Connecting diversities: migration, social innovation and design

Keywords: migration, social innovation, collaboration, interpersonal encounters

1. Catalyst Information

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2. Context of Conversation Topic

The migration issue is here to stay in Europe and worldwide. This conversation will focus on the European context, but its results, in terms of design problems and research directions could have a more general value.

Europe is and will be in the next decades, the place-to-go for several millions people. The challenge is to think this perspective not as a threat, but as an opportunity. That is, to imagine how migration can become a driver of innovation towards a younger, dynamic,
cosmopolitan and, at the end of the day, more resilient Europe.

Of course, nobody today can have a clear and precise idea on if and how this positive perspective could become real. Therefore, the only wise move to do is to consider this broad view, i.e. the possibility of a new cosmopolitan Europe, as a design-orienting scenario: a shared vision on the basis of which to experiment local solutions, to discuss them and to use them to feed a broad social learning process.

The conversation we propose goes in this direction: “Connecting diversities” is an exploration, done in a design perspective, of how collaboration between migrants and residents can strength the social fabric. And, more precisely, how collaborative services (intended as result-oriented collaborations among different actors) can be designed to produce a multiple value: the social, cultural, economic value generated by this positive and creative interaction.

2.1 Hypothesis. (1) in the complexity of the present society we can already find promising examples of migrants-residents collaboration: collaborative initiatives demonstrating how the search of migrants’ inclusion can be turned in a collaborative service, and therefore, in the exploration of new ways of living and working. (2) design discipline, particularly design for social innovation, has been over the years developing a body of knowledge on how collaborative services can be designed, but not specifically applied to migration issues.

2.2 Organization. The conversation will be structured in two steps:

(1) to consider and discuss a number of promising examples (showcased by the catalysts) and their features;
(2) to consider and discuss guidelines (three) for value co-creation, specifically focusing on how collaborative services can be set up between migrants and local residents;
(3) to identify emerging topics in terms of design research.

2.3 Specificity.

The conversation will be supported by the following elements:

(1) Promising examples of collaborative initiatives between migrants and residents were collected in workshops, held in Italy, UK and Belgium, organized by DESIS Network Labs (Design for Social Innovation Network). These cases are collaborative initiatives that foster new interactions between residents and migrants and are developed by citizens (migrants and/or residents) who took action to face the migrant crisis. They will support the first conversation, about their features and how the initiatives are designed to promote value co-creation processes between migrants and residents.

(2) Three guidelines for value co-creation between migrants and residents, which will support the second conversation about their usefulness in creating value for both the migrants and the whole society. The guidelines summarize the experiences done in different
fields of design for social innovation (particularly those observed in the activities of DESIS Network Labs). The conversation will bring into focus these guidelines, specifically referred to the migration issues:

- **User-centered approach (as precondition)**: solutions consider each migrant as a free individual. That is, solutions are based on his/her right and concrete possibility to express ideas, and choose what to do and how.

- **Capability approach (as main design guideline)**: solutions are based on migrants’ active participation. More precisely, they enable them to use at best their sensitivity, skills and knowledge.

- **Multiple-value production (as result to be achieved)**: solutions aims to achieve practical and social results for all the involved actors (migrants and residents) and for the society as a whole (in terms of physical and social commons improvement).

3. Organizing research question

Given European problems and the way they are perceived in Europeans’ everyday life, how migrants can be part of these same problems solution?

In particular: How migrants and other residents collaboration can be triggered and supported? How design can help in make this collaboration possible?

4. Set-up of the session

**Overall process and role of catalysts**: the conversation will be supported by the catalysts. Some of them will have specific roles in the development of the conversation process, but all will intervene randomly in the process accordingly with their own experiences and backgrounds:

Ezio Manzini will provide inputs about the theory and practice of design for social innovation, with focus on the notion of “connecting diversities”

Lorraine Gamman and Adam Thorpe, inputs on how to bring a social innovation focus to reframe what we want less of (crime and anti social feeling or prejudice) to focus on what we want more of and how to deliver it (social inclusion and pro social behaviour);

Carla Cipolla and Virgina Tassinari, inputs on interpersonal relational qualities in the processes of value co-creation in services.
Session activities and process: after a short introduction, the conversation will be organized in two phases. Insights will be presented and discussed in the conclusion. Some catalysts will be in charge to organize the conversations, while others will observe the process and register the key insights which will be presented in the conclusion.

Introduction (10 min)

the notion of “connecting diversities” as a possible strategy to foster a new relation between migrants and residents is proposed to the audience (Ezio Manzini)

(1) Conversation: part 1 – promising cases (30 min)

Four (4) cases are presented by the catalysts to stimulate the conversation. The cases are solutions developed by citizens (residents and/or migrants) and represent an opportunity for designers to learn from the distinctive features of these initiatives.

Participants are invited to discuss:

a) the values co-produced between migrants and residents;

b) how they have been designed to foster the value co-creation processes between migrants and residents, with focus in the distinctive design features that enables this collaborative process.

One of the catalysts takes notes of the insights from this conversation.

(2) Conversation: part 2 – guidelines (30 min)

Participants are introduced to three initial guidelines for value co-creation identified in previous researches and practices on design for social innovation.

The focus of this conversation is: (1) to confirm or not if these guidelines are useful to design solutions to face the migrants crisis; (2) evoke from participants (most of them design researchers) their existing knowledge on each guideline (or other proposed) to foster a mutual learning process about the distinctive features that solutions to face the migrant crisis may have.

The three guidelines are proposed and participants are invited to discuss each one by bringing their own experiences and knowledge:

• User-centered approach (as precondition);
• Capability approach (as a main design guideline);
• Multiple value co-production (as a result to be achieved).

One of the catalysts takes notes of the insights from this conversation.
(3) Conclusion: emerging topics for design research (20 min)

In this conclusive part, one of the catalysts presents the main insights identified in each part of the conversation. Participants and catalysts are invited to identify emerging topics for design research.

5. Type of space and equipment required

A meeting room with standard projector and audio equipment

6. References


Catalysts:

Catalyst 1 Ezio Manzini has been working for more than two decades in the field of design for sustainability. He started DESIS Network (http://www.desis-network.org). Presently, he is Chair Professor of Design for Social Innovation at the University of the Arts London (London), Honorary Professor at the Politecnico di Milano and Guest Professor at Tongji University (Shanghai) and Jiangnan University (Wuxi).

Catalyst 2 Carla Cipolla is Associate Professor of the UFRJ - Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. She is coordinator of the UFRJ/Coppe DESIS (Design for Social Innovation) Lab.

Catalyst 3 Lorraine Gamman is Professor of Design at the University of the Arts London; She founded the award-winning Design Against Crime Research Centre at Central Saint Martins in 1999.
Catalyst 4 Adam Thorpe is Professor in Socially Responsive Design, Co-Director of the Design Against Crime Research Centre (DACRC) and founder of UAL’s DESIS (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) Lab.

Catalyst 5: Virginia Tassinari is Assistant Professor at LUCA School of Arts, Brussels