DESIGN: CLOSE TO INNOVATION, STILL FARAWAY FROM INNOVATION POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

The topic mainly dealt in this paper is participatory design as tool for policy makers in pilot actions aimed to boost local innovation with an international point of view. In particular, it presents the results of a project financed by the European Program Alpine Space 2007-2013, CCAlps- Creative Companies in Alpine Space1, as a case study in the field of design because of the pilot actions implemented as a tool of participatory innovation for policy makers. In fact, the project can be considered a good practice since by focusing on design, meant both as a process and as a business sector, it has experimented a method of generating and fostering innovation dealing with societal challenges in a bottom up approach. A way to make participation an asset in the governance of territories and a contribution to the design research, that wonders about the effectiveness of the solutions to societal challenges provided by policy makers and the legitimacy accorded to them by citizens, in a context of lack

of time and resources where it's difficult taking a democratic approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

Starting from the crisis of legitimacy that affects most of the modern institutions and from their difficulties in providing effective solutions to the many societal challenges, it's needed to test innovative participatory approaches in order to develop useful tools for policy makers.

Design, as a wide discipline, always considers both participation and innovation as essential drivers in the creation process.

In order to discuss about the potential of design, the paper presents the most important policies developed in this field at European level and the case study of CCAlps[2] where the participatory design has been experienced as a tool of generating innovative solutions dealing with societal challenges.

2. PARTICIPATORY DESIGN AND CREATIVE APPROACH FOR POLICY MAKERS

The design approach contributes to the interpretation of emerging cultural and societal patterns, and to the translation of such patterns into a consistent and visible set of requirements for the definition of future products and services (Morelli, 2002). Design is an approach to problem solving that can be used across the private and public sectors to drive innovation in products and services putting people first.

The European Commission's action plan aims to accelerate the use of design tools and processes in innovation policies at national, regional and local level across Europe (Whicher, 2014).

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[1] Hereinafter "CCAlps"

[2] www.ccalps.eu

But there are currently few regions with design tools integrated into their policies. Among them there are some regions and cities that include design in their development plan (ex. Ljubljana Region that is partner of the European Project CCAlps) and they are best practice cases in the European Union.

Following these pioneers, the government innovation is changing and we are assisting to a rapid growth of new teams of work, departments or units (in municipalities or in regional and national institutions) with the aims to find ways able to face challenges, to generate opportunities of growth for companies and people and with a specific mission in societal growth (reduction of poverty, new services for new needs etc.). (NESTA 2014).

In this framework, design discipline could play an important role in the definition of specific tools and methodologies able to support policy makers in the government innovation. Design discipline puts people at the centre of innovation and it is a starting point to generate policies near the real needs of people and societies.

3. THE EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

The framework chosen for the analysis is the European Union since it represents the biggest economy in the world with a consequent great influence on worldwide economic trends, this in terms of GDP world contribution and in terms of export and import (European Commission 2013) and because of the traditional important role that design plays in the EU made production event if often unconsciously[3].

Design is part of a system of competences linked to creativity and culture and as a sector belongs to the Creative and Cultural Industries, according to the definition given by the European Commission in the Green Paper[4].

4. DESIGN AND PUBLIC POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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[3] The paper is based both on literature and studies and on the presentation of results of the real project CCAlps, for which the authors work. As regarding the literature and the studies, the research has been conducted mainly thanks to online resources, while the CCAlps project represents a fieldwork.

[4] – Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries (2010), Cultural and Creative Companies are composed by CORE ARTS (Visual Arts, Performing Arts and Heritage), CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (Design (fashion design, graphic design, interior design, product and services design), Architecture, Advertising) and CULTURAL INDUSTRIES (Film and Video, Television and Radio, Videogames, Music, Books and press)

An important point of analysis in order to understand the role that design can play in the future is to see how design is perceived by our policy makers nowadays and translated in concrete policies.

It's to highlight that only in the last five years, European institutions started to consider design as a driver for innovation. In fact, only in 2009 the Council of the European Union stated that the European Innovation Plan should incorporate all forms of innovation in both the public and the private sector, including design. This result was achieved also thanks to the European project See – Sharing Experience Europe[5], a platform about design integration into regional, national and European policies to boost innovation, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, sustainability and economic development. This project, part of the European Design Innovation Initiative[6], the main tool for promoting design in EU, during the years, helped to develop also local policies and promote awareness about design in European countries.

In 2010 design was recognized as one of the 10 priorities of the Innovation Union[7] (one of the 7 flagship Initiatives) but a crucial initiative for integrating design as a part of innovation policies in Europe was made in 2011 through the establishment by the European Commission of the European Design Leadership Board (EDLB, a group of 15 experts from industry, SMEs, national and regional innovation agencies and the academic world), with the aim to provide recommendations on how to enhance the role of design in innovation policy in Europe at the national, regional or local level and to develop a joint vision, priorities and actions, and policies. The EDLB presented its recommendations[8] in September 2012 and among them it was recognized the necessity to create a legal framework more suitable to the design sector; to promote the understanding of design impact on innovation; to sustain the design-driven innovation to strength companies competitiveness and drive renewal in public sector and to develop calls in European programmes such as Horizon 2020[9], and COSME[10] but also in structural funds for 2014-2020 where design is

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[5] http://www.seeplatform.eu/

[6] http://europeandesigninnovation.eu/

[7] http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm

[8] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/files/design/design-for-growth-and-prosperity-report_en.pdf" \o "Report of the European Design Leadership Board

[9] http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/

[10] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cosme/index_en.htm

considered as a key driver activity to implement policy objectives.

Another step forward was made on September 2013 when the commission published the "action plan for design-driven innovation" in which was affirmed that a more systematic use of design as a tool for user-centred and market driven innovation should be implemented in all sectors of economy complementary to R&D in order to improve competitiveness.

The Commission is now co-financing the implementation of the European Design Innovation Platform (EDIP)[11] as an instrument to deliver its Action Plan for Design-Driven Innovation. The Platform aims to boost the adoption of design in innovation policies and support the creation of capacity and competencies to deliver these policies. As a concrete result of this change in the vision of the policy makers about the role of design, we can see that already in the first two-years work programme, in Horizon2020 some calls for proposals focused on creative companies and on design as driver for innovation have been developed, sometimes in the matter of quality and efficiency of public services, some others in terms of the improvement of the life quality with a user-centred view or to enhance the competitiveness of European companies[12].

Moving to the national or local level, we can understand how design is perceived looking at how it is integrated in the public policies.

The 46% of European Member States has no policies for design and this highlight how much there is still to do. At the first level of policy, we can find policies for industrial design and this situation represents the 32% of the cases, then there are policies for service design (4%) and at highest level, where design is considered under a broadly-based view, there are policies for strategic design 18% (Design Policy Ladder 2013).

5. CASE STUDY: THE EUROPEAN PROJECT CCALPS- CREATIVE COMPANIES IN ALPINE SPACE

The CCAlps project is presented as a case study that highlights the importance and the relevance of the policies for the design sector and more in general for the creative and cultural industry at regional level with a European perspective (Alpine Space regions). It also shows the needs of integrating design tools and methodologies in the public policies in order to make them more effective.

The project has been defined starting from the experiences of two of its partners: Lombardy Region

and Regional Development Agency of Ljubljana Urban Region. Both the partners have integrated the design tools and the methodologies in the policies dedicated to the cultural and creative industry but with a significant different scope and economic context since Lombardy Region is one of the 4 Motors for Europe.

CCAlps is a European Project started in October 2011 and concluded in December 2014. It is a project financed by the European Commission and more specifically by the Alpine Space Programme in a partnership composed by Regional governments, Universities, Chambers of Commerce, Innovation and Development Agencies from 6 European Countries[13].

The project is interesting for more reasons:

a) it aimed at the analysis of needs and at the promotion of CCIs, Cultural and Creative Companies of which design sector forms part;

b) it developed the pilot actions "Creative Camps"[14] dedicated to the creation of new start-ups coming from cultural and creative sectors and of business ideas dealing in particular with territorial needs and societal challenges using a participatory design approach that involved numerous stakeholders in the whole creation process;

c) it put in place the foundations for the constitution of a transnational network of hubs (centres of services for CCIs), also in order to spread the "Creative Camps" as a consolidated design tool for policy makers to support start-ups and the creation of collaborative projects[15];

d) it involved policy makers in order to made aware them about the importance of the CCIs sector and of the design tools developed as drivers for innovation.

So, design in CCAlps Project had a central role. This was possible thanks in particular to the participation of the Design Department of the Polytechnic of Milan that has collaborated with Lombardy Region, Lead partner, in the ideation and realization of the project, especially in the implementation of Creative Camps and in the development of the network of hubs.

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[11] http://designforeurope.eu/

[12] Ex. ICT-19-2015 Horizon2020

[13] Lombardy Region (lead partner), Piedmont Region, University of Haute Alsace, MFG Stuttgart, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Lyon, ITG Salzburg, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Nice and Côte d'Azur, RRA LUR, CRT Foundation, SUPSI

[14] See below

[15] See below

Figure 1: Creative Camp on Lake Costance, May 2014

The Creative Camp can be seen as an advanced pilot action with an international perspective, which has a very intensive initial phase of concept generation followed by a second longest phase of idea development to create new product and services (Sedini, Vignati, Zurlo 2013).

The Creative Camps had two editions, a first edition where all the CCAlps partners developed their own local Creative Camp and a second edition that was the international pilot action with results at European level. Creative Camp is an innovative model of action that promotes innovation from similar activities because it combined local needs and activities with international sessions of best practice sharing, knowledge transfer and networking activities.

The first edition was composed by four main phases:

1° a call for ideas focused on specific area of interest of the partners regions addressed to cultural and creative companies or professionals;

2° the selection of the best ideas and at least two days of intensive workshop for the concept development with numerous experts coming from the Design field;

3° a phase of mentoring and coaching;

4° a final event of dissemination to present the collaborative projects born to the public and to potential business partners.

In the second edition some partners developed new collaborative projects starting from a new call for ideas, some others decided to continue to support the projects born in the first edition.

The creators of all these projects participated to two international events: one on Lake Constance where the technical feasibility of the projects was tested and after a consequent selection, one in Milan "Cross Creativity", an event with more than 1.000 participants, where they had the chance of networking with other companies and investors in order to develop their business opportunities.

In order to better understand the Creative Camp process, we describe the experience of one of the collaborative projects developed: "Craftadventure". Craftadventure was born in the Lombardy Creative Camp 2013 "Multimedia, Fashion and Service Design for Expo 2015" [16]. A team composed by four young creative designers and students in strategic design applied to the open call for Creative Camp in Lombardy Region. Their project idea called "Craftadventure" was a service creating a matching system among tourists interested in living a local artisan experience and artisans offering know how. The idea was selected for participating to the Creative Camp on 21-24th May in Milan where they received training and worked with experts in order to make feasible their idea. After that, they worked for a month (continuing receiving coaching and mentoring from experts of the Politecnico di Milano) to improve their project idea and in June 2013 in Milan in the public event "Culture Creativity Growth", they pitched again in front of investors and policy makers. In this event, Craftadventure was one of the six projects (the so-called collaborative projects) selected from a jury of experts for a further support programme and funds to start with the company. In particular, they received further support also through the involvement of public institutions (the Association of Chamber of Commerce and Regione Lombardia). During this period the team realized a promotional video for the project, the web platform, defined 4 partnerships with local artisans in the field of wood manufacturing, bakery, textile manufacturing and cheese production. They continued to be supported in the development of their project for one year, until the event "Cross Creativity" in June 2014 where they received the availability from a Business Angel for funds after a first market test during Expo 2015. Craftadventure can be considered a good result of public policies for innovation since the process and the collaboration among different public institutions supported the development of innovative business creating local value. In fact, the project aims at preserving and valorising the immaterial heritage of the Lombard handicraft towards national and international tourists (www.craftventure.com). During the transnational event in the Creative Camp process the

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[16] Lombardy Creative Camp was focused on the following macro subjects: 1. Multimedia and communication (enhancing cultural and touristic appeal of the territory and innovating the promotion and fruition modalities of Lombardy's local resources, traditions, landscape and typical food and wine; developing new products/services to promote the intangible cultural heritage and interculture); 2. Fashion (competitiveness of the 'Lombardy fashion system" on an international scale. New strategies and services to promote textile in the clothing and furniture sector); 3. Service design (new services ahead EXPO 2015. Promoting sustainability through new forms of hospitality, mobility, information and restaurant management).

team have also verified the scalability of the service in all the states partner of CCAlps.

The CCAlps project in 3 years of activities, succeeded in involving about 4.000 participants in its public events, 240 institutions and 600 cultural and creative companies and professionals in the project activities and 64 collaborative projects were developed in a participatory design approach. It is a unique experience in this field and it is a best practice at European level.

Figure 2 : Cross Creativity, Milan, June 214

The participatory design approach was adopted starting from the beginning of the process since the calls for ideas have been prepared by CCAlps partners in collaboration with local stakeholders such as universities, chambers of commerce and the hubs that hosted the Creative Camps.

The process that lead to the creation of new project ideas followed a bottom up approach since institutions identified their territorial needs and general topics to be developed in a collaborative way, then they expressed them in the calls for ideas and gave wide margin to creative people in presenting their own ideas as a solution. Some of the topics explored are typical nowadays societal challenges, for example green city, sustainable innovation for tourism and culture and service innovation.

Besides the actors involved in the first phase, experts and mentors have guided the whole process and the involvement of different stakeholders and of potential business partners have led to the birth of collaborative projects sometimes with a radical change in the initial project idea but necessary for its real implementation.

Investors were involved mainly in the last phase of Creative Camps when the ideas were more mature and solid to face the "market".

Also the general public was involved in the creative camp process, since the ideas were presented in different phases in public events and during the second edition of Creative Camps, videos about the project ideas were uploaded on the ccalps.eu website and open to the voting of the public.

A specific consideration has to be given to the involvement of hubs active in the field of CCIs, one of the key typology of actor in the CCAlps project. A "hub" is conceived as "a space-based and online community to access innovation, knowledge, market opportunities, inspiration and experience that brings together people who want to make a change, and are willing to take the risk – a space that will help make the change easier and less lonely"17; it can have different thematic focus and different organizational structures, different funding models and different partners; it can be located in a physical space, as some science parks, or be connected to a virtual online entity, like an open innovation website.

CCIs hubs are designed to facilitate start ups and to support existing CCIs by helping them to create or consolidate a network of co-operators that could support them in realizing their project and or/innovate their product; by providing easy access to information (i.e.. about administrative procedures), knowledge (i.e. access to data bases), connection to creative people and to market; by promoting CCIs and create a community and helping them to find market opportunities. The relationship with the hub should also help enterprises to improve their connection with the territory.

One of the main objective of CCAlps was in fact to create an international network where Creative and Cultural Enterprises can fulfil their highest potential with the help of support networks (such as incubators, institutions, universities, research centres that can be considered hubs) and connect with each other and their markets, also in view of developing new products and services to support the competitiveness of the economy. So, the involvement of hubs in Creative Camps was an opportunity for the creators of the idea to be incubated or to receive further support and services. Moreover, the involvement of the hubs in the pilot projects and the constitution of the network was a mean to spread, test, improve and consolidate at transnational level the Creative Camps as a methodology and a tool for policy makers that in most of the cases are also the owners of these places.

Another tool provided by the project, following a participatory approach, was the ccalps.eu platform that has been conceived as an important mean of networking among the actors of regions involved: CCIs, hubs, stakeholders and investors. In fact, besides being a showcase for companies and hubs, the idea is that, once the platform will be finalized, public actors could also use it for publishing calls for proposal aimed at

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17 To know more about the HUB definition and the concept of CCALPS please read "CCAlps Creative Companies in Alpine Space. Methodological Dossier" (Regione Lombardia and Unioncamere Lombardia - 2012, www.ccalps.eu).

satisfying public needs collecting innovative solutions in a bottom up approach.

Figure 3: a screen shot of the CCAlps platform

6. DISCUSSION

The main conclusions come from two different levels: at the policy level analysed and at the level of the case study considered CCAlps.

Spreading information and creating a general awareness about the role that design can play in the economy it's real important especially among policy makers since 46% of European Member States doesn't have any policies for design or policies are only linked to industry where the innovation is mainly conceived in a traditional way such as the technological one. The more public policies are broader and integrated, the more design is conceived to have a strategic role for innovation with a focus also on social innovation[18].

At level of the CCAlps case study, we can highlight that design has proved to be a factor that facilitates innovation processes. In fact, it has developed a tool (the Creative Camp) that can be used by policy makers to deal with societal challenges based on a participatory design approach to innovation since:

- the projects born and supported, "collaborative projects" are an answer to the call for ideas developed by CCAlps partners that depending by their institutional role and areas of interest (Governments of Regions, Chambers of Commerce, Innovation Agencies..) took into account territorial needs and societal challenges but with an international perspective;

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[18] Social innovation: Innovations that are social in both their ends and their means – new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act. Social innovations take place across boundaries between the public sector, the private sector, the third sector and the household. http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/social-innovation/past-editions/definition_en.htm

- in the whole process of creation, numerous territorial stakeholders were involved in a participatory way (at local and international level);

-the phase of mentoring and coaching was important because fostering entrepreneurship in the CCIs means strengthening Europe's cultural and creative diversity by reinforcing the ability of cultural and creative entrepreneurs to efficiently carry out their activities and propose new products and services, and this can act as a non-technological driver of innovation (Utrecht School of the Arts 2010).

What can be done in order to spread the use of these tools in order to foster their potentials and to establish them as a consolidated practice for policy makers both at local and international level is to spread information about the importance of:

- the participation of policy makers, hub, CCIs and investors to European programs that allow to test these new design tools;

-the realization of international events as showcases of ideas and results of these pilot projects and as moments of exchange and networking for creative professionals, investors and public institutions;

-the international collaboration between hubs and CCIs; the better integration among the actors at regional levels (local governments, industrial and professional associations, stakeholders, universities);

- the cross-fertilization initiatives among different sectors (B2B, call for proposals, platforms). Public-private innovation competitions are effective tools to develop markets for creative SMEs and allow the public sector to address major public concerns and demands. This should speed up the introduction of innovations in new markets by improving market access for products and services developed by creative teams and companies in the wider economy, and resolve challenges of public interest (European Creative Industries Alliance 2014);

- the creation of stable and new communication channels between public institutions and CCIs;

-the support of experts to policy makers in the selection and in the development of the ideas that will become collaborative projects.

Moreover, the internalization of CCIs is an aspect that policy makers should take particularly into account in their policies and also the Creative Camp model should be further enhanced under this point of view in order to open new opportunities for CCIs that often have projects and business ideas dealing with public needs that could be replicated successfully in other contexts.

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