

# SOHAM

Regione Toscana - Comune di Minucciano (Lucca)



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# Project Overview

**SOHAM** addresses sustainability through a **circular design** approach, using marble processing waste to create a functional and innovative design element. The idea stems from the desire to create a space dedicated to immersive meditation, encouraging individuals to reflect on their inner well-being. Discarded marble materials are used to craft an **ergonomic seat** designed to support outdoor practice.

The concept of SOHAM is rooted in the relationship between **silence, well-being, and nature**. Silence – understood as an element that enhances sensory perception and facilitates inner reflection – becomes the starting point for designing a space dedicated to immersive meditation. The SOHAM seat is designed to support correct posture, improving circulation and user comfort throughout the meditation session.



## Problem Statement

*Minucciano faces gradual depopulation and limited economic diversification while its cultural and natural assets remain under-com-municated; the town needs new, place-sensitive channels that reconnect residents, visitors, and everyday practices with meaningful opportunities for wellbeing and local value creation.*

## Turbulences

- Local knowledge, traditions, and everyday practices are dispersed across people and places, so the town's identity and attractions struggle to reach potential visitors, partners, and funders.
- Visitor flows concentrate in short periods; limited services, coordination, and year-round programming reduce the area's appeal for longer stays and steady local income.
- Young people lack diversified local jobs, training, and creative pathways; this weakens intergenerational transmission of skills and reduces the community's capacity to innovate and retain talent.

## Bold Vision

To embed mindful, circular design into everyday public life, by creating a network of place-based meditative seats crafted from recovered marble that invite people to stop, reflect, and reconnect with the landscape. SOHAM will pair ergonomic, site-fixed seating with a subtle system of natural cues inspired by the four elements, and a small-scale program of guided practices, workshops, and residencies that animate each installation.

## Where We are Now:

The SOHAM concept is authored by Gabriela Caballero Villa and Aurora Giuntini, two students at the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence (DiDA)

At the NEB Festival held in Gramolazzo on 14 June 2025 the idea was awarded with the First prize overall and Citizens' choice Award.

*Pilot status: now in its prototyping phase*

## How did we get here?

II semester 2024:

- a B4M local node was created in Minucciano, with the involvement of 4-Helix stakeholders.
- thanks to an agreement between the Tuscany Region and DiDA, a group of international students was engaged in an idea contest, after a study visit onsite.

I semester 2025:

- all concept designs were presented to the local population in a public event and then voted by a jury of experts (weighted 60%) as well as by the citizens themselves (weighted 40%) through a combined online and offline polling system.

II semester 2025:

- private funds were mobilised to support the prototyping phase.

**What if...**

# What if...

As a Resident or Visitor

I could find a quiet place nearby to pause, breathe, and reconnect with myself

With an ergonomic meditation seat made from recovered marble

So that wellbeing, reflection, and contact with nature become part of my everyday experience.



# Who will benefit?

## Target Groups

- **Residents and wellbeing-seekers** could access quiet, thoughtfully designed places for meditation and reflection, discovering new ways to reconnect with silence, nature, and their own rhythms through a seat that supports posture and comfort.
- **Visitors and slow-travellers** could experience Minucciano through restorative pauses along trails and viewpoints, encountering sensory elements inspired by the four natural forces that deepen their connection with the landscape.
- **Young people and new comers** could explore creative and professional opportunities linked to circular design, eco-resins, and marble reuse, finding new reasons to stay, return, or invest their skills locally.
- **Local artisans and makers** could gain visibility and new commissions by experimenting with marble waste, ecological resins, and handcrafted finishes that blend tradition with innovation.
- **Cultural and social organisations** could host guided practices, workshops, and seasonal activities around the installations, strengthening community life and promoting a culture of mindfulness.
- **The Municipality of Minucciano** could activate other dispersed natural areas through a coherent system dedicated to wellbeing and circularity, reinforcing the town's identity as a place of silence, nature, and mindful living.

# Key Learnings

The project shows that silence and wellbeing can become territorial resources. When people are offered spaces that encourage pausing, breathing, and reconnecting with nature, Minucciano's landscape becomes not only a backdrop but an active catalyst for inner balance and mindful presence.

**SOHAM** demonstrates that circular design can unlock new forms of value. By transforming marble waste into a refined, ergonomic meditation seat, the project proves that discarded materials can support innovation, aesthetics, and environmental responsibility at the same time.

It also reveals that wellbeing can be a driver of rural regeneration. By creating spaces for meditation and reflection, the project opens new opportunities for guided practices, creative residencies, and year-round activities that diversify the local economy.



# NEB Working Principles

## **Participatory Process** **Ambition: To Engage**

- 4-Helix Stakeholder Involvement
- Consultation of the Local Population
- Circularity-driven Design

## **Multi-Level Engagement** **Ambition: To Liaise**

- Local B4M Node as starting point & network hub
- Regional Government as prime motor (with B4M)
- Now building links with the European NEB hub

## **Transdisciplinarity** **Ambition: To Merge**

- Material science with environmental psychology
- Young and seasoned designers
- Ergonomic research with circular production

# Common Themes

- Living with landscape and natural rhythms
- Circularity of materials and mindful design
- Community, memory, and contemporary wellbeing
- Outdoor sociality and the culture of slow public space
- Sustainable regeneration and territorial resilience





# Sharing for the Future

What knowledge can contribute to the B4M Toolbox

## **Place based material and sensory knowledge**

- How to transform marble processing waste into a refined, durable object that supports wellbeing, demonstrating that circular design can be both technically robust and emotionally resonant.
- How to integrate silence, posture, and natural cues into outdoor spaces to create environments that enhance focus, perception, and connection with the landscape.
- How to design meditative installations that remain fixed in place yet feel open, welcoming, and deeply rooted in the identity of Minucciano's quarry territory.

## **Wellbeing as a driver of regeneration**

- How practices of mindfulness and slow presence can activate dispersed natural areas, turning quiet corners and trails into meaningful public spaces.
- How to pair circular materials with sensory design to create experiences that attract visitors year-round while supporting local artisans, guides, and cultural operators.
- How to build community literacy around wellbeing, helping residents recognise silence, nature, and everyday rhythms as shared assets for the future of the territory.