

field:

a free journal for architecture

PRINT ISSN: 2753-3638
ONLINE ISSN: 1755-0068
www.field-journal.org
vol.II(I)

A TALE OF SOFT SPACES AND SEEDS UNDER THE SNOW

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This essay narrates two alternative spatial practices: *Software-ing Spaces*, an intense living-designing-building residency inside the former monastery Sant'Agata in the old town of Bergamo, Italy, marked by its transformation into a prison that was active up until the 1980s; and *Seeds Under the Snow*, an experimental laboratory for knowledge exchange and testing ground for innovative methods and technologies set within Bergamo's Orti Social (Social Gardens) di Porta San Giacomo. This initiative aims to converge local projects and networks in urban agriculture and social development, while forging partnerships with European counterparts. As encounter space, educational exchange, and on-site experimentation, it endeavours to unite, amplify, and empower.

Both projects seek to challenge systemic procedures that regulate the construction sector, visible in the control of material lines, compartmentalisation of actors, and other logics based on budget or efficiency. Instead, they embrace the volatile urban condition and pay tribute to the ever-changing nature of all human and environmental properties. They attempt to put place, resources, users, and builders in sync, developing spatial ideas based on empathy instead of imposition.

The text, which is based on the two authors' experiences in spatial research and practice, consists of a poetic narrative as its main body, accompanied by a number of visual impressions and further academic reflections in the margins.



Figure 1. The former cells of the ex-prison Sant'Agata. Carrying a vast load of critical memories, the 'hardware' of the prison spaces marked the framework for the experimental design and living experience with the aim of 'software-ing' its spaces in a collective and communal manner. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 2. Moment of arrival: the first assembly of the temporary inhabitants of the Software-ing Spaces experiment. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.

PREAMBLE

The small frame cut out of the thick, run-down walls would show the exact same image every waking day: a darker red of distant roof tiles and then, a bit further away, the bright, sandy plaster of a bell tower. The skies tried their best to offer consolation, adding their varying shades of blue, white, and grey to the palette, but even so, they remained incapable of breaking the monotony of this grid made by thick, black steel bars. As he let his thoughts drift to his beloved daughter, the only source of comfort and warmth left against the inmate's crowded tension and biting cold of the cell, he wondered how anyone ever could have chosen such a view on the world voluntarily. Every time he heard the nearby church bells chime, he thought of how it must — once — have been a consoling call to duty for the faithful inhabitants of these walls. And how — now — had become a **painful reminder** for him: of every passing hour, day, month he was locked up in there for his attempts to fight for a future world worth living in.

SOFTWARE-ING SPACES

His future world is our now. As the lock clicks and we push open the long-forgotten prison door on a beautiful summer day, we are met by dark, dust, and ... silence. The place cannot look much different to the day it had been abandoned, around thirty years ago, in exchange for a modern prison on the lower outskirts of the city, far from the scenic sphere of the tourist magnet of an Italian old town marked by its integral beauty. The generosity of the monastic architecture, with its arches and window ornaments, is in stark contrast with the barred gates and appended steel doors dividing cells. And even though we can sense the brutality of those elements around control and means of spatial organisation, their state of decay, somehow, makes them less appalling. But perhaps this is just due to the fact that — now — we are the official **custodians** of it all, the caretakers and keepers of the key.

Painful reminder | CONTENTIOUS HERITAGE

Sant'Agata is the architectural site at the centre of this essay. It is what is considered a critical, or *contentious*, heritage with various pasts: transformed from a medieval monastery into a prison during Napoleon's reign in Bergamo (a mid-sized city with a tourist magnet of an old town in Northern Italy, nestled into the stark spatial contrast of the hyper-industrialized Po-valley and pre-Alpine nature surroundings), the fascist period and the imprisonment of partisans opposing the regime critically stands out. The text hints to documents conserved from that time, such as letters that Giulio Fiocchi — imprisoned in the early 1940s based on accusations of antifascist behaviour — wrote to his daughter. The attempt for a critical contemporary usage of contentious heritage, particularly in the context of urban commons, has marked the base for the project development. Ours and other examples of approaching the work with contentious heritage in the Italian context are collected and discussed in *Patrimoni Inattesi. Riusare per valorizzare. Ex-carceri: pratiche e progetti per un patrimonio difficile*, ed. by Francesca Lanz (LetteraVentidue, 2021).

Custodians | COMMONS

After the prison's relocation in the 1980s, Sant'Agata remained unoccupied. It fell under administration of the municipality of Bergamo as a protected heritage and urban common. The concept of commons is originally rooted in natural resources and access to land, referring to the right to equal distribution of water, soil, and products of agriculture and foraging, to be shared among and managed by a community cohabiting a territory. From a legislative point of view, it used to frame the access to farming lands in many geographical contexts. In recent years, this concept has shifted to the urban landscape: as Francesco Caneschi points out in his research, urban commons is related to the movement of the 'right to the city' and to those practices of engagement, activism, reclamation of heritage, and struggles for a just access to cities. In Italy, urban commons are regulated within a legislative framework, elaborated during the Rodotà Commission in 2007, that facilitates the adoption of commons by municipalities and cooperation pacts with civic social networks. See Francesco Caneschi, 'From Commons to Urban Commons: Complexity and Contradiction in the Translation of a Concept', *UOU Scientific Journal*, 1 (2021), pp. 36-47.

The project ExSA (short for Ex-Sant'Agata) is one example of an urban common cooperation between the city of Bergamo and our social association Maite (later joint by So.No — Società Nomade) that started to take care of the former prison in 2015. The core team of So.No is a diverse, multi-disciplinary team of six members. In close collaboration with the city's social network and other civic groups active in Bergamo, various social and cultural events were facilitated within the premises of ExSA over a period of eight years, culminating in an intense cohabitation workshop.



Figure 3. Software-ing hostile environments: the cellars cleaned out and transformed into a sleeping pavillion Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 4. Moment of arrival: while the first meals had to be organised as part of the orientation process, the later meals had an entirely organic nature and were collectively organised and commonly produced. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.

And so, we slowly and cautiously seek to form an idea of what the place and ourselves will require to meet each other's needs. We start getting to know each other, room by room, object by object, and we feel as if they are going through a cleansing moment as much as our minds that engage with time witness and document through all sorts of modes: touching, reading, **sorting**. We define, organise, throw out, put on display, and then make the space fit for its use, arrange for heating, fix water and sewage, and refit the electricity.

People begin noticing us. Neighbours stop to ask where we vanish to at the end of that narrow alleyway. Hardly anyone knows the hidden side door, but the curious ones dare surpass its threshold, following us through the long entrance corridor into notknowingness. There's a lot of disbelief first, but also curiosity around what's next, the longer now. Now, we answer, we all narrate this space once more.

We invite everyone in and then reach out to those who can help us in formulating the foreword of a new storyline for turning its (now clean but still) hard features into a place of softer nature. Actors, dramaturges, dancers, musicians, and craftspeople flow in and carry word outside. Much sooner than we could have expected, we learn what the city's present need for a place like this looks like and it manifests in exhibitions, performances, installations, workshops, parties, concerts, childcare, and artistic practices. The engagement with the space becomes larger by the day, and soon our hands become too few to **care and maintain** what we have started. We convene and reconvene, in search of ways that allow the many of us to guard keys, to continue what is steadily growing, to keep it safe, clean, open, pleasurable, and equally accessible. We try to grow better over failure of calendars, turns, circles ... and still we have to acknowledge that exasperation and exhaustion find their way into our tale.

Sorting | CLEANING

Everyday acts of care are performed in the most private and public places, in the intimacy of homes and in the publicness of streets — yet most of it remains unnoticed. Housekeepers, garbage collectors, and window washers dedicate their time to care of others and of the spaces we inhabit. Yet ever too often, they remain unseen and are disregarded in environments that separate and hide dirt, waste, and broken things. Seeking to understand the multifacetedness of cleaning as cleansing procedure in the context of ExSA means also to draw from feminist philosophers, activists, and artists that have empowered invisible actors of care by reclaiming cleaning and maintenance as pillars of our society's functioning and efficiency — against the predominant thinking that promotes neglect and waste. These acts have been elevated to art, for instance in the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, particularly as part of her performative *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969).

Care and maintain | MANAGEMENT

Once a common space gets domesticated, questions around its contemporary and adequate use arise, along with accessibility and eligibility of its user groups. In the eight years of collective care of ExSA, questions we encountered included: When to indulge in certain activities, when in others? Who is responsible for cleaning, supplying, and maintaining? Who is responsible for what goes out and who comes in? How to take care of resources and waste? How to decide collectively? Decision-making and management can become the predominant aspect; roles and rules might provoke conflicts, smoothen processes, trigger separations, or strengthen relationships. The critical decision to be made is the kind of organisational structure: it will be most likely be based on cultural and political ideals, as much as on the perception of personal comfort. And, as Albert Meister and Jo Freeman suggest, the perfect organisation could be a structureless one, but it is probably not the easiest, nor the most enduring method. See Albert Meister, *Sotto il Beaubourg* (Eleuthera, 1988); and Jo Freeman, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* (Agitprop, 1972).



Figure 5. The temporary inhabitants formed into four groups with each one focussing on a different spacial condition inside the former prison and working on strategies of 'software-ing' them. Every group was supported by mentors that were particularly active in the initial management and project development phases. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 6. Ways of reclaiming spaces: also outside the ex-prison, the *Salotto* (living room) team was seeking to create software-d atmospheres at Piazza Vecchia in Bergamo's old town, experimenting with acts of communing against touristification trends. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 7. *Cucina* (kitchen) team testing a sink with water recycle system, aiming for sustainable and autonomous forms of cohabitation. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 8. The temporary inhabitants teamed up in four groups, working on three different spaces of the prison and the more hybrid space of communication. This image shows the atmosphere before the final collective dinner under the canopy that was produced by the *Salotto* (living room) group. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.

Outside protagonists increasingly endanger the narrative by reminding us of our **timewise limited occupation**, though we feel our journey has just begun. The looming end of our custodianship makes us become more radical. In what seems to be a final upheaval, we decide to give our vision of the softest possible autonomy through cohabitation yet another go — **independent of institutional parameters**.

So, we open yet another sub-chapter: Pietro has our (and our space's) back, guaranteeing our sovereignty over the keys against all external forces, while Francesca pulls all strings to draw the entire city's network of creatives and their social and sustainable energy and work into the stream of our vision, all hands on deck! Giovanni transforms even the darkest spots of the cells into cosy sleeping places for the new temporary residents while Yona goes on a treasure hunt for materials and objects in the vast cellars and assembles a wonder chamber of remains — to be brought to life one last time. Ernesto prepares the first meal to share together while Giuseppe gathers all available **tools**. And then we use our key to open the doors one last time, teaming up with as many people as the place can hold and together, as a group of fifty from all over the world, to start from scratch.

Timewise limited occupation | MOBILE SOCIETY, NOMADIC SOCIETY

Migration and mobility are increasingly defining our contemporary society. Not least because of shifts in climatic conditions, we seek new definitions and modes of cohabitation as well as social cohesion. Our work inside urban commons is marked by impermanence and uncertainty, yet we seek to interpret that as a factor of strength. We find inspiration for our *Società Nomade* (Nomadic Society) in the work and research by the Rome-based collective Stalker — a practice implementing pedagogical, performative, spatial, and activist interventions. They explore and expand the nomadic dimension of living within urban contexts. Nomadism, here, represents an inclusive societal act, which carries around its cultural, political, and economic assets beyond any defined fictional border. A nomadic society can settle temporarily and react smoothly in an ever-changing context, trading and dialoguing, accepting the transformative nature of spaces in their ecological dimension, with a low tangible impact on the territories and a rooted legacy on relationships. See Francesco Careri, *Constant: New Babylon, una città nomade* (Testo & Immagine, 2001).

Independent of institutional parameters | AUTONOMY

'Software-ing Spaces' was an intense living-designing-building experience inside of ExSA in November 2023, proposing an independently organised way of cohabitative, autonomous organisation. Our curatorial choice of testing autonomy as a form of social organisation was inspired from principles of self-determination, and self-organisation and the speculation around what can happen when normative concepts are dissolved. Autonomy as a socio-political principle emphasises an active, collaborative, and disruptive approach to the development of practices and spaces. Figures such as Colin Ward have dedicated their lives to exploring and supporting practices of autonomy in what can be described as anarchist movements. Autonomy can be understood not only politically, but also spatially, pedagogically, and relationally. See Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (Allen & Unwin, 1973).

Tools | TOOLS

The choice of tools around the facilitation of collective and participatory design projects is essential. 'For the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change' said Audre Lorde in an introductory speech to a conference in 1979. A tool can take the form of equipment, language, space, media, laws, and many more. And tools are essential in shaping an action, be it a protest, a construction, a performance, an encounter: they set the basis of, embody, and channel any tangible or intangible interaction. Tools translate ideas and shape horizons of action: they set the scenario that will host the desired transformations and come to identify those to adopt them. To rethink an action in revolutionary terms firstly requires rethinking tools in revolutionary terms. See Audre Lorde 'The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House' in *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldum (Persephone Press, 1981), pp. 98–101.



Figure 9. The collective preparation of meals marked an essential part of the cohabitation experience, as did the considerate planning of feeding over fifty people. Attempts for a more sustainable approach included the reduction of energy wasted on food processing through adapting recipes as well as counteracting consumerist norms through the collaborating with local associations saving supermarket products from being thrown away. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 10. Some hands of the *Salotto* (living room) team while producing the canopy. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 11. Shared quarters: upon arrival, the winter school participants started spreading out in the former cells, transforming them into their ephemeral bedrooms. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.

We find that it is, indeed, possible. A marvellous entanglement of collective decision making, shared support, divided and yet commonly arranged working steps — all wanted as much as necessary to accommodate and service ourselves, and to care for one another while living in this free and yet binding spirit of both **responsibility and comfort**.

Paolo thinks of ways to let the water circle instead of going to waste, Masha — with the help of the nuns next door — reactivates centuries-old monastic recipes, Grete **assembles materials** to become mobile chairs, and Deborah lets tables dance but still belong together. Claire builds a fireplace that we all gather around while the hands of Silvia and so **many more weave together** a cloth that can host us and guests for our dinners. Later, at nightfall, we span it as a protective firmament above us. We whisper our wishes to it before falling asleep, just to re-encounter them in our dreams.

Responsibility and comfort | MUTUALISM

Mutualistic arrangements hint towards relations that have a beneficial outcome for every party involved. In the context of our work inside of an urban common, the definition of shared responsibilities under a collective vision follows the principle of mutuality. While the history of mankind and the animal kingdom teaches us the law of natural selection, alternative scenarios to that history of violence and oppression exist. Pëtr Kropotkin, for instance, argued — amid his long-term research at the turn of the twentieth century — that concepts such as *survival of the fittest* are justifying state-oriented politics and the consolidation of empires. Kropotkin proposes a rather different narrative: animals, as humans, manifest an inborn predisposition to mutual aid, to overcome adversities and face dangers. His collection of practices and habits across eras and territories mark a mutualistic and radiating history of the living creatures. See Pëtr Kropotkin *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (McClure Phillips, 1902).

Assembles materials | SELF CONSTRUCTION

Self-build methods, as applied in our project, mark the most ancient and original way of producing any built environment. It implies the direct engagement of future users in the construction of a building without prior construction knowledge. Self-builders work with skills they have acquired through other professions or self-education, out of force or necessity. The majority of the global population builds their homes applying local techniques, scavenging low-cost materials. In doing so, architectures of needs and means are created. In contemporary societies, self-building has come to identify informal settlements in developing countries as well as practice of building housing cooperatives, and — in a design-oriented perspective — the work of collectives that adopt participatory methods in the production of community spaces. See Bernard Rudofsky *Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed Architecture* (MOMA, 1964); John F. C. Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments* (Pantheon Books, 1976); and 'Special Issue: The Segal Method', *The Architects' Journal* (1986).

Many more weave together | STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT

To inhabit a place means making it accessible, safe, comfortable, and functional. This might require various actions including securing, cleaning, organising, emptying, and lighting up. But it also requires installing certain structures to allow specific interactions with the space and among the users. Choosing, building, and activating these structures defines a sophisticated approach to space, and can generate inclusive or exclusive processes of domestication. When structures are shared, open to interpretation, easy to access and flexible, they can constitute a valid system of support for users who approach a space. The concept of 'structures of support' was defined by Celine Condorelli and embraces a wide spectrum of artefacts and actions that encourage, give comfort, and sustain maintenance in the process of cohabiting. See Celine Condorelli, *Support Structures* (Sternberg Press, 2009).



Figure 12. Shared quarters: some of the former cells of the monastery and ex-prison became the inhabitants' indoor camping area. Photograph by Giovanni Emilio Galanello.



Figure 13. Detail of a Software-d Space: the carpet and pillows completed the *Salotto's* (living room) canopy. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 14. Structure of support: still from the *Salotto* (living room) canopy in action. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.

The closure of our eight days of constructive cohabitation falls together with the end of eight years of commoning inside the former prison. As we free the cells from our presence and kiss goodbye to our fellow visionaries, we hope they will — just like the objects we had created and carried to neighbours who took them in — continue to disseminate our story.

Then, we begin roaming the city once more, our ever so curious eyes wide open, wandering, wondering. And we think we can hear a whisper that is answering our questions, our search for a new common place of action, this time bringing together our structural and collective endeavours with the ecological sphere. And it seems to draw us away from the old town, up the hill on its winding streets, to where people do not live anymore but the city still does not want to end ...

PLANTING SEEDS UNDER THE SNOW

When standing on the former defence wall of the city, you could overlook the whole valley. If the increasingly recurring smog would permit you a clear view, you can see the dense web of houses far below you, the green houses, massive factory plants, their tall chimneys, and from time to time, airplanes would sail in and out of your vision. But if you were to turn our head in the other direction, you'd see the Alpine foothills climbing up against the horizon, some of their peaks powdered with a thin layer of snow. **There used to be** more of it, the people of the city would tell you — if you even were to meet someone you could ask, since only very few still find their way up here.

There used to be | TIME

It takes time to blossom, to grow, to farm, to build, to settle down, to heal, to understand, to collect; it takes next to no time to destroy, to erase, to waste. We are living in what commonly gets referred to as *times of crisis* and, simultaneously, as a race *against time*. As we are facing a relentless acceleration of environmental catastrophes, mainly related to human interference with ecological systems, we have arrived at a point of no return: there is no way of maintaining a current condition. The only option seems to be the re-establishing of a more intimate connection with natural rhythms, to regain rituals that can put us in contact with biological cycles. We cannot stop, but we are given the chance to slow down, and if we cannot save what is left, at least to witness and understand. Some of the most appealing spaces to do so are garden spaces, private and communal ones, as beautifully depicted in Olivia Laing's project 'Garden Against Time'. The gardens of the Orti Social (Social Gardens) di Porta San Giacomo mark the next project site, seeking to bridge the missing link between critical spatial practice as performed in ExSA and the ecological dimension with a particular focus on urban nutrition. See Olivia Laing, *The Garden Against Time: In Search of A Common Paradise* (Picador, 2024); and May Rosenthal, *Food Bigger Than The Plate* (V&A Publishing, 2019).



Figure 15. Before or after? The structures for the community kitchen developed by the *Cucina* (kitchen) team and left after the closing dinner inside the cellars of Sant'Agata, inside its former church. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 16. Still of the experimental food processing table assembled by the *Cucina* (kitchen) team. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 17. Food is a communal ritual: still of the installation by the *Cucina* (kitchen) team. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 18. A fictional fireplace built by the *Cucina* (kitchen) team to gather around at night and warm through words, smiles, and music. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.

Quite on your own, then, you could wander around the dense web of the old town, find its many hidden gardens, and if you were to look around a bit more carefully you would find traces of patches and some fruit trees, and you might even stumble upon the well, covered with wooden planks. If you were to investigate some more on the story of the old city's defence walls, you could find that once the city had been able to care for itself, **taking care of one another**, making careful use of the resources around them and living in sync with nature and its shifting seasons. And if you would follow the ancient walls towards the hinterland, you would learn that there are initiatives that are already working on the translation of this **ancient knowledge into modern form**.

Perhaps, you would like to let your imagination grow — right here, at this castle that towers above the city, letting it become a lighthouse to offer orientation against hyper-industrialisation, touristification, pollution? As soon, it will be winter, the days will become shorter, and darkness will have a larger share to cover the city. And its people will be in need of some light to offer orientation, comfort, and reassurance. Why don't you do the **groundwork** right now, right there, where you stand?

Groundworks | SEEDS

The *Software-ing Spaces* winter school ended after one week in November 2023, as did the urban common agreement of So.No with the city of Bergamo. The city gave way to a more normative approach for Sant'Agata. Constructions are currently underway to transform the former monastery and prison into a housing complex — despite innumerable creative and social projects over a period of eight years demonstrating its potential as a collectively-used space. Nonetheless, we strongly believe in the worth and value of our temporary occupation and its effects over a longer span of time, leaning our philosophy of So.No (nomadic society) on thinkers such as David Goodway. Following his terms, we believe our project as well as our future endeavours are 'seeds beneath the snow in the harsh winter of the present. The seeds need to germinate, to put forth shoots and buds, eventually to flower,

if there is to be any chance of a decent life for humans in the future.' According to Goodway, counter-hegemonic and dissident movements in culture, art, and politics manifest like seeds in a subterranean dimension: they act against the official system, shaking it from its foundations, comparatively fragile but in fact rooted and spread; they develop over long periods of time, sometimes apparently disappearing only to be reborn in new forms. To join a counter movement is to care for and nurture it, but it is also to have faith that it will resist the harshest winter, to reappear even stronger the following spring. Planting seeds, in this sense, had become the defining idea for the transitional phase between *Software-ing Spaces and Seeds Under the Snow*, which took place inside of the Orti Sociali (Social Gardens) di Porta San Giacomo in September 2025. See David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* (Liverpool University Press, 2006).

Take care of one another | COHABITATION

In mainstream thinking, building is an elite act, providing for the needs of many. But in everyday reality, much of the global population has to fend for itself, recalling the ancient bond between living and building. Cohabiting a territory as a family, community, or society means to fulfil collective needs and relations: achieving this with a respectful and sensitive approach to available resources, natural cycles, and processes means a way of building as living and — vice versa — living as building. The ecological dimension of cohabitation, as expressed by Sergio Los' works and words, manifests in a conscious, bioclimatic approach to building that reconnects the value of landscape, natural elements, and energy to that of living as a constructive practice. On this same note, the *Territorialist Manifesto* has expanded the notion of building to the territorial scale, reclaiming the landscape as a common and emphasising our responsibility of living as a society accordingly. See Sergio Los, *Geografia dell'architettura. Progettazione bioclimatica e disegno architettonico* (Società Dei Territorialisti, 2013); and Società dei Territorialisti, *Manifesto della Società dei Territorialisti* (self-published, 2011).

Ancient knowledge into modern form | UNLEARNING

Amid the drastic speed of change, particularly amid the context of loss in biodiversity and shifts in climatic patterns, knowledge can rapidly become outdated. Previously unrelated fields or disciplines may need regrouping. The ability to transform and change, in this sense, could be referred to as a process of unlearning in order to create room for new ideas and creative endeavours. There are various spatial practices to facilitate those processes ranging from performative to interactive installation works. The architectural and artistic collective The Missing Link, for instance, was active during the time of the so-called oil crisis in Vienna and conducted workshops and performances to critically address the architectural use of fossil resources and concrete, as well as the alienation of humans from their natural environment. The aim was to actively include a large group of participants and citizens in their critical spatial practice. See *MISSING LINK: Strategien einer Architektengruppe aus Wien, 1970–1980*, ed. by Anna Dabernig and others (Birkhäuser, 2022).



Figure 19. A prerequisite of the support structures crafted during the winter school was their nomadic character and functioning. The *Corridoio* (corridor) team translated this into 'dancing tables', modular and flexible. The tables were adopted for the communal areas of the Youth Prison in Milan. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 20. Connective detail of the 'dancing tables' built by the *Corridoio* (corridor) team. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.



Figure 21. The materials for the support structures were mainly from objects or elements found on site or leftovers that were provided through friends and neighbours. A careful consideration of their values and potential of re-assembly was a central prerequisite for the work of the *Cucina* (kitchen) team. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 22. Member is the *Corridoio* (corridor) team, setting up their wood workshop in the former cells of Sant'Agata. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 23. What will remain after we leave? The team *Parole* (words) made sure to leave the entire group's manifesto, spreading them on the ex-prison's wall. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 24. Experiencing *Parole* (words) on all sensual levels: the sound system set up in the cellar at the public closing event. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello



Figure 25. Are the structures we develop working as nomadic devices? Experimenting with the *Salotto* (living room) canopy as a carpet in the prison courtyard. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.



Figure 26. The *Parole* (words) team in the process of weaving together words and materials, developing new modes of narration. Photograph by Yona Catrina Schreyer.

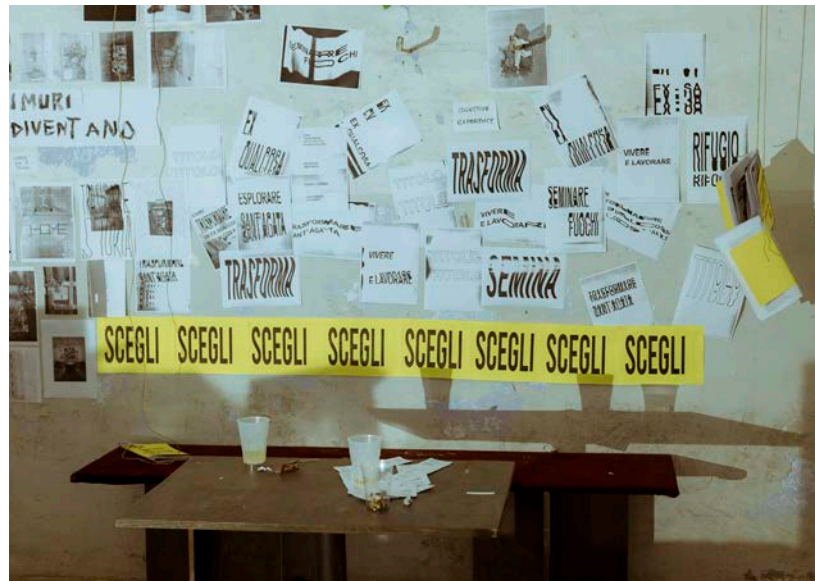


Figure 27. Glimpse of the narrative installation developed by the *Parole* (words) team. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.

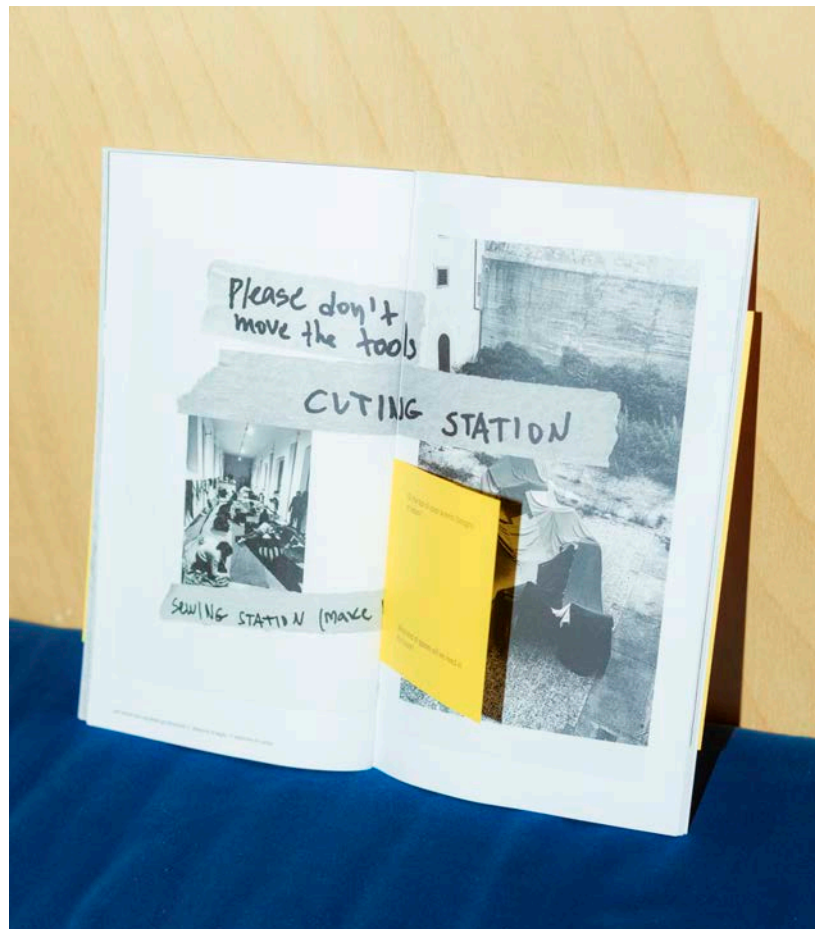


Figure 28. The *Software-ing Spaces* fanzine reflecting on the space and cohabitation experience, collected and produced by the *Parole* (words) team. Photograph by Giovanni E. Galanello.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone who embarked on the *Software-ing Spaces* adventure with us and who has continued to support us, making *Seeds under the Snow* possible — in particular the participants, the contributing design collectives, our local partners, and everyone who lent a hand.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Francesca Gotti and Yona Catrina Schreyer are the curators and creative leads of *Software-ing Spaces* and *Seeds Under the Snow*. They put forward their alternative spatial practice together with their non-profit collective So.No — Società Nomade in Bergamo, Italy. So.No's work is dedicated to cultural, social, and creative communities and aims to spark opportunities for their various protagonists through identifying spaces of action and making them accessible and usable. They seek to put those in touch who are not connected or failed by normative structures, empowering communities to organise themselves.

Francesca Gotti, architect and researcher, explores empowerment through spatial interventions and simulations. She holds a PhD from Politecnico di Milano on critical spatial practices in South Europe. She was research fellow at University of Pavia for COSMO on self-building practices and assistant at USI Mendrisio for the design studio Neotopia by Leopold Banchini. Since 2015, she works in Bergamo on reuse of urban commons, recently as part of the association So.No. — Società Nomade.

Yona Catrina Schreyer is an architectural designer and holds a Ph.D. from Politecnico di Milano. She works as Senior Scientist for the Department of Cross-Disciplinary Strategies at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, is a member of So.No — Società Nomade, and part of the Ecologies of Care group. Through her activities, she explores the relation between society and the design of the built environment, developing interdisciplinary experimental methods and alternative spatial practices in public space and urban commons.