POLITECNICO DI MILANO

DIPARTIMENTO INDACO

HOW THE LOGIC OF SHARING COULD CHANGE THE WAY WE DESIGN CULTURAL SYSTEMS

The logic of sharing has taken a key role in designing innovative systems combining products, services, spaces and events.

These systems could be noticed not only by their economic and social effectiveness but also by their cultural quality. They are not simple product-service systems, they are real "cultural systems" providing an inspiring vision and a set of values related to **collaboration**, **openness**, **bottom-up initiative**.

In a wider framework this is connected to the larger stream of the so-called **Sharing Economy** or Collaborative Consumption, defined as traditional forms of sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting and swapping redefined through technologies and peer communities.[1]

The Collaborative Consumption is no longer a niche economy but a veritable market which produces sizeable numbers. That's why a huge number of companies (and institutions) have decided to provide products and services through sharing. A key-role is played by **networked technologies** that develop platforms to connect individuals and share proposals.

Designers have been pioneers exploiting the logic of sharing, building access rather than ownership to goods, skills, spaces, services.

The way to build access is a matter of design because it is necessary to **provide visions**, metaphors, paradigms and translate them into platforms, tools, artefacts.

Furthermore, in a design-oriented framework, the logic of sharing is not only applicable to the sharing of various elements, but also to the **sharing of different design stages**. This means to collaborate with various actors in order to create and develop solutions. Therefore depicting a scenario characterised by **co-design** and **co-production**.

Three inspiring examples coming from different design areas are here provided as an evidence of "**sharing-power**".

The maker's movement: a community based on sharing

The maker's movement is a **collaborative community** that celebrates learning and freely shares ideas. It represents the ground where product design and digital technology meet the classic do-it-yourself (DIY) world of crafting and small-scale manufacturing.

Such encounter generates the need of physical places where technologies, tools, practices, skills and knowledge are accessible and shared.

These spaces are the so-called **Fab Labs** (Fabrication Laboratories) and other maker facilities such as hackerspaces, machine and material shops.

They have become centers of a novel participatory culture, based on the value of **making instead of consuming**.

Fab Labs are pioneers in combining principles of personal and on-site production (Tech Shop, 100kGarage), democratization of technology, crowd funding platforms (Kickstarter), open source design (Thingiverse, Open Structure, Wikihouse) and **accessibility for ordinary people**. Such experiences are generating novel modalities of sharing knowledge, becoming not only a maker-facility but also a **culture-facility**.

Service Networks for sharing objects and performances

In recent years a number of social and cultural innovations have emerged and their offer is essentially **based on services rather than products**. That's why **design for services** has become a crucial area, above all in organizing daily life.

The ICT system is offering speed of contact and of the supply-demand cycle, fostering the birth of **de-mediated and bottom-up services**, aimed at sharing objects and performances within a **community of ordinary people**.

Some examples: neighbours sharing stuff in the network neighborgoods, collaborative supermarkets as thepeoplesupermarket where is possible to barter work with access to fresh and local food, platforms as agentanything in which students are available to accomplish daily tasks by offering their time to busy people. These experiences are defined as **Collaborative Services**[2], where users are co-creators, co-producers and co-performers. They could provide a pattern not only to manage daily life, but also to foster **bottom-up cultural systems.**

Mega events as Temporary Sharing Labs

In the so-called mega-events, as Olympic Games, Expo, World Cup, **special conditions** are created **to experiment sharing modalities** within the event staff and the residential community.

An interesting example is the initiative Expovisions organized by Expo2015: a program of round tables with local stakeholders to co-design smart services for the city of Milan, to foster **participatory methods** and **involve ordinary people**.

Furthermore, during mega-events there is the need of spaces and objects for a limited period of time, that's why the **shift from personal possession to shared use** is particularly noticeable in these special occasions. For instance, in Olympic and Expo Villages, there are areas dedicated to temporary hospitality, services for daily needs and areas equipped to share food experiences. These places are experimenting **a real status of "Temporary Sharing Labs"**.

It is also interesting to notice how, in the last Olympic Games, **the legacy** of these experiences has been organized on the website remainsofthegames, where a collection of furnishings and objects used during London Olympic Games is shared and put on sale.

All the described experiences have in common not only the logic of sharing but also the concept of **disintermediation**. These two ideas are strictly connected and in a certain way they are consequential.

To foster the creation of bottom-up systems it is needed to organize a **direct encounter between the offer and the demand of culture.** Developing platforms to connect individuals and share proposals (but also goods, skills, services, spaces) is a real action of disintermediation that reduces the stages in between, facilitating the creation of more democratic and participated cultural systems.

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References:
[1]Botsman R., Rogers R. (2010). What's mine is yours. Collins, London
[2]Manzini E., Jegou F., (2008).Collaborative services. Edizioni Poli.Design, Milano

List of websites mentioned in the text: (not to be listed if the article is published as hypertext)
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www.kickstarter.com/
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