

# Design and Communities: exploring rural territories

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## ABSTRACT

Community Design is the result of a natural and healthy evolution in the broader sphere of design. While on the one hand design today still directs significant attention, care and resources to the design of objects, services and consumer products, sometimes useful and sustainable, sometimes neither useful nor ethical, on the other hand youngest designers invest in virtuous cultural, environmental and social processes of mediation, reconfiguration and interaction between communities and the territories they belong to, with a more humanistic than technocratic approach. A field in which the designer cooperates closely with local residents in multidisciplinary groups, enriched with new experts in the humanities such as philosophers, geographers, anthropologists and ethnographers. Through some comparative case studies of projects run in Lebanon and Italy, the paper wants to discuss the importance for designers to use an experiential and anthropological approach for the development of new items, using the narrative tool to embrace the entire symbolic and rhetorical form of rural traditions in their projects. Man as part of the ecosystem, man understood as an organism within organisms, immersed in a continuous and swirling morphing that can shape our work in a reciprocal relational interaction with the things themselves.

*Keywords:* Rural Community Design, Participatory Processes, Culture of Making, Common Heritage, Teaching Community

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## INTRODUCTION: THE VALUES OF DESIGN FOR COMMUNITIES

*People need a community of reference, the community needs places, places generate values, values need an envelope in which to live.* The authors

Community Design is the result of a natural and healthy evolution in the broader sphere of design. While on the one hand design today still directs significant attention, care and resources to the design of objects, services and consumer products, sometimes useful and sustainable, sometimes neither useful nor ethical, on the other hand there is a thriving investment by the youngest designers in virtuous cultural, environmental and social processes of mediation, reconfiguration and interaction between communities and the

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territories they belong to, with a more humanistic than technocratic approach. The finest universities, the most advanced research and development bodies and many local and transnational public institutions are beginning to lend their voice to this metamorphosis of the profession driven by values rather than tools, investing in the field of design for social innovation and turning their attention to minor, sometimes marginal urban and rural territories, with a view to a more direct, participatory and transformative experience involving designers, people and the environment. This is a field of design that might be defined as empathetic, with an anthropological profile, an example of a real and concrete policy of commitment to social and environmental change. A field in which the designer cooperates closely and throughout the entire design process with local residents in multidisciplinary groups, enriched with new experts in the humanities such as philosophers, geographers, anthropologists and ethnographers.

The goal is to achieve an intimate understanding of the territory, to enrich the customary critical approach by adding components based on material and immaterial values, such as historical memories, knowledge, practices, traditions and finally to be able to reinterpret the history of the place dynamically towards new sustainable scenarios for the future as well.

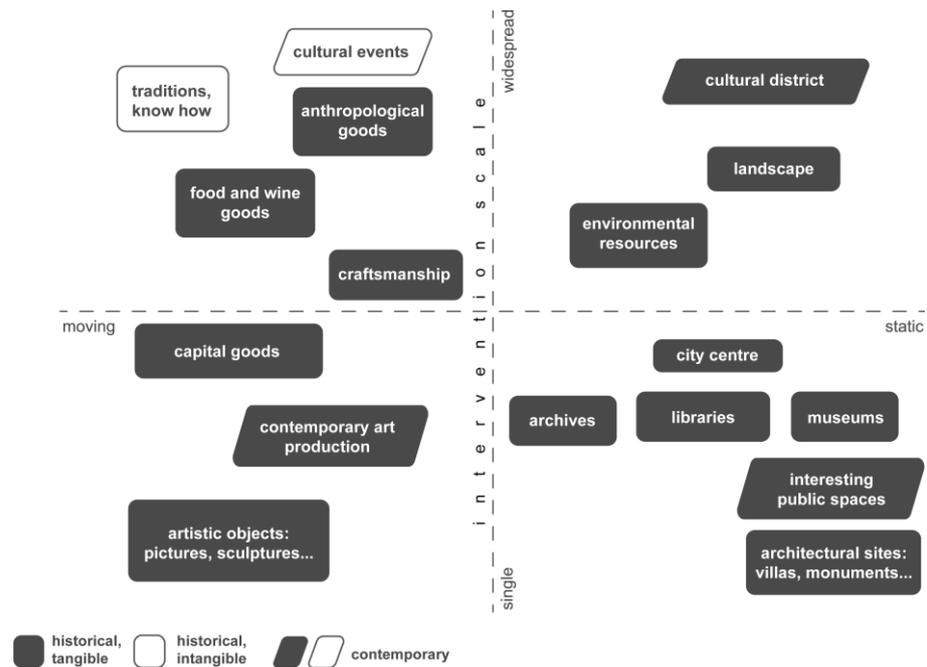
## 1. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In 2003, UNESCO's "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" introduced a new procedural vision to transmit this wealth, and expressed the will to create an active heritage, a life-force for the future, in which the participation of man, seen as part of a group, would be one of the main drivers of the strengthening of new enhancement and local development projects (Bortolotto, 2011).

The definition in Article 2 of the aforementioned Convention reads as follows:

The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. [...]" (p.3)

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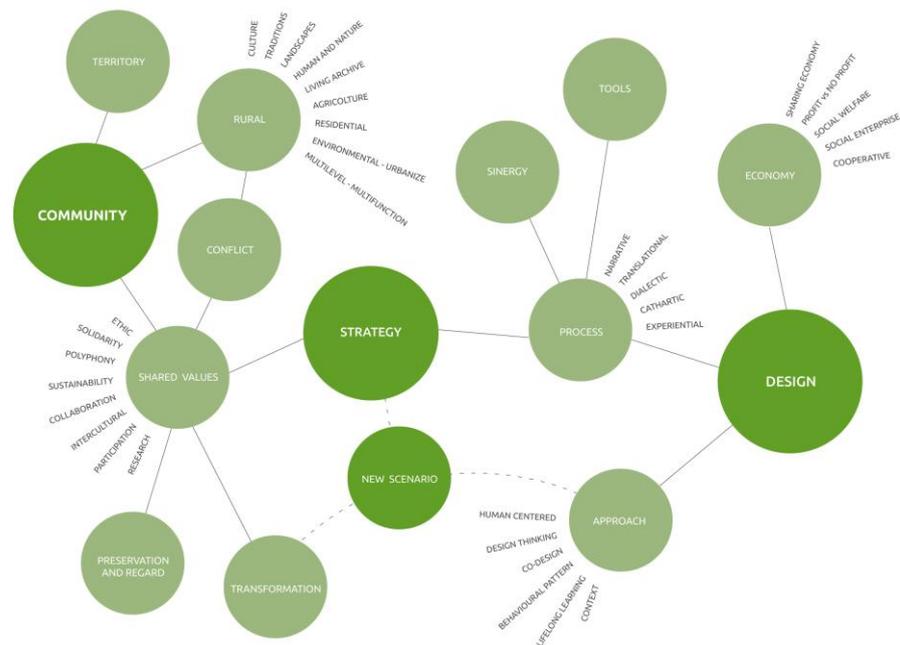


**Fig. 1. Typological map of cultural heritage (redesign from Lupo, 2009, p. 29)**

On the one hand, this vision underscores the importance of the relationship between community and territory, on the other, how the enhancement of the territory itself and its identity are inextricably linked to collaborative processes between the various actors that operate within it (Figure 1).

At this point, we can speak of interaction or dialogue between tangible and intangible, between the human component on one side, understood as the set of individuals, institutions, organizations, companies, artisans – the communities – and the cultural, manufacturing and social capital of knowledge on the other. We might define this set of resources as "territorial capital" (Villari, 2018; Lupo, Parente and Sedini, 2017, Commissione Europea, 2006, et al.): a set of elements that embody the intrinsic characteristics of a territory, which if activated through synergic projects, can enhance and reactivate hidden potential. In fact, if we talk about design and territory, we can see the relationship that unites and integrates them in a dimension in which design takes a resolute approach, establishing connections and playing a strategic and systemic role that connects knowledge, places and people by imagining innovative solutions to address the challenges between local and global, for example, as we will see later in the context of the so-called "new ruralities" (Figure 2).

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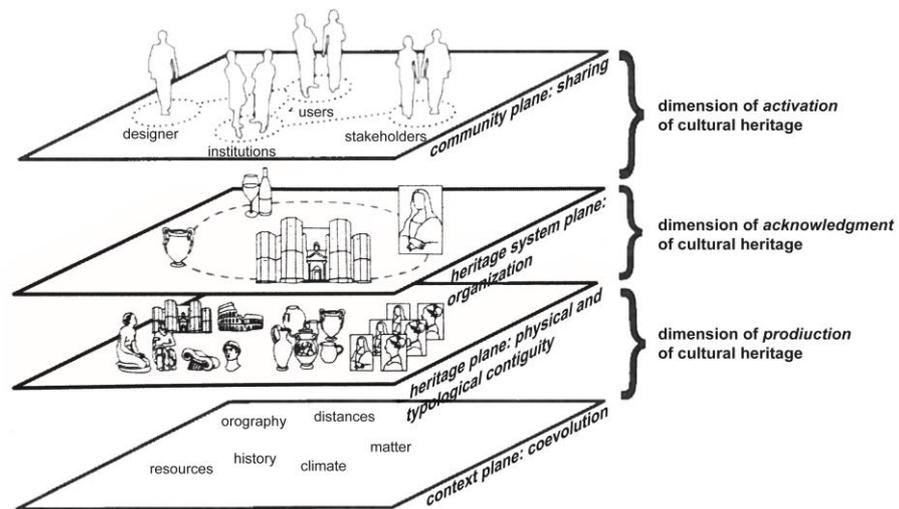


**Fig. 2. Design meets rural communities map (DDC research unit, 2019)**

So we find ourselves within a vision of Design "for" the territories that includes both the design "of" and "in" the territory (Parente, Sedini, 2018), relying on the cultures of design to discover, to know, to enhance and create new dynamic experiences of the peculiarities present in the territory, in its places, in its communities and in its local values. Starting from this approach we can use mapping processes (Reina, 2014) to discover the specificities and the differences in manufacturing, creative practices and know-how between places characterized by the permanence of place, seeking to understand how the intrinsic identity of each territory is influenced by its community and by its raw materials, and how every environment would require its own custom design process to enhance its intrinsic resources. As Vincenzo Cristallo writes: "planning for the territory means recognizing and preserving the identity of a" local culture "[...]. Here then identity [...] consequently becomes the starting point for any territorial planning hypothesis" (Cristallo, 2018, p. 34). In fact, the resources of the places, which we can define as "territorial repositories" (Cristallo, 2018), determine the originality of the local territory which, thanks to its social, economic, environmental, cultural and human factors and its typicality, makes it authentic. To keep local development competitive and sustainable, it is important to talk about innovation from a collaborative point of view, about models that can rediscover the raw materials of a territory, its know-how and its traditions, relating them to the new tools of knowledge and the community vision. In the current context, various models of interaction are emerging for a shared

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planning process for the territory and its socio-economic development. We find the "collaborative economy" model particularly interesting, in which participatory planning leads to entrepreneurial projects that revise the concept of doing business, fostering exchanges between the various actors, and changing the way people consume or experience a product or service (Cristallo, 2018, p. 37). In this dialogue between design cultures and the territory, we have an interpretation of both sides, multiscale, multilayer and multiverse (Lupo, 2009), which based on the peculiarities and needs of the territory itself, channels the design work through the methodology that is most suitable to the project relationship to be activated (Figure 3).



**Fig. 3. Relational model of cultural heritage (redesign from Lupo, 2009, p. 131)**

In this sense, strategic design, service design, product design and visual communication offer different answers to different types of business projects. The scientific literature, in particular the work of Eleonora Lupo, defines five areas of intervention through which design works to foster local development: "entrepreneurial network [...], communication [...], cultural heritage [...], community centered [...], co-design [...] and smart technologies [...]" (Lupo, 2018, p. 59). An interpretation that Lupo defines as "open-ended", in which the idea is to enact a cultural transformation of the territory, both with the support of participatory processes that involve the community, and by highlighting the intrinsic competences of the territory, with the purpose of designing alternative innovative contexts. In dealing with the new approaches to local development through cultural change, we can argue that European Community planning is very active with regards to the consolidation of local platforms and networks and territorial innovation. In fact, new entrepreneurial forms and initiatives are

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emerging that can change the role of people, placing them at the centre of the innovation process, creating alternative models of relationships with local resources, favoring projects for collective social innovation (Villari, 2018).

Design cultures relate to the community and, as Beatrice Villari (2018) defines, can be divided into three macro approaches capable of linking design and community:

- community design
- design with the community
- design conducted by the community

In the first case the role of design is at the centre of the transformation process and its task is to generate design actions that will increase the value of the territory by reactivating its underlying potential and the needs of the community (citizens, institutions, companies, etc.). In the second approach the community is involved as an active part of the process to enhance the territory. This method promotes projects that can foster growth in the actors' skills, integration and creative exchange towards co-design models for the enhancement of territorial contexts. In the last approach the project initiatives arise directly from the communities where the inhabitants themselves, whether permanent or transitory, use design tools to develop collective micro-economy projects.

The case studies we have chosen focus on the methodology defined as *Community Design* - which also represents the inter-university research unit between Bologna and San Marino (DDC research unit) - which embraces all three macro-approaches described above, and in which the community is intended as a threshold space between worlds, environments, contexts: a bridge between nature and country, between man and animal, between countryside and city, between craft and industry, between public and private (Figure 4).

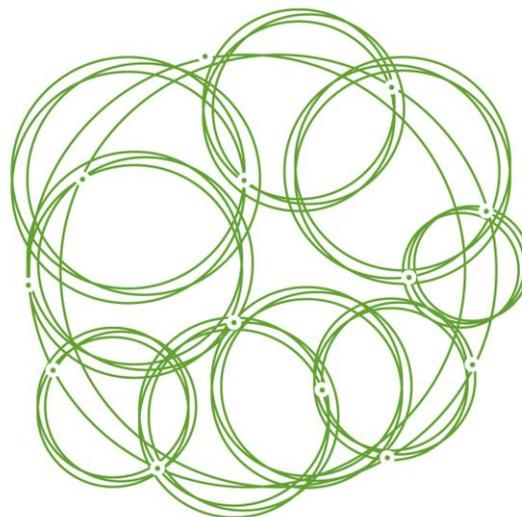
Specifically, we have identified the small rural communities as opportunities, contexts with strong identities and great socio-environmental richness, sometimes anchored, if not fossilized, in the preservation of traditions, with strenuous resistance to change and transformation.

Spaces of Challenge, more precisely, in which to activate, reactivate, restore and innovate man's relationship with place through design and its practices.

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DDC | research program

**DESIGN DI COMUNITÀ**



**Fig. 4. Design research unit image (DDC research unit, 2019)**

Minor internal areas from which to start over, to find alternative solutions for development, growth or degrowth, to experiment with new visions of social eco-systems designed in balance with nature, the countryside, the community. The design experiments initiated in recent years by our research group, including those in Valmarecchia and in Lebanon, illustrate the multidisciplinary work of designers who apply an anthropological, organic, cathartic and transformative methodology to the local context with the features described above. This methodology allows the application of joint experiential and narrative approaches. Experiential (Di Lucchio, 2014), because they allow you to read, embrace and assimilate the territory through physical experience in the field, digging deep to reveal its values and potential. Narrative, because they make it possible to translate this potential and its "strategic repertoires" (Lupo, 2011) into new products, services and processes that then become storytelling elements for the place. These are projects that arise from participatory processes that can enhance the resources of the territory, activating micro-economies based on traditional values, but fluid and evolving as well.

## 2. NARRATIVE DESIGN AS A TOOL

...When we think of a community, we generally imagine it as linked to a peasant past, made up of small villages, and we do it with a touch of nostalgia, tending to combine it with the past, linking it to tradition and to a world that no longer exists...(p.9)

This concept by Marco Aime, developed in the essay *Comunità* (2019, p. 9), can easily be extended to the theme of tradition and, even more specifically, to traditional craftsmanship.

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Given that in local agrarian communities, craftsmanship is often the expression of a specific tradition, linked to food, harvesting, living, to rituals and celebrations, the craft object itself becomes an expression of the community. Besides being a formal expression of tradition, it is a representative symbol for the community. Extending the concept inherent in the term community, to the point of considering it representative of an entire society made up of many communities, it is possible to define and delineate the distinctive elements of a culture, even a transnational culture. While if you reverse the observation point and look at the same territory in more detail, you can identify particular elements that differentiate between community groups, which at the same time, may retain certain common bases.

Still following Aime's reasoning, and supporting it with what Zygmunt Bauman expressed in *Voglia di Comunità*, it must be noted that it has become increasingly difficult today to recognize, define or reconstruct community groups, unlike in the past when the very existence of a community was based on belonging to and occupying a circumscribed place, "on shared space, proximity ... a basic condition for maintaining relationships, given the impossibility of communicating at a distance quickly and continuously" (Aime, 2019, p. 9).

Based on these relations of neighborhood, the story of local events had always played a prominent role in internally generating the social cohesion that also represented sharing, identifying with, a collective mutual identification and self-recognition that, for many of us today, is but a nostalgic and romantic representation of the communities of the past and their protagonists. Extending this outlook to the Italian national territory,

...the community dimension, started in the Roman municipalities and elevated as a system in the city and in the medieval villages, is relevant from all points of view: Italy produces mainly goods to be consumed together (food and the wine) and intended for meeting (clothing, furniture, cars, etc.) and its territories are marked by the prevalence of meeting places ... (Benini, 2018, p.189)

thus, serving to highlight the intrinsic character of Italian cities, built around the *piazza*.

The conclusion could therefore be drawn that the entire craft and industrial product system reflects this particular Italian characteristic of creating products with the purpose of meeting within the community. A production that becomes an expression of *Italianity* and illustrates, with its style, the Italian way of life.

It is a production that identifies the individual local communities: their variety and recognisability still represent a focal point for the development of Italian production compartments, demonstrate their specific crafting skills and their internationally-renowned

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capacity for innovation. It is not easy to re-propose the conditions to copy and reproduce, with equal effectiveness and success, these slow affirmation processes of a specific culture of making, expressing a specific society or a single community within a specific territory, and combining memory, vision and the local material and intangible heritage.

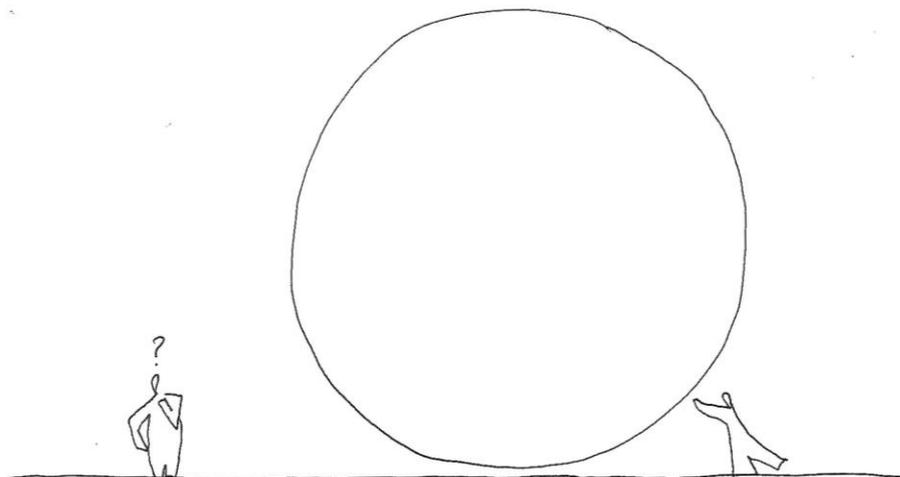
Yet these are the sometimes contradictory challenges that we must learn to face, and which in part, the case studies illustrated here are shown to have addressed. When design seeks to reconnect to traditions, aiming at the revitalization of a local craft and the generation of new micro economies in areas abandoned by the migration of entire communities to the metropolis, the biggest obstacle is precisely the need to revive the character and the conscience of places (Norberg Schulz, 1979 and 1996), through a knowledge of the territory and its traditions that is important to the designer seeking to contribute to their revitalization, co-acting with the marginal surviving or newly-settled communities.

Perhaps a re-design based on the reinterpretation of productive techniques or expressive forms, will not always succeed in conveying the strength of spirit and the specific character that the original products embodied, expressed and represented. But at least, the use of traditional production techniques may guarantee the craftsmen involved their daily bread and butter, as long as the new product is marketable.

### **3. CASE STUDIES - DESIGN WITH LOCAL RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Can we start from rural communities to rethink our own lifestyle? And within this sometimes apparently idyllic, but highly conflicting context, is it possible to explain, compare and solve some of the key issues of contemporary society? How can design operate in internal, hilly or mountainous rural areas?

If design is for people and people exist in relation to the territory, it is legitimate to think that design looks to rural communities as challenge spaces, threshold spaces (Varini, 2019) and spaces of opportunity (Manzini, 2018), of extraordinary richness for the inhabitant as a user and for the designer as the proponent of plans and visions. There is a clear need to switch paradigms, scale of intervention and hierarchy of values in the way we intervene, compared to the consolidated paradigms of the traditional operational contexts of Western-style design - city, industry, traditional liberal capitalist economy (Figure 5).



**Fig. 5. A clear need to switch paradigms sketch (DDC research unit, 2019)**

The challenge of the applied research projects we present, which involved rural communities, the Universities of Bologna and San Marino, was to rely on an almost archaeological approach (Ingold, 2019), to redesign and use elements, tools, typical design strategies to contribute and participate in the revitalization and reconstruction of rural contexts and the local community groups that inhabit them. With regard to the narrative and experiential design approach applied in these projects, the anthropological concept that lies at the root of these experiments, theorized and well-illustrated by Tim Ingold, of man as part of the environment, man understood as an organism within organisms, immersed in a continuous and swirling (interweaving, bundle, line) morphing of things, surfaces, volumes and therefore also of being, that can shape us too, and modify our work in a reciprocal relational interaction with the things themselves. Thus we can now speak of *design di comunità*, of a dynamic design that on the one hand adapts, shapes and transforms based on the territorial peculiarities and local specificities, and on the other hand expresses evolving social visions influenced by the rapid transformation of needs and values within these same communities.

The methodology adopted in the research studies illustrated here contemplates a phase of participatory mapping of the community.

...Preparing a community map of a territory, means starting a path aimed at obtaining a permanent" and always updatable "archive of people, places and their relationships. It will avoid the loss of precise knowledge of the territory, those that are the expression of

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sedimented wisdom, reached with the contribution of generations and generations...  
(p.60)

This is what Giuseppe Reina wrote in 2014: maps that allow you to continuously define new indicators of sustainability (Magnaghi, 2010) in such a way as to foster the necessary recognition of the local heritage by the community as a fundamental element for its active and regenerative enhancement and enjoyment. Mapping the material and immaterial heritage makes it possible to identify the generative elements of the project through the analysis of conflicting aspects, which may be considered cathartic elements and key points from which to start. The feasible and implemented interventions in the various disciplines take place at different levels: from macro-scale of strategic design, for the generation of development scenarios, to the dimension of service and system design, up to the more operational of product and visual communication design.

#### 4. SMALL CHERRY FARMERS IN LEBANON

The three-year international cooperation plan titled *International network for eco-sustainable development and productive, managerial and commercial innovation of small producers in the agribusiness chain of cherry in Lebanon AID 1093*, guided by the Fondazione Giovanni Paolo II since 2017 aims to develop the marginal communities of farmers in the Béqaa Valley, and is supported by the contribution of Italian partners such as the Agenzia Italiana Cooperazione e Sviluppo, CIHEAM, CNR, ASSOBDM - Associazione Botteghe del Mondo, AERES Venezia, Archeologia Arborea, Banca Etica and Lebanese partners such as Fair Trade Lebanon, LARI Institute, University of Beirut and the Zahle Chamber of Commerce (Figure 6).



**Fig. 6. Partners group at the start of program (Fondazione GP2, Raffaele Quadri, 2019)**

The agricultural communities involved belong to several Clusters in the internal areas of the country at the foot of Mount Lebanon (Figure 7), such as the young cooperative Ainata, and several families of producers in the Zahle, Metn and Balbaak Governorates.

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**Fig. 7. Mapping the context. The orchards at the foot of Mount Lebanon (DDC research unit, 2017)**

The major interventions planned by the Foundation at the regional macro-scale involve projects for new logistical equipment and infrastructure, for technical training in the fields of agriculture and social cooperation, for the collective promotion of production, and the reorganization and differentiation of products in local and foreign markets. The main, positive and innovative change to be found in this team’s approach is the awareness that it is no longer working within a context of “cooperation for development” but of “eco-managed, solidarity-based exchange” (Magnaghi, 2010).



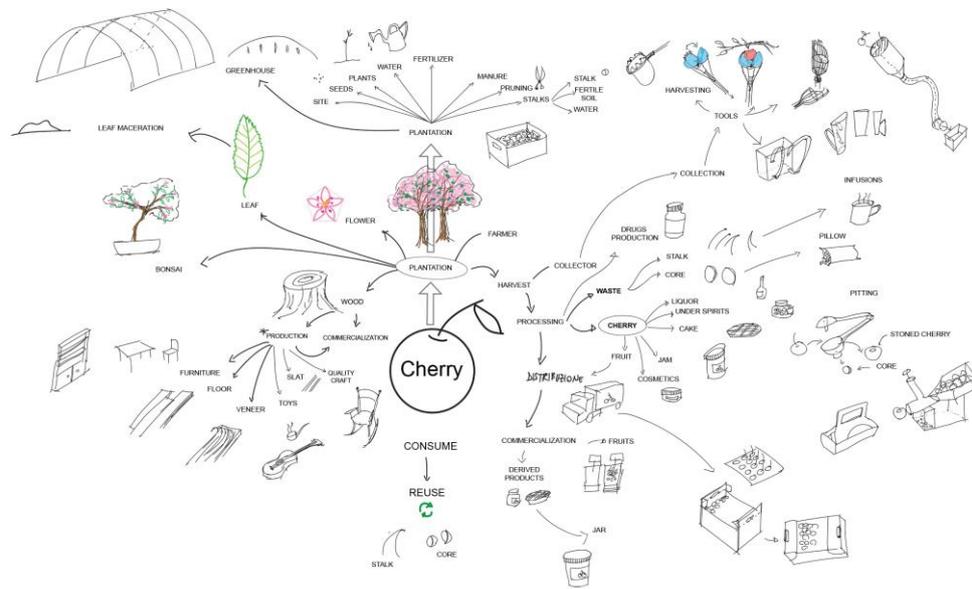
**Fig. 8. Mapping the context. The research and methodology of Fair Trade Lebanon partner (FT Lebanon, 2017)**

For its part, the research group has proposed to test the methodology by mapping the territory (Figure 8) and using questionnaires to map the local resources and material and intangible values, to link them to the critical issues and needs of the farmers involved. Of the existing challenges that must be met in the various scenarios and production chains, we will focus on: the presence of communities with different religions, highly characterized and deeply rooted in the territory; the lack of a capacity to work as a group address competition within or outside the territory, in regards to the small producers of nearby Syria, unfortunately still marked by instability; a family-run and individualistic rather than cooperative business mentality, which runs counter to the shared management of risks and

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investments; the need to activate a modern vision of multifunctional agriculture and a post-productivist farmland.

Cherries as a product have been carefully examined and considered to be a true common heritage, a shared cultural legacy that represents a not exclusively material heritage (Figure 9).



**Fig. 9. First step of project. Production chains of cherry and cherry tree (DDC research unit, Gabrielli, Morri, 2018)**

The study, discussion and collaborative work by the Italian research and cooperation team with local operators led to a “*definition of user scenarios, predictions or encouragement of behaviour*” understood as an “*activity that could establish connections between different systems so as to rely on synergy to increase the range of services*” (Irace, in Giacomelli, 2014), enacted thanks to a strategic design mission conducted by Massimo Renno, an expert in transnational solidarity-based economies and a group of designers. They included Edoardo Perri, who oriented thanks to an international workshop (Figure 10), done with Alice Cappelli and 20 students, the development phase by proposing a more detailed definition of the brief with macro-scale technical interventions, that prioritize design for the recognizability of the product’s origins, a certification of origin and quality, the development of an umbrella brand to support events focused on sharing practical tasks within the production chain (cultivation, preservation, transformation or distribution), and the promotion, in seasonal collective events, of the values that have emerged from the autochthonous rural heritage and the peculiarities of the settled communities.

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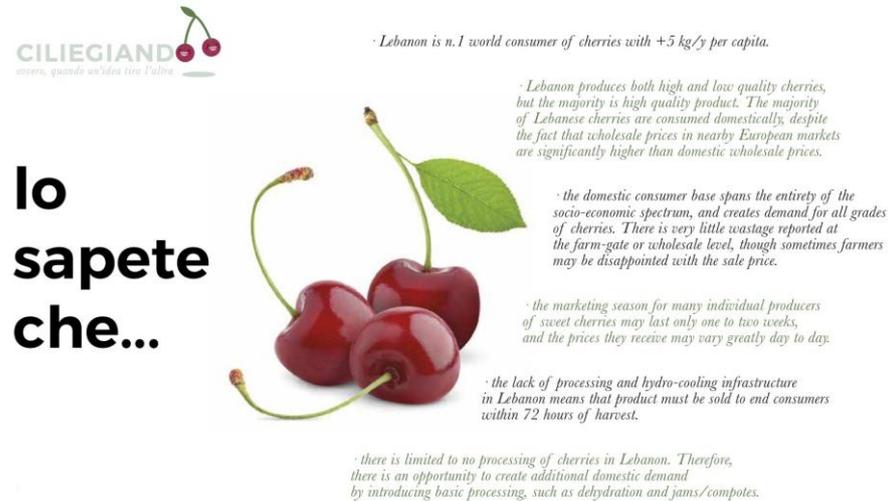


Fig. 10. First step of project. The value cherry's chain (Perri, 2017)

Concurrently, the Fondazione Giovanni Paolo II set up Small farmers, a digital platform promoting connection and networking among small Date, Cherry, Apricot and Aloe Vera farmers engaged in the application of a joint production reorganization strategy (Figure 11).

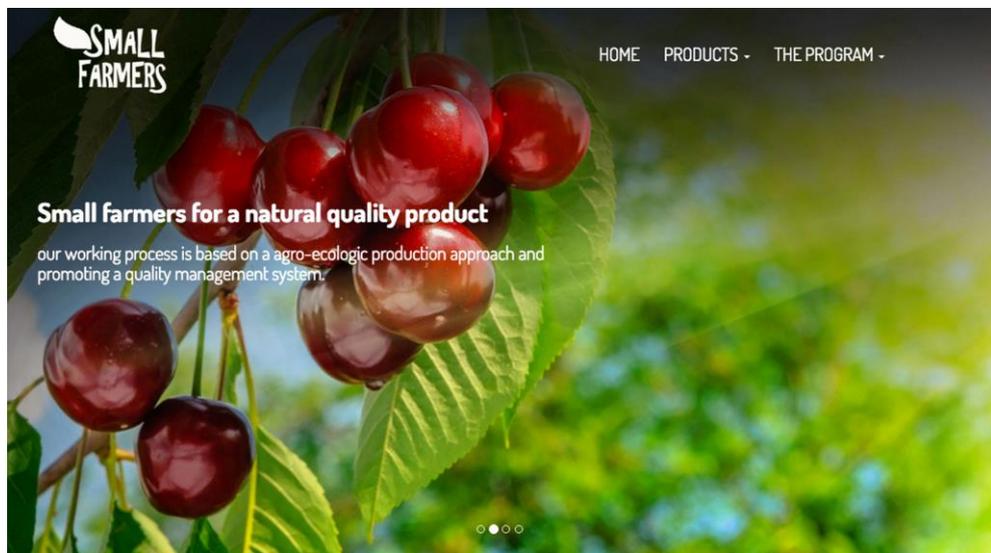
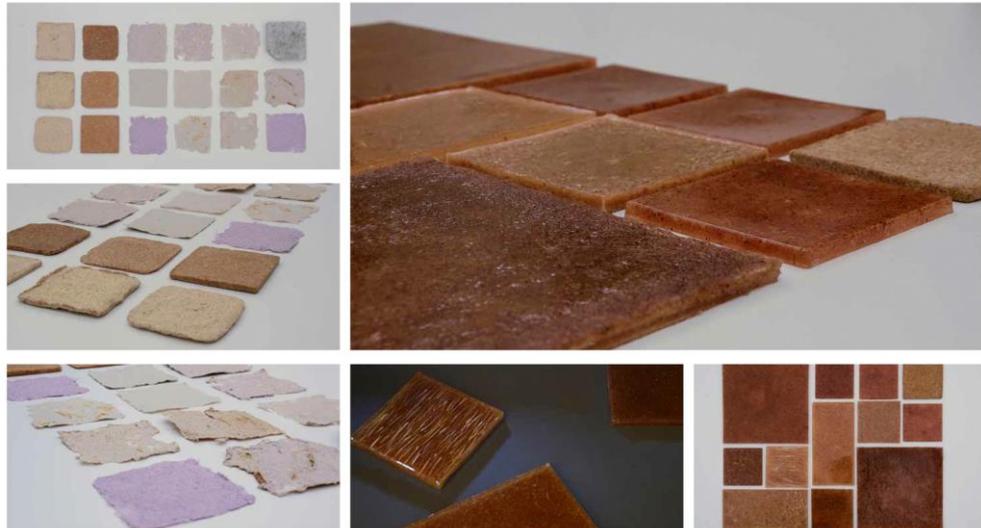


Fig. 11. First step of project. Digital platform promoting connection & networking among small farmers (AiCS+FGP2, 2018)

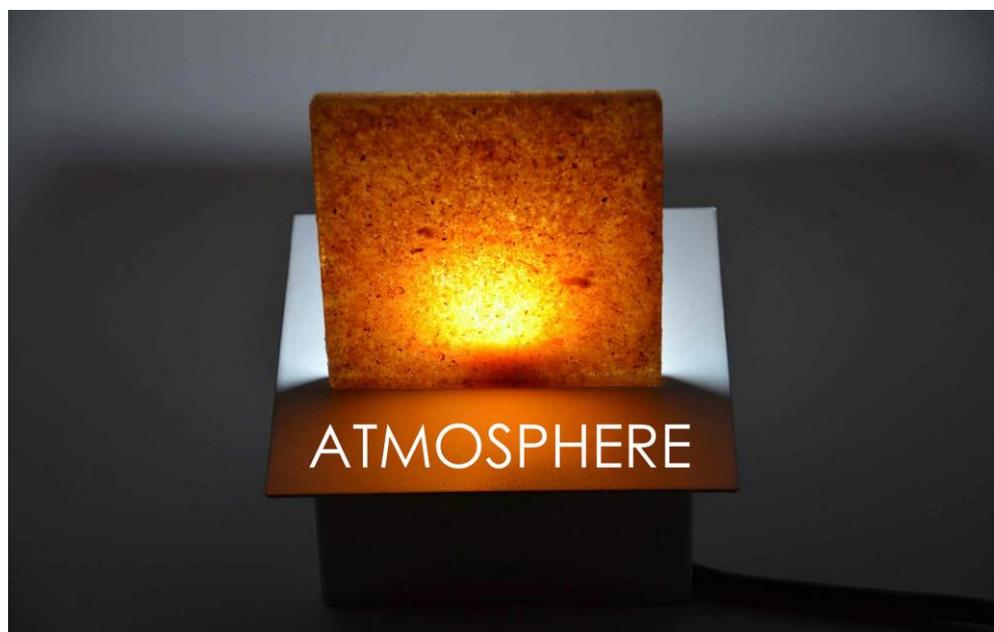
This was followed by an operative phase that is still underway, to build the first operational prototypes, such as: a project for a system to produce cherry leather, a semi-finished sheet made from the powdered waste products of cherry cultivation, with the intent to found a

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local craft start up, that would make it possible to develop and sell a variety of finished products (Figure 12, 13);



**Fig. 12. First step of project. Cherry leather's material samples (DDC research unit, 2018)**



**Fig. 13. Prototype. Cherry leather's product (DDC research unit, Gabrielli, Morri, 2018)**

collections of products such as for example a cup to promote the awareness of infusions made from the cherry stems discarded after picking (Figure 14);

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**Fig. 14. Prototype. Cherry stems's infusions cup (DDC research unit, Menetti, Paolazzi, 2018)**

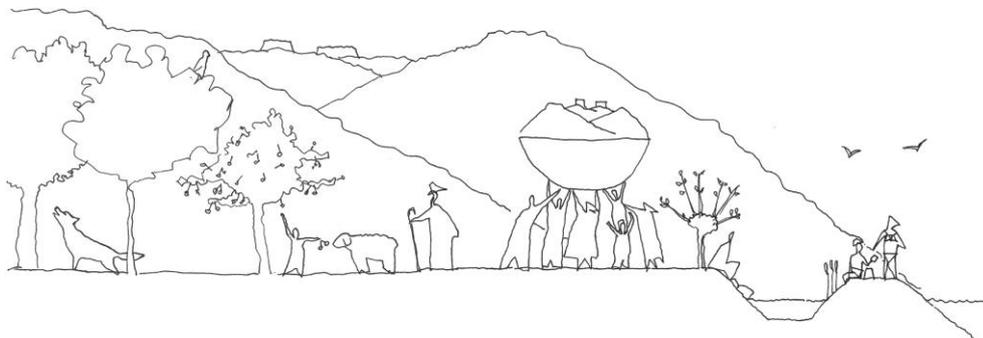
a system for packaging cherries for children that could foster the creation of local teaching farms, with educational and harvesting services, to build a bridge between the micro-producers and the domestic market (Figure 15).



**Fig. 15. Prototype. Cherry's auto pick packaging for children (DDC research unit, Alesi, Lucidi, 2018)**

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## 5. TALKING WOODS IN VALMARECCHIA



**Fig. 16. Valmarecchia communities sketch (DDC research unit, 2019)**

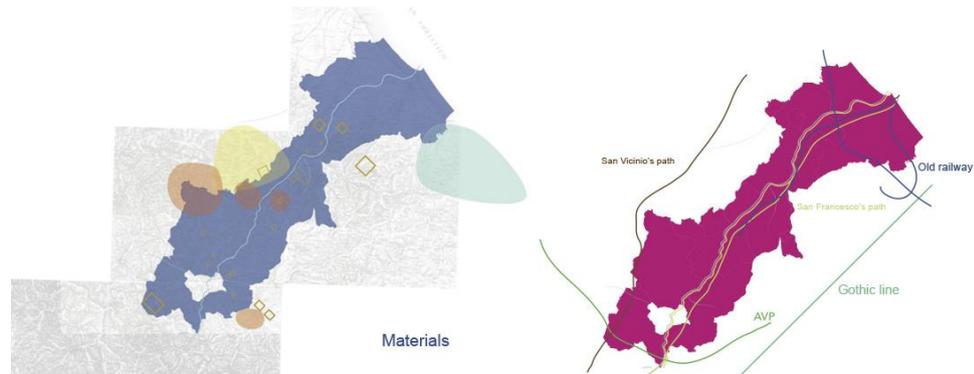
The team has also planned an interdisciplinary project to map, retrieve and enhance the multiple identities of the material and immaterial heritage in the Communities of the Valley that runs through the hills along the Marecchia river, spanning the regions of Emilia Romagna, Marche, Tuscany and San Marino (Figure 16). The partners include the Comune, the Associazione Fondazione Tonino Guerra, the Associazione La Chiocciola casa del nomade, the Museo del Parco MUSSS in Pennabilli and the GAL in Valmarecchia (Figure 17) and Val del Conca.



**Fig. 17. Mapping the context. Valmarecchia and farmers community of Pennabilli (ph. Roberto Sartor, 2019)**

In these territories, the Regione Emilia Romagna is testing innovative tools of rural planning – Plan for the internal areas, River contracts, GAL plans – and the resident communities are receptive to cultivating new forms of public-private entrepreneurship such as the *Community cooperatives*, that are just starting up locally in the borderline City of San Leo (Figure 18).

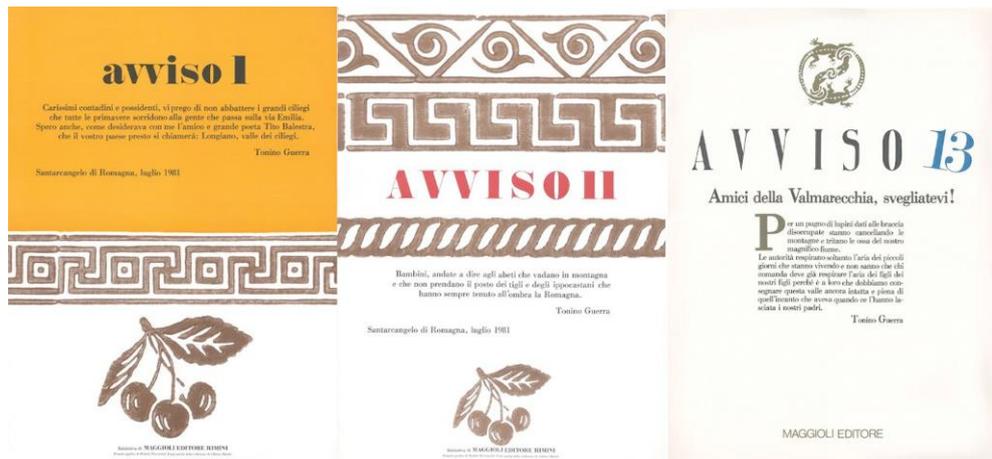
Sicklinger, A., Varini, R., Succini, L. & Galavotti, N. (2019). Design and Communities: exploring rural territories. Strategic Design Research Journal, volume 12, number 02, May – August 2019. 177-199. Doi: 10.4013/sdrj.2019.122.05



**Fig. 18. Mapping the context. Geological and ancient path's maps of Valmarecchia (DDC Unit research, Roberto Sartor 2019)**

The objectives include the revitalization of certain craft industry networks, and creating objects out of rediscovered traditions, techniques and customs.

A visceral inhabitant of this micro-world is poet Tonino Guerra, the co-screenwriter with Fellini of the award-winning film *Amarcord*. Guerra was an inspiration and methodological guide for our team's work: he masterfully interpreted the character of this place (Figure 19), and proved able to catalyse and amalgamate its values and resources in his works on exhibit at the Museo diffuso in Pennabilli, including the Garden of forgotten fruits and the Places of the soul.



**Fig. 19. "Avvisi" to the inhabitants of Valmarecchia (Guerra and Maggioli, 1981)**

The imprint at the local and wider regional scale offered by the Maestro,

...refers to the inclusion in the heritage of immaterial components such as historic memories and traditions, farming practices and the use of the earth's resources,

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knowledge about things and how to use tools, as the particular characteristics that inform the value of the rural landscape ...(Lupo, 2011).

The Museo del Parco in Pennabilli represents, for the citizens and for us as designers, a successful example of how a typically closed Place dedicated to preservation may be transformed, thanks to a fresh, innovative and generative management approach, into an open Place that works in synergy with the local community for conservation, but above all looks to the future to enhance the heritage, finding opportunities for direct co-action in workshops organized with schools even at the pre-school and elementary level.

The team has also defined certain key aspects to work on, and created the prototypes for objects and services that can convey local specificities and serve as tools to understand the territory.

The raw material used to mediate the narration is wood, both as a material to quickly produce the prototypes, and for the finished products.

The typical wood essences in Valmarecchia are: beech, cherry, chestnut and oak. The projects developed with the collaboration of Matteo Giustozzi include: the reinvention of an adult collective folk Game (Figure 20);



**Fig. 20. Prototype. Reinvention of traditional folk Game (DDC research unit, Fantini, Paci, 2019)**

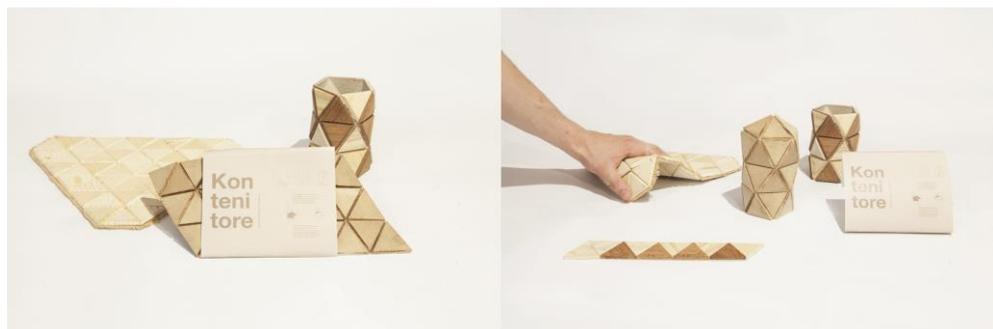
a didactic workshop Doll to study the local wild fauna (Figure 21).

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**Fig. 21. Prototype. Didactic workshop Doll to study the local wild fauna (DDC research unit, Bertaccini, Formentin, 2019)**

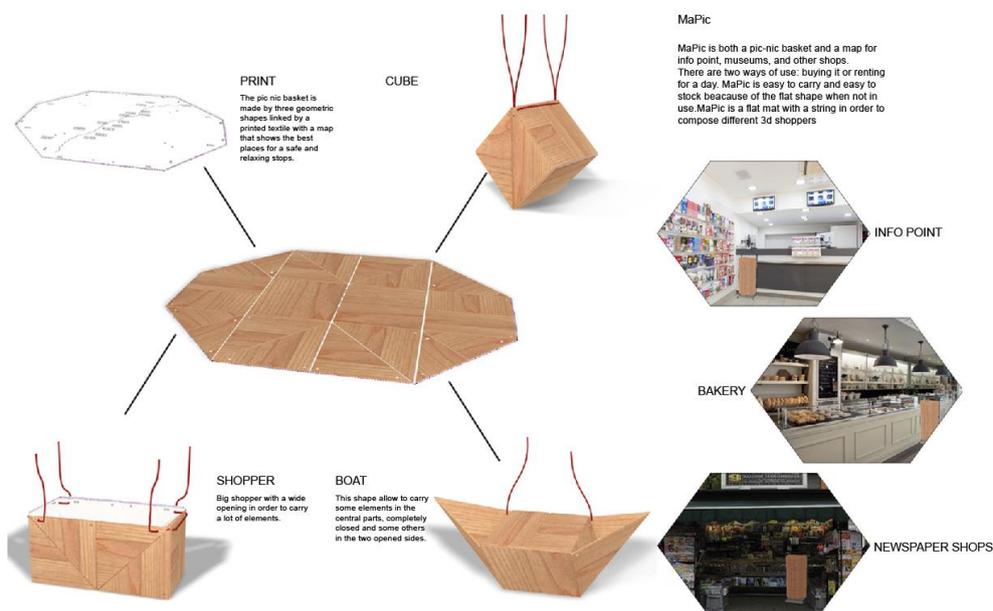
a collapsible Bag to collect the products of the forest (chestnuts, mosses, mushrooms)  
(Figure 22);



**Fig. 22. Prototype. Collapsible Bag to collect the products of the forest (DDC research unit, Civinelli, Vittori, 2019)**

a collapsible Bag to collect the products or to sit down on the forest (Figure 23);

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**Fig. 23. Prototype. Collapsible Bag to collect the products or to sit down on the forest (DDC research unit, Torcianti, Vignoli, 2019)**

board game to retrace the 9 stages of the path of Tonino Guerra in Pennabilli (Figure 24).



**Fig. 24. Prototype. board game to retrace the 9 stages of the path of Tonino Guerra in Pennabilli (DDC research unit, Lenzi, Quadri 2019)**

## 6. CONCLUSION

These experiences illustrate how a designer can play a role of mediation and interpretation, even from a political point of view, towards the environmental, cultural and social values and resources of a place, relying on experiential and narrative approaches that make it possible to test the mutual exchange of skills and sometimes of roles between the Learning Community and the Teaching Community. The openness to dialogue, to research in the field, the curiosity to dig deeper, the capacity to question and reformulate the starting briefs, to perceive elements to work on, the ability to identify with the context and to manage conflict are just some of the attitudes that a designer needs to engage in this experiential discipline. As for the community, as Magnaghi illustrates in his 2010 studies,

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...each phase of the planning process requires specific instruments of participatory democracy to be activated: first and foremost for the shared self-acknowledgment of the heritage values; then to define the contract and «constitution» of the statute for the place; for the negotiated design of the strategic scenario that takes into account the rules of the statute; finally for the social production of the plans and projects that can implement the scenario...(p.141)



**Fig. 25. Design meets communities sketch (DDC research unit, 2019)**

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