



Some views of Estia. the hearth room, the result of the design and self-build workshop.



ESTIA. The hearth room, is the pilot project of UPDATE # Urban Upgrading Processes format, conceived by sa.und.sa architetti to propose participative, low- cost and self-build infill public spaces as urban renewal strategy.

Estia is a place, within the ruins of Senerchia, where gathering, conversation and debate are more than welcome; it is an incubator generating its own energy from vitality, from experience, from wisdom and from the desire of knowledge.

It's been realized during a 7 days workshop, where eighteen university students faced the results of the participatory process facilitated in the previous months by sa.und.sa and found design solutions to restore and re-functionalize a ruin in the old inhabited town center, cut into pieces by the earthquake 1980.

The aim of the project was to create and convey social cohesion by offering a new concept of "making architecture". Standing on top of the ruins left by the earthquake, this new place was not built to commemorate, nor to celebrate the disaster. It is rather the proud acceptance of what has been lost and the enthusiasm of discovering what future awaits us.

The ruins and the new construction come together and embody the ethic and moral commitment of living which is represented by human frailty and its extraordinary ability to regenerate itself. An architecture capable of transforming violence just as violence was able to transform what was existing.



VIDEO > vimeo.com/saundsa/estia

ESTIA. The hearth room S.A.UND.SA ARCHITETTI



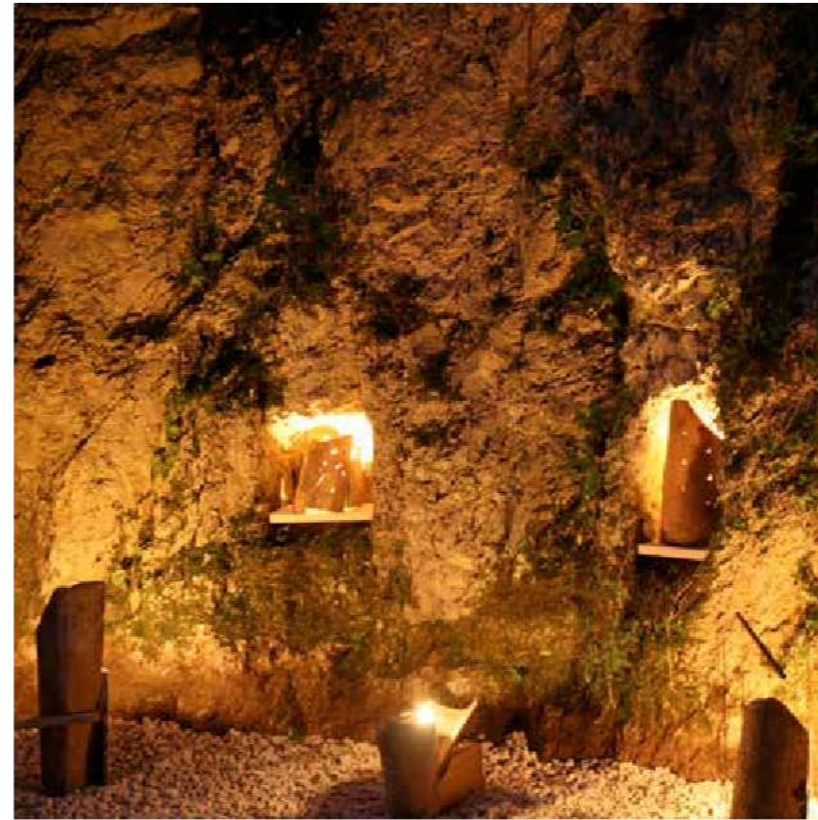
On the top some views of the “outdoor” relational space.

On the bottom the permeable wooden wall that make Estia a lantern: the only point in the abandoned historic center from which, at night, when someone is gathered around the fire, a warm and reassuring light beats, representing a possible urban regeneration.



We do believe in the role of architect in the contemporary society, this is why we strive to produce simple and suitable projects: clear answers to the expectations of our interlocutors, coherent with the contexts in which we operate. Estia, as well as the most of our works, is grounded on the implementation of small site-specific interventions through urban-hacking operations, easily reproducible by citizens; this is a healthy practice that can enhance the social and local “know how”, develop networks and catalyze civic interdependent forms of responsible self-government of settled communities.

In an increasingly educated, pluralistic and multicultural society, in which priorities and values are continually renegotiated, is still widely held the idea that the future of the city is manageable through the work of a restricted circle of experts and public officials erected as custodians of “the verb”. The reality, conversely, always more frequently replaces shiftless top-down strategies by self-organized practices, make-shift actions that, through the declaration of a state of exception, bypass processes and timing of the formality, offering prompt and consistent answers to the needs of contemporary settlement. We look at these practices to intersect needs and improve bottom-up initiatives from an informal state to a formal one.



On the top the inner lighting of Estia was created using recycled tiles, re-designed to protect the candles and diffuse the light. This system has been borrowed by the traditional votive lamps scattered in the inhabited old town centre. On the bottom some moments of discussion, reflection and collaboration of the self-build workshop



Today, it would be necessary to rediscover an idea of the city seen not just as a place inhabited but rather as a place that is produced by living and working together in a community network. Working through the instrument of the workshop in Senerchia allows professionals and citizens involved to face themselves with their possibilities, with the limits of create with their own hands, with the need to overcome the difficulties through an horizontal comparison of priorities and objectives, and the awareness to have a collective responsibility on the expected results.

Besides we hold that every public space project must be able to sustain its own debasement – crossbreeding is more appropriate – maintaining its dignity in an unprecedented coexistence. Working together, during the workshop, we built a new kind of collective intelligence and a new type of communication spreading horizontally the mastership of methods, techniques and operations to understand, access and modify a system – to hack it. Thus citizens, in the role of urban-hackers, have been the key players of a city-making processes: after the achievement of a deep knowledge of the space they inhabited, they have been able to access and modify the structure in order to make them compatible with the needs of the community they belonged to.



On the top Michele, a 91 years old inhabitant of Senerchia, narrating his memories of the place, during an interview.

On the right the visit at Estia of 80 young photographs and journalists coming from different european countries attending the "Project Village programme" to promote small italian villages.

On the top right some young journalists interviewing sa.und.sa on the workshop UPDATE.



Through UPDATE format, we activated processes that generated concrete solutions to the pressing needs of the community of Senerchia; it has been an opportunity to introduce a new way to experience the city, where people were put in condition to establish mutual relationships on shared programs and strategies which took account to alternative economy and saving forms, increasingly credited in the general situation of austerity.

In this scenario is both possible and necessary to develop public policies and urban design approaches that unhinge the "classic" definitions of ownership, financing and labor, catalyzing, through concrete actions, unexpected organizational structures of access to resources. This model can be enhanced by the increase of alternative trading systems such as peer-to-peer, time-banking, user-financing and various forms of venture-funding and crowd-funding, based on concepts of equity and reward.

Active participation in decision-making on public spaces, together with self-build let us reorganize a proactive citizenship: the first by converging interest and ability to dialogue on common utility fields; the second generating empowerment and providing the tools to change rapidly, reversibly and at reasonable cost urban spaces.