



# BrianzaLUG

## Brianza LEGO® Users Group

by Jetro de Château and Francesco Frangioja

### When and how did the idea for your community come about and what was its original purpose?

BrianzaLUG was founded in 2012, when a bunch of friends started to meet on a regular basis, both because we shared the same passion (LEGO bricks, building together, etc.) and because we lived in the same area. The goal is and has always been to base everything on friendship, both between the original founders and with those individuals and families who have joined the group over time.

### To what degree has that goal been fulfilled and how has it evolved over time?

Our goal has been achieved since the foundation. The prerequisite required to be part of BrianzaLUG is friendship. You enter BrianzaLUG because you are a friend of one of the members and over time this friendship extends to the other members, with varying degrees of intensity and fellowship, extending to partners and kids.

### How many people are working on the site and how did you meet?

The 'core' team includes 11 guys: [brianzalug.it/?page\\_id=375](https://www.brianzalug.it/?page_id=375). Before the COVID situation, we were used to meeting every two weeks over pizzas and beer. During lockdown we have organized video chats via Zoom while trying to maintain the same frequency of meetings, and even now, since the region in which we live is still 'critical' and subject to special rules, we continue to meet and talk regularly both via WhatsApp (with a group chat) and Microsoft Team.

### What plans/goals do you have for the future of the community?

The goal is always the same: to have fun with LEGO, in a friendly environment, by spending time with people who take care of each other.

### How is your community funded?

We have no sources of funding. When we need something (website costs, clothing, etc.), we organize this ourselves with internal fundraising.

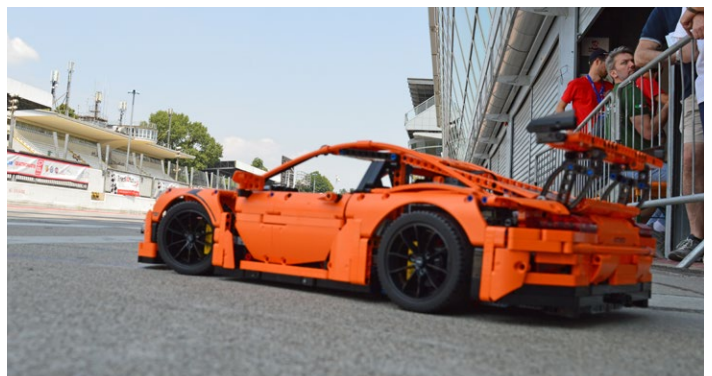
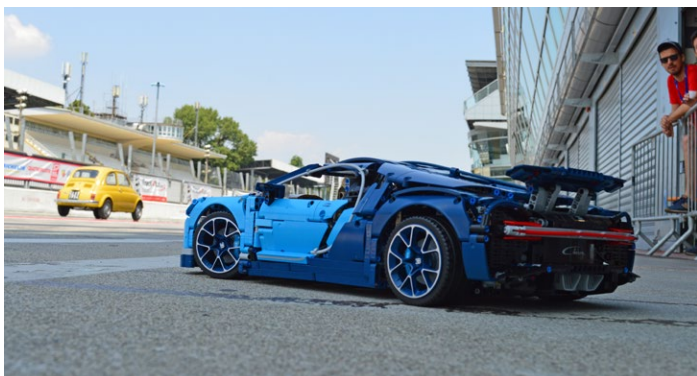
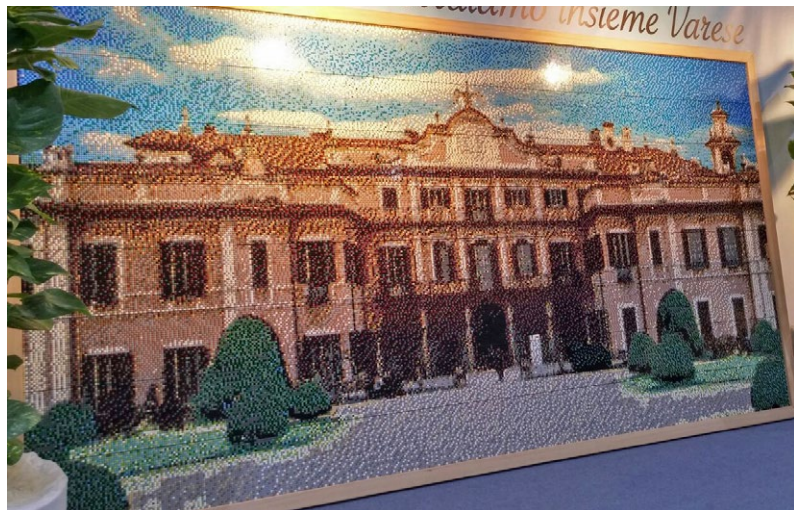
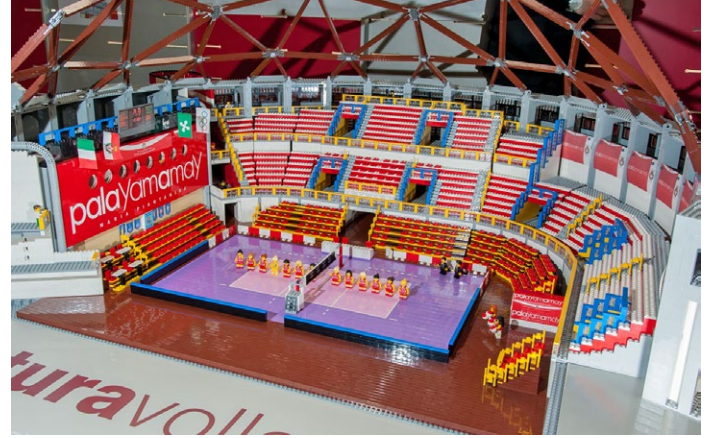
### How do you see the future of your community?

We can't wait to resume organizing our events, both recurring and new ones, welcoming in the meantime all of those who show interest in being part of this great family of ours. While waiting to resume this activity, we are working on some community projects, one of which we have returned to again after a 4-year break to re-apply for project support.

### How has Covid-19 changed or affected your community? How have you adapted to these challenges?

The two worst things we faced were the impossibility to meet as we had been used to (as we were a group of friends before becoming an AFOL community) and the fact that we had to cancel all our events—which for our group are an important opportunity to get involved for all those members who can not participate regularly in our 'pizza and beer' evenings. For a 'physical' community like ours, not being able to meet each other was dramatic. The same went for events: for reasons of distance, time or work, these are often the only occasions for everyone to meet each other with any regularity. Cancelling events meant for us not being able to see some people for a long time, so we can say that Covid-19 has struck us more in our feelings than our health and physical well-being.





We have partly solved this with video-chat sessions over Zoom and Team, but it's definitely not the same as chatting in front of a pizza or around a table. Always keeping the security aspects very much in mind, we slowly started to meet again, but always with great caution because many of us interact for work with a lot of people and at home we have elderly parents and/or children to consider.

### Describe your relationship with LEGO?

Conflicting, in some ways. LEGO bricks are a hobby and a passion. LEGO as a company... well, it is a company. We know very well that they are aimed at generating turnover and profits. We also know that whatever they give to AFOL Communities is a bonus and not an entitlement, and we recognize that while we often do not understand or agree with their choices, this doesn't mean they

are wrong. On the other hand, we really don't understand some behaviours towards communities: from leaks that are leaks only for communities, to certain rules included in the Fair Play Policy. That said, we are also a community that has long since put aside everything about sets to orient itself more towards MOCs and community dioramas. So all things considered, issues concerning the 'world' of sets leave us mostly indifferent.

### What changes/improvements would you like to see in that relationship?

Surely, we wouldn't mind more involvement with our local office. We have excellent skills (LEGO Technic, MOCs and dioramas) and a good network of contacts (newspapers, YouTube channels, museums, event organization, etc). We would like to be able to make them available to our local office for organizing live events, with the

public, etc. when launching prestigious sets (e.g., Lamborghini, Ducati, Crocodile...)

### Can you share any anecdotes about your community?

A tradition we started last year during our flagship event is named "the parallel event". In practice, this is what it is all about: during the event, a sort of reserved area is set up backstage where, in rotation, exhibitors meet for a tasting moment where they eat the typical culinary specialties of the place where the event is being held (cold cuts, typical bread, etc.) and celebrate their meeting with locally produced wines (all obviously far from the eyes of visitors and children). Put this way it doesn't sound like much, but it's a time that everyone looks forward to: not only for the food and wine, but for the family atmosphere that is created.