

## Design for territorial business systems: Role, instruments and operating methods

### Design territorial para sistemas empresariais: papel, instrumentos e métodos operacionais

**Giuseppe Lotti**

giuseppe.lotti@taed.unifi.it

Università di Firenze, Dipartimento di Tecnologie dell'Architettura e Design "Pierluigi Spadolini". Via San Niccolò 89 A, 50125, Firenze, Italia.

**Ilaria Bedeschi**

ilaria.bedeschi@taed.unifi.it

Università di Firenze, Dipartimento di Tecnologie dell'Architettura e Design "Pierluigi Spadolini". Via San Niccolò 89 A, 50125, Firenze, Italia.

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#### Abstract

Talking about design for territorial business systems seems almost to be a contradiction in terms inasmuch as design is the tool which contributes to the construction of innovation-related added value, strengthening the competitive advantages of the individual company over the competition. In reality, the design activity aimed not at the individual business but to several manufacturing organisations in a specific territory, what seems to be a coherent response to the particularities of the Italian manufacturing model. The case of Tuscany is rather special, being a region which expresses its analytical and interpretative skills via its capacity to study local manufacturing contexts. This is strengthened by the strategic decisions of the Regional Council which has, for some time now, opted to promote system designs via the activation of intermediate structures – Business Service Centres – which provide mediation services. Within this context we need to understand the specific role that design can perform for territorial business systems, identifying the operating tools and methods. All of this takes place through the presentation of real case stories relating to designs implemented in Tuscany, analysed using factors identified as key to the construction of future actions. This analysis has generated a hypothesis of good practices on the points in question, reproducible in other contexts.

**Key words:** design, strategies, innovation, territorial business systems.

#### Resumo

Falar de design para sistemas de negócio territoriais parece ser quase uma contradição em termos, na medida em que design é a ferramenta que contribui para a construção de valor acrescentado relacionados com a inovação, o reforço das vantagens competitivas da empresa individual sobre a concorrência. Na realidade, a atividade do design não destinada à atividade das empresas, mas a várias organizações para a fabricação de um determinado território parece ser uma resposta coerente às particularidades do modelo de fabricação italiana. O caso da Toscana é muito especial, sendo uma região, que manifesta a sua análise e interpretação das competências através da sua capacidade de fabricação local de contextos de estudo. Esta é reforçada pelas decisões estratégicas do Conselho Regional, que tem, há já algum tempo, optado por promover sistemas de designs ou modelos, através da ativação de estruturas intermediárias – *Business Service Centers* – que prestam serviços de mediação. Dentro deste contexto, temos de compreender o papel específico que o design territorial pode executar para sistemas empresariais, identificando os instrumentos e métodos de funcionamento. Tudo isto ocorre através da apresentação de caso de histórias reais relativas a designs ou modelos implementados na Toscana, analisados utilizando fatores identificados como fundamentais para a construção de ações futuras. Esta análise tem gerado hipóteses de boas práticas sobre os pontos em questão, reproduzidos em outros contextos.

**Palavras-chave:** design, estratégia, inovação, sistemas-de-negócio-territorial.

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## Design for territorial business systems: at first glance almost a contradiction in terms

Design is traditionally considered as a tool which contributes, with innovation, to the competitive growth of the individual company in relation to others operating in the same sector.

Yet today, more than ever before, it seems important to reason and operate in extended terms, questioning ourselves on the contribution which, from the world of design – considered in the broadest sense – can come from enhancing the value of production sectors linked to particular territories.

There are several reasons for this.

First of all, this is the Italian manufacturing model – made up of small and very small enterprises, situated in territories which share the same production sector (from districts to territorial business systems), which requires joint operations aimed at several manufacturing organisations. It is no mere coincidence that Italian economists, and particularly the Florentine School (Becattini, Bianchi, Dei Ottati...) have analysed the particular features of the district-based model and its transformations today,

“We ought to point out immediately that it isn't simply a question of the 'organisational form' of the manufacturing process of certain categories of goods, but a 'social environment' in which relationships between people, inside and outside the workplace, when they get together and socialise, and their attitudes towards work, savings, leisure and risk, etc., present their own personal timbre and character” (Becattini, 1987, p.8).

In particular, in Tuscany, it is the regional council which has made political decisions to dedicate much of its funding for innovation and research to projects which involve a large number of companies, possibly from the same territory and production chain. In this sense, the decision to create and sustain service centres operating on specific manufacturing sectors appears symbolic.

Then we have to add that an action aimed at involving several companies appears important in response to the globalisation of the markets and the current recession as this makes it easier to guarantee complex innovation, combining different types of know-how to gain a competitive advantage which is made decisive by the fact that it is hard to copy; activating cooperation projects which are fundamental in terms of internationalisation (with regard to manufacturing and the market) with countries that would otherwise be hard to approach (from China to India); stimulating *cross fertilization* actions, considered not as the simple “transferral of technologies and components from one merchandising sector to another”, but as the “transferral of know-how in a broader sense and therefore also of design methods, crafting processes, communication and distribution strategies” (Dell'Acqua Bellavitis, 2007, p.20).

This said, we still have to understand the role that design can play within territorial business systems and the

sphere of design driven innovation strategies (Celaschi and Deserti, 2007).

Recent literature offers several indications on the matter.

Stefano Maffei and Beatrice Villari see an expansion of the role to a strategic level. The methods and tools that characterise design which operates with a view to local development and also territorial systems appear to be significant. “One thing's for sure, the designers' field of action is expanding: not only are designers required to convey shape to elements, they also contribute to conveying shape to the community of subjects and the methods with which it tests the design, using tools, languages, skills and organisational forms” (Maffei and Villari, 2004, p.88,95).

Medardo Chiapponi on the other hand identifies (within the statute that disciplines design) the tools for reading into the current situation, along with operating methods and operating procedures that are best for the analysis, assessment and design at system level. In short, an “ideal tool kit of design for local production systems”, made up of:

- “product design arising from 'its tendency to deal not only with the planning of isolated products... but also of the analysis, assessment and design of whole 'families' of products'”;
- “the design of the product lifecycle” which leads to an “overall rethink of the logistics and industrial processes... the main, characterising production sector is flanked by others, belonging more or less to a specific production chain”;
- “The design of services and the district's 'Corporate Identity'... a corporate identity project for a local production system not only publicises and consolidates its identity, it could also, as always happens in these cases, provoke a collective reflection on the features of that identity” (Chiapponi, 2005, p.80-81).

Over and above these considerations – in the opinion of the author –, the analysis of case stories and direct experiences indicate that the designer occupies the following roles:

- DESIGNER (pushing his design skills beyond the mere definition of the product to touch on strategic choices), as an undoubtedly special innovation engine: “Consequently it is appropriate to question the contribution of industrial design to a local production system [...]. The possibilities of success of those who set their aims like this depend on the ability to harmonise competitive interventions, carried out in favour of individual businesses, with pre-competitive interventions, aimed at promoting the overall growth of the local manufacturing system” (Chiapponi, 2005, p.80-81).
- CONNECTOR (between the various players: businesses, entities, schools, designers; opening up towards

stimulations and contaminations from the most varied and distant spheres, with the awareness that the combination of different types of knowledge generates and develops creativity). In the words of Loredana Di Lucchio: "In industrial districts... it becomes necessary to build an interface capable of translating the knowledge generated on the international circuit to make it suitable for socialised and shared use within the districts, and also capable of encoding and abstracting tacit local know-how to make the most of it on the international circuit of innovation. This cognitive bridge between tacit and explicit knowledge can be identified in the diverse role of Industrial Design [...]" (Di Lucchio, 2005, p. 14-15).

- CATALYSER (activator of the mix between tacit and encoded knowledge, not as the simple sum of the two [...]): "The perspective we shall adopt is the one which sees knowledge and its practices of activation and translation towards the design of a fundamental process for the construction of a competitive economic system based upon the skills of local players [...] therefore, we might define the action of design as the activation of the integration between the elements made up of the context (territorial, cognitive and action) and the system of interactions between significant agents of the same context" (Maffei and Simonelli, 2002, p. 35, 38).

To achieve this, the designer has to have design talents not only in terms of product but also at strategic level (which touch on the product or rather the product families, communication of the entire territory, the services offered). Empathic and mediation skills are also required, embodied by the ability to interact with the various players in the system – politicians, entrepreneurs and also experts in various sectors (expression of technological innovation), remembering that, by vocation, design holds a summarising role – "Perhaps it is design that is best able to express the role of guide, thanks to its special characteristics and attitudes [...] which are translated into a unique function: to make thought visible" (Mauri, 1996, p. 45-46).

The considerations made so far form the basis of designs for innovation carried out in Tuscany and aimed not at the individual manufacturing unit but at groups of businesses or territorial systems, with a view to stimulating the progress of the sector as a whole and on a widespread basis, also with the intention of triggering emulation by others (Legnante and Lotti, 2005).

In relation to methods and tools – despite emphasising that the complexity of reality implicates the definition of necessarily weak models capable of interpreting the variety of situations that occur without absolute solutions – it is possible to define, via the analysis and assessment of a selection of typical operations, a framework of practices to which reference can be made during the design and definition of other actions aimed at the territorial systems.

The operations mentioned are carried out by the industrial design research team of the "P. Spadolini"

Department of Technologies of Architecture and Design in Florence, within the scope of European, regional or local projects, each of which supports forms of innovation at different levels, promoted by the CSM – Centro Sperimentale del Mobile e dell'Arredamento, a business service structure:

### Scenario innovation

Regional Project Measure 1.7.1 TI.POT – Technology and innovation for Tuscan ornamental stones, Travertine sector. New scenarios for using the material/Interregional Project IIIC EDDT Operations for the development of the Territories – DESTER. Design and Territory. (Lotti, 2006).

### Product-system innovation

FORMA VIVA Project – Designs for the plant nursery activity in the Pistoia district, financed by the Municipality of Quarrata (Legnante and Lotti, 2007, *cf.* Figure 1).

### Formal innovation

Project 27X72 - Concept for padded furnishings in the Pistoia district, financed by the Municipality of Quarrata.

### Technological innovation

Regional Project Measure 1.8 "Research and experimentation on the ideal methods for sealing joints between the structural elements of the motorcaravan" (*cf.* Figure 2).

### Innovation following product chain integration

Regional Project Measure 1.7.1 T.I.MO.N.A. Transferral and Innovation in the Furniture, Nautical and Artistic Craft sectors.

### Value-related innovation

Casa Toscana/Green Home Project financed within the sphere of a Regional Programme Agreement, a Protocol of Intent between Region, Provinces and Municipalities/Life Environment Project ECOFUTURE – Ecofriendly Furniture (Lotti, 2003) – *cf.* Figure 3.

The analysis of the projects led to the definition of 10 key factors for each of which it is possible to supply a framework of good practices and specific indications.

### (i) Identification of the addressee

The territorial business system operations are never addressed at an individual business, but at a group of businesses or, in some cases, an entire production sector.

The fact of intervening with actions aimed at a combination of companies implicates the need to refrain from creating a situation of competition within the group,

developing innovations which the group members will find hard to share.

This aspect is often handled by selecting companies which manufacture complementary products or with actions that group finished product manufacturers and their sub-suppliers and outworkers together, in order to allow the production chain to advance while defending innovation as a competitive advantage for the company.

In cases in which the operations address groups of businesses which manufacture the same product, either the overall project encompasses innovation processes made to measure for the individual companies, or a collective research phase is characterised by intervention with subsequent design proposals developed for the individual businesses.

## (ii) Assessment of the context

It is an activity which is performed informally by those proposing the operation, usually based on players' previous knowledge and on possible expression of needs by the companies, which is then furthered in the initial analysis phase always envisaged in the actual operation itself.

## (iii) Determination of the operating target

### Who decides the targets?

In operations for territorial business systems, the importance of the role of an independent structure in addition to the research centres and companies emerges.

In most cases, the service structures, having identified the needs and criticalities of a production sector, propose the themes and stimulate the projects for innovation, involving businesses and building up a technical-scientific partnership to define and accomplish the activities. This phase reveals how the discipline of design plays a fundamental role with regard to the vision of problems and the identification of targets, often helping the service structure right from the initial phase of conceiving the operation.

In few cases does the demand emerge directly from the businesses and this only happens if the sector has a reference consortium to collect requests and promote enterprise.

### Types of operation

The operations developed for territorial systems are related mainly to:

- collective research, the results of which can be shared and are useful to the whole group of businesses involved (and can often be divulged later to the entire production sector) as guidelines for the ergonomic-functional design of furnishing products, proposals of innovative scenarios for the use of a material, operation manuals for the sustainability of products and processes, etc...);
- research targeting innovation and technological transferral, which always envisage an output aimed at the increase in the shared knowledge of the group of businesses, followed by dedicated applications for each company;

- promotion and/or communication of the sector and the production system. For instance, collective shows and exhibitions, publications that promote the sector's overall identity, territorial certifications or brands, etc...);
- creation of strategic integrated tools to increase competitiveness, which can be used individually by companies (company performance self-analysis software, know-how management platforms, etc...).

## (iv) Creation of the partnership

### Who are the partners?

There are three constant players: businesses or business consortia, universities and/or research centres and service structures which act as intermediary players between demand and supply of innovation.

### How are they involved?

In general, it is possible to identify two partnership creation models.

- (i) The case in which the service centre, encouraged by market analysis, sector-specific studies or investigations to detect requirements carried out among companies, defines a macro-theme of operation and identifies research structures with which to draw up the proposal of actions and assess aims and activities. Subsequently, it selects a group of potentially interested companies and checks out whether or not they are willing to take part.
- (ii) A second method consists in the definition of a research theme to be developed jointly by the service centre and the businesses of a specific sector (or manufacturing a specific type of product) and subsequently, encouraged by the idea of innovation to pursue, special research structures for the case become involved.

## (v) Planning the work phases

The organisation of the operations can be traced back, notwithstanding the diverse nature of the experiences, to 3 or 4 macro-phases of work:

- (i) context analysis – this is always the first phase of operation, as it enables inclusion of economic data, process analyses and the mechanisms of supply and interrelation with other sectors, production typology, reference markets, etc., in a dedicated file;
- (ii) definition of problematic framework – this represents the point of arrival of the context analysis and outlines the criticalities requiring intervention. It sometimes becomes a sort of file containing the brief directly for the design operation;
- (iii) identification and development of technical solutions – a fundamental phase in cases of technological innovation, because it forms the study, experimentation and development of materials or solutions to be introduced;
- (iv) design processing, which envisages:
  - (a) a scenario construction phase, which can also be the ultimate aim of the operation;
  - (b) a concept processing phase;

(c) an executive design phase, when the intention is to reach the development of a prototype.

#### **(vi) Formation of the research team**

The coordination activity is important in projects aimed at territorial systems, also with regard to the composition of the research team, the consortia or service structures, which are often capable of identifying the skills necessary to the development of every phase of activity.

However, the role taken by the discipline of design, which naturally interfaces and communicates with numerous skills, during the phase definition and involvement of the scientific partnership, is of primary importance, supplying a contribution to the identification of the necessary skills, and therefore to the composition of the team, both in terms of management and the ongoing coordination of the activities of the other disciplinary sectors. With every step taken, the research is refocused on the final target and a summary of the partial results from the various contexts is developed upon completion of each phase.

Every operation progresses through an initial research phase, the spheres of which, while making reference to specific disciplines (economy, design, engineering, sociology, anthropology...), are usually performed by trans-disciplinary teams made up of a variety of members.

#### **(vii) Formation of the design team**

##### **Figures of project operators**

The types of designers used in the operational phases are usually teams of researchers (belonging to the sector or trans-disciplinary), groups of students (studying for university degrees or master courses) and independent designers (Italian or international architects or designers). These figures can become part of the process, taking care for either a single project phase or being combined in a variety of ways and interacting with one another.

The composition of the project team is the product of micro decisions and relationships with the partnership, the dynamics of which are hard to represent.

In cases involving independent designers, these are identified by the design team, in conjunction with the service structure, but then shared with the companies with which they are matched.

##### **Level of design and type of innovation**

The project team's choice, or the type of operator for the development of the design action or of the combination of several operators together, strictly depends on the level of design required by the operation and on the type of innovation pursued, as this intrinsically establishes the level of project complexity and the degree of trans-discipline necessary.

#### **(viii) Definition of tools**

The operating tools used are closely linked to the aims of the operation and the disciplinary composition of the research team.

It is possible to identify constants when examining the state of the art and defining the context. The construction of the framework of criticality on the other hand is developed with specific tools which refer to the scientific fields implicated and the problems examined. The design activity is easier to trace back to clearly outlined practices which are selected on the basis of the aim of the operation and the level of design to be achieved.

##### **For the definition of the state of the art, sphere of operation**

- Desk analysis, developed on existing documentation (production data of the sector, economic and market research, sector-specific studies, agreements, monographic publications, benchmarking analyses, etc.), makes it possible to obtain an initial picture of sector-specific data;
- Field analysis (meetings with entrepreneurs, visits to companies, observation of manufacturing processes and methods, etc.) which enables the creation of a picture closely linked to the operating context.

If the analysis requires more in-depth knowledge of company dynamics, procurement, process, distribution and market, communication relating to the businesses involved, marketing mix research is used, along with interviews accompanied by targeted questionnaires.

##### **For the definition of problems**

During this phase, the tools used can be qualitative and quantitative, depending on the type of criticality under investigation.

- SWOT analysis, to identify an overall picture of the sector, not only in terms of economy, but also in relation to its strengths and weaknesses, risks and opportunities. This is a first design indication;
- merchandising analysis of the catalogue and the competition, supplying quality-related data which contribute to the definition of the critical points of the offer, of communication and of the image of the companies;
- non-coded sources of information, directly related to the sector, profitable for checking the level of satisfaction of products consumers or users;
- quantitative analyses, based on scientific methods used to measure sensitive data, used mainly where the operation requires technological innovation aimed at improving the product or eliminating existing problems.

##### **For the generation of the brief**

This phase in operations for territorial business systems is often not so easy to identify, because it does not involve working on the needs of a single company and therefore product features, reference market and consumer target which are clearly identifiable, as they vary greatly, even between companies operating in the same sector. Consequently the generation of the brief, when considered as a limitation of the type of operation, often lies afterwards, in the target, while if it is considered as the processing of paths of operation on which to address the

design, then often it is placed in close contact with the creation of scenarios, like a phase of collection of stimuli and not of restrictions, and developed as design tools.

In relation to this, design has created a series of qualitative tools which help suggest territories of innovation (Cautela and Zurlo, 2008) and derive from approaches and methods of other disciplinary cultures, such as anthropology, consumer sociology, semiotics and marketing. These are "open" tools, which expand the range of research to areas outside the problem analysed and form an interpretative structure of the facts subject to research, the validity and truthfulness of which are closely linked to the context in which they are developed. They also often use visual representation methods (maps, graphic charts, mood-boards, visual aids, etc...).

In the cases analysed, it emerges that design tools involving participation, such as brainstorming or the more structured EASW (European Awareness Scenario Workshop) method are helpful to the definition of the brief, with a strong proposition-related value, meaning that they also aid the development of design scenarios.

#### For design processing

From the cases analysed, the design activity can be essentially traced back to the three practices, identified, depending on the type of operation:

- trans-disciplinary collective design sessions, used when the project implicates different types of know-how and technological innovation which form the lynchpin of the operation and which usually constitute moments in which to share know-how for the advancement of a complex project;
- matching of designers and business in order to develop a design specifically for the company, with the aim of prototyping and possible industrialisation. In these cases, the choice of the designer, especially when matched up with a small business which is not used to relations with outside designers, is made by the service centre upon instruction by the design research team, in relation to the aims of the operation, the type of product and the designer's former experiences, and shared with the company. It is best to emphasise that this activity must be carefully guided during the launch phase, accompanying the first meeting between the business and designer, helping communication and the identification of the specific work team, and monitoring the on-going progress of the activities;
- design workshop, a practice which is quite clearly encoded: choice of the visiting professor, trans-disciplinary meetings, tours of the companies, brainstorming, design, presentation.

The variables can be identified in the position of the location and the overall duration of the activity.

The design operation carried out through the workshop appears to be productive in cases in which intervention occurs following proposals for the construction of scenarios and concept processing for formal innovation and the product-system, particularly for no design-oriented sectors.

#### (ix) Definition of timing

The cases analysed tend to present three types of timing:

- short operation with immediate development (2 months), aimed at almost immediate design processing, on a clearly defined theme, and at substantially formal innovation;
- medium length operation (4/5 months), involving operations aimed at the processing of scenarios or concepts for formal or system/product innovation, which usually implicate a single-discipline (design) research team, in which an activity to identify the context is necessary, accompanied by a design activity carried out through workshops or intensive design sessions, concentrated in time;
- structured operation, diluted over a period of time ranging from a minimum of one year to a maximum of two, involving a partnership of research and multidisciplinary design, requiring the coordination of the research centres and of the latter with the businesses. Meetings are arranged at regular intervals to define and monitor activities, with a first phase to define the context and draw up the framework of criticalities involving numerous skills, often followed by a study phase and the experimentation of technological innovations, and a prototyping phase which has to envisage unplanned delays.

#### (x) Identification of the funding

The identification of funding is a substantial question in this type of operation for territorial systems, because it means operating to promote an innovation which businesses often fail to see as being necessary and anyway are unable to economically sustain themselves alone.

The regional policy also strongly stimulates forms of innovation pursued by aggregated groups of businesses, capable of allowing maximum dissemination of the results, with the aim of gradual collective improvement and stimulation of subsequent operations by the individual businesses.

In this phase too, the role played by the service structures is evident: identification of the tenders that allow the activities subject to intervention, structuring of the technical proposal, presentation of the application.

The cases analysed and the considerations expressed during contacts with the service structures and research centres reveal that the most virtuous practice is the construction of a proposal starting from the aims of innovation proposed by the tender, in which the aims and spheres of operation emerge in a more or less articulated manner. This makes it possible both to outline actions that lead towards regional, national and European directives, as being of priority importance to the development of the manufacturing system, and to build up a partnership and a coherent programme of activities.

## SYSTEM-PRODUCT INNOVATION FORMA VIVA Projects for nursery gardening in the Pistoia district

### OPERATIONAL PROJECT AIMS

Pre-figuration of product, communication and service scenarios to strengthen plant nurseries on the markets

### PARTNERSHIP

Municipality of Quarrata  
TAD - Unifi

### WORK TEAM

- **Research team**  
TAD research team
- **Project team**  
10 Design Innovation  
Master students  
1 visiting professor  
1 tutor  
4 trans-disciplinary experts  
TAD research team

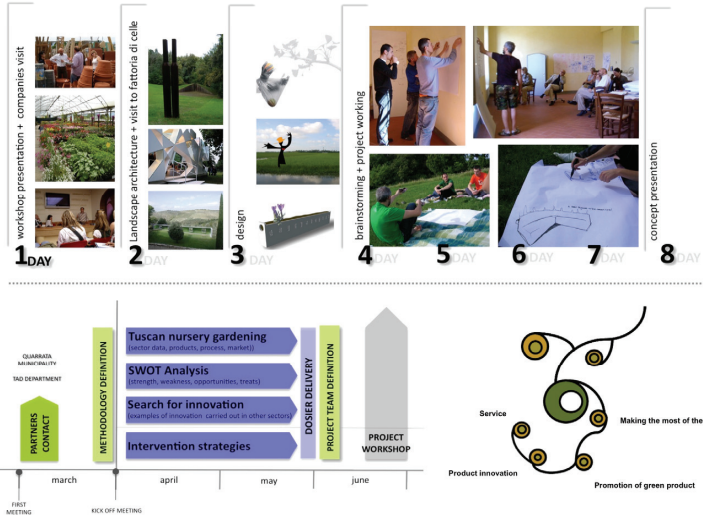
### OPERATING TOOLS

- **Per la definizione del contesto**  
Analsi field (meeting with companies and municipality)  
Analsi desk (publication, report, anlysis, local association)
- **Per la generazione del brief**  
Research team brainstorming / municipality validation
- **Per l'elaborazione progettuale**  
Project workshop

### TYPE OF BACK-UP FUNDING

Municipality of Quarrata

### OPERATING PROCESS AND TIMING



### RESULTS ACHIEVED



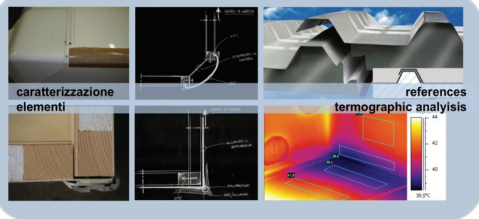
Figure 1. System product innovation. Forma Viva project.

## TECNOLOGICAL INNOVATION Ideal methods for sealing joints among the structural elements of a motorcaravan

### OPERATIONAL PROJECT AIMS

Improvement of joint sealing methods, acting:  
- on type/shape/structure-related aspects, overcoming existing geometry  
- on technical-material aspects, materials, adhesives, finishes

### problem setting



### PARTNERSHIP

Trigano Spa  
TAD - Unifi (design)  
DISTAF - Unifi (wood technologies)  
Polo Chimico Colle - Unifi  
Polo Tecnologico Magona  
Centro Sperimentale del Mobile

### WORK TEAM

- **Research team**  
TAD - Unifi (design)  
DISTAF - Unifi (wood technologies)  
Polo Chimico Colle - Unifi (adhesive materials)  
Polo Tecnologico Magona (composite materials)  
Coordinamento CSM
- **Project team**  
TAD - Unifi  
Polo Tecnologico Magona

### problem solving



### OPERATING TOOLS

- **For defining the context**  
-Field analysis (company visit, engineering department meetings, photographic report)  
-Desk analysis (production data, technical materials, dealer reports, camper blogs)  
-Thermographic analysis of critical points  
-Analysis of wood-based materials
- **For generating proposals and drawing up plans**  
-Analysis of the competition  
-Cross fertilization research  
-Multidisciplinary brainstorming sessions  
-Shared project sessions

### TYPE OF BACK-UP FUNDING

Tuscany Regional Administration Funds  
Docup OB.2 Misura 1.8 "Aid for industrial and pre-competitive research"

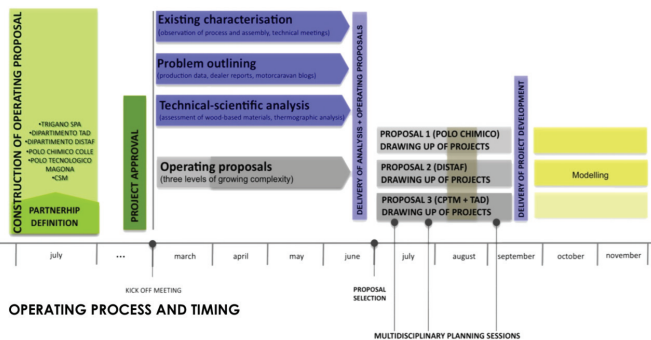


Figure 2. Technological innovation. Ideal methods for motocaravan's joints project.

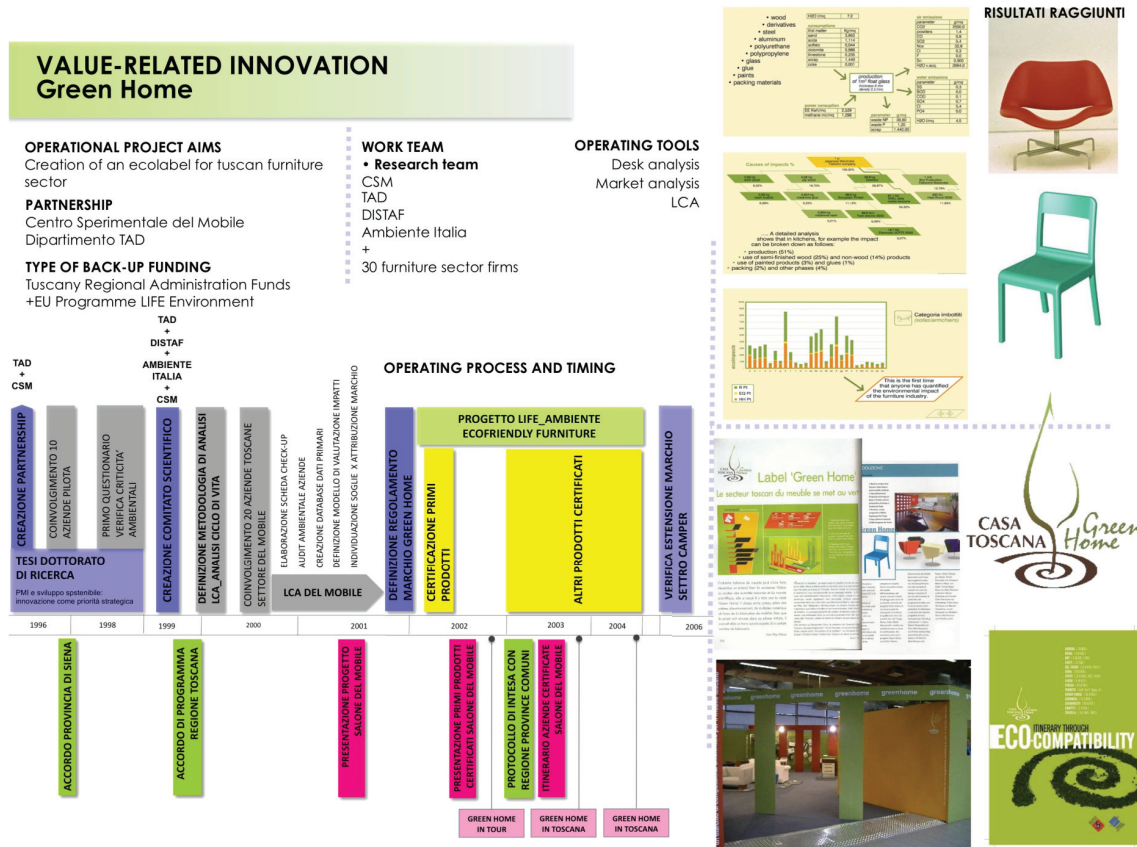


Figure 3. Value-related innovation. Green Home project.

Having established the factors that influence the success of design actions for territorial business systems and highlighted certain particulars and open issues, the principles capable of guiding the strategic choices at the basis of initiatives still have to be defined.

This marks the entry into the field of design proposals, which are definitely less objective and harder to define and which can present substantial implications in terms of development model, not only with consequences in terms of production but also of social and cultural nature.

Faced with the variety of choices, we have sustainability (considered in the broadest sense of the term), which defines the path to follow. The aforementioned Becattini (2004), with a view to an interest in the reality of industrial districts, considered not only as an economic machine but especially as a social structure capable of producing goods which sell but also a more than acceptable life, based upon a veritable cultural and institutional adhesion which is expressed in the form of good protection, appropriate professional training, continuous dissemination of information, cooperation and solidarity, prefigures “capitalism with a human face”, the product of an economic policy which expresses a republic of mutually supportive and responsible citizens rather than mere passive consumers: “[...] if an increase in the production of goods of a collective organisation were to disrupt the social order, destroy the value of certain forms of productive know-how or habits, which convey flavour to life, there is no guarantee that the consequent excess average discomfort that affects some of its members will not exceed the corresponding excess average comfort that affects the same, or other, members” (Becattini, 2004, p. 198).

These considerations acquire even greater value now, in the light of the crises of a manufacturing model based on economic factors alone.

With a growing importance attributable to the concept of sharing capital, which also lies at the basis of SDI – Medesign considered as an entity “which comprises... all the elements that make up the wealth of a territory: natural, physical, human and financial resources, activities and businesses, know-how and skills, and the system of widespread relations” (Manzini, 2004).

In this sense Italy can play an important role. Due to choices which, inspired by productive factors, necessarily influence factors of a broader nature, identifying the quality of the production expressed by a territory as the foundation of the quality of life of the territory’s residents. With Antonio Cianciullo and Ermete Realacci, who formulate a theory based on the soft economy concept – “an economy based on knowledge and innovation, on identity, history, creativity and quality; an economy capable of combining social cohesion and competitiveness and drawing strength from the communities and the territories” (Cianciullo and Realacci, 2005, p. 16-17) – as the main road to increase the country’s competitive edge.

This approach lies behind the project entitled “The shape of values. Ten designers interpret the Tuscan house” of Tuscany region, an exhibition aimed at presenting several excellences of the region’s production (Lotti, 2005, cf. Figure 4).

In its aims “The shape of values” is also a small contribution to a debate which is spreading at international level among politicians, economists, and intellectuals who



sustain, with increasing force, the need for the progressive questioning of the official indicators of the health of a country. Even before the international recession, the farsighted Giorgio Ruffolo said: It is necessary to operate in the sense: "(a) of a reform of the GDP, stripping it of the most obvious idiocies to make it an index which really represents the economic activity; (b) of building up indexes

of wellbeing capable of summarising the social quality of the country, in its most critical aspects: work, environment, health, education and safety of; (c) lastly, of defining, at the highest level of democratic responsibility, a design target positioned in time, which encompasses the economic and social aims implemented as choices to offer the country in a balanced "regulatory index" (Ruffolo, 2005).

**VALUE/COMMUNICATION-RELATED INNOVATION**  
The Shape of Values

**OPERATIONAL PROJECT AIMS**

To communicate and promote the regional productive identity, linking it to the territory and to a system of recognisable values which represent Tuscany.

**PARTNERSHIP**

Consorzio Casa Toscana  
Dipartimento TAD  
ISIA Firenze

- WORK TEAM**
- **Research team**  
Consorzio Casa Toscana  
TAD research team  
ISIA
  - **Project team**  
10 designer  
10 aziende  
2 visual designer

- OPERATING TOOLS**
- **Generating the brief**  
Collective brainstorming  
Key phrases + guidelines for designers
  - **Drawing up the project**  
Matching designers / companies

**TYPE OF BACK-UP FUNDING**  
Tuscany Regional Administration Funds

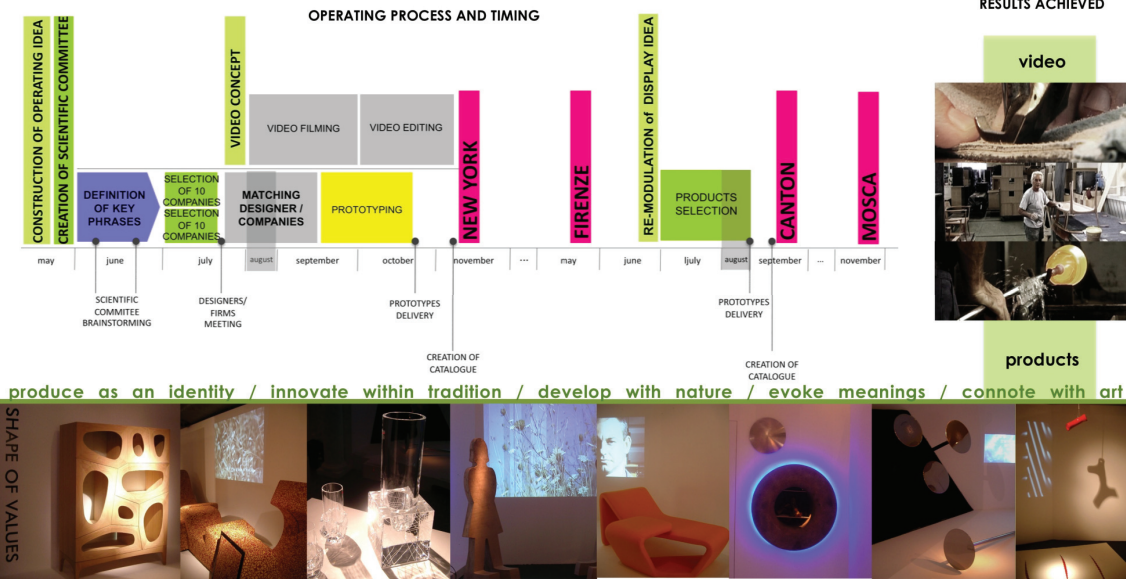


Figure 4. Value/communication-related innovation. The shape of value project.

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