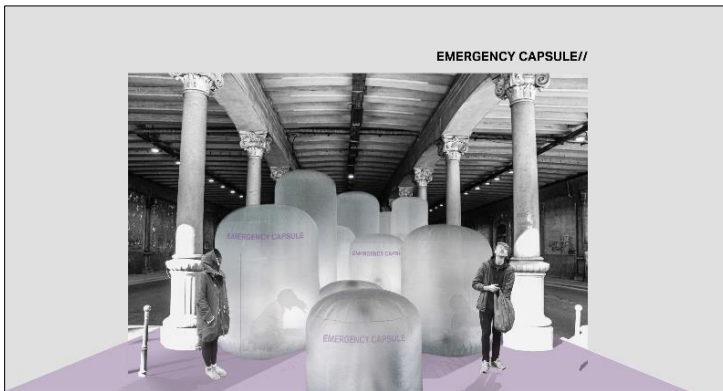


Postcards from sustainable cities of the future

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#public space #future scenarios #inclusive city
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While we are experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic in the world, we ask ourselves about many aspects of our lives and above all we ask ourselves if some behaviors and habits will remain the same as in the past or will undergo transformations. In this panorama we try to imagine future scenarios for our cities, for a different use of public spaces, more inclusive, which responds to the needs and desires of different urban populations: children, elderly, animals, non-human agents, etc.

It is estimated that by 2050, “70 % of the population will live in cities” (Bebbington and Unerman, 2018). This leads both citizens and local authorities themselves to realize that there is a need to find a way of

dealing with these numbers and transformations. With an ever-increasing global population and rising urbanization, creating safe, resilient and sustainable cities is right at the top of the green agenda. The United Nations included this mission among its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which together form a blueprint for collectively addressing the challenges the world faces.

The possible futures of cities must be linked to the issue of sustainability which is no longer one of the possible choices but is the only reasonable approach to be able to continue to imagine different scenarios. 360-degree sustainability, thus including environmental but also social sustainability. The scenarios can be multiple but to be able to build them from the perspective of social sustainability, the involvement of citizens is essential, together with policy makers in imagining other possible futures for urban environments.

Nowadays, cities face the challenge of improving the quality of life of their citizens by adopting the best technologies, forms of communication and advanced infrastructure. However, technology can be an answer but does not seem to be enough to cope with factors such as population growth, food and water sustainability and mobility. This leads to shortcomings related to the more human sphere, including the desire to establish social and community relations and a sustainable economy.

Through educational activities with students of the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano, we worked on the construction of hypothetical scenarios of the possible futures of the city of Milan, starting from the concept of neighborhood, of a hospitable district, sustainable and inclusive for all.

The results of this research are not only interesting visualizations in the format of a postcard, but also, they open various reflections on the design processes to be implemented in order to be able to propose these scenarios as feasible futures not far in time.

Students imagined getting a postcard from the future, more precisely from Milan 2033, telling how a Metropolis has changed in terms of inhabitants, spaces, functions and even impossible scenarios.

What does it expect to notice different about the city? What is the qualities that make it inclusive? Which vulnerable categories populate urban spaces? The main concept to imagine the postcards is Inclusive City, through a graphic visualization of this inclusive Milan 2033, as a scenario/vision or mood board that valorizes the existing vulnerable categories as nature, children, women, elder people, people with disabilities, etc. The students involved had to specify the vulnerable categories they want to investigate, entitled their future inclusive city. Students were free to use different graphics or tools such as analogue or digital mood, try to apply a pop up or 3d model, enhance photos/polaroid, or add value and express concepts with words and thoughts.

The results obtained as a first experiment were unique and diversified, interpreting and exploring different declinations of the concept of inclusion, such as spatial, social, relational, functional and communicative. Among the various postcards created, some can be good starting points to activate intelligent and healing changes for a global territory damaged in the deep post-pandemic. For example, cities have been hypothesized with a single language for communicate and expressing oneself among the streets around the world, to verbally bring together all the people who inhabit and live in the spaces, a communicative and relational inclusion putting everyone on the same level.

Then, starting from a dimension of rethinking a city ready for possible catastrophes or having useful spaces for emergencies, we imagined a city with decompression zones to help, save or isolate the individual in moments of extreme danger. Many temporary capsules that are activated, when necessary, like large balloons in the middle of streets, woods, bars, and dark alleys to prevent aggression, to give a space to those who cannot afford it, or who momentarily need to isolate themselves from the chaos of the metropolis. A space that preserves the human dimension in case of danger.

We present the first experiments, carried out in an academic sphere, but easy to replicate and generate new social challenges. It is just a starting point for possible future scenarios, in terms of the spaces we live and everyday use, relationships with others, intercultural connections, and how to give importance to the factor of time. Surprisingly, changing

from a fragile present to a mutable future thanks to creating new inclusive and innovative possible systems, with imagination and follow with project proposals. The ability to resist and be resilient to the transformations, are giving a new meaning to ideas, concepts, or expectations that we thought were clear. In this never-before-seen pandemic scenario, we are all called upon to act, especially those involved in Design, with the intention of envisioning potential solutions from the short-term to a long-term legacy.

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