

# POP UP LAB

## CO-SELLING AND OTHER COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES FOR COMMERCIAL SPACES IN A NEW URBAN LANDSCAPE

POP UP Lab is a **laboratory of collaborative practices** in the use of closed or underused public and private spaces in our city centres. By engaging public and private actors, POP UP Lab manages to re-open these spaces to host projects developed by creative new entrepreneurs, makers, designers, and startups.

POP UP LAB is based on the intuition that to inject life and energy in urban areas hit by the economic crisis and by the changes in the way we live our cities, a system of incentives to the establishment of traditional businesses is not enough. What is needed is a shift towards collaborative models of space use that apply collaborative strategies of a commons-based urban economy, to define **new processes of engagement** based on mutually advantageous sharing agreements. The ultimate aim of POP UP Lab is that of developing **regulatory tools and public policies** capable of promoting **urban and social regeneration** in our cities.

The project started in **2014** in the municipality of Castelfranco di Sotto (Pisa) and has since been supported by the **Regional Government of Tuscany** and the Regional Authority for Participation, allowing for its implementation in five other Tuscan municipalities: Campi Bisenzio, Empoli, Quarrata, Monteverdi Marittimo and Cascina. In the summer of 2015, the seventh edition of POP UP Lab took place in Castelnuovo Magra, in Liguria.

### The problem



POP UP LAB starts with the acknowledgment of a profound change in the profile of Italian and European cities, embodied in its symbolic icon: **the closed shutter of an empty shop**. In Italy alone, for every new business started in 2014, 2 closed their doors, contributing to the progressive depletion of functions of our cities. At the same time, new creative and social forms of businesses are born: makers and social innovators looking for opportunities to provide their ideas with a physical testing space.

### The solution



POP UP LAB was created to cross these trends with a social and cultural experiment: inject new life in our cities by inviting those with interesting ideas to temporarily use some of the many closed stores in our cities. The initiative **leverages the contribution of different social actors**: city authorities provide the legal framework and the appropriate mechanism of incentives; the private owners of the spaces make them available for temporary use; creative new entrepreneurs answer a call for ideas to temporarily re-open the spaces and share them with others free of charges.

### The outcomes



POP UP LAB is providing the Regional Government of Tuscany with **guidelines to innovate the legal framework** regulating the use of commercial spaces and stores in urban areas. More specifically, POP UP LAB is providing inputs and recommendations to allow for easier procedures for temporary and shared use of shops and other commercial spaces by young entrepreneurs and makers, thus contributing to facilitating access to market, fighting unemployment and defining incentives for keeping commercial spaces open in our cities.



### How it works



POP UP LAB is a process designed to bring together public institutions, private actors and social innovators. First, an accurate **mapping** of empty or underused spaces is followed by the engagement of their owners with specific incentives designed in collaboration with the local authorities. Second, a widely publicised **call for ideas** gathers projects from a wide spectrum of areas and actors innovating in their field. Third, the proposals are evaluated and the **spaces assigned for temporary and shared use** to the winners of the call, which are encouraged to work in synergy with the other participants to network and develop activities aimed at engaging the local community. Finally, a **three day festival** with a dense calendar of workshops and events that involve artists, musicians and local organizations opens up the spaces to the public and provides traction for the permanence of the activities after the project end.

### The results



POP UP LAB as a **model of re-activation of urban centres through collaboration** has been experimented since 2014 in 7 towns, (total population 190.000) across 2 regions in Italy. 100 spaces have been reopened, 700 people have been involved as popuppers, owners, and startappers. In 2 of the major cities, 1/4 of the spaces remained open after the project end. In another, a consortium of makers is self-organizing to rent the showroom they used during the project. In yet another, the project opened the way to a strategic marketing intercommunal process to strengthen tourism in the area.

### And now?

What we learned from POP UP Lab lead to the development of [sharepopup.it](http://sharepopup.it) a new collaborative tool and online platform specifically designed to facilitate temporary sharing of commercial spaces by private actors.



POP UP Lab [www.popuplab.it](http://www.popuplab.it)

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