined, digital participation was skewed towards citizens who were already politically active and young white educated man. When, however, digital tools complemented on-site practices, broader participation was observed in most cases (Simon et al., 2017).

In other studies, citizens were asked to share information, exchange ideas or monitor the work of elected officials and institutions to make them more accountable (Saunders & Mulgan, 2017). Sometimes, organization can also use crowdsourcing initiatives to 'solicits ideas for a product design or technical solution and then rewards a winner' (Brabham, 2013). In other words, citizens are asked to help, but always within well-defined limits. Since the focus in on transfers of information, rather than redistribution of power, purely on-line participation can become a crowded consultation. Digital participation is well suited to connect people, but distributing power is something that tools cannot guarantee.

One last point I want to emphasize is that creating tools for a specific purpose has both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, tools developed from scratch are tailor-fit to support an initiative. On the other, this means that each tool might receive maintenance only as long as the process exists. And since developing a tool requires time, an interdisciplinary team of skilled workers (that should not include only developers), and a lot of money, there is also a risk that an initiative becomes tailored around the tool rather than the other way around.

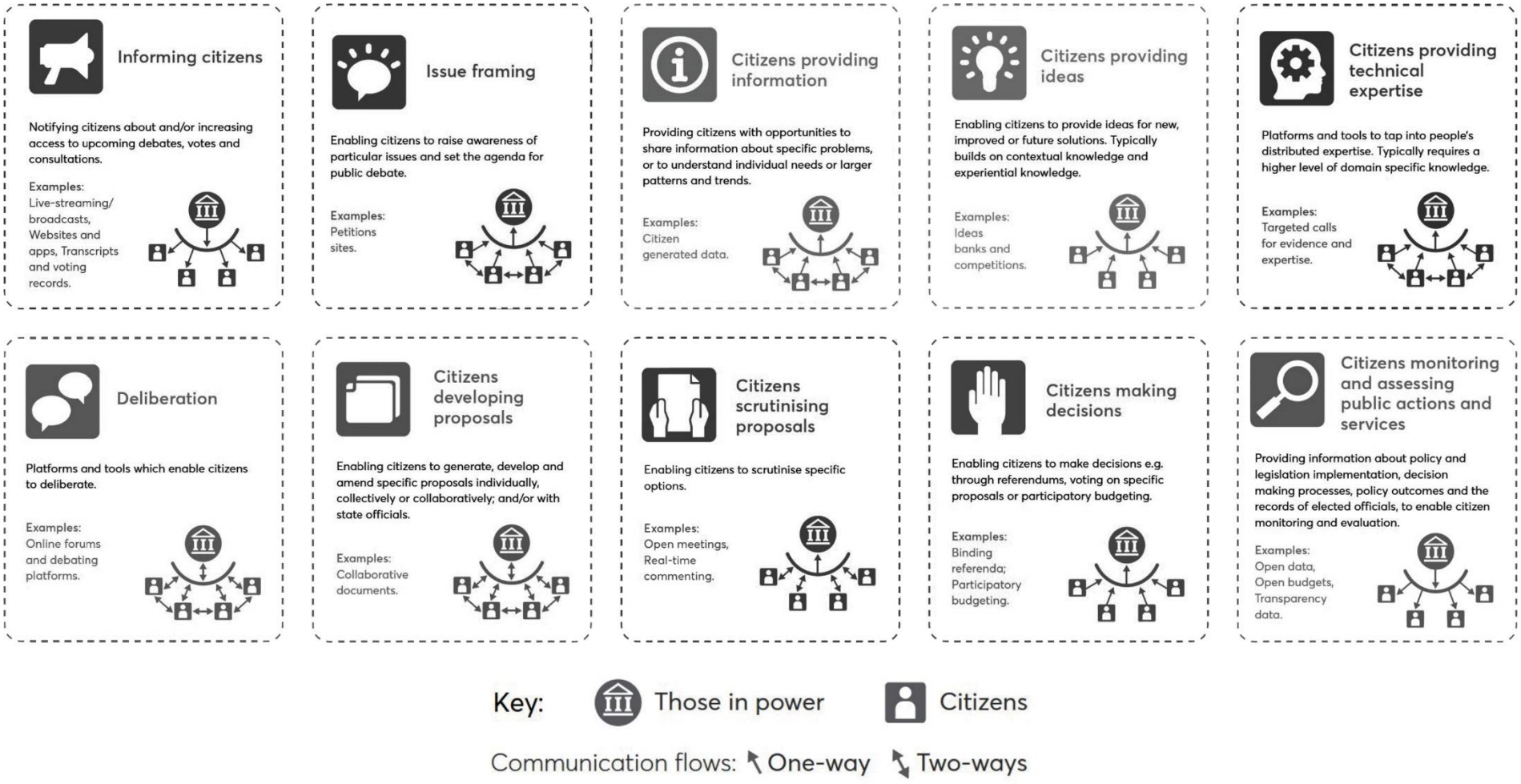


Figure 1: A typology of tools for digital democracy. Adapted from Simon et al. (2017)

The last group I want to discuss are readapted digital tools, which include instant messaging application, collaborative document editors, file sharing tools, digital calendars, project management applications, and more. Many of these applications were developed with workplaces in mind, to support employees work remotely and/or improve their communication and coordination, but many of these functions are relevant to participation as well. There is, to my knowledge, no study that tried to experiment with tools that were already available to support participation. (Except perhaps for collaborative Geographic Information System (GIS) applications.)

Since they supported by commercial ventures who can invest a lot of resources into making, maintaining and improving their tools, these applications often prove more user friendly than the alternatives that were developed for a specific initiative. It is also more likely that they run on both computers and smartphones and that they will be more reliable, both because they are actively improved (e.g. new functionalities are added) and supported by professionals, who will continue fixing issues beyond the participation process.

Well-known tools also have a lower adoption cost, meaning that many users are already familiar with them. Thus, some re-adapted tools will be easier to integrated with the process, although this depends on the popularity of the tool and the composition of the group. For example, e-mails and instant messaging apps are used to communicate within groups, even though their functions might not be the best for coordinating work. (This might sound familiar to readers who felt overwhelmed by the number of chat groups they are in and found that communication can be very dispersive.) More structured alternatives, on the other hand, can offer improved functionalities but might be foreign to people who have not familiarized with them before (often in the work environment).

There are potential disadvantages with re-adapting existing tools. Most tools are not free, although many have freemium pricing that allows people to test them out before paying for a subscription. They also might collect and sell data from users, like social media platforms. Finally, often they cannot be personalized, which might require users to adapt to their affordance. And although there are many free and/or open source software alternative, these require skilled people to installing, maintaining or even personalizing them might require skills that are not very common.

2.3 Revolution or strangely familiar dream?

Figure 2: A poster made by French students during the student-worker rebellion of 1968 (Arnstein, 1969).

As we have seen in previous sections, participation can address different types of issues through different approaches, which in turn affect how and to what extents people participate. While events and processes keep happening and evolving, stepping back and assigning labels remains arbitrary and instrumental to find some order within the chaos and messiness of reality.

The eight rungs of Arnstein's (1969) ladder categorized participation initiatives according to how authority was distributed among the actors that compose a polity[3]. The more power got redistributed, the more meaningful participation could prove, and the more likely that communal interests would prevail. Although the ladder highlighted dynamics and revealed nuances that still feel relevant today, Arnstein recognized that what she proposed might not apply to other geographical and temporal contexts. The ladder, then, was 'less theory than a distillation of a critique' (Kelty, 2016, p. 6), which emphasized the gradations of citizen participation and their contradictions within the practices that Arnstein studied: the US federal social programs Urban Renewal, Antipoverty, and Model Cities. 'In the real world of people and programs, there might be 150 rungs with less sharp and "pure" distinctions among them' (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

3 Arnstein categorized participation efforts according to eight levels, the rungs of her ladder, which were divided in three groups. First was non-participation, which included manipulation and therapy. Three degrees of tokenism followed: informing, consultation and placation. And finally, the top of the ladder hosted three degrees of citizen power: partnership, delegated power and citizen control.

Much like Arnstein's ladder, my typology is useful to order and compare but are limited by the simplifications they imply. My overview, then, can be considered both narrow and broad. Narrow because it focuses on Europe and the US and considers mainly citizen participation in matters that connect with life in urban environments. Broad because, even within this focus, it leaves out many initiatives, details and exceptions. But as we scratch the surface to explore different understandings and meanings of contemporary participation, a mono-dimensional spectrum reveals its limitations, which become clear once the details of an initiative are accounted for, and there will always be exceptions that do not fit.

Setting aside the ambition to be comprehensive and accepting limitation of a spectrum, my goal for this chapter was to identify and delve into those concepts that are relevant and useful for the coming discussion about community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation. Given its diversity and interdependence, in the contemporary season of participation it is ever more difficult to understand what participation is and what it is not, or in which label best fits each initiative. Every practice has its own mix of participants; each participant has its role; each role implies goals and strategies to achieve them; and everything evolves in both planned and unexpected ways.

If in practice participation can take different forms, even if we find a meaning to it, that might change over time. Initiatives promoted as opportunities to empower those without power through cooperation, might turn out to be co-opting participants to agree to the plans of the powerful. 'Grand spectacles of public participation' Polletta (2016) said 'may make it that much easier for back room decision-making to carry on as usual, unscrutinized and unchallenged' (p. 234). And even when intentions are genuinely good, not all participants might feel the same way.

For instance, is participation that happens through self-organized assemblies more inclusive, meaningful, or effective than participation paid for by institutions and facilitated by professionals? On one hand, professional might get paid to 'nudge' participants to agree with the opinions of those who are financing them. On the other, assemblies tend to get lost in endless arguments, and can also perform poorly when it comes to let everyone voice their opinion.

If the meaning of participation is bound to change over time and space and subjective, or as I said before it is context-sensitive and contested, it means that discussions about participation can get lost in a wide array of settings, modalities, motivations, actors involved, aims, consequences, etc. The different logic that underlay a participatory participation lead to different understandings of its purposes and limits (Polletta, 2016). For me, that understanding is based on the idea that participation is context-sensitive (it is in dialectic with local circumstances and builds upon the experiences that preceded it) and contested (can be experienced and interpreted in different way by each actor, is subjective and subjectivizing), and that all this things might evolve over time, means that we do not focus so much on clear-cut answers, but we recognize that participation builds on top of what preceded it and what surrounds it.

Kelty (2016) argued that participation is hard to understand because of its 'unusual grammar.' Participation, he said, lives a 'double-life' as an agent of both liberation and co-optation. By comparing the ways people talk about and understand participation in three contexts – public administrations, companies and international development circles – he identified two moods that alternate in repeating cycles.

When the optative mood prevails, we observe 'an enthusiasm, a normativity, a happy hypotheses of change through the involvement of more people rather than fewer, poorer rather than richer, rural rather than urban, indigenous rather than colonial, or everyday experience rather than rarefied expertise.' The critical mood, on the other hand, calls for a realization of the 'false, phony, exploitative and disappointing' character of participatory initiatives (p. 11). For example, Kelty wondered whether the current focus on digital tools is really that unprecedented or if it is just a repetition of the optative-critical cycle. I argue that the same reasoning can be expanded to the other distinctive elements of participation. Paraphrasing is words: does contemporary participation marks a revolution from the past or are we experiences strangely familiar dream?

We can recognize the context-sensitive and contested nature of participation as an inherent paradox. Neither the optative nor critical mood are right, but both are necessary for the evolution of participation practices. 'Accusing participation of being false, phony, exploitative, or disappointed, it allows the optative mood in the next turn of phrase – a better, more authentic participation yet to come' (Kelty, 2016, p. 11). As a rule of thumb, the more experimentation and comparison, the better... but always with a healthy degree of skepticism.

In this chapter I provided a brief overview of practices and how they evolved in tandem with sociopolitical circumstances; highlight how contemporary participation is made of both recurrent and distinctive elements; and propose to study participation as context-sensitive and contested. These three steps were useful to help understand the broader sector/ecosystem where community hubs, the topic of the next chapter, exist. It was not so much about finding the right placement of community hubs along the spectrum, which would be impossible, but to highlight what community hubs share with the practices that preceded them. For instance, as we will see in the next chapter, while community hubs continue the tradition of reformist participation, they also combine elements of bottom-up practices like self-organization, informality, and alternative hierarchies.

In addition, both recurrent and distinctive elements of contemporary participation are relevant to the case studies discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Since they exist within the socio-political circumstances described above, community hubs are the product of the increase scale and scope of participation, since integrationist initiatives expanded their roles from social mediation to the provision of urban welfare. The increased variety and possible configurations of contemporary practices also make community hubs rely on a diverse mix of actors.

The relation between space and participation that is central to the thesis will be developed in the next chapter, while the case studies will report on how conflict and consensus intersected throughout the three initiatives I studied. The first two case

studies are examples of top-down facilitated participation, while the third is more connected to bottom-up self-management within a private enterprise. Finally, digital tools will also be present in all case studies.

To conclude, I propose to study participation as context-sensitive and contested because no approach, method or set-up is better than others. Where would we place an initiative started and managed by citizens but also dependent on funding from public or private institutions? Is this dependence a form of soft institutionalization? Who sponsors it? Who animates it? Who is invited? What are the stated aims? What approach is adopted? How did things evolve? As the possible answer to each of these question increase, the potential configurations for any initiative multiply.

If the way we understand participation is context-sensitive and contested, then also the way we do it must always interact whit the place, moment and people involved. The proposal of this thesis is to zoom into three examples of shared management of community hubs, and reflect on clues derived from practical experience. Not to extract guidelines or generalizable results, but partial answers that reveal the many nuances involved. Once we zoom into any initiative, we will find nuanced roles, motivations and goals that were not visible from afar.

Chapter 3

Spaces of participation

In the previous chapter we have seen that there are many ways to participate, and none is in principle better than others because participation is context-sensitive and contested. I argued for the need to zoom into specific practices to explore and reflect on their nuances, paradoxes and contradictions. The three case studies discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7 all revolve around multi-purposes spaces whose goal is to aggregate and develop projects for their territory; and which, conversely, also depend on aggregation to thrive.

In this chapter I want to discuss community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation. Like before, I aim at a loose definition that highlights those concepts that are relevant for the upcoming discussion. Building on the previous chapter, in the first section I propose to study community hubs as multi-purpose spaces that aggregate people, ideas and energies to provide activities and services for the community and by the community. The idea that participation is context-sensitive and contested translates to how community hubs are rooted in the territory and in continuous evolution.

Being rooted in the territory means three things: that community hubs exist and evolve in tandem with the broader social, economic and political circumstances of contemporary participation; that they are in dialectic with the urban and social fabric of their territory; and that in community hubs built space is constitutive of participation. Continuous evolution, on the other hand, implies that being multi-purpose implies a challenge to integrate different uses, needs, understanding of space and that, as a consequence, community hubs must balance between maintaining enough structure to function consistently while remaining flexible and permeable.

While elaborating on these points I will also introduce three issues that need further discussion, namely the need to conceptualize space as constitutive of participation; the need to have an understanding of what the community hub is and how to define its community, especially given how the former depends on a diverse

coalition of interdependent actors; and the challenge of exploring governance models. Let me briefly introduce each issue and how I intend to address it.

By providing the space to develop activities and services, community hubs enable people to take part in the social and cultural life of their territory. For instance, people can contribute by proposing a project that they will develop independently; they can be the audience of an activity; they can voluntarily help caretaking of the space; and more. In other words, the focus of participation shifts from decision-making to heterogenous actions. If on one hand participation exists because there is a space where it can happen, on the other that space exists because of participation.

In the second section of the chapter, then, I want to delve into the relation between participation and space, which was one of the recurring elements across past and contemporary practices. While participation can happen in different places, I want to go beyond an understanding of space only as the container of participation. I will build on Kitchin and Dodge's (2011) argument that 'social relations do not operate independently of space or simply at a location, rather space is an active constitutive element in the production of social relations' (p. 65). To unravel the dialectic between interactions and where they happen, I will plug in Kohn's (2003) ideas of encounters and spatial coding. While studying houses of the people – multi-purpose spaces of participation that existed in Europe between the two World Wars – Kohn showed that encounters are made of both explicit and implicit exchanges and are in dialectic with the environment where they happen through spatial coding, which captures the set of scripts and repertoires that are appropriate to a specific place.

In the third section, I will integrate concepts from literature on urban commons to answer the remaining two issues (defining the community hub and its community, and governance). I propose to understand urban commons as made of three inseparable components (the commons, commoners, and commoning); whose boundaries are subject to continuous renegotiation; and which cannot exist in isolation from other entities. Readapting these ideas to community hubs helps defining what the community hub is, who the community includes and how is social reproduction performed. If urban commons depend on the continuous dialectic between commons, commoners and commoning, community hubs exist as the product of interactions between space, people, and encounters. Continuous renegotiation of boundaries can help highlight how what the community hubs is, the different roles of the people who get involved (promoters, activators, contributors, and users), and the arrangements through which space is shared, are not only undefinable a-priori but always under question.

Finally, to discuss the issue of governance I will use the work of Stavrides (2019), which will help me frame community hubs as spaces of encounter with otherness. Community hubs must have a reliable structure while remaining flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and permeable to enable and encourage the external contributions they need to survive and thrive. Like the institutions of commoning that Stavrides discussed, then, community hubs must function as permeable organizations that allow for unpredictable identities and enable their

differences to be integrated. Hence both physical and metaphorical thresholds are relevant to how community hubs function.

In the last section, I will introduce my research questions – how do humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs? – and anticipate how, through the approach to research that I will discuss in the chapter 4, I propose to zoom into the three case studies.

3.1 Community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation

In the overview presented in the previous chapter, participation practices were grouped according to a spectrum that had functionalist (top-down) initiatives on one hand, reformist ones in the middle, and radical (bottom-up) ones at the other end. If I were to place community hubs along that spectrum, they would probably stand somewhere in the middle, since, similar to reformist initiatives, they generally operate in accordance with legal regimes, have a collaborative attitude towards institutions and can function as social mediators between citizens and local administrations. However, community hubs might also exist as occupied buildings or initiatives that have a more conflictual approach to participation. Like reformist initiatives, community hubs depend mainly from civic actors, although often public institutions and private supporters are also involved. However, they might also practice informal and egalitarian participation and, like the new social centers in the nineties, community hubs catalyze energies, aggregate local actors, and create a shared narrative rooted in the history and materiality of each space.

Since contemporary participation practices have become diverse and interdependent from a variety of actors, assigning label got increasingly complicated. Where would we place an initiative that was started and is managed by citizens but also depends on funding from public or private institutions? Is this dependence a form of soft institutionalization, although the initiative is formally managed by autonomous citizens? Who sponsors it? Who animates it? Who is invited? What are its stated aims? What approach is adopted? How did things evolve? As the possible answer to each of these question increase, the potential configurations for any initiative multiply.

That said, the concepts developed in the previous chapter can help us understand the wider environment surrounding community hubs. In this first section I will lay out how I understand community hubs, based mainly on two ideas that build on the context-sensitive and contested nature of participation.

The first idea is that community hubs are rooted in their territory, meaning that they exist and evolve in tandem with the social, economic and political circumstances of contemporary participation. Community hubs well exemplify both the increase scale and scope of participation (for instance the combination of social mediation and urban welfare provision) as well as the increased variety of configurations. In addition, community hubs are in dialectic with the urban and social fabrics of their territory. Community hubs depend on them both because they need a space where to operate and because they rely on a diverse coalition of actors

to survive. However, they also support the urban and social fabric of their territory through a wide understanding of urban welfare. Finally, in community hubs participation exists within a space that, conversely, would not exist as such without participation. In other words, in community hubs space is constitutive of participation.

The second idea is that community hubs are in continuous evolution as they must balance between the need for enough structure to function consistently, while remaining flexible to adapt to changes in demands, resources (people, money, time), and other exogenous shocks; as well as permeable in order to enable and integrate external contributions. Being a multi-purpose space is for community hubs both a social mission and instrumental to their survival. However, it also implies a challenge to integrate different uses, needs, understanding of space.

Rooted in the territory

The previous chapter introduced the broad developments that influenced how contemporary participation practices have both invented new approaches and readapted new ones. These developments included how globalization led to the relocation of enterprises and, as a consequence, an increase of vacant buildings that were left behind [[not all of industrial use]]. Meanwhile, as economies gradually transitioned to a service-driven paradigm – always with significant heterogeneity in terms of extent, geography and timing – land assumed a new value. Especially in those places that were able to ride the new waves of economic growth, the trajectories of urban development were increasingly influenced by the objective of private actors, whose capital and contribution were necessary for public administrations whose budgets were insufficient. This meant that only pats of this industrial heritage were requalified, while many remained empty, especially in areas that that did not attract external investments.

This situation was further aggravated with the financial crisis that started in 2008. Once again, local administrations saw their budget tighten, and eventually accelerated the retreat from the provision of urban welfare services. This widened the gap between the increasing demands for welfare services and the ability and willingness of public institutions to satisfy them. In response to this, many reformist and bottom-up participation initiatives – whose role had generally been more skewed towards social mediation and aggregation – had to reinvent themselves as marginal to essential providers of urban welfare.

These are the social, economic and political circumstances in which community hubs have emerged and evolved. As we will see more in detail below, like other contemporary practices of participation, then, community hubs well exemplify both increased scope of participation (from social mediation to urban welfare services) and the increased variety of possible configurations that participation relies on.

Some of the activities that can take place in community hubs include parent and toddler groups; health and wellbeing activities; employment support; childcare; library services; advice and information (Locality, 2016). Among the eight houses of the neighborhood in Turin, for instance, around seventy associations offer

different activities and services like counseling or support groups devoted to legal and psychological needs; language courses; digital literacy courses and supports with computers; courses and workshops about arts, dance, singing, crafts, etc.; urban gardens; bike repair workshops; opportunities to learn and practice new skills (like co-workings spaces, fablabs and shared workshops) (Depedri et al., 2018).

Community hubs can also host cafes, bars and restaurants, which are useful to generate income, attract people, and be places of sociality. Finally, they can also include initiatives that support local entrepreneurship and create job opportunities. As such, they can be places of production and cross-fertilization between people that have different backgrounds and expertise (Avanzi et al., 2016).

Community hubs are multi-purposes spaces, whose services, the people that provide them, and the ways they do so reflect both local needs and the available of energies, expertise and interests. And by doing so through less conventional and innovative approaches, they can also become also become habitats of social inclusion (Avanzi et al., 2016). Taken together, these different functions – mediation, welfare provision, social inclusion, and production – show that community hubs address urban regeneration not only by reactivating a building, but by enabling the community that form around that building. In other words, they regenerate both the urban and social fabric of a territory.

Since they provide services that either complement or substitute public ones, community hubs enable a wide understanding of what forms urban welfare can take. In fact, they understand and address urban welfare differently because community hubs are permeable to external proposals, which emerges from the necessity to aggregate energies from the community. Hence, I do not intend to portray community hubs as initiatives that successfully cover all the needs of their community; rather, community hubs live in a dialectical relation with their context: they thrive on the opportunities of their territory, must address its limits, and when successful are able to maximize the first and overcome the second. They are spaces of participation that strengthen social ties and nurture unexpected opportunities.

Finally, while I previously said that understanding built space only as the container of participation is reductive, and later I will propose to understand it as constitutive of participation, the importance of where participation happens should not be underestimated. The services and activities that take place in a community hub are likely influenced by its size (how big is the building? how is it organized?); conditions (how much time and money are necessary to reactivate it?); location (is it in a central or peripheral neighborhood? what is its social composition?); and ownership (is it a public or private building? what could be the interest and role of its owner(s) in the reactivation process?).

Generally, community hubs ‘operate out of buildings, from which multi-purpose, community-led services are delivered’ (Locality, 2016, p. 8). While some are built anew, many community hubs start by transforming vacant buildings that were left behind by companies that moved to other countries or went bankrupt (Avanzi et al., 2016). From an economic perspective, community hubs take advantage of available real estate assets, whose conditions allow reactivation at lower costs than building from scratch. Reactivating old buildings should also take

less time and prove more environmentally friendly. Finally, reactivation also has a symbolic meaning as it finds new uses and narrative to spaces that embed its shared past. Hence regeneration takes the form of re-activating available spaces and optimizing their use and community hubs become the common ground (literally and figuratively) for different people and groups that interact with and within those spaces.

However, if the availability of a suitable container is necessary, it is not enough. When I discussed that community hubs both depend on and support the social fabric of a territory, it was also because community hubs also depend on social relations. Reactivating any space does not guarantee that there will be people and groups willing and ready to take action. The presence, interests and capabilities of local associations, civic actors, active citizens and shared traditions can make or break a project that thrives on aggregating energies (Magnaghi, 2015). Community hubs depend on a diverse coalition of actors – including the person or entity who owns the building – who must be willing to coalize and find a viable agreement with the owner of the building. Fund-raising is also necessary, especially in the beginning. Investment can come from different sources, like grants, foundations, private funds, philanthropy (Locality, 2016).

Hence community hubs are rooted in a territory both because their activities revolve around a physical building, and because the regeneration of their territory cannot be understood separately from its urban and social fabric. For example Laino (2001) proposed a list of factors connected with what he calls the fertility of a territory. (He noted this was not a systemic overview, but reflections based on his involvement with project in Italy and Europe.) These included the emergence of social demands worth treating; clearly defined boundaries and availability of heritage (both in terms of built space and culture); a culture of competition among cites; the capability to mobilize internal and external actors; local administrations that, at least in part, are already involved in processes of internal innovation; and the existence of proactive civic organizations. The more these territorial resources are available (and can be mobilized) the more fertile the territory will prove. On the other hand, what he calls ‘sad areas’ lack these resources and will likely require a firstly interventions to promote and develop their potential.

Continuous evolution

Community hubs need an available building in suitable conditions, actors willing to be its promoters, and arrangements with owners and funders to sustain reactivation. If that seems complicated, it is only the beginning. To sustain regeneration processes and welfare provision, community hubs build hybrid forms of collaboration and mutual support with both private and public actors (Bragaglia, 2017). As we have seen, some of their activities can substitute or complement public services; some might also operate from public buildings; yet crucial functions of coordination are run by non-public organizations. These complex arrangements, then, blur the distinction between private and public entities.

‘Typically, community hubs are run and managed by a dedicated community organization, in other instances they may be owned or managed by a public agency such as a housing association, or local authority but with substantial input and influence from the community’ (Locality, 2016, p. 9). Dedicated entities can have various roles, but these will include taking care of the space and supporting the different activities, which also implies ensuring activities are compatible.

In a similar way, community hubs can integrate both for- and non-profit activities. The first are necessary to sustain the space economically, while the second can be useful to sustain their territory. Either way, for-profit activities usually favor accessibility (for example through affordable prices) over maximizing revenues. Why and how this happens depends on local circumstances, but it reinforces the idea that their nature as public spaces is more a construct than a precondition (Avanzi et al., 2016). In fact, it is often hard to determine the governance, strategy, or activities of a community hub from the legal nature of its coordinating entity. These might also be influenced by whether the coordinating entity was founded before the community hub, its governance built and previous arrangements.

Since community hubs are the product of diverse coalitions of interdependent actors that lead to complex entities, and since the services they offer, and the groups and needs these address, are highly context-specific, there is an issue of defining what is the community hub and who is included in the community it serves. Related to that, there is also the issue of governance: who manages space? Are other actors able to access it, use it, and/or contribute to its maintenance? How do these arrangements work?

For one, community hubs provide space for people to develop different activities and it would be naïve to think that their needs will always be compatible. If on one hand community hubs thrive on aggregating ideas, interests, and expertise, on the other the different activities they can host must share a space. The architecture of the building and how it is organized influence the ways space gets adapted to different uses and, conversely, how some uses must adapt to it.

Compared to those reformist associations that in the sixties and seventies brought deliberative democracy to their neighborhoods, managers of community hubs are more like coordinators than enable others to provide services. And while community hubs might share models that integrate horizontal, egalitarian and non-hierarchical forms of management, this does not mean that all members share the same decisional power.

Hence, Community hubs need structure to function consistently, and yet they must remain flexible and permeable in order to, respectively, adapt to changes and enable external contributions. However, the diversity discussed so far reinforces the idea that there are no universal solutions.

No community hub is like any other

Before closing this section, I want to briefly introduce a network of community hubs based in Turin. Formed in May 2012, the *rete della case del quartiere* (lit.

‘network of houses of the neighborhood’) includes eight multi-purpose spaces, the first of which opened in 2007. In addition to being relevant to the case study discussed in chapter 6, Turin’s houses of the neighborhood share characteristics with the definitions of community hubs provided in the thesis, meaning that they offer spaces to organize events or activities, thus enabling citizens to contribute to the social and cultural life of their territory. But while they share values and general operational modes, each house has its own history, structure and model of governance, making them also a good example of how diverse community hubs can be, even within the same city.

For instance, the building of each house had a different function before being regenerated. Hence, they have different sizes and number of rooms. In addition, each house is embedded in a different neighborhood, and each neighborhood had its demographic, social and political configurations. Wealthier areas with a longer tradition of civic engagement presented less obstacles, even though more underprivileged settings are probably where community hubs could have a higher impact (Depedri et al., 2018).

The houses of the neighborhood also provide anecdotal evidence of how heterogenous governance can be. Although all buildings are public property, each house has a different agreement between its coordinating entity, the municipality and other entities that support them. Three coordinating entities are registered as associations, two of which are so-called second level associations, meaning they are associations of associations; two are foundations; two are cooperatives; and another is a joint venture of local cooperatives. Each entity uses different arrangements to coordinate its space. In three of them (a foundation, an association and a second level association) the members of the coordinating entity also manage the space. In two spaces (the other foundation and the other second level association) members participate in regular meetings where they shape and influence the strategy of the space, but do not have an active role in the daily management. Finally, in the three cooperatives decision-making and daily management are completely separated (Depedri et al., 2018).

If the previous chapter did not aim at giving a comprehensive definition of participation, here I also wanted to highlight those aspects of community hubs that help the coming discussion, and that hopefully can offer interesting reflections beyond the scope of this study. This initial overview of community hubs included three issues that I want to address more in detail in the rest of the chapter. I said that the importance of built space should not be underestimated, while at the same time it would be reductive to consider space only as the container of participation. In the next section, I want to delve more into what I mean when I say that in community hubs space is constitutive of participation. In the third section, on the other hand, I will use literature on urban commons to reflect on the remaining issues. One is about defining what is the community hub and who is included in the community it serves, collaborates with and depends on, which is complicated by how community hubs are the product of diverse coalitions of interdependent actors. The other issue revolves around governance, and more specifically how can community hubs

balance their need to function consistently while remaining both flexible and permeable.

3.2 Space is constitutive of participation

Since in this thesis I investigate community hubs as spaces of participation, I need to elaborate on the meanings that I intend to convey when I talk about space, and especially when I say that space is constitutive of participation. Space can be conceptualized in different ways, and reviewing the extensive literature discussing them is beyond the scope of this thesis. My intent is rather to distill a few of these understanding and highlight which better captures the nature of space according to the analysis that I will carry out.

A first distinction can be made between absolute and relative space. Absolute space refers to the geometric system of dimensions and coordinates, whose primary use is to locate things, people and events. (Curry, 1995). Absolute is understood as thing in itself – hence the adjective – which exists independently from other entities it contains. Relative space, on the other hand, exists only in the moment that different objects relate to each other. When people move from one place to another, the space they cover gains relevance to their reality.

Neither of these views is appropriate for my analysis because they do not capture interdependence of space and social relations. Instead, I draw from authors who argue that space is relational, by which they meant that it is ‘a critical component, along with social relations and temporality, in understanding everyday life’ (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011, p. 65). In fact, any distinction between space and social relations always must be considered artificial rather than real. It follows that spatial forms ‘are seen not as inanimate objects within which the social process unfolds, but as things which "contain" social processes in the same manner that social processes are spatial’ (Harvey 2009, p. 10).

Relational space is contingent and active, something that is produced or constructed through relations and practices but also constitutive of them (Massey, 1994). Instead of being independent from the entities it contains, relational space is contained in them. This means that ‘an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects’ (Harvey, 2009, p. 13). Relational space is, as Rose (1999) said, ‘brought into being through performativity’ (p. 247): it comes into existence as the actions of people unfold. For example, the streets that urban planners design are transformed into practiced places by people walking over them (De Certeau, 1984).

Kitchin and Dodge (2011) built on these ideas to propose their understanding of space as ontogenic. ‘Space,’ they said, ‘is constantly bought into being as an incomplete solution to an ongoing relational problem’ (p. 71), which implies that ‘social relations do not operate independently of space or simply at a location, rather space is an active constitutive element in the production of social relations’ (p. 65).

I want to point out three properties of ontogenic space that are particularly relevant to community hubs and multi-purpose spaces in general. Firstly, ontogenic space is in continuous flux since both its material fabric and the social relations it

hosts are constantly being created and recreated. This flux is more visible in certain moments than others because changes happen at different speeds and have different impacts. It follows that some changes will be more noticeable than others. For example Kitchin and Dodge (2011) mentioned those 'processes of erosion and entropy at abandoned buildings' that 'demonstrate [how] all places are in the course of change, slowly mutating from one state to another' (p. 68).

Secondly, as the function of space changes, its use is continuously being 'negotiated and contested between individuals and groups' (p. 68). Functions can change at periodic intervals (like in touristic areas where the change is seasonal), or even daily (like in nighttime establishments or business areas, which shift from busy to empty within hours). It follows that 'spaces have multiple functions and through the daily flux of interactions, transactions, and mobilities are always in the process of being made differently' (p. 68). In multi-purpose spaces this flux is expected to be more intense than in mono-function spaces like homes and offices. In fact, the flux defines them and is defined by them.

Finally, as different people can do different things in space and create a diverse flux of intersecting social relation, the meanings associated with space are also bound to shift. Hence not only the use but also the meanings attributed to space can be contested.

If space is, like everything else in the world, 'always in the process of becoming' (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011, p. 68), then we must assume a 'radically unstable notion of spatiality' that is ontologically insecure because 'extraordinarily convoluted, multiply overlaid, paradoxical, pleated, folded, broken and, perhaps, sometimes absent' (Rose, 1999, p. 247). In fact, space can be absolute, relationist or ontogenic depending on 'whatever we make of it during the process of analysis rather than prior to it' since it 'can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances' (Harvey, 2009, p. 13).

The question, then, is not 'what is space?' but rather 'how do different practices (including the research we do on space) both use and create different conceptualizations of space?' I want to propose a conceptualization of space as in dialectic with the social interactions it hosts. To do so, I will build on two concepts: encounters and spatial coding.

Spaces of participation in 1920s Italy

> *'After a few weeks the mentality of the major part of the Sassari soldiers were already modified. On Sundays there wasn't a neighborhood circle (for example, socialist club, usually organized around a cooperative bar/café) where there weren't a few of these soldiers. In the barracks, the counterrevolutionary speeches of the officers weren't listened to religiously like before… From the same barracks some rifles disappeared and the officers could never figure out where they ended up. During popular demonstrations the sympathy of the soldiers for the people appeared evident. The Sassari Brigade was not the Sassari Brigade anymore… And a few months after its arrival in Turin it was sent away from this dangerous "center of infection."'*
>
> *(Kohn, 2003, p. 66)*

In *Radical Space,* Margaret Kohn (2003) explores the relation between encounters and the spaces where they happen by studying the sites of class mobilization in Italy between the two World Wars. One of the stories Kohn told about was the encounter between striking factory workers in Turin and the Sardinian soldiers from the Sassari Brigade that were sent to curb their protest. The quote above is taken from historical sources that reported how interactions between the two groups started shifting from an adversarial attitude when on the streets, to more solidaristic tones once striking workers started inviting soldiers for a glass of wine in local cooperative bars. Why would moving to a different location have such an effect on their interactions?

The bars where workers and soldiers met became 'centers of infection' because they had three functions. Firstly, they hosted encounters that led to exchanges of ideas, experiences and interests. As encounters continued, bars became centers of aggregation, which led to formal or informal coordination. Finally, people organized in assemblies that created the context for political talk and action.

However, Kohn's book did not focus on bars, which were primarily places of conviviality and leisure, but on mutual-aid societies, cooperatives, chambers of labor and houses of the people. Kohn studied how these sites of resistance addressed both material needs – like shopping, milling bread, or drinking a glass of wine – and social ones – since they replaced hierarchical relationships with egalitarian ones[4]. *Case del popolo* (lit. 'houses of the people') are particularly relevant to this discussion because they were multi-purpose spaces that hosted diverse groups and activities, which addressed both material and social needs.

Like community hubs, houses of the people emerged in response to and evolved in tandem with wider socio-political circumstances. After World War I, Italy was, like other European countries, dealing with painful structural changes, such as unemployment, stagnant salaries and rising cost of living. What set Italy apart, however, was its uneven territorial development. The divide between an industrialized North and a more agrarian South meant that subaltern groups did not include only factory workers but also women, farmers, artisans, and unemployed. In addition, industrialization had led to the commodification of the old subsistence-based economy, in which various middlemen (chiefly merchants and the owners of the means of production) appropriated most labor-generated surpluses.

It is in this context that cooperatives and mutual aid societies often redistributed their profits to support a wider range of activities, and some combined their funds and volunteered labor to build houses of the people. These became instrumental not only to improve living conditions but also support broader organizing and advance agendas of radical democracy. Houses of the people were sites of a counter-economy whose main objective was to offer viable alternatives to a system that was unfavorable to the interests of subaltern groups.

[4] For example, mutual-aid societies functioned as self-organized insurance programs. Cooperatives, on the other hand, were businesses that aimed at fulfilling the necessities of their members and communities through collective organization and democratic management.

In houses of the people, services that would normally be provided by paternalistic and charitable initiatives were reconfigured by their beneficiaries through collective control. Their members could then re-appropriate and control autonomously the surplus they generated through solidaristic practices. For example, houses of the people hosted literacy campaigns through evening schools and independent libraries, which could have a direct impact on local politics since at the time only literate male citizens could vote. They also provided start-up capital, logistical aid and space to local grassroots initiatives that addressed the difficulties resulting from high cost of living and precarious employment.

Houses of the people were also rooted in their territory. Unlike trade unions, which organized on a national basis according to the needs of a sector, or factories, which were planned to facilitate control over workers by their managers, houses of the people influenced the territories where they operated by engaging diverse underprivileged groups within the same area. Hence, they became both 'symbolic intervention onto local landscapes' and, sometimes, those 'centers of infection' that connected 'an interlinked set of autonomous yet highly integrated initiatives' (Kohn, 2003, pp. 96-97). (Kohn also suggested that we should not only look at what HoP achieved but also at the 'unrealizable hopes' they inspired.)

Finally, houses of the people were also in continuous evolution. They were sites of both solidarity and conflict and, as such, were subject to continuous renegotiations between their members, who experienced the frustrations of joint endeavors: inefficiencies of collective decision making, rivalries between different visions, corruption of power, and constraints of a hostile economy. However, Kohn argued, it is through sustaining these horizontal hierarchies, which drew on values of collectivity and face-to-face relations, that houses of the people could sustain solidarity through cooperation.

Despite these similarities, my aim is not to compare houses of the people to community hubs; rather since they share some similarities, I want to reflect concepts that can help understand community hubs. In particular, the dialectic between encounters and the spaces where they happen was at the center of Kohn's work.

Encounters and spatial coding

Encounters refer to how people interact through various exchanges, which include linguistic communication, cognitive and sensorial reactions, implicit cues (like posture, dialect and inflections) and ritualistic gestures (for example taking one's hat off when you greet someone). If encounters are shaped by the prevailing norms and habits of the environment in which they happen, for Kohn they are also influenced by the space where they happen. Although encounters happen in all kinds of settings – such as squares, homes, schools, places of work, leisure, worship churches, etc. – different settings can, at least temporarily, reproduce or challenge the patterns of the world at large.

Drawing from Butler (1990), encounters are citational of the social practices that preceded them. This means that they 'endlessly, but imperfectly, cite the

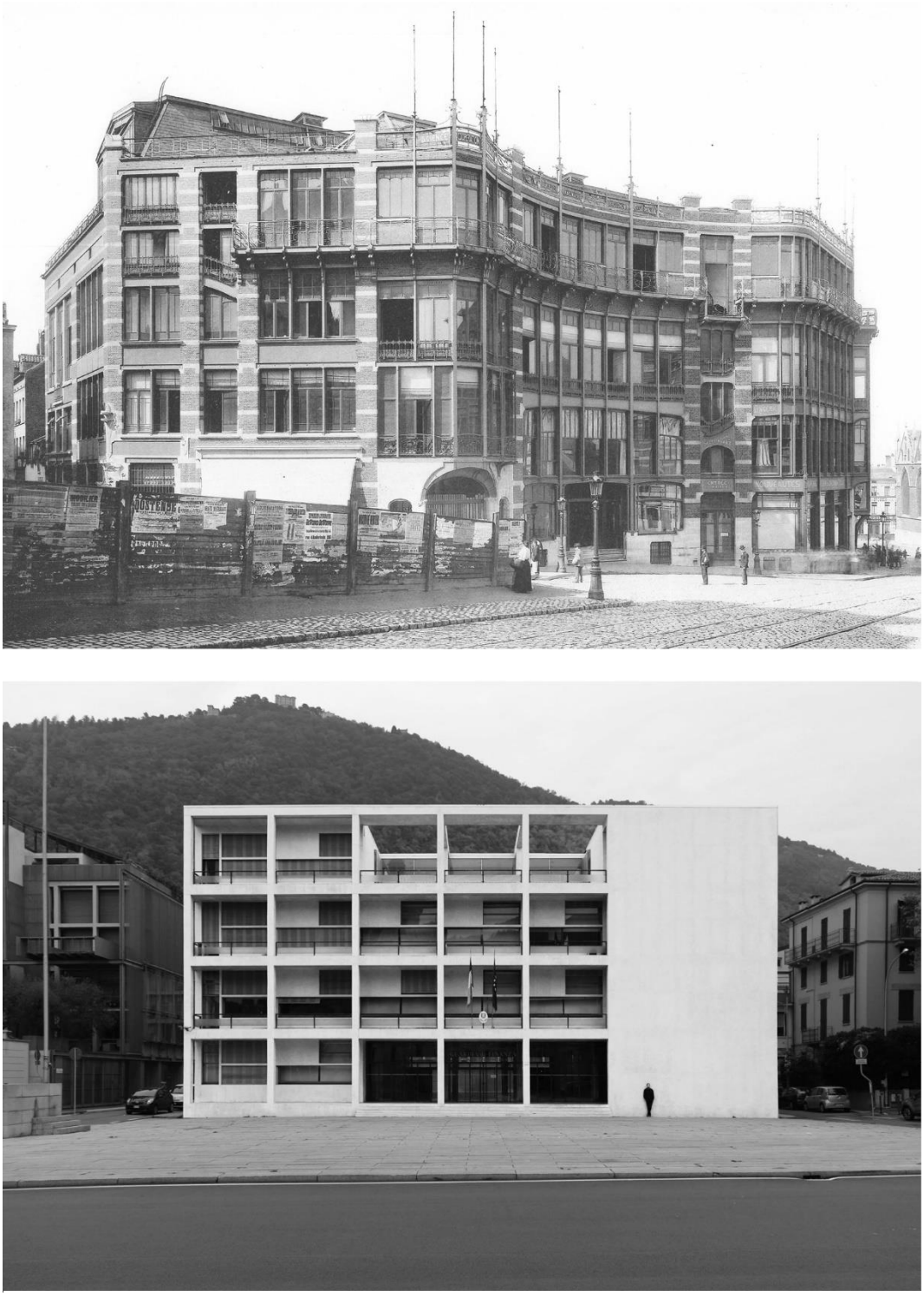


Figure 3: The facades compared: Maison du Peuple (top) and Casa del Fascio (bottom).

previous moment and thus give the appearance of coherence and continuity' by echoing prior actions and 'accumulate the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authorities set of practices' (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011, p.69).

Built spaces (especially those that host sustained encounters) are relevant to the emergence of group patterns. However, Kohn did not argue that we should understand built spaces as the key determinant in the development of encounters, but that it is worth considering how their physical characteristics can affect the type of encounters they host. Space and encounters, then, are in a dialectical relation,

which Kohn captured through the concept of spatial coding, which she defined namely the set of scripts and repertoires that are appropriate to a specific place.

Take for example the interactions between workers and soldiers mentioned above. Interactions between the two groups changed depending on where they met. Military barracks reinforced the sense of camaraderie between soldiers and consolidated the army's hierarchical relations. When soldiers and workers met on the street, their prejudices against each other were likely to prevail and lead to conflictual encounters. Expected patterns of interaction, however, were challenged by workers who invited soldiers to have a glass of wine in the cooperative bars. Houses of the people, on the other hand, were designed and built
to accommodate a range of activities that reflected socialist values of equality, face-to-face relations and radical democracy. Since each was built by volunteer workers according to their collective needs, houses of the people became material expression of those needs. To illustrate her point, Kohn compared Brussel's Maison du Peuple, designed by Victor Horta, with Como's Casa del Fascio, designed by Giuseppe Terragni. If Kohn considered the first as 'the most significant House of the People' (at least from an architectural point of view), the second was its ideological opposite, because it served as the headquarters of Italy's *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PFN, lit. 'National Fascist Party'). Since each building had been designed and built anew, Kohn could identify similarities and differences both in the meanings embedded by their creators and the organization of available space.

Differently than traditional monumental architecture, which employed concrete to convey a sense of grandeur, stability and massiveness in those seeing or entering a building, Horta and Terragni achieved that effect through glass, light and wide, open spaces. The two facades, however, also had revealing differences. In the Casa del Fascio, the facade was largely made of a glass wall that separated its internal atrium from the square outside. Thanks to its transparency, it proved ideal to integrate interior and exterior during mass assemblies. The socialist organizations that run Horta's house of the people, on the other hand, operated under tenuous legal conditions and needed spaces that could not be easily observed from the outside to avoid surveillance and repression. Additionally, while the Casa del Fascio had a straight facade, Horta's was curvilinear. For Kohn, this was due more to circumstances than a deliberate choice. Horta had to compromise with the irregularly shaped lot that Brussels socialists had to settle for in order to obtain a space in the city center. In Como, on the other hand, the municipality had donated to Terragni a lot next to the city's main church.

The internal organization of space also showed similarities and differences. Horta's house had two central spaces: a bar-cafe-restaurant on its first floor and an auditorium on its top floor that could host up to 1,500 seats. 'The building' Kohn explained 'was organized in a way that allowed the greatest possible opportunity for communal life.' Horta also pioneered the use of removable panels that invited user to autonomously adjust communal spaces according to their needs.

The Casa del Fascio was also built around a central auditorium, but it included elements that 'play[ed] an important role in strengthening the cultic element.' There was, for instance, a shrine to honor fallen fascists, while its communal spaces were

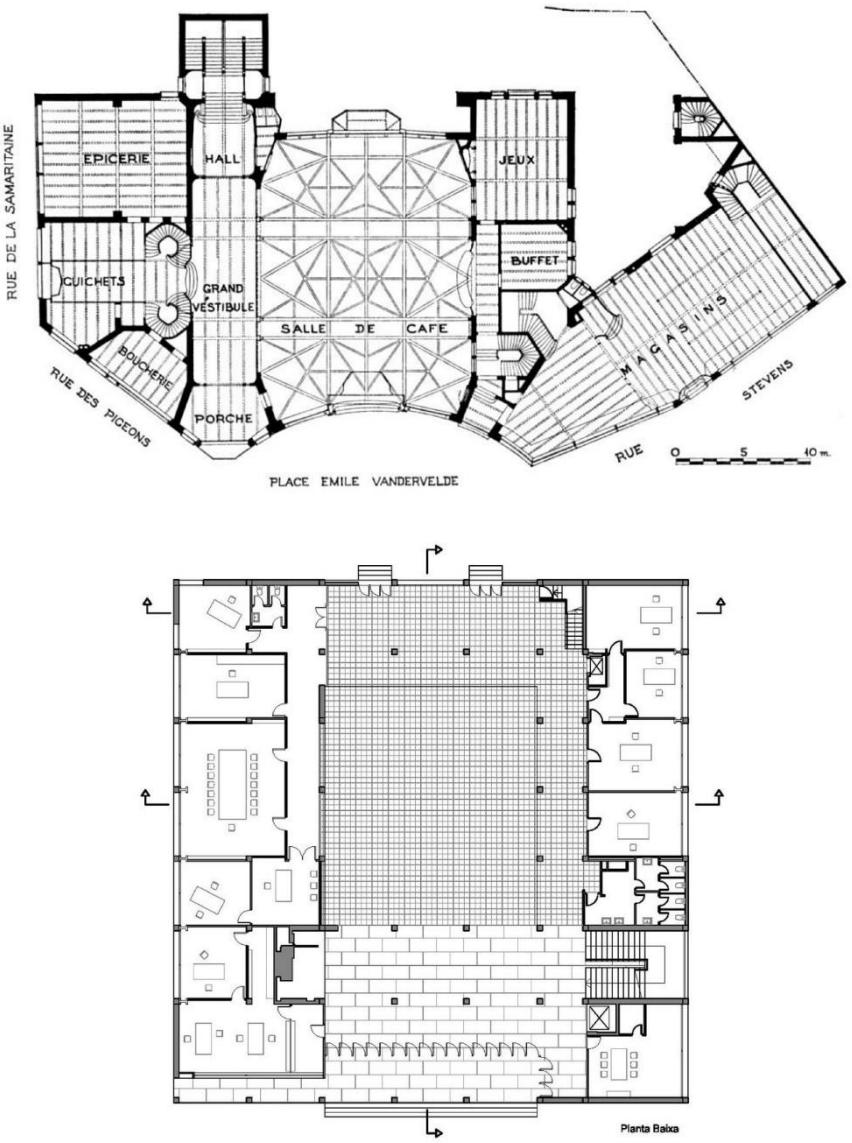


Figure 4: The ground floors compared: Maison du Peuple (top) and Casa del Fascio (bottom).

organized to accommodate 'carefully orchestrated displays of participation and acclamation.'

Both buildings also had, around their central cores, smaller separated rooms that offered privacy while remaining integrated with the rest of the building. Horta's HoP hosted offices and cooperatives, whereas in the Casa del Fascio private spaces were used by social services offices, which were instrumental to the efforts to integrate social life within the fascist regime's monolithic state. This mix of similarities and differences had Kohn ponder:

> *'If similar spatial forms can be appropriated to server such opposed projects, how can we make any compelling argument about the power of place? [...] We cannot separate formal architectural analysis of space from the way it is appropriated and experienced. [...] [W]hat is significant about the houses of the people is less the exemplary influence of architectural innovators that the production of space by those who lived in it. The unnamed architect of the houses of the people were the workers who built spaces to meet their need and thereby collectively expressed what those needs were. When charitable*

> *institutions or government agencies tried to construct social centers modeled on the house of the people but without the active participation of unions and co-operatives, they failed.'*
>
> *(Kohn, 2003, p. 106)*

In her explanation of spatial coding, Kohn identified four general properties of space within the sites of resistance she was studying. Firstly, space could initiate, maintain or interrupt interaction, encourage or inhibit contact, and aggregate or exclude. Space also served as a backdrop of a shared world and forms the basis for intersubjectivity, affective, gestural, and symbolic interactions. Hence spaces were not only physical but also social because they embodied different scripts and repertoires that might or might not correspond to those of the world at large. Finally, certain uses of space aggregated people and resources to facilitate communication, coordination and control. For example, the sites of resistance she studied provided political training and experience unavailable to the disenfranchised.

Kohn's work highlighted features that resonate with my conceptualization of community hubs. In particular, encounters and spatial coding are useful to make a step forward in unraveling the dialectic between interactions and where they happen. She showed that encounters are made of both explicit and implicit exchanges and are in dialectic with the environment where they happen through spatial coding, which captures the set of scripts and repertoires that are appropriate to a specific place. She also showed that space has an influence in encounters, not only because its physical dimension suggests certain uses that can influence an experience, but because space is part of that experience.

Hence spatial coding is useful to reflect about how space influences but does not determine whether encounters reproduce prevailing patterns of interactions (like those among soldiers in military barracks) or challenge them (like when workers and soldiers met in bars; or when subaltern groups self-organized to addressed their material and social needs in houses of the people); conversely, sustained encounter can either reinforce or challenge a place's spatial coding. In community hubs – places where participation happens but that also exist because of participation – spatial coding can help reflect about the role of space as a constitutive element of encounters.

3.3 Understanding community hubs as urban commons

The recent revival of the commons within and beyond academia is often attributed to Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues, who in the 1990 published *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action,* an extensive study of the ways in which self-organized communities manage natural resources. Older societies, however, already conceived commons as important goods that need be protected from enclosure. For example, commons existed in ancient Rome's legal code, which stipulated that there existed *res communes omnium* (lit. 'common things of everyone'), which included air, water, the seas, wild animals, fishes and more. *Res communes omnium* were for everyone but not

of anyone, meaning that they could not be appropriated by anyone nor exchanged as market goods (Dani, 2014; Maddalena, 2011).

Commons were also mentioned in the Magna Carta, signed in 1215, which said that aristocrat landowners had some exclusive privileges on their property, like hunting, but also had to respect the right to access common land for other uses, like farming. Rather than redistributing land, the Magna Carta was limiting the extent of ownership rights. It framed the right to access and use commons not only as beyond the scope of ownership, but as a universal right: 'something that the king must respect and not something that he can grant' (Kratzwald, 2015, p. 29). While historical sources shows that 'originally, the concept of commons derived from the rural experience of shared natural resources' (Dellenbaugh et al., 2015, p. 9) and provide evidence that acknowledges the importance of preventing their enclosure, we do not know whether and how those resources were managed.

This is what Garret Hardin asked in 1968 asked in his study about common-pool resources titled *The Tragedy of the Commons*. Common-pool resources are 'shared resources in which each stakeholder has an equal interest' because they are important for people's livelihood (Hess, 2006). According to economic theories about the nature of different goods, they have two characteristics. Firstly, they are rivalrous, meaning that the more one person uses the resource the less is left for others. Secondly, they are non-excludable, meaning that it would be very hard (if not impossible) to control who gets to use the resource. Hardin argued that the conflicting interests of rational individuals whose main goal is to maximize the utility that they can extract from a resource would inevitably lead to the depletion of the latter. The tragedy was then inevitable, as no one would ever choose to limit their consumption (an immediate loss) in order to preserve the resource for future generations.

Table 1: Different types of economic goods (Hess and Ostrom, 2007)

	Non-Rivalrous (low subtractability)	**Rivalrous (high subtractability)**
Easy to exclude	Club good (cinema, theater)	Private good (food, clothes)
Hard to exclude	Public good (national defense, air)	Common-pool resource (fish stocks, coal)

Ostrom and her colleagues, on the other hand, documented how communities around the world had been using and self-managing their common-pool resources effectively without privatization nor direct government control. Their worked spanned wide, both geographically (from Switzerland to Japan, from Spain to the Philippines) and in terms of the resources communities managed (forests, fisheries, irrigation systems). Through modelling and quantitative analysis, Ostrom and her team were able to systematize the 'anthropological, sociological, and historical evidence that had long shown that if the herders talked with each other (or had

cultural rules of sharing) then they might easily solve any commons issue' (Harvey, 2013, p. 68).

How come, contrary to what Hardin foretold, that people were not prioritizing their individual interests? For Kratzwald (2015), Ostrom et al. showed that 'when the right arrangements have been found, there is no contradiction between individual interests, because everyone profits' (p. 33). In other words, commons could function without requiring 'better' people.

Although there was abundant evidence that communication, coordination and cooperative management could ensure the livelihood of communities while preserving resources for future generations, Ostrom et al. found that every commons worked differently. They could not identify universal solutions, but found eight conditions, which they called design principles, that increased the likelihood of long enduring, self-organized, and self-governed CPRs. (I summarized them in the left column of table 2.)

Over the years, the appeal of the commons went beyond natural resources. Hess (2008) mapped how commons-inspired ideas that self-managed cooperation could satisfy the needs of communities while preserving sustainability better than competition had been adapted to a range of material and immaterial goods. So-called new commons included culture (tourism, sports); infrastructure; knowledge (the Internet, libraries, patents, etc.); health; markets, and global commons (air, oceans, and more generally the climate).

Table 2: Original design principles for CPRs (Ostrom, 1990; left) and adjusted principles for urban commons (Parker & Johansson, 2011; right).

0	Not present in the classic list.	*Appropriators need sufficient knowledge to understand the value of the resource*
1	*Clearly defined boundaries (effective exclusion of external unentitled parties)*	Expected to be relaxed.
2	*Rules regarding the appropriation and provision of common resources are adapted to local conditions*	Expected to hold unchanged.
3	*Collective-choice arrangements allow most resource appropriators to participate in the decision-making process*	Expected to hold but modified to an extent by difficulties of clearly delimiting appropriators.
4	*Effective monitoring by monitors who are part of or accountable to the appropriators*	Expected to hold unchanged. (Mutual monitoring is likely to be more difficult in many cases where value of the resource is indirect.)

5	*There is a scale of graduated sanctions for resource appropriators who violate community rules*	Expected to hold unchanged.
6	*Mechanisms of conflict resolution are cheap and of easy access*	Expected to hold unchanged.
7	*The self-determination of the community is recognized by higher-level authorities*	Expected to hold with the slight modification. (Urban commons are likely to have a more active presence of government enabling.)
8	*In the case of larger common-pool resources: organization in the form of multiple layers of nested enterprises, with small local CPRs at the base level*	Expected to hold unchanged

In Hess' mapping of the new commons, urban commons were included among neighborhood commons. These included both material elements of the urban landscape – such as apartment complexes, housing collectives, industrialized areas, parking, playgrounds, sidewalks, green spaces – as well as immaterial ones – like conviviality, sense of belonging, and safety.

However, new commons, and urban commons in particular, did not share all the characteristics of CPRs. Parker and Johansson (2011) identified four categories urban commons – urban space, ecosystem services, infrastructure, and intangibles – each with its peculiar characteristics and challenges. In fact, they argued that urban commons share characteristics of knowledge, infrastructure and cultural commons, and adjusted Ostrom's design principles accordingly (right column of table 2). Combining these adjusted principles with ideas of authors like De Angelis (2010), Kip (2015) and Hardt and Negri (2009), I want to propose an understanding of urban commons based on three ideas.

Hardt and Negri (2009) defined a commons both as common wealth and the shared form of democratic managing that wealth. De Angelis (2010) took this idea further and argued that 'resource-based definitions of the commons [are] too limited' and that we must understand commons as made of three inseparable components. The commons, a 'non-commodified means of fulfilling people's needs;' commoners, the community of people who share the commons, define autonomously how to regulate its use and ensure its preservation; and commoning, 'the social process that creates and reproduces the commons' (p. 2). The first idea is that commons are the product of a continuous dialectic between these inseparable components.

This means that urban commons have both a material and immaterial dimension that capture, respectively, the physical characteristics of a place and the people and practices that enable its social reproduction. There can be no commons without commoning, and no commoning without commoners. This is particularly relevant

to urban spaces whose social reproduction cannot be untangled from human relations that perform it.

However, bringing social relations into the definition of urban commons is not enough. We also need an appropriate conceptualization of the urban that goes beyond the underlying idea of a territorially bounded entity (Kip, 2015). Drawing from critical urban studies, Kip understood the urban as a form of social organization that is 'multi-scalar' and functions as a 'space of mediation.' 'Commoning efforts are not pure and distinct spaces,' rather 'urban commoners are always already part of other processes and spaces that influence, inform, foster, or compete with their involvement in a particular commoning project' (p. 53).

For instance, urban commons have an indirect value because in many cases they are not as essential to survival as CPRs, like fisheries or forests. 'Awareness of the resource is not a problem in classical common-pool resources but may certainly be so in the case of urban ecosystem services.'. Exclusion of unintended parties, then, 'is unlikely for practical reasons and may not be desirable from a citywide perspective.' In fact, Parker and Johansson (2011) said, 'it is to be expected that people other than direct appropriators of the resource may contribute to its management' (p. 13). For example, an urban garden could be accessed by city dwellers who come from other neighborhoods. The second idea that I want to propose, then, is that the boundaries of what is the commons, who are the commoners, and how is commoning done, are likely subject to continuous renegotiations and fluctuations.

The third and last point relates to how, due to the total interrelatedness of urban environments, we cannot ignore the relation between urban commons and the socio-economic systems in which they exist. On one hand, often urban commons need to be managed through collaborations between citizens and public institutions. This implies 'a new critical challenge […] in making the cross-sector collaboration function well' (Parker & Johansson, 2011, p. 14). On the other, 'as urbanization keeps expanding and capital latches onto new externalities urban commons can only survive if they keep expanding as well' (Kip, 2015, p. 44), lest they risk being appropriated or domesticated, either by those same public institutions with whom they need to collaborate or by other forces.

When appropriated, urban commons might just become a trendy label that gives a new coat of paint to business-as-usual practices. Domestication, on the other hand, is a more subtle risk that can be linked with forms of institutionalization (Roggero, 2010). It refers, for example, to limiting commoning to isolated projects (urban gardens, common kitchens, and perhaps community hubs) but impede that the affects the structures of society (urban infrastructure, education, health).

Hence, to survive 'commoning needs to remain a collective struggle to appropriate and transform a society's common wealth' through concrete examples 'based on equality, solidarity and collective inventiveness' that must 'remain *infectious*, osmotic, and capable of extending egalitarian values and practices outside their boundaries' (Hardt & Negri, 2009, 251-253). In other words, the third idea is that not only urban commons cannot be understood as isolated forms of social organization, but they also cannot survive in isolation.

To sum up, I understand urban commons as the products of three inseparable components, whose boundaries are subject to continuous renegotiation, and who cannot be understood or survive in isolation. How do these three ideas about urban commons help us reflect about community hubs? I think the can help us address the second issue that I listed at the end of section 3.1, namely the difficulty to define the community of the community hub, especially given the diverse coalitions that lead to hybrid entities.

Like urban commons, community hubs are not just buildings, but the people that meet in them, the activities they carry out, and the various arrangements that enable their social reproduction. If urban commons depend on the continuous dialectic between commons, commoners and commoning, community hubs exist as the product of interactions between space, people, and encounters. And like in urban commons, the boundaries and definitions of these components get continuously renegotiated. By their nature community hubs are multipurpose spaces that host various people, their needs, interests and uses. But is built space the commons? Who are the commoners? And how is commoning done?

Community hubs provide a range of goods and services that address both material and immaterial needs, and that both enable and depend from contributions from various actors. For one, the focus of participation in community hubs expands from deliberation and advocacy to action. People stopped being reflexive subjects who advance demands to decision-makers and started organize to address their needs autonomously (Avanzi et al., 2016). Hence, while some people contribute to the community hub others benefit from the services it offers. The commons is made of this wider understanding of what urban welfare, urban regeneration and community activation entail as well as the space that enables and sustains it.

In a similar way, the community of commoners is easier to define with natural resources, where commoners are the people who need to access a resource and can do so according to well-defined conditions. Who, contributes to the social reproduction of a community hub? And how? Different people can contribute and support a community hub in different ways. They can voluntarily help taking care of the space; they can contribute by proposing and develop autonomously a project or an activity, or be its audience and benefit from it; depending on the governance of the space, they might also be included in decisions related to the management of the space.

Finally, the process of social reproduction is also under continuous renegotiation. If community hubs need an active, interdependent and permeable community, they also often include a coordinating entity to keep the space running and allow people to take an active part in its social and cultural life. Coordinating entities function through heterogenous arrangements that integrate for-profit and non-profit, which makes the public-private dichotomy inadequate to describe community hubs.

Continuous renegotiation of boundaries can help highlight how what the community hubs is, the different roles of the people who get involved (promoters, activators, contributors, and users), and the arrangements through which space is shared, are not only undefinable a-priori but always under question.

On a practical level, continuous renegotiation is also instrumental to remain permeable to outside contributions, which is likely relevant to places that depend on and support the social fabric of their territory through accessible offers. By enabling and supporting local actors seeking to respond to the different demands of the territory, community hubs can offer a wide range of services, which are complementary or even substitute welfare services that were associated with public institutions. This does not mean that a community hub will cover all the needs of a local community, rather it points to the fact that their portfolio of activities is both relevant to the territory and somewhat unpredictable. Hence, like urban commons, community hubs cannot be understood as isolated forms of social organization and cannot to survive in isolation, lest they risk becoming unsustainable, appropriated and/or domesticated by other forces.

Community hubs as spaces of encounters with otherness

The previous section showed that community hubs require availability of space, social capital and arrangements among various actors, and that the definitions of these essential components (people, space and arrangements) cannot be determined a priori not are static over time. In a way, being a multi-purpose space is for community hubs both a social mission and instrumental to their survival. However, it also implies a challenge to integrate different uses, needs, understanding of space. How can community hubs maintain enough structure to function consistently and sustain their activities, while also adapting to changing circumstances and remaining permeable to the external contributions that they need to survive? It would be quite surprising if organizations that I described so far – who depend on multiple actors, bring heterogenous groups together, are constantly readapting and renegotiating how they work, and need to make do with limited resources – would not have to deal with internal disagreements.

Do community hubs experience what Kohn called the frustrations of joint endeavors?[5] Avanzi et al. (2016) argued that, to integrate their transdisciplinary activities, community hubs sustain a constant tension that permeates the design, support and implementation of each. But how does that unravel in practice? Coordination is important to ensure that the space works as expected but, for instance, it is less clear how caretaking functions intersect with other activities. Or while the governance of the space and its success (or survival) are linked with maintaining an experimental and adaptable approach, how are conflicts handled? To address this question, I propose to study community hubs as spaces of encounter with otherness.

In *Towards the city of thresholds* (2019), Stavos Stavrides highlighted the importance of how people approach otherness in encounters. He said that 'approaching otherness is a difficult act' (2019, p. 8) that can be done with three different intents: hostility, assimilation and mutual awareness. (What follows are heavy simplifications that help me illustrate his point.)

[5] Like inefficiencies of collective decision making, rivalries between different visions, corruption of power, and constraints of a hostile economy.

Imagine two people divided by an imaginary border. They can approach each other to verify hostility, and eventually deploy it if necessary. Crossing the border, then, becomes a symbolic act of war. For example, people in gated communities are likely to let their preconceptions prevail when they approach outsiders. (Like striking workers and Sardinian solider on the streets.)

Another way to approach otherness is through assimilation: here the encounter between two people might include a will to embrace their differences, but without an intermediary phase of mutual recognition and negotiating gestures, differences get flattened into a preconceived understanding of the other. Stavrides mentions tourists as collectors of 'sensation-trophies', who assimilate otherness superficially.

Finally, when people decide to transition in the territory that belongs to no one, recognize their differences and negotiate an understanding that does not homogenize them, otherness can be approached in an act of mutual awareness. Mutual recognition is not only about comparing differences but finding ways to translate them and negotiate without reducing those differences to a common denominator. This is the hardest of the three approaches because it requires a conscious effort of accepting oneself as incomplete (Sennett, 1992). 'Being able to become other, even if one returns again to one's former self, is being able to accept otherness and, potentially, a position from which to construct a relationship with the other as other' (Stavrides, 2019, p. 10).

That non-appropriated territory of transition is a threshold, an in-between space that 'separate[s] by connecting at the same time' and thus allows comparison (p. 5). Thresholds can be associated with physical spaces. For Stavrides, bridges offer the most appropriate analogy, since they connect different places without eliminating their differences. However, he was not the only author who wrote about thresholds. Bourdieu (1977), who understood space as an educating system that sustains social identities reproduced through networks of practices, focused on the symbolic meaning of the door. In his studies about the Kabyle house in 1960s Algeria, the door functioned as a threshold because it 'acquire[d] its meaning as a point of both contact and separation through the practices that cross it' (p. 7). But thresholds need not to be identifiable physical places: van Gennep (1960), for instance, compared thresholds to rites of passage, within which and through which people ventured towards others.

For me, thresholds are those spaces, physical or metaphorical, where we negotiate with otherness. They are complicated social artifacts that challenge relations between sameness and otherness. If building a bridge of mutual recognition requires 'keeping the necessary distance while crossing it at the same time,' (p. 5), it is by dwelling on the threshold that we can feel that distance and perform intermediary identities.

Stavrides linked ideas of thresholds and otherness with identities, which do not refer to fixed traits or beliefs but are rather something that get performed through

social relations[6]. Every passage through a threshold, then, implies an explicitly or implicitly symbolic act 'that is essentially the suspension of a previous identity and the preparation for a new one. […] The wisdom hidden in the threshold experiences' Stavrides said 'lies in the awareness that otherness can only be approached by opening the borders of identity, forming – so to speak – intermediary zones of doubt, ambivalence, hybridity, and negotiation' (Stavrides, 2019, p. 7).

While spaces of emancipation can often be 'envisaged either as freed strongholds to be defended or as enclaves of otherness,' Stavrides (2019, p. 231) proposed to 'abandon a view of autonomy that fantasizes uncontaminated enclaves of emancipation.' Rather, emancipated communities are made by 'emerging subjects of commoning actions' who 'transform themselves by always being open to "newcomers" or by becoming themselves newcomers' (Rancière, 2011, p. 17). The constantly negotiable in-betweenness, then, becomes part of the process that produces cooperation through sharing, and that implies an overspill of the boundaries of any established community and the cross-fertilization of identities. In other words, 'the sharing between equals and, at the same time, the opening of the circles of sharing towards "outsiders", necessarily implies creating institutions that can manage difference and tolerate unpredictability' (Stavrides, 2019 p. 240).

Through what mechanisms can community hubs manage differences and tolerate unpredictability? We have seen how the place where encounters happen influences them through its spatial coding, that set of scripts and repertoires appropriate to a place. Depending on spatial coding, certain spaces invite people to have more egalitarian or solidaristic encounters, or hierarchical ones. Kohn (2003) distinguished between dominated and appropriated spaces. Dominated spaces were designed to fulfill the need of standardized citizens (e.g. churches, military fortifications, shopping malls). They 'helped create the kind of subjects they were designed for' (p. 154). Appropriated spaces, on other hand, were produced by ordinary people who adapted their skills to their needs and the particular context. Stavrides echoed these ideas but talked about institutions, which he understood as mechanism of social organization that societies deploy to reproduce themselves by ensuring that a certain social order gets repeated. In other words, 'institution guarantee regulated repeatability and, therefore, predictability of acts' (Stavrides, 2019, 230). For Hardt and Negri (2009) institutions create a context for singularities to manage their encounters. Stavrides distinguished between dominant institutions and institutions of commoning.

The first are social arrangements that defend rigid identities, predictability and homogeneity. As tools of social organization, they tend to circumscribe a community as a closed world of predictable and repeatable practices. Dominant institutions classify and predict behaviors; define a community around a fixed and unambiguous identity with closed and rigid borders; and enable only those practices that support their self-reproduction. This can lead to enclosure according to which

[6] Hardt and Negri (2009, 338-339) proposed to talk about singularities rather than identities, because they are defined by and oriented towards multiplicity and are 'always engaged in a process of becoming different.'

only those people that comply with certain identifies and behaviors are allowed into the community. Dominant institutions sustain spaces of disciplines and enclaves of rights shared only among their members. They consolidate the accumulation of power by reproducing a status quo made of homogeneous and predictable identities, behaviors and arrangements.

Examples of dominant institutions include gated communities, ghettos but also, perhaps less institutively, public spaces. Public spaces are controlled by dominant institutions that are 'essentially forms of authorization that aim at directing the behaviors' of the people who use those spaces, and have 'general rules appeared addressed to homogenized users who can only have access to a specific place at specific hours of the day (or who are not allowed to "step on the grass," and so on)' (Stavrides, 2019, p. 236). That said, there are social structures that need to minimize unpredictability, which include both tangible structures, like roads, and intangible ones, like legal systems.

Institution of commoning, on the other hand, are those mechanisms that regulate the corresponding practices of commoning. They create spaces of emancipation rather than discipline, where open identities form and develop through negotiation and translation. 'An emancipate community is a community of narrators and translators' (Rancière, 2011, p. 17). Open identities are still enclosed but in flexible borders, whose thresholds offer meeting points with otherness, 'zones that allow flows to penetrate the perimeter of a defined community' (Stavrides, 2019, p. 241). Institutions of commoning 'define subjects of action, and the boundaries of the group inside which commoning takes place' (p. 233) This does not mean that there are no boundaries, but they are, as we have seen, continuously renegotiated through the encounter of differences. In other words, a politics of commoning is necessary to prevent institutions from limiting commoning by explicitly devising and implementing procedures that avoid enclosure.

Just like dominant institutions, institutions of commoning require rules, although there are 'obvious differences' in terms of both form and content since rules can be oriented towards different social bonds and 'forms of collaboration based not on homogenization but on multiplicity' (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 338). If rules in dominant institutions consolidate the accumulation of power, those in institutions of commoning prevent and discourage it. 'Sharing of power' Stavrides explained 'is simultaneously the precondition of egalitarian sharing and its ultimate target' (p. 236). Mechanisms that allow for sharing of power can include duty rotation, collective accumulation of goods, and democratic accountability.

In a similar way, openness to change and negotiation should not be confused with a lack of structure and hierarchy. This is relevant to community hubs, which must have a reliable structure while remaining flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and permeable to enable and encourage the external contributions they need to survive. Since thresholds are where encounters with difference happen, and since community hubs thrive on the integration of differences, both physical and metaphorical thresholds are relevant to how they function. Like institutions of

commoning, then, community hubs must function as permeable organizations that allow for unpredictable identities and enable their differences to be integrated.

> *'To devise common spaces means, thus, something a lot more than to succeed in reappropriating small pieces of still available open space. It means, explicitly or implicitly, sometimes in full conscience and sometimes not, discovering the power to create new ambiguous, possibly contradictory but always open institutions of commoning. Actual physical space, but also metaphorical imaginary of space, becomes not only the ground that is necessary in order to see these institutions function; space shapes institutions of commoning and is shaped by them.'*
>
> *(Stavrides, 2019, p. 236)*

3.4 Opening the black box of community hubs

My understanding of community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation builds on how they are rooted in their territory and continuous evolution. As such, community hubs emerge in response to and evolve in tandem with their social, political and economic contexts; depend on coalitions of heterogenous and interdependent actors; and are multi-purpose spaces that enable participation to exist but also exist because of it. In addition, community hubs are the product of three inseparable components: people, space and the arrangements that sustain its social reproduction. We cannot understand community hubs without including them all, nor we can take understand these components as static, because each is subject to continuous renegotiation. In a similar way, community hubs cannot be understood, nor survive for that matter, as isolated entities. Being multipurpose is both a mission and a survival strategy, since community hubs need to balance between reliable structure on the one hand, and flexibility and permeability on the other. To do so, community hubs must function as permeable organizations that allow for unpredictable identities and enable their differences to be integrated.

If in this chapter I combined a diverse pool of literature to help me conceptualize these points, now I want to explore how these dynamics unravel in practice. As I argued in the previous chapter, studying participation as context-sensitive and contested requires to zoom into specific practices to explore and reflect on their nuances, paradoxes and contradictions. My proposal to continue reflecting on these issues is to open the black box of community hubs. The idea comes from actor-network theory (ANT), which, together with action research, is one of the methodological approaches that I followed in the field and that I will present in the next chapter.

ANT understands social formations (which it calls actor-networks) as vibrant entities that are continuously made and unmade through the interactions of humans and non-humans (which ANT calls actants). Actants are the source of action, which they can initiate independently or have granted by other actants since, according to ANT's principle of generalized symmetry, that both humans and non-humans can be relevant actants. My analysis will start from the assumption that both people and

built space can have the same relevance in the making and unmaking of community hubs.

By understanding actor-networks as vibrant entities whose durability depends on the bonds between actants, ANT gives researchers the possibility to zoom into or out of entities. Any actor-network – be it a person, a group, a place, a technology or a mechanism of social organization – can be considered a black-box waiting to be opened. That means that every actant is itself an actor-network, and that researchers can either open a black-boxed actant and trace the associations that make it, or punctualize a group of actants and consider them as a (temporarily) stable black box. Entities remain black-boxed until researchers decide to open them and explore the associations that make them work consistently. In my case, I will attempt to do that with community hubs.

ANT also states that no entity is inherently strong or weak by itself: actants become stronger by forging alliances and weaken in isolation or as a result of contrasting associations. Hence through meticulous ethnographies of actor-networks, researchers step aside and follow the actors, meaning that they let them unfold associations without pre-determined conceptions. As I said in the introduction, I started this research with an idea to test whether digital space could be relevant actants and what their role could be in influencing encounters with other actants. ANT allows me to integrate how people, built spaces and the digital tools contributed to the social reproduction of community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation without excluding the potential relevance of other entities.

By integrating concepts from ANT I build my research question as follows: how do humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs?

Before moving onto the case studies, then, in the next chapter I will present the two approaches that I followed while in the field – actor-network theory and action research – and reflect about how the combination worked in practice. The three case studies that I will dive into in chapters 5, 6 and 7 revolve around multi-purposes spaces whose goal is to aggregate people, energies and ideas to develop projects for their territory and which, conversely, also depend on aggregation to thrive. The first two case studies revolved around two top-down participatory processes in Chieri, which I followed from September 2017 until July 2018. The third case is based on my experience in a self-managed space in Valencia, where I stayed from October 2018 until June 2019.

The three spaces were significantly different from one another in terms of their goals, how far they were in their development, the actors involved and their roles. The first space that I will examine was an ex-textile factory that needed to be regenerated, tried to reactivate a part of it to make it a community hub, but failed. In the second process, the building was already active, and the goal was to emulate the model of Turin's houses of the neighborhood to make it more permeable to outsiders. Finally, the space in Valencia tried to be a self-managed hybrid of a co-working and community hub.

As I discussed in the introduction, my choice of case studies was influenced by both my research goals and the circumstances I found in the field. My intent has never been to compare the two contexts, nor the three case-studies. I think, however, that they share enough common points to allow for reflections that can be relevant to all of them; return something to those contexts; and provide interesting reflections even beyond them. Like in community hubs, in each of the three cases participation existed because there was a space where it could happen. Each space also tried, in different ways, to become a catalyst of local inventiveness and energies by offering space where people could meet and develop ideas. Finally, they all drew inspiration from other community hubs, although their goal was not to replicate ideas but to re-adapt them. In different ways and with different results, each space would become community hubs only if participation continued.

Chapter 4

Methodology

In the previous two chapters I outlined my understanding of participation as a context-sensitive and contested concept, and then narrowed my focus to the spaces of participation. Accordingly, I my research question is: how humans and non-humans interact in the participated management of community hubs? In the next part of the thesis, I will use three case studies to explore the question. Before doing so, in this chapter I will outline how I approached my fieldwork. I will start by introducing the two approaches that I combined in the field: actor-network theory (ANT) and action research (AR)[7].

For ANT, I introduce the concepts that helped me most in revealing, observing and thinking about the social dynamics that I observed and participated in. AR, on the other hand, guided me as I approached my inquiry with an engaged positionality, while having to rely on a complex network of relations and mutual learning. My goal for this chapter is to address two questions: do their dissimilarities prevent AR and ANT from being used together? If not, how can they complement each other?

In the following section, I introduce the only two studies that I could find where ANT and AR were explicitly combined. Hagglund (2005) argued that ANT helped him maintain a comprehensive analytical structure while avoiding pre-determined explanations. Lewis (2008), on the other hand, focused on his practice to argue that ANT can help action researchers remain conscious about how they carry out their studies. I then compare their respective literatures to highlight how both ANT and AR refuse generalizations and are concerned with making inquiries more pluralistic and transparent. In fact, I argue they might not only be compatible but even complementary.

[7] A substantial part of this chapter is a re-elaboration of an article that was published in the Action Research Journal under the title Reflections on combining Action-Research and Actor-network Theory (Piovesan, 2020). The main difference in in the second section, in which this chapter includes also reflections from my field-work in Valencia, which were absent from the article.

In the last section, I shift to a more personal perspective and use anecdotes from my fieldwork to reflect about how the combination worked in practice. As I said in the introduction, the methodological approach I wanted to follow was influential in deciding my case studies.

Although a thesis requires to follow a linear logic, this is inevitably a constructed narration. As I said in the introduction, I think there is value in seeking transparency about the development of my research process. What I researched and the way I went about it evolved in tandem with the circumstance I experiences why in the field. In other words, my research focus influenced my field-work as much as my flied-work influenced my research focus. If I started my PhD hoping to conduct an action research on how digital tools could support the participated management of urban spaces, after a few in the field I started wondering how I could combine information from the parts when I participated to those when I would continue observing – which were and remained most of what I did.

Following a suggestion from one of my supervisors, I looked into ANT, which caught my attention because the emphasis it gave to non-humans seemed to complement the role that digital tools had in my work. In addition, ANT required me to carry out an ethnography-like description of the interactions I was observing, which seemed close enough to what I had been doing. Hence, I decided to follow ANT for observation phases and applied principles of AR when I was able to participate. So if AR guided my entrance to and shaped my attitude in the field – which led me to experience different roles but also to unexpected situations that enriched both me and my work – ANT helped me remain open to new perspectives without losing track of my broader research goals.

I am not looking for generalizable results but 'concrete examples and detailed narratives' that can support partial reflections (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 283). I am committed, then, to what Stephen White (2000) called a weak ontology and (Barnett and Low (2004, p. 14) defined as 'approaches that affirm certain fundamental values while at the same time acknowledging the contingency and contestability of those fundamentals.' Hence, although my reflections will also be context-sensitive and contested, I hope they can useful to the debates that I navigate (both within and outside academia) about spaces of participation outlined in the previous chapters.

4.1 Actor-Network Theory

> *'How is it that the ideas and writings that issue from [some] institutions are able to revolutionise, if only gradually, conditions of work in industry, the universe of consumer goods and lifestyles?" [H]ow are certain technical devices [...] able to conquer markets throughout the world [although] anthropological studies of the laboratory have shown that nothing exceptional occurs within the walls of research centres themselves which could account for their influence?'*
>
> *(Callon, 1986, p.1).*

ANT developed within science and technology studies (STS) to investigate the dialectic between scientific praxis and the social context where it exists, and

questioned assumptions that the former could be free from normative judgments. Through meticulous ethnographic accounts of life in the laboratory, early ANT scholars found that intellectual and organizational factors were as relevant to scientific developments as other controversies that involved people, objects, ideas, events, and more (Latour, 1987). Michel Callon is one of ANT's main promoters together with Bruno Latour and John Law. In the quote above, he questioned whether the supposedly objective scientific method could portray fully how theoretical and applied sciences advanced and impacted society.

Over time, ANT was applied beyond STS, and evolved from a theory of technoscience to a 'general social theory centered on technoscience' (Simondo, 2009, p. 81). ANT provides researchers with a vocabulary that emphasizes how heterogeneous entities (called actants) contribute to the making and unmaking of social formations in which they interact (called actor-networks). In the following paragraphs, I explain what actor-networks are through ANT's main concepts: actant, mediator-intermediary, translation, agenda, black-box, and cognitive relativism.

Actants are the source of action, which they can initiate independently or have granted by other actants. Accordingly, ANT's principle of generalized symmetry states that both humans and non-humans can be relevant actants. (Often, authors use 'actant' instead of 'actors' to overcome the 'unnecessary duality between humans and non-humans' (Cressman, 2009, p. 4).)

For example, in Callon's (1986) study on the development of the electric car at EDF (*Électricité de France*) actants included engineers, French consumers, ministries, and environmental movements, but also accumulators, fuel cells, and electrodes. 'For, if the electrons do not play their part or the catalysts become contaminated' he explained 'the result would be no less disastrous than if the users rejected the new vehicle, [or] the new regulations were not enforced' (p. 22).

If generalized symmetry allows an endless number of entities to play a role in the (un)making of associations that constitute and maintain an actor-network, how can researchers distinguish between relevant and irrelevant actants? Actants matter in different ways: while intermediaries transport messages, actions or intentions without significantly altering them, mediators contaminate them with their influence. 'A concatenation of mediators does not trace the same connections and does not require the same type of explanations as a retinue of intermediaries transporting a cause' (Latour, 2005, p. 107).

In practice, however, the distinction remains a matter of perspective and all actors can be either intermediaries, mediators or irrelevant depending on the actor-network under study. In other words, no entity is inherently strong or weak by itself: actants become stronger by forging alliances and weaken in isolation or as a result of contrasting associations.

For example, in a study about a Brazilian ecological field site, Latour (2009) discussed how researchers used standardized charts to annotate the color of soil. On one hand color charts are intermediaries that allow scientists worldwide to collect data through a common schema. On the other, they can also be mediators that, together with methodological prescriptions, translate data collection practices. As

he watched scientists hold their charts against the ground and uniform nature according to a selection of colors and codes, Latour noted how ‘a standard philosophical problem that gives rise to questions about realism, is reduced by scientists to a few millimeters’ (p. 83).

Since agency is determined by associations with other entities, actants are continuously engaged in translations attempts to transfer their influence, strengthen their position and promote their goals. Performing a translation ‘does not mean a shift from one vocabulary to another’ (p. 32), but refers to creating a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies the elements it connects (Latour, 1994). As Freeman (2018) explained, translations ‘give shape to associations between actors, which, in turn, give shape to the collective action of an actor-network’ (p. 5). They happen over four moments: problematization, interessment, enrollment, and mobilization.

The first phase of translation, problematization, refers to ‘an action or intervention that is put forward to solve a problem in a way that both defines what the problem is and identifies actors crucial to seeking its resolution’ (Freeman, 2018, p. 8). In other words, actor-networks become visible, or start forming, when matters of concern lead to controversies. In the second phase, interessement, actants attempt to assign roles to other entities, which redefine their identity within the agenda proposed. ‘As multiple actants compete for the attention of others,’ however, ‘interessment does not guarantee moving to the next phase’ (p. 9).

Enrollment, the third phase, starts when ‘multilateral negotiations, trials of strength and tricks that accompany the interessements’ begin to succeed (Callon, 1984, p. 211). By gaining allies, actants strengthen their agency and threaten that of their competitors. The final phase, mobilization, leads to ‘a deeper bond than proclaimed alliances or explicit forms of consensus’ that disseminates and secures the shared agenda; mobilized actants renew their alliance to an agenda by consistently supporting it (Freeman, 2018, p. 11).

Translations are seldom straight forward: when interests are transferred, they take ‘detours’ that morph them into new ‘composite’ goals (Tabak, 2015, p. 39). Those four moments often overlap or happen simultaneously and should be considered more as a conceptual guide than clearly distinguishable events.

In addition, even consolidated translations can be dismantled. In Callon’s study about the development of the electric car, Renault had been enrolled by EDF to produce the chassis for its electric vehicle. Through its work, Renault gained technical expertise, contacts within the French government and insights into consumers opinion. The associations Renault had built as a partner of the project allowed it to counterattack to EDF’s plans by publishing a book that argued against the viability of EDF’s project both from a technical and social perspective (Callon 1986).

This turn of events also exemplifies ANT’s principle of irreduction, which states that no actant can ever be fully contained inside another. Actor-networks are thus continuously made and unmade by actants who attempt translations to influence each other, forge alliances and promote competing agendas. Through a series of successful and failed translations, interests might eventually align,

identities get attributed and roles assigned. All these contribute to the consolidation of certain agendas and shape the course of future actions (Callon, 1986).

The more allies are successfully enrolled and mobilized, the more stable an actor-network will be. Black-boxes are actor-networks whose stability can be momentarily taken for granted. Individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, technologies, social orders, and established facts can also be seen as black-boxes waiting to be opened. Technical objects that function as expected (like computers, cars, or fridges) remain black-boxed until researchers decide to open them and explore the associations that make them work consistently.

By understanding actor-networks as vibrant entities whose durability depends on the bonds between actants, ANT gives researchers the possibility to zoom into or out of entities. Since each actant is itself an actor-network, researchers can open a 'black-boxed' actant to trace the associations that make it. Or they can take a group of actants and 'punctualize' them into a black box, which can be considered as an actant within a bigger actor-network. For example, each scientist at EDF was also a black-box, while the wholes of EDF and Renault could be either zoomed into or black-boxed were actants in a bigger actor-network that was influencing the future of electric cars in France.

To conclude, any network is only as strong as its weakest link (Latour, 1987) and even the most consolidated ones are the result of relations that are never static but consistently being performed (Cressman, 2009). The hyphen between 'actor' and 'network' exemplifies that all actants are simplified actor-networks (Tabak, 2015).

The job of ANT researchers, then, is not only to identify the associations that make an actor-network, but to trace how they form and persist. According to some scholars, this is like what ethnographers do (Herbert, 2000). However, ethnographers simultaneously occupy two perspectives: that of the actors being studied and that of the theoretically informed and logically rigorous social scientist. ANT researchers, on the other hand, should be guided by 'cognitive relativism', namely the idea that only through 'literal, naive and myopic' accounts (Latour, 2005, p. 104) can they avoid unilateral definitions of how actants define and order their social reality (Law, 2004). The social, then, is nothing but 'a type of connection between things' (p. 5) since 'there is no society, no social realm, and no social ties but there exist translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations' (Latour, 2005, p. 108).

4.2 Action Research

Action research (AR) is an approach to inquiry where practitioners and non-professional co-researchers address knowledge production and social changes at the same time (Saija, 2014). AR is different than ANT, and most other research approaches, because it relies on different relationships with non-academics, has a different purpose, and develops through a nonlinear relation between knowledge and practice. By combining action and reflection, AR teams usually strive to solve issues that are relevant to the group or community involved in the project (Reason

& Bradbury, 2011), thus developing an understanding of their social system by trying to change some aspects of it (Elden & Chisholm, 1993).

AR legitimizes sharing, borrowing, improvisation and creativity, promotes mutual and critical reflexive learning, and entrusts the responsibility for good practice to both researcher and co-researchers (Chambers, 2008). However, rather than a rigidly defined approach, AR is more 'a family of approaches' whose principles have been interpreted differently by its practitioners (Reason & Bradbury, 2011, p. 7).

My understanding of AR is strongly inspired by Gergen (2015, 2017) and Saija (2014, 2017), for whom AR is an approach to inquiry that addresses knowledge production and social change at the same time; has activist trajectories; and is founded on a unique ethical and epistemological stance that amplifies the transformative power of learning. In practice, AR is founded on collaboration with non-academics; creates context-sensitive knowledge; requires flexibility; and combines action and reflection in iterative phases.

Firstly, action researchers collaborate with non-academics to do research with people rather than on people (Gergen & Gergen, 2011, p. 165). To do so, they bring action, reflection and mutual learning into communities where 'traditional issues of truth and objectivity are replaced by concerns with [what] research brings forth' (p. 162). Non-professional researchers are involved in all phases of knowledge production: from identifying the issues that resonate with stakeholders (Reason & Bradbury, 2011) to agreeing how to generate knowledge about them, and discussing which actions should be carried out to address them (Brydon-Miller et al., 2016).

Close collaboration can reveal and possibly neutralize power inequalities between researcher and researched (Mills et al., 2010). However, processes of collective self-analysis require time and trust and o-researchers might initially be suspicious of academics – for example because of differences in background, social status and economic conditions.

Secondly, if ANT maintains that we can learn about social phenomena through relativist accounts of the associations that constitute them, action researchers learn about social issues by combining action and reflection to address those issues. By addressing local issues within a specific spatial and historical frame, AR produces what Saija (2014) called context-sensitive knowledge, or insights that can be used to affect that frame but cannot be transferred to other situations.

Since human behavior is socially constructed and, as such, it is a function of the context in which it occurred (Lewin, 1947), action researchers cannot advance generalizable claims. Rather, they 'simply pain[t] another in an expanding array of pictures', their projects cannot be directly compared with one another (Gergen & Gergen, 2011, p. 169). By breaking the linearity of positivist approaches – where rigorous observations generate knowledge fit to guide action – AR places knowledge and action in a dialectical relation. However, context-sensitive knowledge can lead to 'partial answers' and support 'the ongoing dialogue about the problems, possibilities, and risks' related to the topic being discussed (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 290).

Thirdly, AR 'does not start from a desire of changing others "out there" [but] from an orientation of change with others' (Reason & Bradbury, 2011, p. 1). As they collaborate with non-academics, researchers share their analytical skills while remaining open to change their point of view. In addition, the circumstances in which they operate will most likely change during the investigation. Deviations from the initial plan, then, are to be expected: for instance, Brydon-Miller et al. (2016) talked about the 'chaos, uncertainty and messiness' (p. 21) of AR, while Park (2009) wrote about how AR lacks precision; is time consuming and could face organizational and social constraints.

Flexibility is also be necessary to avoid personal and group conflicts (Er et al., 2013). In fact, AR requires expertise that is seldom trained in academia, like social and persuasive skills to set up the collaboration (McArdle, 2008), facilitate group discussion and manage projects that rely on external collaborators (Mackewn, 2008). Action researchers, then, must strike a balance between interpersonal aspects of a project – building trust, facilitating mutual understanding and learning, agreeing on a shared representation of the experience – and its operational concerns – like deadlines and budget constraints.

And fourthly, AR teams work in iterative cycles of action and reflection, in which they apply their collective knowledge, evaluate its helpfulness, and adjust their strategy to inform the next iteration. Lewin (1947) spoke of a spiral of steps while Freire (1986) called conscientization the process through which researchers and co-researchers develop a more conscious understanding their social reality when substituting observation with an iterative mix of action and reflection.

In AR reflexivity is crucial during the project, especially in the evaluation phases of each iterative cycle, but also afterwards. When teams analyze the data collected, they should also reflect about how certain information was prioritized; why was that the case; and how it was formalized. Finally, action researchers should also reflect on how field work activities may have changed their point of view on the issue under study.

To conclude, these principles have ethical and epistemological consequences that are seldom considered, and perhaps unacceptable, in other approaches. Rather than extracting information from non-academics, action researchers co-create knowledge with them (Gergen & Gergen, 2017). AR also breaks the linear relation between knowledge and action because learning becomes inevitably embedded in a context, stems from a collective process and is itself a form of action. Finally, rather than being detached observers that neutralize their world view, action researchers make situated ethical judgments (Campbell, 2006) and remain 'highly intentional about the kind of change they want to promote' (Saija, 2014, p. 192).

4.3 Combining AR and ANT: the little we know

The literature offers little evidence about the opportunities and challenges of using AR and ANT together. While a review of web databases returned no previous

studies that explicitly combine AR and ANT within my field, I found two results beyond my discipline, both of which were from organization management studies[8].

The first study is by Peter Hagglund (2005), who wrote about doing AR in a company in economic crisis where he was consulting on how to improve internal management. He compared how different analytical frameworks supported his AR project: a structural, interpretative and ANT.

When using a structural framework, Hagglund reduced the company to cause and effect relations founded on the assumption that the organization existed to fulfill a few simple goals (such as profitability) and defined people according to hierarchical prescriptions. While this framework offered an ordered structure that might convince practitioners they have a full grasp of organizational dynamics, it also hid details about the agendas of each person.

The interpretative framework, on the other hand, was based on a social constructionist perspective. By enabling all actors to play a significant role regardless of their hierarchical position, the interpretative framework gave a detailed account of each actor's agenda and could explain how employees often prioritized operative necessities over the company's long-term goals. As a tool for managers, however, it weakened the connection between actors and the company's network.

Finally, through an ANT framework Hagglund could interpret the company as a self-organizing system with independent but coordinated centers who use their connections to performs translations, which he defined as a heterarchy. Hagglund argued that when practitioners integrate ANT in their analysis, they can understand the company from different perspectives that does not favor any pre-determined order but maintains a comprehensive analytical structure. Additionally, ANT highlighted power struggle among all actors, accounted for the role of technical artifacts (such as best practice manuals distributed across departments), and built a vocabulary that resembled the way in which actors understood their organization.

The second study was by Paul Lewis (2008), who used ANT as a lens to guide interventions within two parallel AR projects in a corporate financial institution. ANT's concepts and language, he wrote, proved 'most useful' (p. 592) in interpreting the problem setting and suggest political actions that would help both projects succeed.

For instance, the organization that hired him subjected his research to the same performance evaluations applied to other internal projects. Since there was a risk that the managers who evaluated his project did not recognize the utility of academic research, Lewis devoted the beginning of each meeting to nurture a network of associations around it. By translating his objectives in ways that

[8] My attempts included a database review where I queried 'action research AND actor-network theory' on Google Scholar, SCOPUS and Web of Science. I also used SCOPUS to export all papers published in several journals and perform the same search through their titles, abstracts and key-words. These included the International Journal of Qualitative Research Methodology (1998-2019), Qualitative Inquiry (1995-2019), Qualitative Research (2001-2019), International Journal of Action Research (2009-2019) and Action Research Journal (2003-2019). Only the latter returned one paper (Cvetinovic et al., 2017), although its authors had used ANT to review past AR studies in order to build a spectrum of its paradigms.

highlighted their shared interests, Lewis was able to enroll into his project both another department and a newly hired manager. In addition, he regularly published reports in the bank's magazine and organized lunchtime discussions that made his work 'public and high profile' and its associations with other employees 'undeniable' (pp. 594-595).

Despite these practical benefits, Lewis also discussed caveats of his work: he admitted how privileging those directives that seemed most useful to his needs might 'offend an ANT purist' (p. 595); worried that blurring the researcher-researched relationship could make studies less comparable; and wondered about the ethics of his 'potentially Machiavellian' (p. 597) practices. Despite these limitations, Lewis concluded that ANT can help researchers navigate the networks in which they operate and, perhaps more importantly, give conscious attention to the actions they took to carry out their research.

I cannot argue that other researchers may experience similar benefits, mainly because of how heterogeneous collaborative research projects can be. In addition, both authors come from a discipline aimed at explaining and supporting the management of organizations. There are, however, calls to explore the opportunities of combining either AR or ANT with other approaches. For example, Müller (2015) suggested that 'ANT would benefit from exploring links with other social theories [and a] a more sustained engagement with issues of language and power' (p. 27). Gergen (2015), on the other hand, noted there are 'promising possibilities [in] linking [action] researchers with the creativity by design movement in the technological sphere' (p. 303).

As regards combining AR and ANT, Czarniawska, (2016) commented that Gergen (2015) had 'practically repeated Latour's (2005) appeal' (p. 317) to create crowded agoras of debate. Finally, Gaventa (2003) – who has written widely on issues of participatory research, power and participation (Reason & Bradbury, 2011) – found in ANT 'an entirely new and critical version of power that recognises both actors and discourses and the differential scale on which power operates' as long as researchers avoid its 'trap of totalisation' (p. 11).

How different is different

Despite the lack of literature that combines AR and ANT, I found myself wondering whether their dissimilarities prevented them from being used together? And if not, could AR and complement each other? There are three properties relevant to the nature of both AR and ANT that, despite being interpreted differently by each, support the idea they are compatible and can complement each other.

Firstly, both produce context-sensitive knowledge, meaning they rely on qualitative case-studies, refuse generalizations and contribute to academic debates with partial reflections. In addition, they base their research on a more pluralistic representation of reality that attempts to integrate the perspective of non-academics and non-humans, respectively. Finally, AR and ANT consider transparency crucial to the validity of investigations and can complement each other by balancing out their respective tendencies to extreme detachment and biased engagement.

Context-sensititvity

ANT researchers start their journey when they 'open' an actor-network, follow its actors and trace controversies to reveal how actants attempt translations to influence each other. Actants associate with new allies to strengthen an agenda: the more an agenda prevails, the more stable an actor-network becomes. Researchers, then, can decide to temporarily 'close' that actor-network into a black-box. However, any actor-network is as strong as its weakest link (Latour, 1987) and its components depend on mutable bonds (Law, 1992). That means actor-networks are highly contingent: any association that can be traced – and any insight derived from it – are valid only within specific temporal and spatial contexts.

As I said before, AR epistemology is founded on the idea that knowledge and action stand in a dialectical relation. This means that investigations cannot start from nor arrive to generalizable understandings that can guide informed decision. Rather, they produce context-sensitive knowledge by addressing specific issue within a defined spatial and historical frame (Saija, 2014). Context-sensitive knowledge, however, can still be valuable in two ways. Within the context where it generates, since it can be used to affect it; and outside of it, because partial answers can still support ongoing dialogues about issues shared with other contexts (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

Pluralism

Both AR and ANT aim at making inquiry more pluralistic, although in different ways. ANT seeks a pluralistic inquiry by adding non-humans (such as text documents, inanimate objects, ideas or habits) to the range of relevant actors. There are authors who doubt whether detailed descriptions of things as they are is enough to trace how unequal agencies form and persist. However, when ANT's open and explorative engagement is understood as a tool for inquiry rather than critique, it supports richer understandings and foster hybrid forums that combine knowledge from multiple sources with new forms of collective experimentation and learning (Farías, 2016).

For example, Hagglund (2005) described how the structural framework hid the nuances of individual behaviors while the interpretive one weakened the connection between their agendas. ANT, on the other hand, included both perspectives without losing a comprehensive analytical structure: 'paradoxically' he says 'an organizational actor who understands her organizations from an [ANT] perspective may feel less powerful, but this insight might enable her to exert more influence' (p. 267). (Similar reflections have been advanced by authors that studied the complexity of urban assemblages (Farías, 2011).)

AR relies on collaboration with people that have no formal training in scientific research but live in, are affected by and possess first-hand knowledge about the context being studied. Depending on the project's central issue(s), non-academics might come from different walks of life and belong to various socio-demographic groups. Although their work is often skewed more towards action than reflection,

when non-academics assume the role of researchers, they start transcribing their tacit knowledge into research (Given, 2008).

Taken with a humbler and self-reflexive approach, ANT and AR can complement each other. On one hand, AR can nuance tracing agendas because researchers not only follow actors but also internalize their way of thinking. On the other, ANT can provide AR teams with a perspective that considers a wider array of entities as potentially affecting their agency at different scales (individual, group, community, etc.).

Transparency

ANT's cognitive relativism implies rejecting biases about any actant's world-building capacities as well as refraining from translating controversial accounts into theory-driven linguistic frameworks. However, any written account is itself an act of translation that is inevitably informed by one's experiences and aims (Ruming, 2009). When writing, then, researchers should assume they are always 'one reflexive loop behind' the actants they are following (Latour, 2005, p. 33) and aim at neutralizing their positionality.

Action researchers also recognize that their contributions inevitably relate to their experiences and beliefs but, rather than neutralizing their preferences, they embrace their positionality. However, if strong engagement can be a fulfilling premise, working with people whose cause we wish to champion can lead to divisive rhetoric (Gergen and Gergen, 2011). Researchers, then, must articulate their choices in a transparent way to acknowledge the complexity of conflicting positions (Reason and Bradbury, 2011).

Although apparently opposed, cognitive relativism and engaged positionality can complement each other. As Lewis (2008) said 'despite how we eventually report [it], no research simply happens; access must be engineered, clients must be worked with and whether we decide to empower the disenfranchised or support the status quo, we necessarily react to events' (p. 597). If AR's involvement can nuance the literal, naive, and myopic lens of ANT, the latter can help action researches zoom out and report more thoroughly about the relational dynamics that affect the project. (How did researchers enroll and mobilize non-academics to participate in a project?) ANT also invites reflections on the role of non-humans. (Why were specific knowledge artifacts and practices favored over others? How did this influence the distribution of agency within the group?)

4.4 Reflections from the field

Before moving onto the next part of the thesis, I would like to conclude this chapter by sharing some reflections about my experience with combining AR and ANT. If their respective literatures showed that ANT and AR can be compatible and even complementary, testing this hypothesis in the field led to new issues and reflections.

As I said in the introduction, while this thesis follows a somewhat linear order, my research process was far from linear. I think this is a good moment to disclose

both the advantages and limits that I experienced, especially given the focus of both ANT and AR on being transparent and reflexive about one's experience. Rather than seeking normative statements about research practice, combining AR and ANT invited new questions about the realities of doing collaborative research, and emphasized how inquiry cannot exists without a complex network of relations that, in turn, inevitably affect its validity.

Although each case study is discussed in detail in the next part, I will briefly introduce some contextual information to set the scene. The first case-study, which lasted around one year, was set in Chieri, a town of around 37,000 people in northwestern Italy (not far from Turin). In May 2017, Chieri's municipality launched a public call to hire external facilitators who would lead two processes that revolved around two public buildings. The call was won by a consultancy firm from Milan that, from now on, I will refer to as the facilitators.

The first process (Chieri1, discussed in chapter 5) was about a former textile factory of around 30,000 square meters located in the city center, most of which had been unused since the municipality acquired it, more than twenty years ago. Its main goal was to initiate and support a multi-stakeholder dialogue to collect, elaborate and incubate proposals that could intensify the use of active spaces or reactivate some unused parts.

The second process (Chieri2, discussed in chapter 6) focused on three different buildings whose rooms had already been assigned to local associations the year before. The process was expected to encourage associations to collaborate more, improve the use of common areas, and define how external actors could use some spaces when empty.

My second case study (Valencia, discussed in chapter 7) lasted around nine months, from October 2018 to June 2019. It revolved around Colector, a hybrid between a co-working and community-hub located in Valencia, Spain. The building was an ex-monastery, now owned by a private individual. If the cases in Chieri were examples of top-down participation, in Valencia co-workers self-managed the space. While in Colector, I was both a co-worker and a volunteer in the group of people involved with promoting its activities as a community hub while making the space economically sustainable.

The following sections will focus on entering the field, collecting information and negotiating control with stakeholders; shifts in positionality; the dialectical relation between theory and practice; and formalizing the fieldwork. As I will be reflecting on my experience, they will take a more personal perspective. I will try to convey a similar distinction also in the case studies. All the chapters are mainly told through an ANT perspective, although with some differences. In the first two I always use the third person, except in the final parts of each chapter where I switch to the first person as I discuss how the facilitators, participants and I experimented with digital tools. In Valencia, on the other hand, it is harder to distinguish observation phases from action-oriented ones. After a few initial months of observation, I got involved with some of the activities I discuss. Hence, in the chapter I decided to use a more engaged perspective.

Collecting information and negotiating control

When entering the field researchers must align their interests and negotiate control with stakeholders. ANT scholars use ethnography to step aside and follow the actors, meaning that they let people unfold associations in their actor-network, which implies a partial loss of control over how the research will go. Action researchers, on the other hand, use a wider range of qualitative methods to collect information, engage co-researchers and facilitate mutual learning. It follows that they must deal with a more encompassing loss of control as they decide what to investigate and how to go about it together with co-researchers.

In Chieri, the facilitators were the gatekeepers of my fieldwork. When we met for the first time, my goal was to investigate opportunities and risks of integrating digital tools to support the processes they were going to lead. AR legitimizes both collaboration with non-academics and proactive engagement, which were especially important since I could not find previous research that experimented with adapting digital tools within ongoing participatory processes.

The facilitators and I agreed that I could follow the process as a participant observer and, when appropriate, propose available digital tools that would be easy to implement and might support communication and coordination among participants. I based my proposals on information collected during meetings, both within the team of facilitators and with other participants. In other words, I was entering a process that existed independently from and was not based on my proposals. This was a stimulating challenge, both to me and to the utility of digital tools. However, I could not predict whether facilitators and/or participants would agree with my proposals or would become involved with the research.

During my first months in the field I only observed, learning all I could while looking for opportunities to advance my proposals. Meanwhile I started considering how to combine information from the parts when I participated to those when I could only observe. ANT's emphasis on the agency of non-humans caught my attention due to the role of digital tools in my work. Also, ANT required researchers to describe things by following the actors, which seemed close enough to what I had been doing.

After four months, some of my proposals were accepted and my roles started changing. My role in Chieri1 split. For the most part, I continued following the facilitators as they met public servants, local associations, and citizens, observing and noting details to reassemble associations between heterogeneous actants. However, after four months I started leading a project with eight students (aged between 16 and 22) and some local associations, whose goal was to design and build a web repository of memories and opinions about the factory around which the process revolved. Here I collected information mostly during informal conversations, meetings with associations and co-design workshops with teenagers.

In Chieri2, on the other hand, I gradually became an active collaborator of the consultants and mixed observation and engagement. During meetings with associations I mostly observed, while I participated actively in planning those meetings, which was also when I proposed and discussed digital tools with the

consultants. Combining AR and ANT allowed me to adapt to the changes I faced in each process and helped me negotiate the field with the facilitators: I could be more engaged when it was helpful (and appropriate) or keep observing otherwise.

Finally, in Valencia my gatekeepers where the members of CivicWise that I had met when I visited the city for the first time in May 2018. However, when I moved the following October, I realized that not all the people who were in Colector were CW members. When I had the chance to present myself to the group, I followed a different approach than in Chieri. This time I tried to emphasize more the idea that researchers and co-researchers are equals (Which, retrospectively, I had not done as well the first time I met Chieri's facilitators.)

Since co-workers were already familiar with and used various digital tools in their work, I simply told them that, as a self-managed hybrid between a co-working and a community hub, Colector was very interesting for me and relevant to my research, and that I would have liked to help in whatever ways I could.

Like in the project I had with students in Chieri, I noted how it was harder to systematically take notes when fully involved. (Luckily, in Valencia we took minutes of every meeting, which I could integrate to my field notes.) On one hand, since these moments were more meaningful, I felt that I could remember them better. On the other, I must recognize that I am likely more biased about the parts where I was involved (and perhaps also about how precise my memory is).

Shifts in positionality

While ANT advocates for cognitive relativism to prevent bias, AR encourages researchers to openly recognize and embrace their positionality. In Chieri, my priority was to be helpful to facilitators and participants. However, I should also recognize that part of me considered my project's well-being dependent on participants using the digital tools that I was proposing, which made my positionality far from neutral. In fact, while alternating roles I used the information collected across processes to reinforce my associations.

For instance, the idea for the website I proposed in Chieri1 came after I realized that younger citizens had been absent from both processes, while also reassembling the controversial history of the building. Which I did by mixing official documents, articles from the local newspaper and the personal accounts from several participants.) Thanks to some associations I had met through the process, I was introduced to local high-school teachers that supported me when trying to involve teenagers. In a way, my role as an active contributor within Chieri1 was reinforced as I became a bridge between high school students and the rest of the process. For example, I was invited to later meetings as a participant rather than an observer.

In Valencia, as I said, I took a different approach. However, I was also sharing an apartment with two members of CivicWise. As we grew closer, I gained different insights about what was happening in Colector. For instance, before I presented myself to other co-workers, they had told me that the group had discussed my proposal in a previous meeting, and that some people seemed a bit uncomfortable

with the idea that a researcher would come to observe their work. Knowing this influenced my initial approach that I discussed before.

Combining AR and ANT helped me adapt to these shifts in positionality. As an action researcher my purpose-driven positionality was acceptable as long as I remained transparent about it. As an observer, on the other hand, I could reflect on the work done in more engaged parts with the same vocabulary I used to follow actants. As Lewis (2008) suggested, ANT helped me report about the process by emphasizing how my actions and interests developed according to the roles I covered, and accounting for the formal, informal and often unexpected interactions I had.

Dialectical relation between theory and practice

I was lucky to find two case-studies where my proposals were accepted, even if both arrangements could not provide any reassurance that things would develop in ways that favored my initial goals. Hence, I cannot say that a previously designed theoretical framework guided my empirical work. Rather, while in the field, my research evolved in a nonlinear way that was significantly affected by circumstances (and chance).

This is in line with how AR works through iterative cycles of action and reflection. However, I was not able to share most reflection phases with co-researchers. Only in Chieri2, while planning with facilitators how to engage associations in each meeting, we discussed our strategy and evaluated the potential utility of digital tools. However, we were not framing our discussion as a research effort. Instead, in all cases I was motivated by a participative ethos and followed the principles of AR outlined in previous sections. This led me to establish relations with more people and groups than I would have met if I only observed the work of facilitators. For example, in Chieri1 I interacted with teenagers, associations and citizens that never participated in rest of the process.

AR allowed me to experience multiple perspectives, if only momentarily. For example, when observing the work of facilitators in Chieri1 I was somewhat critical about how they engaged participants. However, in Chieri2 where I helped facilitators structure sessions, and in Valencia where I helped with organizing events and running the space, I realized how easily things can deviate from plans.

Meanwhile, ANT nudged me to not dismiss even the most mundane exchanges, while also not losing track of the underlying struggles between competing agendas. Chieri1 became a competition between incremental regeneration (favored by facilitators and parts of the municipality) and inaction (supported by other parts of the municipality who saw new uses less favorably). In Chieri2, on the other hand, facilitators were promoting shared management of common spaces while resident associations defended an agenda aimed at appropriating them.

In addition, some dynamics that I might have otherwise considered as gossip became controversies worth investigating. ANT was useful to step out of the network, analyze them more systematically, and trace how actants (me included)

‘shift identity depending on who/what they are attempting to enroll and on the audience of their translations’ (Ruming, 2009, p. 465).

ANT also helped me cluster interactions within the network where they happened. The next chapters are structured around a core network, where promoters defined general strategies, and shared power and responsibilities; an inner network, where promoters interacted with participants they intended to engage; and an outer network, where outsiders and people who attended public events temporarily entered each process.

This structure was not decided *a priori* but emerged as I reflected on each experience. In addition, by zooming into each actor-network I could highlight two things. Firstly, certain entities or groups were influential only at some levels, while others were present in all of them. Secondly, entities might have unified in one network whereas they were not in another.

ANT also emphasized the unexpected agency of non-human entities in ways that nuanced my understanding without imposing a predefined order (Hagglund, 2005). These included not only built and digital spaces but also documents, whose relevance I realized only in the field. As I will discuss in each case study and the following discussion chapter, documents were and unexpected actant with different roles: some had an implicit effect on how people interacted; for others, their agency was explicitly activated or ignored; finally, some were used to consolidate and formalize agreements.

In retrospect, AR guided my entrance to the field and shaped my attitude. This led me to experience various perspectives, while I also ended up in unexpected situations that enriched both my fieldwork and me. ANT, on the other hand, helped me remain open to new perspectives without losing track of mt broader goals. ANT and AR are unlikely the only approaches that take researchers on a non-linear path of discovery, but I appreciated how both accepted messiness and invited me to reflect on and disclose how it influenced my work.

Formalizing knowledge

When addressing knowledge formalization, both approaches remain coherent with the principles discussed so far: ANT advocates for extending cognitive relativism to writing, while AR for bringing collaboration into the formalization process.

Since the same information can be used to tell multiple stories, when they write researchers have the privilege to control the last translation attempt (Rose, 1997). Good ANT research brings the making of the report to the foreground and lets the concepts of the actors permeate the text more than those of the researcher (Latour, 2005).

In AR knowledge artifacts come in different forms because research teams are likely to generate outputs with different purposes. AR does not produce only academic texts but also posters, project proposals, websites, presentations, community plans, participatory videos, power maps, etc. While these outputs might not always fulfill academic standards, they contribute to the research by helping

participants build awareness and increase their ability to take action and level power differentials (Reason & Bradbury, 2011). And since they support the creation of collective narratives that promote the project beyond academic circles (Saija, 2014), collaborative artifacts also become central resources to peer-reviewed publications that might be of little interest to non-academics but address relevant issues in the literature (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

In Chieri1, my co-researchers and I produced texts and social media posts that described our project and goals. In Chieri2 we redacted, together with the facilitators, instruction manuals to help associations initiate new collaborative practices. Finally, in Valencia we prepared various documents both for internal use (like the welcoming kit for new co-workers) and external activities (like promotional material for events.) Crossing these with other sources (like official documents, local newspaper articles, the reports produced by consultants, and meeting minutes in Valencia) also helped me consolidate a more pluralistic vocabulary (Hagglund, 2005).

However, involving people in knowledge formalization is one of AR most challenging tasks. Due to lack of time on both parts, I was not able include any stakeholder in academic writing. Instead, while ANT helped me remain as neutral as possible and articulate my writing transparently, I strove to maintain it accessible for stakeholders and other non-academics (Marshall, 2008).

Limitations

Throughout the chapter I argued that AR and ANT can be combined despite their differences. While in my case the combination worked well, it was not flawless. Firstly, as I reflected on my fieldwork I realized that I spent more time using ANT than AR, with less frequent pockets of the latter integrating observation phases. Has AR been supporting ANT, rather than the other way around? Should I care about defining a hierarchical relation between the two? In fact, the two were not binary states but more the extremes of a continuum: sometimes I was only observing, sometimes I was totally engaged. Most of the time, however, I was at various intermediate stages.

Secondly, I must admit that I used each approach as an intellectual compass and the resulting practice might be questioned both within action research circles and by ANT purists. On the one hand, I was able to apply only some of AR's principles rather than adhere to all of them. On the other, like Lewis (2008) warned, I am guilty of cherry picking those ANT's concepts that supported my fieldwork. I wonder how common it is for researchers from both approaches to use a mixed toolbox while in the field.

Thirdly, although my work is context-sensitive and I am not aiming at generalizable findings but partial reflections, I could not include an account of how the different personalities and attitudes of the people involved shaped each experience. While I would not have had the expertise to integrate such an account, I also think it would have been unethical to disclose the opinions I had or those that others shared with me. Rather than getting into the details of each position, I decided

to name a few to, at least, avoid flattening diverse opinions into the average view. However, I cannot ignore that the same strategies and circumstances will likely lead to different developments depending on who is involved.

Finally, as said before, collective inquiry is based on trust, which can take a lot of time to build. More time on the field was necessary to consolidate trust, refined shared narratives and challenge them beyond the context of study. Some authors have spoken of the naiveté researchers may fall prey to (Datta et al., 2015; David, 2002; Estacio, 2012). Dealing with time-constraints and unforeseen turn of events might not only affect the process but also the people involved with it.

There are two authors whose reflections resonated with my experience. On one hand, Laino (2011) wrote about the involvement of academics and external experts in urban regeneration processes. (I am paraphrasing.) He said that local communities must be respected because they can be tired of being approached by researchers looking to interview and observe their lives; by associations who attempted to deploy initiatives that never rooted into the context; and by politicians who make unrealistic promises in exchange for support. If newcomers cannot bring a promising and significant investment into these communities, remaining down-to-earth and respectful is extremely important, lest they will only erode trust further.

On the other, David's (2002), who discussed the risks of action research, argued: 'when asked "whose side are we on"', he said, 'academics might be more bold and suggest "we are on our own side"' (p. 11). For instance, I was not able to involve co-researchers in the writing process. In addition, if AR and ANT provide context-sensitive, rich descriptions of the interrelationship between human behavior and sociocultural formations, these must be shared with a critical community who can challenge their coherence, and also disseminated to the wider public. This, however, requires additional time and I had to prioritize my needs above those shared with co-researchers. In other words, I focused more on what I extracted from my experiences and less on what I left behind.

Despite these limitations, I think that combining ANT and AR is appropriate to open the black box of community hubs. By zooming into each process, I can give all actants the same potential relevance and let their interactions reveal how each actant affects participation. Combining ANT and AR also allowed me to remain open to evolving my theoretical framework without having to change it entirely. Specifically, while investigating spaces of participation (both physical and virtual) I could integrate other non-human entities to my understanding of the processes in which I was involved.

The benefits I experienced, however, were not only analytical: combining AR and ANT helped me deal with the unpredictability and loosened control of collaborative research projects, adapt to circumstances and negotiate the field with my gatekeepers. I learned through engagement when allowed to do so, observed when otherwise, and zoomed out to reflect on my agency in all situations. I also had tools to report systematically on my interactions while appropriating the vocabulary and narratives built during the experience. Hence, I hope that my partial reflections can be relevant both to researchers and practitioners involved with community hubs and to those interested in collaborative action-driven research.

Chapter 6

Chieri1: Ex Cotonificio Tabasso

In May 2017 the municipality of Chieri launched a public call for the facilitation of two participatory processes and the organization of an International Festival of the Commons. The processes would start the following July and last for two years; the festival, on the other hand, would take place in July 2018 (at the end of the first year).

Chieri is a town in north-western Italy, around 30km from Turin. Commons were not an unfamiliar concept to its 37,000 inhabitants. In 2014 local elections were won by *Chieri bene commune* (lit. 'Chieri for the Commons'), a coalition that united independent parties with affiliates of the center-left national list. During their first year in office, Chieri became one of the first municipalities in Italy to approve its *Regolamento per l'amministrazione condivisa dei Beni Comuni Urbani* (lit. 'regulation for the shared management of urban commons') [9].

In July 2015, the city hosted its first International Festival of the Commons, which hosted scholars and activists of the commons from Italy and abroad but was contested for not being planned for locals {D209} [10]. Two follow-up events also took place in 2016 and 2017. Finally, since local elections were scheduled for April 2019, the municipality would oversee the launch of the call and the first part of the processes.

This chapter and the next will focus on the account of the two participatory processes outlined in the call, which I will refer to as Chieri1 and Chieri2. Both revolved around the management of different public buildings. In the public call it published in mid-May {D25}, the municipality had explicitly mentioned urban commons and shared administration, whereas in the call's annex it described the processes as 'another significant step towards theoretical and practical developments of the commons'. In total, around 70,000 euro were budgeted among

9 According to Labsus, a non-profit organization that has been supporting local administration in implementing the regulation, Chieri was the fifth municipality in Italy to do so (https://www.labsus.org/i-regolamenti-per-lamministrazione-condivisa-dei-beni-comuni).

10 Throughout the chapter references to different sources are indicated by the source code in curly brackets, for example {D1}. Refer to Appendix for the complete list of documents and the link to the database were originals can be found.

the two processes; 10,000 to organize the launch event; and 50,000 for the festival {D26}.

Chieri1 was about the *Cotonificio Felice Tabasso*, a former textile factory of around 30,000 square meters, most of which had been unused since 1995. The facilitators' goals included: promote and sustain multi-stakeholder dialogue; co-design activities to intensify the use of currently active spaces; lead the participated reactivation of parts of the unused spaces; and draft a proposal for long-term solutions.

Chieri2, on the other hand, focused on three different buildings – a former slaughterhouse, a youth center and a section of a private school – whose rooms had already been assigned to local associations. The process was expected to improve the use of common areas, encourage collaboration across associations, and define how external actors could use parts of each space when empty. In the words of the call, these spaces were to become Chieri's *case della città* (lit. 'houses of the city', HoC), an explicit reference to Turin's *case del quartiere* (lit. 'houses of the neighborhood', HoN) discussed in chapter 3 {D26}.

On July 7th a Milan-based consultancy firm called Avanzi won the facilitation of both processes and the organization of the festival {D29}. Avanzi defined itself as a 'laboratory to design services, a system integrator and, sometimes, a manager' that can assist building owners (public and private) in implementing multi-stakeholders ventures for urban regeneration projects {D32}[11]. In mid-July 2017, the they organized a two-days launch event where they presented their team and proposals for the two processes and the festival {D30, D31}.

During the event the facilitators explained that their approach was founded on analyzing the needs of the territory, identifying target groups, and building an 'original storytelling', around which target groups will identify because it was based on the analysis of their needs and desires {D32}. Facilitators also organized one focus groups for each process, during which I had the chance to meet them and introduce my idea.

The following September I visited their Milan offices to present myself and the research {D36, D37, D38}. My proposal was centered on testing whether digital tools could be integrated in either of the two processes. We agreed that I could follow their work closely – at least as long as they considered appropriate having me taking notes in the room – and could propose available solutions that would be easy to implement and might support communication and coordination between participants.

The facilitators were organized in two teams, one for each process. My fieldwork lasted from September 2017 to July 2018. During these months, the relations I had with each team was shaped both by circumstances and by the proposals I made. During a discussion with the team that led Chieri1 in late-November, I proposed four tools, only one of which was eventually accepted

11 *Avanzi* literally translates to 'leftovers', while their slogan *sostenibilità per azioni* (lit. 'sustainability for actions') is a wordplay with *società per azioni*, how publicly traded companies are called in Italy.

{D72}. This led to nexTabasso, a project I led together with six students (aged between 16 and 22) and a number of local associations, that was aimed at creating a web-site that would collect memories and opinions revolving around the factory. Most of this chapter focuses on the Chieri1, where I mainly observed the work of facilitators, while nexTabasso is discussed at the end of the chapter as a separate process.

In Chieri2, which I will discuss in the next chapter, I gradually became an active collaborator of the facilitators, and mixed both AR and ANT while supporting their work and experimenting with the tools I suggested.

5.1 Ex Tabasso: a complicated story

By the end of the 1800s, Chieri's was important center of textile production since it had seventeen active factories {D24}. For more than a century, from 1872 to 1994, the biggest among them was the *Cotonificio Felice Tabasso* (lit. 'Felice Tabasso textile factory', from now the factory) {D196}. Originally founded by Felice, Giacomo and Giuseppe, sons of a cotton trader, the company lived through the ups and downs of industrial development in northern Italy, including the creation of railways in 1874, both World Wars and the economic crisis in between. By 1955 the Tabasso factory had reached its current size – around 33,000 square meters – while at the peak of its production it employed around 500 people.

Starting in the 1970s, competition from emerging countries and market shifts at global, national and local level led to a gradual decline in the company's fortune. When, in 1993, the company stopped its activities, its 120 employees lost their jobs overnight. The following year it filed for bankruptcy {D24}. Five years later, in 1999, the municipality bought the factory for seven billion Italian liras with a twenty-years mortgage that ended in 2019 {D2, D20, D24}.

In the early 2000s, the municipality changed the area's zoning and started reactivating some of the factory {D24}. In 2004, a new public library opened, together with the city's historical archive, a post office, a bar, and the local employment office. A room previously used as the porter's lodge was assigned to some local associations, that would share the space for their activities. The rest of the factory, however, remains unused to this day (see plans).

In the mid-2000s the municipality tried to requalify the area through a public-private partnership between the administration, which determined the mix of public and private spaces that would be developed, and one or more private promoters, who would gain the right to manage private spaces for determined number of years[12].

Four projects were proposed in mid-2007 {D3}, and the promoter of the winning one also became the developer of its construction in early 2009. However, a new cabinet had won local elections in that same year and started questioning the

12 The public spaces requested by the administration included an auditorium, a museum, a professional school for animators, indoor parking space, and outdoor public areas. Private spaces, on the other hand, could have the following functions: cinemas, restaurants, local shops, tourism, events, fitness, cultural and leisure services, residential and private parking {D1}.

soundness of the agreement {D8}. The project was delayed until the end of 2010, when discussions resumed. Constructions had not begun when rumors started circulating that the promoter was experiencing financial difficulties following the crisis that had started in 2008. By mid-2012 the mayor declared that the developer would file for bankruptcy {D12}, and by early 2014 the municipality officially pulled out of the agreement {D19}.

Fifteen years and three mayors after buying the factory, the municipality had to give up its requalification. With the wound of the company's sudden closure still open, a mostly unused vacant building in Chieri's city center was now sitting on it. At the time, the current mayor blamed the agreement made by its predecessor, who rushed to close it before the previous elections in 2009. That mayor, on the other hand, blamed the outcome on the financial crisis {D18}. Finally, some citizens denounced the lack of transparency and participation that characterized the process {D20}.

In February 2016 the municipality published a public call to requalify a smaller part of the factory, which received two proposals. The first was about creating a community land trust, which would host social housing and spaces for local businesses that mixed tradition and innovation by focusing on local agricultural products {D21} and an incubator for technological start-ups {D22}. The second proposal, from a group of local entrepreneurs, offered to purchase the houses in exchange for public buildings rather than money {D24}. The administration was reportedly more interested in the second proposal, but no significant advances had been made by the time Chieri1 started {D28}[13]. In the following year the municipality issued the call to regenerate the factory through the engagement and participation of citizens.

5.2 Core network[14]

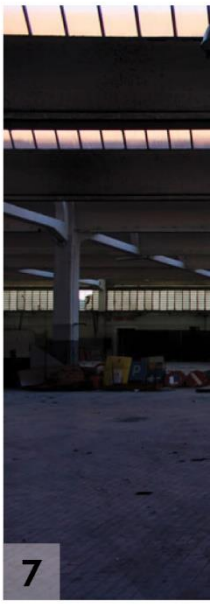
Aside for the launch event in July, work on Chieri1 started in September 2017. Within the first month, facilitators had one visit to the factory; met at twice with the municipality's communication office; once with the participation and innovation department (PID); and once with the direction cabin (DC)[15]. (I did not attend these meetings.) In October and November, facilitators interviewed local stakeholders following a list provided by the municipality and then organized three focus groups.

13 The entrepreneur that made that offer is the same that facilitator would later mention as a potential investor for their plan.

14 The core network includes the facilitators and different departments of the municipality involved in the process (see next footnote).

15 The *cabina di regia* (lit. 'direction cabin', DC) is a jargon that usually refers to a group of representatives from different departments (across one or more public institutions), who collaborate around a project that requires their different expertise. According to {Pascuzzi, 2017} the project should represent a governmental action that integrates vision, planning, coordination and implementation. A quick on-line search reveals that the term is used by many local administrations in Italy.

In Chieri1, the DC included the mayor's and vice-mayor's offices and the following departments: finance; environment and mobility department; culture and youth policies; participation and innovation (PID); social and work policies department (SWP); planning (PD); and the communication office.



1-5: Outside the factory, including street art by local artists

6-8: Inside the factory

9: The Ex Tabasso iconic Water tower

Figure 5: Pictures of the ex Tabasso factory

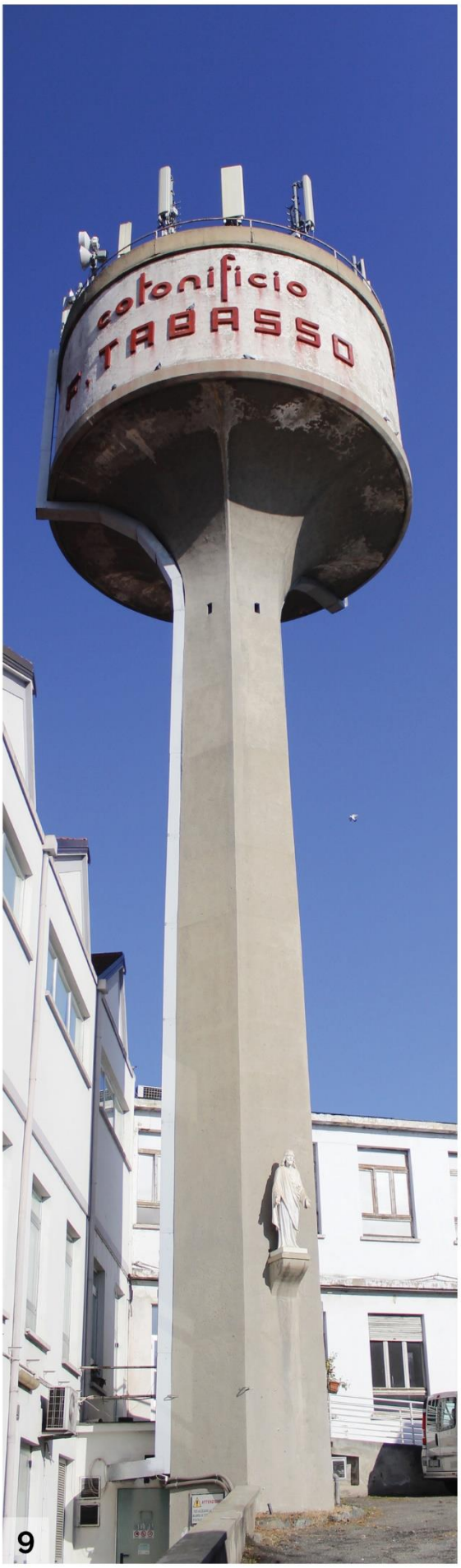

cotonificio
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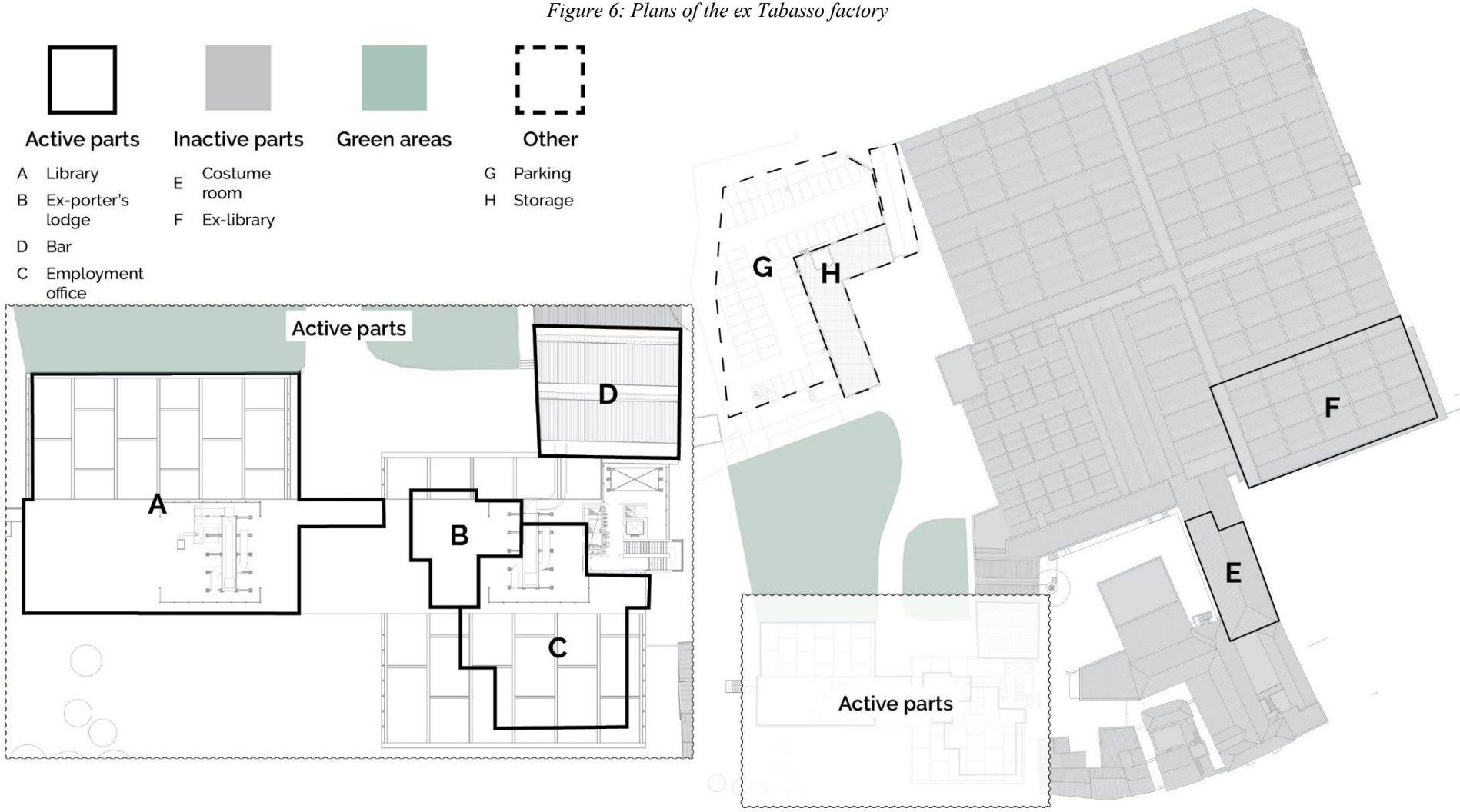
Figure 6: Plans of the ex Tabasso factory



People

- 1 Municipality
  - 1.1 Direction cabin
  - 1.2 Participation and innovation dept
  - 1.3 Communication office
  - 1.4 Mayor
  - 1.5 Planning dept.
- 2 Facilitators
- 3 Participants
  - 3.1 Food and agriculture
  - 3.2 Culture and solidarity
  - 3.3 Textile and design
    - Colonizers
  - 3.4 Library managers
  - 3.5 Bar managers
- 4 nexTabasso
  - 4.1 Contributors
  - 4.2 Local associations
  - 4.3 High school teachers
  - 4.4 Participation and innovation dept.
- 5 Citizens

Spaces

Physical

- 6 Active parts
  - 6.1 Library
    - Conference room
    - Study room
  - 6.2 Bar
  - 6.3 Post office
  - 6.4 Employment office
  - 6.5 Ex-porter's lodge
- 7 Inactive parts
  - 7.1 Ex-library
  - 7.2 Costume room

Digital

- 8 nexTabasso
  - 8.1 Website
  - 8.2 Social media pages
- 9 Official website

Documents

- 10 Local laws
  - 10.1 Detailed zoning plan
  - 10.2 Security regulations
  - 10.3 Other legislation
- 11 Reports
  - 11.1 Food and agriculture
  - 11.2 Culture and solidarity
  - 11.3 Textile and design
- 12 Incremental reactivation plan

Figure 7: Actor-networks in Chieri1

Finally, in December they organized another public event where they presented the findings they had collected until then. (Interviews, focus groups and the event are discussed in more detail in the next section.)

In early January, during a second meeting with the DC, the facilitators presented what they learned from the interviews and focus groups and proposed a strategy for the following months {D84}. They argued that and attempt at regenerating all the factory at once would likely fail; instead they proposed an incremental approach to regeneration articulated around three points.

Firstly, incremental regeneration implied expanding the pool of potential stakeholders, both in Chieri and its surrounding municipalities. Like the library, a new initiative in the factory should target beyond Chieri's inhabitants {D85}.

Second, the facilitators wanted to improve the use of some already active parts, especially the library and bar, either by increasing opening hours or by adding new activities. Hence, they would contact the people managing those spaces.

Finally, the central action of their strategy was to temporarily reactivate a part of the factory for the festival and make it an open innovation lab. Temporary reactivation could consolidate alliances with local associations and, by displaying the potential of the space, also attract social and economic capital from citizens interested in contributing to the space and investors who could finance further regeneration works. This experimentation would also help collect information to inform a proper evaluation of the viability and costs of further interventions {D104}.

However, the detailed zoning plan approved in the early 2000s was still valid, and it dictated that around two thirds of the factory were to be demolished. The facilitators had to identify a suitable space among the parts that did not have to be demolished, and whose maintenance needs could be addressed with the available budget. In addition, maintenance had to be approved and carried out within the six months that were left before the festival.

Meanwhile, management of the reactivated space would have to be assigned to one or more groups of citizens in a relatively short time. A concession or a shared management agreement (based on the regulation of urban commons mentioned before) would take too long to set up and did not reflect the experimental character of the operation {D85}. The facilitators proposed to emulate the experiences of other cities with experimental practices like *riuso temporaneo* (lit. 'temporary re-use') to relaxed regulatory constraints[16].

The reactions during the meeting were mixed but did not give away much. While representatives from the participation and innovation department (PID), who were the strongest supporter of the process within the municipality, responded with enthusiasm, most of the others did not make any comment {D85}[17].

16 For further information about temporary re-use see Inti et al. (2015) or Haydn and Temel (2006).

17 Within this same meeting the facilitators presented their first results and strategy for both processes and introduced their plans for the festival. In the discussion following their presentation, most questions focused on the logistics of the latter {D85}.

In the months that followed facilitators continued to advance their strategy within the municipality while they looked for allies among participants. In early February they met with the communication office and the PID, and then with the mayor and the PID.

During the first meeting, facilitators discussed how to translate their strategy into a narrative that could then be communicated through the festival's website. While the 2015 edition of the festival was about commons in general, this second time the focus shifted on urban commons as a tool to reactivate public buildings.

Empty buildings, and factories especially, were a relevant issue in many Italian cities, both big and small. The festival could leverage local experiences with the shared management of urban commons and 'reinforce Chieri's position within the debate on urban innovation at the national and European level' {D103}. According to the PID, the festival was also an opportunity for local associations and citizens to meet with and learn from the representatives of similar experiences around Italy, which would also justify why the municipality hired a consultancy from Milan to facilitate the process.

In the second meeting the facilitators discussed what appeared as a suitable place for the open innovation lab. They had identified a room that used to host the library before 2004, when the current one opened. In fact, the PID had already visited the ex-library with an architect, who said that the place required maintenance works that were reasonably achievable within the time and budget available. The mayor, however, appeared more skeptic, and reminded that someone with the right authority had to approve the safety of the place, which implied taking responsibility for it {D104}.

In early April facilitators organized a meeting with the direction cabin and the fablab, whom facilitators had identified as a suitable leader of the innovation lab's colonizers (see inner network). By the end of May, the PID was confident that reactivation would succeed: in its latest evaluation, the architect said that maintenance works were simple, affordable and would take around two weeks {D163}. However, the municipality had to approve them quickly, otherwise there would not be enough time to hire a company that could do maintenance before the festival, set to start in a month. Also, the municipality still had to formalize the collaboration with the fablab and the other colonizers, enabling the facilitators to finalize the festival's program {D207}.

The biggest obstacle was that, since February, the facilitators and PID had not been able to set a visit to the ex-library with the planning department (PD), whose approval of the plan was necessary to proceed with reactivation. Only the PD had the authority to make the decision and, therefore, take responsibility for it. When the PD had its assessment visit a few days later, they concluded the place was unsafe because they found some external drainpipes detached from the wall {D223, D227}.

The reactivation of the ex-library was rejected less than a month before the festival, and it was too late to find another space that could host the open innovation lab. For the rest of June, facilitators had to focus on finalizing other logistical details for the festival. Together with the municipality, they decided to host an artistic

performance in a smaller room next to the library, which was used to store costumes used during a yearly medieval reenactment.

While my field-work ended after the festival, facilitators continued consulting the municipality for another year. During their first meeting with the direction cabin following the summer break, they presented a series of documents that formalized their strategy {D293, D295}. These reiterated that the ex-library was the most suitable place to start with incremental regeneration; presented different options that the municipality could use to assign the space; illustrated a series of temporary reuse examples from other town; and proposed the fablab as the space's social manager {D292}.

Later, facilitators delivered a public call that the administration could launch to find a social manager of the ex-library {D299}. They suggested to set up a concession of three years; to prioritize proposals with a measurable social impact; and that rent could be discounted to promote gradual investments in renovation works. However, when a new mayor was elected after the local elections of April 2019, there was no guarantee that the incremental regeneration of the *Ex Cotonificio Tabasso* would continue.

5.3 Inner network[18]

In September 2017 the facilitators started interviewing both individuals and groups from private and civic organizations. The followed a list provided by the municipality that divided participants in three groups: food and agriculture, textile and design, and culture and social cohesion[19]. The first had already been identified as an interesting area by one of the proposals for the public call about the *cassette*; textile and design was connected with Chieri and the factory's past as a center of textile production; and culture and social cohesion were seen as a bridge other activities {D74}.

Using the information collected during the interviews, facilitators prepared three reports, which they used as a starting point for the discussions during the focus groups. In each of these, participants were asked to present themselves, share their opinion about the factory's past and current situation, and imagine what could become of it. Different proposals and risks emerged.

Proposals mainly developed along three shared ideas. Firstly, abundance of space led to the possibility, or even the necessity, to imagine a multipurpose space that could serve different groups and adapt to changes. For example, the food and agriculture group imagined a place could host a local market to promote direct and ecologically conscious relations between producers and consumers; an experimental center for education, research, and awareness initiatives around responsible consumption; and an incubator for local enterprises {D58}. In the culture group people discussed how the space could be adapted to host different

18 The inner network includes the facilitators and the participants that they interviewed and/or invited in the focus groups, either as individuals or as representatives of local associations.

19 Around half of the seventy-one participants identified by the list were interviewed, while two thirds of them would take part in the subsequent focus groups.

types of cultural shows and events throughout the year {D68}. Finally, in the textile and design group participants imagined a space that would aggregate enterprises, schools and laboratories to support experimentation, entrepreneurship and cross-fertilization across sectors and generations {D70}.

Secondly, there was a desire to integrate entrepreneurship and social goals, like civic education, awareness, and solidarity towards marginalized groups. In the food and textile groups, for instance, younger participants were keen to combine traditional know-how with new technologies, like computer aided designs and 3D printing. In addition, a space that could aggregate actors from various sectors would favor knowledge exchange and collaboration over traditional production models characterized by secrecy and competition.

Thirdly, people agreed that a big and experimental space needed a broad narrative and vision. This narrative should include and attract people from Chieri's surrounding municipalities {D58, D68}[20], and needed to outlast electoral cycles. (This seemed especially relevant since elections were half a year away.)

Risks, on the other hand, could be clustered around two issues. Firstly, some participants were skeptic or even critical towards the process. They shared a feeling of fatigue towards the regeneration of the factory's, which had gone unsolved for fifteen years, and worried that the process would repeat the mistakes made in the past. One person questioned the criteria followed to identify the individuals and organizations that had been interviewed {D68}; others complained the absence of public servants at the table; and some noted the lack of young people[21].

A second group of risks revolved around more contextual issues. Participants thought that associations lacked collaborative culture {D58}. As a matter of fact, many had never met each other although the worked in the same sector and had complementary activities. Others worried about the unfavorable economic conditions following the 2008 financial crisis that complicated starting new projects {D66}.

Facilitators integrated these findings in their reports and shared them with the participants {D58, D69, D71}. In early January they summarized the reports in the meeting with the direction cabin, where they presented their proposal for incremental regeneration discussed in the previous section. After the meeting facilitators had to find support from different groups to increase the use of active areas and reactivate a part of the factory.

As regards the first objective, facilitators met with the people that managed the public library and the bar. The librarians were not optimistic that any collaboration could be set up before the festival because their cultural activities were usually organized yearly and funded with regional funds that required long bureaucratic procedures. In addition, they told facilitators how they had tried to keep the library open during evenings or weekends but had poor results {D102}.

20 Some participants for instance referred to the Pianalto region, a *patto di identità regionale* (lit. 'territorial identity pact') that included 47 municipalities for a total of 160,000 people (Chieri had 37,000 inhabitants).

21 Few participants were in their early thirties but no one was younger.

They also discussed about two rooms that could be used both during the festival and, perhaps, to experiment new activities. Their conference room could be accessed only through the library's main entrance and was unfit to host events outside opening hours. The study room, which was mostly empty except for university exam periods, seemed more promising since it had an independent entrance. However, its alarm system needed to be made independent from the rest of the library, and safety procedures required an employee to be present (and paid) at any event. In the end, both rooms would be used during the festival, but no experimental uses were tested.

The owner of the bar also explained how they had been trying to organize more events, such as exhibitions, talks, meetings from local associations and political parties, and were enthusiastic about adding more. They provided catering services for one of the evenings of the festival {D105}.

Meanwhile, as they worked within the core network to reactivate the ex-library, facilitators were also looking for the colonizers that would manage it during the festival. Since the festival would revolve around the idea that inactive public buildings could become urban commons, the reactivated space could host an open innovation lab where traditional crafts met new technologies, and which integrated social and entrepreneurial goals.

According to facilitators, the textile and design group had the most promising mix of actors that could become the space's first colonizers, mainly because their interests were complementary and had a meaningful connection with the factory's past {D84}. The open innovation lab would combine the interests and creativity of younger generations with Chieri's heritage as an important textile production area, which included know-how from local entrepreneurs; an exhibition of textile arts; and the possibility open the archives of samples held by some of the city's most historical companies {D73}.

Among the textile and design group they identified three colonizers: a fablab, one of the associations that resided in the ex-porter's lodge; a social sewing imitative, which had recently set up within Chieri's textile museum; and a local entrepreneur, who was particularly keen on experimenting with new technologies.

The proposal gained momentum when the facilitators organized a meeting between the fablab and the direction cabin to discuss it {D133, D158} but fell apart when the plan to reactivate the ex-library was blocked in early June. During the festival, some of the associations from the focus groups contributed to the event by organizing activities that were complementary to the festival's program in the outer areas of the factory, like stands for children, mobile workshops, a bike rental and repair service, etc.

5.4 Outer network[22]

Aside for launch in July, the first public event for the process took place on December 1st, where facilitators presented the information they had collected from

22 The outer network includes all the people that participated in public events.

interviews and focus groups {D73, D74}. They also invited three guests to talk about different initiatives in which they were involved. While two of them were more relevant to Chieri2, the third talked the regeneration project of a former factory in Milan.

The municipality had bought the factory in 1990, and in 2014 it issued a public call for its management. The call was won by a coalition of local enterprises and civic organizations, Avanzi among them, who renamed the project BASE[23]. To be sustainable, BASE had to combine different sources of income by diversifying its users. Its spaces hosted laboratories and storage space for one of Milan's most famous theaters, a museum, and a multi-purpose space[24]. The latter occupied 12,000 of the total 70,000 square meters, and included spaces for events and meetings, a co-working area, a start-up incubator, artists residences, study rooms, temporary shops and a bar.

Facilitators did not present BASE as a replicable model, especially because of the vastly different socioeconomic contexts of Chieri and Milan. Rather, they used it to illustrate what they considered state-of-the-art urban regeneration. BASE was 'an innovative start-up with a social mission'; it had a code of ethics, an ethics officer and a 'social budget'. Its status as a social enterprise also allowed investors to get a tax discount. Finally, it was run through a multi-stakeholder management model and was part of several European networks that brought visibility and fostered collaborations. The presenter argued that although legally BASE was a private enterprise, it had a degree of 'publicness' that came from its functions.

Facilitators used BASE to hint about their plans for the following months. While they did not explicitly introduce the colonization agenda, facilitators hinted at some of its central elements: they mentioned that full regeneration would not be viable, and instead the factory should be reactivated gradually. They also praised the importance of attract actors interested in different uses, and who could contribute with economic or social capital.

Another event took place in mid-April. This one was more about the upcoming festival, where the facilitators invited local associations to discuss possible collaborations. As the festival would revolve around commons and urban transformations, the facilitators hoped it could be a platform for 'experimentation and social impact' and were inviting proposals that they could integrate in the program. A representative from the participation and innovation department also announced they had identified a suitable place to reactivate, and that they were working on making it available for the festival {D174}.

The final event was the festival, which took place between June 29th and July 1st 2018. Over three days, guests from Italy and abroad came to discuss different initiatives that revolved around the regeneration of public buildings. Since the ex-library had not been reactivated, facilitators used a smaller room to host a site-specific artistic performance. Throughout the three pre-festival events (namely the launch and the two previews in December and April), as well as during the three

23 See https://www.base.milano.it/about

24 The theater had been using part of the factory since 1994 while the museum opened in 2015.

days of the festival, interactions with the audience were mostly limited to question sections. Exceptions included the focus groups done during the launch event; a tour of the factory that some people attended during the festival; and a small nexTabasso stand where they could share memories about the past of the factory and ideas about its future.

5.5 Digital tools in Chieri1: nexTabasso[25]

By early December, after the interviews and focus groups were completed, I had prepared a few proposals for digital tools to support different aspects of the process, like the communication between facilitators and participants and they coordination with different departments of the municipality. Of these, only one proposal caught the attention of the facilitators {D72}. The proposal was about the creation of a digital collection of memories about the past of the factory, perceptions about its current state, and ideas about what its future could be.

The idea to create a participated on-line collection had gradually emerged over the previous months because of two aspects. Firstly, young people had been absent from the process. (The youngest participants at focus groups were in their late twenties.) During one of them, a participant also mentioned the difficulty to involve young people in cultural events {D69}.

The second aspect was that several participants had shared personal anecdotes about the factory, often because they had relatives or friends who worked there {D68, D70, D77}. If in the past Tabasso was associated with one of Chieri's biggest company, now the factory meant different things to different people. The factory was an 'open wound' for former workers, many of which were retired, and their relatives, who heard their stories about the company's sudden closure {D80}. Among teenagers, on the other hand, few knew about its history and the Tabasso was an empty factory sitting in the center of their city. (At least according to those who later took part in nexTabasso.)

Building a shared narrative was a key component of the regeneration process. Although there were many studies, books and archival materials about the factory and the company, none emphasized the connections that people had with it. The project I proposed would collect existing material but also ask citizens to share original content, like a picture or a recording that told about life at the Tabasso {D77}.

After the facilitators had approved the proposal and introduced it during the early January meeting with the direction cabin {D84}, I started looking for partners among the associations that took part in the focus group. I presented my idea to the fablab (introduced in previous sections) {D81} and *Area Bene Comune* (lit. Area Commons, ABC) {D80}. Since its foundation in 2014 (the same year *Chieri Bene Comune* won the elections), ABC had promoted the participated regeneration of

25 This network includes the people and groups that got involved with nexTabasso. In this section I will switch to speaking in first person because I was more engaged than in other parts of the process.

industrial buildings for the development of cultural activities through stronger relations between local institutions and citizens {D181}. Two of their members were also public officers (in fact, one was the main representative of the innovation and participation department.) And like the fablab, they were among the associations that shared the ex-porter's lodge.

Over the years ABC had organized different activities that revolved around the Tabasso factory like cleaning some areas with groups of volunteers and events to brainstorm ideas about possible reuses for the factory {D182}. They had also organized guided tours of some of the factory's inactive areas, during which some participants had shared anecdotes about the factory that ABC would have liked to collect. Hence my proposal was especially relevant to their activities.

Thanks to ABC's initial support, I was introduced to the city's historical archive {D77}, and Storiandoli {D79}, whose activities included interviewing Chieri's senior citizens to share their memories. Both became partners of the project and, like ABC and the fablab, supported it by providing suggestions and contacts.

Since I was trying to set the project up according to action research principles, our first meetings were spent exploring open questions such as whether and how collecting memories and ideas would help the participatory process; or if there were better ways to invest our energies {D88, D101, D117}.

We agreed on the idea to design, create and manage together with participants a digital archive, that would be presented during the festival but could last beyond it {D78}. It would be a web page that combined available materials with multimedia contents shared by citizens like documents, pictures, recordings and videos. We were hoping that people would share pictures of lie in the factory, or recordings of anecdotes from their relatives.

Since the website should be made by and for citizens, the project had to remain independent from facilitators and municipality; hoped that the project would continue existing after the festival {D98}; and discussed alternative labeling schemes that included categories like 'built space', 'life in the factory', 'the Tabasso family', 'before the factory' {D101}.

While partners supported the project, I still needed collaborators to design, create and maintain the website. Thanks to the fablab, which had experience working with high school students, I was able to meet with teachers from two local high schools. They liked the idea and helped me set it up as a project for the *alternanza scuola lavoro* (lit. school-work alternation, ASL) {D111}[26]. I also had support from the participation and innovation department, which would act as the host institution for the project.

After exchanging some written proposals with teachers and the PID {D125, D126, D127}, by mid-March we launched a call for participation. The main goals of the project included: (1) Co-designing the website, including its aesthetics,

26 Since 2015, Italian high school students are required work a certain number of hours in one or more jobs in the private, public or civic sectors over their last three years of education. (A comparable system in the UK is called 'work-related learning'.) In fact, if the PID would not have agreed to act as hosting institution no ASL agreement would have been possible.

features and architecture. (2) Collecting materials by engaging citizens to crowd-source contents, both existing and original. (3) Curating and the website (like deciding how content should be organized and published) and maintaining it over time.

After a presentation in each school {D152, D140}, six students decided to get on board. Later, during a presentation of the project at the Polytechnic university of Turin, two more students decided to join the team {D172}. During the presentations I emphasized that we would take a learning-by-doing approach. (For me especially, since I had no experience working with teenagers.)

In fact, the project's objectives were quite ambitious and had to be adapted to the skills and energies available. For example, we had to decide whether we would develop the website from scratch or use tools that simplified development but were less flexible. We decided to take the second approach, since I was the only person with coding skills and, while a few students were interested in learning, we did not have enough time. However, some students felt comfortable with social media and took over the communication of the project; had graphic design skills that helped us design our logo, which later was used for stickers that we used to promote the project around the city.

At the beginning of our activities, we structured the team as a newsroom divided in three macro-tasks: design and development, collecting and editing contents, and communication {D127}. Most of our meetings took place in the ex-porter's lodge (thanks to ABC and the fablab); sometimes we also used the library's conference room, and once we used an room of the municipality (both thanks to the PID).

One of our first tasks was deciding a name, so we did some brainstorming about the group's perceptions of the factory. We decided for nexTabasso: by adding a 'n' to 'ex Tabasso', which was how many citizens referred to the factory, we were hoping to convey our goal to link past, present and future.

Almost all students knew about the factory and were familiar with the library, but very few were aware of its history. However, they said that green spaces were used during the summer, although there was no area designed for that {D162}. So, we decided that they would take advantage of their school's self-management day in mid-May to ask other students about their perceptions and ideas. These included: a multipurpose space to host events, concerts and exhibitions; a crafts market; spaces to study as well as relax; spaces for rehearsals; book and poetry clubs; a speakers corner; and a self-managed bar that they could use to raise funds to support other activities[27].

Although the festival was approaching fast, we managed to meet fifteen times (for two or three hours at a time on average). One of the collaborators had joined nexTabasso because she was a relative of the Tabasso family. She helped us contact he uncle, who had been the last CEO of the company, and who accepted to take us on a tour of the factory's inactive area[28]. (Unfortunately, however, we were not able

[27] http://www.nextabasso.it/?p=63
[28] http://www.nextabasso.it/?p=119

to involve him further in the project.) All other materials we were able to collect were shared on the website and our social media pages. In mid-June the local newspaper interviewed the collaborators {D238}.

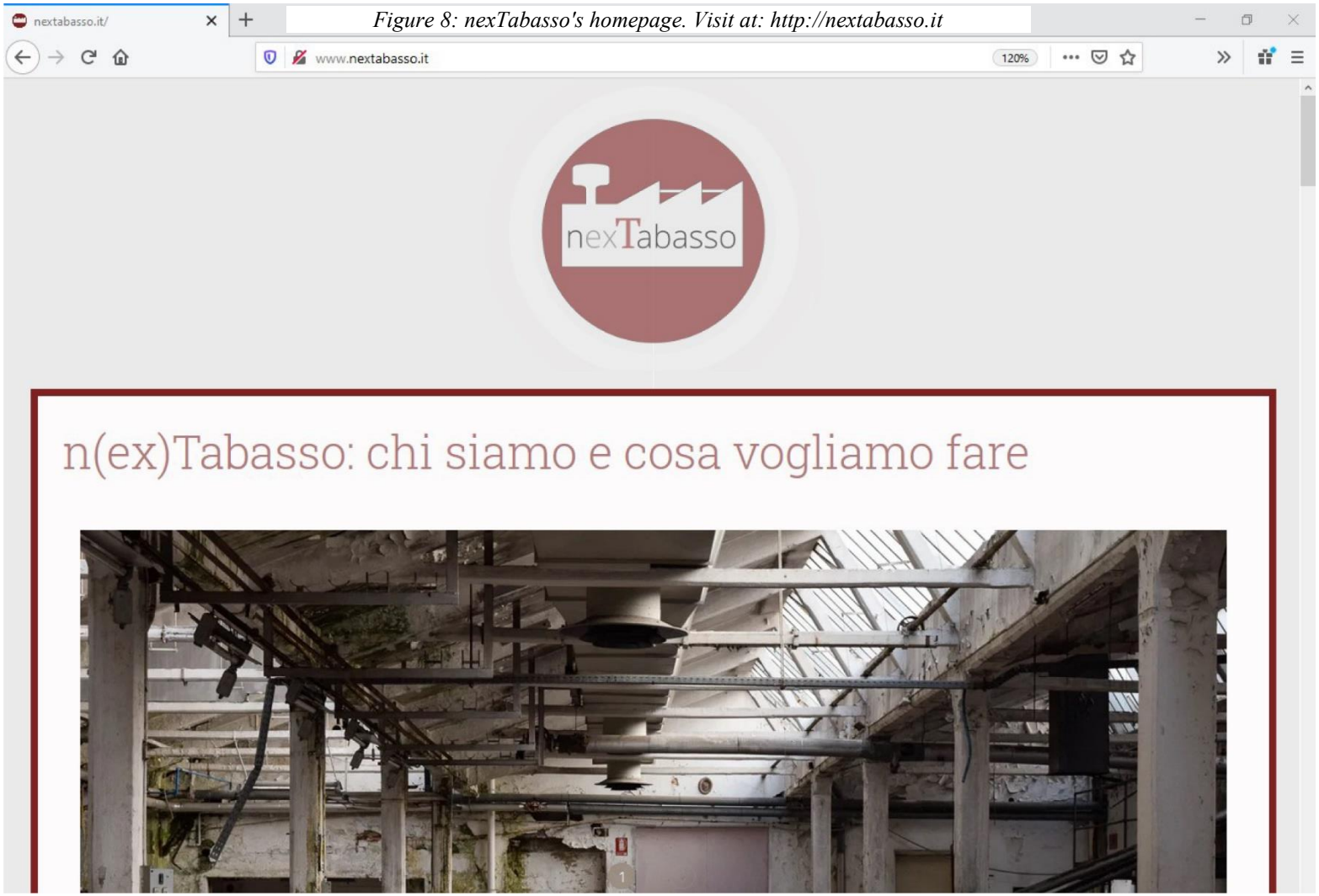
The last action we wanted to carry out was to have a space in the festival where we could continue to collect memories and idea from participants. The facilitators let us stay in the room that had been reactivated, where the guided tour organized by ABC ended. Those who attended the tour would then take part in a site-specific poetry reading that revolved around memory. After that, they could share with us their memories and ideas about the factory.

To collect contributions, we asked people to draw their idea (or just write their name) on a round piece of cardboard. Each piece had a radio-frequency identification (RFID) tag, so that they could swipe the cardboard on a box that house a small computer[29], which had a microphone that people could use to record their idea. All the results were later compiled in another webpage, which displays the different cardboards and their associated recordings[30].

29 Similar tags are often used in public library books (to facilitate rentals and returns) or public transport systems.

30 The idea was inspired and supported by the work of Alexander Wilson from Newcastle Universty, who had prototyped the system for his PhD thesis. Visit at: http://nextabasso.it/festival2018

Figure 8: nexTabasso's homepage. Visit at: http://nextabasso.it



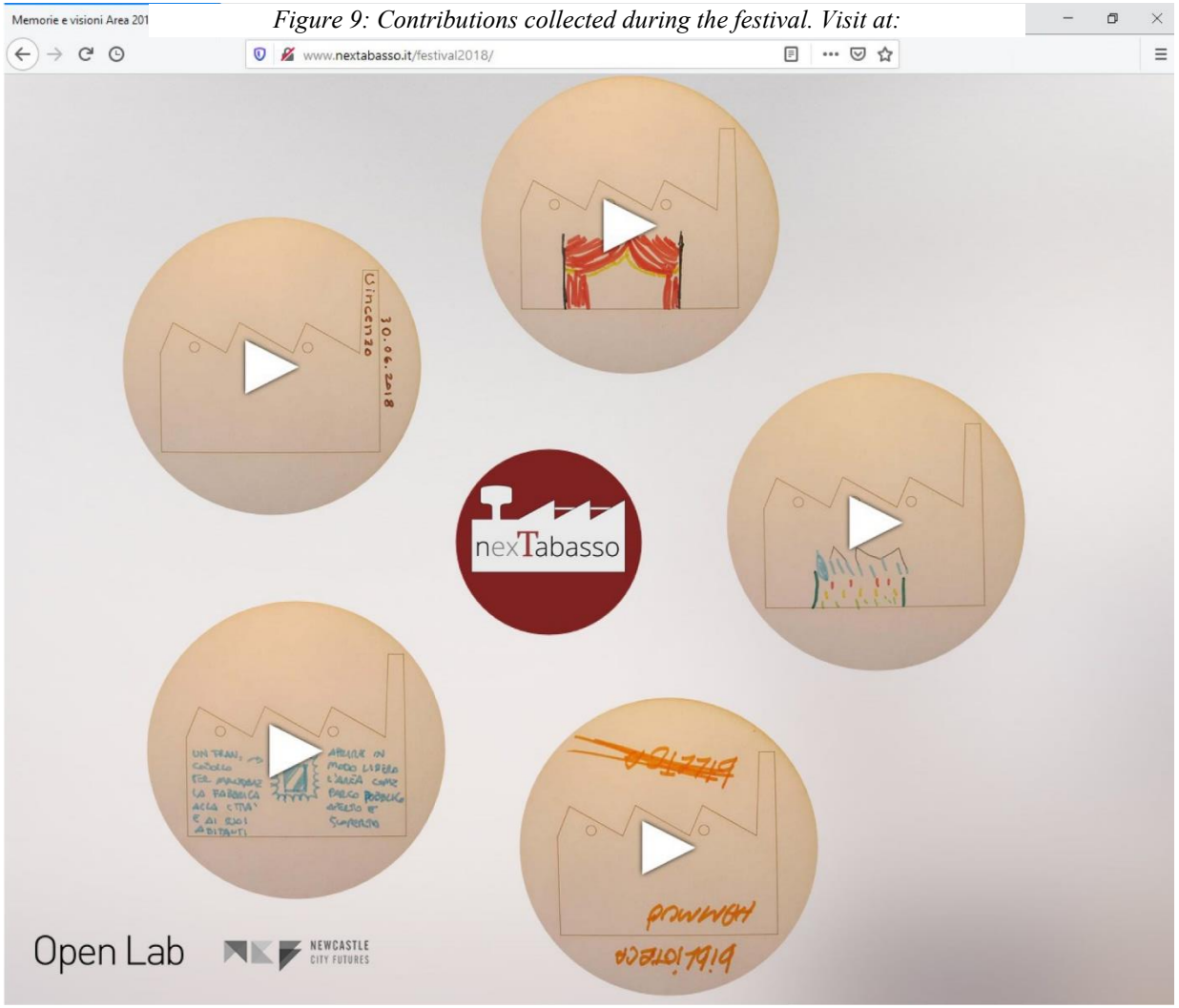


Figure 9: Contributions collected during the festival. Visit at:

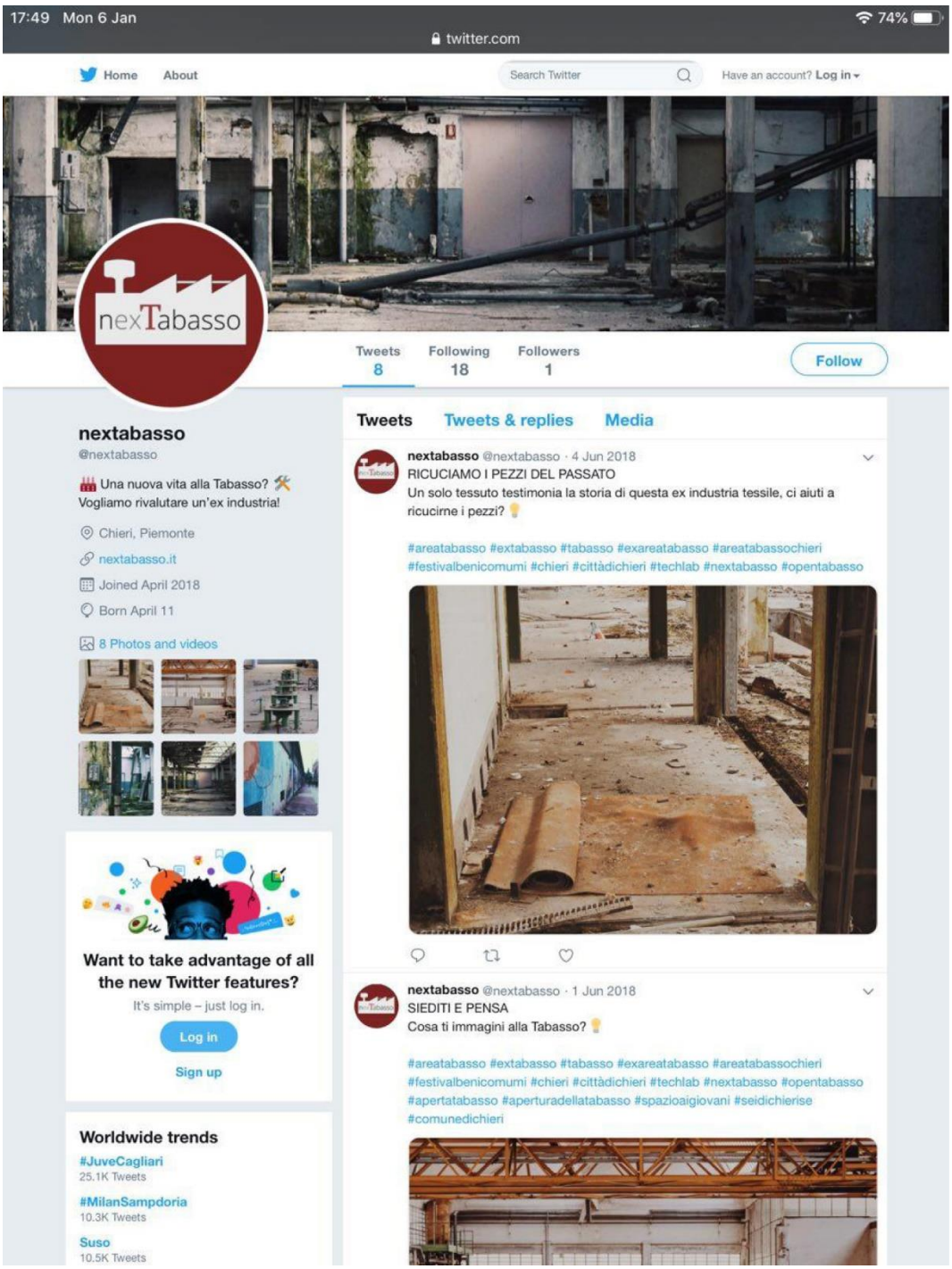


Figure 10: nexTabasso's presence on social media: Twitter. Visit at: https://twitter.com/nextabasso

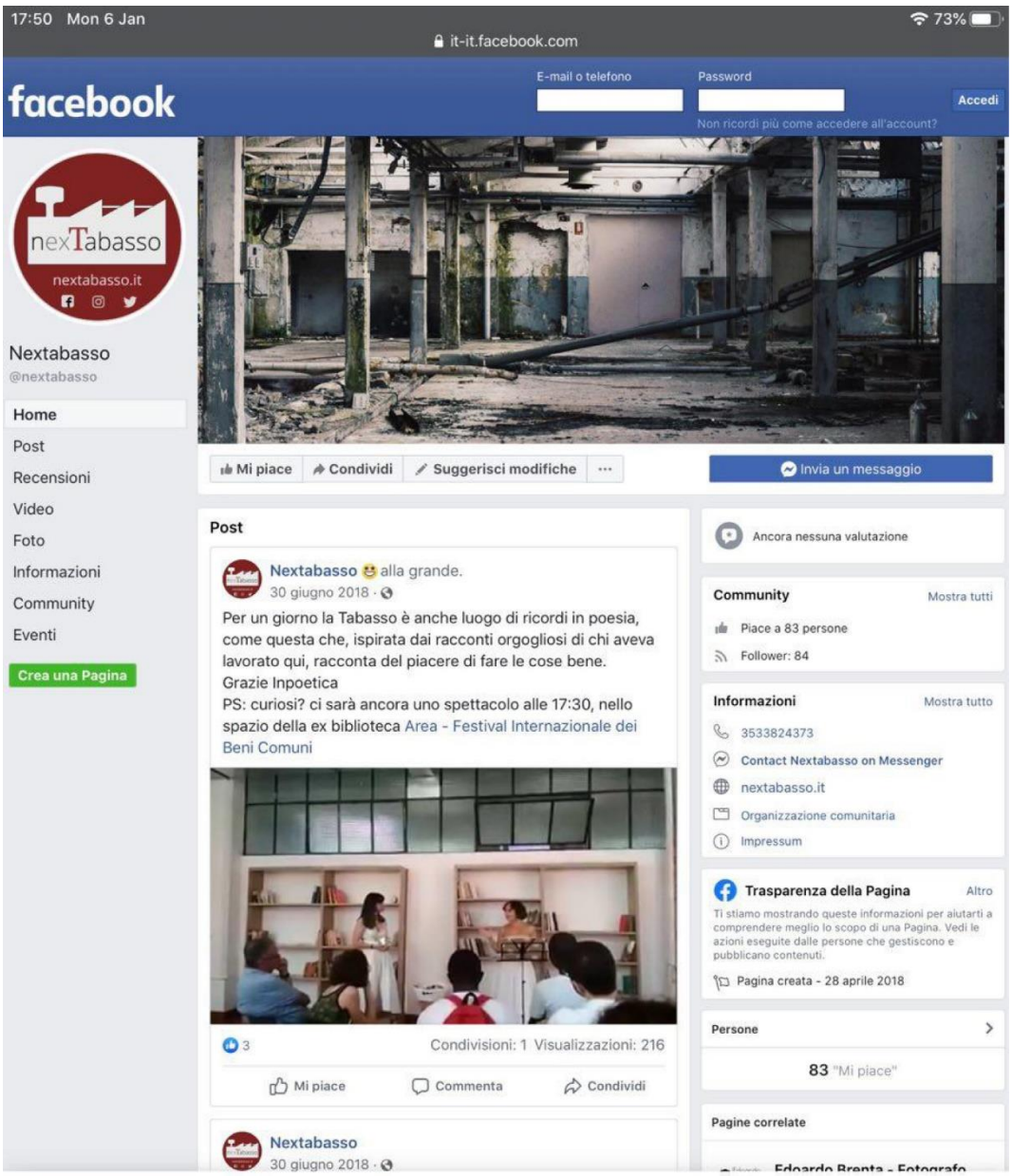


Figure 11: nexTabasso's presence on social media: Facebook. Visit at: https://facebook.com/nextabasso/

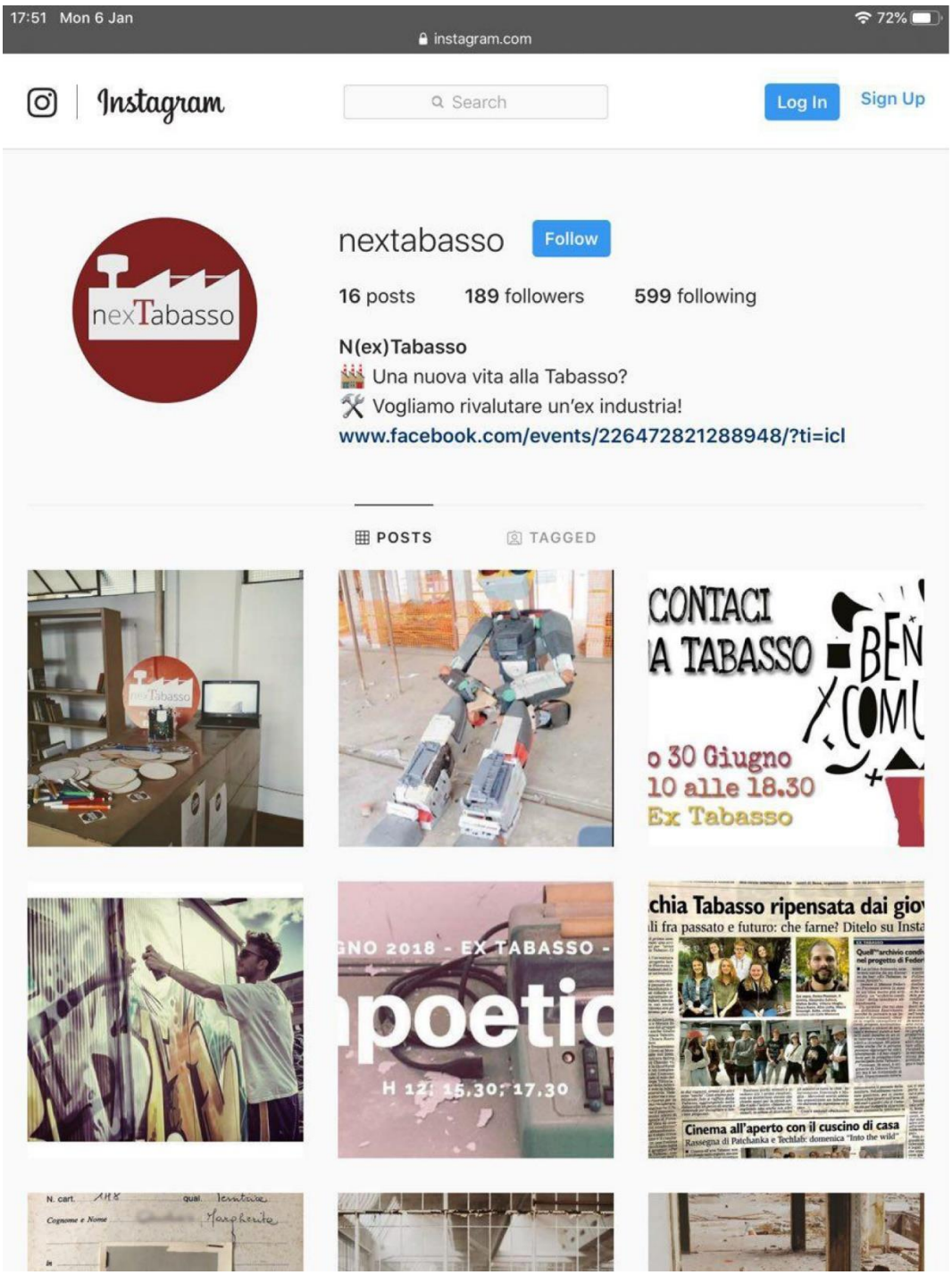


Figure 12: nexTabasso's presence on social media: Instagram. Visit at: https://instagram.com/nextabasso/

Chapter 6

Chieri2: Case della Città

In the previous chapter I introduced the two processes that took place in Chieri, following a public call issued by the municipality to hire external facilitators. This chapter discusses the second process (Chieri2), where I mixed AR and ANT as I gradually became a collaborator of the facilitators that followed it. Like in the first process, the facilitators were the gatekeepers to my fieldwork, which lasted from September 2017 to July 2018. The teams that followed each process, however, were different. We agreed that I could follow their work and propose digital tools that could support the process.

Chieri2 revolved around three public buildings that the municipality assigned to local associations to carry out their activities. The main goal was to evaluate and possibly change, together with local associations that were already in each building, their management and access models.

In the call issued by the municipality, Turin's *case del quartiere* (lit 'houses of the neighborhood', HoN) were explicitly mentioned as a 'model that can be replicated' to create Chieri's *case della città* (House of the City, HoC) {D26}[31]. More specific goals included improving the use of common areas; fostering synergy and collaboration across associations; and defining how external actors could use parts of each space when these were not used by resident associations. The last point was intended to optimize the use of each building to satisfy demands from other associations without an assigned space.

31 Like in the previous chapter, sources referenced in curly brackets (for example {D1}). Refer to Appendix for the complete list of documents, while originals can be found in the database.

1-2: Outdoor view of the Cittadella del volontariato

3: The common salon during an event

4: Entrance to the restaurant

Figure 13: Pictures of the Cittadella del Volontariato

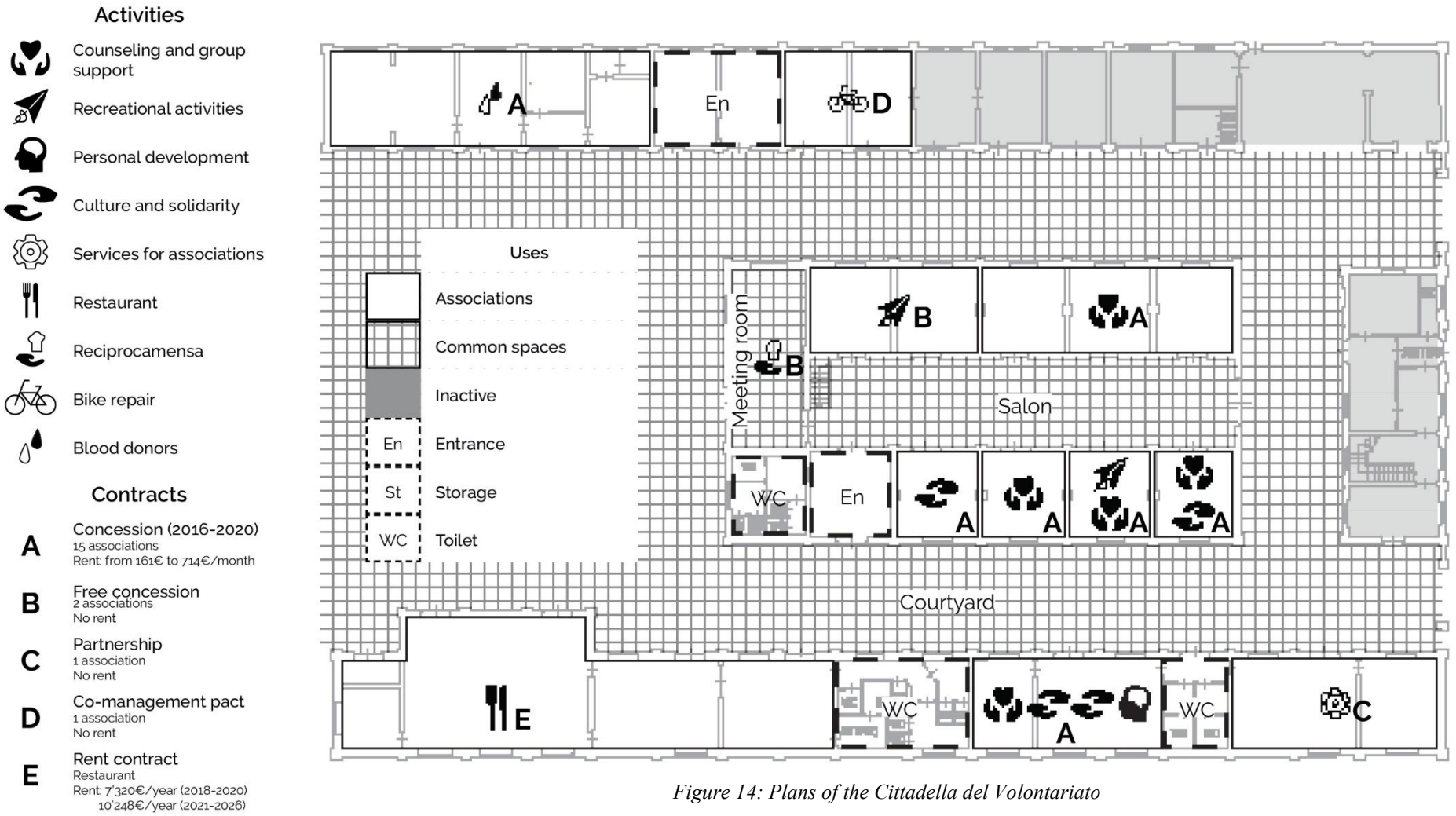
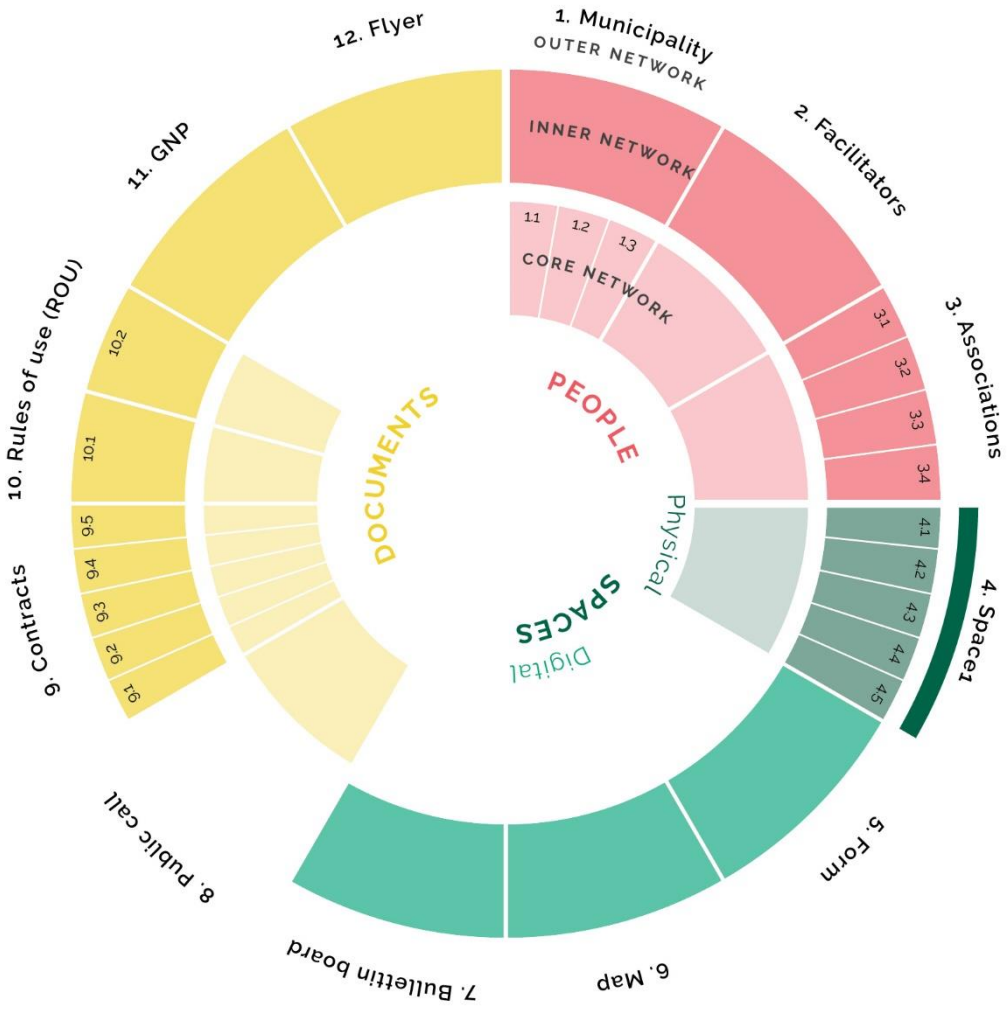


Figure 14: Plans of the Cittadella del Volontariato



People

1 Municipality
- 1.1 Direction cabin
- 1.2 Social and work policies dept.
- 1.3 Participation and innovation dept.

2 Facilitators

3 Associations
- 3.1 Present
- 3.2 Absentees
- 3.3 Restaurant
- 3.3 Administrative services prov.

Spaces

Physical

4 Space1
- 4.1 Associations
- 4.2 Common spaces
- 4.3 Restaurant
- 4.4 Inactive
- 4.5 Other

Digital

5 Form
6 Map
7 Bulletin board

Documents

8 Public call
9 Contracts
- 9.1 Concession (2016-2020)
- 9.2 Free concession
- 9.3 Partnership
- 9.4 Co-management pact
- 9.5 Rent contract

10 Rules of use
- 10.1 ROU1
- 10.2 ROU2

11 Good neighbors pact
12 Flyer

Figure 15: Actor-networks in Chieri2

The first space was Chieri's c*ittadella del volontariato* (lit. 'citadel of volunteering', from now space1) a former slaughterhouse re-qualified in 2012, which hosted twenty-one associations involved in providing a range of services and recreational activities to their members as well as the community. The second was *Area Caselli* (space2), originally a sewing factory, which had recently been reassigned to a group of youth associations tasked with establishing the Chieri's new youth center. The last was *San Filippo* (space3), a private school located next to a church, within which two identical corridors on two different floors had been assigned to associations.

While the call outlined the same objectives for all three spaces {D26}, each was different in terms of spatial organization, the relations between associations and their agreements with the municipality. These differences were identified in the early phases of the process and led to space2 and space3 being dropped from it, although for different reasons that I will outline below.

As for the previous process, the case study is organized according to the different actor-networks that formed around the process. However, since no public events were organized, in this process there was no outer network. The inner network formed only in space1, as very few activities were about space2 and none (except for a visit) about space3.

6.1 Core network[32]

The call that facilitators won outlined three objectives {D25, D26}. The first was about defining, together with associations, a model of governance where they would be more engaged in, and consequently become responsible for, the management of both their assigned spaces and common ones. If that could be achieved, the second objective was to harmonize local regulations that defined the rules of use that occupants must follow. The third objective, which focused only on space1, asked facilitators to review existing studies about the building to identify promising ideas for requalifying its parts that were still inactive[33].

The call suggested that the municipality had a homogeneous agenda for all spaces, but facilitators soon realized that the circumstances in each space were different and most objectives needed to be adjusted {D41}. When the social and work policies department (SWP) guided them to visit each space, it laid out its own objectives that had not been explicitly mentioned in the call {D41, D42, D48}.

In order to improve its coordination with associations in each space, the SWP needed more information about how they used their assigned rooms and common ones. In space1, only some associations had provided their hours of activity. The use of shared spaces was reported in an online calendar but there had several occasions when activities had overlapped, leading to some conflicts. The communication and coordination routines in space2 still had to be defined, but since it was the smallest space and hosted less associations, it seemed the least

32 The core network includes the facilitators and different departments of the municipality involved in the process.

33 These referred mainly to projects from the from the Polytechnic and University of Turin.

problematic. Things were more problematic in space3, where coordination was informally overseen by a person with whom the SWP had no relation.

Another objective was to satisfy the demands from associations that did not have an assigned room. Chieri had more than 200 registered associations and many were on a waiting list to have a room assigned. In space1 and space3 rooms had been assigned mainly through concession contracts that would last until 2020, and associations perceived rooms as 'theirs.' In space 2, on the other hand, associations were reportedly more open to let outsiders use the space {D49, D50, D51}.

Finally, in space1 there were spaces that needed to be requalified before they could be assigned. The SWP wanted to apply for regional funds in partnership with the network of associations that would form during the process.

If meeting the SWP revealed some discrepancies between the call's stated objectives and the circumstances of each space, when facilitators met with the *cabina di regia* (lit. 'direction cabin', from now DC[34]), they realized that the departments involved had conflicting plans for each space. During their meeting in late October, facilitators presented their preliminary evaluation of each space. Following the call's suggestion to emulate the HoN in Turin, facilitators had

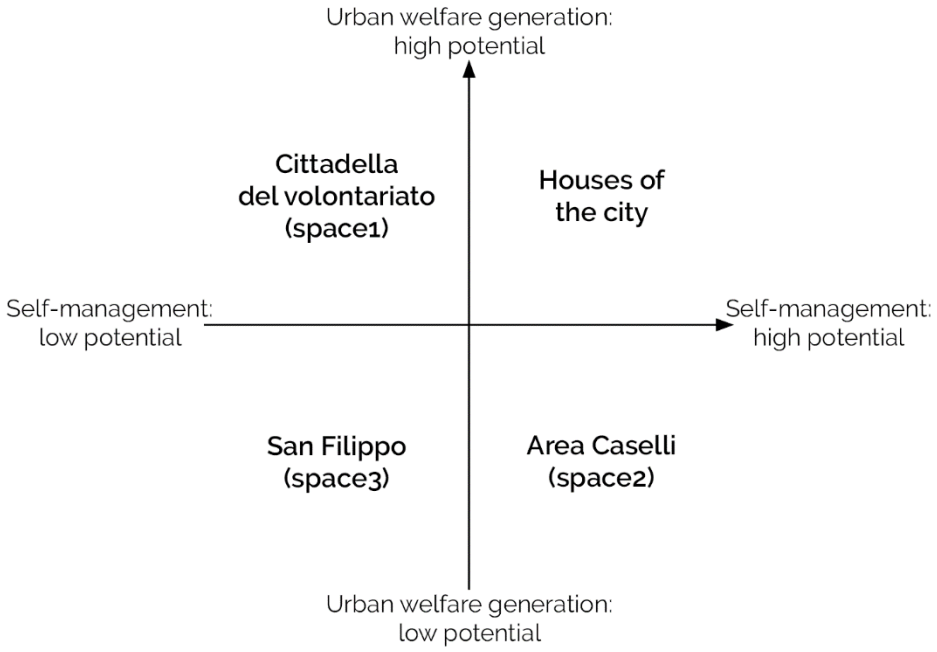


Figure 16: Preliminary evaluation of each space {D52}

evaluated each space according to their capacity to generate urban welfare and to

34 The *cabina di regia* (lit. 'direction cabin', DC) is a jargon that usually refers to a group of representatives from different departments (across one or more public institutions), who collaborate around a project that requires their different expertise. According to {Pascuzzi, 2017} the project should represent a governmental action that integrates vision, planning, coordination and implementation. A quick on-line search reveals that the term is used by many local administrations in Italy. In Chieri2 the DC included the mayor's office, participation and innovation department (PID), the social and work policies department (SWP); the planning department (PD); and local police {D54}.

self-manage common spaces {D54}. In different ways, each space lacked at least one of these two aspects when compared to the ideal model {D52}.

The facilitators also presented a SWOT analysis to outline their argument in favor of a shift from the current situation, where each association appropriated its room, to shared management. While they had prepared several arguments (which, however, did not address the objectives of the SWP), they only had time to explain how shared management would lead to reducing variable costs (such as utilities, materials and equipment) {D52}. Representatives from the planning department (PD) disagreed with the goals that had been outlined, the evaluation and the desirability of shared management.

As regards space1, facilitators said it had high potential to generate urban welfare because its twenty-one associations addressed various interests and needs {D56}. It also had parts that still needed renovation, which could be used to promote shared management and foster coordination between associations. However, as one facilitator put it, its associations were like 'tenants in a condominium' and seldom collaborated with each other.

Despite this, it was the only space for which the DC agreed on a list of adjusted objectives. The first was to improve self-management, firstly by implementing a shard calendar that would help plan activities and coordinate how common spaces were used. Then facilitators could use the vacant spaces as leverage to co-design with associations how outsiders could use the space {D54, D56}.

Space2 seemed the most promising when it came to implement shared management, because its associations had proposed to manage it in ways that reminded of Turin's HoN, {D49}. Although they were at an advanced stage compared to the other two, there was still room for adjustments because associations still had to define the space's internal rules of use {D50} and draft their *carta dei serivizi* (lit. 'service chart' where they would list all their activities and services for the community) {D51}.

The facilitators said that space2's potential to generate urban welfare was low because it only targeted young citizens, rather than all age groups as HoN usually do. The PD argued that they had won the space through a call that explicitly asked for a youth center {D49}. Facilitators, then, agreed that they would continue support associations to define a service chart, and would promote a management model that could later be replicated in the other spaces {D54}.

The biggest conflict arose about space3. Here the PD's plan, unknown to the facilitators until then, was to reduce the space that associations occupied from two floors to one. This was necessary because of a revision in the regulations for fire safety and also because the private school that also used the space needed to increase the number of rooms available to its students. The participation and innovation department, on the other hand, worried about worsening relations between the municipality and the associations. In this case facilitators said that the municipality needed to sort out whether and how rooms would be reassigned before they would engage space3's associations.

After adjusting the objectives for each space, facilitators and DC also discussed about the additional goal to create a shared narrative for all the spaces. Since the

idea to create a network of HoC was not shared by all the departments in the municipality – and next section will show it encountered skepticism also among associations – facilitators needed to understand if it was useful to create a network among the three spaces, and what its nature and purpose should be. In fact, only associations from space2 considered themselves as a group, while those in space1 and space3 were more isolated.

The participation and innovation department wished that associations would start understanding the three spaces not only as the buildings where their resided, but as spaces connected by a common mission to generate urban welfare. A shared identity would also support a new communication strategy for all spaces that could be used for the festival and support future applications for funding.

At the end of the meeting, facilitators decided that they would continue supporting associations in space1 and space2 to achieve their adjusted objectives and to start building a shared narrative. This was also the only meeting that facilitators had with the DC, except for one in early January when, however, discussions about Chieri1 and the festival dominated.

In the following months facilitators continued working only in space1. Work in space3 was supposed to resume once the municipality had solved its issues, but that never happened and space3 was dropped from the process. As regards space2, facilitators had (to my knowledge) two meetings with its associations, one that took place just before the first meeting with the DC {D48}, and another in mid-November {D63}. In both meetings the situation in space2 seemed promising, except for some disagreement about the ways in which outsiders could use the space. (These, however, were only mentioned briefly.) As far as I know, although facilitators kept in touch with associations from space2 through phone calls, over time associations became less responsive. In the end, no further activities took place in space2.

6.2 Inner network: Cittadella del Volontariato (space1)[35]

Space1, also known as the *Cittadella del Volontariato* (lit. 'citadel of volunteering'), was located in a former slaughterhouse that had been built in the early 1900s, just outside the perimeter of Chieri's ancient walls (which today roughly delimits the city center). The building was composed of two side blocks and a central one that can be divided in five blocks: north, south, center, east and west. During my fieldwork, space1 hosted twenty-one organizations, all were non-profits associations except for a restaurant and a provider of administrative services for non-profits.

The left half of the northern block hosted two associations and some deposits, while its right half was still inactive. (The other building that needed renovation occupied the eastern block.) The left half of the southern block was occupied by the restaurant; four associations share the three rooms on its right; and the

35 The inner network includes the facilitators and the participants that they interviewed and/or invited in the focus groups, either as individuals or as representatives of local associations.

administrative services provider took the two rooms on right corner. The central block hosted most associations, the corridor and a meeting room. The only other shared space was the garden, located in the western part and mostly used by the restaurant but also available to other associations.

Like in Chieri1, people in their twenties and thirties were mostly absent from the process, except for the restaurant and one association. However, associations did not target specific age groups and could potentially attract a wider range of people, some of which also came from surrounding municipalities. Some activities were open to anyone (such as free counseling services or support groups for alcoholics, cancer patients, and single mothers) while others were for members only.

Due its variety and availability of rooms, space1 had potential to generate urban welfare and be a place of encounter among diverse groups. This potential would increase if outsiders were allowed to use the space. Hence facilitators approached space1 hoping to shift how associations used and perceived it, from low collaboration and appropriation of individual spaces towards shared managements. However, as the previous section explained, the call did not describe circumstances in detail, and facilitators had to meet both the social and work policies department and associations a few times to assess the situation {D41, D61, D86}.

The following table summarizes the different priorities that emerged from the call that facilitators won, their visit to the spaces with the SWP, and the meeting with the DC. These objectives did not contradict each other, but they prioritized three broad issue in different ways. The first was implementing shared management, which implied shifting the perceptions of associations towards the space, from something they appropriated to something that could be shared. The second was about optimizing the use of the space by defining the conditions that could enable outsiders to use parts of it when inactive. Finally, the third objective was about creating a shared narrative that could be used to communicate the space to outsiders but also that could support future fund-raising efforts, which were necessary to reactivate that parts of the inactive space.

During their meetings with associations, facilitators had to assess how viable these goals were depending on the circumstances within space1. When facilitators mentioned in Turin's HoNs as a model to emulate, few associations knew what these were. (And even if some people knew them, HoNs were places with diverse management models that were hard to conceptualize in few simple words.) Some participants responded with skepticism and shared doubts like 'are we being forced to convert to a HoN?' {D61}; 'will the municipality be excluded from managing space1?'; and 'where do we get the funds to support the conversion process'? {D86}.

Aside for a problem of understanding, the objective clashed with current circumstances. Most associations that resided in space1 had won, through a public call, a concession agreement that granted them the right to use the space from 2016 to 2020 (see plans). This meant that they were under no obligation to change the ways they used the space. Concession contracts were agreements between associations, the tenants of the space, and the municipality, its owner and

administrators {D167}. They legitimized associations to appropriate their assigned spaces. In one of the first meetings, facilitators asked if people considered space1 as a private or public space, and most associations agreed it was private {D86}. Hence trying to force the shift to share management could be understood as an attempt to manipulate or even a break of the agreement.

Table 3: Summary of objectives

Issue		
Shift from appropriation to shared management	Optimize the use of space	Build a shared narrative
Public call {D26}		
Co-design a model of governance where to make associations more engaged in and responsible for their assigned and common space. (Emulate HoN model from Turin.)	Harmonize local regulations that defined the rules of use that occupants must follow.	Review existing to identify proposals to requalify space1's inactive parts.
Social and work policies department {D41}		
Collect more information about how association used the space to improve coordination.	Optimized the use of space to address demands from associations.	Apply for regional funds to requalify inactive parts.
Adjusted objectives {D54}		
Improve self-management by implementing a shard calendar.	Use vacant spaces as leverage to co-design with associations how outsiders could use the space	Create a shared narrative to connect associations within and across the spaces

Another document, the *regolamento per l'uso delle sedi associative* ('rules of use', ROU), integrated concession agreements. There were two versions of it, ROU1 and ROU2[36], which defined slightly different rights and obligations both for the municipality and the associations.

ROU1 covered norms related to the maintenance of space1, distributing responsibilities between the municipality (who, for example, had to care for the electric and heating systems) and associations (who paid utilities). The text also referred to a 'sense of responsibility and social conscience to collectively maintain

36 The first version was officially approved in its latest version on May 2nd, 2016 {D131}. It focuses on space1 and space3, while space2 was excluded because a separate call would be made to regulate it. The second version, called *Regolamento per l'uso della Cittadella del Volontariato di Chieri* (lit. 'rules of use for the cittadella del volontariato', dated June 30th, 2017) was a proposed draft that introduces changes to ROU1 for space1, while acknowledging that these proposals might change over the processes 'dealing with urban commons' that would start soon thereafter {D130}. (In fact, ROU2 was published two weeks before the processes' launch event.)

a public heritage and respect current laws and local customs,' and stated that, once a year, associations had to elect a general representative to mediate the relation with the municipality. In addition, each association should also have its internal representative, who would be the contact with the general representative and the municipality {D131}.

The municipality was supposed to organize a general assembly twice a year, while associations could ask for additional meetings if necessary. At the start of process associations had a general representative but it was not clear who their internal representative were and whether any assembly had ever taken place.

ROU2 added a section on 'common areas', saying that the general representative must ensure 'fair use for all', making sure that everyone would be able to use them, if they needed to, at least once a month, and that events would not conflict. ROU2 also stated that events should be scheduled in an on-line calendar, jointly managed by the general representative and the SWP, and that a printed version should be shared on a bulletin board and updated every two weeks {D130}. As the SWP explained during the first meeting with facilitators (discussed in the previous section), while there was an on-line calendar there had also been times when events overlapped.

The ROU was mentioned for the first time during a meeting in mid-January, when a participant complained there were no rules regulating the use of the space, and the SWP representative present answered that ROU had been distributed when concession agreements had been signed. In fact, it seemed that most of the associations present at the meeting were not aware of the document. {D114}.

Aside for the relevance of these documents, there were also latent conflicts between associations that emerged from the first meeting and would monopolize much of the following ones. These related to caretaking, free-riding, and absenteeism from the process.

Care-taking controversies revolved around matters such as registering with waste collection authorities, subscribing to a common insurance policy and cleaning common spaces and toilets {D86}. Associations had to register individually with the local waste collection authority, but many were not aware of it and had not done it. This showed that communication was lacking. Insurance, on the other hand, showed there would be economic and practical benefits to coordination {D86}. Both issues, however, were discussed only once.

Cleaning issues, on the other hand, monopolized most meetings. Throughout 2016, the first year of concessions, cleaning services had been paid by the municipality. Once the budget for cleaning at space1 ended, no alternative was implemented and, when the process started, associations had been paying for cleaning autonomously for several months[37]. Some associations felt that it was not fair that everyone payed the same amount when others used the space everyday while they used it only a few hours a week.

37 At the second meeting they decided to self-organize and take advantage of the meetings to collect cleaning fees, at least from associations that were attending {D114}. In later meetings, associations were autonomously collecting the money: while cleaning issues monopolized many discussions they also made associations interact more {D237}.

Free riding was another reason of conflict. Some associations met several days a week, while other only for a couple of hours a month. For example, one association complained they paid too much, between utilities and rent, for using their space only two hours a week. Another said that, since they used the space for administrative purposes while they conducted their social activities around the city, they felt it was unjust that they should pay the same as those who used the space everyday {D167}.

Associations also had different needs. Those who stored sensitive documents or valuable materials in their room were less keen to share the space with others. Those who were increasing their activities and members needed more space, while others had been inactive for a long time. Finally, only a few agreed that sharing space with outsider would help optimize the its use {D146}.

Several participants associated their complaints about cleaning and free riding with the elderly association, who usually occupied the common salon every afternoon of the week and every Saturday evening, had a lot of members[38], and whose rent was paid by the municipality. Representatives from the elderly associations, on the other hand, defended their entitlement to use the space and complained that it was not adequate to their needs (especially in terms of cleanliness and security).

Another set of controversies revolved absenteeism from the process. Although half of the organization attended the meetings at least once, during some only five or six were present. Some participants felt that it was not fair that only some associations were investing their time into a process that would change the norms of communal living and feared that absent organizations would not comply with whatever was decided {D113}.

Absenteeism was due to a variety of reasons. Since the communal spaces were in the central building, some associations from the northern and southern blocks felt the process did not concern them {D141}. Other associations were inactive or did not have members that could be present at the meetings, which were usually held on Wednesday nights between 18 and 20. Another issue was a lack of trust, both towards a top-down process and between associations.

The provider of administrative services and the restaurant were among absentees, although they could have contributed to shared management. The facilitators met with the administrative services provider, who benefited from a free concession in exchange for supporting local associations in mid-February. It representative was disillusioned about the process and, more in general, that associations would be able to collaborate {D112}. Although it might have been the ideal candidate coordinate daily maintenance, they showed no interest in being involved.

The people who run the restaurants at space1 met facilitators In mid-April facilitators met with the people who run the resaturant {D169}. Although restaurants or bars are important to attract people and support the project

38 They had around 200 total members, although on average 40-50 people were present simultaneously.

economically {D165}, the managers explained how their relationship with other associations had deteriorated over the years.

They had started with 'loads of optimism' and the HoN model in mind[39]. For instance, they had offered to manage the calendar and common areas, but their proposal was ignored. They also had to limit cultural and recreational initiatives because the common salon was always occupied Saturdays and Sundays, which only left the courtyard available in spring and summer. And when they had events, often other associations complained. However, restaurant managers complained that other associations used their bins since other associations were using their garbage bins. Finally, they disliked how some of the other associations would buy food and drinks from nearby places but use their tables.

When facilitators tried to suggest that the restaurant and associations 'lacked a clear agreement', the managers responded that they were lacking 'a sense of belonging.' Facilitators decided not invest time to investigate these controversies but understood that there was little reciprocity between the restaurant and many associations. In fact, while during the meeting the restaurant's managers seemed interested in collaborating further, they would only provide catering services during one day of the festival[40].

The last objective for space1 was about exploring the possibilities to apply for funds to renovate the parts that were still inactive. On one hand, it would be easier to raise funds with a joint application between the municipality and associations. However, facilitators dropped that objective because of the low levels of collaboration and how issues care-taking and free-riding had to be prioritized. Accordingly, the overview of previous studies was also ignored.

While these issues might seem trivial, they could not be ignored and helped asses the attitudes of associations towards each other, the municipality, the facilitators and shared management. (Also, it is easy to reassemble these conflicts with hindsight but most emerged and were understood gradually and in a nonlinear manner.)

The sense of appropriation that associations felt towards the space was supported by its spatial organization, which one facilitator defined the condominium model; the agreements that regulated its use; and the conflicts discussed so far. Altogether, current circumstances made the shifts towards shared management unlikely. Since associations would remain reticent to collaborate more until issues of caretaking, free-riding and absenteeism were be addressed.

However, the current situation also had downsides. Lack of coordination prevented associations from paying less for utilities or insurance, while inflexible agreements did not allow the space to adapt to changing needs. For example, associations who were increasing their activities, or reducing them, had no way to have more space or reduce their expenses respectively {D146, D165}.

39 The people who run the restaurant were in their thirties and employed younger staff. One of the managers was also working at one of Turin's HoN.

40 Later, facilitators were told that the person they spoke with during their meeting had left, and the internal re-organization that followed might have affected their possibilities to participate {D236}.

Appropriation also reduced the space's potential to generate urban welfare. On one hand, each association focused on the needs of its members or the people it supported and had to protect its space to continue its activities. On the other, while outsider could have addressed the needs and interests of other groups, the were not enabled to use the space when it was empty.

Facilitators decided to adjust their objectives once more and proposed associations to continue building a shared narrative of space1 as part of the HoC network, and to co-create what they called a *patto di buon vicinato per la gestione condivisa* (lit. 'Good Neighbors Pact', GNP)[41]. The two objectives were linked, as the GNP was supposed to formalize new agreements that would support the development of a shared narrative.

The facilitators considered building a shared narrative a necessary step to change relational dynamics. Firstly, it would help communicate space1 as a center of urban welfare generation and could nudge a sense of belonging, since associations would be the ones who defined it. Since the festival would be an opportunity to present the new narrative for the first time, associations seemed keen to work on it {D113}.

Meanwhile, the GNP would address those issues that had paralyzed previous meetings, namely care-taking, free-riding and absenteeism. While the ROU already addressed most points, it had proven non-influential {D113}. Perhaps, as one facilitator suggested, this was also due to its bureaucratic language, which might have given a sense of a top-down procedure, rather than something built together. Either way, most associations agreed that they needed a new agreement to regulate communal living.

In fact, the GNP would not be another agreement between the associations and the municipality, but a pact among peers that associations would draft and approve autonomously. The municipality would then legitimize it by recognizing that it complied with local legislations {D165, D167}. Hence the GNP did not substitute but complemented existing agreements. It focused on practices of 'collective caring of common spaces' and would exclude legally binding terms between associations and the municipality.

In the short-run the GNP addressed care-taking issues, free-riding, absenteeism as well as the need to have a representative of space1. It formalized the rules to manage the cleaning of common spaces and the bathrooms, which would be paid by the municipality, while associations committed to clean their individual rooms independently and every common room after using it.

Other elements of the GNP included: making sure doors were locked and lights were off at the end of the day (and notify should they not work); furnishing common spaces with both decorative and functional items (such as curtains or a bulletin board); taking care of outside area and green spaces; and caring for garbage independently. The GNP also ted that association could share services and equipment, although at the beginning these only included space1's wireless internet connection {D272}.

41 The idea and name were adapted from a similar pact done in Riccione {D153, D167}.

Rather than setting new rules, the GNP emphasized the collaborative practices that were already in place, and let associations add new elements voluntarily {D236}. By listing proposals rather than obligations, the GNP did not impose a standard way to use space1, rather it recognized that associations who used common spaces less often should also be less responsible for their caretaking {D167}. In other words, when associations that agreed to the GNP would not give anything up but could offer whatever they wanted but they might also gain something from the proposals of other {D167}. Other areas or activities that the GNP could address included caring for green areas; installing or improving urban furniture; dealing with garbage collection, etc {D188}. GNP was also transitory, meaning that it would last for one year with possibility of renewal, and that there would be quarterly meetings to adjust its details {D272}.

The GNP also addressed absenteeism from the process and future co-management meetings. As they were finalizing the agreement, associations and facilitators discussed whether groups who did not sign the pact should be sanctioned. They decided that adherence should stay voluntary but associations who did not sign the agreement could not participate in future meetings {D279}.

Finally, the GNP also defined the roles of space1's coordinator who, differently from what ROU2 introduced, would not be responsible for the relations between the municipality and the associations at space1 but would coordinate future co-management meetings[42]. Following the proposal of one participant, the role rotated every three months, at every co-management meeting {D237}.

This shift of language and focus from obligations (setting rules that everyone must follow) to propositions (recognizing communal actions that associations were already doing or were willing to do) intrigued associations {D146}. New features included a shared communication strategy, for which associations committed to promote space1 and other activities carried out there in their communication material in order to convey a sense of unified project; the fact that facilitators would support the first year of experimentation; fund of 500 Euro sponsored by the municipality to purchase shared materials; and the quarterly co-management meetings {D272}.

In the long run the GNP was mseant to foster belonging and civic responsibility. If compared to a co-management pact, the GNP was a 'watered-down compromise', as one facilitator once said {D167}. While it mainly focused on communal living it also included elements of caretaking {D165}. The difference between 'what everyone must do to respect communal living' and 'what each is willing to add to the space' might be subtle, but it tried initiate a shift in relational dynamics. As one participant said, associations needed to stop considering space1 as 'their' and start thinking of it 'ours' {D146}. In a sense the GNP undermined appropriation by

42 Roles included organizing co-mangement meeting by contacting all associations; making sure that appropriate minutes were redacted during each meeting; and maintaining relations with other associations and the municipality to collect issues that would be discussed in the following meetings {D279}.

installing practices that, if maintained over time, could help shift to shared management.

6.3 Digital tools in Chieri2

As I followed the work of facilitators throughout Chieri2, we experimented with four tools: a form to collect information about associations and their activities; a map-based calendar to visualize when and where activities took place; a bulletin board to integrate the physical one and let people who could not attend meetings participate in them; and a blogging platform to communicate the shared narrative that associations started building towards the end of the process. (In this part, where I was more engaged, I will change the subject from the third person to first.)

After the first meetings with associations were dominated by discussions about care-taking and free-riding, facilitators needed a better overview of the current situation. While they knew how associations were distributed throughout space1, they did not know how often each used the space; what activities they did; and who were their representatives {D114}. One facilitator was able to find contact information and general descriptions about some associations from social networks, but much was missing {D92}.

We decided to make a questionnaire, which I helped design and submit through an on-line platform. The form asked associations to provide their name, a short description, contacts information (including what they wanted to share publicly and what not); and their activities[43]. In total we collected fifteen responses over the course of three months.

The survey was meant to support shared management, and undermine perceptions that space was scarce, by showing that several rooms remained unused for much of the time. It could also help avoid overlapping activities and, later on, it provided information for space1's shared narrative. We decided to use an on-line form so that it could be distributed via the same e-mail list we used to announce meetings, and responses could be collected automatically.

While I chose an available service that could be deployed very fast, it also had some limits {D90}. For instance, I struggled with its pre-determined question formats when asking associations to provide their days and hours of activity. Also, some associations did not feel comfortable using a computer. We then printed some forms and, together with an association, we helped them filling the form out {D86, D129}. Finally, while having results in digital form meant that the facilitator and I did not need to type them into a table, more than one group wanted a copy of their answers, so that we had to distribute digital prints of what we collected {D146}.

One facilitator later said 'the on-line form was too rigid and did not allow respondents to have an overview of what they were sending' {D187}. When in late April we asked associations to submit proposals for the festival, this time we decided to use an off-line text document. In this way participants could either

43 Each association could give information about more than one activity (up to twenty-five), which included its name, a short description, who did it target, and when it was done.

submit their filled copy via mail or bring a printed one to the meeting {D191}. Despite this, the information collected through the form would be useful for the shared narrative.

Around late-October, I started developing the idea of an interactive digital map to improve the plans that the SWP used to track how associations were distributed in space1. In addition, it could also be used as a digital calendar to support the use of common spaces and communicate which activities took place at the *cittadella*, when and wdere {D41}[44]. I created an interactive map that would show which rooms were occupied and which were not at different moments of the week.

Differently than the form, I built this map from scratch. This time limits were mostly due to my programming skills. For instance, I divided each day in three periods (morning, afternoon and evening) rather than in hours. This was not compatible with the activities of associations who had activities in between two periods; or others who would use the same room within the same afternoon {D144}. If I were a better programmer, I could have built an interface that made changing hours of activity easier. I would be a lot of work for a prototype and I was not sure it would be worth investing in unless we were sure that the participants found the tool useful.

At the beginning the facilitators seemed interested in the map and we spent several weeks refining it together. The first reactions of the associations were mixed: some seemed interested in adopting it, while seemed more skeptic {D146}. However, after some discussion we realized that no one would be able to maintain and update the map without training on how to change it {D137}[45]. Shortly after we decided that it was too complicated and that it should be used only to visualize use of space {D143}. However, since the process never arrived to discussing openly that space was underused, this was also not put into practice.

Later in the process, I also proposed to create a digital bulletin board where we could collect a summary of the information shared during meetings and let participants comment on it. The main problem we were trying to tackle with this tool was letting participants who could not attend meetings remain up to date, and also have a fixed reference for important announcements (like reminder about registering with garbage collection authorities) and resources (like presentations and text documents that were shared during the meetings).

Since the board was a more complex than other tools and also allowed for interactions, I prepared some instructions that participants could follow to learn how to use it[46]. We also showed it and had a tutorial during one of the sessions. The board also allowed participants to comment on each topic. However, only one person used that function. In addition, participants from the associations that were normally absent from meetings did not appear to have accessed it.

44A working prototype can be accessed at {LINK}. By clicking on a room would provide more information about the association and its contacts.

45The map displayed information from two spreadsheets: one had the description of the associations, the other showed the use in each room at an given time. In addition, any change to the map design (for example the categories of the activities) would require a basic understanding of Javascript.

[46] A copy (in Italian) can be viewed at: https://bit.ly/piovesan_phd_bulletinboard_instructions

In the end, the board turned out to be useful for those who attended the meetings as a synthetic summary of how things were proceeding. And even though not all participants accessed the board, several asked for a printed a copy that could be on a physical board in the common salon.

When facilitators proposed to build a shared identity for space1 together with associations, they suggested that it should be based on a narration of space1 as a historical building that transformed from a place of work to one 'for encounter, solidarity and the collective creation of "urban welfare". A place that generates ideas, projects and shared initiatives where energies meet to support collective well-being' {D243}. Associations helped collect photos that narrated the story of the building, while the information collected with the on-line form was used to communicate all the activities and services offered at space1 {D154, D166, D243}.

We had to decide through which media we would communicate the new identity. One participant proposed to create a self-managed website, where we could integrate the interactive map. Building on this idea, I proposed to set up a page on a blogging website, which would include basic information (like the history space1, its associations, their activities and events) while also redirecting to each association's website or social network pages. It would be fairly simple to use and I could train one or more participants to use the platform while also filling its initial content. And it would allow associations to change its content autonomously after the process ended. However, this solution was too complicated and labor-some, and no one wanted to take the responsibility {D146}.

Another solution was to publish a brief history and description of space1 in two already existing websites. The first was the municipality's webpage, which had good visibility but required a lengthy process for any future modification. Then there was the website that the facilitators were creating for the festival, which offered more flexibility and a modern design but could not be changed after the participatory process ended.

The last solution was to create a flyer that would be distributed during the festival and would remain after the process {D208}. It would combine a brief introduction to space1, the information collected with the form and practical information on how to get to space1. It was the most static solution but also the one that most participants and the facilitators preferred.

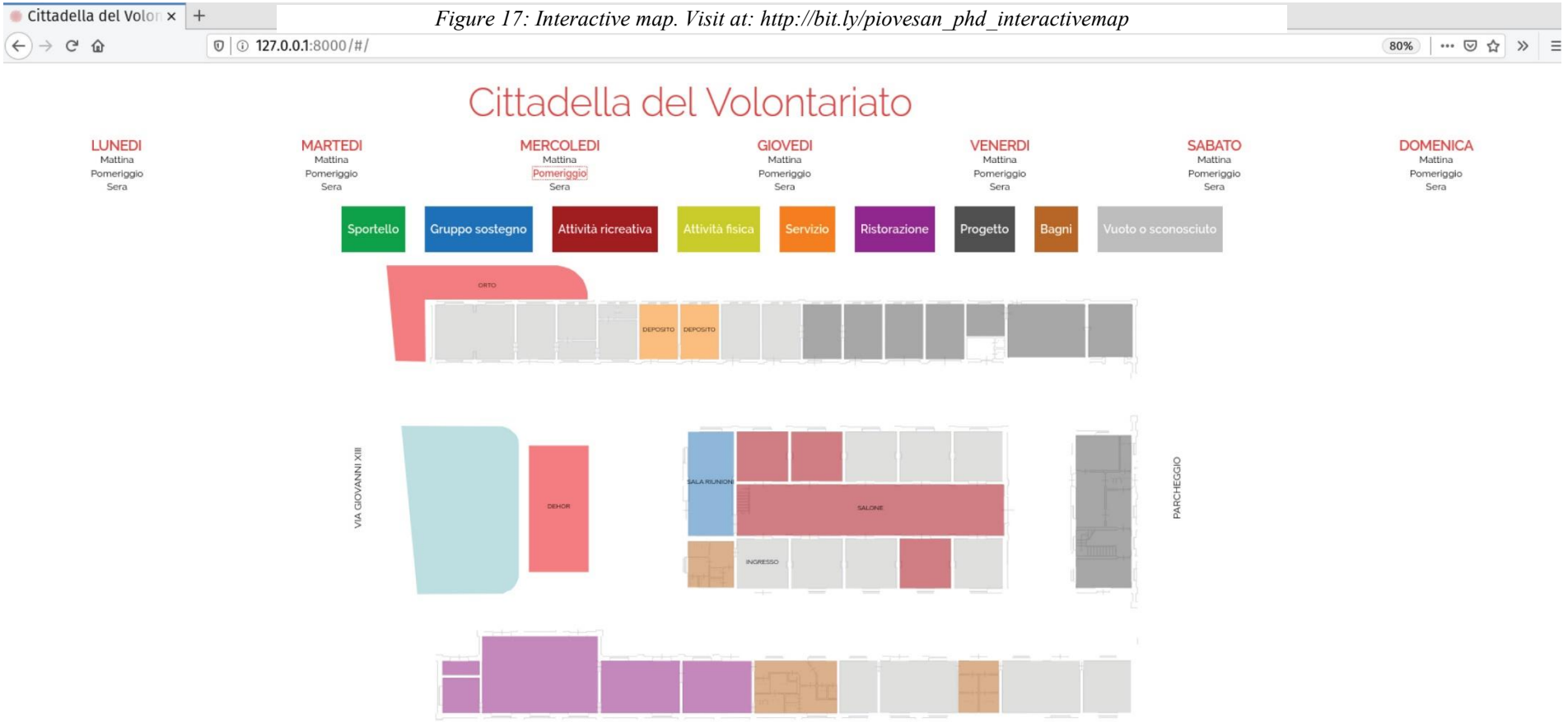


Figure 17: Interactive map. Visit at: http://bit.ly/piovesan_phd_interactivemap

Figure 18: Bulletin board. Visit at: http://bit.ly/piovesan_phd_bulletinboard

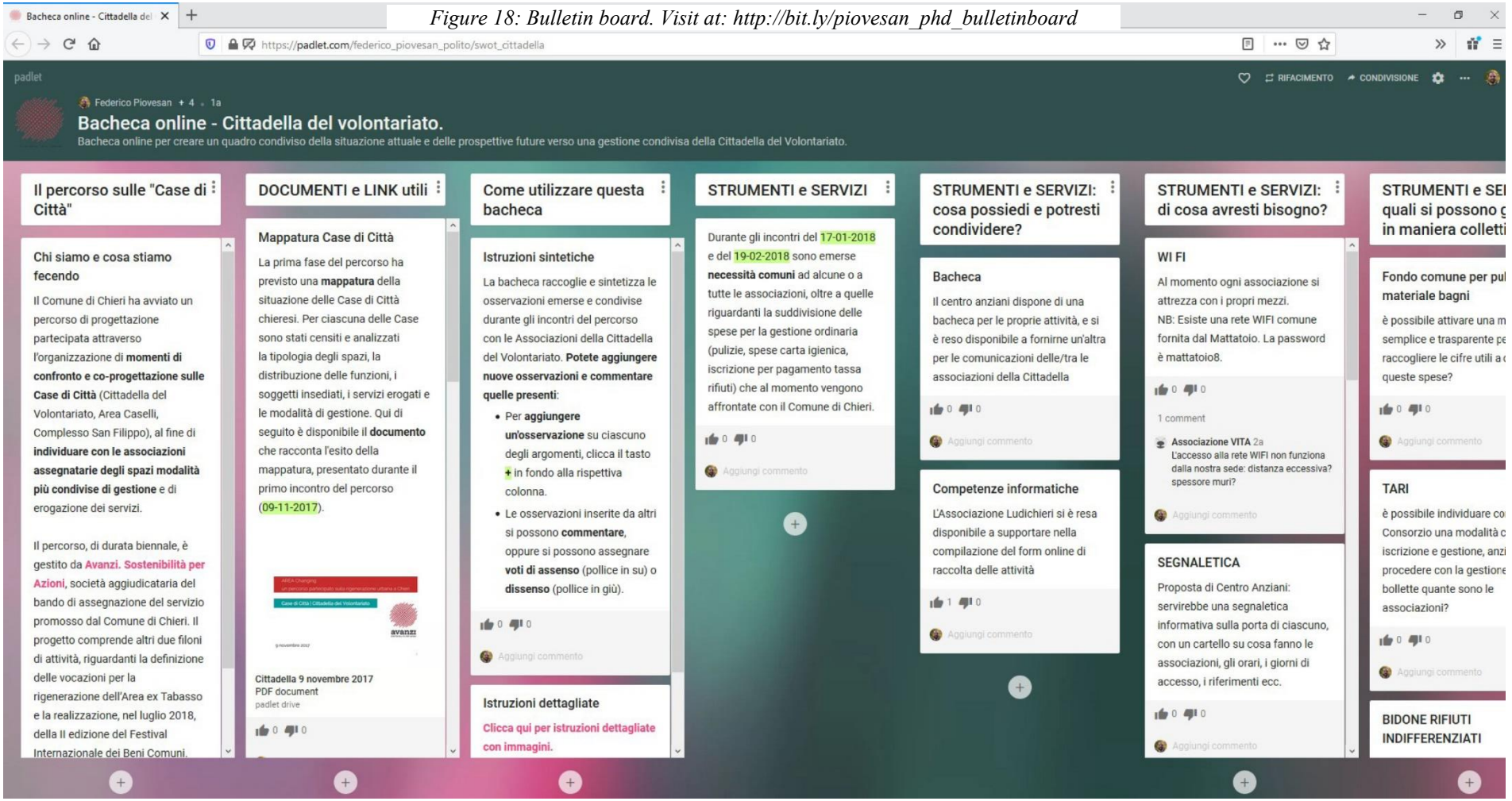


Figure 19: Flyer {D243} (back and front cover).

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Figure 20: Flyer {D243} (inner pages).

Chapter 7

Colector

In this chapter I talk about my experience in Colector, a hybrid between a co-working and community-hub located in Valencia, Spain. Between October 2018 and July 2019, I was both a co-worker and as a volunteer in the group that managed it. As in previous chapters, I will start by providing some contextual information about the case-study. However, this time the focus will be more narrowed to the origins of Colector, which can be traced back to the Valencian chapter of CivicWise. This is relevant for two reasons. First, Colector builds on a previous initiative of CW Valencia called Civic Fest, which I will introduce in the next section. Secondly, CW members were the gatekeepers of my field work and my point of entry to this case-study.

After that, I will continue with an analysis of my field-work experience that reflects the structure used in the two previous chapters. As a self-managed space, Colector cannot be compared to the participatory processes in Chieri, which were top-down initiatives. However, I found that it also had a core, an inner and an outer actor-network.

Most of the chapter will be told in first person because since my arrival I was more involved than in Chieri. Also there is not section about digital spaces because in this case I was not promoting them, rather some tools were already in use. In fact, I if in Chieri I proposed myself as a promoter of digital tools, in Colector I offered my help with a wider range of activities

1: Colector from the outside

2: Co-working

3: Meeting room

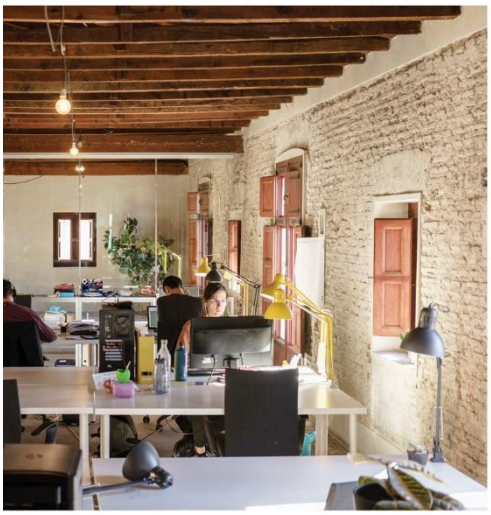
4: Monthly collective Paella

5: First event by ESPAM

6-7: Performance and art exhibition during ESPAM event

8: Exhibition room

Figure 21: Pictures of Colector



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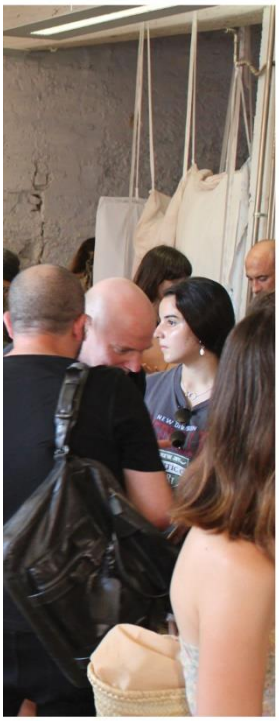

8

People

1 Company
- 1.1 Owner
- 1.2 Co-workers

2 Committee
- 2.1 Caretakers
- 2.2 Working groups
  - Administration
  - Commercial
  - Communication
  - Events
  - Space
  - Governance

3 Co-workers

4 Collaborators
- 4.1 Other collaborators
- 4.2 ESPAM
- 4.3 Caminemos juntas
- 4.4 La Microeditorial
- 4.5 I+D+Arc

5 Citizens

Spaces

Physical

6 Ground floor
- 6.1 Exhibition room
- 6.2 Kitchen

7 First floor
- 7.1 Co-working
- 7.2 Meeting rooms
- 7.2 Relax area

Digital

8 Digital tools
- 8.1 Shared drive
- 8.2 Structured chat
- 8.3 Instant messaging
- 8.4 Calendar

9 Website

Documents

10 Minutes

11 Contracts

12 Welcome kit
- 12.1 Rules of use
- 1.2 Governance

Figure 22 Actor-networks in Colector

7.1 How I entered Colector

Founded in 2014, CivicWise (CW) is 'an international distributed and open network that promotes citizen engagement, developing concrete actions and projects based on collective intelligence, civic innovation and open design.' These are broad terms, that like participation and community hubs, can be used in different situations and assume different meanings. However, they fit the diverse projects and practices that CW implement in their respective territories[47].

CW members use a variety of digital tools to remain in contact, to exchange ideas, compare experiences and sometimes develop projects together. Since anyone can join CW and there are no formal obligations for its members, some of them contribute more regularly while a majority interacts sporadically. Also, while the main organization is not formalized, some of its local chapters are registered as associations[48].

In my experience with CW, I found it often focused on three overarching concepts: situated collective intelligence, glocal perspective and civic space. Collective intelligence draws from network science to conceptualize knowledge flows and collaboration dynamics in different organizations.

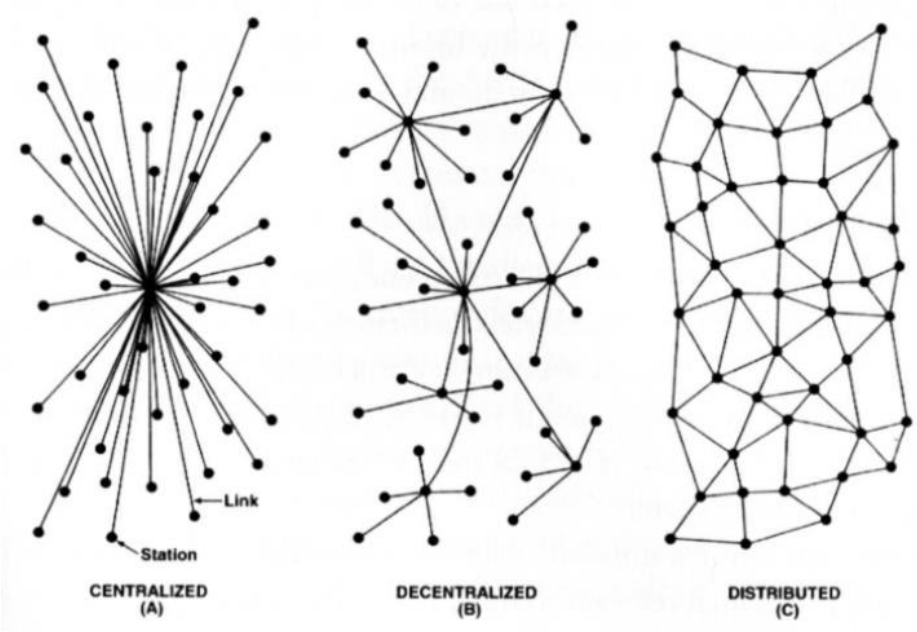

Figure 23: A representation of centralized, decentralized and distributed networks {D3}

In centralized networks, all nodes are connected to a central one. If the latter stops working, the network breaks and knowledge and information stop flowing. (Television is an example of a centralized network.) In decentralized networks, on the other hand, several central nodes are connected to each other as well as their

47 For more information see http://www.civicwise.org

48 These include CW chapters in Valencia, Barcelona, Bari, Brussels, Canary Islands, Curitiba, Lonon, Madrid, Milan, París, Turin, Buenos Aires, Monterrey and Mexico City.

peripheral nodes. If a central nodes falls, all its peripheral nodes follow through but the rest of the network keeps functioning. (A federal State is an example of a centralized network.) Finally, in distributed networks every node is connected to all others, and can communicate without passing through one or more connectors. If a node falls, the network continues functioning as before. (Social networks function as distributed networks, although many are managed as centralized organizations.) {D3}[49].

CW works as a distributed network both to overcome geographical distance and maximize collective intelligence. By sharing skills, experiences, contacts and efforts, members build a 'shared knowledge base that is bigger than the sum of its parts' {D3}. In other words, relations between members are dominant to other organizational aspects. 'Although we can take action individually, we will inevitably affect other people. [By] working collectively we can widen the scope and impact in ways that go beyond the individual efforts that led to the construction

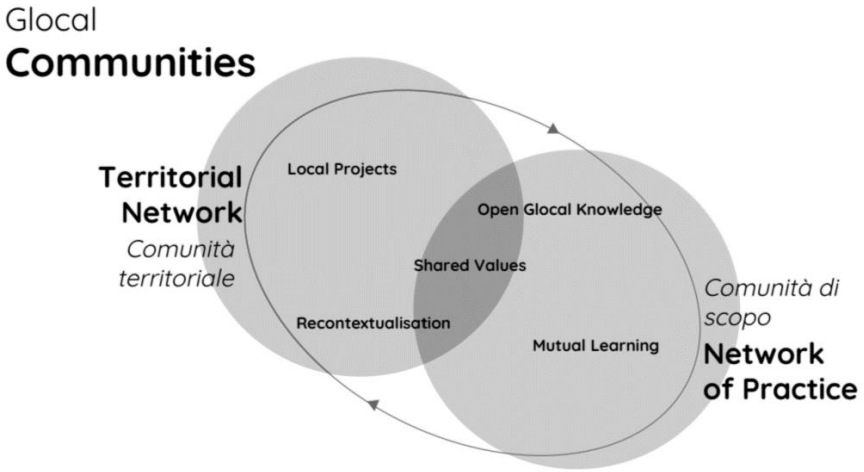

Figure 24: How a territorial network and a network of practice can intersect {D18}.

of our network' {D3}.

The second concept, the glocal perspective, refers to how CW members operate between a territorial network and a network of practice {D18}. The network of practice exists mostly on-line, where members regularly have conference calls between people from different locations. These are also streamed on-line as they happen, so that anyone can follow as they happen or afterwards. Finally, minutes of each meeting are kept and shared through on-line text editors.

Hence CW members contribute to a common repository of 'glocal knowledge' {D3}: while they work in different territories, parts of their time and energies are used to keep in touch with the network and thus maintain a dialectic process that benefits both CW's network of practice and each member's territorial network. This also means that each local node is free to structure its activities according to the needs and habits of its members.

[49] Like in the previous chapter, sources referenced in curly brackets (for example {D1}). Refer to Appendix for the complete list of documents, while originals can be found in the database.

The last concept is the idea of civic space. Members go back to their territories to (re)situate their collective intelligence and promote 'dialogue and collaboration between citizens, public and private institutions for the common good' {D41}. In other words, they attempt to create opportunities for encounter between people that work on similar or complementary issues but usually do not interact.

Although some of the projects born within the CW went to become independent initiatives, others continue to exist as internal projects. Among these, there is an on-line course in civic design. Several people I met had joined CW after following the course. For example, one explained me that after months of interactions through the course, she realized how the people involved in CW shared values, methods and goals that were central to her work in a local community hub, and so she diced to make CW a part of her regular routines {D20}.

Another project is CW's Glocal Camp, where members of the community and outsiders meet in person. While each camp hosts members-only activities to improve CW's governance and design new projects, most events are open to the public {D20}. (I have been to only one Glocal Camp, the 2019 edition held in Modena, Italy and was impressed by what its organizers achieved given they had almost no budget.)

A third project is the Civic Factories network. If CW is a network of people, civic factories are a network of community hubs that are meant to become containers of civic space {D41}. As meeting points for a local CW node's territorial community and CW's community of practice, Civic Factories are where shared glocal knowledge is re-situated.

'In these spaces the concept of "product" acquires new meanings and connotations: from a purely physical or service-related one, to a processual and generative dimension identifying a collaborative method for the development of further "products" with and for people' (Tagliazzucchi et al., 2018). Civic factories are an implementation of CW practices into the management of spaces. Firstly, because the Civic Factories network is open for other spaces to join. And secondly because its members keep in touch to share experiences and reflect on what worked and what did not work in each context. However, coherent with the idea of re-situated glocal knowledge, Civic Factories do not aim at design replicable models but rather hope to enrich their respective initiatives by nurturing shared knowledge.

In 2016, CW Valencia organized the Civic Factory Fest (which in part also hosted that year's glocal camp) to prototype its own Civic Factory{D11}. The location was an abandoned building of the city's Marina, originally built in the early 2000s to build ships for the America's Cup {D1, D4}. When CW and the Marina met for the first time in June 2016, the building had been abandoned for around six years. CW members proposed to reactivate the space through the month-long Civic Factory Fest (CFF) {D11}.

They had agreed that the Marina would approve the temporary reactivation of the space under the condition that CW took full responsibility for anything that might have happened during events. Also, CW could use the space at no charge but would have to cover most other expenses, which meant its members were not paid during the three months they worked for the CFF. 'They were really fast,' one of

CW members said about how the Marina dealt with a process that often requires lengthy bureaucratic procedures {D11}.

Table 4: Marco-topics, approaches and phases of Civic Factory Fest.

Macro-topics	1) Shared city 2) Civic economy 3) Social development 4) Ecological transition 5) Emergent citizenship 6) Culture and creativity
Approaches	1) Mutual learning among actors 2) Debates and reflections 3) Promoting concrete actions 4) Communicating the practices developed
Phases (each lasted one week)	1) Working with local actors in Valencia around the six macro-topics 2) Integration of the CW international network of professional of collaborative design to broaden the perspective (Glocal Camp) 3) Open to everyone to present the conclusions from the working groups 4) Using an exhibition of civic practices as reference, give visibility to the process of activation of the building and its surrounding area

A team of six people worked intensively for two months to prepare the event, which lasted from 7th to the 30th November 2016. The Civic Factory Fest was open to everyone and participants only had to sign up for activities through its on-line program {D2}. The event aimed at 'fostering new opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between citizens, public offices, university, and private sector' {D1} and 'use innovation, creativity and collective efforts to make the city more inclusive' {D2}. (The table above summarizes how the event was organized around six main topics, used four approaches and developed through four phases).

Albeit temporarily, CW Valencia had its civic factory. After the CFF ended, CW considered it 'the first step of a longer journey to consolidate Valencia's CF'{D3}. However, after months of negotiation the Marina decided to continue using the space for public events without renovating its agreement with CW {D4}. By summer 2017, one year after the first meeting with the Marina, Valencia's CF was without a space. However, CW wanted to capitalize on the relations they had built and the ideas that had emerged during the Civic Factory Fest.

After looking for a new space for almost a year, the group convinced the owner of an ex-monastery to let them continue building Valencia's CF. They proposed him to turn the space into a 'factory of city-making' that would address the lack of

connections between various sectors, and 'leverage collaborative culture to promote the productive activation of the territory […] through the development of tools and methodologies that support glocal collective intelligence processes' {D6}.

Their proposal drew from CW's experience with the Marina as well as community hubs like Madrid's Media-Lab Prado {D32} and the other Civic Factories that were part of the network (Tagliazzucchi et al., 2018). The Civic Factory would host four activities: a school to promote collaborative culture; a workshop to share working spaces and develop common projects; an 'agora' to host meetings, presentations, and discussions; and a space for exhibition {D11}.

When I first visited Valencia in May 2018, CW was about to finalize their agreement with the owner of the building. However, by the time I moved to Valencia the following October some things had changed. Firstly, the team had increased to include more or less ten people, only six of which were CW members. (Among these, four had been involved in the Civic Factory Fest.) So, although CW members were the gatekeepers to my field-work, from the beginning I interacted with the rest of promoters and other co-workers that joined the space in the following months.

Promoters had also decided to change the name the space from Civic Factory to Colector. Similarly, different ideas were being tested, others had been put on hold, and others had changed or had been dropped. The school continued existing as an independent initiative hosted in another innovation center run by the municipality. Agora and exhibition space would remain idle until events were organized. Finally, the workshop (which from now on I will refer to as the co-working) was the part that took most energies, both in terms of organizing the space and deciding how to manage it.

7.2 Core network[50]

When I arrived in October 2018, the core network was made of around fifteen people, though the number decreased in the following months as six left and only one joined. Before talking about how the core network was organized in theory, and how it functioned in practice, I would like to make a few remarks.

First, Colector was managed by a private enterprise whose administrative board included four co-workers and the owner of the building. While this entity was necessary for tasks like signing contracts with co-workers and printing invoices, it was not supposed to be involved in daily operations. In other words, it was a necessary tool but did not determine the nature of the project, whose goals were ensuring the economic sustainability of both the co-working space and community hub {D37}. In general, the four co-workers who were part of the administrative board did not have more authority than other people involved in the core-network, unless they had to intervene as decision-maker of last resort in disputes that could not be solved. (This, however, never happened while I was in Colector.)

50 The core network included people involved with the management and promotion of Colector's double mission as a co-working space and a community hub.

Second, although the project continued a previous initiative by CW, by the time I arrived its members were a minority. Of the six that were in Colector in October, two left in November and another at the end of the year. This meant that the ideals outlined before did not represent everyone. Third, the governance of the core network kept changing throughout the months and rules were not always followed. And finally, no co-worker received any compensation for what they did to promote and support Colector: all efforts were voluntary and had to be carried out on top of full-time jobs. (People with more responsibilities, however, were recognized a discounted tariff.)

The core network was supposed to function according to a complex structure that I will refer to as distributed self-management. As we will see, distributed management was not flawless, and lack of consensus about its principles and how to put them into practice also led to conflicts. However, everyone agreed that Colector was on *beta permanente* (lit. 'permanent beta'), a concept borrowed from software development to convey the idea of continuous experimentation, which implied learning by doing and being open to adjustments {D13}.

Spaces of decision-making included the *grupo de gestion* (lit. 'committee') and five *comisiones* (lit. 'working groups', WG), with a sixth added later. In addition, five people received a discount on their rate in exchange for taking care of daily tasks like answering calls and e-mails or receiving visitors. Later the committee decided to call this group *cuidado* (lit. 'caretakers').

Table 5: Working groups and their tasks.

Administration	Collect payments; prepare contracts and invoices; collaborate with the accountant; purchase items and services other working groups might need.
Commercial	Define sales and fundraising strategies, promotional campaigns and partnerships with collaborators; coordinate fundraising efforts; apply to public calls and project proposals.
Communication	Maintain website and social media pages; promote events, projects and organizations.
Events	Design and organize events; collaborate with outsiders who might propose more events.
Space	Responsible for spatial organization; buy furniture; coordinate maintenance works; deal with bureaucratic procedures to obtain licenses to host events.
Governance (starting February 2020)	Understand and formalize the governance of the core network; communicate with other co-workers and facilitate their entrance into WGs.

Working groups had different tasks, shown in the table, and were supposed to be the structure through which distributed self-management would be implemented. Any co-worker could join one or more WGs according to different levels of involvement. At the lowest level, co-workers could simply make proposals or requests. Depending on their interests and availability, co-workers could also support a WG with more or less regular contributions. Collaborators were, on the other hand, regularly involved in a WG. Finally, each WG had a coordinator, who did not have authority on collaborators and supporter but was responsible that the WG achieved its targets {D44}.

Each WG was supposed to carry out its tasks autonomously while collaborating with other WGs when necessary. Once a week, the coordinators of each WG met in the committee to report on their activities. In a way, WGs were supposed to act as a bridge between the core and inner networks. However, most of the time their activities were carried out by people who were already in the core network. I was a collaborator in the events, commercial and governance WGs but also attended committee meetings.

We used different digital tools to support communication and coordination, most of which were borrowed from practices developed within CW. There was an instant messaging application used for light and informal communication. Another structured messaging application allowed to create different discussion rooms and was used for conversations related to working groups (open to everyone), committee discussions (only for invited users), and if necessary one-on-one or group conversations. Finally, an on-line shared drive was used to create and edit documents, like minutes from meetings and project proposals. Whether people were attending a meeting in person or remotely, it allowed them to work simultaneously on the same documents from different devices.

Throughout the time I spent in Colector, there were two main obstacles to the successful implementation of distributed self-management. The first was that the structure I just described was agreed upon but not always respected. The second related to the economic sustainability of the space.

As in many non-hierarchical organizations, some obstacles to self-management related to personal relations or the different understandings of how Colector should have pursued its goals. Another related issue was that the same people that were part of the committee were also in WGs, which blurred out spaces of decision-making and responsibilities. As a consequence, many committee meetings were spent discussing the activities of the different WGs, with co-workers that were not involved in a specific WG were influencing its activities. Committee meetings were supposed to be spaces of reporting on different activities, but often were debating about decisions that, at least in principle, should have been discussed among WG members.

This slowed both decision-making and action, but also contributed to the fact that many people felt overworked. And this led, in several occasions, to complaints about free riding, meaning that some people (especially those whose responsibility as caretakers made them stay in the space everyday) complained that they were doing more work than others {D27, D28}.

In the spirit of *beta permanente*, there were different attempts to restructure governance. The first was at the end of November {D31}, when committee meetings went from being held once a week to a once every two weeks. We then set the coordinators of each WG and decided they would hold the position for the following three months. Finally, everyone agreed to keep all communications about the WGs and committee on the structured messaging application, while caretakers would continue use the instant messaging application to communicate daily with all co-workers.

A few weeks later we also started discussing about creating a governance WG, whose goal was to formalize Colector's organizational structure and communicate it to other co-workers, hoping that this could facilitate their involvement with WGs {D43, D51}. (The governance WG is discussed more in detail in the next section.) Later, the governance WG also collaborated with the space and communication WGs to prepare posters and printouts that would explain governance as well as list the individuals and organizations that were part of Colector and the projects they were involved with {D65}.

Another restructuring of governance took place in late-June {D66}. (By then I was about to leave and was not present during the meetings.) This time, the most significant change was formalizing caretakers as a separate group and update the list of their responsibilities.

Until then the tasks that I previously described had been considered an extra that some co-workers were responsible for in exchange for a discounted rate. However, throughout the week caretakers were responsible for numerous tasks. In the beginning, these included answering emails and phone calls; welcoming visitors; supervising events (which mostly took place during weekend); monitoring and ordering supplies (like water, kitchen and toilet materials and printing supplies); dealing with cleaning personnel; and offering technical assistance to other co-workers {D44}.

Since initially there were five caretakers, they decided that each person would be responsible for one day each week. Over the months, caretakers had realized that their tasks also included cleaning the common fridge; tidying the kitchen area; taking out the garbage; watering plants; washing kitchen and toilet towels; opening and closing windows {D66}. It was not that additional tasks had emerged, rather the invisible labor that caretakers did had not been acknowledge and formalized.

Taken individually these tasks might require little effort, but all together they amounted to significant work. Hence caretakers also decided that each day two people rather than one should responsible for them. Also, they decided that the idea of gradual involvement used in WGs could not work for caretaking. In fact, while most WGs complained about being overworked and needing more help from other co-workers, when their members were too busy, they could always delay their project. (Indeed, it was common and accepted that WGs did not respect deadlines.) However, the tasks caretakers were responsible for could not be deferred.

Economic sustainability was the second issue that had been central to many discussions from the first meeting I attended {D13, D23, D51, D55}. Colector was a self-managed space run by a private enterprise whose main expenses were rent,

utilities, supplies and services (like cleaning and internet). Its main source of income was the rates charged to co-workers, who occupied most of the upper floor and were divided in *continuos* (lit. 'continuous') who had their personal desk and paid a higher rate, and discontinuous (lit. 'discontinuous') who shared the desk but paid less. Incomes also came from renting other spaces for meetings, workshops, events, exhibitions, etc. Finally, if internal projects generated any revenue, some would be redistributed to support the space.

Even if at full capacity, the co-working did not generate enough income to cover all other expenses {D24}. This also meant that most internal projects and events had to be organized with almost no budget and, throughout the time I spent in Colector, none generated revenues. One way to reduce costs was to ask involved co-workers to work for free, while allowing those who had the highest level of involvement a discounted rate {D40}. Sometimes, like for the inauguration event, co-workers also gave a small contribution to buy snacks and drinks {D13}.

When I arrived in October, the owner had discounted the rent of around 40% until the end of the year. However, by November we were unable to cover even the discounted rent, and doubts started emerging about how to sustain the increase that would start with the new year {D23, D27}. As 2019 started and it was not possible to cover the full rent, after a few months of delayed payments the owner agreed to renew the discount until the end of the year. However, he stopped investing in the renovations that had been planned {D55}.

For example, in order to get a license to charge for drinks and snacks during events, the exhibition room needed maintenance to comply with accessibility regulations. However, since the owner decided to stop renovation, we could only raise funds through donations. Also, there was no way to isolate the upper floor where co-workers left valuable equipment, which required us to be extra careful during public events.

We tried different agreements with outsiders to promote the space and increase the number of rentals and collaborations, which I discuss in the outer network. There were also other proposals that were never implemented. One was to open to outsiders the activities that had developed within the inner network, like yoga classes and a mindfulness course, while charging a fee to their teachers {D65}. Another was to use the exhibition room, which was usually empty during mornings, as a cheaper co-working area (around a third of the discontinuous seat) in exchange for less services (no free prints or coffee) and more flexibility (the room might be partly or fully used for other activities) {D64, D68}.

To conclude, attracting as many people as possible was crucial to Colector's sustainability, both in terms of distributing workload among caretaking and WGs, but also because outsiders could contribute initiatives and ideas that might generate income. Even though the primary goal was being able to pay expenses rather than making profits, limited resources meant that energies and money were mostly used to sustain the co-working. Hence, efforts towards Colector's second mission as a community hub to support and incubate social projects were inconsistent. By the time I left we had not always been able to sustain a safe space to continue experimenting and collaborating with other initiatives. However, these were the

first months of activity in a space that thrived on relations and trust that take more time to build.

7.3 Inner network[51]

In this section I try to reflect on the reasons why most co-workers did not join the committee or working groups, and some anecdotes about communal living. During the time I have been at Colector the total number of co-workers oscillated between twenty and thirty-five people. Most co-workers were between twenty and forty, and either worked as free-lance, were part of a small enterprise, or worked remotely. Many of them were architects, though graphic designers, developers and NGO workers were also present. Finally, most were locals (either from Valencia or surrounding municipalities), although there were also some people from other parts of Spain and a few foreigners (including myself).

In the previous section I discussed how distributed self-management was designed to enable outsiders to join or help the committee, caretakers and/or different working groups. In fact, each group needed as many contributions as possible to distribute the workload of both caretaking and organizing initiatives that could bring more resources, income or collaborations. However, throughout my time at Collector only one co-worker joined the events WG.

One obstacle was that everyone had their full-time jobs to worry about, which made them unwilling or unable to volunteer in WGs. One co-worker once verbalized this skepticism: 'If I pay to use my desk to do my own job, why should I also put extra efforts into organizing events?' However, he also recognized there were some benefits: 'If I use the space to work and put the extra effort to promote the space and bring new people in, hopefully these new people will do things that are complementary to my work, and we can develop new projects together, or at least I can expand my network' {D25}.

Another issue, however, was that communicating how distributed self-management worked was more complicated than expected. From the beginning, the committee discussed about making a welcome package to explain distributed self-management, both in terms of norms for communal living and how anyone could contribute to Colector {D16}. In December, we had decided to create these documents together with other co-workers from the inner network {D35}. However, mainly for reasons of time, we decided to make and distribute a first version that had been prepared within the committee.

Around early January the communication WG circulated a document that stated: 'Colector is self-managed by some of its co-workers, which are organized in working groups and that support the growth of the space in different ways. It is an open project and you can be a part of it: coordinators can explain you how to contribute' {D47}. There was also another document that explained the internal governance more in detail {D44}.

51 The inner network included all co-workers that paid a tariff to use the space.

Most new co-workers came because they were friends (or friends of friends) of some other co-worker. Initially we thought that, to keep it simple, newcomers should keep in touch with the person they had first contacted {D51}. However, later we realized that this was not enough to communicate distributed self-management effectively. For instance, every time I talked about the committee and WGs with some co-workers in the inner network, most told me they had not understood how Colector worked. In fact, often it was not clear who was included in the enterprise that sent contracts and invoices, and how this was different from the committee, WGs and caretakers.

There had also been some misunderstandings about who could join different meetings, which resulted in the committee being unwelcoming to outsiders at times. While the committee was intended as a space for coordinators from WGs to report of their activities, and as such it was supposed to include only most involved co-workers, it was also a good chance to get an overview of what WGs were working on. In fact, the first time I joined a committee meeting I was told that I would probably get bored. Something very similar happened to another co-worker who came to attend a meeting in late-November out of curiosity {D33}. My motivation made me continue, but the other person did not join further meetings.

By the beginning of 2019, we understood that sending the welcome package via e-mail and answering questions was not enough. Together with another co-worker, in early February we proposed to establish a new governance working group, whose first task was to organize regular meetings with new co-workers to present and answer questions about distributed self-management in person {D43, D51}.

In mid-March, I conducted the first governance meeting with two other people from the committee. Around fourteen people joined, most of which had recently arrived in Colector {D53}. We presented how the different spaces of decision-making (company, committee, and working groups) worked; emphasized that everyone was welcome to join working groups without feeling obliged to contribute; and that Colector was in *beta permanente*, a place of experimentation where new ideas and proposals were always welcome {D55}.

Later, the governance WG also collaborated with the space and communication WGs to prepare posters and printouts that would explain distributed self-management; list the individuals and organizations that were part of Colector; and present both internal and external projects they were involved with {D50, D63, D64, D65}. This work, however, was not completed by the time I left and, as far as I know, did not continue afterwards.

Although only one co-worker joined the events WG in the months I spent at Colector, others contributed in different ways. For example, there was a small company who had clearly said they could not help WGs but offered to supply free drinks for events {D31}. After the first meeting of the governance WG, two people proposed and then organized a yoga class and a mindfulness course. These remained internal activities, but also added some opportunities for co-workers to get to know each other more.

The other point I would like to discuss in this section was the role of spatial organization had on interactions between co-workers and communal living. As I said previously, co-workers were divided in two groups: continuous (who had their own desk) and discontinuous (who shared desks). The upper floor was mostly dedicated to spaces of work and was divided in two areas, one for each group. In addition, there were mainly two spots for relaxing and getting to know each other. One was a small area in between the co-working areas, where people could get coffee and drinks and where, as a consequence, co-workers met regularly. Another area was the exhibition room, which was normally used to have lunch together {D31}.

The division between continuous and discontinuous made sense from an organizational point of view but also isolated the two groups somehow. I was in the discontinuous part and my perception was that it took a bit longer to get to know other co-workers. Perhaps it was because continuous co-workers came more regularly to the space, while some discontinuous co-workers (including me) only came for half a day. Meeting rooms were also in the discontinuous area and made it quite loud at times because they had almost no sound insulation (they were glass boxes without a ceiling) {D31}.

Over the months, I had the chance to share informally my impressions with three discontinuous co-workers and all of them felt in similar ways. While over time people bonded anyway, I would argue that these effects of spatial organization influenced how people felt about the space. (However, it was also hard to foresee them.) The issue was also discussed in committee meetings: twice in late-October, when one (continuous) co-worked suggested that this division determined a hierarchy according to the different rates that were paid {D14, D16}; and once in late-May, when another co-workers proposed to redistribute co-workers equally among the two areas {D65}. However, the topic was left for future discussions.

Another issue that emerged in several committee meetings related to phone calls and on-line meetings. There were co-workers, especially those who worked remotely for companies in other cities or countries, who regularly had long on-line meetings. Some people in the committee thought that everyone should use the designated rooms for meetings (which, as previously said, were in the discontinuous part) even if these were on-line. Others agreed that it was not necessary to occupy a meeting room for a phone call, and that the coffee area could be used even if it was closer to the continuous area {D31}.

Either way, the fact that the issue was mentioned several times {D33, D51, D53, D64} showed the need for adjustments in spatial organization, or an environment where people would more easily let others know that they were being loud. In May, when the residences started, we strengthened the internet connection in the exhibition room. Since then, people could also use it for phone calls.

7.4 Outer network[52]

Despite the difficulties that I outlined in previous sections, we were able to organize on average two events each month. Some were organized internally, like Colector's inauguration {D14}, three *Caña Collector*, and *Lunch With The City* {D58, D64}. While none of them generated income, their gave visibility to the space.

Other events were done by outsiders who rented the space, according to different agreements. Art exhibitions and book presentations usually paid to rent the space; the local *Creative mornings* group, on the other hand, used the space in exchange for promoting Colector within their networks and social media pages {D21, D36}. In addition, since *Creative mornings* happened at breakfast time on Fridays, we decided they would be followed by *Colector obert*, during which anyone could try the co-working space without paying for the rest of the morning.

In the rest of this section I want to share two examples that I consider most relevant to illustrate how personal relations intersected with distributed self-management. Since I have been close to both from the beginning, it would be presumptuous to pretend that I can maintain a detached perspective. Rather, the way I interpreted these events is inevitably affected by how I experienced them. In other words, as the final translator, I must recognize that my account of these experiences does not include the point of view of other people involved, some of whom might not agree with everything I say.

The first example was about a book club that in April contacted me to have their activities in Colector. I thought that they could use the space for free, since they generated no income and met at times when rooms were mostly empty. However, within the committee we agreed that they could use the space once to try out, but for subsequent meetings they would have to pay a discounted fee, although by then it was still not clear how much it amounted to {D40}.

Since I was their contact, I was also responsible to welcome them to the space and stay until they left {D57}. However, I was out of Valencia during the day they met and had asked another co-worker to let them in. Since they meet in the evening, I knew and trusted the organizer, and did not want to my fellow co-workers (who was not part of any WG) to stay and wait for them, I decided to give the organizer instructions about how to care for the space. I also had communicated everything to caretakers and other co-workers through the instant and structured messaging applications.

Although I received no objections before the book club met, after the committee said it was unacceptable that strangers were left in the space without supervision. There were no hard feelings with the committee, who accepted my apologies for assuming it was fine to leave the space unattended if I trusted the people using it {D64}. However, the book club never met in Colector again.

52 The outer network included external collaborators or supporters of Colector, as well as people who attended its events.

The second example is about Colector's first residence program. In January the events WG started working on a call for proposals that launched in mid-March. We were looking for people or groups who wanted to develop a project but needed a space where to work. We were looking for 'innovative ideas at any stage of development that aimed at having an impact on the city' {D54}. We suggested some topics, including ecological transition; urban transformation and habitat; technology and citizenship; emergent culture; conscious economy; living together and diversity. However, they were not a requirement. Colector would offer its exhibition room for internal meetings and public events. The room could be used during mornings from Monday to Friday, when it was mostly empty.

We selected four winners. *Caminemos juntas* was a project by an architect and a social worker whose aim was to 'acknowledge and give visibility to the relation that migrant women had with the urban spaces where they lived' {D59}. *ESPAM* wanted to give an opportunity for emergent artists in their early twenties to display their work and experiment with statements about the issues that defined their generation {D60}. *I+D+Arq* experimented with how digital technologies (such as 3D printing and virtual reality) could be integrated in how people designed, built and lived the city {D61}. Finally, *La Microeditorial* explored 'urban practices and the relation between bodies and the city' through the creation of a fanzine {D62}.

Residences were supposed to last three months, from mid-April to mid-July, during which residents needed to carry out their activities autonomously but would receive our support with organization, communication and logistic needs. Residents could manage communication as they preferred but were asked to publish on social media about their project at least once every two weeks. Finally, at the end of the program, each project had to organize a public event and prepare a final report about their experience that we could keep for our archives.

Once residences started, I took the role of coordinator, which implied supporting residents while making sure they respected conditions and deadlines. Since it was our first residence program we were also learning on the go (as we always said, we were working in *beta permanente*). For example, we were hoping to receive proposals from a diverse group of people, but all the projects that won were run by university students, possibly because we offered the space during mornings.

Most of the following discussion focuses on the relations we had with *ESPAM*, who wanted to organize three public events during June and July. As regards the others, *I+D+Arq* participated in some initial activities but at the end we lost contact. *Caminemos Juntas* and *La Microeditorial* organized a joint event that took place in October 2019, after I had left Valencia; *La Microeditorial* also collaborated in the organization of a one-day festival about independent comics that was very successful.

As coordinator, I was the mediator between residents and the committee. I tried to build a relation with residents that was based on mutual trust: we could agree on goals, but we no one should impose how they had to be reached. Residents were working voluntarily, and we had no rights to be strict about terms. In fact, I thought

it would prove counterproductive to do so. However, most groups did not respect the terms we had set, which generated long discussions within the committee.

None of the groups came to the space during the first weeks after residences started, which led to skepticism about their commitment {D57}. When I had the chance to speak to some of them, they explained that, since university exams were coming soon, they had no time to come and do work at Colector. In mid-May *ESPAM* asked if they could use the space on weekends and late evenings because they needed to study during the mornings. In fact, they had already met to work one evening when I was in the space. For me, once they had signed their contract – and were covered by the space's insurance policy – and since they had a set of keys like other co-workers, I thought they work however fit their schedules better.

Indeed, there was an issue of security because there was no way to lock parts of the of the space, like those where continuous co-workers left their equipment. However, when I proposed some solutions the committee agreed that security was not the problem. Rather, some people thought residents kept asking us to be flexible about our terms while, until then, they had not respected our agreement {D64}.

I had to tell ESPAM that they should use the space only during designated times, although we both acknowledged they had the keys and could do otherwise. I did not like to be the messenger and impose a decision that I did not agree with and that in my opinion did not reflect how distributed self-management should work. I complied, but also told both the committee and *ESPAM* that the next requests would be discussed without my mediation.

The chance came soon after. For their first event, which took place in early June, *ESPAM* wanted to use the space's projector for an installation. Since they needed to hang the projector from the ceiling, but we had no support for that, *ESPAM* proposed to build it themselves, while they would pay for a new projector if it got damaged. When the committee rejected their request {D66}, I decided to organize an encounter between the space WG, who was responsible for changes and installation, and *ESPAM*. It took them five minutes to agree that they could install the projector on the ceiling. In fact, the support they made would be used in other events as well.

The first event went well both in terms of affluence and how *ESPAM* took care of the space: after gaining the trust of the committee they had more flexibility on how to organize the following to events. The other events consolidate our relation with residents and brought more visibility the space. Articles were published in a local newspaper at the launch event {D63}, and after two of the three events ESPAM organized {D67, D69}. In fact, these were more crowded than any other initiative previously organized.

Chapter 8

Discussion

Using the concept proposed in first part of the thesis in this chapter I address my research question: how do humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs? I proposed to study participation as context-sensitive and contested and community hubs as rooted in their territory and in continuous evolution. I argued for the need to combine observation and engagement to zoom into specific practices to investigate how humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs. And in the previous three chapters I provided an account of what happened in each case study.

In Chieri1 the process was about reactivating part of the factory into an open innovation center as the first step of a larger urban regeneration. In Chieri2, the space was already active but there was little cooperation between insiders, and no opportunity for outsiders to use spaces. The challenge, then, was to shift the resident associations perceived the space from appropriation toward a shared management to optimize the use of space and increase the welfare it generated. In both cases, the goals of each process were not achieved, but they offer food for thought to reflect on why that was the case. Finally, Colector was a self-managed co-working space who used its extra rooms to host events and local projects promoted both by insiders and outsiders. For the time I was there, Colector was more a co-working with extra activities that can remind of a community hub. However, another way to look at it is that Colector aspired to be a community hub that had a co-working business to sustain itself.

Although not directly comparable, the three processes I studied had a common denominator: all revolved around re-adapting an old building into a space of participation. Each process also drew inspiration from other community hubs, although the goal was to re-adapt their ideas rather than replicating them. Facilitators in Chieri had mentioned BASE Milano and the houses of the neighborhood in Turin. Valencia was part of the network of Civic Factories, which itself drew inspiration from several more established experiences of community hubs around Europe (Tagliazzucchi et al., 2018).

If the previous chapters delved into the details of how each process unfolded, here I want to discuss how these outcomes emerged and highlight the contradiction and paradoxes that I identified in each.

The first two sections use ideas from actor-network theory (ANT) to discuss recurrent and distinctive elements of each process. The first will zoom into each group of relevant actants, which included both humans (people, groups and organizations) and non-humans (built space, digital tools and text documents). I reflect on how, depending on the circumstances, actants assume different roles. The second section, on the other hand, will zoom out and discuss the different actor-networks in which these actants interacted. In each process I distinguished three concentric actor-networks of encounters: a core network, an inner network and an outer network. I then reflect on who was included in each network, how influence transferred across them, and how thresholds existed between each.

The final two sections are more practical: if abstract concepts are useful to frame broad and complex issues, in the field we never discussed about actants and actor-networks. I use anecdotes from case studies to report on issues that were more significant, interesting or controversial.

In the first I unpack spatial coding as made of and influenced by people (their roles, goals and relations, including latent and accumulated conflicts), physical and digital spaces of encounter (how they are organized and taken care of), and text documents (which, among other things, can be used to formalize certain mechanisms of organization and ensure they are repeated). I then reflect about the practical matters around which spatial coding emerged, the strategies and mode of operation influenced it, and how spatial coding manifested.

Since in community hubs inclusiveness is not only a political statement but a survival strategy, they must be permeable. In the last section, I draw from literature on urban commons to propose two shifts of perspective that can address two fundamental challenges of running community hubs: defining the boundaries of a community hub and its community; and finding a balance between structure, flexibility and permeability.

8.1 The roles and relations of actants

ANT invited me to study humans and non-humans as equals. People, the places where they meet, the objects they use, the habits the share, and the wider social context where they exist, all have the same potential to influence others, which each actant tries to do through translation and by forging associations. As I laid out in chapters 2 and 3, my initial focus was skewed towards how people interacted with built and digital spaces. Indeed, people and spaces of encounter (both physical and digital) had important roles in each process, although not always in the ways I expected. However, text documents also emerged as another group of relevant non-humans. In this section I want to focus on which groups of actants were relevant to each case study and reflect on their peculiarities.

People

Participation is about bringing people together and one way of thinking about a process is to trace how participants connect. In the cases I examined, some people already knew each other, for example because they were colleagues or part of the same association, while others met during the process, whether to collaborate or compete. Some people acted as individuals, while others represented a group, for example public institutions, the facilitator's consultancy firm, or the different associations present in both processes. However, people also formed informal and temporary groups.

There are two points that I want to discuss related to people and groups. Firstly, the same people or group can belong to, interact in and influence more than one actor-network. When that is the case, it might be that one person has different roles in each group and that these roles contradict each other. The second point, which follows from the first, is that, although mapping actors and their different roles is useful, it is also necessary to account for the relations that different people and groups had.

In my case studies, people interacted across different actor-networks and it was often the case that the same person belonged or was relevant to more than one group. Chieri is a town of 37,000 people with more than 200 registered civic associations and I often encountered familiar faces across the two processes. For example, the fablab was a participant of one of the focus groups in Chieri1; it was picked as one of the colonizers of the ex-library; it was one of the associations residing in the ex-porter's lodge; and it was also part of the associations of space2 in Chieri1. In Valencia, on the other hand, co-workers that were part of the working groups were also all present in the committee.

As I said, when a person or group had multiple roles, these could prove contradictory. For example, two members of ABC, one of the associations that supported nexTabasso, were also employees of the municipality. One of them was in charge of the participation and innovation department, the strongest supporter of the participatory process within the municipality. These two roles shared the goal to promote the participated reactivation of parts of the ex-factory. However, when the reactivation was blocked in early June, this person had to conform to his duties as a public officer and comply with a decision he did not agree with.

I experienced something similar when I was coordinating the residence program in Colector. One way I supported residents was to report their demands to the committee, where they would be discussed. That meant that I had to impose the decisions of the committee on residents even when I did not agree with them. For example, when ESPAM asked to use the space outside working hours because as it would accommodate their schedule better, I refused their request. A few weeks later, when residents asked if they could use the projector during one of their exhibitions. Once again, the committee rejected the request because some people feared the projector could fall. This time I decided to step away and let people within the committee discuss directly with the residents. After a quick discussion,

the issue was solved, and the committee decided to trust residents. In a way, my intermediation did not facilitate trust.

A clear map of who is involved and their respective roles can help navigate a network, but it might also help outsiders who are invited to enter. For example, in both processes in Chieri the facilitators had to explain several times who their agreement with the municipality influenced their work in order to clarify doubts that participants had about their neutrality. In Valencia, the governance working group it was clear how most other co-workers were not the core networks worked.

As participation tries to build coalition among individuals, it can increase the connections within the network or expand them to include new entities. New groups can form because of temporary coalitions (like the colonizers in Chieri1, or the residents in Valencia), or because they gather representatives from other groups (like direction cabin, or the members of associations that were present during the meetings of Chieri2). New or strengthened connections, however, do not guarantee agreement. Each group can be fragmented in sub-groups who are at odds with each other. Mapping the roles of entities (both people and groups) can help explain their goals, and the contradictions they embody. However, it can be hard, especially for outsiders, to trace competing agendas, who supports them, and identify contrasting goals.

For example, in both processes in Chieri the departments of the municipality supported different agendas. In Chieri1, incremental regeneration clashed with the priorities of the planning department; while in Chieri2 within the direction cabin there were different objectives that shaped the rest of the process (chiefly, disagreements led to space3 being dropped from the process). But this also happened within other groups. For example, initially the associations of space2 seemed the most aligned to shared management. However, throughout the process facilitators stopped hearing from them. As far as I was told, this was due to internal disagreements about how to let outsiders use their space.

Similarly, in space1 the administrative services provider and the restaurant could have had an important role in, respectively, coordinating actions among other associations and attracting new people to the space. However, both showed little enthusiasm about taking part in the process. The person from the service providing organization justified her skepticism towards shared management by saying that it was too ambitious for the associations that would be involved.

The managers of the restaurants, on the other hand, shared more details through anecdotes about their failed attempts at establishing different collaboration with other associations[53]. When facilitators suggested that perhaps part of the problem was due to a lack of a clear agreement, the restaurant managers responded that they lacked a sense of belonging. Although, such relations and conflicts happened before

[53] As I explained in chapter 6, the restaurant's offers to manage the calendar and common areas had been ignored; they had to limit events during cold months because the salon was always occupied; and when they did have events, often other associations complained. The restaurant, on the other hand, complained that they paid a lot for waste collection because other associations used their bins; and members of other associations would order food and drinks nearby places but used their tables when it was close.

to the process and are beyond the scope of this study, they cannot be ignored or considered trivial.

Individual contradictions are inevitable and mapping the different roles each person covers can nuance how we understand their actions. Being aware of relations, on the other hand, can help identify the most promising opportunities for compromise, either by avoiding further conflicts or acknowledging and address in them directly. However, it is easier to reassemble these controversies with hindsight and a nuanced understanding of roles and relations can take time to build.

Built space

Since all three processes revolved around a multi-purpose building, I expected that built space would be an influential actant. Whether to regenerate parts of the ex Tabasso; change the way associations used the former slaughterhouse to make it more permeable; or self-manage Colector as a mix of co-working and community hub, the physical dimension of each building manifested through different opportunities and constraints.

In Chieri1 built space determined the circumstances around which the process developed. Its size and location made the factory occupy an important position within the town's urban fabric. Its past as one of the Chieri's most important enterprises made it important in the imaginary of many citizens, while the previous failure at regeneration led to skepticism towards the process. Finally, given its current state and the available economic resources and time, facilitators proposed an incremental strategy rather than another attempt at total regeneration.

Although facilitators proposed to reactivate the ex-library because its conditions made them confident that it could by achieved in time for the festival, there were both economic and bureaucratic obstacles. The current detailed zoning plan that determined the possible uses for the area needed to be changed. Then the maintenance works that would make the space legally safe had to be approved and budgeted, and a third party had to be contracted to carry them out. Finally, the administration needed to sign an agreement with one or more associations to temporarily manage the open innovation center. Facilitators proposed that some constraints could be relaxed by emulating the regulations for temporary reuse that had been used in other cities. However, the planning department did not share their enthusiasm and used those constraints to block reactivation.

The smaller room that was reactivated for the festival enabled a significantly different experience than what an experimental open innovation center would have afforded. Since the room was smaller than ex library, it could host only two activities: a site-specific poetry performance and the nexTabasso stand where we collected memories and ideas about the factory. The performance was the final stop of ABC's tour of the factory organized by ABC, which meant that only the people who attended the tour could visit the room. While the experience people had was not completely passive – the poetry performance had interactive parts, and afterwards people could leave their comments about the space in the stand – their interactions

with the space were limited to what was asked of them during the performance and a short time afterwards.

The other goal of incremental regeneration was to increase the use of the ex-factory's active parts, namely the bar and the library. The latter had a room that was underused and had an independent entrance, which meant it could host events even outside the library's regular opening hours. However, if third parties were to use it, its alarm system needed to be made independent from the rest of the library, whereas internal safety and insurance procedures always required a responsible person to attend any event.

Space3 in Chieri2 was another example of how space significantly influenced the circumstances of the process through a mix of architectural characteristics, use and bureaucracy. Since it was part of a private school undergoing a revision of its fire-safety plan, the planning department wanted its associations to be redistributed on one floor instead of the current two. However, the facilitators refused to integrate this goal in their agenda because it implied asking associations to be more collaborative only is to halve the rooms they occupied.

For the former slaughterhouse in Chieri2 and Colector, on the other hand, the architectural characteristics and spatial organization both influenced and reflected organizational dynamics. After renovation works, space1 had been divided in separated rooms, which provided privacy (necessary to certain activities like counseling and support groups) but fostered isolation. Most of the associations that came to meetings stayed in the central block, where they shared the salon, meeting room and toilets. The associations that did not attend the process, on the other hand, were all from the southern and northern blocks, where they would not be affected by changes in the use of common spaces.

One facilitator compared space1 to a condominium because of how it was organized and managed. Although the building was public property, access was not unrestricted as it would be in a square or park. In fact, the right to use the building was granted through concession agreements between the municipality and associations (similar to rental agreements) and access to the building was determined by the activities carried out by associations (which could either be open to everyone, specific groups, or members only).

Since tenants own a private space within a shared building, there are common areas, but these are often limited to entrances, staircases, parking areas, etc. This kind of spatial organization does not completely prevent interactions, though it does not foster them either. In space1, some associations said they occasionally collaborated with others but, for most, interactions with others were limited to coordinating the use of common spaces.

Finally, condominiums embed the idea that space is rivalrous and excludable (they are club goods, not common-pool resources): since the number of rooms is limited, those who can appropriate them gain a privilege over outsiders. These constraints could be flipped around if associations accepted to share their access rights rather than appropriating rooms. However, the agreement they had signed supported appropriation, while the waiting list confirmed that space was scare.

In Valencia, the upper-floor co-working area was divided in two main rooms: one was used by continuous co-workers (who had their own desk) while the other hosted discontinuous co-workers (who could access shared desks). This made sense from a spatial organization perspective but had unintended consequences in terms of relations between co-workers.

In the continuous area, desks of the same size were organized to optimize how space was used, while in the discontinuous area, tables could be arranged in different ways to accommodate more people. In fact, we readjusted the placement of desks a few times according to proposals from co-workers themselves. From a relational point of view, people tended to interact more with the co-workers in their room. Continuous co-workers came more regularly (most were there every day) and personalized their desks. Discontinuous co-workers, on the other hand, were less regular and the room was sometimes empty. As a discontinuous co-worker, I felt it was harder to get to know people I only saw once or twice a week. It felt more like a reading room in a library than a shared office space. In addition, the meeting rooms were also in this part, which made the space louder.

This spatial organization conveyed a distinction between continuous co-workers (who paid more) and non-continuous ones (who paid less) and it did not help making the space more permeable for newcomers. While there were activities that helped co-workers mix, like having lunch together in the exhibition room, these did not have the same effect as sitting next to each other every day. These impressions were shared by other co-workers I informally talked to and also discussed in a few committee meetings. Although these barriers become less relevant over time and intersect with other factors (like each person's personality and whether one already knew other people) they did not help speed the process of integration of newcomers. Hence, although the effects of architectural characteristics and spatial organization are hard to forecast, it can be useful to acknowledge them and wonder how things could work with different spatial configurations.

The last point I want to reflect on is that caretaking of space cannot be overlooked, not only because it is necessary but also because it reveals the relation that people have with a space. As discussed in the case studies, caretaking was a source of longstanding conflicts. In Cheiri2, discussions related to cleaning issues took a considerable time during meetings and influenced the development of the process. In Valencia, where cleaning duties were carried out by a company, there were still tasks that had to be done daily, like opening doors, answering emails, making sure there were enough supplies, etc. Associations in Chieri2 considered the space as a service the municipality provided to them. Most co-workers in Valencia also saw the space in the same way. And none of them was wrong to think it was not their responsibility. Associations had signed contract that granted them the right to use the space, while in Valencia co-workers payed a monthly rent.

Associations in space1 considered themselves as recipients of urban welfare and thus felt entitled to use the space as something the municipality provided. This was especially true for the associations that catered to the interests of their members. Some complained that expenses were too high when compared to their use of the

space. However, by focusing only on their needs, they failed to recognize that they were under-using the space and that letting outsiders in would both decrease their expenses and benefit the wider community.

Often it might not be viable to expect people to be responsible for caretaking. In fact, it is important to acknowledge that caretaking cannot be overlooked, and that both responsibilities appropriate resource must be assigned. But if care-taking issues might seem trivial, they also give a sense of how people relate to the space. Devising small change and experiment practices that get people involved in small tasks can be a way to change their attitude towards the space from something that they pay for to something that they share and care for.

Digital space

One proposal of the thesis was to explore how digital tools could contribute to the processes being studied. Although digital tools did not prove as relevant as I might have hoped for, experimenting with them led to some unexpected reflections. While digital tools might promise convenient solutions to specific organizational problems, implementing a new tool also means implementing a new practice, which can turn out to be more challenging than the problem that tools was expected to solve.

When I wanted to propose a tool, I would start by considering a handful of alternatives (which were always limited by the options I knew). The choice depended, among other factors, on whether a tool was free or required payment; whether it worked on different devices (computers, smartphones, etc.); whether users would need to install the software and/or set up an account to use it; and how much effort people, on average, might need to learn the tool and get used to it. Since effort is subjective and cannot be quantified, when considering implementing a new digital tool it is important to compare its potential gains with whether and how much people are willing to experiment with it. Even so, new tools can bring both gains and losses that vary across people and that cannot be fully foreseen, especially if it is the first time a tool is tested within a group.

In Chieri2, when facilitators and I decided to use an on-line form to collect information from associations, participants familiar with the service I proposed could use it without major problems. Others needed some quick help before they could use it independently. Finally, some people were not able to fill the forms by themselves. Both me and another association volunteered to help them fill the form, which meant they depended on other people to complete the task. Once answers had been collected, results could be easily exported in a table, which saved the facilitators and me some time compared to having to manually input them. However, some people wanted to have a copy of the answers they submitted, and we had to create exports of those answers.

In Valencia, different messaging applications were used for different purposes and types of communications. There was an instant messaging application for informal communication; a structured chat with rooms for each working group and the committee; and an-online drive to share and collaborate on different documents.

The instant messaging application could reach users quickly, but more complex conversation would be lost in its intense flow of messages. The structured chat helped maintain order but was less effective in reaching all co-workers. Although everyone was invited to join, not all co-workers were willing set up a new account, and others who did joined would forget to check the chat regularly. Commitment and interests where the keys than unlocked this other space of communication. Finally, the drive collected the most structured information but had the fewest users. While it might seem unintuitive that an unstructured chat conversation proves more disorienting for a newcomer than a set of documents neatly organized in folders, it is important to recognize that the former takes much less effort to get accustomed to.

Hence each new tool might facilitate certain tasks while making others more complicated. A full understanding of gains and losses might not be available until you try it out, and these can change over time. One should be prepared to adjust and assist, and eventually mix digital and analogical solutions.

When someone proposes a new tool, it is natural to wonder whether it would be the best available solution and worth the effort. However, it can also be interesting to reflect on why that tool was proposed. For example, is it addressing a specific organizational issue or is it a partial answer to a broader issue?

In Chieri1, nexTabasso was proposed to address two challenges simultaneously. Firstly, young people were not very represented in the process. And secondly, the process had not included input from citizens beyond those who had been interviewed and/or had participated in the focus groups. There had been public events, but they were mostly used to address doubts about the process (like the fact that facilitators were not perceived as neutral) or debating about the causes of past failures, which left little space to gather proposals.

In Chieri2, I proposed to use a bulletin board to enable those who could not attend meetings to follow what had been done and contribute with their comments. Judging from the comments collected no new participants joined the discussion. However, the board turned out to be useful for those who attended the meetings as a synthetic summary of how things were proceeding. And even though not all participants accessed it, many found the board useful and asked to place a printed copy on a physical board in the common salon.

Something related happened in Valencia when we were trying to communicate better Colector's co-workers and the projects in which they were involved. During a committee meeting one co-worker proposed to use another type of on-line board that followed a Kanban structure. While some co-workers had already used in other projects, others were fatigued by the amount of applications they had to install, learn and keep up with. The tool was discarded but the need to have a space where we could list what co-workers and working group were doing (useful both for insiders and outsiders) remained as one of the proposals that the governance working group would work on.

In none of these examples digital tools were able to solve the problem they were supposed to address. nexTabasso was not able to collect many proposals (and only involved the six teenagers who were part of the team); the board did not collect new

comments about the process; and the Kanban required too much effort. But at least they brought attention to their respective issues, and sometimes inspired alternative solutions.

One final consideration is that digital spaces, like physical ones, need to be taken care of. (Or in developer jargon, they need to be maintained.) When I proposed nexTabasso to associations and students, one of the objectives was to create a community that could maintain the project after the festival. Although most people agreed that the project would lose meaning if it was limited to the festival, after the summer break I moved onto my next fieldwork and had to leave it; meanwhile no one had offered to maintain the website. (Although I never expected that would happen, given how much effort it required.)

One of the objectives of Chieri2 was to create a shared narrative for the space. As the facilitators and I discussed how it could be communicated, there were different options. One was the calendar-map hybrid that I had proptotyped, which could become a way to visualize where associations were, what they did and when their activities took place throughout the week. However, even if the tool would have been ready and flawless (which it was not), it required users to be familiar with spreadsheets, how to export data and upload them to a server. Also, basic coding skills would be necessary in case something went wrong. While someone with these skills could handle these tasks in a few minutes, no one among associations had them and training would have taken a lot of time.

As an alternative, I proposed to use a blogging platform that would be much simpler to learn and use. An easier tool meant that more people could learn it, and thus share the effort to maintain it. However, as the festival was approaching this solution was still too complex. Another option was to use the municipality's website, but that would require too much time for modifications. Finally, we decided that, given the time and resources available, the best solution was to design a leaflet to communicate the new shared identity, and that a physical copy of the calendar would be printed every week.

In Valencia, on the other hand, most digital tools were already in use and co-workers had less problems learning new ones. While available tools had the advantage that they were maintained by an external organization – like a company or a community of developers – additional work was still required. In the on-line drive, for instance, someone had to make sure that files followed naming conventions to make sure they could be navigated by co-workers familiar with them and newcomers alike.

If digital tools can work as virtual spaces of encounter – for example an instant messaging application can complement (and sometimes even substitute) a real-life meeting – like in physical spaces their architecture can influence how we interact. And digital spaces also need to be taken care of, lest they become less functional or stop being used. nexTabasso, for instance, is now an empty room, more like a museum than a collaborative space.

Text documents

While people and spaces – both built and digital – where central to my study before I entered the field, text documents emerged as relevant actants later on. This group refers to written documents but also includes what they represent, like the agreements they formalized (a local law is a piece of paper but also a component of bureaucracy); or how they were produced (for example the new agreements that were drafted over the project). In ANT parlance, documents can be mediators or intermediaries that translate certain agendas. Hence, like other actants, not all text documents have the same relevance. In fact, in each process documents had diverse roles.

Some documents had an implicit effect on interactions and attitudes, by which I mean that they can help explain certain aspects of each process although they were seldom mentioned. Take for example the public call that facilitators in Chieri had responded to and the concession contracts that regulate access and use to space1.

By specifying what was requested of its winners, the call shaped how facilitators approached each process. For example, in Chieri1 they were tasked with facilitating a multi-stakeholder dialogue and co-design activities to intensify the use of currently active spaces, and to reactivate part of the unused ones, as well as draft a proposal for more long-term solutions. The call also asked to explore opportunities and support the creation of a community of citizens that could start and maintain a process of participated regeneration. The municipality also gave facilitators a list of potential participants that divided local associations and citizens in three groups. Interviewees and participants of focus groups were mostly included in that list. In fact, during of the focus groups a participant questioned the criteria followed to identify individuals interviewed {D68}.

Similarly, in Chieri2 goals included defining a model of governance where the associations would be more engaged in, and consequently become responsible for, the management of both their assigned spaces and common ones; harmonizing current public regulations that defined the rules of use that occupants must follow. The call suggested that the municipality had a homogeneous agenda for all spaces, but facilitators realized early in the process that most objectives had to be adapted to the conditions of each building {D41}. While guiding them to visit each space, the social and work policies department laid out its reasons for promoting shared management, which were much more connected with distributing public buildings to accommodate the demand from local associations, rather than promoting principles of commoning.

And while the call did not explicitly mention community hubs, it included Turin's houses of the neighborhood (which are community hubs) as a model to emulate. In their preliminary evaluation of each space, facilitators classified them according to criteria taken from how houses of the neighborhood worked: the capacity to generate urban welfare and the capacity to self-manage common spaces. When they presented their evaluation during a meeting with the direction cabin, however, some people did not consider self-management and welfare production as important priorities and disagreed with their work.

Finally, the call also mentioned urban commons and co-management, and its annex described the processes as 'another significant step towards theoretical and practical developments of the commons' {D26}. It appears that the people who wrote the call were sympathetic with ideas connected to urban commons, considered they would benefit Chieri and translated these goals (and hopes) through the call. It does not surprise, then, that facilitators spent their first months exploring those directions; what might surprise more are the obstacles they found along the way. Even if parts of the municipality did not share the hopes of their colleagues who authored the call – or at least they did not consider them viable compared to other priorities[54] – the call was approved was approved unanimously, and 70,000 euro in public funds were allocated to the processes {D25}.

The concession contracts that associations had in Chieri2 were another document that had an implicit but broad effect. Few associations knew what a house of the neighborhood was. In fact, even for those who did, the concept referred to different places with diverse management models which were hard to conceptualize in few simple words. Other doubts that emerged: 'are we being forced to convert to a house of the neighborhood?' {D61} 'will the municipality be excluded from managing space1? 'And 'where do we get the funds to support the conversion process'?{D86}.

Aside for a problem of mutual comprehension, it soon emerged how this objective clashed with current circumstances. Concessions granted associations the right to use a specific room as well as common spaces for four years (from 2016 to 2020), in exchange for rent and respecting the rules of use. As one facilitator said 'the concession is closer to a "rental contract" than to the idea of "civic access" of the commons' {D165} and associations knew they were under no obligation to change the way they used space1 until the end of the agreement. In addition, scarcity was inscribed in a waiting list of other associations that asked the municipality for a space {D168}. If space is perceived as scarce, those entitled to use it might perceive granting use rights to new actors as threat to their comfort and their activities – almost 'an invasion of their home', as one facilitator said {D236}. When, in one of the first meetings, facilitators asked if people considered space1 as a private or public space, most agreed it was private {D86}. Concession contracts backed the sense of appropriation that associations had with respect to space1 and trying to promote a different view could be considered an attempt to manipulate or even a break of the agreement.

In other cases, the agency of documents had to be explicitly activated to promote or hinder certain agendas. However, while some documents were made relevant by actors who use them to support their goals, others that could have had relevance were ignored. For example, the planning department often referred to local legislation – like the detailed zoning plan and safety regulations – to slow down the reactivation of the ex-library. And although facilitators and the innovation and participation department proposed to emulate temporary reuse regulations used

54 For example, the planning department delayed their evaluation of the ex-library because they were overworked.

in other cities to relax some constraints, they could not convince the planning department.

Although both processes were about urban commons, Chieri's regulation for the shared management of urban commons did not prove influential. In Chieri1, it could have been used to create a pact of collaboration between the municipality and colonizers but got discarded because it would take too much time to set up. In Chieri2, a co-management pact was proposed as an alternative of the good neighbors pact. Since associations were already offering beneficial services to the community, they could frame their activities as preserving space1 for future initiatives, while the pact would also establish relations with municipal departments beyond the social and work policies department {D146}. However, it required a higher level of coordination between participants and imply responsibilities that associations were not ready to take.

Another document that was ignored was a list of tariffs for renting common spaces in space1 that a representative from the social and work policies department (SWP) mentioned during one of the meetings of Chieri2 in mid-April (around halfway through the process). This document implied that the municipality had already approved that outsiders would use parts of the space, albeit only the common ones, and assigned them a price[55]. However, the document was mentioned only at that time and never considered again.

The rules of use (ROU) for space1, on the other hand, were mentioned and became partly relevant once associations started discussing potential changes. There were two versions of the ROU that, taken together, outlined most of the changes that facilitators would talk about during the process[56]. For instance, the second version stated that events should be scheduled in an on-line calendar, which had to be managed by the associations general representative together with the SWP, and that a printed copy of the schedule should be shared on a bulletin board and updated every two weeks {D130}. The second version of the ROU, while still a draft, was more relevant than the first because it influenced the objectives of the SWP and, as a consequence, those of the facilitators.

However, several participants claimed they had never seen the ROU[57]. A facilitator also suggested that their technical language might have given a sense of a top-down procedure, rather than something built together. This was one of the

55 The document also stated that 'renting was limited to initiatives coherent with the goals and spirit of space1' {D168}.

56 The text also referred to a 'sense of responsibility and social conscience to collectively maintain a public heritage and respect current laws and local customs', and stated that, once a year, associations must elect general representative to mediate the relation with the municipality. Each association should also have its internal representative, who would be the contact with the general representative and the municipality. The municipality would organize an assembly twice a year between all associations, who could ask for additional meetings should the meet arise. At the start of process2, there was a general representative, but it was less clear whether all association had defined an internal representative (other than the people who came to the meetings) and whether the biannual assembly had ever been done.

57 ROU1 and ROU2 were mentioned for the first time when a participant, a during meeting in mid-January, complained there were no rules regulating the use of the space, and the SWP representative present answered that ROU1 had been distributed when concession agreements had been signed.

reasons they proposed to create the good neighbors pact (GNP), which will be introduced as a complement rather than a substitution of it.

The GNP is a good example of another role documents can have: supporting the formalization new arrangements. Implementing shared management required new inscribed procedures that regulated how outsiders would access space1 (such as sending a request to reserve the space), while also defining obligations to care for them (e.g. clean after use or pay a fee for cleaning services). As previously said, one option was to create a pact shared management of urban commons between the associations and the municipality. Another option was to draft new ROU, though it would be too complicated because it would have to use administrative language be compatible with local laws. 'We risk to be elephants in a crystals shop,' one facilitator said {D113}.

Instead, facilitators proposed to create a good neighbors pact that did not set new rules but acknowledged the contributions to communal living that associations were already making. Associations also decided that each should be free to decide whether to adhere and, those who did not, would lose the chance participate in future meetings {D279}. Finally, the GNP was transitory, meaning that it lasted for one year (with possibility of renewal), and there would be quarterly meetings during which details could be tuned {D272}.

While the GNP was significantly less ambitious than shared management, it reflected current circumstances better. The difference between 'what everyone must do to respect communal living' and 'what each is willing to add to the space' might be subtle, but current circumstances called for an indirect approach to shared management made of symbolic actions and delaying efforts. The GNP tried to initiate a shift in relational dynamics by formalizing new arrangements that emphasized contributions over obligation; that moved away from bureaucratese to a shared language; and that were open to future changes.

The GNP also set the foundations, designed together with associations, for future revisions of concession contracts and rules of use that would embed more explicitly collective management principles. In the long run, building a shared identity and defining new forms for managing common spaces still required associations and their members to embrace a different mindset the one regulated by concessions. And while the GNP itself might not achieve these goals, the process of writing it formalized new agreements that promoted a shift of perspective useful to achieve them.

Something similar happened in Valencia when the committee revised the documents that explained its governance. Each time, co-workers discussed why the current governance did not work and how it could be changed. Although they had been approved unanimously by the committee, the rules of distributed management were not always respected. Implementing governance rules might not have been as easy as agreeing on them, but the subsequent revisions of the document were an opportunity for the committee to reflect retrospectively on the adjustments that were necessary.

To conclude, I am left wondering about the reliability of written documents, given the many roles they can assume. Similar documents can have explicit effect

on the process (zoning regulation) or be ignored (temporary reuse and co-management regulations). Others can be the product of processes that formalize agreement, like the ones I just discussed. However, there were examples where evaluating attitudes from published documents can prove superficial.

The associations from the second space in Chieri2 had a governance documents that outlined how they would manage the space. By reading it, it would be easy to think that they were more aligned with the shared governance model of Turin's houses of the neighborhood. During a meeting with facilitators in mid-October, their representative shared that they were having problems on agreeing how outsiders could use the space. The rules they had decided (possibly influenced by the motivation to win the call as managers of the space) did not work well in pactice.

Similarly, if I were to evaluate the attitude of Chieri's municipality urban commons based on the call it published and regulation for the shared management of urban commons, it looked like the administration was very invested in urban commons. On one hand, documents that use abstract concepts to convey a political vision also leave room for maneuver and adaptation. On the other, they might not reflect the more operative attitude of public officers who are faced with pragmatic challenges, as the difference between the objectives outlined in the call for Chieri2 and the priorities of the social and work policies department showed.

8.2 Actor-networks of encounter

By zooming into each process, I gave all actants the same potential relevance and let them reveal how they affected participation through different interactions. In this section I want to zoom out and reflect on the actor-networks that they formed. Although the three processes that make my case studies were very different from each other, by understanding them as intersecting and concentric networks I could maintain a comprehensive analytical structure while avoiding pre-determined explanations (Hagglund, 2005). In each case study, I distinguished three concentric actor-networks of encounters: a core network, an inner network and an outer network. In these, humans and non-humans interacted for different reasons, like exchanging information, making decisions and taking action. I did not enter the field with this structure in mind, rather it started emerging as I was drafting the case study chapters. This analytical structure both reflected the networks I experienced and fit all three cases.

The main promoters of each process interacted in core networks. It is in these networks, then, that most power and responsibilities concentrated. In both processes in Chieri, the core networks included the facilitators and the departments of the municipality they interacted with. The people involved in the core networks of each process, however, were not the same. Each process had a different team of facilitators and these met with slightly different representatives from the municipality. In fact, only the participation and innovation department, which was the internal promoter of the call, was present in both processes.

In Valencia the core network included the committee and the coordinators of working groups. Working groups were supposed to include also co-workers who

collaborated occasionally, while committee meetings were reserved to the coordinators of each working group and caretakers. However, there were a lot of overlaps between working groups and committee.

Inner networks were made of people from the core network interacting with selected groups of participants. In general, the latter were expected to be interested in the process or that could somehow contribute to it.

In Chieri1 these were different people and groups identified in the list that the municipality provided to facilitators. After interviewing some of them individually, facilitators organized three separate focus groups, and then decided to interacted with a smaller group that they considered most promising (the colonizers).

In Chieri2, on the other hand, the inner network was limited to the associations that already had a room in the three spaces. As space2 and space3 were gradually dropped from the process, the network shrank to the associations that resided in space1. One of the initial objectives was to co-design rules and arrangements that would have allowed outsiders to enter the space. As this did not happen, the inner network did not expand to include more people.

In Valencia the inner network included all the co-workers of Colector. Working groups were supposed to act independently form the committee and include also co-workers that were not part the latter. But if working groups should have spanned across the core and inner networks, most of the time that was not the case and they included the same people that were also in the committee, and often the latter ended up discussing and influence their operations.

Finally, outer networks formed when a process interacted with outsiders, like during public events. In all three processes the least amount of participation happened in outer networks, although organizing any event required work in the two other networks. Also, nexTabasso in Chieri1 and the residences in Valencia were attempts to bring people from the outer network into the inner network.

This way of looking at each process in terms of concentric actor-networks shows three things. Firstly, some actants are relevant in all actor-networks, while others are present only in some of them. When actants enter a network their goals, agendas, and perspectives will be represented. That means that they become enabled to exert their influence on others and, conversely, have others attempt to influence them. Understanding where actants are relevant helps map where their influence can potentially play a role. This mapping can be done with humans and non-humans alike, thus showing how certain actants are relevant only in some actor-networks, while other are relevant to all (fig. 26).

Secondly, even if an actant is relevant to more than one network it does not mean that it will act always in the same way. As discussed before, it is important to map roles and relations because some actants can belong to different groups and have multiple, sometimes conflicting, roles. In addition, this perspective highlights how groups that appeared as solid networks in a level were fragmented in another.

The municipality in Chieri, for instance, would act as a unified entity in the inner and outer networks. Facilitators were hired because they won a call that the municipality approved and funded but only parts of the latter supported the process. However, its internal dynamics influenced what was possible or not within the

process and were strongly influenced by the personal relations, both positive and negative, between its members.

For example, shortly after the colonization agenda had been proposed in February, facilitators and the innovation and participation department started carrying out preliminary evaluations (together with external experts) that confirmed the viability of their plan. However, the planning department, who held the power and responsibility to approve the plan, waited until the beginning of June to visit the space, and then blocked the reactivation of the ex-library just one month before the festival, leaving no time to discuss adjustments.

Similarly, the private school from Chieri2 was dropped from the process due to the internal disagreements about how associations were distributed in the building. These internal disagreements were not outlined in the call, but once they emerged facilitators refused to convey a technocratic decision as the goal of a participatory process. In space2, on the other hand, disagreements among the different associations blocked the process. Again, this was unclear until facilitators met the representative of associations, since from their proposal to manage the space they appeared much more aligned.

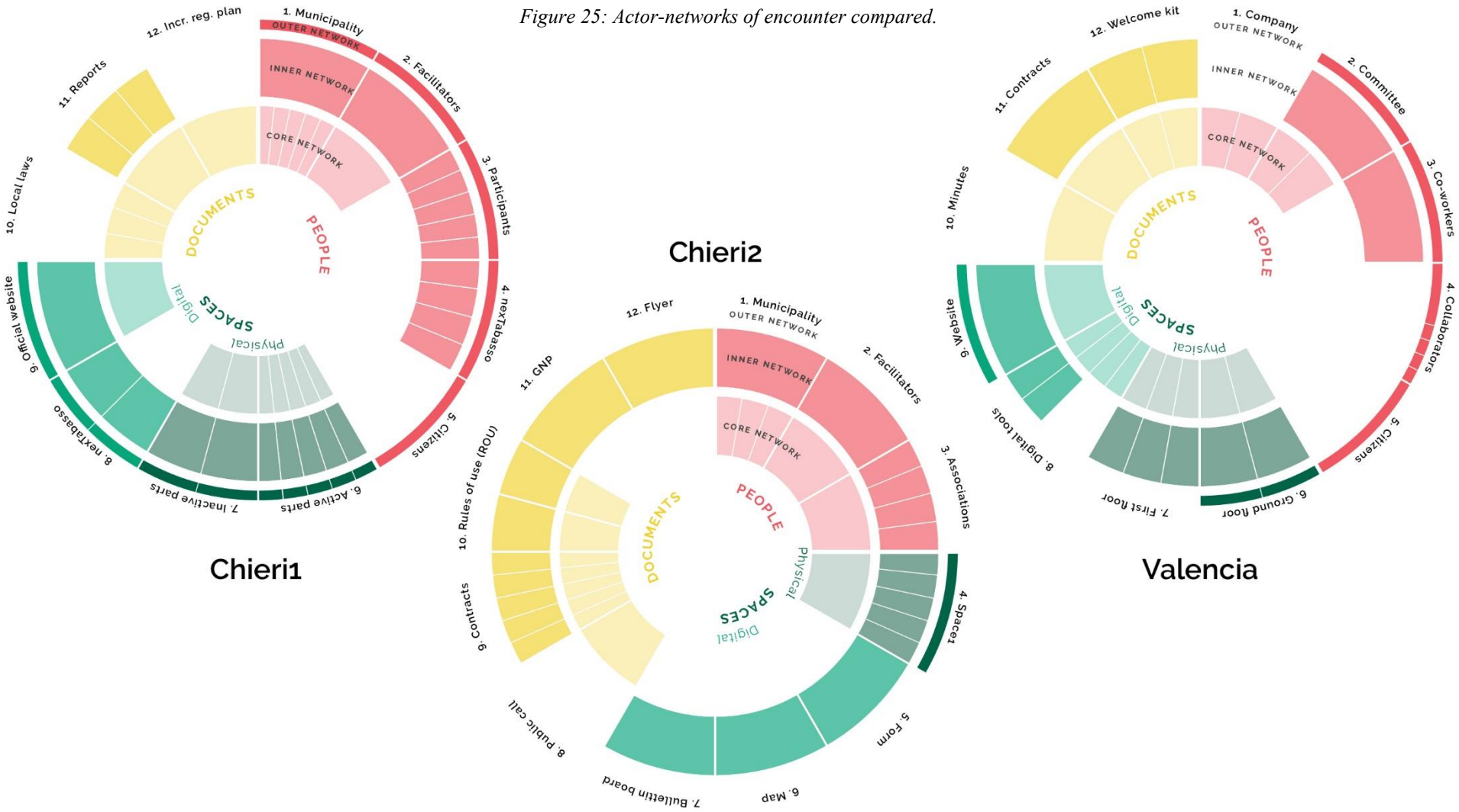

Figure 25: Actor-networks of encounter compared.

Something similar can also be said about non-human actants, like built space. For many citizens in Chieri, the factory was simply divided between active and inactive areas. People in the core and inner network, however, were more aware of sub-divisions in each space.

Conflicts and contradictions, however, are seldom disclosed outside of the networks where they happen. While they were not completely invisible, they can be hard to spot for outsiders who are not in the network. For example, except for the innovation and participation department in Chieri1 and the social and work policies in Chieri2, other public officers seldom took part in public events. With hindsight, this might be taken as a signal of low commitment to the process.

The third and last point is that thresholds do not exist only between the inside and outside of an initiative, but between every actor-network of decision-making. Tracing events in the core networks can help explain much of what happens in other networks. In other words, core networks influenced the inner and outer ones (influence got translated outward) in all cases but the reverse happened less often.

If participation aims at involving outsiders into decision-making about issues that affect their lives but on which they have little influence, then the participatory degree of an initiative depend on how permeable thresholds are. Permeability does not mean that passage over another network can or should be without effort. Rather, it implies that some people can, according to certain procedures, translate their influence inward. Think of it in terms of what must be done to traverse a threshold, how clear that is laid out. How can actants move to an inner network? Is it only possible when insiders invite them or are there other ways for outsiders to enter? And why would insiders invite outsiders?

In Chieri1, focus groups were the most engaging activity. Participants were invited according to a list provided by the municipality and asked to share their vision about potential futures from the factory. As can often be the case with consultation, there was no guarantee that proposals would be taken under serious considerations. The reports that were produced after each focus group stated that the discussion would continue, but facilitators picked the participants they considered most promising and continued working only with them. In public events, on the other hand, there was a clear distinction between those presenting and the audience, who could share their thoughts only during question sessions. The festival allowed for more interactions (although the format remained the same) but by then most decisions had already been taken. While these choices might have been influenced by the obstacles facilitators faced within the municipality, they reduced the permeability of the inner network.

In Chieri2 there was almost no permeability across networks. While space2 and space3 were dropped from the process, in space1 most decisions were taken in the inner network, where associations held a stronger position than participants in Chieri1. Here facilitators had to work with them and needed to shape their objectives according to what associations were willing to do.

In Valencia, co-workers were invited into working groups because the project wanted to be collaborative at all levels, but also because involved co-workers were overworked. For the reasons I discussed in chapter 7, only one co-worker joined the

event group. This showed that even when insiders explicitly invite outsiders to cress thresholds, there is no guarantee that the latter will do so.

nexTabasso and residences were, in my view, the most significant cases were outsiders were meaningfully invited into the inner network. In one occasion, one of the resident groups also interacted with the committee, making them span across, if only momentarily, all three networks. I must emphasize, however, that I was personally involved in both efforts, and so I know them well and see them favorably.

This ANT-driven perspective emphasizes dynamics that can help reflect on what works and what does not in participation practices. Firstly, interactions happen in concentric networks, which are difficult to understand if you are not an insider (where are different actants relevant, are groups fragmented). Secondly, influence is always transferred outward, less often inward. Third, thresholds are useful to conceptualize how influence can be transferred inward, which it is what participation supposedly aim at.

8.3 Making and unmaking spatial coding

In chapter 3 I talked about community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation that aggregate people, ideas and energies to provide activities and services for their community and by their community. By providing the space to develop those activities and services, community hubs widen the focus of participation from deliberation to action and enable people to take part in the social and cultural life of their territory. I also said that no community hub is like any other, since each can host or offer different activities and services and have different governance and management models. Hence I proposed to understand community hubs as rooted in their territory and in continuous evolution

Community hubs are spaces that exist because of participation, and where participation exists because there is a space. I argued that space is not simply the container of participation but an active constitutive element in the production of participation. Drawing from Kitchin and Dodge (2011), space is 'is constantly bought into being as an incomplete solution to an ongoing relational problem.' Ontogenic space had three properties: it is in continuous flux since both its material fabric and the social relations it hosts are constantly being created and recreated; as its function changes, the use of space is continuously negotiated and contested; and the meanings attributed to space can also be contested.

Spaces were among the actants that influence the social reproduction of the community hubs I examined. For example, the architectural characteristics and spatial organization of a space influenced and reflected organizational dynamics; or the way a space is taken care of can influence the relation people have with it. But the role and influence of space intersect with those of other actants, like people (their roles, goals and relations, including latent and accumulated conflicts) and text documents (which can have various roles, among which that of formalizing new mechanisms of organization and their repetition).

Kohn (2003) captured the continuous dialectic between space and social relations through spatial coding. Spatial coding, she said, is the set of scripts and repertoires that are appropriate to a specific place, and that can influence, though it does not determine, whether encounters reproduce prevailing patterns of interactions or challenge them. Stavrides (2019) echoed these ideas when he talked about institutions as mechanism of organization that reproduce a certain social order. For Hardt and Negri (2009) institutions create a context for people's identities to manage their encounters. In my analysis, spatial coding is the product of the dialectic between material and immaterial dimensions of a space of participation, and it can be understood as a by-product of the interactions of entities within actor-networks.

In this section I shift to what they discuss about. What are the practical matters around which spatial coding emerges? What the strategies and mode of operation influence it? How does spatial coding manifest? Since each issue is grounded on anecdotes from case studies they cannot be generalized. In addition, the three cases revolved around built spaces that were at different phases of development: in Chieri1 the Tabasso factory was inactive and the process revolved around its reactivation; in Valencia Colector had just opened; and in Chieri2 the former slaughterhouse was in a more consolidated phase, but people were considering whether and how to change its management model. However, I identified four overarching themes that emerged in all processes; that deal with both the material and immaterial dimensions of each space; and are worth reflecting about beyond the scope of my field work. These include multipurpose and difference; shared narratives; economic sustainability; and governance (power-responsibility).

Multipurpose and difference

Being multipurpose is part of the DNA of community hubs because it is both a social mission and instrumental to their survival. The spaces I studied hosted or were supposed to host diverse activities. In Chieri1, variety was necessary to attract both an active community of contributors and potential investors; in Chieri2 each association used the space for different activities and in different ways; and in Colector being multipurpose was actually a fundamental part of the space's business model, since revenues from co-workers were not enough to cover expenses. When different people and groups use a space, each will have their needs and goals, which shape their relations both with the space and with other users. Different uses and needs lead to different understanding about how the space should be used, or what it should become: a key challenge of a multipurpose spaces, then, is to accommodate differences

In Chieri1, since the space was not used, these issues were less prominent. The ex-porter's lodge, however, was shared by some local associations, including the fablab, ABC, a the local time bank. Most nexTabasso meetings also took place in that room. When we started the project, a new association joined the room. It was a counseling service for victims of domestic abuse that, given the sensitive nature of their work, needed the space to be quiet and tidy when they were having their

activities. However, this led to conflicts with other associations who were used to share the space in ways that did not fit how the new association needed to use, and thus understood, the space.

In Chieri2, conflicts around caretaking related to the different needs that each association considered legitimized by their activities. For instance, if one association hosted a loud recreational activity, another that was offering counseling services would not be able to offer an appropriate setting to its users. In other cases, it was not only about arranging simultaneous activities, but also about what every activity left behind. Many participants associated caretaking issues with the elderly association. On average, the elderly association used the space six days a week (more than any other association) and often occupied common areas to play cards or dance, thus preventing others from using the salon for them. From their perspective, the space was not big enough for their members. In fact, they offered their services to more people than other associations combined. However, other associations complained about how loud they were and how they left common spaces untidy.

Incompatible uses of space were an issue also in Valencia: in several meetings the committee discussed about co-workers using spaces in ways that bothered others. For example, some co-workers used the relax area to have on-line meetings and phone calls, which bothered co-workers in the continuous area. Meeting rooms, on the other hand, were in the in the discontinuous area, and when people had meetings there, they were loud for discontinuous co-workers. The issue was discussed only within the committee and never with other co-workers.

Differences intersected with lack of trust when ESPAM (one of the residents) asked to use the exhibition room out of opening times, during weekends or evenings. To some, their request showed that they were willing to put an extra effort to make their project work. In fact, since they were university students, when the residences started around April they were having exams. However, as they had not come to Colector in the first few weeks of residence, part of the committee thought they were not committed and had no rights to advance additional request before they proved their trustworthiness. In the end, the committee decided to not grant their request, even though they had already given them a key to enter the space independently.

When different people use the same space this kind of conflicts are likely inevitable. When people have a good relation, it might be easier to let them know they do something that bothers others. Otherwise, lacking practices, spaces or opportunities to address differences openly – those intermediary phase of mutual recognition and negotiating gestures (Stavrides, 2019) – can hinder trust and can take a long time to solve. If taken alone these conflicts might seem trivial, as they accumulate they can shape the relation between people and the spatial coding of a community hub.

Shared narrative

If acknowledging and integrating differences is crucial to how community hubs function, creating a shared narrative that accommodates these differences is one way to strengthen relations among different groups of users. The narratives of the spaces I examined, for instance, shared the goal of giving a new use to an old building.

During focus groups in Chieri1, people agreed that a big and experimental space needed a broad narrative and vision. The abundance of space led to the possibility, or even the necessity, of imagining the parts of the factory that could be reactivated as multipurpose spaces, There was also a desire to integrate social goals (like civic education, awareness building, or solidarity towards marginalized groups) with economically sustainable activities. Coherent with these ideas, the open innovation lab that facilitators proposed was supposed to emphasize the city's heritage in the textile industry and, at the same time, promote the exchange of know-how across generations by combining tradition with new production paradigms.

In Chieri2, when the house of the neighborhood model was met with skepticism, facilitators tried to decide together with associations what being a house of the city meant. After collecting information on the activities of each association, a flyer was prepared that described space1 as a place for encounter, solidarity and co-creation of urban welfare {D243}.

In Valencia, Colector was part of a XIII century ex monastery and was described as a space of work, collaboration and experimentation. Colector aimed at generating impact by promoting a place of encounter for innovative actors; and that lived in *beta permanente*[58].

Building a shared narrative can help community hubs in more than one way. In a more pragmatic sense, it helps communicate the essence of the initiative, which can be useful when promoting events, looking for collaborators, and raising funds. But shared narratives should be addressed both to insiders and to outsiders and explain how a community hub functions. For example, it can clarify the complex and hybrid nature of community hubs and go beyond the simplistic distinctions between public spaces and private enterprise. Generating a shared narrative is also about finding shared meaning and value; and foster a sense of belonging among insiders by making explicit what the unites them. As Rancière (2011, p. 17) said 'an emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators.'

Economic sustainability

Trust and sense of belonging must be built for a shared narrative to consolidate,. Community hubs need a solid business strategy to guarantee that they will continue operating. Income is necessary to sustain the costs to maintain a space, support activities, and ensure that these remain accessible to people from all income levels.

58 See https://colectorvalencia.com/que-es/

In terms of economic sustainability, each space in the case study operated under different conditions.

Chieri1 was a public building, though the municipality could not finance its regeneration. According to facilitators, an incremental strategy could be a way to display the potential of the space with relatively little upfront costs. The open innovation center, then, was supposed to attract both social and economic capital, respectively to contribute to the space's activities (and thus increase its attractiveness) and finance regeneration works.

Chieri2 was already functioning and mostly financed through public money, except for the rental fees that associations paid. The issue here was more directed towards serving more people (namely local association and non-formalized groups looking for a space) without increasing costs by maximizing the use of space.

Colector was a self-managed co-working run by a company in a building rent from a private owner, and economic sustainability had been a key issue from the first meeting I attended {D13, D23, D51}. Self-management implied that much caretaking was done by some co-workers for free.

When I arrived, Colector had just started and aimed at a business strategy strongly based on relations within the space and beyond it. However, relations, require trust and time to build. Its goal was to sustain a space for experimentation and collaborations, but issues related to economic sustainability took a lot of energies away. The fact that rent from co-workers hardly covered expenses led to tensions within the committee and left almost no budget to fund projects or events that were supposed to attract more co-workers, collaborators and users.

Within the commercial and event working groups, we tested different types of agreements with outsiders. For example, the exhibition room was given for free to the Valencian chapter of Creative mornings for their first four events, in exchange for a minimum contribution of promotional content within their networks and social media pages {D21, D36}. Since the group brought outsiders at breakfast time on Fridays, it was also decided that Friday mornings would host *Colector obert*, where newcomers could try the space for half a day for free.

Although community hubs can have multiple sources of income like grants, donations, and revenues from renting out rooms or providing services (Locality, 2016), sustaining each source of revenue also implies effort. (For example, in Colector we tried to apply for a few public grants, which was challenging since all of us had to contribute what they could in their free time.) Defying the rules of competitiveness, then, means optimizing how resources are used. Space might be the chief asset of a community hub, but often also social relations need to be used to their full potential. In all three cases, then, being an inclusive space was both a social goal but also a potential source of revenue. Hence, even though profitability might not be their chief aim, community hubs need to balance between different sources of income and incentives.

Governance

The issues discussed so far – integrating differences and trust within a shared narrative while ensuring sustainability – do not exist in isolation but intersect and need to be addressed simultaneously. In each space letting different groups of people use the space was necessary to build a coalition of actors and integrate social goals with economic sustainability. However, the more people use a space, the more differences it had to host, making compromises necessary. And while all these aspects deserve attention, often some issues (like economic sustainability) are more urgent than others (like integrating differences), and people are forced to make tradeoffs when distributing available resources.

This was less relevant in Chieri1 than in the other cases because the process did not arrive at deciding how the reactivated space would be managed. (The facilitators had planned to leave governance to the colonizers, at least during the festival.) After the festival, facilitators designed a public call that the administration could use to find a third party that would become the social manager of the ex-library {D299}.

In Chieri2 the topic was much more prominent. When facilitators proposed the analogy between space1 and a condominium, they noted that the space was lacking an administrator, who usually deals with caretaking in condominiums. While the rules of use in space1 defined that associations had to elect a representative, this person was only responsible for the calendar and managing the use of common spaces. And the municipality – who according to the facilitators' analogy was the administrator of the building – was not agile enough to solve such problems promptly due to its rigid bureaucracy.

Houses of the neighborhood, on the other hand, have a coordinating entity that takes care of the space, defines its narrative, deals with collaborators and users, makes sure the place is sustainable. The details of each arrangements can vary but some form of coordination is always present. The good neighbors pact addressed this issue by making space1's coordinator responsible for the relations between the municipality and the associations at space1, but also organizing the periodic meetings among associations. During a meeting, a participant proposed to rotate the responsibility every three months, at each co-management meeting, so that over time every association would be responsible for it {D237}.

In Colector we discussed and experimented with different models of governance. Lack of resources meant that co-workers involved in the committee and working groups were not paid for their contributions and were often overworked. For example, caretaking took a lot of effort on a daily basis that could not be postponed, and caretakers often had to take time away from their jobs, which left them not a lot energy left to deal with the activities of other working groups, and sometimes made them feel that other co-workers were not contributing as much. Conversely, asking people to take help offloading responsibility from caretakers could have scared newcomers.

Before I argued that it is important to map actors, their roles and their relations to others. But this is not only useful to analyze an initiative: when mapping is unclear to insiders, it can lead to conflicts and unclear decision-making structures

that can prove unable to address such complex issues. In addition, freeriding issues can be understood as a form of aversion to difference. Hence community hubs need to integrate not only different uses but also different contributions. However, equal distribution of efforts might not always be possible, and it is important to unpack roles into tasks and responsibilities, and then assign appropriate decision-making power and compensation. Finally, since each community hub needs to continuously refine how it assigns roles, which in turn distribute both power and responsibilities, periodic retrospectives can be very useful to continue evaluating the governance of a community hub.

8.4 Community hubs as institutions of commoning

The previous section identified four challenges that were, in a way or another, were present in all case studies: community hubs must deal with the differences that arise from being multipurpose; they need a shared narrative that helps tolerate and integrate these differences; they must balance economic sustainability and social impacts while often lacking resources; and they must devise unconventional governance structures based on pragmatism and mutual recognition. In this last section, I discuss what the conceptualizations of urban commons, and institutions of commoning, described in chapter 3 reveals about the challenges that I discussed so far by addressing two final questions: how can we define the community of the community hub, especially given the diverse coalitions that lead to hybrid entities? And how do community hubs maintain enough structure to function consistently while remaining flexible to the contributions they need from outsiders? By flipping the question from *what* commoning is to *how* it is done, I propose a shift of perspective for each of them. This does not mean that community hubs should aspire at becoming institutions of commoning. Rather, community hubs and institutions of commoning share some fundamental issues, and perhaps they can learn from one another.

Defining community hubs and their communities

In chapter 3 I argued that no community hub can be understood without considering the role of space (built or digital), the people that interact with it (their roles, goals, relations) and the arrangements that contribute to its social reproduction. Understanding community hubs as urban commons reveals how continuous renegotiation of boundaries and arrangements must be accepted. Like urban commons, community hubs must continuously renegotiate the definition of what the commons is, who the commoners are, and how commoning is done. In community hubs, the commons includes the spaces of encounter, but also the services, activities, and relations that develop within that space.

The first shift of perspective can help untangle the fact that being a multipurpose space means dealing with differences in how different people might use or relate to the space, and the conflict that arise because of these differences. Accepting the continuous renegotiation of the boundaries of a community hub

emphasizes how what the community hubs is, the different roles of the people who get involved (promoters, activators, contributors, and users), and the arrangements through which space is shared, are always under question and can change. Commoners can include the people who run and contribute to the community hub, but also those who attend its different activities. And commoning, or the process of social reproduction, includes the mechanisms of coordination necessary to maintain the community hubs function but also the flexibility needed to make the permeable to outside contributions.

Consider Chieri2: as requests for space had increased in recent years, one of the process' main objectives was to let outsiders use the space. Differently than in Turin, where the houses of the neighborhood were bottom-up initiatives, in Chieri the idea to establish a houses of the city within space1 was a top-down decision. No association had asked for more collaboration and the municipality had no claim over the space because of the running concession contracts.

During their first meeting, the social and work policies department and the facilitators discussed how associations contributed to the wider community through different activities and services. Some groups provided services to everyone (such as counseling or support groups for alcoholics, cancer patients, and single mothers) while others catered more to the recreational interests of their own members (like the elderly association).

Facilitators tried to evoke a sense of larger community by emphasizing that the municipality wanted to generate more welfare by providing space to more associations, although it did not work well. The fact that associations considered space1 a service provided by the municipality rather than an opportunity to generate urban welfare had two consequences. First, associations had little responsibility to take care of it. (According to the social and work policies department, 'some associations felt legitimized to tell the municipality that, if they did not receive a satisfactory service, they would not vote for them' {D41}). Secondly, associations considered the space as a privilege that would be reduced once shared with more people.

Institutions of commoning integrate different uses without flattening them out. If the commons is not only building but the opportunity to use a space for activities that can benefit a wider community, commoners agree that each use is legitimate, none is better than another, and all contributions are, in a way or another, valuable. In other words, people who come to use the space, even if just to attend events, contribute to its social reproduction like those who take care of it. However, continuous renegotiation should also enable the community to discuss what is useful and beneficial to a commons and what is not.

This shift of perspective can help address the problem of freeriding, which emerged both in Chieri2 and Valencia. An empty community hub is unsustainable, while a self-sustained but closed space is an enclave. If all the people involved in the social reproduction of a community hub are considered commoners, then they include both its managers, contributors, members and users. The next step is about deciding how each group that uses the space must also care for it. This solution might not fit every initiative, and as both Chieri2 and Valencia showed just

discussing the issue might not be enough. Finally, different roles must imply different responsibilities and decision-making privileges.

Continuous renegotiation relates to how community hubs cannot survive in isolation and should be included both as part of a community hub's shared narrative and of the practices that sustain its social reproduction. Sustainability depends on combining various sources of income and build wide network of collaborators. During the festival in Chieri, one of the speakers argued that public institutions should consider that vacant public buildings have no real estate value, and only new uses that integrate both social and economic impact can give them new value[59]. As Dellenbaugh et al. (2015) suggested, urban commons not only operate between state and markets but beyond them. Being permeable is not only a political statement: it is a survival strategy.

Balancing structure, flexibility and permeability

Differences and permeability have been central to discussions so far because community hubs must remain permeable to thrive. Instead of eliminating heterogeneity, institutions of commoning strive to accept it. The fact that all the people who interact within community hubs can be considered commoners does not mean that we have all access to the same spaces of decisions making. Thresholds are the in-between spaces were outsiders and insiders meet, and where differences are acknowledged and integrated. If community hubs function like institution of commoning, there should be ways for outsiders to pass through its thresholds. Stavrides argued that thresholds are were commoning happens; I argue that they are central to the success of a community hub.

Understanding participation in terms of concentric actor-networks showed that when an initiative is permeable it means that people can not only get involved but somehow access its different centers of decision-making. If thresholds do not exist only between insiders and outsiders but at all levels, looking at the permeability of each threshold can reveal how participatory or participated each initiative is. Permeability does not mean that passage over an inner network is effortless but that there are procedures that people can follow to traverse it. This, however, can be hard to put into practice, especially because, like other arrangements these procedures can be renegotiated.

In Chieri1 there was little permeability from outer to inner network. Public events were more participated than participatory, while associations invited in the inner network were determined by a list provided by the municipality. Perhaps there was more permeability between the inner and core networks. Among the ideas proposed during the focus groups, facilitators picked the one they considered most promising. The colonizers entered the core-actor-network momentarily when the facilitators asked them to meet the municipality; this, however, had no impact once the colonization agenda was blocked due to disagreements between departments.

59 The same argument was included in the website the facilitators prepared as synthesis of the event: http://areabenicomuni18.avanzi.org/#valore

nexTabasso was an exercise in making the inner circle more permeable: one of its objectives was to involve younger citizens into the process, and the other to make it easier for citizens to express share memories and ideas about the Tabasso factory. Although nexTabasso managed to bring new participants to the network – the students and some associations that had not been invited to focus groups –the impact had on the process was not significant.

In Chieri2, there was no permeability between thresholds. Facilitators met with the social and work policies department and the direction cabin in the core network, where they refined the strategy that they would then apply in the inner network. However, in the inner network power was distributed differently than in the other process. If in Chieri1 associations were mostly invited to consultations, in Chieri2 facilitators had to agree with associations how the strategy that was determined in the core network would be implemented.

In Valencia, Colector's distributed self-management was supposed to embody permeability, although this did not always work well. Although the core-group was in principle open to newcomers, it did not always appear keen on having outsiders join in and/or showed a welcoming attitude. In addition, it was hard to clearly communicate that the core network was open to outsiders: although we established the governance working group to clarify how distributed self-management worked, no co-worker joined the working groups. Permeable thresholds do not guarantee that people will join in.

Either way, permeable thresholds are difficult to translate in practice, especially if they must be integrated with different understanding of how spaces of encounter work. When discussing how to make working groups more accessible, the event working group proposed that all working groups set weekly fixed meetings to make it easier for newcomers to join, and that each group should advance on their work regardless of who was present. This approach – which they called 'do-hocracy' – would also be supported through digital tools that enabled everyone to follow and contribute without being present. In the communication group, on the other hand, co-workers said they were not able to work that way. Since each of their team members had a specific task that others could not substitute, they were not able to advance in their work unless everyone was present. And since this was always something they did voluntarily on top of their work, they could not commit to a fixed weekly schedule.

The two working groups had different habits and needs. The event group would regularly use the on-line drive to note minutes for the members who could not attend, which was useful also for newcomers who wanted to join in. For the communication group writing minutes of each meeting was extra work. Hence, they structured their meetings in different ways, had different uses for digital spaces of collaboration, which influenced the ways outsiders could enter

Finally, opening thresholds can be tricky and will not always be successful or bring desirable outcomes. When the reading club asked if they could meet in Colector, I thought it would be good to host them even if they could not pay and rent. Since I trusted the person who coordinated the reading club, I also thought it would be appropriate to let him take care of the space. However, most other

committee members did not appreciate, and our misunderstanding led to the fact that the reading club did not contact us anymore.

Despite this mistake on my part, this episode led the committee to discuss how to deal with emerging initiatives who could not afford paying the rent for rooms. We decided to set a lower friends tariff, under the conditions that the space could be used only in moments of low demand, newcomers would take care of it, they would give back in the form of communication, and that a responsible person from the committee or working groups would follow them in their first meetings.

Things went better with ESPAM. After I had to refuse their request to use the space outside working hours, we handled differently the matter of the projector. Initially the committee had decided to not let residents hang the projector from the ceiling during their first event, fearing that solution ESPAM had made might not be safe enough. However, the committee decided to trust them when they had the chance to speak directly with the resident – once, in other words, the decision was moved from the core network to a threshold in-between the committee and residents. And once residents won the full trust of the committee by successfully managing their first event while taking care of the space autonomously, remaining events were organized without frictions and proved very successful for Colector.

To conclude, thresholds can exist at different levels: a place can be open at the outer level, for example because it organizes initiatives and events that are open and economically accessible. That same place, however, might have impenetrable inner networks. For instance, a square can be accessed and used by everyone, but only few elected representatives and public officials can access the networks where they determine which uses are allowed an which are not. Total openness is likely unachievable and even undesirable, but by positioning the different strata of initiative on a spectrum that defines openness according to how it handles thresholds helps us frame that initiative according to principles of commoning. If we turn this around, initiatives that want to be open should put special care in how they handle thresholds.

Since inclusiveness is not only a political statement but a survival strategy, community hubs must be permeable. But thresholds can be tricky because they require to manage difference and tolerate unpredictability (Stavrides, 2019). My experiences on the field convinced me of their importance for community hubs, and participation in general, to create and protect spaces of encounter with otherness. There is a delicate balance between remaining operative and having permeable thresholds at all levels of an initiative.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

In this thesis I contribute to debates about community hubs and, more generally, about the shared management of urban spaces, with partial reflections grounded of my empirical experience. The research question I aimed at answering was: how do humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs? To address it, in chapter 2 developed a conceptualization of contemporary participation and proposed to study it as context-sensitive and contested; in chapter 3 I discussed community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation that are rooted in their territory; and in chapter 4 I reflected on how my research approach combined observation and engagement. In chapters 5 to 7, I provided a detailed account of three case studies that revolved around buildings that, in different ways, fit my conceptualization of community hubs.

My intent was not to compare these cases, but to identify and explore their recurrent element, peculiarities, and contradictions and paradoxes. So, while I am aware that my findings cannot be de-contextualized, in the first part of this chapter I want to highlight those reflections that can be useful beyond the contexts I studied, and hopefully can help academics and practitioners alike. Through a mixed positionality as participant observer and collaborator, I experienced perspectives and nuances that would not have been highlighted otherwise. In the second part, then, I will reflect retrospectively on my research experience. Finally, the detailed reports I provided about my case studies also left me with several open questions. In the last part of the chapter I want to share some speculative provocations, issues that I cannot answer but I deem worthy of further research and experimentation

9.1 How do humans and non-humans participate in the management of community hubs?

To answer my research question, I conducted three case studies, two in Chieri (chapters 5 and 6) and one in Valencia (chapter 7). The case studies in Chieri were about two top-down structured participation processes that happened at the same time but revolved around different public buildings and had different goals; while

the one in Valencia was about a privately-owned and self-managed hybrid between co-working and community hub. In the field, I combined observation and engagement and, as I explained in chapters 3 and 4, both my theoretical framework and research approach were in dialectic with the experiences I had in the field. While I had orginally intended to conduct an action research project, my study field work gradually turned into actor-network theory-based ethnographies that integrated parts of direct involvement.

My ANT-based analysis looked at how, in each case study, human and non-human actants interacted in concentric actor-networks. By zooming in and out of their networks of interaction, I could emphasize different nuances about how their roles and influence intersected.

One common denominator was the role of space. Each process revolved around a building, which in different ways could be considered a community hub. Built space, then, confirmed its role as constitutive of the social interactions of which it was a part. Sometimes – like the Tabasso factory in Chieri1 (most of which remained inactive) and space3 in Chieri2 – built space determined the circumstances around which the process developed. On the other hand, for the former slaughterhouse in Chieri2 and for Colector, space's material dimension (its architectural characteristics and spatial organization) both influenced and reflected organizational dynamics. Either way, caretaking emerged as an aspect that should not be overlooked, both because it was necessary and because it revealed the relation that people have with a space.

ANT invited me to disregard preconceptions about the relevance of any actant and avoid pre-determined explanations without losing a comprehensive analytical structure. If space became not only the container of social interactions but also an element of a larger compound of entities engaged in continuous negotiations, something similar can be said about the other non-human actants relevant to the study: digital tools and text documents. Their relevance depended both on how their intrinsic characteristics interacted with the uses that people projected on them.

As regards digital tools, I must admit that they did not have the relevance that I might have hoped when I started my research (which had the intent to experiment how they could support participatory processes). My intuition was that available tools – instant messaging applications, collaborative document editors, file sharing tools, digital calendars, project management applications, etc. – that are usually developed for other contexts (for example workplaces), could be readapted to facilitate communication and coordination among the participants of the processes I was studying. That said, understanding digital tools as virtual spaces of encounters revealed how, if the architectural characteristics and spatial organization of built space influence the encounters they host, the way digital tools are designed favors certain interactions over others.

Hence new tools can bring both gains and losses that privilege some people and types of interactions over others, and that cannot be fully foreseen. Implementing a new tool also means implementing a new practice, which can turn out to be more challenging than the problem the tool was expected to solve. It can also be useful to reflect on why that tool was proposed: is it addressing a specific organizational

issue or is it a partial answer to a broader issue? Finally, like built space, digital tools need to be maintained, lest they might become empty spaces of virtual encounter.

The other group of non-human actants relevant to my study were text documents. Unlike built and virtual spaces, I did not expect text documents to have influence on interactions before observing it on the field. In ANT parlance, documents can be mediators or intermediaries that translate different agendas. Hence, they were artefacts that enclosed a wider set of interactions, such as the agreements they formalized or the process that created them.

Like other actants, not all text documents had the same relevance. Similar documents can have explicit effect on the process (zoning regulation) or be ignored (temporary reuse and co-management regulations). Others can be the product of processes that formalize agreement, like the good neighbors pact and the revisions of distributed self-management in Valencia. In fact, in each process documents had such diverse roles that I was left wondering about their reliability. For instance, the several official documents on urban commons published by Chieri's municipality, the proposal of shared management of the second space in Chieri2, and the distributed self-management agreements in Colector, were all examples of documents that convey a certain approach to collaboration. Whether or not the stated goals are implemented in practice, it is useful to acknowledge their relevance since documents are one of the entities that contribute to the social reproduction of a space.

Finally, people and the groups they formed were the last category of relevant actant. From an ANT's perspective, humans, like any other actant, can be scrutinized to show that they are actor-networks made of many other actants. While treating people like a black box to be opened was beyond my scope – and the analogy is perhaps incomplete – it can still give an idea that each person embodies a mix of role, goals, skills, beliefs and contradictions.

I found that when people belong to more than one group (whether formally or informally) they have different roles that might contradict each other. Although mapping actors and their different roles is useful, it is also necessary to account for the relations that different people and groups had. In fact, being aware of relations can help identify the most promising opportunities for compromise, either by avoiding further conflicts or acknowledging and address in them directly. However, mapping the roles of people and groups to explain their goals, roles, relations and the contradictions they embody can be hard, especially for outsiders.

ANT contends that human and non-human actants can have the same influence on the actor-networks in which they interact, and these were the roles that I identified within my context of study. However, ANT also enabled me to zoom out of specific actants and focus on their wider interactions within different actor-networks. I reported about each case study according to how events unfolded in three concentric actor-networks: a core, inner and outer network. Rather than being chosen a priori, this narrative structure emerged as I started drafting the case studies.

The main promoters of each process interacted in the core network, where most power and responsibilities concentrated. In the inner network, people from the core

network interacted with selected groups of participants. In general, these were expected to be interested in the process or be able to somehow contribute to it. Finally, outer networks were where insiders of an initiative (its promoters and invited participants) interacted with outsiders, like the audience of public events or people that responded to calls for collaboration (like the students in nexTabasso or the residents in Colector). In all three processes the least amount of participation happened in outer networks, although organizing any interaction with outsiders required work in the two other networks.

Looking at each process from this zoomed-out perspective revealed a few useful things. Firstly, while some actants were relevant in all actor-networks, others were present only in some of them. However, being relevant in more networks does not imply that actants behave the same way in all of them. For instance, groups that might appear as unified entities in outer networks were often fragmented in inner ones.

In my framework, thresholds are the physical and metaphorical spaces where insiders and outsiders meet. Stavrides (2019) – who intended institutions as mechanisms of social organization that societies deploy to reproduce themselves by ensuring that a certain social order gets repeated – argued that if spaces of participation want to support a politics of commoning, they must have permeable thresholds to allow for unpredictable identities and enable their differences to be integrated. One of the central finding of this work is that thresholds do not exist only within a process and its outsiders, but between each network. This implies that influence is almost always transferred outward (from core to inner and outer) and much less often inward. If the goal of participation is to give people a say into decisions that affect their lives, or in other words to let them into the actor-networks where they can influence those decisions, emphasizing the importance of all thresholds can help us reflect on how that goal is being supported.

The ANT-based analysis I just discussed directly addresses my research question and offers food for thought to apply the framework in other contexts. However, it lacks a more pragmatic application that speaks to the challenges of running a community hub. In chapter 3 I defined community hubs as spaces of contemporary participation that aggregate people, energies, and ideas to provide activities and services for and by their community. I also said community hubs are rooted in their territory and in continuous evolution.

Community hubs are rooted in their territory because (1) they emerge in response to, and evolve in tandem with, the broader circumstances of contemporary participation; (2) they simultaneously depend on and support the urban and social fabric of their territory through a broader understanding of urban regeneration and welfare; and (3) space is constitutive of participation: participation exists within a space but that space would not exist in that way without participation.

Saying that space is constitutive of participation means that community hubs have both a material and immaterial dimension. For this reason I proposed to use Kohn's (2003) concept of spatial coding reconcile these seemingly separate elements. Spatial coding refers to the set of scripts and repertoires that are appropriate to a place, which influence the encounters that that places host, and in

turn can either reinforce or challenge the patterns of interactions of the world at large. As such, spatial coding is the product of the dialectic between the material and immaterial dimension of a space. For the purposes of this thesis, however, spatial coding still needed to be contextualized within the practical matters discussed by the people involved in the participated management of community hubs.

Across the three case studies, I found four overarching themes. Firstly, community hubs must deal with the differences that arise from being multipurpose spaces that host different types of people, groups and activities, who in turn might have different needs and understanding of what a shared space is and how they should use it. Secondly, community hubs need a shared narrative that tolerates and integrates differences, and which embodies and communicates this narrative both to outsiders and insiders alike. Thirdly, community hubs must be economically sustainable without prioritizing revenues over their social mission, and despite often lacking financial resources and personnel. And fourthly, community hubs must devise unconventional governance strategies that reconcile pragmatism and mutual recognition; that assign roles, which imply both power and responsibility; and that allow for renegotiation.

On the other hand, community hubs are in continuous evolution because being multi-purpose is both crucial to their social mission and instrumental to their survival. However, it also implies a challenge to integrate different uses, needs, understanding of space. Community hubs, then, rely on a mix of diverse and interdependent actors, which lead to unconventional structures that go beyond the dichotomy between public and private enterprise. This also means that community hubs must balance between their need for a solid structure to function consistently, and their need to remain both flexible – to adapt to changes in demands, resources, and other external circumstances – and permeable – to enable and integrate the external contributions they need to thrive

The fact that being multi-purpose is both crucial to the social mission and instrumental to the survival of community hubs, and that they must find a balance between a solid structure and flexibility and permeability led, respectively, to two issues. Firstly, given the diverse coalitions that make up the hybrid organizations that run community hubs, it is hard to give a general definition of what these are and of the community they serve. And secondly, how can community hubs find balance between structure and flexibility. To answer these last two questions, I looked to related concepts within the literature about urban commons. My goal was not to showcase the ways that community hubs are urban commons. Rather, I sought to demonstrate that community hubs and urban commons share some fundamental issues and perhaps can learn from each other. By flipping the question from *what* commoning is to *how* it is done, I propose two shifts of perspective that reveal interesting aspects about each process and participatory management of community hubs.

The first shift of perspective can help untangle the fact that being a multipurpose space means dealing with differences in how different people might use or relate to the space, and the conflict that can arise from these differences. In

my conceptualization, urban commons are made of three inseparable components: the commons, commoners and commoning. In a similar way, community hubs are made of a space of encounters, the people that interact in it, and the arrangements they find to support its social reproduction. And like for urban commons, the boundaries of these three inseparable components must be understood as subject to continuous renegotiation. That implies that what the community hubs is, the different roles of the people who get involved (like promoters, activators, contributors, and users), and the arrangements through which space is shared, are always under question and can change.

If the commons is not only the built space but the opportunity to use it for activities that can benefit a wider community, commoners can agree that each use is legitimate, none is better than another, and all contributions are valuable. Similarly, it can also help with conflicts that arise from issues of free-riding, meaning that some people will inevitably put more effort in the social reproduction of a community hub than others. If all the people involved in the social reproduction of a community hub are considered commoners, then they include both its managers, contributors, members and users. However, different roles must imply different responsibilities and decision-making privileges. That said, continuous renegotiation should also enable open discussions about what uses and contributions are not useful or beneficial.

The second shifts of perspective is about recognizing the importance of thresholds for initiatives that, like community hubs, thrive on openness and permeability. As I said before, thresholds do not only separate the insiders of an initiative from its outsiders but exist between every decision-making circle. In the cases I examined, for instance, I always identified what I called a core, an inner and an outer network of interactions. If community hubs function like institution of commoning, then there should be ways for outsiders to pass through these thresholds. Permeability does not mean that passage over an inner network is effortless, but that there are procedures that people can follow to traverse it. This, however, can be hard to put into practice. For instance, permeable thresholds do not guarantee that people will join in. In addition, total permeability is likely unachievable and might even be undesirable. Finally, like other arrangements, these procedures can be renegotiated.

9.2 Doing context-sensitive and contested research

Saying that participation is context-sensitive and contested means that any answer to questions such as ‘what is participation?’, ‘what does it mean?’ or ‘what does it imply?’ must be weighed against the circumstances where they emerged. Answers will be different if we ask someone in the global north or the global south, or who comes from a Western or Eastern Europe. In a similar way, millennials who are active in their community might disagree about what participation can look like with people who participated in initiatives in the sixties and seventies.

If we cannot understand any initiative independently from its context, we must also accept that, since participation is a subjective practice, people will attribute

different meanings to the same experience. Even within the same initiative some people might consider participation meaningful, while others see their participation as phony. Whether contemporary practices lead to innovative social configurations or become instrumental to the reproduction of already prevailing socio-economic configurations depends on many factors. And often they can be both at the same time because there will always be contradictions and paradoxes.

In the cases I examined, participation was not only contested because people understood it in different ways. There was no clear division between people who considered a process meaningful, and others who thought it was phony and exploitative. These processes were contested because they existed at the intersection of different goals, understandings, circumstances and events. Within each process, there were both things that worked well and gave meaning to the experience, and obstacles that could not be overcome. Criticizing some actants for undermining the success of an experience means ignoring how each has its own goals and constraints. Hence, I am not seeking normative judgements, generalizable results or guidelines, but partial reflections about the complex details that existed within each process.

While I was fortunate to find two settings that fit my interests and where people accepted my proposals, both arrangements could not provide any reassurance that each case study would develop in ways that favored my initial goals. In the field my research evolved in a nonlinear way that was significantly affected by circumstances and chance. Hence, I want to stress again how my theoretical framework and empirical work were in dialectic. Why some actants were more relevant than others depended on how much they were discussed and how their presence influence other interactions, from the most mundane discussion to those that defined the overall strategy of each process.

What does this tell us about context-sensitive and contested research? I am left with two paradoxes. Firstly, studying context-sensitive concepts implies that grasping the relevant aspects of an initiative without insider knowledge is very difficult. Controversies and contradictions are easier to reassemble with hindsight since many of the facts that nuance one's understanding do not emerge until later stages of the process. An engaged positionality can help experience different perspectives, which I think added important nuances to this research. However, the longer and more involved researchers are, the greater the risk that their opinions will be biased.

Secondly, I think that concepts like community hubs, participation and urban commons must remain contested because they must remain open to debate and adaptation to different social settings. However, this also means that contested concepts be appropriated to cover business-as-usual practices. In Chieri, for instance, the municipality explicitly mentioned urban commons and co-management in its resolutions and communication material about two processes that were closer to more traditional top-down consultations. While it is laudable that public discourse and institutions invest in and experiment with into new participatory concepts, it is important to approach these actions with a healthy

degree of skepticism. At the same time, simplistic rhetoric of good versus evil are unfit to reflect the complexity of interrelated processes.

I must also recognize the limits of a short-term approach to investigation and engagement. More time was necessary to consolidate the trust that was built within each process, and especially to engage in iterative cycles of action and reflections with co-researchers. My focus was limited to the time I spent in the field, while a proper evaluation should also include shared retrospectives.

One of the primary motivations of my work was to engage in collaborative action-oriented research. Action-oriented and collaborative research cannot be taken lightly: meaningful engagement required time and resources beyond my means. At times I felt overwhelmed by the amount of interactions I had to track, for instance when phases of engagement overlapped with meetings between facilitators and municipality in Chieri; or when in the last months in Valencia I had to step away from field work just after I had built trust with the group. I found that one year in the field was barely enough to build trust and mutual recognition, which are only the first steps of an action research project. To be meaningful, rigorously and with significant impact, collaborative research cannot be done without longer commitments.

More time and resources are necessary to monitor developments for a longer time. This should include impacts of the project but also what both researchers and co-researchers have learned from the experience. When working with students in Chieri and co-workers in Valencia I realized that there were skills that I tended to take for granted, like interviewing, approaching strangers, taking notes, that cannot be imposed upon people who do not used them daily. While I know I learned a great deal from my interactions in the field, I have no way to tell what the people who collaborated with me have learned, or whether the experience proved as meaningful to them. Academic work starts showing its extractivist tendencies when researchers cannot reconcile their professional obligations (like deadlines and budgets constraints) over the impact their work has on the people they worked with and context they worked within,

If context-sensitive research aims at having an impact on the context where it was carried out, it also needs to seek criticisms beyond its borders. It is crucial, then, that the work gets challenged within critical communities of other researchers and practitioners, as well as disseminated to the wider public.

I wonder how the outcome of this research would have changed if co-researchers were given the same privilege I had to reflect about their experience, something that practitioners and other non-academics can seldom benefit from. Ideally co-researchers could also be included in the writing process. When that is not possible, our contribution as researchers could be to distill these reflections and share them with the people involved.

9.3 Gaps between rhetoric and practice of participation

At the beginning of this thesis I argued that participated management of community hubs can evoke values like mutual recognition, solidarity, emancipation

and, ultimately, democracy. I wondered how these take form in practice and what types of arrangements and interactions can either promote those values or obstacle them. If participation implies the widening of the circles of decision-making, does this guarantee significant redistribution of influence and, as a consequence, more desirable outcomes? Does participation always lead to new social configurations or does it reproduce prevailing arrangements?

These questions are hard to address because participation can both lead to new social configurations or does it reproduce prevailing arrangements at the same time. However, the fact that participation is context-sensitive and contested should not be interpreted as a justification that 'anything goes.' Any understanding of participation quickly loses strength if it is unaware of what each practice shares with, and what distinguishes it from, the circumstances and experiences that preceded it. In addition, there might always be people who are enthusiastic about their experience and others who feel frustrated. This, however, does not imply that all practices are equally meaningful. Rather, it implies that meanings are renegotiated through the dialectic between communal experiences and individual interpretations.

Upon completing this research, I am left with open questions and speculative provocations that, while being framed within anecdotes from my case studies, speak to broader issues and I consider worthy of further research.

The myth of equality

Participation initiatives are often associated with 'a kind of democratic flavour or sensibility' (Polletta, 2016, p. 243) that can imply a sense of equality among those who participate. In practice, however, the ideal of total equality can prove naive. There is no guarantee that all those who enter a space of participation will automatically gain the same privileges and responsibilities.

The concentric actor-networks that I used to discuss the case studies show that not everyone participates in the same way: in other words, widening the circles of decision-making did not automatically lead to a significant redistribution of influence. Even within the core network, where people are closer to the decision-making processes that influence other networks, it is inevitable that some people will have more influence on those process than others. This can be due to a combination of various factors that can include their knowledge, skills, connections and responsibilities.

In Chieri, the municipality held a determinant influence on facilitators and the rest of the process. Because of how the mandate was configured, the municipality could approve or modify the strategy that guided facilitators, who in turn had to implement it in the field. If their roles granted them different influence and responsibilities over each process, both facilitators and municipality were groups made of people, and each of these had different roles.

When the facilitators and the participation and innovation department proposed to reactivate the ex-library during a meeting with the mayor, he responded that someone had to approve the usability of the place. Only the planning department

could do so, and eventually did not agree with the proposal. However, the planning department would also bear the responsibility in case of any accident. Similarly, if the process would have involved private investors, these would probably have had more influence than the average citizen, particularly because they would have had to sustain financial risks.

In Valencia, on the other hand, the owner of the building also had a disproportionately high relevance compared to the time he spent in committee meetings. He rarely exercised that influence, and the fact that he decided to be one of the associates of the company that run Colector hinted at how he trusted the potential of the project and wanted to have a direct link with it. That said, he did not want to comply with the distributed self-management practices that we were trying to implement. Rather than taking part meetings, joining the structured chat, and reading minutes, he preferred to remain in touch with only one co-worker. Other co-workers in the committee thought that this arrangement gave too much influence and responsibility to one person, who in turn did not like being in that position. But in the end things remained that way, which undermined the idea that all co-workers in the committee had the same influence.

These anecdotes showed that total equality might not always be possible, and perhaps not viable either. Perhaps participation should not be strictly understood as an equal redistribution of influence, but as an exercise in acknowledging power imbalances and addressing them openly. A more pragmatic goal of participation, then, could be to enable more people to exercise their influence. Although there is no guarantee that this would enable more people to have a significant impact on outcomes, or that all participants will be empowered in the same way, there is a value in mapping how influence is distributed – and how it is affected by personal relations – if it leads to more transparent discussions about the structures of decision-making that permeate a process, and how privilege is inevitably connected with responsibility.

Path dependency on the configuration of participation

As it might often be the case with top-down structured participation, the two processes in Chieri largely revolved around the work of facilitators. In chapter 2, I said that facilitators are professional mediators hired to maximize the opportunities for dialogue and cooperation among the different people and groups involved in a process. In practice, the work of facilitators can take many forms since facilitators might use different tools and techniques to structure interactions among participants. In general, their skills and experience help facilitators make participation inclusive, pleasant, and meaningful by leveling the playing field and allowing people to connect in ways that undermine expectations associated with roles and backgrounds. To practice this craft, facilitators must be chameleonic: confident in formal settings but also relatable in informal ones, and often need to be able to experiment, improvise and change their strategy throughout their work.

In Chieri both groups that managed each process relied on conventional practices, like individual and group meetings, as well as some focus groups and

public events. However, the work of facilitators was not limited to their interactions with participants. Aside for meeting various people in different settings, some more informal than others, facilitators had to listen to and gather opinions and ideas, identify complementarities, and manage both conflicts and expectations. Putting all their information together, they would then craft a strategy based on a narrative that integrated diverse, and sometimes incompatible, points of views. One of the facilitators in Chieri once told me that participatory policymaking is like making a collage.

As Laino (2011) said, the good intentions and creativity of facilitators exist within the implicit and explicit constraints of a mandate that inevitably influences what can be achieved by participation. The facilitators in Chieri also worked within the constraints implied by their mandate. I discussed how the initial objectives of the pubic call influenced how facilitators approached each process, and how in both Chieri1 and Chieri2 facilitators had to readjust their strategy to the conditions on the ground. But the mandate was not only a set of instructions that the municipality had laid out in the public call: facilitators had to revise and adjust the priorities of each narrative and strategy they had crafted in tandem with how they handled the relationship with their client.

While it would be naïve to expect that the mandate that facilitators set with their sponsor does not influence how they work, and that they can afford the privilege to work under ideal conditions, what if some of those conditions changed?

If the most important decisions are taken in the core network of a process, a participation effort that wants to genuinely involve and transfer influence to citizens should enable them to have a significant role within its core network. How would a top-down participation process change if facilitators were hired by citizens, or had to respond to them rather than the local administration? This would address skepticism towards the neutrality of facilitators, whose initial credibility in Chieri was low because they were perceived as representative of the public administration. However, it would also lead to new challenges, like choosing which citizens would represent the interests of their community.

In fact, public officials are in theory legitimized to assume such a role, but often have to deal with other issues that make participation process a low priority. In addition, participation processes are unlikely to involve only one department of a municipality, especially when they have complex goals like urban regeneration. Another configuration, then, could be that facilitators not only work with citizens but also within the municipality to define a shared agenda across its different offices.

In Chieri, the direction cabin was supposed to represent different offices, but its interactions were limited to meetings that did not achieved a shared strategy. Each department worked in different ways, under different circumstances and with different priorities. Perhaps these offices were not used to working together, perhaps some were not prepared for outsiders entering their habitual routines, perhaps there were latent conflicts between departments and/or between people. Perhaps all, or none, of these factors were relevant. Either way, internal disagreements within the municipality had a significant influence on each process.

In Chieri1, delayed evaluation of the ex-library meant that its reactivation was blocked only a month before a festival in which it played an important role. In Chieri2, one of the three spaces was dropped from the process due to administrative infighting.

The gap between the objectives outlined within the call (unanimously approved and financed by the municipality) and the circumstances within the administration makes me wonder how common this situation can be. Municipalities are hierarchical organizations, but in Chieri there was no clear leadership on how to deal with obstacles that had a profound influence on the rest of participation. And facilitators, however capable and well paid, had to focus their energies on the issues imposed by their mandate.

Part of the energy and expertise of facilitators could be invested into navigating the complex bureaucracy of a municipality and prepare it to absorb inputs from its citizens. Otherwise, a gap widens between the rhetorical promises of participation and what happens in practice. Within that gap, a certain hypocrisy is evident as citizens are asked to coalesce for the well-being of their community by institutions who work in impermeable silos. Even if new configurations are likely to lead to new problems and conflicts, it is worth exploring alternative arrangements characterized by distributed hierarchies and more transparent communication.

Are the benefits of collaboration worth the effort?

Finally, I want to discuss the gap between (1) the supposed benefits of collaboration, (2) how much effort it requires, and (3) how unprepared we are for it. Participation practices that go beyond consultation into active involvement imply that people need to find a way to collaborate. Especially in community hubs, where the focus of participation expands from decision-making and advocacy to action, there is an underlying belief that by doing things together people can achieve better results.

As Kelty said, participation embodies ‘an enthusiasm, a normativity, a happy hypotheses of change through the involvement of more people rather than fewer [and] everyday experience rather than rarefied expertise’ (2016, p. 11). However, if ‘openness is a value that presupposes plurality not sameness’ (Barnett & Low, 2004, p. 15), it also means dealing with differences that can lead to the inefficiencies of collective decision making, rivalries between different visions, and the corruption of power inherent in joint endeavors (Kohn, 2003).

To put it plainly collaboration is hard and, as I have shown, ideas like absolute equality can prove misleading. In Colector, where we tried to implement distributed self-management to optimize energy and foster creativity, we might have shared a vision for our space of participation – which aspired to be a place of inclusiveness and enabling for a broad community that went beyond its core and inner networks – but we lacked an agreement on how to purse that vision.

For this reason I want to reiterate some key points from previous chapters. Unclear organizational structure leads to inefficiencies, contradictions and conflicts. Hence, as I said in the previous point, there needs to be a clear definition

or roles, and an understanding that each role carries a degree of influence and responsibility. In addition, responsibility can take different forms: people can be legally responsible for what happens in a place if something goes wrong; they can be the face of an initiative if it does not become a success; or they can be the ones everyone goes to when there is a problem.

Stavrides (2019) mentioned that the rotation of roles can be a useful practice to prevent the accumulation of power; but there are tasks that require more training that others. Role rotation is an interesting idea, but its opportunities and risks depend on the responsibilities implied in each role. When possible, duty rotation can represent a commitment to let everyone learn and experience different tasks, consolidate the idea that no one is indispensable and that each role must be respected. Caretaking is a good example of a set of tasks that cannot be ignored, whose importance cannot be underplayed, and where duty rotation could help shape a collaborative attitude between people and towards the space. However, rotating other roles, like administrative and accounting tasks, can be risky.

Mapping roles, influence and responsibility can also help address problems connected with free riding, which showed how hard it can be to recognize the legitimacy of each contribution. Regular retrospectives on what worked and what not, how to change it, and openness to experiment with alternatives can help participation practices evolve and adapt to changing circumstances. A commitment to keep reflecting and experimenting, however, must be mindful of the efforts required to implement new practices and how these might lead to unforeseen consequences.

Integrating all this into the shared narrative of the space can address both internal coordination and promote an initiative with outsiders. By addressing questions – such as why are we trying to collaborate? What can we achieve together that we could not do alone? What are the goals worth hours of meeting, discussions, frustrations? – shared narratives can also be instrumental for insiders to reflect about and explain why it is worth going through the trouble of participation. However, when trying to let outsiders through thresholds there will always be a tradeoff between transparency and operativity, and it might not be beneficial to fully disclose all these internal disagreements.

Finally, collaboration is not only about teamwork, collective intelligence and combining energies to achieve a sum greater than its parts. Participation is also about being ready to work with people you might not agree with, or simply do not like. It is also about becoming aware of how our ego affects our interaction with others, or to set it aside and accept that a project might fail or take unexpected turns because it must accommodate different visions. Perhaps it is a matter of experience, and in Colector we were unprepared to collaborate in ways that challenged traditional vertical hierarchies. Distributed organizations are not without hierarchy: they must devise a different one. Both scholars and practitioners of participation, then, could benefit from more research on how we can venture into new forms of working together.

Closing

> *'Democracy, in short, is a political form that enables action that is being decisive without being certain, and is therefore open to contestation and revision. And this implies that it is important not to think of democracy in terms of identity, whether this refers to the presumption of deep cultural unity of a citizenry, to the idea that representatives and represented are bound together in a tight circle of delegation, or to a single model of democratic rule. Rather, the value of democracy inheres in the quality of relations between different imperatives, interests, and identities - that is, it lies in the degree to which definitions of the proper balance between imperatives of collective action and individual freedom, between conflicting interests, and between multiple and fluid identities remain open to contestation and challenge'*
>
> *(Barnett and Low 2004, p.27)*

Studying the participated management of community hubs as context-sensitive and contested highlighted some inherent dualities. For example, multipurpose spaces must deal with inclusiveness (which is both a moral goal and a necessity) and the difficulties that come from integrating differences. The fact that every person has a different role means that each one has a different balance between the influence that role grants and the responsibilities it implies. Changing routines and learning new practices is often necessary, but every change requires effort and can lead to unexpected and even undesirable outcomes. To make their thresholds permeable, initiatives need to be transparent about how they work; but total transparency, like total equality, might not always be possible or desirable. And finally, even the most convincing and inspiring narratives must weigh their ambitions against reality.

If there are no solutions to these dualities, there can be a conscious effort to live with them. Since community hubs, and participation initiatives in general, are context-sensitive, identifying these dualities can be complicated, and it will likely require conscious reflection. Often, however, people involved in community hubs do not have such a privilege. And since every community hub is contested, perhaps there is not final equilibrium between any duality, as any balance is only temporary until new challenges arise. Although there cannot be definitive answers, continuing to experiment with different practices and configurations, as well as reflecting on experiences and sharing knowledge can help us improve our understanding of participation. The point, then, is not to find the participation practice that makes everyone agree, but to find practices that allows for continuous renegotiation of differences.

Saying that participation promotes universal values like democracy, emancipation and solidarity, does not mean that there is one meaning that fits every context but, quite the opposite, that meanings have to be renegotiated in every place. And for that, we need more spaces of participation.

Annex

List of sources

In the case studies, sources were cited in {curly parentheses} according to their unique identification code, for example {D34}. Here you can find the complete list of sources that I collected in Chieri and Valencia. These included my field notes (taken during meetings or phone calls), emails, official documents, PowerPoint presentations, and newspaper articles. Chieri1 and Chieri2 share the same sources, while Valencia has its own. Originals can be found at the link below. (E-mails were removed for privacy reason.)

https://bit.ly/piovesan_phd_sources

Chieri

ID	DATE	DOCUMENT_TITLE	TAGS (type/event)
D1	2007	Riqualificazione tabasso obiettivi procedure criteri	official / n.a.
D2	2007-01-19	Privatizzare traslocando la scuola di cinema	news / n.a.
D3	2007-07-06	Tabasso da ex a futuro	news / n.a.
D4	2008-03-18	Una tabasso tutta da vivere	news / n.a.
D5	2009-02-13	Tabasso verso i lavori	news / n.a.
D6	2009-05-08	Il futuro della tabasso	news / n.a.
D7	2009-12-04	Tabasso senza rete	news / n.a.
D8	2010-10-29	Tabasso e ora di ripartire	news / n.a.
D9	2011-02-04	Tabasso scuola di cinema addio	news / n.a.
D10	2011-05-13	Uffici invece della scuola del cinema	news / n.a.
D11	2011-06-24	Sale cinematografiche all ex tabasso	news / n.a.

D12	2012-04-04	Addio nuova tabasso in crisi la cordata	news / n.a.
D13	2012-04-06	Pubblico e privato insieme per un capolavoro di ritardi	news / n.a.
D14	2012-05-25	Ex tabasso appesa al filo del concordato	news / n.a.
D15	2012-07-27	Tabasso sul filo del baratro	news / n.a.
D16	2012-09-14	Per la tabasso si avvicina il naufragio	news / n.a.
D17	2013-04-12	Cade l illusione tabasso	news / n.a.
D18	2013-04-12	Requiem per la Tabasso	news / n.a.
D19	2014-02-18	Verbale giunta riqualificazione tabasso project financing	official / n.a.
D20	2014-03-14	Tabasso studenti e prodotti atipici	news / n.a.
D21	2014-05-13	Dal campus sportivo alle imprese	news / n.a.
D22	2016-01-22	Vendesi casette della ex tabasso	news / n.a.
D23	2016-02-26	Da ruderi a case condivise	news / n.a.
D24	2017	Cronologia ex tabasso	other / n.a.
D25	2017-05-03_01	Delibera_85	official / n.a.
D26	2017-05-03_02	Delibera_85_Allegato1	official / n.a.
D27	2017-05-03_03	Manifestazione_interesse	official / n.a.
D28	2017-05-12	Il comune va in cerca di un uomo che scopra il futuro della tabasso	news / n.a.
D29	2017-07-07	Esito	official / n.a.
D30	2017-07-14_01	AREA in TRASFORMAZIONE programma 1	official / meeting
D31	2017-07-15_02	AREA in TRASFORMAZIONE programma 2	official / meeting
D32	2017-07-15_03	AREA Changing un percorso partecipato sulla rigenerazione urbana a Chieri	presentation / meeting
D33	2017-07-15_04	Riflessioni sull amministrazione condivisa	presentation / meeting
D34	2017-07-15_05	[memo] Kick-off event	note / meeting
D35	2017-09-19	AREA CHANGING	n.a / email
D36	2017-09-19_01	Conversazione mail pre-incontro	n.a / email

D37	2017-09-19_03	Note presentazione Avanzi	note / meeting
D38	2017-09-19_03	Presentazione progetto di ricerca	presentation / meeting
D39	2017-09-27	Calendario attività previste set-nov (Unicode Encoding Conflict)	other / n.a.
D40	2017-10-05_01	calendario attività Chieri - case di città	n.a / email
D41	2017-10-05_02	Incontro con Laura Oddenino e visita agli spazi	note / meeting
D42	2017-10-05_03	Riunione con Davide e Sandra	note / meeting
D43	2017-10-09	Fwd: cdq chieri	n.a / email
D44	2017-10-18	aggiornamenti	n.a / email
D45	2017-10-20	Skype su CdC	note / call
D46	2017-10-23_01	Mail pre-riunione	n.a / email
D47	2017-10-23_02	Cronoprogramma	other / n.a.
D48	2017-10-23_03	Incontro con Michela	note / n.a.
D49	2017-10-23_04	Bando vincitore caselli	official / n.a.
D50	2017-10-23_05	Bozza regolamento area caselli	official / n.a.
D51	2017-10-23_06	Bozza carta dei servizi area caselli	official / n.a.
D52	2017-10-23_07	Presentazione comune	presentation / n.a.
D53	2017-10-23_08	Riunione cabina di regia	note / n.a.
D54	2017-10-23_09	Verbale riunione comune	minutes / n.a.
D55	2017-10-31	Resoconto ultimo incontro e prossimi passi	n.a / email
D56	2017-11-07	Riunione Lato Giardino	note / meeting
D57	2017-11-09_01	Focus Agroalimentare	note / meeting
D58	2017-11-09_02	Report agroalimentare	minutes / meeting
D59	2017-11-09_03	Resoconto ultimo incontro e prossimi passi	n.a / email
D60	2017-11-09_04	Presentazione Cittadella	presentation / meeting

D61	2017-11-09_05	Riunione CdV 1	note / meeting
D62	2017-11-09_06	Presentazione Caselli	presentation / meeting
D63	2017-11-09_07	Incontro in Area Caselli	note / meeting
D64	2017-11-09_08	Fwd Area Changing Case di Città percorso Cittadella del Volontariato	n.a / email
D65	2017-11-16_01	bozza x mail invito	n.a / email
D66	2017-11-16_02	Intervista Andrea Navone	note / meeting
D67	2017-11-16_03	Inframezzo	note / meeting
D68	2017-11-16_04	Focus Cultura	note / meeting
D69	2017-11-16_05	Report cultura	minutes / meeting
D70	2017-11-24_01	Focus Tessile	note / meeting
D71	2017-11-24_02	Report tessile e design	minutes / meeting
D72	2017-11-27	Proposte	n.a / email
D73	2017-12-01_01	Programma preview	official / meeting
D74	2017-12-01_02	Presentazione preview festival	presentation / meeting
D75	2017-12-01_03	Preview Festival	note / meeting
D76	2017-12-15	Chiamata Giulia	note / call
D77	2017-12-21	Archivio digitale delle memorie sull'area Tabasso	n.a / email
D78	2017-12-22	Proposta di creare un archivio digitale delle memorie sull'area	n.a / email
D79	2018-01-08	Telefonata Ferruccio Ferrua	note / call
D80	2018-01-08	Telefonata Raffaele Fusco	note / call
D81	2018-01-12	Telefonata Pierre	note / call
D82	2018-01-17_01	Fwd Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - Incontro mercoledì 17	n.a / email

D83	2018-01-17_02	Bozza scheda rilevamento attività	other / meeting
D84	2018-01-17_03	Presentazione cabina di regia	presentation / meeting
D85	2018-01-17_04	Cabina di regia	note / meeting
D86	2018-01-17_05	Riunione Cittadella del Volontariato	note / meeting
D87	2018-01-19	Prima riunione archivio memorie ex tabasso	n.a / email
D88	2018-01-19	Riunione nexTabasso 1	note / meeting
D89	2018-01-24	Telefonata Giulia	note / call
D90	2018-01-26_01	Scheda associazione	n.a / email
D91	2018-01-26_02	(sandra) Area Changing Cittadella del Volontariato bacheca scheda attività e prossimo incontro	n.a / email
D92	2018-01-26_03	(davide) Area Changing Cittadella del Volontariato bacheca scheda attività e prossimo incontro	n.a / email
D93	2018-01-29	Area Bene Comune - Materiale Tabasso	n.a / email
D94	2018-02-02	Archivio digitale condiviso delle memorie sull'Ex Area Tabasso	n.a / email
D95	2018-02-05	ufficializzazione con comune di Chieri	n.a / email
D96	2018-02-05	Lettera Collaborazione_GC	official / n.a.
D97	2018-02-05	Telefonata Luca Berardi	note / call
D98	2018-02-06	Seconda riunione archivio memorie	n.a / email
D99	2018-02-06	Tabasso 2 filmati di Storiandoli	n.a / email
D100	2018-02-06	Chiamata Giulia	note / call
D101	2018-02-06	Riunione nexTabasso 2	note / meeting
D102	2018-02-09_01	Riunione in biblioteca	note / meeting
D103	2018-02-09_02	Riunione comunicazione	note / meeting
D104	2018-02-09_03	Riunione pomeriggio	note / meeting
D105	2018-02-09_04	Incontro al Cafe' Letterario	note / meeting

D106	2018-02-12	IMG_20180202_191036	n.a / email
D107	2018-02-13_01	Collaborazione Cheiri-Politecnico per ricerca su Area Tabasso	n.a / email
D108	2018-02-13_02	LetteraCollaborazione_GB+GC	official / n.a.
D109	2018-02-18_01	Assemblea associazione Area Bene Comune	n.a / email
D110	2018-02-18_02	Materiale Tabasso	n.a / email
D111	2018-02-19_01	Incontro liceo Monti	note / meeting
D112	2018-02-19_02	Riunione Volto	note / meeting
D113	2018-02-19_03	Riunione CdV 3	note / meeting
D114	2018-02-19_04	Appunti Livia	minutes / meeting
D115	2018-02-19_05	Post-riunione CvD del 19feb	n.a / n.a.
D116	2018-02-21_01	Aggiornamento e riunione ABC	n.a / email
D117	2018-02-21_02	Riunione con ABC	note / meeting
D118	2018-02-22_01	Avviso ASL	other / n.a.
D119	2018-02-22_02	Avviso ASL (sito)	other / n.a.
D120	2018-02-22_03	Prosposta attività ASL - monti	n.a / email
D121	2018-02-22_04	Attivita' ASL su ExTabasso - vittone	n.a / email
D122	2018-02-22_05	Proposta attività ASL - comune	n.a / email
D123	2018-02-22_06	modello per la proposta progetti alternanza scuola lavoro	n.a / email
D124	2018-02-22_07	modello progetto	other / n.a.
D125	2018-02-26_01	Proposta attivita' ASL	n.a / email
D126	2018-02-26_02	Avviso ASL	other / n.a.
D127	2018-02-26_03	Avviso ASL (sito)	other / n.a.
D128	2018-02-28	Chiamata di aggiornamento	n.a / email
D129	2018-03-01_01	Re Post-riunione CvD del 19feb e PROSSIMI PASSI CITTADELLA	n.a / email
D130	2018-03-01_02	Regolamento uso CdV	official / n.a.
D131	2018-03-01_03	Regolamento uso sedi associative	official / n.a.

D132	2018-03-08_01	Sopralluogo spazi festival	note / meeting
D133	2018-03-08_02	Incontro con Pierre	note / meeting
D134	2018-03-08_03	Incontro con Pino Torinese	note / meeting
D135	2018-03-09_01	Nuova attivita' ASL liceo monti	n.a / email
D136	2018-03-09_02	sfilata multietnica	n.a / email
D137	2018-03-09_03	excel organizzazioni	n.a / email
D138	2018-03-10	Area Changing Cittadella del Volontariato - Compilazione scheda attività	n.a / email
D139	2018-03-12_01	Incontro prof ISS Vittone	note / meeting
D140	2018-03-12_02	Progetto ASL - Ex TABASSO Tu cosa faresti - vittone	n.a / email
D141	2018-03-12_03	Area Changing - Percorso Cittadella del Volontariato	n.a / email
D142	2018-03-13	Presentazioni alle scuole #tabassochefare - abc	n.a / email
D143	2018-03-14_01	Telefonata con Sandra	n.a / call
D144	2018-03-14_02	Appunti lavoro su mappa	other / n.a.
D145	2018-03-15_01	(no subject)	n.a / email
D146	2018-03-15_02	Riunione CdV 4	note / meeting
D147	2018-03-20_01	Mi aiutate un po' con la pubblicita', per favore	n.a / email
D148	2018-03-20_02	Appunti post-riunione 3	n.a / email
D149	2018-03-20_03	commenti-fb1	other / n.a.
D150	2018-03-20_03	commenti-fb2	other / n.a.
D151	2018-03-20_03	commenti-fb3	other / n.a.
D152	2018-03-22	Presentazione progetto - Ex TABASSO_ TCF	presentation / meeting
D153	2018-03-26_01	Riunione con Sandra e Davide	note / meeting
D154	2018-03-26_02	Area Changing Cittadella del Volontariato - materiale e prossimo incontro 12 aprile	n.a / email
D155	2018-03-28_01	Inizio attivita' alternanza	n.a / email
D156	2018-03-28_02	Inizio attivita' coi ragazzi e nuova riunione	n.a / email

D157	2018-04-04	Area Changing - Percorso Cittadella del Volontariato	n.a / email
D158	2018-04-09_01	Chiamata Giulia	note / call
D159	2018-04-09_02	Riunione Techlab	note / meeting
D160	2018-04-10	Riunione consulta giovanile	note / meeting
D161	2018-04-11_01	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - Incontro giovedì 12 aprile ore 18.00	n.a / email
D162	2018-04-11_02	Incontro nexTabasso 01	note / meeting
D163	2018-04-11_03	Riunione con Carlo e Livia	note / meeting
D164	2018-04-12_01	ppt cittadella	n.a / email
D165	2018-04-12_02	Riunione con Laura Oddenino	note / meeting
D166	2018-04-12_03	Presentazione riunione 5 CdV	presentation / meeting
D167	2018-04-12_04	Riunione CdV 5	note / meeting
D168	2018-04-12_05	Locazione_sale_Cittadella_Volontariato	official / n.a.
D169	2018-04-12_06	Riunione con Ex Mattatoio	note / meeting
D170	2018-04-16_01	programma Urise	n.a / email
D171	2018-04-16_02	ProgrammaURISE_Chieri_rev_16_04	other / n.a.
D172	2018-04-17_01	Tecnologie e co-gestione BCU	presentation / meeting
D173	2018-04-17_02	note presentazione cotella_avanzi	presentation / meeting
D174	2018-04-18	Presentazione Festival alle associazioni	note / meeting
D175	2018-04-20_01	Presentazione Claudio 1	presentation / meeting
D176	2018-04-20_02	Presentazione Claudio 2	presentation / meeting
D177	2018-04-20_03	Presentazione Claudio 3	presentation / meeting
D178	2018-04-20_04	Lezione Claudio	note / meeting

D179	2018-04-20_05	Un Progetto di Ricerca sulle Tecnologie Digitali per la Partecipazione Civica	presentation / meeting
D180	2018-04-20_06	Presentazione Sartoria	presentation / meeting
D181	2018-04-20_07	ABC 1 - presentazioooone 2018	presentation / meeting
D182	2018-04-20_08	ABC 2 - presentazione mag2017-8	presentation / meeting
D183	2018-04-20_09	ABC 3 - programma d'azione mag 2017-8	presentation / meeting
D184	2018-04-20_10	Tavolo Associazioni + IUAV	note / meeting
D185	2018-04-21_01	mod. registrazioni ai tavoli	n.a / email
D186	2018-04-21_02	Domanda SOCIO	other / n.a.
D187	2018-04-23_01	programmazione festival e case di città	n.a / email
D188	2018-04-23_02	Scheda rilevamento attività patto buon vicinato chieri	other / n.a.
D189	2018-04-24	Passeggiata guidata Area Tabasso venerdì 27 aprile ore 18	n.a / email
D190	2018-04-28	Riunione ASL 2	note / meeting
D191	2018-05-02_01	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - incontro mercoledì 9 maggio ore 18.00	n.a / email
D192	2018-05-02_02	patto cittadella _scheda rilevamento attività	other / n.a.
D193	2018-05-02_03	Riunione ASL 5	note / meeting
D194	2018-05-02_04	Appunti riunione ASL	other / meeting
D195	2018-05-07	Video passeggiata in Tabasso	n.a / email
D196	2018-05-09_01	Inventario Cotonificio Tabasso - 2018	other / n.a.
D197	2018-05-09_02	Inventario_archivio_Felice_Tabasso	other / n.a.
D198	2018-05-09_03	Tabasso_libri3	other / n.a.
D199	2018-05-09_04	Tabasso_varie1	other / n.a.
D200	2018-05-09_05	Riunione CdV 6	note / meeting
D201	2018-05-15	Progettazione pagina Instagram	other / n.a.

D202	2018-05-16	Riunione co-progettazione tour	note / meeting
D203	2018-05-17	la fabbrica e la città	n.a / email
D204	2018-05-18	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - incontro giovedí 24 maggio ore 18.00	n.a / email
D205	2018-05-21_01	Re Festival beni comuni invito a partecipare a incontro su tour e visite guidate	n.a / email
D206	2018-05-21_02	incontro co-progettazione tour	minutes / n.a.
D207	2018-05-24_01	Chiamata Elen	note / call
D208	2018-05-24_02	Riunione CdV 7	note / meeting
D209	2018-05-25	Quei beni comuni zoppi	news / n.a.
D210	2018-05-28_01	Riunione ABC + Techlab	note / meeting
D211	2018-05-28_02	Riunione Techlab	note / meeting
D212	2018-05-30_01	JigsAudio	n.a / email
D213	2018-05-30_02	programma festival - quasi def	n.a / email
D214	2018-05-31_01	Cittadella del Volontariato	other / n.a.
D215	2018-05-31_02	cittadella 01	other / n.a.
D216	2018-05-31_02	cittadella 02	other / n.a.
D217	2018-05-31_02	cittadella 03	other / n.a.
D218	2018-05-31_02	cittadella 04	other / n.a.
D219	2018-05-31_02	cittadella 06	other / n.a.
D220	2018-05-31_02	cittadella 07	other / n.a.
D221	2018-05-31_02	cittadella 08	other / n.a.
D222	2018-06	programma-area-festival-internazionale	official / n.a.
D223	2018-06-01	chiacchierata con livia	note / meeting
D224	2018-06-02	invito per il 6-6 ore 21 Assemblea associazione Area Bene Comune	n.a / email
D225	2018-06-05	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - incontro giovedí 14 giugno ore 18.00	n.a / email
D226	2018-06-06_01	Fwd sopralluogo Tabasso Performance Racca	n.a / email

D227	2018-06-06_02	Riunione passeggiate	note / meeting
D228	2018-06-06_03	minute ABC di questa	n.a / email
D229	2018-06-06_04	minute BC_tabasso 06jun2018	minutes / meeting
D230	2018-06-06_05	Progetto Inpoetica Tabasso 3	other / n.a.
D231	2018-06-07	orari def passeggiate + Inpoetica	n.a / email
D232	2018-06-11	R testi	n.a / email
D233	2018-06-14_01	comunicazione cittadella	n.a / email
D234	2018-06-14_02	comunicazione case copia	other / email
D235	2018-06-14_03	pattocittadella	note / email
D236	2018-06-14_04	Laura Oddenino	n.a / meeting
D237	2018-06-14_05	Riunione CdV 8	n.a / meeting
D238	2018-06-15	Corriere di Chieri Vecchia Tabasso ripensata dai giovani	news / n.a.
D239	2018-06-18_01	Bozza pieghevole Cittadella del Volontariato e Programma Festival 29 giugno	n.a / email
D240	2018-06-18_02	pieghevole cittadella_18giu	other / email
D241	2018-06-22_01	Alcune note organizzative	n.a / email
D242	2018-06-22_02	Pieghevole Cittadella e Invito Festival Beni Comuni	n.a / email
D243	2018-06-22_03	Pieghevole_Cittadella del Volontariato	n.a / email
D244	2018-06-22_04	FESTIVAL INTERNAZIONALE BENI COMUNI_PROGRAMMA	other / email
D245	2018-06-29_01	Primo incontro venerdi	note / meeting
D246	2018-06-29_02	Secondo incontro festival	note / meeting
D247	2018-06-29_03	Robiglio	note / meeting
D248	2018-06-29_04	Robiglio AdaptiveReuseToolkit	other / meeting
D249	2018-06-30_01	Art Bonus Chieri	n.a / email
D250	2018-06-30_02	resoconto ore nexTabasso	other / n.a.
D251	2018-07-02_01	Busti e altro	n.a / email

D252	2018-07-02_02	1	other / email
D253	2018-07-02_02	2	other / email
D254	2018-07-02_02	3	other / email
D255	2018-07-02_03	Artbonus mattoni decorati	other / email
D256	2018-07-02_04	Artbonus busti in gesso e marmo	other / email
D257	2018-07-09	A post-festival e Cittadella del Volontariato	n.a / email
D258	2018-09-11	Riordino dei libri nell'Area Ex -Tabasso	n.a / email
D259	2018-09-24	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - incontro martedì 2 ottobre ore 18.00	n.a / email
D260	2018-09-25	Giulia	note / call
D261	2018-10-02_01	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - promemoria incontro martedì 2 ottobre ore 18.00	n.a / email
D262	2018-10-02_02	patto cittadella_incontro 2.10.18	other / email
D263	2018-10-29_01	Riunione Techlab	note / meeting
D264	2018-10-29_02	Monticiak	other / n.a.
D265	2018-11	Manifesto-Chieri-2	official / n.a.
D266	2018-11-09	Dai frammenti dell ex tabasso l idea di riqualificazione a piccoli passi	news / n.a.
D267	2018-11-30	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - incontro lunedì 17 dicembre ore 18.00	n.a / email
D268	2018-11-30_01	Bando Civica_ CHIERI FACILE_Tessitura Civica	other / n.a.
D269	2018-11-30_02	Bando CivICa _Allegato 1_CHIERI FACILE	other / n.a.
D270	2018-12-12_01	Fwd Patto di Buon Vicinato stipula patto	n.a / email
D271	2018-12-12_02	proposta delibera patto cittadella	official / n.a.
D272	2018-12-12_03	Patto buon vicinato cittadella	official / n.a.
D273	2018-12-14	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - Promemoria incontro lunedì 17 dicembre ore 18.00	n.a / email
D274	2018-12-20_01	Chiamata con Giulia	note / call
D275	2018-12-20_02	DO NOT SHARE [call] Giulia Alberio	n.a / call
D276	2019-01-18	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - incontro martedì 29 gennaio ore 18.00	n.a / email
D277	2019-01-29	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - promemoria incontro martedì 29 gennaio ore 18.00	n.a / email

D278	2019-02-08_01	Area Changing - Cittadella del Volontariato - Firma Patto di Buon Vicinato - 21 febbraio ore 18.00	n.a / email
D279	2019-02-08_02	Cittadella_Verbale incontro 2019.01.29	minutes / meeting
D280	2019-03-06_01	A Area BC proposta di patto da rivedere ENTRO DOMENICA Lunedì 11-3	n.a / email
D281	2019-03-06_02	1 Scheda Comunità di Riferimento	other / n.a.
D282	2019-03-06_03	2 Modulo proposta di condivisione 2018_tipici e atipici	other / n.a.
D283	2019-03-06_04	minute 5mar2019	minutes / n.a.
D284	2019-03-06_05	scheda associazioni	other / n.a.
D285	2019-03-10_01	Modifica proposta di condivisione, scheda associazione, ipotesi grafica acesso ai locali e sistemazine zona Amici della Biblioteca di Vhieri	n.a / email
D286	2019-03-10_02	correzione documento della Papi	other / n.a.
D287	2019-03-10_03	scheda associazioni	other / n.a.
D288	2019-03-10_04	PROPOSTA UTILIZZO PARTE AREA TABASSO	other / n.a.
D289	2019-03-14_01	2 Modulo proposta di condivisione - commenti nexTabasso	other / n.a.
D290	2019-03-14_02	scheda associazioni - nextabasso	other / n.a.
D291	2019-03-17	modello lettera d'intenti	other / n.a.

Valencia

ID	DATE	DOCUMENT_TITLE	TAGS (type / event)
D1	2016-10-11	La base del Alinghi acogerá el Civic Factory Fest del 7 al 30 de noviembre	news / n.a.
D2	2016-11-08	Civic Factory Fest La Marina una plataforma para dar respuesta a los problemas de Valencia	news / n.a.
D3	2017-04-27	Tenemos que hablar la Factoría se reinicia	other / n.a.
D4	2018-03-27	Fabrica Civica (Francesco)	note / call
D5	2018-07-13	CivicLab_Presentacion SLIDE	presentation / n.a.
D6	2018-07-13	Factoría Cívica Valencia Dossier_páginas	presentation / n.a.
D7	2018-09-29	Domenico on civic hacking	other / email
D8	2018-10-02	Acta #36	minutes / meeting
D9	2018-10-02	Colector primo impatto	note / other
D10	2018-10-03	Colector secondo giorno	note / other
D11	2018-10-04	Domenico	note / meeting
D12	2018-10-11	Acta #37	minutes / meeting
D13	2018-10-16	Acta #38	minutes / meeting
D14	2018-10-23	Acta #39	minutes / meeting
D15	2018-10-23	Reunion CivicLab	note / meeting
D16	2018-10-23	Reunion Colector	note / meeting
D17	2018-10-26	Cine ciudadano y comprometido estos son los 10 documentales que no puedes perderte en su festival	news / n.a.
D18	2018-10-26	RSD7_Analyzing OvestLab's collaborative regeneration	presentation / n.a.
D19	2018-10-26	RSD7_Essay_Analyzing OvestLab's collaborative regeneration	presentation / n.a.
D20	2018-10-26	RSD7_Presentation notes	presentation / n.a.

D21	2018-10-30	Acta #40	minutes / meeting
D22	2018-11-02	Els avions de joguet de Stoyries continuen volant	news / n.a.
D23	2018-11-06	Acta #41	minutes / meeting
D24	2018-11-06	Reunion Colector	note / meeting
D25	2018-11-07	Reunion Programacion	note / meeting
D26	2018-11-13	Acta #42	minutes / meeting
D27	2018-11-19	Acta #43	minutes / meeting
D28	2018-11-19	Reunion Colector	note / meeting
D29	2018-11-21	Reunion con Jaime (empresa)	note / meeting
D30	2018-11-23	Prova investitori	note / meeting
D31	2018-11-28	Acta #44	minutes / meeting
D32	2018-11-28	Reunion con primero inversor	note / meeting
D33	2018-11-28	Reunione coordinacion	note / meeting
D34	2018-12-03	Reunion con Eduard	note / meeting
D35	2018-12-05	Acta #45	minutes / meeting
D36	2018-12-05	Reunion Colector	note / meeting
D37	2018-12-05	Reunion con Jaime	note / meeting
D38	2018-12-11	Reunion Programacion	note / meeting
D39	2018-12-12	Acta #46	minutes / meeting
D40	2018-12-12	Reunion Colector	note / meeting
D41	2018-12-13	Presentacion Eduard	presentation / meeting
D42	2018-12-13	Reunion con Eduard	note / meeting
D43	2018-12-19	Acta #47	minutes / meeting
D44	2018-12-19	Gobernanza de Colector 2019	official / n.a.

D45	2019-01-09	Acta #48	minutes / meeting
D46	2019-01-09	Reunion Colector	note / meeting
D47	2019-01-09	v0.2 - BIENVENIDA A COLECTOR	official / n.a.
D48	2019-01-23	Acta #49	minutes / meeting
D49	2019-02-01	Riunione Commercial	note / meeting
D50	2019-02-06	Acta #50	minutes / meeting
D51	2019-02-06	Reunion Colector	note / meeting
D52	2019-02-20	Acta #51	minutes / meeting
D53	2019-03-06	Acta #52	minutes / meeting
D54	2019-03-14	COLECTOR _ PR _ CALLS _ Residencias de proyectos 1	official / n.a.
D55	2019-03-20	Acta #53	minutes / meeting
D56	2019-04-03	Acta #54	minutes / meeting
D57	2019-04-17	Acta #55	minutes / meeting
D58	2019-05-08	Acta #56	minutes / meeting
D59	2019-05-10	Caminamos Juntas	presentation / other
D60	2019-05-10	ESPAM	presentation / other
D61	2019-05-10	I+D+Arq Backview	presentation / other
D62	2019-05-10	Microeditorial	presentation / other
D63	2019-05-18	Colector cómo se fragua un despertador urbano para València	news / n.a.
D64	2019-05-22	Acta #57	minutes / meeting
D65	2019-06-05	Acta #58	minutes / meeting

D66	2019-06-26	Acta #59	minutes / meeting
D67	2019-06-26	Quiénes son las Futuras Licenciadas que escriben el presente de la música valenciana	news / n.a.
D68	2019-07-10	Acta #60	minutes / meeting
D69	2019-07-10	Espam la trilogía expositiva que buscó resignificar la arquitectura en València	news / n.a.
D70	2019-07-24	Acta #61	minutes / meeting
D71	2019-08-07	Acta #62	minutes / meeting
D72	2019-09-04	Acta #63	minutes / meeting
D73	2019-09-18	Acta #64	minutes / meeting
D74	NA	Di Siena_Commoning_Medialab Prado_Civic Place	other / n.a.

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