

Collaborative services as trigger for a sustainable culture: two case studies

MOREA* Claudia¹, COLLACCHIONI Sofia¹, FALLI Francesca¹, RUTIGLIANO Chiara¹

¹University of Florence, (Italy) – *claudia.morea@unifi.it

Abstract

The paper proposes a research carried out in the field of Service Design for Collaborative Services, through the development of two university research projects and with the aim of advancing the sustainable culture. Nowadays collaborative and peer-to-peer systems are facilitated by the democratisation of technologies, therefore, the research investigated the opportunities of those systems to provide the empowerment of their users, in terms of green, soft and hard skills, and achieve a sustainable emancipation from the bottom. In this dimension, is emerging the capability of Service Design to activate inedit connections and provide new collaborative and sustainable networks. Two collaborative platform projects are here presented: Make!T Different and Restart. The first enables the use of environmental assessment tools in the context of non-expert design, while the second promotes social sustainability in the creation of social and solidarity-based enterprises in the Maghreb region.

Keywords

Collaborative Platforms, Sustainable Empowerment, Life Cycle Assessment, Inclusive co-creation, Social Innovation.

1. Introduction

The persistence of current social, climatic and economic problems highlights the need to spread collective awareness on which to create the basis for a sustainable emancipation of our society. The direction here investigated to pursue this emancipation is identified with the tools implemented through Service Design and resulting in Collaborative platforms.

Service Design for Collaborative Service represents a compass to identify and satisfy new needs of the community and thus enabling social innovation: “social innovations are new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes, etc.) capable of satisfying a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) through new (or improved) relationships and the innovative exploitation of goods and resources” (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012, p. 18).

In this perspective, design emphasises the solutions generated within society itself and supports them by offering tools to support innovation processes. Design analyses bottom-up phenomena that can be catalysts for sustainable cultural innovation through technological innovation.

The spread of participatory and collaborative systems, where consumers/users take on new roles, including that of producers of content, highlights an increasing willingness to play an active role within the supply chain and service systems, which gives rise to the concept of the *prosumer* (Toffler, 1980), a figure who can now act as a bridge for the dissemination of knowledge and sustainable practices, becoming a sort of ambassador or influencer.



2. Sustainability of p2p system

With the pervasive diffusion of digital devices in recent decades, we are witnessing a transformation of production and communication systems, which is pushing for a change in the relationship between producers, consumers and designers.

ICT, Information Communication Technologies, emerge as enabling solutions that facilitate social innovations from the grass-roots, fostering services in which end users collaborate with each other to implement solutions to their unsatisfied needs, and in these alternative solutions they lead towards a transition to a sustainable society (Meroni et al., 2007).

These bottom-up phenomena, which are driven by the democratisation of new technologies, are often supported by *commons-based* and *peer2peer* systems. These systems present themselves as suitable frameworks for new sustainable production and organisational models, in which prevail the needs of civil society, resulting in a democratisation of resources and profits (Bauwens et al, 2012).

The Collaborative Platform, based on p2p systems, differs from other services since they require the development of relational qualities as a prerequisite for their performance. It is necessary to create bonds of trust, intimacy, friendship and a common identity among participants, in order to guarantee relational qualities as expressions of “genuine dialogue” (Cipolla et al. 2009). This condition guarantees the service's long-term durability, since the strong relationships between users ensures a platform self-sufficiency that is a measure of sustainability.

3. Distilling complexity

Roberta Tassi defines Service Design as a “direction of directions” since it is able to orchestrate the multiplicity of specific languages of all the spheres involved in the realisation of a service project (Roberta Tassi, 2019). Generating a sharing of values among the actors involved creates a design ecosystem in which designers, through a systemic approach, collaborate on a forward-looking vision that does not presume to completely solve a complex challenge, but lays the foundations to create new open questions.

In the research projects presented, it is emphasised how the use of tools such as the *Systemic Design Framework* [fig. 1], a design model reworked by the Design Council in 2021, on the basis of the *Double-Diamond*, succeeds in “Distilling complexity & providing space for different expertise” (Drew, 2022), favouring the emergence of bottom-up solutions that produce inclusivity and social innovation.

The design of collaborative platforms brings out the need to work on a horizontal dimension with the aim of creating relationships, ties, community, trust (Cannonieri, 2018). The success of these systems is gained by considering the needs of the community that first participates in the activation of design choices and development processes in a logic of sharing and value creation (Maiolini R., Fracassi E., 2015).

4. Restart platform

The collaborative platform *Restart* was developed by the DIDA research team in the framework of two projects RESTART Tunisia - Ecological and Social Upgrading of Territories through the Relaunch of Youth Entrepreneurship in Tunisia, co-financed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), and RESTART Maghreb - Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria - under the scientific coordination of XXXX - Architecture Department of University of Florence, and realised in partnership with COSPE (leader) together with other Italian and Maghrebian NGOs.

The collaborative platform (<http://restartmaghreb.org/home>) offers an ecosystem of services for the accompaniment of enterprises operating in the field of Social and Solidarity Economies (SSE) and promotes economic, durable, sustainable and inclusive development in the Maghreb territories. In particular, the platform promotes the employment of young people through the consolidation and start-up of enterprises for the enhancement and redevelopment of the territory.

The platform focuses on three main axes creating services for: training, coaching management and a “social showcase” for businesses. In particular, the platform promotes the employment of young people through the consolidation and start-up of enterprises, acting as tool to foster connections between start-ups, research and training centres, local NGOs and associations, institutions, incubators and

consultants, to generate a favourable ecosystem for the new businesses in order to enhance and redevelop the territory. Moreover, the platform is now developing a system of certification of specific skills for SSEs.

The interdisciplinary approach of the project has highlighted the complexity and instability of the relationships on which this system is currently based. Then two design methodologies were applied: participatory process of Service Design, to generate value for all stakeholders, and the strategic methodologies of the *Systemic Design Framework* to define a shared vision to respond to the complex challenges of the project [fig. 2].

Stakeholders actively participated in designing the service and testing the platform, inducing themselves needs and solutions that are valuable and sustainable for the community. The synergies created between institutions and local communities ensured a democratisation of opportunities in a context of economic and social marginalisation.

The project demonstrated the potential of the social and solidarity economy as a viable alternative for the empowerment of young people. Through the enhancement of transversal competences the target group gained self-awareness in the society, secured decent work and improved their socio-economic conditions.

5. Make!T different platform

Make!T Different is a collaborative platform designed to increase users' green skills through an empowerment mechanism that provides tools to assess environmental impacts on the basis of the Life Cycle Assessment methodology, tools to promote sustainable design and tools to create a local circular network.

The project, developed within the framework of PhD research, starts from the assumption that the achievement of sustainable innovation can only take place in conjunction with the achievement of sustainable emancipation at every level of our society. This level can be achieved with the active empowerment of individual citizens, i.e. by enabling non-expert people as well with the tools for the assessment and thus understanding of both environmental and social impacts.

Goal of the platform is to guide towards the eco-alphabetisation (Capra, 1982) by focusing on a defined target group of craft and DIY-people, the work was approached on two fronts.

Firstly, working on the simplification of the tools and language adopted by the Life Cycle Assessment methodology and, secondly, on the construction of a circular value network linked to the material and immaterial resources belonging to the territory that would support the platform's offer and make it self-sufficient in the long term.

In particular, the model of the collaborative platform was considered the most suitable for the following reasons: it allows the stakeholders to take on new roles within the supply chain, so allowing them to experiment with new circular network configurations; it guarantees an active involvement of users, through the creation of contents and interaction between can be generate the "genuine dialogue"; it allows the generation of new results, enabling the platform itself to adapt and accommodate the directions/needs of the users [fig. 3].

6. Conclusion

The two projects verified the possibility for Service Design to apply collaborative platforms as an enabling tool to achieve social and sustainable innovation goals. Collaborative platforms turned out to be the appropriate tool since its participatory nature allows users to increase their *empowerment* as well as to increase the offer of the platform itself by adapting it to their needs. In both projects, users experience the platform to improve their personal skills and generate social innovation. In *Make!T Different*, users discover sustainability issues through practical empowerment actions that put them in a position to be initiators of a local circular network. In the case of the *Restart* platform, users are offered tools to improve their skills and thereby their socio-economic conditions, creating a bottom-up chain for the creation of eco-friendly enterprises.

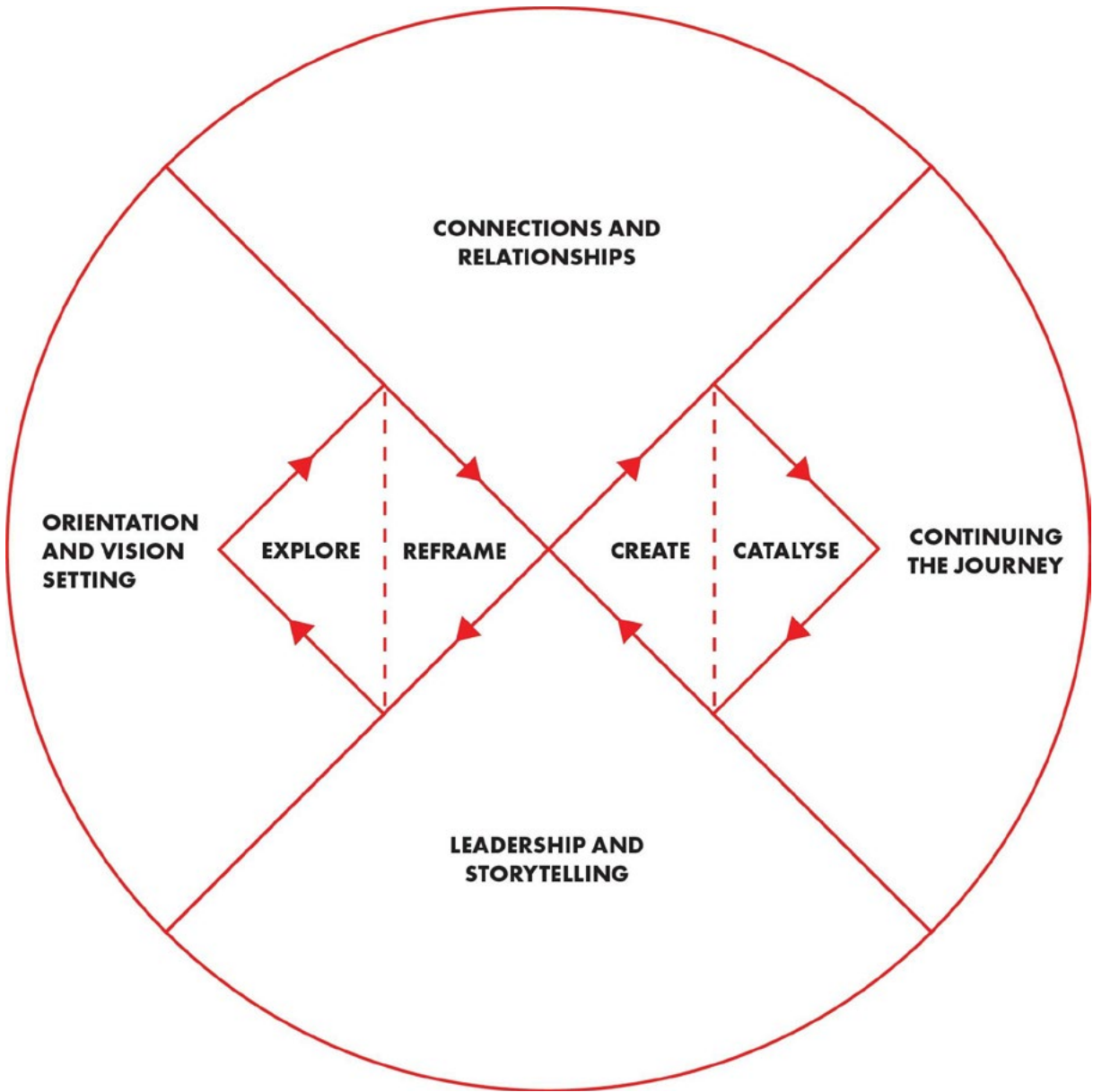


Fig 1. *Systemic Design Framework* (BEYOND NET ZERO: A SYSTEMIC DESIGN APPROACH, Design Council, April 2021)

Applying the systemic design framework to the Restart project

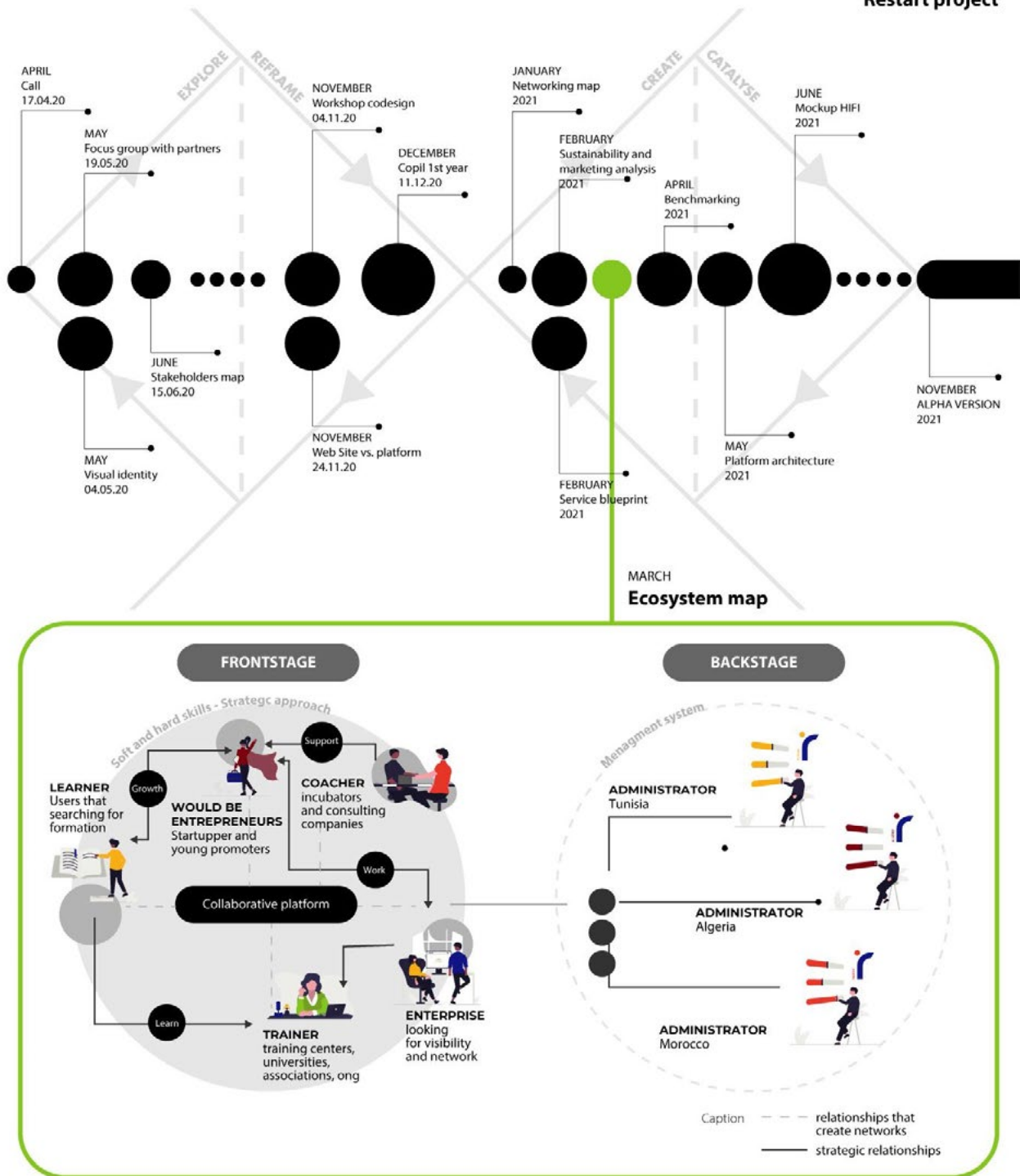


Fig 2. Systemic design framework and Ecosystem Map of *Restart project* (Dida Team, March 2022)



networking map

existing NETWORK to build

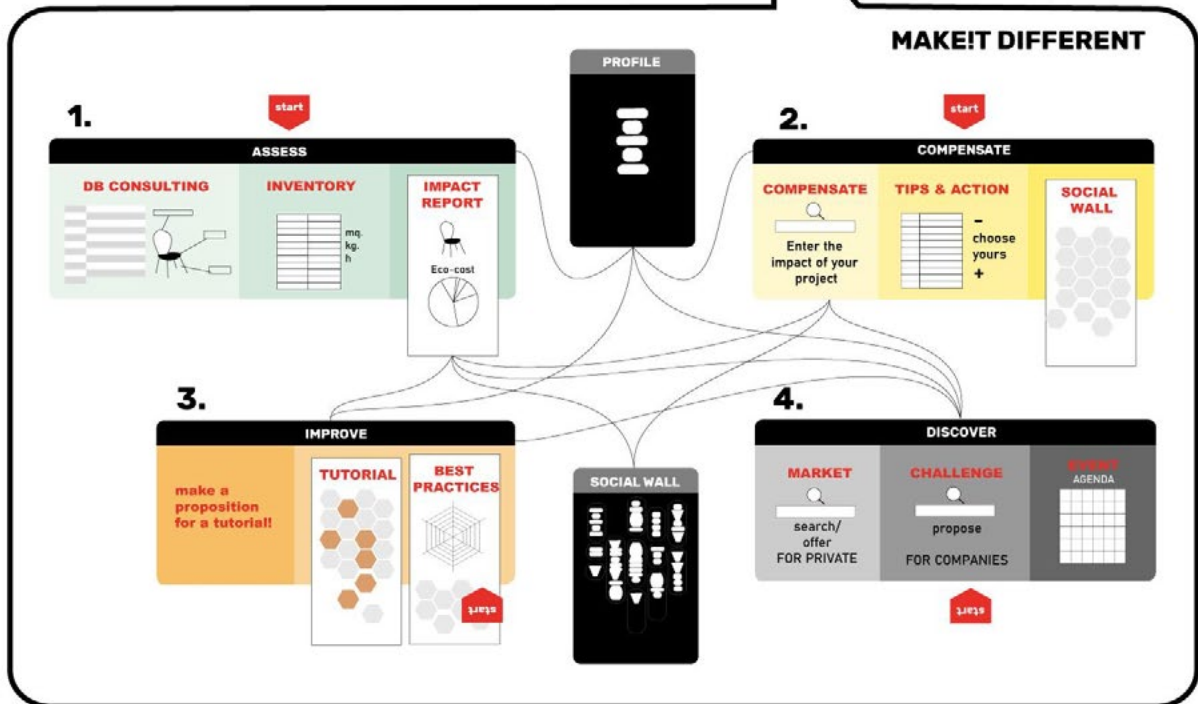
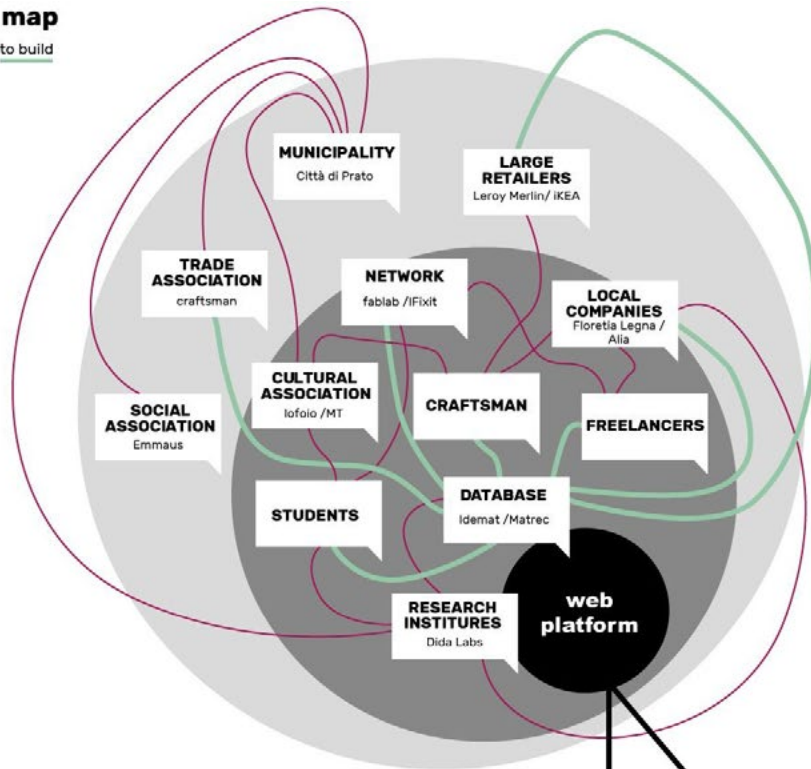


Fig 3. Networking Map and Platform Information Architecture of *Make!T Different Platform* (Dida team, 2022)

References

- Bauwens M., Kostakis V., Pazaitis A., (2012) Peer to peer. The Commons Manifesto, University of Westminster Press.
- Cannonieri, S. (2018, July 30). *SHARING: UN MODELLO DI SERVIZIO PER COSTRUIRE COMUNITÀ*. Reti Solidali. <<https://www.retsolidali.it/sharing-economy-mainieri/>> (01/03).
- Capra F., (1984) The turning point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture, Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Caulier-Grice J. Davies, A. Patrick, R. Norman, W. (2012), Defining Social Innovation. A Deliverable of the Project: "The Theoretical, Empirical and Policy Foundations for Building Social Innovation in Europe" (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, European Commission, DG Research, Bruxelles.
- Cipolla C, Manzini E., (2009) *Relation Service*, Know Techn Pol DOI 10.1007/s12130-009-9066-z.
- Drew, C. (2022, January 7). *Developing our new Systemic Design Framework - Design Council*. Medium. <<https://medium.com/design-council/developing-our-new-systemic-design-framework-e0f74fe118f7>> (03/03).
- Maiolini, R., & Fracassi, E. (2015). L'innovazione delle relazioni tra gli attori, Carli MG (a cura di), Modelli ed esperienze di innovazione sociale in Italia, Secondo Rapporto sull'innovazione sociale, 141-148.
- Meroni A., (Ed.). (2007). Creative Communities. People Inventing Sustainable Ways of Living. Milan, Italy: Edizioni Polidesign.
- Tassi, R. (2019). Service designer: Il progettista alle prese con sistemi complessi (Italian Edition). Franco Angeli Edizioni.