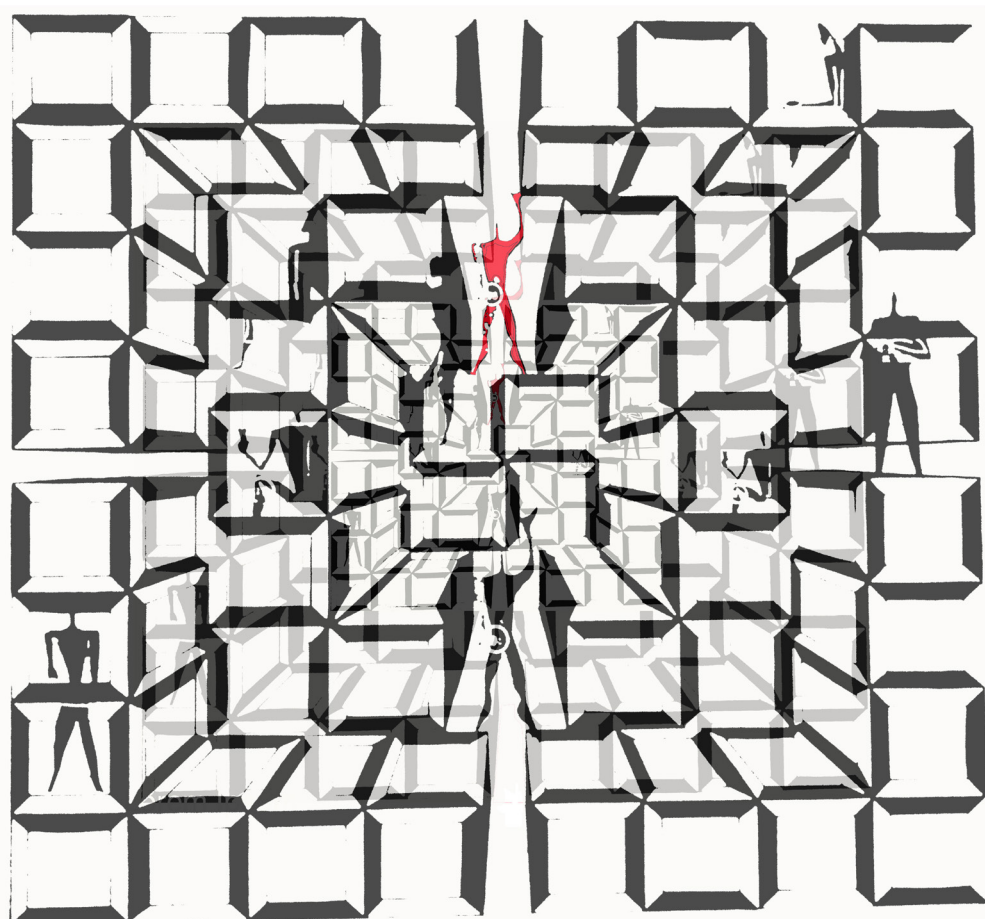


# De\_Sign Environment Landscape City\_2020

Atti

*a cura di* Giulia Pellegrini



*Atti*

## **De\_Sign Environment Landscape City/Di\_Segnare Ambiente Paesaggio Città**

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## CONTENTS/CONTENUTI

### **T1. Survey and Representation of Architecture and Environment**

T1. Rilievo e Rappresentazione dell'Architettura e dell'Ambiente

- 9 THE FORTRESS OF HVAR TVRDALJ IN CROATIA. SURVEYS AND MODELS  
**L. Corniello, A. de Cicco, L. Giordano**
- 17 UNIFIED SURVEY AS COGNITIVE TOOL  
**S. Eriche, G. Pellegrì**
- 29 DETECT VS REVEAL. THE SURVEY AS AN INVESTIGATIVE TOOL IN THE DIDACTIC EXPERIENCE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT  
**P. Mei**
- 35 THE MOSQUES OF THE CITY OF BERAT IN ALBANIA  
**A. Trematerra, E. Mirra**
- T2. Drawing for the Landscape**  
T2. Disegno per il Paesaggio
- 43 NEW SIGNS FOR THE URBAN LANDSCAPE. THE BUS RAPID TRANSIT REDESIGNS THE CITY  
**F. Bianconi, M. Filippucci, M. Meschini, G. Pelliccia, M. Seccaroni**
- 59 ORTHODOX MONASTERIES IN THE LANDSCAPE OF ISLAND GREECE  
**D. Carleo, L. Corniello, G. Pio Lento**
- 69 SLOW MOBILITY-BASED REPRESENTATION OF COASTAL TERRITORY. THE COSTA DEI TRABUCCHI CASE STUDY  
**D. D'Uva, F. Eugeni**
- 75 REGENERATING CHIASCIO: THE FIRST GREEN COMMUNITY IN UMBRIA  
**A. Fancelli, F. Bianconi, M. Filippucci**
- 89 COMPLEXITY, COHERENCE AND DISTINCTION: PIET OUDOLF AND THE DESIGN OF SPONTANEITY INSPIRING BY NATURE  
**S. Melli**
- 101 FOOD AS A MEANS OF CHANGE FOR CITIES AND LANDSCAPES  
**G. Tucci**
- T3. The drawings for the project: tracks visions and previsions**  
T3. I Disegni per il progetto: tracce-visioni e pre-visioni
- 111 TERRAFORMING MARS VS EARTH'S ANTHROPOCENE  
**F. Burlando**
- 123 THE DISSOLUTION OF ARCHITECTURE ACCORDING TO YONA FRIEDMAN  
**E. Lo Giudice, M. Scaglione**

ARTISTS IN THE FRENCH ARSENALS OF LOUIS XIV <b>C. Tacchella</b>	131
THE DRAWING AS A COGNITIVE PROBE FOR THE PROJECT <b>M. Valentino</b>	147
<b>T4. Margins: the signs of memory and the city in progress</b> T4. Margini: i segni della memoria e della città in progress	
OB PORTUS. LANDSCAPE AS MEDIUM AND STRATEGY IN AMERICAN PORT-CITY ARTICULATION <b>F. Bellora</b>	157
NEO-PRIAMÀR. NEW SHAPES FOR THE BORDER HERITAGE <b>L. Mandraccio, B. Moretti, D. Servente</b>	171
<b>T5. Visual Culture and Communication: from idea to project</b> T5. Cultura visiva e Comunicazione: dall'idea al progetto	
FROM CONFINED SPACES TO INFINITE SPACES: THE REPRESENTATION IN SCREEN- MEDIATED GAMES <b>G. Attademo</b>	183
DESIGNING WITH PERSONAL DATA – A PARAMETRIC VISUAL EXPERIENCE AT TEDXGENOVA <b>A. Vacanti</b>	195
WHAT IS THE BEST GRAPHIC TOOL FOR CO-DESIGNING “HOME” SPACES WITHIN REFUGEE CAMPS? <b>F. Vercellino</b>	201
<b>T6. Architectural Features</b> T6. Emergenze architettoniche	
NATURAL OR ARTIFICIAL? AESTHETICS AND FUNCTIONS ON BUILDINGS GREEN ENVELOPES <b>M. Canepa, A. Giachetta, A. Magliocco, K. Perini</b>	209
A SENSORIAL APPROACH TO NATURAL LANDSCAPE <b>D. Opincariu, A. Motu, L. Vartic</b>	219
<b>T7. The colour and the environment</b> T7. Il colore e l'ambiente	
FROM THE “SMOKEY BLUES” OF THE GRAN CARRÉ IN THE TUILERIES GARDEN TO THE ORNAMENTAL SPONTANEOUS GRASSES IN THE AEOLUS' GARDENS IN PARIS <b>A. Gherzi</b>	231
THE DIGITAL CATALOGING OF THE PAINTED FAÇADE DECORATION <b>G. Pellegrini, F. Salvetti</b>	241
COLOURS FOR URBAN ARCHITECTURES: THE LUSO-BRASILEIRA AZULEJARIA (XVII-XX CENTURIES), NOTES FOR A CRITICAL SURVEY <b>M. Spesso, G.L. Porcile</b>	253

### **T8. Perception and territorial identity**

T8. Percezione e identità territoriale

- 263 THE 'GREEN' AS ELEMENT OF REGIONAL IDENTITY  
**P. Burlando, I. Vagge**
- 273 TRACKS, STORYTELLING, CONTEMPORARY DESIGN FOR THE TERRITORY  
**R. Fagnoni, C. Olivastrì**
- 285 MAPS FROM PUBLIC SPACE TO RELATIONAL SPACE  
**M. Gausa, N. Canessa**
- 295 SLOW TOURISM LINKS HANDICRAFTS AND TELLS THE IDENTITY OF THE TERRITORIES  
**L. Parodi**
- 301 THE PERCEPTION OF INTERMITTENT RIVERS IN URBAN AREAS  
**M. Pitanti**
- 313 INSIDE THE SECRET GARDEN  
**D. Repetto**

### **T9. Iconographic Cultural and Landscape Heritage: art, literature and design effects**

T9. Patrimonio iconografico – culturale – paesaggistico: arte, letteratura e ricadute progettuali

- 325 DUAL MIND: FROM CULTURE TO DESIGN  
**A. Bertirotti**
- 331 ANIMATED REFLECTIONS: AN EVERYMAN'S GUIDE TO POSTMODERNITY  
**A. Canevari, G. Galli**
- 349 SYMBOLOLOGY AND MYTH IN ANCIENT SHIPS: THE APLUSTRE  
**M. Corradi**
- 365 THE DRAWING THE IMAGE THE SPACE OF THE GARCÍA SANABRIA MUNICIPAL PARK IN SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE  
**A. Donelli**
- 375 LA RAPPRESENTAZIONE DELLO SPAZIO NELLA LETTERATURA CINEMATOGRAFICA ORIENTALE. IL RAPPORTO TRA UOMO E SPAZIO IN PARASITE  
**R. Marrocco**

### **T10. Signs and Drawings for Design**

T10. Segni e disegni per il design

- 393 THE ART OF WOVEN VEGETABLE FIBER, DECORATIVE SIGNS AND FUNCTIONAL SHAPES DERIVED FROM THE ENVIRONMENT  
**E. Carassale**
- 405 SIGNS AND THICKNESSES OF THE CITY: THE ROLE OF PRE-MODERN CARTOGRAPHY  
**A. Iacomoni**
- 413 DECOMPOSITION AND RECOMPOSITION OF NATURAL LANDSCAPE  
**D. Opincariu, A. Motu, L. Vartic**



COMMUNICATION, ORIENTATION AND WAYFINDING ABOARD GREAT SHIPS: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED AND USER-CENTRED SYSTEM <b>N. Sorrentino</b>	423
<b>T11. Advanced Representation</b> T11. Rappresentazione avanzata	
BERAT (ALBANIA) DIGITAL MODELING FOR ADVANCED REPRESENTATION <b>D. Carleo, A. De Cicco, M. Gargiulo, F. Guerriero, G. P. Lento</b>	433
FEATURES OF LANDSCAPE, A VISUAL INTERPRETATION <b>D. Opincariu, A. Motu, L. Vartic</b>	443

## **Traces, rituals, narrative**

### **Design for the territory**

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#### **Abstract**

On 11 December 2019, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee proclaimed the transhumance intangible cultural heritage of humanity. A tradition that has its roots since prehistoric times, an important recognition that confirms the social, economic, historical and environmental value of pastoralism in Italy. An immaterial heritage, which materializes through heterogeneous traces and objective evidence of tools, clothing, iconographic, photographic, biological and archival sources.

In this paper, we intend to focus on the role of design in the narration of this material heritage, which becomes a story and legacy of a Ligurian territorial tradition. The design role is to mend relationships and gaps through the traces that have overlapped in the history of our territory, through sensitive storytelling that can also become a stimulus for a revival of tradition in a contemporary key.

The Interreg Italy-France Maritime Programme, led by Regione Liguria, in the project Cambio Via-Cammini Biodiversità Valorizzazione Itinerari e Accessibilità della Transumanza is an opportunity to rethink strategies for Ligurian Parks as Beigua, Antola, Aveto.

The aim is to use the project as a tool for interpreting the values of the territory through communication, products and services that can promote land policies capable of supporting resilient communities that operate and live in fragile areas.

#### **Abstract**

L'11 dicembre 2019 il comitato del patrimonio mondiale dell'Unesco, ha proclamato la transumanza patrimonio culturale immateriale dell'umanità. Una tradizione che affonda le sue radici sin dalla preistoria, un riconoscimento importante che conferma il valore sociale, economico, storico e ambientale della pastorizia nel territorio italiano. Un patrimonio immateriale, che si materializza attraverso tracce e testimonianze eterogenee di carattere oggettivo riguardanti utensili, abiti, fonti iconografiche, fotografiche, biologiche e archivistiche.

In questo paper si intende approfondire il ruolo del design nella narrazione di questo patrimonio materico e materiale, che diviene racconto e testimonianza di una tradizione territoriale ligure. Il ruolo del design è quello di ricucire relazioni e contrasti con le tracce che si sono sovrapposte nella storia del nostro territorio, attraverso una narrazione sensibile che possa divenire anche stimolo per un rilancio della tradizione in chiave contemporanea.

Il Programma Interreg Italia-Francia Marittimo, con capofila Regione Liguria, nel progetto Cambio Via-Cammini Biodiversità Valorizzazione Itinerari e Accessibilità della Transumanza, diviene occasione per ripensare strategie di valorizzazione all'interno dei Parchi liguri interessati: Beigua, Antola, Aveto. L'obiettivo è quello di utilizzare il progetto come uno strumento di interpretazione dei valori del territorio attraverso comunicazione, prodotti e servizi che possano favorire politiche territoriali capaci di sostenere le comunità resilienti che operano e vivono su aree fragili.

*Si scendeva verso la pianura  
e la pianura non veniva mai,  
i monti partorivano altri monti.  
Sopra gli Appennini la nostra carne era dura,  
come le tegole, come i muri.  
L'aria di febbraio era così sottile  
che si spezzava come si spezza un capello.  
Da lontano le vacche erano vacche  
e gli uomini farfalle  
Svegliarsi nella paglia dopo aver sognato  
la casa fresca di buon mattino,  
spazzata appena con rami di rosmarino.  
Andare e poi tornare, questo era il mestiere:  
cucire una terra all'altra col filo del fiato.  
[Franco Arminio, Trasumanze, 2017]*

## **Introduction**

Including transhumance in the intangible UNESCO list means to recognize its precious contribution to the cultural heritage of humanity, from which we benefit today and we will transmit to future generations as an inestimable source of life and inspiration.

The issue of inheritance inevitably leads back to responsibility and impact.

Responsibility means the duty to preserve virtuous practices, to take care of the territory that hosts us, to respect it and to highlight the values that are reflected in the interactions between man and the environment, in which balance and well-being produce zero impact.

Environmental impact is the measurement of sustainability and it refers to the systemic conditions by which human activities - at the planetary and regional level - do not disturb the natural cycles they are based more than the resilience of the planet allows. At the same time, they haven't to ruin the natural capital that will be transmitted to future generations (Manzini & Vezzoli, 2007).

UNESCO tends to exalt and preserve local specificities sedimented over time, in contrast to the growing trend towards the universality of places. Therefore transhumance inevitably refers to a universal and ancient practice, which provides one of the first human forms of nomadism to moving flocks, herds, cattle to find the best habitats and pastures during the changing seasons. All the effects it produces on communities, cultures and traditions are deeply local and sometimes rooted in very restricted areas, creating a mixed palette of rituals.

Primarily transhumance may seem to be a very specific and delimited area to the zootechnic sector, but deepening the subject many repercussions on various sectors emerge (fig.1) such as botany, environment, landscape, anthropology, sociology, history, food, folklore, architecture, art, self-production, craftsmanship, all elements that create territorial culture. Transhumance shapes relations among people, animals and ecosystems. It involves shared rituals and social practices, caring for and breeding animals, managing land, forests and water resources, and dealing with natural hazards. Observing today’s rural landscapes and inland areas crossed by sheep tracks, it is hard to find traces of these narratives. Territorial signs are often covered by negligence and abandonment, and cultural traces are almost hidden or diminished as if they were relegated to the past. The material culture formed in the pre and post-war agricultural tradition of Italy survived immune to the global languages of modernity still lives in some backwaters of the Italian hinterland. It constitutes a very precious depository and a resource that we should know and observe with new eyes. A culture only apparently archaic gives us back an iconographic heritage full of memories and still very current because it is linked to the roots of our past.

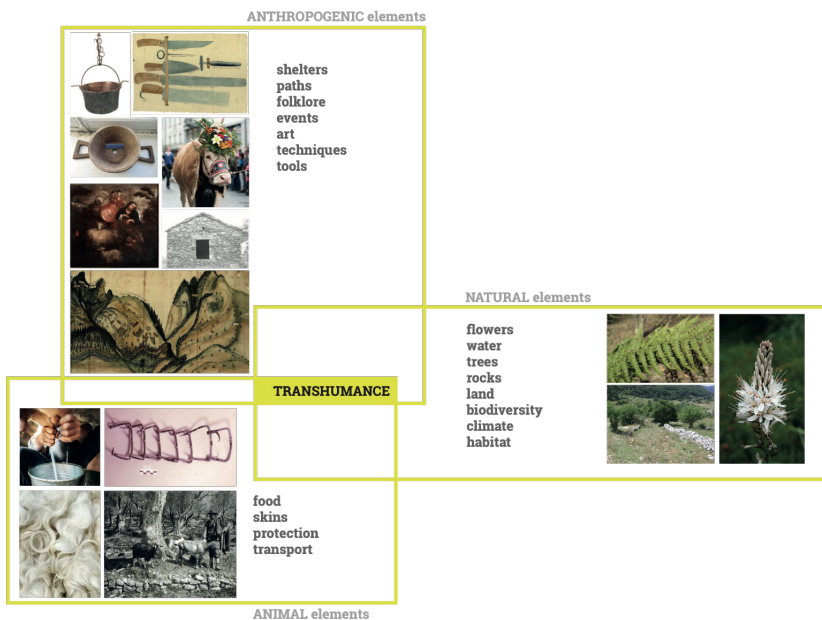


Fig.1 Transhumance as a reservoir of natural, animal, human resources

The Ministry considers transhumance to be protected as a “cultural element with a strong identity component” that over time “has been able to create strong social and cultural links” between countries those have practised it and crossed, and as “sustainable economic activity”, based on a link between man and nature. The importance of intangible heritage, in fact, lies “in the wealth of knowledge and skills that are passed on from one generation to the next”, explains UNESCO (Spadaro, 2018). A fundamental issue generated innumerable repercussions in Western culture, from its most distant Greek-Roman origins: it has considered the mankind as the master of nature, thus allowing him to perceive the environment as an object of domination susceptible to violence.

Never before have we witnessed the power of nature in the face of human precariousness committed to re-establishing priorities and balanced relationships with contexts, so transhumance becomes a reference based on a stable and millenary balance between man and the environment, preserved from changing customs, scientific and technological discoveries until a break occurred in the twentieth century.

Through the European programme Interreg Italy-France Maritime, specifically in the project Cambio Via-Cammini Biodiversità Valorizzazione Itinerari e Accessibilità della Transumanza, the aim is to develop transversal territorial strategies, but also a direct comparison with local communities.

The lead partner Regione Liguria works with the University of Genoa with other local subjects of the territory, together with the regions of Tuscany, Sardinia, Corsica, in order to elaborate synergic lines of intervention through acupuncture actions that can bring benefits to the wider system.

The research, started in July 2019, aims to build a model of territorial cooperation based on local communities that are guardians of biodiversity in marginalized areas at risk of abandonment. The Research Group<sup>1</sup> intends to contribute to the achievement of the general objectives by intervening with its 'know-how' on three different axes:

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>METHOD</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>
quality food repositions on the market	visualization and communication of the supply chains	creation of narrative packaging
interest towards material culture and rites that distinguish internal territories	updating and re-designing some artefacts belonging to rural life, to raise people's awareness of a more balanced relationship between nature, raw materials and products.	designing artefacts from local materials, techniques or traditions.
development of itineraries slow tourism network	creation of experiences and tourist attraction system, linking traces, rituals and communities in ecosystem services and new paths of tradition	wayfinding, communication and different channels promotion

*Table 1 Cambio Via – The role of Design: goal, method, actions (by authors)*

The interest in an underestimated and often discredited field can be revitalized by creating a new aesthetic of the imperfect based on the authenticity of raw materials, the poetics of tradition and the strong territorial component.

More than ever we need to rediscover and rebalance this link with the landscape and start again from the inner areas, from the effort and sacrifice of resilient communities to protect important parts of our culture, identity and history.

Designing territory means recognizing and preserving the identity of local culture in a close link with the territory and the community that induced it. Identity is, therefore, the starting point of any territorial planning hypothesis (Cristallo et al, 2017).

### Repositioning of food products

The project aims to promote an economic model for the hinterland based on social and environmental values; to enhance typical products, places of production and connected routes to reach high quality markets; to build virtuous relationships and networks with urbanized areas and the most attentive consumers, to achieve a cultural, economic and social redemption of inner areas communities.

The inland areas that overlook the coast of the eastern Ligurian coast are parks, enclosed within narrow limits, but open to the infinite number of opportunities. They are Parks of Aveto, Antola and Beigua (fig.2) recognized with the law on protected areas (L.R.12/95). Hidden lands, forgotten reality from which many people have escaped.

Lands that bear witness to stories of tenacity and mutation, even though they are reluctant to renew their projects. Lands where seems to be nothing, where roads are few and narrow, connections are inaccessible, isolated houses, the network missing, villages not equipped and poor services. Where sometimes discomfort has become a defence against conformism and a generator of genuineness.

Lands where nothing can be everything, revealing not only the wonder of nature but also of a Mediterranean lifestyle. The research proposes to deepen and enhance the active supply chains, the stories of young heroic entrepreneurs who decided to invest in biodiversity and authenticity of their products, in the methods of production, diffusion and communication of food, but also in the values of the territories.

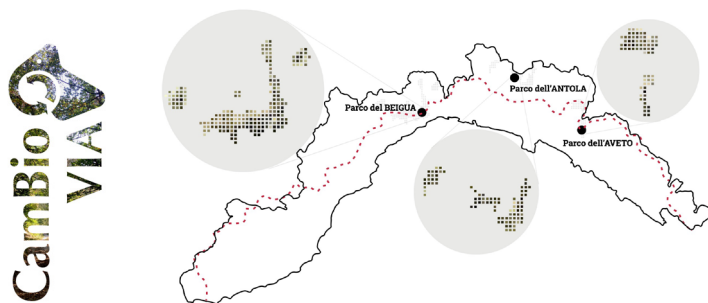


Fig. 2 Parks interested in Interreg CamBio VIA research

The challenges of these companies are against wolves, natural disasters, but also against the ruthless market that floods small businesses with the industrial competition.

The first project's strategy was to interview and get to know directly the farmers in their territories, to listen and see the difficulties they have to daily overcome, and the different methods developed.

There are two main supply chains, milk and meat. If milk is more transparent, meat is unknown even to the farmers themselves, who often do not know the distribution and final retailers of their products.

Three categories of people emerge from this investigation phase: the 'prostheses', the 'established' and the 'weak'. The 'prostheses' are those people who have made the choice to change their lives in the first place, energetic people who are curious and driven to improvement and innovation. The 'established' are often those who have run the family business for generations and try to confirm a balance, are not very prone to change, are more inclined to the status quo. Finally, there are the 'weak' companies, which struggle to survive, but do not know how to recover and they also have lost the confidence and passion for the work they do.

The sense of disorientation of the most fragile ones highlights the lack of network producers that can work both internally to create a system of actors generating a high biological value from the Park, and externally to present themselves as organized and consolidated systems, giving proof of reliability. The proliferation of self-produced brands of each park to catalogue food products from protected green areas, it is certainly a good idea to clarify and order the regulations of labels, but above all to accompany the history of products that can certainly not be sold silently. The role of design is to study methods of tracking and visualizing production processes, to make packaging more attractive and tell the stories that originated them, to reposition products on the market and get the right recognition for the high quality offered (fig.3).

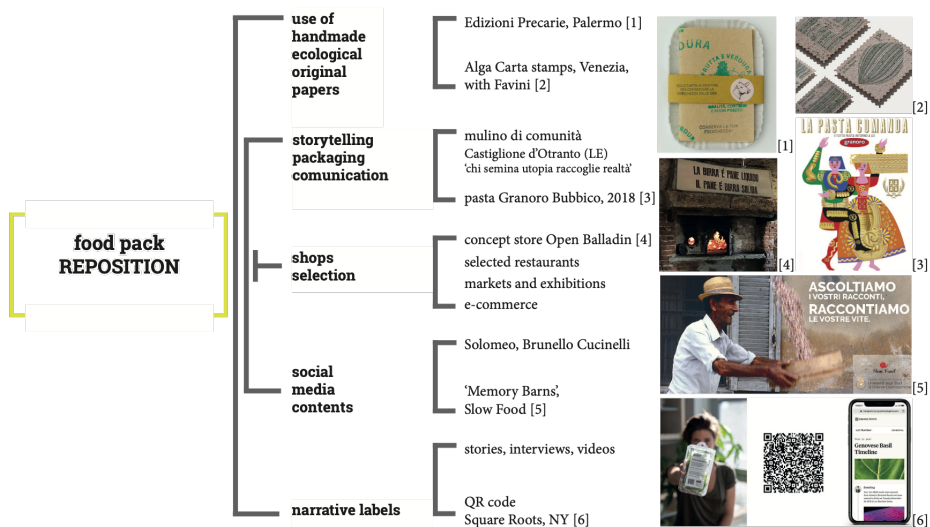


Fig. 3 Intervention strategies to develop new packaging

Rather than adding another brand, increasing the system complexity, it seems more useful to add a narrative label that provides precise information on producers, their companies, the plant varieties or animal breeds used, cultivation, breeding and processing techniques, animal welfare and territories of origin.

In fact, chemical, physical and taste analyses are not enough to evaluate the quality of a product. Any technical approach does not consider what is behind a product - its origin, history, transformation technique - and does not allow consumers to understand if a food is produced in respect of the environment and social justice.

Besides, the communication that accompanies the products is often mystifying: it refers to peasant worlds full of poetry, presumed traditional techniques, vague references to ancient flavours, this is the case for example of Mauro Bubbico's project for Granoro pasta. It includes three postcards and a stamp that represent all the values of the artisan product, strongly identified, described through the representation of love and urgencies such as work, the values of the couple and family, through the idea

of collective celebration, hospitality and conviviality.

Another element to rethink the packaging can be the material itself like papers or wrappings with strong relevance to the territory. Edizioni Precarie<sup>2</sup> in Palermo works on food letter papers, to recreate a journey in the historical markets where papers are used to wrap meat, fruit, cheese, and the idea is to use them as writing papers, ideal to wrap thoughts, ideas, drawings and to preserve their freshness. In 2016 the EP are selected for the Compasso d'Oro as a project of cultural sharing and graphic research with peculiar elegance design. A different experiment is that of the designer Pablo Dorigo who uses Alga Carta, in collaboration with Favini<sup>3</sup>, taking up the paper patented for the first time in Italy in 1992. At the time the government had asked the company to find a reuse solution of the polluting algae that were now irreparably damaging the ecosystem of the Venetian lagoon, so a philatelic edition is proposed.

The project 'Granaries of Memory'<sup>4</sup> is a multimedia archive to collect interviews that reconstruct small universes that are disappearing through the direct testimonies of farmers, workers, artisans, entrepreneurs, etc.

Seeing these videos, we come across memories of realities, of universes that have been denied the word many times. Memories intended not only as a look at our past but as an instrument for rethinking and reshaping the future.

The Slow Food project was born from the need to transmit that the food quality and its narrative, starting from the origin of the product (the territory) and including the cultivation and processing techniques, the preservation methods and, of course, the organoleptic and nutritional characteristics. Only the narrative can restore the product's real value (Slow Food Foundation<sup>5</sup>).

### **Material culture and artefacts**

*Peasant cultures have a very different relationship with objects than that one we are accustomed to: the farmer built most of his objects himself, took their behaviours directly from nature, adapting them to their use, to their physical characteristics and aesthetic. At the very end, he completely owned the object, because he knew it in each detail and all its functional and formal implications. He always conceived the artefact as a natural material, as a piece of nature to which he had given a form. The relationship with the object was in this case of such complete knowledge and (therefore) mastery. Risks of a reversal relationship didn't have to happen. The artefact remained first of all a material. When the purpose for which it had created was exhausted, it lost its status as an object and became matter again. It was transformed or recycled or abandoned to nature.* (translated from Frassinelli, 2019 p.111).

The description proposed by Frassinelli in Design and Anthropology invites us to recover this virtuous relationship between artefact, man and nature to create contemporary projects that can seduce and create new attention towards the rural world.

The challenge we want to take up is to recompose an inventory of material heritage to testify the countless repercussions not only on the immaterial level of identity, culture, tradition and rituals but also on the material level of artefacts, techniques, tools, self-production to rediscover their forgotten traces.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.edizionipecarie.it/> (view on 4 may 2020)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.favini.com/news/storia-riuso-creativo-favini-carte-ecologiche-upcycling/> (view on 4th may2020)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/presidi-slow-food> (view on 4th may 2020)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fondazione Slow Food.com/it/cosa-facciamo/etichetta-narrante> (view on 4th may 2020)



In this framework, the discipline of design can help to decode the meaning of certain elements and the processes that define them. It can help to understand the individuals who use them, the contexts that provoke their emergence, and it can help to re-insert the residual parts deactivated by social conflict into the contemporary world.

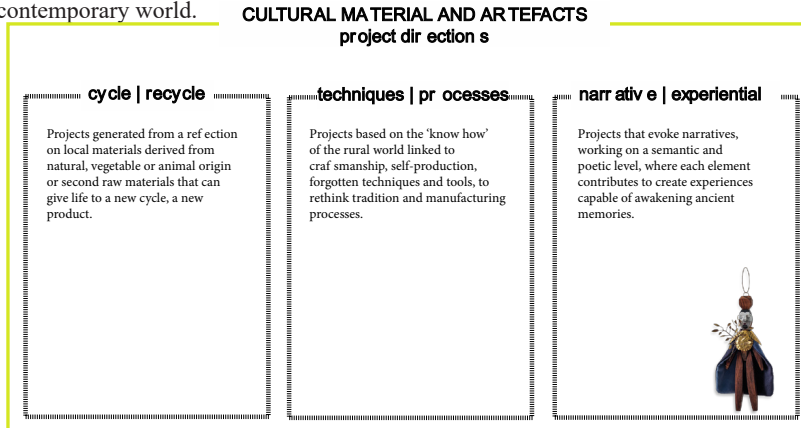


Fig. 4 Design approaches of contemporary artefacts in relationship with material culture

The most explored design lines can be summarized in three attitudes (fig.4).

The first focuses on the material cycles coming from the territory, where waste and residues can give new life cycle including the original context they were produced from. The interesting projects exhibited at Ventura during Milan Design Week 2016 explored the tactile sensations transmitted by materials produced by reusing unsold milk waste and pine needles, both considered waste and re-evaluated in a new perspective.

The second one looks at techniques and manufacturing processes that are reinterpreted with freshness and respect: Roberto Sironi, for example, wins the Compasso d'Oro with the project Madre Pane revisiting the moulds of Matera to mark the bread with a symbol and bake it in the municipal ovens. Formafantasma's Autarchy is a tribute to simplicity and everyday life, with a collection of containers, vases and lamps dried naturally or cooked at low temperature, with a bio-material composed of sorghum flour, agricultural waste and natural lime.

The third one evokes rituals and traditions by the narrative component, like 'Furniture' designed by Sovrappensiero: a project to rebalance the relationship between the global and local inspiration of the product and the link between products and buyers.

These are a series of incomplete objects, aesthetically anonymous and stateless, but custodians of functional intelligence, which can be activated by users through the addition of natural elements found in a specific place and chosen according to their tastes, needs and link with the territory.

Antonio Aricò proposes the Calabrian identity elements in a puppet he calls Nirù, a small Moor in ebony holding an olive branch in brass, with a purple cloak and a blue velvet skirt evoking the Mediterranean. These project lines are traces for the development of projects that will take part in the exhibition 'On the footsteps of the shepherds. Transhumance and Biodiversity in Liguria' which will open on 16th September 2020 in the State Archive of Genoa, organized inside the CambIO VIA research programmes with the collaboration of the Department of Antiquities, Philosophy and History and the Department of

### **Architecture and Design**

The exhibition will offer an opportunity to see a review of heterogeneous elements directly related to the world of transhumance, from iconographic to archival, botanical data, photographs, clothing, sculptures and tools, to retracing the signs left in the territories, in history, tradition and identity.

The historical section will be accompanied by experiments and reflections that can involve a broader system of relationships in which innovation of meaning and contemporary design reactivate the surviving cultural fragments of popular civilizations.

This contamination with the languages of modernity, in the respect of their cultural, historical and social derivations, can represent the multiple and molecular character of communities, as Ezio Manzini said (2018, p. 42).

The exhibition will host projects that work and relate the idea of nomadism typical of the shepherd with that of the contemporary nomad, thinking about solutions of clothing and accessories that become shelters, protections and devices for comfort. Besides, tools and elements of tradition and work will be rethought to give voice to the new generations that dedicate their lives to preserve these practices and others that reinterpret details or artefacts in a contemporary key.

Design can leverage its technical tools and meanings to give back to the contemporary an intercultural comparison through research and production of artefacts, to represent them both as still active elements and as parts of contemporary phenomena.

To make it possible, however, the design must not stop at the surface, formally reproducing a traditional project by updating it through a contemporary production process, but must have the ability to interpret it deeply, bringing to the surface above all its residual evocative capacity of identity links (Carullo, Labalestra, 2019).

The documentation and analysis of pre-industrial creative processes not only can give a key to historical interpretation, of a culture that is excluded from official history and that is on the way to extinction, but also reveals a little-known and forgotten creative capacity. In pre-capitalist culture, a field of activity don't isolate itself from the other. Each reality was totally integrated into a complex of material and immaterial, social and personal operations and activities. It is in this enormous heritage of knowledge that we can trace the direct relationship between man and nature, an activity in which design, construction of use and recycling coincide (Natalini et al., 1983).

### **Slow tourism experiences**

“Until now it can be said that folklore has been mainly studied as a “picturesque” element [...]. It should be studied instead as a “conception of the world and life” of certain strata (determined in time and space) of society, in contrast (also mostly implicit, mechanical, objective) with the “official” conceptions of the world, that have followed one another in the historical development (Gramsci, 1948, 2014, p.2311). Gramsci’s Folklore observations then require us not to deal with artefacts, but with contextual relationships: the texts we are used to considering as the raw materials of folklore are the only partial document of human behaviour that develops instead in depth (Bauman, 2001, p. 99).

The events related to transhumance, are part of an ephemeral heritage that stages the tradition and everyday life of the past to involve a wide audience in a process of emotional immersion that turns into knowledge and awareness.



*Fig. 5 Transhumance day in Val d'Aveto, 27 October 2019, credits Matteo Paolillo*

The aim is to organize the activities that enhance the tourist attraction of the parks by adding the experiential component linked to processes, the preparation of the second raw materials, the self-production, stories and rituals combined with cooking.

The offer would integrate the naturalistic and cultural fruition in what we define slow tourism.

Slow tourism promotes quality and experience by contrasting with mass, fast and consumer tourism which does not give value to the typicality of a place. Slow tourism becomes a further way to enhance the Italian territories less known by international tourism and sustainably relaunch them. It fosters innovative travel experiences, knowledge and discovery of organic and zero-km food, a propensity to authentic destinations where to live the authentic traditions and appreciate the synergies with the landscape.

This trend must be fostered by a networking of the already existing offers for the creation of thematic and adequately communicated itineraries through wayfinding projects in the affected area, but also by dissemination and promotion outside the local context.

This system also includes the calendars of heterogeneous festivals spread on territories and events that evoke past rituals and attract many visitors, who are often fascinated by the spectacle and pay little attention to the contemporary relevance and repercussions generated by tradition.

One of the most interesting Ligurian festivities is in Santo Stefano D'aveto (fig.5) conceived and organized by a local breeder Pietro Monteverde, who proposes the ceremony of the cattle return to the village in an adorned parade after the period of transhumance.

In this sense the community becomes the guardian, taking care of the protection of the seeds, the harvest, the agriculture, the breeding, also to protect rites and celebrations that we risk forgetting, but which are fundamental roots of our past.

## Conclusion

Cambio Via proposes an action-research project: a methodology that combines - and then reworks - theoretical phases with those on field experimentations.

Theories, in action-research, are not independent assumptions that are applied to practice; they are validated through practice, they are carried out in a “real context” with a dual purpose: to improve the conditions of that particular context and to generate, at the same time, new scientific knowledge for the target community. It is a flexible methodology that often changes the program during the course of the work.

The action-research, born in the social sciences, looks at the processes of communication and socialization of knowledge between the actors involved in the project as very important. Due to its social character, action-research uses tools for the collection of qualitative information, that it analyses and eventually uses for experimentation. It is a cyclical process that starts with the definition of the problem(s) of the research and ends with a conclusive redefinition elaborated with the research process. (Villari 2005)

The Design approach deals with local development is certainly not new, it is a tested and open field since Miur MeDesign research (2004). With this research, as introduced in the text, we will experiment and apply actions and practices to contribute, with the actors of the territory, to bring back a value, a sense and a better quality of life to these territories viewed as minor, but rich in knowledge, stories, products to be enhanced.

Around the table of experts and communities, the designer sits down to listen and absorb the salient features of the technical processes to provide a transversal glue capable of collecting the uneven traces and to create a coherent and cross narrative plot able to give suggestions for the implementation of territorial policies.

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