



Design for the hospitality of the future: protagonists in comparison

This was the title of the event we organised in July at Tricolore Design Hub, a 'dialogue' full of inspiration and new perspectives, much appreciated by a qualified audience of architecture firms, designers, contractors and companies

The speakers, **Maurizio Naro**, President of Federalberghi Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza, **Maria Rita Notari** of Augusto Contract, architect **Chiara Caberlon** and **Stefano Risolè** of Planetaria Hotels, moderated by **Gianpietro Sacchi** of POLI.design, gave an overview of the hotellerie world, with its shortcomings, demands and strengths.

As **Maurizio Naro** says, "everyone has their own version of what the future of the hotellerie should be. I have one, and you have to take into account that I am used to competing in a city like Milan, which was the first to see the overbearing entry of the big international chains: there are 30 chains there, a number that, outside Milan, is perhaps reached by adding the chains in Rome, Florence and Venice.

This has meant that the whole industry has to compete with brands that use very aggressive design studios, to invest and to raise its quality, because the international customer, especially since the Expo, wants quality, does not want conformism. All the 'hard brands' are moving towards an offer that proposes something new that, within the same brand, is repetitive because this, especially among the Z generation, is the demand: to find something that strikes, something that is Instagrammable, because the user wants to be at the centre of an iconic scene.

This has led to investment, to dialogue with architects, perhaps not specialised in hotels, which leads to the difficulty of combining the functionality required by the hotelier with the architect's idea of interior design, especially in the confrontation of two strong personalities, such as the hotelier and the architect.

The future of hotels? There are around 30,000 hotels in Italy, many of which are in need of renovation, but one wall they often hit is the generational changeover, which often has different objectives: those who have more traditional ideas clash with those who want to bring something new, not so much in the aesthetic field, but in terms of services. Services that are scary, because they need staff and, since the pandemic, this has become a very important issue.

This is to say that 30,000 hotels means having 30,000 hoteliers, who have 30,000 different ideas: the hotel is a complex machine, the operation of which must be perfectly known, and above all, the designer must know the hotelier and succeed in convincing even those who still maintain: 'but we have always done it this way' that the improvement and adaptation to the guest's requests, leads to an improvement in economic terms as well. Fortunately, the generational change has started to give a push in the right direction.

Chiara Caberlon, an architect specialising in hotellerie, endorses Dr. Naro's assertion that the client/architect relationship must be one of trust and based on a shared objective.

'I specialised in hotels because I found interesting, multifaceted topics in this sector, with so many themes to explore each time: each project is different and special and the search for the special has become spasmodic.

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Every hotel wants to be different and to be so, it is necessary to create narratives, a story telling that supports, at a commercial and marketing level, the designer's idea because, in the end, the project must be sold, told. The hotelier and the designer are indivisible and complementary, and their collaboration must lead to the same result, which is that customers are happy, satisfied.

Fundamental in a hotel is the fluidity of the spaces, as well as the fact that the offer is not exclusive to the structure, but inclusive, that it includes and attracts those who come from outside, that it is a polarising element not only for the guest who sleeps, but also for those who live near the hotel and frequent it for other reasons. This also leads to the revaluation of areas of the city, also shifting investment, because the hotel makes a destination'.

Maria Rita Notari, founder of Augusto Contract, talked about who the general contractor is, a perhaps somewhat lesser-known figure.

"As a general contractor, and we have the presumption to say that we are the first general contractor, not because we are the best, but because we introduced our general contracting business to the food service spaces, particularly for the restaurant chains that were emerging and we made Italian chocolates, the right sandwich, poke houses, these worlds known in this environment, to which we presented ourselves as those who do both construction and plant work, and furnishings.

What distinguishes us from our competitors is the fact that we do not design the format: we are the ideal partners of the architects, with whom we have grown up. Sometimes we are called upon by the client who has his own architect, to whom he had entrusted the format of his chain; other times it is the architect who contacts us, wanting to 'free himself' from all those activities that concern adherence to deadlines, costs...: once a specification has been defined, we take charge of the site and take care of maintaining the agreements made and what has been countersigned.

We make executives, we don't draw up plans, so we work closely with the architect who is sometimes a little less expert in the field of catering and bars (the sector in which we were born), but more 'strong' on the emotional image that the restaurant must give: we make it functional, and the close relationship with the designer has made us grow, particularly in the world of catering.

We also approached the world of the hotel industry, because, thanks to collaborations with designers and managers of chains, we entered the 'Combo' world. It was a wonderful experience. We realised three of them, taking care of the common parts and those dedicated to catering, and reception".

Stefano Risolè, Brand and Development Manager of Planetaria Hotels, told us about the hotel today.

"The hotels in the Planetaria Hotels chain are different from each other, because each one has to follow the trends and needs of the customer.

There are so many characteristics that a hotel must have, which are related to the theme of repetitiveness, evolution, management.

Evolution: nowadays we are moving more and more towards the spirit of the place, so when it comes to hotel chains, if a new hotel opens, it must remember the chain, but above all the spirit of the place where it will rise, paying close attention to how the world has changed and the demands of the customer.

The hotel chain concept of 20 years ago has been completely overturned: not all structures have to be the same, no matter where in the world they are built, but each one has to have characteristics of the place where it is built and of the user who will use it, always with an eye towards functionality.

Fundamental is the spirit of the place, the genius loci, to be balanced with the trends and needs of the spaces, which must be so special that they remain in the memories.

For a new hotel, some of the points to keep in mind are to maintain the historicity of the property, in the case of renovation, to create the story telling appropriate to the place, to understand how the structure can function, to imagine what the customer might want in that structure, the management, to try to anticipate trends.

Another very important issue to take into account during the design phase is management, i.e. how the structure is to be maintained over time: the structure that opens today, what will it be like in 10? And this depends on how it is designed, the materials and suppliers chosen, and also for this reason the hotelier must understand that his work and that of the designer run on parallel tracks, with the same objective".

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