



Milano



Fondazione
Giacomo Brodolini

MILAN WHITE PAPER

ON SOCIAL INNOVATION

Accelerating Milan's local ecosystem
for social innovation

milano in



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



BOOSTING
SOCIAL INNOVATION



CONTENTS

Foreword.....	3
Why create a local ecosystem fostering social innovation?.....	5
The Milanese way to social innovation.....	8
• <i>The 2012-2016 roadmap</i>	8
• <i>The participatory process</i>	15
• <i>Accelerating Milan's local ecosystem</i>	18
Future perspectives for Milan.....	19
• <i>How to enhance the scalability of social innovation</i>	20
• <i>The role of the municipal authorities</i>	22
• <i>Next steps</i>	25
Bibliography.....	27
Annex A – The research methodology and the actors involved.....	28
Annex B – The authors.....	29

FOREWORD

by Cristina Tajani

For the first time in history, more than half of the world population lives in urban areas, where wealth generation is mostly concentrated. The ongoing process of gradual urbanisation of the world population will increase the importance of cities to the extent that global competition among them could replace competition among States, while posing social challenges that cities, in particular, will have to face in a new way.

This is the reason why in the 'century of cities', social innovation is of utmost importance.

Social innovation represents a break with the traditional way of doing things, as well as a new way of finding solutions; it constitutes a new, creative response to social problems that have not been tackled by either the market or the State.

The Municipality of Milan has chosen to promote social innovation as one of the aspects of the smart city, since the latter is not only a city that manages to keep up with new technologies, but also one that succeeds in exploiting innovation with a view to developing new methods of tackling socially relevant problems. In this sense, smart cities are those ones that create governmental, infrastructural, and technological conditions for producing social innovation.

Among today's unavoidable challenges is the reduction of inequalities and the quality improvement of the living environment and social relationships. We must reconsider the relationships between wellbeing and development as well as between social value generation and production of economic wealth, focusing on people and their capability to improve their own condition. If we want to reconsider our development model – that is what this is all about – we need to find out solutions to successfully tie together inclusion and innovation.

We have to face with what is happening in the rest of the world, and take up the new challenges posed by the currently ongoing major changes. As an example, several European cities are now experiencing a decline in the sense of community in their neighbourhoods. The concept of vulnerability is particularly suitable to express the combination of social unrest and economic distress typical of contemporary societies, inasmuch as it correlates the impoverishment of middle and lower classes with the reduction in individual skills, as well as material deprivation of individuals with the weakening of the relational patterns of communities. Paradoxically, whereas technology as well as people's capacity to communicate, exchange information, and cooperate is growing exponentially, vulnerability is becoming an inherent feature of our way of living.

Furthermore, in the current context, European cities have been all affected – although in different ways – by the reform of state structures and, in particular, by the administrative devolution of cohesion and inclusion policies. A constant feature of the ongoing transformations is the reduction of direct public commitment both in the provision and in the funding of services and grants, whereas promotion and empowerment policies are experiencing a serious legitimacy crisis.

In such a phase of instability and administrative and regulatory uncertainty, the most innovative actors encounter serious difficulties in taking up challenges because rules are not clear enough to predict the consequences of one's own actions, and it is not possible to estimate the likelihood of institutional reactions.

Unfortunately, there are no solutions that can be successfully applied to every context. It is therefore important that cities share success stories with a view to making the urban environment a field of action where healthy competition among different actors – both public and private – leads to the identification of solutions that increasingly improve citizens' life.

As evidenced by this research project implemented in cooperation with Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, in the last five years Milan has proven to be able to successfully experiment social innovation solutions; it has experienced an increase both in the quality of life, and in the availability of shared spaces and opportunities for people to start up new self-entrepreneurship projects. The city has not let the crisis prevail. It has not stopped or retreat. Milan has instead been able to find its way consistently with its mission and in line with growth patterns typical of advanced economies. Community welfare, sharing economy, social innovation, outward-looking international approach, smart city, start-ups, fab labs, co-working spaces, smart working, and new forms of mutual support have found a fertile breeding ground in Milan, as they are consistent with the idea of development that we have often summed up with the dual concept of 'innovation and inclusion' as one of the keys to this success story.

The practices that have been supported and funded in the last five years have contributed not only to generating employment opportunities for youths thanks to hundreds of new start-ups, but also to reviving thousands of square metres of disused urban areas, in addition to implementing business and social promotion actions in different neighbourhoods, as well as to 'developing a community pattern' through sharing economy platforms in support of socially innovative and sustainable services based on business models that enhance synergies and mutuality.

The positive results obtained in recent years tell us that the action of the Municipality of Milan should be driven towards supporting and further developing the local innovation ecosystem, through different types of tools that complement each other within a clear, medium-term vision shared with the city and the main stakeholders.

Innovation is inclusive if it is able to produce social value along with profit and when it allows for the opening of doors leading to new spaces where others will, in their turn, enter to open new doors; furthermore, innovation is inclusive when it stimulates dissemination of knowledge, strengthens cooperation and collective intelligence, and identifies the foundation of its own ecosystem in successful co-existence and cooperation patterns. Inclusion and innovation are not two separate worlds. New ideas emerge and develop in the most open and 'comfortable' contexts. Under specific conditions, spaces, tools, and investment in knowledge and innovation may become key factors to change the destiny of a neighbourhood, a community, or a city.

WHY CREATE A LOCAL ECOSYSTEM FOSTERING SOCIAL INNOVATION?

An environmental system, or ecosystem, is defined by a portion of the biosphere in which a group of animal and plant organisms interact with each other and with the surrounding environment in a dynamic equilibrium. The use of this word in the field of innovation to define the relationships among the components of an economic system that interact to generate innovation enables us to think about what conditions contribute to setting up a system that fosters the development of new ideas and knowledge exchange, the creation and enhancement of new skills, and business start-up.

Nowadays, European territories, be they urban or rural, need to find out new answers to emerging needs, which put a strain on old social and economic concepts. Failures of the public and private sectors in an increasing number of critical areas, from environmental sustainability to welfare, from employment to social inclusion, pave the way to new solutions that can come from any of the actors operating in a specific local ecosystem. In fact, the days are gone when innovation was generated according to a top-down approach, i.e. by R&D labs of large industrial corporations or by political elites. Today innovation originates from the bottom, thanks to small groups of people who conceive, develop, and field-test new products and services that over time might become new value chains, influence traditional fields and change their outline, be replicated in different local contexts, and result in alternative models partly overlapping and partly replacing traditional ones.

For this reason, the territories that are able to develop effective innovation ecosystems are those capable of providing the best answers to the needs of the people living there. It is not only a matter of technological innovation or business start-up, which however contribute to boosting the strengths of a territory, but also – and perhaps principally – of social innovation meant as transformation of both the ways a society meets its members' needs, and the modalities and interactions with which it finds out these responses.

Going back to the initial definition of 'system', i.e. a group of items that form a unified whole without losing their features, and complement each other, we wonder what are the elements of a territorial ecosystem for social innovation. If basic elements are represented by institutions and organisations that, in various ways, contribute to the 'normal' life path of a territory (public authorities, universities, firms, third-sector associations and organisations, etc.), the truly new aspect of our time is likely to be found in the hybridisation among these actors, in sharing patterns among their functions, as well as in the set-up of smart networks that are able to move towards new goals and to self-regulate in their organisation. Within an open innovation logic, i.e. bearing in mind that radical and systemic solutions can be implemented only through cooperation,

system
[sys-tem]
noun (pl.-s)

A group of items forming a unified whole without losing their features || A plurality of related items that work together to perform a specific action.

the roles played by different actors at territorial level change, become flexible, lose their original identities and find new ones, and open their organisational borders to allow new ideas and opportunities to come in. The concept of 'integration' is of utmost importance when we consider well-functioning innovation ecosystems. If the actors of a specified local area manage to start long-term partnerships and find out how to generate the so-called 'shared value', for themselves and for the communities interacting with them, the impact of their activities and partnerships becomes useful to contribute to social and economic welfare at territorial level. When the scope of these partnerships broadens and includes whole service and activity chains, the shared value – i.e. the social impact – is multiplied. In this context, integration means the possibility for different actors to be part of a shared pattern, to contribute to achieving common goals that are too far away for each actor individually. When, within a specified territorial area, different actors actively and regularly cooperate towards a common goal, and identify effective forms of partnership that create both individual returns and shared value, they make up an ecosystem, i.e. a system (in this case at local level) that systematically yields the results it was initially intended to achieve. In the case of local ecosystems for social innovation, these results can include the fulfilment of various kinds of needs of the members of civil society living there. A fundamental complement thereto is that resource flows that feed the ecosystem's processes stabilise over time and guarantee medium/long-term sustainability. The ongoing transformation thus concerns both the aims of these long-term partnerships, and their modalities, hence creating stable and sustainable systems that regularly produce innovations meeting the needs of the territories concerned.

In Europe there are many cities that are currently conducting tests involving the establishment of local ecosystems for social innovation. Milan is undoubtedly one of the cities that are achieving the best results in that sense in Europe. In recent years, the local authorities have done a lot to encourage local actors to contribute to the set-up of initiatives and partnerships focused on and aimed at social innovation. The agenda and leadership of this transformation of the social fabric has been smartly suggested through shared processes at each and every level of urban governance, and the feedback from the territory has been provided through a range of initiatives in different fields, from sharing economy to solution economy, from smart working to co-working, from digital manufacturing to social start-ups. Like in all these transformation processes, there is a long way to go, which is even more difficult at the beginning when it is necessary to input a significant quantity of energy to produce changes to the *status quo*. We are still very far from attaining a new dynamic balance in which the ecosystem is able to systematically introduce the necessary innovations.

For this reason, the Municipality commissioned the present study in order to assess the state of the art and understand which results have been achieved so far, but above all which actions are necessary to continue in that direction and bring the system to the next 'point of equilibrium'. The study involved several actors that, for various reasons and with different roles, are contributing to the development of this local ecosystem, and the analysis focused not only on what has been done or the results achieved, but

above all on future perspectives. In the logic of innovation economy and of the study of the ecosystems that produce it, we have tried to understand what conditions are necessary to allow for the acceleration of Milan's local ecosystem, so as to enable it to evolve, grow up, become stronger, and thus contribute – to a greater extent – to the fulfilment of the goals that are part of its mission. We hope that the findings of the present study will promote a collective debate that calls for new joint efforts, and we invite the readers to go beyond the subjective dimension of their point of view and to actively try to look at the future with 'systems thinking' in order to produce the shared value that is at the core of the mission of Milan's emerging ecosystem for social innovation.

THE MILANESE WAY TO SOCIAL INNOVATION

THE 2012-2016 ROADMAP

According to iCityRate¹, in three years Milan has become the first Italian smart city and is among the most innovative cities all over the world. In 2014 alone, Milan featured the birth of 470 start-ups², many of which socially-driven. These figures confirm the relevance that social innovation has and that the metropolitan area of Milan represents a place able to promote and support innovative projects aiming to improve the quality of citizens' life, favouring the development of shared solutions.

Milan plays therefore a leading role in the context of social innovation: not only in terms of figures but also (and mostly) in the willingness to experiment. The city, in fact, is trying to promote social innovation as one of the fundamental aspects of the concept of smart city, striving to go beyond the technological dimension and to turn it into a tool capable of contributing to the development of new methods to tackle socially relevant problems. In doing so, it involves a large number of stakeholders and uses digital technologies to support collaborative processes.

In compliance with the fundamental principles of the Europe 2020 strategy³, according to which not only does a smart city develop its technological component but it is also capable of combining economic development and social innovation, innovation and training, and research and participation, Milan, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, has approved a set of guidelines on smart cities, defining a governance framework that includes models, indicators, policies, and orientations in order to allow local authorities to improve, on an ongoing basis, the quality of citizens' life as well as businesses' economic development. The identification of strategic goals for Milan as a smart city began in April 2014 with the implementation of a public initiative called 'Public Hearing: Towards Milan as a Smart City'. This initiative broke with the past: it was aimed at involving the main actors of urban development in the creation of a system, thus making them the active protagonists of a process consisting of not only consultations and governance. Starting from this initiative, a series of consultations have been organised with a view to networking institutions, private actors, universities, and third-sector organisations through the creation of thematic working groups: Smart Europe, Smart Mobility, Smart Environment, Smart Citizenship, Smart Inclusion, Smart PA, and EXPO.

Such a process has led to the identification of seven strategic goals for Milan as a smart city (see Figure 1):

1. Milan as a global city and national and European lab;
2. sustainable urban mobility: Milan strives to become the leading city in piloting sharing and peer-to-peer mobility projects, promoting competition among, and development of enabling platforms;
3. environmental and energy policies: Milan aspires to be the European leader in the urban waste cycle management, with the aim of boasting the highest rate of waste sorting among the cities with more than 1,000,000 inhabitants;
4. promotion of social inclusion and diversity: Milan aims to activate in its neighbourhoods – even within each block of flats – technology-driven relational networks targeted at involving and monitoring people, including those most in need. Milan promotes new forms of community and territorial welfare by making use of new tools to support and promote shared services and socialisation;
5. urban wellbeing: Milan intends to implement regeneration projects for urban spaces and parks, with a view to ensuring their multifunctional dimension as well as to enabling residents, city users, and tourists to use them for recreational purposes;
6. simplification of administrative procedures: Milan wants to spread knowledge about the public administration, its structure, functioning, and actions, providing citizens with as much information as possible. Milan also plans to use the technological lever with a view to improving access to services and enhancing job quality, through the implementation of a suitable information system for the development of online services targeted at citizens;
7. business start-up: Milan as a smart city intends to support monitorable and integrated projects designed in cooperation with stakeholders since the planning phase, aimed at guaranteeing project goals and a coordinated approach, at favouring new partnerships between the private and the public sectors, and among institutions, as well as at exploiting each and every growth opportunity offered by EXPO Milano 2015 – before and after the event –, also taking into account the points of excellence of the territory (fashion, design, biomedical, and social innovation sectors).

¹ - 'iCity Rate 2015 – La classifica delle città intelligenti italiane, quarta edizione', October 2015, carried out by FPA.

² - <https://goo.gl/4iDGAN> and <https://goo.gl/lFbDzQ>

³ - European Commission, 2010.

Figure 1: The roadmap of Milan as a sharing city.



Source: Municipality of Milan.

In this context, social innovation represents a set of strategies and tools to support new businesses able to meet social needs (education, employment, mobility, etc.) and, at the same time, to create social and economic value for the city. More specifically, thanks to support from the municipal authorities, several initiatives have been launched in recent years, with a wide range of different actions. Some of these initiatives have been strongly supported by the municipal authorities, which have played a 'top-down' role; some other initiatives have been kicked off based on a 'bottom-up' approach, i.e. thanks to the initiative of individuals or groups of people (in many cases, informal in nature).

Among the initiatives belonging to the first type, we can mention the eight practices – including incubators and accelerators – that have specialised in social innovation in the broadest sense of the term. If social innovation represents the cross-cutting macroarea of reference, each space has a different and specific purpose, according to specialisation (thus avoiding inefficient overlapping) and complementarity criteria (the aim is to have the broadest possible aggregate supply system). As we can infer from Table 1, there are different experiences, among which: PoliHub, with an outstanding technological feature; Base Milano, which is focused on creative businesses; and

FabriQ, which is the incubator specialised in the development of projects with a strong social impact. It is worth mentioning that, whereas some of these experiences are about to begin operations in these months (for instance, MHUMA, which is focused on digital manufacturing), some others are already fully operational and have begun to yield very interesting results in terms of incubated start-ups, thus confirming the importance of these places in supporting employment and new start-ups.

Table 1: Incubators set up with the support of the Municipality of Milan.

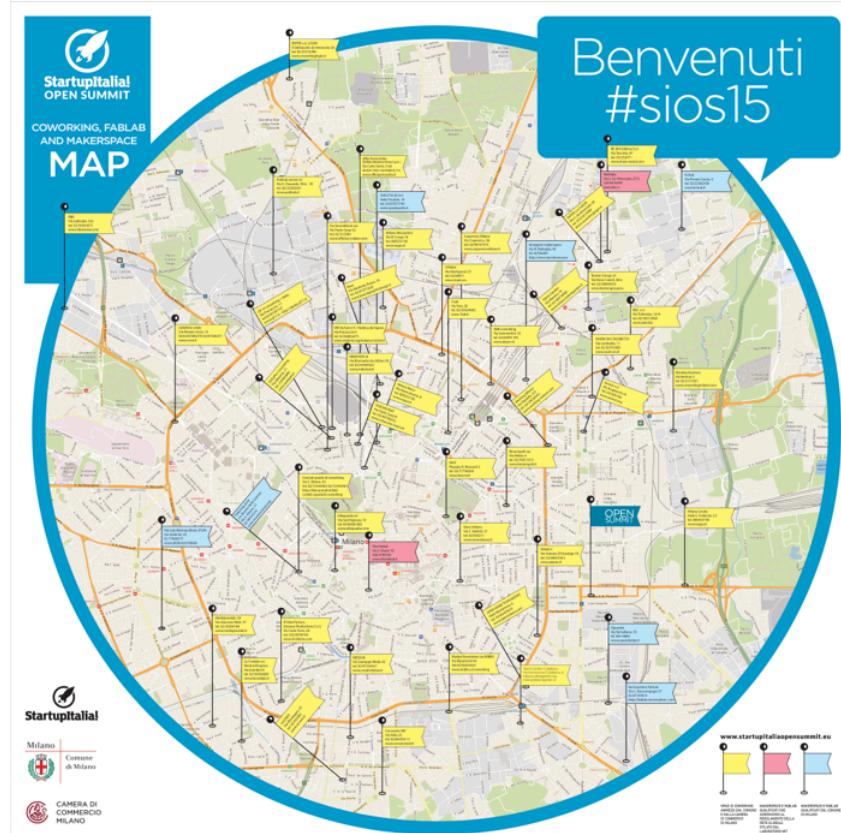
INCUBATOR	SET UP IN (YEAR):	MANAGED BY:	MISSION
PoliHub	2000	Fondazione Politecnico di Milano – Polytechnic University of Milan Foundation	PoliHub is aimed at supporting highly innovative start-ups with scalable business models, as well as at boosting cross-fertilisation processes among start-ups.
Alimenta	2006	Parco Tecnologico Padano – Technological Park of the Po Valley	Beyond research activities and services, it supports business start-up through its business incubator and accelerator called 'Alimenta'.
Speed Mi Up	2013	Chamber of Commerce of Milan and Bocconi University	Development of business and management skills as well as of competences in accelerating the development of innovative professions and start-ups
FabriQ	2014	Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini and Impact Hub Milano	To support social innovation through the implementation of ideas, projects, and start-ups that have a positive impact on the social, environmental, and cultural sectors.
MHUMA	2017	LUISS Guido Carli University, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, and ItaliaCamp S.r.l.	MHUMA aspires to be a comprehensive fab lab for Milan and for the whole country, a service and learning centre for both the Milanese and the international community of makers. It will moreover represent a social lab that will integrate the urban ecosystem.

INCUBATOR	SET UP IN (YEAR):	MANAGED BY:	MISSION
Base Milano	2016	Avanzi, Arci Milano (the Milan-based branch of the Italian Recreational and Cultural Association – <i>Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana</i>), Esterni, h+, and Make a Cube	Base Milano is a hybrid space for culture and creativity in Milan. It was created with a view to innovating the relationships between culture and economy, future and everyday life, as well as between democracy, wellbeing, and knowledge economy.
Spin-off of the ‘Quarenghi’ Training Centre		Municipality of Milan	Fashion design workshop exclusively targeted at the alumni of the centre who plan to start up their own business.
Spin-off of the ‘Arte & Messaggio’ School		Municipality of Milan	It was created with a view to supporting business start-up in the graphic design and illustration sector.

Source: own construction.

In addition to incubators, co-working spaces too fall under the category of new cooperation spaces where different actors (individuals, associations, professional teams, etc.) establish their operational offices, thus contributing to trigger significant processes of knowledge sharing and co-planning of new projects (Leminem et al. 2016; Moretti, 2013). Milan proves successful in keeping up with the times in relation to this aspect as well. As shown in Figure 2, Milan boasts over 80 co-working spaces. The Municipality itself has invested in this new type of working and socialisation spaces, for instance by providing funding with a view to granting a EUR 1,500 voucher to whomever decides to work in one of the 49 co-working spaces officially recognised by the Chamber of Commerce and by the Municipality.

Figure 2: Co-working spaces in Milan



Source: www.startupitaliaopensummit.eu

Again in relation to new collaborative spaces, we should mention the fab labs that have been kicked off in recent years and that have benefitted from public support. They include: the first-ever makerspaces such as Opendot and Yatta! (set up in a neighbourhood that historically served as a link between the large firms located in the hinterland, and small manufacturers) as well as WeMake, which is home to open source technologies applied to 3D items. All in all, there are today nine fab labs that are reshaping the digital manufacturing patterns and that are officially recognised by the Municipality of Milan: The Fab Lab, Yatta!, fai da Noi, We Make, Opendot, Innogrow Makerspace, Vectorealism FabLab, Fab Lab Metropolitano KI-BUK, and Tinkering zone within the Museum of Science and Technology ‘Leonardo da Vinci’.

In addition to the impact in terms of new businesses and employment, these new collaborative spaces play another important social role, i.e. that of providing an opportunity to regenerate urban spaces that are no longer used. Without going into detail about the complex relationships between spaces and social innovation (Montanari and Mizzau, 2015), at this point we intend to highlight that the municipal authorities have recognised the importance of this issue by investing EUR 1.5 million in the restoration of some buildings located in different areas of Milan. Thanks to some developments in the municipal tendering system as well as to the possibility even for informal groups to submit project proposals for the city, about 300 spaces have been reopened or regenerated since 2011 up to now, or are going to be made accessible in the next months. Among them, we should point to the abovementioned Base Milano, a cultural promotion hub set up after the regeneration of the former Ansaldo production facility (http://base.milano.it/index_ita.html).

Beside these major projects mainly steered by the Municipality, which are having a strong impact on the (real and cognitive) urban map, the city is experiencing the spread of several social, cultural, sports, and small business projects developed with a bottom-up approach on the basis of the associational practices that have been representing one of the fundamental features of the Milanese community since long ago. An outstanding example of this type of projects is Mare Culturale Urbano (<http://maremilano.org/>), a cultural production centre set up in Milan's eastern area, aimed at embodying a new territorial development model that starts from the outskirts.

The municipal authorities have tried to support this type of bottom-up, participatory projects, playing a support and promotional role. To this aim, an attempt has been made to outline a distinguishing feature that connects the different parts of such a broad and diversified ecosystem. In other terms, the overall amount of public funding (around EUR 18 million) has been used not only to support a high number of initiatives and social innovation spaces, but also to actually set up an ecosystem to support businesses with a strong innovative impact. In addition to places, actors, and relationships, Milan's ecosystem also consists of technological support tools such as the Open Data portal. Launched in 2012, this portal has contributed to increasing transparency in the public administration, and has made public data available to those civil society actors that want to share them or use them with a view to developing innovative application⁴. Furthermore, during EXPO Milano 2015, the municipal authorities joined the 'Eo15' initiative (<http://www.eo15.regione.lombardia.it/PEo15/>) with a view to improving Milan's technological innovation ecosystem, involving entrepreneurs, students, and researchers. With the support of EU funding opportunities for smart cities (H2020-SCC-2015) and in cooperation with London and Lisbon, innovative tools have been tested, aimed at involving citizens through restoration and renovation of old buildings.

⁴ - As an example of the potential of this type of activities, it is worth recalling that a group of citizens from Chicago used the open data made available by the Municipality of that city to create a (very successful) application aimed at monitoring the operation of snowploughs (and thus the actual situation of the roads cleared of snow).

THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

As pointed out in the previous paragraph, the municipal authorities have tried to adopt a systemic approach to innovation, i.e. an approach based on both 'top-down' actions (in relation to those projects in which they played a primary leading role) and 'bottom-up' actions, centred on the 'bottom-up' involvement of the local community as well as on support for several emerging initiatives. In that sense, we can speak of 'open coordination', i.e. facilitation of co-creation and shared decision processes. Among the most interesting projects implemented on this aspect, we have to mention:

- participatory budgeting: Milan is the first Italian city to have decided to manage EUR 9 million from its budget through a participatory approach. The project was kicked off in July 2015 and, within a timespan of four months, around 60 meetings were organised throughout the city, aimed at collecting suggestions and proposals from citizens. The hundreds of needs gathered have then been processed by nine co-planning labs, i.e. by working groups that have been attended by more than 200 citizens. In harness with the Municipality's technical staff, they screened the proposals received. They eventually identified 40 projects, nine of which will be fully funded, while the other six will receive partial funding;
- Food Policy: Milan has committed to making its food system more equitable and sustainable, adopting its own Food Policy, i.e. the strategy that will shape the municipal food policies in the next five years. The drafting of this document involved world leaders committed to creating an equitable and sustainable food system. In July 2014, the Municipality of Milan and Fondazione Cariplo signed an agreement aimed at defining and adopting the Food Policy: a four-step roadmap targeted at analysing strengths and weaknesses of Milan's food system. Through the implementation of a public consultation, this roadmap has led to the adoption of the Food Policy by local institutions, as well as to the elaboration of pilot projects. The analysis brought the so-called '10 issues' to light: from the access to food to the fight against food waste, from citizens' wellbeing to the protection of agricultural land;
- civic crowdfunding: the municipal authorities have devised a bottom-up crowdfunding programme focused on projects of the city and for the city, related to social innovation. The authorities have allocated EUR 400,000 as co-funding. An urban platform will host up to 18 innovative projects, each of which is likely to receive up to a maximum of EUR 50,000 granted by the Municipality, over a trial period of 20 months. Such a crowdfunding platform project intends to support the social impact of initiatives implemented by the actors of the local ecosystem, fostering reconciliation of the public and private sectors on social projects. The website, linked to the website of the Municipality, will be set up in cooperation with a partner, and will highlight project ideas that private actors (individuals or associations) may decide to fund by granting an amount of money they deem appropriate. The platform is likely to strengthen the links between the public sector, the private social sector, and businesses, by networking different institutions with a view to raising funding and financing social community initiatives and projects for Milan's territory.

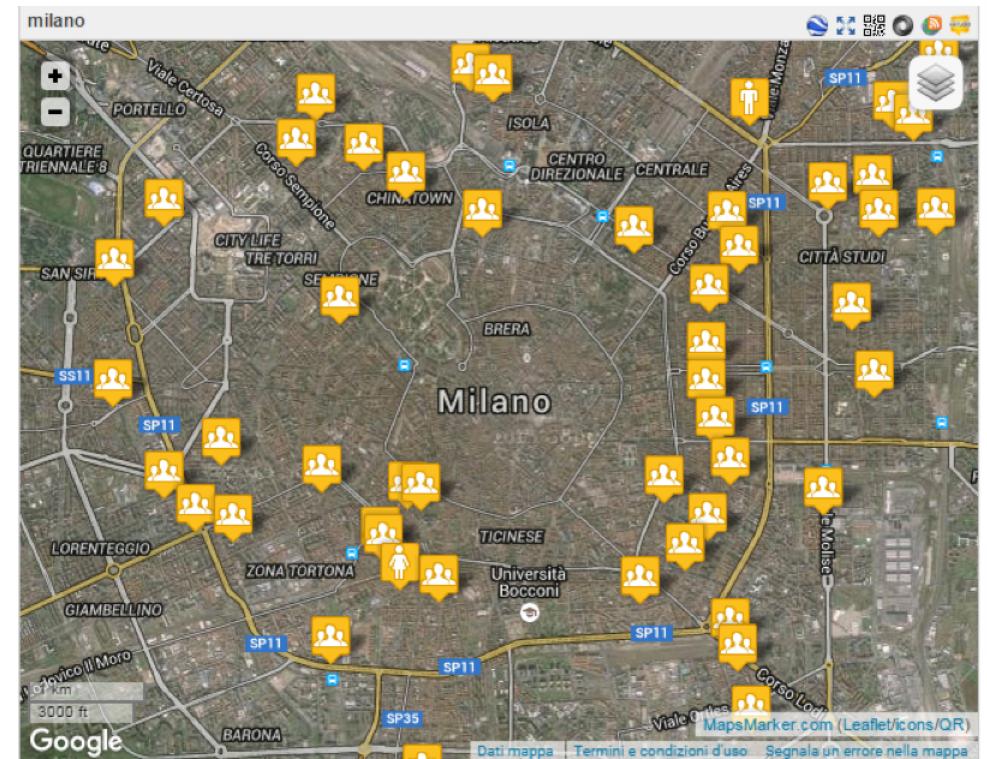
At international level as well, the municipal authorities have achieved important goals, promoting social innovation through several projects implemented in cooperation with European cities. An example is the project 'My Neighbourhood, My City': launched in January 2012, it came to an end in June 2013, and was implemented in cooperation with Aalborg, Lisbon, and Birmingham. The project made use of the living lab tool⁵ with a view to recreating social and spatial connections among people of the same neighbourhood, thus providing different communities with service models that can be easily scaled up.

The policies, implemented by the municipal authorities, have been included in a context, such as the city of Milan, characterised by a very active and dynamic social fabric, with several non-profit organisations that have been successfully meeting the most diversified social needs for a long time. In recent years, we have been experiencing a proper proliferation of 'bottom-up' initiatives promoted by both single citizens and new organisations that try to update the distinguishing elements of the third sector, so as to implement new social innovation actions.

If we conduct a more in-depth analysis of the dynamic pattern of Milan's social innovation, we come across some practices such as the so-called 'social streets'. These practices, which stemmed from the experience of the Facebook group 'Residenti in Via Fondazza – Bologna' ('People residing in Via Fondazza – Bologna') launched in September 2013, are voluntary initiatives that try to establish new forms of sociality and urban cohabitation, socialising with neighbours living in the same street in order to establish relationships, share needs, exchange professional skills and knowledge, implement joint projects, and thus benefit as much as possible from increased social interaction. With more than 60 experiences, Milan is today one of the cities with the highest number of social streets: among the most 'crowded' are San Gottardo, Lambrate, and Maiocchi, each of which boasts 1,500 subscribers. It is necessary to clarify that these interesting initiatives are not always successful: evidence so far has shown that it is very difficult to develop practices of this type in the most central areas, where there are many offices, or in those neighbourhoods where professionals live. On the other hand, such practices are more likely to find a breeding ground mainly in the areas close to the city centre of Milan: the most concerned districts are zone 3 (Città Studi, Lambrate), zone 4 (Vittoria, Forlanini), and zone 6 (Barona, Lorenteggio) (see Figure 3).

⁵ - Living lab is a methodology that envisages the creation of environments to support research and social innovation by actively involving several stakeholders (end users, businesses, public institutions, etc.). Its ultimate goal is to foster co-creation of new products, services, and social infrastructures. A living lab can therefore be seen as an 'operational methodology [...] an innovative and multidisciplinary approach characterised by some fundamental and distinguishing elements such as open innovation, end user's role, application of research to real-life scenarios, partners' economic interests, and sustainability' (Testoni, 2016, p. 81).

Figure 3: Map of social streets in Milan.



Source: <http://www.socialstreet.it/>

Another interesting experience that is currently under development in the urban trade network is represented by the so-called 'Ethical Purchasing Groups' (EPGs), created on a voluntary basis and centred on a critical approach to consumption. Milan boasts about 60 among those adhering to the national network; their number, however, is higher if we consider informal groups (people living in the same block of flats often establish informal groups to coordinate their purchases, as well as to meet their needs in terms of work-life reconciliation). EPGs are often interested in organic products, trying to prioritise those producers that have opted for organic agriculture, as well as local producers. Furthermore, in recent years, active citizenship events have been organised: they have been promoted by various networks, and also include self-production through the purchase of food raw materials such as different types of flour.

It is necessary to mention an interesting project called 'Segnali di futuro' ('Signals of future' – <http://segnalidifuturo.com/>).

This project—implemented by Avanzi and promoted by the 'La Triennale di Milano' design and art museum, with the support of Fondazione Cariplo and the

patronage of the Municipality of Milan – covered the whole metropolitan area of Milan, mapping and analysing 'bottom-up' best practices. All of this with a view to highlighting those practices that are meeting consolidated and hidden needs. This project has revealed that it is becoming increasingly difficult to classify innovative practices within specific areas and legal patterns outlined by clear and impermeable barriers; nowadays, social innovation forms are increasingly hybrid since they stem from ongoing changes in a range of aspects, such as the provision of public services, forms of labour, living patterns, the creation of social cohesion, our everyday strategies for the care of individual and collective wellbeing, and cultural and mobility-related practices. Obviously, the effectiveness of such 'bottom-up' initiatives increases in proportion to the support provided thereto by the municipal authorities through specific actions, as well as in proportion to their degree of complementarity at territorial level with the system of 'consolidated actors' that since long ago (and with an institutional approach) have been trying to meet the consolidated needs of the community. In their turn, these consolidated actors have to be able to open up, taking the opportunity to use energy and skills of the community actors. It is only through this complementarity and matching among actors with different backgrounds, goals, features, and skills that a well-developed ecosystem in support of social innovation can actually be set up.

ACCELERATING MILAN'S LOCAL ECOSYSTEM

Although Milan is the Italian city with the highest likelihood of featuring successful innovation projects, a challenge is still there, i.e. transferring and promoting social innovation as an attempt to streamline public and private resources into a systemic pattern.

More in detail, the study underlying this white paper brought to light the following areas for improvement:

- strengthening social innovation culture and the competences necessary to manage it, so as to broaden the target consisting of organisations that – in different ways – contribute to the transformation of models and processes at territorial level;
- steering policy-making processes in order to strengthen the capability of the system to attract resources, so as to multiply the activities linked to social innovation, as well as their impact;
- making social innovation a process that can be accessed and enjoyed by a higher and higher number of potential targets, thus involving more and more citizens and potential active actors;
- improving the administrative framework with a view to tackling technical, bureaucratic, and legal critical issues that represent a hindrance to the actors active in this field.

An ecosystem is able to evolve if it accelerates its internal processes of strengthening its own capacity to produce outputs, in this case linked to social innovation processes.

Working on the areas for improvement referred to above means strengthening the systemic conditions in order to help the ecosystem evolve. In the next chapter, we will provide a detailed analysis of the future perspectives and levers the city can make use of to strengthen such conditions.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR MILAN

As we outlined in the previous chapter, the ecosystem that supports social innovation in Milan features a good degree of maturity, as demonstrated by the large number of public and private initiatives that have been developed in recent years. The municipal authorities have undoubtedly played an important role in supporting these initiatives, which are in line with the strategic goal of developing their own smart city model. A smart city, in addition to 'nurturing' its technological component, must also protect its propensity for social innovation, paying attention to process innovation, stakeholders' involvement, the enhancement of its points of excellence, and the promotion of its own initiatives. In that sense, the actions that the Municipality will implement in the next years to support the local ecosystem are of utmost importance with a view to strengthening its role as an urban lab capable of identifying solutions that make it possible to combine economic development with social inclusion, innovation with scalability, and excellence with participation.

Turning a city like Milan into a smart city where social innovation represents one of the main pillars is of course a complex process that requires adequate (material and immaterial) investments aimed at strengthening the local ecosystem. In that sense, it becomes of utmost importance to share a clear, long-term vision that allows for the coordination of the actions and efforts made by each and every actor involved in the local ecosystem, so as to exploit any synergies and attain its goals. To do so, it is necessary to focus on the following areas for improvement, which have emerged in the framework of this study:

- scarcity of available economic and financial resources compared to potential actors, ideas, and initiatives;
- difficult operating conditions (technical, bureaucratic, legal, etc.) that reduce the potential impact of social innovation initiatives;
- need to strengthen the social innovation culture within the ecosystem in order to improve the alignment between policy making, the capability of attracting funding, and territorial co-planning;
- importance of making social innovation increasingly available and accessible to a greater number of potential targets, thus involving more and more citizens and potential partners.

One of the strategic priorities of the next years will therefore be to implement effective actions that tackle these issues and strengthen the local ecosystem. Social innovation is a highly context-dependent phenomenon (Montanari, 2014; Zamagni, 2015):

the economic and social impact generated by social innovation initiatives in a specific territory is strongly influenced by the features of the social, economic, cultural, and institutional frame of reference. Therefore, only through the implementation of actions aimed at developing framework conditions to support social innovation, it will be possible to have a developed local ecosystem able to attract investments, support innovators, increase opportunities, and, in the final analysis, enhance the economic and social impact.

HOW TO ENHANCE THE SCALABILITY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

From the point of view of the lifecycle of social innovation (e.g. BENISI TRANSITION, 2015), after the initial stage of generation and development of ideas, and that of prototyping of goods and/or services to be implemented, it becomes important to try to scale up, i.e. to broaden the scope of social innovation in a territory (Garoli, 2015). Such a broader scope may concern both the spread and/or involvement of a great number of actors in situ (citizens, social innovators, companies, etc.), and the dissemination of innovation in a broader geographical context than that of origin. As already observed, it is necessary to implement the right actions on the local ecosystem in order to increase the scalability of social innovation initiatives stemming from it, thus increasing the impact generated (Avanzi, 2013).

Acting on the local ecosystem means first of all creating framework conditions that actually make it possible to 'work as a system', thus succeeding in turning the first (and sometimes almost 'trailblazing') experiences into replicable models, complementing them with other experiences and fostering a cooperation and co-planning approach. To this aim, it is important to invest in material and immaterial infrastructures that bolster the functioning of the local ecosystem through the provision of general services (mainly in terms of support in the identification of funding opportunities), support in the development of networks among the actors concerned, the promotion of training and knowledge transfer initiatives, as well as suitable planning and urban regeneration activities. The ultimate goal of these actions is to ensure an atmosphere of trust and cooperation that fosters the exchange of complex information and knowledge, the definition of shared standards of conducts, the development of joint initiatives, and increased involvement of different stakeholders. The presence of a high degree of trust at system level, shared by all the operators and able to positively influence individual expectations from the beginning (swift trust, Kramer and Tyler, 1995), plays a pivotal role in supporting social innovation, mainly wherever it is necessary to involve actors belonging to contexts very far from each other (and often characterised by a certain degree of cultural distance) in the management of common goods and in social innovation experiences based on the sharing and pooling principles (Caroli, 2015).

A line of action in that direction concerns the provision of meeting venues and opportunities for the operators active in an ecosystem, aimed at developing relationships among them. If it is true that networking can be developed in an informal and spontaneous way, the availability of physical spaces dedicated to new meeting and socialisation models (incubators, co-working spaces, living labs, etc.) where ideas, information, and experiences can be exchanged, plays a key role in fostering the emergence of a suitable 'connective tissue' in support of social innovation (Giordano et al., 2015; Maiolini, 2015).

Beyond the fact that the design of these venues can be conceived by itself as a form of social innovation (Montanari and Mizzau, 2015), these spaces represent important meeting venues where people can exchange ideas and develop new projects, and where they can socialise with newcomers, disseminating the core values of the local ecosystem culture (Abrahmson and Fombrun, 1994). In that sense, it may be useful to organise specific meeting and information exchange events for operators, such as a prize or a festival, which may provide interesting opportunities for promoting ongoing projects (both consolidated and emerging ones) as well as international best practices. Such moments also make it possible to attain another goal: to increase the number of relationships with other Italian and international ecosystems, boosting their exposure to experiences outside the local ecosystem. The presence of such connections is very important since it allows for increased circulation of ideas and experiences, thus strengthening the innovative potential of the ecosystem concerned and avoiding the risks typical of over-embeddedness⁶ (Uzzi, 1997).

In addition to physical relationships, the online ones too play a pivotal role in the creation of a climate of trust and cooperation. In that sense, it might be important to develop collaborative web platforms that may serve as an effective tool both for the representation of actors that operate in a specific field within a territory (thus promoting what already exists), and for their coordination (possibly on specific issues and calls for actions). For instance, web platforms may serve to foster contacts between people and/or organisations that share the same problem and may want to cooperate to find any possible solutions, thus fostering cooperation and co-planning of responses to common needs. Alternatively, they may be a tool for local governments (or other actors) to engage different stakeholders (citizens, firms, associations, etc.) in discussions and co-planning of some public policies. In all these cases, web tools can support the so-called 'buzz' dynamics, complementing formal and informal face-to-face meeting opportunities (Storper and Venables, 2004).

The social dimension of an ecosystem plays an important role also in relation to the heritage of concepts, knowledge, and knowhow gained over time and capable of contributing, in a unique and original way, to social innovation initiatives implemented by local operators. If it is true that each actor takes part in social innovation processes with its experiences and knowhow, it is then possible to act towards strengthening this knowledge base through specific training actions (not only traditional teaching patterns, but also, among others, coaching and mentoring) focused, for instance, on how to run a business (including but not limited to social entrepreneurship), as well as on funding mechanisms (including, but not exclusively, public calls) and on the development of cross-cutting competences (leadership, teamwork, etc.).

⁶ - 'Over-embeddedness' means the situation in which the actors that operate in the same geographical context feature many close links with each other and very few with the outside world; these close and relatively isolated situations tend to reduce the flow of new information, thus limiting the innovative potential.

THE ROLE OF THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

The municipal authorities of Milan are supposed to play a key role in the process supporting the scalability of social innovation initiatives that have been developed on their territory in recent years. In particular, they will have to play the fundamental role of manager of the process, which could be defined as 'mainstreaming social innovation', i.e. oversight of, and support to the whole local social innovation chain, with a view to increasing visibility, awareness, and impacts. The challenge Milan's ecosystem has to face in the next years is to increase its relevance for a greater number of local stakeholders (citizens, social innovators, firms, etc.), as well as to develop synergies with other areas of action of local policies, and to boost its connections with other geographical contexts. To attain these goals, the municipal authorities have to play an increasingly multidimensional role that goes far beyond the granting of funds: they have to work towards enhancing the visibility of the system, disseminating adequate expertise, and strengthening cooperation among the actors operating in the local ecosystem.

More specifically, this complex role has to be played by the municipal authorities in three main areas of actions:

- support: this area covers all the actions aimed at supporting the actors of the ecosystem not only in economic and financial terms, but also through sponsorship of other potential funders and, in general, of different stakeholders, as well as through technical assistance (e.g. support in project design and preparation of applications for EU public calls) and educational support aimed at developing the expertise and culture necessary for social innovation;
- facilitation: the municipal authorities have to implement all actions aimed at underpinning the development of (formal and informal) relationships among the actors of the local ecosystem, for instance by playing a steering role wherever required, dealing with conflict mediation/solution, and planning the necessary tools for creating (and maintaining) relationships, including those with other ecosystems (mainly abroad);
- dissemination: this area covers all actions aimed at managing and sharing information among the actors of the local ecosystem, with the ultimate goal of fostering the creation of a common culture that allows territorial points of excellence to successfully work towards common and shared goals. The area covers those actions too aimed at promoting knowledge of the local ecosystem, reaching out both more and more citizens (who have not yet got in touch with it) and external actors (i.e. other national and international ecosystems).

These three main areas of actions can result in a broad range of concrete initiatives that feature a high degree of interdependency. If managed in the right way, this interdependency may provide for the possibility of establishing significant synergies. For instance, both the support and the facilitation areas cover the implementation of all 'soft infrastructures' aimed at developing a culture and a climate of trust, which should foster

information exchange, cooperation, and knowledge sharing among the operators of the ecosystem. More specifically, evidence of these 'soft infrastructures' may be found in both the arrangement of key general services such as training and support in identifying funding opportunities, and the provision of meeting venues and opportunities targeted at the operators active in the local ecosystem.

As to this latter point, the previous chapter outlined that Milan already features several venues based on new meeting and socialisation models (incubators, co-working spaces, etc.); it becomes therefore very important in the close future to successfully 'systemise' these venues by setting up an effective 'control booth' able to fully exploit their synergies and complementarities, reducing any overlapping and duplications. In the current context characterised by limited availability of financial resources to public organisations, these regenerated venues represent an important resource for the local ecosystem, and thus any related decisions have to be carefully made. In particular, it is necessary to be fully aware of what cities and actors of the ecosystem need, so as to be able to tackle major criticalities in the right way. For this purpose, it might be useful to study the outcomes of already implemented projects whose impact has already been measured and assessed, with a view to sharing the experiences gained, thus fostering mutual learning.

Again with reference to 'soft infrastructures', it is of critical importance to create specific meeting and socialisation opportunities for local operators (this action falls within both the facilitation and the dissemination areas). In this sense, it may be useful to establish a prize or organise a festival dedicated to social innovation, which, in addition to representing an opportunity to promote the projects currently in place in the local ecosystem, may serve as a point of contact with specifically identified international best practices. Such relationships are fundamental since an ecosystem linked to other ecosystems at international level fosters the exchange of resources and knowledge, provides for the possibility of opening up new markets, and allows for the replication and upscaling of initiatives. Again with a view to boosting linkages with other Italian and international social innovation centres, it is important to successfully seize the opportunities offered by the European projects the city is already involved in: Milan actively takes part in major international, European, and national networks that deal with smart, sustainable, and attractive cities, promoting an ongoing debate on the most innovative and effective practices. In this sense, local authorities can play a pivotal role in disseminating the knowledge gained in these projects implemented by the Municipality in partnership with other European cities, firms, and universities.

As concerns the 'connective tissue' between the operators of the local ecosystem, we should try to foster sharing dynamics between the points of excellence of the local social innovation system and other fertile grounds at urban level, such as research, business activities, and creativity (the fashion and design sectors just to name but a few), as well as the social fabric of the neighbourhood making up the city, in their different dimensions and features, which make Milan an interesting urban environment due to its several orders of magnitude.

To this aim, it becomes crucial to gain in-depth knowledge of the actors active in the local social innovation ecosystem⁷.

Only by fully understanding the features of their activities, needs, and relational networks (both at international level and with the local context) in which they are involved, it is possible to implement effective actions, identifying the so-called 'keystone organisations', i.e. territorial actors that can act as brokers and facilitators in the development of relationships among the actors of the ecosystem, and as gatekeepers with other external contexts (thus favouring the development of relationships with other national and international contexts).

These keystone organisations can moreover play a key role in supporting dissemination activities by implementing initiatives aimed at fostering a social innovation culture and at promoting venues and activities already in place in the Milan area. Communication activities about what has been done and future initiatives are particularly important for the mainstreaming process to be successful. The challenge is to go out of the current 'circles' that are already focused on social innovation, making it increasingly available and accessible – in other words, trying to involve different groups of citizens and other potential partners. To this aim, it is important to exploit each and every opportunity for sharing and cooperation, including with contexts belonging to different (and seemingly faraway) places. For instance, it might be interesting to bring social innovation into the city's museums ('La Triennale di Milano' design and art museum, Museum of Cultures – MUDEC, etc.) through specific events, or to promote bottom-up initiatives on the common goods issue.

As far as this latter aspect is concerned, in line with the idea of inclusive, participatory, and smart city that the municipal authorities have promoted in recent years, it is necessary to implement an urban strategy centred on the idea of open lab, i.e. fostering the emergence of a cooperation logic where pooling, teamwork, exchange of ideas, and co-planning of new projects become not only the output of specific actions, but also (and mainly) the cornerstone of the culture of the ecosystem. To this aim, it might be useful to create specific areas where planning of common goods is implemented and where different actors (public administration, social innovators, citizens' associations, etc.) co-plan new forms of social participation, combining different expertise and knowledge, and developing the city's human and cognitive capital to devise new forms of welfare and new models of coexistence. They do not necessarily have to be physical spaces; they can however consist of specific collaborative web platforms. In both cases, succeeding in building up around a specific social need a community of interest made up of many different actors allows for the activation of new relationships, which are likely to lead to the identification of new solutions.

7 - To attain this goal, it may be useful to implement a periodical mapping of the actors operating in the local ecosystem. Such a mapping should be implemented systematically and thoroughly, trying to understand the main features of the actors at territorial level, so as to understand their main features in terms of, among others, expertise, needs, and links with both the local context and international ecosystems. Such mapping actions make it possible to have a clear 'picture' of the local ecosystem, also suggesting the axes along which adequate policy-making actions should be developed.

In this sense, it is also useful to focus our efforts in order to increase the links between the social innovation systems and the other 'open workshops' of the city (welfare initiatives linked to other municipal initiatives, projects funded by other important territorial actors such as Fondazione Cariplo, etc.). For this purpose, the municipal authorities can play a significant role by, among other things, incentivising these cooperation and sharing activities, shifting from a logic of 'funding granted to single projects' to the idea of 'open workshop' where we should try to insert the actions of other actors, which in different ways and at different times – although clearly outlined and coordinated – may contribute to attaining significant goals. To implement such an increasingly collaborative, systemic, and multi-actor vision, keystone organisations are once again important since they are able to connect different stakeholders, which, otherwise, would not enjoy the possibility of cooperating and engaging in a dialogue.

The application of this new approach also entails a change in funding modalities since the municipal authorities should direct available resources to strengthening this cooperation and co-planning logic. Furthermore, owing to the limited availability of financial resources, support actions that the municipal authorities are supposed to implement concern the capability of identifying and exploiting the resources to be invested into the local ecosystem. In addition to European and national structural funds, the municipal authorities can play a 'technical support' role, for instance by finding guarantees for the development of mixed (public-private) investment funds, helping interested actors apply for European public calls, making it easier to bid for municipal public calls (thus reducing restrictions applying on currently open calls), or trying – through new forms of public procurement – to allocate current expenses, paying attention to the actors that deal with social innovation.

NEXT STEPS

As extensively discussed beforehand, in recent years Milan has taken on a leading role in relation to social innovation. This result has been achieved mainly thanks to the presence of a local ecosystem featuring a good degree of maturity. In the next years, the municipal authorities will have to face a fundamental challenge, i.e. supporting the social innovation mainstreaming process; in other words, they will have to sustain scalability so as to increase its visibility, awareness, and impacts. In order to successfully face this challenge, it is of utmost importance that the municipal authorities work towards creating a culture of trust and cooperation by supporting a network of relationships and sharing (not only among social innovation operators, but also between them and the other circles of the Milan context), starting from the already existing human, cognitive, and social heritage. The first steps to be taken in that direction can concern the following actions:

- to work on co-planning models in cooperation with the actors of the local ecosystem, with a view to adapting international best practices to the features of the Milan context, thus avoiding the mistake of simply transferring projects from a context to another;
- to strengthen the links between the local ecosystem and the universities based in that territory, both with research centres that deal with these issues, and with

students enrolled in various training programmes, so as to exploit potential synergies and support the dissemination of the social innovation culture among younger generations;

- to kick off 'open workshops' where common goods are co-planned, involving actors from the social innovation ecosystem and other actors from that territory (citizens, firms, associations, banking foundations, municipal authorities themselves, etc.), with a view to meeting the urgent and important needs of the city in a structured way and on an ongoing basis;
- to focus available resources on actions aimed at strengthening the ecosystem, and in particular on meeting venues and opportunities, as well as on organisations that might be of utmost importance in supporting cross-fertilisation processes, exchange of ideas, and cooperation with other ecosystems, mainly abroad;
- to invest in appropriate communication activities and events in order to raise awareness of the local ecosystem both internally (among the actors themselves) and externally, i.e. among those targets (citizens, potential partners, other ecosystems, etc.) that have not yet been reached out to. These communication activities and events should also be targeted at making the local ecosystem increasingly aware of both its internal actors and external subjects.

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ANNEX A – THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THE ACTORS INVOLVED

The aim of this study has been to analyse the current situation of Milan's social innovation ecosystem, assessing the state of the art in relation to the sharing of existing practices, as well as testing the proposal for new tools aimed at supporting the development and strengthening of Milan's ecosystem (as an enabling condition for scaling up social innovation initiatives currently in place). The ultimate goal was to assist territorial actors (institutions, stakeholders, key actors, etc.) in the analysis of specificities and pilot projects already kicked off in the social innovation field, as well as to sustain them in the identification of shared, suitable, and sustainable development strategies to support civil society actors and local institutions in creating networks and partnerships able to identify and share ideas and future strategies.

The study made use of online and offline meetings through which the actors of the ecosystem had a chance to exchange their opinions on the recent evolution of the local social innovation ecosystem, on its strengths and areas for improvement, as well as on its future perspectives, taking into account the social and economic trends of the territory. This latter element has been very important because the research study has tried to analyse the social innovation ecosystem within the broader economic and social context of reference, being aware that the identification of the most important drives for the development of the local social innovation ecosystem would be made possible only by taking into account the civil society in terms of territorial identity, change in the social composition, and development of urban functions and services.

In particular, the first step consisted of a mapping of the actors that are directly or indirectly operating in the social innovation field at metropolitan level. This entailed contacting about 50 organisations so as to cover the main categories of active stakeholders, also paying attention to the different contributions offered with a view to promoting the social innovation agenda in the Milan area. More in detail, the categories involved include: Arci Milano, Polytechnic University of Milan, Bocconi University, Base Milano, Fondazione Accenture, Consorzio Mestieri Lombardia (an organisation providing services to companies and cooperatives of Lombardy, as well as acting as an employment agency for the inclusion of the most vulnerable workers), and Associazione RENA. Upon completion of the mapping activity, the research was further developed with the identification of a restricted group of experts – at least one for each category – who have been tasked with 'validating' the implementation phase and its results.

At the end of this first phase, three 'chat sessions' were organised: they involved the experts identified during this phase, who engaged in discussions through specific web platforms. During each chat session, six questions were asked, aimed at understanding how developed Milan's local social innovation ecosystem is, as well as at assessing the impact in recent years, the most effective practices for community involvement, the factors that may support the replicability of best practices, and finally the role that the municipal authorities are to play in the next years.

The last phase envisaged the organisation of a workshop aimed at validating what had emerged from previous meetings with properly recruited experts. The experts that took part in the workshop represent all the stakeholders currently active in Milan in the social innovation field. The main goal was to discuss together with a view to assessing the findings concerning the different aspects of social innovation in the city. During the workshop, not only were the findings from previous online meetings validated, but further 'food for thought' was provided in relation to the current situation of the local social innovation ecosystem and the lines of actions that may help in supporting and strengthening it in the years to come.

ANNEX B – THE AUTHORS

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He is the Open&Social Innovation Manager of Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini. In this role, he coordinates the activities and projects of three urban labs: FabriQ – the Social Innovation Incubator of the Municipality of Milan, Open Incet – the Open Innovation Centre of the City of Turin, and the Milan Hub Makers (due to be kicked off in 2017).

He is an expert in urban policies for local development and social innovation, and cooperates with several organisations throughout Europe. He is furthermore the editor of a number of publications on this issue. From 2012 to 2015, he provided consultancy services related to capitalisation and dissemination projects of the URBACT II Secretariat, the European funding programme for peer-to-peer learning among cities.

As founder and manager of the Global Sustainability Group of PricewaterhouseCoopers, he was responsible for social business projects in more than 30 countries all over the world.

He has been a member of the steering committee for Europe of Creative Advantage, an international consultancy firm specialised in innovation processes, based in New York. Furthermore, he has been the founder, deputy director, and member of the editorial committee of Ticonzero.info, a publishing house that has released cutting-edge online contents on business and management issues for 15 years. He is a member of the organising committee of TEDxNavigli, as well as a founder member of the Responsible Leadership Forum of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

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