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SPEKTRUM STU

DESIGN AND SOCIETY CONTEXTS

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ACTING IN THE WAY OF SOCIAL INCLUSION: A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE FOR DESIGN

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Resumé:

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Inclusive Design Scenario
Strategic Topics

1. Introduction

The Design discipline has always been resilient to the evolutionary processes of society, including the ones related to the idea of Social Inclusion. Although the traditional, and most diffused, idea of designing for Social Inclusion is commonly aligned with the notion of accessibility and/or designing for the human disability, the recent societal instances request designers and researchers to think holistically to new enabling ideas and visions for this design approach. Therefore, a new idea of Design for Social Inclusion must be proposed to be in line with the contemporary idea of inclusive society, as well as to provide designers and researchers a knowledge agenda on which to set the future professional practice.

2. Toward a new idea of Design for Social Inclusion

Designers and researchers must rethink their approach to Design for Social Inclusion by reconsidering the perception of human diversity and Social Inclusion in Design (Rossi and Barcarolo, 2019); this can be done simply by evolving the perception of the design interventions through a positivist lens.
It is important to move from disability to opportunities – Social Inclusion is in fact a goal, rather than a negative condition to overcome – and to approach the idea of diversity as a positive stimulus for new proactive designs and scenarios. Later, it is important to consider the emerging issues and interrelations with Design for Sustainability, at all scales, in new idea of Design for Social Inclusion. This because Social Inclusion is linked with concepts like: wealth, prosperity, human wellbeing and environmental protection (European Commission, 2010), which are today some of the most important topics to consider for designing long-lasting sustainable interventions. Finally, the new approach to Design for Social Inclusion requires the use of three significant paradigms: 'designing for communities', rather than for customers or disabled people; approaching the 'design of solutions for living environments and community places', rather than designing objects for impersonal contexts of use; considering the role of 'enabling technologies', which are fundamental to sustain a human-centred transition toward inclusive qualities of life, abandoning anonymous tools (i.e. scope-based).

3. Inclusive Scenario

Figure 1 portraits the 'Inclusive Scenario', which is the first level of analysis on which designers and researchers must pay attention in order to create the basis of an effective socially inclusive and sustainable intervention. The idea of Inclusive Scenario is consistent with the idea of scenario discussed by Manzini, et al. (2009, p.15): *'a designable vision of something complex and articulated based on a clear motivation – what is the aim? – and a practicality – the actions to undertake to favour its implementation'*. Accordingly, it can be intended as a powerful design-research element to

be used to imagine and rethink future living conditions mixing bottom-up instances and top-down strategies.

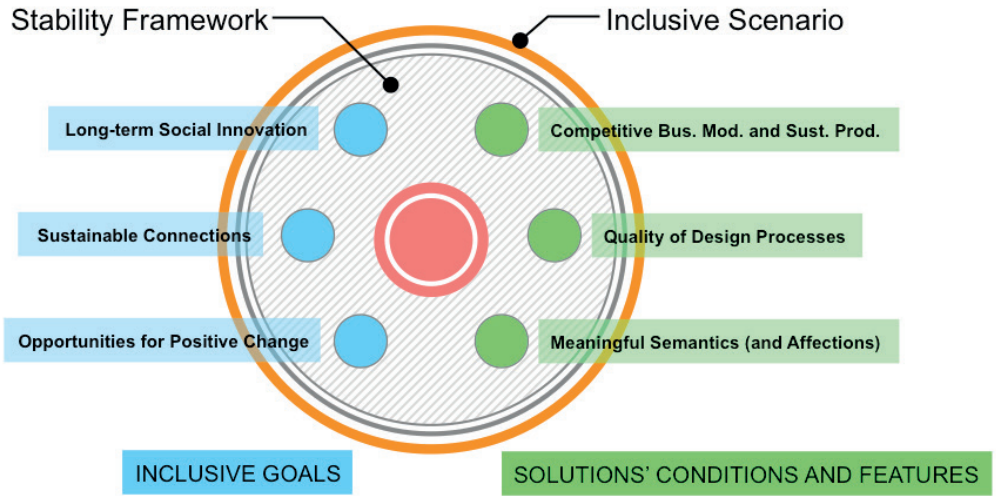

Figure 1: Inclusive Scenario

The Inclusive Scenario contains two groups of design-oriented elements, three topics each, which compose the so-called 'Stability Framework': the set of inclusive-oriented design parameters needed to tailor the design interventions in the way of Social Inclusion. Therefore, the Inclusive Scenario is the philosophical-design strategic context where any future socially inclusive intervention takes place.
Designers and researchers can refer to this operative context to define, qualitatively, the preconditions of their studies and projects, which is the element at the centre of the Inclusive Scenario. In particular, the Inclusive Scenario is composed as follow:

1. st respect to be considered as 'inclusive'. Therefore, the Inclusive Goals is a set of strategic parame'Inclusive Goals', which describe the preconditions that any new design intervention or study muters aimed to target the Social Inclusion, which can be both top-down (i.e. 'a.') and bottom-up (i.e. 'c.'). Accordingly, three elements compose the Inclusive Goals:
    a. *'Long-term Social Innovations'*, which describe the capability of any new solution to be innovative, both in the short and in the long run, at the social level.
    b. *'Sustainable Connections'*, describing the set of tangible and intangible elements establishing long-term sustainable qualities in any socially inclusive living place where the new solution will be asked to operate.
    c. *'Opportunities for Positive Change'*, which represent the attitude that designers and researchers must show in order to culturally be in line with the above-mentioned idea of Social Inclusion. Through this attitude, designers and researchers' mind-set will be aligned with the will

to operate using positivist approaches (i.e. 'diversified abilities', rather than 'disabilities').

2. *'Solutions' Conditions and Features'* portraits the sustainable characteristics of new inclusive projects and studies. These design-oriented conditions, or features when referred to scientific projects, describe the surrounding sustainable conditions to set for transforming, or consolidating, the inclusive interventions into a strategic action linking environment, society and economy. In particular, three elements compose the Solutions' Conditions and Features':
    a. *'Competitive Business Models and Sustainable Productions'*, which are important requirement through which it is possible to set the new inclusive interventions: studies or projects.
    b. *'Quality of Design Processes'*, describing the qualitative aspects of procedures and processes used by designers, or researchers, to develop innovative-oriented projects and/or interventions (i.e. co-design, action-research, etc.).
    c. *'Meaningful Semantics and Affections'*, which must be used to stimulate new meaningful aesthetics, beyond the traditional idea of 'designed for the few', 'designed for disabled people', etc.

4. Design Framework for Social Inclusion

The Design Framework for Social Inclusion extends the information described by the Inclusive Scenario with new data and parameters that address the development of new projects toward effective inclusive strategies. As shown in Figure 2, the Design Framework connects the Inclusive Scenario with three strategic elements that contextualize any new intervention by rethinking the WHO, the HOW, and the WHERE.

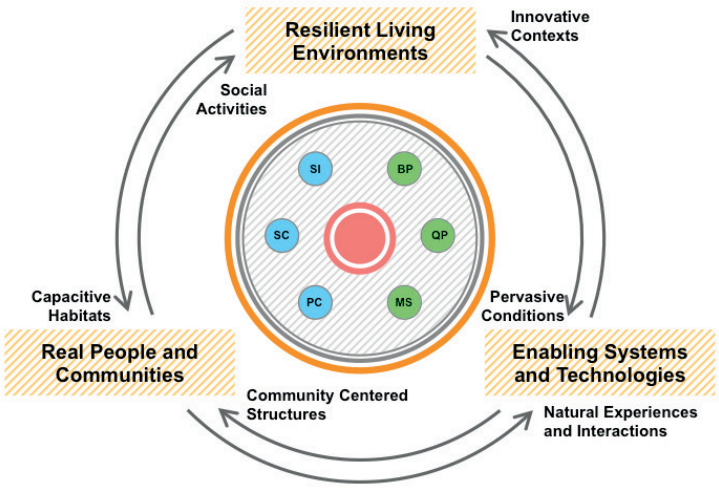

Figure 2: Design Framework for Social Inclusion

'Real People and Communities' represents the WHO. As said in the introductory part of this paper, designers and researchers must evolve the cultural reference used in the analytical/meta-projectual stage by considering real people and communities, rather than to consider disabled people or marginalised ones. This new vision portraits an evolved idea of people, bringing more emphasis on their social interactions as well as on the quality of living contexts and communities.

'Resilient Living Environments' represents the WHERE. Compared to the past, the main evolution here concerns the emphasis on the resiliency, which suggests to consider the environment in a new way by using the biological patterns existing among communities living in those living places. Accordingly, the environment is now approached as a combination between people and environmental features.
'Enabling Systems and Technolgies' represents the HOW, and in particular it can be seen as a catalist to perform enabling actions driven by communities in real resilient living places, using the higest technological advances. The term enabling is here used to reinforce the inclusive qualities of designable interventions, which is now in line with the idea of Social Inclusion as well as to elicit the development of proper sustainable-inclusive actions through projects and studies.
Finally, a number of reinforcing elements can be included in this design framework – connection arrows – to consolidate the relationships between these three strategic elements. These reinforcing elements improve the qualities of any new inclusive intervention by intercepting those minor aspects that, instead, contributes to define a holistic framework of knowledge and design ideas belonging to the modern concept of Design for Social Inclusion.

5. Conclusions

The fast-growing attention toward the new ideas and visions surrounding the concept of Social Inclusion requires, in the Design discipline, a structural evolution of paradigms and reference models used so far, which risk of being obsolete very soon if compared to the real evolutions of these macro-topics within society. A strategic perspective for the Design for Social Inclusion has been presented as a convergence approach merging holistically Social Inclusion and Sustainability.
The novelty of this new strategic vision can be found in the richness of elements composing it. Both the Inclusive Scenario and the Design Framework for Social Inclusion collects a wide number of new design ideas, parameters and concepts that can be immediately considered by designers and researchers to set new studies as well as design interventions.
This new strategic approach can be also used for integrating the teaching curricula, by inspiring teachers and training students in considering the complexity of society since the beginning of the design-research stages, rather than to use outdated cultural and design models that limit the design creativity as well as slowing down the cultural evolution of the Design discipline.

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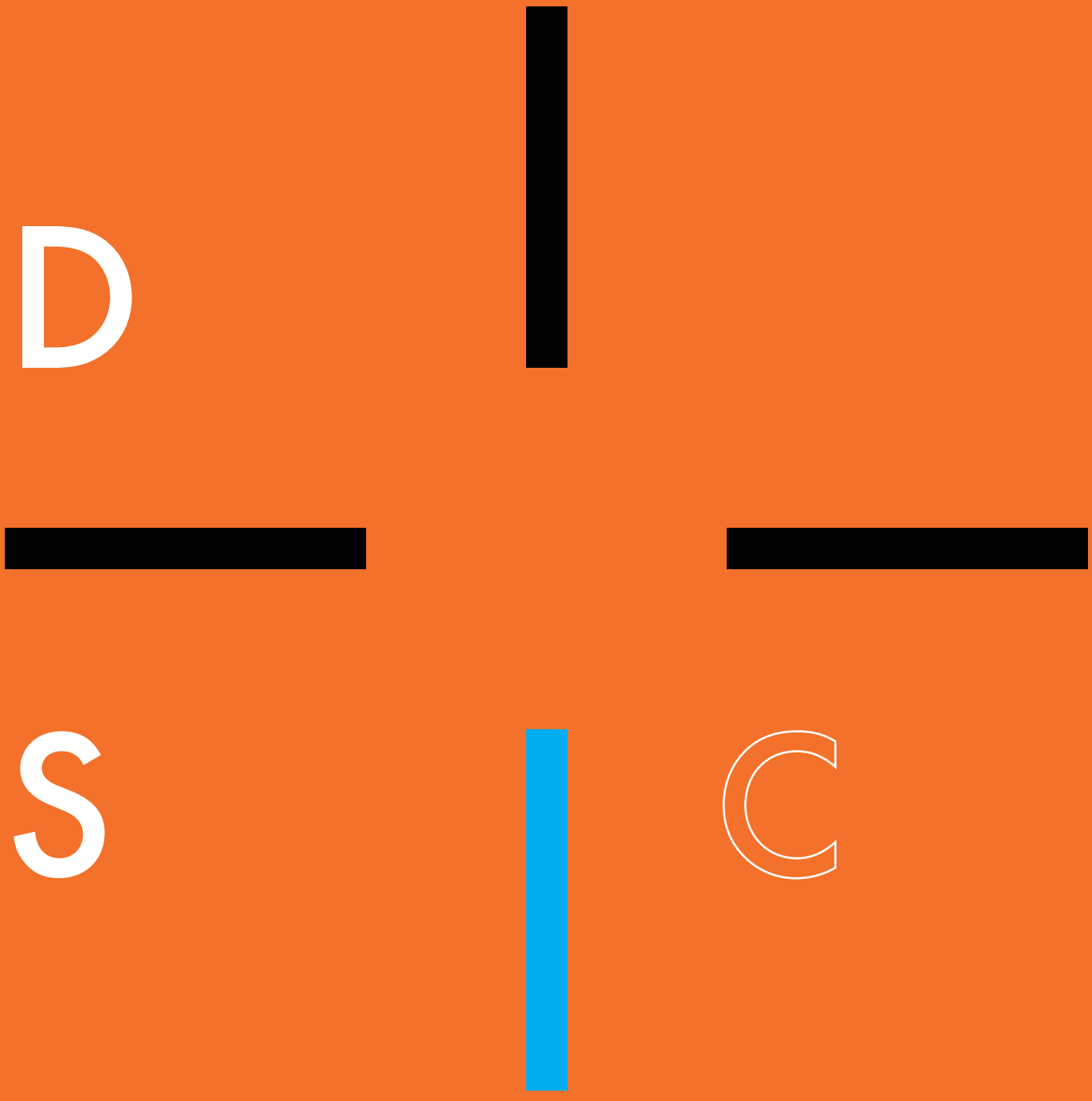

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