was born, which could, thanks to its versatility, allow the maximum number of possible actions. Simple elements, which, combined in different ways, can accompany the user under all kinds of circumstances, from exercising to resting, from playing to simply sitting down, catching and storing the energy consumed by each of these actions and making it available under the form of electricity. The object’s versatility is further evidence of its being ‘green’: one single object substituting the other ones represents a saving in terms of raw materials and implied energetic resources. 1.5 min ses = 1.8 KWH = one hour stove sitting down 20 times = 0.1 KWH = a 60W lamp for 10 min 10 min exercising = 1.6 KWH = hair dryer for one hour (page 39)

Green mobile Stanislao Gabriele Anello and Michela Maniscalco -We are convinced that one of the assumptions for a green lifestyle is starting to critically observe what surrounds us, freeing ourselves from the usual ways in which we think, see and make things. We think that one of the most common trends to reach green aims is to enrich the urban landscape with green and natural materials. On these grounds, we imagined that the green could lose one of its intrinsic conditions, the rooting to the ground, acquiring a new mobility and a dynamic character. From this point of view, to take a step forward towards a sustainable lifestyle means that the individual participates in the transformation process of the urban landscape, affecting with his actions the organization of a coordinated but at the same time casual image of the city. One gives up his own comfortable means of transport and decides to carry with him a piece of urban green. When one stops or pauses, by aggregating such piece of urban green with the others, gives birth to temporary and continuously evolving parks. This would cause a functional and perceptive transformation, both in the places where our daily displacements start and finish, such as parking spaces, and on the streets and in the urban landscape in general, introducing the possibility of managing and organizing public spaces somehow through the intervention of the individual citizen. The project aims at stimulating the use of a non-polluting means of transport, but also at triggering a collective renewal process, in which the idea of acting for oneself decays in favour of choices which allow to combine a personal advantage with an improvement of the quality of collective life. The green mobile is some kind of urban pedal, a multiple seat bicycle which carries a tree along; it has two and a half seats, allowing two people to ride it, but gaining an extra place if coupled to another one, thus reaching five, which is the number of seats in a car. It also aims at stimulating the idea of acting together, making its usage more practical.

(page 43)

The exhibition display by Gaetano Licata, Pietro Airoldi and Michele Cammarata The opportunity to show the projects developed during the workshop generated an exhibition which draws again on the question: ‘what is green?’ Within the space of the hall, the analogy to the green of the vegetation, the world of images and pieces of the city are intertwined on purpose, with no intention of mediating between them, on the contrary, taking the risk of causing some annoyance. After all the elaborations and discussions, the place is turned into some sort of medium, both as a physical space and thinking space, through the projects themselves and the big maquettes.

4. di copertina What is green? A life style, a fashion trend, a philosophy? All of that and much more. This question generated a workshop at the University of Palermo, which had been invited, together with other Italian universities, to take part in the students’ competition Costruire Green Life, promoted by the magazine Interni: an occasion to formulate some answers under the shape of projects, ideas and words, on one of the major current themes, the environment and its resources, with which architects and designers are confronted, but towards which all of us are summoned to take a position. The book What is green? conveys the outlines of the reflection emerged during the workshop and presented through the exhibition held at its end. This was one way of facing the question, but above all of generating other questions, being convinced that an open attitude could trigger suggestions, planning skills and a new form of responsibility.

Cos’è Green? by Gaetano Licata 2.a di copertina What is green? A life-style, a fashion trend, a philosophy? All of that and much more. This question generated a workshop at the University of Palermo, which had been invited, together with other Italian universities, to take part in the students’ competition Costruire Green Life, promoted by the magazine Interni: an occasion to formulate some answers under the shape of projects, ideas and words, on one of the major current themes, the environment and its resources, with which architects and designers are confronted, but towards which all of us are summoned to take a position. The book What is green? conveys the outlines of the reflection emerged during the workshop and presented through the exhibition held at its end. This was one way of facing the question, but above all of generating other questions, being convinced that an open attitude could trigger suggestions, planning skills and a new form of responsibility.

2.a di copertina What is green? A life-style, a fashion trend, a philosophy? All of that and much more. This question generated a workshop at the University of Palermo, which had been invited, together with other Italian universities, to take part in the students’ competition Costruire Green Life, promoted by the magazine Interni: an occasion to formulate some answers under the shape of projects, ideas and words, on one of the major current themes, the environment and its resources, with which architects and designers are confronted, but towards which all of us are summoned to take a position. The book What is green? conveys the outlines of the reflection emerged during the workshop and presented through the exhibition held at its end. This was one way of facing the question, but above all of generating other questions, being convinced that an open attitude could trigger suggestions, planning skills and a new form of responsibility.

4. di copertina What is green? A life style, a fashion trend, a philosophy? All of that and much more. This question generated a workshop at the University of Palermo, which had been invited, together with other Italian universities, to take part in the students’ competition Costruire Green Life, promoted by the magazine Interni: an occasion to formulate some answers under the shape of projects, ideas and words, on one of the major current themes, the environment and its resources, with which architects and designers are confronted, but towards which all of us are summoned to take a position. The book What is green? conveys the outlines of the reflection emerged during the workshop and presented through the exhibition held at its end. This was one way of facing the question, but above all of generating other questions, being convinced that an open attitude could trigger suggestions, planning skills and a new form of responsibility.
In the perspective of embracing with full awareness the green trend, the first thing to do is to ask oneself with gradual approximation what really green is, and, according to the formulation of the questions, rather than that of the answers, one should begin to filter what should or could be green. The answer to the first question is green a fashion trend? Yes, but not exclusively. Is green a nostalgic return to nature? Phenomena such as the new urbanism, Krier’s nostalgic visions, not by chance developed for Charles the Prince of Wales, aim at a reversion to the medieval dimension of the city, some sort of return to the past, with the motivation that it is more on a human scale than life in a metropolis, or on the thirtieth floor. Yet this attitude, founded on the culture of preservation, produces an odd return to nature, made of low-rise houses, narrow and curving streets, but without lattices and with cars. Moreover, this is the cause of all those marring laws, issued by institutions which should supervise the State’s culture and which do not want to show that time keeps passing by.

Is slowness green? Surely a time dimension which is less accelerated than ours brings about time for observation, for consideration, but does not necessarily make us think carefully or do the right things. But taking time is common to natural processes, growth, seasonal rhythms and conditions retarded at precise intervals. Is sustainability green? The term sustainability is surrounded by a certain heaviness, since it is nowhere everywhere and it has become a commonplace. The molecular designer Michael Braungart considers sustainability as a tolerant attitude towards the planet’s destruction, which is harmful to a real paradigmatic change in the relationship with the environment. To say “Protect the environment. Use the car less!” is equivalent to saying “Protect your children. Beat them less often!” Therefore, sustainability looks like the acceptance of a slow death.

Is responsibility green? A new form of responsibility is necessary. The argument whereby “Every decision has to be taken by the same subjects who suffer the consequences” seems outdated today. And what if the decisions taken affect the future of generations yet to be born at the time when the decision is taken? Who is going to defend those who are not there yet? The current situation of some industrial contexts with a very high pollution rate will cause the sons or the grandchildren to suffer because of the decisions taken by their parents and grandparents. One could selfishly neglect this, saying that those who will come later will be smart enough to solve the problems which will emerge. But this is not an answer, this is rather not taking responsibility.

Is transformation green? The mere action of lengthening the life cycle of existing things, abandoning the widespread logic which only apparently makes us feel free to use things and dispose of them, surely is one of the possibilities. Among other things, this always allows us to economize. In a building, some parts age more quickly than others, more or less as it happens with cars, which need to be substituted or upgraded. If we apply the same principle to the city, it means to densely, to make all the infrastructural parts exploited to their most: streets and networks. If we apply that to objects, we could reach the non-production of objects, and thus the reduction of the energy necessary to produce them from scratch in the first place, and then of the energy necessary to dispose of them. To give some numbers about the disposable philosophy: every year 10 billions disposable razors are produced, which correspond to 250 thousand tons of steel. Is design green? If by design we mean the invisible part of a project, which rules or, even better, induces behaviours, as opposed to all designs which find their raison d’être in their direct visibility only, maybe we have a possible key in our hands. An improvement in our relationship with the resources is usually proposed only through the use of new products, which do not belong to the green logics, precisely because they are new and because they substitute older products. The invisible designed, in the case of green, needs new assumptions and new motivations, leading to new objects or relationships between people, and between people and things generating or transforming previous things, with a different perception of new needs, objects, cars or houses, beyond any formal rhetoric. This is necessary to respond to a condition of restrictions, of unsuppressible growth, of slowness, which need small breaking off actions, even within rigid scientific disciplines.

Who does today the greener things? Those who make the most important discoveries are transversal figures, new professionals: designers creationships among new applications, which induces to the construction and the re-design of new behaviours.

PRIMA DEL DESIGN is an ongoing research by M. Cammarata carried out for the PhD in Design, Expression and Visual Communication, University of Palermo. Tutor: Gaetano Licata.

The projects

Green pantry

Vito Priolo

The green pantry project is a system of organic vegetables self-production. It is a vertical greenhouse, installed in proximity of the buildings façades. The greenhouse is developed in height, thus allowing to serve each habitative unit through kitchen garden-trays made of recycled plastic. The greenhouse, closed by a polyethylene membrane, on a couple of steel posts on which a drawer system is installed. This system, sliding on tracks, allows the kitchen garden-trays to come close to the users, to the point of entering their houses. The system comprises kitchen garden-trays on different levels, suitable to different free spaces and to the different positions and dimensions of balconies and openings. The structure is therefore light, flexible and independent from the building. The dimensions of the kitchen garden-trays can vary, increase in depth, according to the needs of the users, so that the greenhouse changes its appearance. The cultivation of vegetables, set into an expanded clay layer, is hydroponic. The irrigation is granted through a gravity system, which, ruled by a timer, lets the water enriched with fertilizers fall from the reservoir located in the upper part of the structure, into the individual kitchen garden-trays. This model of alimentary self-production sparks off a change in daily behaviours and rhythms, since the greenhouse needs to be maintained and cared for, it encourages the production and the consumption of organic food and at the same time a low energy impact cultivation.

The green pantries have a direct relationship with the city and its landscape, they spread a message in favour of recovery and reuse of a culture which is closer to environmental preservation, and to the protection and care of nature’s products.

Green shelf

Anna Maria Ferraro and Paolo La Spina

Green shelf is a system which can be fitted onto existing buildings with the aim of making room for all those objects which, as proper parasites, in the last decades have cling onto the façades, testifying the need for new functions linked to domestic life, to which the interior of the houses was not able to respond. In this way, each apartment, equipped with its own “shelf”, sets windows, balconies and façades free from air conditioning units, satellite dishes, laundry, sun protective tents, closed verandas… and re-organises the reconquered space in function of a green life style: rain-harvesting tanks, small gardens, spaces for relax and leisure, pantries, cooktops, photovoltaic panels, solar panels, micro-eco-life, small greenhouses… It is not an organizing principle, nor a façade’s homogenization system, rather a grid whose filling is made of countless different solutions, because countless are the needs of each habitative unit, and therefore the composition theme is not given but it is a result, and it is never definitive. Because of its flexibility, the green shelf is replicable on a urban scale, changing its configuration according to the building it is fitted onto. It is made of a grid of modular metal elements, anchored to the existing façade at a certain distance according to the presence of balconies. It is therefore continuously expandable or dismantlable when it is not necessary anymore.

Le tapis énergétique

Monica Andaloro and Andrea Di Franco

The piezoelectric generators, mechanisms capable of converting kinetic energy into electric energy, occupy at the moment a middle position in the system of devices, which promise to produce, with low costs and high energy efficiency, electric energy from any given movement. This technology, which is currently being perfected, was first applied successfully in Japan, where piezoelectric cells, fitted into a stretch of pavement, produced 0.5 KW/h electric energy for each individual pedestrian step. From this fascinating idea, a project for a domestic object...
to that of one made of integrated systems of things, people, objects and institutions, has produced, in the past few years, a new attitude towards design. In the last years, design projects have increasingly tended towards the production and consumption of iconic objects, limiting themselves to fulfill demands which often don’t contribute to innovative research on the object or to research which might bring about proper changes through the objects themselves, in terms of usage and habits. One possible way is trying to take a step back, before taking the pencil in hand, working on everything which comes before the object and which is not visible, some sort of pre-design, in order to achieve results which may push forward the research on the product and produce tangible changes in economical, social and institutional areas. Even small objects for common usage can produce major transformations, such as new and different behaviours. Let’s take the pen as a possible example to lay out a process/project, starting, first of all, by observing and acquiring knowledge, not limiting oneself to work on the level of the shape and image, but rather on a protocol of constraints, assumptions and influences, which could really allow us to transform and re-think the object until it becomes something else. The question we should ask is, precisely, what is a pen? It is an object which releases ink, and, thus, a sign. If, on the one hand, it takes its name after the goose quill (Italian ‘penne’), which releases ink when dipped into an inkwell, on the other hand, its formal structure, the fact of being a monodimensional object, is not to be attributed to a sought after resemblance to the shape of the goose-quill, as much as to external influences. The first real transformation of the pen-object is indeed related to a shift in vision and meaning, that is, to the moment when the pen becomes at the same time an ink-container and an instrument to release it. The principles of capillarity and gravity become the new body of the project, give structure to the new object which has a high conceptual value, and can be thus articulated, yet keeping rigorously intact the principles on which it relies. The fountain pen becomes an increasingly complex and sophisticated object. Its materials, joints and couplings may vary, and new and different inks may be used, but these are all variations of the same project. A ball covered in mud whose rolling releases a sign on the ground, inspires the Ungarian journalist Lázló Biró to work on a ball point, which releases ink touching a paper sheet. The ball point, designed by Biró in 1938 and later diffused in 1945 by Marcel Bich, essentially transforms the pen-object. The new point enables faster and smoother writing, it limits and graduates in a better way the ink release and establishes new relationships among the parts which compose the object. The ball point, the bic, becomes the pen; a ball point, a thin container for rather more fluid typographic ink, a rigid protection and a cap, kept together by simple joints among the parts, so simple it can be produced as a disposable object. This is a real design project, very high in conceptual value, which sets the pen free from a category of objects which are linked to a specific use, and makes it used daily and continually, almost as an appendix of our body. Up until today no other design has succeeded in transforming the pen-object by innovating it, except for the retractable tip, which, transferring the cover function to a spring inside the shell, thus allowing the release and retraction of the tip, has somehow reshaped the formal structure and the usage of the object. But in what way and with which attitude could it be possible today to face the design project of a pen? Moreover, in 2003 Bic announced having sold an impressive 100 bil-lions disposable pens; how many of us have ever wholly consumed a Bic? The two, apparently distant questions suggest two ways of working on the pen design theme, detaching oneself from the process, largely used in the last years, of working on the ‘dress’, on the shell, making the design project coincide with an image operation, somet-imes with proper massaging. The first possibility is to work on the pen-object in an indirect way, for example reorienting to the gravity principle of the fall of the ink, or to work on the writing surface: by induction, this would produce new gestures and other new pens. Another possibility is to carry on with the work on everything which a disposable pen produces, and on what it can become. That is pen design too, perhaps a less tangible design, but one of actions and rela-

of self-degradable materials, engineers of biogenetics producing sewage bacteria, plant-scientists creating plants which clean up polluted water, nanotechnologists calculating in real time traffic stre-a.ms, scientists calculating the energy saved by simply painting roofs in white and thus returning some heat to the atmosphere... If new mass behaviours do not develop besides scientific research, the green challenge is doomed to remain difficult. And if an actual cultural passage can be helped by green as a fashion trend, or as a slogan... why not? If only riding a bike became fashionable instead of having a SOH. 3 Lucas Bardone, Okologie – nur eine Mode?, in: Die Kinder fressen ihre Revolution, Köln 1985, pp. 220-224. 2 German institution for the environment preservation’s announcement, cited in “La sostenibilità è un tema di frontiera”, in: Michelangelo and Lucia, Centro di studi per la sostenibilità, Torino 1992, p. 146. 4 Lucas Bardone, Per un design invisibile, in: D’Arte, n. 153/1983. German original: Design ist unsichtbar, in: Die Kinder fressen ihre Revolution, Köln 1985, pp. 42-48.

(page 9) Urban Tour At Teresa La Rocca’s house. A conversation by Gaetano Licata Since 1972 Teresa La Rocca has been living in Palermo historic centre, in a house with three green areas, in front of the harbour: it is a house she transformed several times. We visited her on the Saturday before the workshop.

Gaetano Licata: You’ve been living in this house, transforming it and watching its growth; it is set in a saturated urban area of the historic centre, yet it features two patios and a terrace which flourish with vegetation.

Teresa La Rocca: I’ve been living here for more than thirty years... and, as you know, the house was there, the actual changes have been minimal, mainly small adaptations to the changes in life...what really grows is the vegetation. In my patios the trees have found their climate. I’ve planted myself many plants which are local; this one for example comes from a broken branch I picked from the big ficus tree in Piazza Marina. There are even twenty-five year old plants, which I

am often forced to cut, since they sometimes invade the house; I somehow protect myself from them rather than cultivate them, so every now and then, zac...

Gaetano Licata: With regard to going green in an active way: have you ever thought about fitting photovoltaic, solar panels, or rain-harvesting devices in this house?

Teresa La Rocca: No, never, here I don’t have any climatic issue, the patios, the vegetation, the ventilation, affect a rather enjoyable way of life... gre-en... you would say. These days, I am confronted with this theme, I have to say I’m a bit desperate, I can’t find a solution

Gaetano Licata: Why?

Teresa La Rocca: I’m trying to understand what is the best way of doing it. I won’t just pick the panels and install them; for example, nowadays they are handed out on a plate, there are tax incentives, discounts, and energy saving has become a proper business. Everything in Italy turns into a business. I don’t know, I’d like to use them to make pergolas; I don’t know yet how to do that, I am working on this, you can’t just have them fitted, they are so invasive...

Gaetano Licata: Don’t you think that dealing with those things we often call gad-gets, since they are usually just superimposed, is a legitimate duty? The fact that many of us are not eager to use those objects confines their use, disposition and integration, only to those people who make a profit out of it, from manufacturers to sellers, to installers or even certain engineers. Is this a subject to consider as well?

Teresa La Rocca: Yes, that’s true, but I’d rather think of this as of a collective matter, I don’t know, for instance, on the scale of a small community of flats within a house, instead of enhancing the individualistic policy of a single use of improvements, which I would almost forbid. On the contrary, a strong promotion is currently taking place, making the in-dividual purchase and installation of these objects much simplified, while there are only few strategies for collective needs. I think that in Italy there is no sense of public responsibility, nor the acknowledge-ment of a small community such as, for example, that of a house split into apartments. Everyone acts for himself. ‘Town’ and ‘Public’ are words ignored by the majority of people.

Gaetano Licata: Therefore, energy saving, for instance, can only be a collective attitude