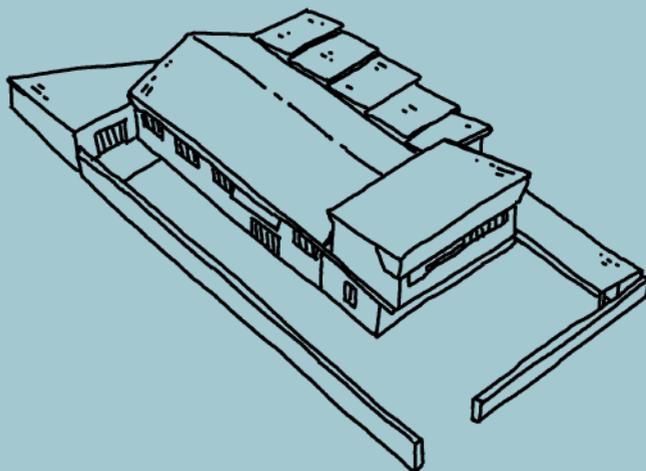


OvestLab

A community factory in the heart of the artisan village from 2015



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OvestLab is a community factory, a space that shares practices and thoughts about the reactivation of the Villaggio Artigiano Modena Ovest (Artisan Village of West Modena) through art, craftsmanship, urban regeneration and community participation. The project was created inside a former machine shop and is managed by two associations, Amigdala and Archivio Architetto Cesare Leonardi, in a framework agreement with the Production Activities Areas and Service Consortium of the province of Modena.

OvestLab is a multidisciplinary center in which training activities, artistic production, urban transformation and care of spaces can interact, starting virtuous circles that can increase the quality of life in the area and restart a dialogue with economic activities, while simultaneously engaging the local community in the process of change.



WHERE

OvestLab's headquarters is located in a former workshop that hosted a woodshop for many years.

Today the space is composed of an open space (equipped with lighting, audio, video projector and screen) where most of the activities take place, a smaller workshop area, two offices, a kitchen, restrooms, a warehouse and a large outdoor courtyard.

CONTEXT

Ovestlab is located in the Villaggio Artigiano Modena Ovest, the first artisan village built in Italy and which has become an emblematic model of public-private relationship, studied and replicated internationally. The village was built in 1953, in a period of deep economic crisis following the war, thanks to a public intervention of social innovation ahead of its time, and gave many unemployed skilled workers the opportunity to become entrepreneurs. The administration purchased agricultural land in an area near the then-railway and airport and transformed it into a productive area, inviting citizens to invest by opening a craft business. The workshop-houses, emblems of an inseparable link between work and life, reflected the resourcefulness of the inhabitants and the community bond of the village, which was built as a real production chain. Given their proximity to the airport and in order to avoid building speculation, the workshop-houses could have a maximum of two floors and contain a maximum of two apartments in each lot. Between 1953 and 1968, more than 100 businesses were started, and the number rose to 500 during the 1970s. Many of the workshops were built by the artisans themselves, also thanks to the support of an architect made available by the Municipality. 60 years later the village faced a slow decline, due to changes in the productive system that led to

the abandonment and degradation of 70% of the productive spaces. Some of these have been transformed over time. Today about 3,000 people live in the village, mainly elderly people and foreigners who have built places of worship in some warehouses.

LOCATION

Urban

TYPE OF SPACE

Building

ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Industrial (artisan workshop)

YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION

1955/1958

MAIN HISTORICAL FACTS

1953: the village is built.

1955-58: the machine shop is built

2006: the machine shop is closed and becomes a woodshop.

2010: the woodshop is closed.

2015: the city of Modena proclaims the village an "active transformation area".

2016: the space is temporarily reactivated during the Periferico Festival .

2017: the associations Amigdala and Archivio Leonardi win the Funder35 call for ideas and the expression of interest promoted by the Production Activities Consortium, thus entering into a three-year framework agreement for the management of the space. The Fionda magazine, open to all citizens, is founded.

2018: victory of the Culturability call for ideas and and execution of some renovation works.

2019: once the framework agreement expires, the lease is renewed directly with the owner, who has made some improvements to the space. Victory of the Creative Living Lab call for ideas, which allows for the activation of the MOP project.

SURFACE AREA

400 sqm

OWNERSHIP

Private

CONCESSION

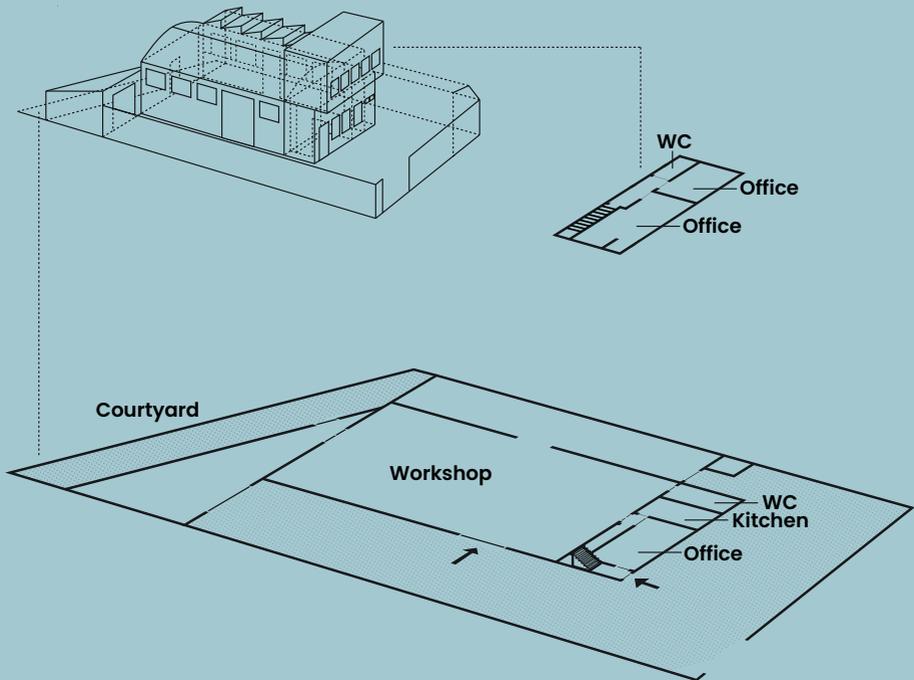
Regular rent

CONDITION BEFORE ACTIVATION

Abandoned

COMPOSITION OF THE SPACE:

- Main workshop
- Side workshop
- Warehouse
- Office
- Courtyard
- Kitchen
- Restrooms



Credits: OvestLab

WHEN

TIME OF DAY USED

Morning 7am - 1pm 20%
Afternoon ... 1pm - 7pm 30%
Evening 7pm - 1am 50%
Night 1am - 7am 0%

Workdays: 50%
Weekends: 50%

Winter: 25%
Spring: 25%
Summer: 25%
Autumn: 25%

OPENING HOURS

Open during specific events and initiatives

AVERAGE USERS PER DAY

10

WHAT

OvestLab's activity is organized around four themes:

Public art: works produced by artists called to establish a relationship with the urban space, with the inhabitants, with the places of the neighborhood

Shared territory: actions and tools that allow citizens to be key figures in the management of the territory they inhabit and to be able to welcome new projects as a resource

Knowledge assets: sharing of knowledge and skills still present in the village, starting from the historical heritage of the neighborhood to the present day

Civic economy: new forms of more equitable and inclusive economies that defend and promote social, cultural, and environmental values, boost local commerce, and develop forms of cooperation among citizens

The result is a rich, open, and participatory programming, which in addition to the activities and events promoted by Ovestlab, hosts initiatives of other asso-

ciations and entities of the neighborhood (organic market, dance nights, etc.).

SURFACE IN USE

400 sqm

THEMATIC AREAS

Culture and arts
Design, crafts and production
Education and training
Welfare

CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Public art
Performing arts
Artist residencies
Visual arts
Civic design

USER DEMOGRAPHIC

Artists and creatives
Associations and collectives
Children
Local community
Senior citizens
Young people
Under-represented people: migrant women

COLLABORATIONS

Artists and creatives
Associations and collectives
Citizens and local community
Companies
Other commons
Professionals and freelancers
Public administrations and public authorities
Universities and schools

NETWORK

OvestLab is constantly in touch with other organizations and community spaces on all levels.

Local: framework agreement for the management and for widespread projects in the village, Andante network (network of theaters), local associations and entities

Regional: HUB Usi Temporanei (Hub for temporary re-use by the Emilia-Ro-

magna region), *Giovani per il Territorio* network

National: Stato dei Luoghi, Civic Wise Italia, Rete Open (performing art festivals network)

International: Trans Europe Halles, IETM (international cultural networks)

WHO

Amigdala is an association for social development and support and an art collective based in Modena. It operates in the field of contemporary and performing arts, with a strong interest in urban regeneration and civic innovation. Since 2017, it has managed the #OvestLab project, together with the Archivio Architetto Cesare Leonardi association and in collaboration with the City of Modena.

COMPOSITION

Consortium or network

MANAGING ORGANIZATION(S)

1. Amigdala (association, 2005)
2. Archivio Architetto Cesare Leonardi (association, 2010)

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT

2 full time
3 part-time employees
2 freelancers
1 volunteer

HOW

NATURE OF THE INITIATIVE

Bottom-up

TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Horizontal

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

5% Membership fees
15% Public grants
5% Rental income
75% Regular public funding

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

95% Free
5% Paid

Focus on the cultural production

Periferico Festival

Periferico is an international festival of site-specific performance practices that was born in 2008 in a nomadic style, building ad hoc programs featuring meetings, performances, concerts and installations in several districts of Modena, and stimulating social and urban transformation processes. The festival is curated by the Amigdala collective and mixes art and performance, music and theater, architecture and civic design, based on the idea of promoting the creation of artistic works and practices through the reactivation of spaces that would otherwise be separated or hidden from the daily view of the citizen. The festival takes place in non-theatrical locations, chosen for their architectural value or importance in local history: factories, archives, warehouses, housing projects or other little-known but significant places in the city.

Today Periferico is a recognized and wide-ranging event. Based on a process involving residency, observation of the territory and meeting with the communities, the artistic direction and the artists together evaluate the possibility of adapting new or existing works or works specifically made for the festival.



How did your story begin?

Everything started with Periferico, the international festival of site-specific performing practices that was born to connect with some spaces in Modena, specifically those on the outskirts of the city or subject to strong urban transformation. It is a strongly experimental moment that allows us to test out and evaluate actions and interventions created in close relationship with the chosen spaces. Thanks to its structure, the festival has become a tool to connect with the owners of the buildings and to initiate processes, so much so that it has temporarily activated about 40 buildings in the city in collaboration with several entities, thus creating a widespread cultural center.

“The Periferico festival has become a tool to connect with the owners of the buildings and to initiate processes.”

Periferico got to Ovestlab in 2016. During that time, the Municipality proclaimed the village as an “active transformation area”, introducing benefits and incentives for changing the intended use of buildings. On that occasion, the Municipality temporarily rented the former workshop and initiated a series of local meetings that were attended by Amigdala, among other entities. In 2017, Amigdala and Archivio Leonardi won the Funder35 call for ideas and the expression of interest promoted by the Production Activities Consortium, thus entering into a three-year framework agreement for the management of the space.

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Is there a practice or value that represents you and you think may be an inspiration to others?

A practice that represents the way Ovestlab and the Periferico festival operate and the urban regeneration projects they started in the neighbourhood is “MOP – Modena Ovest Pavillion”, a public art project for the temporary transformation of a block of flats in the heart of the Villaggio Artigiano.

Thanks to our victory in a call for ideas, we wanted to give continuity to the artistic initiatives that have been active in the building since 2017, which have allowed us to experience its potential and to enter into a relationship with the owners, who gave us the opportunity to use the spaces for free.

MOP was created to rethink the potential of an abandoned space and be regarded as a good practice for the redevelopment of the village in which it is located. It is a shared project that has seen the participation of residents, volunteers, local entities, but also artists, curators and historians of contemporary art.

The project started with the launch of an open “construction site”, where the citizens participated in the cleaning and painting of the building. This phase was followed by the process of reappropriation of space, during which many actions took place: workshops of co-design and self-construction of interior design and furniture made with volunteers and students of the arts high school, artistic residencies, co-design roundtables, public talks conducted by critics and art historians, moments of reflection between artists and citizens, and finally, exhibitions and performance events in the spaces of MOP.

The project ended with a party and a shared collection of ideas for the future of MOP. As it often happens to “regeneration” projects, MOP was the beginning of another project – a widespread hotel in the Artisan Village that offers residencies or temporary housing to students and artists who will work on projects proposed by OvestLab.

What is the secret ingredient that makes your story unique?

Every time we close a project, we are aware that it will never really end, because all projects are actually processes. This awareness helped us to develop the ability to tie one project to another. The projects we work on in Ovestlab are full of cross-contamination. Let me try to give an example: AFOR is a project on oral sources, a digital archive that collects the voices of the many people who, in different ways, are linked to Modena's Villaggio Artigiano. Therefore, the project has allowed us to collect many accounts/stories to reconstruct the history and identity of this part of the city. But that's not all: the material collected by AFOR is often used to write articles for Fionda, another beautiful project created at Ovestlab. Fionda is a paper magazine conceived and built by a participatory and open editorial staff of citizens and people who work or live in the Villaggio Artigiano. Each issue starts from a keyword around which to establish unexplored connections between everyday life, memory and imagination. The magazine is distributed free of charge to all the houses of the neighbourhood and out of some local shops. Back to the theme of contamination, this year AFOR has also become part of the Periferico festival because we have started a three-year project of artistic residencies that will work precisely on the accounts/stories collected in the archive.

Interview with: Silvia Tagliazucchi



Did you know?

AFOR – the archive of oral sources

In collaboration with the Modena Institute for the history of the Resistance and Contemporary Society

The goal is to create – through video interviews stored online – a collection of the experiences and lives of those who have lived in the Villaggio Artigiano since its inception and contributed to creating its identity. This is not a museum operation, but a real historical and social documentation of the village: in fact, the digital archive aims to encourage multidisciplinary analysis and research ranging from academic to artistic fields. This path was born, above all, from the research work on the territory done over the years by Amigdala, and from the brilliant intuition of two thesis students: Cuan Sommacal and Diego Fiori. The voices of the inhabitants who saw the birth of this Village and who, thanks to their actions within the territory, have shaped its identity and soul, represent the values and the process of shared construction modeled by this village. The archive is available to anyone who wants to consult it, offering the chance to freely access the interviews, along with the documentation collected (photos, videos, digitized paper material) through a mapping that connects the places mentioned during the interviews to the voices that talk about them, in order to maintain a direct relationship between space and memory, also providing the possibility to create one's own exploratory path in the village, passing from digital representation to physical experience.

