Learning Lab 3 – Milan

FUTURING CARE
Rethinking well-being by envisioning digital solutions seamlessly integrated into daily life.

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School of Design @ Campus Bovisa, Politecnico di Milano

Building B2 - Room B2.0.1 (ground floor)
Via Durando, 10 - 20158 - Milano (MI)

As highlighted by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the heart of the 2030 European Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a shared blueprint for **well-being and prosperity for people and the planet,** now and into the future. Therefore, ensuring **healthy habits,** an **efficient healthcare system,** and promoting the **adoption of more sustainable behaviour** towards an improvement of personal and environmental well-being is essential to future sustainable development.

In this 3rd Learning Lab organized by Politecnico di Milano, the concept of care is considered from a convergent perspective as a combination of human and environmental health and their interaction and interconnectedness. Indeed, the planet's health is crucial for individuals' physical, mental, and emotional health.

It is expected the emergence of a "futuring care" approach, seamlessly integrated into daily life, and characterized by a deeper understanding of individual human biology and lifestyle, able to deliver disease and well care earlier and in a more personalized manner.

Indeed, more than before, care involves systemic processes, such as: making healthy lifestyle choices avoiding unhealthy habits, being physically active, eating healthily, and it ranges from promoting everyday well-being and taking care of self-treatable conditions to the management of long-term conditions and recovering after trauma.

In this ongoing disruptive healthcare, with the convergence of health and wellbeing (people and planet), significant challenges and opportunities are arising, leveraging a broader range of health solutions.

Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning Virtual Reality, Wearable sensors, and Internet of Things are emerging technologies with outstanding potentialities for care and well-being. Therefore, new digital care scenarios and solutions can be envisioned towards the creation of a more equitable and sustainable well-being ecosystem for future generations.

Within this broad topic, three thematic areas have been specifically defined as they urge today of an increasing attention and actions for an improvement in the future, through the strategic adoptions of digital technologies.

These are:

- Food as medicine
- Mental and emotional care
- Everywhere's care

FOOD AS MEDICINE

"By 2025 we will be eating our way to a healthy planet and population, stemming from the unstoppable rise of public awareness of how our food impacts not only our individual health but the health of the environment. Our palates, hungry for 'ecological public health'[1], will become more and more adventurous in using food as a tool for environmental action." (Sainsbury's, Future of Food report)

Nowadays, the food systems are extremely unsustainable- the chains of food production, supply, consumption, and waste have an immense impact on both **people**'s health, resilience, and well-being, as well as on the **planet**'s well-being and environmental systems.
Our food systems have become vulnerable due to the loss of biological diversity of plants and animal species. In the European Union, the *food is the second largest contributor* to our individual carbon footprint and its impact on biodiversity needs to be lowered soon.
Food as medicine concerns the ability and opportunity for a sustainable food chain to optimise both human health and environmental sustainability. The impact of food consumption and food behaviour on individual well-being is not limited to what people consume but it goes as far as how and where they consume it, as well as social and cultural factors concerning eating.
In recent times, food has become more "mobile" and is increasingly being eaten individually and in the shortest time possible. There is indeed a growing demand to optimize the time needed to prepare meals according to individual lifestyles and health conditions. Because of the growing attention paid to individual well-being and safeguarding health, innovation, and the implementation of technologies in the food industry will also be directed to the development of functional foods that concern the development of foods that can, for example, improve brain function, prevent ageing, combat fatigue, or induce drowsiness, etc.

Keywords:
 #awareness #lifestyle #sustainablefoodchain #planetwellbeing #peoplewellbeing

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL CARE

'A key factor underlying inappropriate diagnosis of mental health concerns is the restricted access to mental health services starting from primary care, with low availability of mental health professionals and short consultation times being the norm. There is a clear need for earlier and more accessible psychiatric assessments to reduce the need for high clinician availability.' (Mirea, et al., 2021)

The faster and more frenetic lifestyle which characterizes the current era, often induces high levels of emotional stress in people, translating into widespread conditions – depression, anxiety, and feeling of loneliness. This is especially true when talking about Gen Z, ranging from middle school students to early professionals, where nearly a third (31%) of them would rate their overall mental health in 2022 as bad (Harmony Healthcare IT, 2022). Two years after the COVID-19 pandemic began, Gen Z is reporting higher rates of anxiety, depression, and distress than any other age group. They also report more unmet social needs and the least positive life outlook, including lower levels of emotional and social well-being than any other older generation, including income, employment, education, food, housing, transportation, social support, and safety, which are associated with higher self-reported rates of behavioural-health conditions.

Eco-anxiety - the difficult emotions caused by environmental conditions and knowledge - is increasingly growing among Gen Z. They are indeed more aware and concerned about

climate change and social issues than any previous generation, experiencing anxiety about planetary health.

Being continually connected can also result in self-esteem issues and feeling pressure to conform. Especially for young women, photo-based platforms like Instagram are linked to worsening body image issues. Exposure to cyberbullying or content that features self-harm, harassment, and undereating can also be harmful to mental and emotional health. Emotional well-being has been indeed reported to be one of the key components of mental health as it influences work performance, learning outcomes, decision-making, health, and more.

Keywords:

#mental care #emotional well-being #anxiety #personalizedcare #behaviouralhealth

EVERYWHERE'S CARE

"The World Health Organization (WHO) defines self-care as the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote their own health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker" (WHO, 2022)

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on the importance of self-care as well as care for others, care service delivery and channels for providing care. The focus on care is expanding beyond the healthcare sector as businesses and services in other sectors are finding new ways to assist users.

Society is moving towards an integrated, co-managed, and person-centred healthcare model based on community cooperation and on the convergence of many stakeholders. Indeed, non-traditional healthcare companies are starting to see health as an integral part of their strategy and aim to play a larger role in improving our collective care experience, rethink the ways in which medical treatment is delivered. In the future traditional healthcare organizations can benefit by uniting complementary capabilities and strengths with convergence players, led by big tech and retail, and going to market together.

This cooperation between diverse stakeholders will facilitate a more distributed and accessible care in different places, environments and moments connected to our daily life, enabling care personalization, and enhancing equity and democratization of care, guaranteeing care to a major number of people. The spaces dedicated to care will extend, including our domestic, the communities and the urban spaces, allowing a seamlessly integration into our daily lives.

This radical paradigm shift is being empowered by the ongoing digital transformation which is impacting the healthcare sector as a whole and encouraging the shift from institutional healthcare towards a decentralized self-care.

Keywords:

#convergentcollaboration #preventative #environmentforcare #equity #anticipation