

## AFTER LOCKDOWN

### Light regenerative set-up and re-design of the public space

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#### ABSTRACT

The permanent side effects of the lockdown, due to the spread of Covid-19, left our cities empty and silent leading us to a reflection on their future and ours, in terms of public spaces for us to inhabit and regenerate. This essay describes a few case studies and their unique modalities of adopting ‘tactical’ set-up strategies, through bottom-up procedures and top-down solutions. These case studies could be an example of regeneration of the post-Covid-19 public space, according to an innovative idea of the ‘culture of living’ which gives a ‘new life’ to marginal or neglected places. This contribution wants to outline some distinctive features of the strategic actions which can be useful to those who deal with the enhancement, upgrading and management of places of common interest.

#### KEYWORDS

exhibit and public design, DIY, lockdown, temporariness, low-strategies

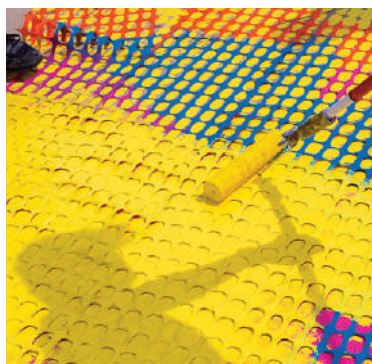
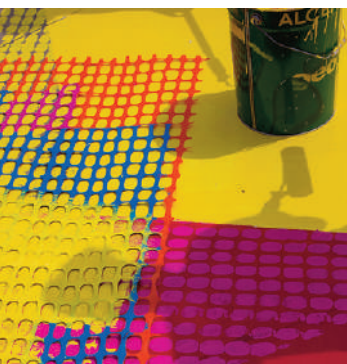
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The exceptional historic moment that we are experiencing gives us a chance to observe collective living from a different point of view. The permanent side effects of the lockdown, due to the spread of Covid-19, left our cities empty and silent leading us to a reflection on their future and ours, in terms of public spaces for us to inhabit and regenerate. American researcher Richard Florida, who studies social and urban dynamics, linked 'creative class' with 'urban regeneration', claiming that, after the pandemic phase, cities will be able to thrive through different and alternative forms of living in social spaces (Florida, 2003). In a recent interview, Florida said that we must experiment through the so-called 'tactical urbanism', a way of regenerating underused urban areas; he was thinking of parking lots, abandoned properties and all those spaces that can be converted for active public use (Molinari, 2020).

Coronavirus has accelerated trends that were already in place in many northern-European countries, where the city is imagined as an 'archipelago' of self-sufficient micro-districts and everything we need is within a short distance, on foot or by bicycle, according to the '15-minute' rule. These countries plan to upgrade peripheral empty urban areas through 'tactical' interventions – a new mode of action that is simple, cheap and quick to realise (Stefanelli, 2021). The socio-economic and healthcare crisis produced by the pandemic has heavily put to the test our cities and the overall quality of our life, on the one hand. On the other, it has offered an opportunity to rethink the 'porousness' of the urban public space quickly and strategically thanks to the redefinition and redistribution of the human density, the identification of new marginal areas needing an upgrade and the localisation of shared urban practices that guarantee new services and activities in communal spaces (Agnoleto, 2020). The young architects' collective, Orizzontale, which deals with the upgrade of neglected spaces, states that the events linked to the global diffusion of Covid-19 in the first half of 2020 caused, among other things, a sudden and explosive diffusion of temporary/adaptive/tactical intervention practices on our cities (Orizzontale, 2020).

Measures of domestic confinement and isolation, which were introduced with the aim of containing the spread of the virus, favoured two different aspects: the sense of community, through the unexpected rediscovery of private or semi-public spaces for social bonding such as balconies, walkways, courts, terraces and communal gardens which preserve, ease and trigger new forms of sociality; the necessity of finding quick and relevant set-up strategies which granted social distancing while activating new modes of intervention for the re-design of public spaces and the upgrade of the collective spaces in decay (Nicolin, 2020). The necessity of 'making space' has generated temporary strategies and additional insertion practices which materialised into strategic, hybrid, adaptive, flexible and cheap actions, opened to social interaction and functional promiscuity and characterised by their diversity. These solutions are reactive claims of public space which trigger a contamination effect, are quickly repeated and offer new scenarios of experimentation, reuse and upgrade of space itself. This kind of pop-up solutions has demonstrated the ability to accelerate change and act as

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**Fig. 1-5** | Orizzontale, 'Prossima apertura', Aprilia 2021 (credits: A. Vitali; courtesy of Orizzontale).





regeneration catalysts. The public space has been transformed in a great playground with a cheap connotation, subject to an essential system of predefined and juxtaposed elements, regulating the use of space and the layout of the paths.

There are numerous examples of urban actions, made internationally during the pandemic with minimum investments and small-scale interventions, which have promoted inclusiveness in temporary playgrounds as a regeneration strategy for collective spaces. Thanks to the UN support, numerous private nonprofit organisations, in agreement with local communities and authorities, have experimented with new models of itinerant playgrounds to slowly restart the social processes, in complete safety and following the procedures of Covid-19 containment, even in countries with little economic resources (Harrouk, 2021). In the most neglected areas of countries such as Vietnam, Bangladesh and India, the itinerant pop-up playgrounds have systematically appeared. They are made with recycled elements and natural materials requiring little maintenance. Parking lots, abandoned areas in highly populated parts of the city and peripheral areas near the informal urban voids have transformed into small temporary devices, easily accessible for children to play in total safety. In these interventions, very simple elements are used and combined with each other in original ways. They refer to an essential compositional code and to a non-predefined hierarchical scheme (Anderson, 2013). Some of these are: coloured flags attached to road bollards to divide the playground areas; recycled tyres, used for jumping games; nets and ropes attached to temporary wooden scaffoldings for acrobatic climbing; recycled pallets to create tables and temporary seats. During the pandemic emergency, these types of playgrounds, distinguished by simple actions and instant forms of participation, have proven socially vital for entire communities all over the world.

In our country, among the most popular strategies adopted to guarantee a re-functionalisation of public spaces, for outdoor activities done in total safety, we can spot two light and punctual actions on a small scale of intervention. In stations and shops, as well as museums, markets, post offices and supermarkets, a series of temporary devices for social distancing have been used, such as polycarbonate panels, pavement marking, mainly created with tape, stickers and polychrome paints. In businesses like bars, cafés and restaurants with permission to occupy the public space in front of their premises – usually destined to parking cars – temporary structures for reception purposes were installed. This outdoors, mostly made with platforms, tables, seats, transparent walls, shade umbrellas, movable shade canopies and flowerpots, might not have a suitable design for the urban context, but they considered light and temporary installations: they are often built by the business owners and are realised with a small budget.

The two light actions of set-up and re-design, with their immediate, contained and reversible features, highlighted how to deeply transform the usability and spatiality of places of social interest. Making Space has therefore produced some remarkable advantages: new forms of negotiations between privates and public authorities for terri-



**Figg. 6, 7** | DettoFatto, 'Lady flower', 2015 (credits: L. Caruana; courtesy of DettoFatto).

torial management; original and synergic cooperative systems between individuals; flexible project solutions, easily repeatable in various contexts and levels of temporariness; experimental building solutions, economically and environmentally sustainable, mostly made with standardised elements which are easy to assemble and facilitate the DIY processes; new ways of testing critical aspects of the project and the effectiveness of the intervention, in order to orient future design choices in short times.

In the report dated 30th of March 2021, titled *Cities and Pandemics – Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future*, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Agency for human settlements and sustainable development, listed an important meeting in the 2030 Agenda, concerning the necessity of researching innovative approaches in the field of urban planning, which is interesting for governments, public administration, civil society and the private sector to make inclusive, multifunctional, safe, resilient and sustainable cities. The report clarifies that the way cities will recover after the pandemic will have an important impact on the global efforts to reach a more sustainable future for everyone. When the current restrictions on social distancing – due to the healthcare emergency – allow it, it will be necessary to adopt new and appropriate modes of 'tactical' intervention inspired by the light strategic actions which have been in place since before the Covid-19 and after.

These modalities will conciliate between social distancing and the need for sociality, conviviality and use, so as to give new life to neglect residual areas. Communal spaces will become spaces of planning experimentation, where the 'set-up' replaces the 'build-



**Figg. 8, 9** | DettoFatto, ‘Lapollo’, Apekitchen 2015  
(credits: L. Caruana; courtesy of DettoFatto).

ing’. These places will have to be ‘open’ to sharing and ‘flexible’ to social interaction.

On the basis of some virtuous planning experimentations, realised in the latest years by designer collectives engaged in active change Europe-wide, and based on some recent experiments made by groups working within the Italian borders, this contribution describes the distinctive features of possible strategic actions regarding the public space set-up. In times of uncertainty and environmental, social, economic and healthcare crisis design acts as a catalyst, able to trigger new regenerative interventions which come alive from the constraints and the conditions of that particular context. These ‘light’ interventions are distinguished in the international scenario, for their social inclusiveness, implementational simplicity, temporariness, ‘micro’ dimension, ‘playful’ character, informal image, low-profile constructive nature and multi-disciplinary approach (Iacovoni, 2009). The places are transformed through unplanned spontaneous ‘strategic’ actions, definable as ‘bottom-up’, regarding urban planning, architecture, design, art, culture and sociality.

The general objective is to identify those modes of action typical of some case studies. By adopting ‘tactical’ set-up strategies they can be an example and be implemented in regeneration projects of the post-Covid-19 public spaces, according to an innovative culture of living that offers a ‘new life’ to residual and peripheral places. This contribution wants to outline some distinctive features of the strategic actions which can be useful to those who deal with the enhancement, upgrade and management of places of common interest.





**Fig. 10** | DettoFatto, 'Labiocco', 2015 (credit: L. Caruana; courtesy of DettoFatto).

**Figs. 11, 12** | DettoFatto, 'Apekitchen', 2015 (credits: L. Caruana; courtesy of DettoFatto).

**Collective strategic actions for public space regeneration** | In light regeneration practices of public spaces there are some recurrent aspects characterising bottom-up processes: social engagement and inclusive policies for spaces of collective interest; the ability to interpret the legal code regulating the activities on the public space; temporariness; the micro-scale of the interventions; the playground; the multidisciplinary skills of collectives and the transmission of know-how. In these processes, projects are usually ‘top down’, they are characterised by an informal image and by the use of light technologies, modular systems, cheap materials and recycled products. The activity of social engagement and inclusion of public spaces – usually corresponding to residual or unproductive marginal areas located in peripheral urban contexts – represents one of the typical main aspects of these ways of claiming habitable plots of land.

‘Neglected’ places can be ‘recovered’ (Piano, 2014), redesigned, enhanced and reintroduced in the social fabric through tactical actions aiming to transform common goods into heterogeneous spaces for collectivity, sharing and conviviality. Inclusion policies make the most of possible interventions on public ground thanks to ‘light’ work sites involving the locals through participatory processes and citizen empowerment. These worksites often materialise as planning ateliers, didactic labs and DIY workshops. These inclusive processes generate a ‘diffused planning activity’ among groups of citizens, where everyone feels involved in a small creative project, adding up to those of other participants. This unity is obtained by overlapping layers and ideas able to modify the use, the set-up, the image and the identity of a place.

Music festivals, cultural events, political rallies, religious celebrations and fairs are some examples of the recurring inputs that activate socially engaging situations in a community and that started new regenerative processes and activities in public spaces. In most projects there is a wide variety of inclusive functions, such as playgrounds, relax areas or refreshment stands. In these kinds of situations, the digital social networks become an important additional channel, a viral tool of communication, essential for a successful participation and involvement of the community, grouped by age and interests.

Project Prossima Apertura was launched just a few days ago by the Roman collective Orizzontale. This project adopted an experimental process where the community actively takes part in the regeneration of a square in the peripheral Toscanini district. Winner of a competition back in 2016, the project originates an experimental work site and involves a psychologist association and a group of public art curators with the common goal of implementing new forms of social inclusion. The intervention includes a series of integrated activities during the whole process. These correspond to actions complementary to those of a traditional worksite: surveys to find out the opinions of the locals; focus groups for a direct debate with the community; DIY workshops; experimental workshops on urban art; photo shootings; communication and video-documentary projects to spread the voice about the initiative on social media. Prossima Apertura represents an inclusive project where the activities are a fundamental and core part of the whole process. The project is open and flexible to changes and





**Figg. 13, 14** | Campomarzio, Cooperativa 19, Teatro Cristallo in Bolzano, Infopoint Bolzanism Museum, Bolzano 2021 (credits: V. Casalini; courtesy of Bolzanism Museum).

adjustments during the progress and the different steps, trying to find a compromise between what citizens want, what the initial goals and intentions were and what possible future purposes there can be (Figg. 1-5).

The democratic and inclusive act of reappropriation of collective places needs a particular knowledge of the laws that regulate activities on public grounds. The action is carried out in full awareness of the relevant regulations and can interpret the law, taking advantage of the ‘opportunities’ offered by the legal loopholes in the administration (Cano, 2020). The legal trend in some projects is based on workarounds, thanks to the lack of regulation or exact definition within the legal frame, concerning a particular type of intervention. Therefore, we can talk about ‘a-legal’ strategies where, differently from legal or illegal occupations, it is possible to use expedients existing within a grey area of confusing or inexistent regulation (Delgado, 2007).

Because of their temporary nature, various projects follow the same simplified procedure to ask permission for the occupation of public ground with a worksite for provisional construction. Santiago Cirugeda turned this practice into an operational procedure. For example, he transformed a work site container, used to collect debris, into a children’s playground, into a functional structure for a skateboarding ramp or into a



**Figg. 15, 16** | Caret Studio, StoDistante, Vicchio, Florence 2020 (credits: F. Noferini; courtesy of Caret Studio).

green micro-area. The Spanish architect rediscovers his civic commitment and offers his mediation skills to the community to help them to take back the urban space and exert their rights on it. Moreover, he uses his skills as a qualified technician to provide a handbook of urban expedients which take advantage of the grey areas of the regulations in the construction industry and urban planning for future needs. These action modalities are opportunities, which were never taken into account before, to intervene in poorly equipped areas that need to be redeveloped, where waiting for political parties to solve the problem is no longer an option.

The issue of temporariness represents a particularly effective tool, as it allows the realisation of the project in a short or medium term, and at the same time, it allows to respect all the initial ideas. Traditional planning is characterised by very long-term programs, slow and complicated application processes. They are usually bound to be delayed or obstructed, and the initial solutions could become obsolete or useless when compared with the quickly changing needs of citizens and estimated budget. The temporariness of actions that are occasionally taken and adapted to the circumstances represents another test tool for the solutions that were implemented and, once ended, allow to fix or correct the possible incongruities between the solutions that were





**Figg. 17-19** | Collective etc., Meccalupino, Bastia, 2021 (credits: Collective Etc; courtesy of Collective Etc).

planned and the acceptance of the final results by the community, in future interventions. In areas that are particularly vulnerable in terms of social issues and neglected on an urban level, these temporary solutions can represent great examples of upgrade and functional shift – especially if they are not conceived only as an art installation and if they involve the community – and they can contaminate the surrounding areas with the same ideas.

DettoFatto collective produces a series of actions that have temporary effects as their main trait. They are occasional interventions where the ‘time factor’ is materialised in the speed of the project, in its realisation, in a short-term construction process and in the duration of the work itself. This group of young designers realised a series of small temporary and travelling structures, such as Lady Flower (a greenhouse garden), Lapollo (a small building to shelter animals in the garden), Labiocco (a series of poly-functional modular furniture for the outdoor) and Apekitchen (a small itinerant kitchen to make mojitos and barbecues). The temporary structures were conceived to be located in unexpected places, they can be scattered in irregular and complex areas, like old town centres or recent expansions, rural areas, parks or natural environments, roads or residual marginal areas of the diffused city. These temporary devices, suitably



and strategically inserted in places that need regeneration, are turned into a particularly effective occasion to trigger social effects (Figg. 6-12).

The dimension of the upgrading intervention in communal places has radically changed. It has gone from small architectural projects, developed on a contained portion of public land, to micro-interventions of creative design acting on a punctual scale, made of a small number of pieces and functional parts. Tables and linear seats, flowerpots, shades, platforms, cantilever roofs, spectacular scaffoldings and itinerant kiosks represent micro-devices with a travelling and temporary feature, interacting with each other and with the surrounding space while activating an exchange and a synergic debate between the community and the urban context. They are punctual 'infrastructures' with an experimental disposition, flexible, combinable and ready to be disassembled and rearranged, able to reorganise the 'liquid' marginal space where they are temporarily set up.

These design artefacts become catalysts that intervene on the local scale, becoming new landmarks, new sharing and defence spaces of the urban micro-scale. The 'micro' dimension represents a concrete occasion to test, research and experiment quick actions of punctual urban regeneration so that places can get their identity back and citizens can find that sense of belonging linked to a certain public space. Campomarzio collective together with Cooperativa 19, Bolzano's Teatro Cristallo and a group of university students realised a small information module, recently launched to promote Bolzanism Museum, a tour that reinterprets daily life places and the working-class districts of Bolzano in an 'improved' version. The small info-point/box office, born in a DIY workshop, was built with a light modular structure made of blue-painted timber. It represents a micro-setup of strategic design, particularly effective for social interaction and community building (Figg. 13, 14).

The public space evolves into a field of possibilities, where it is possible to experiment with numerous light temporary actions, unexpected 'play' activating unusual and effective freedom of movement. Conceiving the upgrade of a marginal area as a playground is an elementary, although effective, strategy that represents today a mode of intervention able to restore functionality to a neglected public space through collective playful activities. Aldo Van Eyck's playgrounds represented one of the first action strategies on public space, a modality of intervention to reclaim the urban voids created in the city of Amsterdam by the bombings during World War II. Following an abstract geometric grid, drawn with tapes, chalks and coloured paints, the ground turns into a playground hosting processes of continuous transformation. The bodies moving on the playground outline a public space where the 'markings on the ground' design an informal, friendly and reassuring space, where citizens feel part of a collective performance. In this sense, we can define the action of 'play' as a strategy to remark upon the idea of territoriality, able to represent the instinctive factor that makes the individuals feel in a safe and comfortable space. The street becomes a stage, enlivened by itinerant performances activating a process of social regeneration and claim the urban space.



**Figg. 20, 21** | ‘La Rivoluzione delle Seppie’, Belmonte 2018 (credits: N. Barbuto; S. Gin; courtesy of La Rivoluzione delle Seppie, 2020).

A particularly interesting example referring to the topic of the playground is that of a temporary installation, recently made in the old town of Vicchio, near Florence. The project, called *StoDistante*, conceived by Caret Studio, reinterprets new forms of social distancing imposed by Covid-19 with a regular grid, a square of 180 x 180 centimetres – the distance imposed by the local regulations to contain the spread of Coronavirus. The abstract drawing is made of a regular pictogram of a sequence of squared pixels of various dimensions, created with white paint directly on the cobbles, and shows unexpected urban perspectives and a new way of claiming the public space. The temporary installation generates an ‘open’ platform, flexible enough to host a series of collective initiatives for social events even during a time of social distancing (Figg. 15, 16).

In the majority of the interventions, we find multi-disciplinary groups of action, made of professionals with very different and complementary skills, whose goal is to pass on the know-how to improve the quality of those communal places which are going through a common decay. The multi-disciplinary character of collectives has the aim of providing empowering tools, allowing the community to act autonomously and with determination, to activate regeneration and transformation processes of the public space. The groups of activists are formed by single individuals united in both public or private associations which have also council members, cultural institutions, private foundations, sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists, artists, directors, performers, photographers, architects, designers, students and groups of volunteers. The action modality is decided with ‘open’ debates between the participants with different interests and skills. Through dialogue, opinion exchange, and knowledge transfer they attempt to reach a form of shared and constructive agreement, giving the citizens the opportunity to gain more awareness of the common good and ensuring knowledge on

topics that concern the public space. The know-how transfer of these collectives is also finalised to face the Nimby syndrome ('not in my back yard'), that is to find forms of social participation in social communities, to facilitate cohesion and stop mobilisation as a form of opposition to progressive interventions, which are not seen as suitable in a certain context by the community, even though it is considered useful.

Collectif etc is a French collective, among the first in Europe, created by a group of professionals with diverse skills. For more than ten years it has been engaged in activating and experimenting with new creative modalities of communication and intervention for the regeneration of marginal urban contexts. Through the fulfilment of small art and design interventions, this collective works with the participation and the engagement of the locals to offer a democratic vision, an alternative to the usual procedures of public space regeneration. In the recently completed Meccalupinu project, for the upgrade of a decaying walking path in Bastia (Corsica), the multi-disciplinary group compiled an informational brochure which was delivered to the whole community during the participative phases, in order to give the locals the necessary knowledge to intervene during the realisation. The leaflet was presented in the form of a comic strip to simplify the comprehension of the construction processes during the intervention, and it was a particularly effective and useful instrument for the locals who were interested in the upgrade. The guide simulates a simplified assembly kit describing all the construction phases for the temporary structures distributed along the walking path, made with metal pipes and slats (Figg. 17-19).

These strategic actions of regeneration of the public space often stand out for their top-down approach to the project, where most of the time the designer uses the combining principle of DIY, light technologies and cheap materials. The 'informal' nature of this project is the identity code of design temporary actions, characterised by a 'generic' image lacking in figurative or calligraphic self-referentiality, adaptable to each case. The linguistic expressiveness of the design artefacts is associated with a soft communicative image, mainly trying to search for new forms of relations with marginal domains. They are informal devices whose aspect is characterised by an absolutely original figurative variety, mutating thanks to the idea of connection and addition.

The composing modality of the bricoleur can best express the figure of 'activist' and 'militant' designer, standing out for their natural creative approach, a peculiar communicative and engaging skill, a predisposition to the art of making and a profound spirit of adaptation. The bricoleur becomes, as defined by Lévi-Strauss, someone who can easily adapt, conceive and realise modular objects which are simple and cheap to implement, who is keen on «[...] adopting different tools from those used by professionals in the same field» (Lévi-Strauss, 1964). The bricoleur's objective is to obtain the maximum result on the project while using and optimising the scarce resources available. The expressive identity, resulting from the 'minimum effort, maximum performance' logic, has to deal with the actual resources of what can be realistically built to upgrade a decaying context in a short time, more than with what the im-



age itself can represent. In these urban action forms, the designer can both imagine the project and create it by themselves. Enzo Mari (2002) talked about 'autoprogettazione', a process of design and realisation which helps people understand the meaning and value of the objects of daily use. The models that Mari proposed in the 70s, in the allegory Proposal for an Example of Autoprogettazione, still are a suitable tool of socialised knowledge and practical awareness, to realise objects with an informal design, able to activate processes of urban regeneration.

The project of development and upgrade of the small village of Belmonte Calabro (in the province of Cosenza) was carried out by the Cultural Association La Rivoluzione delle Seppie, together with Orizzontale collective, the London Metropolitan University and various experts in communication, marketing, art, music and theatre. Since 2016, they have been implementing a series of actions that planned the realisation of endorsed strategic interventions, with an informal design and 'self-designed'. The DIY projects are realised with the production tools which Enzo Mari would have defined 'collective heritage' and which use the 'carpenter technique'. Through simple combination of unrefined wooden planks and nails, it is possible to create spectacular scaffoldings for outdoor or summer performance, benches, tables and seats for young people's gatherings, cantilever roofs to shelter working spaces or cultural happenings, in addition to all the indoor works of renovation of a series of buildings in the village. One of these buildings, casa BelMondo, became the Association's headquarters thanks to an agreement with the city Council. This aims to avoid the depopulation process, promote social integration among locals and the intercultural interaction with the communities of migrants in the area, learn and share of common skills and passions such as sewing, cooking and carpentry (Figg. 20, 21).

The use of light technologies, modular systems, cheap materials and recycled products represent a strategic tool that helps to transform everyday dynamics in a social space. Design artefacts are created by using simple creative solutions and dry assembled with different materials and low-cost techniques, which rationalize the constructive process and do not require skilled labour. Steel pipes, used for scaffoldings, allow to create a certified and resistant system; construction wood and recycled wood boards which are connected through simple structural joints, joint with nails or staples; recycled pallets for transporting and storing goods; modular plastic jerseys which can be matched, stacked, filled with water or sand, generally used as traffic barriers; paints, coloured tapes and reflective elements used for road signs are just a few tools that can be included in this creative regenerative activities.

Hybrid constructive solutions are researched and studied in order to offer new space configurations, extremely flexible and easy to be personalised in each context. The constructive quality of design artefacts does not lie in the attractive ability of the materials or in the 'preciousness' of the detail, but their success is given by the intrinsic sustainable combination of environmental, social and economic factors. The TAM TAM project (Temporary Architecture Module), in the peripheral district of Sorgane (Florence) was



**Figg. 22-25** | ND Studio, TAM TAM (Temporary Architecture Module), Sorgate, Florence 2020 (credits: S. Girardeau; courtesy of Studio, 2020).

inaugurated just before the beginning of the pandemic emergency and lockdown by the Tuscan collective ND Studio, who designed some of the temporary architectural devices, realised with standardised modular systems. The upgrade intervention, with the active participation from the local community, was realised with small 3D modules and Layer, the popular German system – patented for scaffoldings – and yellow wooden planks to cast concrete. The temporary modules, especially cheap and easy to assemble, host built-in seats with green tubs, swings, rocking chairs, trees and board games. The modules can be easily transported, allowing a change of set-up during the installation by moving the modules according to the locals' feedback. They could set up the square differently, following the suggestions of the activist part of the community (Figg. 22-28).

**After lockdown: possible future scenarios** | The current pandemic has undoubtedly highlighted the conditions of our times that influence collective living spaces in public areas, like the political instability, the massive migrations and the growing socio-economic inequalities. According to Richard Florida, with the end of the pandemic the cities won't stop being places of innovation and creativity enlivened by an aggregational process that brings people closer and will continue in the future (Molinari, 2020). Once the Covid-19 effects are over, the cities will go back to being a lab of active experimentation where the new 'connective fabric', represented by the locals, will work for the implementation of new practices to fill the 'voids' with new contents, activities and services for the city, as a result of 'sharing' (Stefanelli, 2021).

The next regional policies will have to examine once again the transformation, enhancement and redefinition of the abandoned areas; they will have to find new purposes of the uncultivated green areas through collective and punctual actions, sudden and light, able to upgrade the marginal spaces for social activities (Agnoletto, 2020). Both public and private actors, dealing with the enhancement, upgrade and management of communal public spaces, will have the chance to implement all those intervention strategies which are reactive, hybrid, adaptive, flexible and cheap and that can 'learn on the streets' (Rykwert, 2015).

Hashim Sarkis, curator of the 17th International Architecture Exhibition of Venice in 2021, titled *How will we live together?* (Rodenigo, 2021), in his inaugural speech stated: «We cannot wait any longer for politicians to propose a path towards a better future. While politics keeps dividing and isolating, architecture can offer alternative ways of living together». According to Sarkis, in the present times, it is necessary, as well as suitable, to carefully look at the emerging and radical activism in young groups of designers, who face new challenges in daily actions. The living space is consumed in favour of new realities, we will need young activist facilitators with marked creativity, self-sufficiency, professional skill, knowledge of the regulations, relational aptitude, team spirit, constructive awareness and the ability to adapt to different marginal contexts. The synergic exchange of knowledge and aptitudes of each individual will return new spatialities and different ways of living, through experimental processes of original design practices which are diffused and shared, in order to get new uses of inclusive spaces, far from the traditional urban planning.

In the current condition, creative collectives formed by young designers, graphics, photographers, artists, directors, botanists and communication experts will have the chance, in the near future, to implement the transversal knowledge and skills of going back to live in the public spaces through precise regenerative and addition interventions, even small-sized ones. The change taking place won't consist of a mutation for its own sake, but in the rediscovery of social values underlying the meaning of public space, places made for sharing and conviviality, equally redistributed. This is a real expressive reconfiguration regarding the present condition of ambiguity, characterising the uncertain state of materiality, irreversibly linked to the current historic moment





**Figg. 26-28** | ND Studio, TAM TAM (Temporary Architecture Module), Sorgate, Florence 2020 (credits: D. Spadola; courtesy of ND Studio, 2020).

and highlighting possible scenarios which could take place as a result of the current transformation on a cultural, social, environmental and economic level.

In this scenario, it is possible to imagine a series of actions and activities which act under the name of ‘temporary set-up’. Within the regulations, this can be described as a ‘temporary artistic installation’ instead of a ‘permanent architectural intervention’. During project approval procedures, it will be possible to adopt all those expedients which help speed up the bureaucratic steps and political timing and shorten the distance between regulations and implementation. It will be possible to obtain new forms of the urban upgrade, through bottom-up processes and top-down projects, which will facilitate social inclusion, allow new forms of ‘play’ on the micro-scale of intervention and will be implemented thanks to informal-looking artefacts, with a constructive low-profile identity, obtained during the transmission of multidisciplinary skills of the professionals involved.

These virtuous experiences of the set-up and redesign of public space do not aim at becoming striking projects, but they are going to be a form of redemption on the daily practices. The city will be ‘set-up’ instead of ‘built’, and not only will it develop post-pandemic emergency solutions, but it will become a new way of upgrading parking lots, areas for temporary events, local green areas and spontaneously equipped residual places. This way, it will be possible to re-think the places of conviviality with ‘tactical’ set-up interventions, shared and endorsed by the community, aimed at the functional change of pavements, pedestrian paths, gardens, street edges and unused areas, so that a new alternative public space can be created. The path of sharing and participation will allow the local informal groups to acquire that sense of belonging and a desire to take care of the common assets (Tato et alii, 2020).

These light regenerative actions of set-up and re-design of the public space, despite being particularly effective and beneficial for many aspects – such as returning a sense of sociality to the communal public spaces – might appear limited especially on a figurative level. As a matter of fact, the interventions are often made with artisanal techniques, DIY processes, limited budgets and marginal conditions of the peripheral context, and they won’t always be included in the domain of an ‘aesthetic revolution’ in terms of urban decor. The informal nature of these actions of regeneration is not always particularly aesthetically refined, but this should be seen as a ‘will to re-start’ and a desire to trigger a social reaction to reclaim public space.

In a small volume titled *Quel che Stavamo Cercando* – 33 Frammenti, Alessandro Baricco has recently written that when the frontal attack fails, infection wins; the pandemic is a small handbook about strategy, among other things (Baricco, 2021). The ‘virus’ among other things – according to Baricco – redesigns our cities with original tactical elements of urban override, which don’t mean to represent an aesthetic revolution, but a functional action able to activate new forms of sociality and upgrade the public space. In this health crisis, the ‘extreme’ conditions all around it, the constraints determined by social distancing, the necessity to ‘make space’, the rediscovery of new domains of relations, the need to adopt collective synergic actions, to research new forms of public-private regulation and organisation of the territory combined with the necessity of regeneration of public space are connected to man’s relentless spirit of resilience and become the starting point which will give an identity to the project. For our near future, we can imagine a public space inhabited by an archipelago of independent micro-islands, integrated in the urban fabric, described as outdoor multi-functional ‘rooms’, with a transitional nature and each one will be set up with punctual and flexible solutions with a functional and essential design.

## References

- Agnoletto, M. (2020), “Spazio pubblico – Progettare il vuoto”, in *Domus*, n. 1052, pp. 12-13.

