

## emBEDded labor

Workshop at Cittadellarte, UNIDEE.

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We gathered at Cittadellarte to undertake a workshop with the University of Ideas on The Architecture of Social Space: Creating Spaces of Critique Within the Places We Live. Through sharing in-depth discussions on our individual practices, listening to the histories of the city as they were shared with us in conversations with local people, and from walking the streets together we became interested in focusing on uncovering some of the current ideas and situations around labor and industry in Biella, and what it may mean not to work.

Biella's industrial past is a strong presence in the city landscape. The buildings of former factories and their chimneys speak about a community developed around labor. Labor and industrial development was what shaped the city the way we can see it now, and one of the underpinning elements to the community. It seems like the social fabric of the city is interwoven with the wool it produces. It is thanks to its factories that this region was historically one of the most wealthy and advanced in civil rights, but it is also the reason why, facing contemporary labor crisis, it has to face a challenging transformation.

We've all woken in beds in a dismissed factory for the past week. This simple image evokes reflections on how labour subsumption has affected leisure, and how the two aspects are intertwined. One cannot exist without the other, but it's not that easy to separate the two.

What does it mean to transport a bed, as a symbol of leisure, into a public space that seems to be imbued with work ethic? And what if, this leisure-related object becomes an object of labor by being publicly assembled? What if a moment of constructed leisure provokes a conversation on understanding labour paradigms differently? What if this site of intimacy becomes the place to begin a conversation on present labour conditions, starting from past narratives and offering a place to dream a different future? We ask people to tell their story...

## AAAAA Offresi tempo libero

per parlare di lavoro

EmBEDded Labour è un'azione organizzata da 3 artisti impegnati in un workshop a Cittadellarte.

In una città come Biella in cui il lavoro collegato alle fabbriche locali ha avuto, e ha, un impatto fondamentale sulla struttura sociale, ci siamo chiesti quale sia la relazione tra cittadini e lavoro, come sia cambiata negli ultimi tempi e quali siano speranze e paure per il futuro

Se sei interessato a condividere la tua esperienza puoi sederti al nostro letto e raccontarci la tua storia

Benaccetti i perditempo





"I work in my free time"



"We don't have anything left, but we don't have debts either."



“People maintain the idea that there’s nothing here”



“ We need a law that allows everyone to be paid... do you like that idea?”



“My sister worked a lot in order to find work.”



“What kind of work or non-work would you like to do, in an ideal situation?”

“I would do anything, also in far away places, like America. I want to become American!”



"I worked for 36 years here, but my son, in the last 7 years has only worked for 2 months, then another 3 months, then the last 6 months. And that's all."



"Thank You for you time! Don't worry we have time..."



"If you invest 12000 euros a year in your education, you can expect to find a job."



"You have to invent your work, or you need help from the outside. Maybe we should go back to the old community model."



"Have you ever worked?"  
"No"

#### NEXT ITERATION/NEW DIRECTIONS

From this experience of performing 'emBEDded labor' we found the visual element (bed, carpet, lamp, and small table) of 'emBEDded labor' was successful in getting people walking on the street in Biella to stop and engage with us.

We were able to have several conversations with people about labor and their experiences with labor, which was the intent of the project. However, after performing 'emBEDded labor' we came together the next day and discussed what we learned and to brainstorm how we could make it more impactful. From these discussions we found some new directions to pursue as possible new strategies:

After people decided to enter into the space created by the intervention we can develop an activity that the participants could engage with that relates to the theme of labor. Here are some ideas:

SURVEY - make a visual survey that has a picture of a girl, a woman, an older lady, a boy, a man, and an older man and next to each picture it asks how many hours a day do you think each person should work.

#### QUESTIONS

Another avenue of is to develop a line of questioning that is provocative yet does not alienate, but remains open and interesting. Such as:

"What would you like to do in your community if you were paid the same as the job you have now?"  
"What does it mean to not work?"

## CROSS POLLINATION

One area that we felt was successful and that we wished could happen more was the few moments where various people who didn't know each other began engaging with the project at the same time began to sit on the bed and talk with each other. This opened up the idea that the project could be a platform for the people of Biella to have time and space to talk to one another. One way this could happen is that we make the space bigger, for example with more beds, or try to rethink the visual trigger and develop an activity or situation that many people can participate in at the same time.

We discussed how this project could develop into a much larger project that could be the framework for setting up a system in Biella like TIME BANK – an alternative economic model where people able to exchange their labor for the labor of someone else. (A Time Bank is a community system where a person who volunteers one hour of their time helping someone else gains an hour time credit. They can then use that time credit or their accrued time credits to receive help from someone else. Everyone's time is equal no matter what each hour is spent doing. 1 hour of help = 1 time hour.)

After the Time Bank is established, we could continue to use the strategy of displacing domestic furniture into public spaces to create talking circles that further the discussion, and connect people with similar ideas to create focus groups within the Time-Bank. For example, if we uncover a particular need for a certain type of service or education in the town, then the people who would benefit from it could pool their hours and bring that resource to fruition. The public talking spaces would allow a platform for these interests to be uncovered, and for people to connect in a meaningful and productive way.