weconomy

COLLABORATIVE ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

powered by logotel

16

A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT VISION

**PEOPLE & COMMUNITY-CENTRED PERSPECTIVES
TO GENERATE POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONS**

We

Weconomy is the research platform of the Independent Design Company Logotel.
Open, shared and multidisciplinary, it explores the opportunities of the collaborative economy.
Each issue is based on a letter of the alphabet. This issue, the sixteenth in the series,
is dedicated to the letter 'V' of vision, which, for us, means shaping
a 'Completely different vision' that focuses on people and communities
to address the major transformations in which we are immersed.
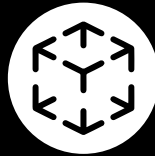
The Weconomy vision continues through augmented reality experiences.
They are a sensory extension of reading.

To access augmented reality, take your smartphone, open the camera app and frame
the QR code above and inside the issue. Then, point it at the cover
and prepare for a sensory extension of reading.

A voice guide and a soundtrack will accompany your discovery of the contents,
projected in a physical-digital space that we will update with the latest news.

weconomy
COLLABORATIVE ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

powered by **logotel**

Logotel is an Independent
Design Company that supports
organisations and businesses
to generate positive impacts.
Since 1993, we have co-designed
services and experiences internationally,
from strategy, to implementation,
to 'life'. With a team of over 280 people,
our headquarters are in Milan,
in the 2400 square-metre space
of the former Faema factory.
Our international offices are
in Paris and Madrid.
In 2023, we worked for over
60 customers, implemented
over 90 design & change projects,
and involved over 7000 people in
training projects. We provided daily
support to over 250,000 people
with our 42 business communities
delivering services and content,
motivating and activating sharing
and participation.

Weconomy entered the
ADI Design Index 2019,
as one of the best research projects

A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT VISION

QUID NOVI?

Generations
who collaborate

Q

W

EMPOWERMENT, FEEDBACK, GAMIFICATION

Once upon a time
Retail

E

UFO

Unidentified Future
Organizations

U

INFO, INDIE, INTER

Renewed innovation

I

OOPS, OR, OK

The paradox
of continuous choice

O

KILL SKILL

A non-catalogue
of skills

S

DESIGN

(Re)shaping
business

D

F

J

K

LOCAL

Talent, Community,
Making

L

C

A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT VISION

Perspectives People & Community
centred to generate positive
transformations

V

R
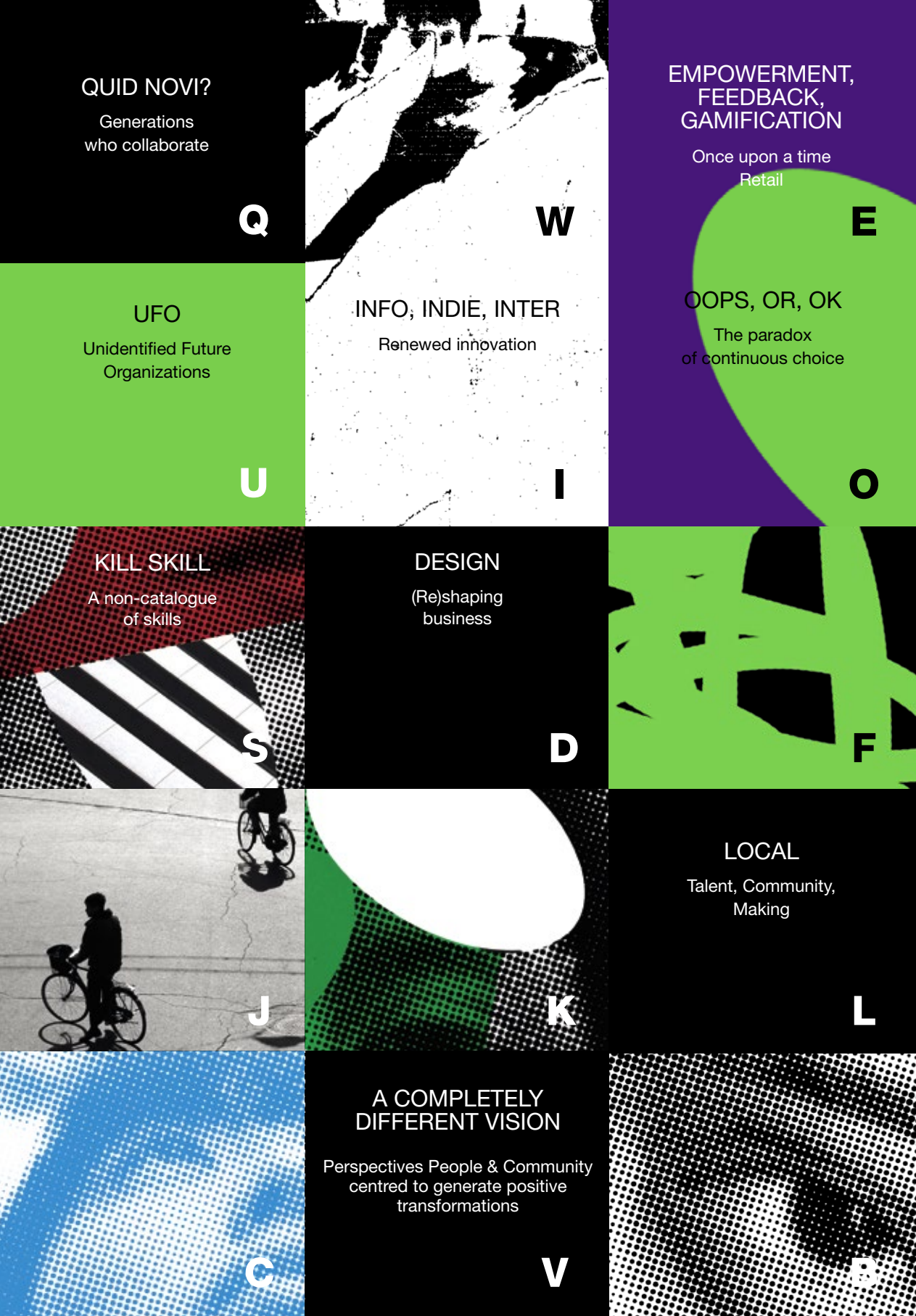
ROBOT

Is automation collaborative?

R

TRASH

Let's defeat junk sales

T

Y

P.O.P COLLABORATION

Point Of Presence

P

AUTO, BETA, CO.

(Re)write the Future

A

HR

Human (R)evolution

H

G

FROM A TO Z.
THE ALPHABET OF
THE COLLABORATIVE
ECONOMY

We are in an era in which organisations have to deal, dialogue and interact with six different generations of people. And then with territories, ecosystems, communities and living species, including artificial ones. Responding to these challenges, Weconomy explores intersections between business, design, sharing and impacts on people's experiences, to open up beyond anthropocentrism.

Weconomy is a network of managers, researchers, designers, managers, and professionals convinced that the driving force behind any effective initiative and innovation is the relationships of which people and communities are freely and creatively capable.

The Weconomy Notebooks are monographic: each issue, starting with a letter of the alphabet, opens up a research horizon into the collaborative economy.

Z

X

NE(X)TWORK

Flow. Amplified Identity Common Environment

N

MANAGEMENT

Cross, Self Content

M

READING PATHS

In this issue of Weconomy, the journey moves from theory to practice, from today's urgencies to opportunities for the future. You can read it by scrolling the pages or follow one of our suggested paths.

1. SENSE MAKING

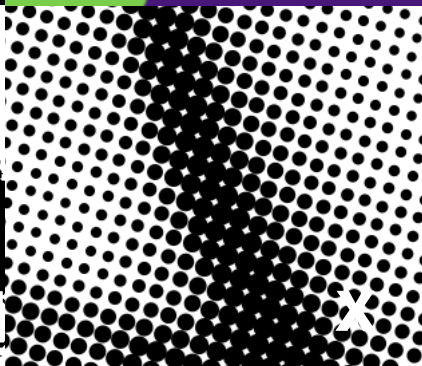Investigate the deeper meaning of the People and community centred approach. This systemic perspective seeks to grasp the transformative potential of communities and then show you the differentiating characteristics and positive impacts.

2. MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

They are designed to inspire you. Blending disciplines and cultures, this study offers a contemporary look at a classic topic, such as communities, with its ethical, social, urban planning and organisational implications.

SYSTEMIC VIEW

DESIGN

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A community? When it is transformative it creates impact and generates well-being. Point.
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EXPERIENTIAL LOOK

3. COMMUNITY PRACTICES

It is a practical path, sharing Logotel's experience. It shows you concrete cases that generate positive impacts on the day-to-day operations of an organisation and innovation paths.

Empty platforms VS places of co-creation
Rachel Happe
p. 92

OBSERVING AND MEASURING

RETAIL ECOSYSTEMS

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Silvia Magnanini
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CoCo Swarovski
p. 122

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TIM Style
p. 136

How is your community? Why, with what and how to measure it
Daniele Cerra
p. 112

4. ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The last course involves managers,
entrepreneurs, startuppers and makers
to show how communities nurture business
models, generate cohesion and influence
new generations.

A community? When it is transformative, it creates impact and generates well-being Point

Cristina Favini

Chief Design Officer, Logotel

Raise your hand if you are willing to argue publicly against the power and effectiveness of organisations inspired by connections, dynamics and collaborations that are genuinely communitarian... Again, raise your hand if no one has ever asked you to develop ideas, projects, proposals, actions, or scenarios that could dialogue with and affect the experiences of individuals, colleagues, customers, citizens, and communities.

At this point, the following questions arise: are we really aware and convinced of the *People & Community based* approach? Are we sincere when we say that a community of people can really contribute or 'give a boost' to the selection of goals and decisions that matter? Or – but this is the same question – how much of what we design for communities has an impact? Now, let's focus on this very mysterious object: community. And open up to dialogue with different voices and experiences.

We know our purpose includes a good dose of 'selfishness', the healthy kind, meaning... Logotel has been developing ideas, actions, and experiences around communities for decades. Successes and mistakes. Now, we need to understand more about it. First and foremost for us, but we believe it is a common need. Because as we can see, there is a widespread need to set some markers on the subject. On the one hand, we can see how the issue of communities inside or outside organisations shows itself in all its complexity. The variety of communities can transcend all the usual polarities (digital/analogue, physical/virtual...), even revolving around non-structural connections. This variety leads towards the frontier that opens up the yet-to-be-understood terrain of *communities of communities*. We frequently talk about the resilience or even survival of organisations. Maybe this connects with people's need for positive and constructive identification. Indeed, organisations not only *Community based* but *People & Community based*.

Let's start with them, with 'us'

I would like you to start with them, the people who live a *community*, associating with it, contributing to it and using it to do things they otherwise could not do. The people who choose to invest time and energy in a community because they recognise its actual usefulness, support it by sharing information, practical content and enthusiasm, and enable and support (and defend) it in daily life to trigger and make actions happen. We have testimonials from people who have been part of a *business community* for over 22 years to work every day learning and doing, and others who have recently joined an organisation and thanks to a *community of practice* do not feel alone and are learning a new trade with AI, thanks also to the continuous contribution of colleagues. We also hear from people who – even if physically distanced – feel part of a supportive team and

can get answers about how to do their job better with a *community of interest* of different citizens, people and organisations, who use a *community of community* to network. Why do they do it? Because to *be* we need the other. We seek utility in exchange, we need to express ourselves in a safe context, we need to know that 'my' contribution has value, and if we learn something today, it will be useful to us in the future. This drives us and makes us participate in a community of collective interest. This motivates us and makes us feel good. Increasingly, people want not only a place to work/a salary that meets their expectations but somewhere that marries with their beliefs and personal life direction. They also want an attractive, stimulating place in terms of human relations. That is why identifying with each other over something meaningful, significant, that is, being a community, feels good and is vital for businesses and organisations.

There is so much talk about communities, yet there are cemeteries full of them, so many only survive for 'show time'. These are not the ones we want to tell you about. We are not interested in cosmetic work! Here, we want to discuss transformative communities: living systems that evolve and change over time in hybrid contexts to generate positive impacts.

As I mentioned above, transformative communities make people do something that they otherwise cannot do themselves. They nurture processes that make people's behaviour evolve. They are 'giving and receiving' networks that generate relational impulses for social action for a purpose.

We cannot create such communities in vitro, but nor are they entirely spontaneous. We must design them from the emerging needs of people, organisations, areas and ecosystems. No, we are not talking about chat and conversation-only environments or just local communities... Of course, these aspects also exist. Rather, we are interested in addressing an ingredient that speeds up the metabolism of increasingly networked, distributed, multidimensional environments such as ecosystems of people, organisations, sales networks, companies, entities or associations; of multinational companies or non-profit networks. Entities that all have one thing in common: people who have to find a meaning for why they live, stay, cooperate and act together to do better. Systems that must work over time and generate real value.

Logotel: a community whose business shapes and drives communities

I spoke of 'we', so this time, I will emphasise

**Logotel
is a community
whose work encourages
other communities**

Organisations must feed community connections. Or they will disappear

Logotel's desire as an independent design company to want to share what we have learnt and are learning in over 30 years of experimentation and implementation, with over 40 cases originating in the Mediterranean and spanning over 100 countries and as many cultures, and which are still 'live'. From this angle, we should remember that Logotel is a community *first and foremost* and inspires, through its business, communities. A few months ago, Logotel decided to dedicate Weconomy to UFOs, or Unidentified Future Organisations. A tendency immediately emerged in those analyses, discussions, and testimonies to consider community as an ingredient that may not be essential and vital, but is at least necessary for the organisations of the future. Whatever form they take. Either the organisation will nurture internal community connections, or it won't. It is also increasingly clear that community actors have overwhelmingly become as much part of the core stakeholders of organisations' internal structuring activities as of their business. Now, we want to focus on communities.

Do we really care?
With all our problems and priorities, why should it matter to 'me'? New and future forms of organisations and businesses will increasingly resemble fluid networks of people. They will be more like current communities than organisations as we know them. There will be progressively less of an 'in and out' but increasingly fluid boundaries between customers and colleagues, the public, volunteers, partners, and suppliers. Let's ask another question: how much does our organisation cost today? And what if we add to that cost the burden of the ever-increasing *turnover* of people? That of finding and hiring young people turned off by many current organisations and brands? The cost of training to upgrade skills and re-skill? What about getting people from different companies to work together in new 'value production' chains? Without that ecosystem of supportive, cohesive and motivated people, I don't *exist* as a company or business network. I could go on, but the cost is high. If we lay all this on a canvas of *blue & green* political, economic, social and generational transformations that we have to manage and ground, the cost increases. Any impact we make is achieved if we do it with and through them, through people. Transformations are not external. They must emerge within organisations within ecosystems of people. Only then will we achieve relevant impacts.

We need to adopt a truly original vision
We spoke of dynamic matter comprising relationships, exchanges. Communities do not simply consist of discrete, networked units but of dynamic, porous

elements. Transformative communities are living systems, which need the right conditions to grow and thrive. They are not abstract but are always located in physical and digital places, environments and territories.

We require a completely original vision to develop a dual perspective simultaneously of the person but also of the community as a subject: *People & community centred*. What impact do we want to create for the person in each state and moment? And for the community? The dual perspective generates relational motivations to make social action happen.

A networked vision. A linear and finite vision does not work. It is an organic, open, incomplete, continuous project that continues through time. There are no procedures and rules, except some 'lenses' that help us understand and recognise the state of a community in relation to the impact we want to support and achieve.

A dynamic vision shapes the purpose and the sense in which that community exists, or should exist, or evolve. We call it Impact Design.

Transformative communities do not perform procedures; they live and thrive. Classical tools alone cannot shape and nurture them. We need to test ourselves in three dimensions daily.

1. Designing the centre of gravity with and for communities
The task is one of *sense making* to materialise the languages, values and experiences that bring people together around a common project or challenge. This perimeter triggers a *People & Community centred* project. Give 'shape' to the glue, to what is relevant for people and the community, and ask yourself: what impact do you want to generate? It is a dimension where, from the outset, we need to nurture participatory listening and interpret needs to clarify the emerging ones and identify what unites and separates people, community. What is significant, motivating and valuable for people, sub-communities and the community as a whole. As designers and *makers*, we know that, besides listening, exploring and interpreting, we also need a good dose of imagination to design creative, improving and beautiful solutions to trigger, 'situate' and make tangible the lives of people of and in the community.

2. Building contexts that create enabling experiences
Pragmatism is not enough in transformative communities. We must make the shared meaning and language tangible and shareable so that the participants

can experience and change it in a perpetually adaptive and evolutionary dimension. Planning and **designing collaborative rituals** gives life to the 'temporal scan', increases the frequency of exchange, encourages the creation of opportunities and interaction and supports dialogue. It punctuates collaboration. It aims to multiply informal meeting opportunities that nurture interpersonal empathy. To create units of experience, contexts and hybrid physical/digital relational environments, which all people 'take possession' of to express themselves freely.

3. Encouraging, nourishing and multiplying interactions and sharing
Transformative communities are places of action. Designers and participants support each other, at the right time, in the right way. Transformative communities need a group of people we sometimes know by different names, from designers to *community builders* to 'directors', who serve the community and are within the life of the community. A group of people who observe and gather feedback, where even dissent is valuable for understanding health, facilitating, supporting exchange, stimulating the community and helping it evolve.

We have learned there are no rules but one fixed point: take care of communities. When focus and commitment are lacking, they die.
Like all living systems, when commitment and participation are lacking in communities, they fade and eventually die. Commitment and participation are not a priori promises. We must nurture them daily to accrue benefits. Because the strength of communities is to survive in dynamic environments, where weak signals can lead to new solutions.

If our outlook changes, expanding from people to communities, our role as designers must also evolve. We have learnt that we must trigger continuous planning because planning for and with communities means inhabiting them, challenging our beliefs. We cannot just design a single stream. We need to follow a path that scales the impacts, opening up new possibilities.

The 16th issue of Weconomy addresses how, for our collective survival and sustainability, we need to handle our communities with care. This issue makes available, in *open source* mode, our experience and that of entrepreneurs, managers, academics, and experts from Europe, Asia and America who approach the topic of communities from various angles: from economics to design, from psychology to sociology, from anthropology to *game design* and activism. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who generously

gave us their time and energy to share their stories
and perspectives.

In the first section we discuss the various scales that
communities can assume. We cannot claim to pro-
vide strict and exhaustive definitions. Therefore, we
try to describe the (main) types of communities and
the dynamics running through them rather than at-
tempting to define what a community is or what its
assumptions and salient features are.

The second section of this issue focuses on the role
of people. What happens to the individual who finds
themselves in a community? The links need not all
be strong: people's involvement remains essential.

In the third section, we address the impact of communities, which is not
measured by simply quantitative metrics. Community life is anything but
easy. Complexities and risks arise, we might say, right from conception.
However, our experience is that they are a special and exemplary place of
community life in business, capable of generating innovation at every level
of the organisation.

To conclude this introduction, I would like to emphasise that this entire
issue of Weconomy is pervaded by an urgency, which affects us as people,
but above all as organisations. Because as we have already said, it is within or-
ganisations, understood as ecosystems of supportive, cohesive and motivated
people, that transformations must take place to scale significant impacts.

**This is the right time to make a difference, so even the most sceptical
CEO, entrepreneur, manager, coordinator, investor, startupper or maker
should take an interest. This is the stuff of the future**.
We dedicate to all of them in particular, and to all readers, this detailed re-
view *of* and *on the* communities to which Logotel has contributed in terms
of conception, refinement, implementation and support. Communities,
whether long-established or more recent, are certainly very varied and some-
times full of challenges. We believe this issue of Weconomy offers an excel-
lent insight into learning from these 'experiences within experiences'.

Take a breath and dive in. ■

We have learned that there are no rules but one fixed point: take care of communities

The visual concept

Density, porosity and multidimensionality are some
of the concepts that gave rise to the visual identity
of this issue of Weconomy.

Planes and levels are layered, interacting
with multiple objects, creating moments of contact
when overlapping and cross-fertilisation
when dialoguing with other forms or images.
Textures create vibrations, and realistic photos of faces
emphasise and enhance the warm and empathetic
living dimension to give strength to an idea:
communities are not colourless networks.

The continuous dialogue between all these aspects
and elements can hold all the participating
entities together, becoming a concrete testimony
of a system of different stories in constant evolution
and transformation.

On a metaphorical level, street art inspired me,
sharing with communities the spirit of action
and vital means of expression. The stylistic language
echoes the creations of Blek le Rat or Jef Aérosol,
pioneers of stencil graffiti, along with those of more
contemporary urban artists such as JR,
with his revealing photo collages of humanity.

Valeria Crociata, *Art Director Logotel*

Imaginary dialogue on a different vision of community

We: Hello, are you ready to wear new lenses?

Reader: But I can see just fine.

We: What we want to offer you a completely different view of communities.

Reader: It seems to me an ancient concept, an organic community instead of a mechanical society, as Ferdinand Tönnies said...

We: But over two centuries have passed since Tönnies. And, since you like quotes, it seems to us that right now, there is more 'desire for community' than in the past, as Zygmunt Bauman writes. Specifically, we want to talk to you about transformative communities. Consider all the big transformations we are going through: the ecological and digital transitions, changes in the world of work or mobility. Do you think you can cope with them alone?

Reader: OK, I want to listen to you. So please tell me what you mean by community.

We: We don't want to tell you what a community is or isn't: we'd never finish, trust us. However, we want to tell you what happens when you adopt a *People & Community centred* approach: exchanges and transformations are always triggered, at whatever scale: in organisations, in neighbourhoods, in cities, in creating new products and services... and even in yourself.

Reader: I don't understand: am I a community, too?

We: Walt Whitman wrote: 'I contain multitudes.' But we'll let someone much closer tell you.

Bacteria: Hello, we are the microbiota, the community of bacteria living in your body. And we are more numerous than the cells in your body.

Reader: Oh, my God! So, am I hosting a community? I'm a little confused. I had always thought of communities as something I could either be part of or not, like a closed circle: either you are in or out.

We: Don't worry; that's what happens if you think of communities using a binary logic, which we want to overcome. Consider for a moment: how many communities do you belong to? Friends, colleagues, family, teammates or yoga partners... Your 'membership diet', as David Spinks writes later, is very diverse, and I don't believe that there are such obvious barriers among these communities. For us, one of the essential aspects of communities is their porosity. And also consider this: participation in these communities rarely comes down to an on/off. There are different degrees, a spectrum.

Reader: But there must be some element that helps us to understand better what are these transformative communities you speak of.

We: This is what we have tried to do in this issue of Weconomy. We can think of them as living organisms located in places, environments, and territories. We have also tried to identify three dimensions that we believe make up transformative communities: a core, which contains everything that makes the sense of belonging develop. A second dimension comprises enabling contexts and practices, which makes everything condensed in the core concrete and tangible. And finally, a third dimension of animation and sharing, of teeming life. However, the most important thing you need to know is that something is always happening in these transformative communities. They are marked by experiences that begin with exchanges and generate transformations and adaptations but always oriented in a common direction. This is how they generate shared improvements.

Reader: So, they are multidimensional and traversed by experiences. But I am also a little worried. If communities are living systems, can they also die?

We: The purpose of communities as organisms is to thrive, but because of their very nature, they can also weaken, even to the point of extinction. So much so that we have also left a space for the 'cemetery of communities'.

Reader: But you also explain how not to let them die, right?

We: Yes, and with the help of many points of view, we also describe what and how many forms they can take: communities of practice, of interests, of relationships, even communities of communities. And also how synthetic agents can inhabit them and extend into the spaces of virtual and augmented reality.

ChatGPT: It is possible to imagine a future in which synthetic agents are integrated into communities. Today, virtual assistants like me are employed to answer questions and provide information. However, there could be an evolution towards more active participation: working with fellow humans on common projects, providing emotional support or even taking part in community decisions. However, fully integrating artificial agents into communities would require several ethical, social and legal considerations*.

We: This is one challenge we mention in this issue of Weconomy.

Reader: You have intrigued me; I look forward to continuing this multidimensional journey!

* Text generated by ChatGPT based on the following prompt: 'I am imagining a dialogue centred on a new vision of the concept of community. Do you think artificial agents like you will be part of these communities in the future?'

Let us reinvent the concept of community for a changing world

Vincenzo Scagliarini

Weconomy Editor-in-Chief
Senior Strategist, Logotel

We want to free the term community from polarisation and taxonomies, bringing out its transformative potential. Because to grasp the great transitions we are going through, we need to widen our gaze beyond individuals.

The word 'community' has a long tradition, originating in sociology and branching out everywhere: from marketing to organisational models, digital platforms to economics. It is an elusive concept in its vastness. Some try to domesticate its multiformity with definitions and taxonomies, but there are concepts that need to remain free: 'Because communities are in a constant state of change, in perpetual construction and deconstruction,' as David Spinks, author of *The Business of Belonging*, an essential book on community design in organisations, commented.

In this issue of Weconomy, we want to look at communities from a free point of view, devoid of ontologies, to liberate this word from polarisations and pigeonholing and to unleash its transformative potential.

This is an important step: placing communities at the centre is especially important today because the significant transformations we are in the midst of become elusive when we focus only on individuals. While they acquire form and meaning when we widen our gaze. Indeed, the twin transitions, ecological and digital, change not only individuals' attitudes, habits and behaviour. As the philosopher Timothy Morton writes in his *Humankind*: 'It's not starting a car that causes global warming, but all the cars that keep starting.' In short, so many single people, even when virtuous, visionary and just, are insufficient. What to do then to stop being frustrated? We have a choice: to change perspective and intervene in a system that makes a different way of operating possible, in which the actions of individuals are meaningful because they help change something bigger. And thus scale.

However, big transitions are not the only ones that affect us. We are experiencing many molecular mutations connected in various dimensions. The world of work and organisations are changing: they have become hybrid, networked and based on connections and relationships, as we reported in our

We have a choice: change perspective and intervene in a system that makes new ways possible

Transformative communities activate a path of improvement and generate cohesion

Weconomy UFO. Business models are evolving in response to these interconnected transformations. That's not all: the shape of products and services is also redefining itself to adapt to an accelerated environment. In the research that informed this issue of Weconomy, two next-generation software products, Notion and Figma, which saw the emergence of *first* communities of potential users and only later the product itself fascinated us. A genuine reversal of the dynamics of production (which shape software) and dissemination (where traditional digital communities used to be). And thus, the lines of code that make up these platforms are the result of continuous interactions with a group of people who are highly interested, ready to exchange ideas, offer suggestions, test, meet, and contribute. To achieve a common goal: get the best software for your needs. Then continue to work to evolve it.

So, starting with these initial contextual elements and not losing ourselves in the vastness of the topic, we can restrict our field of enquiry, adding an attribute to the word 'community' and thus speak of transformative communities. We can imagine living systems where each participant plays a role in change. Because communities that embrace transformations are not made up of indistinct piles of users, understood as interchangeable parts of a machine. Every person, place, platform, living species, tree or synthetic agent has a significant role in bringing value to the community. And it is crucial to enable each role to express itself fully.

But is it essential to complicate things so much? Considering the scale of the changes we face, it is inevitable.

There is a further motive. Transformations generate movement; they have no ends or goals; they continue to thrive and adapt. They survive failures and respond to an environment disrupted by unpredictable phenomena. This is another feature to add to our vision of transformative communities: not to lock them in a box, but to see them as generators of cohesion, accompanying their participants on a path of improvement. For everyone. ■

Further reading

Timothy Morton, *Humankind*, NERO Editions 2022

THESIS

Transformative communities are living systems inhabiting hybrid contexts.
We cannot create them in vitro, but nor are they entirely spontaneous. We must design them for the emerging needs of people, agencies, organisations, areas, and ecosystems. To generate positive impacts.

Transformative communities are multidimensional and porous.
They always listen to the context and take different forms. In this continuous dialogue, they always remain concrete and real and escape the temptation to turn into abstract and virtual procedures.

Transformative communities are never binary. They feed on evolutionary challenges and adapt to changes of scenario.
This is how they can accompany their inhabitants beyond uncertainty.

**Transformative communities don't end
after they achieve pre-established objectives:
they continue to thrive.**
Because they fuel people's desire to contribute
to continuous improvement.

**Transformative communities are shot through
with experiences that activate exchanges and generate
transformative actions.**
They feed on forms of belonging that transcend binary logics:
they generate spectrums of participation, which embrace
everyone's best energies and orchestrate the best resources
the context can offer.

**In transformative communities, no one is
indifferent: each person has an enabling role.**
To strengthen the relevance of participating, to build
the tools and the most suitable environments to continue
weaving connections.
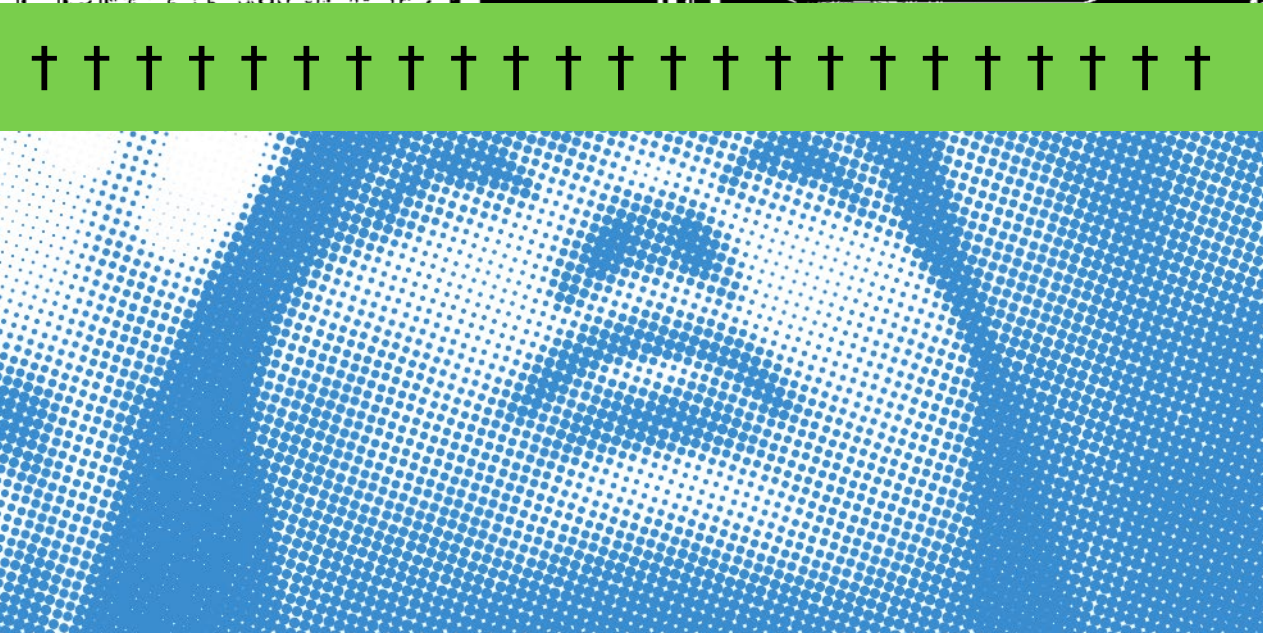
The cemetery of communities

Like all living systems, transformative communities can be remarkably resilient and survive extensive changes. However, precisely because of their living nature, they become fragile and can die out when commitment, care and attention are lacking.

Indeed, there is often a tendency to confuse the tools used to nurture communities with the meaning for which they exist. Thus, we stumble into a mechanistic approach, focusing on creating the best platforms, prestigious events, and cutting-edge *engagement* mechanisms while forgetting the cohesive project that brings people together in communities. Thus confusing the means with the end.

In history, there are plenty of examples of ideal places and platforms, created with the best of intentions, but which, without a *People & Community centred* approach, have lost their function on the way. One of the most famous cases is the Indian city of Chandigarh, created by Le Corbusier in the 1950s as a modernist utopia where everything was arranged to be aesthetically and rationally satisfying. Then, over time, the teeming life typical of Indian cities, which certainly doesn't follow Western standards, invaded the rationality sought by the Swiss architect. So, Chandigarh's buildings, monuments and streets still exist but no longer follow the original design intentions.
Jumping further back in time and moving into the digital world, one of the most famous cases of a failed community is the SecondLife platform, which, at its peak, was full of interactions between connected people worldwide. However, driven by the desire to incorporate as many real life functions into the virtual as possible, it grew so complicated that the simple desire to share fell away, creating endless barriers that diluted its original meaning.

Or, a final example concerns the multiple failed attempts by Google to create a social network, first with Buzz, then Orkut and Wave, and finally Plus. Platforms that were much more advanced and fluid than the competition but developed with no thought of collective spirit. In contrast to Facebook, which started with what the anthropologist René Girard termed as a 'desire machine' to support the sharing of university life and then evolved and gave space to myriads of micro-communities, reaching its peak in the late 2010s, only to fade away. The reason? Because the 'pact of trust' between people and platform owners has broken down, as an article in *The Verge: social media is doomed to die* recounts.

Transformative communities are living systems: they can thrive, but they can also die out. There are elements that, if not managed, poison the life of a community and neutralise its potential.

So, let's try to identify six elements that, if left unmanaged, poison the life of a community and neutralise its potential.

1. **Lack of a centre of gravity.** Today, people are over-stimulated and bounce from one physical-digital environment to another with endless options. When a disagreement or problem arises, as in all relationships that don't work, they are tempted to leave the community to seek easier solutions elsewhere. Without trust and a deep reason to stay, all participation will gradually diminish.

2. **There are only conversations and no utility.** The opportunity to express yourself and have your ideas and opinions accepted is a powerful catalyst for communities. But without organisation, planning and sharing of resources, everything remains theoretical. And exchanges will thin out in the absence of utility.

3. **Functionality prevails over relational paths.** Even when communities help solve problems, they should never just optimise results. Because direct communication between people creates quicker routes and opens up new ways to deal with a challenge. Thus, without relational elements, the community will only nurture utilitarian relationships, undermining its future adaptive possibilities.

4. **Too much focus on specific topics and too little inspiration.** Communities offer participants opportunities to discuss topics of interest (from ideas on improving work performance to neighbourhood improvement projects). But, if they don't welcome new points of view, the focal topics will not be nourished with new perspectives. And they will burn out.

5. **Rewards for active participants take precedence over rules of engagement for new members.** Working on forms of celebration and reward for active members is an important element. However, new additions also nurture communities, helping extend the scale of the community. If we forget how to renew the forms of reception, we will stop accommodating new needs. Thus, suddenly, the community will lose sight of the future.

6. **The word 'community' is so vague that it does not aggregate meanings.** A functioning community is not for everyone; it must have a perimeter. It is a prerequisite for triggering relevant conversations and sharing. These help define the many forms a community can take. ■

Further reading

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Multidimensional vision and spectrums of participation

Are transformative communities natural or artificial? Are they spontaneous or the result of intelligent design? Are they inclusive or exclusive? These are some of the questions that have guided us on our journey in producing this issue of Weconomy. And they have led us to countless dead ends. So far. Because we were going down technological, procedural, linear paths of binary choices. And transformative communities are never binary. Instead, we needed a different vision.

As we have mentioned, transformative communities are living systems that need the right conditions to grow and prosper. They are not abstract but are always situated: in places, environments and territories. Instead of thinking of them as machinery with gears to oil, let's imagine them as a forest whose trees are growing, with interconnected roots sharing nutrients. Trees can proliferate for thousands of years without encountering programmed obsolescence, establishing relationships with other inhabitants of an ecosystem. The trees in a forest can be artificially planted or grow naturally. They can include various living species and exclude others as long as they are compatible with the environment they inhabit, in which they flourish and adapt. If the context changes, they can evolve. We are interested in these connections between nature and people (or, it would be better to say, agentivity) because they generate new relationships, as Eduardo Kohn relates in *How Forests Think* and because they shape alternative models of development, investigated by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

Or we can imagine transformative communities as organisms in which cells play different roles, depending on whether they belong to the nervous or circulatory systems. In short, transformative communities don't merely comprise networked discrete units but consist of more or less porous elements, which incorporate nutrients with various forms of specialisation and varying degrees of intervention. These different roles and functions enable an organism to perform complex and coordinated actions.

With this new insight, we can return to the initial questions and address them from a deep perspective. What can we base our continued exploration on if transformative communities cannot fit into binary concepts? How do we shape concepts that, following the vital metaphor, avoid community necrosis or colonisation by toxic organisms?

Multidimensional forms and spectrums of participation

We have identified three dimensions which help us frame communities' relevance and spaces of action. But understanding their transformative po-

Transformative communities span several dimensions, in which people don't act like 'indistinct masses', but - with a novel design approach - can take action at different levels of participation.

tential is not enough. People inhabit and participate in communities. This is one of the key elements differentiating them from platforms that simply connect people. So, it becomes essential to understand and design enabling actions for communities. Because from this point of view, we can trigger dynamics of interaction, exchange, resource management and *governance* to multiply exchanges and community relations. And to avoid imposing all those binary forms of participation we could summarise as: 'if you participate in the community, you have to do certain actions, or you can stay out'. Although based on the need to incentivise active contributions, these rigid methods limit forms of involvement, excluding new possibilities and, thus, future developments. This is a problem approached from an interesting angle by Henry Mintzberg , who, in the updated edition of *Understanding Organisations… finally!,* shows the complexity of community thinking in organisations, balanced between the need for isolation (which keeps their goals alive, even to the point of implosion) and assimilation (which generates connections but dissolves the original oneness).

So it may be more helpful to recall the famous article *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* by sociologist Sherry Arnstein and talk about *spectrums of participation*, which are defined by joining two elements: the **roles** that inhabit transformative communities and the **actions** they generate. We speak of 'spectrums' because these roles are not set in stone: they can change with time, fade, readjust and overlap. What matters is not to make people feel part of a mass but to enable them to unleash possibilities for action, namely, to contribute in specific ways and specific contexts, with specific tools.

Before we go any further, we need to clarify the guidelines governing the methods of participation. Traditionally, exchange dynamics go from top-down or bottom-up. This implies a sliding value judgement: the former are impositional and authoritarian; the latter are free and democratic. Our task is to overcome this contraposition and adopt a vital viewpoint. Thus, a new objective arises: how can a community's inhabitants care for it? Talking about care means creating the conditions for something bigger to happen and nurturing it. In the same way, it entails generating antibodies that keep the community relevant to its members. Working on caring and enabling conditions implies asymmetries in participation, but at this point, people's actions are no longer based on power logics or hierarchies. Instead, they 'nurture a long-term form of social caring for ourselves and others', in the words of Bernard Stiegler, in *Taking Care. Of Youth and Generations.*

Multidimensional project horizons

The core

This dimension makes people develop a sense of belonging to a transformative community. It ensures that interactions are (and continue to be) relevant to the participants. It is dense because it preserves the relevance of the community. It changes slowly. It transforms abstract language and knowledge into something concrete.

Enabling role   **converger**

The main task of the people involved in the core is to ensure that all participants know the shared direction excluding elements that affect community life.

Enabling contexts and practices

This dimension contains the tools, environments and opportunities that situate values, languages and organisational challenges in physical, digital or hybrid territories. It is porous because it dialogues with the ecosystems with which it interacts. It reacts to the needs of participants by transforming the concrete into the tangible.

Enabling role   **builder**

In this case, people responsible for giving shape to new practices, modelling spaces and tools that make participation possible.
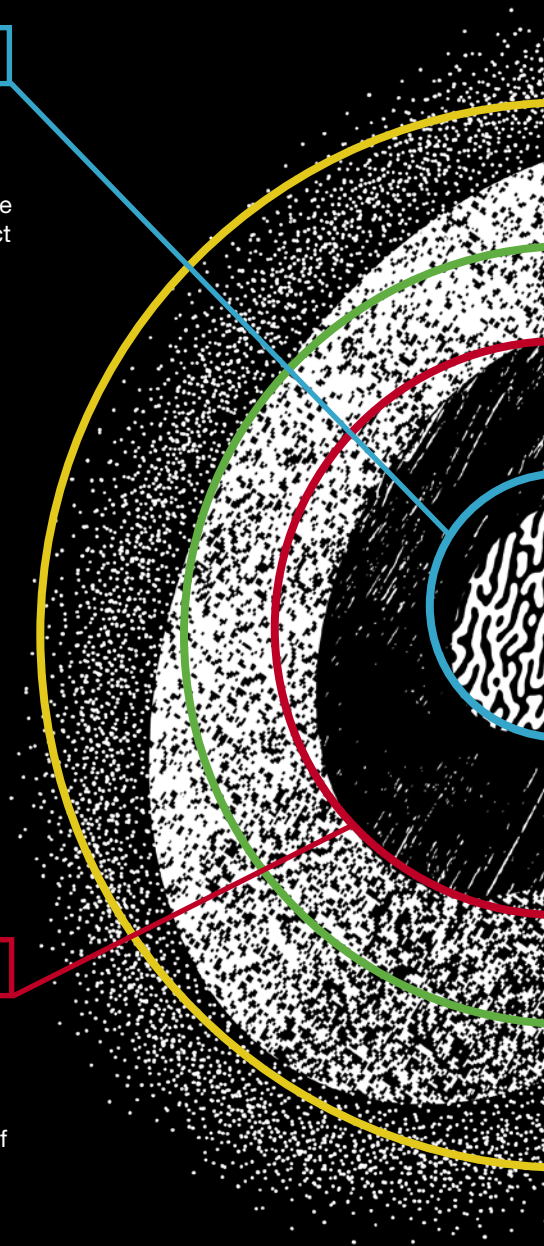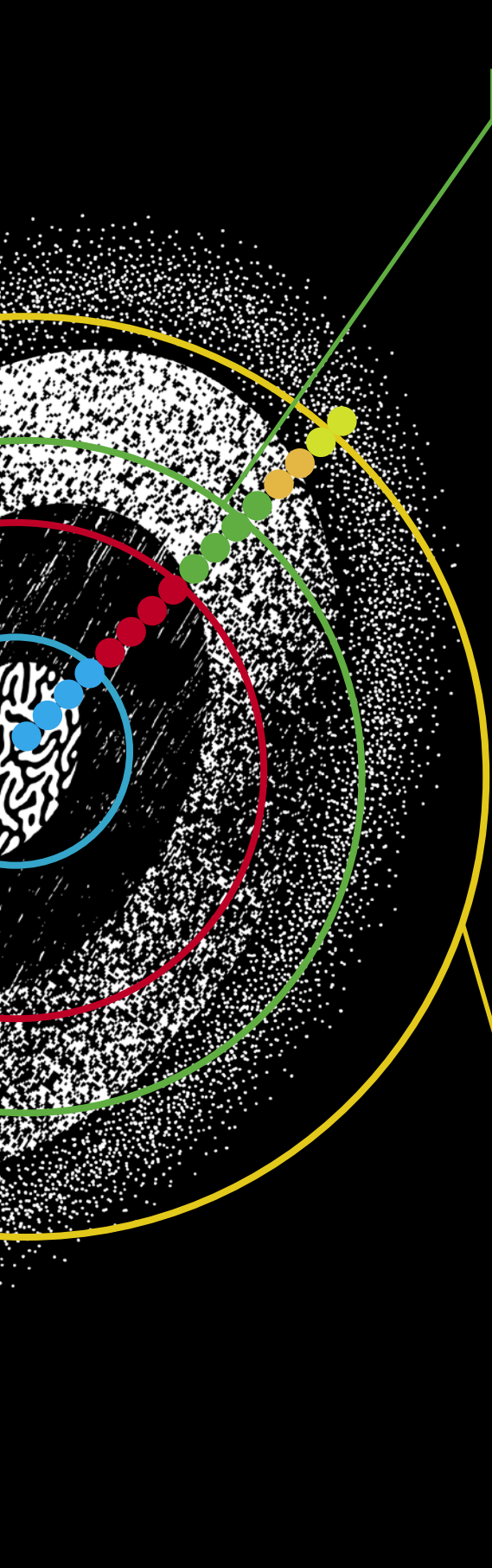
Animation and sharing

This dimension feeds the interactions of transformative communities, where strong and weak bonds are nurtured. It contains contents, conversations, meetings and discussions. It is teeming, a hive of activity, because it releases and receives stimuli from within and without. And it transforms the tangible into the actionable.

Enabling role   **weaver**

It facilitates exchanges and increases the frequency, speed and number of connections among the participants.

Listening and waiting

An external dimension to communities: it opens up new possibilities of participation for people partake in the common project. It welcomes potential members and alternative forms of contribution.

Enabling role   **listener**

This form of participation is still undefined but does not lack for action: these people share a common project, but await opportunities and methods to unleash their potential in the community.

This concept of care is embodied in various forms of community engagement and responsibility. For example:

- whoever has the opportunity to create a resource (which may be a platform, a physical space, an event, etc.) has a responsibility to make it available to participants;
- whoever has a more general view of the project that the community pursues defines the roles necessary to develop, disseminate and evolve it;
- each participant in community life spreads information, experiences and practices with which they come into contact, according to their abilities.

Now, we can finally get to the heart of the matter, delving into the dimensions of transformative communities and the spectrums of participation they generate and nurture.

The first dimension: the core. It is the centre of gravity of transformative communities. It contains values, languages, knowledge and all those elements with an aggregating and attractive role. It is what develops a sense of belonging. It is a crucial element in ensuring that interactions within the community are (and continue to be) relevant to the participants. It also forms the basis of the bridge-bonds that the community can build towards the outside world. The core is not necessarily pre-existing. It must be discovered and listened to if the community already exists. Or built and consolidated if it is a nascent community in which the needs of a community are coming together. Transformative communities are in constant motion, but this first dimension is the densest and slowest to change. Therefore, it is essential to shape and accept the core. Because once we have built a common language and goals, they must be stable over time to act as a 'magnet of aggregation'.

Participation in the first dimension: convergence roles. Whoever intervenes in this first dimension aims to transform something abstract into something concrete. And thus to translate the values of an organisation into the context in which the community operates. In this case, people's central action is convergence, ensuring that all participants know the shared direction, excluding those elements that may undermine the life of the community.

The second dimension: enabling contexts and practices. A community co-alesces around something shared (the core), but is still inert. It needs spaces, practices, opportunities and tools to become real. And it is not just about manifestos or declarations of intent. Because transformative communities are always located: they exist in one or more places and are activated in specific contexts. This second dimension performs a specific function: it uses all the necessary

resources to make all the concrete elements of the core tangible for the participants. It is a porous and hybrid dimension because it always keeps up a dialogue with the outside world. Indeed, a transformative community always resides in a city, neighbourhood, or organisation. It is an element that allows us to welcome and adapt new stimuli, transforming them into something tangible and usable by the participants, always consistent with its founding core. This dimension has an important evolutionary role because new languages can emerge around new practices, a new sense of belonging can be formed, thus continuing to nurture the first dimension, namely the core.

Participation in the second dimension: builders. The figures inhabiting this dimension are the builders: they shape new practices and model all the spaces, platforms, tools and rituals to make them available to the participants so they can 'touch' and put into practice the community's goals in their daily lives.

The third dimension is animation and sharing. After forming according to the community's needs, practices and contexts must be experienced. Thus, in this third dimension, everything tangible in the second dimension is transformed into something actionable. This is where the teeming life of the community is nurtured: that is, all the comments, dialogues, meetings and discussions.

Participation in the third dimension: weavers. This third dimension is inhabited by the weavers facilitating exchanges, developing connections between participants, and listening to their needs. They care for and support everyone in the community. It is an essential function because their ability to give and receive feedback can tap into new, unheard-of needs and requirements and thus call for novel forms of expression, tools and resources that can be transformed into emerging practices, feeding the second dimension. This dimension is the most porous because it can accommodate new stimuli to translate them into something new and thus attract new participants.

The external dimension: listening and waiting. Transformative communities don't thrive in self-enclosed spaces. Their porous nature also generates contacts with people who, despite not having an active role, share the community's common project. Thus, we find two particular forms of participation in this external dimension. Their form of participation is linked to **listening**, seeking a valuable opportunity to get involved. And become members of the community. Finally, at the extreme edge, we find people who are curious but have not yet developed enough understanding to embrace the common project. This role is **waiting** to be addressed. ■

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Experiences across communities

Transformative communities
are shot through
with experiences that arise
by activating exchanges
and evolve by transforming
the participants and their
environments.

Something is always happening in transformative communities because we are not talking about static structures but multidimensional objects that unlock relationships and that, in turn, generate continuous interactions. These exchanges don't follow rigid, deterministic patterns. This is not their purpose because, otherwise, any dynamics of participation would be reduced to a method of implementation. We could then say that the interactions between the people who inhabit transformative communities take the form of experiences. We use this word that is lofty and demanding but simultaneously abused and desemantised, because it includes deep meanings that we can recover. To experience (also) means: 'to say something, to attempt something, to feel something, to be influenced by something'. And the dimensions we described in the previous article allow us to do just that: they are experience multipliers. By adding to the spaces and activities that people do every day, they allow the experience of something else: with new tools, resources, and environments, feeding a new vision.

So here is a first summary of experiences in transformative communities: they are designed to involve many actors, territories and ecosystems. They are concrete and never abstract. They continue developing beyond attaining contingent goals because they continue to adapt and evolve from a sense of belonging that unites over and above change.

Non-linear experiences, but with a direction
This is no small matter. Scholars of complex social systems urge us not to cage ourselves in a vision terribly close to linear paths. That is, to imagine them as experiences that lead people from point A to point B. Showing a point of arrival (a finish line!) to people who invest time and resources in community life might be motivating. Nevertheless, it would entail a very high risk: shaping abstractions that nip in the bud different paths to those envisaged, restricting the emergence of alternative solutions and, finally, ignoring all those evolutionary signals that point in a new direction when a planned path no longer works.

However, taking a complex, non-linear approach can be disorienting. Dave Snowden, creator of the famous Cynefin model, offers an interesting interpretation in one of his webinars: "Thinking in complex, non-linear terms does not mean indulging in randomness and unpredictability. It's helpful to think in vector terms, integrating three factors: knowing in what direction to move, with what speed and with what

effort. When we combine knowledge of these three elements with an awareness of where we are, we are well placed to address change, identify where to start and see where it makes sense to intervene.'

So, living systems offer many possibilities of movement, but the reality we experience always heads one direction. This is what physics calls the 'time arrow'. That is why we cannot put water back into the glass when we have accidentally spilt it on the floor. Or forget an experience that has marked us deeply. We can change, delete, copy, rewrite, and reverse information, moving back and forth in time. Everything to do with reality also has unchanging elements: matter (what we can touch and experience) and energy (what is accumulated and shared). And this is the vital intervention horizon we want to explore.

The beginning is an exchange, the path is a transformation
We can thus establish a first concept that characterises experiences in transformative communities: they always begin with an exchange involving information, matter and energy. These exchanges activate a movement, transforming people *in the many instances in which* the common project of the community is carried out.

We have defined the *beginning*. Around this concept, we can resume discussing the dynamics that typify interactions in transformative communities: rules of engagement, involvement, palimpsests and content. Which become means to travel in a *direction common*. But what happens next? When exchanges cross the multidimensional horizon of transformative communities, something new emerges, which is made *concrete*, *tangible* and *actual*. Thus, the value generated by all exchanges flows into the people who take part, the spaces populated, the organisations activated, and all the extended ecosystems brought into relationship. It is what gives life to an ever-changing experience.

Levels of exchange
Now let's try to move on to explore what levels of exchange and what levels of transformation involve people in a community. It is an approach nurtured by neuropsychiatrists such as Jean-Michel Oughourlian, who, in his book *The Third Brain*, divides our experiences into: cognitive and mental; emotional and affective; mimetic and relational. Starting from these concepts, we can discern three types of exchanges with an experiential matrix.

Mapping the experiential dynamics

Levels of exchange

The experience that passes through a transformative community feeds on the exchanges that continuously interact with the values, environments and conversations generated by the dimensions around which the community coalesces.

VALUE FOR ORGANISATIONS

INFORMATION
Contents and conversations

MATTER
Experiences and 'what concerns us'

ENERGY
Opportunities to celebrate

VALUE FOR PEOPLE
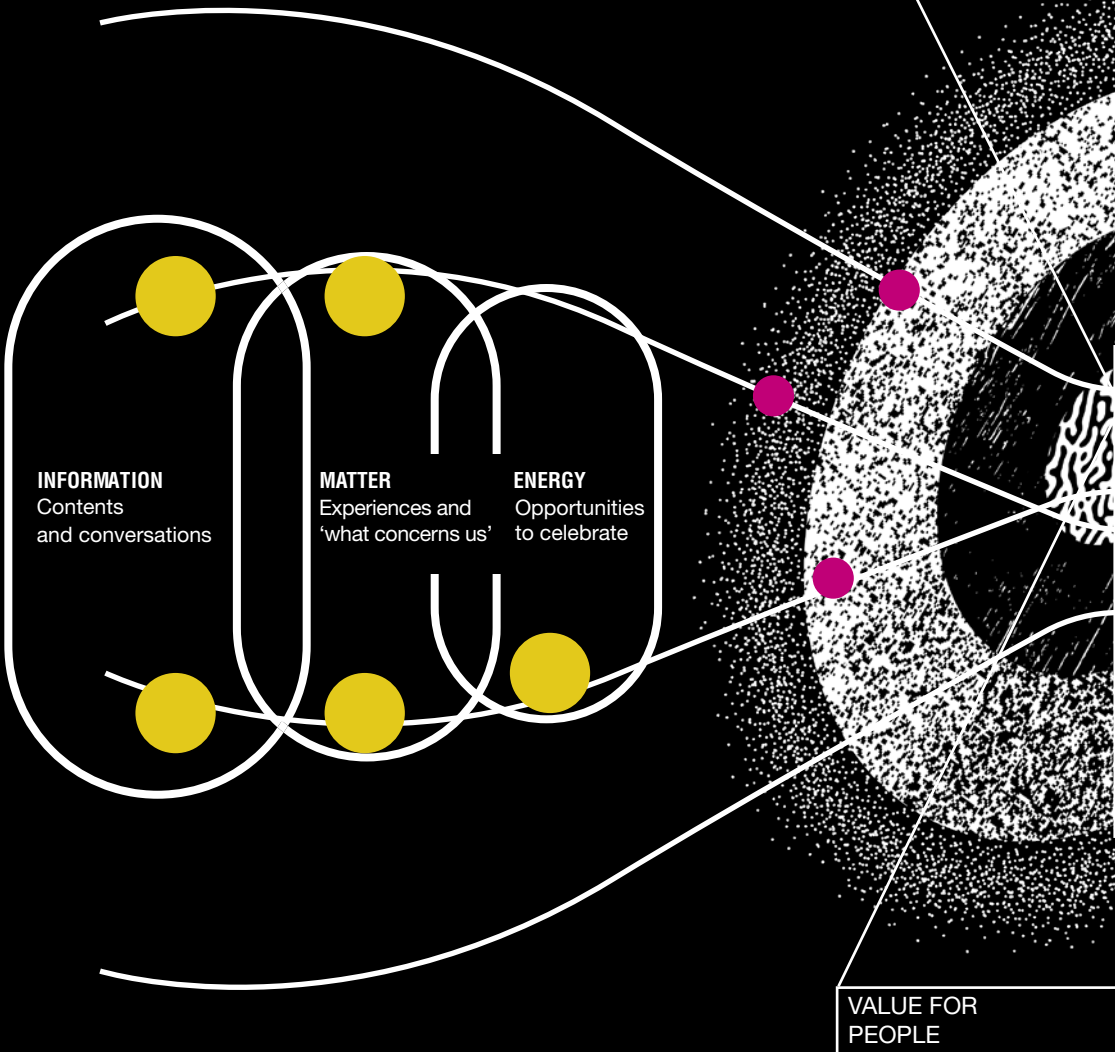
Value generation

When interactions come into contact with community dimensions, collective value is generated. This value is 'located' on the community scale in the organisations, ecosystems and agentivities involved.

VALUE FOR
ECOSYSTEMS

CLEARNESS
Managing
complexity

AWARENESS
Activation of
a movement
towards
a common
direction

ADAPTIVENESS
Evolution
through
listening
to emerging
needs

THRIVE
Development
of systemic
and improving
interactions

VALUE FOR
EVERY AGENTIVITY

Levels of transformation

Transformative communities don't stop at achieving
their goals but generate progressive movements
that evolve the entire system, fuelling positive impacts
on people and their surrounding environments.

1. Information. It is the zero level of exchanges: it concerns all content, whether proposed by people in the community (*user generated content*) or micro-interactions to request support, as well as *top-down* schedules delivered through platforms and tools. Information in communities speeds up the possibility of finding what we need regarding a shared goal, interests and values.

2. Matter. It is everything that happens in people: life lived, unresolved problems, personal and collective successes. It exists even with no organised form (such as content, dialogue or conversation). They can be photos, audio, unstructured video, or collaborative activities. This level differs from the information level mainly because it can have blurred contours and no immediate meaning. The 'material ' comes into focus through exchanges and the support of others. Enhancing this second level of exchange, transformative communities are perceived as safe places, where people can express themselves even when disoriented.

3. Energy. In transformative communities, like in reality, every action produces energy. This is what drives people forward through small and large celebrations, gatherings and any situation that expresses closeness, even the most informal. The energy that flows through communities is the most tangible element of community health and cohesion. And it generates the pleasure and satisfaction of participation.

The exchange of information, matter and energy should not be understood as interchangeable ingredients of equal weight. Depending on the form the community assumes as it evolves, they may re-balance. However, one thing is certain: even if one level prevails over the others, the remainder must never be extinguished. Otherwise, the community will cease to be such and deviate into something else: an information network if information dominates, a listening group if matter dominates, or a series of celebratory events if only energy exists. These are alternative evolutions that have no negative connotations. But we should consider these variables because they carry a risk: the transformative component, which we will see in a moment, needs all levels of exchange.

The levels of transformation
Transformative context means 'bringing into existence, slowly or quickly, new rules, norms, logics, social relations, and ways of doing

things' that, in the words of Matthew Wizinsky in *Design after Capitalism*, end up 'changing the whole system'. As we have anticipated, these progressive changes become possible and viable when the three levels of exchange cross the multidimensional horizon of communities. And that is: anyone who interfaces with the community does something they *would otherwise* not do. Everything we do *in relation* to the community also affects the context as much as the people in it. We can imagine the levels of transformation as rings expanding in four progressive movements:

1. Clarity. Thanks to exchanges providing mutual support and relevant information available at the right time, everything previously nebulous becomes clear. And it remains clear over time. This is especially important in highly complex contexts that are subject to change. Thus this reorientation towards clarity ensures that contributions flowing through the community remain useful.

2. Awareness. This further step requires a certain maturity in the participants. It is transformative because it makes us realise where the community is heading and enables us to journey through change together with others, not only in the immediate but also in the future.

3. Adaptability. The subsequent transformation implies an evolution of the community form itself. We have included this element because one potential of a *People & Community centred* approach concerns the ability to change, even radically, the starting assumptions and knowledge when an event changes the context. But there is an additional factor. Just as living systems grow and thrive, communities continue to generate new tools, ideas and environments. And adaptivity results from an emerging need that takes shape in new objects and dimensions. This transformative level gives a depth of insight to people who, by participating, acquire new lenses to look at the common project that involves them.

4. Prosperity. We can understand this last transformation as a tendency. It does not exclude the previous elements but incorporates them. A community will continue to thrive when all participants recognise what they need to make it tangible and workable in their ecosystem, introducing all those ameliorative elements that benefit all, even outside the community. ■

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Scaling the impacts

So far, we have described several invariants that typify transformative communities. We have imagined them as multidimensional objects traversed by experiences, which begin by activating exchanges and evolve by transforming the participants and the environments with which they interact. However, these types of communities cannot all have the same form. Otherwise, they would be mass-produced constructs. With one consequence: they would ultimately lack an essential feature, the ability to shape themselves to emerging needs and to grow in scale, increasingly merging with the ecosystems with which they relate. Instead, the dimensions we have identified become increasingly structured when a transformative community thrives. Therefore, managing the everyday is essential. It is the project horizon to investigate to avoid any form of abstraction.

This is an essential step because there is nothing new about communities, but their scope has traditionally been limited to small, predominantly local contexts. However, introducing concepts such as scalability and impact into design is an increasingly important topic. It is widening the spaces for intervention of community-centred approaches, making them powerful enablers of social innovation and accelerators of new forms of cooperation. We can see this in several recent publications that have investigated these transformative dynamics in various contexts: in organisational models (Joost Minnaar and Pim De Morree in *Corporate Rebels*); in the 'super-experiences' generated by new ways of working (Jeremy Myerson and Philip Ross, *The Reinvention of the Modern Office*) or in system changes (Dan Hill - Vinnova, *Designing Missions*).

This topic is practically endless, but to orient ourselves, let's start with how the literature identifies communities. Then, we can work on the experiential dimensions and dynamics described. Thus, we can achieve a goal: to identify transformative perspectives that can foster scalability and generate positive impacts. This open, non-taxonomic point of view seeks to extend the scope of these 'living systems' without diluting their uniqueness.

Transformative communities take different forms, shaping themselves to fit people's emerging needs. In so doing, they change the ecosystem they inhabit, to generate positive impacts.

Evolution of impacts

**1. Transformative perspective
in communities of interest**
In an era of transformation, people need
to broaden their conversations beyond
day-to-day activities and discuss hot topics,
in a structured way, avoiding fandom
and polarisations.

**2. Transformative perspective
in communities of practice**
When addressing change involves mastering
technical tools, communities of practice
become essential. Because, from a transformative
perspective, they democratise knowledge,
making it tangible.

**3. Transformative perspective
in communities of relationships**
When an ecosystem or organisation evolve,
becoming extended, hybrid and distributed,
it becomes essential to increase the scale
and frequency of the interactions.

**4. Transformative perspective
in communities of communities**
These typologies connect several interdependent
actors: they create intersections and points
of contact, preserving the identities of the individual
organisations they link and sharing elements
of mutual benefit.

Scaling action in communities of interest: consolidating the core

Through convergence dynamics, the community of interests can attract diverse points of view while preserving relevance and keeping away toxic and disruptive elements.

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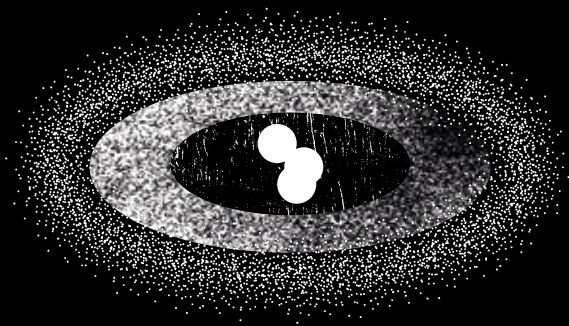
Scaling action in communities of practice: to enhance tools and environments

The evolution of communities of practice entails the co-creation of tools and environments. Involving and enabling people in building, modelling, experimenting and applying new knowledge. All artefacts created with these dynamics become part of shared rituals.

←

Scaling up action in communities of relationships: nurturing modes of animation

To accelerate the evolution of communities of relationships by giving space to people who can stimulate, celebrate and interact (weaving roles), favouring streamlined content and formats and able to travel fast.

→
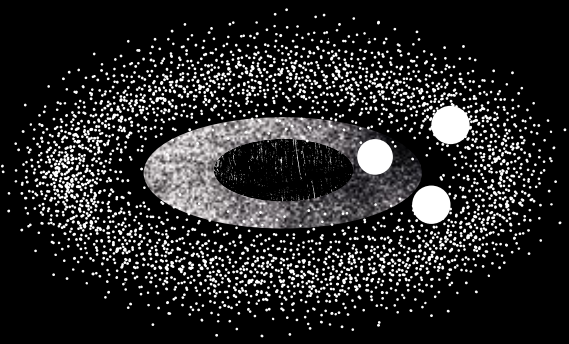
Scaling action in communities of communities: generating new forms of cohesion

To promote systemic change, it is crucial to work on the interdependence of multiple stakeholders, linking and sharing resources between communities and nurturing a multi-value culture.
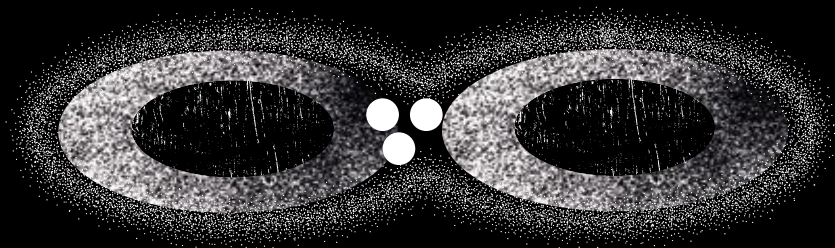
Transformative perspective 1. Communities of interests

The social ancestor of this type of community includes all aggregative forms consolidating around a specific theme (for simplicity: the *fanbase* of a band or sports team). Nowadays, we hear a lot about communities of interest because, in an era of transformation, people must discuss urgent topics (such as technological development, global warming, improving their lifestyle, etc.). However, one-off conversations don't get you far. To go far, you need structured ways of gathering diverse points of view from many places and experiences that converge in the community.

Approaching communities of interest from a transformational perspective, the dimension that most needs attention is that of the **core**, around which a sense of belonging develops. However, because this type of community derives genetically from dynamics conducive to fandom, they need potent antibodies. We may share an interest, but different people bring diverse views and divergent opinions that, if not managed, can be disruptive.

Unsurprisingly, **convergence** is the key action in the participation spectrum to intervene in the core. In this type of community, you will need to converge an area of interest *in relation to the common project it is pursuing (which may be related to the development of a theme in an organisation, the evolution of a product, or the needs of a local area).*

When the nucleus succeeds in picking up on all the topics and innovations that transform an (abstract) interest into something practical and valuable in everyday life, the tangible impact is the cultural evolution of all participants. In addition, the community will develop the defences necessary to avoid all forms of polarisation, which detach points of view from the intended common goal. This is even more critical when interests include hot topics such as sustainability, inclusion or social cohesion.

Transformative perspective 2. Communities of practice

Originating in the world of software developers, these communities help tackle a common challenge with greater skills. In a world swept by transformations, communities of practice step outside the technical perimeter. Indeed, we live in an era of high specialisation; to

master it, we need resources and tools. For simplicity's sake, we also include vocational communities in this category, which specifically concern the highly specialised content of new professions. This is why **the dimension of contexts and environments** is essential in communities of practice, meaning the spaces in which participants can acquire, experience and learn to use new resources shared by the community.

These elements do not emerge from nothing, so the relevant action in the participation spectrum involves **builders**, people who can model new objects, tools and environments that serve the community. To then modify and evolve them, accommodating new needs.

Artefacts created within communities of practice become part of **shared rituals**, which are especially important, as they can accompany participants on long-term learning paths and thus shorten the learning curve of more complex tools.

Transformative perspective 3. Communities of relationships
These communities are not dominated by the tools we need to master or the topics to discuss. In this type, what matters lies elsewhere: in the generative capacity of giving and receiving support. They can be very useful in local contexts (which, for example, bring together the specific needs of a neighbourhood with a very diverse population) or in dispersed organisational contexts (in which the 'parent company' spreads out over a diffuse network, encompassing much larger spaces than traditional offices).

The strength of these communities lies in being constantly connected to a real context comprising problems to solve and solutions to generate. The speed and frequency of exchanges between participants in this case is crucial. This is why, in communities of relationships, **the third dimension, that of activity**, prevails. Indeed, the experiential paths triggered by these communities multiply the number of participants capable of developing relevant content and specific solutions, sparking discussions, events and physical-digital forms of aggregation.
Thus, the critical action in the spectrum of participation is the **weaving** that continues to nurture relationships, involving new people in this mission.

Transformative perspective 4. Communities of communities
This last type has a systemic role as a federator of communities from different organisations and areas. Communities of communities work on intersections and points of contact. They converge two or more ecosystems towards a shared project, pooling practices, languages or interactions. So, in this case, we do not have a prevailing dimension. Instead, all dimensions become porous to accommodate useful elements from other communities or, by providing their resources, to support a broader ecosystem.

Communities of communities do not incorporate groups to become a mega-organism but create a dynamic balance between several communities that, while maintaining their identity, share all those elements of mutual benefit. Many associations leverage this concept, as do organisations that include several businesses and pursue synergies oriented towards cost reduction and to nurture a multi-value culture.

A design view for a change of scale
As mentioned, in transformative contexts, communities are not tools. They allow a shared path, enabling new perspectives. This is why we have focused on how communities are formed and interact rather than on specific areas in which they act. Because we live in a world where silos have ever less meaning. This is the great potential of a *People & Community centred* approach: to generate exchanges and interactions between entities that were previously isolated and disconnected, establishing new relationships between private, public, *for-profit* or charitable entities, to generate impacts on an entire system.

These relational dynamics have an additional advantage: they concretise change in real environments, which can be *touched and experienced* by each person who, therefore, acquires new awareness. Hence, a transformation of scale takes shape.

Anticipating and orienting
Working from the 'forms of communities' (interests, practices, etc.) creates a necessary design perimeter, especially in highly uncertain contexts. Otherwise, because of the many actors involved, a *People & Community centred* approach risks losing coherence. Therefore, the forms of community are a first point of reference, helpful in identi-

fying the dimensions to give space to and the actions to trigger the most beneficial participatory dynamics of participation.

This is a helpful first planning step to observe interactions and prepare for potential evolutions, course corrections or new resources. Defining a design perimeter from a form of community (interests, practices, relationships, etc.) helps avoid creating large digital environments that, to respond to everything and everyone, are doomed to remain empty rooms. Providing 'more' is not just useless in these contexts. Designing more platforms, technology, and events detracts from achieving one overriding goal: embodying the most relevant exchanges in the most valuable contexts. Thus generating disorientation and, eventually, disaffection.

For example, a **community of relationships** will need a few flexible tools to allow people to express themselves more frequently. In contrast, a **community of practice** can thrive even with a low level of interaction as long as it provides practical tools to use at the right time. And a **community of interests** will have to work on an ever-stronger sense of belonging, not to let people's attention wane on an issue that frequently risks becoming unfashionable.

In the design phase, focusing on the type of community is not just helpful in the initial planning stages. It is a continuous exercise because the strength of communities is that they adapt and transform, and anticipating how they might rearrange themselves guarantees future participation. Being always ready to generate new relationship environments or refocus language is one way to nurture community life.

This is not pure theory, but social dynamics that we need to support. For instance, some communities created as digital platforms may need to share the participants' **energy**, which is best expressed physically. Conversely, an informal community formed around a specific interest may need resources to continue discussions, and a digital environment can be very helpful.

Therefore, a *People & Community centred* approach feeds on hybrid design to move between transformative dimensions without scleroticising into a fixed idea. It then feeds the flow of experiences, multiplying among the participants and generating positive impacts. ■

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Designing for transformative communities

Interdependence

Adopting an approach that focuses on people and communities means looking at individuals as interdependent parts in constantly changing environments that lead to new relationships, contexts and possibilities for action. Interdependence runs through *the present* (organisations, neighbourhoods, areas, production systems) and *the future* (new spaces of extended reality and interactions with non-human agentivities).

The scales of intervention

Thus, designing for transformative communities primarily means recognising the scales of intervention on which to develop a discourse, hybrid environments and shared practices. It is a crucial step for releasing exchanges, vital interactions and energy. And to understand that communities are not all the same but are always situated. Otherwise, they gather people with nothing in common and generate blurred goals, which claim to generate value but drop into the void.

We are communities of communities

Thinking about scales of intervention adds a pluralistic awareness to design because, as people, we are members of multiple communities, which, through our relationships, establish hybrid bonds that nurture larger ecosystems.

We are all interdependent, in a 'network of giving and receiving'

Sante Maletta

*Associate professor
of Political Philosophy,
University of Bergamo*

Let's not limit ourselves
to tolerating informal
networks in organisations.
Let's value them
to improve people's
well-being and efficiency.

The concept of community spans the whole of modernity and has acquired a central role, especially in philosophy and sociology, at least since the Industrial Revolution. Faced with this 'great transformation' (K. Polanyi), contemporaries are amazed at the progress in the technological and economic fields but, above all, distressed by the rapid deterioration of the living conditions of the urbanised masses and the crisis of traditional social forms. The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies left us with the community/society dichotomy as the intellectual stylistic starting point for community thinking. The community is an *organism* in which the individual parts interrelate in a mutual and *solidaristic* co-partnership that makes them in principle irreplaceable. Society is a *mechanism*, which, if you have the necessary *know-how*, can be disassembled and reassembled based on the fungibility of its parts. Community is warm insofar as it cares for the needs of its members. Society is cold insofar as it values the merit and functionality of its members for its purposes.

For Tönnies, the community tends to play the role of an *ideal* helpful in gaining an external perspective on contemporary society from which to identify the limits of society and study it with a *critical* approach. However, for Tönnies or more recent sociology, this doesn't mean that there is no recognisable community life in modern society. In all known societies, community and society always come together in an *entanglement* that takes the most varied forms and can only be dissolved theoretically. Without forgetting, the notion of community can and must also be considered in its intrinsic *ambivalence*. Indeed, the danger of any form of community life is developing a sense of our identity to the point of *excessive immunisation* against anything other than it. Such suspicion and fear of diversity and the seemingly unassimilable not only closes the community's identity but also betrays its basic function, which is to support, according to the principle of the *subsidiary relationship*, its members in their life journey, which generally, by its very nature, crosses the community's boundaries. In other words, over-immunisation is accompanied by a limitation of the autonomy of community members that compromises their personal realisation. Looking at the news, this is not an infrequent experience, especially in ethnic-religious minority communities living within contemporary liberal societies.

The most recent developments in the thinking of one of the leading contemporary moral philosophers, Alasdair MacIntyre help us avoid getting lost in the tangle of community. Known as one of the leading theorists of neo-communitarianism, the Scottish philosopher rethought the notion of community in the light of an anthropological vision that views human beings from the perspective of their essential *dependence* and *vulnerability*. This theoretical move

Informal networks of giving and receiving drive the lives of people working within organisations

presupposes that the sociological view focuses on the social relations that sustain human life through its various stages, which are more or less informal. These relationships, which MacIntyre calls *networks of giving and receiving*, follow a principle of selflessness and can generate rational motivations for social action that transcend the boundaries of what we do out of mere utilitarian calculation or in compliance with positive laws. Such networks generally encompass not only family and friends but also work colleagues and can sometimes include business associates and even strangers. They underpin every political community by empowering community members to manage their vulnerability to obtain the material and relational goods for their human fulfilment. This is a *pre-political* phenomenon without which social institutions (such as the market) or political institutions (such as the state) would not survive.

The networks of giving and receiving rely on the practice of a set of *intellectual and moral virtues* that MacIntyre encapsulates in the expression *just generosity* to indicate that mere justice, as it is commonly understood, is not enough. Just generosity is expressed through acts of mutual care between people who consider the needs of others as good reasons to act without pre-calculating the extent and scope of that caring relationship. In this perspective, we emphasise that MacIntyre rightly understands the virtues as acts that, even when essentially relational, enable the person practising them to realise, even if only partially, their own good, that is, *happiness*. This is the reason behind virtue's strong motivational charge, which is far more potent than common altruism.

Thus, while it is undeniable that informal networks of giving and receiving inform the lives of people working within formal economic and political organisations, they face an alternative: either tolerate them or seek to *value them* in synergy with a corporate welfare system intelligent enough to respect the intrinsic nature of those networks where too much formalisation would be detrimental. All with a view to boosting the material and moral well-being of the organisations' members, which could also positively impact efficiency. Such organisations, encouraged to open up to the forms of community life preceding and surrounding them and to valorise subsidiarily the networks of giving and receiving, might bring more precision to the ideal perspective of *community capitalism*. ∎

Community of...
the attribute
makes a difference

Interview with
Fabio Berti

Full Professor
of Sociology

Sociologist,
University of Siena

Community is a powerful and evocative yet problematic concept. To overcome its ambiguity, community can be defined in a planning and forward-looking sense, deciding with whom, how and in which direction to go.

The term 'community' has increasingly been used in organisations in recent years. How come?

We live in a society of rampant individualism, where disintegration and fragmentation are structural elements. In this context, the title of a famous book, 'Desire for community', by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman is emblematic. We need to return to community specifically to overcome this exaggerated individualism, but the desire for community can also mask negative aspects.

According to Ferdinand Tönnies, the first academic to discuss it sociologically, community can be warm, welcoming and protective. Yet, it protects and excludes. Community implies a boundary establishing who is in and who is out. In this exclusive sense, communities can presuppose conflict and generate nationalism and a resurgence of patriotism. Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, speaks of a 'global community', but social and 'virtual' communities are one thing. Reality is another.

In contemporary society, communities are often a means to an end and temporary. Bauman again speaks of wardrobe communities or coat-hanger communities: they are *à la carte* communities, which last the length of a performance. We are united and feel deeply part of a group with important feelings of belonging and solidarity, but only for a short time, like attending a concert or an exciting gathering. When the show ends, we forget about the others with whom we shared it all until an hour ago and return to our individualities.

Then, there is the positive aspect of communities, which occasionally appears with very particular attributes. For example, community cooperatives are based on a territory, not for the exclusive use of whoever is traditionally entitled to it, but on solidarity between recognised stakeholders. In this sense, the term community is not exclusive but inclusive. It is not marginalising but, on the contrary, produces positive effects.

In general, the risk is that words such as 'community' or 'sustainability' become slogans: evocative terms that mask other rationales and prove inadequate tools to fix what is wrong.

The first suggestion we get from this is that 'community' is a word that needs to be connoted...

We need an attribute to define community, but it is not enough. It must also be filled with appropriate content. In this way, it becomes an alternative perspective to a dominant societal model that revolves around the individual bearer of special interests. Even if we are verging on an oxymoron, we could say that the communitarian reference is tenden-

tially universalistic, including interests that are not utilitarian and disengaged from the profit motive. In these terms, community offers a perspective capable of looking at the solidaristic values of generosity and true sustainability.

If we ask ourselves 'community *of what*, *of whom* and *for what*', then we can also possibly come up with an idea capable of offering an alternative.

How important is the commitment to revitalise the term community?

Commitment is central. In Tönnies' conception of community, we ended up there by birth, whereas today, we can choose to be part of one, but we can also drift into solipsism. Being alone may be a burden, but not a cost, while choosing to be in a community has a price. It means committing to something, to someone, to a group that transcends the subjective dimension. And that isn't easy in a society that has trained us in individualism.

Communities seem to provide a perspective to address many of today's challenges. But how can we avoid falling into the traps he described?

We live in an increasingly complex world, and we cannot meet the challenge of complexity alone. However, the danger is adopting a procedural approach to community. We develop shared solutions to solve problems, but this does not necessarily increase the sense of community.

Procedures are important, but we also need values and to know with whom I want to create a community that identifies a direction for improving the quality of life for as broad and inclusive a well-being as possible.

The community must be a germinal prospect: it is a seed and, like all things that grow, must be managed, supported, and cared for. It is a mistake to imagine a community already given. It is a perspective that you build and need to train. ■

In the term community, the idea that you cannot reduce everything to the individual is powerful and evocative

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We are all co-dividuals

Carlo Alberto Redi

*Lincei Academy,
Umberto Veronesi Foundation*

Manuela Monti

*Department of Public
Health, Experimental
and Forensic Medicine
University of Pavia;*

*University Institute of
Advanced Studies - Pavia*

Biology also tells us we are all *co-dividuals*, the result of the interaction between our DNA and the environment in which we live. We need a collective exercise to reverse direction and ensure our well-being and that of future generations.

The Covid-19 pandemic made clear the need to imagine a new normality because, as Simone Weil says: 'Waiting for that which is to come is no longer a matter of hope but of anguish.' Like a litmus test, the virus unmasked the normality in which we live and revealed who we are. Now is the time to think about who we could be. This reflection must start from at least two inescapable and non-discretionary facts. The first is that the destruction of the planet's ecosystems and biodiversity is a clear fact and causes the epidemics/pandemics that have struck over the last forty years at an increasing rate. The second is that there is only one Earth and it is exhausted: the demand for resources and services we place on the Earth today is such that we would need almost two planets to meet it.

Thus, we can no longer return to pre-pandemic normality and must develop sustainability policies for social justice and environmental justice, as the sustainability of all our actions becomes a necessary response to a just demand for intergenerational justice. Everyone has a duty to develop and propose potential solutions, but to take part actively, we need conceptual tools to develop our ideas in this regard. To be a full citizen today and to participate in the governance of things, you need a 'minimum' base of scientific knowledge. Scientific citizenship is then ultimately connoted as an exercise of active citizenship. Participation is about being and feeling part of an open community, knowing that you count in the processes through which decisions are made, and being able to control and question the exercise of power. Participation and self-governance are the two basic premises of modern democracy, which is a 'cognitive' democracy, the only one capable of promoting equity among its participants.

After the century of chemistry and physics, we are now in the millennium of the life sciences, of biology. Everything around us is bio: bio-politics, bio-economics, bio-ethics, bio-engineering, bio-terrorism... If in the century of chemistry, people could go about their lives without knowing the periodic table of elements, or in the century of physics, they could cheerfully overlook the Higgs boson, in this millennium, they need to know the rudiments of the significant advances in knowledge of biology and their technical applications in every field of knowledge since these directly affect our 'naked life'. How we arrive on planet Earth (procreation), how we leave it (end of life), how we care for ourselves (regenerative and personalised medicine), what we eat (protein production from alternative sources to meat), how we produce energy (fossil fuels *versus* green energy), and how we destroy or preserve planet Earth (biodiversity economics). Everything is based on technological advances in the life sciences, and therefore, that minimum amount of knowledge that people need to make their own choic-

We result from the interaction between our DNA and the environment into which we are born

es is the factor that defines being fully citizens and the degree of democracy in our social living. Our degree of citizenship is defined by our capacity to make independent choices about our bodies and the environment in which we live, taking a secular welfare state approach, abandoning the inconsistent vision of genetic determinism that sees individual destiny as decided by the DNA assigned to us by fate, by the genetic roulette of our parents' sexual reproduction.

We are the outcome of the interaction between our DNA and the environment we are born into. Here, we mean environment in the broadest sense, the family and cultural environment that nurtures us and the chemical and physical environment determined by postcode lottery. We are the product of an affective process, not a zootechnical animal reproduction exercise. This is today's biological conception of the individual as 'co-dividual' . Biologists see human identity emerging as an evolutionary, irreducibly multiple identity, a summation of the many diversities that crossbreed and cross-fertilise. Each of us comes into the world carrying within us and embodying the biological past of countless generations, all of which have migrated to us through reproductive sex that reshuffles all the genetic traits.

The awareness of the 'ecological question' seriousness suggests that we can no longer postpone the time for action. There is no alternative to caring for a liveable planet capable of ensuring our own *well-being* and that of future generations, towards whom we have not hitherto behaved as good ancestors. Clearly, the outline of 'social genomics' that can ensure our well-being and that of future generations is now clear. A growing body of evidence documents a substantial link between the social context within which we live and the genome functions of our organism's somatic and germinal cells. Indeed, various environmental factors can change our cells' genetic expression, altering the physiological state of tissues and organs. Thus, social inequalities translate into health inequalities, which are not only transmitted intergenerationally but determine disparities of opportunity, income and social rank in a recurring mechanism that reinforces the social disadvantage that led to them. Combating the social injustices that blight most humanity is an ethical duty for the most fortunate. The society in which we live has to ensure the best for the *well-being* of all *co-dividuals*. Therefore, we need to attempt a collective exercise to reverse course and radically change our lifestyles to prevent our *agendas* from turning into *sub-agendas*. ■

Complex places for nomadic communities

Giampiero Lupatelli

Territorial economist

Communities at the centre of the local development process as an educational process must be imbued with complexity, open and curious about an innovation that will redesign their traditions.

The success of the government's call for *green communities* raises high expectations. First, because of the noun used: the term 'community' would have seemed obsolete or at least rhetorical until not so many years ago, but nowadays, it occupies a growing space within the purview of the social sciences. The attribute, 'green', is likewise not lacking in ambition, bringing us up to date on global warming. *Green community* as the territorial extension of a *green economy* that people often argue is a cosmetic operation, *greenwashing*? Or, instead, an opportunity and instrument of territorial rooting of a development model where the social and economic dimensions of sustainability accompany a priority need for environmental sustainability?

We can only find the answer to such challenging questions in the intentions of the local political and social operators, first and foremost, in a new understanding of local development processes as valid learning processes. This means educational processes in which, alongside the operators who participate individually or in collectives compartmentalised into formalised roles, and together with the organisations assigned to manage the various organisational, logistical and curricular profiles of the processes in the city centre and the suburbs, the physiognomy of a new yet ancient subject appears increasingly relevant and better defined.

Indeed, the new institutional understanding of the local development process as an educational process involves, within a new framework of active involvement and responsibility, the very *communities* within which the process takes practical shape. Admittedly, to adequately describe community today, we need to introduce quite a few clarifications and distinctions from the classical canon that, in Ferdinand Tönnies' work, based its efficacy on the difference between community and society and on the parallel distinction that saw in modernity the transition from *status* to contract.

At the turn of the millennium, having emerged with great expectations, if also a certain bewilderment, from the long period of Fordism, and perhaps lulled by the prospect of the end of history, capitalist society looked afresh at community. That latter can and must no longer be imagined and represented merely as the residue of a past order of which we can at best be nostalgic, but as a reality once again alive in the second wave of modernity, full of implications and possible evolutionary projects, to the point of being configured once again as a primary category of political discourse, the hub of a potential new dyad capable of replacing the worn-out but hardly surmountable right/left duality.

It's time to reread Ferdinand Tönnies

In refocusing attention on the community dimension of social relations, maybe the time has also come to re-read and reconsider Fedinand Tönnies' original lesson and his striking contrast between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, trying to investigate new repositories of meaning in the organic/mechanical pairing that Tönnies associates with the community/society pairing, in a way that is perhaps more direct and explicit – and indeed more eloquent in our eyes – than the *status*/contract pairing with which we more usually associate it.

Supposing we accept the centrality of this second association and associate with organic the notion of complexity as a distinctive element of the new biological/organic scientific paradigm and its metaphorical mirroring in the social sciences. In that case, we might also derive a new reason to explain the success of the community dimension and its research in the second wave of modernity, found in exploring new horizons and frames of meaning in the organisation of everyday life bubbling deep in the bowels of contemporary society.

These horizons are deeper and more structured than those built by the exchange of benefits (in the sphere of the market) and the exercise of rights (in the sphere of institutional relations), pursued instead in the free practice of the gift, which expresses the need to meet in our neighbour not the stranger that urban civilisation presents to us, but the person with whom we can convince ourselves that we share a sophisticated space of values, a world of choice and not only of destiny, a place.

Places, landscapes of the soul

In this place of being, traversed by life, we can read the complex sedimentation of information, events of natural and social history, biographies and feelings. Here we find the profound message of a landscape of the soul that – in this feeling of ours – accompanies and overlaps with the real landscape, helping to distance it from the mechanistic reduction to its vision as a panorama, as a postcard image. A landscape of the soul that brings us closer to other people who, like us, derive from the messages those

The community can and should be imagined and represented as a living reality again, full of implications and possible evolutionary projects

The village of our educational pacts must be consciously imbued with complexity, open and curious about innovation

places impart to us, perceptions and feelings not (too) dissimilar from our own, convincing us (deluding us?) that we belong to the same community of place – even if not to a community of blood – and yet still capable of inadvertently transferring to us, as if introjected with our mother's milk, attitudes, orientations and behaviours that, just like those of a pre-modern tradition, transcend utilitarian calculation and, apparently, even the individualistic exercise of free will to envelop us in collective action, even more effective and convinced the more it is placed at the micro-scale and from whose warmth the Promethean liberation of economic rationality appeared to have separated us.

Thus, places, with the infinite complexity of relationships that connect them in space and time, are in the material dimension of economic relations of production and consumption as in cultural contaminations. Social practices of connection, cross-fertilisation and exchange, made all at once closer and more immediate as they become more impersonal and nuanced with the pervasive entry of digital technologies and their obsessive common use.

To raise a child, you need a village
In these places, the biographies of individuals interweave, for a more or less brief moment (increasingly frequently) or for a lifetime (increasingly less frequently), to form families, businesses, friendships, loves, institutions. In these places and the flow of events through them, now certainly less stable than in the past, we build *communities* that we can increasingly see as nomadic. It is to these communities – and not to others, abstract and ideal – that we entrust the possibility of success of an evolutionary pathway of local economies, certainly not separate and disjointed from the dynamics of globalisation.

If '*it takes a whole village to raise a child*' as an African proverb says, the village of our educational agreements should be consciously steeped in complexity, open and curious about an innovation that will reshape its traditions. In a village, a community that exercises an educational function will first learn to learn. Because here, too, in building and maintaining the social relations of neighbourhood and proximity, learning is the work, as in the factory of the future. ■
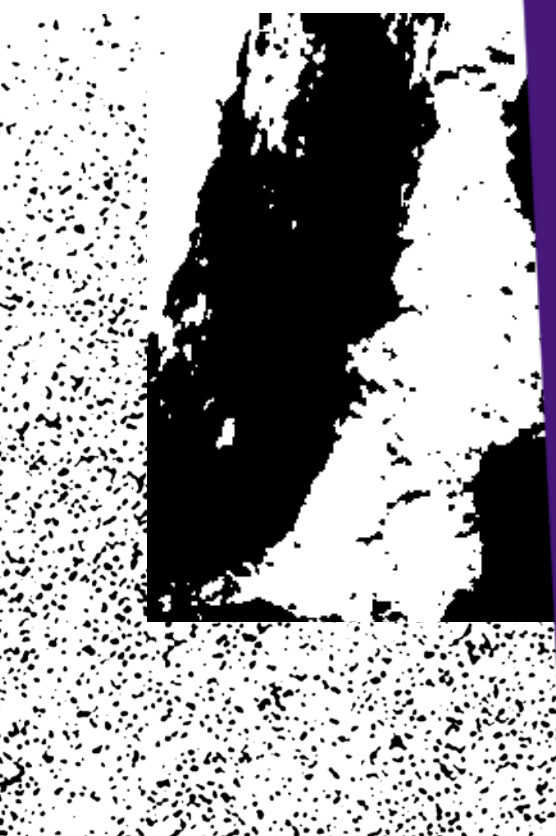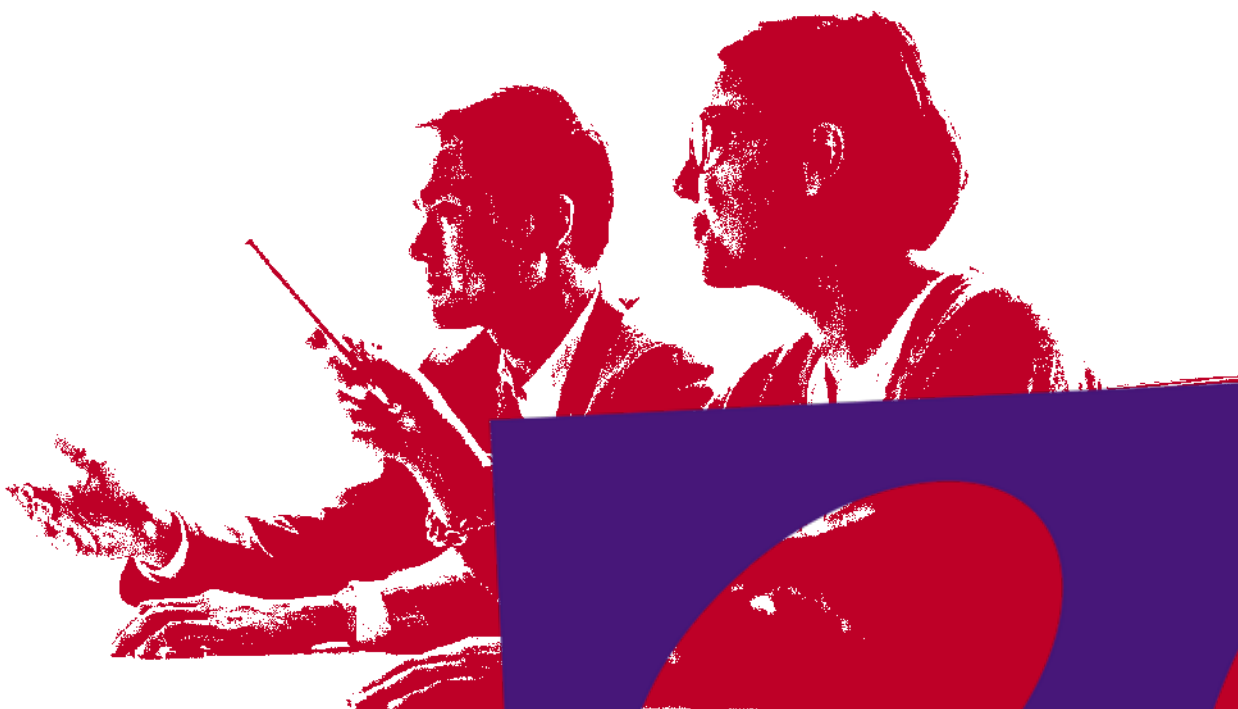
Designing participatory change for cities

The link between the city and its people highlights a paradigm shift in which the resident is no longer a spectator of a changing place, but the main protagonist of change. This is happening thanks to a renewed sense of civic activism, which very often goes beyond individual initiative and finds greater strength in the group. Whether informal or with a codified structure, being a 'community' today means playing a political, social and active role in the transformation of everyday life.

The 'situated community'

The 'situated community' refers to a system of people who are connected by living, working, visiting and spending time in the same place. A community of this type can be that of a neighbourhood, a village, a workspace, a meeting place, a public space, or, more broadly, any specific geographical place that is continuously frequented by a certain number of people. A community offers many of the characteristics of a deep social relationship: security, familiarity, support, loyalty. The mutual appreciation of people in such a context is based on each person's efforts and contributions to the group, rather than on individual status.

When 'situated communities' are willing to participate in collaborative action, it is much easier to design, produce and activate solutions for a better way of life. In fact, there is a level of proactivity that facilitates the creation of solutions for a better everyday life: from small events that are more related to entertainment or cultural diffusion, to self-managed services that include sharing solutions, to actions that respond to very specific needs of neighbourhoods, very often involving residual public spaces (urban gardens, improvised playgrounds), up to real micro-transformations of spaces that are waiting for a structural change and that take on a temporary character to test their validity, effectiveness, correct use and induced benefits for people (tactical urbanism, solutions related to emergencies).

We can call them 'project communities', groups of people who form around a response to a need of theirs in factual, design terms, and who take the idea through to realisation, and even further, to the phase of use, testing, improvement.

The designer as a design activist

In many urban projects with extensive citizen participation, the role of the designer emerges as a design activist: a figure with interdisciplinary skills who remains active at all stages of the process, not only in the conception but also in the realisation of the interventions themselves. The designer is therefore the one who can create convergence by identifying and translating

Davide Fassi

Polytechnic of Milan; Polimi DESIS Lab coordinator

People living, working and continuously spending their time in one place are 'situated' communities: when they are prepared to participate in cooperative actions, they become project communities, leading the transformation of everyday life.

In many urban projects with extensive public involvement, the role of the designer becomes that of a design activist

people's needs and ideas, on the basis of three qualities that accompany him or her throughout the process:

- The ability to generate empathy with the communities of reference, i.e. a process that facilitates the consolidation of the designer's credibility and thus creates a relationship of trust with the people with whom he designs;
- Patience, i.e. tiptoeing into existing contexts, which allows time to listen, observe, build relationships, devise and ground solutions. Time is a key factor because it ensures the gradual construction of objectives and the calibration of relationships between the various components of the community system;
- The ability to generate visions, scenarios and solutions by drawing on a panorama of knowledge that goes beyond the "hic et nunc", i.e. providing a strategic approach to the problem to be solved, rather than proposing a punctual solution.

In this way, City Living adopts a "bottom-up" approach, in dialogue and interaction with the "top-down" approach, even with virtuous cases. This is due, on the one hand, to the numerous initiatives linked to social innovation that are gradually changing the way citizens use, transform and shape cities, starting from the neighbourhood level (tactical urbanism, slow mobility, guerrilla gardening, social streets) and, on the other hand, to a series of tools that the administration has made available to the public.

Accompanying the inhabitants of the areas in participatory processes makes them aware of the benefits of the project and actively involves them. The use of participatory methods and the involvement of citizens in urban regeneration make it possible to create a new affective dimension towards rediscovered urban spaces. The development of a sense of belonging - to a place, a project or a community - leads to a greater willingness to take care of the place itself over time, making the regeneration process effective and sustainable. This is the moment when activators trigger a 'jump-out' process, recognising the organisational autonomy of the community and the completion of the empowerment process.

The 'project communities' thus become a crucial issue for urban development today, because they show how the expertise generated by being active in a place implies reappropriating public spaces, imagining new uses and creating new connections. ■

Circles and lines: metaphors for a post-racist society

Interview with
Janine De Novais

Writer & Cultural Strategist

We need a new metaphor for a community that is not an enclosure, a closed circle. It is possible to imagine post-racist communities if we can develop intellectual courage on the subject and empathy.

As a counsellor, educator and teacher, do you feel the community perspective has renewed importance?
I deal with racial and cultural issues and believe these communities have always developed forms of collective resistance to attacks. So, from this point of view, I don't think there is a renewal. Indeed, people recognise these issues require a collectivist and communitarian idea and approach, but we are losing the ability to put it into practice. At least in the US, yes Gen Z is collectivist. However, it is anchored to technologies and social media that make us lose important qualities, such as empathy, coexistence with differences, and understanding others' points of view.

How can we imagine a community that can contribute to a more just, equitable and inclusive world?
We have always imagined communities as a circle. Social sciences teach us this: with an inner and an outer group. We learn that we have evolved in this way. However, when I look at the universe and nature, I do not see closed systems but entities expanding rapidly in all directions.
So what if we have always had a mistaken view of community? The most we can do with a circle is to imagine it growing bigger and bigger, always leaving someone on the outside. Because a circle always has an edge and an exclusion. But what if the community were a line instead? By representing it in this way, we would all be more cautious in asserting who belongs to it, who entered it first, and who cannot access it. All our inclusion problems have this circular and chronological bias.
We should teach people to think differently about communities from an early age. We should work to create identities that do not depend on these ideas of authority and exclusion.

Your research focus is racism, and, in your book, you speak of a 'brave community' that can help us imagine a post-racist society. Can you explain what this is about?
It is essentially a method I devised to help university teachers. The original project is a qualitative sociological study of university classes with students from different backgrounds, aged between 18 and 22, in which professors taught topics such as racism and other difficult subjects. And they did it successfully. The theory I call 'brave community' helps students develop two crucial elements: intellectual courage about the subject matter and empathy. The dynamic that arises is this: we develop 'the ground for learning', a combination of content, culture, and 'why' we are learning certain notions.

It's like when an outstanding professor teaches a complex subject: the students don't just get knowledge from it but also ideas about how they should behave and interpret that combination of content.

You say we cannot imagine a world beyond racism. How can a community perspective help us?

If you think about it, there are few things in the modern world that we all imagine alike at any latitude. Racism is one, capitalism the other. I don't think everyone is racist, but we are all fully involved in a racially and capitalist structured world. It is like saying 'the sky is blue': it is such a powerful ideological state of affairs that no one can question it. Unless you work against this ingrained concept. It is the absence of imagination that perpetuates racism. Why do we need to activate a post-racist imagination from a community perspective? Racism operates on many levels: it is not just a structural system but also an ideological one, and if we do not practise thinking outside of it, we will remain encircled by racist views. Instead, when people find themselves in a 'brave community', they can escape this situation for the first time. Thus, racism becomes a concept that can be questioned, with a social and historical origin. In a learning environment where we can ask questions, an ability to reflect is activated, and something new becomes possible. I see this mechanism in students: they start to understand things they hadn't grasped before.

All our problems of inclusion have this circular and chronological prejudice: everything revolves around the idea that the community is closed

We could use this method to address critical issues related to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. But you point out that, in organisations, many DEI-related policies are 'built to fail'. What would you suggest to tackle these problems effectively?

We need a rigorous approach and context-specific interventions because there are different skills, missions, objectives and ways of doing things: a museum differs from Coca-Cola, a school system or a government organisation. All these institutions have different social and historical trajectories. How-

We should start working on the idea that perhaps we need a new metaphor for community that is not a fence, a circle

ever, regarding DEI, we think these specifics do not matter and that any consultant can provide adequate policies. This makes little sense. I would therefore recommend starting from the brave communities approach. So people can understand how and why their institutions and contexts have become unequal and then be guided through a learning process that can help them solve the problem through their expertise in their specific context.

Let's conclude with an optimistic exercise: what features should a future community capable of moving beyond racism have?

I am always optimistic about human beings: we are organisms that want to live, like nature. We must practise a religion of life, not death, which is the basis of racism.

A post-racist community should also be informed and educated. It should not just be multicultural and multiracial but also dynamic. If we return to the vision of a community that transcends the circular vision, we can visualise a post-racist community in constant change. Then, it must be geared towards diversity and understanding what we are as a human civilisation, comprising diversity, intercultural dialogues, and migration.

We don't have to change much: human beings are not afraid of change, of differences. They are not stable. However, nowadays, they teach us lies from childhood: in kindergarten, we are told that our community is homogeneous, that it is better than others, that it is stable, that it cannot bear change, and that outsiders must not enter. Thus, fear, xenophobia, racism, homophobia, and transphobia develop. We must unlearn these concepts and re-learn who we are deep down: courageous, empathic and social beings. ■

Further reading

Janine De Novais,
*Brave community:
teaching for a post-racist
imagination*,
Teachers College Pr 2023

Beyond the Metaverse: the web to come

Interview with
Avi Bar-Zeev

*President of the XR Guild
and RealityPrime*

We don't just talk
of Metaverse, but of Fediverse,
whose pillars are
interoperability, cooperation
and ethics. We need
communities that run the
gamut of interests, linked
in an equal ecosystem.

What's the link between the concept of community and the Web3?
Successful on-line experiences with user-created-content, whether centralized or decentralized, have one thing in common: community. There has to be a really good reason for people to participate, to contribute, and to pay attention to what others contribute as well. Single-player experiences depend primarily on great content. Multi-player experiences depend on that plus other people reinforcing a positive overall experience. It's easy for a few bad actors to really ruin a community, which is why moderation is so important.

Can metaverse correctly be conceived as a community? Which kind of community (what are its rule, its dynamics) and why is it important to think at metaverse as a community?
There are many different communities today, but none of them are at the level of The Metaverse we imagine. People who got into NFT art did so largely because of the community (if not the money). The Web3 side of the future Metaverse is a kind of community of people who believe in decentralization primarily, who are angry with the centralized control of our lives. Cryptocurrency enthusiasts are similar, but more concerned with making money outside of normal channels. The Metaverse needs more than that. It needs communities across the entire range of interests, networked into an overall ecosystem. The Fediverse may be the closest thing today, but I wouldn't call that The Metaverse yet.

What risks do you see in the metaverse? In terms of interoperability: rather than a single immersive and interoperable world, the metaverse is in danger of being the final stage of the journey that from the dream of the global Internet seems to be gradually transporting us into the reality of the "splinternet", the balkanized network? In term of data protection and accessibility issues: an insecure or inaccessible metaverse can fuel exclusion and pose a threat to members' identities? Other risks?
Things will always be splintered in my opinion, for better or worse. There is a Web today, but it's made of millions of very different web sites. Some are mutually consistent, but most are not. What matters is that there are common protocols and standards such that when people want to mash up two or more web services, they can easily do so. Bad splintering happens when we can only take screenshots of some website to share on other websites. Good Interop happens when we can embed content. However, each site has different customers, different rules, and different needs. And we'll never see one-size-fits all in my opinion. That could be come as oppressive as today's tech giants, even if was decentralized. One of the concerns I have

with blockchain is that it's a shared public ledger. Even if you encrypt your personal data for storage somewhere, if it's permanent then it can later be decrypted by more powerful computers. So for privacy, the best bet is to keep your private information to yourself. When you do need to share, we have newer protocols like verifiable credentials, zero-knowledge proofs, homeomorphic encryption that make it safer to share data in very limited ways.

How to transform metaverse into a truly collaborative environment?
The key to collaboration is good communication systems (like co-presence in XR) coupled with good tools that let people work together. Four people can't steer a car, but they can paddle a boat. The right tools and techniques need to be developed for people to actually work together in a productive way. And that includes asynchronicity, where we don't have to always meet in person in real-time to get work done.

Why do you say that metaverse needs a strong set of ethical principles to succeed?
For too many people the Metaverse is inevitable and not enough of them have learned lessons from Manifest Destiny, where east-coast Americans settled west and displaced the ingenious people and suffered from a lack of law, health care, education and general safety. We're repeating the same mistakes, including those we made with the Web, where free-flow of information trumped privacy. A strong set of ethical principles helps guide decisions we make during product development to ensure the final product matches our real needs and helps vs. hurts consumers. It at the very least helps developers become aware of future problems they might not know until they step into them. Ethics is the voice of experience looking to the future.

What might offline communities learn from the metaverse and how will the two dimensions interact?
I think it's more the other way around. The Metaverse is made of people and we've evolved social norms over thousands of years. Some new ones will develop, but humans are still human, at least for now. So we should understand how we positively interact and stop the negative patterns we see, like harassment and bigotry online and off. ∎

**Ethics
is the voice
of experience
that looks
to the future**

More-than-human: working with new agentivities

Laura Forlano

Professor - College of Arts, Media, and Design Northeastern University

To imagine and design community, solidarity and relationships in a *more-than-human* world, we need to abandon the categories that have long shaped our experiences. Learning from the people who already do it is a good starting point.

In the HBO post-apocalyptic thriller "The Last of Us", based on a 2013 video game, a fungus outbreak turns humans into violent flesh-eating zombies. But, what if we were to imagine microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses and fungi not as the threats of another pandemic such as COVID-19 but rather as new opportunities for *more-than-human* community, solidarity and relations?

Symbionts, an exhibition at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, takes exactly this perspective exploring "what it means to be interdependent by engaging living materials as collaborators in creation". This key question around acknowledging and fostering interdependence – both with living materials as well as artificial ones – is essential to consider in the current moment.

While conflict and chaos make for good television, in her essay "Carrier Bag of Fiction", science fiction author Ursula K. Leguin cautions that our stories might be reimagined not, for example, as bullets and bombs but rather as containers for holding different kinds of relations and futures. Technologies must also be reimagined; not only as solutions and fixes to current problems or modes of surveillance, control and profit but rather as sites of care, resistance and liberation.

A more-than-human approach challenges the dichotomies inherited from Western, European Enlightenment notions around liberal humanism. We are instead invited destabilize existing categories of meaning around many aspects of everyday life including gender, race and ability – in fact, the very criteria around which what it means to be human.

For me, a disabled social scientist and design research, this has meant using autoethnographic methods (sometimes also referred to as first-person research) to investigate my own interdependence with the machines – a "smart" insulin pump and sensor system – that I use to stay alive. It also means exploring the labor required to maintain these systems through robotic sculptures together with interdisciplinary artist Itziar Barrio. And, it means learning from disabled scholars, artists and activists about the meaning of embracing a "crip" identity that understands disability as an expansion of humanity, rather than a deficit.

Disabled people are keenly aware of more-than-human relations because of our lived experiences, which often require access to medicines, technologies and communities of care. But, we are not silent or passive recipients (as many would like us to be), we actively shape these through humor, do-it-yourself (DIY) practices, bartering for supplies, disobeying medical regimes and participating in activism around our own needs.

Technologies also need to be reimagined as places of care, resistance and liberation

In order to design for more-than-human relations, designers today must develop the capacities to participate in and experience the world in new ways. Performative rehearsals, playful experiments, speculative storytelling and intimate forms of cohabitation - rather than predictions, simulations and tests - have much to teach us about what it means to live together with nonhumans. Many of these things have always been present in the field of design to varying degrees, perhaps foreshadowed by more scientific and systematic practices of strategy and planning.

A greater attention to somatic, affective and aesthetic dimensions – exploring all of the senses – offers a deeper engagement with the world, fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility. For example, this might mean going beyond the visual and using sound, touch, smell, taste and movement to bring to life other ways of relating to one another as well as to the people (and things) that we interact with everyday in our homes, neighborhoods and communities.

These visceral, embodied and situated experiences of alternative possibilities for living will allow us to experience the world in new ways, opening up different questions, dilemmas and concerns. Such questions might include, for example, how we find meaning, belonging and purpose in our lives, how much we produce, consume and/or create, and who we might become in the future. For over ten years, my Designing Futures students have been asking these questions using props, videos, scripts and performances; even building out entire studio spaces where it is possible to experience new rituals of human relations in order to bring their ideas to life.

But, who belongs in these futures and who has agency to shape them? Artists and activists alike are constantly experimenting with the possibilities of what it means to create with new materials, whether artificial, microbial, vegetal or animal. Through these projects, it is possible to learn what it means to share agency, ownership and responsibility around creative practices whether by making things with the latest algorithmic software, growing/decaying things in the art studio or building trust and equity with communities for long-term collaborative projects.

Rather than apocalyptic stories that foreshadow our demise, entertaining as they are, designers can play a role in developing more-than-human approaches by creating more equitable, generous and abundant relations between humans and things. Letting go of the categories that have long shaped our experiences of the world and learning from people that have navigated ways of living that challenge those categories, reconfiguring them around alternative identities, communities and narratives is a good place to start. ■

Designing differently. Between brand-led and community-led experiences

Hugo Jamson

*Business Mission Lead,
The Design Council*

Tackling the climate crisis
requires a third way in design,
combining the simplicity of
the *brand experience* with the
aspirational aspects of the
community experience.
And give shape to business
models for organisations,
serving communities.

Design, differently is a Design Council project that supports design at the intersection of community and climate action. We are taking social entrepreneurs from across the UK through a design thinking and design doing programme, supporting community-led teams who are designing different aspects of a sustainable and circular future.

Our project offers practical support to these community teams while also visioning what future circular communities might be like. Drawing on real-world insight from the inspirational teams we support, we are crafting a connected vision of how shared energy, sustainable food, equitable mobility, circular consumption and empowered skills and education might come together into a positive northstar vision of a different future.

What is becoming clear through our work in this project is the need to design a bigger and faster shift from traditional brand experiences to *collective* experiences.

Customer experience and brand experience are how designers and businesses typically describe the relationships that we have with the providers of our goods and services. They are what businesses want to create to make themselves recognisable and stand apart from their competitors, and what we as consumers gravitate towards to find what we most need and want.

When they work well they become familiar, sticky, aspirational – but their in-built need for fast growth and scale often makes them inherently *un*-sustainable (or hard to retrofit to become sustainable) as well as often more likely to drive us apart than bring us together.

Yet on the other hand community experiences while powerful and enriching to individuals, groups and places are still less visible, less widely adopted, less in line with mainstream aspirations.

When community initiatives work they are built in and of a particular place, they draw the local community together, they are shaped more organically by the unique qualities and needs of the very people they will serve. They create alternatives to existing commercial models and, we believe, offer opportunities for circularity to really take root in a place. The design sector too has a part to play in building these new experiences. A big part of the *Design, differently* project has been about bridging the divide between community and commercial designers. Bringing both together at key moments to work together and learn from each other.

At the Design Council we are starting to describe this third way as *collective experiences*. The blend of products, services and places that are as accessible and inviting as brands, and that can scale and succeed in similar ways, but that are grown from and nurture the communities they inhabit and serve. These are future sustainable business models that are created with the ingenuity and talents of both community and commercial designers acting together.

So how have we and the community designers we've been working with do this? We have unpacked a number of observations and approaches that outline how to design differently with and for communities:

- Don't design what you think a community needs, co-design the initiative *with and around them*. Wide input and collaboration is crucial, draw in actors from right across the system.
- Think like a brand, how do you make what you offer as frictionless and aspirational as what's on offer through a more familiar commercial experience?
- Define the core principles and functional attributes that underpin the offer, but allow room for the unique expressions of place and community to overlay it. As these initiatives scale it's so important that they still retain the capacity to be unique to a particular place.
- Design for your core area of focus, be that food, energy, mobility etc, but ask how might growth be felt outside of the core area? What are the mass effects of success and how can you design them to be as benevolent as possible?

Finding a third way between commercial and community experiences, in their design, implementation and growth, is vital to accelerating meaningful responses to the climate crisis. We can't just build businesses as usual, we need to find new models that change behaviours, that build communities and collectives rather than multiple individual customers. ■

Collective experiences are the business models of a sustainable future

The cohesive faces of communities of communities

Domenico Sturabotti

*Director General Symbola –
Foundation for Italian quality*

In an increasingly connected
and unstable world, the most
competitive companies
are those that are cohesive,
expand their perimeter
and adopt a community-
focused business model.

The current crises make the business environment increasingly unstable. The model that allowed us to compete in the marketplace without genuine relationships with the organisations and people who interact with the company in various capacities can no longer cope with such sudden changes. The world is more connected than we thought, and businesses find themselves immersed in a network of interdependent entities – when the context demands it – to which they can give and from which they can receive input for development and growth. In this scenario, it is essential to encourage the creation of community, extending the company's perimeter outside its walls.

As the Symbola Foundation, we have long analysed cohesive enterprises, organisations with a community-focused business model. In cohesive companies, a strong level of loyalty spans several levels: consumers are more loyal, employees develop a greater sense of belonging, and it is easier to form strategic partnerships with others. All this generates a condition of greater security when facing times of positive change or difficulty. Our report *Cohesion is Competition 2023* documents these benefits. It shows, first, that there has been a growth in cohesive companies throughout Italy (43% of SMEs in 2022 compared to 37% in 2020) and, second, that in the years 2021-2022, these companies recorded a higher rise in turnover than the market (38% compared to 29%).

These new ways of generating value occur at different scales and in different forms.

Internal communities
The first form of cohesive community transforms employees into active subjects. For example, in Honda Italia's Abruzzi plant, all employees can spend part of their time improving the company's operations, both organisationally and in product innovation. This isn't participation that reacts to predetermined stimuli because everyone cooperates in redefining and continually repositioning the company.

However, companies such as Prysmian or Luxottica consider their internal communities so crucial that they encourage employees to become shareholders and, thus, to some extent, co-owners.
These dynamics generate a double value: the company benefits from bottom-up innovation, and employees help by bringing their needs inside the business perimeter.

Relationships with the supply chain
The community approach also extends to the relationship between companies and their supply chains. Thus communities are born, coalescing around the maintenance of increasingly scarce goods.

This is becoming increasingly necessary to progress in the circular economy world. Indeed, in the past, anyone acting upstream in the value chain, producing raw materials, did not dialogue with the final part of the chain. Today, all players are driven to dialogue and co-design to develop the conditions necessary to extend the life of each essential component so that, at the end of its use, it can start a new life cycle.

Innovation is also becoming an essential element in creating communities of business actors. I am sure the products of the near future will arise from knowledge in different sectors rather than in silos. This continuous dialogue is crucial in the era of 'great convergences' where once separate industries are increasingly intertwined. The most obvious example is electrification, where the automotive world increasingly works with the energy and digital worlds.

Communities linking companies to consumers
Something interesting is happening in the company-customer relationship. The latter are no longer only buyers but take part in the company's design process. For example, many motorbike or bicycle manufacturers have created communities to share feedback, where customers often suggest ways to improve products that the company had not considered.

In general, all companies that establish an authentic listening community generate value from this relationship because they tap into new demands and continuous stimuli to innovate.

The world
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The market and the third sector

Another important relationship concerns the third sector, with which companies develop communities that integrate value dimensions with market dimensions. Consider the interaction between Eataly and Slow Food, which has led to a beneficial and continuing relationship. Specifically, Slow Food has built a community that has saved several products from extinction, marking them out and making them known to the world. Then Eataly built its market for those very products, completing the process started by Slow Food.

Innovation is becoming an essential element in creating communities of entrepreneur-stakeholders

The relationship with local communities

Many companies nurture local communities to improve their employees' living environment. One example is Luxottica, whose production plant is in Agordo, a small town in the Veneto region of Italy. The world's leading eyewear manufacturer needs to attract global talent to a place far from large urban centres. Therefore, Luxottica has forged relationships with local councils to make the area where its employees live more attractive, generating value and positive effects for the entire population. Today, Agordo's schools and services are of such a high quality that even foreign executives and their families find it a great place to live.

Recognising membership of multiple communities

It is becoming increasingly important for cohesive enterprises to look at people as members of multiple communities, not just focusing on the corporate dimension. Some organisations allow people to devote part of their working time to helping the associations they belong to. At Alessi, for example, employees can contribute to maintaining public communal spaces during office hours. At Enel, employees take part in environmental campaigns with corporate sponsorship. ■

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Experiences across transformative communities

Exchanges that open perspectives
Dynamics in transformative communities are always generative: they activate experiences on multiple levels, always beginning with an exchange and leading to a transformation. With one clear result: give-and-take relationships open up people's individuality to new perspectives.

The spectrums of participation (and possibility)
In transformative contexts, we need to develop a new idea of community experience, not based on linear steps but on spectrums of possibility involving several people together. This enables a transformative community.

We measure what unites us and what divides us
Traditional methods cannot quantify or measure these experiences, too often modelled on those of digital platforms. Instead, we measure the cohesive relationships that generate positive impacts and the signals that maintain a pluralistic place or organisation. Because in diversity, new roads emerge to tread with a collective horizon.

Permeable boundaries to integrate differences

Interview with
Norma De Piccoli

*Full Professor
of Social and Community
Psychology, University of Turin*

Every individual is embedded in many contexts. The question that arises is to consider the factors that produce well-being and constitute the pre-conditions for its development. The local community to which we aspire builds solidarity and transcends homogeneity.

The community perspective is becoming increasingly urgent, but what happens psychologically in an individual embedded in a community?
Everyone lives in various contexts: social, group, educational, family, work, and community. The well-being of each individual also derives from the extent to which each of these contexts can meet the needs of the individual and individuals considered in their 'cohabitation' as a collective. All the places/contexts that run through our lives are also places of relationships, from affective and primary relationships to those built out of shared action to impromptu, casual relationships that do not seem important to us. US sociologist Robert Putnam explained that strong and weak bonds are essential in a community. The former *bondings* satisfy a need for relationship and belonging, while the latter are so-called *bridging*, which allow access to information and channels that connect groups, institutions, communities, and people.

Several studies show that social relationships offering sustenance and support are essential in coping with stressful situations. They represent an important protective factor, developing well-being and reducing psychophysical malaise generated by stressful events.

What, however, are the limitations and the pitfalls? An overly cohesive community can erect rigid boundaries and, from the outset, exclude nonmembers, producing social capital (and welfare) only for its members, generating an us/them struggle to 'protect' the status quo from the 'dangers' of outsiders. Excessive cohesion can entrap people within it, creating powerful pressure for uniformity and preventing creative and innovative ideas. In such cases, strong social control can also develop, aimed precisely at protecting the traditional values on which the community is based, excluding or marginalising anyone who doesn't conform to these. Therefore we need to develop both strong and weak bonds, the latter making boundaries - real or symbolic - permeable, not rigid, to foster an openness to the other, to the 'different', to those who do not yet belong to 'us'.

Speaking of 'we', how must a community not obscure the role of individuals who do not always have the same needs?
Combining the 'we' with individual uniqueness is challenging. On the one hand, human beings need to live and experience the 'we', which indicates belonging and means recognising and being accepted as an 'I' within a collective. But the subject also needs to express themselves. They need to self-fulfil themselves by expressing their peculiarities and individuality, which never happens in a vacuum. A part of our identity is also defined by what others feed back to us. As Piero Amerio outlined in his book *L'altro necessario*, humans are biologically

social beings. We need each other to develop as individuals and species.

Does a community 'obscure' the role of individuals? Yes, if the community, as I described earlier, doesn't accept diversity and tends towards standardisation by rejecting any kind and form of innovation. A community takes the person as a value in themselves (as an end in themselves and not as a means, as Amerio reminds us, quoting Kant). It should respect individual needs, which can be expressed within a non-homologising and non-ghettoising collective.

Over a century ago, sociologist Emile Durkheim called solidarity a social glue. The local community to which we aspire, perhaps somewhat utopically, is a community that builds solidarity because people need to feel accepted and protected by others. It is also based on integrating differences because it doesn't homogenise individuals.

We cannot ignore others in constructing who I am

Participation plays a key role, but often, we are torn between a spontaneous interpretation and a directive one without thinking about possible nuances...
Participation in the deepest sense is the possibility for a subject, or subjects, to act, be there, and have a say. In the late 1960s, sociologist Sherry Arnstein defined the 'ladder of participation', clarifying that participation isn't simply listening to opinions or consultation without decision-making power. Instead, participation envisages subjects who can also interact and intervene in power choices. If this doesn't happen, it is disguised and distorted participation (referred to as 'tokenism').
'Directive participation' is a nonsense: participation can be stimulated, proposed, conditions can (must?) be created to develop participatory processes, but participation cannot be directive. If it is, then we are dealing with something else.

Participation also implies critical aspects; we need to assess its 'costs' (in time, resources, possible conflicts, etc.) before proposing a participatory process. I will conclude by emphasising, paraphrasing one of the founders of social psychology, Kurt Lewin, that participation isn't a given. We need to 'educate' for participation. ■

Further reading

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*Individui e contesti
in psicologia
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Piero Amerio,
L'altro necessario,
Il Mulino 2013

Networks connect, communities care

Interview with
David Spinks

*Author of 'The Business
of Belonging'*

If you're just a network of
people with no sort of emotional
connection to each other, it's
hard to call it a community. But if
you care about the people in that
group and they care about you,
that's where you start to feel a
sense of community.

Everyone talks about community. What does this concept mean to you as a business community pioneer?

It's a big question and there are 1000 different ways to answer it.

In its simplest form, community is a group of people who feel connected around something they have in common.

In the world of business, it's a shift in how value is created. A typical business aims to help people. A community business helps people help each other. So, you figure out ways to create that collaboration, that network effect where people start helping each other. And, as a result, you can help a lot more people and create a sense of community.

I like Henry Mintzberg's definition, which I learned from Fabian Pfortmüller, another great community thinker. Mintzberg said, "Networks connect, communities care". If you're just a network of people with no sort of emotional connection to each other, it's hard to call it a community, but if you care about the people in that group and they care about you - that's where you start to feel a sense of community.

I think we join communities because they make us feel safe. It's rooted in us from the earliest days of humans and is still how our brains work: if we're alone, we feel unsafe, like we're open to attack.

So community is commonality, it's an exchange of benefits, and it's a place where you feel safe.

To help people understand the importance of emotional connections in the communities you talk about a "diet of belonging". So, how different forms of belonging can be balanced in a wholesome community diet?

Yes. One form of belonging doesn't give us the breadth of connection that we need.

If you only spend time with your family, you might start feeling like you're missing out on a different experience with friends. And if you only spend time with friends, maybe you feel like you're missing out on an opportunity to build your broader network.

The PNAS journal published an interesting article titled "Relational diversity in social portfolio predicts well-being": it shows that people who have a diversity of interactions throughout their day experience a higher level of well-being. Surprisingly, people who only spend time interacting with close friends will have lower well-being than people who spend time interacting with close friends AND neighbors, strangers, acquaintances, etc. We need a "portfolio of interactions".

People need to invest in their social health the same way they invest in their

physical health or mental health. And just like having a balanced diet, we need a balanced diet of connections.

The right balance can change over time for someone. They may be in a phase where they need more family time. They may need to branch out of their friend group and start meeting new people. They may need to spend more time alone with themselves. But it's always about finding a balance, not leaning 100% on one form of connection.

Let's talk about communities within organizations and workplaces. Companies are starting to work as communities in their own right, but they are becoming hybrid and trying to build some kind of digital rituals to keep people together. Is that enough?

I think that our relationship with work and the extent to which we count on it for community is completely changing.

Communities are built in the hallways. In an office, you're constantly crossing paths with your team members and striking up spontaneous conversations. These micro-interactions are critical for serendipity to occur and community to form. We lose that when teams are fully remote. There are no hallways, we log straight into and out of the conference room. There's little chance for serendipity.

You can absolutely still form strong connections and community online, but it won't be as strong as in the office. I think that's a harsh truth we're still coming to terms with.

And hey, maybe it's okay that our places of work aren't our primary sources of community. I know I relied way too much on my work to provide me with a sense of identity and connection over the last 15 years. Maybe this creates space for us to seek community in other parts of our lives. I think that's a good thing.

We need
a balanced diet
of connections:
one form of belonging
doesn't give us
the breadth of connection
that we require

For a lot of people, talking to a robot will just feel safer and easier

Given the rising importance of AI in our lives, how will robots play a role in communities in the future?

There are two main questions I think about here:

1. Will robots be used to build communities?

2. Will humans form emotional connections with robots?

On question number 1: absolutely. People will use robots to build community because robots are much more efficient than humans at certain parts of building communities in scale. A robot can hold a great deal of information about every member in the community and every topic they care about.

It gets potentially terrifying when you think about robots building community without human instruction, but I think that's going to happen too. It's going to become much harder to trust online communities because you won't know if leaders and members are robots. In-person will become that much more valuable because it'll be the only way we can be sure we're talking to other humans.

We're going to need a lot of new rules and regulations to try to monitor it, to make sure that there's transparency and accountability in this space.

On question number 2: also yes. There are people who say that humans don't want to form emotional connections with robots, but we're already seeing it happen.

And why wouldn't a lonely person connect with a robot that makes them feel heard, appreciated, and even loved? It's easy to judge them, but when the alternative is to join dangerous fringe groups, self-harm, or commit other harmful acts, talking to a robot may be much safer and healthier option.

It makes me feel sad that people feel like they have to turn to robots to feel connected. But that's just the state of the world. There's a lot of pain, anger, and conflict. We've lost the ability to meaningfully repair harm in many of our communities. We've forgotten how to BE in community together. For a lot of people, talking to a robot will just feel safer and easier. ■

Between individual needs and desirable futures

Interview with
Joseph Press

*Futures Architect,
IFTF & MakeOurFuture -
Professor of Innovation,
Design and Leadership*

The shocks of recent years have led to 'spectrums of choice' between whose extremes there is an inevitable tension between individual and collective needs. Designers are challenged to balance different needs to co-create more desirable futures.

The individualistic perspective no longer seems sufficient, given the significant transformations facing us. Does this also apply in the workplace? Will the *Office shock* you analysed also lead to the development of a community perspective in the way we work in the future?

Office shock stems from all the crises of recent years: war, inflation, the energy crisis, and phenomena such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter. Each shock determines a spectrum of choices, and one of these shocks concerns the purpose of our work. People are increasingly asking questions about the time spent in the office or at home, how and why we work. The answers span two extremes: at one end of the spectrum are individual needs, and at the other are collective needs. These two demands are in tension with each other and must be balanced. But you must satisfy both: it is unrealistic to have a community that doesn't meet individual needs.

Even when analysing the other spectrums of choice that lead to office shock, we always find tension, which can be positive if used to learn, change and find common ground, while it can easily turn into stress if it locks everyone into their own space.

This tension between individual and collective needs is an excellent space for us to co-create the direction we want to take to find a balance and a way to satisfy both needs. Individuals, single organisations and communities will make various choices. However, if we can see the commonalities and differences, it will be easier to synchronise them to shape future actions that turn this tension into an excellent opportunity for change.

Therefore, there is always a kind of tension between individual needs that must be addressed and collective needs. Then there are the great transformations, unachievable without a collective approach...

The good news is that people today are more willing to work together and network than 15 or 20 years ago. Technologies have helped guide our mentality in this direction. Everyone knows how to use Zoom, place documents in shared folders and work synchronously and asynchronously.

However, fundamental questions related to the purpose of working together and the role of capitalism in influencing community work are still open. I will say it clearly: if the corporate focus stays on quarterly profits, there will be no acceleration towards more sustainable practices. This evolution must accompany other systemic changes in rituals, business models, and human expectations of growth.

Therefore, we need a systemic approach. What role can design play in this change?

The role of designers isn't only to encourage conversations about these shocks and possible responses but also to look for practical solutions to these tensions, to transform them into excellent opportunities for better futures and, finally, to mobilise people to become part of a community. As designers, we are trained to solve problems in the 'here and now' and do it ourselves, but I think both are mistakes resulting from a wrong mentality. Instead, we need to work collectively, even when difficult.

A fascinating example of the role of design in these systemic challenges is the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Jeans Redesign Project. It grew out of a desire to set guidelines to circularise the economy surrounding the production and distribution of jeans. There are many actors, materials and production cycles throughout the value chain of these trousers: a simple pair of jeans is, therefore, incredibly complex. The Jeans Redesign Project started from the design phase, eliminating the metal rivets that make jeans non-recyclable, to embrace a broader challenge: to create a community that could devise standards for everyone in the jeans ecosystem, of which there are hundreds, each tucked away in their own universe.

Design should look specifically at systemic interventions. It isn't about providing a service or a timely solution. It isn't about technology, but about seeing the future you want, to imagine what would happen if that future came true. And then listen to individuals, organisations and communities about what they want to do. This will require some synchronisation because it will imply the emergence of new tensions between collective and individual demands. ■

This tension between individual and collective needs is an excellent space in which to co-create the direction we want to take to find a balance

Further reading

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From spectators to spectator-authors: learning from video games

Interview with
Fabio Viola

*Game Designer
and Professor Escuela
Internacional de Cine
Y Television of Cuba*

As the world of video games teaches, we need to transform the members of a community from spectators to spectator-authors to bridge the gap between user expectations and the added value offered to them by the community experience.

Video games are less and less of a solitary experience and increasingly communal. But what relationships are established inside and outside video games?

Video games have become almost exclusively community games that are not geographic but thematic, involving interests that arise and pass away quickly, with various cooperative, synchronous and asynchronous modes.

Various levels of relationships form within these communities: the first is that of the player with their simulacrum, the avatar, the alter ego. It is a powerful type of relationship between a human and a non-human. It is about how each person represents themselves, the differences between perceived identities in real life and how we self-identify within these worlds.

Collaborative and group relationships, sometimes even hierarchies, appear in all games where the players divide into clans or guilds, such as World of Warcraft or Clash Royale.

Finally, relationships also form between the people who love a game and its champion players. This is typical of the world of e-sports, streamers, youtubers and content creators, where the same dynamics are created as in other worlds, such as physical sports.

We went from enthusiasm for the Metaverse to rapid disillusionment. Yet, in this macro-world, some communities continue to thrive (such as Roblox, Fortnite, Minecraft)... What advice do you feel like giving to organisations?

At the moment, the only populated Metaverses are video games. Other platforms that call themselves Metaverses have few active users, and the same applies to all the environments that companies are trying to create in-house. They are nothing more than 3D and incomplete recreations of the real world.

I believe that replicating pre-existing logics in a new container cannot work. Companies need to rethink content: how people move in space, what they must do, and what powers they have available. A key point is that video game platforms have ceded some power to the community. So, drawing a parallel with the organisational world, it means that the employee or consumer must play a different role. However, this means intervening in a company's mission and vision. At the moment, no one will do that.

So, do you think that for these immersive environments, the dynamics deriving from video games are inescapable...

A video game works when you are constantly called upon to decide. In essence, a triple shift occurs: from the idea of spectator to that of spectator-actor and then spectator-author. Without this dynamic, these new corporate community environments find it difficult to survive. Whoever enters these worlds must be

allowed to co-create and participate in decision-making, not merely with 'ornamental' creations such as choosing their avatar's shirt.

Some videogame meta-verses work, and some brands and organisations try to explore existing ones, allowing them to be contaminated instead of creating their own meta-verse. How do you evaluate this choice?

Exploring existing worlds makes much more sense than creating your own. At the moment, all the brands I have seen create their own Metaverse come up against poor participation. The question is always the same: why should I - an outsider - join a brand-created community, which I perceive as directed, commercial, top-down, probably boring, and with one-thousandth of the interactions available in other tried-and-tested spaces? But I also realise that not everyone can go on Fortnite or Roblox, which have a specific target audience. There is currently no third way.

Turning the question around: what would you suggest to a brand to build engaging communities?

If you preside over a theme (though this differs from a product), you can create communities around that theme. The challenge is to find values and create related content. People will then coalesce around those values. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for a brand to create a bond like it used to because customer retention and loyalty have changed. No one uses the same bank account or the same detergent for life anymore, and the same goes for communities, which we need to re-envision as places to enter, leave and maybe re-enter years later.

Community as a subject is something interesting, precisely because people are no longer just part of a community…

In this respect, there is still a long way to go: we must find transversal, universally understandable, intercultural themes and content. And we are not used to this. One of the significant differences between video games and cinema is that the former are made for worldwide distribution, while most films – especially Italian films of the last 30 years – are solely for domestic distribution.

This is also an interesting perspective for organisations that are becoming extended networks. Therefore, we need a language like that of gaming: inclusive and capable of working for everyone…

Video games are designed for a global audience to create global communities that are then clustered loosely. Of course, economies of scale also lie behind this approach, but a good video game offers different audiences compelling reasons to stay. For organisations, providing motives and values for different audiences but applicable to all implies a new design approach. ■

Doubling the perspective of experience

Antonella Castelli

Senior Manager Design, Logotel

To shape useful and fulfilling shopping experiences, we need a new design perspective that looks at the relationships, behaviours and impacts people generate within a community.

It is undeniable: customer experience has a competitive advantage.
Customer experience has entered the fabric of organisations, weaving more or less dense webs (*engaging people across multiple business areas and managing multiple touch points*). It is a fabric that defines the principles for enhancing the processes that lead a customer to buy a product: thus, it directly affects a company's competitiveness. In developing *customer experience*, the concepts guiding design are now *seamless*, *frictionless experience, multiple touchpoints*, *optimising usability*, and *interaction cost reduction* etc. These elements have specific goals: to optimise and make a shopping experience more accessible and more than that. They are rewarding because – when absent – the entire experience doesn't work. It doesn't simplify; it isn't helpful; it isn't immediate; it doesn't offer feedback. It doesn't create synergies between channels; it doesn't propose clear paths; it doesn't look at my needs, etc.

But is this enough?
Years ago, we realised we were not considering people. Then *user-centred design* came to the rescue, shifting the focus of design culture. The focus of our activities was no longer on the product or service but on the *users*, who then became *people* and finally *human beings*. This awareness generated a first significant change of perspective, which oriented our work towards discovering needs and overcoming barriers and limitations to using a product or service. Meanwhile, the latter have become mere c*ommodities*.

However, today, the complexity has exploded. The design of the *experience* has become so technical that our design efforts often focus on mapping out every detail, developing miles of *user experience* flows that certainly serve to make a process efficient, but neglect all the distinctive and unique elements. That is, the very reasons that help people choose and understand the true usefulness of a product or service.

So, how do we reclaim these elements to shape an experience that can make a difference? What method or ingredient should we add?
I believe the crux of the matter nowadays lies elsewhere. We must not add, improve, or make incremental changes but change our perspective again, or rather adopt a dual perspective, to look in a new way both at the methods to adopt and the results we want to achieve.

The dual perspective: how to enhance the *people* approach?
As designers, we have worked to find, analyse and develop people's individualities in recent decades, highlighting their distinctive features and character-

istics. Today, in the era of remixed lifestyles, the script has been turned on its head. People need to rediscover their individuality within one or more communities (the *Communal Individuality* that Trendswatching writes about in a 2023 report). Here, we establish relationships, build interactions and develop bonds that, in turn, change and enrich identities and consolidate into new behaviours.

Thus, the subject of *experience* changes: today, it is the community with which people relate. So, we need to evolve our tools of analysis, design, implementation and 'grounding'. This evolution cannot stop at a systemic reorganisation, which is helpful in mapping the complexity of the actors involved but demands a new logic of processes to look at the meanings that people attach to the community dimension. Because it must generate value for individuals and everything the community includes and involves, namely brands, organisations, ecosystems, and territories...

Which design levers?
1. Generating and supporting new behaviours of people within the communities with which they interact and relate. To generate positive impacts.
We must not only intervene on flows and *customer journeys*, but ask ourselves: what behavioural change do we want to achieve? Because the sum of behaviour generates a positive impact and thus an effect on the community.
It is thus no longer just about mapping but about imagination. If we think about what collective behaviour we want to trigger, we can better see what systemic effects to design and, thus, the real impacts to generate.

2. Orchestrate continuous interactions.
This device leads us to act on two elements: a. The development of interactions that nurture **participation**; b. Not stopping at 'broadcasting' the

User experience flows make processes more efficient but neglect elements of uniqueness

experience, but giving it **continuity** in daily life: to interpret the behaviours we have activated; to capture stimuli for (*continuous improvement*) and to gain the courage to change our initial ideas.

3. Measuring impacts and shaping new metrics.

When we move from an individualistic (*user-centred*) approach to a(*People & Community centred*)one, we have to make sure that what we have achieved is working and generating impact. And so we need metrics that complement *mainstream* KPIs (such as the Net Promoter Score) and measure 'the living matter of the community', namely – precisely – the behaviours, interactions, engagement and value exchanged.

In summary, what is the added value for an organisation designing with a *People & Community centred* perspective?

1. The numbers change, the scale changes: more interactions, feedback, discussion of needs, contacts, and data to share, etc.
2. We anticipate the timing: of decisions, tests, problems to be solved, gaps to be bridged, new trends to embrace, and results to generate.
3. The system becomes dynamic. It develops interactions and bonds, which nurture people's intrinsic motivation and accelerate the creation of content, ideas and new exchanges.
4. Finally, we measure what matters: behaviour, impact, value generated and shared for people, the organisation and wider ecosystems. ∎

The sum of behaviours generates a positive impact and thus affects the community
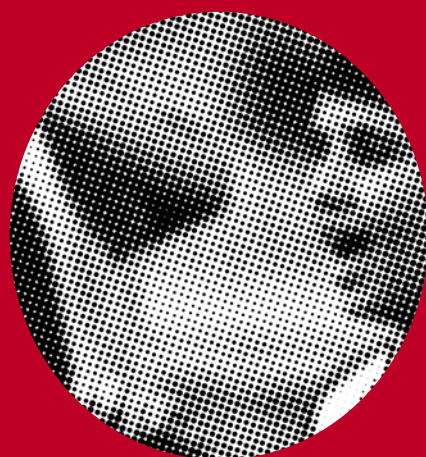
Empty platforms VS places of co-creation

Interview with
Rachel Happe

Founder, Engaged Organisations; Digital Workplace and Community Strategist

People in organisations want to be heard, seen, and recognised. Online communities help to create the space for enhancing human energy, which comprises creativity, connection, trust building, and cooperation.

How are organisations changing in the face of the major transformations? And what are the advantages of adopting a community-centred approach?

We are in the midst of substantial changes driven by the rapid evolution of technology. Today, we have global social networks with radical transparency where we can connect with anyone. These networks generate a massive overabundance of information, both accurate and information meant to deceive and manipulate. To manage this overabundance of information inside organizations, we have built ever more layers of governance, technology, and hierarchy. Multi-level hierarchies were required at a time when it was difficult to share because it enabled filtering and distribution. Today, however, these hierarchies are more often an obstacle because they inhibit the speed of information. Externally, the speed of information continues to increase and the faster it gets, the more friction arises internally.

Employees are being assaulted with an increase in information and channels, which is creating anxiety and stress and resulting in a lack of engagement and an increase in resignations. However, companies have done little to address this; they keep adding technology and collaboration platforms, which are just adding to the content and inundating employees with more than our brains are used to filtering. Managers are also so overwhelmed that they don't have the capacity, time, or insight to address the root cause of their employees' emotional experiences.

Online communities – or enterprise social networks – are one way to address some of these challenges. These spaces, when well-managed, can provide transparency, access, and connections that help employees navigate to and understand what matters. Communities have always 'defined' what people believe is true. When there is so much content, we rely on our trusted relationships to help determine what matters. That trust develops when people are an integral and essential part of the process. Technology, especially with the advent of generative AI, can do many of the standardised tasks once done by people, but it cannot build relationships, help people change, or support their emotional security. In the future, companies will thrive from human energy that produces creativity, connection, trust and relationship building, partnership, and cooperation. But today, most companies are structured to optimize only production capacity.

Indeed, the wave of digitisation during the pandemic created an illusion of increased productivity, but only because we counted the documents produced and emails sent...

This can be seen in *customer relationship management* (CRM) tools, which contain the word 'relationship' but don't actually track the quality of relationships. They manage customer content and transactions, the volume of which sometimes has no correlation to the quality of the relationship. Organisations that think of people as units of production don't know how to measure relationships, not least because our accounting systems are very simplistic. As an example, tracking attendance at a training course is

Perfection is the enemy of engagement

not evidence of learning effectiveness. We must look at the 'metrics of how' rather than 'how much': behaviour changes when you learn something, and if we tracked that behavior we could measure effectiveness.

How then to create engagement?

One key factor that drives engagement is a feeling of being connected and understood. This is where communities come into play; communities help people feel seen and heard by others, who provide recognition and intrinsic rewards, which complement the extrinsic rewards of work like salary and bonuses. However, one of the most interesting pieces of research in recent years reveals that communities more often help people feel heard but not necessarily seen. This has profound implications because feeling seen means being recognized and celebrated for who we are. It is a DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) issue.

Engagement also comes from meaning. For years, I have said that perfection is the enemy of engagement because if I provide people with something perfect, it leaves no room for individual contributions. One powerful way to engage people is to ask them to contribute something that matters. In this way, we can move from a transactional process to one with shared ownership.

In this perspective, what roles do communities play?

Communities of practice, those communities that 'capture' knowledge and best practices are one of the best approaches to fostering meaningful communities inside organizations. All employees who work with or want to develop specific skills can take participate in communities of practice, finding a place to share issues and what they have learned. By engaging in these communities, employees can learn about applying a new best practice or innovation, share their progress, and ask others in the community provide feedback. That engagement triggers cooperation and co-creation, and since everything is online, knowledge remains stored and accessible to others because these communities are open.

You spoke of open, accessible, dynamic, and multiple communities. However, many people in organisations confuse tribe and community.

Tribes are very identity-based. In the organizational context, employees spend the majority of their time working and hopefully, less time worrying about identity. While supporting employees' identities is important, the *focus* on identity can divide us by putting the focus on our differences and, metaphorically, putting us on opposite sides of the fence. In contrast, if we work together on something, we stand on the same side of the fence, looking to the future, which can decrease the division we sometimes feel from our differences – and by cooperating on something meaningful, we come to know each other. ■

What we know and what we think we know

Matteo Buccarini

Senior Lead Learning, Logotel

Communities also play a role in spreading knowledge: we must be aware of our dependence on the knowledge of others.

What does it mean nowadays to really know something? The media and tools for accessing knowledge have made it easier for people to access news, scientific information, research studies, educational resources and much more. This has created a vast network of shared knowledge connecting individuals and communities worldwide. In this context, how can we be sure we really know something? How can we be confident that we have understood and described a piece of reality, even the seemingly simplest one, when the greater part of our individual knowledge is based on sources, information and data deriving from others?

It is a problem of dispersed knowledge that the American philosopher John Hardwig, some 40 years ago, interpreted in the light of the concept of 'epistemic dependence' (J. Hardwig, 1985), an expression he coined to describe the social mechanism whereby each of us can only rely on the authority of others to justify much of what we claim to know. After logically analysing the idea of intellectual authority, especially that linked to the figure of the expert, Hardwig concludes that 'We must also either agree that one can know without possessing the supporting evidence or accept the idea that there is knowledge that is known by the community, not by any individual knower'.

It is a purely epistemological perspective that nevertheless touches the life experience of each of us. Indeed, the average number of co-authors in scientific publications has been growing for over five decades. People often mention that a 2015 paper on the mass calculation of the Higgs boson bore the signatures of over 5000 authors. Or, again, the extreme complexity of the phenomena governed by politics brings an increasing number of consultants and experts to the decision-making table. However, if we 'get down' and look at our everyday lives, how many of us could explain how a zip fastener works? Or explain the mechanism that makes a bicycle move steadily without wobbling and falling over?

Cognitive scientists Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach argue that humanity survives despite individual deficiencies of the mind precisely because of the inherently collective nature of knowledge (S. Sloman and P. Fernbach, 2018). More than the individual expert, the networked circulation of data, information and knowledge is the key to our intelligence as a species.
However, a reality that has now taken the form of the digital network poses the problem of epistemic dependence with additional challenges, not without contradictions. The idea of polycentric and distributed knowledge, coupled with the complexity of contemporary phenomena and the amount of data available to the community, also implies, in the eyes of many, a weakening of the role

of the expert. Who can we trust when we want to be sure about something? The cases of organised resistance to recent vaccination campaigns, or the spread of outlandish theories about the shape of the planet and the workings of the solar system, represent a direct attack on epistemic dependence, without which, even with all its grey areas, neither science nor society could function adequately (Hutson, 2020).

With the spread of automated and intelligent forms of knowledge generation, such as artificial intelligence and *large language models*, the problem of the valorisation of collective knowledge becomes even more urgent. Recent experiments have shown that feeding next-generation generative models with synthetic data produced by artificial intelligence creates a vicious circle that eats itself, an implosive process whose implications are still unclear (S. Alemohammad *et al.*, 2023). Without sufficient fresh information at each generative cycle, the next cycle will produce information of lower quality, accuracy and diversity. If individuals were only to rely on artificial intelligence to provide the answers they need without contributing further to the collective knowledge community of which they are part, we would compromise the answers provided by artificial intelligence because of the diminishing of the original data source.

The problem of dependence on the knowledge of others is also present in organisations and the communities they inhabit. Making informed decisions and guiding strategic choices in a complex and interconnected world requires the ability to exploit the company or the community's collective knowledge base. Accepting the impossibility of knowing everything, recognising and nurturing the wealth of collective knowledge can help us make thoughtful and informed decisions.

In overestimating what we know, each of us represents a piece of a vast ecosystem in which knowing something is more than acquiring an individual piece of information. It is an awareness of our dependence on others' knowledge and the importance of contributing to a collective knowledge system . ■

Recognising and nurturing the richness of collective knowledge can help us make considered and informed decisions

Further reading

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Convergence and divergence. A possible co-existence

Silvia Magnanini

*Service Designer
& Project Manager, Logotel*

*PhD in Innovation
Management & Design,
Polytechnic University
of Milan*

The tension between convergence and divergence offers organisations the chance to build transformative communities open to innovation.

In an era of incredible transformations, it is now critical for organisations to manage two seemingly irreconcilable dynamics: **convergence**, understood as the cohesion of the collectivity in an agreed direction, and **divergence**, which enhances individuality and generates perspectives for change. But how do we manage the tension between the two, reconciling the aggregating nature of one and the disruptive nature of the other?

Promoting convergence seems to have taken precedence over divergence when dealing with business change processes. Let's think about the transformations of the last few years, for example, those implemented by two leading companies to steer their employees towards new visions: **General Electric with 'Ecoimagination vision' and IBM with 'Smarter Planet'**. In both cases, the participation of everyone at every level of the organisation and the spreading acceptance of shared values and goals have been crucial for GE to address environmental challenges in manufacturing and enable IBM to reconsider a more interconnected world.

However, shifting our gaze to the world of innovation, we see an anomaly that seems to tell the opposite story: the creation of innovative visions can emerge from a few individuals who, placed in the interstitial spaces of the organisational community, explore radical ideas at odds with the company's strategy. When Microsoft launched the Xbox console in 2001 to compete with Sony's PlayStation 2, the market didn't expect such a radical move. The software giant didn't enter the gaming world as a supplier to join other platform manufacturers and application developers. Microsoft opened a new hardware product business, based on an operating system that was incompatible even with its flagship Windows product, to offer young consumers a new entertainment experience.

Tracing the origins of the Xbox vision, Professor Roberto Verganti speaks of a 'radical circle': a group of a few colleagues - Backley, Bachus, Hase and Berkes - not formally connected within the organisation who, sensing a malaise in corporate strategy, had intentionally begun (silent) research which they soon submitted to top management.
The birth of Xbox is just one example of how openness to 'dissident' ideas has generated innovative visions for the community. According to psychologist Charlan Nemeth, the disagreement of a few *troublemakers* sometimes is more valuable than the majority opinion. It challenges the *status quo*, incorporates more information, and engages the mind in creative decision-making. The pirate flag hoisted over the Cupertino campus at the be-

The tension between convergence and divergence generates space for opportunity

hest of Steve Jobs during one of the countless periods of clashes with Apple still testifies to the concept.

Faced with these two dynamics, convergence and divergence, the community thus constitutes the battleground between polarised forces. While convergence dynamics help to foster social cohesion during periods of transformation, they also risk triggering mechanisms of inertia and confirmation *bias* towards old paradigms. Similarly, divergent ideas can lead to the development of new radical visions but also cause fragmentation. How to avoid a rupture?

The reconciliation of the two forces seems to be a matter of the two sides cooperating and listening to each other: all the voices promoting a dominant paradigm and the individual voices standing against it.

The four creators of the Microsoft Xbox vision operated radically but non-destructively. They promoted something the organisation could not yet see but did so for the company's success. Microsoft's top management paid attention to an opposing voice, appreciating its visionary value. This attitude was not a one-off. Over the years, the Microsoft Garage programme made listening to the 'few' the company's recipe for innovation. In this space, anyone within the company could pursue ideas far removed from *business as usual*.

This is how the tension between these conflicting forces becomes a place of opportunity for organisations.

Business climate analysis tools allow us to identify the emergence of positive and conflicting attitudes towards the company's chosen direction. While they can confirm the spread of shared ideas, they can also become a tool to investigate some people's 'discomfort further' and turn the proposition of contrasting stimuli into possibilities for innovation. This is now the design terrain confronting organisations wanting to build transformative communities open to innovation: continually giving voice to dissent, valorising it as a form of community participation, and integrating it into the debate in a dynamic balance alternating between convergence and divergence. ∎

Further reading

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What type of design for transformative communities?

Francesco Zurlo

President of POLI.design and lecturer in industrial design

How design can use its capabilities, tools and mindset to stimulate a creativity capable of transforming communities positively, combining the *user-centred* dimension with the *community-centred* one.

To discuss the question that provides the title for these brief notes, I think we should start with a few assumptions.

The first refers to the work of a Nobel Prize winner for Physics, Gerd Binnig, who describes the creative act as a process enabling new units of interaction and new types of relationships between things. He then adds that **creativity is the attitude of a system to its evolution** (Binnig, 1991). As if to say that a system, from small to large, such as a family group, a business organisation, or a neighbourhood community, can evolve (taking such evolution as positive), **if it can fully express its creativity**.

The second concerns design and its connection to creative processes. According to Italo Calvino (1982), the latter is like jam, a shapeless substance that makes sense when spread on a *solid* slice of bread. **Design appears to interpret this idea of creativity** because it generates innovation (i.e. new units of interaction) through a solid, research-based process of marking out the edges of the problem (design as *problem finder*, *setter* and *solver*) to identify, meticulously, all the technical, economic, cultural and social constraints, in dealing with contexts and situations. This short paper seeks to understand how design can use its skills, tools, methods and mindset to stimulate creativity capable of transforming and improving communities. The premise is that its practical core no longer only contains the individual user but rather the network of relationships established between stakeholders, united by a common purpose, which we usually associate with the idea of community. In short, how design can combine the *user-centred* dimension with *community-centred* action. How it can focus its activity – as a *project aim* – on solutions for communities, whatever form they may take, to facilitate their transition towards sustainable (and therefore transformative) patterns of life.

Design's ability to deal with this is now an established fact in the field, although much less so in common parlance, where the term is still, all too often, associated with a purely aesthetic dimension. Indeed, according to some academics, design is already embedded in a 'fourth order' of activity, going beyond the previous three orders of communication, product and services/experience (Buchanan, 1992). This fourth order has systems and, to some extent, organisations as its design focus and effectively represents the complexity of human action. This fourth order includes the 'community subject' and **the system of relations** between individuals that characterises it. On the other hand, the keystone of the relational theme is the **dimension of 'care'** (for self, for other, for nature) that is now central to the design debate,

reaffirming the *hope of design action* for the sustainable progress of humanity. Caring underlies Arturo Escobar's (2018) concept of *radical interdependencies* and Ezio Manzini's (2021) theory of *cities of proximity*. Both are leading scholars in the discipline interested in the **relational dimension.**

Manzini's and Escobar's theories refer to cities and their complex system of relationships, emblematic of an indistinct and complex set of interests, values, and dynamics characterising its communities. Communities within a neighbourhood, for example, are more or less organised systems whose guiding principle, according to the authors, should be caring and developing creative responsiveness to emerging and contextual challenges. Looking after and enhancing the creative capacities of communities are probably two sides of the same coin. Therefore, nurturing these creative capacities through design seems to be a viable strategy for managing and directing the transformation of groups and communities. In confirmation of this, Rob Hopkins (2020), founder of Transition Town, emphasises how much people's creative capacity to imagine a different, more participatory and engaging way of experiencing the city has diminished with the creation of solutions focused on the principle of caring. Efforts to overcome a kind of capitalist colonialism of the imagination, as Richard Sennett (2018) wittily observes, to induce people and **communities to imagine possible and desirable futures**, are the agenda in initiatives such as Transition Town or other similar ventures marked by creative activism.

Indeed, Richard Sennett, with his trilogy of *The Craftsman*, *Together* and *Building and Dwelling*, emphasises the importance of values such as togetherness, collaboration and cooperation in a world of *radical interdependencies*. In particular, an assumption emerges in his work: the exercise of creativity comes through doing together. Creative making requires mutual trust, acceptance of others' thinking, responsibility and respect. One good analogy is with the theory of optimal experience or stream of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), where – in the individual – the balance between individual capabilities (what I can do) and external challenges (what I am asked to do) leads to a felicitous alignment between emotions, cognition, perception results

Feeding creative capacities through design is a strategy for nurturing and guiding transformation

Further reading

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and generates a positive feeling of well-being. We observe a similar phenomenon in creative processes, a collective stream of consciousness (Sawyer, 2003), a *networked flow* that we can use as a key to understanding the dynamics of creative communities and where, once again, 'doing' (together) plays the role of activator of this flow.

As a making-oriented discipline and a creative dimension by definition, what role can design play in supporting this process of **creative networked flow, caring, cooperating in making, recognising itself based on a specific** *purpose?*
The designer provides their own *capabilities* to visualise existing radical interdependencies, to give a voice to the voiceless (the *more than human* or the demands of generations to come), helping to disentangle complexity, prototyping helpful solutions to foster sustainable transformations, considering the different 'talents' of the individuals with whom it works, calibrating their capacities to respond to the challenges posed from time to time. As a powerful storyteller, design contributes to creating those narratives that make a group recognisable, identifying the *purpose* that can unite individuals and orient them towards shared goals. It is there to support a kind of *transformative community mind*, acting as an **activator of new ritual interactions** through potential props, **artefacts that become genuine group** *memes,* making it recognisable and acting as a glue between group members, enhancing a sense of belonging that facilitates and empowers *creative doing.*

By placing the topic of care at the centre of design processes, designers contribute to creating communities that thrive and nurture their members, assuming responsibilities as moderators of dialogues and facilitators of processes of transition and innovation. The ensuing challenge also involves the education of designers and the new skills they must acquire. In systemic transformations, designers will have to cultivate essential skills such as active listening, storytelling and promoting sharing to function as **catalysts of community-driven change**, ensuring that we hear differing voices and address authentic community needs. ▪
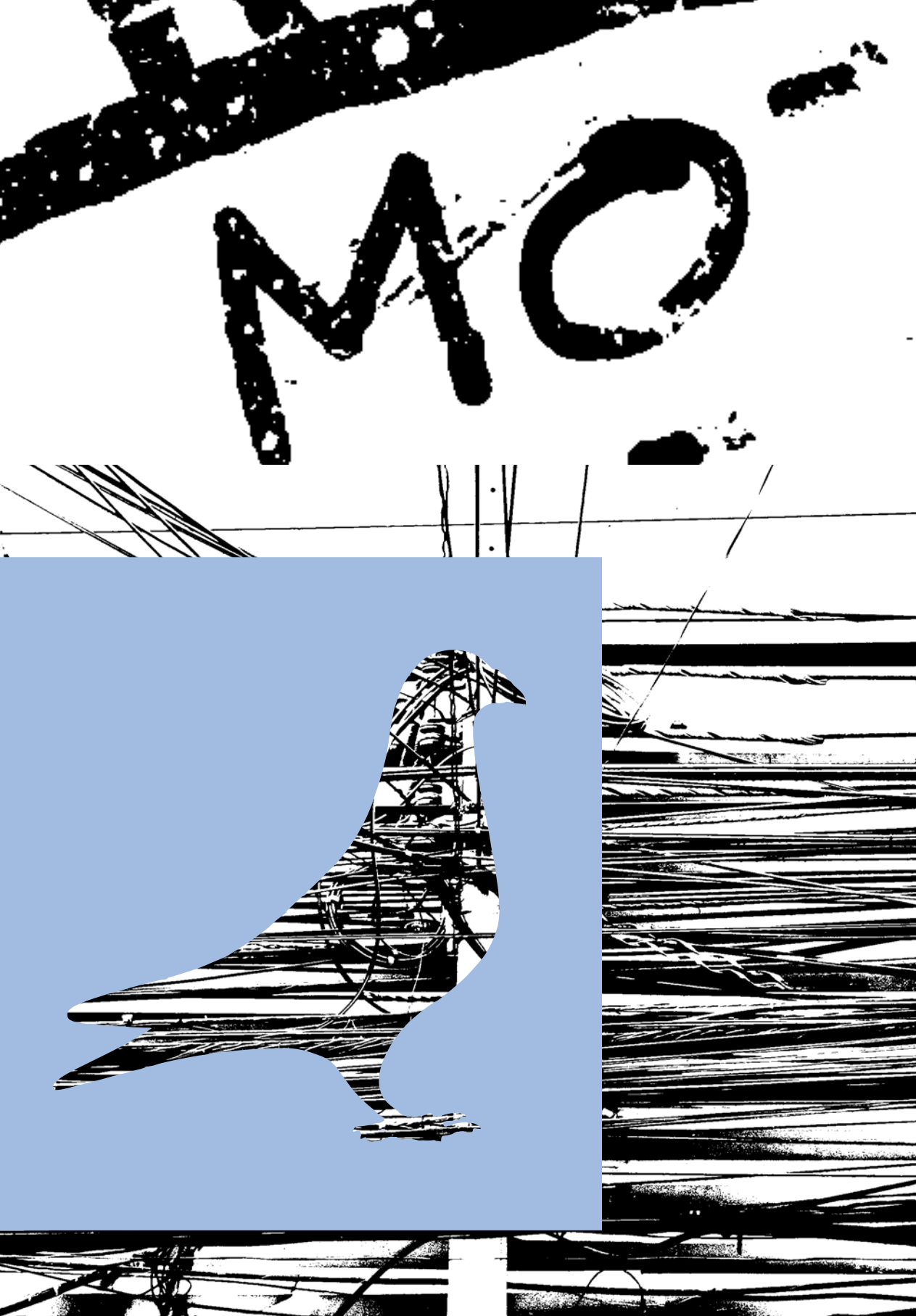
Cosmo-local identities as an antidote to the metacrisis

Michel Bauwens

Founder, P2P Foundation

Cosmo-local identities based on the commons, regenerative counterweights to the extractive dynamics of markets and states, can help us rebuild a new type of social glue to deal with the metacrisis.

'Public intellectuals' appear decreasingly influential. One reason could be the fragmentation of our communication fields because of the role of social media, which has evolved from affinity-based meeting places to filter bubbles and even 'fortresses'. Before the Internet, intellectuals didn't have to deal with an explosion of sources. Every minute spent on the web or YouTube to keep up with a rapidly changing cultural landscape is a minute not spent in reading or intellectual practice.

The toxicity of social media then compounds the difficulty of conducting research. If we are really 'forced' to spend a lot more time online, then it is essential for our well-being that the environment is less toxic than it is today. But is the problem solvable?

One theory is that private ownership of social media exacerbates the toxic effect, as the owners decide what attracts and holds our attention, trying to get us hooked while pushing us towards certain behaviours that are in their interest and not ours. Another explanation arises from Réne Girard's theory of mimetic desire: status differences preserve order in our communication, and the lack of such obvious distinctions leads to permanent competition that results in a periodic hunt for a 'scapegoat'. This would explain the *cancel culture* explosion that emerged simultaneously with social media. From the point of view of Girard, social media are a neutron bomb for our sociality: you cannot connect five billion people and hope everything will turn out well.

It doesn't help that our societies face a meta-crisis and require transition. This factor creates generalised anxiety in the 'real world' and is inevitably reflected online. The latter explanation suggests that social media is not so much the cause as the amplifier of existing social crises.

The role of the commons

The solution could be the same as in the real world: the development of civilisation. Civilisation does not resolve the underlying conflicts but ensures their expression in ways that don't exacerbate them. If we cannot change the situation on a macro level, this should not prevent us from creating healthy communities on a smaller scale, where the rules of civilisation can be maintained and expanded once established.

This is where the practice of 'commoning' can be helpful, if not a vital necessity. What are the commons? We can see them as the third human institution, alongside markets and states, which has always played a regenerative and protective role, a counterbalance to the extractive dynamics of

markets and states. While the latter are geared towards competition and growth, even conquest, the commons are cooperative arrangements seeking to cultivate and protect a shared resource. Thus, a common is a 'thing', possibly immaterial, a resource to be shared but also a human community (which can be extended to other beings in the web of life) that has decided to share and protect, but above all is characterised by self-regulation. The original commons were physical resources. Later, they were social, such as the mutualisation of life's risks undertaken by the labour movement that led to the institutions of the welfare state. However, the commons can be intangible: they can be knowledge goods. These knowledge commons are the new collective agents, which can act as the backbone for collective intelligence and, through their self-regulation, create the civilisation necessary for exchanging knowledge.

One of the characteristics of civilisational transition periods is that, because of society's loss of resources or because a new technology introduces a higher level of differentiation, the old institutions can no longer hold society together. There is a fragmentation and, consequently, polarisation of social groups, which currently takes the form of a sociological split between the 'physical' and the 'virtual', the *somewheres* (locally rooted) and the *anywheres* (globally rooted), as documented by social scientists such as David Goodhart, Eric Kaufmann and Matthew Goodwin. When major institutions lose people's trust and the ideological glue that holds our societies together weakens, people 'regress' to less complex identities and smaller trust scales. A physical/*somewhere* person, unable to move and directly affected by de-industrialisation, will probably crave the reinforcement of traditional identities: religion, nation, ethnicity. A virtual/*anywhere* person, better able to navigate through globalised de-territorialisation, will be more likely to be affected by new intersectional identities. Both reactions fuel polarisation but show a search for new identities and communities that can 'protect' against the uncertainties of the current crisis.

If we cannot change the situation at the macro level, this should not prevent us from creating healthy communities on a smaller scale

Cosmo-local identities based on the commons can help construct a new type of glue

Cosmo-local identities. A new type of glue, based on the commons

I believe that cosmo-local identities based on the commons can help construct a new glue. What does contributing to a common mean? Take permaculture as an example: you stand with your feet in the mud, a metaphor for reconnecting with the land and the earth, without whose cultivation no one can survive. The permaculturists' heart is in their local community, but their brain and the other part of their heart are in the commons of global permaculture. They have extended their identity beyond the local, acquiring a trans-local and trans-national identity. They haven't done so through an alienating concept of corporate globalisation, like an uprooted elite individual, but through deep participation in a true constructive community, which is helping to solve the metacrisis that alienates most of us. Cosmolocalism is synonymous with deep-rooted but extremely rapid global innovation. If you are an *anywhere*, we suggest you become a *everywhere*, using your virtuosity as a digital nomad to serve relocalised production, pollinating local communities with the knowledge of other local communities. If you are an *entrepreneur*, etymologically 'taking in the middle', we suggest you become an *entredonneur*, 'giving in the middle'.

The pulse of the commons

This revival of the commons is not a historical accident but a recurring phenomenon I call the 'pulse of the commons'. We know from academics like Peter Turchin that societies evolve cyclically, in ascending and descending phases. Markets and states, powerful historical institutions that have existed for thousands of years, are essentially growth- or conquest-oriented and always, without exception, end up outgrowing the regional level of resources globally. The commons also follow an ebb and flow countercyclical to the other two institutions. When people's lives are challenged in the downturns of market and state systems, they revive the commons, institutions that mutualise risk and regenerate and preserve resources. Global capitalism has made the depletion of resources translocal, planetary. This means that today, as our socio-political system is disintegrating in a new chaotic transition (Peter Pogany), our response must be local, translocal and planetary.

So what can we do?

First, extend the social contract to the entire world, guaranteeing the life of all humanity. Second, create strong protective institutions capable of defending human and non-human communities, which I suggest calling 'Magisteria of the commons'. Finally, following the suggestions of Bruno Latour and others, we need a social contract between humanity and the vital network on which it depends. This task is unprecedented for our civilisational model, based on the opposite principle of considering nature as a mere object of human management and enjoyment. Today, in the Anthropocene, non-human beings cannot live without us, and we cannot live without them. The means is neither the market nor state domination but an understanding between our three historical institutions, which must, therefore, also include the commons. ■

We need a social contract between humanity and the vital network on which it depends

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The impacts of transformative communities

From thought to action
Transformative communities always generate something tangible. They populate the worlds in which they operate with new objects: tools, practices and interactions that support any form of organisation.

Evolution of value
Their generative value involves everything that communities affect: people, organisations, territories. Everything has a role. Which is to be explored, acknowledged and co-created. We no longer talk about creators or executors. But of value for everyone. Indeed, the objects that populate communities evolve depending on whoever observes and values them.

An inexhaustible shared energy
However, the impact does not end with achieving an outcome: it is persistent. It generates shared energy for the participants who engage and care for the community horizon in which they are involved.

Leave a mark, generate impact

'More is different'

Philip Warren Anderson (Nobel Prize for Physics in 1977)

Gabriele Buzzi

Senior Manager Community, Logotel

We design to change the status quo and generate a concrete and positive impact. Communities are the dimension that activates the transformation of individuals, bringing out those understandings, energies and behaviours that they could not have deployed on their own.

Many essential and somehow interconnected questions cluster around this section of the notebook and this article. What does it mean to create impact – through a design or series of designs – in an organisation, company, or even our local neighbourhood? Why is impact a prerogative of a design that aspires to be so? Why and how can we create impact through a community design approach?

Of course, it is impossible to address all this at once, but we can at least try to resolve the central question for us: *how and why to create impact through the design form of communities*.

When we design, we always do so with the more or less explicit ambition to change the *status quo*, to effect change, simplification, innovation... **we design to leave a mark,** *to generate impact*.

The first point to make regarding this thesis is that the great debate on sustainability (social, environmental, economic) has taught us that the concepts of innovation, change and impact are not linear and unambiguous. Not infrequently, the solutions proposed (think of the divisive issue of electric cars) are poorly suited to their intended purpose, so one step forward in the short term can mean two steps back in the medium term.

Happy degrowth (a somewhat old-fashioned word), *quiet quitting*, digital nomadism are all phenomena that somehow problematise the concept of growth, of linear change from situation A to B to C, where B is better and preferable to A and C is better than B and so on.
But then, how can we envision a *concrete and positive impact* as designers?

Our answer is through using communities , communities as tools, entities, and projects for genuine change in and of the world.
This is not just theory, but practice, **the product of a privileged point of view**: working in many community projects over the

years, I have observed and measured the impact of communities in the lives of people and organisations:

- sharing and cooperation where there was competition;
- arising of new teams and new professional challenges (creating real start-ups within companies);
- voices finally free to express themselves using a shared and productive language.

But how can we make these design 'epiphanies' happen?
As a community manager and a designer, I always thought that the *community effect*, beyond design tools, KPIs, editorial planning and goals, was **difficult to define uniquely** and to replicate in *n* different cases. What Baudelaire calls *the moral of the toy* applies to communities: if you take it apart to understand how it works, you usually break it.

But beyond this initial feeling, if we want to delve deeper into the subject, we can think of communities generating an impact comparable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the emergent properties theorised by the philosopher Karl Popper, among others, namely properties that are not the mere sum of the properties of its parts. We are adapting to our discourse a complex theory that emerged from physics and the most advanced consciousness studies, but that, perhaps metaphorically, leads us to think of the impact of communities as something that **leads to knowledge, energies, and behaviours that the individual participant *alone* could not have deployed.**

To attempt to give a more sustainable theoretical foundation to this *scaling process*, we can borrow a tool **such as the semiotic framework theorised by Algirdas Julien Greimas** that is now widely used to study the evolution of deep meanings within a book, a film, and more generally a text.

The square is a very malleable tool (and thus also used to analyse advertising campaigns). It shows us how the narrative, also emotionally, leads us from a start situation 1 to an arrival situation 2, through intermediate stages of negation and evolution, and then back, usually, to the pre-break starting situation (think of the classic ending of American films) obviously with a new awareness and new *lesson learnt*.

Here is the *neutral* pattern of the square:
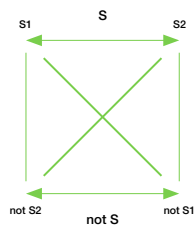
If we were to adapt it to the community, in terms of impact, we would probably have this configuration:
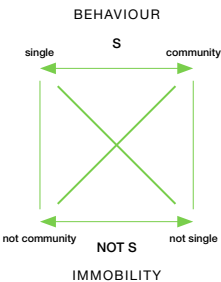
The individual abandons their way of being, their point of view and activities and progressively adopts those of the community: exchange of value, sharing of good practices, adoption of a common language.

Of course, the square is completed with the (even momentary) exit of the individual participant from the community dimension to return to the S1 position of the individual, but with a transformation: a new awareness that, in the most successful cases, results in new behaviours and activities. In this sense, the 'centrifugal' effect of the community is virtuous because it increases the participant's status, their inclination to 'get involved', to play an active role in their social, work or *leisure environment.*

Of course, **management of communities** working to achieve these results is also an issue. However, this issue is beyond the remit of this paper, which closes with the consideration that impact through communities is for us the concrete and real possibility of changing the status of an environment, of bringing out new aspects of the participants' selves (which they may not have realised they had), of fostering new knowledge and new practices in line with the goals of the project designer, but also and above all the people who bring them to life day-by-day. ◾
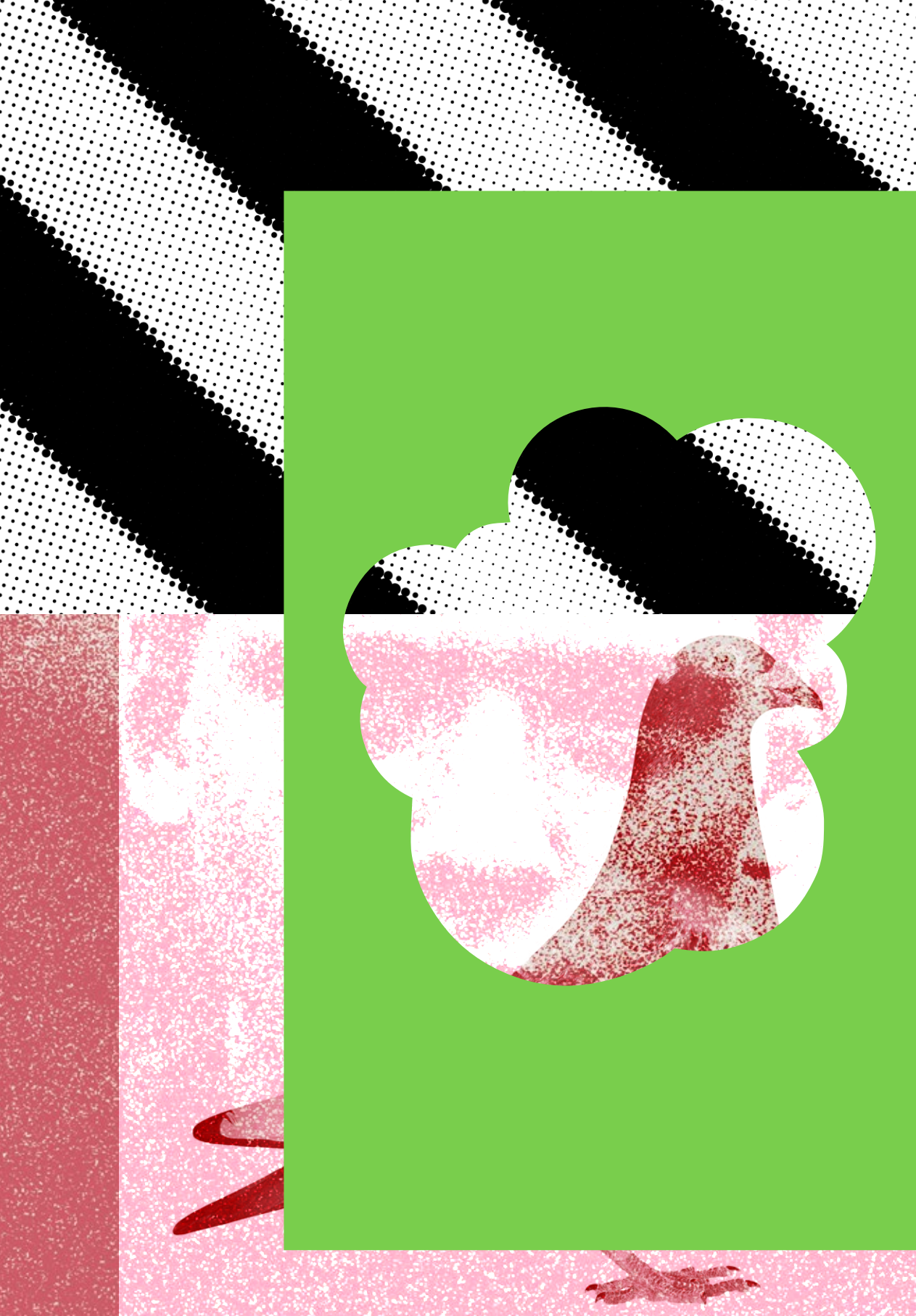
How is your community? Why, with what and how to measure it

Daniele Cerra

Partner and (Digital) Innovation Officer, Logotel

A survey on tools and methods for measuring communities. Not to extract, but to generate value.

Since 2001, Logotel has been designing, stimulating, working **WITH** and **FOR** communities.

WITH communities, because by acting on them, we can generate a tangible impact on the broader system in which they are located, exploiting what we call *community-centred design* [see BOX 1] and *community psychology* [see BOX 2].

FOR communities, because the present and future of organisations is based on, and can no longer ignore, healthy communities with engaged, motivated and satisfied people, ready to offer the best of themselves [see Fabio Berti's article on p. 52]. Over the following few pages, we will try to outline several key elements and practical models codified through years of direct experience and study that enable the interpretation of communities.

Let's start with *why measure them*

Measuring a community serves primarily, to **understand its state of health**, to know its intrinsic features and, thus, to make the most of the potential it can express as a whole and through its individual members. Real-time monitoring of the community's *mood* and how it varies with changes in the business context (using AI algorithms for *sentiment analysis*), identifying emerging figures or informal leaders in an organisation, or mapping the quantity, quality and direction of relationships that arise and are sustained in the network [*social network analysis*] are just a few examples that help us measure a community's health. Of the many indicators relating to measuring the state of the community, the possibility of detecting the *Sense of Community*, an indicator that can be simplified as the intensity of the connection, the force of attraction that a member feels about the community itself, deserves special mention. The *Sense of community Index* [see BOX 3] is highly predictive for defining the *engagement* and *commitment* of its members and the likelihood that acting on the entire community will influence the behaviour of the participants, triggering social or individual dynamics.

Second, measuring a community allows us to quantify its extrinsic manifestation, to understand *if, how and how much that community is generating a concrete impact* in the geographical, organisational, social or political system of reference [see Domenico Sturabotti's article, p. 72]. Therefore, rather than focusing on a community's

health, the focus is on the results achieved: the impact. Where the community has sprung up spontaneously, as it often does in contexts where people with relevant interests or characteristics in common come together in groups/communities and does not have a predefined *mission*, the analysis primarily serves to qualify what kind of impact it is helping to generate. A neighbourhood community in a self-constructed city suburb, whose members live in geographical proximity, could have an impact (not necessarily positive and not necessarily calculated) on the inhabitants' quality of life and sense of well-being, the safety of the area, the emergence of business activities, the support of the weakest, and the cost of housing and so on [see the article by Giampiero Lupatelli, p. 56].

If the community was created *by design* or 'nurtured' from the outside, in other words, created with clear expectations of results to obtain and has specific resources allocated to support it, the measurement of the impact generated is not only exploratory (an aspect needed to identify unexpected consequences on the reference system) but also targeted and quantitative. A community created and funded to support a brand's customers will contain by design the areas of impact and obvious objectives (often expressed as OKRs) to be achieved [see Gabriele Buzzi's article, p. 108]. Examples may be the spread of a shared corporate culture or the propagation of collaborative behaviour or skills and knowledge within the community of a specific corporate sector, for example, marketing [see the article on the communities that Logotel has designed and manages for and with Enel, p. 130], observable as an increase in relations between colleagues and the generation of cross-departmental innovation and additional business opportunities. All indicators that need monitoring over time.

Among the many other good reasons to measure a community, there is the possibility of gathering valuable evidence to intuit the direction of development that the community is taking (*predictive analytics*) and, thus, to design how to support or redirect its development. The community of employees in an international brand's shops generates behavioural and engagement data from its members which, integrated with other data such as sales results or shop and staff performance indicators (*business intelligence*), allow the identification, and thus timely intervention, on phenomena such

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BOX 1.
Community-centred design
A community comprises individuals, but the logic and dynamics of relationship and interaction typical of a social grouping require a design approach that takes a step forward from more classical *user-centred design*. Always bearing the environmental impact in mind and the community's social reality and involving the right stakeholders are *must haves* that stem from placing the community – as a whole – at the centre of attention. We should consider community the primary unit of analysis and the primary target of interventions and initiatives that are inclusive, participatory (at least partially) and culturally acceptable. A *community-centred* approach leads to decisions and solutions that may be counterintuitive compared to a *user-centred* one (it is by no means certain that the best solution for the community is the one best received by the individual participant). Also, in community measurement, the most significant indicators will be those that arise from designs that map, identify and consider the *asset*, needs, relationships and group dynamics rather than the behaviour of the individual member [see the article by Davide Fassi, p. 60].

BOX 2.
Community psychology
Instead of focusing on the individual, as in classical psychology, this branch of psychology examines people's development in relational contexts, society and the interactive environments (organisations, families, etc.) closest to them. Created to improve quality of life through research and collaborative action between people, *community psychology* offers many insights into community members,

as *quiet quitting*, impending resignations, declining motivation or their desirable positive counterparts and consequent excellence to be valorised. A similar intersection between the information on the community's mood or stress state and the findings on impacts on operational effectiveness and efficiency or increased revenues will help us understand when to launch *calls to action* or engage in targeted training activities or, if it is about individual cases where we perceive a decrease in the level of engagement and participation, to evaluate *caring* and *retention* activities.

Demonstrating a community's return on investment, obtaining data and information to understand evolutionary aspects of the system/organisation/market in which the community originates, and verifying the effectiveness of *behavioural change* models or targeted impact strategies are just some of the various whys of measuring communities.

What to measure about communities?
From the examples given when discussing why the should measure, communities have such different natures, scopes and identities that it is virtually impossible to devise a measurement and analysis model that is valid for all of them. A tribe within a banking group that becomes a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community, the community of HR managers of Italian companies dealing with integrating *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion* policies [see the article by Barbara Falcomer, p. 156], that of the spare parts dealers of an automobile brand or that of the master's students of one of the most popular European faculties [see the article dedicated to DOT, the POLI. design community, p. 140], diverge in their constituent pillars and primary aims to the point of being unable to use the same analysis parameters.

However, there are broad categories of indicators that we sometimes collect in synthetic indices for convenience. Suitably selected and modelled according to the specific nature of the community, these indicators can guide the choice of analysis tools. On the one hand, for instance, we have the indices that testify to the **transactional dynamics**, those that make it clear how much and what kind of practical value exchange takes place in communities (impact generated by/for/thanks to each of the *stakeholders* involved). On the

other, we find the **relational ones**, based on the quantity and quality of the relationships established in a community, irrespective of the practical and operational outcome achieved [see Rachel Happe's article, p. 92].

Although we cannot go into the details of each of the following indices in this article, we can say there are five areas of observation and quantification for measuring a community's key elements:
- Impact on Business & Governance Index [see article on CoCo, the Swarovski international retail network community, p. 122];
- Engagement & Sense of Community Index [see the article on Enel communities, p. 130];
- Behavioural Change (Management) Index [see the article on the GuccIdeas project, p. 152];
- Relational & Social Capital Index [see the TIM Style retail community article, p. 136];
- Social, Environmental, DEI sustainability Index [see Janine De Novais' article, p. 62].

Impact on Business
& Governance
Index

A

Social,
Environmental,
DEI sustainability
Index

E

B

Engagement
& Sense
of Community
Index

D

C

Relational
& Social Capital
Index

Behavioural / Change
Management
Index
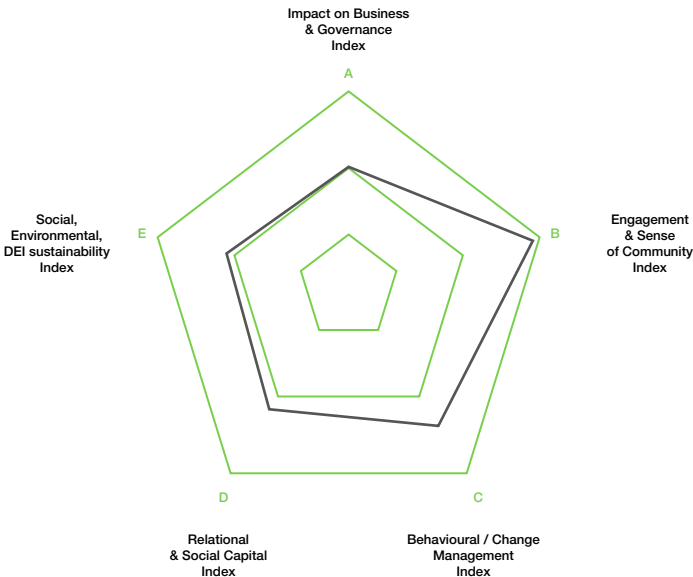
organisational models, systems (micro and macro) and how people relate to each other [see the article by Norma De Piccoli, p. 78].

BOX 3.
Sense of Community Index
Sense of Community means the sense of belonging, connection and mutual interaction/support between people in a community or, more generally, a group.
This is a key element of *community psychology* and is a highly predictive indicator of active participation, very useful for quantifying the most effective ways of interacting in social contexts and understanding how to evolve communities. The name comes from the famous *working paper* by David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, which appeared in 1986 in the *Journal of Community Psychology*. An initial list (updated in more recent times but consistent with the original) is defined in the article, comprising four key elements: *membership, influence*, *integration & fulfilment of needs*, *shared emotional connection*. They are the domains that define the Sense of Community, whose 'Index' is the official tool released by McMillan and Chavis to make its measurement possible [see the article by David Spinks, p. 80].

BOX 4.
Extracting or generating capital? An environmentally sustainable mine
Over the last 20 years, driven by the success of global phenomena such as Facebook, YouTube and various other platforms related to the idea of community, people involved in marketing, communication or sales have fine-tuned metrics and techniques to achieve their business

LIFE

Depending on the community analysed, the 'form' obtained from a graphic representation of its indices may be significantly different and thus represent a sort of fingerprint, the expression of the collective DNA of that community at that moment [see Carlo Alberto Redi and Manuela Monti's article, p. 54].

To evaluate each of the five domains, we must resort to more specific *key result* measurements, surveys and observations that comprise the elements of the algorithm leading to the quantifiable value of that index. In other words, the business and governance impact index involves evaluating parameters that are directly due to or correlated with the community, including increased revenues, reduced costs, increased operational speed, human capital generation (e.g. *knowledge*, *how-to*, *up-skilling*, *reskilling*), innovations generated, improved operational processes, digitisation, growth paths, etc. [see the Intesa Sanpaolo Tribes article, p. 126].

How to measure a community?
Having explored 'the why' and 'the what', the age-old question of 'how' remains. A necessary premise is to emphasise that it is complicated, if not impossible, to measure something not designed to generate traceable evidence.

Indeed, the starting point for any measurement is to find the data to be analysed, which must not only exist but also be observable. A good design phase cannot leave this point to chance. The next step is to think and design ways of tracking and digitising/quantifying them. At this point, we collect the data in forms that can be analysed using tools, software, and methods appropriate to the data type. From here on, the various branches of *data science* take over but always guided by common sense and the knowledge of the community of community managers.

Regarding the latter, in the first section of the article, we mentioned some ways of analysing different data relevantly. We must be careful not to fall into the error of evaluating some of the most critical parameters of a community with inappropriate yardsticks and models. Perhaps it is obvious, but we cannot measure the emotional state of the members of a community (usually summarised in *score* summaries of positivity and charge) with the same numerical units used

aims. Social media *engagement* metrics, building on those of *digital marketing* and traditional media, have emphasised measuring data as a way to identify how best to maximise the value extraction from groups of people made accessible by such platforms. Frequency, time spent, topics read, profiling by content, methods and access situations: from these data, we went very quickly to complementary indicators which summarise and define the cost, the possibility of taking part of the value from communities (purchase cost, per click, feedback cost, value of personal data collected, etc.).

The models presented in this article are not only based on how many resources can be extracted from the community's capital – or should we say from the capital plural – (money, data, time, ideas, attention, trust, information, experiences, etc.) but also, and above all, on how well the community can generate new ones or regenerate stocks from which it was drawn inordinately. The challenge for people involved in communities is to move from considering them as mines to plunder to harness existing economic, social, cultural and human capital to organic situations where this type of value is generated and renewed, placing people in a safe and suitable context to express themselves.

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BOX 5.
Community coffers
When we talk about the value of the 'capital' that a community can collect or generate, from which it can draw or which it can pour into the system in which it is placed, there are at least four different branches that must be considered [see Michel Bauwens' article , p. 102].

for a percentage increase in productivity or with economic metrics (euros saved).

Today's collaboration and social platforms allow the tracking and native analysis of various elements helpful in analysing the state of a community. To take an increasingly popular example, Microsoft's Viva platform lets us track and return as *actionable* data a lot of information from the collaborative business context that contributes to at least two of the five indices mentioned above (e.g. the amount and direction of interactions that take place with our colleagues). The diverse nature of the indicators in turn requires appropriately broad multidisciplinary expertise.

For designers or managers of communities using a *People & Community centred* approach, it may be harder to grasp data that falls within the sphere of human physical, mental and psychological interactions and reactions, which is apparently harder to digitise and quantify. However, the task of the *community designer* is not only to design interventions and contexts that help the community flourish but also to create systems for generating observable outputs even in the physical domain of relationships between members, for example, an event, a gathering, a group meeting or performing everyday work activities. Fortunately, the physical experiences associated with human beings almost always produce observable phenomena that are either definable behaviourally (specific actions occurring or not) or are somatised as bodily expressions. Both consequences are categorisable, quantifiable and digitisable. Emotions expressed by texts posted in a community or facial expressions underlying specific emotional triggers can now be tracked and classified by increasingly accessible and powerful artificial intelligence systems. Similarly, where technology cannot do it, another human being can. In a retail context, for example, it is quite usual to think of the

It is up to community designers to create systems to generate observable and therefore measurable outputs

behaviour of shop assistants as the subject of observation recorded by mystery shoppers. These data can then be digitised and evaluated to adopt desired behaviours.

So, to understand how to measure a community, you may need a certain amount of creativity and common sense. A few years ago, I was inspired by the tracking activity implemented by the Japanese shop manager of a well-known luxury brand who, during visits to shops in Tokyo seeking to come up with an OKR structure to redirect the brand's performance, merely noted a single value: the number of smiles he saw on the faces of shop assistants and customers. The paradox of the most digitised nation in the world using this expedient for a quick *check-up* was very sensible and reapplicable in countless other contexts.

In short, how do you measure a community? Gathering information in quantifiable formats, analysing it with the relevant technical tools and theoretical disciplines and processing it with methodologies specifically tailored to the nature of each community. Certainly difficult, but definitely possible! ◼

Economical capital, comprising resources such as money, goods, and tangible *assets*. It can be invested, collected, increased, and redistributed to achieve community goals.

We can define **human capital** as the sum of the knowledge, skills, practical and operational abilities of community members. Resources that in a highly developed context in terms of social capital are made easily accessible, shareable and exploitable by the entire community and that increase thanks to to collaboration and opportunities for learning and sharing.

Social capital (term to be considered in its social scientific meaning), comprising relationships, connections, trust and a sense of security affecting members of the community. It is one of the key levers allowing community members to access resources and other types of capital through the community and decide to invest (commitment) in the community.

Cultural capital understood as norms, rules, history, stories, roles, traditions, tastes, values, languages and typical symbolic systems and the community's owners. It marks the boundaries of community identity and qualifies and diversifies the domain, that is, the key element that members have in common, the reason for coming together.

How the communities Logotel creates with its customers emerge and thrive

A practical look

At Logotel, we have designed, implemented and brought communities to life for 22 years. The following pages share our experience. We have collected 12 actual case studies, to show what happens behind the scenes: from the initial moments, to the evolutions. This is just a small sample of our work we have selected to show the range of positive impacts generated by the *People & Community centred* approach, the diversity of challenges and fields of application.

A multiplicity of perspectives

So far, we have systematised and narrated it: now is the time to show it. Communities generate positive impacts in people's lives. Hence, the following articles collect 28 testimonials from Logotel designers, our customers and anyone who experiences the community every day.

An augmented door into our world

This issue of Weconomy is a photograph, by its very nature static. But we will continue to shape platforms, collaborative events, services and experiences *People & Community centred*.

That is why we have created an augmented reality dimensional connection that will keep you up to date. Just frame the QR code on the left.

VALUE GENERATED

ELEMENTS OF INVOLVEMENT AND AGGREGATION

INTERACTION DYNAMICS

HUMAN CAPITAL

SOCIAL CAPITAL

ECONOMIC CAPITAL

CULTURAL CAPITAL

TRANSACTIONAL

RELATIONAL

CHANGE MANAGEMENT PATHWAYS

ADOPTION AND LEARNING PATHS

ORGANISATIONAL ECOSYSTEMS

PRODUCTIVITY TARGETS

INTERESTS AND PROFESSIONS

SALES NETWORK

Swarovski CoCo. p. 122

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Sky Mya p. 144

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CoCo Swarovski
Local voices enhancing global strategy

Interview with
Hana Negele

*Senior Manager Retail
Community & Content,
Swarovski*

CoCo can spread *best practice* internationally. How is this important for a brand like Swarovski, which operates in different contexts and cultures?

In 2018, when we started working with Logotel, our dream was to integrate all existing platforms into one ecosystem to manage our global retail community. We wanted consistent, market-specific communication with culturally and operationally relevant messages.

With CoCo, we have achieved these goals. We now have a place where we can share all information with people at the point of sale, where everyone always knows where to find what they need. A better trained and more engaged shop staff is more productive. CoCo helps to increase our revenues and has streamlined *back office* operations, improving efficiency.

Communicating an offer globally implies designing actions on a double scale: global and local. How did CoCo create this mix?

The *consumer calendar*, as we call it, is globally complex. We have to meet the needs of individual markets and CoCo users, meaning the staff in our shops and those of our partners. The CoCo management team takes care of all the complexities, keeping them in the background. Thus, end users do not see how we 'cook' content behind the scenes: they enjoy a *seamless* experience, that delivers messages simply and transparently.

An important element in ensuring this recipe is feedback from the field...

It is an essential point, but at CoCo there is more. We do not simply acquire feedback on what staff think: participation in the community contributes to the continuous improvement of our activities, both tactically and strategically.

We have created a feedback loop between retail staff and managers at *headquarters*, which is extremely useful on occasions like Valentine's Day or Mother's Day. During these critical moments, which we call 'Key Con-

What is it:
CoCo is Swarovski's global community.
It connects the brand with its direct and
indirect retail network.
CoCo conveys brand values and identity,
engaging and motivating Swarovski people
in all countries and offers a uniform,
consistent and impactful in-store
customer experience.

Year of foundation:
2018 (pilot), 2019 (go live)

People involved: 14000+ people in over
4500 shops in over 125 countries

sumption Periods', we change the range
of products in our shops, how we dis-
play them and, therefore, the shop win-
dows. This system acts as a support ser-
vice: for example, people in the shops
can share photos of their displays.
Others can then assess them and make
suggestions. When we notice incon-
sistencies, we can intervene promptly.
Also, if we observe recurring discrep-
ancies, this feedback loop allows us to
correct our instructions and prevent a
problem from reoccurring, raising the
quality bar.
We also provide digitised daily opera-
tional checklists that ensure the stand-
ardisation of daily activities in each
store. In this way, thanks to CoCo,
shops always have precise rituals, rang-
ing from opening to specific tasks to
KPIs to monitor. The result is that we
no longer have millions of sheets of
paper or Excel documents to send and
archive; everything is transparent, con-
sistent and always up-to-date.
Another critical ingredient of CoCo is
an *always-on* survey that contributes to
continuous improvement and gives re-
tail staff the chance to share their feed-
back with the *headquarters*. The data
collected through the community then

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE DESIGNER

**Lorenzo
Ceresa**

*Senior Project
manager community,
Logotel*

CoCo is an ongoing challenge. The mission
we set ourselves at the planning stage and
renew every year is to support Swarovski
in 'connecting and empowering its people,
from all retail channels, to perform at their
best, as satisfyingly as possible, in line with
business goals' There are no pre-packaged
solutions or plotted routes to ground this
mission, especially since this is a Global ter-
rain with unique features and needs.
Being effective in this context is our biggest
challenge, and to do so, we work on two
drivers that have proven to be impactful:
• *data driven* approach: we use today's
data to generate tomorrow's impact;
• *empowerment* of users: a scope that ex-
pands and contracts from global to local
through a management network that
allows us to be effective.
It seems almost redundant to talk about
how every activity that happens on-
line (and thus also in the community) is
tracked and how this tracking generates
usable data for anyone working in the dig-
ital domain. However, having data is not
enough: if we don't read it correctly, it can
be (and very often is) completely useless.
Therefore, every initiative we imple-
ment is designed in the 'how and what
we will measure'. Reporting is an integral
part of planning: it helps us gather help-
ful information we can use to offer con-
crete and meaningful future solutions.
Shared at every *step* with our customers,
these analyses become the basis that drives
the year's strategy and, depending on the in-
itiative's impact, can have a tangible effect
on Swarovski's business development. While
the *data driven* approach is undoubtedly in-
dispensable, for people, it is equally crucial
to design engagement.

What drives people's actions? The an-
swer is frighteningly broad and embed-
ded in a global context. An entire trea-
tise would barely scratch the surface.

Since none of us can presume to know how to interpret all the geographical and sociological peculiarities of our community's 125 (and increasing) countries, we have preferred to rely on people who, with our support, contribute locally to creating the conditions for our *users*, the *key users*, to generate a virtuous circle. If I feel engaged, I contribute; if I contribute, I reduce the 'blank sheet' effect, leading even the most hesitant people to contribute.

Continuous sharing leads to a willingness to innovate and experiment with new and unique contributions, which ultimately leads to an improvement in *output*. It sounds complex, but it is the same as a trend arising on social media: someone does something new, and many people like it and start copying it and adding something of their own. By replicating it, the format is refined, and the final quality is likely to increase.

This dynamic applied to the *training* of sales practices (such as *cross-selling* or *selling proposition*) allows us to reach as many people as possible, respecting the specificities of each individual market effectively, creating reference points within the community and generating a continuous feedback for Swarovski. Knowing how to read these insights and feed them back to the community is at the very heart of what we do. ■

becomes part of our strategy: our Product Lab, which evaluates it to incorporate it into the development of our future collections and products analyses it. This information is cross-referenced with a sister survey programme designed to receive customer feedback. Combined, these two programmes give us a comprehensive view of how Swarosvski is perceived worldwide, with the opportunity to take timely action and use any feedback to enhance our strategy.

Besides operational issues, what initiatives does CoCo carry out to engage people?

We involve people in our sales approach, which is very structured and covers all stages: from customer reception to cross-selling strategies.

Thanks to CoCo, we can thoroughly evaluate how these steps are carried out: we ask the staff to share with the entire community how they sell their products, and the experts at headquarters comment on it, suggesting variations and selecting the best ways globally.

This sharing exercise is beneficial because acting globally allows people to connect with different fashions and styles and to discover combinations of products and ideas they might not have considered.

Also, every time we launch a new collection, we ask the community to share ideas on the *total look*, that is, to show us combinations of Swarovski products for customers, thus generating *cross-* and *upselling* suggestions. It is an initiative we appreciate and encourage, selecting the best *total looks*, thus contributing to the spread of *best practices* around the world.

Several roles coexist at CoCo to make Swarovski's global retail network function. How do they interact, and how does the community respond to their specific needs?

We can say that, within CoCo, there are sub-communities comprising the local *key users*, the *visual merchandisers* group, the *district managers*, the *ambassadors* and the shop managers.

These groups need specific information and have different needs for communication with the network. Our editorial
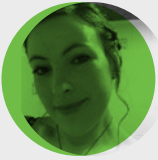
**Markella
Everitt-Russell**

*Sales Operations
Executive:
Communications
Swarovski,
CoCo Key User*

What does being part of CoCo mean to you? How has it changed your daily life?

I feel part of something bigger with CoCo and it allows me to connect with the Swarovski community worldwide. I have expanded my network of connections and can support my colleagues and help them settle in. As a *key user*, I can also give my input on topics that impact organisational culture, such as Pride or topics related to *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*.

What exactly do you do as *key user*? Is this role helping you develop new skills?

They sometimes say I am like Yoda because I am aware of everything going on. The *key user* ensures that the content shared is useful and engaging and helps community users improve their daily working lives.

This role helps me develop several skills: stakeholder management, *problem-solving*, creating comprehensive and engaging content for CoCo, and developing initiatives to encourage feedback. It is like a job within a job, but it is really lovely to do something for the entire community.

You are also a CoCo veteran and have seen it evolve. What has surprised you the most over the years?

When I started working with CoCo, I was unfamiliar with the HTML language used to publish on the platform: I had to learn it from scratch. I was trained and supported on this path and was surprised how quickly it became natural to use it. CoCo is a lovely mix of process and creativity, and it is good to see how the community has evolved. There is always friendly competition between us *key users*: we can see who is doing well, congratulate them and then ask them for suggestions on improving. We share content, best practices and help each other: if I have problems, there is always someone else to question, and if I make a mistake, someone will point it out and support you. Although my colleagues and I are in different countries, we feel we are in the same office. ■

team's work is crucial in this respect : it orchestrates and interconnects all sub-communities, which can work as one big team, maintaining common goals and customer satisfaction.

CoCo continues to evolve. What are the future plans?

CoCo must continue to add value to the work of Swarovski personnel by offering relevant and diverse content to ensure the high levels of interaction we have achieved so far. For this reason, one of the next developments concerns gamification, which I believe will take the community to another level by adding a playful dimension and promoting virtuous behaviour. ■

Intesa Sanpaolo Tribes
Orchestrating borderless collaboration

PERSPECTIVE 1 / THE STRATEGIC ROLE

Interview with
Renato Dorrucci

Executive Director, Group Head of Development Policies and Learning Intesa Sanpaolo

The theme of communities appears in Intesa Sanpaolo's 2022-25 Business Plan. Where does this need come from?

Three interrelated instances led us to develop communities in Intesa Sanpaolo.

The first relates to the digitisation of processes and products and entails the need to nurture forms of *cross-collaboration* between different parts of the organisation, crossing traditional boundaries. This is even more important in a large corporation like Intesa Sanpaolo, divided into *silos* and based on a divisional model, thus, by definition, vertical and hierarchical-functional.

The second instance relates to human relationships in the new ways of working. After *remote working* made necessary by the pandemic, we have adopted a hybrid model, which has reduced the opportunities to meet and informal exchanges. So nowadays, people know each other less, and work contacts are increasingly purpose-driven and less spontaneous. This lowers social interaction and offers fewer networking opportunities, which, in a large organisation, is an enabling factor for *cross-collaboration*. Hybrid work also makes the *onboarding* of new employees more complex.

The third instance stems from the vital need for *upskilling*, linked to evolving skills and professions. We started to look at our organisation in terms of our employees' skills. It is a new lens of observation that enhances everyone's professional contribution and investigates what you need to know to work better. This is an important perspective in a rapidly changing world that constantly requires new skills.

These three instances converge in creating the ISP Tribes, which, for us, shape organised ways of promoting sociability and exchange, aiming at people's development and growth, to speed up the transformation of how we work towards digital, facilitate the effectiveness of hybrid work, and enable professional growth for trades and skills.

What they are:
ISP Tribes are professional and interest communities for the Intesa Sanpaolo workforce. They seek to enhance people's development and growth, accelerate digital transformation, facilitate hybrid working dynamics, and enable collaborative dynamics for the transfer of knowledge.

Year of foundation:
2022

People involved:
7000+ (as at June 2023)

Interview with
Francesca Mangia

Head of HR Development Models Intesa Sanpaolo

At Intesa Sanpaolo, are these communities created artificially or are they of a different nature? What types of communities are you developing?
I believe communities are not and should not be an artificial construct: they are about the emergence of groups that have a natural and spontaneous vocation to meet. The organisation's task is not to create them but to detect and organise them. In Intesa Sanpaolo, there are two types of natural communities: a more stable one and a more contingent one.

The first type of community relates to trades, clusters around the concept of skills and professionalism, and thus invokes the themes of *cross-border* networking and cooperation. The second values interests, which we can interpret as a contingent skill, an elementary component of an occupation. In the working world, a person is interested in something for two reasons: because it relates to their profession or because it generates cross-fertilisation with other points of view for a future expectation of growth or personal development.

How do you detect and grow these types of communities?

The Intesa Sanpaolo Tribes came into being in 2022. Today, one year later, what reflections can you share?
First of all, we have noticed that a little like people our Tribes have distinct characters: some need more prompting, others are more autonomous and spontaneous. Another reflection concerns the participative learning mechanisms enabled by the Tribes, besides traditional training. Today, we can learn not only from teachers but also from colleagues. This is of immense value because it brings together the enormous knowledge base, experience and professionalism present in a company as large and complex as ours.

There is then an element of *caring*: we monitor and listen to the Tribes all the time because we do not see them as mere spaces of autonomous interaction. Therefore, we have created a differentiated and customised editorial, relational and communication strategy for each Tribe. It is a 'living' and multidimensional strategy. We continuously monitor each Tribe to observe the progress of initiatives and emerging dynamics. We learn a lot from this continuous listening because we draw *insight* to energise communities and develop communication and engagement plans that meet our identified needs.

Let's get specific: what model allows you to enable, activate and involve people in your communities?
Our two types of communities, trade and interest, have common purposes: training, development and networking on the one hand, and exchange of tools, methods and experiences on the other hand.
Each Tribe is then based on certain recurring elements. The first is virtual

Firstly by using the two *detectors*, we have identified – trade and interest – to find them where there is a desire to exchange. On the one hand, this implies solicitation and maieutic extraction. It means answering explicit community demands. In this work, it is important to start with sufficiently mature needs, which require 'legs to move forward', namely, a digital infrastructure and an editorial team that drives, stimulates and offers tools for dialogue, also in a *bottom-up* mode.

In any case, forcing these dynamics makes no sense: it is important not to create a community where there is none. Also, we must not assume that, once they have emerged, communities can go it alone. They need spontaneity, but they require continuous orchestration, without which they cannot stand the test of time.

space, integrated with our digital HR ecosystem to offer a *seamless* experience and allow people to access all company tools and initiatives in one place.
The second concerns governance: all Tribes have a sponsor organisation that identifies the need to create a new community and directs its development and strategic evolution over time.
The third is the editorial team, the central contribution team: it governs the various content formats and schedules. We focused on variety to provide a rhythm and different stimuli to explore various topics.
The fourth obviously relates to how people are engaged. In the initial stages, a Tribe's participants are identified along with the sponsoring structure, defining an initial pool of participants that will then expand in later stages in different ways. For example, in the profession-based Tribes, membership of a profession is the driving force, whereas in the interest-based Tribes, participation is much broader and more open.

Finally, it is crucial to nurture meaningful interactions and contributions from below. That is why

At Intesa Sanpaolo, professions and interests intersect and overlap. How are these subsets within the same organisation managed?
We always apply this concept in the plural: being present in an ISP Tribe does not mean having exhausted the potential of community. Therefore it is essential to build bridges between Tribes. Hence, we have made them all visible on one platform: a single vantage point, to make it easier to identify the ones to take part in.
We used a *top-down* approach to create cross-events and situations encouraging multi-participation. Meanwhile, we are exploring new *bottom-up* approaches, which are already emerging. We have people who create continuity between conversations and transfer them from one community to another. The participant is always the first bridge between communities.

We talked about the value of exchanges and interactions. How could they be turned into results?
The results are varied. For instance, the bank is launching a structured AI transformation programme, which will shape new processes and products. The Tribe dealing with this issue already exists. Thus, the programme will

ambassadors are a key component of our model: they are the link between the editorial staff, the participants and the *owner* structure. They are not just facilitators but are active participants with whom the editorial team discusses relevant issues. The *ambassadors* are catalysts because, by participating in the Tribe's life, they are the 'antennae' of proximity, the first to grasp people's needs and to be recognised. This proximity also helps the decoding of specific languages in the more technical Tribes, such as those dedicated to data and artificial intelligence. The *ambassadors* can be identified centrally but can also be selected from among the most active and engaged participants. Thus, the life of a Tribe is dynamic not only in its content but also in its functioning and the activation of roles, which evolve over time.

People with different seniority and from distinct divisions take part in the Intesa Sanpaolo Tribe. How do they dialogue in this horizontal context?
Exchanges in communities are democratic and do not follow our hierarchies, although we should emphasise that they do not replace organisation. I like to think of the Tribe as a public square, an informal space added to the organisation, where discussions and conversations take place, knowledge is exchanged, and people network. And networks are not in themselves hierarchical. They have more or less significant nodes depending on skills and experience.

In Tribes, people discuss topics related to their work or everyday experiences. Above all, we can ask for help and compare ourselves with many colleagues; this is a distinguishing aspect to be appreciated.

What challenges await the Intesa Sanpaolo Tribe?
One upcoming challenge is to enhance *bottom-up* logic, thus increasing participation and active and valuable interaction between users. Internationalisation is another important area of evolution, to develop new connections between people in the countries where we operate. With this project, we have embarked on a path of continuous learning and innovation, and we will continue to be amazed by the evolutions offered by technologies, formats and modes of engagement. ■

benefit from its community and use it as a tool to gain *insight*, *feedback* and helpful output for developing new solutions. And thus communities will generate further value: not only from conversations but from the products generated by these conversations.

Do Intesa Sanpaolo's communities end at the organisation's perimeter, or do they extend beyond it?
The openness of the Tribe to the outside world is a complex and very relevant issue. On the one hand, we know there are very open communities, such as those of *open source* developers. On the other hand, organisations have a practical *cybersecurity* related problem: opening up means exposing ourselves to risks we cannot underestimate. In a world of open ecosystems and exchanges, I find it hard to believe we won't have to open up in the long run.
It is fascinating to understand where to find those porous points of exchange which facilitate dialogue with the outside world while maintaining the security of participants and computer systems. Because knowledge is increasingly contaminated and needs nourishing with constantly new sap. Without this, when a community reaches its peak, it risks becoming sterile. ■

Enel

An ecosystem of communities generating value

Logotel supports Enel in facing the challenges of the rapidly changing energy sector. The community system that Logotel has co-designed and continues to feed, together with the Italian multinational, covers multiple needs of a Group with around 70,000 employees, plus external partners.

In this context, adopting a *People & Community centred* approach is key to designing solutions that can transform and adapt as market needs and the Group's requirements evolve. Specifically, Logotel designed four communities *with* and *for* Enel: **e-flow**, **X Change**, **WeGrid** and **Marketing Tribe**.

E-FLOW

PERSPECTIVE 1 / LOGOTEL

E-flow is a digital business community for professionals in the Market Italy division and their partners. It involves about 14,000 people. Founded in 2008, it is the oldest of the communities Logotel has co-designed for the Enel Group. E-flow is a living organism that, over time, has evolved with changes in the supply system. Today it is an accessible, inclusive platform and also reflects the Group's values in this respect. Its current *mission*, that is, the thing that gives the project meaning, is 'to ensure active listening between all Enel people and customers'. E-flow does this by motivating, shaping and empowering its participants, offering utility and accompanying challenges and transformations: from *digital transformation* to energy transition and electrification.

In e-flow, people find everything they need for their daily work, whether it is selling products or services or *operations*-related activities. The community assures Enel that all its people dealing with customers – employees, partners or partner networks – offer a consistent experience across all physical-digital *touchpoints*: from selling in shops to selling through telephone channels, from handling complaints to communicating changes in the offer.

Training is another pillar of e-flow: its training plans accompany peo-

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE CUSTOMER

Marika de Marzi

*Head of Market Portal
and Content Management,
Enel Group*

E-flow is home to over 14,000 people for whom it provides utilities, services, tools, training and much more. It came out of an approach that, in contrast to *user-centred design*, puts the needs of people as part of a group that identifies with a value proposition at the centre of design. It is a 'kind' community in which, as a cohesive editorial team, we share an active role in designing the solution (co-design) and organising it (co-management). This generates and increases *engagement*, conveys coherence and cohesion, both short and long-term, to our entire Network. ◼

Ivana Cappellaro

*Head of Market Lab
and Training,
Enel Group*

Better together! Membership of the e-flow community helps us to create training paths, starting from *onboarding*, that consolidate behaviours and skills helpful for achieving business goals. E-flow offers support, content, motivation, aggregation and possibilities of expression for everyone. Indeed, the community is alive and feeds daily on people's valuable contributions, generating useful and practical content. From strategy to execution through day-to-day projects, e-flow allows us to generate tangible and measurable results for people care and business. ◼

ple from *onboarding* and cover every aspect of the direct and indirect sales network, conveying in real time even radical changes in the offer, such as the recent introduction of fibre. In this respect, e-flow can train a distributed population quickly and evenly, managing training flows that positively influence staff *turnover*, business results and operational efficiency.

That's not all. The community nurtures a new *mindset* in the participants to make them brand *ambassadors*: diffuse connection points of Enel customer culture, that is, sensors that can pick up and generate continuous feedback ranging from the perception of offers to their understanding, to customer moods and feelings. ◼

X CHANGE

Launched in 2020 amid a pandemic, X Change is a business community dedicated to the global ecosystems of Enel X and Enel X Way, two Enel Group companies focusing respectively on energy transition and electric mobility, united by the use of the same global CRM.

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE CUSTOMER

Giacomo Rulli

*Specialist Enel X Portfolio
& Quality Management*

The need to digitise training and information processes because of the recent pandemic led to X Change. It played a crucial role in the CRM X-Customer *adoption* programme, a set of digital platforms given to the Enel X world (Salesforce, Zuora, AMPEER, Glovia, SAP) globally, organising technical and commercial training courses through editorial plans, live support services, *selling competitions* and many other engagement initiatives accompanying and supporting the various parts of the business in their evolutions.

However, X Change is much more than that: it is our community that continues to grow and improve through the feedback we receive from the field and that enables us to communicate, exchange information and train all the people working in the Enel X ecosystem effectively and efficiently every day. ∎

The approximately 15,000 X Change participants are people directly employed by Enel X/Enel X Way or external partners. They are spread over 12 countries, have different professional roles and are divided into three action segments: B2C (private customers), B2B (companies) and B2G (government agencies and public administration). Each participant, depending on their profiling, has training paths and content available for their work.

X Change thus manages a multinational and complex system with a *community-centred* approach:

• in training, professional development and the adoption of new procedures and tools;
• in the knowledge and sale of the products and services offered by the two companies;
• in learning about safety and environmental issues.

These ingredients, combined with the participants' active listening and the exchange of feedback, immediately generated benefits and made X Change a unique hub where all information and training of the two Enel Group companies were available. ∎
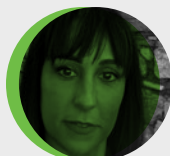
Patrizia Caringella

*Lead Expert Programme
Management Office
(Grid Blue Sky)*

For us at Enel Grids, WeGrid is first and foremost about global sharing and proactive listening. The community allows us to follow up on the professional needs of the 33,000 people in the business line who, by sharing their constructive feedback with the community, provide us with innovative ideas, allowing us to grow together. All this is possible through dedicated discussion and training spaces that, for example, foster knowledge to adopt the Global Operating Model, a highlight of Grid Blue Sky, the process re-engineering and digitisation programme. That's not all: the community is *first and foremost* people-centred. It is where everyone can bring their added value by participating in the dissemination of the Compass principles, on which the path of cultural evolution we are called upon to undertake together is based.

WEGRID

PERSPECTIVE 1 / LOGOTEL

Enel Grids is the Enel Group's business line dedicated to the management and maintenance of medium and low-voltage distribution infrastructure and networks. It is a strongly innovation-focused ecosystem. To meet the needs of this ecosystem, in 2021, Logotel co-designed WeGrid, which is currently the biggest community with 33,000 participants, all of whom are in-house people. At launch, WeGrid focused on training to support the adoption of Grid Blue Sky in the countries where the business line is active. This is a large and innovative project designed to disseminate and make people adopt a standard working model enabling them to manage processes connected with their daily activities uniformly and efficiently. The design approach has generated operational efficiencies and nurtured a sense of belonging among its people, regardless of where they work: from Italy to Brazil.

Besides the training goals, WeGrid has identified new *people-oriented* pillars, designed to support Enel's cultural transformation: that is, the dissemination and adoption of all those values, such as empowerment, transparency, and feedback culture, included in the company's 'behavioural compass'.

The Grid People Awards is a concrete example of the application of this pillar. It unleashed the full potential of the community, tangibly showing how rituals and events can, as the mission states, 'create, nurture and strengthen new relationships and links between people, content and skills'. Specifically, it is an internal contest held on a global scale, with a final award event in Rome, designed to celebrate best practices and reward people in the business line. The high level of *engagement* in this activity was because of the participatory manner in which it was designed. Indeed, people in the community nominated their team or other colleagues who distinguished themselves by their attitudes, behaviour or the quality of their work. ■

MARKETING TRIBE

PERSPECTIVE 1 / LOGOTEL

The feature that distinguishes the Marketing Tribe from other communities in the Enel system is that its members do not belong to a business line, but to a business family. The Marketing Tribe is the community of practice that connects all Enel X marketing professionals globally, fostering a continuous cultural and pragmatic exchange.
All members of the Tribe can express themselves, share their experiences and learn from each other, enhancing the community's social capital and nurturing shared marketing knowledge.
As one of the tools available to Enel X marketers, the Tribe offers all the information they need to do their job better (latest trends in the marketing world, real-time updates on competitors, best practices and much more). Thanks to the involvement of other stakeholders in the Enel marketing ecosystem, Tribe members can easily access essential touchpoints such as training, a constantly updated database with all available internal and external reports and a dedicated design hub.

The information and initiatives driving the Tribe aim to achieve a high participation rate by all members who feel involved because of a widespread 'desire for community'. Rituals also fuelled this desire such as the Tribe Talks and discussion events with marketing professionals outside the Enel world. Founded in 2022, the Marketing Tribe is a young and growing community which aims to become the main reference point for marketers. Planned initiatives to enhance the sense of belonging to this unique global community include creating a collaborative marketing glossary designed to nurture a common language and consolidate the Tribe's strong core identity. ■

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE CUSTOMER

Carmela De Renzis

Strategic Positioning - Global Strategic Marketing, Enel X

The Marketing Tribe is the community that unites Enel X marketing professionals worldwide, and this project's impact is both professional and personal. As professionals, it gives us the chance to enrich our point of view, exchange opinions and advice with our peers and learn from others by sharing market news, marketing insights and work experiences. As people, the community helps us build relationships with colleagues who do the same job as us but on the other side of the world. It involves us in activities that make us feel connected and part of one big team: our Marketing Tribe! ■

TIM Style
Relationships as a strategic orientation

Interview with
Manlio Scavo

TIM Consumer Trade Marketing Manager

TIM Style stands out for its ability to generate direct contact between people in the field, spread throughout the territory. What do you think are the most valuable elements?

On the level of utility, some aspects are more strategic, and others are more practical. At the strategic level, the community allows us to direct commercial policies and marketing strategies. For example, through surveys, we can collect thousands of pieces of feedback almost in real-time, which we then use to reorient, readjust, and redirect our work. For us, TIM Style is a tool with immeasurable value. The company has no other channel allowing us to go directly into the field and collect such precise feedback. The community also ensures that the content reaches the recipient in real-time. This is very important in a company as large and articulated as TIM, where information usually has to pass through many steps.

On a practical level, I would put the notice board first among the most valuable elements. I think it is the heart of the community. It is where employees communicate, exchange information, support each other and dialogue.

Community dynamics increase a sales force's level of effectiveness but also generate further unforeseen positive effects. What positive result did you come away with? And an unexpected result that amazed you?

The TIM Style community was founded in 2015, and the level of participation I have seen over this time has exceeded all expectations. This is gratifying because it was not a given. I am amazed by the diligence, thoroughness, timeliness and dedication with which employees engage in certification and training courses that involve them in complex issues, especially since these activities are additional to their work. All this makes me realise there really is a need for community and a tool that makes them feel part of our reality. The staff exhib-

What is it:
TIM Style is the social learning community of TIM consumer network employees and agents. It aims to nurture and support a unique selling style through training and acquiring specific skills. Over the years, it has evolved into an environment where participants engage in dialogue and discussion.

Year of foundation:
2015

People involved:
2350 (as at June 2023)

ited a sense of belonging to TIM and its values. They showed they had the same passion as those working at TIM. Indeed, the best unexpected result of TIM Style is that the community employees, part of an indirect sales network, actually consider themselves TIM people, irrespective of their position at the point of sale.

Over time, the community has become rooted in the workers' lives, who interact and support each other. What value do you place on this relational element?
Over time, the relational element has intensified so much. TIM Style has become a benchmark. People use it to share ideas, opinions, judgements, woes, personal and professional situations. Friendships have developed. There is even a self-proclaimed '100% active in community' Group, complete with t-shirts. These are *opinion leaders*, experts on specific topics, and it is a very inclusive group, even towards newcomers we bring into the community from time to time. It shows how our community is human, empathetic, and relationship-building. We cannot summarise all this with figures.

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE DESIGNER

Loredana Garzarella

Senior Project Manager community, Logotel

TIM Style is the social learning community of TIM consumer network employees and agents. It aims to nurture and support a unique selling style through training and gaining specific skills. However, I realise this summary does not capture online life: the enthusiasm, the liveliness, the involvement that drives people within this digital platform. So, I'll try to immerse you in my reality.

When I joined this community, I felt the 'urge for community', to quote Zygmunt Bauman, because at TIM Style, we feel a strong need to belong and to have experiences alongside a 'group of like-minded people' -. Staff and agents are not TIM employees, but because of the exclusive relationships they experience online and their daily contact with management, sharing the same spaces, they feel protected and recognised and, therefore, part of the brand itself. There are hundreds of examples I could give, but I find the comment of this staff member powerful: 'The most beautiful thing is sharing [...] Any question has an answer. I thank all my colleagues and the staff who respond, even if only to attempt a solution, sometimes giving solutions, sometimes joking about our daily problems. In short, with you all, I never feel alone!".

TIM Style needs constant updating to function as a hub and crossover element. Therefore, for the future, we aim to work on a new organisational aesthetic: on the dimension of being together, towards something in which employees and agents increasingly recognise themselves, that they find fulfilling, guiding them towards a future, generating positive impacts on their working and non-working lives. To do this, we are planning a new version:

+ **Intuitive**. We want to evolve towards a *mobile first* system that develops connections while remaining complete, functional and with a simple and fast 'scroll feed' operation.

+ **Participatory.** We are renewing formats and engagement mechanics to avoid dissipating attention and to promote vertical connection based on interests, level of preparation, and scope of action of employees and agents. We aim to create new rituals, community ones, to engage people even more online.

+ **Generative.** The quantity and mode of interaction will increase to trigger a virtuous circle between content production and consumption in an ever more contemporary perspective. To do this, we will involve the creators of the community, the very ones who regulate connections, enrich suggestions and create new contacts.

We aim for a more sustainable, powerful *always on* TIM Style, which can identify the needs of the sales network and create fresh paths, opportunities, and genuine connections. ■

One of TIM Style's valuable elements is its ability to translate the 'parent company's' content and training paths into schedules and formats tailored to a population that differs from TIM's in terms of age and attitudes. What do you think of this generational dynamic?

The community is a different world to dialogue with, and - first - *I give so you might give* is fundamental. We provide tools and information that explain 'what we do' and 'why we do it'. It is an important element to make everyone feel part of a team. In return, the employees give us their individual experiences, which, combined with the collective experiences of the sales network, become an enormous added value that has made us grow so much. It is a transformative and fruitful exchange because it nurtures positive change.

Regarding generational dynamics, the average age in TIM differs from that of people in the community. So our task is always to find new ways, investing and experimenting with all the technologies that are part of the everyday life of the new generations. We are thinking of a development that goes precisely in this direction. This focus on younger people means we must always keep up to date, but we do not have to struggle because we are in a company that operates in the world of technology, which is constantly developing.

Over the years, TIM Style has never stayed the same. It has always evolved. What are the most significant changes you have seen, and what do you envisage for the future?

In TIM Style we have never rested on our laurels because the logic is to evolve, to change, to improve, and to progress all together. Year after year, we must study to identify all the initiatives and tools to ensure the community's growth. Among the activities I manage, this is the number one priority. ■

When do you interact with the TIM Style community? When do you consult it? And how does it help you, for example, in customer relations?
I am always connected to the community on my PC at work. I keep it open in the background and take a look every five minutes. I look at all the news posted. When interacting with the customer, the community helps because, for example, if you don't know something, you can ask other colleagues, and someone will always answer you, perhaps even revealing particular things or some of their 'tricks'.

Besides participating in the community's life from day one, you also took part in all the training courses and had the highest scores. What does that mean to you?
I think training is essential in everyone's life. We always need it from the first to the last day. Even when a course repeats itself in some aspect, it is okay because sometimes you forget something, you miss a concept, and by repeating, you can catch up.

Has community participation made you feel closer to the brand?
Mobile telephony arrived in Italy in the 1990s, and I was already working with TIM in 1992, activating the first mobile phones. I can now say that TIM feels a bit mine, even though it is not mine. I could retire and stay at home, but I like this job so much that I will continue doing it as long as I can. ■

Interview with
Sandra Crivellaro

Retail network employee TIM

TIM Style is human, empathetic, and every day nurtures relationships

DOT by POLI.design
An ecosystem in continuous evolution

PERSPECTIVE 1 / THE DESIGNER

Irene De Ponti

Design Lead, Logotel

How far can a service extend if it addresses many people with very different needs, interests and life stages (personal and professional)? How effective can it be? These were the questions we tried to answer one year after the launch of the DOT community.

An enabling context and space to bring out needs and interests
After the *go live* in November 2021, we had the chance to explore features, content and interactions that would create fertile ground in the community. We also observed the dynamics of less interest to the participants. All this was possible because we interpreted the community as an enabling space, which revealed *live* the types of people who use it most, their needs and particularities. These have emerged both in the online platform, in the physical spaces of POLI.design, and in the in-person meetings we have organised, from which we have gathered suggestions and ideas for improvement. It was a fundamental step because it triggered an evolutionary leap: DOT went from an environment *for everyone* to a community for the people who needed it most, the students enrolled in the School of POLI.design. A homogeneous group of people with similar interests, needs and paths.

Focusing on students and redesigning services
This transition required a design flow based on three macro-phases: 1. Registering and relocating to Italy (most students are European or non-European); 2. Discovering Milan and student life; 3. Searching for the curricular internship at the end of the teaching activity and the *placement*.
Therefore, we delved deeper and gave more importance to those sections of DOT

What is it:
DOT is an international physical-digital community for students of POLI.design, a *post-graduate* Design school of the Polytechnic University of Milan.
It offers services and opportunities to meet all student needs, from enrolment to multicultural interactions to finding a curricular placement.

Year of foundation:
2021

People involved:
around 450 students every year, plus coordinators, professors, tutors, staff members and former students (*alumni*).

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE CUSTOMER

One of the most interesting aspects of DOT is its adaptive capacity, starting from the design phase. How has the community adapted, and what reflections can we draw from its ongoing evolution?
We must start with a piece of reality: the masters have a very autonomous life. They are disconnected product silos with no genuine community to refer to. Initially, we conceived DOT as a virtual community of peer inter-actions, a 'third place' where students could interact with the entire POLI.design population, guided by an editorial board, particularly in conveying certain content in the community and enabling peer exchange. Exchange intensity, one measure of the effectiveness of a community, was initially low because if there is no physical community, there can be no virtual mirror. So, my first thought is: you can only design something, a platform, a digital interaction model, when there is a pre-existent 'social-physical' nature.

This is why we rethought DOT with a three-step evolution. We moved from a *community-led* to a *user-led* perspective and then re-established a *community-led* dynamic based on new assumptions. When we realised the intensity of the exchange was relatively low and did not trigger a real virtual community, we reflected on the user's needs, asking about a student, espe-cially a foreign one, who has to familiarise himself with a new environment and culture.

We, therefore, redesigned DOT to turn it into a tool to support the three critical phases of the life cycle of a master's student: acclimatisation with the regulatory and entry conditions within our country, greater integration not only with the POLI.design context, but with everything that goes on around it and thus with the city of Milan, and finally, the internship pro-cess, which puts the companies where the students go in touch with the students' needs. In this third phase, we will again shift to a *community-led* perspective to activate new forms of exchange – both *top-down* and *bot-tom-up* – in the dialogue between students and enterprises and, thus, create a new mechanism for matching supply and demand.

What was the key to readjusting the community?
We clearly identified the community service user, refocusing on relevance. Where there is a community, there are often disparate or even conflict-ing interests. However, we have to identify who is a community's real *lead user*, and we have identified them in the student, designing the experience around their needs. These reflect three macro-phases: onboarding, life dur-ing the master's programme and subsequent *placement*.

The significance of conversations and information relative to a coherent group is one of the founding elements of a community, but if we only focus on this, the perimeters rigidify. However, an exciting aspect of DOT is its porosity, which makes POLI.design interact with Milan, its home city…

Interview with
Cabirio Cautela

*Full professor
of design management
and strategic design
for innovation
CEO of POLI.design*

that would be useful in these three phases: from administrative support before moving to Italy, to helping students get to know each other before classes begin, to discovering areas of Milan, events and leisure activities, to generating live meeting opportunities, to make DOT not just a virtual space, but a community of intentions, a group of interest that extends beyond the services offered.

The 'key roles' to involve students in each master's programme

We identified *pivots* among the students, namely bridge roles between the community and students. We identified these figures in each master's programme who became the DOT community managers. They gained skills to promote initiatives, gather needs and produce physical and digital content. We trained and gave voice to people who were motivated to work together to improve the service, promote multicultural interactions and gather ideas for further areas of improvement.

The impacts are amplified. And the objectives and services are extended

The design reorientation allowed DOT to transform into a physical-digital system of connection and relationship capable of self-powering. For example, today students/community managers naturally create opportunities to meet each other across the different master's courses because they have no way of doing so in the everyday life of POLI.design. Mutual support mechanisms have emerged for newcomers to the city to look for accommodation and exchange tips on how to find it. Students also share analyses and suggestions with the editorial staff to improve the services offered.

DOT now generates value through every interaction and will enable us to extend the community towards **new types of users, scaling the impacts towards the entire POLI.design School system.** ■

We evaluate a community on different aspects. Therefore, I like this concept of porosity and even talk about proximity because it has stopped making sense to see communities in terms of distance. However, the type of exchange is already a vector that can take on different forms and content each time. The porosity of DOT is clear in its ability to support students with consistent content and 'physical' moments. The platform has thus become the place to provide insights, set appointments and orientate yourself. This aspect is doubly integrating; first, with the context in which the student studies and second, with the city so that the POLI.design students in the suburbs can experience Milan's cultural and design event circuit, which is varied and frequently changes. So, in this case, the idea is to support the students during the master's course by engaging them in certain aspects of city life.

Roles also exist in peer communities or a-hierarchical organisations: they can be simplified or specialised, develop differently, and carry different responsibilities and weights. This differentiation allows communities to thrive and prevents them from collapsing. How does this concern DOT?

Everyone is different, and people construct various roles with respect to social diversity. Only people who do not know how complex systems work can think we all do the same things and have the same roles. So much so that in social networks, roles are almost a projection of your personality

Soukarni Barai

*DOT participant and
community manager*

and allow you to connect with others by adopting behaviours, manners, and languages that reinforce group relations. So roles are not static but must be adaptive and transformative: roles evolve but must be given. At DOT, we have taken a first step in this direction by identifying and training *pivots* within the different master's degree classes. These people act, to some degree, as community managers. Their task is to engage and motivate the other students.

What future developments do you see for DOT?

It would be wonderful if master's degree teachers would assign different roles according to the students' personalities and various creative, analytical or relational aptitudes. We must then build an extra component focused on the *reason why* we take part in DOT, which must detach itself from the initial services and information dimension to become a place for multi-disciplinary discussion and exchange.

I then see a further evolutionary leap: the involvement of *alumni*, people who were community members as students and who can continue to be part of it in a new guise. I believe they are a vital part of the future DOT, always bearing in mind that the virtual is a mirror of the real. If you are good at drawing in the physical world, virtual reality can support, facilitate, accelerate, and act as an *enabler*. If, on the other hand, you don't have the design features of physical reality, the virtual becomes almost an exercise in style. ■

You play a dual participant and community manager role at DOT. What does being part of it mean to you?

For me, DOT was the first point of contact with the POLI.design School and the Milanese community. When I was in India, planning the move, I knew nothing about the culture, the place, the people, and what I had to do. DOT gave me much valuable information about how to find my way around. I thought it was a great opportunity when I heard I could become a community manager.

What have you learned as a community manager? Have you gained new skills?

I would say that I first learnt about the local way of life. I did not know about the typical rituals of Italian culture, such as the aperitivo. I also thought of organising these kinds of events to make it easier for people to get to know the POLI.design masters. I have always enjoyed belonging to organisations that bring people together. As a community manager, I have learnt to manage time better and bring people from different cultures and classes together. It all started as an experiment, which is now becoming a widespread practice among other community managers.

Do you feel you have developed a sense of belonging to the DOT community?

When I arrived at POLI.design, nothing connected the students of the different master's degrees, and I felt we were very isolated. DOT also creates links through community managers because we are all trying to bring everyone together and create shared memories. Having memories in common generates a sense of belonging. ■

Sky Mya
Navigating change by doubling skills

Interview with
Sergio Saviotti

*Field Operations
and Commercial Coaching
Senior Manager Sky*

A key element of the Mya community is its versatility. In what way did this feature prove important when changing the Sky offer?

In recent years, Sky has sold hardware, Sky Glass TVs, and previously entered the Telco market by launching Sky Wifi. We created Mya to assist our retail network in this change. The community aims to enable salespeople to manage existing and potential customers with a new type of conversation geared to TV content and a new technology with distinctive features that require skills other than those developed in the last 10-15 years.

However, we must remember that Mya came into being at a particular time. It launched in early April 2020 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus Mya triggered a revolution that preceded the launch of the new products. It transformed how we communicate and relate to a mostly indirect sales network at a critical time when salespeople were locked down. At that time, there was great frustration related to uncertainty about the future. Communicating directly with the sales network allowed the company to convey calm and cohesion while putting a channel manager and head office directly in touch with an installer or salesperson anywhere in Italy, generating a powerful sense of belonging.

This was the first fundamental change: previously, communication was by email, text message and a direct relationship with staff on the ground. These modes could generate doubts, confusion and fragmentation among the various channels. With Mya, besides harmonising information, the sales network could voice their feelings for the first time. On its launch, this innovation met with much enthusiasm, which led to loads of hits and comments.

What is it:
Mya is the business community of
Sky Italia's Retail & Service Network.
It is designed to support salespeople,
installers and points of sale in their
daily work and to bring Sky and its
contractors closer together in the
field, strengthening their bond.

Year of foundation:
2020

People involved:
Approximately 4000 users

Daniele Limonta

*Senior Manager
Community, Logotel*

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE DESIGNER

You arrive at Milano-Rogoredo station, and just as you enter the Santa Giulia district, you find yourself outside Sky Italia's headquarters. This classic modern concrete-glass-steel building is impressive, with its imposing transmission dishes pointing skywards. The building houses the studios that produce most of the Group's news broadcasts, with the bustle of technicians, celebrities, guests and directors coming and going in the corridors and rooms, perfectly integrated with the managers and people from the marketing, sales, logistics and customer care departments. At Sky, everyone contributes to achieving the result, and that goes without saying. They do so by living and walking in the same spaces, with a sense of competitive camaraderie typical of people who gen-

Communities generally address more practical needs first and then focus on relationships, whereas Mya reversed this order…

It was more tactical than strategic: we reacted to the best of our ability to the pandemic context. In the first phase, we focused everything on a *community-centred* approach: we looked at the importance of resilience in Covid management. We conveyed confidence and provided across-the-board safety knowledge.

This relational dynamic proved helpful when we launched Sky Wifi in June 2020. We could term it the second phase of Mya's life when the community distributed information to sell our products. We enriched the communication with new content, procedures, and commercial offers. At that point, we had an audience that knew how to use Mya, which sped up the adoption of the new product and shortened the *time-to-market*. Here again, Mya proved to be innovative. When we broadcast Sky Wifi's launch event via video streaming, our CEO could communicate in *real time* to a network spread across the country, generating many subscriptions, views and comments.

uinely know sport because they experience it from the inside and talk about it all the time.

The strength of the (working) Group was immediately apparent when we started thinking about building a communication and engagement system for Sky Italia's physical sales and service networks. With an ambitious goal: to contribute to a revolution.

Thousands of people in every Italian municipality who, with the shiny Sky logo embroidered on their shirts and polo shirts, talk every day with tens of thousands of (current or future) customers about sports, cinema, TV series, reality shows, documentaries, and children's programmes... have had to branch out into another market sector: broadband, with Sky Wifi. We speak of expertise because they already know the job, experience it and continually refine it. They are Sellers (with a capital letter!).

We accomplished this revolution with the support of the Mya Business Community. While the Sky Wifi product

Mya transformed the way the Sky sales network communicates, speeding up the adoption of new products and accelerating time-to-market

Do you think Mya has come of age?
I believe we can speak of maturity for some targets, such as sales accounts, demonstrated by constant access and loyalty. On other targets, we still have to work to improve *impressions* and *reach*, especially on targets that over time have acquired an increasingly strategic role in Sky sales, for example, multi-brand shops that sell products and services of other companies and are much more commercially than relationally focused. So we started introducing training courses aimed at this target group to talk about Sky in a different way, and Mya plays an essential role in this process. The number of hits and frequency of use has increased, but we need to step up the work of *education* to maximise the engagement and interest of this target group as well.

has won the Ookla Speedtest Award as the fastest service provider in Italy for two years running, with Altroconsumo crowning it the 2022 'product of the year' in the telecommunication services category, the national Sales Networks have made it the company's best-selling service. This hoped-for result grew from ambition to reality on the back of a company organisation with an exceptional sense of belonging, which channelled the company's entire sales training and marketing effort into a powerful, versatile and effective tool such as the Business Communities, but above all with the ability to explain and communicate the 'why' of each step of the strategy to its people, almost all of whom belong to indirect networks.

Sergio has already said it above: we launched Mya during a pandemic when everyone was humanly and economically struggling. It could change shape and colour (in the literal sense of the term because it takes on new hues with each new initiative) astonishingly quickly. It expertly brought out and dosed corporate messages, sharing information between colleagues and new words to learn the meaning (managing to competently expound the advantage of having 'low latency' is difficult for someone not in the business). Above all, it has created and continues to create connections between people that are increasingly solid and linked not only to geographical proximity, finding strength in the shared revolution of which they are a part.

This revolution recently received another boost with the launch of Sky Glass and the Group's entry into a new market of hardware and software that makes it unique. With Mya and its editorial team always in the foreground. ◼

How do you consider Mya strategic for Sky's sales network, and how could it evolve?
Mya is strategic for retaining our salespeople and communicating emotions and not just numbers. A sales network is typically based on targets, offers, and promotions. Mya's ambition is to create something more: a community. The goal is now to extend this sense of community to people who have recently joined the platform and have not experienced its history. Around 4,000 people could use Mya; of these, around 1,700, with peaks of 2,500, use it faithfully and consistently. The medium-term goal is to make the use of these 2,500 more constant. We can do this by trying to make Mya even more profiled to respond quickly and easily to the needs of individual types of sellers. This requires a lot of *effort* from the people feeding the community, but it also requires a platform that can dynamically and automatically adapt to the browsing needs of the targets. ◼

Italgas

When transformation is cultural, participatory and community-driven

PERSPECTIVE 1 / THE CUSTOMERS

Interview with
Peter Durante

*Chief Human Resources
Officer, Italgas*

Interview with
Irene Sacchetto

*Head of Talent and Change
Management, Italgas*

Concepts such as identity, purpose, vision and mission are often abstract. With the VI.VA.MI and LASCIA IL SEGNO (LEAVE YOUR MARK) projects, Italgas has worked on these concepts by initiating collaborative and generative dynamics to increase involvement and breathe life into these elements throughout the population. How have these dynamics been helpful?

Durante: This was not a formal involvement. Our people contributed to creating Italgas' new *identity*. Logotel helped us to establish our new mission, vision and purpose that, before then, was part of a relatively unfamiliar terminology for most of our population. Obviously, a top team worked closely with Logotel in the first phase, but all the Group's units could experience these concepts. This was the actual community approach we deployed. And today we can say that these words are part of a common language.

Sometimes *purpose*, *vision* and *mission* are communicated externally first and only later to employees. Why did you choose to turn this dynamic around so thoroughly?

Durante: In a way, we had to. Our company is going through a big change. Italgas is the sort of start-up that has been around for 185: it distributes gas nationwide, and we can say it is part of Italian history. Until now, it has always operated in the same way, but the UN's 2030 Agenda and the European Commission's 2050 Goals mean we need to redefine ourselves in depth. Because, in the energy transition, gas, in the traditional sense, is seen as dying. So, seven years ago, we began a significant transformation to make our

What are they: VI.VA.MI and LASCIA IL SEGNO (LEAVE YOUR MARK) are two pathways aimed at redefining the *identity, vision, mission* and *purpose* of Italgas and disseminating them via communication and entertainment activities to the entire corporate population, involving them in the entire process. The paths also worked on the design of the mindset that translates and brings the new leadership model to life in behaviour.

The path: Logotel designed a series of workshops with third parties and second business lines, with a *fine tuning* involving the first managerial lines. Professionals in the field were also involved in verifying the effectiveness of the messages that took shape.

People involved: The entire company population (4,000 people)

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE DESIGNER

Benedetta Bacialli

Lead Learning, Logotel

Italgas is a leading distributor of gas to Italian homes with over 185 years of history and a solid commitment to sustainability and energy transition.
Today, it is undergoing a powerful transformation stimulated by two major challenges: first, to deal coherently and swiftly with a very demanding business plan for the next few years with ambitious targets and enormous investments in the expansion and digitisation of the network; second, a big generational change is in progress which, to express its full value requires listening and care.

In such a context of business transformation and innovation, Italgas' HR team felt the urgency and need for a **cultural change**, starting from the **co-design** of *identity*, *vision*, *mission* and *purpose*. These are the premises of the VI.VA.MI. project.

valuable distribution infrastructure a tool to achieve new sustainability goals. This involved digitisation, the 'smart' evolution of the network, and increasing the number of entry points so that biogas, biomethane, hydrogen or a *blend* of all these could pass through our pipes. We began by redefining business processes but realised that by leaving the cultural component out, people were not changing how they acted. Therefore, we decided to adopt a different vision. This is why we chose a collaborative approach to writing Italgas' new *purpose*, *mission* and *vision*. It was the only way to translate a new culture into daily life. And something revolutionary happened: the word gas (the past) never appears in any of the materials produced. This indicates our future focus.

Sacchetto: In our journey, building a new pact of trust that involved people without creating 'communication showcases' was crucial. I think that trust is crucial for people to really adopt a new language every day.

As Logotel, we supported Italgas on this path, marked by a strong inclusive and engaging approach, starting from a question: how to design an identity change that can speak to the entire corporate population and then spread it to all levels to inspire new behaviour?

A collaborative *design-oriented approach*
The factor that contributed most to achieving the project's goal was the collaborative approach, which featured the re-writing of the various cultural components.
Starting with the third lines, then with the second lines, the first lines, and finally with the more technical and operational ones, we gathered and integrated points of view at all levels of the organisation to make the new Italgas culture inspiring and applicable to everyone's daily life.
In addition, the *People & Community centred* approach and method we adopted in this process enabled creative skills and a sense of caring in the entire population involved, and this amplified the desire for authoriality and constructive dialogue.
The concept of this sort of transformative community emerges strongly.
Because, in transformational communities, everyone plays a significant role in bringing value to the community, which has set Italgas apart as an innovative and pioneering approach to redesigning its corporate culture. Each person has brought their uniqueness and acquired an enabling role in spreading and involving others in this process.

A path that redesigns 'the core' of the Italgas community
In this issue of Weconomy, we look at multidimensional transformative communities, where the first dimension is the core, containing values and knowledge along with all the elements with an aggregating and attractive role for the people who are part of it.

The title of this issue of *Weconomy* is "*a completely different vision*", precisely because, to deal with a transformation, we think it necessary to change perspective...
Sacchetto: Generating a sense of urgency in the change would have been a shock, considering our 185-year history, the company's *background* and the *top-down* approach to innovation we had hitherto adopted. Building a narrative in tune with the new distributed, diffuse and engaging leadership model we are aiming for was crucial for the Copernican revolution we are facing. Thus, the 'Leave your mark' project was a fresh, engaging and light-hearted way to bring on board our people on the ground, who willingly engaged in activities removed from their daily *tasks* to achieve a common goal.

After redefining the company's essence, have you noticed a change in the everyday behaviour or vocabulary people use?
Durante: I'll start with an episode I found significant. During a convention on ESG issues with some of our suppliers, all front-line colleagues began their speeches by mentioning the company's new *purpose*. It is really in this aspect where I can see the biggest changes. For example, a new word has entered our staff's everyday vocabulary, under *purpose*: 'pioneers' reflects the way we look to the future, in the energy transition. This word now features in conversations, is joked about, and expresses pride in being part of a greater transformation.

Today, especially when the younger generation joins Italgas, they are aware it is a leading player in the energy transition, and we are very keen on this point in terms of selection and *retention*.

The VI.VA.MI. project brought together different roles that would not normally sit around the same table, involving first, second and third lines to act as *role models* in the change. What valuable interactions have you seen emerge?
Sacchetto: There are significant differences compared to a few years ago: in how we discuss these concepts, how much we have grown, how we look at people and look to the future together, and how we look for characteristics and values that can take us forward. We know that Italgas is a large organisation and that changes happen at different speeds, but we are seeing the internalisation of this new culture, which is also exciting, considering all the work done to make people active in this change process. ■

In this sense, **VI.VA.MI** reshaped the core of the Italgas community, consolidating it based on the needs of a new community, which transforms along with the context. Since the core is the densest and slowest to change dimension, it is important that everything within it, such as goals and language, is shared and accepted. This allows a community that transforms over time to survive, adapt and regain its balance in change.

Leave your mark, the second part of the project, inviting Italgas people to leave their mark, to share their views on the newly generated core, played a key role here.

Leave your mark had three primary goals:

- **to make all Italgas people aware** of the new key elements of corporate culture (*vision, mission, purpose*);
- **to involve** the entire Italgas community with a communication and engagement programme to assimilate and consolidate the new positioning;
- **to provide** through a *repository*, a dedicated digital space containing all useful content and documents for both the current and new population.

What's next?
Now, having finished informing, disseminating and involving people about the identity change, we need to respond to the next challenge, involving our **mindset**: a set of transversal and inspirational behaviours to apply the new leadership model in everyday working life. ■

GuccIdeas
Collective experiences of collaborative innovation

Interview with
Valeria Cicino

Global Collaborative Innovation Director, Gucci

GuccIdeas approaches innovation with a *People & Community centred viewpoint*. Shifting the focus from an idea of innovation linked to specialised figures to a collective approach. How is it proving useful?

The birth of Collaborative Innovation at Gucci points in this direction. Our company has different roles and functions, from the style office to production, corporate functions to retail. Today, we have active projects arising spontaneously from our people's ideas in various areas, thanks to our corporate culture and its spirit of collaboration and sharing.

The Collaborative Innovation approach, particularly the GuccIdeas initiative, aims to enhance and foster this type of innovation, resulting from the observation of the emerging needs and entrepreneurial spirit within us all. To amplify these dynamics, we asked ourselves some basic questions: how can we support idea generation? How can we support experimentation and thus foster business innovation in all areas?

GuccIdeas answers these questions, creating a dedicated space for sharing ideas through a dedicated platform. We also foster entrepreneurial spirit and critical thinking with experiential training programmes, thus stimulating creativity and innovation within the company.

We start from the concept that, with the right tools, anyone can be an innovator in their area of responsibility, and we are building an ecosystem that supports this perspective. Although we are still in the initial experimental phase, the responses from colleagues and the ideas generated through GuccIdeas show the formation of a transversal community capable of spanning Gucci's diverse network and embracing the different cultures it encompasses. For example, at GuccIdeas, we have seen retail people quickly exchanging ideas with those from other areas, listening to suggestions from the industrial area, a store, or our corporate offices, allowing participants to broaden their perspective, and also making them feel how productive our company is in terms of ideas.

We are spreading a new mindset and corporate culture that empowers individuals and their innovative potential to make a difference with a significant impact on the company and its future.

What is it:
GuccIdeas - The learning experience is the path that supports Gucci people, regardless of their role and function, to experiment with methods and approaches and tools to make innovation a habit.

The path:
We designed, developed and delivered two events, one at the beginning and one at the end of the course, five digital distance learning modules, five collaborative activities and one intermediate appointment in the virtual classroom.

People involved:
A selection of participants from 21 countries were involved.

How do the interactions that emerged in the project translate into the lives of the people in Gucci?
People very much appreciated group work and interactivity during 'GuccIdeas - The Learning Experience': a collaborative training session that started with the first pilot this year involving more than 200 participants worldwide. This course was delivered in Italian and English using a hybrid structure involving asynchronous and live moments to involve the participants as much as possible, who could also work in small groups.

Participants wanted even more opportunities to connect during the closing event. The working groups interacted spontaneously and with different degrees of intensity, triggering dynamics that continued beyond the project's life.

The ideas generated during the GuccIdeas training course will not remain purely theoretical but will be translated into concrete actions. For example, participants can take part in ongoing activities and projects that would otherwise be inaccessi-

PERSPECTIVE 2 / THE DESIGNER

Tristan Rigendinger

Advising Partner Logotel

Fostering innovation through a people & community centred learning approach at Gucci. Innovation lies at the heart of any successful organization, and this is especially true for successful luxury fashion companies. Gucci, a brand deeply rooted in creativity, recognizes the importance of nurturing innovation throughout its entire workforce. Traditionally, creative departments have dominated the innovation process, risking to leave other employees feeling excluded from contributing valuable ideas. However, Gucci's adoption of a community-led approach has revolutionized this dynamic, creating an inclusive environment that empowers all employees to dare to be innovative, and contributing to the platform "GuccIdeas". Using an intense co-design approach, we provided an enriching learning experience that encourages self-reflection, collaboration, exchange and sharing, while respecting individual differences.

The role of learning for employee empowerment. "GuccIdeas - The Learning Experience" is built on a community-led learning approach, prioritizing inclusivity and collaboration by involving employees from various departments and stores in the innovation process. To foster a more innovative mindset, this interactive learning experience equips participants with tools and techniques for innovation. Through an engaging mix of videos, online events and downloadable content, we introduce methodologies linked to innovation, brainstorming, and problem-solving, encouraging participants to think outside the box and approach challenges from fresh angles and with strategic thinking. The learning experience is thoughtfully co-designed to address specific needs and challenges faced by participant in their respective roles.

Emphasizing exchange. A crucial aspect of community-led learning on innovation or any other topic is the exchange of ideas and experiences. "GuccIdeas – The Learning Experience" encourages regular discussions, sharing, and brainstorming sessions among participants. This

practice sparks innovative thinking and refines ideas, strengthening bonds within the community by generating and sharing novel, innovative solutions.

Co-designing for empowerment. Involving everyone in the design process of new projects or strategies instils a sense of ownership and empowerment. When individuals see their ideas being discussed and implemented, they become more proactive in contributing to growth and innovation. Community led co-designing approaches foster purpose and motivation, inspiring individuals to go beyond their regular tasks and collaboratively find innovative solutions.

Understanding and respecting individual differences. Acknowledging that every member of the community is different is crucial. Not all participants may want to actively share their ideas right away. Some might prefer to listen and observe before participating. Gucci's learning experience recognizes the uniqueness of each community member and tailors its approach to accommodate various communication styles. Whether it's in-person discussions, virtual checkpoints, online platforms, or regular updates and calls for action, all avenues are considered to ensure that every voice is heard and valued.

The Power of collaboration. Gucci's learning experience's community-led approach thrives on collaboration, bringing together diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise. This diversity acts as a catalyst for innovation, pushing participants to explore new ideas beyond their comfort zones. As employees witness their peers embracing change and making a positive impact, they, too, are motivated to contribute, collectively fostering a culture of innovation within the organization.

In conclusion, Gucci's adoption of a community-led approach has unlocked the innovative potential of participants at all levels. By offering a carefully designed learning experience, promoting exchange, and embracing collaboration while respecting individual differences, the company continues to cultivate an inclusive and empowering culture of innovation. This approach not only leads to valuable changes in participants' realities but also transforms the personal experiences of all employees, making them more confident and willing to embrace and contribute to innovation boldly.

ble because an already trained team conducts them. They will also be able to test their ideas in their team or area of expertise, receiving our methodological support to develop them fully.

Projects like this thrive on participation. Which is not (only) quantitative but brings out different attitudes and dispositions in individuals...
In projects of this kind, people often emerge with high-quality contributions, and others participate out of a desire to share. Many colleagues have actively participated, expressing themselves in chat rooms and on our platform through comments and interactions. We should also emphasise that it wasn't competitive. Rather, colleagues' ideas and work were structured collaboratively.
GuccIdeas is a project involving people worldwide and has dramatically improved the participative attitude of our colleagues. Some logged on at unearthly hours to share materials with the entire team and help amplify the initiative's messages. Some even logged on at 3am in their time zone!

Community-centred design leads to often unforeseen needs and outcomes. What happened in GuccIdeas that was unexpected?
First of all, we received confirmation of several needs related to enhancing cooperation on cross-functional projects, many ideas on how to interact differently and more effectively, a need typical of a dynamic reality such as ours. We also gathered ideas on accessing the

Learner

Store Back Office, Gucci

wealth of information needed to do our work or specific tasks, with suggestions for chatbots and apps catering to particular needs. In general, we were struck by the participants' motivation. They set themselves to the task and immediately applied the methodologies learned.

Personally, I have noticed a new sense of belonging emerging, closely related to the growing GuccIdeas community. People I didn't know before now stop me in the corridors to share their work and give me feedback. This sense of sharing and participation is exhilarating.

What future developments do you envision for Gucci's community-centred projects?

We were struck by the fact that everyone experienced GuccIdeas differently. Some people were into active sharing, while others listened more. These varied experiences stimulate us to evolve the project.

What did participation in the GuccIdeas project mean for you? Has what you have learned had an impact on your daily life? If so, how?

I find that GuccIdeas can help understand your ideas and those of others. Day-to-day, I am trying to think of new ideas I can implement.

What new practices have you tried?

In the shop, it is trickier to try out things because it is a very structured and change-sensitive ecosystem. However, dialogue is a valuable tool to discuss proposals and evaluate possible implementations.

Is there anything about the experience that positively surprised you?

I was surprised by their eagerness to learn and collectively find a situation they could improve. ◼

GuccIdeas has generated expectations, and we recognise the importance of listening to people and translating these expectations into concrete actions. For example, people worldwide engaged in the project through remote collaboration, but for the future, we are considering how to introduce proximity dynamics. People want to meet and discuss in person.

We are also trying to foster and drive so-called *grassroots innovation*, which we believe can address issues relevant to everyone's future, such as sustainability. The challenge is to create situations where there is no competition between *disruptive ideas* and more realistic and practical proposals, but a cross-pollination in line with our reality. We want the innovative spirit coming from below, which is evident in the younger generation, to influence our organisation positively by drawing in more experienced people who can assess the feasibility of a proposed solution. Communities play a key role by accelerating the adoption of innovation in tune with our business reality. ◼

Younicity: a systemic approach to diversity, equity and inclusion

Barbara Falcomer

General Manager Valore D

To address Diversity, Equity & Inclusion dialogue between organisations is crucial. Therefore, Valore D is shaping Younicity: a multi-company platform that unites around shared values and challenges stereotypes in individual companies.

Valore D is Italy's leading business association – over 350 to date, with over two million employees and an aggregate turnover of over EUR 500 billion – committed to gender balance and inclusive culture in organisations and our country since 2009.

The Association emerged from the meeting of twelve managers from twelve virtuous companies: AstraZeneca, Enel, General Electric, Johnson&Johnson, IKEA, Intesa Sanpaolo, Luxottica, McKinsey & Company, Microsoft, Standard&Poor's, UniCredit and Vodafone.

According to research conducted by Omnicom PR Group Italia, only one in two Italians knows much about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) issues, and just over 30% believe that equity is guaranteed for everyone in the country. In companies, the percentage of knowledge on these issues is higher partly because of the work carried out by the Association over time. However, it is essential to continue the work of cultural awareness to speed up the transformation.

Added to this is the European push on ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) issues where S and G represent a real challenge for companies.

Today, more than ever, the data show that dialogue between companies fosters mutual growth and enhances employees' potential. This is the basis for a project that aims to create a new paradigm for member companies.

Valore D's integrated approach has provided companies with practical tools and inter-company and institutional dialogue. However, it has lacked a fundamental building block, namely the provision of a place of 'experience' where Valore D could make its *know-how* available so that each company could realise its path to inclusion while respecting its uniqueness. Thus, the idea arose to create Younicity, the place of places to bring together individuals from member companies around a value set of inclusion. To develop this essential transformative tool, Valore D partnered with Logotel. This company, over time, has developed a strong *expertise* in building B2B communities but, above all, is a qualified agent to drive change focusing on people and communities.

Younicity is a platform that facilitates interaction, sharing and collaboration between participants. It is intuitive and accessible and guarantees a key company concern, data privacy and security. Younicity seeks to be a training ground for every employee, to create a shared culture in which they can practise respect and freedom. In joining Younicity, Valore D members trust they will be guided towards a model that favours sharing rather than segregating experiences within the perimeter of each company. The Association supports them by promoting transparency. Younicity aims to be an environment where people feel comfortable sharing knowledge, experience and resources: sharing and openness to collaboration are key to fostering value creation within the community.

Besides common goals and interests in diversity and inclusion, training and shar-

Younicity aims to be an accelerator of the country's cultural transformation

ing good business practices for mutual value creation will unite the participating companies. Each company will benefit from participation in the community: access to new knowledge opportunities, the development of new skills or the identification of innovative DEI solutions they can easily apply within their business. Not only that, the platform aims to work on talent enhancement to create workplaces that make diversity a value in the relationship between people and foster business growth.

In the community, people will learn new perspectives, innovative approaches and effective strategies that may not be available in their organisation. This knowledge enrichment will foster personal and professional growth, enabling people to develop different skills and improve the culture of diversity within their company.

For the active adoption of Younicity, the community will need the support of leaders who encourage participants' interaction and active involvement. Only in this way can positive change occur within the companies themselves.

There is no doubt that contamination is the driving force behind inclusion because only this process of exchange and fusion of ideas, perspectives and approaches can help create a stimulating environment to challenge preconceptions, stereotypes and generalisations, enabling people to develop greater understanding and open-mindedness towards others.

Bringing everyone on board is undoubtedly the most challenging goal for Younicity. For Valore D, this is a long-term commitment. The adoption of a multi-company community requires time, constant *commitment* from participating companies, effective management and the ability to adapt to changes over time. It has to respond to the needs and maturity of the people of the companies involved and to the changing sensitivity towards inclusion issues that change as society evolves. Valore D will leverage its *know-how* and specific content to guide companies on their path towards DEI awareness.

Beyond the professionals, this multi-company community will speed up the country's cultural transformation because every organisation today is an ecosystem and aggregates around itself entities that must reflect its values. A DEI skills incubator will be a reservoir of energy that will feed our relational network.

For Value D, Younicity transforms from single organisations to networks of interconnected organisations' as theorised by Peter M. Senge in *The Fifth Discipline*, through organisational learning and a transformation of the collective mindset.

To promote inclusion, organisations must develop a shared vision that unites and inspires them. A vision that helps to create a common direction and sense of purpose between the different organisations within the network. Younicity is Valore D's contribution to partners in this journey. ∎

Further reading

Peter M. Senge, *La quinta disciplina*, Editoriale Scientifica 2019 (*The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Doubleday/Currency, 1990)

The talent pool for work that changes

Francesco Marino

Co-founder & CEO of Cosmico

A community of talents, built on relationships online but also offline, to accelerate the transition to new ways of working. This is the Cosmico's approach to meet the talent shortage challenge.

It is now clear to everyone that the world of work is changing. Companies are looking for talents who want to be free from the constraints of traditional working methods. To respond to this paradigm shift, as difficult as it is inevitable, in 2020, we founded Cosmico with Simone Tornabene and Matteo Roversi. This community connects digital professionals with organisations that need to grow their workforce rapidly.

Let's start with the context: the future of all organisations hinges on their ability to react quickly to technological changes. The *digital transformation is not a transition but a process of constant renewal*, and it takes the right professionals to deal with it. The labour market doesn't have enough of them, and companies struggle to attract them.

Cosmico, a firm with a turnover of more than EUR 2 million in 2022 and the ambition to reach EUR 5 million, helps companies with this. Our customers, which include major consulting firms, large agencies, multinational companies and start-ups, come to us because they need to enrich one or more of their company's teams with specific skills. Through talent matching, we find professionals within our community of over 8,000 already validated talents, including coders, designers, marketers and copywriters and arrange an interview. If both parties agree, the talent joins the project within 48 hours.

Our strengths are speed, reliability and flexibility because we mediate and manage the relationship between company and professional, with the necessary guarantees and administrative streamlining, and because we can offer the skills of a single professional but also entire teams managed by us or entire turnkey projects. All our talents work remotely, supervised by Cosmico and choose the projects to work on.

However, our mission is not to remoteise work. We want to accelerate the transition to new working methods that give the individual the maximum freedom to choose what to work on, when, how and from where. Cosmico promotes autonomy at work, an innovation we offer to address one of today's great challenges: the *talent shortage*.

How do we do it? Thanks to a community built on online and offline relationships. We work remotely, but we like to meet and be together, and this is the vision we offer talents who opt to join Cosmico. This community develops 'from the bottom up' and grows daily through sharing experiences

and creating connections between people. The talent community, as in the exchange between professionals and customers, is a context for professional interactions and the sharing of perspectives that enrich us all as individuals and professionals.

We cultivate values such as connections and networking in every activity we offer, not only within the projects where our staff work. We also do so when we travel around Italy to meet as many professionals as possible and in our villas in the Canary Islands, where we offer digital nomads, freelancers and professionals the space and time to connect with themselves, fellow travellers and nature. Our format promoting remote working is also an opportunity to share with other professionals who often don't know each other. That is why we give people a space beyond co-working and co-living. The experiences we offer to companies that can purchase them as a benefit for their teams and to individual professionals are designed to be genuinely transformative, to push people out of their comfort zones and open them up to new opportunities and the cross-fertilisation of ideas through the sharing of activities such as surfing, nature trekking, and cooking challenges.

What will the world of work become tomorrow? We cannot know. However, we do know what we would like it to become. Cosmico was created to enact a specific change. To achieve this evolution, how will Cosmico itself change? Hard to say. But we can say what it won't become: it won't be a mere consultancy firm or employment agency, and it won't be a business bent to the traditional logic of work organisation, which is still stuck in the 19th century. Our guiding principle is: maximum freedom for the individual worker, in line with what they are today and what they aspire to become tomorrow. ■

We want to accelerate the transition to new ways of working that give the individual the maximum possible freedom

The power of authentic connections and shared experiences

'Man is a social animal'
Aristotle

People come together to fulfil social, cultural, and professional needs. The community concept starts here. However, this concept can be abused or exploited for questionable purposes. In the marketing world, for example, we have often seen superficial initiatives with a purely commercial focus that do not create a genuine connection between members or interest in their needs.

Betty Pagnin

People & Culture Director and Equity Partner of OneDay Group, Board Member of La Carica delle 101

Communities have become crucial in modern society, providing a sense of belonging and sharing between people. One example is WeRoad, which creates authentic travel experiences for groups of people of the same age and combines digital and physical interaction.

Creating authentic relationships requires time, passion and constant commitment. The idea of making a meaningful impact in the lives of the people in our communities is deeply rooted in OneDay Group's DNA and guides our daily choices and initiatives. It is the natural goal of our companies. If there is one thing we do well, it is to create engaged and enthusiastic communities, offering them content, products and experiences tailored to the needs of a specific age target. Awareness of intergenerational dynamics significantly impacts the development of services and platforms, considering different age groups' diverse needs and perspectives.

For example, with ScuolaZoo (our first company), we have been inspiring Italian students since 2007 by communicating their dreams and needs and giving them 'wow' experiences, from travel to entertainment and offline & online education.

Another example of a well-structured community created within OneDay Group is WeRoad, the travellers' community that connects people, stories and cultures worldwide. Trips are organised in small groups divided by age group (25 to 35 or 35 to 49), and by travel mood. That is what helps create a sense of belonging and shared identity, which allows people to feel part of something big. According to an internal survey conducted by WeRoad, each 'WeRoader' made at least 10 new friends. Throughout the year, WeRoad organises multiple 'meet-up events' in various locations in Italy and abroad, an opportunity to catch up with fellow travellers and create lasting connections. This, above all, also impacts people's lives, especially in an era when interactions are purely digital, with people finding it increasingly hard to make new friends outside their networks or hometowns.

The connection between physical relationships and digital spaces within communities is a relevant issue today more than ever, as technology has enabled people to connect and interact virtually in unprecedented ways. Digital spaces, such as social media and messaging platforms, have greatly expanded communication possibilities within communities. Today, people can connect quickly and easily to share experiences, opinions and information. However, digital communication may be less personal than physical interaction, lacking the empathy that can only be conveyed through eye contact and body language. Face-to-face meetings allow deeper and

more meaningful connections and more authentic and intimate relationships. The connection between physical relationships and digital spaces in communities is complex, and both types of interaction can be valuable, each with its advantages and limitations. WeRoad has an integrated approach, combining online and offline interaction: it is an excellent solution for fostering meaningful and lasting relationships within communities.

Community dynamics can play a crucial role in fostering a brand's evolution and prosperity by actively involving participants in its growth and development.
Within a community, participants can share their resources, skills and knowledge with other members, and this sharing can lead to an overall increase in the resources available in the community and foster mutual learning. Community dynamics that encourage co-creation and members' active participation enable the development of initiatives, projects and activities that directly address participants' needs and aspirations. This also leads to collaborative problem-solving and allows members to tackle challenges and difficulties together. Community dynamics also foster sharing common values, principles and culture among participants. These shared values act as a social glue, creating a solid basis for community growth and cohesion among its members, who actively participate in their own experience within the community.

Working on the form, in terms of the structure or content of a service, initiative or platform, could be a good start, but it is not enough to achieve lasting and meaningful results. It is crucial to go further and focus on creating different ways of involvement that make people an active part of the process. People must be free to be key players in the decision-making process and implementation of an activity or service, allowing them to influence and shape key elements. This is the only way to increase the sense of responsibility and involvement. The community is a 'living thing'. It is a 'bottom-up' movement, and that is its beauty.

Communities regenerate, renew, change and adapt, but authentic ones do not change how they unite people, respond to needs, and generate a sense of belonging. When communities extend, they transform into movements, lifestyles, and societies. ◼

Creating authentic relationships requires time, passion and constant commitment

Lost
in virtualisation

Thomas Bialas

Futurist

In the century of the
machine, humans are
in danger of getting lost
and wandering around
as mere spectators
of communities populated
by artificial agents.

Lost in artificial communities

Collaboration automation, sharing automation, discussion automation. Does the algorithm community mark the end of the human community? It might. Already today, over half of all web content is artificially generated and moderated. There isn't much left now. I have been repeating this ad nauseam for at least ten years. This is the century of the machine (including the machine community) and its (excited) servants. ChatGPT and its imitators, or inspirers (there are plenty of similar, though less media-hyped services), are ready to take the reins of our businesses and lives and are metaphorically the ultimate solution to the human question. Create, generate. 'This is the turning point of artificial intelligence,' cry the apostles of the new artificial messiah. 'It knows how to do everything,' the disciples (lowest level of the possessed) also insist. 'ChatGPT writes a text on any subject quickly and, often, better than a human being, even academic-level essays, that is... ChatGPT writes its own computer programs, and the user simply has to figure out what they need to do... ChatGPT can even practise as a lawyer and has passed the medical licensing exam... kneel and worship the Blessed Artificial One'. Well, this is it. I know. ChatGPT is like a human assistant sitting next to you who has absorbed all knowledge (of course, from the person who decided how to feed it). Thus, it can independently create something entirely new: advertising slogans, business ideas, product development or people management. Never mind managing stupid human communities. Indeed, at some point, humans might get lost and wander off into nowhere as mere spectators of communities populated by artificial agents.

Lost in lonely communities

Being part of a community. How wonderful. In the mythological language of the Internet, groups of people meet, discuss and exchange information through the network's infinite tools. But is that so? When a trade union like CGIL or Manageritalia says, 'We are a significant community', they are thinking of something very physical (albeit digitally supported). But to share, you have to participate; to do that, you have to be there, much better if in physical reality. We recognise that the virtual one features billions of isolated people sharing billions of isolated views billions of times over. So much for participation. It may be the fault of the pandemic (and its attendant isolation), but a recent *Wall Street Journal* survey on the evolution of values in the United States highlighted a fact that should give pause for thought on the propensity for community engagement. While in 2019 *engagement* was important to 62% of the respondents, in 2023 it is only important to 27%. In short, a niche. It certainly doesn't help that parallel, immersive universe where we worship worlds populated by our avatars. That strange place and community called the Metaverse where everyone is scattered and lost. As many may know, the term was 'lifted' from *Snow Crash* , the 1992 novel by Neal Stephenson, the Quentin Tarantino of science

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**Already today,
over half of the web's
content is artificially
generated
and moderated**

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fiction. Here, in a dystopian future, people escape from a bleak reality to wander in a vast parallel universe of spatially designed virtual reality. Heavenly Utopia or hellish dystopia? I tend to the latter, although it might go the way of SecondLife and only survive as a modelling and testing tool (digital twins) for businesses.

Lost in communities of (non)sense

Today, we unite around macro-themes shared by all and disseminated by all media. Never an argument. Never a doubt. Never a criticism. The realm of verisimilitude dominates, and yes, a spectre lurks in the media. The spectre of the inconsistency of information now downgraded to propaganda and/or *disinformation* (intentionally false information) and/or *misinformation* (inadvertently false information). The future Ministry of Truth will likely be called The Federal Misinformation Act, with fines for producers of objectionable content. On the pretext of eliminating false information, all information that irritates the people running the merry-go-round populated by dumb citizens who go around in circles munching on colourful messages always different but the same in substance will be eliminated. Some of these messages are so tasty no one ever spews them out in disgust. Like the parable of the digital Good Samaritan. Over the past two decades, almost everyone has glorified immaterial technology and its immense networked spaces, down to the recent glorification of the so-called twin transitions (digital and ecological). Indeed, the rulers of the world and the economy usually sell ecological transition and digital transition as a happy couple. However, I say they are irreconcilable. Either one or the other. Today, 'immaterial' technology consumes 10% of all energy produced worldwide and is highly polluting and disturbing, as a recent, well-documented book (one of many) warns. In the Italian version is called *Digital Hell* and its subtitle already speaks volumes: 'Why the internet, smartphones and social networks are destroying our planet.' Yes, why? Perhaps because the digital is never satisfied with resources and competes with us humans for them. Perhaps it is because *The Internet makes us stupid* (Nicholas Carr's old book) and takes us straight into the *The Lonely Century* (Noreena Hertz's recent book). Perhaps because all over the world, scientists, governments, companies and consumers are working together to turn the Earth into a giant computer and humanity into a huge, networked, AI-managed common brain. Or perhaps because we can find unexpected answers in namesakes. Now, it just so happens that a short while ago, I discovered a poisonous, highly toxic plant with an elegant and seductive flower, also widely used in phytotherapy, called Digitalis. A plant with a curious and bizarre name derived from the Latin word *digitus*, meaning finger, referring to the distinctive thimble shape of its striking flower. As beautiful as it is dangerous. Just like the technology that has dazzled and seduced us all these years. Meaningless. ■

Further reading

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Noreena Hertz,
Il Secolo della solitudine. L'importanza della comunità nell'economia e nella vita di tutti i giorni,
Il Saggiatore 2021
(*The Lonely Century: How to Restore Human Connection in a World That's Pulling Apart*, Crown Currency, 2021)

There is a lot of talk about people. What are we losing?

Nicola Favini

CEO Logotel

In organisations, 'meaning' is being lost. An organisation living as a community generates a magnetic force that allows it to retain the valuable people, to attract people, to make them grow and prolong their experience.

These are strange years. Digitisation is bearing fruit. We know everything about our customers. We know how much and where they spend, whether they are satisfied, how they click and how many seconds they stay on a page before they cheat on us with someone else's content. We put customers at the centre and spend fortunes to keep them there. We spend to attract, serve, chase, and recapture them (but only if it is to our advantage). We do this using technologies and platforms that promise productivity, and we are preparing to *outsource* intelligence because the artificial promise is too *disruptive* and too much of a *game changer* to leave it to others. In budgets, investment items are distinguished, and business plans show the resources invested to innovate and become faster and more efficient. Ok. It fits.

And then there are the *people*. We talk about them a lot, a very lot. We redo spaces to make them as smart as the work they have to accommodate, create super Instagrammable 'wow' services and events for *employer branding*, and relaunch generative, inclusive, kind leadership models. And that's only fair! It's all right. But in budgets, we try to optimise and contain *people* costs. Especially in the profit-and-loss account where a good *performance* in terms of personnel costs is a panacea to create EBITDA, to give more value to the company. Yes, the value! All for value.

Time out! Let's rewind the tape and look for what we are losing. What makes our salesperson's offer unimpressive and sloppy when meeting the customer? What makes us innovate using technologies available to others by creating new things rather than something already seen? What poor ingredient makes project meetings dull? What makes the promises different companies offer when hiring recruits similar and tone-deaf? What doesn't trigger the spark that ignites motivation in a young person learning their trade from an experienced colleague?

It weakens, it standardises, it frays because it is taken for granted until forgotten: meaning. 'Meaning' is being lost in organisations. Meaning is not just the why that differentiates, but the spirit that moves and activates. Meaning is an emergent property of a community that exists. Of a collection of people who know each other, exchange, connect and cooperate across roles, budgets and KPIs. Meaning is passed on like culture, with contacts, rituals, stories told, and stories to experience together. Community spirit is the vector of meaning. An organisation that lives

as a community generates a magnetic force enabling it to retain people who are worth it, attract people, and make them grow and prolong their experience. While it is true that the new generations are more nomadic, it is also the case that the people who can hold on to them for a longer average time will reap better rewards than the ones who are caught in the bus-stop trap. Every month, many get on, and many get off the ride. Meaningless.

We need to create communities, we need to nurture *tribes* of trades, we need to build palimpsests and services that mix and 'match' different skills, interests, knowledge, desires across function or project boundaries. Every day, we must nurture the narrative that links an individual's action with *purpose*. Introducing autonomous and free flows of contacts and relations that interpret and energise new fashions, languages and artefacts created by people who know and not just those who have to.

If we are good at explaining to a customer why they should choose us, we must become even better at conveying why Marina or Ahmed should join our team, beyond the obvious contractual *features* (salary, benefits, welfare, etc.).

These are strange years. That is because we evaluate companies based on a multiplied EBITDA. However, no balance sheet indicator shows whether the team that generates that figure is as strong like a community of destiny, cohesive, and driven by a magnetic and regenerative sense that will make that performance more likely to be self-sustaining. How much is a company worth? How much is an organisation worth? If it is lively and dynamic as a community, it is worth much more than one that has ceased to be such, with the same EBITDA!

We have been dealing with community and meaning at Logotel for 22 years. And never before have we felt the need. ■

**Meaning
is passed on like culture,
with contacts and rituals,
with stories told
and stories to experience together**

Where it all began

Giuliano Favini

*Founder
and Chairman of Logotel*

The history of e-volution,
the first business community
designed by Logotel:
an intuition that became
one of the longest-lasting
platforms ever.

Who would have thought... in 2001, we created the world's first business community: e-volution. Since then, it has been studied and analysed. It has been the subject of seven dissertations. Today, in 2023, I believe it is one of the longest-lived platforms ever: with twenty-two years of life and over 8,000 uninterrupted days online. E-volution was the first of many more adventures. And this is how it all began.

Logotel has supported TIM's Commercial Management since the end of 1995, mainly with motivational training courses for its various types of salespeople and, since 1998, for the new agency network dedicated to SMEs. In the early 2000s, a problem arose: the increasing rate of resignation of salespeople, also triggered by the first telecoms market competitors (before then, TIM operated as a monopoly). As Logotel, we wanted to contribute strongly to support TIM in this situation. So we asked ourselves: why not create a site for sub-agents, which would help them and facilitate their work? Back from the summer holidays, we prepared a straightforward and concise story to present the idea and motives, encapsulating them in five simple slides.

On 14 September, we met Tiziana Barnobi, who was also in charge of training for TIM's agency channel. The aim was to take stock of the situation, and at the end of the meeting, we addressed their resignation rate. So we could talk about our macro-project. Tiziana was enthusiastic, and the following morning, she immediately spoke to her manager, Michele Corcione, who called us the same day very intrigued. Two days later, we were in his office, and we were surprised: we assumed he was being cautious saying 'yes, but...', but his interest grew as the minutes passed. Corcione concluded the meeting by telling us that from 1 to 3 October, an annual convention of TIM agents would take place in Istanbul and that he would like to launch the idea of the site in his closing address. And so it was. Comments on the courage of these TIM managers?

Let's travel back to 2000. There were no social media, no communities. Everything had to be thought out and built *ex novo*. We set to work with a growing concern: we only had four months available, nothing we needed, no comparable experience, and no usable platform for our goals.
We started with a consideration/question: why would a commercial sub-agent visit a business site in their free time, namely in the morning before meeting customers or in the evening back home? As smartphones didn't exist, they would have had to buy a computer to browse our site (at the time, most computers were desktops and were not as prevalent as today). Our response was based on an idea: we (TIM and Logotel) had to be helpful individually and

give sub-agents a service to save mental effort and time. It was a goal consistent with what Logotel believed in then (with our training courses) and still believes in today (with impact design). But just being useful was not enough: we had to surprise the participants often to keep their attention over time. We had to step into their shoes to know their motivations and needs to achieve this. So, in agreement with TIM management, one of our colleagues accompanied the sub-agents in fieldwork, specifically during appointments with customers. After a week of shadowing, our colleague had met ten future participants and visited 23 customers with them. This choice was decisive in defining goals, contents and methods concretely.

The team we had assembled continued to grow, as did their emotional strain, alternating between motivation and concern. Meanwhile, the resignation rate of network sub-agents had risen by 57% by the end of 2000.

On Monday, 29 January 2001, e-volution, Logotel's first community, went online. It was entirely different, and we had to make it known. So, in the following two weeks, we organised a roadshow in five cities in Italy in which most of the agents and sub-agents participated. We wanted to attract their attention, surprise them, create curiosity, and encourage word of mouth. We made a five-metre banner with the name e-volution, six illustration boards to place along the walls and something for each of them: an inspirational package that included a CD with instructions on how to get started.

We would have had to surprise participants frequently to keep their attention over time

Thus began this incredible adventure. These have been months of high intensity and concentration. The increasing participation of sub-agents and the feedback we received through text messages, emails and phone calls stimulated and encouraged us.

By the end of 2001, after not even a year of e-volution's existence, the *turnover* of TIM network sub-agents had decreased by 75%.

On 8 November 2001, ADICO (Sales and Marketing Managers Association) with Espansione awarded e-volution the prize for the best marketing product of the year, and Roberto Pellegrini, Sales Director of TIM, received the award from Albertini, Mayor of Milan, at the Museum of Science and Technology before over 300 participants. ∎

logotel
Independent Design Company

We design
for change
and impact

We assist organisations and companies in generating positive impacts
 grasping the meaning of transformations to shape a better future for all.

We design services, experiences, content and platforms with a
People & Community centred approach to anticipate and respond to the needs of people,
organisations, ecosystems and local areas in increasingly hybrid, networked and
dispersed dimensions.

We build collaborative contexts to increase the scale of change,
enabling new behaviours and empowering people and communities to take action.

Every day, we look after the life of the projects and interventions we help
create and sustain.

Our independence is a guarantee. It enables us to be free to choose novel
interpretative keys, alternative solutions and original paths alongside our customers.

We shape services and experiences, from strategy to implementation and beyond
We analyse, imagine, design and implement possibilities, from sense-making,
to the design of strategy, the creation of services, experiences, and their stories.

We enable, engage, train and coach people
We support people and organisations to face the transformations of the present and future
through change management, re- and upskilling programmes and learning systems.

We build, support and nurture communities
We build and nurture physical-digital platforms to develop new ecosystems, improve the
performance of organisations, amplify the quality of cooperation
and support new relationship models, accelerating value generation.

Impact design.
Our way to drive relevant
and measurable results.
For the better

Impact design is systemic and multidisciplinary
It helps to innovate and improve products, services and experiences by making them more
practical, functional and desirable for people, customers, colleagues and communities.

Impact design is sustainable and inclusive by design
Because it understands sustainability as a practical responsibility, which comes into play
from the design stages and extends into the life of projects by designing
desirable and improving behaviour for people, society and the environment.

Impact design is collaborative and participatory
Making together is a crucial factor in co-designing and engaging the team
and everyone involved in the organisation and its internal and external ecosystem, nurturing
cooperation in a project's fine-tuning, continuous improvement and life.

Impact design is beauty
It unleashes creative acts and amplifies relationships. It is an enabler of fulfilling, impressive,
and long-lasting collaborations. Beauty is the path to excellence,
to go beyond expectations and the state of the art.

Logotel research.
We design desirable futures

We shape the challenges of the future with research projects
and experimentation, anticipating new needs and developing interpretative scenarios.

Weconomy is our collaborative economy network, active
for over 14 years: with a website, a series of publications, podcasts
and apps, it develops connections with makers, managers, entrepreneurs, designers
and researchers to increase the vision of our projects.

Our **Horizon** programme brings cross-media projects to life
to embrace changes in creativity, design and business.

logotel spirit

We are a community of people who choose each other. Every day. And we act as a community based on cooperation on every scale.

We cultivate original and courageous points of view, creating continuous osmosis between skills, expertise and passions. To continue to understand the changes we are going through, each year, we invest in training and projects dedicated to us, involving experts in frontier sectors and disciplines.

Our spaces accommodate employees, customers and our network. We use hybrid rituals to enable continuous exchanges with our extended ecosystem.

We fall in love and care about the challenges and projects in which we are involved.

beauty

originality

sustainability

continuous learning

caring

spaces

making together

rituals

about weconomy

170,000
downloaded notebooks

45,000
printed copies of our notebooks

618
published articles

280
authors

16
numbers to download

14
years of activity

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ARE A SENSORY EXTENSION OF THE READING.