

# A SHARED DESIGN METHOD WHICH BETTER INTEGRATES COMMUNITIES

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It is not possible to talk about the city without thinking of the people who compose it, and it is not possible to talk about the resilience of the urban landscape without looking at social inclusion. Nowadays our cultural landscapes present themselves not only as the stratification of a sophisticated socio-ecological mosaic that has overlapped over time, but also the result of a vortex of flows of people, goods and services; one that leaves a multitude of signs. Signs which are open, more than ever, to multiple interpretations.

Within the disciplinary framework of landscape architecture, we are witnessing a flourishing and proliferation of participatory urban practices. Naturally this puts increased pressure on the already urgent and spasmodic search for answers around how to go about community-based construction of places of meaning. We believe finding these answers will be an essential step for landscape architecture as it continues to work to pinpoint exactly what role it has to play as a discipline in the production of space in the city.

As such, in 2016 we established the LandWorks Circus International Program ([www.lwcircus.org](http://www.lwcircus.org)), a program with the

main research intention of engaging with the city in a way that pushes the boundaries of landscape architecture into the realms of cultural landscapes in both urban and rural contexts.

Based on a narrative of a sort of renaissance within the urban landscape, LWCircus's research centres around the engagement programs of the ArnoLabs shared creative workshops. In particular, we are working on experimentation through artistic and multimedia languages, which through the medium of art in the landscape can give back meaning to places and reconstruct ways of living in, and enhancing, the landscape. This is something that we believe emerges most strongly when communities actively contribute to the construction of their cities, as it happened in the past during the renaissance period.

As such, our work is deliberately based on a necessarily participatory formula that enables local communities to work cooperatively in urban landscapes and prestigious environments to share and build places of exchange and interaction. This is a process that moves disparate communities towards social inclusion, giving rise to ephemeral installations

1. Mastinu, M, Saiu, V 2016, Ricerche di Architettura e di Urbanistica, Una rassegna di tesi di dottorato, Publica, Alghero.

2. Bussiere, S, Lovell, K 2016, "Design and Experiential Learning in Post-Industrial Landscapes",

3. Piras, A, 2016, "LandWorks Workshop, a fruitful way to re-evaluate cultural landscapes", Landuum, Paisaje, Cultura y Diseno, n. 02

4. Piras, A 2018, " SPECIAL - LA RIVOLUZIONE VERDE DELLA CITTA' by Loredana Barillaro", Small Zine, Magazine di arte contemporanea / Anno VII n. 25

5. Piras, A 2018 "LWCircus Shared Operative Program, Landscape Design Methods based on Social Practices for an Inclusive and Resilient Urban Future", IFLA World Congress Singapore, Future Resilience, July 2018 .

6. Piras, A, Camarena, P, Porraz, M 2018, "LWCircus ArnoLab 2018: integración social y resiliencia a través el paisaje", Landuum, Paisaje y Resiliencia, n. 09.



that sit somewhere between art and landscape; perhaps what we can define as a sort of urban land art.

The protagonists of this project are of course the places and people who interact with it in various ways. Local communities, minorities including political refugees and asylum seekers, administrators who are solicited by a multidisciplinary and an international creative community. All of these groups, through the use of artistic and multimedia languages, work cooperatively through our programs to revisit the historical memory of the places concerned and move towards a plausible future which is increasingly resilient and inclusive.

Focused on experimental methods and strategies of design based largely on social and cultural practices in the field, the LWCircus Program aims to explore sensitive areas around cultural heritage and redesigning contemporary urban landscapes which are currently undergoing environmental, social and economic transition.

LWCircus looks for alternative tools to activate sustainable development and responsible action through shared workshops, the direct involvement of

local communities, minorities and well-known international practitioners. The workshops stimulate the interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge, information, attitudes, skills and real-world know how through artistic and multi-media expression. The LWCircus Program's outcomes aim towards an integration, and cultural and economic development whereby local inhabitants and minorities can feel connected and intertwined.

The first two editions of the shared operative workshops, (called LWCircus-ArnoLabs) were held in Florence. The first was over a 10-day period in September 2017, and the second over a similar period in May 2018. At these events a culturally and disciplinary disparate group of participants worked together to create ephemeral installations such as lighting solutions, urban furniture, staging points and temporary shelters. These were all realised on site through the collection and appropriation of recycled natural material transported to site by the unpredictable and changing fluctuations of the Arno river.

During both the events a temporary international, multi-cultural and multidisciplinary creative community emerged to fruitfully test shared

practices by using multimedia languages, artistic approaches and performative/spontaneous attitudes. This included the direct involvement of local actors and public institutions responsible for the river's safeguarding and management. All the groups involved in the workshop were looking for a "resilient" and "inclusive" urban future, and it was felt that they went a long way towards achieving responsible cultural valorisation and sustainable development for the local community, and the diverse minorities directly involved in each step of the process.

At both events, groups of selected young refugees, from Niger, Senegal, Mali (ArnoLab017), Burkina Faso, Ghana, Gambia and Bangladesh (ArnoLab018), who had survived the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean, were invited to join the rest of the international creative group (from Mexico, China, USA, Australia, Lebanon and Syria, Colombia, Venezuela UK, Holland, France, and Italy). Everyone worked together extremely enthusiastically to design and realise the series of installations, sharing wishes and hopes, and kick-starting a process of social inclusion that gave life to successive opportunities for further entanglement of local realities.



By sharing the process in conceiving and realising the works, these disparate groups transmuted what started as the concept of “others” into a feeling of “us”. The outcome we hoped for was a re-appropriation of traditional strategies for living along the riverbanks, where, through interaction, different members of the community could take over ownership and management of the reconquered public space without any kind of discrimination.

We believe that these results demonstrate a huge amount of potential around the evolution of the traditional figure of the landscape architect, to a sort of ‘landscape facilitator’ whose role is also to underline the operative shared method as a fundamental and intrinsic part of the design process. Making disparate groups feel as though they play a central part in achieving a result is essential for getting excellent results in a short time.

In the future it is hoped that this project will help to heal the landscapes together with their communities. This is a project that stimulates not just a sense of responsibility to landscape and place, but also to community. When landscapes are a product of community the two become inseparable, and when temporary or new arrival communities such as refugees or immigrants become engaged in these processes they become equally responsible for the production both of concrete and symbolic space, therefore they start to become equally embedded into local communities.

7. Piras, A 2018, “Experimental shared practices strategies for Urban Renovation and Cultural Heritage valorization”, The 7th International landscape planning and design Conference, WORLD HABITAT Magazine n. 05, Speech, pp. 20 & 21.

8. Piras, A 2018 “LWCircus Shared Operative Program, Metodo di Progettazione basato sull'utilizzo di Pratiche Sociali Strategie sperimentali attraverso approcci partecipativi, linguaggi artistici e attitudini performative per il Rinnovamento del Paesaggio Urbano, la Valorizzazione dei Patrimoni Culturali e l'Inclusione Sociale nello Spazio Pubblico”, inside “Città Come Cultura”, MAXXI Museum Foundation, Rome.

