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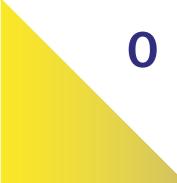
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EDITORIAL #26

Humanizing Energy

Design and Art for Energy Transition

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The energy transition represents today an unavoidable challenge, a necessity and an environmental, social and economic urgency that can no longer be postponed. Institutional actors, governmental and non-governmental bodies have defined strategic objectives to pursue it, yet they have undertaken actions that are still too often of limited impact. International programmes include, for instance, the 7th SDGs of the 2030 Agenda and, in the European sphere, the European Green Deal and the most recent REPowerEU, with which the European Union has set the target of using 42.5 percent renewable energy in its energy mix by 2030 (European Commission, 2022). The plan calls for parallel efforts to reduce consumption, improve the energy efficiency of buildings and production cycles, and invest in energy storage infrastructure.

The climate crisis also prompts a rethink of fossil fuels' environmental and social impact. The transition to more sustainable sources, instrumental in a serious reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, is indeed an important step in the fight against climate change. An increment in energy sustainability also goes in the direction of countering the emergency of energy poverty: whereas in developing countries the latter manifests itself in the inaccessibility to the electricity grid for about 1 billion people, Italy alone in 2021 accounted for more than 2.1 million households experiencing difficulties in acquiring a minimum basket of energy goods and services (8.5% of total households) and in 2023 10% of minors still

lived in unhealthy, poorly heated and/or cooled, or poorly lit environments (Castellini et al., 2023).

As a matter of fact, the energy transition concerns all fundamental aspects of societal life: health, work, the quality of everyday spaces, mobility, as well as cultural production and the fight against inequality and discrimination. Community, care, technology, culture, identity, education, neighbourhood welfare, behavioural change, urban biodiversity, social and ecological networks, soft mobility and urban resilience are but a few of the themes that converge in a truly sustainable and inclusive energy transition.

With this in mind, it is surely a collective responsibility to identify processes and methods to implement a rapid and effective energy transition. In this process, design and the arts represent strategic levers of action and innovation, for they may stimulate paradigmatic changes in the ways energy is produced and consumed, in the ways it is used and in the behaviour of individuals and communities around it, to experiment with new conceptual and operational models and, in short, to propose paths towards a more sustainable future.

In this vision, design disciplines intervene on the "hard" components of the energy transition but also on its "soft," more relational, and qualitative components. This dimension is "close" to the people and calls upon the responsibility of individuals without leaving the solutions solely to institutions, companies, and international bodies. Instead, the energy transition is based on the collective participation of all social

bodies, formal and informal, and requires sharing themes, scales, and project intentions. Indeed, the transition requires systemic, structural, technological, political, economic, and cultural changes involving individuals, communities, and all local and global actors. It is, therefore, necessary to implement a revolution of the current models, starting from a more widespread energy education towards scenarios – some of which are already visible – of co-creation, co-production, and co-management, of short and circular supply chains, of self-production and digitised and smart processes, to secure a safe, ethical and welcoming future.

Innovative models such as those of Renewable Energy Communities (Bolognesi & Magnaghi, 2020), so-called circular neighbourhoods, and "proximity" energies aim to engage individuals and businesses in the creation of a local energy system, re-establishing a direct relationship between users and production, while creating new jobs, stimulating community cohesion and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, are heading in this direction. Ultimately, it will enhance territorial specificities and promote opportunities for social innovation and new forms of energy democracy (Liberti, 2022).

Issue #26 of PAD, therefore, gathers reflections, studies, and research proposals that highlight the role of design and the arts in promoting systemic innovation, both in terms of practice and cultural and social meaning, to provide new models of sustainable energy production, use and consumption. In particular, the issue explores how art and design actions can lead to a transition toward innovation in values, models, and

tools. These three categories also articulate the structure of the journal. Innovation in values leverages culture and knowledge about energy-related phenomena and transforms everyday behavior. On the other hand, an innovation involving models ignites the development of increasingly participatory and collaborative processes in energy production and consumption systems. Finally, sustainability undoubtedly passes through innovation in tools, which are intended as devices and technologies for sustainable energy production but also understood as those supports aimed at increasing awareness about the role of data and information in the overall energy balance.

1. Values: Energy Cultures & Behavioural Change

The first section, *Values: Energy Cultures & Behavioural Change* is dedicated to pieces that explore the role of design in promoting energy sustainability through cultural and behavioural change. This involves spreading new value systems and increasing the knowledge and awareness of individuals and communities. In this context, design, with its interdisciplinary connections, emerges as a powerful ally for individual and collective education. It can generate support for change, raise awareness, engage people and broaden participation in transition processes. Furthermore, design can outline new future scenarios for energy production and consumption, create new formats for managing daily actions, and envision energy-efficient goods and services. It can also promote using sustainable energy sources by adopting technologies and materials with reduced environmental impact.

The essay Re-Crafting Energy-Related Household Routines: The Integration of Design Methods in Behavioural Change Theory to Foster More Sustainable Routines by Giovanni Profeta, Francesca Cellina, Desirée Veschetti, Evelyn Lobsiger-Kägi, Devon Wemyss and Pasquale Granato focuses on the promotion of more sustainable household routines in terms of energy consumption using design methods integrated with behavioural change theories. The authors describe the development and implementation of the Social Power Plus (SPP) mobile app, which aims to promote energy-efficient behaviour. The app is based on the Model of Action Phases (MAP), which identifies four stages of behaviour change. It uses data visualisation techniques to provide feedback to users according to their level of data literacy. In addition, the app provides social networking features to facilitate the sharing of energy saving experiences and knowledge.

The contribution by Gijs van Leeuwen and Abhigyan Singh, *Exploring Design Fictions as Tools for Transformation Towards a Human-Centered Energy Transition*, explores how design fiction can be used to support people-centred energy transitions. The authors propose using design fiction as a method of world-building to imagine alternative realities and intervene in the development of energy infrastructures. The emphasis is placed on using design fiction to influence values, mindsets and practices across the distributed networks that shape energy transitions. The authors present seven speculative scenarios to illustrate possible futures of energy infrastructures, aiming to create a comprehensive approach that can influence systemic energy transitions while maintaining a human-centered focus.

The essay Environment/Data/People: [Eco] Participation Through Data Visualisation as Design Strategic Approach for Engaging, Sensitising, and Educating the Community to Energy Transition, by Alessio Caccamo and Anna Turco, explores the role of data visualisation in promoting energy literacy and participation in the energy transition. The article highlights the importance of engaging citizens through visual and participatory methods to foster a deeper understanding and commitment to sustainable energy practices. The article discusses different design strategies to make abstract data more tangible and engaging, including visual metaphors, data art, and data physicalisation. It presents several case studies and examples of effective data visualisation projects. By involving individuals and communities in participatory data visualisation, it is possible to create a more emotionally engaging and accessible understanding of complex energy data.

Marco Manfra and Grazia Quercia, in the essay *Design for Temporary and Sustainable Music Festivals: New Values and Informal Educational Systems for Humanising the Energy Transition*, explore the role of temporary and sustainable music festivals as vehicles for promoting new environmental, "energetic" and social behaviours. These festivals can typically address environmental impacts such as energy consumption, fossil fuel use, biodiversity loss, CO2 emissions and waste generation. The authors argue that these festivals can inspire personal responsibility and promote practices of sustainability and circularity. They examine several European music festivals, detailing their sustainability strategies and encouraging responsible behaviour through interactive and engaging methods.

The essay Talking about Energy: Design and Language for the Energy Transition written by the editors (Barbara Di Prete, Agnese Rebaglio, Lucia Ratti) concludes the first part. It emphasises the critical role of communication in the energy transition. It argues that design can play a key role in engaging people both cognitively and emotionally in discussions about energy sustainability. By creating a new language around energy, design can, in fact, promote knowledge and awareness to combat the "energy illiteracy" that is currently making the majority seem disinterested in transition-related issues. Starting from the observation that the technical and specialised language currently used in the energy discourse often has an alienating effect on people, the authors suggest that the development of a new everyday vocabulary could help to bridge this gap, making sustainability a more integral part of everyday life and thus encouraging behavioural change. The article outlines different design approaches to help cultivate a culture of sustainability, making energy issues more understandable and actionable for a wider audience.

2. Models: Energy Communities & Collaborative Landscapes The second section, entitled *Models: Energy Communities & Collaborative Landscapes*, examines alternative and innovative collaborative models of production, management and consumption, mainly characterised by participatory dynamics, community practices and collective empowerment in constructing new economic and social visions. The five contributions offer complementary points of view on methods and tools for raising citizens' awareness, but also on new forms of "proximity" energy co-production and co-management aimed

at combating energy poverty (energy communities, short supply chains, self-production models, local renewable sources).

All these analyses point to the strategic role that design can play in promoting the containment of energy demand, guaranteeing access to energy for all, promoting increasingly inclusive, democratic, and conscious processes of community welfare, but also in outlining new scenarios of more sustainable consumption, redefining both individual behavior and collective aspirations.

Debora Giorgi, Claudia Morea, Chiara Rutigliano, Letizia Giannelli and Luca Incrocci, in the essay entitled Services to Design Change: Gamification Opportunities to Generate Virtuous Behaviours and Design Sustainability Pathways, explores Design for Behaviour Change (DfBC) practices capable of promoting an energy transition based on more sustainable consumption, more conscious behaviour, the ability to embrace technological advances and the application of user-centered design strategies. The contribution aims to provide a theoretical and methodological framework that combines the skills of design with those of social psychology to make sustainable energy choices and personal desires and not merely social or regulatory constraints perceived as distant and suffered as imposed. The essay presents case studies that testify to the effectiveness of the proposed practices in raising awareness and stimulating a collective commitment capable of determining impacts in terms of energy, environmental, and climate sustainability, even in the long term.

The essay Energy to Design Communities: Energy Communities and Communities of Practice to Support Marginal Areas in Abruzzo, written by Rossana Gaddi, Raffaella Massacesi, Luciana Mastrolonardo and Davide Stefano, illustrates a systemic and multiscale design experiment carried out in Taranta Peligna (CH). Here, the construction of a Renewable Energy Community provides an opportunity to support high-quality artisanal resources, recover the excellence of the local industrial history, valorise the great environmental heritage of the area and counteract the growing depopulation. The aim is to define a production model based on proximity, public-private collaboration and the use of an open-access Geographical Information System, in order to develop inclusive, community-centred scenarios for clean energy production that combat energy poverty and, in the long run, generate economic, cultural, social and environmental benefits, starting from the energy lever itself.

Carla Sedini, Francesco Zurlo, Stefania Palmieri, Mario Bisson and Silvia Peluzzi, in their essay *Enhancing Wind Farm Projects: A Systemic and Strategic Design Approach to Community Acceptance and Engagement*, investigate how to increase local acceptance of wind farm projects by integrating landscape knowledge and cultural significance through a systemic and strategic design approach. A case study analysis of fifty energy transition projects was undertaken and a matrix was filled to map the case studies based on user involvement and their relationship to the environment. The study highlights the need for community engagement at both the design and implementation stages to achieve local acceptance. The discusses strategies in-

clude educational activities, visualisation of abstract concepts of sustainability and co-design workshops.

The essay by Andreas Sicklinger and Adrian Peach, Powered by the People: Human-Powered Energy Generation as a Lifestyle Choice, addresses a crucial issue that is both a constraint and a lever for the energy transition in a society dominated by consumerism and the pursuit of well-being: the need to replace the dominance of waste with a different social vision that does not conflict with the expectations of citizen-consumers, but is capable of asserting itself as a new, desirable, more ethical and also more attractive lifestyle. With this in mind, the essay illustrates an experiment carried out in two university workshops and invites to take advantage of people's growing interest in health and sport as an opportunity for design, using the energy of physical movement to power household appliances and proposing new products to generate decentralised energy, mainly at home or at work. Starting from concrete solutions, the text thus pursues an ambitious and far-reaching goal: to act in the sphere of awareness, responsibility and individual freedom, and to induce a collective change in behaviour for the benefit of society as a whole.

The contribution *Designing Community-Driven Energy Solutions*, written by Valentina Auricchio, Marta Corubolo, Stefana Broadbent, Beatriz Bonilla Berrocal and Chenfan Zhang, proposes a wide-ranging critical and design reflection, developed in the academic sphere, which identifies renewable energies (solar, wind, biogas and other green sources) as the challenge and opportunity for a future capable of reducing CO2

emissions in the most congested areas of the world, while at the same time reducing energy poverty in the most remote areas or among the most vulnerable populations. Electrification is therefore a prerequisite, strategy and objective for the realisation of this inclusive scenario. In particular, the essay examines a number of community energy solutions that allow citizens to become protagonists of change, sharing resources with their neighbours through networks, often autonomous, that envisage different possible infrastructural distribution models. The results of these experiments are the strengthening of the sense of belonging to the community, the construction of social capital and the transition towards an increasingly necessary local empowerment.

3. Tools: Energy Technologies & Digital Awareness

In the third and final section, centred on Tools: Energy Technologies and Digital Awareness, the focus shifts to the more "hard" component of the energy transition. The four contributions collected here are concerned with analysing and proposing directions for an infrastructure, process or service innovation that is brought back to the human scale, suggesting reflections on the introduction of new techno-ecological approaches to energy production, horizontal models for its distribution, recalibrated habits around the use of the web and a renewed awareness of the impact of digital behaviours.

Projects and field experiments aimed at investigating the role of design and art in defining a new productive, commercial, distributive, but also conceptual paradigm - reported first-hand or taken from the literature and critically analysed here – find space in this section, along with data-based reflections on the impact of current technological and digital solutions, to stimulate further discussion on the existing need for the use of "better" tools, and at the same time a "better" use of the ones that already exist. The role of art and design here becomes that of "contaminators", capable of identifying alternative strategies to the current ones, gathering clues from different domains of knowledge and grafting between the meshes of technical-technological knowledge the human need to understand and the collective need to be aware of the change we are living.

Suzanna Törnroth, in her essay Solar Biota: Co-Living with Solar Ecologies, presents a personal experience of field experimentation in the sphere of alternative solutions for energy production. Challenging the prevailing perception that associates solar energy with the image of large photovoltaic panels located in places that are inaccessible or otherwise distant from the experience of everyday life, the author reports on the results of a five-month multi-species ethnographic study during which she observed her SunSpider - a small prototype of a photovoltaic "organism" - interacting with the ecosystem and other living and non-living entities. Exploring the possibilities opened up by a relational approach to photovoltaic technologies, the essay offers points of departure for a reflection on the complexities and possibilities inherent in the increasingly necessary act of co-living with solar energy-producing devices. Combining an interpretive lens derived from artistic practice and research with a new materialist perspective, Törnroth proposes an original narrative of the

ecosystemic, climatic, and relational entanglements that are triggered in these "solar ecologies" by the conscious coexistence with the technology they bring forth.

From the Cloud to the Ground: A Data-Driven Research to Build Informative Heritage on the Internet's Energy Footprint, written by Fabiola Papini, Francesca Valsecchi and Michele Mauri, moves the spotlight onto the impact of a technological area that is extremely close to our lives: the Internet. Contrary to the common understanding of the Internet as an intangible and lightweight "cloud" devoid of any physicality, the authors bring to the fore the significant resource consumption and contribution to global warming that the vast network of digital infrastructures involved in the functioning of the Web implies. To this end, the essay employs communication design, and in particular data visualisation, both as a method and as an output, to address the knowledge gap that currently exists around the energy footprint of digital activities, and of contextually identifying visual strategies suitable for effectively communicating such complex data. The interplay between human behavior, technology, and the environment is central to the authors' discussion, which ultimately aims to raise awareness of the unsustainability of our current relationship with the internet in order to act as a guide to a more responsible digital future.

The essay *Towards Energy Sustainability in the Digital Realm:* A Compass of Strategies Between Natural and Artificial Intelligence, written by Michele De Chirico, Raffaella Fagnoni, Carmelo Leonardi, Ami Licaj, Giuseppe Lotti, Manfredi Sottani and Annapaola Vacanti, also proposes a critical reflection on

the digital as a non-immaterial entity and suggests ways forward from the current predicament. In particular, the authors highlight how the use of digital does not automatically reduce the physical footprint of human activity but rather requires dedicated planning and design aimed at promoting sobriety and moderation, sustainability, accessibility, and inclusion. With this in mind, the essay examines several virtuous contemporary strategies aimed at minimising the energy consumption of the digital, analysing them through a dual reading criterion: practices that use artificial intelligence to improve system efficiency, on the one hand, and practices that rely instead on natural intelligence to redefine established consumption paradigms, on the other. Finally, by clustering these strategies according to further parameters, the essay proposes a significant set of actions aimed at promoting the energy transition within the digital realm, in line with an increasingly post-anthropocentric vision of design.

Lastly, Davide Crippa and Massimiliano Cason Villa, in their essay *Understanding the Energy Transition by Analysing the IT Revolution: An Infrastructural Reading to Direct Design Approaches Toward Energy Sustainability*, draw a connection between the more strictly instrumental field of energy production and distribution technologies and the digital world, weaving a parallel between the energy transition and the IT revolution. Using the IT metaphor as a critical-interpretive tool, the authors focus on the similarities between electrical energy transfer systems and data transfer systems, deriving from these observations a series of operational suggestions that could be transferred between the two domains.

Indeed, the issue of optimising the architecture of computer networks has been addressed before, and the lessons learned from its revision can serve as a guide for the reassessment of current energy policies. In particular, the paper explores the peer-to-peer model as a possible approach to horizontal and community-based energy management through the analysis of recent experiments in design and art and pilot projects carried out in European cities, with the aim of identifying design strategies and synergies that can inform present and future energy infrastructure planning.

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Since 2019 he has been collaborating with the startup Design Differente, taking care of participatory didactics projects on Circular Design topics, with partners such as the Municipality of Milan, La Triennale di Milano and the SOUx school of Milan. Since 2022 he has been teaching at the New Academy of Fine Arts in Milan; today he is a student at the Doctorate in Science of Design at the luav University of Venice, with a research focus on Design and Circularity studied under the lens of product life cycle assessment tools.

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