

MILAN DESIGN (ECO) SYSTEM

Salone del Mobile.Milano
Annual Report 2025



Salone del Mobile.Milano



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Milan Design (Eco) System 2025

The *Milan Design (Eco) System* research project is a Salone del Mobile.Milano initiative, co-conceived and executed by the Salone del Mobile.Milano and the Department of Design of the Politecnico di Milano

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In Milan, design forms the nerve centre of a productive, economic, social and cultural ecosystem that plays a strategic role. Year after year – driven by the momentum generated by the Salone del Mobile.Milano – this ecosystem grows increasingly aware of its potential and continues to explore new horizons. The more than 2,100 exhibitors from 37 countries, the over 300,000 visitors recorded in 2025, and the estimated €278 million in economic impact calculated by the Chamber of Commerce are clear evidence of the central role design plays not only in our economy but, above all, in the life of the city during Design Week.

The enthusiasm that Milan inspires – together with the artistic, cultural and entertainment initiatives that engage and attract creative talent from across Italy and the world, including the many events held throughout the city beyond the fair's grounds – represent an additional strength that the Annual Report 2025 *Milan Design (Eco) System* aims to highlight. Under the supervision of the Department of Design at the Politecnico di Milano and the Salone del Mobile.Milano, the activity of the Working Tables, and their updates provided in this document, furnish a thorough, rigorous and comprehensive picture of the impact the design world has on Milan. It is a practical resource to which the City of Milan is proud to contribute, sharing ideas and insights.

Attilio Fontana
President of the Lombardy Region

The second Annual Report *Milan Design (Eco) System* marks the beginning of a new phase in a project that is as ambitious as it is urgent – a stage that allows the synergy between the Salone del Mobile.Milano, the Department of Design of the Politecnico di Milano, the Lombardy Region and the main stakeholders to fully unfold.

Like a vessel shaped by what it contains, the Annual Report takes form from the data and visions it gathers, offering an ever-evolving picture. The unprecedented focus devoted to cultural production provides an analysis of the wealth of knowledge that nourishes and promotes the culture of design. It is the most effective way to reveal the connections between research, creativity and enterprise, making visible the fabric of relationships that sustain the ecosystem. The scope of the initiative is therefore broader: to narrate, to study and to monitor – always in the spirit of continual improvement and sharing that thrives on ever-renewed spaces for dialogue and exchange.

With renewed confidence, we welcome this second Annual Report as a tool capable of inspiring new pathways and consolidating a model of excellence that belongs to the entire community.

The Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week are true city-wide laboratories of innovation, creativity and design vision. They mark a key moment in the cultural, social and economic life of Milan. This is design-driven innovation: exploring signals from the market, technology and culture, amplifying their potential, and offering new ideas and solutions to both professionals and the wider public, locally and internationally.

For the Politecnico di Milano, these events provide a crucial platform to strengthen the connection between academia and industry, fostering collaboration between research and enterprise.

This second edition of the Salone Annual Report offers a renewed perspective on the Milan Design Ecosystem, enriched by the scientific contributions of the Department and the School of Design. Once again, design and architecture students played an active role, contributing with skill, commitment and critical insight to on-the-ground observation of the urban phenomena that animate the city during Design Week.

Through this project, the Politecnico di Milano – through its community of students, researchers and faculty – reaffirms its role as an active participant in this ecosystem, helping to shape a future in which design and innovation are essential tools for improving the quality of our experiences, behaviours and urban life.

With this outlook, the University will continue to support initiatives such as those promoted by the Salone, fostering shared and sustainable growth as the result of a fruitful relationship between the city and its university.

From this point of view the University will continue to collaborate on initiatives like this with Salone, which are able to nurture a shared and sustainable growth, resulting from the advantageous relation between the city and university.

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Gianfranco Marinelli
President, Federlegno Arredo Eventi

Maria Porro
President, Salone del Mobile.Milano

Salone del Mobile.Milano has always considered knowledge an essential part of its mission. From this perspective, the Annual Report *Milan Design (Eco) System* is not just an instrument of analysis, it is a project for collective value: an observatory that grows, thanks to the contribution of institutions, businesses, universities, associations, and professionals, with the aim of providing a shared vision of the transformations of Milan Design Week.

In 2024, with the first edition of the Report, a research project was launched that will consolidate over time: this laboratory of ideas analyses data, translating it into instruments through which to understand the Salone's impact on the Milan system: on the design industry and international design community. With this second edition, the project expands, introducing a new thematic focus dedicated to the cultural production of design, an element that, more than any other, illustrates the Salone's ability to generate economic and symbolic value.

Since its inception, the Salone has never been simply a trade fair, but a cultural and industrial engine, capable of intertwining innovation and thought, manufacturing and vision. Its most powerful instrument of leverage is represented by the capacity of design culture to impact society: to open new horizons for living and to build new connections between disciplines, markets, and people.

This year a decisive contribution again came from the *Milan Design (Eco) System Working Tables*, which in both editions engaged over 240 city stakeholders in an open and diverse dialogue. Their deliberations have enriched the Reports with multiple points of view, conveying the complexity of a constantly evolving context.

This second phase of research confirms the Salone del Mobile.Milano's commitment to creating a permanent platform for discussion: a space where knowledge is

generated, trust is cultivated, and a shared legacy is built, year after year, for Milan and the entire design system.

The result of this commitment is the culmination of collaborative work. Heartfelt thanks, therefore, go to the Mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala, and the President of the Lombardy Region, Attilio Fontana, for their support and collaboration through the relevant departments; to the Rector of the Politecnico di Milano, Donatella Sciuto; to the Design Week districts; to the trade and professional associations; to all the data holders who generously shared information; and to the numerous stakeholders whose active participation made this project possible.

Special thanks go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, to ITA-Italian Trade and Investment Agency, to Fondazione Fiera Milano, and to Fiera Milano for their ongoing support of the Salone's activities; and to the Politecnico di Milano for their scientific rigor which ensures the dependability of the research. Finally, special recognition goes to Fastweb+Vodafone, that launched a research partnership with Salone this year, contributing a data-driven analysis of the traffic flows in the city during Design Week, offering a further perspective on the event's impact.

Tomás Maldonado Art and Artifacts Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist

After collaborating on Es Devlin's project *Library of Light*, Salone del Mobile.Milano returns to conversing with Feltrinelli, selecting for the introduction to the second edition of the Annual Report *Milan Design (Eco) System*, an excerpt from Hans Ulrich Obrist's interview with Tomás Maldonado, published in 2010 in the volume *Arte e artefatti*. In honour of this free thinker, the value of the crossover between disciplines and languages, and the deepest and most contemporary meaning of design culture, Salone not only thanks Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, Milan, for this contribution, but also the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation, custodian of the Tomás Maldonado collection.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST: *Your biography is very rich and complex. And this can be grasped by simply going to a bookstore or library where, if one wants to consult your books, you have to visit five or six different sections: communication, information technology, philosophy, sociology, design, architecture, and art. Alexander Dörner, the director of the Hannover Museum who worked with El Lissitzky in the 1920s, said that to understand the true importance of the visual arts, you also need to understand what's happening in other disciplines. I must say, however, that I've never encountered a practice as transdisciplinary as yours. Can you tell me more about it?*

TOMÁS MALDONADO: I can imagine that my pursuit of transversality, that is, my tendency to operate in diverse fields of knowledge, may be surprising. And, in some cases, even the object of mistrust, or outright condemnation. Our society, it must not be forgotten, is a relentless 'labelling' organization. In practice, everyone is required to wear a single, clearly visible identification tag, and only one. Those who wear multiple tags, as I do, are usually a source of embarrassment.

HUO: *It's true, one often doesn't know which label is most appropriate.*

TM: However, like it or not, the pursuit of transversality has certainly been a constant throughout my now long intellectual journey. Every time I have been engaged (practically or theoretically) in a particular field of activity, I have always questioned what the possible convergences of this field are (or could be) with others, near and far. This has often led me, in my considerations, to go beyond the activity I was carrying out. Although my training has been predominantly artistic, I must say that from the very beginning my interests have gone far beyond the specific field of art. The stronger my commitment to artistic practice became, the more my interests broadened to include themes with philosophical, scientific, and sociological implications. And last but not least, political ones too. Indeed, even at a very young age, my concern (I would almost say my obsession) was to contribute to a *total*, comprehensive, vision of culture. Of course, in hindsight, such a project was overly ambitious, but it certainly anticipated, to some extent, my enduring interest in what you have called transdisciplinarity which, I would prefer to call, adopting a recently coined expression: a 'third culture'. That is, the attempt to overcome (or at least make less drastic) the famous dichotomy between 'hard' and 'soft' sciences.

HUO: *Don't you think the idea of a 'third culture' may perhaps also be too 'ambitious'?*

TM: It certainly is. But that doesn't change the fact that it expresses a profound need of the world we live in today. A world in which socially (and even politically) degenerative events are occurring, linked, among many other factors, to that

‘proliferation of the orthodoxies of separate camps’ described by Edward W. Said. On the other hand, I’m aware that in a society like ours, characterized by the role played by specialists in science and technology, devotees of a ‘third culture’ (such as myself and many others) don’t have an easy life.

HUO: *To tell the truth, not even the specialists do.*

TM: There’s no doubt about it: they are celebrated (and at the same time discriminated against) by the media as exponents of a world that is ultimately alien to ‘true culture’. (Usually, it is believed that the only – or principal – exponents of this idea of culture are artists, novelists and musicians, not scientists, engineers, and technicians). I am convinced that this state of affairs is in the process of changing. We must get used to the idea that culture, in the future, will be the result both of the work of specialists who, like speleologists, explore as yet unknown sectors of reality in depth, and of the work of non-specialists who, like tireless globetrotters, travel everywhere, pursuing their curiosity and seeking to establish connections between the different lands they visit.

HUO: *On the other hand, it seems to me that the category you call speleologists, that is, specialists, not only includes scientists and technicians, but also many exponents of activities traditionally considered humanistic. There are, for example, artists who pride themselves on being exclusively artists.*

TM: That’s exactly right. I’m reminded of the twenty-one-year-old Mozart’s letter to his father, in which he defined himself as a musician, and nothing more than a musician. On this point, Mozart included a very exacting list of everything he believed he was *not*. Neither a poet, nor a painter, nor a dancer, but only, as he said, a ‘Musikus’, that is, someone capable of expressing his feelings and thoughts solely through sound. Mozart was, therefore, a ‘speleologist’. Quite the opposite of a ‘globetrotter’.

HUO: *The metaphor of the globetrotter versus the speleologist is very seductive, but aren’t you afraid that the globetrotter might be judged as a slightly ennobled version of what is today disparagingly called a ‘know-it-all’?*

TM: I believe the issue of ‘know-it-alls’ should be clarified once and for all. Let’s see if I can. There is no doubt that know-it-alls exist. Know-it-alls are those who consider themselves qualified, and therefore authorized, to talk (and write) about anything, even things they are completely ignorant of. The best examples of this category are to be found among professional journalists and politicians. It should be noted however, that sometimes even great specialists, even Nobel laureates, venture into thematic fields that have little (or nothing) to do with their specific discipline. I remember once listening to a lecture in Milan by a Nobel Prize winner in chemistry, who, contrary to what everyone expected, didn’t speak on a subject in his specialty – the ‘dynamics of elementary chemical processes’ – but rather, on the subtle symbolic implications in Picasso’s work. I must say that the result was, all things considered, neither better nor worse than what a professional art critic (or historian) might have proposed.

HUO: *In your opinion, are there limits to disciplinary circumnavigation, beyond which it becomes wishful thinking?*

TM: Certainly, caution (and mistrust) of uncontrolled excursions beyond one’s own discipline are always warranted. But this cannot mean, out of principle, ignoring the contribution of those who seek to establish, with due rigor, points of contact

between different disciplines. To call them out bluntly as know-it-alls, seems to me dangerously reductive. Interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity, not only respond to an increasingly pressing need for cooperation between disciplines, but they are also an expression (and always have been) of the inescapable ambition for universal knowledge.

HUO: *If I understand correctly, you suggest that interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity should not only be preserved, but encouraged.*

TM: That seems obvious to me. It must be borne in mind that the pursuit of a comprehensive vision of knowledge is nothing new in the history of Western culture. I’m referring to the fact that its main protagonists, from antiquity to the present, have generally shown little respect for disciplinary boundaries, and could for the most part have been labelled know-it-alls. Good know-it-alls, if you like, but know-it-alls nonetheless.

BIOGRAPHIES

Tomás Maldonado (Buenos Aires 1922 – Milan, November 26, 2018) was professor emeritus at the Politecnico di Milano. A leading figure in the Latin American art avant-garde, in 1954 he was among the founders of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, a German design school, where he taught until 1967. He became an Italian citizen in 1976. An industrial design theorist and scholar of the philosophy of technology, he published, with Einaudi, *La speranza progettuale* (1970) and *Avanguardia e razionalità* (1974); and with Feltrinelli, *Disegno industriale: un riesame* (1976, 1991, UE 2008), *Il futuro della modernità* (1987), *Cultura, democrazia, ambiente* (1990), *Reale e virtuale* (1992, UE 2005), *Che cos’è un intellettuale?* (1995), *Critica della ragione informatica* (1997), *Memoria e conoscenza* (2005), *Arte e artefatti* (2010). In 2009, the Triennale Milano dedicated an exhibition to his multifaceted work. In 2022, Feltrinelli Editore published a new edition of *La speranza progettuale*. This was followed by the publication of a new French edition, *Vers une écologie critique* (Les presses du réel, 2025).

Hans Ulrich Obrist (b. Zurich, 1968), curator of the Museum in Progress, Vienna, since 1993 and of the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris since 2000, joined the Serpentine Gallery as co-director of exhibitions and programmes, and director of international projects in 2006. He has curated over two hundred solo and group exhibitions internationally since 1991, including *Take Me, I’m Yours*; *Manifesta 1*; *Cities on the Move*; *Live/Life*; *Nuit Blanche*; the first Berlin Biennial; *Utopia Station*; the second Guangzhou Triennial; the Dakar Biennial; the first and second Moscow Biennials; *Uncertain States of America*; the Lyon Biennial; and the Yokohama Triennial. He has already published a series of interviews with figures from the world of contemporary art and culture, collected in the *Interviews* volumes (Charta, 2003, 2009). In 2024, he was among the speakers at the Talk *Drafting Futures. Conversations about Next Perspectives*, part of the Cultural Programme of Salone del Mobile.Milano.

TOMÁS MALDONADO COLLECTION

The Tomás Maldonado Collection preserves a substantial and varied body of documentation, testifying to the multifaceted intellectual career of Tomás Maldonado as an artist, academic, design theorist, designer, and philosopher of technology. Reflecting this versatility, the Collection comprises a wide range of documentary types and media: from correspondence to slides used as teaching tools, from drafts of books and conferences to unpublished editorial projects, from art catalogues to student theses, from sketches for paintings to awards and honours. Spanning almost the entire twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first, the Collection represents a useful tool for exploring many contemporary themes from the perspective of an intellectual, who, with rigor and clarity, successfully intervened in public debate with concrete and operational proposals. The project to reorganize and inventory Tomás Maldonado's personal archive, begun in March 2021, was promoted by the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation on the occasion of the centenary of Maldonado's birth, on April 25, 2022. In addition to reorganising and inventorying the collection, the project promoted further enhancements: the creation of six thematic digital paths for direct access to archival sources, available on the *Digital Archives* platform of the Feltrinelli Foundation website; the publication of the e-book *Esploratore di mondi. Tomás Maldonado e la sfida della trasversalità* (Feltrinelli Foundation, Milan 2022) with studies and in-depth analysis of Maldonado's thought and achievements, including a detailed essay on the archival collection *La stanza delle meraviglie. Un'introduzione all'Archivio Maldonado* (Califano, Rubinelli) and the exhibition *Tomás Maldonado. Centenario contemporaneo* which was on display at the Feltrinelli Foundation from April 21 to May 20, 2022. In 1995, at the invitation of the Salone del Mobile, in collaboration with ADI, he spoke at the International Conference *Design: i dialoghi di Milano* with a presentation on *La cultura materiale di fronte alla sfida informatica* (Material Culture Facing the Challenge of Information Technology).



Salone del Mobile. Milano 2025

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Infrastructure for the future

Maria Porro
President, Salone del Mobile.Milano

1.1

As this second edition of the Annual Report was going to press, Salone del Mobile. Milano inaugurated *Red in Progress* in Riyadh, a preview of the Saudi Arabian edition of the event scheduled for 2026, in strategic partnership with the Architecture and Design Commission of the Kingdom's Ministry of Culture. This event marks a decisive step in the internationalisation of the Salone. It is not simply a geographical expansion. It is a strategic extension, an industrial policy investment designed to start a dialogue with one of the world's most dynamic economies. In this sense, the event in Riyadh is not just a showcase for Made in Italy, but a B2B infrastructure. There are two key terms: industrial cooperation and economic diplomacy. The whole year of the Salone, which is increasingly committed to supporting sectorial manufacturing in the consolidation and realignment of markets, should be viewed from the same perspective.

2025 was a shaky year for international economies. On the global geoeconomic scene there were downturns and sudden swings, with geopolitical tensions making the outlook more uncertain. In the first few days of the Salone in April, the Trump administration's announcement of tariffs added further instability to an already complex picture. In this scenario, the Salone reaffirmed its function, demonstrating that the design world can act as an infrastructure of cohesion and competitiveness. It has in every respect been a strategic asset for the country. It has supported growth in the sector, boosting its international profile, especially in Europe; it has generated economic, cultural and social value; it has offered the supply chain a concrete space in which to reorient its offer, facilitating exchanges between enterprises, markets and institutions. In short, it has acted as an instrument of trust: a locus where the economy, innovation and culture come together to regenerate an industrial vision capable of grappling with complexity and translating it into a medium to long term strategy.

Since 1961, Salone's constant commitment has helped to build Milan's international reputation as the capital of design. Edition after edition – and listening carefully to shape its evolution – Salone has nurtured a virtuous circle between industrial innovation, urban culture and global positioning. Together with Milan, it has become a permanent laboratory that has proved able to interweave manufacturing and design thinking, positioning itself on an international scene where design is not just viewed as a sector but as a language too.

Salone's international vocation was further strengthened in the 2025 edition. The growth in the number of European exhibitors and visitors positioned the event at the centre of the continental market, one of the world's leading markets in terms of added value, exports and employment. There were 2,103 exhibitors – 73% were from EU member states – from 37 countries. This represents an important anchor: the single market remains the most stable and loyal core of international demand and offsets fluctuations in more volatile economies. Sticking to the exhibitors, 168 brands took part in the event for the first time in 2025, 68% of which were from abroad. Ninety-one returned to exhibit, more than half of whom were international. This is not an episodic dynamic but the physiological dynamic of a living system: a mechanism of industrial regeneration in which new entries and returns create a balance that fuels the competitiveness and resilience of the Salone system and its supply chain. The economic dimension of this ecosystem is equally significant. Italian exhibitors generated a total turnover of 9.9 billion euros, amounting to 34% of the national furniture macro-system (27.5 billion); foreign exhibitors totalled over 7.5 billion euros. The structure is export-driven: exports represented 52.9% of the turnover of Italian companies and 54.5% of foreign ones. These figures do not just describe the contours of the Salone but explain its strategic function as well. It is a platform that contributes directly to the international competitiveness of

the supply chain, boosting its innovative and relational capacity. The core theme of the edition was the Euroluce Biennale, with 306 exhibitors, 45% from abroad, demonstrating that Italy's centrality is no longer measured just in terms of its production capacity, but also in its capacity to orient research themes and trends in design on a global scale. The results of the Surveys, conducted as part of the Vision Project, through which Salone observes itself, send a strong signal of confidence: 93% of exhibitors in 2025 said they would like to exhibit at the event again.

Demand in 2025 was similarly strong: total attendance figures topped 300,000, with a record 68% share of foreign operators. This result reflects the solidity of an attractive and interconnected ecosystem able to maintain centrality and confidence in a changing global context.

As far as environmental commitment is concerned, in 2025 Salone renewed its ISO 20211 certification for the sustainable management of the event, consolidating its role as an international benchmark for ESG practices in the industry. Moreover, new Guidelines for Sustainable Set-ups were shared, signalling that the event is the natural home of environmental responsibility. For enterprises in the supply chain, sustainability is now one of the cornerstones of long-term strategies. Investment is being directed towards production models that integrate industrial efficiency, design innovation and social impact. It is not just a question of choosing recycled or recyclable materials, but of rethinking processes, supply chains and product life cycles, from design through to end of use. In this scenario, Salone acts as a convergence platform. It is where the principle of sustainability translates into shared criteria, operational tools and a common vision. During the 2025 edition of the Salone, the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security and FederlegnoArredo signed a programme agreement to begin preparatory tests for a future extended producer responsibility scheme. This was a significant step: the place where innovation is showcased has also become the place where shared rules are hammered out and choices are made that orientate the supply chain towards the circular economy. It offers confirmation that Italy, which has one of the most advanced wood-furniture sectors in Europe when it comes to renewable energy sources and recycled materials, can lead the international conversation and dictate the agenda and future perspectives.

In 2025, the Salone's Cultural Programme functioned as a strategic positioning lever and a platform for meaning production. Its strength is rooted in a curatorial tradition dating back to the 1980s. Edition after edition, the Salone del Mobile. Milano has built its own grammar for exploring the relationship between industry and culture. It has conceived and produced exhibitions and projects that have helped to redefine design as a collective language. Monographic exhibitions devoted to Joe Colombo, Achille Castiglioni, Gio Ponti, Vico Magistretti, Alvar Aalto, Ettore Sottsass and Bruno Munari have outlined a map of Italian design intelligence, building a shared narrative embracing manufacturing, research and the public. At the same time, projects such as *Stanze e segreti* (Rooms and Secrets), curated by Achille Bonito Oliva at the Rotonda della Besana, Peter Greenaway's multimedia event, *Leonardo's Last Supper*, and *Universo Satellite*, curated by Beppe Finessi and Marva Griffin at the Triennale Milano (a strategic partner for Salone) have broadened the scope of the event, transforming it into a permanent observatory. In this historical continuity, the 2025 Cultural Programme expressed a new maturity, consolidating the Salone's function as a knowledge infrastructure. Design culture is viewed by the Salone as a tool for interpreting economic and social transformations, capable of activating networks of cooperation between disciplines and territories. An integral part of this commitment has been the ongoing dialogue with the city's cultural institutions – ranging from

museums to foundations, universities and theatres – aimed at building co-design models that strengthen Milan's role as a shared workshop of cultural innovation.

The 63rd edition of the event chose to extend its presence beyond the pavilions of Fiera Milano, Rho, reaffirming the role of culture as a shared fabric between industry and territory. This act of cultural policy has put Milan back at the centre of a living relationship between design, enterprise and citizenship. At the fair, and likewise in the city, the cultural programme expressed this vision with a unified language. Paolo Sorrentino and Margherita Palli's *La dolce attesa*, Pierre-Yves Rochon's *Villa Héritage*, Robert Wilson's *Mother* at the Pietà Rondanini Museum in the Castello Sforzesco, and Es Devlin's *Library of Light* in the Cortile d'Onore of the Pinacoteca di Brera articulated a story about light, time and memory – themes that intertwine human experience with design research. Running alongside these projects was a packed programme focusing on multidisciplinary discussion and thought. The *Drafting Futures* talks and roundtables, and the first edition of the *Euroluce International Lighting Forum*, which hosted *The Forest of Space* – designed by Sou Fujimoto, one of the most visionary Japanese architects of his generation – in the Arena, positioned Salone at the centre of an international debate on the future. A place for engagement between enterprises, designers, architects and thinkers. With this edition, the Salone reaffirmed that culture is the dimension in which design meets society: it becomes a collective experience, it translates into a system of thought and value, it draws inspiration from the city in order to give back to the city – as happened with the extended opening of the two museum installations and the donation to Milan's libraries of the 3,000 works made available by the Feltrinelli publishing house for *Library of Light*.

Looking ahead, the priorities are clear. The complexity of the present also opens up new opportunities. Salone will prove able to explore them without losing depth in its centre of mass. Milan will continue to be the place of convergence, not as an espousal of identitarian claims, but because the alliance between manufacturing and culture in Milan has found a recognisable and shared urban form. 2025 also saw a strong growth in the presence of young people, up 34.5% compared to 2023. It is a sign that this generation views industrial manufacturing as a concrete prospect. With SaloneSatellite, which in 2025 began to travel with its Permanent Collection – inaugurated at Expo Osaka and conceived as a living archive of creativity from the under-35s – the Salone has added depth to its mission: not just to preserve a legacy, but to prepare a future. This is where our responsibility will be measured in the coming years, in our ability to continue to hold together the economy and culture, enterprise and thought, city and world, so that the design community remains true to a simple and necessary principle – *Thought for Humans*, the message that inspired the 2025 edition of the Salone. This is what being an infrastructure for the future means for Salone: it means keeping differences together, offering continuity within discontinuity, and building trust where everything is changing. But above all, it means recognising that the primary goal is always to weave a thread between those who design, those who produce, those who buy, those who inhabit the everyday.

Salone, Milano and beyond

Marco Sabetta
General Manager, Salone del Mobile.Milano

1.2

Salone del Mobile.Milano has pursued its mission with a global vision since 1961. Over time it has built a network of economic, cultural and institutional relations that has made Milan a strategic hub of the international design system. The 2025 edition confirmed the solidity of this approach: the record 68% share of foreign operators from 160 countries is the result of a multilevel strategy based on continual investment in internationalisation. For Salone this strategy takes the form of a system of integrated actions – commercial, cultural and diplomatic – designed to consolidate its presence in mature markets and, at the same time, to open up new avenues of business relations with emerging economies.

In the lead-up to the 2025 edition of the trade fair, Salone gave concrete form to this vision: it forged new alliances and created new exhibition formats. There were three key stages. In Shanghai, Asia's main hub in terms of visitor numbers and exports, we returned, in collaboration with the *West Bund Art Fair*, with *The Orbit's Orbit*, an immersive installation by Matilde Cassani. In New York, as part of the *From Italy with Love* event, Salone mounted the exhibition *Italian Design: from Classic to Contemporary*, curated by Ferruccio Laviani and held in *Bloomingdale's*, thereby reinforcing the link with the US high-end market. And at the end of November 2025 – thanks to the economic diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the support of the Italian Trade and Investment Agency – it was the turn of *Red in Progress. Salone del Mobile.Milano Meets Riyadh*, a spin-off of the Salone 2026 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which, guided by the Vision 2030 plan, is experiencing a period of unprecedented transformation. Italy occupies a leadership position in this region: according to the FederlegnoArredo Study Centre, Saudi Arabia is the second largest market in the Middle East and North Africa for Italian furniture, with exports reaching 288.3 million euros in 2024, up 16.9% on 2023 and 19% on 2022.

Moreover, thanks once again to the support of the Italian Trade and Investment Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the April edition of the Salone del Mobile.Milano was marked by a concrete commitment to internationalisation. Twenty-seven delegations were welcomed to the event from Central Asia and the Gulf nations, with over 350 buyers, contractors and investors. The operational dimension has developed, thanks also to Salone, *Milano and beyond*, the international tour promoting Salone, which travelled from New York to Mexico City, Toronto and Jakarta, with meetings devoted to architects, developers and interior designers. During 2025, Salone intensified its dealings with emerging markets, from India (with an annual growth rate of 6.5%) to ASEAN countries. In Europe, we visited Copenhagen, Paris and Madrid, consolidating Salone's presence in the mature markets. We also travelled to Los Angeles thanks to the support of the Italian diplomatic offices involved in the ninth edition of *Italian Design Day*, a cultural diplomacy project developed as part of the Permanent Board for the Internationalisation of Design, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Culture.

Two further initiatives broadened Salone's global projection. One was the launch of the first edition of the *Euroluce International Lighting Forum* in Munich, which strengthened the positioning of the *Euroluce Biennale* as a professional reflection and business platform for the international community in the sector. The other was the *Permanent Collection of SaloneSatellite*, presented at the Italian Pavilion at *Expo Osaka 2025*, which attested to the strong synergy between the Salone's under-35 showcase and the sector's supply chain. In early December 2025, the new partnership with *Art Basel Miami Beach* extended Italy's presence in one of the world's most influential cultural and market contexts.

To support this operational architecture, this year Salone committed once again to a global communication strategy to ensure consistency and recognisability: 141 planned international media events; a Press Tour reserved for 180 invited journalists from 40 countries with the support of the Italian Trade and Investment Agency; and the *Thought for Humans* campaign conceived by Dentsu Creative Studios, which integrated OOH, DOOH and digital storytelling in the main global hubs.

Underlying this approach is a vision for Salone that is oriented towards efficiency and measurability: every internationalisation action is part of a system that combines data analysis, strategic planning and the forging of top-quality networks. Salone acts as a system operator, generating competitive advantage through the quality of relationships and its ability to anticipate the evolution of global design markets. Every investment in internationalisation is also an investment in knowledge, in the ability to read the markets, anticipate changes and generate data, insights and relationships for the benefit of the entire Italian design supply chain and for the Salone trade fair.

In short, Salone's internationalisation model is based on three complementary pillars: global visibility events, which position the brand; economic diplomacy, which opens avenues of quality demand; and operational networking, which consolidates long-term relationships. These do not yield episodic results but are instead the expression of a structured process that transforms internationalisation into a permanent and competitive asset.

It is on this architectural framework – content, institutions, operators and media – that Salone is, day by day, building its future trajectories: Saudi Arabia in 2026; reinforcement of its position in emerging markets, a selective presidium in North America and Asia. With Milan as the system's convergence capital, Salone del Mobile.Milano, on the back of the trust placed in it by the sector supply chain, has confirmed its standing not only as the leading trade fair event, but also as a platform of competitiveness, culture and soft power.

Path to sustainability

Over the last few editions, the Salone has demonstrated its concrete commitment to identifying solutions and enacting virtuous practices. Testament to this are its membership of the United Nations Global Compact – the leading business sustainability initiative at global level – its circulation of Green Guidelines for planning and building trade fair displays and, especially, being awarded ISO 20121 certification for sustainable events management, relating to the planning, set-up and management of the event.

Environmental, economic and social responsibilities will remain priorities at the 2025 edition of the Salone del Mobile.Milano, which is endeavouring to organise all the activities, exhibition spaces and events (both those directly run by the Salone and those run by the exhibiting companies) so that they have the greatest possible positive effect on the surrounding social and environmental ecosystem, and are geared to the efficient use of resources, monitoring energy consumption, cutting waste, and protecting the human rights, diversity, health and safety of those taking part in the event and those workers involved in its organisation, and ensuring benefits, also through participatory governance with institutional and private bodies, for all the companies taking part, the various interested groups and the local communities, adhering to the principle: 'do it well, do it for everyone.'

To this end, the sustainable events management system, in conformity with ISO 20121: 2024 legislation, represents an opportunity for constant improvement. By continuing to question the effects of its actions from an environmental, social and economic point of view and cultivating sustainable behaviours, through the consideration, involvement and support of its own stakeholders, the Salone aims to be and to continue to be a point of reference and source of inspiration for the entire sector, pursuing a business model that is as ethical as possible, capable of responding intelligently and consistently to the increasingly complex challenges that the future has in store.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The pillars on which the Salone del Mobile.Milano intends to focus its path to sustainability, in conformity with the principles of ethical resource management, inclusivity, integrity and transparency are as follows:

- Promoting the environmental, social and financial compatibility of the activities and services provided.
- Respect for people, the true resource in every project and event.
- Ethical business.
- Meeting the demands and expectations of its stakeholders.

COMMITMENTS

In light of these premises, the Salone del Mobile.Milano, from the top management downwards and with the support of all the internal and external personnel acting under its authority, undertakes to:

- Ensure that the trade fair and all the activities associated with it take place in full respect of the applicable mandatory requirements, both contractual and pursuant to ISO 20121:2024 legislation.
- Assess all risks and opportunities inherent in its activities with a view to minimising potential environmental, social and economic impact.
- Adopt solutions that will enable natural resources to be managed in the best

way possible, prevent environmental pollution; and monitoring the impact on the city and on the region.

- Involve the supply chain with a view to sustainable growth, selecting partners whose strategy centres around a genuine awareness of the consequences of their activities - geared to providing services that will not only ensure the full satisfaction of the stakeholders, but also help to minimise environmental, social and economic impact.
- Bring to the attention of the protagonists of international debate and all internal and external stakeholders the issues of environmental, economic and social sustainability, as well as the thinking around ethics, circularity, domestic space, participatory architecture, urban regeneration, recycling and upcycling, in a bid to generate awareness, additional virtuous behaviour so inspire an acceleration in the process of identifying effective solutions for curbing the negative effects of climate change.
- Assert its role as a platform for business models structured along paths of responsible and inclusive development, as well as for new business ideas and technological solutions capable of contributing to people's wellbeing, to the protection of diversity, the environment, the home and resource efficiency, in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Identify and promote solidarity-boosting initiatives geared to raising the sustainability level of the event, such as sustainable mobility projects, initiatives and display solutions that offer better usability and accessibility of the spaces and projects by less able users.
- Valorise staff and their professional development at all levels, doubling down on welfare policies and reconciliation logics, along with training programmes geared to skills development and responsible involvement in spreading the culture of sustainability.
- Promote inclusion/inclusivity, respecting the rights of visitors to the event, of the exhibiting companies involved, of the partners/suppliers and the workers.
- Evaluate and Report transparently on the results and lessons gleaned from each edition of the Salone del Mobile.Milano and the initiatives consequently undertaken to increasingly curb impacts and leave a positive legacy.

The above points constitute a frame of reference for establishing and re-examining the objectives and milestones relating to the sustainability of events, which have a short, medium and long-term vision, aimed at ensuring sustainability in the future of the Salone del Mobile.Milano.

The Salone del Mobile.Milano also undertakes to set up and operate an ongoing system for monitoring the performance of its own Management System for Event Sustainability, to keep improving the service it provides, the satisfaction of its stakeholders and the increasing sustainability of the event.

Fiera Milano for environmental sustainability

Curated by Fiera Milano

Fiera Milano's commitment to environmental sustainability is reflected in the results presented in the *ESG Scorecard 2024*, which highlight the tangible milestones achieved by the Group in reducing its environmental impact and promoting the circular economy. In recent years, Fiera Milano has significantly reduced its total CO₂ emissions, recording a 42% decrease compared to 2023, fully in line with the objectives set out in its Decarbonisation Plan. To achieve these targets, Fiera Milano has identified several strategic areas of action. First and foremost, efforts are underway to continuously improve environmental management systems and processes, including obtaining ISO 14001 certification. This certification confirms the adoption of a structured approach to environmental management, aligned with international best practices.

Another key pillar is the progressive increase in the use of renewable energy, with the goal of reaching 70% by 2027 and 80% by 2030. This objective will be achieved through the expansion of the photovoltaic plant installed by Fair Renew – comprising 50,000 solar panels on the rooftops of the Rho exhibition district – and through the growing procurement of certified electricity with a Guarantee of Origin (GO), rising from 20% in 2023 to 60% by 2027 at Group level. In parallel, Fiera Milano is investing in energy efficiency through the construction of a new centralised cooling system, scheduled for completion in 2027. This project will enable more efficient energy management and further reduce emissions.

By 2026, Fiera Milano also plans to measure Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions, allowing for more comprehensive monitoring and assessment of its environmental impact across the entire value chain, thereby completing the picture of both direct and indirect emissions. Waste management remains another key priority: 96.5% of waste was recycled, and 100% of the carpet used at events was recovered for reuse.

Green Guidelines for the design and construction of sustainable installations

As part of its own activities and looking ahead to the 2025 edition, the Salone del Mobile.Milano continues to support and accompany the exhibiting companies as regards the design and creation of increasingly eco-compatible and sustainable spaces, and to promote the spread of good accessibility and inclusion practices through the sharing of green design directions. The aim: to invite exhibitors to identify a plan during the design stage for the correct management of the materials at the end of the event, to reduce the environmental impacts of the sector increasingly effectively.

Installations

CIRCULARITY

- Identifying innovative and circular architectural solutions for the exhibition spaces and materials, from the planning stage onwards.
- Opting for high quality, reusable semi-finished and finished products, thus cutting down on the need to buy new ones.
- Opting for reused and reusable installation and furnishing elements or alternatively ones that can be passed on free of charge to third parties (associations, voluntary organisations or civil protection and humanitarian organisations) in a bid to prolong their useful life, cut waste, curb the consumption of resources and emissions of climate-altering gas during production.

ENERGY RESOURCES

Cutting down on energy consumption while building and managing stands, opting for low energy, high efficiency lighting (e.g. LED) and Class A electric and electronic equipment, for example.

TRANSPORT

- Adopting reused/reusable packaging for the transport of installation and furnishing elements, thus cutting down on overall packaging quantity.
- Prioritising materials based on distance from the supply source, that take account of logistical sustainability, both in terms of distance and vehicles.

RECOVERY AND DISPOSAL

In the case of displays not suitable for reuse, the dismantling of individual component materials must be factored in right from the take down stage, so that they can be sent to the specific authorised collection and recycling centres.

Accessibility

- Adopting set-up solutions (such as those listed below) that guarantee accessibility and fruition by people with disabilities.
- In the case of platforms and pavements of even minimal thickness, at least one access ramp with a slope not exceeding 8% must be provided within your exhibition space without encroaching on the common gangways, well signposted and preferably in an easily identifiable and usable position.
- Creating reception desks with a maximum height of no more than 90 cm from the ground in order to make it easier for visitors with wheelchairs to request information.
- Leaving sufficient free space inside the stand for said visitors to carry out their manoeuvres independently.
- Avoiding uneven floors that could cause problems to those with walking difficulties.

Safety

Adopting structurally and environmentally safe measures, products and equipment that ensure safe installation procedures and methods for the staff involved.

Suppliers

- Prioritising suppliers having implemented sustainable management service systems conforming to ISO 20121 legislation and international environmental, health, workplace safety and social responsibility standards.
- Asking suppliers to provide the characteristics and traceability of their products.

Communication

- Demonstrating the company's commitment to sustainability regarding installations, describing the environmental performance and characteristics of the products and their lifecycles.
- Training on-stand staff with information relating to the sustainability and circularity of the company and of the products.
- Prioritising communication in digital mode, cutting down on the amount of printed material; where the latter is strictly necessary, opting for recycled or recyclable material or material sourced from sustainably managed forests (FSC-PEFC).

Mobility

- Encouraging the use of environmentally friendly modes of transport for materials (e.g. rail) or low-emission vehicles based on the distance of supply and the type of means of transport.
- Encouraging both staff and guests to use public transport (metro, train, airport shuttle buses) or other types of shared mobility for travel to/from the event.

Materials

Cutting down on the use of non-reusable materials often destined for disposal, such as plasterboard, for example, which will be banned as per the Technical Regulations of Fiera Milano as of January 2024.

WOOD AND CARDBOARD

Opting for recycled stand building products or products from sustainably managed forests with FSC or PEFC chain of custody certification.

CHEMICAL PRODUCTS

Opting for materials, paints, cleaning products, printing ink etc., with low environmental and safety impact (e.g. water-based paint, ecolabel products, ecological detergents free from toxic components etc.).

PALLETS AND OTHER WOODEN PACKAGING (E.G. CRATES)

Opting for reusable or repaired products or products obtained through exchange schemes, that comply with phytosanitary measures to prevent the introduction of harmful organisms (e.g. ISPM-15 - International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures No.15).

PLASTIC

Any on-stand catering must use plastic-free or recycled plastic tableware and cutlery or even compostable/biodegradable consumables.

GADGETS

Opting for reusable and/or gadgets made from recycled/recyclable materials, therefore sourced from social initiatives or local manufacturers using recycled materials, etc.).

WASTE

During the set-up and take-down phases, as stipulated in the Fiera Milano Technical Regulations, special waste must be removed on a daily basis - cardboard packaging or mixed materials, wood waste, panels, cellophane, paint or stucco containers and pieces of carpet. Exhibitors must arrange for this to be removed from the exhibition centre by one of its own suppliers authorised to carry out this service (listed in the National Register of Environmental Managers) or by requesting information from Fiera Milano's Customer Services.

63rd Salone del Mobile.Milano

Andrea Vaiani
Exhibitions Director, Salone del Mobile.Milano

1.4

The 2025 edition of the Salone del Mobile.Milano once again demonstrated that the strength of the event lies not only in its attendance figures, but also in the quality of the processes that precede and support it: the research and selection of exhibiting brands, the profiling of operators, logistics management, services and digital instruments designed to support the visitor experience and subsequent networking activities between companies and operators, and the precise monitoring of environmental impacts. These concrete, verifiable and replicable elements have consolidated the Salone's credibility – in a constantly evolving process – confirming its status as a recognizable operating model.

The 2025 edition featured 2,103 exhibitors from 37 countries. Within this new manufacturing geography, the top ten international exhibitors included Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands confirming the European presence, combined with an openness to emerging non-EU supply chains, such as Brazil and Thailand. In 2025, *Euroluce* confirmed the strength of an event capable of uniting the market with design and lighting culture. After the breakthrough of 2023 with *The City of Lights*, which redefined the exhibition format with an experiential and curatorial focus, the Biennale continued its evolution, consolidating its position as a global reference platform for the sector. Integrated work with the sales team identified a targeted selection of brands, which brought 306 exhibitors to Milan, approximately 45% of which were from abroad. The first edition of *The Euroluce International Lighting Forum* strengthened its role, offering a space for multidisciplinary discussion and confirming the centrality of light in the dialogue between industry, design, and the world of lighting design. In terms of visitors, the 2025 edition attracted 302,767 attendees, with a record percentage of international professionals from 160 countries. This was not a foregone conclusion, but the outcome of ongoing efforts of selection and engagement that ensured the presence of strategic partners in Milan. The proprietary ticketing system allowed for precise tracking of visitor origins and profiles, providing transparent data on attendance at the fair: 211,670 professionals, 20,087 design enthusiasts, 15,108 students, and 5,263 accredited journalists from 67 countries.

This year, too, technical organization was a decisive factor. The construction of 168,537 square meters of exhibition space recorded 883 company presences and over 58,000 worker presences. Stands, pavilions, installations and arenas were assembled and dismantled in compliance with high standards of safety and precision. In 2025, seven health, safety and environmental non-conformities were detected in the exhibits directly managed by the Salone, a decrease compared to 2024, while no 'near-misses' were recorded. This data demonstrates a rigorously monitored and tracked system. The 53,881 meals served during the assembly and dismantling phases alone provide a measure of the 'logistics box.'

Another area in which the Salone continues to invest, is the visitor experience. For the 2025 edition of the event, the internal pavilion routes have been redesigned to improve orientation and usability, with the increasingly efficient support of a series of digital tools. Among these, Wayfinding: the digital map for orienting between exhibitors, pavilions and services exceeded 646,000 hits (a 43.5% increase over 2024). Meanwhile, Matchmaking, the service that connects exhibitors and professionals based on similar profiles and interests, has reached 1,365,000 interactions (+36.5%). These numbers confirm how the Salone's digital infrastructure enhances the ability to create valuable connections and guide visitors through the fair. Among the services offered to exhibitors and visitors, the commitment to mobility is also included. The 2025 edition of the show consolidated its focus on public transportation: 63% of visitors used public transport (compared to 60% in 2024 and 58.3% in 2023), while the use of private transport

dropped to 37% (from 40% in 2024). The trend was confirmed by the visitor numbers: the East Gate—nearest the subway and railway—accounted for 65.4% of visitors (up from 63.0% in 2024). To support public and collective mobility, the Salone also activated a free shuttle service to and from Malpensa Airport this year, and benefited from up to 24 direct Frecciarossa and Italo rail connections to Rho Fiera. The Mito Design Connection platform integrated Turin into the logistics system, expanding the ecosystem's hospitality capacity. Additionally, on the hospitality front, thanks to the collaboration with MiCodmc, the Salone was again able to guarantee a dedicated booking system.

Sustainability was also a key focus from an operational standpoint. The event's ISO 20121 certification for sustainable management ensured alignment with international standards, while waste monitoring confirmed reliable waste separation and a significant reduction in the use of critical materials. In addition to quality control of waste fractioning, a particularly significant indicator emerged: the kilometers traveled by materials to reach treatment plants. In 2025, this value stood at 0.04 km per square meter of exhibition space, a figure that measures the average distance between the point of waste generation and the disposal facility. This is a positive result because it demonstrates how flows have been optimally managed from a logistical perspective: with materials delivered to facilities close to the exhibition center and a reduction in long-distance transportation and so a consequent reduction in emissions. This is not only an environmental metric, it is also an indicator of the overall efficiency of the dismantling supply chain, which has successfully integrated speed, proximity, and sustainability.

In terms of accessibility, monitoring – activated in collaboration with Fiera Milano – of compliance with the Technical Regulations for stand design (particularly regarding the construction of platform access ramps) has shown a marked improvement. The number of observations collected has decreased from 353 in 2024 to 233 in 2025, a 34% reduction. This result not only concerns formal compliance with the regulations, but also indicates a growing focus on exhibitors to design amenable, accessible, and safe spaces for all visitors. The reduction in non-compliance demonstrates that stand design standards are no longer perceived as a constraint, but as an integral part of exhibition quality. In this regard, the 2025 edition has introduced the Priority Pass, reserved for visitors with disabilities. The Pass first included a free entry ticket to the event and, in addition, guaranteed priority access to the cash registers at the on-site bars, the self-service restaurants on Corso Italia, and the Salone Arenas for the Talks. The initiative also involved exhibitors, who were invited to recognize the Pass as priority entry to their stands. Finally, in terms of accessibility, starting with the 2025 edition, a series of actions were launched to ensure the accessibility of the Salone website according to WCAG 2.2 AA standards.

Salone del Mobile.Milano 2025 Map

168,537 m²

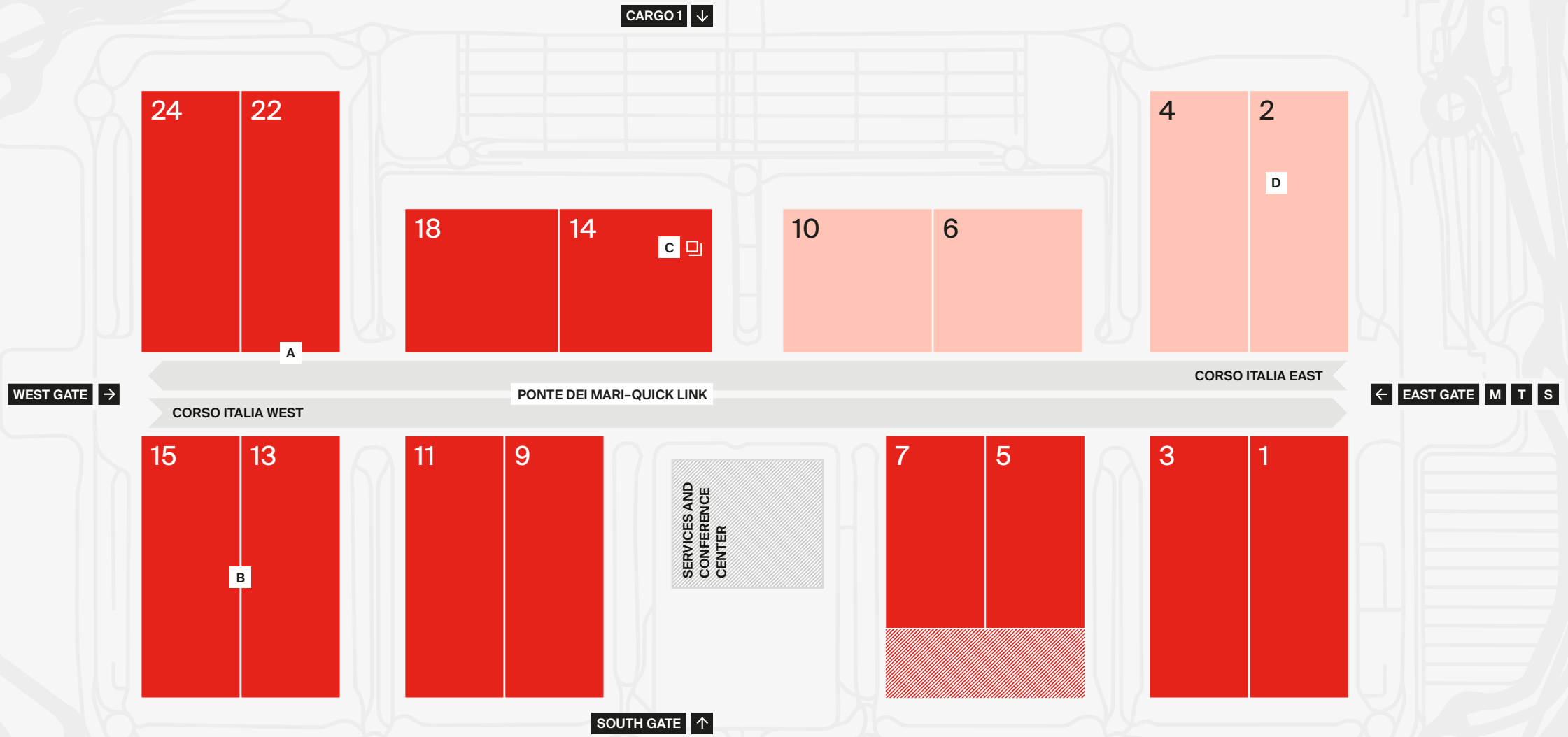
Exhibition Space

2,103

Exhibitors

302,767

Presences



Exhibitions

- Salone Internazionale del Mobile
International Furnishing Accessories Exhibition
Workplace3.0, S. Project
- Euroluce
- SaloneSatellite

Special Projects at the Trade Fair

- A Paolo Sorrentino. La dolce attesa
- B Pierre-Yves Rochon. Villa Héritage
- C Drafting Futures. Conversations about Next Perspectives
- D The Euroluce International Lighting Forum
- Bookshop Corraini Mobile

Salone del Mobile. Milano 2025 Figures

1.5

1.1 Net Exhibition Area Occupied

The figure refers to the net area occupied by exhibitors' stands and the cultural initiatives of the Salone del Mobile.Milano 2025.

2025	2024	2023
168,537 m ²	176,966 m ²	171,646 m ²

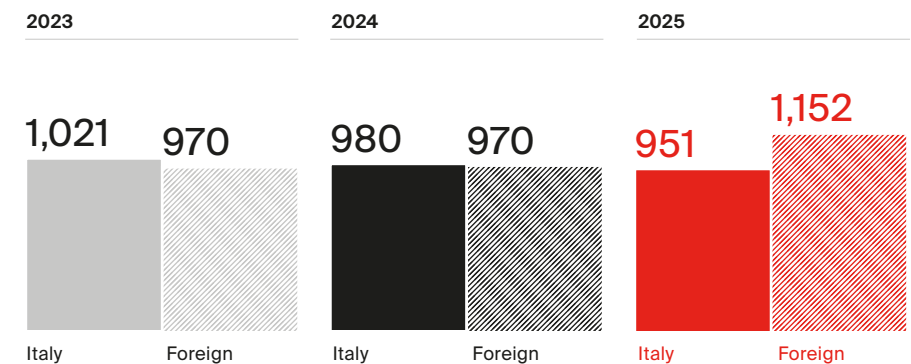
1.2 Exhibitors Salone del Mobile.Milano

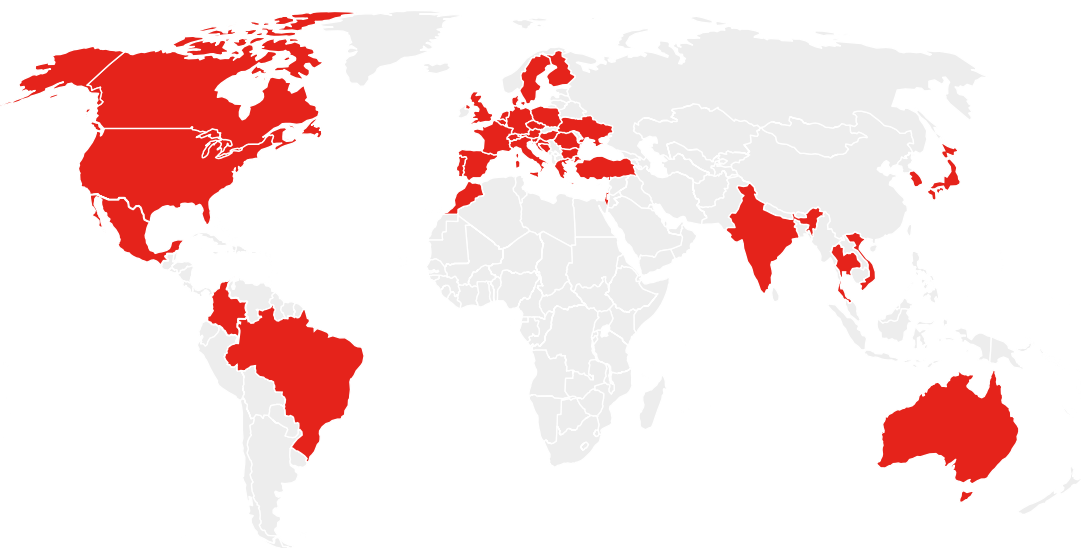
The 2025 figures are consistent with 2023, the year of the EuroLuce Biennial.

	2023	2024	2025
Exhibitors - Total	1,991	1,950	2,103
Salone del Mobile.Milano Exhibitors	1,441	1,350	1,403
Salone del Mobile.Milano Exhibitors - Italy	939	890	846
Salone del Mobile.Milano Exhibitors - Foreign	502	460	557
SaloneSatellite Exhibitors - Total	550	600	700
SaloneSatellite Exhibitors - Italy	82	90	105
SaloneSatellite Exhibitors - Foreign	468	510	595

1.3 Italian and Foreign Exhibitors

Strong European base among international exhibitors (73% from EU countries; Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Germany and France in top ten).





Exhibitors

2,103

Foreign Countries

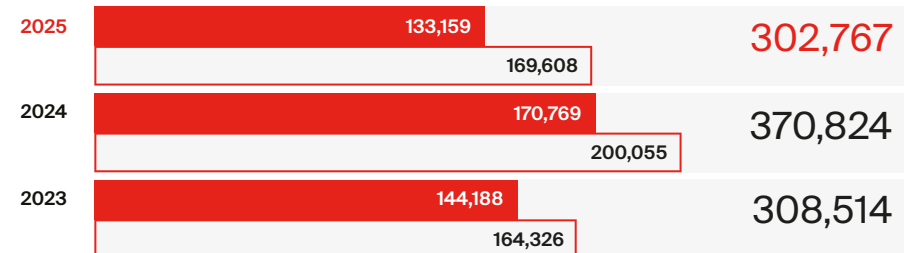
37

Foreign Countries

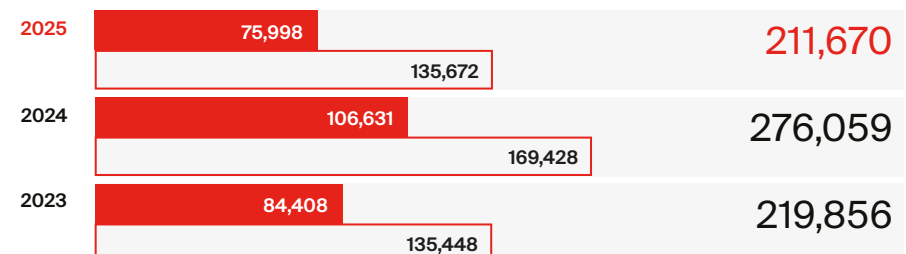
- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Spain | 14 United Kingdom | 27 South Korea |
| 2 Portugal | 15 Morocco | 28 Australia |
| 3 Belgium | 16 Greece | 29 Austria |
| 4 Germany | 17 Czech Republic | 30 Vietnam |
| 5 Brazil | 18 Bulgaria | 31 Colombia |
| 6 France | 19 Japan | 32 India |
| 7 Romania | 20 Poland | 33 Israel |
| 8 Türkiye | 21 United States | 34 Liechtenstein |
| 9 Netherlands | 22 Bosnia and Herzegovina | 35 Mexico |
| 10 Thailand | 23 Slovenia | 36 Switzerland |
| 11 Denmark | 24 Canada | 37 Hungary |
| 12 Sweden | 25 Croatia | |
| 13 Ukraine | 26 Finland | |

The 2025 edition, despite a context of significant global uncertainty, consolidates the results achieved in 2023 – the year of the Euroluce Biennial. The share of international Trade Visitors, the highest ever recorded, confirms the key role of the event in generating new business opportunities across 160 countries.

Total Presences ■ Italy □ Foreign



Trade Visitors



Public

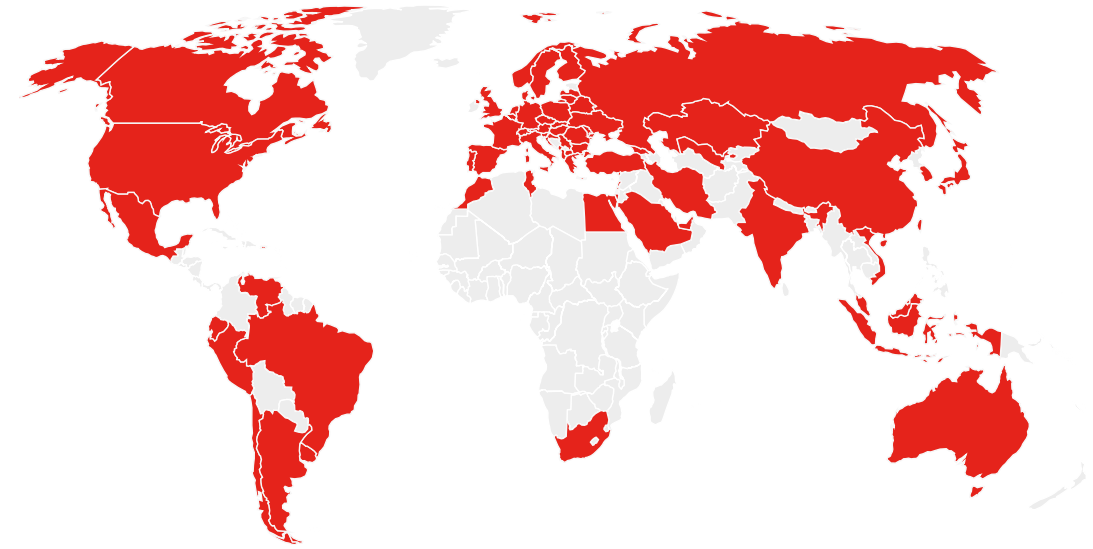
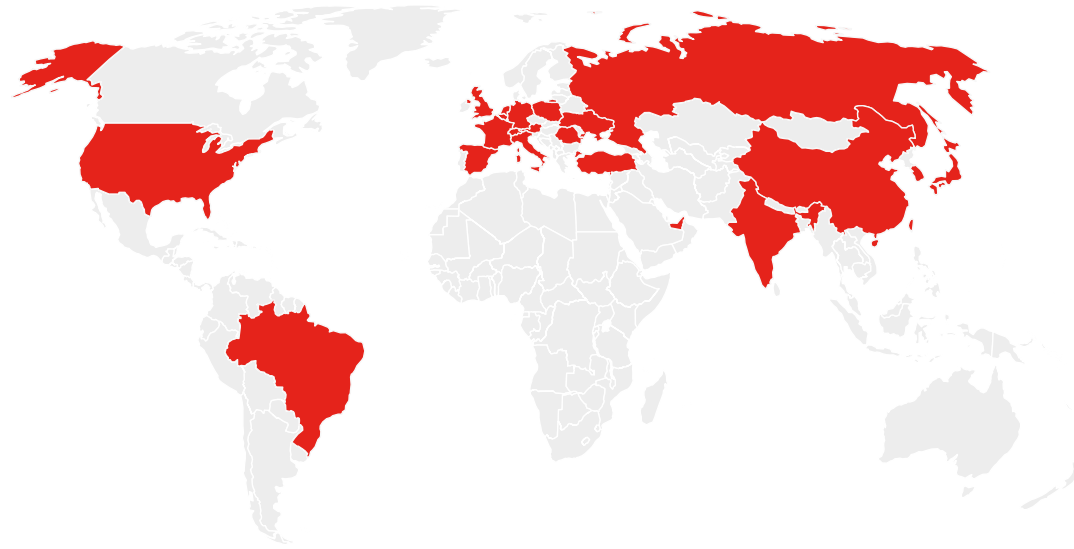


Press & Media



Students





Attendances

211,670

Foreign Countries

160

Top 20 Foreign Countries Salone del Mobile.Milano

1 China	8 United States	15 Japan
2 Germany	9 Switzerland	16 Austria
3 Spain	10 India	17 Romania
4 France	11 Türkiye	18 Belgium
5 Russia	12 United Kingdom	19 United Arab Emirates
6 Poland	13 Netherlands	20 South Korea
7 Brazil	14 Ukraine	

Top 20 Foreign Countries Euroluce

1 China	8 United States	15 Austria
2 Germany	9 Switzerland	16 Netherlands
3 Spain	10 India	17 Romania
4 Brazil	11 United Kingdom	18 South Korea
5 France	12 Japan	19 Belgium
6 Poland	13 Türkiye	20 Czech Republic
7 Russia	14 Ukraine	

Attendances

5,263

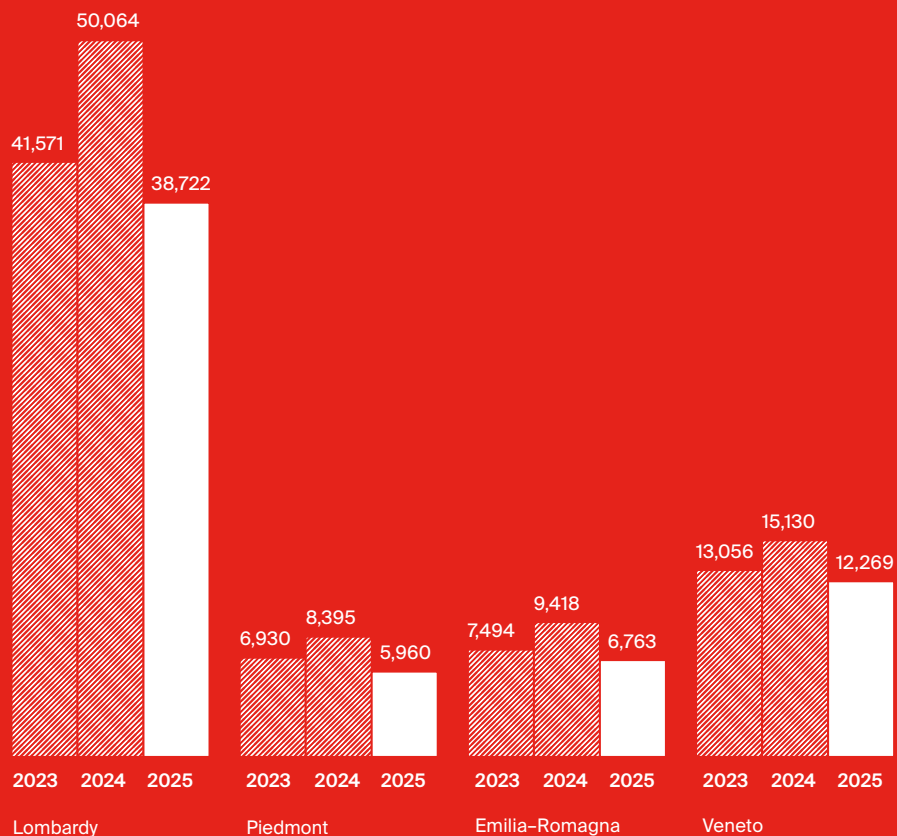
Foreign Countries

67

All Foreign Countries

1 Germany	18 Mexico	35 Serbia	52 Uruguay
2 Japan	19 Czech Republic	36 Canada	53 Venezuela
3 China	20 Romania	37 Hong Kong	54 Egypt
4 United States	21 Greece	38 Puerto Rico	55 Kazakhstan
5 United Kingdom	22 Bulgaria	39 Indonesia	56 Moldova
6 Spain	23 India	40 Latvia	57 Finland
7 France	24 Austria	41 Lebanon	58 Norway
8 Brazil	25 Hungary	42 Malaysia	59 Peru
9 Russia	26 Belarus	43 Singapore	60 Slovakia
10 Poland	27 United Arab Emirates	44 Lithuania	61 Tunisia
11 Switzerland	28 Belgium	45 Georgia	62 Uzbekistan
12 Portugal	29 Ukraine	46 Monaco	63 Albania
13 Argentina	30 Denmark	47 Israel	64 Saudi Arabia
14 South Korea	31 South Africa	48 Morocco	65 Chile
15 Austria	32 Sweden	49 Vietnam	66 Ecuador
16 Netherlands	33 Slovenia	50 Iran	67 Luxembourg
17 Türkiye	34 Croatia	51 Taiwan	

1.8 Visitor Attendance from Neighbouring Areas



Installation and Dismantling

1.9 Exhibition Contractors and Workers

Source: Fiera Milano.

	2023	2024	2025
Presence of Exhibition Contractors	945	899	883
Presence of Exhibition Contractor Workers	69,683	83,465	58,155

Safety

1.10 Safety Indicators

The 2025 data on Non-Conformity Reports – defined as discrepancies between planned and actual outcomes, potentially including legal violations, inefficiencies or process failures – concerning the companies contracted for the installation activities commissioned by Federlegno Arredo Eventi, show a clear improvement compared to the previous two editions. Furthermore, during the 2025 edition, no Near Miss incidents – events with the potential to cause injury – were recorded.
Source: Fiera Milano*

	2023	2024	2025
Accidents at Work Federlegno Arredo Eventi and Collaborators	0	0	0
Reported Health, Safety, Environmental Non-Compliances on Federlegno Arredo Eventi Installations	13	14	7
Reported Health, Safety, Environmental Near Misses on Federlegno Arredo Eventi Installations	9	3	0
Reported Accidents and Incidents	0	0	0
Man-Hours Spent Monitoring Safety at Work*	495.5	495.5	491
Interventions (Inspections) Competent Authorities*	2	0	0
Security Guard Hours (Access Control Included) *	35,312	34,655	33,001

Sustainability

1.11 CAM Events

The 2025 edition confirms the percentage of Minimum Environmental Criteria (CAM) – established by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security for sustainable consumption in Public Administration, and voluntarily adopted by the Salone del Mobile.Milano in compliance with ISO 20121 certification – effectively met among those directly managed by Salone. Also slightly higher is the percentage of CAM over which Salone can exercise influence to ensure compliance.

	2023	2024	2025
Percentage of CAM Events complied with among those directly controllable (35 out of 98 total)	77%	80%	80%
Percentage of CAM Events complied with among those within our Influence. (63 out of 98 total)	60%	60%	62%

1.12 Energy

Source: Fiera Milano.

	2023	2024	2025
Electricity Consumption from Renewable and Non-Renewable Sources (kWh)	2,986,582	2,247,799	1,959,582
Electricity from Renewable Sources (kWh)	1,296,451 (43% of total)	952,697 (42% of total)	1,318,647 (67% of total)
Gas (methane) (smc)	0	0	0
GPL (kg)	0	0	0
Diesel for Generators (litres)	0	0	0
Remote Heating (kWhT)	0	0	1,166,319

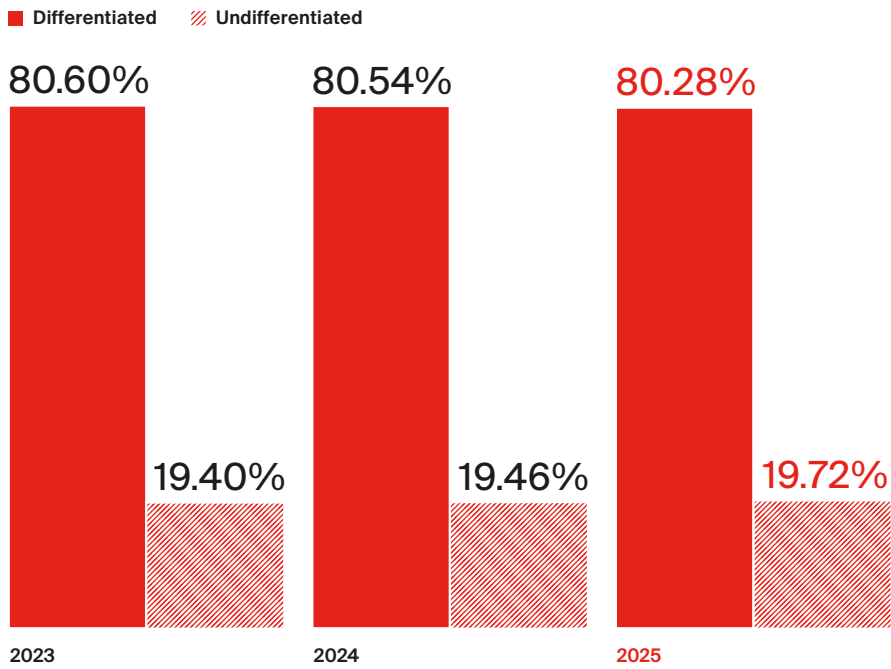
1.13 Waste (kg/m²)

As in previous editions, the presence of plasterboard remained extremely limited in 2025. Compared with 2024 – within an overall virtuous framework – a very modest increase was recorded in waste generation per square metre, with a slight rise in the production of wood waste and bulky materials. Source: Fiera Milano.

	2023	2024	2025
Total Quantity of Waste	11.07	13.12	13.39
Multimaterial (papers, cardboard, plastic)	1.51	1.66	1.03
Metal	N.D.	0.02	0.01
Wood	6.73	8.42	9.17
Glass	N.D.	N.D.	0.0014
Paints and Varnish Residues	0.09	0.06	0.06
Aqueous Suspension Containing Paints and Varnishes	0.48	0.34	0.38
Mixed Demolition Waste	0.0237	0.0157	0.0195
Plasterboard	0.0389	0.0026	0.0028
Bulky Waste	0.04	0.04	0.09
WEEE	N.D.	0.0017	0.0008
Urban Undifferentiated	2.15	2.55	2.64

1.14 Differentiated and undifferentiated waste

For the 2025 edition, the share of differentiated and undifferentiated waste was consistent with the levels recorded in the previous two years. Source: Fiera Milano.



1.15 Km transport of waste to treatment plants (km/m²)

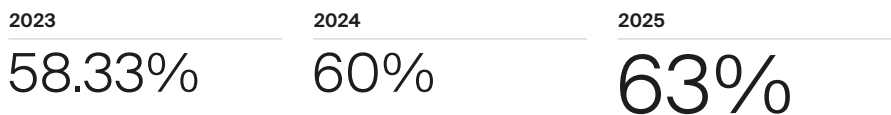
Source: Fiera Milano.



Mobility

1.16 Public Transport

The percentage of visitors who chose public transport to and from Fiera Milano, Rho increased compared with the 2023 and 2024 editions. The indicator includes travel by underground, suburban rail, regional trains, and Frecciarossa / Italo services stopping at Rho Fiera station. Source: Fiera Milano.



1.17 Types of Public or Collective Transport

Visitors who chose public or collective transport to and from Fiera Milano, Rho. This year once again, the Salone del Mobile.Milano provided a dedicated shuttle service between Malpensa Airport and Fiera Milano, Rho. Source: Fiera Milano.

	2023	2024	2025
Underground and Train to/from Fiera Milano, Rho	172,666	239,746	206,378
Shuttle Buses to/from Malpensa - Fiera Milano, Rho	-	2,035	1,945

1.18 Private Transport

Percentage of visitors who chose private transport to and from Fiera Milano, Rho. Source: Fiera Milano.



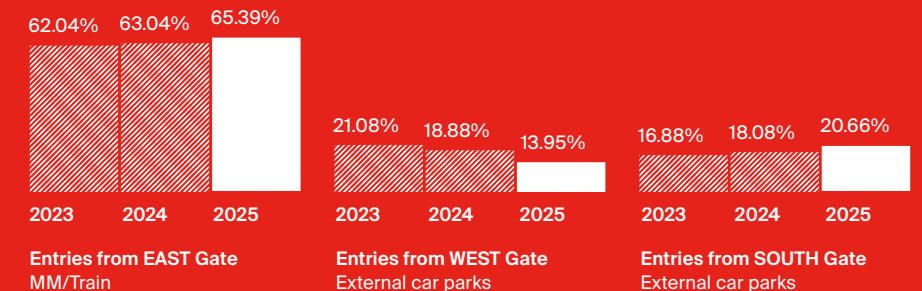
1.19 Private Cars

Private cars parked in the external parking areas of Fiera Milano, Rho. Source: Fiera Milano.



1.20 Fiera Milano, Rho Entrances

The 2025 edition recorded a further increase in the number of visitors entering through the East Gate of Fiera Milano, Rho, corresponding to the underground stop and Rho Fiera railway station. This figure is consistent with the overall rise in the use of public transport.



Accessibility

1.21 Services for Inclusive Access

Among the initiatives introduced by the Salone del Mobile.Milano in 2025 for visitors with disabilities, the most significant – already confirmed for 2026 – was the introduction of a dedicated Priority Pass, allowing holders to skip queues at food service counters. A decrease was also recorded in Fiera Milano's observations concerning compliance with the Technical Regulations safeguarding accessibility for visitors with disabilities to Exhibitors' stands (e.g. access ramps). Source: Fiera Milano.

	2023	2024	2025
Social Mobility (Wheelchair and Scooter Hire)	99	83	64
Waivers of parking fees for visitors with disabilities	79	103	117
Priority Pass – fast-track access for visitors with disabilities	N.D.	N.D.	436 +290 accompanying persons
Comments to exhibitors regarding compliance with accessibility regulations (ramps for raised platforms)	N.D.	353	233

Exhibitor and Visitor services at the fairgrounds

1.22 Online ticket sales

2025	2024
91.65%	92%
2023	
90.65%	

1.23 Digital Services

The results recorded during the 2025 edition confirm the Salone del Mobile.Milano's commitment to developing new digital services for both Exhibitors and Visitors. Among the most significant innovations were Matchmaking – a digital service enabling Exhibitors, through the App, to scan visitors' entry tickets at their stands and directly download the collected data – and, for visitors, Wayfinding, an interactive feature available on the Salone App that allows users to create a personalised route through the exhibition.

Matchmaking

2023	2024	2025
710K	1M	1,365,158

Wayfinding Research

2025

646K

2024

450K

2023

108K

1.24 Catering

The number of meals provided is based on the total receipts issued. The receipts refer to the overall catering contract and, starting from the 2024 edition, have been differentiated between the installation/dismantling phases and the Exhibition days. The 2025 edition recorded a decrease in the total number of receipts issued (226,654) compared with the previous edition, but an increase in the number of receipts issued during the Exhibition days. Source: Fiera Milano.

	2023	2024	2025
Refreshment Points Operating during the Trade Fair	76 46 fixend and 30 additional points	81 54 fixend and 27 additional points	79 53 fixend and 26 additional points
Meals Provided during Set Up/Take Down	N.D.	64,354	53,881
Meals Provided during the Trade Fair	N.D.	168,992	172,683
Catering Services Provided by Fiera Milano during the Trade Fair	8	22	12
Catering Services Managed Independently by Exhibitors during the Trade Fair	55	74	89
Solidarity Initiatives Operative during the Trade Fair (e.g. Food Banks)	0	2	2
Kg of Food Donated thanks to Solidarity Initiatives	0	700	144

Communication

1.25 Press & Media

In 2025, media coverage of the event increased by 10% compared with 2023 – the year of Euroluca – confirming an increasingly targeted and high-quality communication strategy. This achievement was built on valuable editorial content, a widespread international presence, and a strengthened dialogue with the media, particularly television networks.

5,263

Press & Media Attendance
from 67 foreign countries

10,691

Italian Press mentions
January-April 2025

15,560

International Press mentions
January-April 2025

Other Figures

187	Journalists from 39 countries invited with the support of ITA – Italian Trade Agency	224	Foreign journalists hosted at 4 Press Welcome Coffee during the Salone
141	Media outlets planned across 38 countries	78	Press contents (IT/EN) shared in the Press & Media area of the website
192	Interviews	749	Scheduled appointments during the Salone 2025 Press Tour (with 207 participants)
37	Press & Media DEM campaigns during the Exhibition (103,000 openings/views)	250+	Images shared during the Exhibition
13	Press Meetings abroad	16	Photo shoots – Cultural Programme and Exhibition Halls
1	International Press Conference with 534 participants		

Digital & Social Media

1.26 Indicators

Once again in 2025, the Salone del Mobile.Milano's digital communication operated year-round, intensifying its activity during the days of the Event. Creative formats, targeted storytelling and original content enhanced the visibility of exhibitors, products and designers, consolidating the Salone's role as a leading platform for the global design community.

	2023	2024	2025
Site sessions	2.5M	3.3M	3.1M
Impressions	80M	90M	110M
Interactions	450K	2.4M	20M
Database users	570K	720K	840K

Vision Project 2025

Giulia Falcinelli
Manager and SME, Native Strategy

1.6

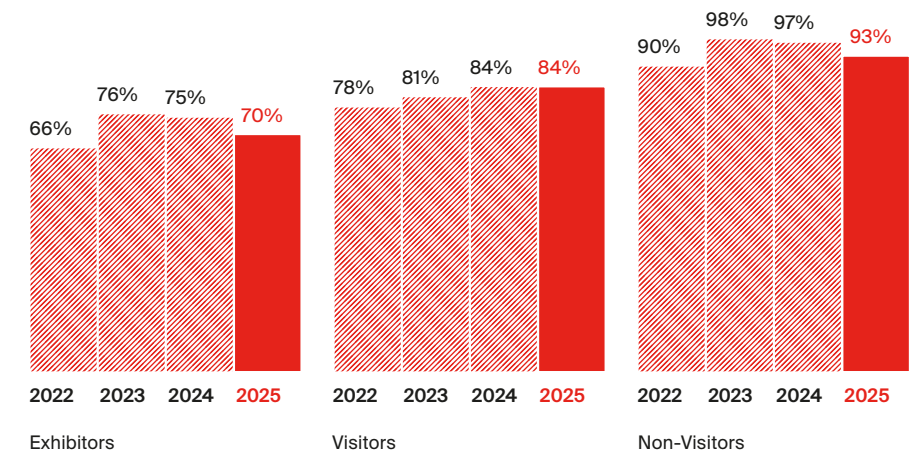
The Salone del Mobile.Milano is not merely an event: it is a collective ritual that each year renews the bond between Milan and the world of design. At once an agora and a cultural workshop, it is both a showcase for innovation and a privileged observatory of emerging trends. It is within this tension – between concreteness and vision, between local roots and international reach – that its truest identity takes shape. The strength of the Salone lies precisely in this identity: a hub that combines its role as a catalyst for business opportunities with its cultural mission. Thanks to its international outlook and its constant drive for improvement – in experience, exhibition model, and services – it continues to reinforce its standing as a global benchmark in design culture.

To understand how this strength is perceived, and to explore the directions for future development, the *Vision Project* – now in its fifth edition – conducted the 2025 Field Survey, involving more than 1,500 people, including Exhibitors, Visitors, and Non-Visitors, representative of diverse audiences and a wide range of geographical and professional contexts. Through this extensive listening exercise, perceptions, expectations, and trajectories of change were explored, with particular attention to consolidated themes such as brand identity, competitive positioning, event satisfaction, brand potential, and community, while also opening up to fresh ideas and innovative perspectives. The results indicate strategic directions that confirm the central role of the Salone as a primary institution in the world of design, while simultaneously opening up new possibilities for its evolution.

Vision Field Survey – Key Highlights

1.27 Brand Reputation – Brand Recognition

Average recognition of brand attributes (#18 attributes): percentage of participants who associated each attribute with the brand. Key attributes most strongly linked to the Salone brand (attribution >80%): average of Exhibitors and Visitors.

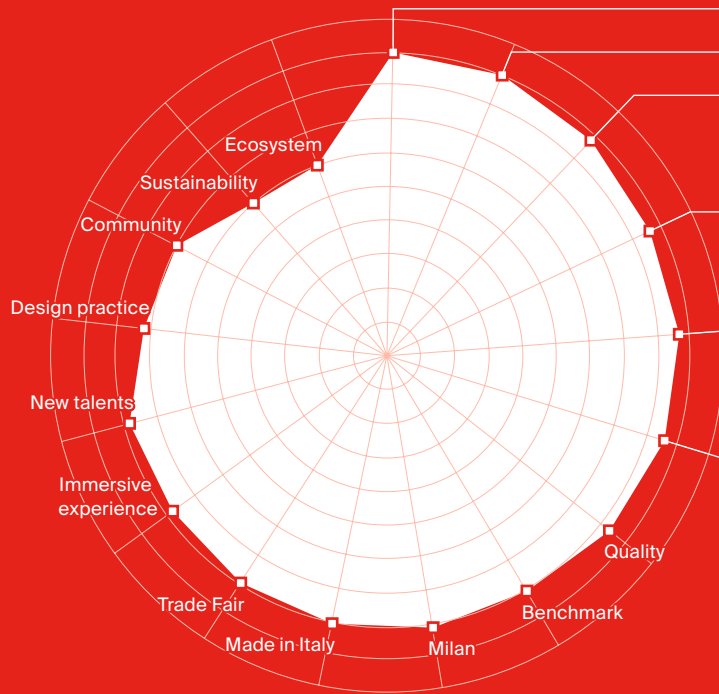


Top Brand Attributes

The Salone del Mobile serves as a catalyst for the design system, benefiting both Exhibitors and Visitors. Its brand strengthens its international standing as a benchmark. Alongside its cultural dimension—defined by attributes such as Design Culture, Creativity, and Inspiration—the Salone asserts a global outlook. It has a clear, business-oriented focus, reinforcing its position as a dynamic platform for relationships and market opportunities.

KEYWORDS - TOP 6

- 1 Internationality 90%
- 2 Design Culture 90%
- 3 Creativity 88%
- 4 Inspiration 85%
- 5 Business 84%
- 6 Innovation 83%



5 DIMENSIONS 2025 vs. 2024

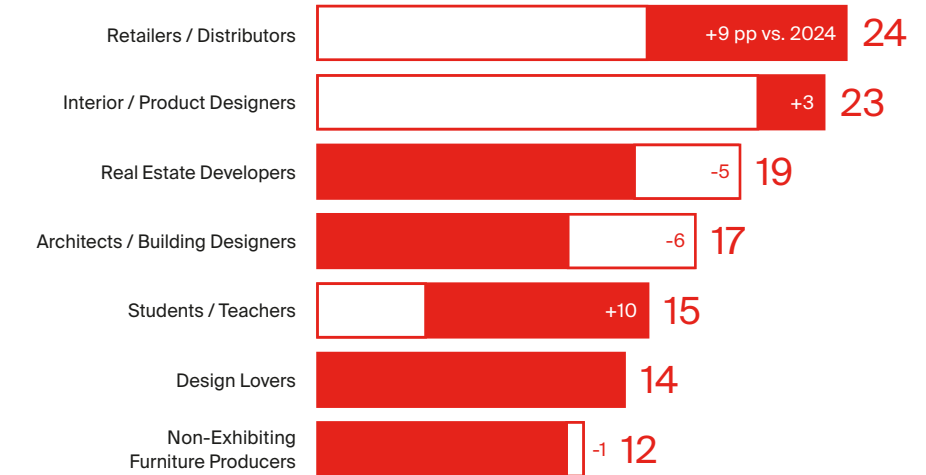
Design Culture	→
Trade Fair	→
Event	→
Relationships	→
Sustainability	↑

1.28 Target audience (%)

In 2025, the Salone del Mobile strengthens its role as the primary platform within a diverse professional network. Exhibitors and Visitors are aligning on how the target audience is changing. Both parties recognize the need to engage more closely with interior and product designers, as well as retailers and distributors. Exhibitors also want greater involvement from the academic world. Visitors, while interested in technical roles like engineers, still see Design Lovers as the primary audience. There is a shared goal to expand the audience in a deliberate way, bringing in strategic players who can enhance and support the design system around the Salone.

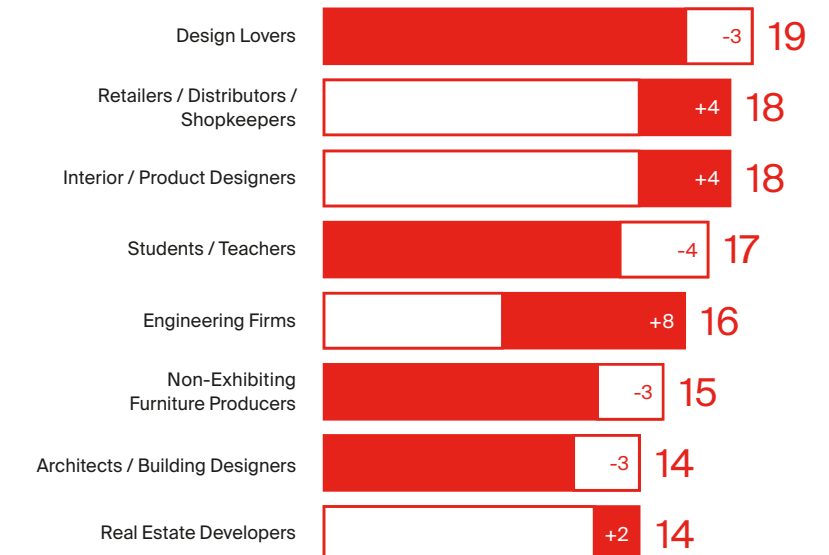
Exhibitors Survey

The Salone should also appeal to...



Visitors Survey

The Salone should also appeal to...



1.29 Overall Satisfaction

In 2025, the outcomes of the Salone del Mobile's evolutionary journey are consolidated. The event has expanded its cultural dimension through progressive changes in the exhibition model, content, and services. At the same time, it has reinforced its role as a business platform. High satisfaction among both Exhibitors and Visitors confirms its effectiveness. For Exhibitors, product promotion and building new commercial relationships remain key drivers. This confirms that the cultural evolution has not weakened its original business focus.

Overall Satisfaction

% participants who stated they were very satisfied with their experience. Satisfaction rating from 4 to 5 on a scale of 1-5.



Reason Why – Focus Exhibitors

Reasons for exhibiting at the Salone are...

			Vs. 2024
Promotion	Presenting own products	56%	↑
	Increasing international stakeholder visibility	42%	↓
	Growing client and end consumer visibility	39%	↑
Relationships	Meeting new clients	55%	↓
	B2B meetings with the public	38%	↑
Trade	Consolidating relationships with current clients	41%	↑
	Acquiring new orders	27%	↓
Discovery	Monitoring new trends and competitor offering	19%	→
	Education, seminars...	6%	↑

1.30 Intention to return

In line with 2024, the strong intention to return to the 2026 edition of the Salone from both Exhibitors and Visitors confirms the solidity of its positioning as the sector's benchmark platform for A&D. Exhibitors recognise its value in terms of visibility and access to strategic clients, while Visitors continue to regard it as a privileged observatory for emerging trends and business opportunities.

They intend to return to the Salone del Mobile.Milano...



Exhibitors would like to exhibit at the Salone again because...

		Vs. 2024
It guarantees a good return in terms of image and notoriety	60%	+4pp
It allows contact to be made with potential important clients	43%	+8pp
It is the benchmark trade fair for the A&D world	42%	+5pp

Visitors would like to return to the Salone del Mobile.Milano because...

		Vs. 2024
It allows them to monitor the competition and scope new trends	37%	+4pp
It's a good opportunity to do business, buy/sell products	37%	+7pp
It is the benchmark trade fair for the A&D world	33%	-2pp

1.31 Community

In 2025, Visitors show increasing interest in a permanent community promoted by the Salone, confirming their desire to belong to an ongoing and shared relational space. This trend suggests an opportunity for the Salone to develop a community model that consistently connects passions and professions, thereby extending engagement beyond the exhibition itself.



Visitors that would be interested in an A&D Community connected with the Salone del Mobile

SaloneSatellite 2025

Marva Griffin Wilshire
Founder and Curator SaloneSatellite

1.7

With the theme *New Craftsmanship: A New World*, the twenty-sixth edition of SaloneSatellite reaffirmed its mission to anticipate the evolving directions of contemporary design. In the pavilions of Fiera Milano Rho, more than 700 young designers under the age of 35, together with 20 international schools and universities, explored the relationship between tradition and innovation, manual skill and digital technologies, and craftsmanship and environmental responsibility. The exhibition design by Ricardo Bello Dias, in collaboration with Hariadna Pinate, created a fluid space that once again welcomed the prototypes of emerging designers. The Selection Committee – composed of international figures from the worlds of design, architecture and education – offered a global perspective, with significant representation from Asia, Latin America, Europe and Africa. SaloneSatellite 2025 thus reaffirmed its role as an observatory and laboratory of ideas – a meeting ground where young talents connect with industry, fostering dialogue and professional opportunities.

A highlight of the edition was the fourteenth SaloneSatellite Award, which recognised the most outstanding projects for their quality, sustainability and ethical vision of design. The jury, chaired by Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, underlined the importance of craftsmanship as a foundation for progress and innovation: 'Craft is essential for progress and crucial even in today's world powered by artificial intelligence and 3D printing. It is not merely a way to understand the material culture of other peoples. Because it is often distilled over centuries, it also contains ancient wisdom about nature and survival, offering tested and reliable lessons on sustainability. When materials and technologies are brand new, the ability to use your hands is necessary to guide innovation.'

Her words encapsulate the spirit of this edition, in which craftsmanship itself emerges as both a way of knowing and a driver of innovation. The award-winning projects bear witness to this approach: Kazuki Nagasawa (Super Rat), with the *Utsuwa-Juhi Series* – a collection of vessels reinterpreting Japanese tradition through the use of bark and natural dyes – received first prize for its symbolic impact, capturing the most ethereal qualities of design. Second place went to Luis Marie (The Netherlands) for *Plissade*, a self-supporting textile screen that revisits pleating with rare technical perfection. Third place was awarded to Riccardo Toldo for *Fil Rouge*, a lamp of an extremely fine filament that, in its utter simplicity, restores the magic of a gesture. A special mention was given to Juan Cortizo (Venezuela) for *Quibor Project*, an acoustic speaker that harmonises traditional craftsmanship with technology.

These awards confirm SaloneSatellite's mission to identify the most vital energies of emerging design and to channel individual research into a collective narrative of sustainability, beauty and innovation. The 2025 edition highlighted a conscious generation for whom craftsmanship does not signify a return to the past but rather the pursuit of new harmonies among nature, technology and culture.

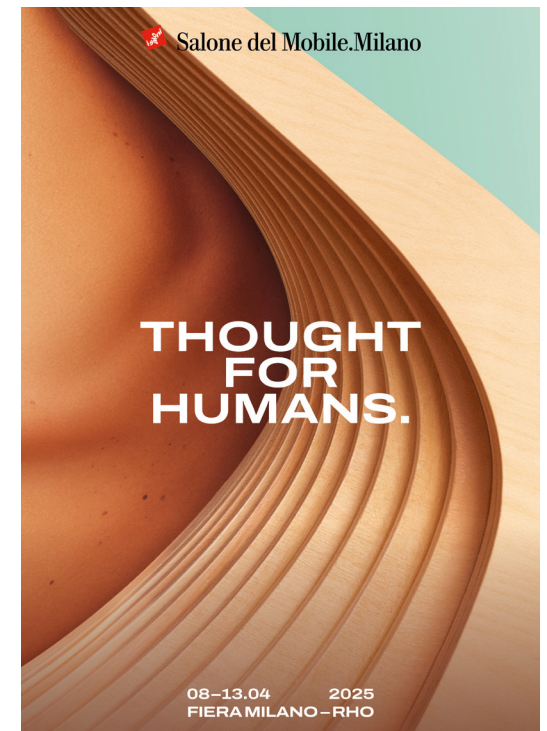
The Japanese debut of the exhibition SaloneSatellite *Permanent Collection (1998–2025)*, inaugurated in September to coincide with Expo 2025 Osaka, was welcomed with great enthusiasm. The exhibition – which brought together a selection of 47 products from the hundreds collected over the years – bears witness to the strong connection between this creative hub and the industry showcased at the Salone del Mobile.Milano. A living archive tells the story of successive generations of designers and of SaloneSatellite's enduring ability to transform under-35 research into a contribution of imagination towards shaping the future.



SaloneSatellite 2025.
Fiera Milano, Rho - Pav. 5-7
Exhibition curated by Ricardo Bello Dias
with Hariadna Pinate

Thought for Humans. 1.8

With *Thought for Humans.*, the 63rd edition of the Salone del Mobile.Milano chose to portray design in its most authentic dimension. Conceived by Dentsu Creative Italy and interpreted through five photographs by American photographer Bill Durgin, the 2025 campaign reflects on the deep relationship between body, material and space, reminding us that every project is born to address people's needs, values and lived experiences. After the 2024 experiment with artificial intelligence – which translated the Salone community's connections into abstract form – the 2025 communication chooses, for the first time, the universal language of photography. Durgin's images evoke a tactile, corporeal idea of design, where material merges with skin and becomes an extension of identity. The campaign encourages us to view design as a responsible practice, rooted in human anatomy and oriented towards an ethical, sustainable future. Bill Durgin explains: '*Thought for Humans.* is exactly what design ought to be. As human beings, we engage with design every day. Everything around us has been designed by someone for someone. Great design is not only aesthetically pleasing; it brings joy to everyday interactions – moving through spaces, preparing breakfast, working, or gathering around a table with family. By designing furniture myself, I learnt how designers study the human body – our movements, our abilities, our postures – all to make life simpler. Design is grounded in human anatomy and nourished by our continuous interaction with it.' With this campaign, Salone reaffirms its ability to innovate the language of visual communication while maintaining a strong continuity with its own history. From the first black-and-white poster of 1961 entrusted to graphic designer Camillo Pizzigoni, to Massimo Vignelli's *Compasso d'Oro* for the first corporate identity (1994), Salone has, across its 63 editions, consistently chosen to entrust its communication campaigns to distinctive creative voices – thanks to close collaborations with leading masters of Italian graphic design, artists and illustrators. Among the many 'posters', memorable examples include those by Mimmo Rotella (2004) and Guido Scarabattolo (2007 and 2008); those developed during the long collaboration with Pierluigi Cerri (from 2004); and the more recent editions by Emiliano Ponzi – one of today's most respected international illustrators (2022) – by Leftloft, Milan's renowned communication design studio, and by acclaimed collagist Gio Pastori (2023). In 2024, artificial intelligence became the focus of the campaign by Publicis Groupe, created with the scientific collaboration of Paolo Ciuccarelli, founder of the DensityDesign Lab at Politecnico di Milano and Director of the Center for Design at Northeastern University, Boston. *Thought for Humans.* sits within this tradition as a new chapter in a journey that, year after year, renews the way the Salone tells the story of its values and challenges.



On air since January 2025, the international Communication campaign *Thought for Humans* has rolled out across OOH, DOOH, BTL, as well as social and digital channels. To craft and curate the imagery, Dentsu Creative and Salone del Mobile.Milano enlisted New York-based artist Bill Durgin. The campaign revolves around five subjects: wood, metal, fabric, bioplastic and light.



Cultural Programme 2025

Annalisa Rosso

Editorial Director and Cultural Events Advisor, Salone del Mobile.Milano

1.9

In his book *Reality Is Not What It Seems*, the physicist Carlo Rovelli highlights the inconsistency of contemporary thinking, which stubbornly treats science and poetry as separate domains, failing to recognise that both are necessary to grasp the complexity of our existence. In recent years, this willingness to embrace different perspectives has guided the cultural programming of the Salone del Mobile. Milano. The declared objective of its major exhibition projects, numerous talks and experiments open to new forms of expression is precisely not to keep the various forms of thought apart, but rather to weave together economy and creativity, strategic thinking and imagination, technology and philosophy – and the list could go on, for only a superficial approach would regard these as opposing concepts.

On this basis, and in the spirit of openness and inclusion, the Salone del Mobile presented two extraordinary works across the city. The celebrated American artist Robert Wilson, who passed away recently, created the installation *Mother*, accompanied by music by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, transforming Michelangelo's *Pietà Rondanini* into a moment of collective meditation. This moving and powerful work, curated by Franco Laera at the Museo della Pietà Rondanini in the Castello Sforzesco, was produced in collaboration with the City of Milan | Department of Culture. Wilson also directed the official opening evening of this 63rd edition at Teatro alla Scala, with the performance *The Night Before: Object Chairs Opera*.

The *Library of Light* stood in the heart of Brera: a monumental kinetic sculpture by the British artist and designer Es Devlin. Installed in the Cortile d'Onore in collaboration with the Pinacoteca di Brera, it hosted talks, performances and more than 3,000 books, donated by Feltrinelli and by visitors themselves, later redistributed through the city's network of public libraries. Once again, the project connected diverse registers: students from the Accademia di Brera attended a *lectio magistralis* delivered by Es Devlin, and the installation's strong public engagement led to an extension of its display period. In Piazza della Scala, the temporary *Design Kiosk* – designed by the studio DWA and curated by Corraini Edizioni – for the second year running symbolised the Salone's presence in the city, hosting leading voices such as Piero Lissoni, Federica Biasi, Aldo Cibic, Stephen Burks and Olimpia Zagnoli.

Within the pavilions of Fiera Milano, Rho, the Salone once again sought to engage visitors and provoke emotion and reflection through projects of very different natures. The Oscar-winning film director Paolo Sorrentino, together with set designer Margherita Palli and sound designer Max Casacci, presented *La dolce attesa*, a poetic and visionary work that sold out every day. Here too, students played a key role: the performers were actors from the Luca Ronconi School of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano. Meanwhile, the French architect Pierre-Yves Rochon created the site-specific installation *Villa Héritage*, conveying an idea of timeless design that bridges eras and cultures, reinterpreting tradition through a contemporary lens.

Also within Fiera Milano, Rho, the first edition of *The Euroluce International Lighting Forum* – strongly supported by Salone President Maria Porro and Euroluce President Carlo Urbinati, in collaboration with APIL, the Italian Association of Lighting Professionals – successfully brought together a wide array of thoughts and actions centred on the theme of light. Over two days, more than 1,600 people gathered in the evocative arena designed by the Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto to take part in a collective consideration and exchange featuring twenty of the world's most respected experts discussing the topic from multiple perspectives. Anthropologists and lighting designers, astrologers and architects, artists and researchers – among them the sculptor of light Patrick Rimoux, who recently

designed the new lighting scheme for Notre-Dame de Paris, the plant neurobiologist Stefano Mancuso, and solar designer Marjan van Aubel, among others. The result was stimulating not only in terms of immediate exchange but also in fostering the growth of a long-term, active community.

For the third consecutive year, the arena designed by Formafantasma provided the setting for *Drafting Futures. Conversations about Next Perspectives* – five days of talks and round-table discussions featuring Es Devlin, Lesley Lokko, Bjarke Ingels, Paolo Sorrentino and Valeria Segovia, Principal and Design Director at Gensler London – alongside sessions exploring new perspectives on the distribution and marketing of design and furniture products, the business of hospitality from a design perspective, and the excellence of Italian manufacturing. Around eight hundred architects attended these events, accredited for professional training credits by the Order of Architects. Surrounding the arena, as always, was the Salone *Library*, presenting books chosen by the speakers themselves – this year on the theme of light – and the *Corraini Mobile Bookshop*, a cultural hub and meeting place that once again proved an essential destination for visitors to the fair.

The 2025 Cultural Programme demonstrated how the Salone del Mobile.Milano is able to intertwine the economic dimension and cultural research within a single system. From the installations spread across the city to the talks at the fair, from platforms of thought to editorial presences, every project contributed to strengthening the strategic value of the event, generating an impact that extends beyond the days of the exhibition itself and reverberates internationally, fostering connections, opportunities and new visions for the future of design.

Opening evening of the
63rd Salone del Mobile.Milano

The Night Before - Objects, Chairs, Opera

Teatro alla Scala

07.04.2025



‘The stage is unlike any other space. Every chair can be a temple. Every object can hold a memory. Every light can be a revelation.’

Robert Wilson
Artist



Robert Wilson, who passed away in July, leaves behind an immense legacy. A peerless master of light and visual imagination, Wilson transformed the theatre into a timeless space where the visible becomes an inner experience – a lesson that will continue to inspire. Salone del Mobile.Milano had the honour of collaborating with him for the 2025 edition of the event, celebrating his vision through three distinctive events: *The Night Before – Objects, Chairs, Opera*, the official opening evening at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan; the installation *Robert Wilson. Mother* with music by Arvo Pärt at the Museo della Pietà Rondanini – Castello Sforzesco; and a profound masterclass at *The Euroluce International Lighting Forum*, where Wilson shared his reflections on light as a universal language.

For the evening at the Teatro alla Scala – marking the fifth year of collaboration between the Salone and Milan’s most celebrated opera house – Wilson conceived a visionary journey through some of the most renowned operatic works he had directed over the years. The Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala, conducted by Michele Spotti, and soprano Marina Rebeka gave voice to this journey of memory and imagination. On stage, a selection of objects and chairs from Wilson’s historic productions of *La Traviata*, *Macbeth*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Norma* and *Otello*, sourced from theatres around the world, were transformed into silent yet powerful presences, capable of evoking stories, atmospheres and visions.

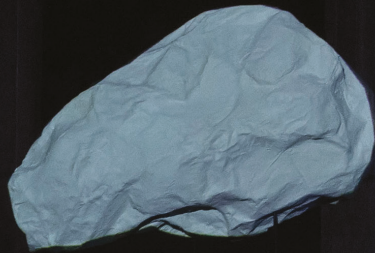
With his final appearance in Milan, Robert Wilson left the Salone and the city a poetic legacy: the belief that every space, every light, every gesture can become revelation and remembrance, opening to the viewer a horizon of beauty.



The Night Before – Objects, Chairs, Opera
Opening evening of the 63rd Salone del Mobile.Milano
Conceived by Robert Wilson; Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala,
conducted by Michele Spotti; Soprano Marina Rebeka

Robert Wilson Mother

Museo della Pietà
Rondanini
Castello Sforzesco
06.04–18.05.2025

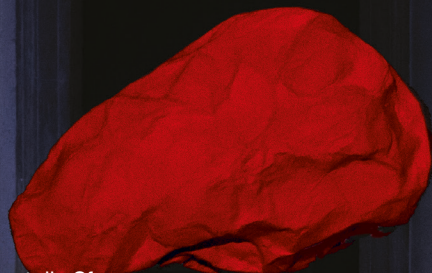


At Milan's Castello Sforzesco, *Robert Wilson. Mother* inaugurated the Cultural Programme of Salone 2025. A complete work of art dedicated to Michelangelo's masterpiece in dialogue with Arvo Pärt. The last known vision of the Master of light.

Robert Wilson
Artist

Light is what gives shape to space. Without light, space does not exist. Albert Einstein said that light is the measure of all things. For me it is always the starting point. If I have to set up an exhibition, I start with light. If I create a play or an opera, I start with light. Because light is not just a technical element, it is a living presence, an actual protagonist. Light is not a detail to be added later, it is the beginning of everything. When I first saw Michelangelo's Rondanini Pietà I sat there in front of it for more than an hour. I can't say exactly how long it was, but it was as if the world had stopped. Then I got up and started walking round it. I felt a powerful energy, an almost mystical presence. Perhaps the very fact that it is unfinished is what makes it so extraordinary. It is like an open window, a space suspended between the visible and the invisible. She asked me to listen, to imagine, to lose myself in her. She allowed me to exist in a different time, a different space in which to think, to dream. The emotion I felt was powerful. The idea of staging her affected me deeply. But after all, the Pietà doesn't really need a setting. It just needs a space, a breath, silence, so that those who observe her can lose themselves in their own thoughts and emotions. So that made me think of the music of Arvo Pärt. There is something in common between his music and this sculpture: a sense of time that expands, a space that opens out and welcomes. Together, art and music do not narrate, do not explain: they simply allow us to feel.





Robert Wilson. Mother

Museo della Pietà Rondanini – Castello Sforzesco

6 April – 18 May

A Salone del Mobile.Milano event

in collaboration with the Municipality of Milan | Culture

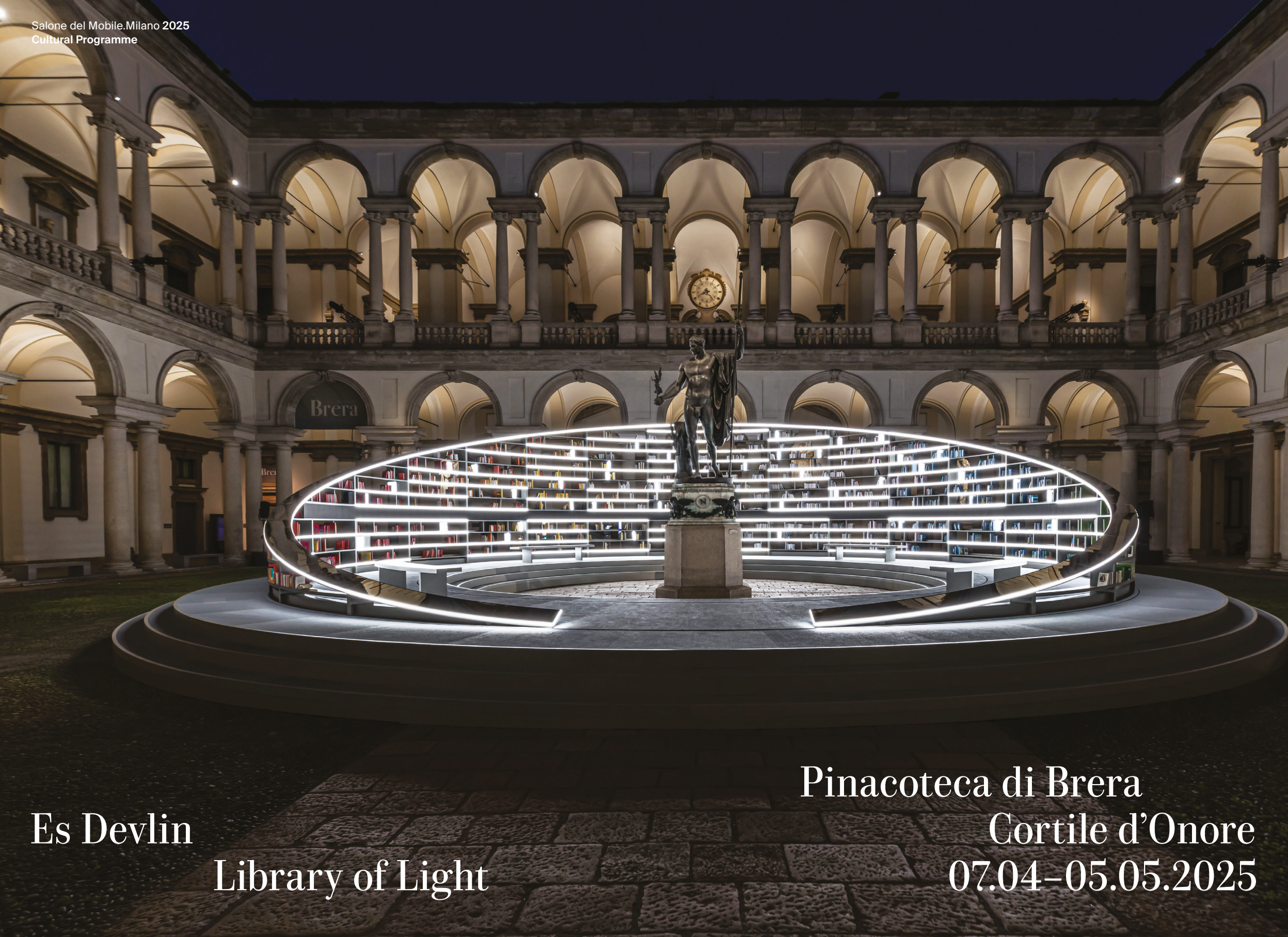
Project curated by Franco Laera

Production Change Performing Arts

Stabat Mater performed live by:

Vox Clamantis ensemble, conducted Jaan-Eick Tulve;

La Risonanza, conducted by Fabio Bonizzoni.



Es Devlin
Library of Light

Pinacoteca di Brera
Cortile d'Onore
07.04-05.05.2025

In the Cortile d'Onore of Milan's Pinacoteca di Brera, Es Devlin unveils *Library of Light*. A compass for the mind where knowledge becomes shared experience. The word becomes art.

Es Devlin

Artista and Designer

The invitation from Salone del Mobile to create a sculpture in the Pinacoteca's venerable 17th century Cortile d'Onore is an immense gift. The theme of this year's Salone is light, and my response is in a way an inversion of the 'pinakothēkē' (πινακοθήκη), the 'storage box of painted boards': a turning inside out of the storage chest, a mechanism by which at least some of its infinite treasures may cast their varied light around its central gathering place. *Library of Light* is an 18 metre diameter revolving cylindrical sculpture formed of luminous book shelves containing over 3,000 volumes. It reflects Umberto Eco's phrase that came to mind as I climbed the high shelves of the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense during my visit: 'Books are the compass of the mind, pointing toward countless worlds yet to be explored.'

I visited the Pinacoteca di Brera last year and was overwhelmed by the density of light and time packed within its walls. Our visit lasted a day but as we emerged we felt as though we had lived several overlaid parallel lives between one sunrise and sunset. As I explored the Cortile D'Onore, I found amidst the statues of celebrated seekers of knowledge and enlightenment only one female scholar: Maria Gaetana Agnesi. She became renowned across Europe for her highly influential 1748 textbook on calculus, her study of natural resonant frequencies, including the behaviour of light, drawing a curve that became known as 'la versiera di Agnesi' (famously mistranslated the 'Witch of Agnesi,'). She could hold philosophical and scientific discourse with experts of the time in 7 languages by the age of 11 and became known as the 'Seven-Tongued Orator'. Later in life she wrote an essay entitled *Il Cielo Mystico*, a guide to fusing spirituality with intellect through sustained attention and focus. She was determined equally to 'live in the century', and devoted her later years to serving the least privileged people in her community. I now find so much to learn from her life and practice, her navigation of her times with grace and courage, and yet, until I encountered her statue in the Cortile last year I had no knowledge of her existence.

In an ideal world, the laws of physics would have allowed the statues of Maria Gaetana Agnesi and Napoleon to switch places. In the end, we have placed our library slightly eccentrically within the courtyard, so that its axis of rotation is not the colossal 1811 bronze copy of Canova's 1802-06 marble statue of Napoleon 'as Mars the Peacemaker'. The Cortile could already be considered a sun dial, sculpting as it does the sun's rays around its corners and characters throughout the day. The angled mirrored plane at the top of the cylindrical bookshelf will reflect the sun's light into corners it has not previously reached as it rotates. By night, visitors will be invited to stay beyond the usual 7.15pm closing time to witness the light emanating from the library as it casts shadows of the courtyard's pillars and statues.

I have always experienced libraries as silently intensely vibrant places where minds and imaginations soar, while clutched like kites by their seated bodies. I sense the synaptic connections being forged, the resonances and associations at play within the minds of the temporary community of readers.

This installation seeks to express the vitality of the library through a series of collective readings. I first experimented with collective reading in 2018. I had become concerned that I didn't read with as much attention as I used to, my reading had become fragmented and interrupted by my phone. I observed that the only time I was reading in a sustained uninterrupted way for a prolonged duration of time was while I was part of an audience, watching and listening to four hour long operas and reading the subtitles. I wondered what would happen if I subtracted the opera and made a work that invited 2000 people to gather on a rooftop one evening in South East London and read a 40 meter long subtitles screen together for 24 minutes. The text was extracted from the theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli's *Order of Time* and we will be reworking it at the Pinacoteca in a new version underscored by violin.

The Cortile is a place where paths have crossed for centuries. I imagine if every person, animal, bird and insect who traversed the courtyard since it was constructed had left a trace, the stones would be etched with a dense hatching of straight lines at multiple angles. This revolving sculpture overlays an alternative, circular geometry upon the Cortile. While the rotating library is in place in April, visitors will slowly circumnavigate the courtyard while reading a horizontal line of text. Throughout the day and into the evening, one of the bookshelves 'reads' passages through voice and illuminated pixels that tinge the edges of its pages. As in Keat's famous poem 'Upon first reading Chapman's Homer' those who visit will 'travel through realms of gold', the gleaming edges of pages and all they encode. Visitors will also be invited to add their choices of books and phrases to the library. I have spent much of the past 30 years sitting or standing within an audience. Whether of 75 people in a theatre above a pub, or 100,000 people in a stadium, I have found solace in the character of the audience as a species: in my experience the audience reacts as one, they empathise, they cry in response to the pain of others, they agree to arrive on time, to sit quietly for extended periods of time, un-fragmented by their devices, they agree to still the ego for the greater good, as they rehearse a possible alternative version of themselves.

Less than a century before Maria Gaetana Agnesi was born, Galileo Galilei was convicted of heresy and kept under house arrest for life for his publication of observations of natural resonance. Agnesi resorted to pure, abstract algebra to preserve her sanity, and as a means of resisting the tension between the weights of church and science that continued to prevail throughout her century. Our times are a legacy of hers: now textured by the omnipresent and fast growing existential threats to climate, biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity. Like many of us who find ourselves entangled within the systems we would like to change, I find solace always in the words of Ursula K Le Guin: 'We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art, the art of words.'





Es Devlin. Library of Light
Pinacoteca di Brera - Cortile d'Onore
7 April - 5 May 2025
A project by Salone del Mobile.Milano
in collaboration with Pinacoteca
di Brera and Grande Brera
With contribution of Feltrinelli
With the support of A2A Energia

our stories. Inspiration won't. Habit is persistence in practice." — Octavia E. Butler

Paolo Sorrentino

La dolce attesa



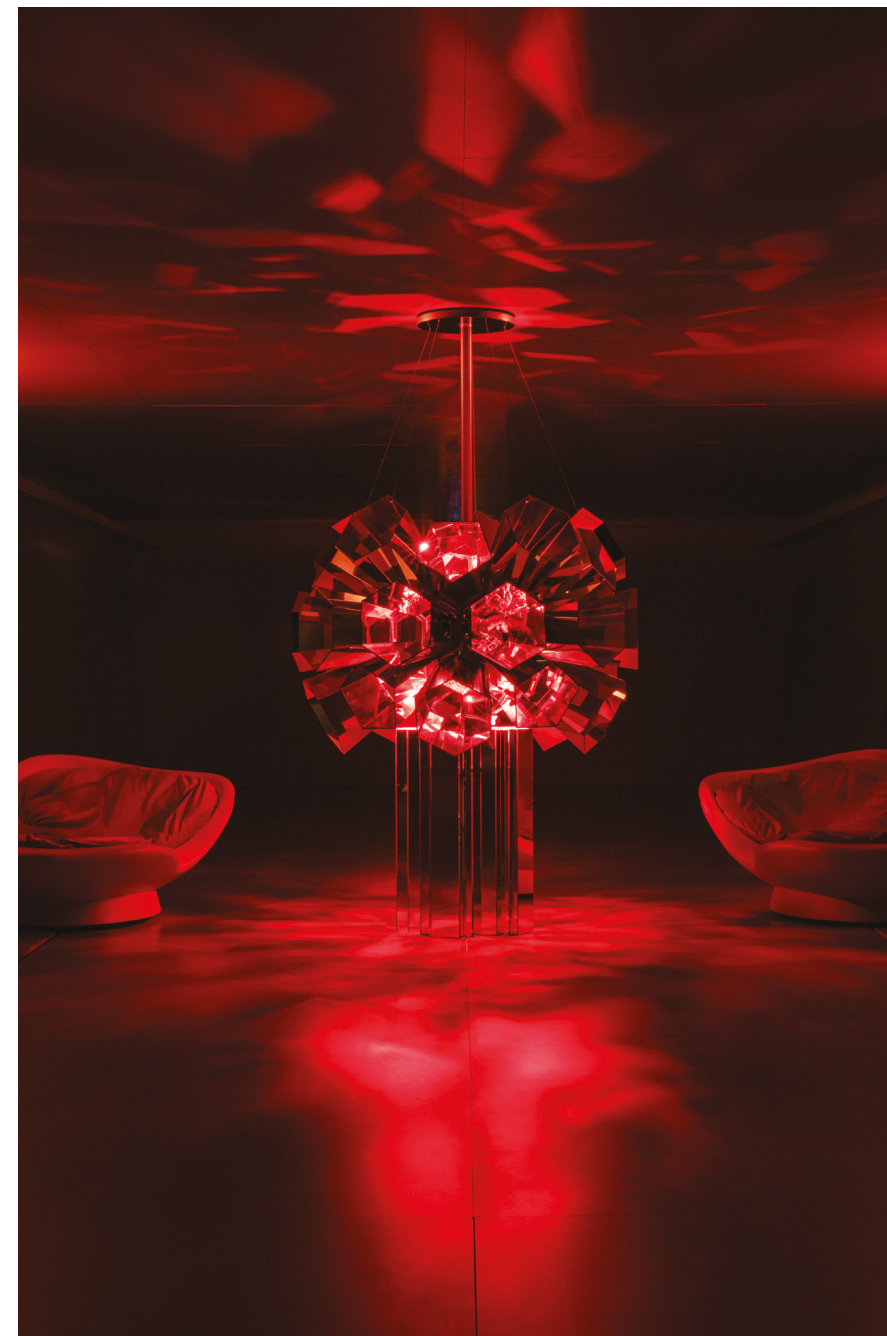
Salone del
Mobile.Milano
08-13.04.2025

An invitation to rethink space as a place of imagination and care. From Oscar-winning director Paolo Sorrentino, an installation devoted to a universal feeling: waiting – a journey that stuns and mesmerises.

Paolo Sorrentino
Filmmaker

One of the worst things in life is having to wait. Except, perhaps, for the birth of a child. But that's not what we're talking about, unfortunately. We mean waiting for a Report, a medical response. The sort of waiting that, in real life, becomes suspended reality. When we're awaiting our fate, all we can do is wait. When our future depends on a doctor, on a laboratory, on a third party, we just have to hang on in there. Still, tense, nervous ... and anguished. Waiting rooms, as they have been conceived up to now, serve only to amplify the anguish. What with white walls, uncomfortable chairs, monitors that project numbers and shifts, and grumpy staff, we end up obsessively hunched over our smartphones, and time ceases to pass. So perhaps we should rethink the way we wait. Trick it. Travel loosely and lose ourselves in the journey as if in a vague sense of hypnosis, of dizziness.

That way, perhaps, waiting can become less painful. Because it becomes something else. Our waiting room aspires to be something else. It doesn't force you to stay still, but lets you go. A little trip, like children, on reassuring rides. As adults, the horses have turned into shell-like armchairs, like maternal wombs. Disaffected employees are replaced by men and women who give off an air of tranquillity. They smile at you and, if necessary, know how to give you a paternal and disinterested pat. Gazing into thin air. The only form of distraction that provides an escape from the anguished wait. The eye focuses on a jumble of frosted glass that conceals and deforms the only thing that can extend our life, if it continues to beat. The heart. Hidden, mysterious, semi-invisible, yet still there to remind us that all is not lost. Once the short trip is over, and everything has been turned into sweet anticipation, we move towards our destiny. For that, a suitable place has yet to be invented. Waiting is agony. The sweet anticipation of pregnancy is a journey. A stunning and mesmerising one.





Paolo Sorrentino. La dolce attesa
Salone del Mobile.Milano
8 - 13 April 2025 - Fiera Milano, Rho - Pavs. 22-24
With Margherita Palli, sound fabric Max Casacci
With the participation of the students of 'Luca Ronconi'
course at Scuola del Piccolo Teatro di Milano.
The costumes are by Margherita Palli, made by
the tailoring department of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano.

Pierre-Yves Rochon Villa Héritage



Salone del
Mobile.Milano
08-13.04.2025

With *Villa Héritage*, Pierre-Yves Rochon pays tribute to a beauty that does not yield to the ephemeral, interpreting the classical not as a constraint but as an act of freedom.

Pierre-Yves Rochon

Founder and Global Design Director, PYR

For more than forty years, every April, my wife and I have come to the Salone del Mobile. It is a ritual we have never broken. Each visit has revealed the extraordinary work of artisans, the strength of tradition, and the pursuit of detail. When I met the President of the Salone, Maria Porro, and she spoke to me about this project, I immediately felt a connection with my own personal story. It was not simply a proposal of collaboration, but an invitation to reflect on what 'classical' means today in our profession as architects and designers. *Villa Héritage* was born from that consideration. I chose this name because, to me, heritage is not only the past: it is a living substance, one that continues to nourish the present and open up possibilities for the future. *Héritage* is the memory of the villas that have shaped the European landscape, but it is also the knowledge passed down by craftsmen, the quality that resists obsolescence, the beauty that does not bow to the fleeting or the fashionable. The truly classical is never a repetition: it is rigour, proportion, endurance. It is the capacity to withstand time because it is rooted in a living culture. From this imaginary world arises my desire to create an interior architecture that is at once familiar and surprising, recognisable and new. The project was not conceived as a residence, nor as a stage set, but as a demonstration of values. Every choice – from the clarity of proportions to the measured use of materials, to the light that defines the volumes – seeks to remind us that elegance is born from the encounter between rigour and sensitivity. It is not about decoration, but about giving shape to a coherent language in which every element interacts with the others, as in a musical score. *Villa Héritage* also stems from a dialogue with the arts that have always inspired me: Visconti's cinema, with interiors that become characters in themselves; opera, capable of transforming space into total emotion; and music, which teaches harmony and pause as much as rhythm. I wanted to create a pause in the frenetic rhythm of the Salone – a place where one can listen to music, be moved by images, and rediscover, in the echo of other disciplines, the strength of our craft. A place in which to recognise the meaning of transmission, of a work that does not belong solely to its creator, but to those who will inherit it tomorrow. Because for me, designing means exactly this: to preserve a heritage and at the same time to pass it on, renewed, to the future.





Pierre-Yves Rochon. *Villa Héritage*
8 - 13 April 2025 - Fiera Milano, Rho
A Luxury Way - Pavs. 13-15



CORRAINI MOBILE BOOKSHOP

14 F

14 G

Drafting Futures.
Conversations about
Next Perspectives

Arena Drafting Futures
by Formafantasma
Salone del Mobile.
Milano

Curated by
Annalisa Rosso

08-12.04.2025

5
Talks

10
International
Speakers

3
Round Tables

22
International
Lecturers



Bjarke Ingels, Architect, Founder and Creative Partner Bjarke Ingels Group, in conversation with **Oliva Sartogo**, Co-Founder & Architect Lead VIV Arts.



Lesley Lokko, Founder, Chair African Futures Institute, in conversation with **Manuela Lucà-Dazio**, Executive Director The Pritzker Architecture Prize.



Es Devlin, Artist and Designer, in conversation with **Sarah Douglas**, Consultant, Advisor and Design Agent.



Paolo Sorrentino, Filmmaker, in conversation with **Antonio Monda**, Journalist.



Valeria Segovia, Principal, Design Director Gensler London, in conversation with **Massimo De Conti**, Architect, Journalist.

The Euroluca International Lighting Forum

Light for Life
Light for Spaces

Directed by
Annalisa Rosso
in collaboration
with APIL



Arena
The Forest of Space
by Sou Fujimoto
10-11.04.2025

The first edition of *The Euroluca International Lighting Forum* brought together twenty-two international speakers – including lighting designers, architects, artists, set designers, scientists, biologists, anthropologists, astronomers and psychologists – to share visions, insights, and research and design practices. Its aim: to foster a deeper understanding of the future of Light.

Carlo Urbinati

President Assoluce of FederlegnoArredo

A logical development in the process of strengthening the identity of Euroluca began in 2023 with *The City of Lights* – the first edition after the enforced break of 2020 – *The Euroluca International Lighting Forum* fully embodied the objectives set by the Salone for updating the Exhibition. Since 2020, Assoluce has been committed to analysing the results of Euroluca, assessing the reasons for exhibitors' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, with the aim of proposing new approaches to the Salone that would synthesise these findings. Euroluca needed a more clearly defined identity, one more focused on the specificities of the world of lighting – a field no longer populated solely by design products but increasingly enriched by significant technical innovations that have expanded the possibilities of designing a 'luminous atmosphere.' Compared to the earliest editions of Euroluca, in which its liaison with the Salone del Mobile was guaranteed by the shared theme of design, by the design community itself, and to a great extent by the same distribution networks, today its progressive and consistent specialisation has given rise to a field increasingly and specifically devoted to Light – both in terms of professionals and audiences, and of products. Hence the need for a specialist and distinctive focus, capable, among other things, of attracting Lighting Designers – new interlocutors in lighting design – who in recent years have shown an increasingly selective interest, genuinely oriented towards the search for innovative solutions. Based on the synthesis of these analyses, and driven by the Salone del

Mobile and its President Maria Porro, the first post-pandemic edition of Euroluca in 2023 introduced new visitor experiences within the exhibition pavilions: a completely redesigned and boldly original layout shifted the focus from exhibitors to visitors. This new configuration placed the visitor at the centre of the routes, offering a sense of discovery, clarity of reading and memorability, along with a series of relaxation islands designed to allow visitors to 'take a break' from the exhibition, engaging instead with a thought-provoking artistic programme of great depth, culminating in the original work by Maestro Nannucci, *You Can Imagine The Opposite*.

The 2025 edition of the Forum opened with an unprecedented and original event of remarkable scope and depth, explicitly conceived to attract industry professionals. Not yet another conference devoted to the exchange of technical and applied information, but rather an oasis of thought around Light – an arena designed to generate original and unexpected connections and syntheses on the theme of Light. To achieve this goal, Annalisa Rosso, who directed the Forum in collaboration with APIL (*Associazione Italiana Professionisti dell'Illuminazione*), created a highly distinctive programme articulated across three dimensions: six Masterclasses, each led by a key figure presenting their vision; two Round Tables featuring a diverse range of participants; and two Workshops, offering the opportunity to work directly alongside one of the protagonists.

The ambitious premise behind the Forum was the desire to raise awareness among professionals in the field – to convey how every design decision, even the most technical, shapes the interpretation of space, expresses a way of inhabiting places, and inevitably transmits the capacity to evoke emotion and stimulate unconscious associations. From this perspective, the component that best expressed the spirit and objectives envisioned for the Forum was represented by the panel of Masterclass protagonists: Robert Wilson, the artist who has created scenographic spaces rich in depth using only Light, and who – through his installation *Mother* – offered his interpretation of Michelangelo's *Pietà Rondanini* at the Castello Sforzesco; Stefano Mancuso, plant neurobiologist, who demonstrated how we animals live on the by-product of plants – oxygen – made possible through photosynthesis based on light; Piero Benvenuti, Emeritus Professor of Astrophysics and President of the World Association of Astrophysicists, who explained why we are 'children of the stars', having received from them the iron that flows through our veins; Kaoru Mende, Lighting Designer, who with grace and clarity illustrated the thread of his creative thinking in approaching a lighting project, showing how lighting design can foster wellbeing and improve quality of life; and again, Tim Ingold, Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology, who passionately argued that each of us is a designer; and Patrick Rimoux, Light Sculptor and author of the new lighting scheme for Notre-Dame in Paris, who through seven different lighting scenarios transforms the spatial perception of the Cathedral.

These are just some of those who captivated an audience of professionals, students and sector operators over the two days of the Forum, which hosted more than 1,500 attendees. The setting for this gathering, within the Euroluca Pavilion, was *The Forest of Space* Arena, designed by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto – a structure made of vertical natural pine beams, inspired by the organic vitality of forests. With this first edition – which has helped foster an ever-stronger dialogue with international associations bringing together professionals in the lighting field – *The Euroluca International Lighting Forum* has achieved its goals by offering unprecedented content for the industry, presented in an accessible and engaging form, thus beginning to build the identity that we hope will continue to grow in the years ahead, establishing it as an essential event for lighting professionals – the key interlocutors for Euroluca exhibitors.

6
Masterclasses
2
Round
Tables
2
Workshops

22
International
Lecturers



Sunlighted
Marjan van Aubel, Solar designer



Creativity and the Transformative Power of Design
Robert Wilson, Artist.



The Role of Light and Shadow in Architecture
Kaoru Mende, Lighting Designer



LIGHT. An Instrument of Life and Revelation
Patrick Rimoux, Light Sculptor



Uniting People through Light and Motion
Lonneke Gordijn, Artist, Co-Founder DRIFT



Nourish Oneself with Light
Stefano Mancuso, Plant Neurobiologist, Director
International Laboratory of Plant Neurobiology,
University of Florence

Light for Life

10 April

Masterclass

Sunlighted

Marjan van Aubel
Solar designer

Nourish Oneself with Light

Stefano Mancuso
Plant Neurobiologist, Director International Laboratory of Plant Neurobiology,
University of Florence

Creativity and the Transformative Power of Design

Robert Wilson, Artist
Maria Porro, President Salone del Mobile.Milano.

Round Table

Nicholas Belfield, Partner dpa lighting consultants
Piero Benvenuti, Professor Emeritus of Astrophysics at the University of Padua
Rogier van der Heide, Lighting Designer
Shelley James, Lighting Strategy Consultant, Director Age of Light Innovations
Manuel Spitschan, Research Group Leader, Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics & Professor of Chronobiology & Health, Technical University of Munich

Workshop

Transparency, Flexibility and Sustainability

Adrien de Lassence
Associate Director Sou Fujimoto Atelier Paris

Moderator: **Ed Stocker**
Europe Editor at Large Monocle

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Light for Spaces

11 April

Masterclass

The Role of Light and Shadow in Architecture

Kaoru Mende
Lighting Designer

LIGHT. An Instrument of Life and Revelation

Patrick Rimoux
Light Sculptor

Uniting People through Light and Motion

Lonneke Gordijn
Artista, Co-Founder DRIFT

Round Table

Susanna Antico, Architect, Lighting Designer
Hervé Descottes, Lighting Designer, Founder L'Observatoire International
Mariel Fuentes, Lighting Designer, Co-Founder MMAS Lighting
Tim Ingold, Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Aberdeen
Elisa Orlanski Ours, Chief Planning, Design Officer Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group
Carla Wilkins, President-Elect IALD, Senior Partner Lichtvision design

Workshop

Temporary Light in Permanent Space: Creative Lighting Solutions for Museums and Exhibitions

A.J. Weissbard
Lighting Designer



Masterclasses and Round Tables Recordings

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Milan Design Week 2025

- 2.1 Milano, Capital of design
- 2.2 Milan Design Week 2025. Map
- 2.3 An inside view of Milan Design Week
- 2.4 City in motion
- 2.5 Fieldwork observation
- 2.6 The paradox of showing

2

Milano, Capital of design

Alessia Cappello

Councillor for Economic Development and Labour Policies,
with responsibility for Fashion and Design, Municipality of Milan

With its remarkable blend of history, culture and innovation, Milan stands as the undisputed global capital of design. It is the only city that has succeeded, over time, in building a solid foundation while constantly renewing itself and responding to the challenges of the age. This achievement has been made possible by a vibrant ecosystem powered by a unique combination of established figures and emerging talents, prestigious academic institutions and a dynamic design industry that exerts a profound influence on urban life.

Milan Design Week is one of the most eagerly anticipated moments in the city's calendar: it attracts investment, generates significant economic value and enhances Milan's international standing as a city that welcomes both citizens and visitors. This success stems from the synergy between the Salone del Mobile and the many initiatives that take place across the city during the week. In just a few days, connections are forged between businesses, institutions, cultural organisations and associations; the city becomes both a showcase for design trends and a genuine creative laboratory – one that now extends beyond the historic districts to include more peripheral areas, increasingly enriched with events, installations and artistic performances.

At the heart of this dynamic lies the Salone del Mobile.Milano, the foremost international benchmark for furniture and design. Its strength lies in presenting the entire value chain, encompassing materials, components, processes, services and solutions for both private and shared spaces. At the fair, companies unveil new products, test technologies and seek new opportunities. It serves as a meeting ground for manufacturing, research and design, where innovation is measured by quality, durability and impact. The influence of this event extends far beyond the exhibition halls: neighbourhood networks are activated, and spaces and historic palaces open as Milan welcomes professionals and the public. The week celebrates heritage, creates opportunities for local businesses and transforms the districts into a stage for exhibitions.

The *Milan Design (Eco) System* Report documents practices, outcomes and areas for improvement. It provides criteria and tools that make experimentation concrete. The quality of proposals, the focus on sustainability and the capacity for innovation are key. These are sustained by ongoing dialogue between the Salone and citywide events. They enable Milan to face the challenges of an ever-changing context and to project the city into the future, reinforcing its identity and its central role on the global design stage. This document is both an assessment and a commitment: an assessment because it gathers data, insights and results for transparency and comparison; a commitment because it also outlines a path for the years ahead – less fragmentation, more collaboration; fewer barriers, greater accessibility. From the trade fair to the city centre, Design Week reaffirms Milan's role on the international stage and makes visible, both during the week and throughout the year, the city's determination to invest in the sector and in quality.

Milan Design Week 2025. Map



◆ **Certosa District**
 ↘ FuoriSalone – Design Week '25
Multi-venue event, various locations

CERTOSA

◆ **Isola Design Festival 2025**
 ↘ Design is Human
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **ADI Design Museum**
ADI Design Week 2025
 ↘ Best of Both Worlds: ITALY. Art and Design in Italy 1915–2025
 ↘ DBEW EXHIBITION 2025
 ↘ NEW HABITAT FOR TRANSITION
 Massimiliano Mandarini
 ↘ Olympic and Paralympic Village of Cortina 2026
 SIMICO and Fondazione Milano Cortina 2026
 ↘ TWIST, Plust Outdoor Attitude
 ↘ Ad Aquam 25, Treemme
 ↘ XPENG: #FUTUREMOBILITY

ISOLA

◆ **ALCOVA**
 ↘ Alcovia Milano 2025

◆ **Dropcity Center for Architecture and Design**
 ↘ Dropcity 2025

◆ **Fabbrica del Vapore**
 ↘ Fabbrica Design Week - Brave New World

PAOLO SARPI

◆ **Portanuova Vertical Connection**
PORTA NUOVA

◆ **Zona Sarpi**
 ↘ DO IT BETTER
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **Camera Nazionale della Moda**
 ↘ Milano Moda Design 2025
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **Porta Venezia Design District 2025**
 ↘ No Boundaries Design
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **Capsule Plaza**
 ↘ Expanded Living
Multi-venue event, various locations

PORTA VENEZIA

◆ **Brera Design District**
 ↘ Brera Design Week 2025
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **Convey 2025**
 ↘ Leading the new wave of design companies

◆ **Triennale Milano**
 ↘ Magician, Creative Academy
 ↘ Emeco In&Out
 ↘ ERCO Light Box: Light and Photography in Dialogue
 ↘ Against the War 7 Designers for Emergency
 ↘ CHECKED FUTURE, Frequency Manifest
 ↘ ORObyRUFFINO, The Art of Connection
 ↘ Material Alchemists: Class of 2025
 ↘ Light in Matter, Compositions by Emanuel Gargano
 ↘ Nest Award
 ↘ Playful Sculptures, Naoto Fukasawa for JAKUETS

◆ **MOSCAPARTNERS**
 ↘ MOSCAPARTNERS Variations–Migrations

◆ **Masterly–The Dutch in Milano**
 ↘ Masterly–The Dutch in Milano 2025

◆ **Rossana Orlandi**
 ↘ RoCollectible 2025

5 VIE

◆ **SAN BABILA DURINI**
 ◆ **DDDESIGN**
 ↘ Design Week 2025
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **5VIE Design Week 2025**
 ↘ Invisible Harmonies
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **INTERNI Magazine Mondadori Group**
 ↘ INTERNI CRE-ACTION FuoriSalone 2025
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **Tortona Design Week 2025**
 ↘ Design rEvolution: Creative Connections
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **BASE Milano**
 ↘ We Will Design 2025: Making Kin

◆ **Superdesign Show 2025**
 ↘ Happiness – 25 years of Happy Design

◆ **Tortona Rocks**
 ↘ Unframed Design
Multi-venue event, various locations

◆ **Labò Cultural Project**
 ↘ LABÒ CULTURAL PROJECT 2025

STADERA

◆ **Stadera Design District_SDD**
 ↘ Open Studio 2025
Multi-venue event, various locations

Events
1,667
 25.7% vs. 2024

The illustration displays a selection of cultural producers, zones and Districts, that gather subsets of single Milan Design Week 2025 events. An analysis of this population is provided in Section 2.5 using as a reference the number of events/appointments Reported by the Municipality of Milan, Directorate of Urban Economy, Fashion and Design, during the event Milan Design Week 2026: MDW 2025 Survey Results; New Call for MDW 2026, dated September 16, 2025.

An inside view of Milan Design Week

Annibale D'Elia

Director of Urban Economy, Fashion and Design, Municipality of Milan

2.3

Who makes Milan Design Week happen? How many, and which, institutions, associations and businesses bring it to life? How do they assess, year after year, the evolution of an urban phenomenon that is perhaps unique in the world – its strengths, its areas for improvement, and its sometimes complex relationship with the city itself? The distinctive features of Milan Design Week – particularly its largely spontaneous and decentralised nature, as well described in the previous *Milan Design (Eco) System Report* – make it difficult, and perhaps even pointless, to look for a single, definitive answer. An event as diverse and multifaceted as Design Week will inevitably be viewed through many lenses, depending on the observer. A partial but valuable perspective can be drawn from the results of the survey conducted at the end of each edition, which gathers feedback from all the public and private operators responding to the Municipality of Milan's public call for applications and included in the event's official programme. It is worth recalling a few figures. Having overcome the pandemic, since 2022 the number of initiatives and events in the programme has risen steadily; by 2023 it had already exceeded pre-Covid levels, and in the following two years the figure almost doubled (**Figure 2.1**, **Figure 2.2**).

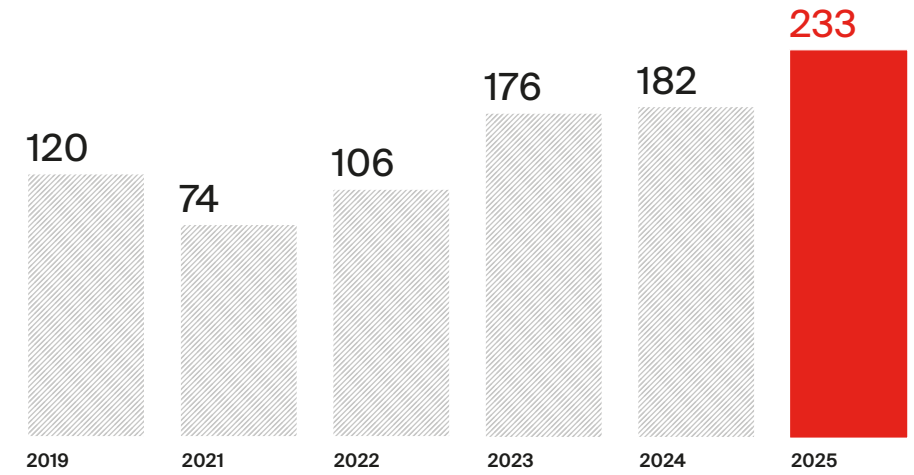
Over the same period, the range of production sectors and city districts involved in the event has broadened significantly. No longer limited to furniture, it now encompasses fashion, automotive, intangible services and consumer goods. Not only the central districts (Brera, Durini, 5VIE) and the large exhibition spaces of Zona Tortona, but also Isola, Porta Venezia, Stazione Centrale, Paolo Sarpi and Cimitero Monumentale, as well as the areas surrounding Bocconi University and Fondazione Prada, together with individual exhibition projects in more peripheral districts and even beyond the city boundaries. This evolution resembles the typical dynamics of social networks more than those of formal organisations – and it has not been without certain undesirable side effects. In one of the first post-2023 discussions with operators, five critical themes – each with two opposing poles – were identified for closer monitoring: 1) The balance between growth and the crisis of growth; 2) The tension between cultural and commercial content; 3) The often uneasy coexistence between the general public and sector professionals; 4) The opportunities for cross-fertilisation among the many spheres of design and the risks of confusion; 5) The tension between the event's contribution (economic and otherwise) to the city and its impact on urban life – from the cost of living and housing to traffic and the experience of those who live, study and work in Milan. For the past four years, more than 160 operators who help to make Milan Design Week possible have been invited to share their perspectives at the end of each edition. This is how they responded.

For most respondents, the overall assessment of Design Week remains positive or very positive, though the trend no longer follows the curve of its growth (**Figure 2.3**). Satisfaction increased up to the 2023 edition (83%), when the Municipality first introduced significant restrictions on the commercial use of public spaces. Over the past two editions, satisfaction has dropped by 14 percentage points, even as the number of initiatives and events in the programme has grown by 39%. However, this criticism does not seem to concern the success of the operators' own projects, which more than nine out of ten respondents rated as good or excellent. Dissatisfaction appears to relate to the perceived quality of other initiatives. Only in a few cases were comments such as these recorded: 'We should all – operators and the Municipality – pay more attention to advertising requests: vertical banners, stickers, trolleys, gadgets, sandwich men... too commercial.' 'We could have been more careful with a couple of initiatives that lacked adequate content.'

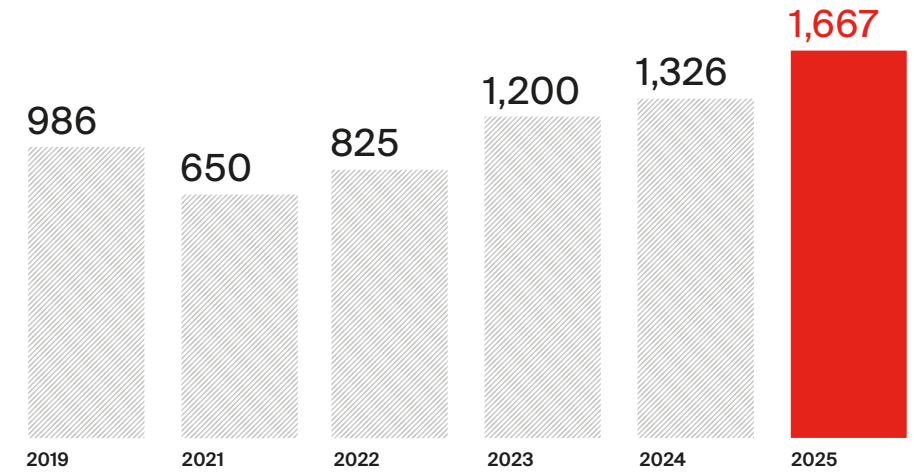
The assessment remains positive with regard to the presence of Italian (70%) and foreign operators (56%), the general public (64%) and students and young designers (67%). As for the city's response (positive for 57%), the main issues Reported were the rise in hotel and restaurant prices, the shortage of taxis and, more generally, the challenges of mobility during the week; nonetheless, 32% of respondents noted signs of improvement. In the 2025 survey, interviewees were also asked to reflect on broader issues, including the overall vision of the event. The majority agreed that Milan Design Week is the most important event in the global design industry (85%), that its spontaneous and polycentric nature contributes to its success (61%), and that there is a need for regular meetings with the Municipality to discuss rules and measures to safeguard the event's quality (77%). A smaller majority expressed a negative view of promotional activities unrelated to design (56%), while fewer than half of respondents believe that the growing number of events and installations undermines the event's overall quality.

A sizeable minority, however, would prefer Design Week to focus solely on the home furnishing sector (37%) or to be open only to industry professionals (33%). As some participants observed: 'Design is a method - a universal language to be understood in a broad and inclusive sense.' 'Fashion, automotive or consumer product brands only pose a risk when the projects themselves are of poor quality.' 'Access should be organised according to priorities, with greater attention to professional users.' Finally, regarding the relationship with the City administration, 63% of operators consider the rules introduced by the Municipality of Milan in 2023 to limit the commercial use of public space to be balanced, while 26% view them as too restrictive and 11% as too lenient - a reflection of the ongoing and delicate search for equilibrium between regulation and freedom.

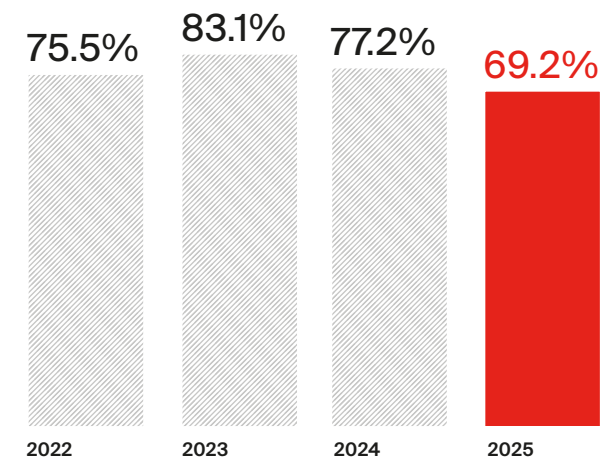
2.1 Number of initiatives on the programme



2.2 Overall number of events



2.3 Quality of the event (positive or very positive view)



City in motion

Curated by Fastweb+Vodafone
with the support of Motion Analytica

For the first time, the Annual Report *Milan Design (Eco) System* presents an analysis of Design Week based on mobile network data, thanks to a new data provider, Fastweb+Vodafone. The dataset made available enables a more precise measurement of the event's urban impact, both in terms of the distribution of presences across the city and mobility behaviours. The results should therefore be interpreted as proxies for overall mobility flows rather than a direct count of visitors or a measure of the popularity of individual events: they capture patterns, not admissions.

The technology used is Vodafone Analytics, a solution developed by Fastweb+Vodafone that collects real-time data generated by the mobile network – non-personal and anonymised data, fully compliant with privacy regulations – which provides highly accurate temporal and spatial information. It is based on data generated by the Vodafone network through the analysis of over 20 million SIMs, the mobile cells distributed across the territory and approximately 30 billion daily geo-referenced positions at national level. The processing was carried out with the support of partner company Motion Analytica, an innovative SME specialising in big data analytics.

The dataset generated through Vodafone Analytics covered the entire March–April 2025 period, allowing continuous observation of urban mobility flows. The analysis presented here isolates the period 31 March–13 April 2025, comparing two consecutive and similar weeks: the control week (31 March–6 April), representative of ordinary urban behaviour, and Design Week (7–13 April), characterised by an intensification of events and mobility flows connected with the Salone del Mobile. Milano. This approach makes it possible to assess the net effect of Design Week on city mobility, excluding seasonal variations and keeping other contextual conditions constant.

The first output, conducted by Local Identity Nucleus (NIL), shows a highly detailed map of mobility in the most affected NILs, with an average increase in presences ranging from +2.3% to +51.9%, depending on location, the density of initiatives and prevailing urban functions. NIL 1 *Duomo* – although not a Design Week District – remains the most frequented area, rising from 2,967,414 to 3,540,123 presences (+19.3%), confirming its role as a tourist and commercial hub and as a transit point to neighbouring districts. This is followed by NIL 2 *Brera*, home to the *Brera Design District* and its widespread programme, which records a 51.9% increase, fully consistent with the density of showrooms and high-profile installation projects, such as *Es Devlin. Library of Light*, curated by Salone del Mobile.Milano in the Courtyard of Honour of the Pinacoteca di Brera. The *Porta Genova* area (NIL 50), gateway to the *Tortona* axis, grew by 41.3%, while *Parco Sempione* (NIL 8), home to Triennale Milano, records a 25.4% rise – a figure also

influenced by its nature as an open space and by short trips and interstitial stays. This is followed by the *Sarpi* area (NIL 69), home to the ADI Design Museum and Fabbrica del Vapore (+12.2%), and *Magenta – San Vittore* (NIL 7) – heart of *5VIE Design Week 2025* – which nonetheless shows an interesting dynamic (+9.6%).

NILs with a strong daily-use component – such as *Porta Garibaldi – Porta Nuova* (NIL 9, +16.2%), *Buenos Aires – Porta Venezia – Porta Monforte* (NIL 21, +7.9%), and *Stazione Centrale – Ponte Seveso* (NIL 10, +7.4%) – despite hosting numerous initiatives, display variations linked to the physiological nature of urban mobility: here Design Week does not overload existing flows but amplifies them, integrating into commuting, shopping and systematic movements.

In the more peripheral quadrants of the city, variations are more limited: *Villapizzone – Cagnola – Bovisasca* (NIL 71, +2.3%), home to *Certosa District*, and *Stadera – Chiesa Rossa – Q.Re Torretta – Conca Fallata* (NIL 42, +2.8%), home to *Stadera Design District_SDD*, remain almost stable – a sign that the *Ventura Lambrate* effect (an emerging district between 2009 and 2017) is not immediately replicable today.

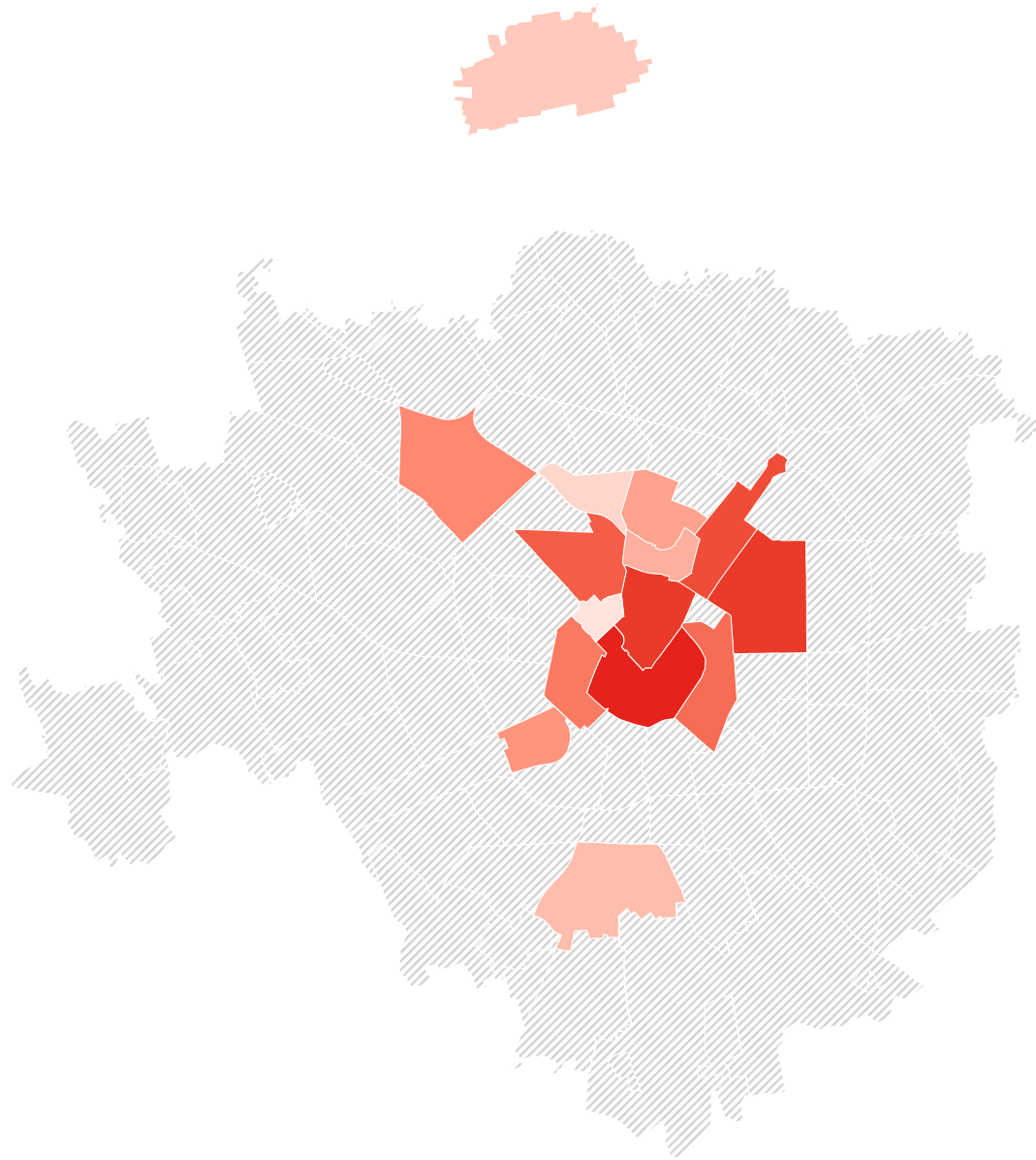
Alongside the NIL-based analysis, the sample of six focus areas selected in the 2025 Programme enables a more detailed observation of movement concentrations within a 500-metre radius of event epicentres: *INTERNI CRE-ACTION* at the Università degli Studi di Milano, *DDDESIGN* in Via Durini, *MoscaPartners Variations 2025* at Palazzo Litta, *Alcova Milano 2025* at Villa Bagatti Valsecchi in Varedo, as well as the *Tortona* and *5VIE* areas. Here too, average flow growth varies between approximately +20% and +50%, with peaks for *INTERNI CRE-ACTION* (+49.2%) and *DDDESIGN* (+48.0%). Particularly significant is the rise in the international component, which at *Alcova Milano 2025* exceeded +300% for foreign SIMs.

Detailed data for Design Week (7–13 April) also makes it possible to interpret the temporal and demographic structure of flows. The 10:00–19:59 time slot concentrates the largest user volume, but the 20:00–23:59 slot still accounts for over a quarter of movements: the city remained active in the evening, confirming that the event is not only a fair, but an urban and convivial phenomenon.

The age composition shows that the 40–59 bracket accounts for 28.7% of presences, while the 25–39 bracket accounts for 21.0%: together they represent nearly 50% of the public and clearly identify the professional and project-driven core of Design Week. They are followed by the 60–79 group (17.1%) and the 16–24 group (14.1%), while those over 80 account for 6.8%. Compared with the previous week, the Design Week effect is particularly evident here: more 25–39-year-olds (young professionals, designers, students of design schools and universities) and more 16–24-year-olds (curious visitors, schools, emerging creatives) enter the city – the groups most likely to move between districts and attend evening events.

Finally, the co-visit maps, built on cross-movements within 48 hours, depict a city connected by spontaneous itineraries. Geographic proximity, the recognisability of initiatives and the density of the offering generate visit networks: audiences – professional and non-professional – tend to build short-range routes, linking several contiguous districts in the same day and choosing destinations based on content (product, research, installation). The resulting picture matches the title: a city in motion, polycentric yet compact, where Salone del Mobile.Milano not only brings over 300,000 presences to the fair's grounds but also activates urban mobility that is measurable, readable and, for the first time, describable through objective network data.

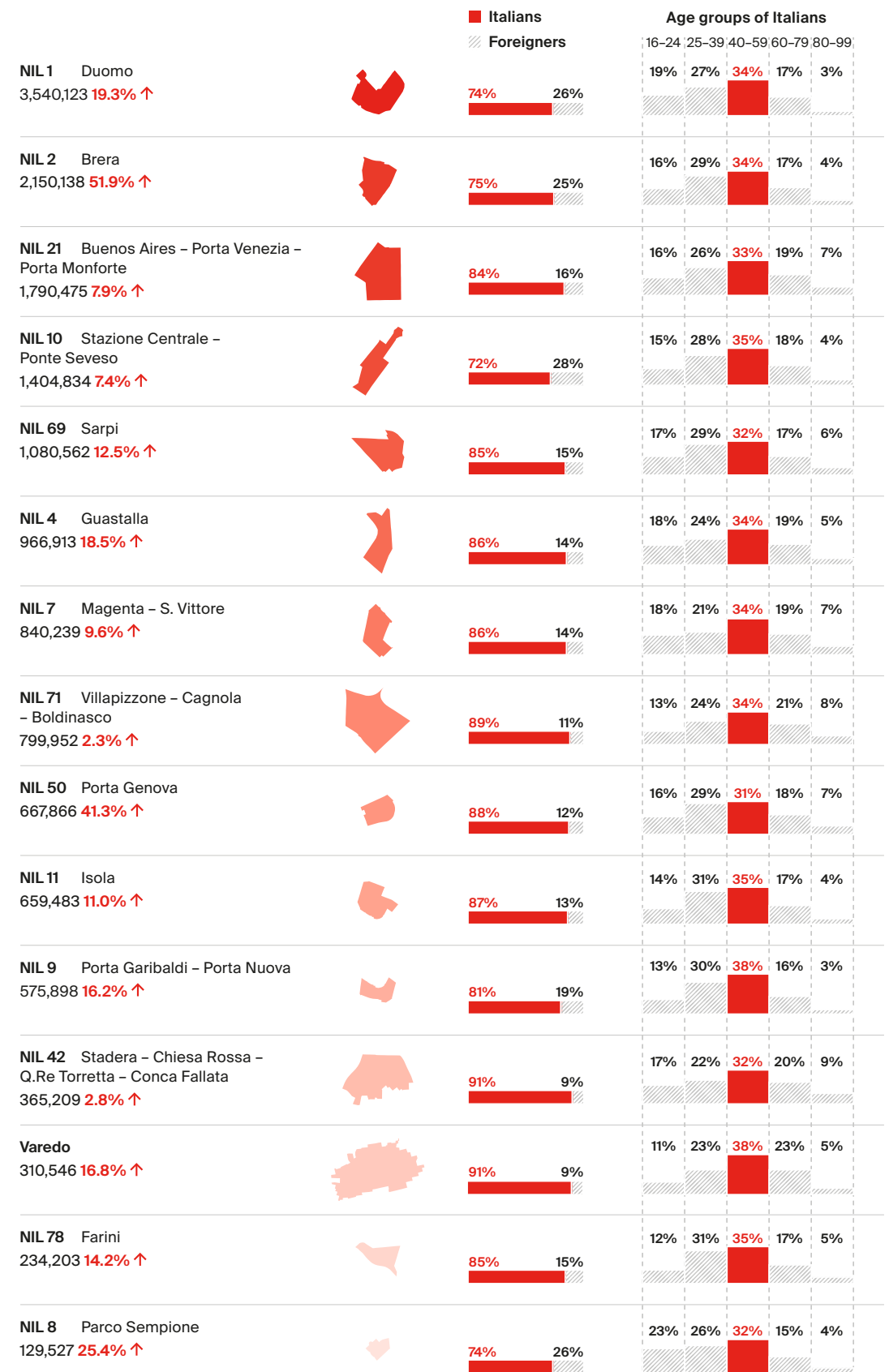
2.4 Map of Italian and foreign SIMs – Design Week 2025 (7–13 April 2025) and % variation vs. previous week. Mobile network data by Local Identity Nucleus (NIL)



The map shows the Local Identity Nucleus (NIL) of Milan and the Municipality of Varedo, identified as the geographic reference units for sharing the research data. The NILs are coloured in increasingly intense shades according to the number of users detected. Specifically, the value of each area is determined by the sum of Italian and foreign SIMs registered there on each day from 7 to 13 April 2025.

The charts on the right represent the same areas, ordered in descending order by the number of users detected, and display:

- The percentage of Italian users and the percentage of foreign users
- The percentage distribution by age group of Italian users only



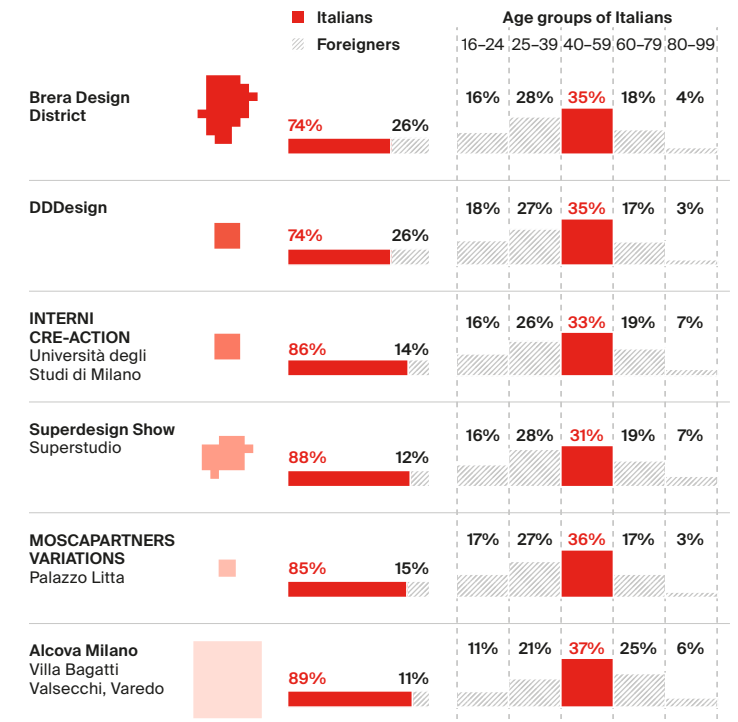
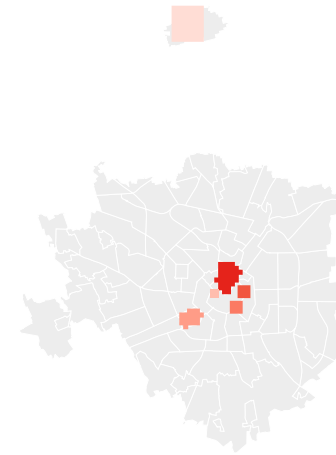
2.5 Maps of Italian and foreign SIMs – Design Week 2025 areas of interest (8–13 April 2025). Mobile network data by Local Identity Nucleus (NIL) and Areas of Interest (AoI)

The maps show six focus areas, coloured in increasingly intense shades according to the number of users detected. Specifically, the value of each area is determined by the sum of Italian and foreign SIMs registered there on each day from 8 to 13 April 2025. Each focus area corresponds to the location of the key event identified (+500 m).

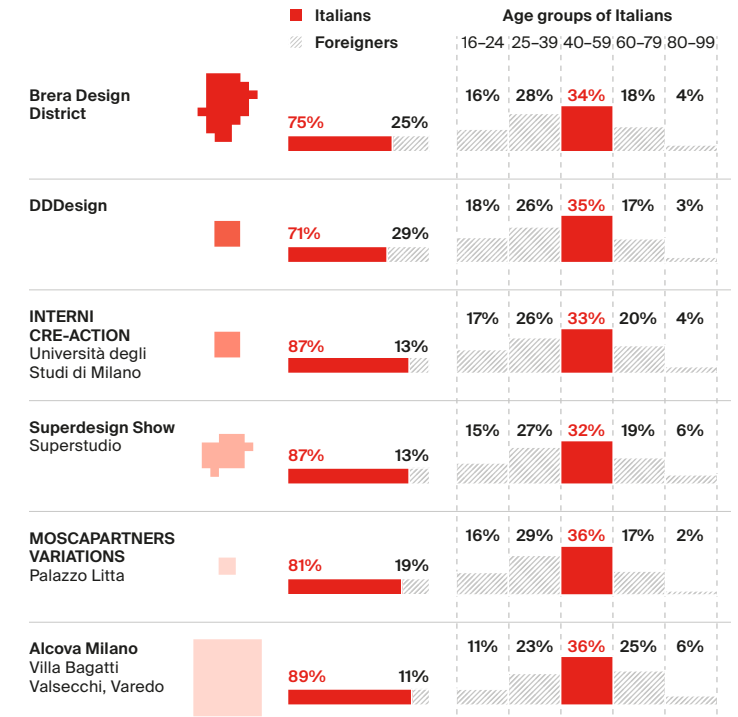
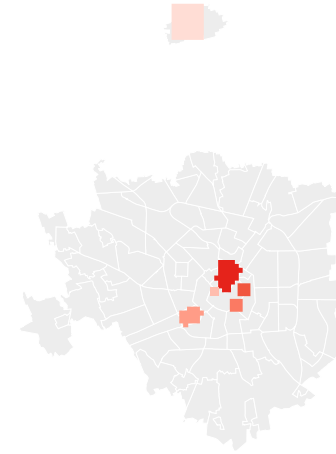
The charts on the right represent the same areas, ordered in descending order by the number of users detected, and display:

- The percentage of Italian users and the percentage of foreign users
- The percentage distribution by age group of Italian users only

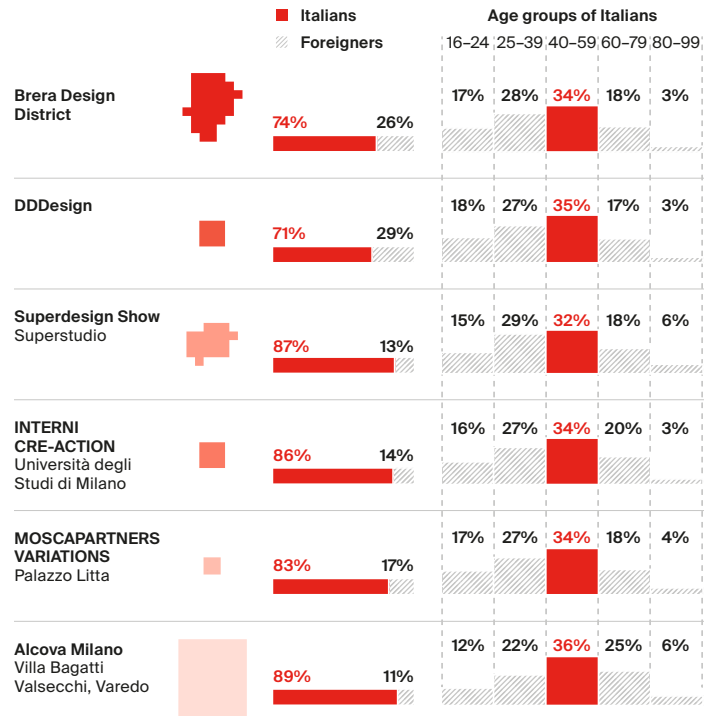
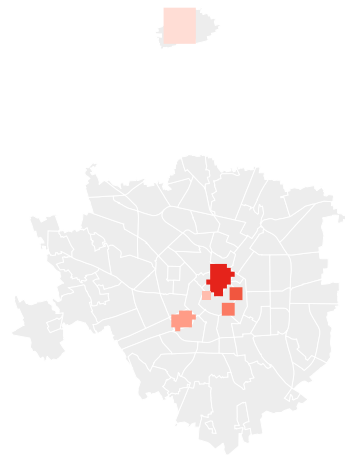
April 8, 2025



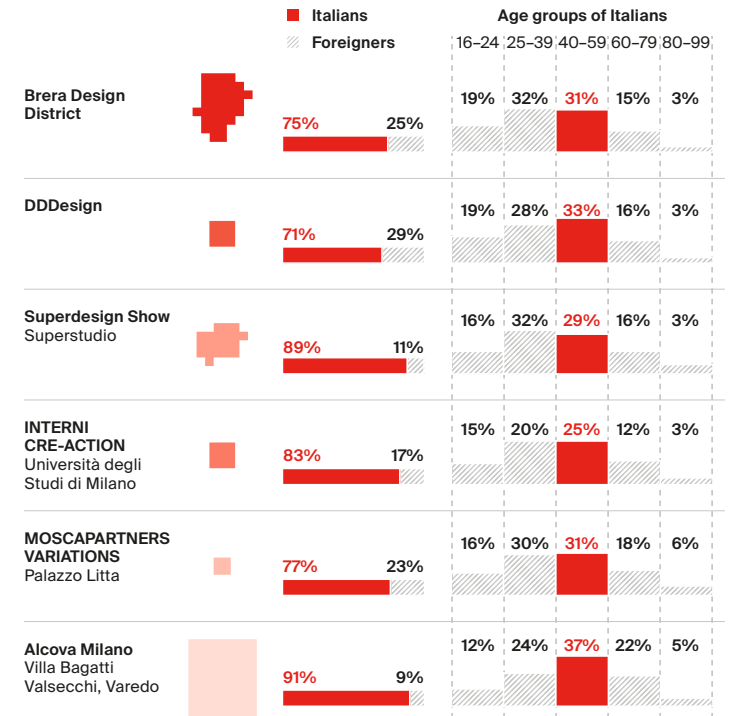
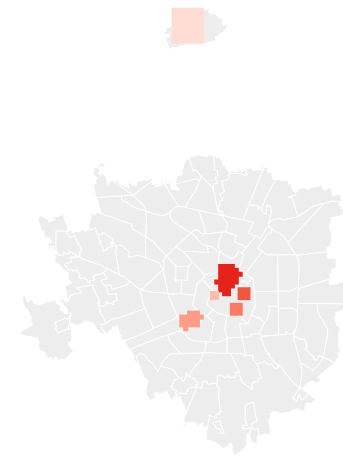
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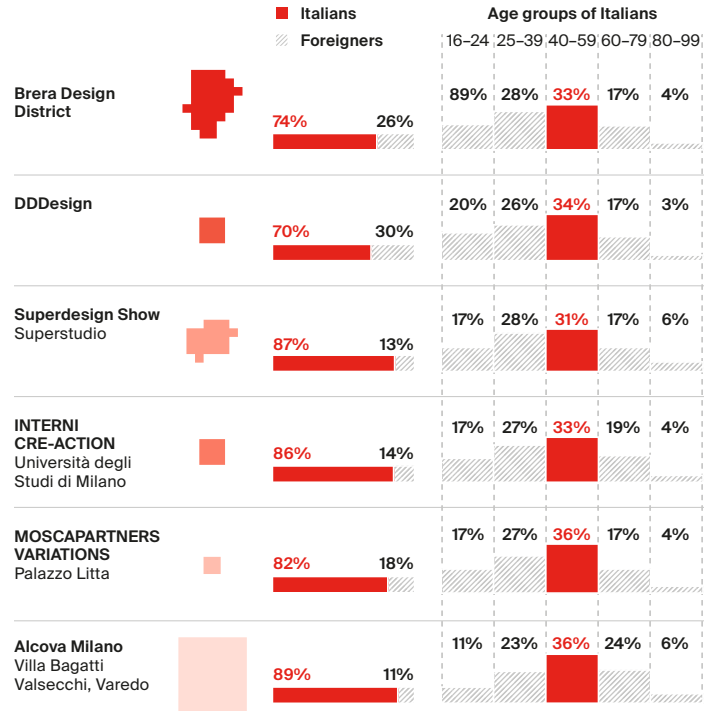
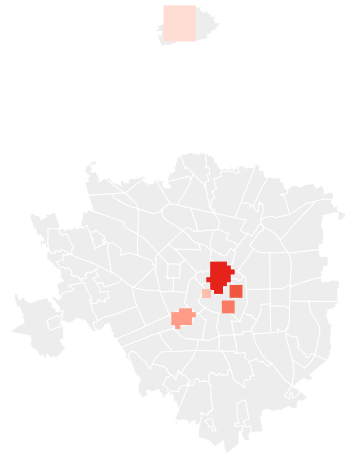
April 10, 2025



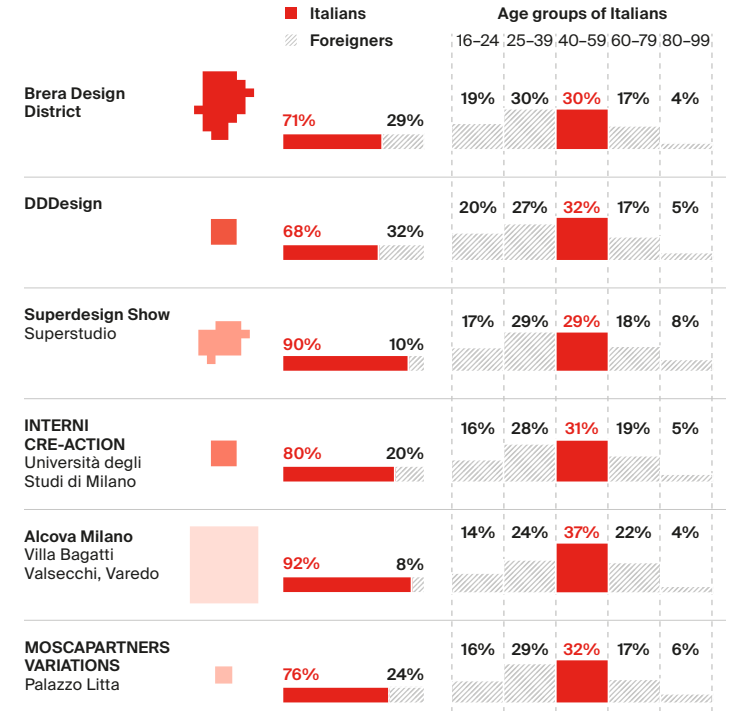
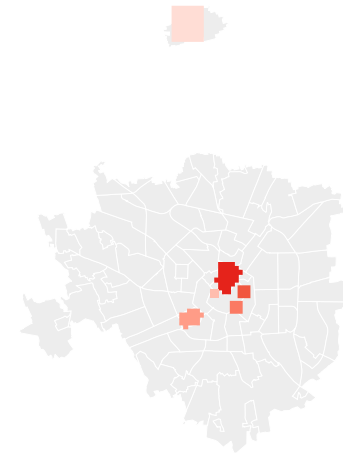
April 12, 2025



April 11, 2025



April 13, 2025



2.6 Points of Interest – Design Week 2025. Mobile network data by Areas of Interest (Aoi)

The data show presence flows in five points of interest of Design Week, comparing Design Week flows (7-13 April) with those of the previous week (31 March-6 April). The measurements derive from mobile network data and represent an estimate of overall movements within the area, not a direct count of visitors. For each focus area, the event location was taken as reference, and mobile network data were analysed within a 500-metre radius.

Italian and foreign SIM card

INTERNI CRE-ACTION
Università degli Studi di Milano

Italian and foreign SIM card 31 March – 6 April 2025	Italian and foreign SIM card 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
461,357	688,352	49.2% ↑

DDESIGN
Via Durini

Italian and foreign SIM card 31 March – 6 April 2025	Italian and foreign SIM card 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
700,397	1,036,934	48.0% ↑

MOSCAPARTNERS VARIATIONS
Palazzo Litta

Italian and foreign SIM card 31 March – 6 April 2025	Italian and foreign SIM card 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
246,628	323,937	31.3% ↑

Alcova Milano
Villa Bagatti Valsecchi, Varedo

Italian and foreign SIM card 31 March – 6 April 2025	Italian and foreign SIM card 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
207,503	253,119	22.0% ↑

5VIE Design Week
Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci

Italian and foreign SIM card 31 March – 6 April 2025	Italian and foreign SIM card 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
252,411	287,478	13.9% ↑

Foreign SIM cards

Alcova Milano
Villa Bagatti Valsecchi, Varedo

Foreign SIM cards 31 March – 6 April 2025	Foreign SIM cards 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
6,246	25,326	305.5% ↑

DDESIGN
Via Durini

Foreign SIM cards 31 March – 6 April 2025	Foreign SIM cards 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
155,990	301,154	93.1% ↑

MOSCAPARTNERS VARIATIONS
Palazzo Litta

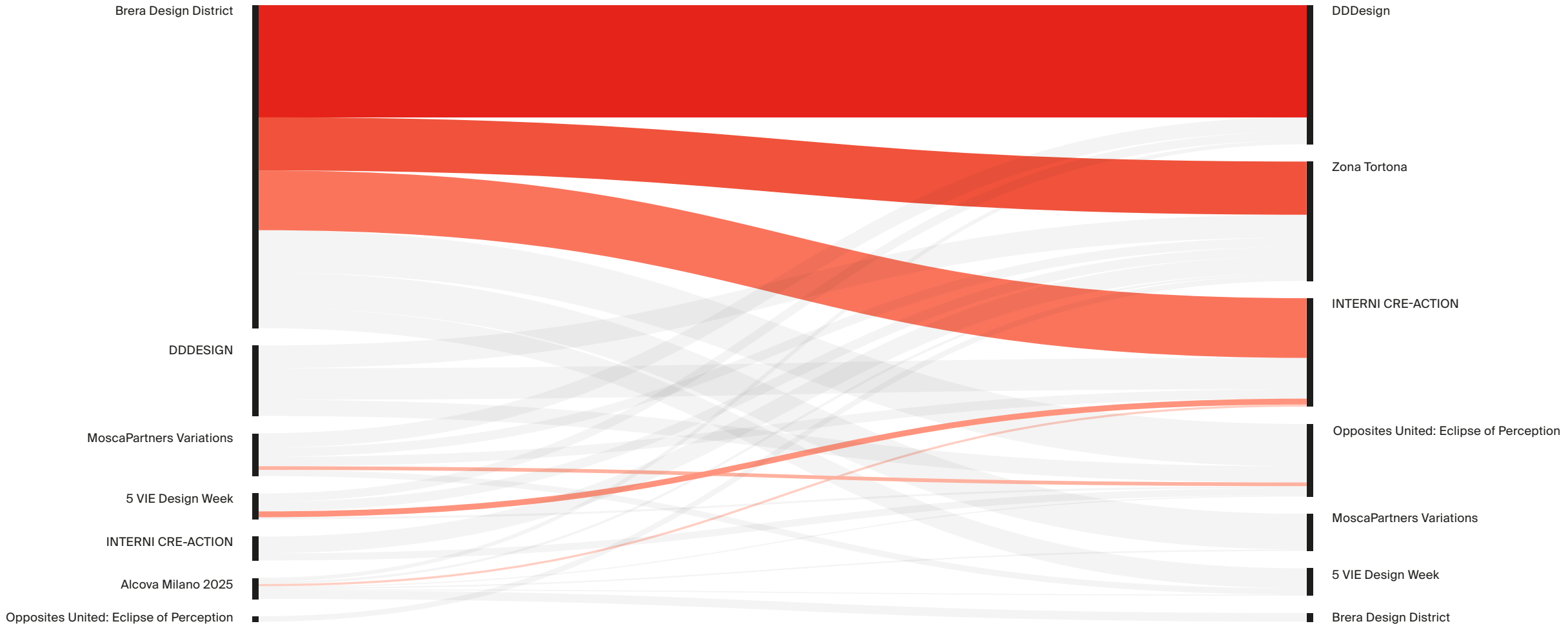
Foreign SIM cards 31 March – 6 April 2025	Foreign SIM cards 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
35,444	58,791	65.9% ↑

INTERNI CRE-ACTION
Università degli Studi di Milano

Foreign SIM cards 31 March – 6 April 2025	Foreign SIM cards 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
63,284	100,935	59.5% ↑

5VIE Design Week
Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci

Foreign SIM cards 31 March – 6 April 2025	Foreign SIM cards 7 – 13 April 2025	% Change
27,649	41,876	51.5% ↑



Co-visit Brera Design District - DDESIGN 1,165,149	Co-visit Brera Design District - Zona Tortona 541,460	Co-visit MoscaPartners Variations - Opposites United: Eclipse of Perception 38,918
63% 37% Italians Foreigners	77% 23% Italians Foreigners	74% 26% Italians Foreigners
Co-visit Brera Design District - INTERNI CRE-ACTION 614,770	Co-visit INTERNI CRE-ACTION - 5 VIE Design Week 61,188	Co-visit INTERNI CRE-ACTION - Alcova Milano 2025 22,596
79% 21% Italians Foreigners	83% 17% Italians Foreigners	63% 37% Italians Foreigners

The charts show the overall co-visit flows between the city's Design Week districts for the period 8-13 April. The red highlights indicate selected significant co-visit combinations, for which the total number of associated users and the percentage split between domestic and international visitors are Reported. The co-visit maps provide a new lens on audience mobility behaviour, revealing spontaneous connections between different districts and events. The figures do not represent absolute counts; rather, they show cross-flows generated by successive movements within the same 48-hour time window.

Fieldwork observation

Filippo Parolini
Researcher, Politecnico di Milano

2.5

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

As in the previous year, the analysis of the 2025 Milan Design Week relied on Fieldwork Observation carried out by 100 students from the Schools of Design and Architecture at the Politecnico di Milano, in the context of an extracurricular activity called *Passion in Action* (PiA). The Fieldwork Observation was conducted in the same way as it was for the 2024 Annual Report (p.118), while benefiting from the experience acquired on that occasion. Methodologically speaking, the analysis was a participatory ethnographic survey.¹ The objective was to observe the evolution of the phenomenon involving stakeholders and visitors of the complex sociocultural network that makes up the *Milan Design (Eco) System*. As extensively discussed in the 2024 Report, Design Week is a unique moment in the city's calendar. For seven days Milan is re-configured into a mosaic of Districts,² each with its own values (Jaimangal-Jones, 2014) and distinctive characteristics. In this perspective, the Districts are not just physical spaces; they are also symbolic places that create a city laboratory where the local and the global come together, giving rise to new forms of cultural expression and identity (Scalisi, 2024).

To grasp the deeper significance of Design Week, the Districts need to be analysed in their full complexity, from the sociocultural groups that animate them (Holloway et al., 2010) to their distinctive values. The challenge is to recognise recurring identity patterns, formulating hypotheses about the social processes that develop in the observed environments (Jones, 1996). Taking this methodological perspective as a starting point, the analysis focused first on the territorial dynamics of the phenomenon, such as the distribution and density of events, before moving on to build up a picture of their content, concluding with an analysis of the design choices that guided the realisation of the events.

The investigation was divided into two complementary phases: first of all, the Design Week programme of events was systematically reconstructed through desk-based research; then, in the observation phase, insights were gathered in the field. Thanks to these two activities, the qualitative observation was firmly anchored to quantitative evidence. During the event mapping phase – completed on 31 March 2025 – the research team identified 1,093 initiatives,³ including installations, exhibitions, talks, performances and workshops. Restricted access events that required an invitation and therefore could not be observed by the students were excluded from the figure. Overall, the field monitoring – conducted between 7 and 13 April – observed 861 initiatives, 79% of the total surveyed. From an operational viewpoint, the students carrying out the Observation were grouped into 18 teams, with each team assigned to a specific area of the city. Each student was asked to conduct a 60-question survey for each event, divided into 6 sections; the task was to collect detailed information on the observer, event, location, related services, exhibition content and the sustainability of the exhibition setup.⁴

In summary, the observations carried out in 2025 covered 52% of the total of 1,667 events declared by the Municipality of Milan in the *MDW 2025 Survey*, presented on 16 September 2025 by the Urban Economy, Fashion and Design Directorate of the municipality's Department of Economic Development and Labour Policies. The discrepancy between events mapped *ex ante* and *ex post* shows the objective difficulty of determining the total number of initiatives in the city, a number that varies according to the sources. The 2025 figure Reported in the official guide of *fuorisalone.it*, for example, is 1,066.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY OF EVENTS IN THE AREA

For the 2025 edition of the Report, the Fieldwork Observation began with a preliminary geolocation of the 1,093 initiatives surveyed by the research team, the aim being to obtain an accurate mapping of the areas most affected by the phenomenon. The analysis, based on the subdivision of Milan into 88 Local Identity Nucleus or NILs (*Nuclei di Identità Locale*),⁵ confirmed a higher concentration of events in the central areas of the city. The map indicates that the *Duomo* (NIL 1) and *Brera* (NIL 2) NILs were the most densely populated, hosting 323 and 257 events respectively, equivalent to 53% of the total. In terms of density, there were 138 events per km² in *Duomo* and 157 per km² in *Brera*, compared to a city-wide average of around 6 events per km². The third area in terms of intensity of events was *Porta Genova* (NIL 50), with 126 events per km², followed by *Porta Garibaldi-Porta Nuova* (34 events per km²), *Guastalla* (34), *Magenta-San Vittore* (33), *Parco Sempione* (19), *Isola* (19), *Sarpi* (18), *Buenos Aires-Porta Venezia-Porta Monforte* (16) and *Farini* (12). It is interesting to note that the largest number of events were concentrated in NIL Duomo, even though it is not formally classified as a diffuse or multi-venue District, unlike, for example, NIL Brera, the heart of the *Brera Design District*. This primacy is associated with the presence of some highly attractive collective events, such as *INTERNI CRE-ACTION – FuoriSalone 2025* at the Università degli Studi di Milano, *MoscaPartners Variations – Migrations at Palazzo Litta* and *Masterly | The Dutch in Milano 2025* at Palazzo Giureconsulti, in addition to numerous individual events distributed throughout the area.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE EVENTS: PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

In order to provide as granular a picture as possible of the 2025 edition of Design Week, an attempt was made, where possible, to record the actual number of exhibitors involved in the programme, commencing with the distinction between:

- *Individual events*, featuring, in a single venue for exclusive use, a single organiser and/or exhibitor (e.g. a single brand, an institution, a designer, a single research collective, etc.)
- *Collective events*, bringing together, under the same title and in a single venue, multiple exhibitors (e.g. a number of brands, designers, research collectives, etc.).

The criterion distinguishing individual and collective events made it possible to describe the nature of the initiatives more precisely, ensuring consistent and comparable data collection despite the variety of organisational models. In the preliminary analysis phase, the research team surveyed 17 large collective events, each characterised by different curatorial formats: from pure curatorship to a commercial, logistical and communicative organisation, and hybrid models. The distribution of these events (**Fig. 2.10**) follows the general trend: a prevalent concentration in central and semi-central NILs, with a progressive thinning out towards the peripheral areas.⁶ Overall, the collective events – those bringing together several exhibitors under a single title and in the same venue – hosted more than 350 companies, design and architecture studios, creative collectives, cultural institutions, independent designers, schools, universities and third sector organisations.

The Observation also reveals that most of the collective events in Design Week 2025 were consolidated and recurring initiatives, often held in the same locations. This was the case, for example, of *Superdesign Show*, which has been held at the headquarters of Superstudio Più in Zona Tortona for the last 25 years; *BASE Milano*, with *We Will Design 2025: Making Kin*; or the Galleria Rossana Orlandi, which has presented more than 90 designers. *INTERNI CRE-ACTION – FuoriSalone 2025* is a special case: a multi-venue event in six symbolically significant locations around

the city, including the historic premises of the Università degli Studi di Milano, a key point of reference with over 30 installations. Besides events with an established location, there are others that have remained itinerant. One example is *5VIE Design Week 2025*, which was held this year at the Cavallerizze (historical stables) of the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci, or *Isola Design Festival 2025*, which chose as its new location the BasicVillage, a former early twentieth-century rubber factory transformed into a multifunctional venue for staging three collective exhibition itineraries curated by *Isola Studio*. In addition to the 17 large-scale collective events, the Fieldwork Observation identified a further 270 aggregator events in which a single organiser involved a number of exhibitors. The picture was completed by a further 494 individual events in which the location was used exclusively by individual brands, design and architecture studios, creative collectives, cultural institutions, independent designers, third sector organisations and universities.

In total, considering both collective and individual events, the Fieldwork Observation found that over 2,200 exhibitors were involved in the events,⁷ with an average of about 6 exhibitors per collective event. Excluding exhibitions of a curatorial nature (where the organisational costs were borne in full by the collective event organisation), there are multiple reasons behind the decision by different exhibitors to share the same space. These range from the need to be part of a structured programme in order to achieve visibility to the benefit of logistical support and the sharing of venue rental costs, which are often prohibitive for smaller entities. The analysis of venue size reveals quite a heterogeneous distribution of events. Most events (26%) took place in locations of 36–80 m², followed by venues between 80 and 150 m² (22%). A smaller proportion used spaces between 20 and 35 m² (17%), while only 9% took place in venues smaller than 20 m². Just 3% of the events took place in locations exceeding 150 m². The data, collected by the 2025 survey of *fuorisalone.it*, presents a heterogeneous picture, in which the choice of venue size can become a strategic factor both in terms of economic sustainability and of the overall visibility of the exhibitors sharing it.

TYPE AND FUNCTIONS OF EXHIBITION SPACES

One of the aspects to which the Fieldwork Observation devoted most attention concerns the nature of the venues used for the Design Week 2025 initiatives. The Fieldwork revealed a heterogeneous distribution of events in spaces across the city, with two broad categories: events held in venues with a business vocation – design showrooms, non-sector businesses and company headquarters – and events held in locations with a cultural value, such as museums, foundations, galleries, historical buildings, schools, universities and former industrial buildings. According to the gathered data (**Fig. 2.12**), business-related spaces hosted 408 initiatives, equivalent to 47% of the total observed (861), while locations with a cultural value hosted 317 events, 37% of the total. Examining these figures in greater detail, the biggest category was represented by design showrooms, with 256 events (over 30% of the total), a figure that confirms their widespread presence throughout the territory. The next biggest category comprised museums, foundations and private galleries, which hosted 138 events (18%), followed by historical palaces with 80 events (10%), former industrial spaces with 53 (7%) and Milan's universities (including the Università degli Studi di Milano, the Politecnico di Milano and private universities) with 6% of the total. Finally, the smallest categories were made up of architecture and design studios (3%) and temporary business establishments such as pop-up stores (3%).

Remaining on the subject of locations, a more in-depth analysis of cultural venues paints a broad and diversified picture. A central role was played by cultural institutions whose mission it is to produce and disseminate design culture, first and foremost the Triennale Milano and the ADI Design Museum. During Design Week, in addition to presenting their own exhibition programme, they provided space for temporary projects promoted by brands, media, sector and non-sector organisations. The contribution of public institutions and spaces was also important, ranging from the Fabbrica del Vapore to the Palazzo del Senato (which houses the State Archives) and Palazzo Lombardia, which was the venue for the *Oasi Life Experience* installation in the middle of the covered square, while the Belvedere on the 39th floor was exceptionally opened to the public for another exhibition.

Historical palaces played a central role in Design Week in 2025 as well, with courtyards and rooms that are often closed to the public opening their doors to visitors. They included Palazzo Litta, Palazzo Clerici, Palazzo Bovara, Palazzo Castiglioni, the Circolo Filologico Milanese and many others. There was also a growing role for private homes, which were transformed into temporary sets and could sometimes only be visited by appointment, such as the Atelier di Osanna Visconti and Casa Cabana. The same trend was observed for redeveloped industrial spaces. Key nodal points in the programme that are worth mentioning include the *Dropcity Center for Architecture and Design* at Magazzini Raccordati and *Labò Cultural Project* at the Fondazione Rodolfo Ferrari, the building once occupied by Società Prodotti Antibiotici. A significant number of events were also held in historically and symbolically significant places in the city, such as the Torre Velasca, the former public baths in the basement of the Piscina Cozzi, the old, historic headquarters of Corriere della Sera, which presented *Città Paradiso*, a vision of a city on a human scale, designed by Mario Cucinella for *Corriere della Sera*, *Living and Abitare*. Then there was the Teatro Lirico Giorgio Gaber, which organised a tribute to three important iconic figures – Le Corbusier, Jeanneret and Perriand – with an exhibition-performance by Formafantasma for Cassina. A point of interest in its own right was ALCOVA. For the second year running, it held its 2025 programme in Varedo, adding the former SNIA factory and the Serre di Pasino to the Villa Borsani and Villa Bagatti Valsecchi locations; finally, it attempted to reopen the Palazzina Liberty in Milan, formerly occupied by the meat exchange of the municipal slaughterhouse and by the Macao collective.

Another pertinent aspect that emerged from the 2025 Fieldwork Observation concerns the significant proportion of venues that were only accessible on special occasions (Fig. 2.13). 257 events (33% of the total) took place in spaces not normally accessible to the public. These included business premises, historical buildings and former industrial spaces (154 events, around 20% of the total). By contrast, spaces normally open to the public, such as showrooms, shops, museums, foundations, schools and universities, remained a constant presence, with over 300 events in showrooms and shops, 103 in museums and 46 in universities.

The data illustrated (Fig. 2.13) confirm that Design Week acted once again as a kind of ‘master key’ offering access to places of value that often can only be visited on special occasions like the *Giornate del FAI*, *MuseoCity* or *Open House Milano*. In the context of Design Week, these special openings were not just an opportunity for the public but also reflected specific design and curatorial choices. The risk is that limited visiting times prevent visitors from getting to know the locations better, turning them into little more than spectacular backdrops. In these cases, the aim should be to create a dialogue in which the value of installations and spaces is mutually enhanced, allowing content and context to merge into a single, coherent, and meaningful experience.

ORGANISERS: IDENTITY AND ROLES

After analysing the locations, the 2025 Fieldwork focused on the identity of the organising subjects (Fig. 2.14). Out of a total of 781⁸ events observed, in 69% of cases the organiser and the exhibitor coincided, while in the remaining 31% of cases the organiser had a curatorial or coordinating role. The first category mainly included sector and non-sector brands (421 events, equivalent to 47% of the total number of events observed). Their weight is particularly evident in those districts with the greatest concentration of showrooms, such as *Brera Design District* and *DDDesign*, the new *Durini Design District* circuit (in Brera alone, 144 of the 201 surveyed events – over 70% – were organised, totally or in part, by brands). A similar trend emerged in the historic centre of Milan, and, with a more limited concentration, in Zona Tortona, where the protagonists of over fifty initiatives in the *Moda Milano Design* programme, promoted by the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, were big luxury brands. Besides the brands, a significant role was played by design studios (17%), creative collectives (10.5%) and cultural institutions (10%), heterogeneously distributed across the city. Following them, with smaller percentages, were third sector organisations (2.5%) and schools and universities (2%). Although they make up a small share of the total, the contribution of Italian and international academies and universities is by no means marginal. Many students and young designers, often gaining their first experience of Design Week, achieved visibility through their events. Some of the most significant examples were: the *INTERDEPENDENCE: exploring opposites* exhibition, curated by the Design Department of the Politecnico di Milano and held in the Fabbrica del Vapore, SaloneSatellite and the university campus; *Design for the Moon*, a project by Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in collaboration with the Design School of Arizona State University (ASU) in the *INTERNI CRE-ACTION - FuoriSalone 2025* programme; and *Glitch Camp*, promoted by Istituto Europeo di Design on the terrace of BASE Milano.

CONTENT AND THEMATIC DIRECTIONS

A further area of Fieldwork Observation concerned the themes and content of the events held during Design Week 2025. As far as themes are concerned (Fig. 2.15), analysis reveals a marked prevalence in the central Districts of events geared towards the presentation of new industrial design products, particularly in *DDDesign* (84%) and the *Brera Design District* (57%). In the latter case, there was a certain degree of variety – micro-productions, installations, material experimentation – while the offer in Durini was almost entirely concentrated in design showrooms; in most cases these belonged to brands exhibiting at the Salone del Mobile.Milano, which are present in the *Salone in città* itinerary promoted by the trade fair event in collaboration with *fuorisalone.it*. The *5VIE* District offers a different picture, characterised by artisan design and small-scale manufacturing (60%), as confirmed by the District’s official communication, which stresses the idea of design as a sensory and conceptual experience, with the key word ‘artisan’ being used 44 times.⁹ Finally, the offering of the Tortona area was extremely hybrid. Once again, as in previous years, several organisers coexisted: *Tortona Design Week* and *Tortona Rocks*, joined by *Superdesign Show* and *BASE Milano*. Together they created a heterogeneous programme, in which consolidated sector and non-sector brands (e.g. Ikea, Lexus, Louis Vuitton and Iqos), niche brands and small artistic and artisanal outfits making their Milan debut coexisted, presenting a very wide-ranging overall offer.

Among the emerging Districts, the *Stadera Design District_SDD* opted, as in 2024, for the *Open Studio* format, promoting local places, businesses and craftsmanship, with a prevalence of graphic artefacts (23%) and artisanal or small-scale

design (38%), as in the collective show *ABOUT: by Sovrappensiero Design Studio. Certosa District*, participating for the first time, presented itself as a laboratory of urban regeneration in former industrial spaces, with a balanced offer comprising small-batch design (33%), industrial products (25%) and installations (17%). Similarly, *Labò Cultural Project*, in its third edition in the Barona District, confirmed its vocation for artisan design and unique pieces by emerging studios and designers. *ALCOVA* also confirmed its role as a research platform for brands, and emerging and established designers, with a diversified offering including mass-manufactured products, limited editions and installations. The Fieldwork data shows that, with some necessary exceptions, the central Districts tended to host events with a more established offering, while more experimental initiatives were found in greater numbers in areas further out. This is obviously a general consideration, influenced by many different factors: for example, the cost of rents in the most attractive areas, which favours the presence of events promoted by brands, rather than bodies with a less consolidated turnover and organisation.

EXHIBITION MODELS AND DISPLAY PRACTICES

Fieldwork analysis of the types of event format revealed, as expected, a prevalence of physical exhibition setups. Of the 781 events observed by the students, no fewer than 757 (97%) had a tangible component. Considering the heterogeneous nature of the events, the Fieldwork Observation classified the management of spaces according to four distinct models: individual exhibition setups or installations, individual setups within a shared space, setups shared between several exhibitors and the absence of a structured setup. The analysis illustrated (Fig. 2.17) shows that the most widespread format was the individual exhibition setup (475 observations; 61%), in which a single exhibitor occupied the space independently and exclusively. The next most widespread format was individual setups in shared spaces, with 158 observations (20%). Events falling into this second category included the organisational models of *MoscaPartners Variations - Migrations* at Palazzo Litta and *Masterly - The Dutch in Milano 2025* at Palazzo Giureconsulti. In 13% of cases (105 observations), the events had a free layout, without a structured setup. One emblematic example was *ALCOVA*, where the exhibitors set up their presentations of projects, products and installations directly in the rooms of Villa Bagatti Valsecchi or Villa Borsani, allowing the spaces themselves to act as the main exhibition device. Completing the picture were the shared setup events, which accounted for 5.5% of the total (43 observations). Among the most significant examples was *Convey 2025*, curated by *Simple Fair*, with the participation of 21 exhibitors, *Capsule Plaza - Expanded Living* and *L'Appartamento Spagnolo*, organised by *Elle Decor Italia* and *Interiors from Spain*.

CIRCULARITY, COMMUNICATION AND SERVICES

As in the 2024 edition, the clear predominance of physical exhibition setups at Milan Design Week 2025 raised questions of environmental sustainability. A multi-venue event promoted by a plurality of organisers, Design Week is not subject to binding design guidelines. In the public call for applications to participate in the official programme of the 2025 edition, the Municipality of Milan included some priority themes among the evaluation criteria: the circularity and accessibility of the exhibition setups, as well as the involvement of young designers. The monitoring work attempted to gauge the impact of the indications contained in the public call through Fieldwork Observations. According to the collected data, the theme of sustainability was addressed by 280 events (36%), but only 122 (16%) showed signs of having adopted concrete practices aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the exhibition setup. Further critical issues emerged in the supply

chain supporting the realisation of events: only 5% of the observers engaged in the mission Reported the presence of partners or suppliers who were either certified or avowedly engaged in sustainable practices, while more than half (53%) stated that they did not have sufficient information to make an evaluation. These data do not necessarily entail that there was a failure to meet the commitments made at the application stage, but they do highlight that there is ample scope for improvement in terms of concrete, measurable commitments and transparent communication.

The issue of communication, which is also linked to questions of sustainability, was a further subject of observation. The main evidence concerns the persistence of analogue printed media, used in 73% of the events. Next came digital media systems like QR codes (30%) and forms of technological support such as screens and projectors (19%). Looking in more detail (Fig. 2.18), the most widely used communication materials were flyers and brochures, observed in 65% of the events, followed by pre-spaced stickers (26%), transportable totems (23%), roll-ups (14%) and video supports (13%). The percentages follow the same trend recorded in the 2024 edition (p.130), with deviations of just 1–2 percentage points, a sign that exhibitors continue to favour analogue tools.

The Fieldwork Observation also analysed products and services supporting the events, distinguishing between permanent products and services and temporary ones specifically created for the event. Figure (Fig. 2.19) shows the types of services with at least fifty recorded occurrences. The data shows a significant increase in the number of tables provided for visitors (+196%), in the street furniture (+102%), urban green installations (+58%), waste bins (+51%) and toilets (+48%). There was also an increase in temporary outdoor areas and mobile gazebos, present in 127 events (16% of the total). Overall, this data attests to the organisers' efforts to offer support services to visitors. A similar trend can also be seen in collective mobility services such as bike sharing. For the most part, the observers considered them suitable for getting to events,¹⁰ and well integrated with other forms of sharing and soft mobility,¹¹ which are analysed in more detail in chapter 5.8.

1 'Participatory ethnographic analysis' refers to an approach that is neither rigidly codified nor bound to standardised procedures, but is based mainly on Fieldwork and participatory Observation, understood as a set of data collection techniques to be applied in a specific context.

2 Jaimangal-Jones speaks of liminal spaces as contexts in which ordinary social and spatial rules are suspended. This perspective fits the dynamics of Design Week, where the districts are reconfigured: private spaces become public, temporary communities form and the territory is transformed into a stage for provisional and experimental practices.

3 'Initiative' refers to the activities covered by the Observation and includes both individual events and exhibitors of collective events, analysed in a more granular manner.

4 The Observations were assigned according to a criterion of geographical proximity. A student contact was chosen for each team, with the task of supporting the coordination of activities and helping to liaise between the research team and the rest of the group. The Fieldwork Observation was preceded by a kick-off meeting, during which the project and the survey protocol were presented together with practical examples, in order to avoid errors of interpretation.

5 NILs are the official territorial subdivision of the Municipality of Milan, adopted in the PGT - Piano di Governo del Territorio (territorial zoning plan). The NIL perimeters were consulted through the geoportale of the Municipality of Milan and used as a point of reference for the analysis. <https://geoportale.comune.milano.it/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e52d990fec5f4fe38b2a4f7d2385962a>

6 An exception is the case of Alcovia, located in Varedo, outside the Metropolitan City of Milan.

7 Figure based on the Fieldwork Observation and only partially verifiable *a posteriori*. It can be considered a reasonable estimate.

8 The total number of observed initiatives (861) is higher than the number of valid observations (781) due to collective events. In such cases, several initiatives (exhibitions) were analysed during a single observation activity. The number of observations was used for the survey of the organisers, because even in collective events with several initiatives, the organiser was the same.

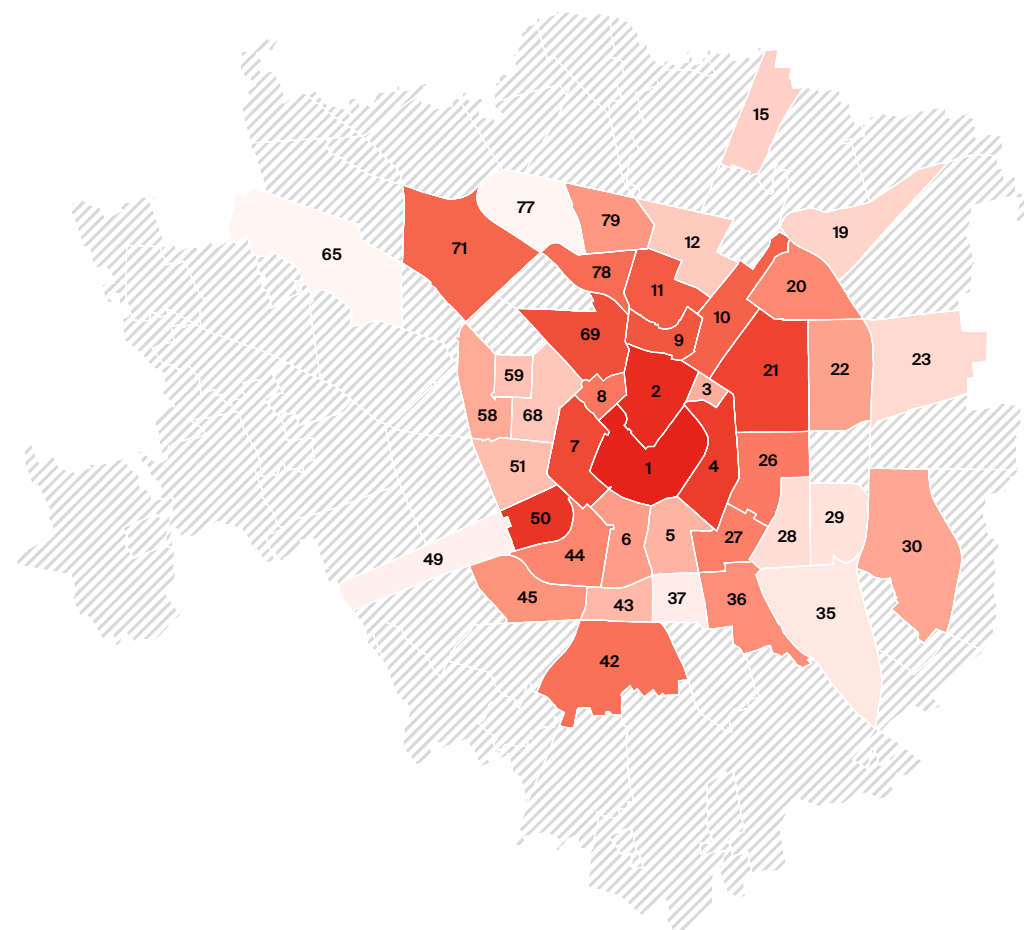
9 Press Release - 5VIE Design Week 2025, armonie invisibili; https://5vie.it/workspace/uploads/comunicato-stampa_5vie-design-week-2025_ita.pdf. Analysis conducted on the Italian version of the press release.

10 Public transport stop within a 1km radius of the event: subway (90%), tram (75%), bus (69%), railway link (29%).

11 Presence, in the vicinity of the event, of reserved parking spaces for soft mobility vehicles (bicycles and scooters) (79%), reserved parking spaces for electric and carshare vehicles (18%), charging stations for electric vehicles (34%), taxi parking areas (38%).

2.8 Distribution of events by NILs

Choroplethic (intensity-shaded) map showing the distribution of events by NIL, according to the territorial zoning plan or Piano di Governo del Territorio (PGT) of the Municipality of Milan. Source: Politecnico di Milano.



- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 1 | Duomo | 6 | Porta Ticinese - Conca Del Naviglio |
| 2 | Brera | 22 | Citta' Studi |
| 50 | Porta Genova | 30 | Taliedo - Morsenchio - Q.re Forlanini |
| 4 | Guastalla | 58 | De Angeli - Monte Rosa |
| 21 | Buenos Aires - Porta Venezia - Porta Monforte | 3 | Giardini P.ta Venezia |
| 7 | Magenta - S. Vittore | 5 | Porta Vigentina - Porta Lodovica |
| 69 | Sarpi | 43 | Tibaldi |
| 9 | Porta Garibaldi - Porta Nuova | 51 | Porta Magenta |
| 11 | Isola | 59 | Tre Torri |
| 10 | Stazione Centrale - Ponte Seveso | 68 | Pagano |
| 71 | Villapizzone - Cagnola - Boldinasco | 12 | Maciachini - Maggiolina |
| 78 | Farini | 15 | Bicocca |
| 42 | Stadera - Chiesa Rossa - Q.re Torretta - Conca Fallata | 19 | Padova - Turro - Crescenzago |
| 8 | Parco Sempione | 23 | Lambrate - Ortica |
| 26 | XXII Marzo | 28 | Umbria - Molise - Calvairate |
| 27 | Porta Romana | 29 | Ortomercato |
| 44 | Porta Ticinese - Conchetta | 35 | Lodi - Corvetto |
| 20 | Loreto - Casoretto - Nolo | 37 | Morivione |
| 36 | Scalo Romana | 49 | Giambellino |
| 45 | Moncucco - San Cristoforo | 65 | Q.re Gallarate - Q.re San Leonardo - Lampugnano |
| 79 | Dergano | 77 | Bovisa |

2.9 Mapped and observed events

Comparison between the events of the Milan Design Week 2025 surveyed through desk research and those observed by the students of the Politecnico di Milano, with the exclusion of NILs which recorded less than 3 events. The figure illustrates, for each NIL, the number of events mapped and those actually observed, both in absolute and percentage terms. Overall, the coverage was high and well distributed, both in the central NILs, characterised by a higher density of events, and in the peripheral ones. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Database: 1,093 recorded events and 861 observed initiatives.

NIL ID	Local identity nuclei Municipality of Milan	Surveyed events	Observed events	Observation coverage
1	Duomo	323	286	88.5%
2	Brera	257	180	70%
50	Porta Genova	126	97	77%
4	Guastalla	53	44	83%
21	Buenos Aires – Porta Venezia – Porta Monforte	47	45	95.7%
7	Magenta - San Vittore	46	42	91.3%
69	Sarpi	32	25	78.1%
9	Porta Garibaldi – Porta Nuova	27	21	77.8%
11	Isola	25	11	44%
10	Stazione Centrale – Ponte Seveso	15	13	86.7%
71	Villapizzone – Cagnola – Boldinasco	14	12	85.7%
78	Farini	12	12	100%
42	Stadera – Chiesa Rossa Q.re Torretta – Conca Fallata	10	10	100%
8	Parco Sempione	9	8	88.9%
26	XXII Marzo	6	6	100%
27	Porta Romana	6	5	83.3%
44	Porta Ticinese – Conchetta	6	2	33.3%
20	Loreto – Casoretto - Nolo	5	5	100%
36	Scalo Romana	5	5	100%
45	Moncucco – San Cristoforo	5	5	100%
79	Dergano	5	0	0%
6	Porta Ticinese – Conca del Naviglio	3	3	100%
22	Città Studi	3	2	66.7%
30	Taliedo - Morsenchio – Q.re Forlanini	3	3	100%
58	De Angeli – Monte Rosa	3	2	66.7%

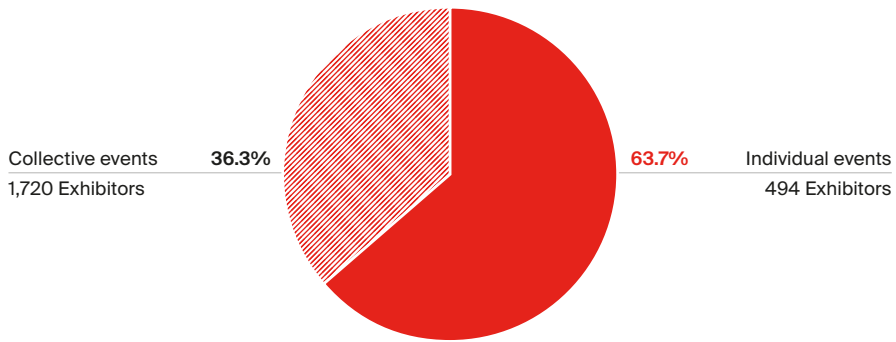
2.10 Collective events

Collective events mapped during Milan Design Week 2025. The 'Location' column only indicates the venues that hosted initiatives with multiple exhibitors (companies, design and architecture studios, creative collectives, cultural institutions, independent designers, third sector organisations, universities). Source: Politecnico di Milano.

NIL ID	Collective events	Location
7	5VIE Design Week 2025: Invisible Harmonies	Cavallerizze del Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci; Palazzo Correnti; SIAM
69	ADI Design Week 2025	ADI Design Museum
50	BASE Milano – We Will Design 2025: Making Kin	BASE Milano
21	Capsule Plaza – Expanded Living	Spazio Maiocchi (main location)
71	Certosa District – FuoriSalone – Design Week '25	La Cattedrale, La Galleria, La Forgiatura
21	Convey 2025 – Leading the new wave of design companies	Spazio Convey
10	Dropcity 2025	Dropcity Center for Architecture and Design
69	Fabbrica del Vapore: Fabbrica Design Week – Brave New World	Fabbrica del Vapore
1	INTERNI Magazine – Gruppo Mondadori INTERNI CRE-ACTION – FuoriSalone 2025	Università degli Studi di Milano
78	Isola Design Festival 2025: Design is Human	BasicVillage
45	LABÒ CULTURAL PROJECT 2025	Fondazione Rodolfo Ferrari
1	Masterly The Dutch in Milano 2025	Palazzo Giureconsulti
1	MOSCAPARTNERS VARIATIONS – Migrations	Palazzo Litta
7	Rossana Orlandi RoCollectible 2025	Galleria Rossana Orlandi
50	Superdesign Show 2025 Happiness – 25 years of Happy Design	Superstudio Più
Varedo (MB)	Alcova Milano 2025	Villa Borsani; Villa Bagatti Valsecchi; Ex fabbrica SNIA; Serre di Pasino

2.11 Individual and collective events

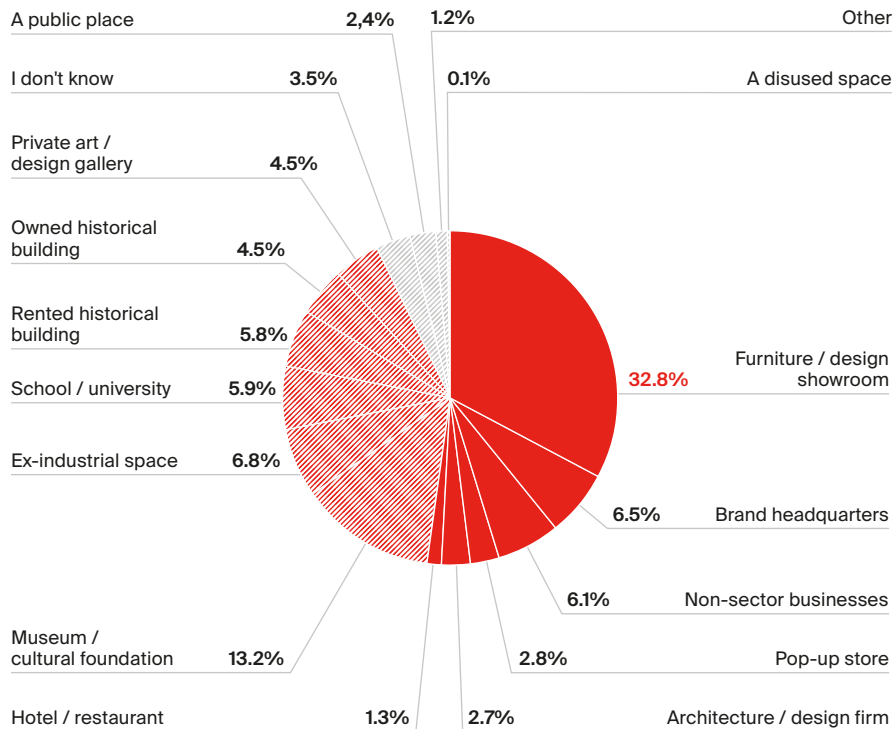
Individual and collective events with the relative number of exhibitors. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Database: 781 observations.



2.12 Type and use of locations

Type and purpose of use of locations observed by students from the Politecnico di Milano. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Database: 781 observations.

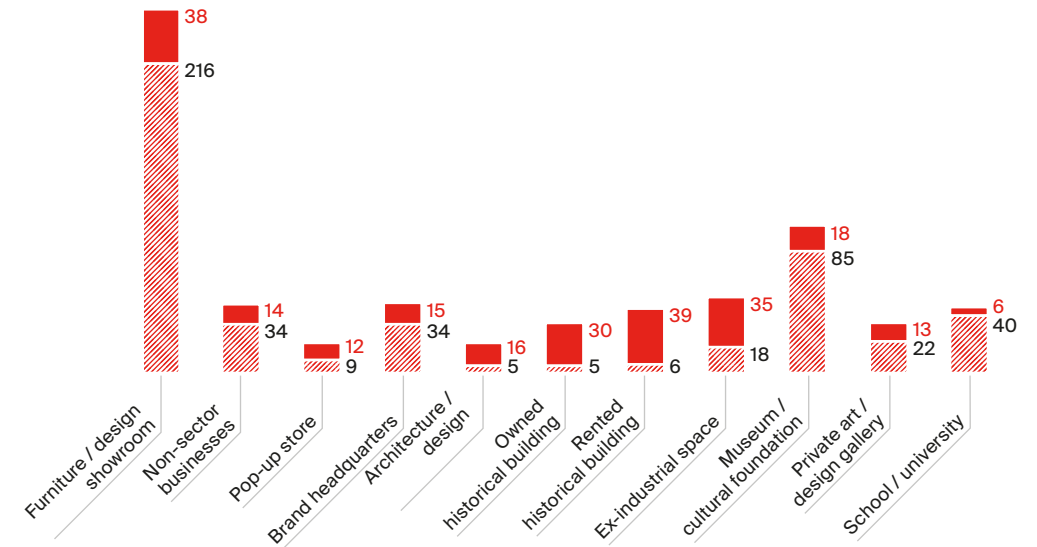
■ Cultural oriented location ▨ Entrepreneurial oriented location ▩ Other



2.13 Special openings by location type

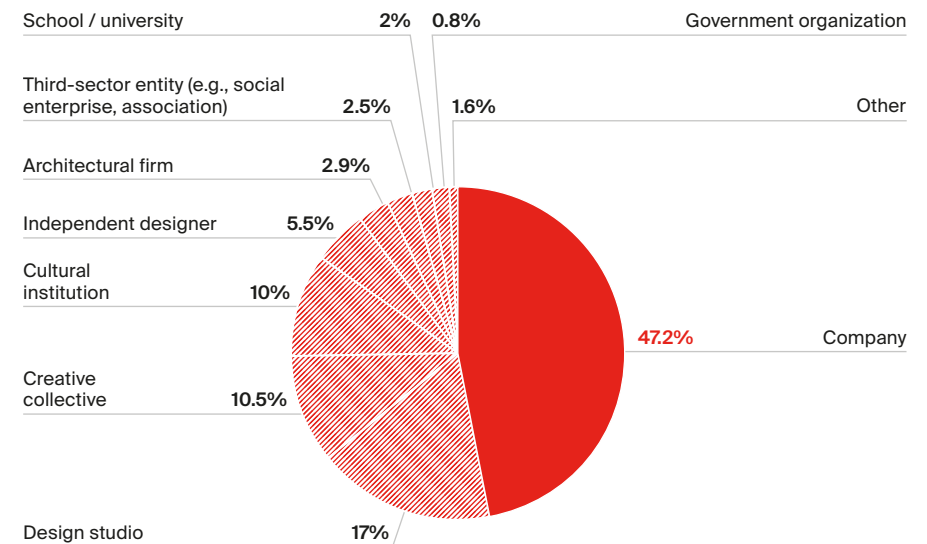
Comparison between ordinary and special openings by type of location with at least 20 occurrences, observed by students from the Politecnico di Milano. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Database: 781 observations, 710 of which are shown in the figure.

■ Accessible for visitors only during the Milan Design Week ▨ Accessible year-round to visitors



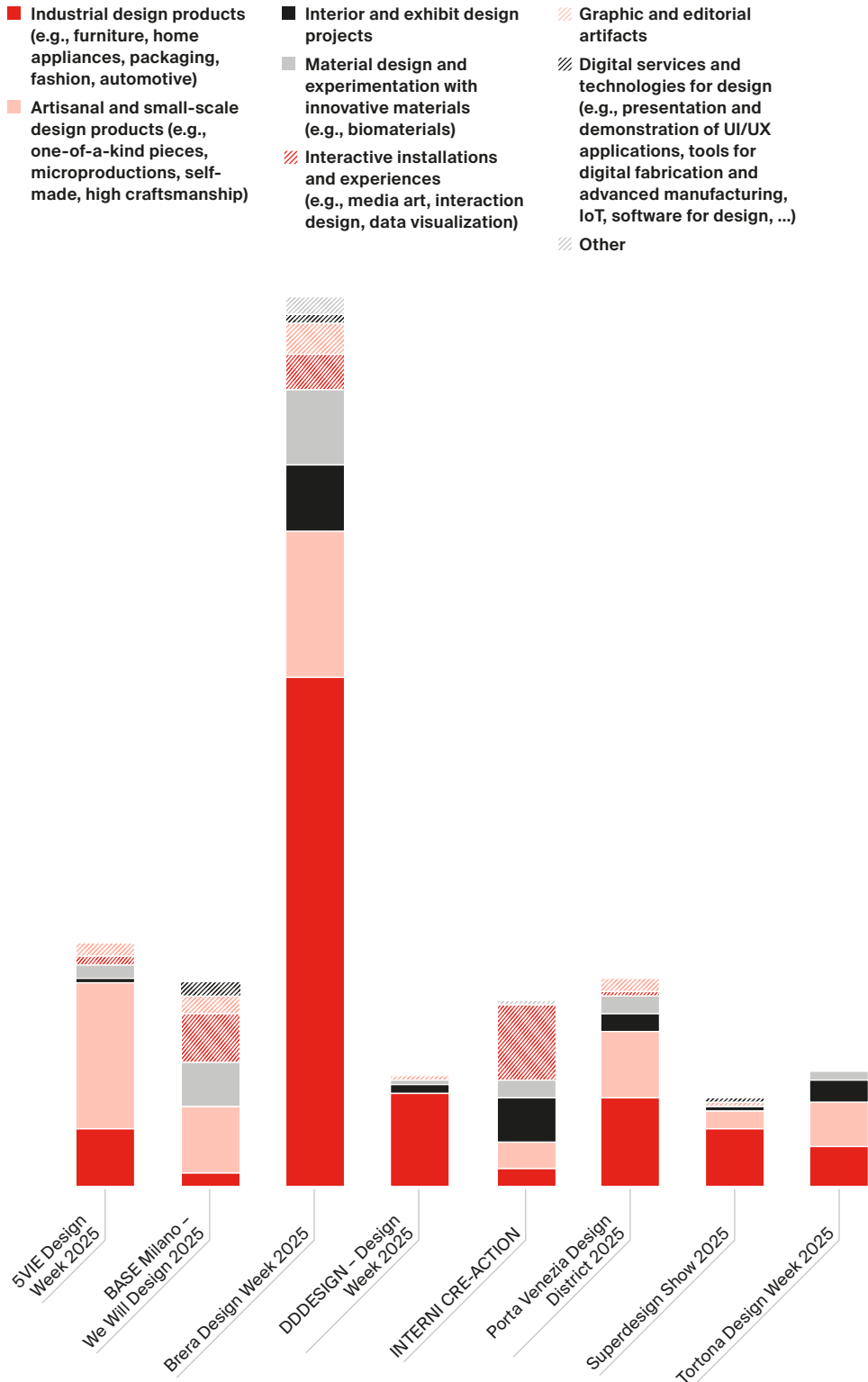
2.14 Organising entities of the events

Types of organising subjects observed by students from the Politecnico di Milano during Design Week 2025. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Number calculated out of the total number of valid responses (892) to multiple-choice questions. Database: 781 observations.



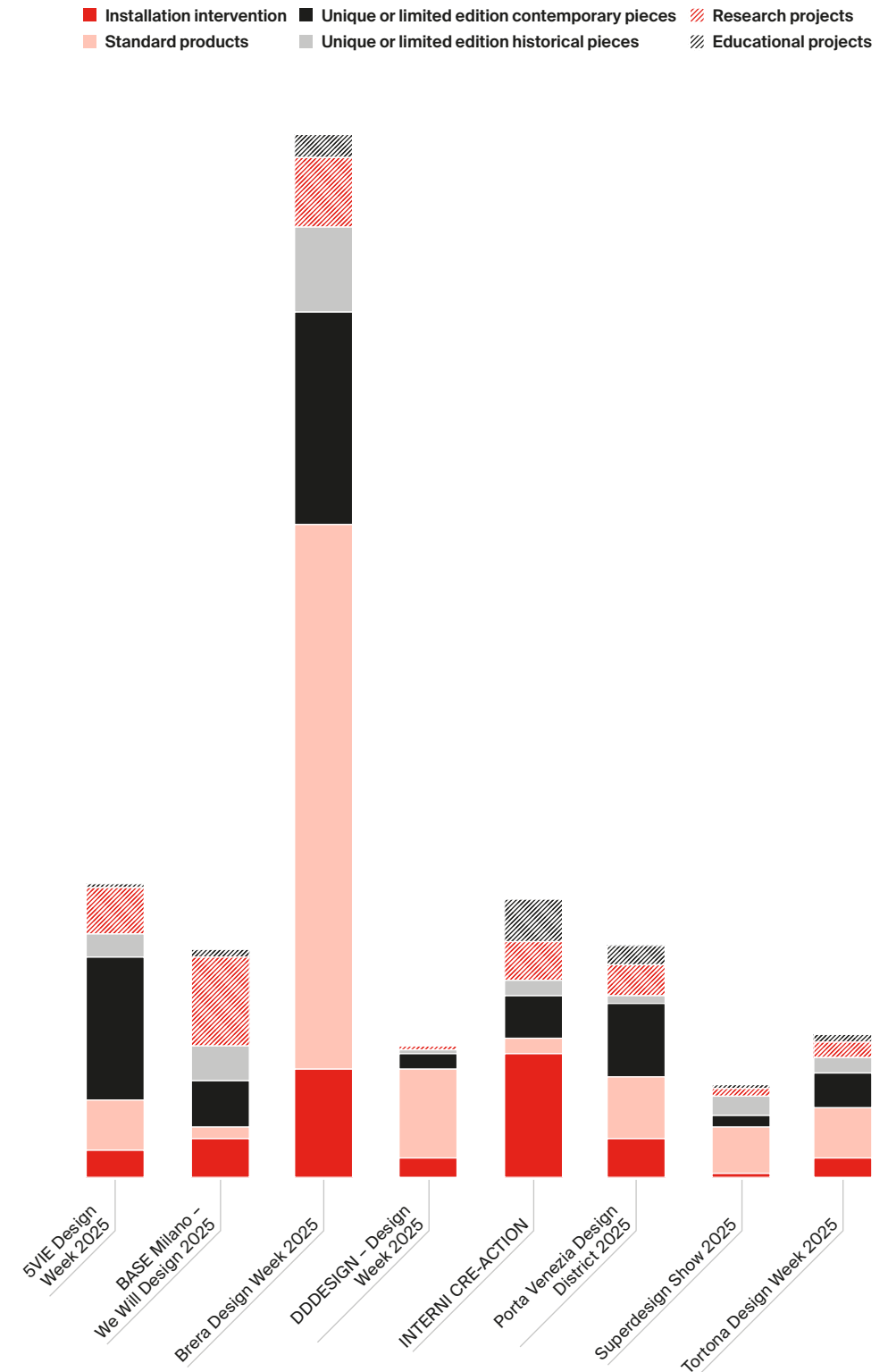
2.15 Thematic variations across Districts

Themes addressed in the events of Districts subject to 20 or more observations. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Database: 781 observations, of which 462 are selected occurrences.



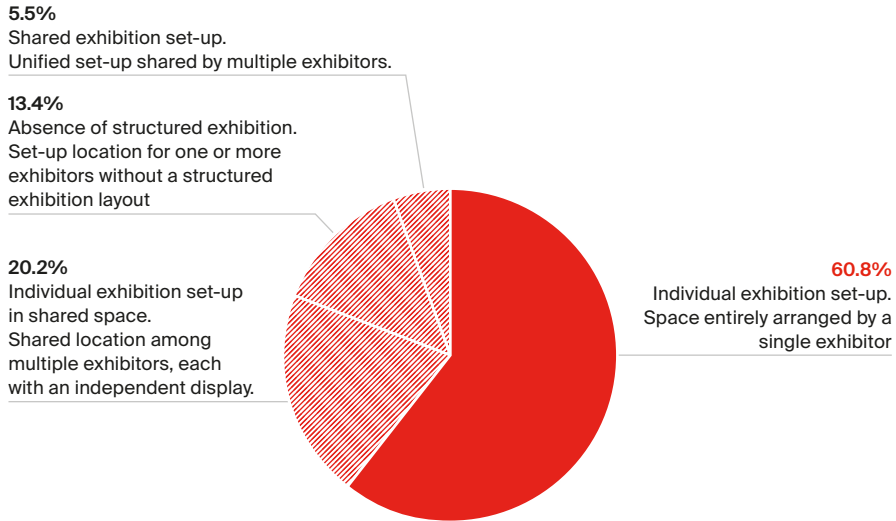
2.16 Content of the events in the Districts

Content of the events in Districts subject to 20 or more observations. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Database: 781 observations, of which 632 were selected occurrences.



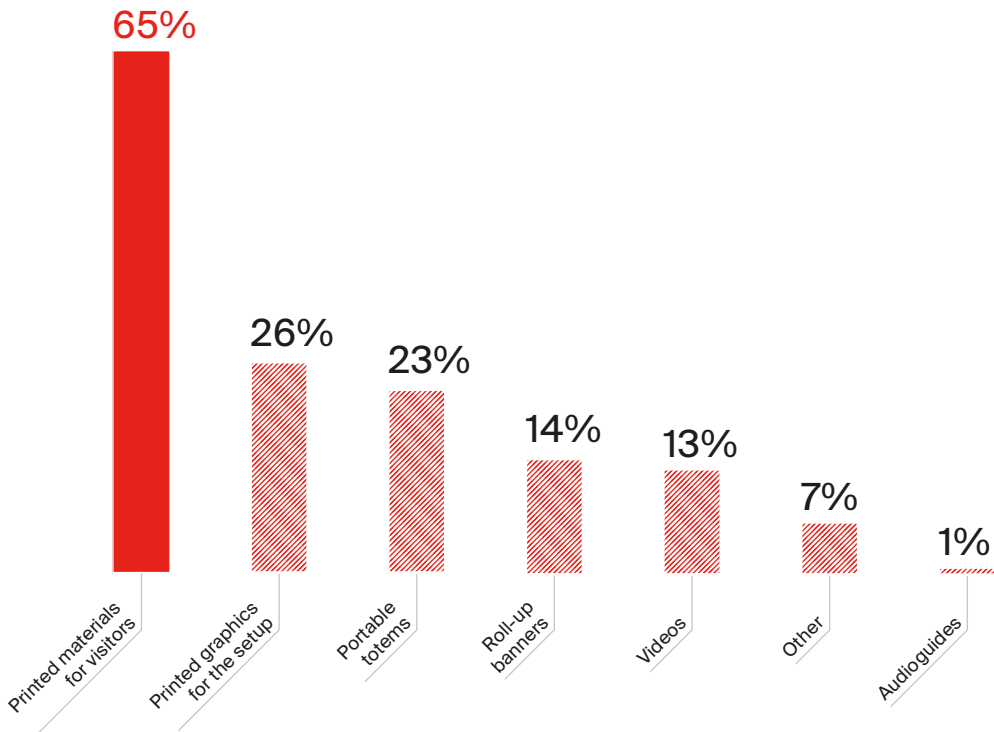
2.17 Types of exhibition and space sharing arrangements

Use and sharing of exhibition spaces according to the different organisational models adopted for the events observed by students from the Politecnico di Milano during Design Week 2025. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Database: 781 observations.



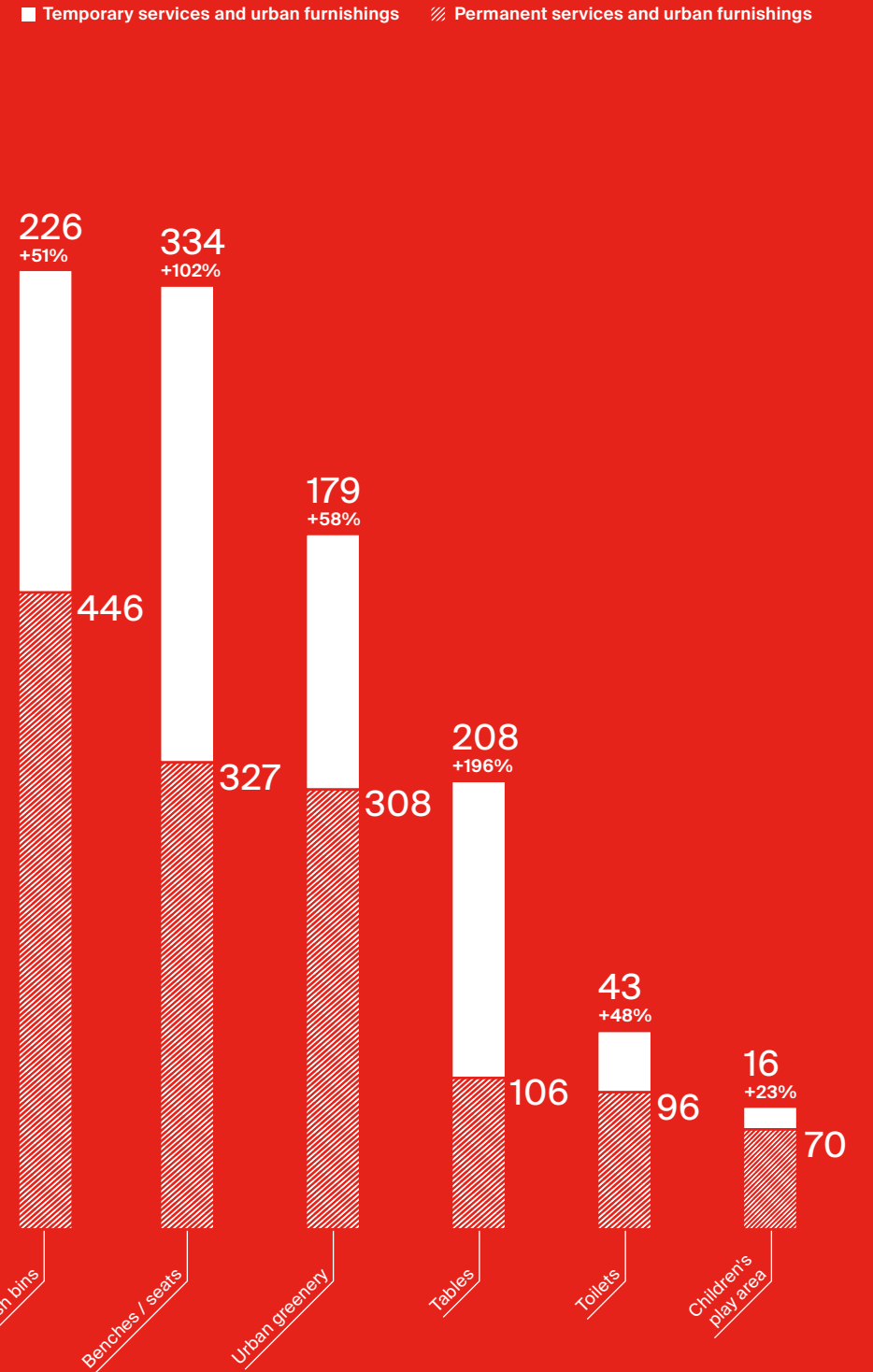
2.18 Types of communication artefacts

Types of communication artefacts employed in the events observed by students from the Politecnico di Milano during Design Week 2025. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Number calculated out of the total number of valid responses (1,170) to multiple-choice questions. Database: 781 observations.



2.19 Temporary and permanent services and urban furnishings

Types of temporary and permanent services and urban furnishings provided for visitors, observed by students from the Politecnico di Milano during Design Week 2025. Source: Politecnico di Milano. Multiple-choice questions. Database: 781 observations.



The paradox of showing

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2.6

Milano Design Week is a phenomenon that can be read through the lenses of urban anthropology and the sociology of consumption. As Marc Augé (1996) argues, global events of this kind produce temporary *non-places*, ephemeral spaces that suspend everyday use and create collective rituals of symbolic consumption. The experience of Design Week, with its queueing and waiting, is configured as *social performance* in which access itself becomes a *commodity* (Couldry, 2019). At the same time, the growing participation of *brands* from outside the design world generates processes of urban *festivalization* (Richards, 2020), where cultural capital is converted into economic capital and vice versa, with effects of exclusion and *symbolic gentrification*. This dynamic reveals tensions between cultural authenticity and commodification, a key nexus in the contemporary sociology of the creative industries (d'Ovidio & Pradel, 2025). If Design Week is interpreted as an urban ritual, the relations of power and belonging that traverse the city, and its temporary spaces can be highlighted.

THE QUESTION OF SHOWING

The question is one of *showing*: how *goods* are *shown* or *show* in the late capitalist society of the twenty-first century, transformed as they are into a permanent spectacle where the exposition becomes the very means of producing desire. In *Passages (Das Passagen-Werk)* Walter Benjamin (2000) observed that the commodity appears as a *chimera*, concealing its use-value behind the exchange-value: '...the commodity form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things...' (Marx, 1976/1867, Vol. I, Ch. 1, §4, p. 165). Benjamin reworks the Marxist concept of commodity fetishism, transforming it into a spectacularisation of commodities within a cultural universe characterised by wonder and seduction. In Design Week, commodities are not only shown. *They show* as well: they are the protagonists of urban activations and sensory narratives. This principle is amplified nowadays: not only are objects shown; commodities *show* through immersive installations and experiential strategies that blend together consumption and entertainment. One example of this is the Google installation *Making the Invisible Visible*. Curated by Ivy Ross, Google's chief design officer, and realised together with the artist Lachlan Turczan, it was presented at Garage 21 during Design Week 2025. This project transformed the physical space into a sensory environment of light, rendering abstract ideas tangible: an immersive installation that offered visitors a sensory and creative experience made up of modular spaces, dynamic projections and participatory installations. The exposition thus becomes a device of symbolic construction, in which there is a reference to *the brand more than to the work* (Debord, 1967). The logic of exposition shifts from the product to the context, from possession to shared experience, creating a *permanent staging of consumption*. This showing does not just communicate use quality anymore, but belonging, desire and social identity. Contemporary exposition, therefore, tends to saturate the urban semiosphere, generating *social showcasing* (Codeluppi, 2021), where public life, consumption and spectacle blend together, elevating the commodity to an embodiment of desire and collective identity. But where does this dynamic manifest itself today? How does this process of showing take place?

THE FAIR AS A DEVICE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS TODAY

The model of the fair as a cultural and commercial device became established between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, with

universal exhibitions and fairs showcasing products, technical innovations and symbols of national prestige. These structures had a performative function, based on *showing* as a means of constructing value, potential incubators of innovation and network building. The trade fair paradigm remains central today, as can be seen in Milan Design Week: it is a system in which showing, trying out, negotiating and selling converge, but in ways that have changed profoundly. The key question is whether this device remains effective or if it needs to be adapted. The theme of showing, and at the same time of trying out and negotiating, understood as cultural actions, has evolved from the notion of a static exposition to that of a performative and immersive experience. Trade fairs traditionally presented objects, prototypes and models; nowadays, the *exhibition* is frequently transformed into an installation, an ephemeral event, a happening. The *trying out* is not simply about touching or observing; it is sensorially and mediatically engaging. The *negotiating* acquires a symbolic dimension: the presence of the *brand* becomes an experience as well as commercial bargaining. Adapting the concept of showing to contemporary times requires critical reflection: while the significance of showing is still that of conveying value and representing ideas of belonging, it must be carried out today in the context of a semiotic overload. The exposition must engage with authentic narrative forms that correspond to the ability to produce cultural and entrepreneurial value, rather than simply shouting the loudest.

CRITICISMS OF DESIGN WEEK: VISIBILITY, ENVY AND SYMBOLIC GENTRIFICATION

International critics, such as Max Fraser, argue that Design Week has become a stage for a diverse range of brands. Fraser (2025) denounces a kind of *brand tourism*: '...Understandably others want a slice of that cool cake. For many years now, the week has been commandeered by a broad swathe of related industries, including fashion, art, beauty, technology and automotive. Big consumer brands are great at identifying and hooking onto key hotspots to 'activate'. Milan Design Week has definitively become the hottest target for those looking to broaden their market penetration...'. The expansion indeed produces a phenomenon that distorts and trivialises the event, acting as the prelude to an anti-design model. There has also been significant criticism of the event's visual and cultural pollution, characterised by a saturation of signs that makes decodification difficult for those working in the industry, resulting in frustration and unsatisfactory experiences. This is in contrast with the patient and enthusiastic ranks of non-specialist audiences. An article in the *Financial Times* entitled 'At Milan Design Week, fashion is centre stage' (Perry, 2025) highlights the growing prominence of the fashion industry during the event, indicating how high-profile brands are dominating exhibition setups and popular public visibility. The article describes how '...fashion brands are no strangers to activating Milan's architecture through exuberant installations. The city is a capital of fashion as well as design, after all. But recently, they have brought more of the catwalk-show spectacle to the design world, and design – its cultural cachet on the up, no longer trailing behind art – is in turn attracting more of the fashion crowd...', where the spectacular activations of the big brands end up redefining the experience of the average visitor: '...At Milan, it's undeniable that luxury fashion brands have the cultural and financial capital to attract top names and stage grand, ambitious events. Perhaps the furniture brands feel shown up, but in many ways it's an invitation to up their game...' This observation highlights the tension between popularity and quality of experience: the queue serves as an advertising success, the paradox being that the professional sees almost nothing.

COSTS, COMPLEXITY AND URBAN PRIVATISATION

The Design Week model comes with high costs: branding, communication, exhibition setups and public events require resources that traditional furniture companies often cannot afford. The result is (the risk of) a *privatised city* à la *Blade Runner* or *Minority Report*, where public space is colonised by branded installations and marketing. The complex fabric of public and private actors with different expectations creates tensions: the incident when the Filarete courtyard was occupied¹ during the Amazon event is emblematic of conflicts between alternate visions of the use of public space, with potential reputational damage (and loss of visibility) for the event as a whole. There is an increasingly widespread lack of authenticity: experiences perceived as being overly commercial and forced, provoke resistance from local communities. The presence of certain brands and product categories is viewed as invasive. This process can consolidate the dynamics of cultural gentrification, leading to an unjustified increase in the price of services, entertainment and hospitality for residents and a resulting loss of meaning and accessibility of public space.

GOVERNANCE OF UNCONTROLLED PHENOMENA:

A CULTURE OF ROBUSTNESS AND RELIABILITY

The *boiling frog* metaphor, attributed to Noam Chomsky, is apt for describing the gradual but potentially degenerative evolution of the Milan Design Week model: the escalation of brand tourism, corporate drives and the temporary privatisation of urban space could grow without prompting an effective reaction. To counter it, there is a need for an organisational culture capable of managing the *unexpected*, which inevitably results from a bottom-up phenomenon such as Design Week. An interpretative framework for understanding how to address phenomena as challenging as those described was proposed by Weick & Sutcliffe (2001; 2007) with regard to High-Reliability Organisations (HROs) and the principles that enable them to manage the complexity of such phenomena.

These organisations have five key characteristics:

1. *Preoccupation with failure*: they are constantly alert to 'near miss situations' and weak signals of potential failure.
2. *Reluctance to simplify interpretations*: they reject misleading simplifications and are receptive to multiple perspectives (Weick *et al.*, 1999; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).
3. *Sensitivity to operations*: they display an awareness of the dynamics taking place at the 'front-stage', the result of real interactions between agents, space and events, and they listen to what these actors have to say.
4. *Commitment to resilience*: they have the capacity to react, reorganise and learn from the unexpected.
5. *Deference to expertise*: they trust situated competence, regardless of formal hierarchy.

To apply these principles to Design Week it is necessary to define roles responsible for detecting and resolving looming failures in *showing* processes; to create a dialogue between stakeholders so as to avoid simplistic explanations; to value the experience of those working in the field (exhibition fitters, residents, curators) and the solutions they are capable of providing; and to develop organisational flexibility so that, instead of just reacting after the event, issues are remedied promptly (as happened, for example, in the case of the *supersalone* 2021, coordinated by Stefano Boeri, to substitute the Salone del Mobile.Milano as a special edition conceived to relaunch post-pandemic design with an innovative and sustainable fair format), instead of reacting *ex post* perhaps through the pool of young talent

and the collective tacit skills with which the city is endowed. In a similar manner to consolidated models of local participation, such as the *Transition Town* movement (Hopkins, 2008), a *pact* could be established *among stakeholders*, including brands, public institutions, local communities and cultural operators, to share governance, costs and benefits. Such a pact would facilitate sharing the city as a *common good*, with a collective redistribution of the positive effects. The lessons of HROs imply the need for *distributed responsibility*, requiring the recognition of differing authorities (curators, residents, businesses, government bodies, etc.) to create new processes of listening and decision-making for the negotiated construction of individual and collective actions. This is a way of preventing trivialisation, valuing authenticity, and dealing with the unexpected.

CONCLUSIONS

Showing in Milan has been effective for constructing symbolic experiences of international value. However, its contemporary application presents structural limitations: semiotic saturation, cultural exclusion, over-commercialisation and organisational fragility. The paradigm needs to be actively rethought if these limits are to be overcome: from reliance on quantitative visibility towards the quality of experience; from a model that is an end in itself to one that is oriented towards the common good; from corporate governance to an ecosystemic governance based on a culture of awareness, listening, resilience, deference to expertise and shared responsibility. Applying the principles of HROs to the urban and cultural context could help to avoid the *boiling frog* condition and favour a paradigm shift, a *leap-frog* for the complex system of organising the event and the region. This is the only way Design Week will be able to maintain and expand its *leadership in showcasing*, restoring Milan's contemporary and sustainable effectiveness.

¹ For a detailed account of the episode, see *la Repubblica*, 10 April 2025: https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2025/04/10/news/fuorisalone_studenti_bloccano_ingresso_installazione_amazon_statale_chiostro_farmacia-424119278/, accessed 14 September 2025

Milan Design System

- 3.1 Invisible infrastructure. Territorial competitiveness and the Milan Design System
- 3.2 An updated mapping of the Milan Design System

3

Invisible infrastructure. Territorial competitiveness and the Milan Design System

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3.1

Ferruccio Resta has pointed out that ‘...territorial competitiveness does not depend exclusively on the volume of investment or the degree of technological development, but also on the density of interactions, the solidity of relations and the maturity of the collaborative architecture that constitute the invisible infrastructure...’ (Resta, *35° Rapporto Milano Produttiva 2025*, Chamber of Commerce of Milan, Monza, Brianza and Lodi, 2025, p. 189).¹ Such a perspective implies a systemic reading of the territory and economy, in line with the relational innovation and cultural clusters approach (Cooke, 2008). Milan offers confirmation of this model: the creative ecosystem is determined not so much by the amount of investment as by the capacity for networking, reciprocal trust and collaborative culture.

The ability of a given territory to attract and generate value does not just depend, then, on physical infrastructure or economic incentives, but on a dense web of social, cultural and professional connections that produce relational and cognitive capital. One of the principles that guides self-organisations, and which we highlighted in our interpretative reading of the 2024 Report (Salone del Mobile.Milano & Politecnico di Milano, 2024), is the *small-world* effect (ibidem, p. 110), which today, using a recurrent term, we might call the *hub-and-spoke* structure, where nodes in an ecosystem are firmly connected to each other at a local level and, in turn, are connected to other design nodes at an international level. The tension between the physical-material dimension of territories and their capacity to generate knowledge constitutes the relationship between the development of the *creative class* and the socioeconomic growth of urban ecosystems (Landry, 2000). As Scott (2014) and Howkins (2013) show, creativity emerges in contexts where the density of interaction is high, where innovators, artists, designers, teachers and entrepreneurs meet in both formal and informal places. Tarrus (1993) speaks of *circulatory territories of knowledge*. He is referring not merely to the geographical dimension, but to the spaces of interaction, exchange and learning where information and ideas circulate, are shared and renewed. In this process, knowledge is not just transmitted; it is enriched and it evolves through the active participation of individuals and groups. Le Moigne (1990) has analysed how complex systems emerge from dynamic interactions and self-organisation, concepts which are applicable to the study of territories characterised by continuous flows and transformations. It is effectively Resta’s *invisible infrastructure*: a combination of networks, trust and collective imaginations that transforms human capital into territorial capital. However, the creative class does not operate in a vacuum: its impact is proportional to the quality of the territorial ecosystem. Scott (2014) has pointed out that a concentration of human capital does not suffice on its own. What makes a *cultural cluster* vital (Bassett, 2002) is the intensity of relationships, access to networks of experimentation and the ability to translate tacit knowledge into diffuse innovation.² Milan is a prime example. Its competitiveness derives not only from the volume of investment and the high degree of technology applied to manufacturing, but from the way the city has managed to build a *stratified creative ecosystem*, nurtured by informal networks, meeting spaces and a diffuse *project culture*. It is here that the *creative class* meets the *invisible infrastructure*: a dense network of trust and reciprocity that transforms human capital into territorial capital. But does this still hold true today?

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS A LIVING SYSTEM

Design-related cultural innovation is not, therefore, linked just to an episodic event (Design Week). It is a full-blown, complex and *permanent* infrastructure articulated in two intertwining dimensions. One is *material*, relating to the presence of cultural production spaces, design studios and laboratories as well as educational and research institutions. The other is *immaterial* and is associated with a cultural

climate, shared values, a focus on getting things done, an entrepreneurial mindset, and the capacity for risk-taking and experimentation. This resource does not stem from top-down planning, but from incremental processes over time, in which different agents, including designers, businesses, universities, public institutions and cultural communities, build a capital of trust. Milan has developed this ecosystem of infrastructure in an organic way, nurtured by a long tradition of creative manufacturing that has succeeded in balancing an *ethos of getting things done* with critical reflection. Models such as Terry Irwin's *Transition Design* (Irwin, 2015) propose an approach to addressing complex social and environmental changes through systemic design. Central to this is the backcasting scenario framework, which starts by imagining desirable futures and then designs measures in the present. This method guides communities (and designers) in creating sustainable, resilient and socially and environmentally integrated solutions. *Collaborative Creativity* (Quint, 2024) approaches also highlight how design can support alignment between multiple stakeholders and a range of complex social, economic and environmental transformations. They reveal the discipline's capacity to forge a shared understanding of problems, to drive collective *agency*, and to orchestrate innovation across organisational and sensory boundaries.

This infrastructure has emerged from the bottom up, favoured by several cultural conditions:

1. *Openness to experimentation*: the city has historically demonstrated a propensity to welcome experimental and exploratory practices, both on the part of companies and designers, and on that of the public, who have shown a willingness to embrace novelty. However, there is currently the risk of creative processes being *managerialised* in response to short-term metrics, or what we might describe as *the curse of the KPI – key performance indicator* (Evans, 2009).
2. *The emancipating ethos of getting things done*: following Maldonado's distinction between the structural and the superstructural dimension, Milan has promoted a *design culture* rooted in an ethos of getting things done, capable of generating social transformations through design practice (Maldonado, 1970).
3. *Attractiveness for capital and talent*: the city has successfully attracted investment and human capital, becoming a hub of cognitive migration both nationally and internationally (Florida, 2019).
4. *Tolerance and diversity*: a progressive orientation and cultural openness have fostered the combining of different forms of knowledge, a key element in social and cultural innovation (Scott, 2014).

Milan's creative infrastructure is currently at the centre of profound transformations due to four key factors: *sustainability and social justice, pressure towards sustainability, the digitisation of creative processes and increasing global interconnectedness*. These transition phenomena highlight both the potential and the fragility of the model. The digital challenge requires the integration of advanced technological skills within traditional *making practices*, without losing authenticity or the territorial roots that have made Milan such a unique ecosystem. At the same time, the urgency of environmental and social criteria is transforming aesthetic innovation into responsible innovation, with a demand for cultural infrastructure to incorporate deep sustainability dimensions (Manzini, 2015). In addition to these dynamics there is a need for systemic collaboration: the inability to aggregate different actors to generate critical mass in the face of complex changes creates the risk of weakening the overall resilience of the system, as underlined by recent reflections on creative cities and their ability to deal with shocks and transitions. An urban cultural infrastructure does not merely include institutional spaces or large-scale infrastructural investments: it is a fabric of social relations, informal

creativity and collaborative networks that is built from the bottom up. *CheFare*, an organisation founded in 2012, is a paradigmatic example of a social and cultural innovation platform, collaborating with communities, cultural and social organisations, public bodies and institutions to develop projects that promote culture as an instrument of social change. During Milan Design Week 2025, *CheFare* coordinated, together with the *Nieuwe Instituut*, the design of a *CIVICITY*, a design residency-intervention to rethink the social and environmental impact of design events on the host cities. It resulted in a research publication, *Da Spettacolo a Sostanza. Civicity come approccio* (From Spectacle to Substance. Civicity as an Approach) (cheFare, 2025), which expresses the idea that cultural resilience does not depend just on financial capacities, but on inclusive processes of urban activation. In her book *The Creative City Does Not Exist*, Marianna d'Ovidio critiques the romantic idea of the *creative city* as an automatic model of urban development. She argues that '...the promotion of urban growth through the use of culture is achieved with high social costs...', including tensions between populations, the displacement of artists and the disadvantaged, and an increase in real estate prices. Circuits of capital, she continues, shape the urban landscape, and they do so by interacting with and exploiting cultural circuits (d'Ovidio, 2016, p. 142). This shows the tension between policies for the creative economy and the need to govern spontaneous processes of social innovation processes in order to avoid *gentrification and marginalisation*. Other observers, including Sharon Zukin (2020), warn of the fragility of creative economies when they become detached from local needs and social goals. Pratt (2015) speaks of *cultural intermediaries* as network platforms that are essential for the functioning of creative ecosystems: '...Successful cultural production, and sustainable cultural production, relies upon the establishment of resilient intermediaries to bring the necessary agents together: cultural production is an ensemble work...' (Pratt, 2015, p. 63). In settings such as creative Milan, these reflections acquire concrete form in the distributed functioning of urban activation: informal hubs, communities of creative enterprises, independent festivals and designer networks make up an *invisible or quasi-visible* infrastructure of symbolic and social capital, which fuels culture and innovation. The *cheFare* experience shows that creating a network of emerging subjects can produce collective knowledge, visibility and new ways of inhabiting urban space, without depending exclusively on institutional budgets. The result is a more resilient and adaptive urban fabric, capable of improvising, experimenting and regenerating even in the event of external shocks or crises.

GOVERNANCE AND THE PACT BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

As discussed in Section 2.6, it is necessary to envision a *pact among stakeholders*, brands, public institutions, local communities and cultural operators to redistribute costs and benefits and to collectively manage this *cultural infrastructure as a common good*. The change in big cultural production systems, such as design and high-impact manifestations such as Design Week, can be imagined by creating a *transition arena* that promotes experimentation, co-creation and adaptive capacity: '...*Transition arena* is a setting that provides an informal but well-structured space for a group of change agents to critically reflect on the status quo and develop alternative ideas, practices and relations. Participants from diverse backgrounds (businesses, government, research institutes, citizens) engage in a series of meetings to jointly develop a shared visionary story, which they can link to their everyday practice. The arena outputs guide the search for strategies to transform existing structures, cultures, and practices, as well as to realise new projects, collaborations, and experiments...' (Roorda *et al.*, 2014, p.46). The construction of this arena can provide an informal and well-structured space where a group of change agents from different spheres (businesses, government,

research institutes, NGOs and citizens) can jointly articulate a transition challenge, draw up a long-term vision and develop transition pathways to realise a vision. It will probably be necessary to move away from an oversimplistic and exclusively *bottom-up* logic, establishing a *pact* for a *common good* that helps to drive the growth of cultural and social capital in an equitable manner, where the bottom-up drive of communities and emerging actors is integrated with the top-down ability of institutions and brands to guarantee resources, continuity and strategic vision. Only a hybrid governance, capable of balancing self-organised processes and institutional frameworks, can boost urban resilience and reduce the risks of appropriation or marginalisation. The *transition arena* thus becomes a place to experiment with co-creation and backcasting, translating desirable futures into shared practices and concrete projects. This pact is not just about redistributing resources, but also aims to build mutual trust and widespread responsibility, transforming culture into civic infrastructure. In this sense, design can act as a mediator between plural interests and the common good, making the invisible of the creative city visible.

¹ The 35° *Rapporto Milano Produttiva 2025* was produced by *Servizio Studi, Statistica e Programmazione della Camera di commercio di Milano Monza Brianza Lodi* (Research, Statistics, and Planning Office of the Milan Monza Brianza Lodi Chamber of Commerce). This Report provides an analysis of the economic, entrepreneurial, and innovative fabric of the Milan area.

² A *cultural cluster* is a geographically concentrated group of cultural and creative activities that interact with each other and with the surrounding area, generating synergies and innovation. These clusters promote economic growth, social cohesion, and the enhancement of local cultural heritage.

An updated mapping of the Milan Design System

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3.2

The *Milan Design System* is the complex of professional, entrepreneurial, educational, scientific, cultural and commercial activities that, over the past few decades, have developed and become intertwined in the Greater Milan area, making it one of the world's design capitals. The 2024 Report produced an initial mapping of this ecosystem, beginning by identifying its key components: *Design Professions System*, *Assist System for Design System*, *Design-Driven Enterprises System*, *Design Distribution System*, *Design Cultural Offering System*, *Design Fairs and Exhibit System*, *Design Publishing and Communication System*, *Design Education System* and *Design Research and Innovation System*. It provided a revised and updated snapshot of the one taken 25 years ago by the first *Sistema Design Milano* (1999) research conducted by the Politecnico di Milano. The 2025 Report updates this mapping and takes account of a significant development: the introduction of the new ATECO 2025 system, aligned with NACE,¹ which has the potential to enable a more accurate representation of the professional configuration of the sector. Gathering information from various economic actors in the country, Italy's office for statistics ISTAT has revised the classification of every sector of economic activity, including sector 74.10 - *Specialised design activities* and its various sub-codes, in order to better capture the specificities of Italian design companies and professionals.² The mapping in the 2025 Report acknowledges this revised classification and is divided into two parts: on the one hand, it continues the analysis of the actors, focusing on the *Design Professions System*, in order to consolidate the knowledge of the sector in Milan and its province acquired through the previous ATECO 2007 classification; on the other, it uses databases reclassified with ATECO 2025 to represent Milanese design companies and professionals in a more dynamic way. In addition to these two parts there is an update on the most significant data concerning four other components: the *Assist System for Design System*, the *Design Distribution System*, the *Design Education System* and the *Design Research and Innovation System*.

In the 2025 Report, the data on the *Design Publishing and Communication System*, the *Design Cultural Offering System* and the *Design Fairs and Exhibit System*, together with specific in-depth analyses for some categories of actors working in distribution and education, are incorporated into the thematic mapping of *design culture producers* in Milan and its province.³ This work is described in section 4.4 and explored in depth in contributions from the content leaders who led the second edition of the roundtable sessions promoted by the Salone del Mobile.Milano ([Appendix](#)).

HEADLINE FIGURES OF THE MILAN DESIGN SYSTEM

The work to build up a picture of the *Design Professions System* in the city and province of Milan started in the 2024 Report. It drew on databases pertinent to the main professional fields, such as *product*, *fashion* and *communication design*, while also seeking to detect the presence of design in other professional sectors. The term *Design Core* was used to refer to the core group of enterprises and professionals classified by sector 74.10.1 '*Specialised design activities*' of the earlier ATECO 2007 system. The term *Design Extended*, on the other hand, covers professional design activities that extend beyond the bounds of the sector.

Various databases were used for the analysis of the *Design Professions System*: ISTAT's *Statistical Register of Active Businesses* (ASIA, processed and verified together with *Fondazione Symbola* and *Centro Studi Tagliacarne*); the Chamber of Commerce of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi; the Italian Revenue Agency; and the *Register of Italian businesses* managed by the Chambers of Commerce. These databases record slightly different values for the number of businesses and professionals, which can be attributed to the year of publication of the source and

the level of statistical consolidation of the data.⁴ The 2025 Report therefore presents a threefold reading of the *Design Professions System*: the ISTAT-ASIA data photograph the situation of the design sector in Italy consolidated as at the end of 2023,⁵ while the data from the Chamber of Commerce of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi, updated to the end of 2024, provide a more recent snapshot of Milanese design. Finally, the database of companies and sole proprietorships, extrapolated in August 2025 from the *Business Register* and using the new ATECO 2025 codes, was used to represent *Design Core* subjects in the Milan area in a geolocalised form.

DESIGN CORE: DESIGN ENTERPRISES, EMPLOYEES AND PROFESSIONALS IN MILAN AND THE PROVINCE

In the 2024 Report, the ISTAT-ASIA data of 2022 were used to identify a population of 6,790 companies, sole proprietorships, self-employed workers and freelancers engaged in specialised design work ascribable to the *Design Core* in Milan and its province. The situation updated to 2025, with the most recent consolidated data as at the end of 2023, shows a generalised growth of the *Design Core* (Fig. 3.1): it has grown in the city and province of Milan (7,360, +8.4%) and Lombardy (14,907; +7.9%), while there are over 50,000 active businesses at a national level. Milan remains the main driver of Italian design (with 14.4% of the 50,956 Italian enterprises) and contributes to the overall growth of the sector. The year-end ISTAT-ASIA data for 2023 also show that the 7,360 *Design Core* subjects active in Milan and the province are distinguished by a higher growth in the number of freelancers and self-employed workers (5,147; +10.6%) and a smaller growth in sole proprietorships (981; +4.8%) and corporations (965; +4.9%). The number of partnerships decreased slightly (260; -3.7%), while other forms of company remained stable.⁶ The number of employees also decreased slightly, from 10,283 to 10,007 (-2.7%,⁷ Fig. 3.2).

DESIGN CORE: SPECIALISED DESIGN ACTIVITIES AND WOMEN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FOREIGNERS-RUN ENTERPRISES

The analysis of the data provided by the Chamber of Commerce of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi, updated to the end of 2024, is crucial for understanding the trend of the 2,333 companies and sole proprietorships⁸ in Milan and its province (and their 7,719 employees) that are engaged in specialised design activities. In general, the sector has grown slightly in scale (+2.6% enterprises and +1.7% employees). The year 2024, now added to the 2009-2023 series (Fig. 3.3), marks a new all-time high with 2,333 active businesses. Over the past 16 years, the number of enterprises has grown by +70.5% (in 2009 there were 'only' 1,368). During this period, the mix of specialisations has been gradually reconfigured. Industrial product and fashion design (ATECO 74.10.1), with its stable growth, is the system's centre of gravity. On the other hand, the cluster of communication design companies (ATECO 74.10.2, 74.10.21 and 74.10.29) has tripled, probably driven by the digital transformation. The stability of the technical designers over the past four years (74.10.3) indicates a possible reclassification, reconfiguration or increasing automation of these skills, while the growth in other specialised design activities (74.10.9) reflects the possible diversification of professions, for instance, the development of service or UX design. The organisational mix (Fig. 3.4) is shifting towards sole proprietorships (+4.2%) and corporations (+3%), while partnerships are falling (-6.3%). The number of women-run enterprises continues to rise (+3.1%, 27.4% of the total) while enterprises run by young people and foreigners grew almost double the average, both +5.1% (a 12.4% share for young people and 14.0% for foreigners). The 818 industrial product and fashion design enterprises (74.10.1) form the pulsating heart of Milanese design (+3% enterprises and +2.8% employees, accounting for almost 70% of employment) together with the

831 communication design enterprises (74.10.2, 74.10.21 and 74.10.29, +2.7% permanent employees). The greatest progress, however, is that of other specialised design activities (341; +7.2% enterprises and +9.3% employees) while the technical designers are stable (323).

DESIGN CORE: TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ENTERPRISES

For the first time, the 2025 Report analyses the territorial distribution of *Design Core* companies and sole proprietorships in Milan and its province using a database extrapolated from the *Business Register* and classified with the new ATECO 2025 codes.⁹ The updated dataset includes 2,556 companies, geo-localised in the Municipality of Milan's *Local Identity Nuclei* or NILs (*Nuclei di Identità Locale*)¹⁰ and in the municipalities of the province. The resulting map shows the density of design activities in the city and the metropolitan area (Fig. 3.5). Almost three quarters of the 2,556 companies and sole proprietorships (1,890, 73.9%) are based in the Municipality of Milan, while the remaining 666 (26.1%) are distributed in 117 of the province's 132 municipalities. In the metropolitan area, the *Nord Ovest Milano*, *Nord Milano* and adjoining *Alto Milanese* zones have the greatest density of enterprises; next come *Adda Martesana (Est)* and *Sud Est*; and lastly, *Sud Ovest*, *Magentino* and *Abbiatense*. The municipalities with the greatest density of enterprises, with the exception of Legnano, adjoin or are close to the city: Sesto San Giovanni, Cinisello Balsamo, Rho and Cernusco sul Naviglio. The 1,890 companies in the Municipality of Milan are distributed in a concentric fashion: central core, intermediate ring and outer ring. The historic city centre area is the densest: NIL *Duomo* (171 enterprises), *Buenos Aires - Porta Venezia - Porta Monforte* (134), *Brera* (112), *Magenta - San Vittore* (90), *Guastalla* (85), *Sarpi* (83), *Stazione Centrale - Ponte Seveso* (77) and *XXIII Marzo* (77). The intermediate ring shows a distribution of 25-50 enterprises per NIL, with higher concentrations in the south-west (*Porta Magenta*, *Porta Genova* and *Porta Ticinese - Conchetta*) and in the east of the city (*Loreto - Casoretto - Nolo*, *Città Studi* and *Porta Romana*). The outer ring extends to the city boundaries and includes NILs with fewer than 25 enterprises; the densest are *Giambellino* and *Bande Nere* (south-west), *Dergano*, *Bovisa* and *Villapizzone - Cagnola - Boldinasco* (north-west), *Gorla - Precotto* and *Padova - Turro - Crescenzago* (north-east). Viewing the distribution by specialisation, product and fashion design enterprises (ATECO 74.10, 74.10.10, 74.10.20) are more concentrated in the centre (*Duomo*, *Brera*) and more evenly distributed in the intermediate ring. Communication design enterprises (ATECO 74.12, 74.12.01 and 74.12.09) have less of a presence in the centre and more so in the intermediate ring, with higher densities in *Sarpi* (NIL 69) and *Buenos Aires - Porta Venezia - Porta Monforte* (NIL 21). Lastly, while interior design (ATECO 74.13)¹¹ and other specialised design activities (ATECO 74.14, 74.14.01 and 74.14.09) are present in the centre, overall they are more widespread in the intermediate and outer rings.

DESIGN EXTENDED ENTERPRISES

The 2024 Report set out on the one hand to survey enterprises that belong to the *Design Extended* sphere, namely, businesses for whom design is a secondary activity; and on the other, to identify other professional circles in which it is possible to detect design activities that do not fall within the ATECO 74.10 reference sector. In the first case, a total of 1,975 companies in Milan and the province identify as being in the design sector (ATECO 74.10) as a secondary activity, whose main activities are in the areas of architecture, digital and consulting.¹² The updated figures for 2025, taken once again from the *Business Register*,¹³ show a set of 1,959 companies, confirming the stability of the *Design Extended* sphere in parallel with the growth in the *Design Core*. In the second case, the 2024 data from the *Chamber of Commerce of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi* revealed a more extensive pool of 16,209 companies and sole proprietorships (+5.7% on

the previous year) that do not belong to the ATECO 74.10 sector but to sectors in which the design activities fall within the *Design Extended* category. From this data it appears that professional sectors in which secondary design activities can be identified show higher growth than the *Design Core* (+2.6% compared to 2024). Moreover, the figure suggests both a possible increasing integration of design competences in contiguous sectors, which might absorb some of the growth, and that there is an opportunity to exploit the potential of design beyond the core sector.

ASSIST SYSTEM FOR DESIGN SYSTEM

Within the Milan Design System, actors in the *Assist System for Design System* such as photographers, advertisers, communication agencies and modelmakers work in synergy with design studios and freelancers, creating micro-networks or project supply chains on an urban scale. Using the database of the *Chamber of Commerce of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi*, the 2024 Report identified four ATECO 2007 sectors representative of the *Assist System: Public Relations and Communication* (ATECO 70.21.00), *Advertising Agencies* (73.11), *Advertising Campaign Design* (73.11.01) and *Photographic Activities* (74.20.19). The *Assist System*, comprising more than 3,200 companies, was stable between 2023 and 2024, but showed possible signs of internal reconfiguration: there was a decline in advertising agencies (-18.1%) while the number of advertising campaign (+7.7%), photographic (+2.9%) and PR/communication activities (+1.6%) grew. The concomitant decrease in the number of companies and increase in sole proprietorships suggest greater organisational flexibility within the *Assist System*, with possible repercussions on the way design companies and professionals collaborate.

DESIGN DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The 2024 Report, based on data from the *Research Office of Confcommercio Milano Lodi Monza and Brianza* (Italian confederation of enterprises, professions and self-employment), found 1,308 companies engaged in the sale, both physical and online, of furnishing products, lighting, objects and home textiles. In 2025, the *Distribution System*, another asset of the Milan Design System, confirmed the presence of 1,303 commercial enterprises.¹⁴ Situated mainly in the Municipality of Milan (more than 60%), the vast majority are micro-enterprises (958 enterprises, 88.5%) and SMEs (112 enterprises, 10.4%) that manage from just one store (55.3%) to 2–5 sales outlets (39.2%). The remaining 5.5%, also substantially stable, consist of large enterprises operating retail networks. Besides the general data, by analysing and arranging three (mutually consistent) databases – Confcommercio, INTERNI Design Index and Federmobili Milano – it was possible to single out and geo-localise a set of 759¹⁵ commercial enterprises that focus on design (Fig. 3.6).

DESIGN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The mapping of higher education institutions active in Milan and its province, which started in 2024 and was updated in 2025, identified 3 universities¹⁶, 12 AFAMs (Higher Education Institutions for Artistic, Musical and Choreographic Training),¹⁷ 24 private schools and institutes¹⁸ offering higher and vocational training in the field of design. These are also three distance-learning universities with operational headquarters or a physical presence in the city that run design-related courses and professional development programmes. The data for the 2023/2024 academic year and, where available, for 2024/2025, show an overall growth: enrolments in universities and AFAM institutes (Fig. 3.7) increased or remained stable, with the Politecnico di Milano and NABA (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti di Milano) confirming their leadership. Significant growth was also recorded for IULM (Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione) and Istituto Marangoni in Milan. Analysis of the number of graduates and diploma holders (Fig. 3.8) is limited by the partial

nature of the available data,¹⁹ but the trend is positive, particularly for Politecnico di Milano, in terms of absolute numbers, and IULM, in terms of percentage growth.

DESIGN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION SYSTEM

The 2024 Report revealed the presence, in the Milan Design System, of a *Design Research and Innovation System* with university poles, districts, incubators and accelerators that also work to support design-driven entrepreneurship and innovation. This system displays a systemic design capacity that attracts economic resources to the territory: this is demonstrated by the more than 70 European Horizon research and innovation projects involving universities, foundations, companies and design studios in Milan and its province.²⁰ In 2025, data from the *Italian Patent and Trademark Office* (UIBM), updated to the end of 2024 and regarding the main outputs of research and innovation processes such as patents and start-ups, confirm Milan and its province as the leading regional and national patent hub.²¹ Between 2023 and 2024, the number of applications filed for utility models, the most indicative rights system for design, rose by 16.5% (from 279 to 325 applications).²² Finally, with ATECO 2025, the Business Register of the Italian Chambers of Commerce also updated the figures for start-ups and innovative SMEs in Milan and its province. In this case too, the picture that emerges at the local, regional and national level remains stable. Innovative design start-ups and SMEs remain 1% of the total number of Milanese start-ups and SMEs (34 out of 3,153, a total of 15,406 in Italy) even though they account for 70.8% of those in Lombardy (48) and 24.5% of those in Italy (139).

STUDYING AN ECOSYSTEM IN PROGRESS

In 2025 the Milan Design System continues to be polycentric and rich in resources. The *Design Professions System* is growing and evolving, with signs of diversification and reorganisation. The triangulation of the *ISTAT-ASIA* (end-2023), *Chamber of Commerce of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi* (end-2024) and *Business Register* (mid-2025) databases reveals stable and regular growth, evidenced by an unchanged membership base (455 members in Milan and the province; about 2,567 in Italy).²³ Overall, the fabric of Milanese design consists mainly of sole proprietorships and freelance professionals, with a fall in partnerships and a slight rise in the number of corporations. The system appears to be becoming more atomised, polarised and oriented towards more flexible organisational models. Young entrepreneurship is growing more than female and foreign entrepreneurship and at the same rate as foreign entrepreneurship, signalling a renewal and updating of skills. As regards specialisations, product, fashion and communication design remain the linchpins, around which other specialised activities are advancing. A new map based on ATECO 2025 locates over 2,000 enterprises and gives a more precise geographic picture: almost 75% of the specialised activities are in the Municipality of Milan (concentric patterns), while the remaining 25% are in neighbouring centres in the metropolitan area (Sesto S. Giovanni, Cinisello, Rho, Cernusco). The *Assist System for Design System* is stable and seems to mirror the individualisation in the system of design professions, moving towards more streamlined and flexible models. Downstream, the *Design Distribution System* is basically stable, with 1,303 enterprises. The *Design Education System* confirms its national primacy, with a growth in the distance-learning university component. The data in the 2025 Report effectively confirm the structural stability of Milanese design. The next challenge is to understand where and how value can be created in the Milan Design System, moving beyond the purely quantitative analysis of its thousands of actors by integrating appropriate metrics to measure the quality of networks and supply chains, the maturity and innovativeness of projects, and levels of sustainability and inclusiveness.

1 NACE (Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community) is the EU's statistical classification of economic activities; in Italy, it is adopted under the name ATECO. Current version: NACE Rev. 2.1 (in use since 2025), see: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nace>. Each ATECO code directly corresponds to a NACE code used across the EU.

2 ATECO 2025 introduced a specific code for Interior Design Activities (ATECO 74.13.00). It is important to note that datasets classified according to ATECO provide a reliable but not exhaustive overview of the activities within a given sector. Moreover, they do not allow for the precise identification of economic activities that are shared or overlapping across two or more sectors.

3 Starting from the 2025 edition, the research initiative *Milan Design (Eco) System* introduces a Thematic Observatory aimed at annually exploring a specific topic or component of the Milan Design System. For 2025, the focus is on mapping and analysing cultural production actors and venues in Milan and its metropolitan area. As an example, a future thematic study might address the *Design-Driven Enterprise System*, which has not been updated in this Report.

4 All datasets Report more than 2,000 companies and sole proprietorships. ISTAT-ASIA data consolidate 2,213 enterprises as of the end of 2023; the Italian Revenue Agency records 2,062 enterprises for the 2023 tax year; the Milan Monza Brianza Lodi Chamber of Commerce Reports 2,333 enterprises as of the end of 2024; and the Business Register lists 2,556 enterprises as of August 2025. The Report presents these datasets separately, without integrating or cross-comparing them.

5 Within the Report, the non-integrated use of different datasets released by various data holders reflects the distinct purposes and methodologies of data collection and systematisation. ISTAT-ASIA 2025 data are consolidated as of 2023 (and not, for example, 2024) because they require a complex process that cross-checks and validates multiple datasets, including those from the Revenue Agency and Italian Chambers of Commerce.

6 The data provided in 2025 by the Italian Revenue Agency, referring to the 2023 tax year, Report for Milan and its province 2,062 partnerships, corporations, and other company forms (including seven third-sector enterprises) and 6,639 sole proprietorships and self-employed workers, for a total of 8,701 entities (17,483 in Lombardy and 65,072 in Italy).

7 The increase in self-employed and freelance professionals, combined with the slower growth of company structures and a slight decrease in employees, is consistent with a regulatory and fiscal framework that, since 2023, has made self-employment more attractive. This includes the expanded flat-rate tax regime (up to €85,000, Law 197/2022) and the Labour Decree 48/2023 promoting contractual flexibility.

8 Unlike the ISTAT-ASIA 2023 dataset, the data provided by the Chamber of Commerce do not include self-employed workers.

9 The ATECO 2025 codes refer to: Industrial and Fashion Product Design Activities (74.11 and related subcodes), Graphic and Visual Communication Design Activities (74.12 and related subcodes), Interior Design Activities (74.13), and Other Specialised Design Activities (74.14 and related subcodes). The list of enterprises was extracted on 8 August 2025 from Telemaco, the online portal managed by InfoCamere (the IT agency of the Italian Chambers of Commerce system), which provides access to the Business Register and Chamber of Commerce databases. The following search criteria were applied: active enterprises registered in Milan and its province, with ATECO 74.1 – Specialised Design Activities as their primary and predominant business activity.

10 The Nuclei di Identità Locale (NIL, or Local Identity Nucleus) are the official territorial subdivisions of the Municipality of Milan, adopted within the PGT – Territorial Government Plan. Their boundaries were retrieved from the Geoportale of the Municipality of Milan and used as the reference base for analysis. <https://geoportale.comune.milano.it/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e52d990fec5f4fe38b2a4f7d2385962a>

11 The low number of enterprises engaged in interior design activities is likely linked to the fact that Code 74.13 was only introduced with the ATECO 2025 classification.

12 The ATECO 2007 codes corresponding to the Design Extended core include: Architectural Design Activities (ATECO 74.11); Digital Professions such as Computer Game Publishing (ATECO 58.21), Other Software Publishing (ATECO 58.29), and Software Production Not Connected to Publishing (ATECO 62.01); and Other Business and Management Consulting Activities, Including Design (ATECO 70.22.09).

13 The search on the Business Register portal was carried out using the new ATECO 2025 classification and the sector 74.1 – Specialised Design Activities, including all related subcodes.

14 Using the Atoka business intelligence platform, Confcommercio identified a subset of 310 commercial enterprises (including e-commerce) with a stronger focus on design from a broader group of 1,303 companies selling furniture, lighting, and home décor items (ATECO 2025 codes: 47.51.1, 47.59.1, 47.59.2, 47.59.3, 47.59.9, 47.78.1, and 47.79.2). This subset was obtained through a combined keyword search, resulting in three main categories: 'Design and Showroom' (177 companies), 'Design' (111 companies), and 'Interior Design' (6 e-commerce companies). The total number is consistent with the scale of enterprises listed in the more specialised INTERNI Design Index directory (686 companies listed as of September 2024).

15 The list of 759 enterprises, including both commercial and manufacturing companies with one or more flagship stores, concept stores, or showrooms, combines data from three sources: INTERNI Design Index (643 enterprises with one or more retail locations), Confcommercio Milano (118 enterprises), and Federmobili Milano (56 member companies). Eight of the 759 enterprises appear in all three databases; 25 appear in both the Confcommercio and Federmobili datasets; another 25 appear in the INTERNI and Confcommercio databases; and 16 appear in both the Federmobili and INTERNI datasets.

16 Universities in Milan offering Bachelor's (L-03, L-04) and Master's (LM-12) degrees in Design include Politecnico di Milano, IULM – Free University of Languages and Communication, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Three online universities offering Bachelor's degrees in Design (L-03, L-04) and operating campuses in Milan are: Università Telematica San Raffaele, Università Telematica Mercatorum, and Università Telematica eCampus.

17 AFAM institutions (Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e Coreutica – Higher Education in Art, Music and Design) accredited by the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research (MUR) and offering first-level academic diplomas (DAPLO3, DAPLO4, DAPLO6, DAPLO8, DIPLO1, DIPLO2) and second-level diplomas (DASLO3, DASLO4, DASLO6, DASLO8, DISLO1, DISLO2) include: Accademia di Brera, Accademia della Moda, Accademia del Lusso, Istituto Europeo di Design (IED), Istituto Marangoni, ACME – Academy of Fine Arts & Media, Accademia di Belle Arti 'I. Duncan' Milano (satellite campus), Accademia di Costume e Moda di Milano (satellite campus), Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti (NABA), SAIE – Italian International Technology College, Istituto Raffles Milano, and Istituto Secoli Milano.

18 The mapped private schools and institutes include: Accademia Fiera Milano, Accademia Teatro alla Scala, CFP Bauer, China-Italy Innovation Hub (Tsinghua University), Creative Academy srl, Domus Academy, Istituto Rizzoli, Istituto Callegari Milano, IFDA – Italian Fashion and Design Academy, ISAD – Istituto Superiore di Architettura e Design, Istituto Moda Burgo, IDI – Italian Design Institute, Nuova Accademia del Design, POLI.design, RUFA – Rome University of Fine Arts (Milan campus), School of Sustainability Foundation (SOS), Scuola Mohole, SPD – Scuola Politecnica di Design, Talent Garden | Innovation School, Istituto Pantheon Design & Technology* (Milan campus pending accreditation), IUAD – Institute of Universal Art and Design, AFOL Moda, Ferrari Fashion School Milano, and MINT – Madeinterior. This list was compiled through desk research followed by verification using official ministerial portals. The dataset remains open to updates and revisions.

19 As of 30 September 2025, the OpenData portal of the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research had not yet published AFAM graduate data for 2024, nor enrolment data for the 2024/2025 academic year.

20 The 2025 Report continued the desk research initiated in 2024 on the CORDIS platform of the European Commission, which had identified 62 Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe research projects funded to organisations within the Milan Design System, amounting to approximately €31.6 million (around 8% of the total project value of €384 million). Through a search on the new Horizon Dashboard, a further 11 design-related projects funded between September 2024 and September 2025 were identified. Between 2023 and 2024, despite an increase in the number of applications, a decline was recorded in patent grants—from 294 to 241 (–18%).

21 In patents for inventions, Milan accounts for 85% of all filings in Lombardy and 25% of those in Italy; in utility models, the shares are 77% for Lombardy and 18% for Italy.

22 A utility model patent protects solutions relating to the form and structure of a product that enhance its usefulness and effectiveness, whereas a patent for invention also covers new ideas and solutions involving products, processes, methods, or substances. Between 2023 and 2024, despite an increase in the number of applications, a decline was recorded in patent grants—from 294 to 241 (–18%).

23 The design associations considered include: ADI – Associazione per il Disegno Industriale (Association for Industrial Design), AIAP – Associazione Italiana design della comunicazione visiva (Italian Association for Communication Design), AIDI – Associazione Italiana di Illuminazione (Italian Lighting Association), SIE – Società Italiana Ergonomia e Fattori Umani (Italian Society for Ergonomics and Human Factors), AIPIPROMES – Associazione Italiana Progettisti Industriali (Italian Association of Industrial Designers), AIS – Associazione Italiana Storici del Design (Italian Association of Design Historians), Ordine dei Periti Industriali – Milano e Lodi (Professional Association of Industrial Experts – Milan and Lodi, only the Design professional section), Gruppo del Colore – Associazione Italiana Colore (Italian Colour Association), and ADOR – Associazione Designers Orafi (Association of Jewellery Designers), and IDEEA – Associazione Italiana Exhibition Designers (Italian Association of Exhibition Designers). Data for AIPI – Associazione Italiana Professionisti Interior Designers (Italian Association of Professional Interior Designers) for 2025 are not yet available.

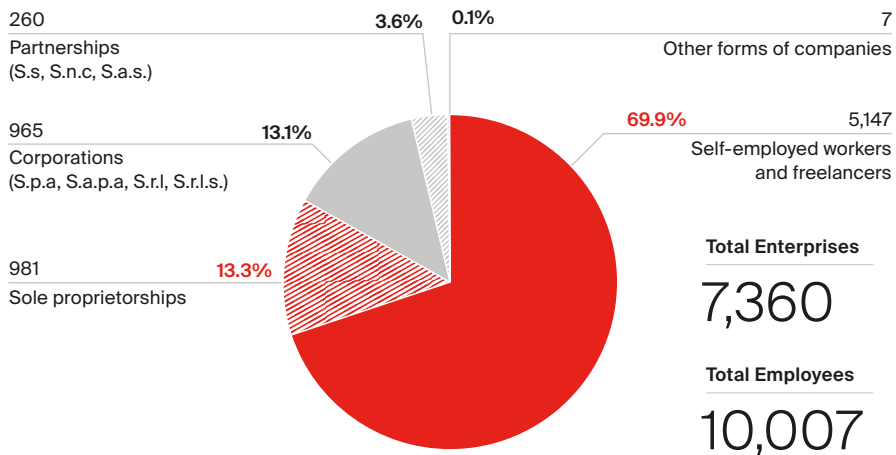
3.1 Design Professions System: companies in the design sector (*Design Core*) operating in Milan and its province

Self-employed workers and freelancers, sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, and companies with other legal forms engaged in specialized design activities in Milan and its province. Source: 2025 analysis by the Centro Studi Guglielmo Tagliacarne of the Chambers of Commerce based on data from ISTAT's Statistical Register of Active Businesses 2023; percentage comparison with 2023 regional data processed by the Italian Revenue Agency and the Chamber of Commerce of Milan, Monza, Brianza and Lodi.

NACE - ATECO Sector 74.10	Self-employed workers and freelancers	Sole proprietorships	Partnerships	Corporations	Other forms	Total Milan and province	Total Lombardy Region	Total Italy
74.10.1. Fashion design and industrial design companies	1,070 9.3%	224 -	45 -26.2%	308 -6.7%	3 -25%	1,650 3.3%	2,759 -5.8%	8,563 -7.8%
74.10.2. Graphic design companies	1,829 6%	558 4.7%	135 -2.9%	360 7.5%	2 -	2,884 5.5%	5,818 6.8%	22,133 7.2%
74.10.3. Technical design companies	1,073 18.6%	52 20.9%	46 39.4%	78 56%	1 -	1,250 21.1%	3,528 21.9%	12,716 21.8%
74.10.9. Other design companies	1,175 12.2%	147 8.1%	34 -8.1%	219 6.8%	1 -	1,576 10.5%	2,802 10.2%	7,544 11.3%
Total	5,147 10.6%	981 4.8%	260 -3.7%	965 4.9%	7 -12.5%	7,360 8.4%	14,907 7.9%	50,956 8.1%

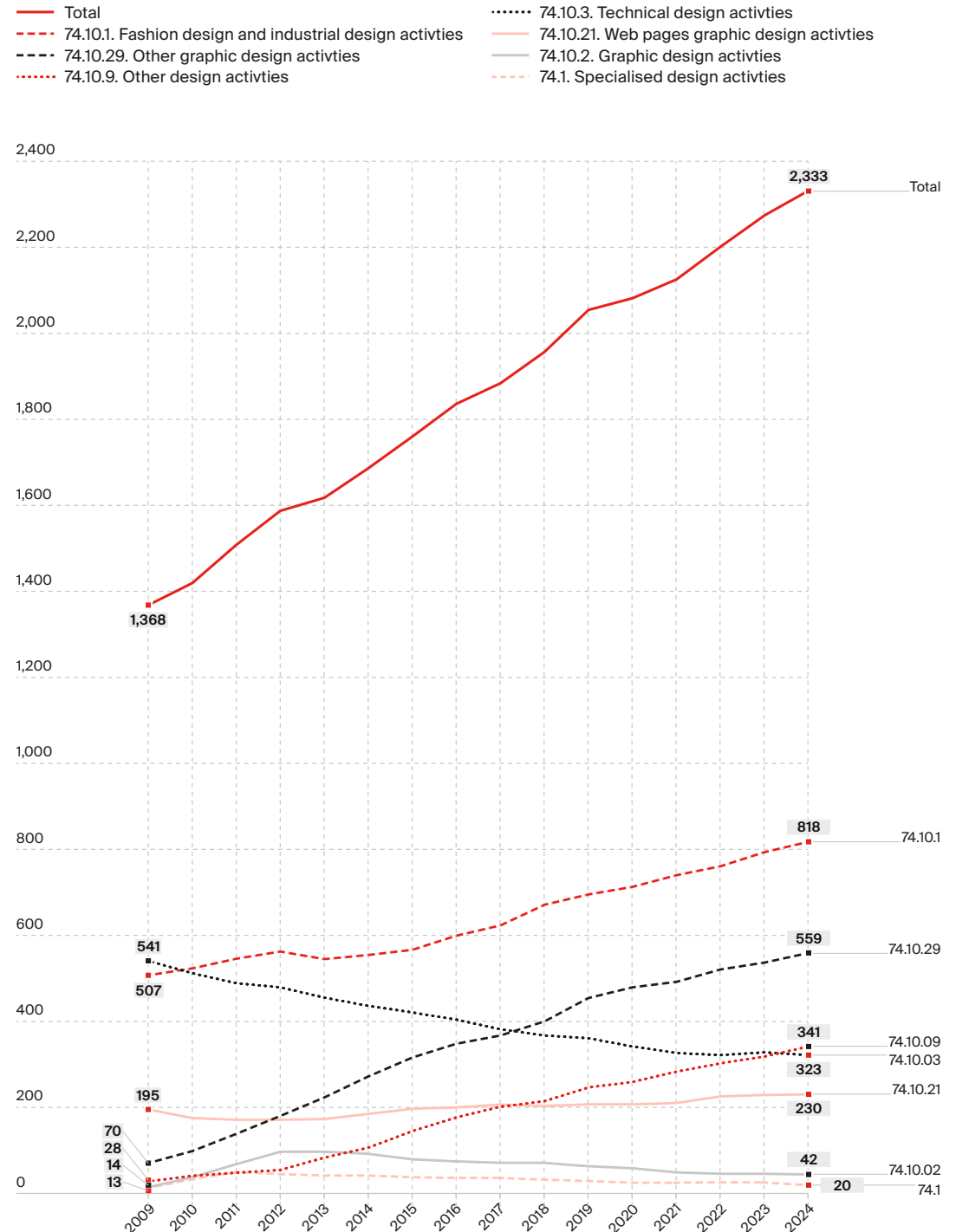
3.2 Design Professions System: companies dedicated to specialised design activities (*Design Core*) in Milan and its province and their employees

Population of the *Design Core* group consisting of self-employed workers and freelancers, sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, companies with other legal forms, and number of employees engaged in specialized design activities in Milan and its province. Source: 2025 analysis by the Centro Studi Guglielmo Tagliacarne of the Chambers of Commerce based on data from ISTAT's Statistical Register of Active Businesses 2023.



3.3 Design Professions System: historical trend of enterprises dedicated to specialized design activities (*Design Core*) in Milan and its province, 2009-2024 series

Historical trend of sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations engaged in specialized design activities in Milan and its province, 2009-2024 series. Source: 2025 analysis by the U.O. Studi, Statistica e Programmazione of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi Chamber of Commerce, year 2024.



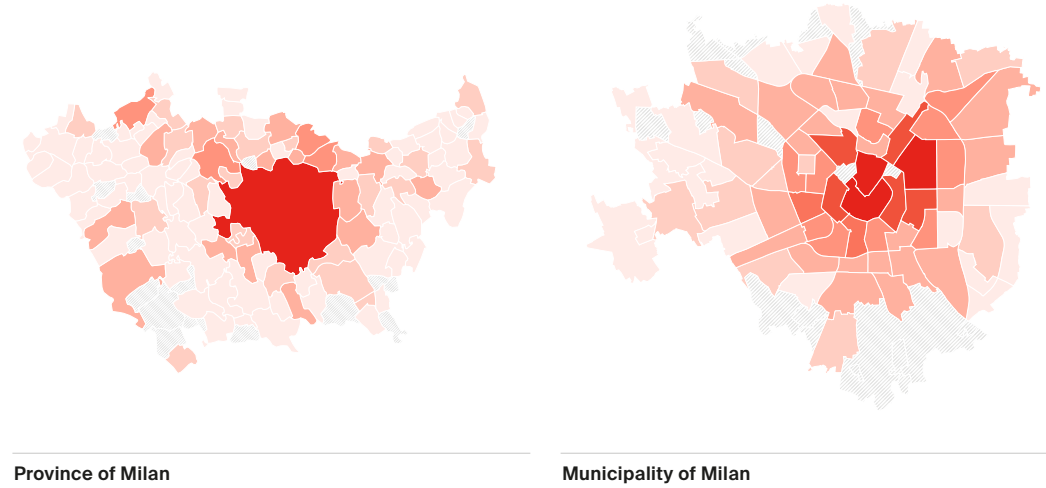
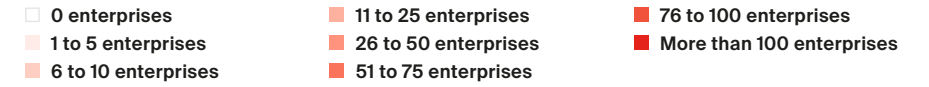
3.4 Design Professions System: enterprises dedicated to specialized design activities (*Design Core*), women, young people and foreigners-run, in Milan and its province with their employees

Enterprises dedicated to specialized design activities (women, young people and foreigners-run) and employees in Milan and its province. Source: 2025 analysis by U.O. Studi, Statistica e Programmazione of Milan Monza Brianza Lodi Chamber of Commerce, based on Register of Italian Companies data, percentage comparison with 2024.

NACE - ATECO Sector 74.10	Enterprises					Types of enterprise			Total employees
	Corporations	Partnerships	Sole Proprietorships	other types of company	Total enterprises	Young people-run Enterprises	Women-run Enterprises	Foreigners-run Enterprises	
74.1. Specialised design activities	15 -21.1%	3 -	2 33.3%	0 -	20 -20%	0 -	1 -	2 -33.3%	43 -41.9%
74.10.1. Fashion design and industrial design activities	505 4.1%	70 -5.4%	240 3.4%	3 -	818 3%	89 -7.3%	272 2.3%	155 0.6%	5,383 2.8%
74.10.2. Graphic design activities	11 -8.3%	2 -	29 -3.3%	0 -	42 -4.5%	1 -	9 12.5%	0 -	64 14.3%
74.10.21. Web pages graphic design activities	89 1.1%	26 -7.1%	113 1.8%	2 100%	230 0.9%	36 16.1%	40 -2.4%	20 -4.8%	507 -1.9%
74.10.29. Other graphic design activities	140 2.9%	55 -1.8%	363 5.5%	1 -	559 4.1%	102 21.4%	145 2.8%	59 20.4%	785 -
74.10.3. Technical design activities	112 -5.1%	49 -10.9%	161 3.9%	1 -	323 -1.8%	26 8.3%	68 4.6%	29 11.5%	492 -4.1%
74.10.9. Other design activities	204 9.1%	20 -9.1%	117 7.3%	0 -	341 7.2%	35 -10.3%	103 6.2%	62 6.9%	445 9.3%
Total	1,076 3%	225 -6.3%	1,025 4.2%	7 16.7%	2,333 2.5%	289 5.1%	638 3.1%	327 5.1%	7,719 1.7%

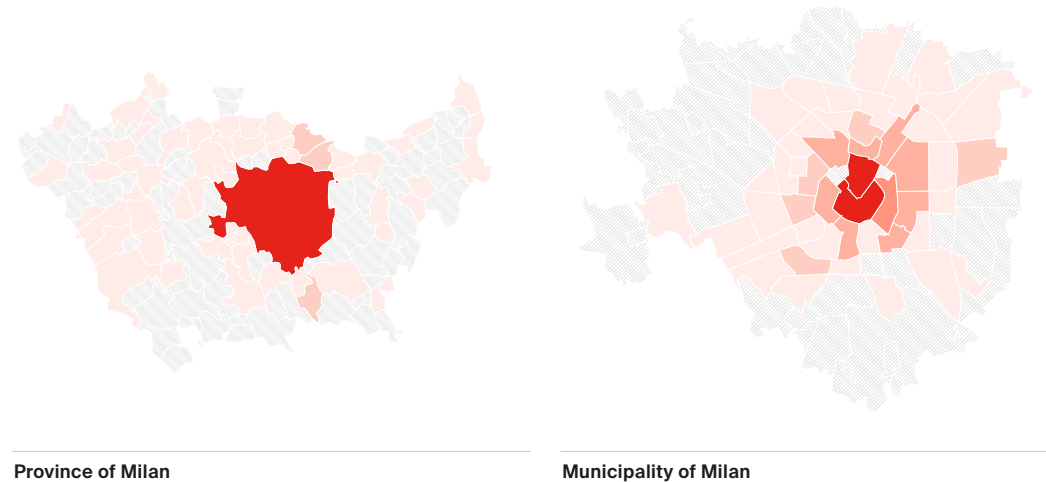
3.5 Design Professions System: territorial distribution of enterprises dedicated to specialized design activities (*Design Core*) in Milan and its province

Number of sole proprietorships and companies dedicated to design as secondary activities in Milan and its province. Source: 2025 analysis by the Politecnico di Milano – Department of Design, based on Register of Italian Companies data from the Italian Chambers of Commerce, extracted from registroimprese.it on 08/08/2025.



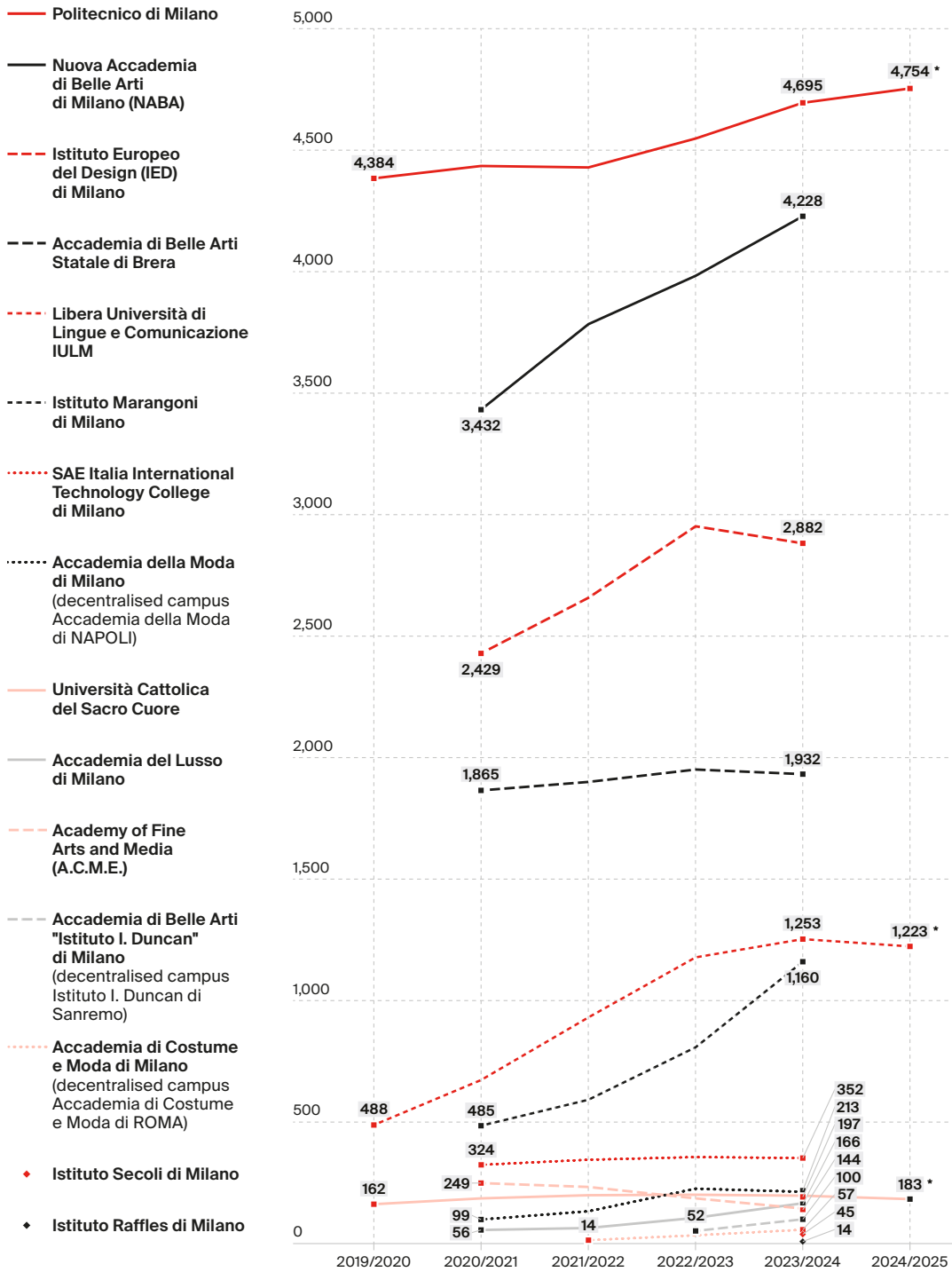
3.6 Design Distribution System: territorial density of enterprises involved in the sale of design products in Milan and its province

Enterprises with one or more retail outlets engaged in the sale of design products (furniture and home accessories) in Milan and its Province. Source: Atoka platform by Cerved Group SpA; data analysis by the Research Office of Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza e Brianza, year 2024; data extracted from the websites INTERNI Design Index and Federmobili Milano.



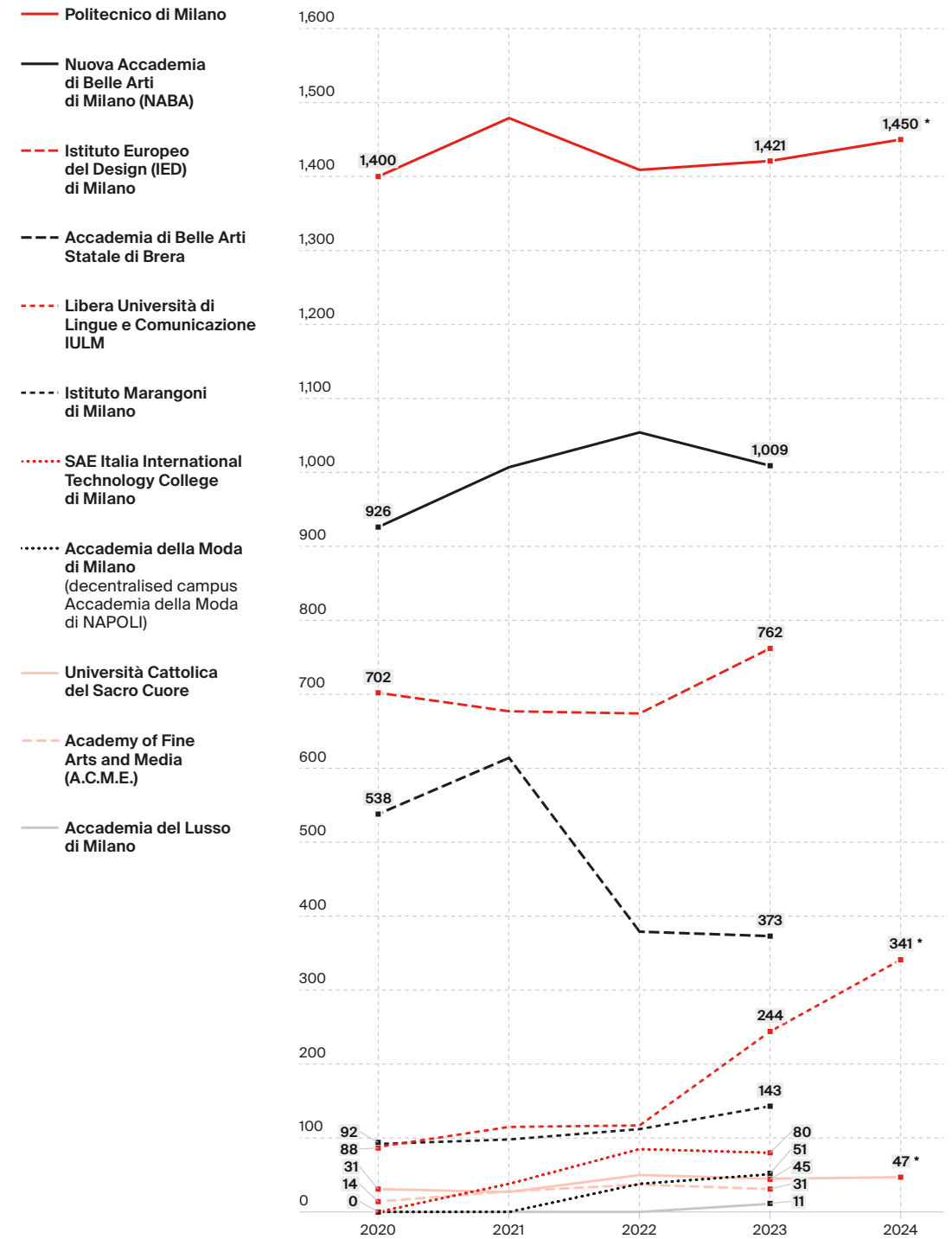
3.7 Design Education System: students enrolled in universities and AFAM institutes in Milan and its province

Students enrolled in degree and design diploma or related courses in Milan divided by institutes and academic year. Source: Ministry of University and Research; data analysis by Politecnico di Milano – Department of Design.



3.8 Design Education System: graduates and diploma holders from universities and AFAM institutes in Milan and its province

Graduates and diploma holders from design or related courses in Milan by institution and year of graduation. Source: Ministry of University and Research; data analysis by Politecnico di Milano – Department of Design.



Design culture production in Milan

- 4.1 Enduring experiment. Design and the City of Milan
- 4.2 Design culture: a history of encounters
- 4.3 Capital and cultural production and the renewal of the Milan Design Ecosystem
- 4.4 Design culture production: numbers and locations

4

Enduring experiment. Design and the City of Milan

Tommaso Sacchi
Councillor for Culture, Municipality of Milan

In Milan, design has never been a decorative afterthought nor a purely industrial pursuit; it has become one of the city's defining cultural languages. Milan's institutions – from museums and archives to universities and cultural foundations – work continuously to transform memory into research, collections into programmes, exhibitions into long-term civic assets. The Salone del Mobile.Milano offers the most visible expression of this ecosystem, yet Milan's design culture extends well beyond the calendar of major events. Permanent collections at the Triennale Milano and the ADI Design Museum, the Museum of Decorative Arts at the Castello Sforzesco, and the recently inaugurated CASVA Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive – home to the city's vast archives of modern architecture and visual arts – ensure that design in Milan is not episodic but structural, shaping cultural life throughout the year and across the city. The rhythm of the cultural season reinforces this continuity without dividing it into self-contained episodes. Milano Art Week opens the spring season, Design Week follows, and projects deliberately bridge the two. Robert Wilson's luminous installation *Mother* at the Castello Sforzesco, in dialogue with Arvo Pärt's *Stabat Mater*, exemplified this strategy. Conceived as a Cultural Project by Salone del Mobile.Milano in collaboration with the Municipality of Milan's Department of Culture and hosted at the Museo della Pietà Rondanini, it was designed to remain on view across both Art and Design Week. What began as an exploration of contemporary art continued seamlessly within the design narrative, turning the succession of events into a single cultural arc. At the wish of the Salone, the installation remained open until 18 May – a gift to the city. Such capacity for integration defines Milan's role within the global landscape of design cultures. The city cultivates partnerships with museums, universities, and design centres across Europe, Asia, and the Americas, exchanging research, curatorial projects, and public programmes. It engages with emerging cities whose design scenes are expanding rapidly, building networks that connect industrial innovation to cultural heritage, academic study to urban policy, temporary installations to permanent institutions. These strategies make Milan a place where design operates as more than aesthetic practice or commercial sector. It becomes a form of cultural reasoning, a way to think about contemporary life while shaping public space, architectural heritage, technological innovation, and civic identity. Temporary installations and permanent collections, local archives and global networks, industrial production and artistic experimentation all converge within a single metropolitan system that functions across disciplines and beyond national borders. Within this system, the Salone del Mobile.Milano occupies a central position not as an isolated summit but as the moment when the city's cultural infrastructure becomes most visible to the world. It engages museums, archives, universities, and civic institutions that sustain Milan's cultural life throughout the year, amplifying their work through exhibitions, commissions, and collaborations that resonate long after the fair itself. To call Milan a Capital of design is therefore to acknowledge not only the excellence of its production but the intelligence of a system that transforms creativity into knowledge. Here design shapes not just objects and spaces but also institutions, archives, and ideas – producing a cultural landscape in which the temporary and the permanent, the local and the global, the historical and the experimental are woven into a single, evolving horizon.

Design culture: a history of encounters

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4.2

Writing about design culture from a historical perspective – particularly in Milan – by tracing a path that leads us to reflect on what it is today, and perhaps what it will be tomorrow, is a challenge that brings to mind certain themes I have already addressed, which I have sought to weave together under the title *Design Culture: A History of Encounters*. Before arriving at these ‘encounters’, let us first attempt to clarify what is meant by *design culture*, considering that this cultural recognition of design was formed and developed in Italy – and, as we know, particularly in Milan – within a lively exchange of ideas and projects after the end of the last world war (an expression that today has a certain resonance), in a positive and optimistic period of rebirth following the twenty-year Fascist dictatorship. Within a single decade – spanning the late 1940s and early 1950s – rich with ideas, projects, meetings, debates and cultural intertwinings among the arts, technologies and industries (for which intertwinings the Politecnico di Milano has always been, and remains today, a worthy home), there emerged a new awareness and maturity in Italy’s design culture. This process achieved, as is well known, its first major international recognition with the organisation of an important inaugural international conference on Industrial Design during the 10th Triennale in 1954. Later on, focusing more directly on the proposed theme of encounters, I shall attempt to trace further steps in the development of this design culture in Milan. We can therefore say that, both yesterday and today, design culture should be understood as a broad, interdisciplinary field of reflection. (Lately, there has been much discussion about the international use of the term ‘expanded design’, which suggests this continual extension – an issue that we also addressed at the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano in an international symposium of design historians.) This is therefore an area that transcends the boundaries of mere object production, engaging instead with aesthetic, social, economic and environmental questions. To speak of design culture thus means to investigate not only design practices but also their historical matrices, shared values and networks of meaning that allow design to become an integral part of contemporary cultural processes. As Richard Buchanan observes in *Wicked Problems in Design Thinking*, ‘design is a field of integrative thinking, capable of connecting and reinterpreting different disciplinary domains.’ (Buchanan, 1992, pp. 5-21). From its nineteenth-century origins, design has positioned itself as a mediator amid art, industry and society. The considerations of William Morris and the protagonists of the Arts and Crafts movement, as well as those of the Bauhaus, testify that design was perceived from its very beginnings not only as a productive activity but also as a cultural construction. Tomás Maldonado, emphasised that design in the twentieth century is situated at the crossroads of science, technology and society, with the function of critically organising the form of everyday life. Its birth is tied to the processes of industrialisation and to the need to mediate between technology and form, between serial production and aesthetic quality. In this sense, design culture cannot be reduced to a collection of objects; rather, it takes shape as a system of knowledge and values defining the relationship between human beings, technology and the environment. One of the central aspects of design culture is its interdisciplinary nature. As mentioned earlier, design activity has progressively extended from the material object to the environment, to services, and to complex systems and digital interfaces. Victor Margolin, a renowned American design historian and theorist, in his book *The Politics of the Artificial*, defined this expansion as the passage from a design of products to a design of systems of meaning: ‘design produces not only objects, but also relationships and narratives that define our cultural experience.’ With the term ‘encounters’ I shall return precisely to this theme of ‘relationships and narratives’ (Margolin, 2002, p. 10). Its interdisciplinary nature draws from art history, architecture, sociology, philosophy and, more recently, media studies. This interweaving fosters a continuous redefinition of disciplinary boundaries: design is no longer only the

design of products but also of services, experiences, interfaces, processes and narratives. Design culture does not merely generate tangible forms; it contributes to shaping the material and immaterial culture of societies. Designed objects convey symbols, identities and values, contributing to the definition of lifestyles. At the same time, design also promotes new immaterial practices such as data management, future scenario modelling and the elaboration of sustainability strategies. In recent decades, critical reflection on design has assumed a central role. Design culture is no longer conceived merely as a functional practice but also as a tool for critical thought. Experiences such as critical design or speculative design demonstrate how design can question social models, established habits and visions of the future, stimulating processes of collective awareness. Alongside its productive function, contemporary design culture takes on a critical and speculative role. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, in their book *Speculative Everything*, have shown how critical design can 'stimulate alternative imaginaries and challenge the normality of technological systems.' (Dunne & Raby, 2013, p. 189). I would observe that our great Italian designers – just think of the brothers Piergiacomo and Achille Castiglioni – were, in my view, already practising a kind of critical design ahead of their time in their celebrated projects. This approach reveals that design is not only a tool of efficiency but also a cultural practice, capable of questioning values, social models and visions of the future. Achille Castiglioni used to tell us students: 'Design is not so much about designing objects, but above all about designing behaviours' which, along with his provocative remark – 'If you're not curious, what are you doing in this school?' – already says much about the health of critical design during that golden age of Italian design. Contemporary design culture is traversed by urgent issues: environmental sustainability, technological innovation, artificial intelligence and social equity (I am thinking here of the beautiful 24th International Exhibition of the Triennale currently dedicated to the theme of *Inequalities*). Ezio Manzini, pioneer of design for sustainability, affirms that 'design today is called upon to imagine and construct scenarios in which people can live better, consuming fewer resources and generating new forms of community.' (Manzini, 2015, p. 5). Design culture, therefore, cannot be reduced to an assemblage of aesthetic objects; it constitutes a dynamic cultural process that integrates technology, society and imagination. It is simultaneously a material and symbolic practice – a tool for innovation, a shared language, and a form of critical reflection capable of guiding transformations in everyday life. I now propose that we read this story – our story of design culture in Milan – as a history of encounters. We have already reiterated that design, understood not as a mere formal activity but as a design culture, represents a field that engages values, relationships and ways of life. As a key to interpretation, it may be interesting to reread all this through the lens of the great Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (a central figure of seventeenth-century rationalism, well known to many of our Italian design masters who had a classical education), particularly his theory of encounters, which offers an ethical and ontological perspective capable of illuminating the function of design as a relational practice. This small contribution of mine aims to show how design culture can be read, in light of Spinoza, as a device for organising encounters – capable of increasing or diminishing the power of individuals and collectives. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza defines the human being as part of an infinite network of relationships. Every individual strives to persevere in his or her own being (*conatus*), yet this power can grow or diminish depending on encounters: when two individuals of a different nature meet, writes Spinoza in his *Ethics*, it may happen that both or only one of them are modified so as to preserve more or less of their power of acting (Spinoza, 1677). A positive encounter is one that enhances our capacity to exist and to think, generating joy (*laetitia*); a negative encounter, on the contrary, reduces our power, generating sadness. In this sense, Spinoza's ethics is a philosophy of relations: to

understand, orient and cultivate good encounters means to promote the growth of life. Design culture, especially from the twentieth century onwards – as we have already noted – has progressively expanded its scope, moving from the production of objects to the design of complex systems, services and interfaces. We earlier cited design historian Victor Margolin and spoke of 'relationships and narratives'. In this sense, every project is already an encounter: between bodies and artefacts, between individuals and communities, between society and environment. Design, in fact, organises the material and symbolic conditions of encounters, influencing their quality and their consequences.

This Spinozian reading allows us to conceive design as an applied ethics of encounters: the designer does not merely create forms, but also generates conditions that orient relationships – and thus the vital power of people. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, with their above mentioned critical design, have shown how design can stimulate alternative imaginaries, destabilising conventions and fostering new encounters: 'Critical design seeks to generate debate, not solutions; to raise questions rather than provide answers.' (Dunne & Raby, 2013, p. 43). This idea resonates with the Spinozian perspective, according to which adequate knowledge of encounters leads to greater freedom. In both cases, value lies not in the object itself but in its capacity to transform relationships. To bring design culture into dialogue with Spinoza means recognising that design is not a neutral act (as, moreover, Enzo Mari also argued – indeed, to be more precise, he defined it as an act of war, a compelled commitment against a reality that must always be improved). The project, therefore, is an ethical intervention in the web of encounters that constitute social and individual life. Design thus becomes a form of practical philosophy – an art of organising the world so that encounters enhance the power of living, generating more freedom, more joy and more community. But, as I promised, let us now see – briefly – which places and situations in Milan have been the settings where designers, together with architects, artists and intellectuals, but also entrepreneurs, artisans, engineers and technicians, have met, creating and participating in the high and low networks of intellectual and material culture in our city. We have already mentioned an important place such as the Triennale Milano, undoubtedly an essential point of reference to this vocation, for encounters and dialogue. Since 1933, with the Milanese headquarters of the Fifth Triennale, the sacred temple of design culture in the city was established, involving the entire country and engaging with the world. But let us not forget, on another plane – still in the realm of exhibitions – the Fiera di Milano, the historic *Fiera Campionaria*, which inevitably leads us to the Salone del Mobile.Milano. In this regard, we must always keep in mind that Milan's historic vocation, more than industrial, is above all commercial: and what could be more stimulating for encounters than fairs and markets, as the history of all times and all corners of the world teaches us? More generally, around this design culture, we must also recall the primary role of schools, which are by definition places of cultural encounter. In Milan, first and foremost, we must recognise the historic primacy of the Politecnico di Milano, founded in 1863, whose very name speaks of interdisciplinarity – not only technical but also humanistic – further reinforced by the establishment of the School of Architecture in 1926 and later by the first Degree Course in Industrial Design in 1993. On the first day of class, I always tell my students that they must not only learn from their professors, but also from the city of Milan itself – with its wealth of cultural variety – and, above all, they must learn from one another, with their differing attitudes, learning (a crucial skill for all designers) to work together, in groups, by confronting and exchanging ideas. Milan is the world capital of design and, certainly, also the capital of design schools. From all over the world, people come to 'rinse their clothes', Manzoni-style, in our cultural Arno (though of course not in our little Lambro), let us say in our great cultural reservoir

that extends across and dots a vast metropolitan territory. By cultural reservoir I also mean all the artisanal workshops and the rich experiences of know-how within our industries, where Italian design – and much celebrated international design – has been formed and developed, thanks to so many fruitful encounters. In this sense, this reference to enterprises brings to mind the important role, since 1956, of the ADI, the Association of Italian Designers and companies, which, through its early link to the history of the famous *Compasso d'Oro* award, has continually fostered cultural interest and recognition for the role of Italian design in the world. I also feel personally involved in mentioning the importance of design archives, which deserve to be supported – as the design historian Fulvio Irace recently wrote – because they are the gold of Milan. With pleasure I recall and note that on 30 September, the Mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala, cut the ribbon inaugurating the new, large headquarters of CASVA at QT8 – the archive of modern design integrated into the system of Milan's Civic Art Collections. To this world we must add the importance of libraries as well as bookshops – and this also reminds me of specialised journals, which have served as chosen places of encounter and intellectual exchange (physically, too, in their various editorial offices). In Milan these have flourished, at times in great numbers, and have been – and we hope will continue to be – a point of international reference. And finally (I shall surely forget other important situations), I would also like to reflect on the role of what are now called 'third places', a concept introduced by the American sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his book *The Great Good Place* (1989). These are social spaces that coincide neither with the first sphere (the home, the place of private and family life) nor with the second (work or school, the places of productivity and responsibility). They represent therefore a 'third space' where people can meet freely, converse, build relationships, and create communities and collective identities. They are, so to speak, halfway between the places of work and study and those of home and rest, forming a dense, underlying network within the city: public places where people meet to relax and have fun, to share an aperitif or dance, to eat together – from the famous Bar Craja of the 1930s to the many Biffi cafés, Scofone beer hall, Bulloni wine bar, Tumbun de San Marc, Santa Tecla, Bar Giamaica, Bar Basso, Oreste, up to the Plastic nightclub (which has recently closed), where in the 1980s and 1990s Andy Warhol and Elio Fiorucci, Giorgio Armani and artists Keith Haring and Basquiat mingled – alongside many young designers, for instance those of the Memphis group. I am no longer of the age to know which are the new meeting places, but I hope there are many, and that they may bear good fruit, perhaps forming even in social centres or impromptu raves. Having said all this, to return to our thread: design emerges as a cultural practice capable of orienting behaviours – as Achille Castiglioni said – fostering a balance between productive needs, ethical responsibilities and community values. The challenge is to transform design culture into a device of mediation between global complexities and local needs, between innovation and memory. Design culture is therefore not a mere aesthetic accessory of industrial and post-industrial societies but – as art historian George Kubler (1972) has taught us so well – a true shared language – a field of symbolic and material production contributing to the definition of our cultural identity. Within it, the historical and the projectual dimensions, the search for meaning and tension towards the future intertwine: elements that make design not only a discipline but a cultural practice, capable of reflecting upon and transforming society.

Capital and cultural production and the renewal of the Milan Design Ecosystem

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4.3

WHY EXPLAIN THE MILAN DESIGN ECOSYSTEM AS A DISTRICT-ECOSYSTEM OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION.

To consider Milan as a district-ecosystem of design (Salone del Mobile.Milano & Politecnico di Milano, 2024) means recognizing that design cultural production is not an accessory feature, but rather the enabling factor, that integrates economies, institutions, and social practices. Local cultural capital, tacit knowledge, shared values, production memories, and educational networks, together operate as a living infrastructure for coordination, trust, and situated learning. An ecosystemic interpretation introduces digital and green dimensions and requires orchestration skills among varied players, to align resources and objectives along trajectories of transition (Kominos, 2022; Burström, Lahti, & Parida, 2024). This contribution integrates a theoretical framework with operational examples: specifically examining the production of explicit design culture and strategies that link its value to the overall optimisation of the Milan Design Ecosystem. What we intend by the specific production of explicit design culture, are those activities that translate design knowledge into shared content: exhibitions and installations; catalogues, magazines and podcasts; public programmes (debates, workshops); open studios and urban itineraries; digital platforms and open archives, etc. These expedients transform implicit, received skills into situated narratives, making design a cultural medium that produces meaning, even before it does products. In the Milanese context, the calendar of events, institutions, thematic weeks, museums, foundations and schools, act as *attractors* of international attention and as the infrastructure of transfer to the local supply chain. Specific cultural production performs three functions: (i) it makes process and criteria of quality visible: *cultural accountability*; (ii) it enables collective learning and matchmaking between stakeholders: the project as platform for interaction; and (iii) it builds reputation and symbolic capital, that can be used in the market. This type of co-design format with businesses, cultural institutions and communities – allows for the fine-tuning of terminology and audiences, avoiding both self-referential technicalities and promotional simplifications. Examples of replicable formats include micro-exhibitions in production spaces with a focus on tools and processes; publications documenting *behind-the-scenes* design processes, decisions and trade-offs; thematic podcasts featuring the voices of designers, artisans, and users; experimental hackathons bringing together companies, students, and researchers; and urban tours that map laboratories, archives and workshops. Every such format must be designed to spark conversations between different worlds and generate tangible legacies (open data, toolkits, networks), avoiding the logic of the ephemeral event.

COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE AND POPULATION OF BUSINESSES

The Milanese (and Lombard) design ecosystem is, before even being a collection of companies, a community of people. The population of businesses includes furniture and product manufacturers, subcontracting chains, design studios, creative agencies and advanced services, with a key role played by small and micro businesses, capable of uniting around projects. The driving force is human capital, regenerated by schools and universities, internships and professional networks that accelerate entry into the workforce and circulate standards and languages. The literature on *communities of practice* shows how learning and professional identity emerge from engagement in shared practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), while knowledge management highlights the ongoing interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Alongside the big players, individuals and independent studios experiment with language, control niches and implement *low-threshold* incremental innovations, reducing the technological and cultural risk for the entire system; many follow hybrid entrepreneurial trajectories, oscillating between consultancy, self-production and micro-publishing.

A LEARNING ECOSYSTEM: FROM 'INDUSTRIAL ATMOSPHERE' TO CONTEMPORARY ORCHESTRATION

The distinctive feature of the *district* is widespread collective learning: exchange of *know-how*, mutual observation and repeat collaborations. Marshall's notion of an 'industrial atmosphere' describes environments in which information and skills circulate almost by osmosis (Marshall, 1890; Becattini, 2000), while the centrality of tacit knowledge explains the resilience of high-density proximity contexts (Polanyi, 1966). Today, this atmosphere extends to digital platforms, fab-labs, university laboratories, and coworking spaces; places of interaction – museums, galleries, festivals, research and training centres – act as conversational triggers in which practice and terminology hybridize. The practice of ecosystem orchestration provides an operational lexicon to guide shared goals, integrate varied resources and enable rapid cycles of experimentation. In this context Milan can serve as a *convergence hub* for digital and green transition, where design becomes a platform for aligning manufacturing, services and cultural supply chains.

SHARING VALUES, LANGUAGE, AND WIDESPREAD ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Milanese design community shares a symbolic and technical language: criteria of quality, aesthetic canons, feasibility standards and professional ethics that reduce transaction costs and nurture trust. This shared cultural foundation allows the navigation of conservative markets and the negotiation of innovations acceptable to both supply chains and public. In terms of *communities of practice*, the entry of young professionals accelerates learning that consequently not only occurs individually, but within the ecosystem itself, where knowledge is constructed and transmitted through active participation and *collaborative work* (Wenger, 1998). Specialized media, critics, and cultural institutions contribute to making this shared lexicon explicit, transforming tacit skills into narratives, exhibition formats and evaluation standards. In the Milanese context, work has a cultural value that is learnt through mentoring and refined through interaction with peers and clients. The result is a work ethic focused on quality and widespread entrepreneurship: designers founding micro-businesses, workshops becoming brands, graphic design studios launching publishing houses, artisans evolving into services and consultancy. The fluidity between the roles of designer and entrepreneur accelerates the emergence of hybrid models capable of combining production, services and cultural content.

SOCIAL AND PRODUCTIVE INTERDEPENDENCIES

The interdependency between economic and social players are amplified by digital networks and hybrid spaces of interaction. The coexistence of professional relationships, friendships, mentorships and associations create paths of trust and exchange that accelerate innovation. These networks connect different clusters on brief trajectories, favouring the dissemination of information and accelerated experimentation (Watts & Strogatz, 1998; Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). Today, these networks are mixed, both physical and digital, allowing for rapid project-based connections, but they require awareness of access biases and strategies to broaden participation. To evaluate the production of design culture from an eco-systemic perspective means moving beyond purely economic indicators to integrate quality of life, social cohesion, and environmental regeneration. Multilevel indicators can measure the accessibility of design services for SMEs (small and medium enterprises), the capacity for co-design with communities, the intensity of research and development with universities and cultural institutions, as well as the reduction of the material and energy footprint throughout the product life cycle. Frameworks

and metrics must ensure fairness and transparency, in line with the principles of *design justice*, which: '...is a framework for analysing how design distributes benefits and burdens among various groups of people [...] and a community of practice which aims to ensure meaningful participation in design decisions...' (Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 42).

HISTORIC MEMORY, TRADITION, AND REGENERATION

Artisanal and manufacturing memory forms the foundational identity of district specializations. Corporate museums, archives, collections and schools have consolidated a recognizable design culture, *but memory must not become rigid*. Tradition is regenerated when it engages with new codes and sensibilities, including practices of reuse and *second-hand* which younger generations associate with forms of *connoisseurship* and *sustainability* (Abdelmeguid *et al.*, 2024). This convergence of memory and circular practices supports new cultural meanings and market trajectories. The enhancement of the ecosystem therefore requires intentional strategies that connect specific cultural production, production chains, and ongoing transitions.

Below are some strategic guidelines:

- Orchestration platforms: adopt common platforms for *knowledge sharing* (materials, processes, standards); integrate living-labs and testing spaces in cities and encourage collaborative direction between businesses, schools and cultural institutions (Shen *et al.*, 2024; Komninos, 2022).
- Policies and procurement: use public procurement to attain quality-of-use and regeneration (*Design for Public Procurement*); design vouchers for SMEs; residency programmes and urban challenges to drive demand for circular and inclusive solutions.
- New training models for design: consider transition processes, particularly those related to digital technologies and sustainability emergencies.
- Internationalization and talent attraction: coordinate exchange programmes for design students and professionals to connect the ecosystem to European and global networks, transforming mobility into a virtuous cycle of skills and opportunities.
- Circular transition and *servitization*: support businesses and designers towards services and *pay-per-performance* models, with tools for circular design (disassembly, digital material passports) and lifecycle evaluation (Sgambaro *et al.*, 2024).
- Data-informed cultural production: support curation and evidence-based public programmes (impact storytelling and data literacy), experiment with hybrid (physical-digital) formats to broaden audiences and promote accessibility, inclusion and active participation.

METRICS, GOVERNANCE AND LEARNING

To transform specific cultural production into systemic competitive advantage requires shared metrics and open governance. An ecosystem dashboard can include indicators of cultural capital (participation, publications, exhibitions); collaboration (multi-stakeholder projects, school-business partnerships); green transition (regenerative materials, reuse rates, avoided emissions); and social impact (inclusion, accessibility, new skills). These metrics support collective learning processes and guide public and private incentives. In terms of governance, a *light orchestration* can coordinate diverse players while safeguarding project autonomy. The goal is not to standardize, but to connect: to build bridges between

manufacturing and services, between schools and businesses, between cultural institutions and neighbourhoods. The logic is that of the ecosystem: multiple roles, clear rules, widespread *accountability*. Understanding Milan as a *district-ecosystem* therefore means enhancing the specific production of design culture as civic infrastructure, that makes knowledge visible, enables alliances and guides transitions. The resulting agenda combines investments in talent and training; spaces and platforms for collective learning; support for widespread entrepreneurship; collaborative governance and shared impact metrics. In this framework, the project is simultaneously an economic practice and a cultural mediation: a device for generating economic, social, and environmental value and for uniting the received identity and the future aspect of the Milan Design Ecosystem. The city plays a significant role in the location choices of those involved in the ecosystem of design culture. It evidently contains the available resources that have fuelled and continue to fuel the ecosystem, and it serves a role attracting outside attention. This infrastructure, connected to the production of design culture, is in fact a *local collective asset for competitiveness* (Crouch *et al.* 2004), that must be supported and enhanced to create opportunities and preserve Milan's unique role in the global scene of design cities.

Design culture production: numbers and locations

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4.4

The Milan Design System is not just a centre for the production, education, promotion and distribution of design: it is a cultural infrastructure that generates and exchanges ideas and circulates knowledge every day. Developing a map of design culture production within the Milan Design System therefore has a dual objective: to identify the players in the city and its province who produce, preserve, and enable design culture and to offer an effective initial means for understanding its role in the local context. The map¹ concerned with the *System of Design Cultural Offerings* is a starting point for understanding who produces cultural value and where, and how this value supports the competitiveness and identity of Milanese design.

During the exploration of the Milan Design System that began with Report 2024, it became immediately clear that mapping the *System of Design Cultural Offerings* required a different approach to the other components of the Milan Design System. The production of design culture is a phenomenon that cannot be reduced to statistical classifications alone: it spans institutions, professional networks, social spaces and informal circles. Consequently, the mapping work required a reconstructive approach, consistent with the dialogical nature of design culture (Manzini, 2016) and respectful of its relational geographies (Bosoni, 2024; Sammicheli & Mainoli, 2019). Before beginning the mapping, it was essential to clarify the concept of *design culture production* by considering the most relevant scientific literature and policy Reports, developed by organizations such as UNESCO², the European Commission³, BEDA – The Bureau of European Designers Association and the World Design Organization (WDO)⁴, which recognize its economic, social and symbolic impacts. Guy Julier (2013) argues that the production of design culture concerns the complex of players, places and practices that generate, preserve and disseminate cultural content related to design, contributing to the construction of collective identity, critical capacity and activism within a society. The production of design culture is expressed in different forms: industrial, artisanal and digital, experimental or participatory. Over time this sediments and practices evolve that generate value and local identity. Design culture produces material and immaterial artefacts, that embody narrative and meaning through a variety of formats: installations, events, exhibitions, publications, awards and dissemination initiatives. Analysing it also means understanding the networks linking designers and clients, production and markets, media and consumers, demonstrating how culture, economy and technology shape an increasingly connected ecosystem (Julier, 2013). The first edition of the map is focused on *specific production resources*: actors and places, such as museums, with a recognized and formal role in the cultural geography. As yet, it does not include informal and emerging producers, or *third-party venues* – public and private urban meeting places – that constitute another group of environments where the emergence of design culture practices are generated, developed and fostered in Milan.

The landscape of Milan's production of design culture encompasses several distinct groups: organizations and institutions that manage museums and offer design-related cultural programmes; foundations and associations of various sorts that support and develop design heritage and culture; and other players such as publishers, media, education and research centres. In terms of venues, the system primarily comprises museums, from design museums to company-museums and house-museums and archives. These are complemented by specialized libraries and bookstores, hybrid spaces and cultural hubs, design galleries and other curatorial or exhibition spaces. Finally, there are fairs and events with design-related programming.

The collection and organisation of a diverse set of sources and databases⁵ has produced an initial grouping of about 700 potentially relevant entities and venues⁶

for mapping the production and offerings of design culture. From the assessment of this first set, a dataset of 533 resources with 275 entities was then selected and consolidated, of which 124 directly connected to places or spaces of various kinds, and 258 places that have a relationship with the production of design culture (Fig. 4.1). Continuing with the analysis of the Milan Design System, each resource, entity and place mapped, has been classified as a primary or secondary cultural producer. Of the 533 resources, 295 entities and places constitute a point of reference for the production of design culture, and 238 participate in, or support, cultural activities occasionally or on a periodic basis⁷. The primary producers in the Milan Design System constitute the most stable, infrastructural part of the cultural production system, while the component of secondary cultural producers represent the most flexible and configurable part of the system.

The activities of the entities analysed span the entire spectrum of design – product, fashion, interiors, communication, digital, and services – confirming the breadth of the culture's scope of interests: design history and criticism, experimental research, artistic and performative practices, as well as activist practices. Observing the map of producers, three things emerge. The first concerns the presence of a densely packed core of entities and places, among which are entities that physically or virtually aggregate more resources from the system. The second concerns the fairly balanced presence of primary and secondary cultural producers, indicative of a possible dynamic of equilibrium in the system between cultural hubs of reference and the wider-spread cultural fabric. The third concerns the *intermingling* of primary and secondary cultural producers: the coexistence of diverse entities within the same contexts and places. This leads to a possible recurring pattern, attributable to a possible model of 'activation and enabling by proximity': entities or places close to primary producers are more likely to become secondary producers and become part of the cultural system. This may be a testament to the capacity of Milan's design culture to aggregate its production and cultural offerings by district.

Moving now from the overview, to an exploration of the various categories of specific cultural producers, we will begin with *Museums and archives*: the most established and recognizable categories. A consultation of the portals of the Lombardy Region, the Municipality of Milan, YesMilano and the Museimpresa networks reveals 56 *museums* in Milan and its province with varying degrees of relevance to design. Among the main cultural producers, alongside the Museo del Design Italiano at Triennale Milano and the ADI Design Museum, there are over 10 company-museums⁸ and studio-museums of design masters such as Castiglioni, and Magistretti. A second more varied group, composed of 39 museums, attributable to secondary producers, is occasionally involved in design-related cultural events and initiatives. This group includes 11 museums and other similar civic spaces, including MUDEC and Galleria d'Arte Moderna; state museums (7, including Pinacoteca di Brera and Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia); private museums (10, such as Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, MAS – Museo Arte e Scienza) and among the others, 6 company-museums and 5 *case-museo* (house-museums).

The *Archives*⁹ category includes 210 entities, almost all physical or virtual places, identified by classifying data and information accessible on the websites of the Lombardy Region, the Municipality of Milan, the Politecnico di Milano, Triennale Milano, the Archivio AIAP and the Museimpresa network. Numerically, they are the most substantial category in the *System of Design Cultural Offerings*. They concern a cultural heritage consisting of a constellation of 199 designer's archives and 11 company archives in Milan (Fig. 4.2, Ciagà 2023), the vast

majority (165) of which can be ascribed to the core of main cultural producers. Among these are numerous private archives and some archives of *Maestri del design* (design masters) such as Albini, Colombo e Ponti, other than the above-mentioned Castiglioni and Magistretti archives, managed by eponymous foundations, and connected to their museum locations. The data confirms that the conservation of documents is a widespread cultural mainstay of the infrastructure of Milanese design, which is not only significant in terms of quantity, but also as an organizational model, whereby the role of the aggregating entities is fundamental for the collation and classification of collections. The recent inauguration of the new headquarters for CASVA (*Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive – Centre for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts*)¹⁰ in the QT8 district of Milan demonstrates the importance of a local entry point that facilitates access to a vast and widespread heritage, that is often not immediately accessible.

Alongside museums and archives, Milan's *System of Design Cultural Offering* includes 20 *Libraries*¹¹, *material libraries* and *specialized bookshops*, some of which are located within Milan's museums. These places, which are true gateways to design knowledge, are strategic hubs for research, training and the dissemination of the history and culture of design. In tandem, *Publishers and magazines* (60) are another key cultural resource of the system. Milan, the publishing capital of Italy (AIE Observatory, 2024), thanks to its rich array of design magazines, has historically influenced design culture, both by fuelling critical debate, even internationally, and by directly promoting and curating large installations, exhibitions and conferences in the city. Magazines such as *INTERNI*, *Domus* and *Abitare* were pioneers in organizing large-scale events, a Milanese format that still remains the organisational paragon. The mapping process also identified a significant group of 88 *Associations, foundations, community centres and collectives* that promote or co-ordinate cultural and social initiatives and activities of innovation, creating aggregation to build networks within and without the Milan Design System. The group includes 48 associations of various kinds, 33 foundations and 7 hybrid spaces, cultural centres and collectives. Only one third of these entities fall within the core of the main producers (33), while the majority can be associated with the sphere of secondary producers (55). In fact, these mostly still-little-explored realities, constitute the civic and professional backbone of the production of design culture, and they constitute an intermediary infrastructure that connects cultural production with the public sector and businesses.

Milan's many *Design schools and universities* (Section 3.2) – an internationally recognized excellence of the Milan Design System – are also a driving force of cultural production. A third of the mapped educational establishments are considered key cultural producers (14 of 37), thanks to their organisation of ongoing cultural activities that include exhibitions, conferences, seminars and participation in the Salone del Mobile.Milano (including the SaloneSatellite) and Milan Design Week. Additionally, 31 *Design galleries* operate as curatorial and commercial spaces in Milan, these promote talent and disseminate design languages in connection with the market. Among the best-known points-of-reference are spaces such as Galleria Rossana Orlandi, Nilufar, and Luisa delle Piane. In addition to design galleries, other commercial spaces also play a cultural role: multi-functional spaces such as Superstudio+ and some of the many showrooms disseminated throughout Milan. Some of these, such as DePadova, are historical entities that have already been mapped during the first phase of Milan Design System research, others, such as Cassina, emerged from analysis of the 2025 Design Week events, and are characterised by their innovative formats, such as the organisation of cultural events in places like theatres.¹²

Finally, there are the *Fairs, festivals, and events* (25 entities and places) that function as platforms and amplifiers for the production of design culture. Salone del Mobile.Milano and the Municipality of Milan Design Week (as well as other Weeks) are the hub of a broader set of events, which in total comprise of around ten entities that operate as strategic aggregators. These entities bring together the various players of the Milan Design System to organize, promote, and support the programming of schedules of events and cultural initiatives dedicated to design, with significant economic impact on the city's cultural planning and networks.

ENABLING A DESIGN CULTURE ECOSYSTEM

The Milan Design System is the habitat in which the system of design production and cultural offerings takes shape.¹³ Mapping it has allowed us to understand its structure, configurations, and population. It is a context dense with individuals, places, and relationships, where design production and design culture are intertwined, even physically. The backbone of the system is provided by the main producers: each, in their own sphere, contribute to the construction of a broad, diversified, and ongoing cultural offering. The muscle of the system is supported by the dynamism of numerous secondary, occasional or periodic producers, that activate to organize events at a sectoral or regional level. The two levels enable each other: the project producers and those that create design culture nurture a culture of design at the sectoral level; the main producers also tend to enable the secondary producers, according to district oriented networks, shaping the offerings at the local level. Within the system, certain entities and places such as museums, schools, and universities act as hubs or centres of cultural reference, while the many archives gravitate around a few entities that act as super-nodes in the collection, management, and enhancement of cultural content. Fairs and major events operate as platforms that connect players and programmes. In contrast, the network of associations, foundations, community centres and collectives, is less visible, despite their performing an enabling role, providing organizational and economic support. This structure suggests a need for greater interoperability between systems, to align structural players with secondary and emerging entities and to improve access to diverse resources and their knowledge-bases. In a design culture ecosystem, enabling dialogue between systems, entities, places and data, can be important for increasing the visibility of all the resources and for shared use of cultural content, even enabling forms of co-production of strategies and formats. The map itself, with 533 identified entities, provides an enabling and expandable working basis, by operating in two directions. The first involves a detailed assessment of the cultural producers present among the more than 2,000 businesses and professionals active in the *Design Professions System*, the *Design-driven Enterprises System* in Milan and its province (with over 1,000 companies in the strategic home-furnishings sector alone) and the *Design Distribution System* (with approximately 1,300 commercial businesses, of which more than half focused on design). This expanse requires a comprehensive and qualitative survey, based on *engagement*: a regional *open-call* that could connect and further enrich the ecosystem's cultural heritage. The second direction concerns the mapping of informal cultural heritage (cheFare, 2021; Manzano *et al.*, 2025): recognizing those emerging entities and places, is a prerequisite for a truly inclusive cultural ecosystem, capable of learning from all types of realities. Finally, enabling a design culture ecosystem also requires the ability to make the many spontaneous, planned, or orchestrated cultural initiatives recognizable within a (more) continuous flow of cultural production: an expression of the local community's intelligence and design consciousness. This convergence requires a widespread critical capacity to intercept, select, and curate the most valid design content generated within and beyond the local area, so that it becomes recognizable, transferable, and therefore adoptable. Through the individuals and places of the ecosystem, it serves to

close an entire cycle: understanding what is produced, disseminating what has been apprehended, documenting and storing what has been produced and disseminated, providing means of decoding and storytelling that help the local area evolve, improving the production of design culture over time.

1 The database on the actors and places of cultural design production within the Milan Design Ecosystem was created and developed by the author together with Valentino Stella and David Zhou (School of Design, Politecnico di Milano), with contributions from Francesco Leoni and Filippo Parolini (School of Design, Politecnico di Milano), and with the scientific support of Graziella Leyla Ciagà (Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano) for the analysis and verification of designers Archives.

2 Milan is part of the 340 cities included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), a global initiative aimed at strengthening cooperation among cities that recognize creativity—including design—as a strategic factor for sustainable development in its economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

3 Within the broader framework of the Cultural and Creative Industries, the European Commission has recognised design as a sector grounded in creative values and expressions that unfold along a cycle of creation, production, dissemination and preservation. Through the *New European Bauhaus* initiative (2020), it has promoted the role and value of design culture within policies for sustainable development.

4 In 2025, the Bureau of European Designers Associations (BEDA) published a position paper in response to the European Commission's *Culture Compass*, defining design as an infrastructure that translates knowledge into implementation, connects industry, society and governance, and links the cultural and creative industries with innovation and sustainability. Design is framed as a lever for value-based transformation, enabling cultural production chains and civic culture. In parallel, the World Design Organization (WDO) promotes design culture through programmes, platforms and advocacy initiatives aimed at advancing the role of design as a global public good, including the World Design Capital (WDC) programme.

5 The initial data collection and verification were carried out through desk research, in some cases supplemented by direct contact with the actors involved. Both the initial database and the consolidated dataset should be considered evolving resources, open to updates and refinements.

6 From the initial database of 705 resources, 172 entities and venues were excluded due to marginal relevance, insufficient evidence of their role in design cultural production, or cessation of activity in design or in general. The excluded entities include 12 museums, 73 designer archives

(architects without documented design activity), 28 associations and foundations, 38 publishers and magazines, 13 fairs, festivals, and events, 4 galleries, 1 library, 1 school or university, and 2 other entities.

7 The inclusion of each actor or place within the category of secondary cultural producers was determined by verifying their involvement in at least one cultural initiative or activity related to design—including those connected to Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week—during the period 2023–2025, in line with the launch of the *Milan Design (Eco) System* research.

8 For further information, see the list of museums and archives affiliated with Museimpresa: <https://museimpresa.com/associati/>. Among the 27 corporate museums located in Milan and its metropolitan area, ten were considered design-related. Corporate archives relevant to design were counted within the general Archives category.

9 The Archives category includes archives, fonds, and collections.

10 CASVA (Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive) is a cultural institute of the Municipality of Milan, established in 1999 and active since 2002. It aggregates and manages designers' archives, organizes cultural initiatives and events, and hosts an exhibition space. CASVA is supported by the homonymous Foundation, which promotes the preservation and valorization of its archival heritage.

11 The 2024 and 2025 Reports on cultural consumption in the city of Milan, curated by the AIE Observatory for BookCity (Fifth Edition), present data that underline the relevance of several categories of design-related cultural producers mapped in this study: the annual increase in cultural events, the growth in museum visitors, the rise in the number of bookstores and in spending on books, and the expansion of access to the city's library system.

12 During Salone del Mobile 2025, Cassina presented 'Staging Modernity', a theatrical performance and installation by Formafantasma at Teatro Lirico Giorgio Gaber, celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Charlotte Perriand Collection.

13 In 2024, cultural activities generated a total turnover of €542 million. Source: Report 2025 – *Cultural Consumption in the City of Milan: 2024*, produced by the AIE Observatory for BookCity. This aggregate value also includes selected categories of design-related cultural producers (e.g., museums, etc.).

4.1 Design Cultural Producers in Milan

The map shows the Design Cultural Producers in the Municipality of Milan, actors and/or places, distinguishing the categories through different symbols. Different colour saturations indicate the distinction between Primary Cultural Producers (darker colour) and Secondary Cultural Producers (lighter colour). A single Cultural Producer may be linked to multiple cultural resources (e.g., a museum institution connecting archives, libraries, and magazines). The numbers in the legend also include Cultural Producers located within the province of Milan (Source: 2025 analysis by Politecnico di Milano – Department of Design, map generated with QGIS).

533

Design Cultural Producers

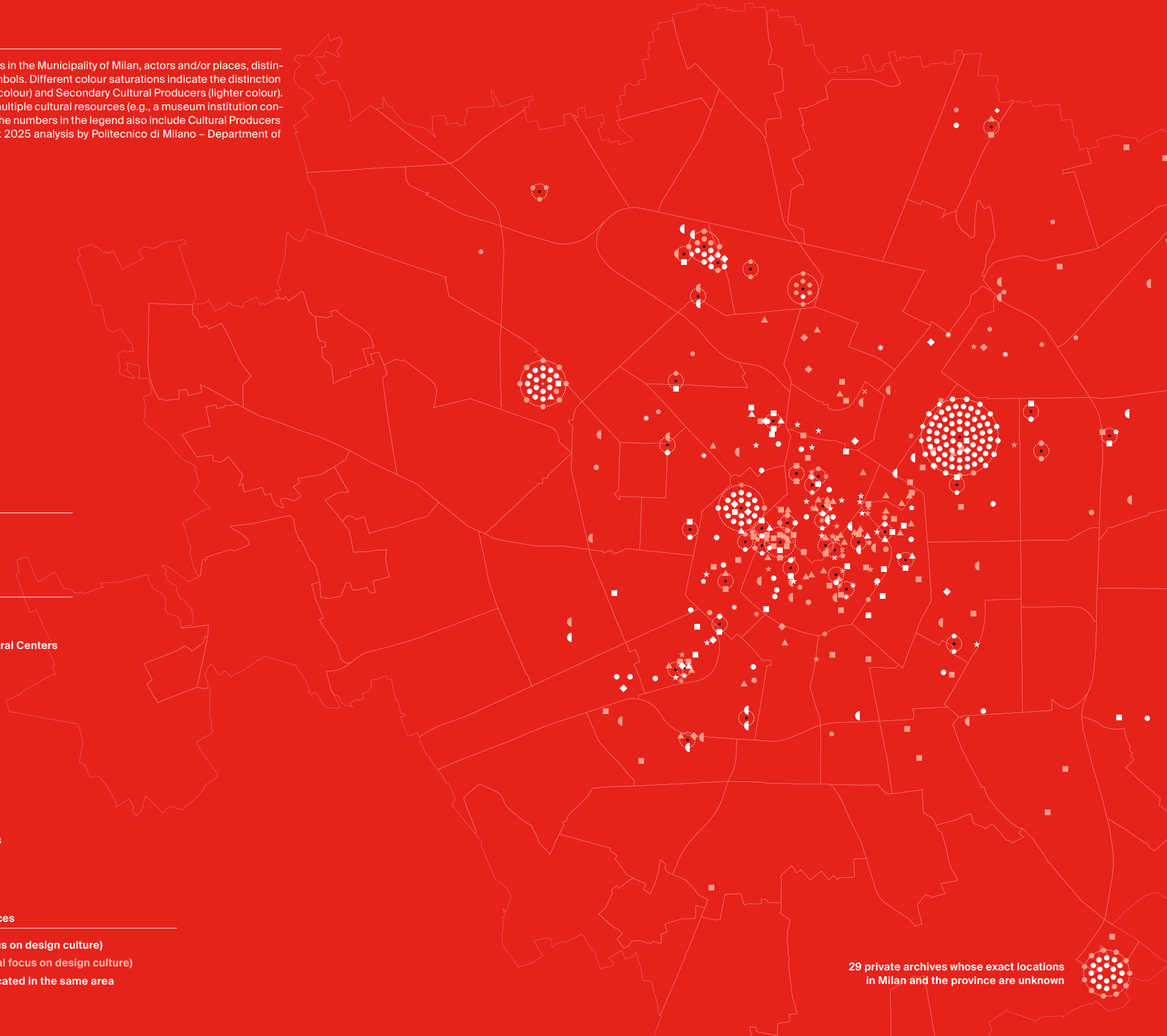
502 in Milan; 31 in province of Milan

Cultural Producer Categories

- **210 Archives**
205 in Milan; 5 in province of Milan
- **88 Associations, Foundations, and Cultural Centers**
85 in Milan; 3 in province of Milan
- 📖 **60 Publishers and Magazines**
53 in Milan; 7 in province of Milan
- ▲ **56 Museums**
46 in Milan; 10 in province of Milan
- 🎓 **37 Schools and Universities**
- ★ **31 Galleries and Exhibition Spaces**
29 in Milan; 2 in province of Milan
- * **25 Fairs, Festivals, and Events**
21 in Milan; 4 in province of Milan
- ◆ **20 Libraries and Bookshops**
- ✕ **5 Institutions and Public Administrations**
- **1 Other**

Design Cultural Producers – Actors and places

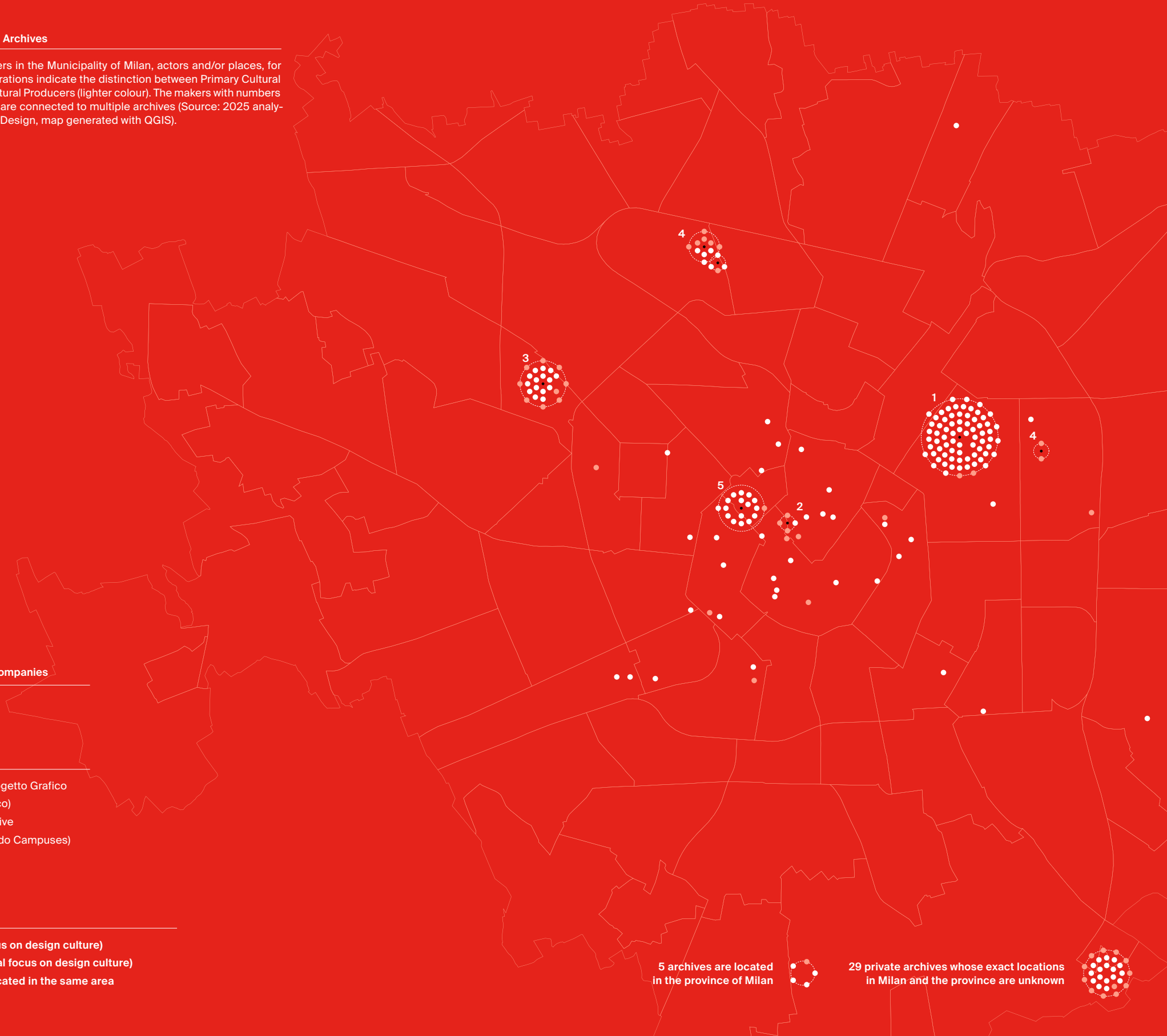
- **Primary Producers (with a prevalent focus on design culture)**
- **Secondary Producers (with an occasional focus on design culture)**
- 📍 **Primary and/or Secondary Producers located in the same area**



29 private archives whose exact locations
in Milan and the province are unknown

4.2 Design Cultural Producers in Milan: Archives

The map shows the Design Cultural Producers in the Municipality of Milan, actors and/or places, for the 'Archives' category. Different colour saturations indicate the distinction between Primary Cultural Producers (darker colour) and Secondary Cultural Producers (lighter colour). The makers with numbers on the map indicate Cultural Producers that are connected to multiple archives (Source: 2025 analysis by Politecnico di Milano – Department of Design, map generated with QGIS).



210

Archives – Designers and Companies

205 in Milan; 5 in province of Milan

Category Archives (210)

- 1 AIAP – Centro di documentazione sul Progetto Grafico
- 2 Archivio Storico Civico (Castello Sforzesco)
- 3 CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive
- 4 Politecnico di Milano (Bovisa and Leonardo Campuses)
- 5 Triennale Milano

Archives – Actors and places

- Primary Producers (with a prevalent focus on design culture)
- Secondary Producers (with an occasional focus on design culture)
- Primary and/or Secondary Producers located in the same area

5 archives are located
in the province of Milan



29 private archives whose exact locations
in Milan and the province are unknown



Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week: local impact

- 5.1 Salone del Mobile.Milano: a driving force for the international appeal of Lombardy
- 5.2 City, impact, transition
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Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week: a driving force for the international appeal of Lombardy

Debora Massari

Councillor for Tourism, Territorial Marketing and Fashion, Lombardy Region

5.1

The Salone del Mobile.Milano is now not only a strategic event for the city, but for the entire region. It is no longer just a trade fair but rather an event that reflects the identity, expertise, innovative capacity and appeal of a region with international influence.

This global positioning was reconfirmed by the 2025 edition, with 302,767 visitors, 2,103 exhibitors from 37 countries, and a 68% international participation rate. These numbers reaffirm Milan and Lombardy's position as a global reference point for design, furnishing, and innovation.

The impact of the Salone extends well beyond the event, generating significant benefits for the entire region. During Milan Design Week 2025, 412,500 overnight stays were recorded in the Municipality of Milan, rising to 543,565 in the province of Milan. Compared to the same week of 2024 (8 - 14 April), tourist growth reached +19% in the Municipality and +23 % in the province of Milan.

This data confirms that the influence of the Salone is increasingly extending from the city to the surrounding area, not only involving the large urban centres but also tourist destinations, the lake regions and surrounding art towns and villages. The spread of collateral events has generated new opportunities for businesses, hospitality facilities, and local communities, consolidating the Salone's role as a driver of widespread regional development. Its impact is immediate and tangible. According to the estimates of the *Centro Studi di Confcommercio* (Research Office of Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza) the economic impact exceeded €278 million, of which over €202 million came from international tourists. Almost two-thirds of the spending was generated by foreign visitors that choose Lombardy as their destination for the Salone and who often return as tourists. This translates into opportunities to work and grow for hotels, restaurants, shops, and the entire hospitality ecosystem.

It is not only a matter of direct spending on hospitality: retail and restaurants have also benefited significantly. The analysis of digital payments shows that Milan reached its peak daily spending rate for the entire year during Salone week, with an increase of 18% compared to the previous week. These figures demonstrate the city's global appeal and the significant contribution of international tourism.

The Salone plays a crucial role in consolidating Lombardy's reputation as a top-tier destination in Europe and globally. It is not only one of the most attractive events internationally, but also a powerful driver for economic development, that, starting in Milan, involves the entire region, generating value. Its ability to draw visitors from around the world makes it a reference model and key asset for Lombardy's international positioning.

City, impact, transition

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Francesco Zurlo

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5.2

The Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week are unique in the calendar of major global events: the former being the most important, concentrated professional showcase of its kind, which is in turn connected to the latter, a widespread constellation of events that together transform the city of Milan into a creative laboratory. To understand the impact of these events on the city they must be framed in a set of interpretative structures that range from the *experience economy* to the *theory of temporary organizations* (Söderlund *et al.*, 2025), to *design-driven innovation* and the phenomenon of *mega-events*. A first point of reference must be made to the work of Bathelt and Sydow (2025), who represent fairs as an expression of new *temporary markets* and *creative clusters* that generate communities, *global buzz* and shared learning processes. In this regard, Charles Landry (2000), the pioneer of *cultural planning*, uses the *creative city* concept to describe cities that can activate latent cultural resources. At the end of the 1990s, Pine and Gilmore (1999), in turn, introduced the concept of *experience economy* whereby companies (as well as institutions, cities and regions) compete by creating memorable experiences for their customers and stakeholders. These theories suggest that events such as the Salone and Design Week not only produce economic but also associative and relational value. A second position from which to understand their impact on the city is connected to the definition of *temporary organizations* given by Söderlund, Stjerne and Zerjav (2025, p.1; Goodman 1982) who describe them as follows, they: ‘...are distinct forms of organizing that involve participants who are brought together to complete a specific task during a pre-defined period of time while working toward a common goal...’. Verganti (2009) and Battistella *et al.* (2012) define *Design Driven Innovation* (DDI) as a meaning-making strategy that integrates desirability, technological feasibility, and economic sustainability. This permits us to maintain that an example of DDI in action is specifically represented by certain Design Week *cities* (Han *et al.*, 2024) that operate as creative platforms for interdisciplinary collaboration, the integration of regional resources and global exchange, mobilizing academia, industry, and civic organisations according to the *principle of the quadruple helix* (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009)¹. The final interpretative mode is supplied by the literature on *mega-events* (Roche, 2000), that is those large-scale cultural, commercial, and sporting events that are *impressive* and have mass popular appeal and international significance. In Roche’s description, such great events are typically circumscribed initiatives such as World Expos or major sporting events like the Olympics. However, even the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week can be considered *mega-events* given their international popularity and the impact they have on the everyday life of the city, occupying physical spaces and services and engaging a multitude of audiences of varied typologies. Moreover, we can say that Milan Design Week belongs to that subcategory of *mega-events* that Roche himself calls *hallmark events* (Roche, 2000). A hallmark event is a permanent institution rooted in its community; it is a short-lived, high-profile event with the massive involvement of local operators and clients from large and diverse catchment areas. Its identity is inseparable from that of the host city and its fame helps define and promote the location’s image and brand. The mega-event, in its various forms (including hallmark events), is a multidimensional social phenomenon involving various stakeholders, and it has more recently increasingly seen the reuse of existing urban structures, the reorganisation of existing areas, and the deployment of strategies aimed at redefining the city’s image (Gold & Gold, 2008). Through exhibitions, events, and installations, Milan Design Week has consistently engaged in the activity of using, converting and reclaiming aspects of the city’s heritage – buildings and locations that are often inaccessible at other times of the year – making the activation of these heritage sites a key factor in the initiative’s visibility (and success). Even the event’s relationship with the media seems to mirror what happens with major events. Indeed, although Design Week is a brief,

concentrated event (coinciding with the days of Salone del Mobile.Milano), it generates extraordinary media coverage, particularly in specialized national and global media, but also in the more generalist local, national, and international press. The literature on major events also focuses on another important issue for assessing impact: the *legacy* these events leave behind for their host cities. In the case of major sporting events (primarily the Olympics), a particularly relevant aspect is that the remaining infrastructure sometimes changes areas of the city, fostering economic and social development. Milan Design Week has a *targeted* temporal impact, but on the other hand being a recurring phenomenon, it nonetheless generates influence in the medium to long term (Salone del Mobile.Milano & Politecnico di Milano, 2024, pp. 169-205). Driven by the event's success, areas of the city have been transformed and adopted different identities, sometimes displacing the original inhabitants who historically lived in these areas, triggering processes of gentrification. In this way, the schedule of events forming Design Week connect to existing processes of gentrification, strengthening them and contributing, for example, to the increase in real estate and rental prices in historically working-class neighbourhoods such as Isola and Tortona. The phenomenon is therefore seen as an emblematic case of how the discourse on creativity (and its media resonance) can become a tool for urban repositioning, optimizing real estate values in line with the theories of authors such as Sharon Zukin (2010). Moreover, it must also be considered that this dynamic, which is manifest during Milan Design Week, is rooted in, and contributes to, strengthening a design ecosystem that, although less visible, is continuously active throughout the rest of the year. Such events never have a neutral impact on the locations in which they occur, and they always produce varied results. On the one hand, they promote a region and its identity – in the case of Milan, the *home of design*, according to the definition of YesMilano the *Agenzia di Promozione Turistica del Comune di Milano e della Camera di Commercio* (Tourism Promotion Agency of the Municipality of Milan and the Chamber of Commerce) – and on the other, they impact local residents and gentrification processes. In the dedicated literature, the topic of *governance* is widely covered in relation to major events. Typically, a major event has a steering committee that coordinates the proposals and requests of a multitude of stakeholders, including national and local governments, organizing committees, private sponsors, suppliers, security forces, local communities, and volunteers. In the specific case of Milan Design Week, the absence of top-down governance is evident, instead giving way to forms of self-organization, typical of complex systems, with flexible and polycentric governance models and forms of structured negotiation between players with differing bargaining power (Salone del Mobile.Milano & Politecnico di Milano, 2024, pp. 108-115). Studies on temporary creative clusters such as *Beijing Design Week* (Zhu *et al.*, 2018) show that Design Week events act as catalysts for innovation and creative governance, but, as in the case of Milan (and every other Western context), the differing political and cultural contexts must be considered. During Milan Design Week, initiatives on public land coexist with many others in private contexts. Consequently, the role of the municipal administration is geared towards regulating the use of public buildings and land. In this context, it embraces a model similar to *nudging*, i.e. giving a gentle push that encourages the adoption of a virtuous patterns of behaviour that can contribute to the emergence of sustainable urban-use models. In this sense, the *Assessorato allo Sviluppo Economico e alle Politiche del Lavoro del Comune di Milano* (Department of Economic Development and Labour Policies of the Municipality of Milan), which maintains the *Delega al Design* (Design Delegation), promotes an important initiative (the *Avviso Pubblico*² or Public Notice) which selects and recognizes events, exhibitions, and meetings that specifically involve the occupation of public property, taking into account the cultural (rather than commercial) aspects of the event, as well as aspects regarding

accessibility and inclusion, the sustainability of the installations, and the involvement of young creatives. Simultaneously, moreover, there is a dynamic of *colonizing private space* that is no longer solely cultural and experimental, but is increasingly mixed with commercial prospects, at times of a high-quality nature. What seems to be specifically lacking, however, is a *reward system* that positively encourages these high-quality public or private activities, as suggested by the *Cues, Action, Rewards* approach (Combs & Brown, 2018). The *cues* are specifically textual, visual, and environmental invitations to adopt sustainable behaviour that aligns with the desired values of the community. *Actions* are the actual responses that produce the desired change (for example, the adoption of accessible design solutions for people with disabilities). What is consequently foremost is the *reward*, a form of positive recognition that can help reinforce such behavioural choices and the perceived value of this kind of action. The hypothesis worth testing, then, may be one of constructing a *reward system* that encourages and supports collaboration between private and public stakeholders. Indeed, a lack of adequate rewards is seen to lead to a failure to consolidate virtuous behaviour in the way the city is used, and to the failure of any policy aimed at regulating the impact and consequences of events. In this context it is unclear what might be perceived as a *reward* by the stakeholders of Milan Design Week and the Salone del Mobile.Milano organization as a whole. A virtuous example in the area of sustainability (following the ISO 20121 standard guidelines) – use of energy from renewable sources, circular economy initiatives and reduction of mobility-related emissions – implemented by Salone del Mobile.Milano, points to a possible path for the ecosystem, in a form of *soft power*. However, this policy also poses internal issues of *reward* for the stakeholders who follow its example and yet struggle to be recognized in reputational terms for their contribution. In conclusion, the comparison between the 2024 and 2025 editions confirms that the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week are more than a trade fair: they are devices for cultural and social innovation that generate economic, symbolic, and urban value. As internationalization, quality of experience and attention to sustainability increase, Milan's role as a global design capital and a laboratory for innovative urban policies is consolidated.

¹ The *quadruple helix* is a model of innovation in which universities, businesses, public administration and citizens collaborate to create shared solutions and sustainable development.

² See: *Avviso pubblico per la presentazione di progetti e iniziative da inserire nel palinsesto ufficiale della Milano Design Week 2025*, Deliberazione di G.C. n. 939 del 2 agosto 2024. https://servizi.comune.milano.it/en/dettaglio-contenuto/-/asset_publisher/pqxq/content/avviso-pubblico-per-la-presentazione-di-progetti-e-iniziativa-da-inserire-nel-palinsesto-ufficiale-della-milano-design-week-2025, accessed 14 September 2025.

Methodological notes

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5.3

The analysis of the impact of Milan Design Week 2025 focuses on 12 primary databases provided by 7 specific data holders¹, that were involved in the research process and chose to make their data accessible to support this study: *AMAT – Agenzia Mobilità Ambiente e Territorio* (AMAT – Mobility, Environment and Territory Agency of the Municipality of Milan), *Comune di Milano – Direzione Innovazione Tecnologica e Digitale* (Municipality of Milan – Technological and Digital Innovation Directorate), *Gruppo SEA – Società Esercizi Aeroportuali* (SEA Group – Airport Operations Company), *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell’Attrattività di Regione Lombardia* (Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region), *Gruppo SACBO* (SACBO Group – Milan Bergamo Airport), *Trenord* (Trenord – Lombardy Regional Railway Service) and *Ufficio Studi di Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza e Brianza* (Research Office of Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza). The dialogue established with these organizations, initiated in 2024 with the first edition of the Annual Report *Milan Design (Eco) System*, has become an integral part of the scientific and relational value of this study. In the 2025 Report, these relationships achieved a significant evolution with the inclusion of Trenord and SACBO Group, and in strengthening of previous collaborations, like the one developed with the Technological and Digital Innovation Directorate of the Municipality of Milan. The partnership with the Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region was also consolidated, and in this edition, that entity has contributed with a dedicated in-depth analysis of tourist spending during Design Week 2025 (Section 5.7).

The participation of these entities has allowed us to explore the event through an inclusive approach, integrating diverse data often available on a greater-than-urban scale (e.g., regional or national statistics). Thanks to the collaboration of the aforementioned data holders, the analysis conducted fits within a growing interest in understanding the sustainability and social value of events (Meyrick *et al.*, 2015) and their contribution to the sustainable development of the places that host them (Mair & Smith, 2022). This perspective considers as particularly relevant those events to which visitors assign a symbolic value, closely associated with the destination hosting them, defined as *hallmark events* (cf. Section 5.2).

In the 2025 edition of the Report, the methodological framework is again based on the analysis of the visitor journey (Figure 5.1), i.e. the reconstruction of the experience of hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Salone del Mobile. Milano and Design Week 2025, here used as a tool to guide an exploration of the event’s impact on the city and to develop a shared, open, and intuitive reading of the event. In the 2025 Annual Report, the *visitor journey* has been updated and integrated with the exploration of issues that concern not only visitors but also residents, such as public safety, introduced for the first time this year. In the other sections of this chapter, the impact of the 2025 edition of the event has been divided into the following stages: visitor arrivals in Milan via the main air and rail transport hubs (Section 5.4); reception across the diverse range of accommodation facilities in Milan and Lombardy (Section 5.5); economic value creation through tourist spending and digital payments (Sections 5.6–5.7); the use of public transport and urban mobility services to reach the Salone and events in the city (Section 5.8). The chapter finally concludes by focusing on topics related to urban management, to explore potential negative social (Section 5.9) and environmental (Section 5.10) externalities.

This edition again focuses on the key element of our visitor journey: the visitors, namely the hundreds of thousands of professionals, entrepreneurs, designers, students, and design lovers who attend the event. The research assesses this population, focusing on two main visitor types: *tourists*, predominantly *business*

tourists, who stay at least one night in Milan and its province or in other provinces of Lombardy, and *city users*, whom in this research we define as visitors who reach the event's locations without staying overnight. Two time periods in the *visitor journey* are examined and they vary according to sections, data sources, and analyses:

- **Daily distribution.** This refers to the days of Design Week 2025 (7 – 13 April), including the Salone del Mobile.Milano (Tuesday to Sunday). For some specific topics – such as visitor flows (Section 5.5) – the week before and after the event are also considered.
- **Weekly comparison.** The weekly values (average or absolute) of Design Week 2025 are analysed by comparing them with the weekly average recorded in the period between the two editions of the event (1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025).

Comparison with the 2023 edition of Design Week is particularly important for correctly interpreting the percentage changes between 2024 and 2025. The variation in overall attendance is attributable to the different attendance between these two years recorded by the alternating biennial events of the Salone del Mobile.Milano²: historically, the edition that includes the EuroLuce biennial charts a lower attendance than the edition with the EuroCucina / FTK, Technology For the Kitchen and Salone Internazionale del Bagno biennials (Section 1.5).

¹ The term, borrowed from the European regulation *Data Act*, was introduced in the first edition of the Annual Report (2024) to refer to public and private organizations active in Milan and Lombardy that collect or aggregate data of interest for the research *Milan Design (Eco) System*.

² Salone del Mobile.Milano is an ecosystem of events that are held simultaneously, transforming each edition into a privileged observatory on the state of the art of furniture design and design culture. Each year, the annual events Salone *Internazionale del Mobile*, the Salone *Internazionale del Complemento d'Arredo*, *Workplace3.0* and *S.Project* are organized alongside the Biennial exhibitions *EuroLuce*, an international benchmark for the world of lighting (on odd years), and *EuroCucina / FTK – Technology For the Kitchen* and the Salone *Internazionale del Bagno* (on even years).

5.1 Impact dimensions analysed through the *visitor journey*, with related datasets and data holders

Visitor journey Step	Impact dimension and scale	Dataset	Data holder
Arrival in Milan for the Salone del Mobile.Milano (Section 5.4)	Airport and railway infrastructures (regional scale)	Arrivals and departures from Milan Malpensa, Milan Linate, and Milan Bergamo airports	SEA Group – Airport Operations Company SACBO Group – Milan Bergamo Airport
		Passengers boarding and alighting from Trenord train services	Trenord - Lombardy Regional Railway Service
Visitor stay (Section 5.5)	Hospitality system of the Lombardy Region (regional scale)	Number of accommodation facilities registered in the Lombardy Region and in the Municipality of Milan	Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region
		Tourist arrivals and overnight stays (Italian and foreign) in the Municipality of Milan and its province	
Visitor Spending (Sections 5.6–5.7)	Estimate of economic impact through tourist spending and expenditure patterns for shopping, food services, and lodging (urban scale)	Projections of tourism spending related to the event	Research Office of Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza
		Digital payments via credit cards	Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region
Movements in the city and to/from Rho Fieramilano (Section 5.8)	Urban mobility (urban scale)	Entrances in the metro system	AMAT – Mobility, Environment and Territory Agency of the Municipality of Milan
		Rentals from shared mobility services (bike, car, scooter, e-scooter)	
		Entries recorded by cameras in Restricted Traffic Zones (Area C and Area B) within the Milan perimeter	
Critical social behaviors (Section 5.9)	Public perception of the event (urban scale)	Citizen complaints regarding public order issues (noise, littering, etc.)	Municipality of Milan –Technological and Digital Innovation Directorate
Waste production and energy consumption (Section 5.10)	Environmental and energy management of the city (urban scale)	Municipal solid waste produced	AMAT – Mobility, Environment and Territory Agency of the Municipality of Milan
		Electricity consumption	

Air and train passengers

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5.4

The first phase of the *visitor journey*¹ explores the flow of visitors traveling *to and from* Milan to visit the 2025 edition of Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week. The topic of arrivals and departures has been examined here expanding the analysis begun in 2024 by updating air transport data and integrating data on Lombardy's rail transport. We considered air passenger data for arrivals and departures to/from Milan Linate and Milan Malpensa airports, provided by *Gruppo SEA – Società Esercizi Aeroportuali* (SEA Group) and to/from Milan Bergamo Airport, provided by *Gruppo SACBO* (SACBO Group). Additionally, regional rail passenger data provided by *Trenord* (Trenord – Lombardy Regional Railway Service) was taken into account.

During Design Week 2025 (7 – 13 April 2025) the total number of commercial aviation passenger arrivals and departures at the three airports considered totalled 1,188,570², divided into 619,096 arrivals and departures for Malpensa, 345,113 for Bergamo and 224,361 for Linate (**Figure 5.2**). Compared with the previous edition of Design Week (15 – 21 April 2024), air traffic for these three airports recorded an overall increase of 5.3%, ranking nineteenth in the historical series considered (1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025, +9.2% on the average for this period). Passenger numbers increased during Design Week at Linate (+4.1%) and Malpensa (+9.15%) as part of a positive trend observed since 2023, but with a significantly lower variation than that recorded between the 2023 and 2024 editions³. For these two airports, it appears that Design Week was integral to the spring recovery in air passenger traffic during April 2025, and that despite being among the weeks with the lowest traffic of the month, it ranked eighteenth (+9.1% compared to the historical series average). In Milan Bergamo Airport, the transit of passengers during Design Week increased between the 2023 and 2024 editions (+9%), while remaining stable between the 2024 and 2025 editions (-0.16%). For this airport, Design Week 2025 ranks 29th in the series considered (+5.16% on average).

Commercial aviation passenger data during Design Week 2025 show figures consistent with the seasonal flow, and higher than those recorded during Design Week 2024. Simultaneously, data relating to general aviation, a category that includes non-scheduled civil flights that largely consist of private or *business aviation*, reveal a notable rise in the weekly trend during the Milanese design event for Malpensa and Linate (**Figure 5.3**). For the general aviation segment, 1,698 passengers passed through the two Milanese airports from 7 to 13 April 2025, of which 85.2% at Linate (1,447). This is the seventh highest figure in the series considered (1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025) and it is 36.3% higher than the weekly average. Finally, it should be noted that Design Week 2024 recorded 1,789 general aviation passengers, reaching fifth place in the series (+43.6% on the series average). Although these passenger numbers are much lower than those of commercial aviation, they are significant if we consider that Linate, with 4,492 passengers, was the national airport with the second largest volume of passengers for this segment in April 2025 according to Assaeroporti.

Proceeding to an analysis of the impact on regional rail transport, we examined traffic flow on the Trenord network by measuring the volume of passengers boarding and alighting on this railway operator's trains. This data shows that during the 2025 edition of Design Week, 251,682 tickets were sold for zones Mi1 – Mi3⁴ (up 1.3% from the 248,519 sold during the 2024 edition). For the Malpensa Express train alone, 117,570 tickets were sold (an average of 16,795 per day), up 8.8% compared to 2024 (108,104), +16.6% compared to the daily average for 2025 (14,408 tickets). Specifically, that from 7 to 13 April, 19,832 tickets were sold for the Rho Fiera station, more than fifteen times the daily average for 2025 (1,257)⁵. At the

same time, to extrapolate data specifically related to the event from within the intense traffic of Lombardy's regional rail network, 13 of Milan's 24 stations operated by Trenord were considered, focusing on the percentage changes in passenger numbers during the period of interest. Referring to the Trenord classification of stations⁶ by traffic volume and importance within the network, thirteen stations from Milan's suburban network were selected: nine high-traffic or Class A stations (Rho Fiera, Centrale, Cadorna, Porta Garibaldi Sotterranea, Rogoredo, Porta Venezia, Repubblica, Porta Vittoria, Dateo) and four medium-traffic or Class B stations (Certosa, Forlanini, Lancetti, and Villapizzone). Rho Fiera, the main rail access point to the Salone del Mobile.Milano⁷, has been analysed with a separate focus. The present selection includes primary stations such as direct hubs or key points of interchange for flows to the Salone del Mobile.Milano and the locations of Design Week 2025 (cf. [Section 2.5](#)).

During Design Week 2025, the thirteen stations examined here recorded an overall decrease in passenger volume (-10,10%, equal to 97,311 fewer people boarding and alighting trains) compared to Design Week 2024 ([Figure 5.4](#)). This decrease specifically affected eight of the thirteen stations considered and is most marked at Milano Cadorna (-23,11%) and Milano Centrale (-17,4%). The remaining five stations, however, recorded an increase in traffic. Leading the way were Dateo (+14%) and Forlanini (+11,5%), presumably thanks to the new connection to the final stretch of the M4 metro line inaugurated in July 2024, and Rho Fiera (+18.2%). While the majority of the railway stations considered show lower passenger flows during Design Week 2025 compared to 2024, the actual significance of the event for mobility on regional and suburban rail in Milan can only be assessed by comparing these numbers with the average values for the consolidated periods.

This analysis shows that Design Week 2025 still exceeds the weekly average for the period of the historical series (+10,9%), ranking fourteenth. It is important to note that, during the days of the event, Class A and B railway stations recorded very similar percentage increases in traffic: for the 2025 edition, compared to the historical series, the average increase is +20,6% for Class A stations and +21,5% for Class B stations; in 2024, they were +27,7% and +24,8%, respectively. This means that Class A stations handle eight times higher volumes, but their percentage increase during the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week is similar to that of Class B stations.

Finally, we examined regional rail passenger flows by day and according to time slots during 2025: Thursday, 10 April, with 333,007 passengers boarding and alighting trains, was the day with the highest overall traffic among the thirteen stations considered; it is followed by Friday, 11 April (321,223) and Monday, 7 April (290,325). Thursday, 10 April, is the day on which the peak number of passengers was also recorded at the Rho Fiera station, with 26,183 people (of whom 14,810 boarded and 11,373 alighted). To give an idea of the proportions involved, this is approximately half the average daily passenger flow through the much larger Milano Centrale station (56,504 people). In terms of time slots⁸, the majority of the passenger flow during Design Week is concentrated in the morning (7:00 – 13:00), both on weekdays and at weekends. For the Rho Fiera station, the three peak periods were recorded between Thursday evening (10,472 passengers) and Friday, with 10,302 passengers in the afternoon and 10,062 in the morning. The daily distribution of passenger flows, also considering the weeks before and after the event, highlight a reduction during the weekend for almost all of the stations analysed ([Figure 5.5](#))⁹.

This analysis clearly shows that the Design Week has differing impacts on arrival and departure traffic. Commercial aviation remains stable as part of the Milanese spring recovery period, while general aviation at Linate registered significant peaks during the Salone del Mobile.Milano, both in 2024 and 2025. These increases suggest strong interest from a high-spending business public that favours business aviation, i.e., the use of private flights for business trips in small groups. At the same time, the analysis of the rail network highlights a widespread impact, peaking on Thursday, when it is assumed there is an overlap in the network between the flow of *business tourist* visitors departing after the weekdays, and the arrival of *city users*, who are more active in the run-up to and during the weekend.

¹ In the 2024 Annual Report, the first step of the visitor journey featured a single section on hospitality, combining an analysis of air visitor flows with the accommodation offer. In this edition, the two topics are treated separately (Sections 5.3, 5.4) to improve the first steps of the visitor journey through the integration of new data, particularly on rail transport.

² Passenger data for flights to/from Milan Malpensa Airport show 313,297 arrivals and 305,799 departures, while at Milan Linate Airport the numbers are 112,893 arrivals and 111,468 departures. These figures represent approximately 25% of each airport's passenger traffic in April 2025.

³ The 12% increase – see Annual Report Salone del Mobile.Milano. *Milano Design (Eco) System*, p. 179 – is retrospectively consistent with the growth trend of Linate and Malpensa between 2023 and 2024, as Reported by the SEA Group in its Annual Financial Report as of 31 December 2024.

⁴ At Rho Fiera station alone, 4,935 physical tickets were purchased during the event.

⁵ From January 2025 to April 2025, several important trade fairs were held at Rho Fiera, including Milano Unica, MIDO, and Miart.

⁶ The classification of stations developed by Trenord is divided into three classes (A, B, C) based on traffic volume and importance within the network. See Regione Lombardia and Trenord S.r.l. (2024). *Contratto di servizio: Allegato 7.A, Misura 11 – Piano di adeguamento della rete di vendita*.

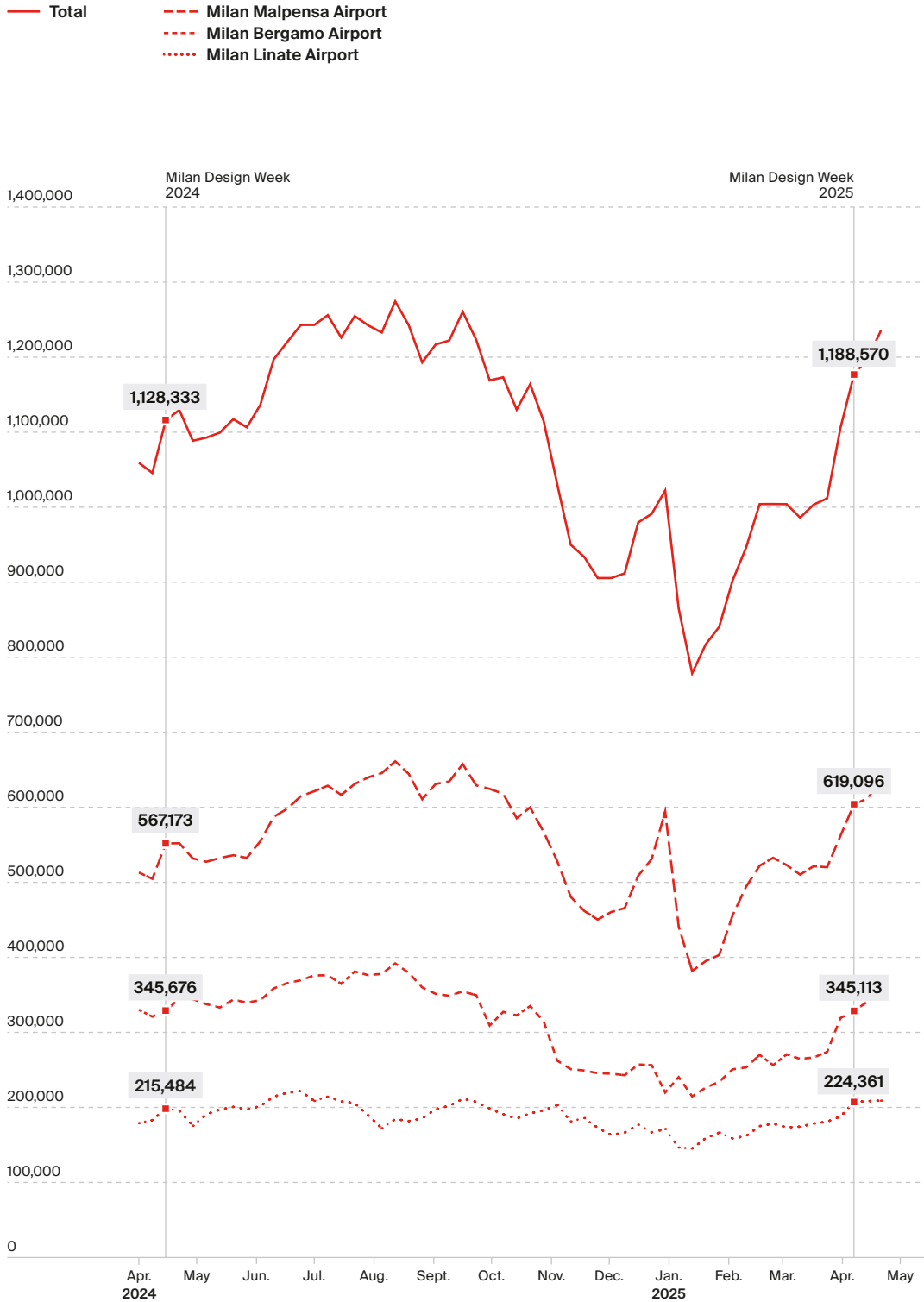
⁷ The Rho Fiera station, classified as Category A, is a strategic hub served by four regional/regioexpress lines (RE5, RE4, R21, R23) and three suburban lines (S11, S5, S6). Among the latter, the S5 (Varese FS - Milano Passante - Treviglio) and the S6 (Novara - Milano Passante - Treviglio) are respectively the first and third busiest lines in the entire network in 2024. See *Trenord 2024 press release*. The station is served by the trains of the national railway service, *Trenitalia*, including Frecciarossa high-speed trains.

⁸ The time slots considered are: morning (7:00 – 13:00), afternoon (13:00 – 18:00), evening (18:00 to midnight).

⁹ The exceptions in 2025 are Milano Centrale and Certosa stations, whereas in 2024 none of the stations considered recorded higher numbers on Saturdays or Sundays than on Fridays.

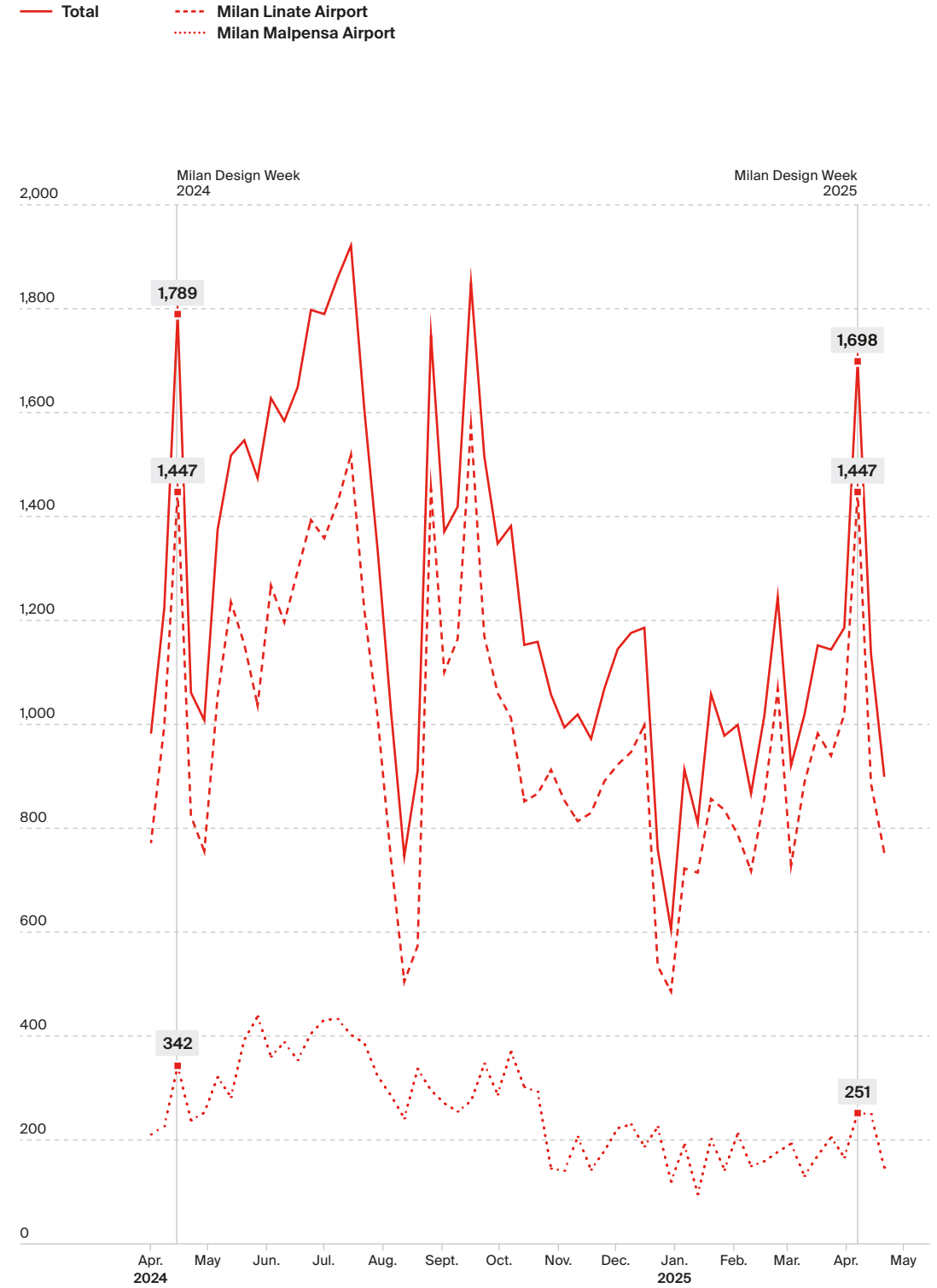
5.2 Air passengers (departures and arrivals, commercial aviation)

Variation in passenger numbers (arrivals and departures) in the commercial aviation segment at Milan Linate, Milan Malpensa, and Milan Bergamo airports during the period 1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025 (a total of 56 weeks). Sources: SACBO Group, SEA Group.



5.3 Air passengers (departures and arrivals, general aviation)

Variation in passenger numbers (arrivals and departures) in the general aviation segment at Milan Linate and Milan Malpensa airports during the period 1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025 (a total of 56 weeks). Source: SEA Group.



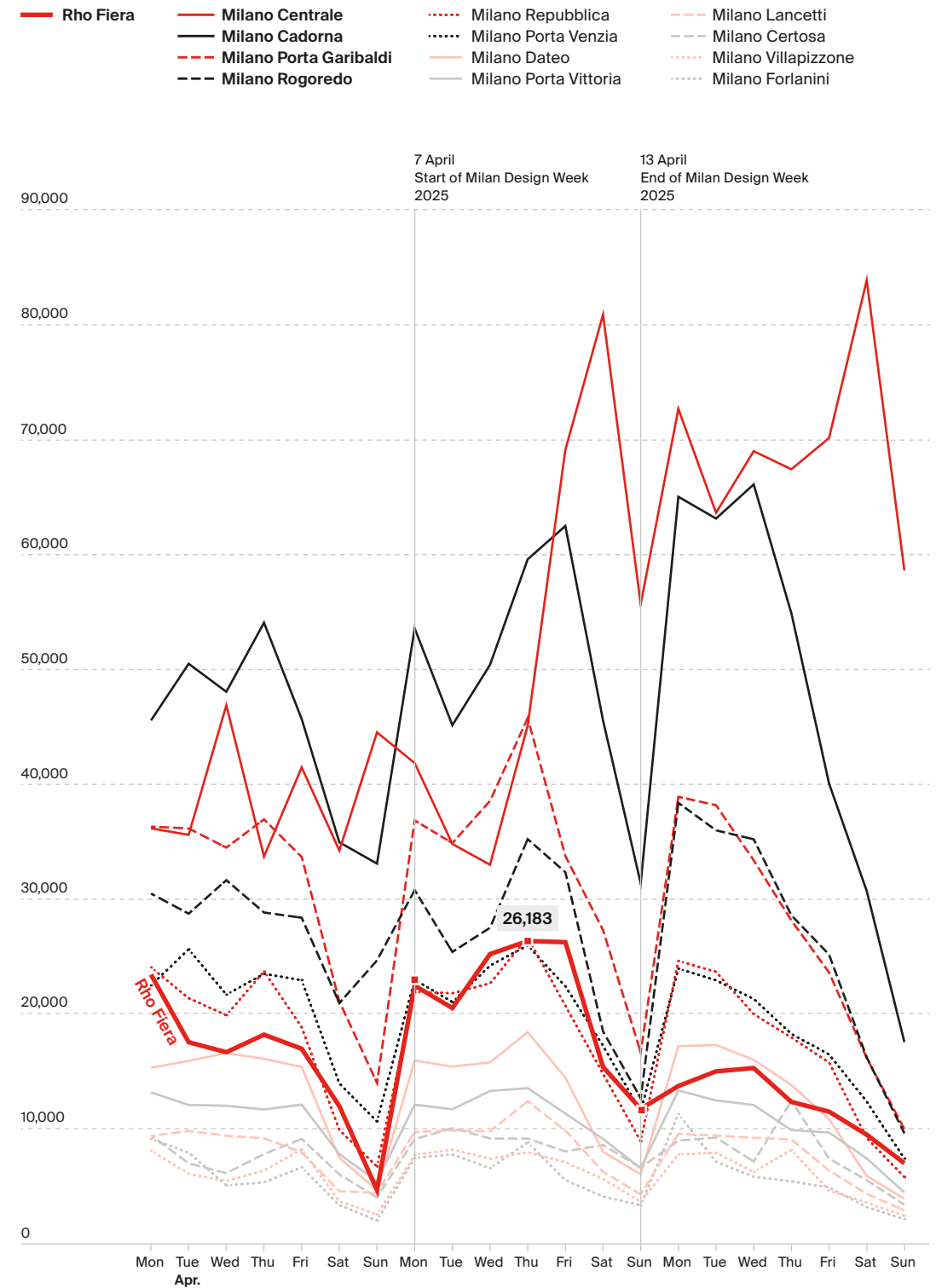
5.4 Rail Passengers (Week Comparison)

Number of passengers (boarding and alighting) on Trenord services during Design Week 2025 and 2024. Comparison with historical series (1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025) and between the two editions. Source: Trenord.

	Trenord rail passengers 2025		Trenord rail passengers 2024		% Change Milan Design Week 2025 vs 2024
	Milan Design Week 15–21.04.2024	Average % change 1.04.2024 – 27.04.2025	Milan Design Week 7–13.04.2025	Var. % media 01.04.24 – 27.04.2025	
High-traffic stations (Class A)					
Rho Fiera	139,448	69.5%	146,753	78.4%	5.24%
Milano Centrale	434,942	11.9%	359,274	-7.6%	-17.40%
Milano Cadorna	451,226	21.6%	346,947	-6.5%	-23.11%
Milano Porta Garibaldi	254,837	31.2%	232,596	19.7%	-8.73%
Milano Rogoredo	179,211	11.6%	181,244	12.9%	1.13%
Milano Dateo	81,476	17.4%	92,888	33.8%	14.01%
Milano Porta Vittoria	81,602	23.5%	76,498	15.8%	-6.25%
Milano Porta Venezia	156,986	30.4%	144,196	19.8%	-8.15%
Milano Repubblica	150,835	32.1%	136,516	19.5%	-9.49%
Medium-traffic stations (Class B)					
Milano Certosa	57,773	14.1%	59,542	18.5%	3.06%
Milano Forlanini	38,084	17.7%	42,451	31.2%	11.47%
Milano Lancetti	67,320	39.5%	61,026	26.4%	-9.35%
Milano Villapizzone	49,057	27.2%	46,493	20.5%	-5.23%
Total	2,142,797	23.4%	1,926,424	10.9%	-10.10%

5.5 Rail Passengers (Day Comparison)

Daily number of passengers (boarding and alighting) on Trenord services during Milan Design Week, the previous week, and the following week (21 days in total). Source: Trenord.



Hospitality: supply and demand

Francesco Leoni
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5.5

The second step of the *visitor journey* analyses the impact of tourist flows on the hospitality sector in Milan and Lombardy during Milan Design Week 2025. This analysis is based on data from the *Osservatorio del Turismo e dell'Attrattività di Regione Lombardia* (Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region), with confirmed figures for 2024 and provisional data for 2025¹. This data describes the accommodation offerings in Milan and the provinces of Lombardy in terms of facilities, and the demand for hospitality in connection with the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week through arrivals (the number of Italian and foreign guests hosted) and presences (the number of overnight stays: cf. Italian National Institute of Statistics - Glossary, 2010)².

Provisional tourism data for the period January to September 2025³ shows growth in Lombardy's accommodation system, with 70,810 establishments⁴ (+16.5% over 2024), of which 67,986 are non-hotel establishments (96% of the total) and 2,824 are hotels (the remaining 4%). Non-hotel⁵ accommodation grew over 2024 (+17.2%, 9,979 establishments), while hotels remained stable (+0.9%, or 24 establishments). Although numerically smaller, hotels significantly outperform non-hotel accommodation in terms of average capacity (72 beds per establishment versus 7 per establishment), rebalancing the figures in terms of rooms, and bed availability.

As of September 2025, Lombardy offers a total of 258,239 rooms for tourist use, of which 102,377 are hotel rooms (39.7%) and 155,797 are non-hotel rooms (60.3%), with 645,159 beds (of which 202,299 are in hotels, 31.4% and 442,860 are in non-hotels, 68.6%). Hotel accommodation averages 36.3 rooms and 71.6 beds per facility, equal to approximately 2 beds per room, while non-hotel accommodation averages 2.1 rooms and 6.5 beds per facility, totalling approximately 3.2 beds per room. The same data shows a growth trend in non-hotel accommodation since the start of 2025 in some of the provinces with the best infrastructure for reaching the event (**Fig. 5.6**), including Lecco (24.7%), Bergamo (22.4%), and Varese (17.8%). This data points to a possibly increasing regional redistribution of non-hotel hospitality alongside that of Milan, with which the event already coexists during this time of year. Meanwhile, the largest quantity of accommodation continues to be concentrated in the province of Milan⁶ (29,832, or 42.1%), followed by the provinces of Brescia (13.6%) and Como (13.3%).

Narrowing the focus to the Municipality of Milan, the Regional Observatory data shows a total of 26,244 facilities for accommodation⁷ in the municipal area in 2025 (+19.2% compared to 2024), of which 491 are hotels (+1.0%) and 25,753 are non-hotel accommodation (+19.6%). In terms of accommodation capacity, the total number of rooms is 74,685 (+10.4% compared to 2024) with 165,552 beds (+12.3%). As with the regions, capacity is concentrated primarily in non-hotel accommodation which represent 65.4% of the total (108,257 beds), up 19.3% compared to last year, while hotel accommodation has remained stable at 57,295 beds (+1%) (**Fig. 5.7**).

Moving to the subject of tourist demand, arrivals at Milan's accommodation facilities during the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week 2025 amounted to 136,157: an almost identical rate to that recorded in 2024 (+3.1% compared to 132,007 in the same week). These were predominantly foreign visitors (109,199; 80.2% of the total; +4.5% compared to 2024), while Italian arrivals decreased (26,958; -1.9%). In the province of Milan, the total arrivals between the two editions also remained stable (182,090; +3.5%), with foreign visitors remaining the majority (73.4%)⁸, an increase of 5.1% compared to 2024; meanwhile the Italian component of arrivals decreased (-0.7%). In terms of tourists arrivals, Design

Week 2025 is similar to the other weeks of April, remaining in line with, or slightly below, the weekly average (-6.3% in Milan; -3.3% in the province). The number of individual tourists registered in accommodation facilities during Design Week 2025 was stable or slightly decreased, especially in relation to the domestic tourism component. Nevertheless, the number of overnight stays increased between the two editions: 412,500 in the Municipality of Milan (+11.4% compared to 2024) and 543,565 in the province of Milan (+13.7%)⁹.

Overnight stays in the Municipality of Milan during Design Week 2025 were mostly made by foreign tourists (81.7% of the total), an increase over the 2024 edition (+13.2%), while overnight stays by Italian tourists increased much more modestly (+3.9%). The province of Milan recorded a total of 543,565 overnight stays during Design Week (+13.7% over 2024), again predominantly made by foreign visitors (75.2%, 14.8% over 2024). In the province, Italian overnight stays grew more consistently than in the municipal area (10.5% over 2024). The decrease in arrivals and the increase in overnight stays translates, calculated as the ratio between the two metrics, into an increase in the average length of stay, which reached 3.03 nights in Milan, compared to 2.81 in 2024, and 2.99 nights in the province, compared to 2.72 in 2024.

This data aligns with the national context which, at the beginning of 2025, showed a -1.4% drop in domestic tourism (ISTAT, 2025)¹⁰ and a longer average stay for a lower number of stays (Italian Ministry of Tourism, 2025)¹¹. By examining the distribution of the maximum values of arrivals and presences during the days of Design Week 2025, together with the previous and following weeks, this analysis identifies the peaks in the impact of tourist flows to verify whether they follow a similar trend to 2024. Monday, 7 April 2025 was the day with the highest overall number of arrivals recorded¹² during Design Week, both in the Municipality of Milan (23,802) and in the province (32,515, **Figure 5.8**).

This pattern confirms the trend, already observed in 2024, that sees the prevalence of tourist arrivals on Monday, for the opening of the Salone del Mobile. Milano. Considering the previous and following weeks, the peak number of foreign arrivals was always on Fridays, both in the municipality and the province, while for Italians, it varied between the Wednesday of the previous week, and the Monday of the following week. A day-by-day analysis of Design Week and the other weeks of April 2025 highlights the influence of the event on the overall dynamic of hospitality. On Monday, 7 April, business tourist arrivals increased tourist registrations by 16.51% compared to other Mondays of the month in the Municipality of Milan.

Between the 2025 and 2024 editions of Milan Design Week, the peak attendance figures were recorded on different days of the week. For the 2025 edition, the Municipality of Milan recorded the peak number of overnight stays by Italian and foreign visitors on Saturday, 12 April: 62,464 overnight stays, 11.5% more than the peak on Friday for the 2024 edition (+6,441 overnight stays, **Figure 5.9**). In 2025, Italian visitors reached their peak number of overnight stays on Wednesday, 10 April (11,506) rather than on Saturday, as in 2024. Foreign visitors, on the other hand, confirmed the same trend between the two editions, with the peak number of overnight stays recorded on Friday, 11 April (51,313). For the 2025 edition, the continuity of foreign visitors' overnight stays between Friday and Saturday explains the maximum peak in total overnight stays (the sum of Italians and foreigners). In Milan, during Design Week, the average number of overnight stays from Tuesday to Thursday increased by 10.55% compared to the same days in other weeks of the month. The event therefore influences the city's usual hospitality patterns, redistributing demand to weekdays and reversing the trend for the rest of April, when most overnight stays occur on weekends.

Looking at the province of Milan, during Design Week 2025 the highest number of overnight stays for Italians was recorded on Saturday (20,478) and for foreign visitors on Friday (62,365), the same days as the peaks recorded for the 2024 edition (**Figure 5.10**). The aggregate trend, however, is different: that is, the sum of Italian and foreign visitors' overnight stays: for the 2025 edition the peak was Saturday, 12 April (81,986 overnight stays), while in 2024 it was Wednesday. In the province too, the number of overnight stays made by foreign visitors remained constant between Friday 11 and Saturday 12 April, making Saturday the day of the entire Design Week 2025 when the province's accommodation capacity was most saturated.

1 Data updated as of September 2025 – Provisional data, subject to change until the annual closure of the ISTAT survey (margin of variation: +/- 5%).

2 Istat (2011) *Movimento dei clienti negli esercizi ricettivi. Glossario*. <https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/glossario1.pdf>

3 *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività* (July, 2025). *Rapporto sul Turismo in Regione Lombardia*.

4 Data on the number of accommodation facilities by province may vary depending on the frequency of updates submitted by each local authority. In addition, the recent introduction of the mandatory *Codice Identificativo Nazionale* (CIN – National Identification Code) on 1 January 2025, required for all facilities used for short-term or tourist rentals, may have led to an increase in registrations recorded in the *Banca Dati Strutture Ricettive* (BDSR – Accommodation Facilities Database).

5 Hotel accommodation includes all hotels (from 5-star and 5-star luxury to 1-star, and tourist-hotel residences), while non-hotel accommodation includes: Agritourism facilities, campsites and tourist villages, holiday homes and apartments not managed as a business, holiday homes and apartments managed as a business, holiday homes and hostels, guesthouses, inns and bed & breakfasts, commercial tourist rentals, non-commercial tourist rentals. Source: *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività*.

6 In the province of Milan, the top categories of accommodation by number of beds available are: Hotels (76,620, 37.2% of the total), Non-commercial tourist rentals (36,535, 17.7%), holiday homes and flats managed as businesses (33,413, 16.2%), and not managed as businesses (28,467, 13.8%).

7 In Milan, the top four categories in terms of bed capacity are Hotels (54,328; 3.82% of the total), Non-commercial tourist rentals (32,217; 19.5%), holiday homes and flats managed as businesses (31,175; 18.8%), and not managed as businesses (24,349; 14.7%).

8 In 2024, the province of Milan was second in Lombardy for foreign tourism, surpassed only by the province of Como and followed by the province of Brescia. Source: *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività* (July, 2025). *Rapporto sul Turismo in Regione Lombardia*.

9 In the Municipality of Milan, Design Week 2025 recorded overnight stays 7.8% above the April average

10 Provisional data for the first quarter. Italian National Institute of Statistics (June 2025). *Movimento dei clienti negli esercizi ricettivi. Flussi turistici - I trimestre 2025*.

11 Italian Ministry of Tourism (June 2025). *Come va il turismo in Italia*.

12 On the same day, partial peaks were also recorded, with 4,822 Italian arrivals and 18,324 foreign arrivals in Milan, and 8,675 Italians and 22,735 foreigners in the province.

5.6 Accommodation facilities in the provinces of Lombardy

Number of hotel and non-hotel accommodation facilities in the provinces of Lombardy. Data compared between 2024 and 2025. Source: *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività di Regione Lombardia* (Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region).

	Hotel facilities		Non-hotel facilities		Total	
	2025	Change % vs 2024	2025	Change % vs 2024	2025	Change % vs 2024
Bergamo	252	0.8%	4,270	24%	4,522	22.4%
Brescia	719	0.4%	8,893	11%	9,612	10.1%
Como	249	0.4%	9,168	14.2%	9,417	13.8%
Cremona	45	0%	576	6.3%	621	5.8%
Lecco	84	2.4%	3,967	25.3%	4,051	24.7%
Lodi	23	4.5%	189	12.5%	212	11.6%
Monza e Brianza	78	4%	1,106	10.6%	1,184	10.1%
Milano	689	1.2%	29,143	19.8%	29,832	19.2%
Mantova	63	5%	1,060	26.95%	1,123	20.3%
Pavia	87	1.2%	1,013	14.08%	1,100	12.9%
Sondrio	394	-1.5%	5,290	10.35%	5,684	9.4%
Varese	141	4.4%	3,311	18.42%	3,452	17.8%
Total	2,824	0.9%	67,986	17.2%	70,810	16.45%

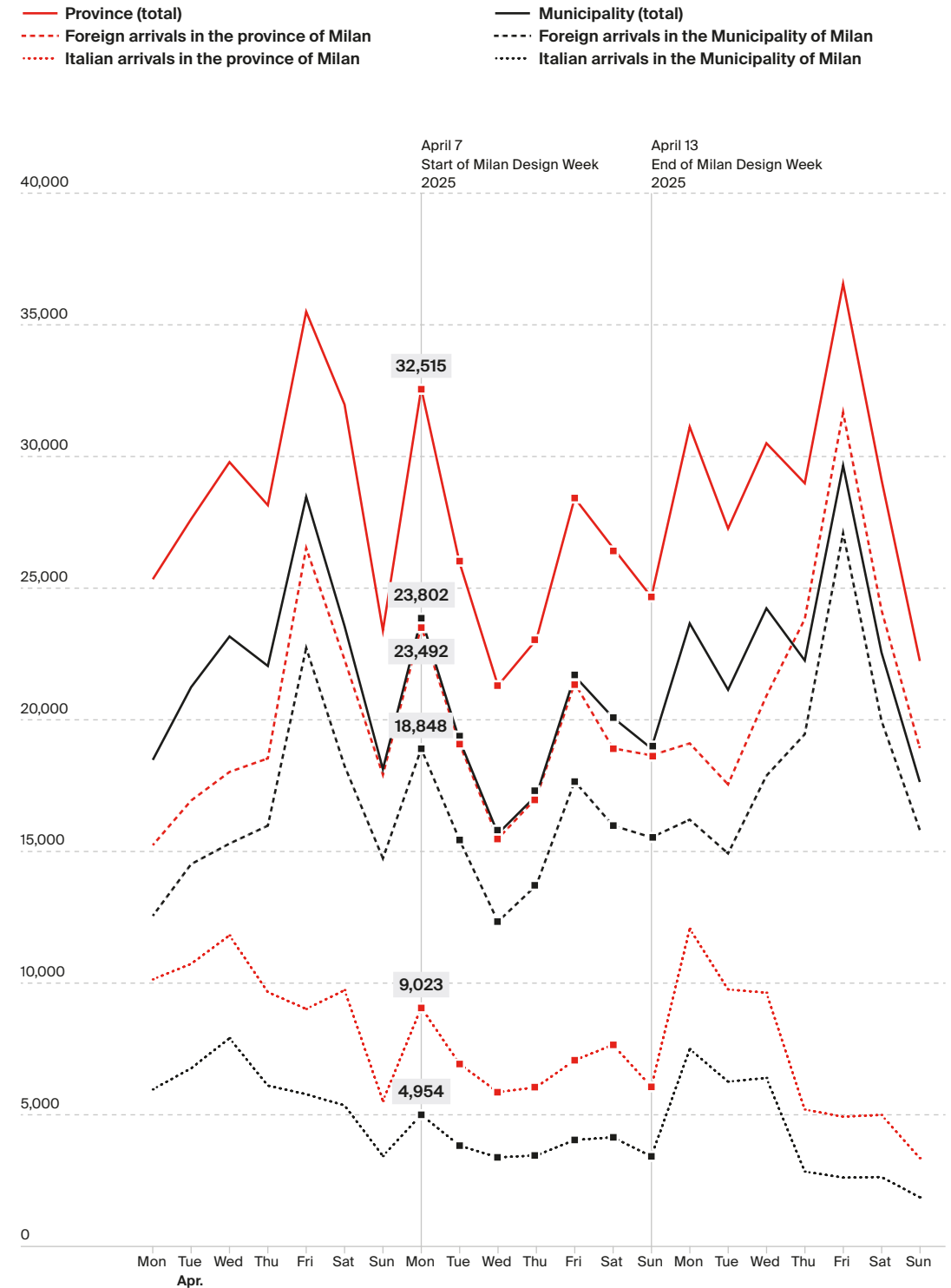
5.7 Accommodation capacity in the Municipality of Milan

Number of facilities, rooms and beds in hotel and non-hotel accommodation facilities in the Municipality of Milan. Data compared between 2024 and 2025. Source: *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività di Regione Lombardia* (Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region).

	Alberghiero	Extra-alberghiero	Totale
Strutture ricettive 2025	491	25,753	26,244
Strutture ricettive 2024	486	21,529	22,015
Variazione % strutture	1%	19.6%	19.2%
Camere 2025	29,425	45,260	74,685
Camere 2024	29,298	38,378	67,676
Variazione % camere	0.4%	17.9%	10.4%
Posti Letto 2025	57,295	108,257	165,552
Posti Letto 2024	56,711	90,757	147,468
Variazione % letti	1%	19.3%	12.3%

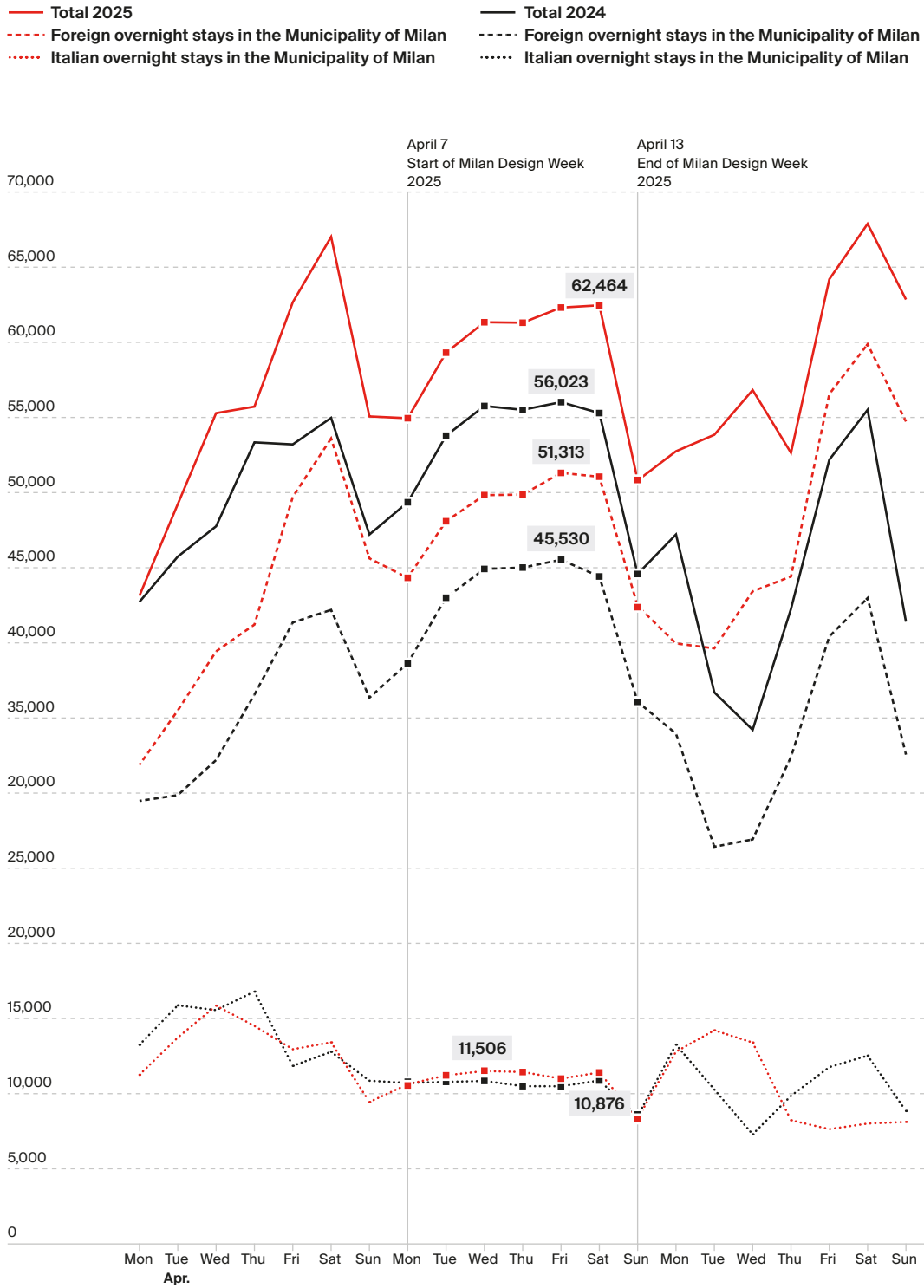
5.8 Registrations in the accommodation facilities of Milan and its province

Daily variation in the number of arrivals in Milan and its province, based on customers checking in at accommodation establishments during Milan Design Week, the preceding week, and the following week (21 days in total). Data compared between 2024 and 2025. Source: *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività di Regione Lombardia*. (Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region).



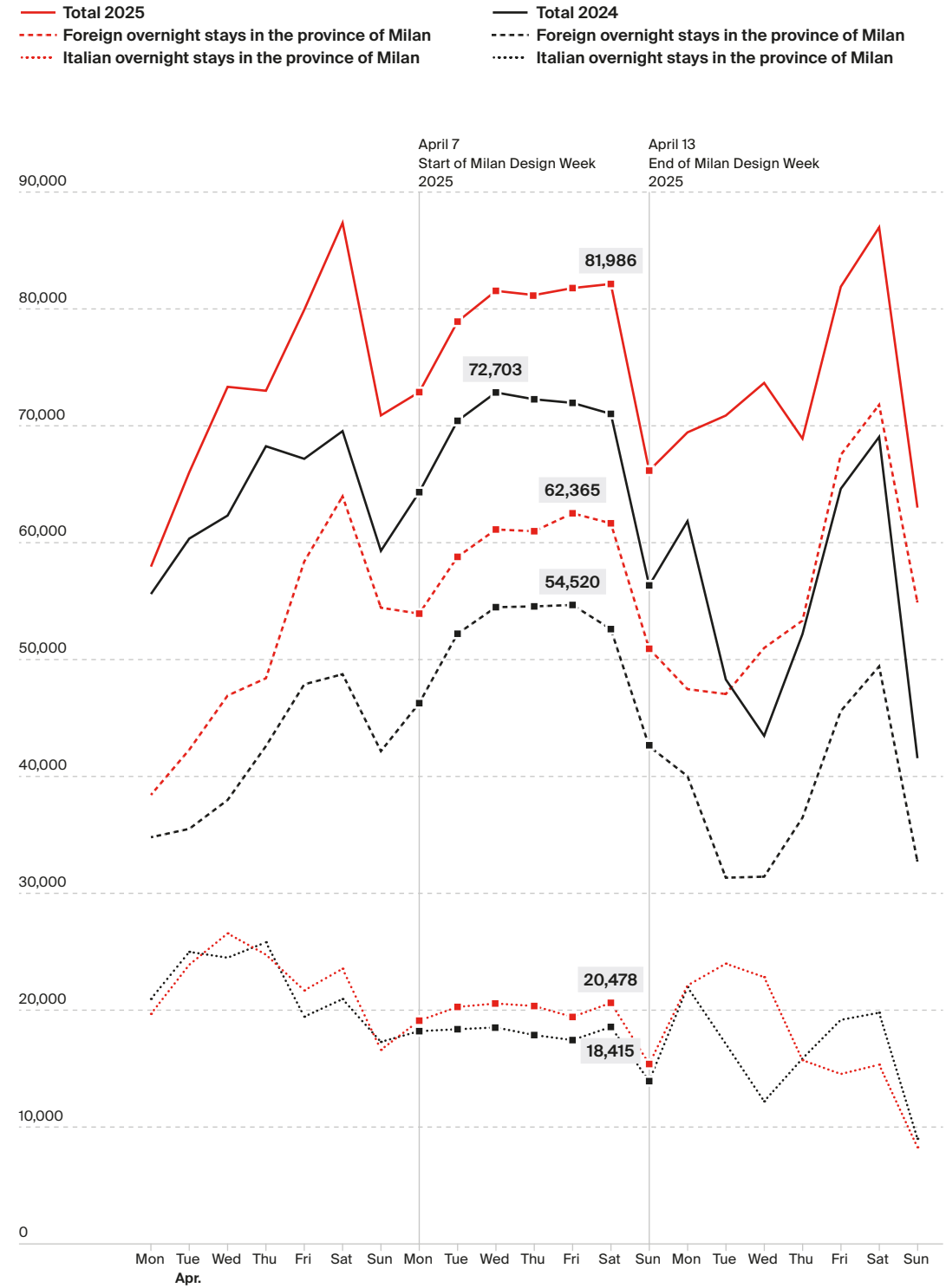
5.9 Daily overnight stays in the accommodation facilities of the Municipality of Milan

Daily variation in the number of overnight stays in the Municipality of Milan (nights spent in accommodation establishments) during Milan Design Week, the preceding week, and the following week (21 days in total). Data compared between 2024 and 2025. Source: Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività di Regione Lombardia. (Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region).



5.10 Daily overnight stays in the accommodation facilities of the province of Milan

Daily variation in the number of overnight stays in the province of Milan (nights spent in accommodation establishments) during Milan Design Week, the preceding week, and the following week (21 days in total). Data compared between 2024 and 2025. Source: Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività di Regione Lombardia. (Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region).



Economic impact

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5.6

Analysis of the economic impact of the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week 2025 represents the third step of the *visitor journey*. This interpretive dimension concerns the effects generated by trade fairs and conferences through tourism, the importance of which makes the sector central to national strategies (Italian Ministry of Tourism, 2024)¹. The Association of Italian Exhibitions and Fairs (AEFI, 2025)² has recently calculated that the trade fair and conference system in Italy generates an annual turnover of 4 billion euros and employs 17,000 people, placing it in fourth place worldwide after China, the United States and Germany. The economic impact of a trade fair is generally assessed according to three categories: *direct impact*, i.e. employment and expenditure directly connected to the organisation, and consumption of the event (e.g. ticket expenditure by visitors); *indirect impact*, generated by the purchase of goods and services in the trade fair supply chain (e.g. energy supply, venue rental); and the *induced impacts* that are reflected in national and local economic contexts through growth in GDP and spending capacity (UFI, 2025)³. This section primarily focuses on understanding the economic impact generated by tourist spending. As in the 2024 Report, the projection released annually by the Research Office of *Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza*, which calculates the induced impact generated by the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week. In March 2025 Confcommercio forecast an induced impact of €278 million in the region, due to the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week 2025⁴, an increase of +1.1% compared to that expected in 2024 (€275.1 million). The estimated spending by foreign tourists was expected to rise to €202.1 million (+5.8% compared to the 2024 edition), or 73% of the total, while spending by Italian tourists was forecast to contract to €75.9 million (-9.7%). However, these figures must be considered accounting for the lower number of visitors expected for editions of the Salone with the *EuroLuce* biennale. For an appropriate comparison, we also considered the Confcommercio calculations for 2023, the last year in which *EuroLuce* was held before 2025. Comparison between the estimates produced for the two editions with the same content and attendance numbers (2023 and 2025) shows how the 2025 edition recorded a significant increase for all items of expenditure (showing an average 15% increase, **Figure 5.11**). The forecast on ticket expenditure for the Salone del Mobile.Milano also increased compared to the 2023 edition, while decreasing compared to 2024, due to the lower number of attendees recorded this year (**Section 1.5**). Focusing now on the comparison between 2024 and 2025, it is particularly relevant to observe how the main categories of tourist spending (accommodation, food and shopping) have changed, and differ between Italian and foreign visitors (**Figure 5.12**). Accommodation services continue to be the dominant in 2025, reflecting the general increase in accommodation prices during this period. Simultaneously, spending on accommodation services is the only category to slightly decrease, likely due to the reduction in spending by Italian tourists (-21.8%), in line with the trend in visitor flows analysed in the previous section. The estimated average per capita tourist expenditure is €275.5 (+0.6% compared to 2024), divided into €119.8 for accommodation services (-1.3%), €87.9 for food and restaurants (+2.3%), and €67.8 for shopping (+1.8%). The percentage decrease in the overall estimated expenditure for the Salone del Mobile.Milano ticket is attributable to the different attendance levels at the *EuroLuce* biennale, as previously specified. The positive forecasts of *Confcommercio* were corroborated through the analysis of spending within the bank payment circuits by the Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region, presented in the next section (**Section 5.7**).

¹ Italian Ministry of Tourism (September 2024) *Il Piano Strategico del Turismo 2023-2027*.

² Association of Italian Exhibitions and Fairs (2025). *Libro Bianco sul sistema fieristico italiano*.

³ UFI (2025) Global Economic Impact of Exhibitions.

⁴ Confcommercio projection, published in March 2025, is based on the metric of tourist spending generated by Milan Design Week 2025 in the Milan area; estimate based on the number of expected visitors.

5.11 Estimated total tourist expenditure for Design Week 2023, 2024 and 2025 (in millions of euros)

Analysis by Ufficio Studi di Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza e Brianza (Research Office of Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza). Percentage change calculated between the 2025 and 2023 editions (Euroluce) and the 2024 edition (EuroCucina / FTK - Technology For the kitchen and Salone Internazionale del Bagno).

	Salone del Mobile. Milano 2023	Salone del Mobile. Milano 2024	Salone del Mobile. Milano 2025	2025 vs 2023	2025 vs 2024
Hospitality services	101.3	115.6	115.3	13.8%	-0.3%
Restaurants and food services	71.9	81.8	84.5	17.6%	3.3%
Shopping	56.2	63.4	65.4	16.4%	3.2%
Salone del Mobile Tickets purchased	12.3	14.3	12.8	4.1%	-10.5%
Total	241.7	275.1	278	15%	1.1%

5.12 Estimated tourist expenditure during Design Week 2024 and 2025 (in millions of euros), by Italians and foreigners

Analysis by Ufficio Studi di Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza e Brianza (Research Office of Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza).

	Tourist spending 2024	Tourist spending 2025	Var. % 2025 vs 2024
Hospitality services	115.6	115.3	-0.3%
Italians	31.2	24.4	-21.8%
Foreigners	84.4	90.9	7.7%
Restaurants and food services	81.8	84.5	3.3%
Italians	24.8	24.3	-2%
Foreigners	57	60.3	5.8%
Shopping	63.4	65.4	3.2%
Italians	23.1	22.6	-2.2%
Foreigners	40.4	42.7	5.7%
Ticket Salone del Mobile	14.3	12.8	-10.5%
Italians	5.1	4.6	-9.8%
Foreigners	9.2	8.2	-10.9%
Total	275.1	278	1.1%
Italians	84.1	75.9	-9.7%
Foreigners	191	202.1	5.8%

Analysis of digital spending and OTA rates

Edited by the *Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo e dell'Attrattività di Regione Lombardia*
(Regional Observatory of Tourism and Attractiveness of the Lombardy Region)

5.7

Analysis of the economic impact of the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week 2025 on the city of Milan and its surrounding area was conducted by processing data relating to digital payments made via credit cards within the Mastercard circuit (Xcc-Mastercard Geospending Platform). The data, represented by spending volume indices, allows us to observe and interpret some of the economic dynamics linked to the event. Specifically, information on the origin of credit card holders, the overall spending volume and the product categories in which tourists and visitors made payments, was collected and analysed. Therefore, this analysis provided insight into the event's impact on visitor spending, including by type of spending, identifying the event's potential areas of 'indirect' economic impact.

During the week of Salone del Mobile 2025, Milan recorded a 3% increase in spending compared to the previous edition, with an increase that reached 6% for the entire metropolitan area. This figure reflects a general trend that saw a progressive increase in spending volumes starting on April 8th, with a record peak on 12 April (**Figure 5.13**).

The analysis also highlighted how the Salone del Mobile.Milano continues to confirm its international relevance. The data confirms that over 63.5% of spending in Milan was made by visitors from abroad. The largest foreign tourist groups were the Swiss, who contributed 8.1% of total spending, followed by Americans (6.4%), Germans (6.3%), Turks (6.0%), and the British (5.5%). Overall, these countries accounted for over 30% of total spending by international visitors. The remaining 26.6% of spending was generated by Italian tourists, with particular concentrations from the regions of Piedmont (12.52%), Emilia-Romagna (11.36%), Lazio (10.12%), Liguria (9.53%), and Veneto (9.04%). Interestingly, a significant portion of the spending, equal to 9.86%, was made by tourists from the provinces bordering Milan, such as Monza and Brianza, Bergamo, and Varese.

While from a regional perspective, analysis showed that foreign tourist spending in Milan was 63.5% and particularly concentrated in the city centre (around the postal codes 20121 – Brera, Via della Spiga, Sempione, and Castello; 20122 – Duomo, San Babila, and Crocetta; and 20123 – Sant'Ambrogio, Magenta, and Colonne – where it exceeded 40% of the city's total spending), when examining the entire Milan metropolitan area, the percentage of spending generated by international visitors dropped to 50.08% (**Figure 5.14**).

With regard to the seasonality of spending, data collected on digital payment trends between January 2024 and May 2025 reveals that the week of Salone del Mobile represents a significant peak in spending. Not only does this peak exceed that of the summer weeks, but it also highlights how the event generated significant increases both in 2024 and 2025 compared to other seasons of the year (**Figure 5.15**). During Salone week tourist spending increased by 17.92% compared to the previous week, with the share of foreign tourists up 23% compared to the previous week, while Italian tourists saw a more modest increase of 7%.

Analysing product categories, the sectors that saw the highest spending were fashion (32.31% of total spending), with an average expenditure of €228.39, followed by restaurants (18.74% of spending) with an average expenditure of €27.81. Shopping also had a significant share, accounting for 10.83%, with an average expenditure of €79.67, while supermarkets and specialty foods accounted for 7.98% of spending, with an average expenditure of €15.72. A significant finding is shown by the percentage change compared to the previous week, that allows us to observe increases in all the sectors considered. From this perspective,

jewellery, despite representing 4.75% of spending, recorded a 69% increase in spending, with the highest average expenditure of all the sectors analysed, equal to €1,048.85 (Figure 5.16).

Analysis of Milan's accommodation rates for 2025 during the event week (OTA – Online Travel Agency data from the D/AI Destinations Platform), compared to the same week in 2024 (i.e., a period when the Salone del Mobile.Milano was not taking place), highlights a further element of the event's economic impact: the observed variations are not attributable to seasonal factors, but rather to the occurrence of the event itself.

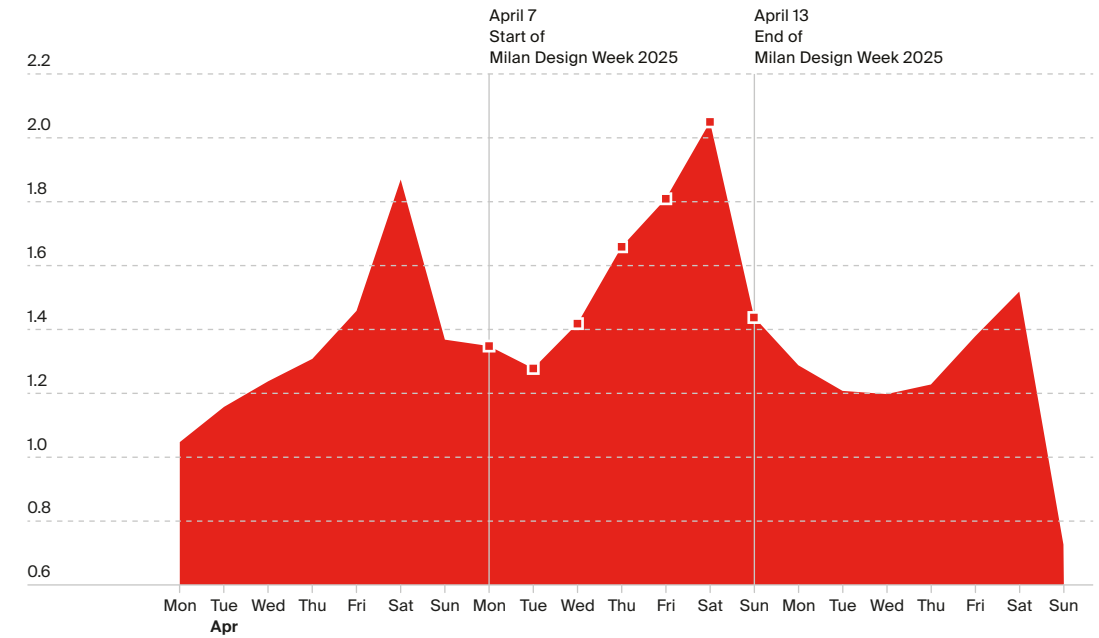
Hotel rates in the Municipality of Milan during the event week showed wide variability, with prices ranging from a low of €145.02 to a high of €3,641.43. Comparison with the same week in 2024 reveals significant increases, highlighting the event's direct impact on accommodation prices. Rate increases are particularly marked for some hotel categories: they range from +59.40% for the minimum rates of three-star hotels, up to +115.59% for the maximum rates of one-star hotels, confirming the strong effect of the event on the prices of lower-category accommodation (Figure 5.17).

The segment for 'Houses or Apartments' also showed similar dynamics: during the week of Salone del Mobile.Milano 2025, rates for these properties in fact ranged between €254.96 and €914.37, an increase spanning between +59.02% and +77.41% compared to the previous year (Figure 5.18).

The Salone del Mobile.Milano thus confirms its position as an international event of major economic importance both for Milan and the entire metropolitan area. Economic impact is clearly generated by direct spending on hospitality, but is also significant in sectors such as retail and food services. Analysis of digital payments provides clear evidence of Milan's centrality as an international destination, with tourists from around the world making a significant contribution to the local economy. Finally, the event itself represents a major tourist attraction, generating a significant economic impact, further demonstrated by the fact that the week of Salone del Mobile.Milano sees the city's highest peak in daily spending of the entire year.

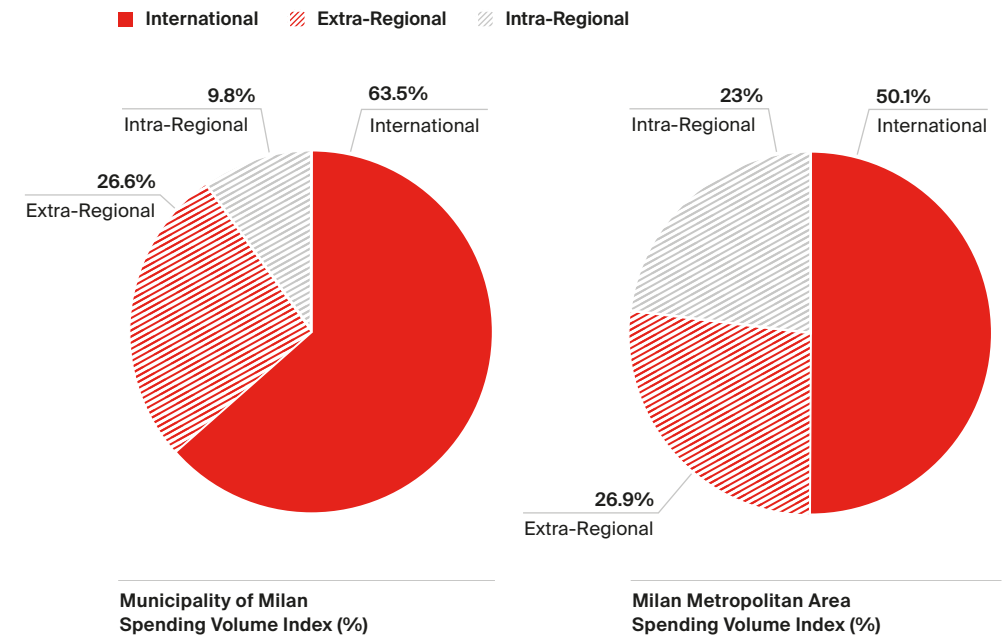
5.13 Daily spending volumes in Milan (31 March – 20 April 2025)

Source: Xcc-Mastercard Geospending Platform. Trend in daily spending volumes recorded through digital payments on the Mastercard network in the city of Milan.



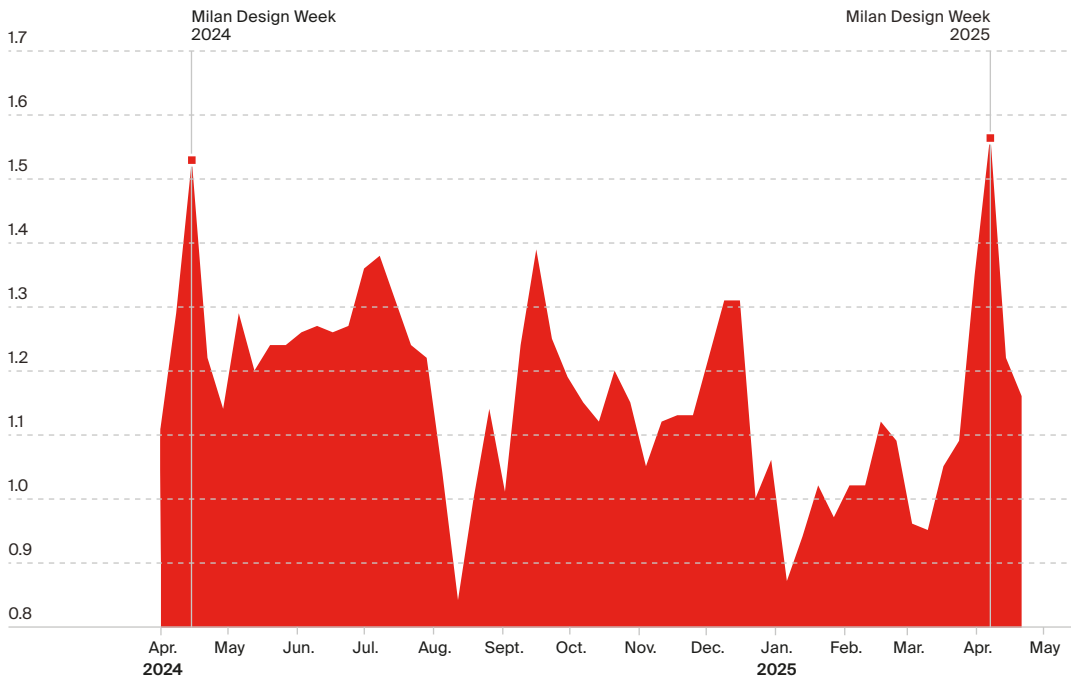
5.14 Geographic origin of spending volumes during Salone del Mobile.Milano 2025

Source: Xcc-Mastercard Geospending Platform. Data broken down by card origin: 'International' (foreign), 'Intra-Regional' (Lombardy Region), 'Extra-Regional' (other Italian regions).



5.15 Weekly spending volumes in Milan (April 2024 – May 2025)

Source: Xcc–Mastercard Geospending Platform. Weekly spending volumes recorded through digital payments on the Mastercard network in Milan.



5.16 Most relevant product categories by spending volumes during Salone del Mobile.Milano 2025

Source: Xcc–Mastercard Geospending Platform. WoW variation calculated against the previous week of April 2025.

	Spending	WoW Change	Average Ticket
Fashion	32.31%	22%	228.39 €
Restaurants	18.74%	21%	27.81 €
Shopping	10.83%	20%	79.67 €
Supermarkets and specialty foods	7.98%	10%	15.72 €
Jewellery	4.75%	69%	1,048.85 €

5.17 Hotel rates during Salone del Mobile.Milano 2025 and change compared to same week in April 2024

Source: D/Al Destinations Platform, OTA data analysis. Values represent the absolute minimum and maximum rates recorded during the week under analysis.

	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
5 stars	938.40 € 88.71%	3,641.43 € 67.36%
4 stars	320.69 € 63.96%	1,051.28 € 96.23%
3 stars	207.43 € 59.40%	690.65 € 104.34%
2 stars	163.65 € 67.13%	435.41 € 129.56%
1 star	145.02 € 61.91%	496.93 € 115.59%

5.18 Houses or apartments rates during Salone del Mobile.Milano 2025 and change compared to same week in April 2024

Source: D/Al Destinations Platform, OTA data analysis. Values represent the absolute minimum and maximum rates recorded during the week under analysis.

Min. Rate	Max. Rate
254.96 € 77.4%	914.37 € 59%

Urban mobility

Francesco Leoni
Researcher, Politecnico di Milano

5.8

In this fourth step, the *visitor journey* explores the impact on urban mobility of the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week 2025. This complex area was explored from three points of view: local public transport; integrated sharing mobility services and private transport. The analysis was based on data shared by AMAT – *Agenzia Mobilità Ambiente e Territorio* (AMAT– Mobility, Environment and Territory Agency of the Municipality of Milan).

The analysis of local public transport focuses on data from the integrated urban mobility system managed by ATM S.p.A. (*Azienda Trasporti Milanesi* – Milan Transport Company), and in particular on the Milan Metro service¹. During the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week 2025, the Milan Metro recorded a weekly average of 1,320,965 passengers entering through the turnstiles – a 4.8% increase compared to the 2024 edition (1,260,428 entries). In absolute terms, this equates to approximately 9,246,755 entries across all Metro lines, with 423,762 more entries than during Milan Design Week 2024. At the same time, the Red Line M1, which includes the Rho Fiera stop at its western terminus, recorded 449,180 average entries, a decrease of around 16,000 (-3.5%) compared to 2024.

Comparing these numbers with the average values in the historical series of reference, the impact of Design Week on the Metro service is unmistakable (**Figure 5.19**). The number of passenger entries during this week represent the absolute peak across the entire network, between 1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025: +39.6% on the weekly average of this period, followed by the numbers recorded during the 2024 edition: +33.4% on the weekly average. For the M1 line, the number of passenger entries during Design Week 2025 came second in the historical series (+37.2% on the weekly average), surpassed only by the same numbers during Design Week 2024 (+42.1%).

The analysis of the hourly distribution of traffic on the Milan Metro confirms similar dynamics to those of Trenord. The day with the highest attendance recorded was Thursday (10th April), as occurred previously in the 2024 edition. Among the assessed days, the busiest time slots² were in the morning (7.00 – 13.00), and in particular between 8.00 and 9.00 (839,642 total weekly entries in this time slot), and in the afternoon (13.00 – 18.00), especially between 18.00 and 19.00 (849,756 total weekly entries in this time slot). As for the Red Line M1 during the 2025 edition of Design Week, the day with the highest traffic was confirmed as Thursday 10 April (533,874 entries), while in 2024 it was Wednesday 17 April. In 2025, the highest recorded morning and afternoon values for all lines were on Thursday 10 April, while in 2024 the highest corresponding values were recorded on the morning of Thursday 18 April and the afternoon of Wednesday 17 April. In 2025, Thursday was also the day with the most intense traffic in the evening time slot (18.00 – 24.00), while in 2024 it was Wednesday. For the M1 line, the busiest time slots were between the afternoon and evening (271,928 entries from 17.00 to 18.00 for the whole week, and 301,385 from 18.00 to 19.00), in line with the closing time of the Salone del Mobile.Milano; the morning followed with the next heaviest traffic (266,571 entries from 8.00 to 9.00).

The second part of this analysis looks at the event's impact on urban mobility through data on public and private *mobility sharing* services (bicycles, electric scooters, scooters and cars). The comparison of shared mobility service usage between the 2024 and 2025 editions of Design Week reveals some differences depending on the vehicle considered (**Figure 5.20**). During Milan Design Week 2025 the use of shared electric scooters, with 13,853 rentals, more than tripled compared to 2024 (+244%, 4,029 rentals). Conversely, after an increase between 2023 and 2024, especially for bicycle rentals, bicycle and scooter sharing saw a

slight decline: 23,713 bicycle-sharing rentals compared to 24,250 in 2024 (-2.2%) and 6,103 scooter sharing rentals compared to 6,502 in 2024 (-6.1%)³. Finally, the negative trend in car sharing, already observed in the 2024 Report, continued with 7,516 rentals compared to 9,024 rentals in 2024 (-16.7%). These differing trends may reflect changes in vehicle availability, linked to operator choices and agreements with the city.

The event's actual impact on this segment of urban mobility emerges more clearly from a comparison between the number of rentals made during Design Week and the weekly average during the period of the historic series (1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025): during Design Week 2025, bicycle sharing (+49.5% compared to the weekly average for the period considered), scooter sharing (+45.6%), and electric scooters (+73.2%) all grew, while car sharing declined, but remained essentially stable (-2.5%). Analysis of the daily distribution of rentals during Design Week highlights further differential dynamics based on the type of vehicle. Bicycle sharing reached its highest values midweek (Wednesday and Thursday), while car sharing, scooter and electric scooter rentals concentrate nearer or during the weekend (Friday and Saturday). This trend was confirmed in both 2024 and 2025. Finally, with regard to time slots, peaks in usage were mainly concentrated in the late afternoon and evening (18.00 – 21.00) regardless of the type of transport, and on every day of the week except Sunday⁴. Together with the aforementioned peaks on the Metro, these hourly peaks indicate that events in the city were enjoyed after the fair or in after-work hours.

Private transportation concludes this section of the Annual Report, with data provided by AMAT on the average weekly entries (i.e., the daily average of entries calculated on a weekly basis) through the access points to the two Limited Traffic Zones (ZTL)⁵ active in the Milan area. The data shows a sharp increase in average weekly entries between Design Week 2025 and the 2024 edition: for Area C there was a 45.5% increase, equal to 117,253 average entries per week, while Area B sees a 31.8% increase compared to 2024, equal to 845,963 average weekly entries (Figure 5.21). Compared to our historical series (1 April 2024 – 27 April 2025), the average number of weekly entries in Area C is +24.5% higher than the weekly average for the period considered (94,187), while that of Area B is +12.8% higher than the average (750,200). Design Week 2025 is therefore in second place for Area C and in fifteenth place for Area B in the series, while in the same time frame, Design Week 2024, positioned in forty-fifth place for the number of entries in Area C (-14.5% below the average), and in forty-sixth place for entries in Area B (-14.5%).

The hourly distribution of traffic in Area C during Design Week 2025 shows a pattern consistent with the morning activity of Milan's workers: on weekdays, peak traffic occurs between 8.00 and 11.00 (an average of 7,848 entries per hour during this time period); Saturdays record significant traffic in the same time period (6,213 average entries per hour), narrowing the gap compared to the afternoon periods, which are predominant on Sundays. Compared to the 2024 edition, the usual weekday morning peaks on Tuesdays and Wednesdays were surpassed at 19.00, indicating increased activity in the historic centre likely related to visitors to the Salone del Mobile.Milano returning to the city for Design Week events. The day with the highest number of passages through Area C during Design Week 2025 was Wednesday, 9 April (126,384 entries), while during the 2024 edition, the peak was recorded on Thursday, 18 April (129,538 entries). A similar trend was observed in Area B, with peaks in incoming or outgoing entries at 8.00 on weekdays and between 17.00 and 19.00 on weekend days. The day with the highest influx of vehicles through Area B during Design Week 2025 was Friday, 11 April (917,846 entries), while in 2024 it was Wednesday, 17 April (917,196 entries).

¹ A central element of urban public transport (112 km network, 134 stations), the Metro allows visitors to reach most of the Design Week venues and the Rho Fiera exhibition centre. In July 2024, it increased its service offering thanks to the completion of the Blue Line Metro 4 to Linate Airport.

² The time slots considered are the same already introduced in Section 5.4 for the rail passengers flow analysis, extended to cover the entire underground service by adding the 'early morning' (3:45 – 7:00) and 'night' (midnight – 3:44) slots.

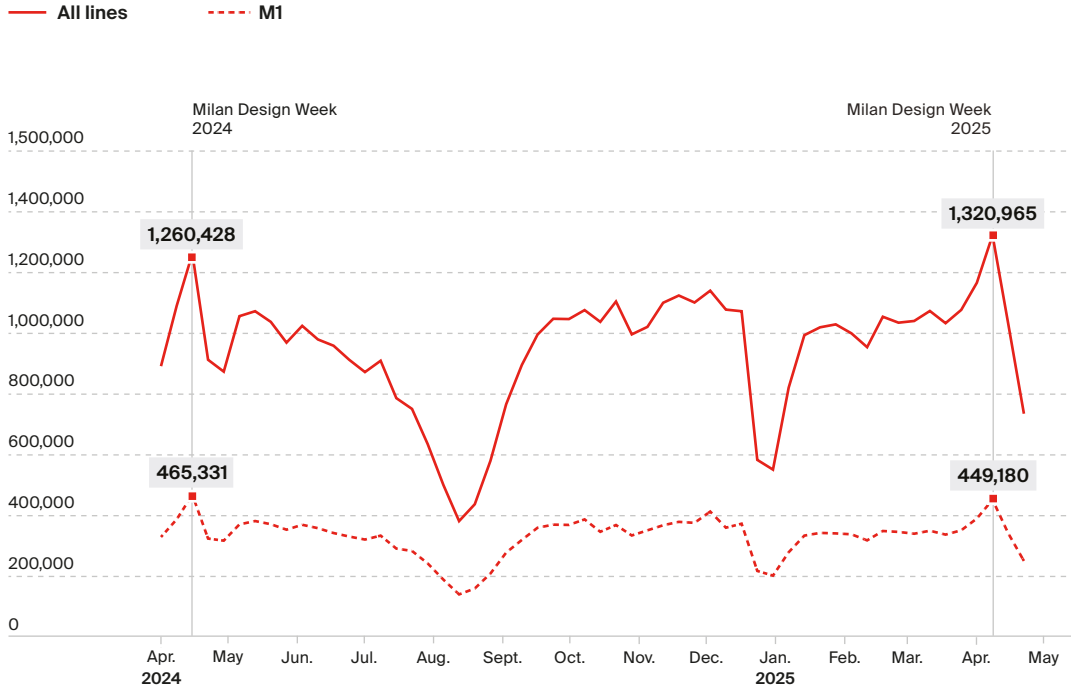
³ The data on scooter sharing were recalculated by AMAT following the adoption of a new monitoring platform. The 2024 figures therefore differ from those published in the previous edition of the Annual Report.

⁴ More specifically, car sharing records its highest values between 8 and 9 p.m., excepting Sunday, when the peak falls between Saturday and Sunday. Scooter sharing shows a higher number of rentals between 7 and 8 p.m. Electric scooters, on the other hand, peak mainly at 6 p.m., but shift to 8 p.m. on Saturdays and during the night between Saturday and Sunday.

⁵ Area C, with 40 camera gates along the boundaries of the historic centre, and Area B, which has 188 more external gates and coincides with 72% of the municipal territory, provide representative data on the movements of private vehicles in the city during the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week 2025.

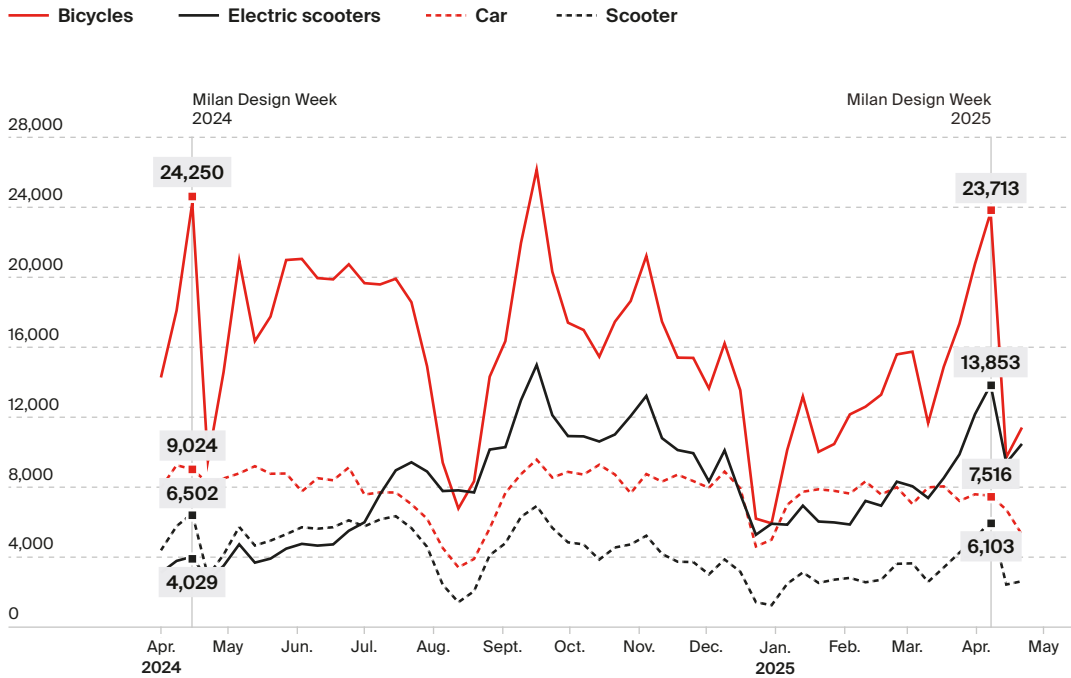
5.19 Accesses to Milan Underground (all lines, M1)

Variance in accesses to Milan Underground (daily average on a weekly basis) from 1 April 2024 to 27 April 2025 (56 weeks). Source: AMAT – Agenzia Mobilità Ambiente e Territorio.



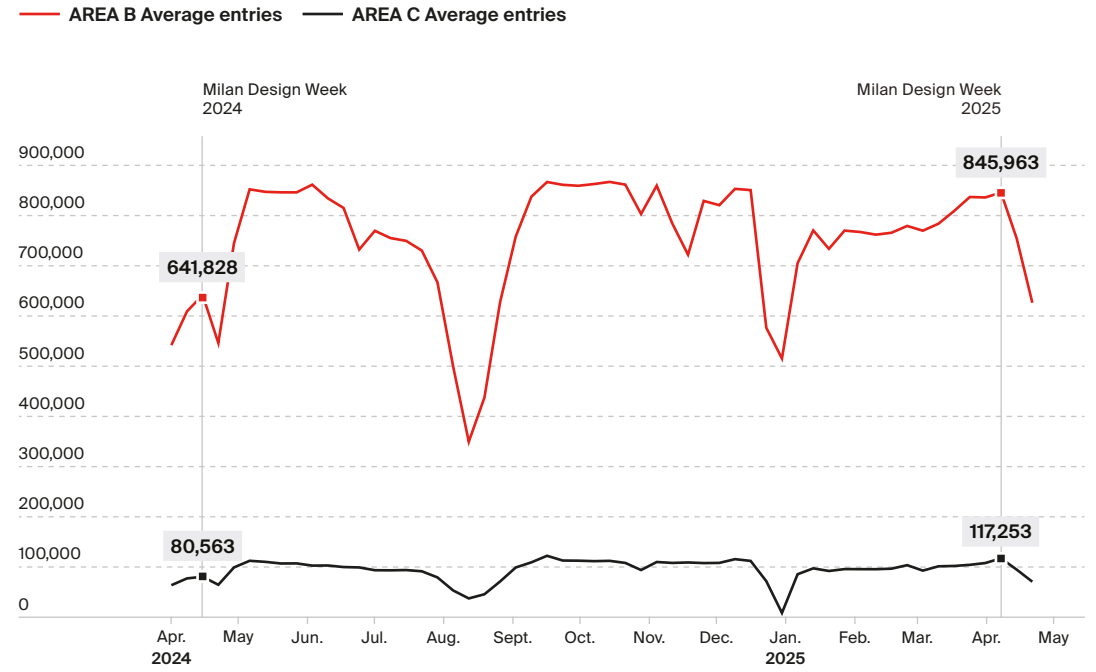
5.20 Shared mobility services

Variation in the number of rentals in Milan by type of shared vehicle (daily average on a weekly basis) from 1 April 2024 to 27 April 2025 (56 weeks). Source: AMAT – Agenzia Mobilità Ambiente e Territorio.



5.21 Vehicle entries in Area B and Area C (Limited Traffic Zones)

Number of vehicle transits (daily average on a weekly basis) in Area B and Area C (Limited Traffic Zones gates) from 7:30 to 19:30, including Saturdays and Sundays from 1 April 2024 to 27 April 2025 (56 weeks). Source: AMAT – Agenzia Mobilità Ambiente e Territorio.



Public safety

Francesco Leoni
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5.9

The dense programme of events during Milan Design Week attracts large crowds, intensifying pressure on both public and private places, with potential consequences for urban decorum and residents' quality of life¹. The 2025 Annual Report expands the study on the impact of Design Week by including an analysis in the *visitor journey* of critical social behaviour recorded during this large-scale urban event. This analysis is based on the data for Reported citizens' complaints – *reclami* – submitted to the public authorities during Design Week 2025 and accessed through the monitoring system² of the *Direzione Innovazione Tecnologica e Digitale del Comune di Milano* (Technological and Digital Innovation Directorate – Municipality of Milan).

This analysis considered 11,288 complaints Reported between April 1st, 2024, and 27 April, 2025. The majority of complaints related to loud music and noise (8,460 or 74.9%), littering (1,088; 9.6%), illegal trading or street vendors (526; 4.7%), occupation of public space (441; 3.9%), traffic violations (346; 3.1%), violations of ordinances or measures issued by the authorities (330; 2.9%), and other issues (67; 0.6%), including 48 complaints regarding people in a drunken state, 16 Reports of businesses not respecting closing times and 3 for not authorised concerts.

A total of 189 complaints were registered during Design Week 2025 (equal to 1.7% of the dataset, an average of 27 per day. In the historical series considered, this is the thirtieth week, below the weekly average (-6.2%). The complaints mainly concerned disturbance of the public peace (132 complaints, or 69.8% of the total, against a weekly average in the period of 151 for this typology), urban degradation due to littering (17, average 19), unauthorized street occupation (11, average 8), irregular trade and illegal street vendors (10, average 9), traffic violations (10, average 6), ordinance violations (7, average 6) and other types of complaint (2).

During Design Week 2024, 206 complaints were Reported (equal to 1.8% of the total dataset), ranking at the twenty-second place in the historical series (+2% on the average). These complaints mainly concerned disturbance of the public peace (158 complaints, equal to 76.7% of the weekly total, +4.6% compared to the weekly average of the period), followed by irregular trade and illegal street vendors (16), littering (15), unauthorized street occupation (8), traffic violations (7), and ordinance violations (2). Overall the Design Week Reported slightly more citizens' complaints than the average for the historical series considered, with a slight reduction recorded between the two editions, particularly regarding disturbance of the public peace (from 158 to 132).

To provide a more localized understanding of the data for Design Week 2025 we analysed the distribution of complaints among Milan's 88 NIL (*Nuclei di Identità Locale* – Local Identity Nucleus). Although the numbers are very low during this period, with a maximum of 13 Reports in the *Loreto-Casoretto-NoLo* and *Brera* NILs, a slight increase can be observed in central areas compared to peripheries. The NIL *Duomo* area, with a high-density of events, stands out with Reports dropping from 20 in 2024 to 6 in 2025 (the annual weekly average in this NIL is 9.4). It should be noted that the data considered may be influenced by factors such as specific events and individual citizens' propensity to file complaints, which in turn is linked to each citizens' actual knowledge of the Reporting procedures. Therefore, this opens up space for further exploration into individual and collective behaviour during such large urban events, to be developed alongside stakeholders in the data supply chain (e.g., local police).

¹ To address this issue, the Municipality of Milan has implemented several specific measures. For the 2024 and 2025 editions of the event, ordinances have been issued prohibiting the sale and distribution of beverages in glass and street vendors operating in public areas for those neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of events: *5 Vie*, *Brera*, *Quartiere Brolo*, *Durini*, *Isola*, *Monumentale*, *Porta Venezia*, and *Tortona*. See Municipality of Milan, *Ordinanza ORDS_2025_5, del 31/03/2025, Milano Design Week 2025 – disciplina su uso spazi urbani, decoro e commercio*.

² The Municipality of Milan has established an integrated monitoring system for citizen Reports to mitigate the negative effects of nightlife. See. *Comune di Milano (2024). Piano degli obiettivi - PDO 2024 - 2026*.

Circularity

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Researcher, Politecnico di Milano

5.10

The final step of the *journey* explores the externalities generated by the influx of visitors to the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week 2025, seen through the perspective of the circularity of the events. Waste and energy management are some of the most important parameters for measuring the sustainability of the Salone del Mobile.Milano, in line with ISO 20121 certification (**Section 1.3**). These factors are also increasingly important for those who organize events and installations in the city during Design Week (**Section 2.5**).

To delve deeper into this aspect, two principal datasets have been made accessible for 2025 by AMAT - Agenzia Mobilità Ambiente e Territorio¹ (AMAT - Mobility, Environment and Territory Agency of the Municipality of Milan) permitting a greater granularity of assessment: the volume (in tonnes) of municipal solid waste disposed of during the days of the event in the city of Milan, and the values for electricity consumption (kWh), recorded through primary substations on the city's electricity grid. The data on waste collection and electricity consumption offer an indicative metric for framing some dimensions of sustainability in the city, in relation to Design Week 2025. The overall volume of municipal solid waste collected during Design Week 2025 is equal to 13,046 tonnes, a slight decrease compared to the days of the 2024 edition (13,425 tonnes, -2.8%). Design Week 2025 ranks ninth in the historical series considered (1 April 2024 - 27 April 2025) in terms of tonnes of waste collected, 7.1% above the period average (12,182.72 tonnes) while Design Week 2024 ranks third, exceeding the average by 10.2%.

Waste data for the Design Week 2025 was divided across 38 areas corresponding to the city's postal codes, allowing for a more accurate reading of the quantities of waste collected. Postal code 20124 - which includes the neighbourhoods of *Porta Garibaldi-Porta Nuova (Nuclei di Identità Locale - Local Identity Nucleus - NIL 9)*, *Isola (NIL 11)*, *Stazione Centrale-Ponte Seveso (NIL 10)*, and the eastern part of *Buenos Aires-Porta Venezia-Porta Monforte (NIL 21)* - is the city area with the highest amount of waste collected (5% of the total, equal to 655.044 tonnes, 90.8% higher than the average for the 38 areas).

In second place, for postal code 20121, corresponding to *Brera (NIL 2)* and the northern portion of *Duomo (NIL 1)*, recorded 613.634 tonnes (4.7% of the total, and above the average by 78.7%). In third place post code 20129, which covers the *Porta Venezia Gardens (NIL 3)*, part of *Buenos Aires-Porta Venezia-Porta Monforte (NIL 21)*, and *XXII Marzo (NIL 26)*, had 559 tonnes (4.3% of the total, above the average by 62.9%). The daily distribution rates show that Monday was the day with the largest quantity of waste collected for both the 2025 and 2024 editions. The trend was similar in both weeks, with a slight decrease on Thursday during the 2025 edition.

Considering energy consumption data, which is not connected to the NIL system, as in the case for waste, the average daily electricity supply in Milan during Design Week 2025 was 14,256,780 kWh, a slight decrease compared to 2024 (14,302,713 kWh, -0.32%). This is 11.2% lower than the average during the period 1 April 2024 - 27 April 2025 (16,040,629 kWh). As a basis of comparison, we can refer to the data for the daily electricity consumption of the Salone del Mobile.Milano: 326,598 kWh, of which 67% from renewable sources, equivalent to 2.29% of the average weekly urban consumption (**Section 1.5**). This energy consumption data indicates that the event days remain well within the city's average levels of consumption throughout the year.

¹ Data on municipal solid waste is provided by Amsa - Azienda Milanese Servizi Ambientali S.p.A., while data on electricity consumption is provided by Unareti S.p.A.

A Journey to map impact: from global to local

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5.11

Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week are *hallmark events* that connect Milan's international identity with design and design culture. Recognizing their dual level of global and local relationships and interactions, has allowed us to build an analysis that retraces their combined impact through the device of the *visitor journey*. This analysis spans from the *macro-level* of international and national impact (travel flows, tourist demand and spending) to the *micro-level* of local impact (urban mobility, public safety, circular management) are reflected. Among the main elements to emerge from the *journey*, is the confirmation of a connection between the event and the international audience, linked to *business tourism*, that is also discernible in the share of foreign operators and attendees participating in the Salone del Mobile.Milano (**Section 1.5**).

In particular, the data highlights the importance of foreign visitors for hospitality and tourist spending. Although the impact of international tourism is typical of Milan and Lombardy, especially during the spring months, recurring patterns in the data for the 2024 and 2025 editions of the event confirm its specific and established relationship with foreign tourism, while this share remains stable in the overall tourist flow. The positive figures for this type of tourism offset the simultaneous decline in domestic arrivals. This trend is accompanied by the expansion of the hospitality system in Milan and Lombardy, especially in the non-hotel component, for which the costs remain high across both editions, and are comparable to those of hotel accommodation, excluding the luxury segment. Spending choices appear to favour products, particularly in the sectors of fashion and jewellery, for which Milan and Italy are known worldwide, as well as being reflected in the hospitality and restaurant system (**Section 5.7**).

The analysis suggests that *business tourism* during the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week is *high-spending* in character: an interpretation supported by the spike in private aviation data, especially for Linate, which highlights the importance of this type of transportation for reaching the event. On the local level, as in the 2024 Report, the event's impact on urban mobility is confirmed: Design Week is the time of greatest stress for Milan's underground system and among the most intense for the suburban rail system. The evident impact of the event on urban mobility suggests the need for intervening to enhance services, so as to better manage traffic flows. In the case of *business tourists*, for example, by offering augmented services in specific train stations, such as those connected to airports. For *city users*, the great percentage increases recorded in vehicle sharing suggests supporting and managing these forms of collective mobility, including through temporary interventions, so as to help mitigate potential problems (e.g., by defining vehicle parking areas based on the density of events in certain areas).

While these forms of impact appear to be the most clearly identifiable, other aspects represent valuable descriptive metrics, but are difficult to correlate directly with the impact of the event. This limitation was particularly evident in those components of the *journey* concerning public safety (**Section 5.9**) and circularity (**Section 5.10**) and stems from the nature of available data, for which the level of aggregation and technicality require in-depth domain-knowledge to be connected with potential causes. In this sense, the experience developed through almost two years of regular shared exchanges with the data holders suggests the possibility of taking a further evolutionary step in studying the impact of the event on the city of Milan. This step implies a transition, from a data-centric relationship, to one focused on future shared projects relevant to the stakeholders of Salone del Mobile.Milano and the Milan Design Week.

Made in Italy Wood-furnishing supply chain

6

- 6.1 FederlegnoArredo and Salone del Mobile.Milano chart the course: the role of industry bodies and trade fairs in driving the competitiveness of Italian design
- 6.2 FederlegnoArredo. Financial statements 2024

FederlegnoArredo and Salone del Mobile.Milano chart the course: the role of industry bodies and trade fairs in driving the competitiveness of Italian design

Claudio Feltrin
President, FederlegnoArredo

6.1

A year after the first *Milan Design (Eco) System* Annual Report, I have the distinct feeling that our perception of time has altered profoundly from the progression of the calendar. It feels as if a year had grown much longer, and each day's 'value' had stretched into a continuous flow governed less by the unexpected, and increasingly by the unpredictable. We are living in an era shaped by geopolitical shifts that, in some cases, have erupted into wars; by 'protectionist' economic policies that translate into other forms of conflict, albeit commercial ones; and by a technological revolution that is advancing at unprecedented speed, testing businesses, institutions and individuals as we grapple with artificial intelligence – a tool we are still unsure whether to consider a precious ally or a dangerous competitor.

2025 has been a year marked by events so disruptive that they have shaken established certainties, objectives, strategies and systems. Imagining the future – the driving force behind any entrepreneurial activity – has become an audacious exercise. Market rules are being constantly rewritten, and the resulting uncertainty can disorient, yet it can also become fertile ground for those who know how to read it as an opportunity. In such a complex landscape, it is natural to ask what reference points can today offer stability and direction to a supply chain – the wood-furniture industry – that carries the 'beautiful and well-made' of Italian design around the world, generating economic, cultural and social value. In this fluid context, where the future is built day by day, having a compass is not merely reassuring but essential.

We are called to rethink the way we produce, inhabit and conceive spaces for work and social life. We are called to redesign industrial policy and rethink the routes of our business, never forgetting our social responsibility towards the women and men whose skills and know-how contribute to the success and distinctiveness of our sector. We must be able to look ahead, investing not only in new products and technologies but, above all, in strong relationships capable of turning collaboration and sharing into drivers of competitiveness – in an osmotic process between roots and innovation, with human value remaining at the centre.

How can this be achieved? By recognising the central role of an intermediary body – FederlegnoArredo – the federation that engages with institutions and stakeholders on behalf of the entire supply chain, offering targeted tools and services to tackle global challenges. And by leveraging a showcase unique in the world: the Salone del Mobile.Milano, where every year the design community, exhibitors, buyers, institutions, the press and the public come together to gauge the sector's vitality and understand its direction of travel. For eighty years, FederlegnoArredo has been the shared home of Italy's wood-furniture companies. It has supported their growth, protected their interests and nurtured their vision. It safeguards the deep identity of an industrial community that has navigated eras and crises, preserving its roots while constantly innovating. The Salone del Mobile.Milano is the international projection of this identity: not merely a trade fair, but an economic and cultural platform. Each edition is a laboratory where industry and design engage in dialogue, transforming ideas into form and function. But it is also – and above all – a moment when entrepreneurs reconnect, exchange views, and share concerns and visions.

The 2025 edition demonstrated this in an emblematic way: the shock announcement of tariffs by Trump, just days before the fair opened, paradoxically forced us to respond with clarity and unity. In those tense hours, one awareness emerged clearly: no one was alone. We were all affected and only together could we search for solutions. Over those days, in the halls of Fiera Milano, Rho, it became evident that FederlegnoArredo and the Salone del Mobile did more than represent a sector – they embodied its route. And in a time when everything seems to move without direction, having a shared course – and being able to build it together – remains the best answer for facing the future.

FederlegnoArredo. Financial statements 2024

Curated by Centro Studi FederlegnoArredo

6.2

The turnover of the wood and furniture supply chain, which accounts for 4.3% of the total manufacturing sector, closed 2024 at €51.7 billion, marking a 2.9% decline. This confirms what has been repeatedly described as a phase of normalisation following the Covid period, during which the sector outperformed the average significantly. The decline was more pronounced in the domestic market (-3.3%), which, at €32.3 billion, represents 62% of the total; exports decreased less sharply (-2.1%), reaching €19.4 billion, which constitutes 38% of the sector's turnover. This share rises to 52% within the furniture macro-system. This snapshot, compiled by the Centro Studi FederlegnoArredo, indicates that the sector comprises 64,144 companies and employs just under 297,000 workers, representing 14.7% and 7.8% of the manufacturing sector, respectively.

The furniture macro-system closed 2024 with a 2.3% decline in turnover from production, amounting to over €27.5 billion, and a modest decrease in exports (-1.8%) compared to 2023, totalling just under €14.4 billion. The decline was influenced by reduced exports to France (the primary market, with over €2.3 billion, a 3.6% decrease compared to 2023) and China (which fell from seventh place in 2023 to eighth in 2024, with sales of €393 million and a 17.9% decline).

It is noteworthy that, across the entire supply chain, the reduction of tax incentives in Italy and the contraction of key European markets in 2024 have continued the downsizing that began in 2023, following two years of growth. It is also worth noting that most Italian exports are destined for Europe, particularly the EU market (51%), which accounts for nearly €10 billion out of a total of €19.4 billion. France, the leading market, experienced a 3.3% decrease, mainly affecting the furniture macro-system, along with Germany, which saw a 6% decline and is now the third-largest market. The non-EU27 European markets, which account for the second-largest share, also contracted by 4%, primarily due to negative performances in the UK and Russia. Conversely, the United Arab Emirates showed positive trends, ranking eighth in the Top Ten, along with Saudi Arabia. The United States, the largest non-European external market, experienced a 1.5% improvement in 2024, following a 10.6% decline in 2023. Overall, the American market is valued at €2.8 billion and grew by 1.9%.

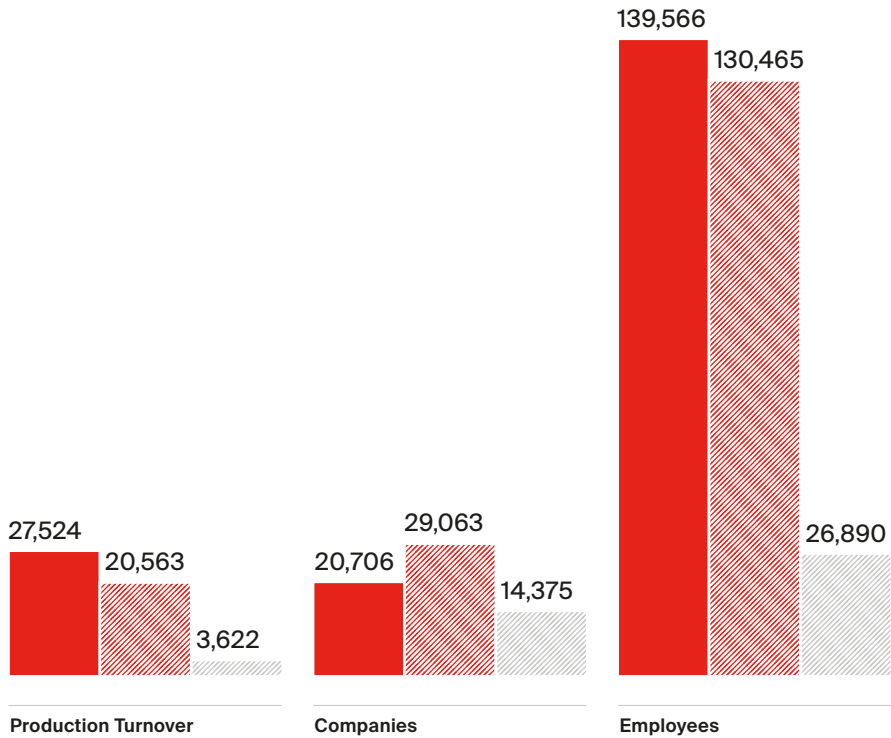
It is understood that, to date, with the Trump administration's trade tariff policies, the prevailing uncertainty and a geopolitical landscape that is becoming increasingly complex rather than less so, the current year has experienced setbacks and slowdowns. A comprehensive assessment will only be possible at the end of the year.

6.1 Wood-Furnishing Supply Chain Final Figures 2024 (Values in millions of euros)

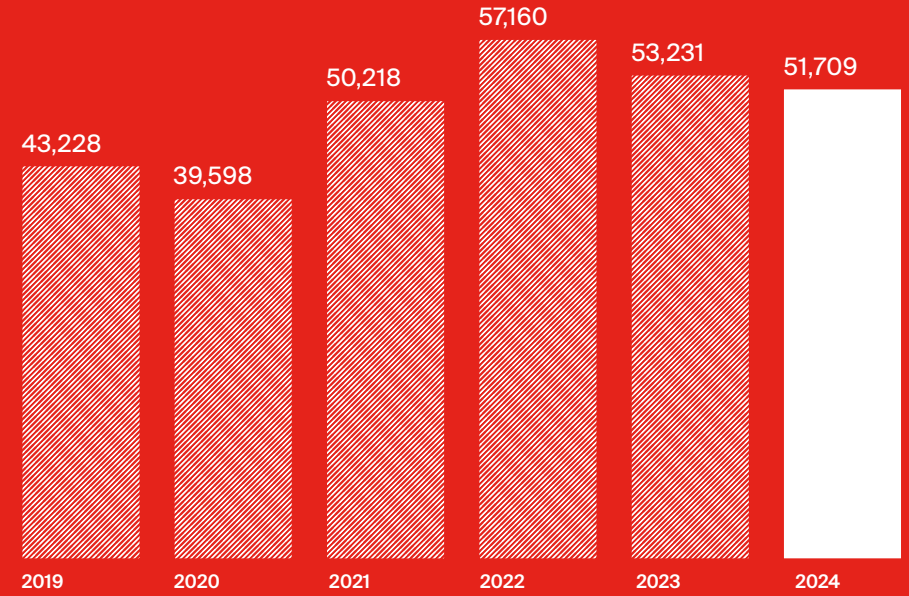
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Production Turnover	43,228	39,598	50,218	57,160	53,231	51,709
Exports	17,113	15,228	18,534	20,866	19,839	19,420
Export Quota	40%	38%	37%	37%	37%	38%
Production for Italian market	26,115	24,370	31,685	36,294	33,392	32,289
Trade Balance	8,321	7,341	8,059	6,882	8,422	7,917
Companies	72,977	71,520	70,064	68,014	66,432	64,144
Employees	297,949	291,392	293,698	297,920	299,079	296,921

6.2 Macrosystems

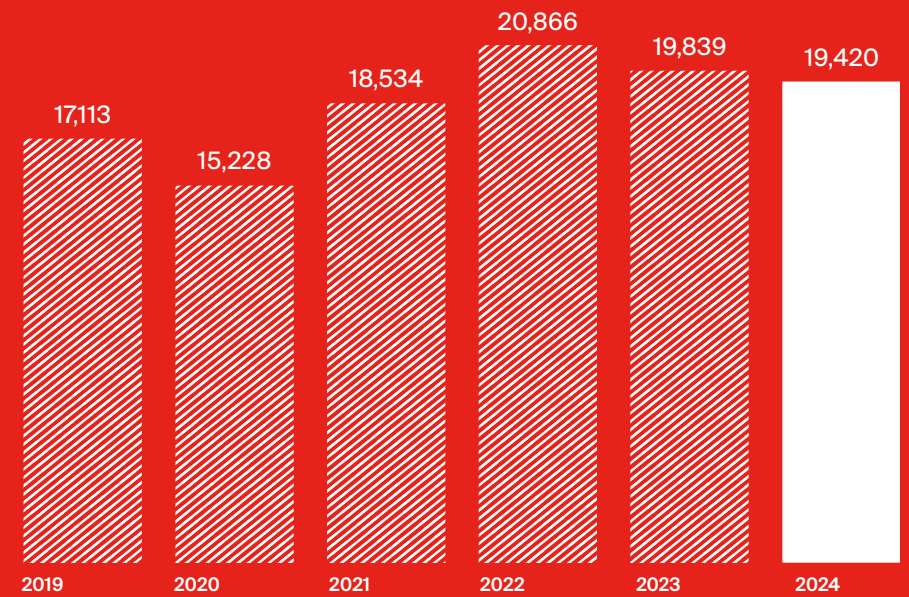
■ Furnishing Macrosystem ▨ Wood Macrosystem ▩ Timber Trade



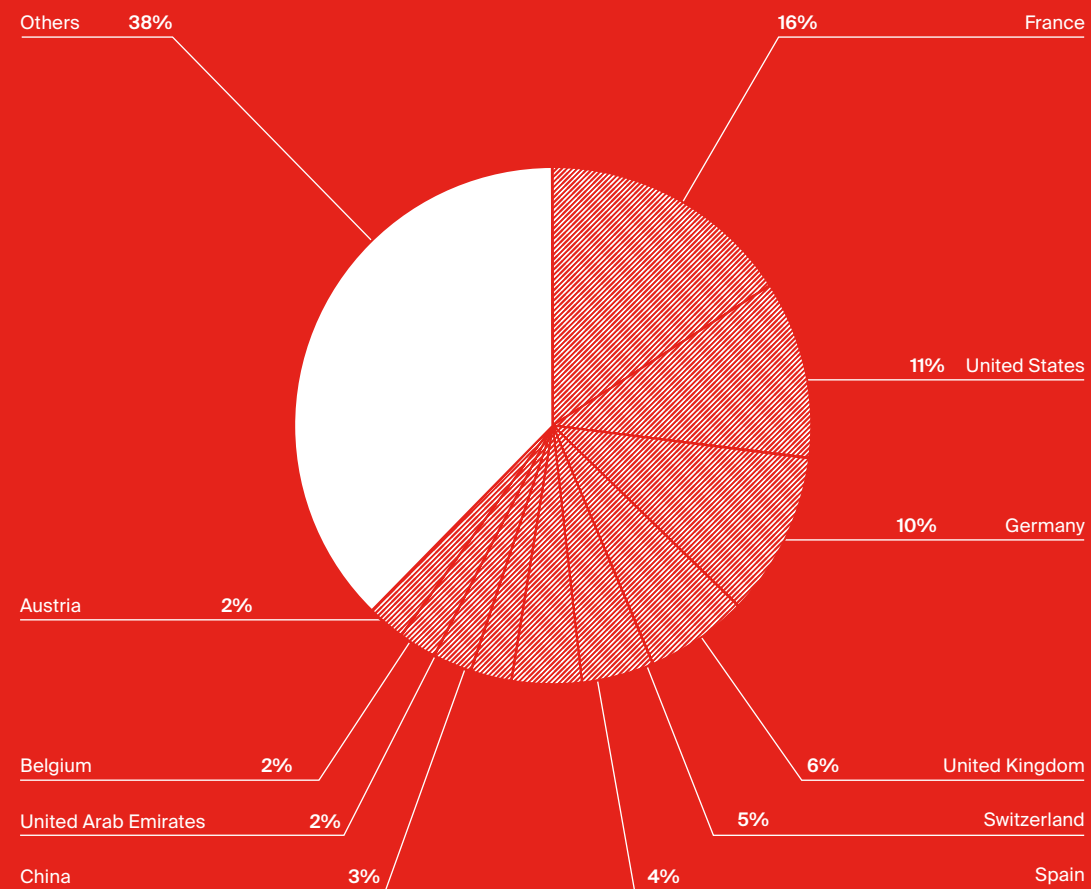
6.3 Production Turnover (Values in millions of euros)



6.4 Export Performance (Values in millions of euros)



Rank	Esportazioni	2024	2024 vs 2023, Var %
1	France	3,094.2	-3.3%
2	United States	2,161.8	1.5%
3	Germany	1,989.8	-6.0%
4	United Kingdom	1,239.7	-6.4%
5	Switzerland	878.2	0.0%
6	Spain	850.3	1.0%
7	China	494.6	-13.2%
8	United Arab Emirates	470.5	21.2%
9	Belgium	458.7	0.7%
10	Austria	454.5	-6.0%
	Others	7,327.7	-1.7%
	Total	19,420.1	-2.1%



Conclusions

- 7.1 A complex and dynamic journey involving the whole city
- 7.2 The Salone as a model for observation



A complex and dynamic journey involving the whole city

Stefano Maffei
Full Professor, Politecnico di Milano

Francesco Zurlo
Full Professor, Politecnico di Milano

7.1

The 2025 Report confirms the strength and vitality of the Milan Design Ecosystem, adding a new layer of analysis focused on the design cultural production within the ecosystem. This exploration shows how design culture mirrors the dynamics of the wider ecosystem: a complex network of actors, places, information, exchanges and initiatives that interact not only during Design Week but throughout the year. This process is sustained by the city's openness – to people, cultures and ways of living – a cosmopolitanism that has always defined Milan. It can be observed, for instance, in the growing number of companies founded by foreign professionals and in the appeal of Milan's design schools to students from all over the world. In this context, diversity acts as a driver of innovation: the encounter between different cultures generates new combinations and fosters the ability to explore unprecedented and original perspectives.

Grasping the relationship between design and culture is not a straightforward task. In many contexts, design is still perceived as a technical or professional activity aimed at resolving operational or functional constraints, defining forms, materials and production factors to create what Tomás Maldonado called a *technical individual* – those artefacts we commonly call products. This view reinforces a conception of design as a predominantly technical act, with strong implications for its interpretation. In particular, for Italian design – long understood as a reflective practice in dialogue with the productive, craft and industrial worlds, and attentive to supporting the typological, formal and functional logic of everyday objects – this reading remains crucial. Yet, when we look more closely at the evolution of Italian design, although production and labour are integral to the dense networks of knowledge and skills that define it, we discover a system that goes beyond simple *know-how* to explore not only *know-what* but also *know-why*. The artisans and manufacturers of Brianza – and beyond – seek engagement with the world of design not only to renew their traditional repertoire but also to expand their cultural horizons. The vision and emancipation brought about by design culture thus become drivers of change in technical and productive domains. Since the post-war period, the search for differentiation has turned local needs into universal opportunities, creating competitive visions and enduring narratives that continue to define the distinctive Italian approach to design. Today, more than ever, the relationship between design and enterprise must anchor its innovative offerings in a solid cultural framework to capture the often-fleeting attention of an educated, conscious and global society.

The cultural ecosystem of Milanese design can be understood as a complex adaptive system – an implicit guiding mechanism: an interweaving of relationships and interdependencies in which every change in the global reference environment can be detected, discussed and interpreted – thus producing effects across the entire local ecosystem. This dynamic evolves while remaining in a state of constant disequilibrium: it requires a continuous flow of energy, internal or external, to keep regenerating itself. Without variation in flows and interactions, without disturbances or unforeseen elements, the system risks becoming rigid and gradually fading away.

The nature and survival of a complex ecosystem such as Milan's require embracing unpredictability as a positive condition: it is impossible to anticipate the effects of a disturbance. This is its strength and, at the same time, its challenge – one that demands adaptability, responsiveness and an organisational culture capable of transformation. In this context, what role can be played by those who choose to engage with these processes? Drawing on Charles Landry's concept of the creative bureaucracy, the importance of building enabling platforms emerges: frameworks that foster the sustainable evolution of adaptive systems

while preserving their vitality and competitiveness. On a cultural level, multiple actors can help define the boundaries of these platforms and promote their adoption among stakeholders within the Milanese – and more broadly, Italian – design cultural ecosystem. The very ability to build and maintain such platforms over time stands as one of the key indicators of a system's maturity. These platforms are not only physical or institutional spaces but genuine cognitive, social and symbolic infrastructures that enable design knowledge to circulate and renew itself. They foster connections between seemingly distant worlds – business and research, schools and craftsmanship, culture and technology – creating fertile ground for experimentation and collective learning. The presence of incubators, foundations and applied research centres helps consolidate this fabric, offering opportunities for intergenerational and cross-sectoral exchange that strengthen the city's relational capital. Within this framework, Milanese design assumes a role of cultural mediation between local instances and global trajectories. It acts as a language capable of translating social needs, values and identities into tangible and shareable forms, and at the same time as a tool of cultural diplomacy, able to build bridges between disciplines, communities and regions. The city thus becomes an enabling platform for new forms of creative entrepreneurship, where design serves as a device for connection, interpretation and the regeneration of urban contexts.

Another distinctive element of the Milanese system is its capacity to cyclically regenerate its collective imagination. The cultural ecosystem of design does not merely reproduce established models but constantly incorporates new sensibilities: ecological transition, the digital dimension, social inclusion and attention to the common good. This convergence gives rise to a hybrid field of experimentation where disciplinary boundaries dissolve in favour of more transdisciplinary and systemic approaches. In this sense, Milan emerges as an *open laboratory*, where creativity is not just an individual expression but a *form of collective intelligence* aimed at building desirable futures. Such a perspective entails greater cultural and political responsibility. Design, understood as a critical and reflective practice, is called to question the logics of production and consumption and to promote fairer, more sustainable and participatory models. Innovation can no longer be seen as an end in itself but rather as a process of continuous learning that brings together the aesthetic, ethical and economic dimensions of design. The ability of the Milanese system to remain relevant in the global landscape will therefore depend on its capacity to integrate knowledge and awareness, form and content, vision and responsibility. Looking ahead, the challenge for Milanese design will be to preserve its evolutionary identity, continuing to treat cultural and social transformations as opportunities for regeneration. Its strength lies precisely in the dynamic balance between memory and innovation: tradition becomes a living material, constantly reinterpreted through new forms of expression, materials and technologies. In this ongoing process of adaptation, Milan remains a global reference point – an ecosystem that not only produces design but also culture, meaning and the future.

The Salone as a model for observation

Susanna Legrenzi

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7.2

The Annual Report arises from a simple yet ambitious intuition: to read the Salone del Mobile. Milano and Milan Design Week as a living ecosystem – a cultural and social organism that both reflects and generates transformations in design thinking, in the city and within the production network. The Salone thus becomes not only the object of this research but also its method: a platform for observation where the plurality of languages, skills and visions continually compels us to rethink the categories through which we interpret it. The research collaboration with the Department of Design at the Politecnico di Milano shows how urgent – and at the same time how complex – it is to adopt a perspective capable of interpreting phenomena with high economic, symbolic and relational impact. The Salone offers a privileged vantage point, not only because of its leading position, but above all for its ability to make broader processes visible – productive, distributive, cultural, social and communicative – and to transform them into collective experience. In a Milan that for decades has acted as an international bridge for the world of design, the Salone, the city, businesses, schools, archives and the temporary communities of designers and visitors together compose an open and porous system: a mobile geography of the contemporary, where design becomes a tool for connection and for interpreting the present.

Reading the Salone as an ecosystem therefore means recognising it as a *total social fact* – a structure that interweaves different dimensions of collective life. It is an economic event, where markets, enterprises and production networks converge. It is also a cultural phenomenon, because design becomes both the language and a form of representation of the present, and from this symbolic dimension the ability arises to generate temporary communities, practices of sharing and urban rituals, that each year redefine the way the city is inhabited. At the same time, the Salone shapes public discourse, visions and desires, offering a field in which possibilities can be tested. From the same perspective, Milan Design Week extends beyond its exhibition dimension to become a sensitive indicator of social and cultural transformation. Each edition can be read as both symptom and signal: a symptom of the deep dynamics that traverse the system – its accelerations, contradictions and voids of meaning – and a signal of emerging trends, behaviour and languages that anticipate change. The Salone reflects the present while simultaneously projecting it forward, registering tensions and forecasting future scenarios, acting as a seismograph for more than just markets.

Expanding the scope of research, the 2025 edition of the Report extends its analysis to the production of design culture, with the aim of understanding how the system of project design – rooted in manufacturing – now generates innovation, symbolic value, shared knowledge and new forms of storytelling. Broadening the perspective beyond the economic dimension means recognising design as a social and cultural infrastructure, capable of connecting experiences, knowledge and imagination. The considerations gathered in the chapters of the Report – from historical analyses to data-based studies and interpretative essays – compose a collection that is not intended to be resolved but rather embraced and made evident. The image of the Salone as an ecosystem is not merely a metaphor but a way of conceiving society as a field of interdependent forces, in which design acts as a mediator between material production and the production of meaning. For the Salone, studying Milan Design Week ultimately means observing how design culture becomes a collective phenomenon: a workshop for social construction capable of generating belonging, vision and shared responsibility. From this perspective, the Annual Report becomes an exercise in self-reflection: a tool that restores awareness to a system often perceived only in its exhibition or production dimensions, but which is, above all, a laboratory for association and imagination.

Analysis is never separate from experience: major events are social organisms in constant transformation. To understand their logics means to recognise their cultural and collective nature – to guide an ecosystem that continues to question itself, the city and the time in which it exists. Next steps? To reinterpret constraints as opportunities for design. Every tension, gap or distance holds the potential for design – an invitation to rethink not only how we make design, but how we think it.

Appendix

Working Tables Milan Design (Eco) System

Design Cultures @Milano The present and future of design cultural production in the city

The *Milan Design (Eco) System* Annual Report was conceived as an act of collective construction. It does not catalogue evidence but creates relationships among phenomena, data, actors and narratives that are fragmented and increasingly complex. Over these two years of work, the data holders involved in the research process have become active nodes within a learning system based on dialogue. The Working Tables, promoted by the Salone del Mobile.Milano, have clearly expressed the same dynamic. Across two editions, they have engaged more than 240 city decision-makers, acting as open meeting spaces for different skills and perspectives. The aim is not to produce a manual of instructions but to create an initial exercise in conversation, from which each actor can begin to imagine and materialise new trajectories. In this sense, the *Milan Design (Eco) System* research itself takes shape as a platform for collective learning – just as an ecosystem is measured not only by its strength but also by its ability to turn interdependencies into resources, differences into opportunities, and data into shared visions capable of defining enabling conditions.

From this latest edition of the Tables – the first thematic one – a plural debate emerged that confirms Milan's strength as a cognitive ecosystem, where the culture of design arises from a constant, though not always linear, process of interaction between industry and research, production and reflection, market and critical thought. It is an open, fragile and precious model in continuous evolution – one that the Salone del Mobile.Milano has chosen to inhabit and to listen to, aware that it is the commons that enable communities to learn, adapt and regenerate. Milan does not simply 'host' design: it produces it, discusses it and turns it into a collective language.

Working Table 1 Cultural policies and governance of design culture

The Table invites discussion on the role of public and private institutions in promoting design culture – from actions to governance tools and impact measurement.

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Summary

Chiara Rostagno
Deputy Director, Pinacoteca di Brera

Working Table 1 brought together the Salone, the Interni system, the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan's Municipal Museums, and a range of institutions and organisations that, in different ways, work to create value around the culture of design – to ensure its continuity, to care for it, to preserve its heritage and to project it into a future dimension. From the outset of the discussion, it became clear that the reality we are dealing with today is profoundly different from the one in which all this was born. The dialogue revealed a number of tensions running through the system, making evident a contrast between the multiple design communities that animate Milan and Design Week.

Milan – which has given, and continues to give, so much to the world of design – is now experiencing, as several contributors observed, a certain sense of strain, dissonance, and lack of harmony. A condition that manifests itself during Design Week but, in truth, extends throughout the year. It is as though the spirit and quality of the proposals were no longer governed, or governable, within a radically changed context and amid a proliferation of events that make it difficult to maintain a clear direction, a strong position and a forward-looking vision.

The theme of inclusivity – so crucial for nurturing the future and ensuring a plurality of languages and offerings – now seems to conflict with the search for shared value, and for a design culture capable of representing and uniting. This has generated a kind of suspended state: on the one hand, the impossibility of going back; on the other, the need to find a new, positive and constructive orientation.

From here arose the idea that the design community itself can and must generate concrete and generative dialogue, giving rise to a precise and courageous curatorial exercise – not to introduce censorial attitudes, but to promote a rewarding approach, capable of recognising and supporting quality. What is needed

is the courage to identify shared criteria – particularly among universities, system actors and institutions – and to highlight those who produce culture, value and meaning, not only in theoretical terms but also in tangible ones, connected to production and territory.

This strategy does not concern only major international players – who often benefit from positions of privilege built over time – but also those who work daily within the city, generating living culture. In this sense, it becomes essential to regain the courage to be protagonists of a shared and plural design culture, in which everyone – the supply chain, education, research, institutions – can take responsibility for their role. Museums, for example, are not only places for preserving memory but also laboratories of the future, capable of stimulating and cultivating new forms of thought and design.

To reaffirm Milan's centrality means, in essence, restoring its role as a place, not merely a location: a welcoming city capable of long-term thinking, able to regenerate quality and vision. This requires the courage to exercise criticism and curatorship – that is, to take care.

As Angelo Crespi, Director of the Pinacoteca di Brera, often reminds us, taking care is the most important thing one can do – whether in business, education, research, or cultural enhancement. To take care means to exercise ethical, as well as cultural, economic and social responsibility. Affirming the need for a new curatorship, and a renewed care for the city of design, is a commitment Milan must embrace. Milan has the heritage, the strength and the potential to do so. It has the history and the ability to take care of its own spirit and its own design. And it is precisely from this awareness that the group's shared conviction arises: that the future of the city of design begins here – from a new culture capable of regenerating meaning, quality and collective responsibility.

Working Table 2 Milan in the global landscape of design cultures

The Table explores Milan's role as the capital of design, between its historical identity, permanent and temporary offerings, global networks and new strategies for dialogue and exchange with other emerging cities.

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Summary

Marco Sammiceli

Curator, Design, Fashion and Craft Sector, Triennale Milano

Director, Museo del Design Italiano

Although the Salone del Mobile.Milano – and the system it has built around the fair – still faces no real competition, the discussion revealed clear signs of strain: both its commercial and cultural models need to be redefined. This shift is essential to secure its competitiveness and international relevance – qualities of a leadership whose global centrality now appears at risk. There is both concern and a shared desire to shape a new vision, grounded in concrete data: attendance, expectations, shifting perspectives, audience behaviour, contextual limits and internal threats. The critical points of a leadership that could gradually erode concern, above all, a reframing of the relationship with the city of Milan and a fresh approach to the fair itself, one that invests more confidently in research and innovation by companies. It is vital to rekindle the energy of those players that no longer find space within the Salone or the city of Milan, not only for economic reasons but because of systemic limits: schools, universities, research centres and start-ups. The Salone must once again champion these communities – through products, projects, enterprises and professions.

A decline in the overall quality of Design Week has been noted. The city's open offer has become increasingly fragmented and confusing, while an organisational system that was once inclusive no longer works effectively – for professionals or for diverse audiences. The city administration, meanwhile, needs to strengthen its public infrastructure during the event, addressing transport, public order, urban hygiene and the regulation of parallel initiatives. To avoid a speculative bubble that could lead either to the collapse of the phenomenon or to its slow downsizing, a clear curatorial direction is required – one

able to balance what, within our design system, is a lasting asset, a temporary driver, or part of its legacy. These energies are a shared resource that must remain active as both an expression of local identity and a distinctive feature compared with other international events. Milan has always drawn its strength from the interplay of multiple forces: design and production, education and communication, research and exchange, culture and services.

The new direction hinges on three key points: raising the event's quality standards; encouraging international inclusion; and maintaining continuity for a phenomenon that transcends the logic of a 'week'. Restoring to the fair the quality of encounters between entrepreneurs, designers, distributors and professionals – through products, research and focused debate – is a priority. It is equally important to revisit access opportunities for young people, schools and emerging countries, providing a sustainable international platform. Communication strategies should invest in coupling 'know-how' with 'making known' – a link too often overlooked – to protect the event from the accessory content that has blurred its industrial, commercial and research dimensions. Building international credibility also means bridging the gap between the city and the Salone, strengthening their cultural connections and their relationship with specific landmarks such as the architectures of the late twentieth century. Finally, a technological transition should be developed to extend key aspects of the event into the digital sphere – following a careful assessment of the roles of the various actors in the Salone ecosystem, with the aim of producing an event of tangible and digital impact alike.

Working Table Spaces

and infrastructures for design culture

3

The Table reflects on how physical and digital spaces – new or existing, formal or informal – can foster the production and dissemination of design culture, creating a more inclusive and connected ecosystem.

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Nicola Zanardi
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Summary

Isabella Inti

Founder, Temporiuso.org; Co-director, M-US-T Master on Temporary Uses, Politecnico di Milano

Which actors and initiatives are contributing to renewing the urban vision? How might the temporary infrastructures created for Design Week be conceived to leave a legacy while responding to local needs and contexts?

Around the Working Table, we identified five spatial, physical, and digital modes that today activate and re-signify parts of the city during the Salone del Mobile and Milan Design Week:

- The urban hub – the perimeter within which the Salone del Mobile.Milano takes place.
- The Design Week Districts – the neighbourhoods directly involved in the event.
- The network of dispersed venues – events hosted in historic palazzi and urban villas, universities and academies, large parks and community gardens, art galleries, and hybrid socio-cultural spaces.
- The constellation of sites beyond the city – linked by curated programmes of visits and events organised by specific entities, such as Alcova in Varedo.
- The immaterial spaces – widely discussed during and after the pandemic.

How, then, can these five models of spatial organisation coexist and collaborate to strengthen the *Milan Design (Eco) System* as a whole? This question opens a landscape of opportunities and new forms of collaboration between spaces and services. The discussion turned to circularity – understood not merely as a technical process, but as a principle of cultural design. Installations, fittings, and furnishings conceived for temporary use could form part of a broader reuse and recycling chain, supported by a digital platform mapping and facilitating their transfer from one event to

another, and from one site to another urban or territorial context.

The same logic could extend to the production of materials and components, generating a kind of secondary design economy capable of reducing waste and creating shared value. The discussion also touched on new forms of investment, highlighting the ability to attract technical sponsors and designers that could give rise to projects initiated during Design Week and evolving into permanent forms – prototypes or lightweight infrastructures for the city. The aim is to strengthen the dialogue between design professionals and local communities, fostering processes that address real territorial needs and transform temporary events into platforms for listening and urban co-design.

Another key theme was that of digital infrastructures shared among places and events, to connect and make accessible information useful to both citizens and visitors. One could imagine a network capable of collecting data, stories and itineraries, offering a living geography of the *Milan Design (Eco) System*, where digital tools amplify, rather than replace, the physical experience. Such an infrastructure could also take the form of a physical hub – a space for orientation and encounter that makes the system's complexity visible and enhances its accessibility throughout the year. Finally, the discussion explored how to enrich the public experience through a lasting appreciation of design culture and the research and cultural production that support designers, enterprises, and producers. From this perspective, Milan Design Week and the Salone del Mobile.Milano are not merely occasions for exhibition and communication but opportunities to foster awareness, learning and recognition of the value that design generates – both in the economy and in everyday life.

Working Table 4

Design culture for and of sustainability

The Table addresses the environmental, economic and social sustainability of design events – from their impact on the circular transition to possible alternative financing models.

Content Leader	Facilitator
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Vincenzo Memmola Sustainability Manager, Salone del Mobile.Milano	Gloria Zavatta Sustainability and Impact Director, Fondazione Milano Cortina 2026

Summary
Domenico Sturabotti
 Director, Fondazione Symbola

For years, the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Milan Design Week have done more than showcase design – they have anticipated and shaped the future of production, society, and culture. At Table 4, the discussion centred on how events of this scale can actively drive the ecological and circular transition, highlighting several key actions. First and foremost, there is a need to embrace a transformative role. The Salone cannot merely remain an exhibition platform; it must increasingly become a research and experimentation hub for the design community and the wood–furniture supply chain – an arena capable of presenting the state of the art, and offering tangible solutions to sustainability challenges. This entails addressing, in a systematic way, issues such as material use, the life cycle of installations, and resource management – a path already underway, though communication efforts should be strengthened. There is a pressing need to develop and disseminate a new culture of living, one that generates new languages in which design and sustainability converge into a renewed synthesis. The theme of legacy is central. In this renewed role, the Salone and Design Week should act as drivers of cultural evolution in sustainability, guiding their communities towards shared knowledge, awareness, and practices.

Organisers should shape each edition of Design Week to mark a clear ‘before’ and ‘after’, ensuring the actual added value lies in the evolution of the supply chain along the trajectory of the green transition. This legacy should not only focus on material inheritances – permanent installations, urban regenerations, tangible artefacts left in the city – but also actively implement and encourage practices: modes of design, exhibition, production, and engagement. Promoting this combination of cultural, operational, and physical transformations, would make the message visible, and lasting through tangible, shared outcomes. Alongside environmental issues, rules also matter. The Salone has introduced notable innovations

– joining the UN Global Compact and obtaining ISO 20121 certification, which, for example, eliminated plasterboard from installations. Yet, a stricter, broader approach is needed – one that rewards efficient production and communication while curbing unsustainable excess. Clear rules, effective monitoring, incentives, and coordination between the Salone and Design Week could further encourage innovation and good practice, while deterring greenwashing and wasteful competition.

Accessibility is also crucial. Rising accommodation and service costs during Design Week risk excluding large parts of the public, especially the young and students. Initiatives such as urban campsites or widespread hospitality have potential for expansion. Ensuring inclusivity opens events to broader audiences and reinforces design’s cultural role as a collective good. Table 4’s second focus was economic and social sustainability. The Milan Design System needs models that go beyond pure commerce: exhibition circuits, institutional and business cooperation, shared policies on transport, hospitality, and investment in education and research.

It is also necessary to counter the growing trend of overspectacularisation, that risks making Design Week mirror fashion dynamics – exclusive events and quest for gadgets – undermining the cultural and experimental qualities central to these initiatives. Through Milan, Italy has the chance to cement its status as a global design capital by integrating beauty, craftsmanship, sustainability, and community. Achieving this will require a long-term vision: a programme that tracks visible, measurable progress, defines clear themes, and establishes lasting knowledge and transformation. Only then can the Salone and Design Week move from sector celebration to fundamental drivers of ecological, social, and economic transition.

Working Table 5

New generations, Alternative cultures and emerging practices

The Table explores emerging practices among young Milanese designers and curators to identify new places, platforms, languages and participatory formats.

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Summary

Angela Rui

Curator, Researcher, Head of Master of Arts, IED Milano

At Working Table 5 – dedicated to new generations, alternative cultures and emerging practices – we explored how Milan can continue to play a central role in developing a design culture that fosters experimentation and new forms of expression. The first shared observation was clear and unequivocal: despite its dynamism, Milan's design ecosystem reveals a certain fragility – namely, the lack of spaces dedicated to new practices. Unlike the world of contemporary art – where spaces, institutions, residencies and production programmes exist – such places remain rare in the field of design. From this critical point, the discussion converged on a simple conclusion: ideas are not what is missing, but policy. What is needed is a joint commitment, public and private, to build new infrastructures – both material and immaterial – capable of welcoming and supporting those who are emerging. Places, resources and platforms that allow new practices to develop over time, rather than being dissipated in the fleeting nature of events. The absence of infrastructures for experimentation prevents this diffuse network from being recognised and valued.

The Working Table took a design-oriented approach, seeking to formulate practical strategies: how can continuity be created beyond the temporality of the event? How can the energy generated by extraordinary moments be transformed into an ongoing process of cultural production? Among the proposals that emerged was the establishment of permanent observatories on design and emerging practices – open and participatory – capable of gathering and connecting the many experiences scattered across the territory. The idea is to reactivate models that once worked but have since become confined within institutions, losing their capacity to generate new ideas. Similarly, there was discussion of the need to promote calls, awards and residencies dedicated to the young design community, inspired by European models that provide public and private funding for experimentation and independent research.

Another crucial point concerns collaboration between universities and city institutions. Design in

Milan has always thrived on the relationship between knowledge and practice; yet in recent years, the presence of schools and young designers during Design Week has progressively diminished – partly due to the rising cost of renting spaces and to increasing competition with the commercial logics of events. This reduced visibility has weakened one of the founding elements of Milan's system: the vital relationship between education, experimentation and design culture. The Working Table emphasised the need to reactivate this relationship by imagining policies and tools that would facilitate the return of schools to the city's cultural calendar – through accessible spaces, public-private partnerships and shared programming that restores to young people a visible and generative role within the city of design.

A further key theme is inclusivity. Milan has a long tradition of public-private partnerships, but perhaps today the challenge is to reverse the perspective: to imagine that private investment, too, can contribute to building a public dimension of design – giving value back to the city and its citizens through shared, accessible and socially useful spaces. This vision has been described as a 'third atmosphere': not merely the 'third places' of urban sociology, but a condition that unites schools, associations, foundations and local communities. Within these spaces, new relationships and forms of design practice can flourish – where design culture becomes an instrument of inclusion, education and care.

Finally, we envisaged a more ambitious gesture: redirecting part of the resources currently devoted to temporary events towards ongoing programmes capable of leaving a legacy. And we asked ourselves – provocatively, but not entirely – why Milan, a city recognised worldwide as the capital of design, does not have a Design Biennale: a cultural event that can represent the complexity and vitality of this discipline, offering new generations a space and a voice, and at the same time building lasting bridges between municipal programmes, the third sector and citizen participation.

Working Table 6

The role of education and research in promoting design culture

The Table examines how education and research generate innovation in design, experimenting with new languages, methods and increasingly sustainable and accessible design approaches.

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Summary

Stefano Micelli

Professor, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

The Working Table dedicated to the theme *The Role of Education and Research in Promoting Design Cultures* focused primarily on two issues. The first concerned the impact of artificial intelligence on the management of educational pathways for Design students. The second addressed the transformation of the furniture and interior design markets as a consequence of decisions taken by the U.S. administration, and the implications that this transformation will have for the mobility of researchers and students.

With regard to the impact of artificial intelligence on creative professions, the Table shared key trends currently characterising the American labour market that, over time, could extend to Europe and Italy. Current analyses suggest that generative artificial intelligence poses a significant challenge to creative professions (design, marketing, coding), which have long been considered immune to the effects of digital transformation. Participants in the Table expressed a proactive attitude towards this issue, highlighting a variety of experiments already underway in teaching practice and noting the openness of students and researchers to technological innovation rather than nostalgia. Two critical issues emerged that deserve cross-cutting exploration:

- The need to determine whether the topic should be developed vertically (for instance, through one or more dedicated courses on how to manage these new tools) or whether the scale of the ongoing transformation calls for a horizontal approach (for example, by introducing specific modules within each subject that make up the degree programme).
- The importance of fostering a critical mindset as an antidote to the flattening of design culture,

which risks becoming passive in the face of major contemporary challenges. From this perspective, design education must engage young people in a collective effort of learning and research that actively involves them in confronting the great issues of our time.

Regarding the new geography of globalisation, the Table recognised the largely irreversible nature of recent U.S. policies and the need to explore a new geography in which to promote the culture of Made in Italy. Globalisation has not come to an end, but it will certainly no longer take the same shape it has had over the past twenty-five years. In this context, members of the Table confirmed the strong interest of many international students and researchers in spending time in Italy—and especially in Milan—to absorb the culture of design in a distinctive and original way.

Two main issues emerged in this regard:

- The need to engage with institutions to ensure that students from emerging countries of strategic interest to Italian design are granted simplified procedures for obtaining visas, paying tuition fees, and accessing essential services such as housing and mobility.
- Conversely, with respect to the outward mobility of Italian students and researchers, the need was identified to compile an atlas of priorities—a map of countries, universities and research centres which, though not currently central to international attention, may soon become important economic and social laboratories with which Italian design both can and should engage in collaboration.

Working Table 7

New narratives and the communication of design culture

The Table explores how design is communicated today – across media, events, languages and technologies – including official, alternative and marginal narratives and their intersections.

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Summary

Walter Mariotti
Editorial Director, Domus

In today's design discourse, a central challenge emerges: distinguishing between information and meaningful communication – and why this distinction is critical for the evolution of design culture. Information is one-way and neutral: it simply transmits data, facts, content – like a technical sheet listing a product's features. Communication, by contrast, is a more complex, two-way process: it constructs meaning by explaining why an object matters and what vision it represents; it builds relationships by forging a bond between those who design and those who experience, generating belonging and identity; it creates culture by turning isolated content into a shared system of values that influences society.

This difference is crucial in an era dominated by video – the medium toward which most design communication is now decisively moving. Video has prevailed thanks to its immediacy, its ability to capture attention quickly, and its emotional pull through sight, sound and movement – qualities that make it ideal for social media. Yet video also introduces problems that the medium itself struggles to solve: it naturally privileges visual impact – the 'wow' effect – over depth of message, speed over reflection, and instant emotion over critical inquiry. In design, emphasizing only how an object is 'beautiful' or 'appealing,' without explaining the design process, ethical values, sustainability or technical innovation, risks losing the substance that makes design meaningful. This shift from educational, culture-building communication to surface-level appeal undermines a field that must convey complexity and foster a sense of shared cultural identity. Faced with this scenario, institutions are turning to the design world for support, aware that visual and design communication can play a strategic role. But the response cannot be limited to emergency measures. The issue must be addressed at the

root – through education. Schools must once again become the places where critical thinking and aesthetic sensitivity are formed, where we learn to distinguish quality from quantity, where design culture becomes a shared asset. Today, however, schools often fall short of this task, and – more worrying still – there is a marked shortage of *Maestri*: figures who inspire new generations. People capable not only of transmitting technical skills but also of imparting vision, ethics and passion. Without authoritative reference points, we risk communication without direction – and design without a soul.

To reverse this trend, Salone del Mobile.Milano must evolve, taking an ever more active role in promoting an integrated system that brings together companies, institutions, foundations, media and universities. No longer an isolated event condensed into a single week – one that sometimes leaned on 'wow' devices borrowed from infotainment – and, above all, one that no longer confuses the content, which is design, with the container, which may also take the form of cultural production. The Salone should become a permanent ecosystem of exchange and growth, a place that values experience rather than just another urban incubator of events. In this context, institutions must assume an active role: setting clear rules, steering choices, and not merely acting as cash machines that fund without governing. A meaningful step would be joint projects, such as opening the workshops and foundations of leading designers, turning them into accessible training spaces where knowledge is transmitted through practice. Finally, the relationship between the Salone del Mobile and Design Week must be rethought – from competition to dialogue, from fragmentation to a shared project – because only by acting as a system can design culture once again become a driver of innovation and identity.

Working Table 8 Culture as an asset for design-intensive creative industries

The Table reflects on how culture and design generate competitive value by translating cultural values into distinctive products and services, focusing on the role of creative industries.

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Gianfranco Marinelli President, Federlegno Arredo Eventi	

Summary

Annibale D'Elia

Director of Urban Economy, Fashion and Design, Municipality of Milan

Table 8 was invited to reflect on the role of culture – and, in particular, design culture – as a resource capable of generating competitive value for companies based in Milan by transforming intangible assets into distinctive products and services. The discussion was organised into two parts: the first focused on the relationship between the past and the present; the second offered a forward-looking vision in light of current uncertainties and ongoing transformations.

It was a dialogue enriched by multiple perspectives, thanks also to the composition of the group, which mirrored the different facets of the design ecosystem: internationally oriented designers, representatives of the wood-furniture industry, operators from the trade fair and event sector, specialised journalists, retail trade associations, and leading voices of Italy's design tradition. The conversation began with a reflection on roots – on the origins of the phenomena that brought us here. In the second half of the twentieth century, thirty years before the concept of 'cultural and creative enterprise' emerged in the Anglo-Saxon world, an alliance was born in Milan between culture and industry, between intellectually minded designers (in the city) and skilled artisan producers (in the surrounding areas). This alliance laid the groundwork for a form of excellence now recognised worldwide. Today, the culture/enterprise combination is well established. As someone at the group put it, 'Culture is an accelerator; within design lies the value capable of generating business.' Yet, paradoxically, the very recognition of that intangible value has pushed into the background the material, productive, and locally rooted dimension that was – and remains – a fundamental component of what is beautiful and well made. And the future? What is, and above all, what will be, the role of design culture in an increasingly vast, unstable, and interconnected world? As several participants underlined, culture remains a key differentiating factor for our businesses – but a paradigm shift is needed. Faced with the productive capacity and massive investments in creativity and knowledge made by new global economic players, design is no longer a European discipline or an Italian excellence,

but rather a last stronghold – an asset for preserving one of the few competitive factors we still possess: credibility.

In this light, the group sought to reflect on the various meanings of culture. The following synthesis gathers the participants' exact words:

- Culture as identity – meaning the design culture, between meaning and technique, that has made us different.
- Culture as memory – without resting on the nostalgia of past excellence.
- Culture as narrative – with attention not only to telling what has already happened but also to creating the conditions for new stories to emerge, especially for younger generations.
- Material culture – since manufacturers are also part of the cultural economy, and this culture must be nurtured through technical training (as in the ITS Academy promoted by FederlegnoArredo).
- Culture of transparency – because today one can no longer hide (as shown by the recent stock market troubles of some Italian firms).
- Culture of sustainability – meaning beautiful, well-made, and non-toxic.
- Culture of collaboration – recalling that the Salone is the only fair in the world owned by its exhibiting manufacturers.
- Culture of inclusion – to reach and engage even non-professionals (as Salone del Mobile.Milano did with the Design Kiosk in Piazza Scala).

In the face of unprecedented scenarios brought about by Artificial Intelligence and new algorithm-driven systems of design and production, culture presents itself to Milanese and Italian businesses not as an option but as a vital necessity. Not a garment to be worn when needed, but a strategic resource to be cultivated – acting both top-down and bottom-up, simultaneously. And without forgetting the culture of enterprise, which must be able to think long-term. As creating a quality product may take three years, but that product will sell for the next twenty.

Working Table 9

The audiences of design: behaviour and new forms of engagement

The Table investigates new audiences for design and how to reach them, aiming to identify ways of building and communicating experiences that generate active and informed participation.

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Summary

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The Round Table explored the theme of design audiences, aiming to reflect on ongoing transformations, the analytical tools currently available, and possible strategies to identify and engage new visitor segments. It quickly emerged that Design Week is an event of extraordinary significance for Milan – one capable of attracting diverse publics, generating considerable economic returns, and acting as an international platform for visibility for local entities connected to art, culture, and design.

A first topic of discussion concerned the growing availability of quantitative and geolocated data, which enables tracing visitor routes, identifying the most frequented urban districts (including Brera and Durini), and estimating average per-capita expenditure. These tools – already employed by operators such as Fastweb+Vodafone, and by the Regional Observatory for Tourism and Attractiveness – enable an increasingly refined understanding of visitor flows and behaviours, confirming the exceptional nature of the event with few equivalents in Europe in terms of intensity and impact.

Alongside this analytical dimension, the debate focused on the need to distinguish – while also coordinating – the two facets of the event: the Salone del Mobile.Milano and Design Week. Although perceived as parts of a single ecosystem, they attract different types of audience and generate forms of participation that do not always overlap. On the one hand, the Salone maintains closer adherence to disciplinary content and sectoral dynamics; on the other, Design Week, with its multitude of events and the widespread involvement of companies, institutions, and associations, sometimes risks dispersing attention and diluting the focus on design itself.

The key question raised by the Round Table was therefore how to attract new audiences to design while ensuring thematic coherence and added value for visitors. It was particularly noted that Milan's cultural associations find in Design Week an extraordinary opportunity for visibility and engagement with an international public. For this reason, major initiatives

should take responsibility for giving the city and its citizens opportunities to enjoy events and content beyond the most hectic days of the fair. A particularly well-received example was *Mother*, the installation curated by Robert Wilson for the Salone del Mobile. Milano, which remained open after the event, allowing Milanese citizens to experience it at a calmer pace and over a longer period, offering a virtuous model of how the value of a cultural proposal can be extended.

The proposals that emerged during the discussion focused on three main directions:

- Strengthening the critical centrality of design by promoting, in the months following the Salone, opportunities for reflection and evaluation by experts and critics – thus prolonging the event's impact and stimulating a qualified debate that does not end with the immediacy of the opening days.
- Enhancing the experience of the local public by returning part of the generated value to the Milanese urban fabric through lasting and accessible initiatives capable of extending beyond the congestion of Design Week, and engaging those unable to participate actively during its busiest days.
- Encouraging greater coordination between the Salone and Design Week by introducing clear criteria of relevance to design for events included in official calendars – in order to facilitate visitor orientation, reduce dispersion, and preserve the overall coherence of the offer.

The Round Table highlighted that the main challenge lies in transforming the breadth and richness of the programme into an opportunity for conscious engagement – one capable of attracting new audiences without losing the core identity of design. The prospect of closer dialogue among institutional actors, enterprises, and independent cultural organisations, therefore, appears to be a necessary condition for enhancing the symbolic and economic capital that Design Week continues to generate for Milan, its citizens, and the international community.

Working Table 10

Innovation networks among territorial ecosystems and design culture

The Table explores how public and private actors can contribute to building strategic alliances within the design supply chain, in order to strengthen territorial competitiveness through design culture.

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Summary

Luciano Galimberti
President, ADI

The Salone del Mobile.Milano clearly represents a vast ecosystem that brings together ideas and interests which, in Milan, find an extraordinary international stage – a platform that is increasingly being used by actors only partly connected to this ecosystem, who overlap it with products and communications that are largely self-referential. In effect, we are witnessing the emergence of a series of hybrid ecosystems that interact with – or simply superimpose themselves on – the Salone ecosystem for reasons of visibility and communication: ‘you can’t not be there’. Within the Salone ecosystem there are numerous innovation networks that only partially engage with one another and with its various components. A first area for improvement was identified in the opportunity to make accessible the many studies and analyses often produced by institutions that are part of the ecosystem, providing useful insights to better understand its own innovation profile. To foster this exchange, regular opportunities for discussion and an ongoing, structured thematic dialogue are essential – not occasional encounters.

A second area for improvement concerns the need for the Salone ecosystem to engage with distant innovation networks, encouraging cross-pollination of ideas and stimulating forms of lateral thinking. Today, innovation is often equated with digital technology, yet this does not exclude the possibility of reinterpreting or repositioning established techniques through a designer’s eye – as in the example discussed of Munari’s lamp, derived from the tubular

knitting technique used in hosiery and knitwear. The annual gathering of the Salone in Milan could therefore coincide with initiatives aimed at connecting contiguous or external innovation networks, positioning the Salone del Mobile as a catalyst for innovation within the wood–furniture sector. Design, as a systemic discipline, becomes a key factor in interpreting new drivers of innovation.

To realise this vision, it is essential to create attractive conditions for innovation networks beyond the Salone ecosystem. A first element of attraction lies in projects that cultural institutions can initiate to stimulate lateral thinking: exhibitions and workshops emerged as the most suitable formats. A second concerns the potential for economic matching between different ecosystems; for this to occur, the support of national, regional, and municipal institutions is crucial. A critical issue that emerged for the Salone ecosystem concerns the balance between international and local interests – between challenges of different scales and among actors that differ in size, objectives, and language. The Salone ecosystem must inevitably aspire to ever greater international relevance, yet local innovation networks – such as those linked to specialised vocational training schools – can become enviable success factors in a competitive context driven by quality. The final point addressed at the table concerned the communication of shared goals – not the mere sum of individual objectives, but a narrative capable of fostering a collective sense of purpose and positive momentum.

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