

# 11. *Beyond the borders.* Connections of the Design System beyond its borders as an agent of social and cultural innovation

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## 11.1 A history of connections

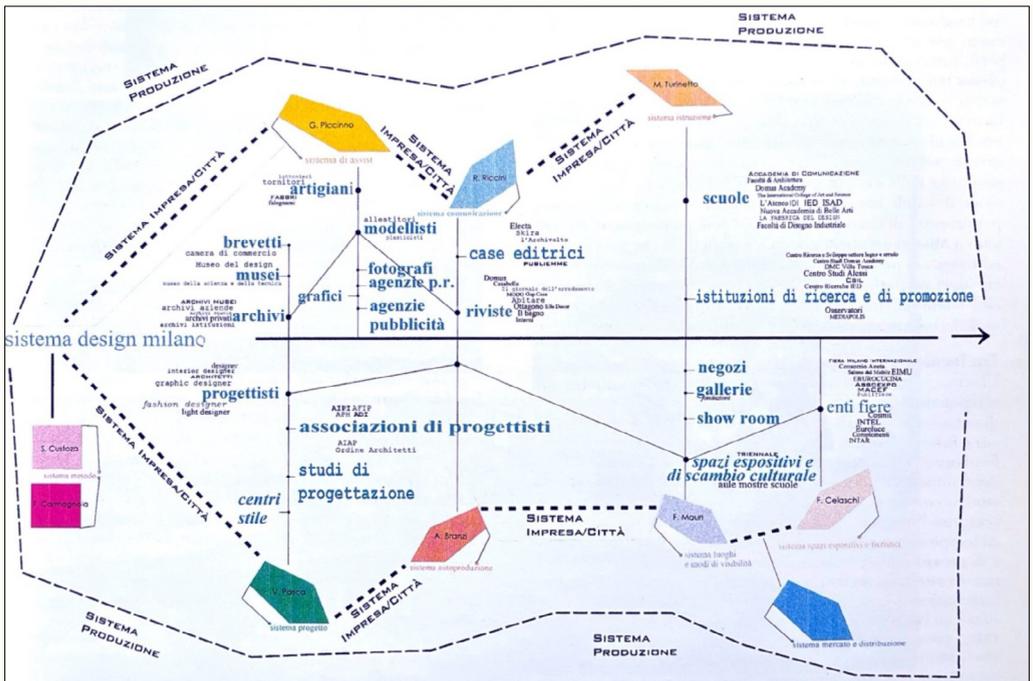
The systemic nature underlying Design at Politecnico di Milano does not merely configure its internal structure (from the initial establishment of the Consortium, followed by the Department and the Faculty, later renamed School), but from the outset, it has led those involved in its development to explore how to interact with the actors, places, and practices that have long been part of the broader and well-established Milanese Design System, eventually expanding the scope to national and international scales. In the history of design teaching and research at Politecnico di Milano, this outward openness has generated experiments and solutions that have historical significance and can be categorized into three analytical areas. The first pertains to opening the campus to the city and taking projects to the places and events of Design, presenting reflections and results, and raising awareness of the Politecnico Design System; the second focuses on building relationships, weaving networks of collaboration and multidisciplinary work, disseminating knowledge; the third, rooted in design and prototyping,

creates positive impacts in the local context. The following paragraphs will explore these three dimensions, highlighting the qualities and uniqueness of some of the numerous episodes of research, teaching, and projects that have transcended not only physical barriers but also ideological boundaries of university spaces, extending beyond the confines of academic settings and deeply engaging with the city and contemporary society at multiple levels.

## 11.2 Foundational research projects

One of the initial actions undertaken by professors and researchers in the design disciplines (referred to by insiders as *ICAR 13*), under the guidance of Alberto Seassaro, was to study and understand these diverse sets, aiming to analyze their components, interrelationships, and functional dynamics. This intention was the basis for several foundational research projects such as *Sistema Design Milano* (1999), *Sistema Design Italia* (initiated in 1998 and completed between 1999-2001), and *MeDesign* (initiated

**Figure 1.**  
The research framework of Sistema Design Milano (carried out by Adele Grumelli, Marcella Ottolenghi, Giovanna Piccinno), taken from AA.VV. (1999).



in 2001 and developed between 2002-2003). *Sistema Design Milano*, a research project conducted in 1999, aimed to examine the local reality in which Politecnico di Milano's design was embedded and to understand its operation to organically integrate into this existing system of relationships, contributing through research and education to its consolidation and evolution. The model that emerged from this study consisted of three main types of actors rooted in the Milanese context: direct actors including designers, architects, project managers, and professional service providers (such as photographers, model makers, and renderers); flow actors such as publishing houses, trade fairs, and retail channels; and support actors such as universities, schools, and professional associations. These figures, together, still constitute the foundations of the Milanese design ecosystem today, albeit with new forms and modes of operation, engaging in a relationship of *coopetition* and making this context a fertile ground for innovation and design.

*Sistema Design Italia* extends the scope to the national level. Thanks to funding from the then Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica (MURST), the research *Sistema Design Italia. Risorse progettuali e sistema economico. Il ruolo del Disegno Industriale per l'innovazione del prodotto. Sviluppo delle risorse progettuali del Sistema - Italia tra risorse locali e mercati globali* [Design System Italy. Design resources and the economic system. The role of Industrial Design for product innovation. Development of the design resources of System - Italy between local resources and global markets] was initiated in 1998, directed nationally by Ezio Manzini and Giuliano Simonelli. SDI (*Sistema Design Italia*) is the acronym for this large collective research project that lasted two years and involved not only Politecnico di Milano but also 11 other Italian universities located in 10 different regions of Italy. The aim was to systematically understand the strong link between Italian design and the country's social, cultural, and economic organization.

*Sistema Design Italia* produced significant original outcomes for our discipline, recognized by the prestigious *Compasso d'Oro* award from ADI - Associazione per il Disegno Industriale. As a process, it was an important field training experience for young design scholars and facilitated the creation of a broad national network of expertise connected with the most significant district realities, coordinated by

the then newly established SDI – *Sistema Design Italia* Agency. This research further developed at the national level with the project *Il design per i distretti industriali. Sistemi di competenze e nuove reti di connessione per la competitività dei sistemi produttivi italiani* [Design for industrial districts. Skills systems and new connection networks for the competitiveness of Italian production systems] (presented in 2000 and conducted between 2001-2002), supported actively by businesses and the *Club dei Distretti*.

*MeDesign: strategie, strumenti e operatività del disegno industriale per valorizzare e potenziare le risorse dell'area mediterranea tra locale e globale* completes the trilogy, making another scale leap and expanding its focus. This research, also funded in 2001 by the then Ministero dell'Istruzione e della Ricerca and coordinated by Giuliano Simonelli, aimed to observe how design manifested and operated in the Mediterranean basin, in comparison with cultural heritage, artisanal realities, and enogastronomic traditions, rather than industrial contexts. Universities in Palermo, Chieti, Naples, Reggio Calabria, and Chieti participated in this two-year study, examining not only industrial products and their production chains but also artisanal artifacts and services related to fundamental human needs: pleasure and leisure, self-care, and psychological and cultural growth. This dimension largely coincides with the lifestyle (and not just the products) of Made in Italy.

In 2002, a complement to this activity was presented to the European Commission, titled *Me(urope).design. Enabling Design Solutions for the Empowerment of the local Mediterranean Resources*, an expression of interest involving Spanish, French, and Greek partners. These countries have historical, cultural, and ideal relationships with the Mediterranean Sea, aimed at directing the VI Framework Programme for Research, then in the drafting phase, towards topics of supranational disciplinary interest.

This series of works and initiatives, scaling from local to international, has allowed the development of knowledge, as well as relationships, consequently generating opportunities for research, education, dissemination, and experimentation in various contexts and through diverse methods.

## 11.3 Design for Districts

Design for local productive systems has been a significant line of activity to which many professors and researchers have contributed, facilitated by relationships with businesses and, importantly, with institutions – area agencies and service centers – focused on supporting innovation in these regional contexts. This was a strategic approach towards the diverse and dynamic universe of local economies, driven by an operational rather than merely speculative approach: understanding how design could contribute to the success of these economies.

*DxD – Design for District* is one such project initiated in 1999 by a group of professors including Flaviano Celaschi, Giuliano Simonelli, and Luisa Collina in collaboration with Lumetel, the district agencies Val Trompia and Val Sabbia, which provided services to local businesses and developed territorial policies. The team also included sociologist Silvio Custozza and three internationally renowned designers: Makio Hasuike, Perry King, and Santiago Miranda.

*DxD* was an educational experience involving over sixty students from the thesis lab of the industrial design degree course. The students were guided in understanding *District 10*, centered in Lumezzane (in the province of Brescia), which was followed by the activation of projects made available to the business community. This comprehensive and structured process of action-research directly engaged students with one of Lombardy's oldest and most traditional districts, active in metalworking: from tableware to handles, from valves to faucets. This experience led to over sixty internships with scholarships at 22 local companies (lasting between 250 and 1000 hours), the design of joint products by companies and students under faculty supervision, and their prototyping for an award, an exhibition, and a final published catalog. Additionally, students defended their theses by 2001.

The *DxD* project served as a pilot initiative bridging the gap between university and small-to-medium enterprises located far from the Milanese design hub, where students played a key role in conveying and making tangible the potential of the design discipline through their extended and daily work in the companies.

Alongside *DxD*, further experiences were initiated with other significant district realities such as Vigevano (for the footwear sector),

Vicenza and Valenza Po (for jewelry), and cultural and tourism districts, which were the subjects of a series of summer workshops organized in Morcone, in the province of Benevento, starting from 2001.

These actions aimed to explore how design could be a resource for the national system, linked to the model of SMEs, industrial districts, and cultural-tourism realities.

## 11.4 From Italian districts to Latin America and beyond

Interest in the Italian model of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) supported by design in their innovation processes soon spread abroad, particularly to Latin America, where alternatives to attracting large multinational corporations were sought. The role of mediator and catalyst, performed in Italy by area agencies and service centers, was taken up abroad by the Italian and regional diplomatic network in synergy with ICE (Istituto per il Commercio Estero) and the Chambers of Commerce.

Promos, at the time a special company of the Milan Chamber of Commerce for internationalization, with offices in South and Central America (Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Mexico), recognized the importance of design. At the turn of the millennium, a research project funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the main development funding source for Latin American countries, was launched to attempt to replicate the socio-productive model of Italian industrial districts in Brazil. The project was carried out in the field by Sebrae (Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas), with the support of Regione Lombardia and Promos, which engaged consultants including Politecnico di Milano for design expertise. While it did not leave concrete marks on the affected territories, the research significantly influenced the Brazilian government's funding policies for business innovation in subsequent years.

Promos then promoted the first institutional trip to Salvador de Bahia in September 2001 by Flaviano Celaschi, Giuliano Simonelli, myself, and Paola Bernasconi from Politecnico di Milano, and Antonello Fusetti from the Scuola Politecnica di Design. The shared goal, supported by both Promos and the Brazilian government, represented by Patricia Or-

rico, then Director Superintendent of Promo – Centro Internacional de Negócios da Bahia, was to support a local industrial policy modeled on Italian SMEs by creating a Design Center in Salvador de Bahia.

Following this initial trip, numerous other missions took place, including a series of traveling seminars with Cristina and Massimo Morozzi, the Campana Brothers, and Nanni Strada in Curitiba (June 2003), Brasilia, São Paulo, and Rio (December 2003). From 2001 to today, the presence in Brazil has developed continuously, creating a network of relationships with local universities and activating countless projects and experiments in collaboration with businesses, entities, and institutions, also facilitated by the establishment of a POLI.design office in São Paulo, with the active participation of Roberto Galisai and Hilton de Brito.

Three of these projects are briefly described below as examples.

In Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, at a Jesuit university, the most ambitious educational project took shape: starting a new local design school modeled on Politecnico di Milano, under the scientific guidance of Flaviano Celaschi and the continuous local operation of Roberto Galisai. The Escola de Design Unisinos, at the Universidade do Porto Alegre, still active today offering design degree courses, incorporates strategic design as the foundation of its educational approach and includes study trips to Milan for its students.

The *Senai Design* project, funded by Senai Nacional, the technical training organization serving Brazilian businesses, with locations in all Brazilian states with its offices, schools, and laboratories. The project's goal was to experiment with the contribution of design as a new competitive factor for Brazilian industry in various local contexts (AA.VV., 2010). The project continued in different forms until 2015.

The *Acre. Made in Amazonia* project, which experimented with a model for using Amazonian forest resources (essences derived from strictly planned cuts) to create furniture products in collaboration with local communities. These products aimed to succeed in the markets of major Brazilian cities and internationally. The project was funded by the State Government of Acre and had active local support from architect Marluca Candida.

Similar missions, projects, and experiments have been conducted in Chile, starting in 2002 thanks to the stimulus from Cestec Spa,

a Regione Lombardia company supporting the competitiveness of the Lombardy production system. The relationships focused on Valparaiso, in collaboration with the Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Universidad de Valparaiso, and the Instituto Internacional para la Innovación Emprendedorial, with the intention of establishing a Design Center for Chilean artisan enterprises and SMEs. This aimed to develop significant relationships between Chilean and Italian businesses, benefiting both. This led to the initiation of a PhD program in Design and the local establishment of a master's program in Strategic Design led by Francesco Zurlo.

Other experiences took place in Argentina, supported by the established relationships of Tomás Maldonado and Medardo Chiapponi. Among other initiatives, a Master's in Strategic Design was created at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, involving Roberto Verganti and Tommaso Buganza for several years.

Other experiences followed in various international contexts, with actions not tied to predefined collaboration formats. In July 2004, funded by Regione Lombardia and supported by the Italian Embassy in Canberra, a month-long study trip to Australia was organized for a group of

design doctoral students, led by Luisa Collina and Fiammetta Costa. Numerous meetings at four major Australian universities (RMIT University and Swinburne University in Melbourne, University of Technology and University of New South Wales in Sydney) established a network of personal relationships between researchers from the local universities and Politecnico di Milano, which has led to ongoing collaborations.

Several years later, in 2007, the educational project *DIMI - Design Innovation Made in Italy* took shape, supported by ICE - Istituto per il Commercio Estero, under the guidance of Marina Da Maggio and coordinated for POLI.design by Valentina Auricchio. Following the modest

**Figure 2.**  
Group Photo During an Excursion  
with Chris Ryan, then Professor at  
the Melbourne School of Design  
(photo by Luisa Collina).



results of previous overseas missions involving Italian companies, ICE decided to experiment with a reverse process: offering an intensive advanced training course in Italy to 30 young Indian designers, selected from 200 applicants. This course, held between September and December 2008, aimed to immerse them in the culture of Italian design (Politecnico di Milano, the great Italian masters, as well as national companies and territories) and consequently strengthen collaboration between professionals and companies from both countries. Today, these 30 participants, mostly aged between 24 and 26 and coming from various parts of

**Figure 3.**  
**Group Photo of DIMI Participants**  
(photo by Valentina Auricchio).



India, are active professionals and cultural ambassadors of the made in Italy brand.

The focus on internationalization extended beyond Europe. Indeed, consider the MEDes network – Master of European Design – a small consortium of esteemed universities which the School still participates in today, starting from 2001. This network offers two-year exchange programs abroad for selected students. Also noteworthy is GIDE, the European network established in 2004 specializing in Interior Design. Another significant initiative is the Master *Design for Society* offered by Universidad Pablo de Olavide in Seville (2003-2004), a project led by Politecnico di Milano and Glasgow School of Arts, involving Giuliano Simonelli, Norman Mc Nally, and myself, inspired by Santiago Miranda, a designer now based in Milan but originally from Seville. Additionally, there is the school's membership in Cumulus, an association of design schools and universities founded in 1990 as a European entity and later evolving into a global scale network. The School of Design has been a member since its establishment in 2001 in Rotterdam.

## 11.5 The first Chinese experiences: a separate story

From October 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999, the first institutional mission of the Politecnico di Milano Design System took place in China (in Beijing and Shanghai) as part of a joint initiative by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regione Lombardia, Comune di Milano, and the China Agency. The design team, led by Alberto Seassaro, included several faculty members from the course board (such as Flaviano Celaschi, Giuliano Simonelli, Nico Ventura, Francesco Mauri, and Medardo Chiapponi), along with young researcher Paola Bertola and professionals representing Milanese design, such as Angelo Cortesi, Gabriele De Vecchi, and Giancarlo Iliprandi.

Acting as a mentor was Alberto Cannetta, representing the National Council of Research, University of Milan, and possessing extensive knowledge of China. This trip marked the first contact of the Politecnico di Milano Design System with the People's Republic of China, known as the world's factory with non-existent design at the time. The delegation presented a newly published work, *Sistema Design Milano-Milano Design System* (AA.VV., 1999), also available in Chinese, stemming from the aforementioned research.

Since 1999, many more missions have followed, initially facilitated by Italian diplomatic institutions and later initiated through direct contacts with our university partners. Depending on the circumstances, the intentions were diverse. The goals included introducing Italian design to China to support the export of Made in Italy products, attracting high-quality Chinese students to internationalize the university, engaging with academic partners for joint research initiatives, offering design education to Chinese students to foster their own design identity and combat counterfeiting, and finally creating job opportunities for young Italian design graduates.

Figure 4.  
The two covers (one in Italian and English, and the other in Italian and Chinese) of the book *Sistema Design Milano*.



Several years later, some initial collaborations materialized. In September 2004, an agreement was signed between the Shanghai Centre for Scientific and Technological Exchange with Foreign Countries (SSTEC) and DESIGNfocus, an institution born from the collaboration in Design research between the Faculty of Design at Politecnico di Milano and the Milan Chamber of Commerce. The agreement aimed to support exchange visits for professors, designers, students, and their counterparts between Shanghai and the Lombardy Region, encourage research studies in design, organize bilateral forums to promote design development, and strengthen intellectual property rights protection in design relying on competent local government departments.

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the then Italian Minister of Education and Research Letizia Moratti and the Chinese Minister of Education Zhou Ji, representing their respective governments, signed the first agreement on mutual recognition of university degrees in the Italian Republic and the People's Republic of China, initiating academic collaborations between universities of the two countries. This led to the establishment, among others, of the twinning agreement between Politecnico di Milano and Tongji University in Shanghai, officially launched on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006, with the ministers' signature in Milan and on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006, with the opening ceremony at Tongji University's Jiading Campus attended by Prime Minister Romano Prodi and Letizia Moratti, by then Mayor of Milan.

Following this *arranged marriage*, in the academic year 2006/2007, the first double degree in design was launched between the Master's degree in *Product Service System Design* at Politecnico di Milano and the *Master in Design and Art Studies* (Shuo Shi Degree) at Tongji University. In the same year, the first courses and professional master's programs in Interior Design were launched in China for Chinese professionals.

These pioneering and sometimes somewhat naive initial experiences were followed by numerous initiatives, experiments, projects, and research endeavors that have continued to flourish (and sometimes falter) until today, after overcoming a sharp slowdown between 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic emergency.

## 11.6 Design on display

In support of the numerous initiatives, projects, and conferences launched outside the university walls, Politecnico's Department of Design showcases and engages through exhibitions and participation in the most important local and international industry events, with a special focus on Milan Design Week. Beyond the campus borders, classes are opened to the public, showcasing student project laboratory results, research, and the design culture developed by the entire community.

At the Milan scale, numerous activities are carried out both during Design Week and throughout the year. Within the framework of the Salone del Mobile, since 2000, the [Designing Designers](#) conferences have been prominent, serving as a meeting point and reflection among international design educators within the fair. Following since

1998, the Salone Satellite [↘](#) has been a key exhibition format conceived by Marva Griffin, aimed at young designers and design schools, in which Politecnico has participated since its early editions. The Salone Satellite, which recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is a place visited by Italian entrepreneurs seeking emerging designers, as emphasized multiple times by Maria Porro, the current President of the Milan Furniture Fair. Since childhood, she accompanied her father on visits to the Satellite on Saturdays during the Salone week.

[Dining Design](#), in 2004, was instead a unique project in its own right: a pathway of hypothetical restaurants set up at the fairgrounds, designed by international design schools and universities in partnership with Italian companies under the curatorial guidance of Adam Tihany. On that occasion, the School of Design participated with *Più-Yiù*, a 1:1 scale realization of a portion of a Chinese restaurant conceptually located in Piazza Navona, in collaboration with Sawaya & Moroni.

**Designing Designers.**  
[Event →](#)



**Salone Satellite 2000.**  
[Document →](#)



**Dining Design.**  
[Event →](#)



**That's Design.**  
[Event →](#)



**NO.MADE.**  
[Event →](#)



**Human Cities - Challenging the city scale.**  
[Event →](#)



**Design Variations 2023 - Reforming Future.**  
[Event →](#)



Design x Designers.

[Event →](#)



Mtv Toy party @ That's Design!

[Event →](#)



SIDE - Sino Italian Design  
Exhibition.

[Event →](#)



Ten years and counting.

[Event →](#)



Autofficina futuro.

[Event →](#)



Seoul Biennale of Architecture and  
Urbanism 2023.

[Event →](#)



Outside the trade fair enclosure, noteworthy are [That's Design!](#), a collective space in the Tortona area conceived and coordinated by Politecnico di Milano, Domus Academy, and Zona Tortona for three editions starting from 2007. Its purpose was to exhibit students' works alongside international schools and universities. Alongside this initiative, proposed for three different editions, were more episodic projects such as [NO.MADE](#) in 2006 at BaseB, [Human Cities – Challenging the city scale](#) at BASE Milano in 2016, and [Design Variations 2023 – Reforming Future](#) at the Marchiondi Institute in Milan, now partly abandoned and made partially accessible for this occasion.

Also during the design week, starting from 2013, the School of Design in Bovisa has hosted the exhibition format [Design x Designers](#) at its premises, transforming the common areas of the classroom building into an exhibition gallery of students' works. This well-established format was preceded on campus by more episodic initiatives such as two editions of *La casa dei Designers* (2006 and 2007) and a memorable party in collaboration with [MTV Toy Party @ That's Design](#) in 2007. On that occasion, it was noted how the educational building of the School and the open spaces of the oval were particularly versatile, capable of hosting international DJs with a console positioned on the ground floor bridge and a large dancing community.

Experiences of exhibitions, installations, and events have also extended beyond national borders: projects of portable, light-weight, and flexible setups include [SIDE – Sino Italian Design Exhibition](#) (Shanghai, 2014), [Ten years and counting](#) (Shanghai, 2018), [Aut-officina Futuro](#) (Bilbao, 2022) and [Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism](#) (Seul, 2023).

## 11.7 Within spatial boundaries, beyond social borders

A strong connection with the neighboring social fabric around the Bovisa Durando campus has underpinned a series of initiatives since the

2010s aimed at physically opening the campus to individuals outside the Politecnico community, while exploring the design for social innovation within the neighborhood dimension.

Since 2012, within the Bovisa Durando campus, there has been a shared garden called *Coltivando* [Cultivating]. Developed by Polimi DESIS Lab in collaboration with service and space designers, it involved a co-design process with the local community currently managing it. A group of professors, researchers, and graduates from the Department of Design and the School of Design at Politecnico di Milano initiated the project in January 2012 to bridge two spatial and social realities that coexisted with limited communication opportunities: the Bovisa university campus, established in the late 1990s, and the Bovisa neighborhood where it is located.

The conversion of the area, previously occupied until the 1970s by the Ceretti and Tanfani factory, introduced significant public green spaces to the neighborhood. These spaces were highly utilized by the internal community of Politecnico di Milano, including staff and students, yet considered unused and hidden by local residents (Fassi *et al.*, 2016). The *Orti belli* [Beautiful Gardens], still remembered in the neighborhood, were small plots cultivated by workers during the factory years. *Coltivando* now occupies these spaces as a starting point for a process of spatial and social reconnection.

The project team's diversity, composed of interior and product service system designers, facilitated the development of both software elements (operational system, business model, organizational model) and hardware elements (space design, cultivation structures, and communal facilities) through various phases of co-design and participatory action research. Co-design activities were organized to engage with future users of the area, obtaining guidelines and feedback for the final project from faculty, researchers, university students, and neighborhood residents, thereby fostering a sense of belonging to the place (Fassi *et al.*, 2017).

*Coltivando* involves collective management of approximately 1000 square meters of space, with harvest distribution among participants during construction and cultivation phases. Following a year of weekly meetings involving around 2000 people in the co-construction process, a sense of awareness and care for this space developed. These

Note 1.  
*Coltivando* website.  
[Link →](#)



*Coltivando*.  
[Event →](#)



Coltivando\_001.  
[Document →](#)



encounters also increased permeability between the neighborhood and the campus. More than ten years since its inception, *Coltivando* is now a place where relationships [↓](#), knowledge, and expertise flourish; it not only «influences visual conventions of the urban environment [...]» but also «citizens' behaviors and lifestyles» (Nicolin, 2012), deeply rooted in and collaborating with the surrounding neighborhood through volunteer residents and educational programs developed with local schools.

## 11.8 The neighborhood-based action research

The success generated by the *Coltivando* initiative (2012) opened up opportunities to extend beyond the campus boundaries and adapt approaches and outputs to the contexts of neighboring neighborhoods. Thus, *campUS – Incubation and staging of social practices* was born, a research project coordinated by the Department of Design and funded through the Polisocial Award (2014), the Politecnico di Milano's social responsibility program that reinvests 5xmillio of income tax declarations donated to the institution by taxpayers into research. *campUS* is an action research project aimed at connecting the spaces and capabilities present at the Durando campus with the Bovisa, Dergano, and Bovisasca territories.

The project involved collaboration among designers, architects, and management engineers across four main areas of interest: the increasingly widespread and widely recognized practices of urban agriculture; experiments related to neighborhood TV as a participatory model that blends co-design practices and participatory video, based on the premise that storytelling techniques and audiovisual language

promote self-expression and serve as factors of social inclusion; innovative proposals for an *open-source* city, constructed through *itinerant* or *pop-up* projects that can act as engines for urban regeneration; and finally, the long-term economic sustainability of social innovation projects, with results applied to the aforementioned actions.

The research aims to confirm the university as a stakeholder capable of engaging with various local communities, mediating between public and private interests, as well as collective and individual interests, initiating experimental processes in each of the four aforementioned fields, addressing administrative, social, technical, and management issues, while simultaneously developing new participatory models to achieve the highest possible degree of inclusion and engagement (Fassi *et al.*, 2020).

Over the two-year project period, a neighborhood social TV, a 5,000 square meter shared garden for 50 families, a traveling pavilion to showcase and promote local associations, and a long-term sustainability model for projects were realized.

The complexity of the project, combined with the high number of involved stakeholders and the quality of the results achieved, allowed campUS to be selected for the ADI Design Index and subsequently win the prestigious XXV *Compasso d'Oro* (2018) in the social design section.

**CampUS - 5x1000 POLISOCIAL  
AWARD 2014 CAMPUS -  
Incubazione e messa in scena di  
pratiche sociali  
Event →**



**ADI Compasso d'Oro - CampUS  
Event →**



## 11.9 Conclusions

*Beyond the borders* is not just the title of this essay, but one of the foundational characteristics of the Politecnico di Milano's Design System. Since its inception, it has been conceived as an open system, in dialogue with its reference contexts, itself part of larger and articulated innovation ecosystems where design acts as a discipline capable of stimulating sustainable and inclusive innovation processes. It supports local

economies, builds bridges between diverse cultures, sparks interest, and captures the attention of a broader, even international audience.

Politecnico di Milano's Design System has never ventured alone beyond these borders, but has always operated in synergy with other actors, predominantly institutional, who have stimulated, accompanied, and supported its activities, confirming the strength of the collective dimension of contemporary Italian design. Over time, the system has progressively operated inductively through trial and error, consolidating fruitful partnerships and abandoning unpromising paths for the future. Understanding that *beyond the borders*, once proposals are evaluated and weighed, can only be experienced; in essence, it prepares the ground and attempts to sow seeds, aware that not all seeds are capable of flourishing.

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