

DESIGNING A MORE SUSTAINABLE EUROPE: STORIES FOR CHANGE AND INNOVATION

The first INSITE event of 2014 was focused on the theme of Narratives; the workshop was aimed analyze and compare the stories which inspire organizations, companies and scholars currently working at the construction of a more sustainable Europe. It did so by collecting first-hand experiences coming from people and organizations that every day enact those narratives, working on innovation and sustainability in the domain of local and community development.

Our point of departure for the discussion was the manifesto “Towards and Agenda for Social Innovation” together with the stories that the invited people/organizations have “told” through the Conference Google Group..

The lively follow up is developing further the themes emerged during the Roundtable sessions. Beside this report, a detailed account of all ideas currently under refinement are publicly available through the #DMSE14 Google Group <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/dmse2014>.

Welcome and introduction

HOMM: hands-on and multi-media laboratories in museums



Margherita Russo, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

Museums, places of informal education par excellence, have great potential in assisting the education activities in schools and fostering lifelong learning. Homm_sw is a tool to create and share on line multimedia narratives. Its use may support the effectiveness of museums in developing inclusive and collaborative educational practices, contrasting learning difficulties and creating connections between people. The goal is to allow the accumulation and sharing of relevant knowledge on local dimensions, very often not available through the scientific and academic literature. Potential targets of Homm-sw are students, teachers, tutors, educators, social workers visiting a museum along with visitors to the museum in general. By proposing Homm-sw to museums and education institutions, we intend:



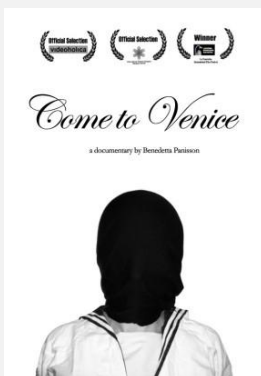
- a) to use ICT to support interactive workshops in museums;
- b) to improve the use of the museum by academic and education institutions, training centers and programs of adult education;
- c) to promote social inclusion, strengthening the identity of museums as places of learning and support relationships between individuals, groups and institutions;
- d) to encourage the sharing of HOMM-sw through networks of museums and research centers interested in developing its use and in implementing new functionalities.

For more information, please visit www.homm-museums.org and www.homm-sw.org

Come to Venice



Benedetta Panisson, Amerigo Nutolo



Come to Venice is an artistic project by Benedetta Panisson about Venice, is a never-ending work in progress dedicated to the people who live in the lagoon and to everybody who feels part of it. During the whole movie, the unsettling sound of the high-tide sirens goes with interviews with citizens and pictures of the city, in a constant mood of fear and rebellion. The documentary was part of the official selection of the exhibition “S’adapter a l’Anthropocene”, curated by UNESCO and COAL, “Coalition pour l’art et le developement durable”. Despite the international resonance of Panisson’s work, the documentary found opposition in Venice. This opposition is interpreted by the author as a symptom of the difficulty of talking about identity to a community which is losing its own identity. The communication become even more difficult when the message comes from a person within the same community, and deteriorates further if it is conveyed through art.

First Session: Stories about

Manifattura: A shared space for shaping innovation



Gianluca Salvatori, Progetto Manifattura, Rovereto, Italy

Progetto Manifattura – Green Innovation Factory is a publicly financed economic development project that is creating a hub for green development. The project is transforming a former tobacco production plant in Rovereto, Italy, into a business and research cluster for green building, renewable energy, and environmental technology. The project is adapting global green growth policies to the local level. With a budget of €100 million from local and national government sources, the project is renovating historic industrial plants dating from the mid-1800s and building new, energy efficient, buildings. The resulting site is providing space and services for small companies, research centers, certification labs, and other institutions. With 150 entities and 1200 people working in open offices and shared environments, the project will be a place that stimulates innovation through the sharing of ideas and goals.



Sustainability is a key theme in today's economy and the general idea is to produce more goods and services for an increasing number of users while consuming fewer resources. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Council has defined a green growth strategy for more than 30 developed countries by redefining existing industries or developing new ones. An integrated strategy is necessary to achieve common goals such as greenhouse gas reduction targets. Within the context of sustainable Green Innovation, changing the products used will alter human behavior. A combination of research, technology development, education roles and public institutions and private enterprise are necessary for any of these concepts to succeed. This strategy can also be applied on the local level. With this view, the Province of Trento is supporting Progetto Manifattura in an effort to manage the transition from traditional industries to greener industries.

Habitech

Thomas Miorin, Habitech/GBC, Italy



Can the story of an industrial district be recounted, and communicated, using narratives? According to Thomas Miorin, yes: building a parallel between popular movies and his past experience, Miorin described the agents, artifacts, scaffolding structures and the narrative logic which led to the genesis of Habitech in Trento, Italy. Habitech was founded in 2006, as an Energy and Environment Cluster and its history was characterized by agents with diverging attributions, challenges and harsh confrontation between the institutions and the characters behind the project.

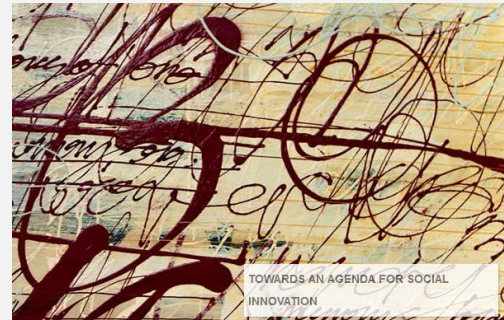
Today, in less than 10 years since its foundation, Habitech has become a reality of excellence, comprised of over 300 companies, research organizations and public agencies, a turnover of close one billion euro and 8000 employees whose main areas of expertise are green building, energy and sustainable mobility. In these three areas Habitech develops projects, offers services for innovation and provide technical and commercial support for enterprises and institutions.

Ontological uncertainty, innovation and generative relationships



David A. Lane, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

The concept of Innovation Society refers to the idea of a society in which innovation, defined as the process through which new artifacts are conceived, designed, produced and introduced into patterns of use, is considered as the only way to face crises and achieve wealth and social stability. The major crisis affecting modern times, from unemployment to climate change passing through resource depletion and widespread diseases, are currently tackled introducing more innovation, which is seen as the sole remedy against unsustainability. But it can be argued that in most cases, are the same innovations that have been a primary factor in inducing these very crises, through the cascade of unanticipated consequences that follow in the wake of innovation processes. Current approaches to innovation studies, with their focus on individual innovations, cannot grasp the complexity of all the unanticipated and unpredictable consequences that the introduction of a new artifact may trigger, and is precisely what makes the Innovation Society's endogenous crises so difficult to detect and address. To understand innovation dynamics, it is essential to take as the unit of analysis innovation cascades and the positive feedbacks that drive them, not individual innovations. These cascades are characterized by ontological uncertainty: it is often impossible to predict what kinds of new patterns of social interaction, new conceptual categories and new artifacts will emerge in the course of an innovation cascade, or even who will be affected by these changes and how. Ontological uncertainty and the resulting innovation cascades have two important implications for the concept of social innovation. First, they imply that all innovation processes are "social," in the sense that they induce changes in interaction patterns and hence social organization, so the modifier "social" in social innovation is redundant or misleading. Second, they imply that the social effects of innovation processes are highly unpredictable: the innovator/entrepreneur's intention to initiate a project that moves in a socially positive direction is no guarantee that the project, even if it manages to obtain financing, becomes sustainable, and "scales up", will have effects that are socially positive, never mind those that the innovator envisioned! To address systemic issues like these, we need a theory of social innovation that does not start from the Innovation Society ideology's way of looking at innovation processes and their dynamics. To be useful, such a theory must also provide guidance for building a social innovation practice that can take us beyond the dilemmas posed by the Innovation Society. What might such a theory look like, and what might it imply about the practice of social innovation?



The Green Communities project within innovation cascades: a case for Dynamic Evaluation



Valentina Anzoise and Stefania Sardo, ECLT

Social Innovation projects have to face complex foresight horizons due to the unforeseen changes occurring in the space its designers are seeking to transform. Some of these changes are induced by their own actions and they can trigger cascades of unpredictable transformations which can reveal themselves even in the long period. Starting from these basic assumptions, the "Emergence by Design" project team (GA 284625 FP7-ICT-2011-C founding scheme) developed an approach to evaluation named Dynamic Evaluation. The ECLT team first tested it on a local development case study, namely the Green Communities project, funded by the Italian Ministry of Environment. The project was aimed at fostering the constitution of economically and socially sustainable communities, through a responsible and efficient management of local resources, in four mountain communities in Southern Italy. This approach is a process itself, and it is immanent to all the phases and dimensions involved in the project. Moreover, it uses narratives as meaningful and constitutive parts of the empirical base of data, and as crucial components of the scenario building processes, so as to generate feedbacks loops. The Dynamic Evaluation is: inclusive, of indirectly/directly involved agents; reflexive, by generating and reintroducing in the process feedbacks and analysis of what is happening; adaptive to cascades of changes; informative and transparent. Moreover, the analysis of the Green Communities case study proved to be fundamental in order to design and develop the Dynamic Evaluation dedicated ICT tools, aimed at facilitating the collection, the monitoring and visualization of data regarding changes occurring in the Agent-Artifact space of the project under evaluation.

Second Session: Building networks through con-sensus, narratives and ICT

Roundtable 1

EC Joint Research Centre, Transition Network, ICLEI, IMAGIS – Network for Visions, European Centre for Living Technology, Euclid Network, PugliaSmartLab, Officina Emilia (chair: Lucas Fülling, Euclid Network)

Transition Networks

Transition Network is a charitable organisation whose role is to inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they self-organise around the Transition model, creating initiatives that rebuild resilience and reduce CO2 emissions. Transition Networks uses narratives at different level - the local, the national (across different countries) and the European/global level, which requires a diversity and richness of languages and narratives. Every narrative holds a level of uncertainty, a grey-zone, which is the space in which innovation can happen. Showing and detecting uncertainties in narratives opens opportunities and shows possibilities.

Lessons learnt:

An important point that emerged out of the consequent discussion is that in order to fully be able to:

- tell a story and
- understand a narrative one needs to be free of interpretation in telling the story but also in listening to the story.

PugliaSmartLab

PugliaSmartLab is a project that aims to foster structural change in Puglia Region, through innovation and “Knowledge Intensive Services” (KIS) development. The goal is to kick-start regeneration after the economic crisis. It is an applied research project aimed at creating an engaged city/region, through creating a scaffolding structure including citizens, the ministry of universities and research, politicians and technology partners. The aim is to create dialogue to identify solutions that focus on people’s needs - the living labs are about meeting and connecting people. However, even though a multi-stakeholder approach was recognized to be pivotal, bringing people together holds difficulties. Therefore, meeting points on shared citizens’ needs were created, hold together by a shared and common narrative, which facilitates meetings.

Lessons learnt:

- Creating and building shared narratives are an important “glue” to get people together and find common solutions.
- It is vital that no “shared narrative” is imposed on people. Narratives need to evolve organically.

ICLEI

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, founded in 1990 as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, is an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organizations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. As a large organisations it underwent several iterations of transformation, currently from the local (local government) level to the citizens level, reflecting a further degree of decentralization. In this process, a dynamic narrative is very important, holding a shared understanding of why this is happening and how it is happening. The discussion evolved around several re-occurring issues, but was also touching on the importance of the dynamic evaluation and how it could be a sustainable asset in the transformation of organisations internally.

IMAGIS

IMAGIS is a project by the department of design at the polytechnic of Milan. Working with designers and service designers it created a network of designers of social innovation. The project explores how to design artefact and meta-stories and create “architects of stories”. It therefore analyses the different structures and languages used, to help designers to become communicators and story tellers.

Lessons learnt:

- The quality of narratives is important. We also need to understand the emotions and emotional levels, which are important techniques for narratives.
- Narratives have to be open and narrators need to be able to enter and exit them at multiple points (no fixed structure)
- We need to be able to listen carefully and let a story emerge. The process of telling a story is important, but also the process of listening to a story is vital. We need to be able to self-reflect and look at the narrative from outside.

Roundtable 2

Rural Design, Mo.Vi.Te, ANCI-Cittalia, Villaggi d’Europa Valle Elvo/EURUFU (European Rural Futures), GAL Casacastra/Palio del Grano, Transition Italia, IMAGIS – DESIS in the Mirror (chair: Tommaso dal Bosco, ANCI)

The National Programme on Municipalities

The story I will tell is about a National Programme on Municipalities (Piano per il rinnovamento delle città), that beached – like many other Programmes of this kind - because of many obstacles, among which internal conflicts and lack of fundings. Despite the controverises, this long-awaited Programme was approved, although full of deficiencies, and it finally became law in August 2012. 500 municipalities submitted their development projects to the open call, revealing the need for such funds. The Programme was managed by a board composed by all the institutional stakeholders that in some ways could have been affected by it (e.g. Regions, Cassa depositi e prestiti, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Development Policies Department, ...). The aim of the board was that of evaluating the submitted projects and then selecting those that would get the funds. When the selection phase ended, the board realized that there weren’t enough funds to fully cover all the submitted projects, therefore these money would have been just a sort of seed capital for those to be implemented. In the meanwhile, other internal and external elements contributed to the process: the fall of the Italian government, the change in the Ministry organization. A new task force was nominated, but it starts opposing the whole process, for example adding new norms and regulations that even came to deny the inspiring principle of the Programme. After several months still there aren’t constructions sites or signed contracts for the selected projects, and of the 28 proposals only a few have been confirmed.

Villaggio dell’Arte, Azione Matese and Rural Design

The project “Villaggio dell’Arte - Azione Matese” was focused on the development of inner lands and was rooted in the idea that a cultural short circuit is necessary in order to change old and persisting narratives deploying in those territories, and enhance the emergence of new ones. One of the ways from which to start building this short circuit, is by stimulating local communities in reflecting about themselves: this could be done through Arts and through participatory labs which involve the population. This experience, even if locally hadn’t that much recognition, has been acclaimed outside as a true example of regeneration of little communities, through the reflection on the identity of the territory, and on the concept of landscape as a way of reinforcing the relationship between human beings and the environment. Beyond the art performances, the output have been new economic activities, such as B&B structures, and of course new relationships. There have been many obstacles to this project, first of all the lack of support from local institutions. In fact, most of these areas are left alone in their problems and they are characterized by the presence of many local groups in conflict with one another. Despite this lack of support, the project eventually had the chance to obtain some regional funding. This story helped in reflecting on how to overcome these issues, and how important is to have a strong decision-making level able to confront conflicts, and to create an outward opening so as to go beyond parochialisms and connect different experiences.

Il Palio del Grano

The “Palio del Grano” project has been developed in a little municipality in Southern Italy. The idea was that of overcoming the imaginary of inner lands as disadvantaged and underdeveloped places, but instead of reflecting on how to better use local resources and change development patterns. The “Palio del grano” experience started several years ago, by a small group of people, and it shows up as an experience of collective harvesting. The harvesting is carried out as a sort of competition, at first among neighborhoods in the municipality of Caselle in Pittari (Italy), and then among neighboring municipalities (for the next editions, the competition will be extended to some Mediterranean communities). Beyond the harvesting festival, the broader vision is of reflecting on: nutrition, sociality, rural innovation through the use of ICTs. As a consequence of this initiative, it has been set up the Wheat Library through the recovery of local and European seeds. Another outcome is an ever growing and widespread knowledge on biodiversity and agricultural techniques, also stimulated by the “Wheat Camp” initiative - a week of workshops and practical activities related to rural literacy. The biggest value of this ongoing process is that it has been able to trigger a short circuit, an inward directed force gradually stimulating local people in participating to the activities. This has been done through a long process of social acceptance: agriculture seen as a resource, and not as a symbol of underdevelopment. This experience has also led to new activities, some young people have found – through this project – a new way of living.

Officina Emilia

The story of Officina Emilia is about a project whose characteristics are the innovation and quality of the concept, and the support of tenacious actors, but whose success has always been negotiated with local institutions. This project is settled in one of the most industrialized, rich, dynamic and manufacturing areas of Italy: Emilia. In 1999 a group of researchers, which was reasoning on innovation processes in the mechanical industry, found out that local policies had decided not to invest in the mechanical industry anymore, because it was considered a traditional and declining industry. The consequences were a decrease both in funding and in the specialization of the education system of the Region, once focused in providing trained workforce to the mechanical sector. The data coming from Regional studies were highlighting a decline that wasn't widespread all over the Region. But as a result, the thriving side of the manufacturing system was hit, and it began to drown for a lack of skills. At the opposite, the aforementioned researchers were perceiving a very strong growth momentum in the mechanical sector, which was not represented in the official data. Concurrently, a change within the University was undergoing, since it was acquiring more administrative autonomy, and it was rethinking its societal functions, among which its role in contributing to the growth of the territory. The group of researchers decided to rise the issue of the mechanical sector to the Ateneum. As a result, the “Officina Emilia” project was launched, focusing on the development of an active knowledge of the territory on young people, teachers and policy makers, through practical hands-on laboratories (designed in such a way that there is a continuous evaluation, helping in enhancing labs outcomes' quality in time). But soon it emerged the need for a physical space and resources; the support came from regional funds, afterwards from a local bank foundation, the Chamber of Commerce of Modena, and the Municipality of Modena. Despite some frictions with local authorities, finally the University found a building in which to host the new initiative, but it took several months in order to have all the bureaucratic permissions to start using it.

Transition Towns

This story is at the same time global and very local. My experience comes from a small town of 5,000 people near Bologna. Some years ago, I started looking at what was happening in England, where - in 2006 - a group of people decided to sit around a table talking about how was it possible to solve the problems affecting humanity. What they realized is that in order to deal with such fundamental problems, the story we're telling each other has to be changed: our perception of the world continues to bring us in the same place as we are, and this prevents us from making substantial changes. Is from here that started the Transition Towns movement, based on the idea that one can activate a systemic process everywhere, as long as there are 4-5 people available. It is not true that people behavioral change is difficult: you just have to know how to do it. Looking at what they were doing in England, I decided to start the same process in Italy. The whole process is about the collective construction of a new and different story with everyone in a community, and it starts with an initial moment of cognitive reconnection with the material and physical reality of our planet. This is a difficult step, but it is the mechanism that allows you to start sharing a common scenario. This passes into a space where this reconnection is managed by an emotional point of view. There are different ways to do so, and the process involves the activation of the context. This work lays the foundation for taking actions, which are different from those that could be obtained in the normal world and are part of a story that is built day by day by the people who belong to it. The new space that is so constructed changes the relational systems, moves priorities, and leads to different results. This is the transition process: we take care of how to deal with the problem, not on how to address it.

Arts and Social Change

Jocelyn Cunningham, Arts & Society



Uncommon Ground suggests that the arts can offer a frame for shared experiences that enable complex explorations of a place in ‘seeing differently’ and ‘imagining otherwise’. This approach is realised in a three-year project in Peterborough, England entitled Arts and Social Change, which was about understanding the conditions on the ground for change and responding to this as opposed to designing a project and then implementing it. In this way, the concept of invisibility plays a critical role in methodology but there is also the continual goal of making visible that which is hidden. This was based upon the notion that if we did this well, we could leave without being noticed, hence a story of mystery and intrigue. The city wanted to tackle the lack of attachment that citizens felt about where they lived, increase civic participation in local community and political life as well as develop new ways of working together. All ideas were built upon the concept of what would enable people to do all this for themselves – what were the conditions that could sustain this behaviour change?

The programme addressed culture change in a systemic way through the arts, not using the arts as a mechanism for change. In fact, many people did not see the projects they did as arts based at all. The term ‘creative practice’ was employed referring to the processes, structures and thinking that underpin arts practice as channels and catalysts for defining new ways of working. Arts and Social Change was a narrative that cannot be outlined as a single case study and its most surprising and successful chapter was one that was never intended – a leadership programme with city leaders. All of these case studies can be seen on the RSA’s website (the agency delivering this programme).

The story of this programme is captured by Peter Senge:

“Deep beliefs and assumptions can change as experience changes and when this happens, culture changes. The carrier of culture is the story we tell ourselves over and over. When the experiences change, so do the stories.”

Tools and approaches to deal with Socially Sustainable Innovation projects

Andrea Quartarone, ASK Centre Bocconi University; Mauro Mattioli, ECLT. Discussants: Antonio Santangelo, University of Turin



Our presentation is aimed to explain a two folded approach to deal with narrative analysis and narrative generation in the context of MD (Emergence by Design) methodology and in particular as a key component of “dynamic evaluation”. The first part is devoted to the Narrative Synopsis, developed in order to make researchers able to translate a story into a defined pattern. The goal is to make narrative structure easier to be analyzed in its constitutive passages, to be associated to a better-known (and more exemplar) narrative and to be depicted in A4, the ICT tool explained soon after. The Narrative Synopsis is a modified version of a Television Synopsis, used by TV writers and producers when they have to clarify their ideas about a program and to understand if the program is reproducible (intended as significant, in the MD project). The Synopsis is designed in two parts: the first is about the story - shortly written - and the environment around it (players, motivations, goals, etc...); the second one is a specific schedule of the events as they have occurred, preparatory to the A4 tool too.

The second part of the presentation shows the results of a research on narrative modeling. The research led to the definition of a formal modeling language for narrative analysis, called A4, and the implementation of Storyboard, an innovative ICT tool for A4 editing and presentation. Storyboard is developed as a sub-system of an ICT platform and the presentation shows its role in the “MD Toolset Ecosystem”, following MD methodology work phases and specific interactions with users and other tools. The main focus of this part is on A4 language, its roots in Lane-Maxfield theory of Agent-Artifact space and the definition of its graphical grammar. Progressive examples are used to illustrate the language: its expressive power and its articulation. A joint final part shows the work done using both tools on a specific case of “guiding narrative” that was discussed and analyzed in parallel by means of Narrative Synopsis and A4 - Storyboard.